

***Sacred plays in sacred places –  
how does embodying the chains of religious  
memory become a transformative encounter for  
Latter-day Saints?***

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# ***Abstract***

Post modernity, some argue, has made grand narratives no longer meaningful. Others critique this view as Eurocentric and its own metanarrative. However, despite the forecast of a fully secular society and the inevitable demise of religion in Western, enlightened society, we now live in a post-secular world, characterised by a resurgence of some religious practices, the decline of others and the emergence of still more. Yet, our performance studies theoretical and methodological frameworks do not always reflect this. In counter-measure, this thesis explores large-scale theatrical productions by twenty-first century Latter-Day Saints. They are a religious people, who theatrically embody their own sacred histories, in locales holy to them. In so doing, the materiality of these performances is shot through with the metaphysical, becoming a case study in the complex nexus between theatre, performance studies and theatre practices informed by faith-based practices within organised religion. The case studies examined are two annual performances (2005 – present, and 2013 – present) by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo, Illinois, America and Chorley, Lancashire, Britain.

These performances become transformative encounters for many participants, and this thesis seeks to understand why. In answering, after laying the preliminary groundwork for the study in Chapter One, Chapter Two builds upon performance scholar Jon McKenzie's work on liminality to propose symbiotic efficacy, which explores how the spaces between cast members and audience become inscribed with Buberian I-Thou holiness to facilitate transformative encounters. Building on this, Chapter Three explores the transformative spaces between the living and the dead they represent on stage, seeking to understand how performative embodiment of one's ancestors can reshape linear chains of religious memory into circular chains. Furthermore, this chapter explores the rupture of "the miracle" on stage. Chapter Four examines the site-specific nature of these performances, and building on both anthropologist Tim Ingold's work on landscape, and Rana Singh's work on faithscape, explores a culturally inscribed frame to reveal the impact of faith on the landscape of site-specific performance locales. In concluding, Chapter Five examines the transformative unity experienced by

participants: unity with fellow cast members and audience, unity with the dead represented on stage, and unity with the landscape of the site-specific location. Such unity for participants is liberating, and ultimately leads to unity with the Divine.

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# ***Table of Contents***

<b>Chapter One: Introduction .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Research positionality .....	11
Object of study .....	22
Method of study .....	26
Why this study .....	27
Structure of thesis .....	33
Latter-day Saints: who are they? .....	36
Latter-day Saints today .....	42
The Latter-day Saint story in Nauvoo .....	44
The Latter-day Saint story in Lancashire & the British Isles .....	50
<b>Chapter Two: The Sphere that Lies Between Things .....</b>	<b>57</b>
Michael's story .....	64
Pilgrims in liminality .....	69
Symbiotic efficacy .....	74
<i>I-Thou</i> encounters .....	82
"What theatre does" .....	84
"It felt like a great, warm hug" .....	87
The transformative power of gifts .....	98
Questions of the soul .....	105
Sarah's story .....	107
"A more exalted state" .....	111
Conclusion .....	119

<b>Chapter Three: The Circular Chain of Believers .....</b>	<b>122</b>
Introduction .....	122
Part One: connections to the dead .....	124
Genetics at play – the DNA connection to the dead .....	125
“The dead are not dead” – the doctrinal connection to the dead .....	129
The chain of memory and community of believers – the lineage connection to the dead .....	135
Socio-cultural practices .....	136
Zion – a celestial community .....	139
Vicarious temple rituals .....	145
Part Two: haunted pageants .....	148
Don’s story .....	149
A circular chain of believers .....	160
Circular time .....	173
Sacrifice and remembrance: remembrance and sacrifice .....	180
Part Three: Conclusion .....	188
 <b>Chapter Four: Faithscape .....</b>	 <b>207</b>
Introduction .....	207
Part One .....	210
Part Two – Nauvoo, Illinois .....	225
Part Three – Chorley, Lancashire .....	249
“You will tell our story?” .....	251
Landscape circle one - the Preston Temple grounds, Chorley, Lancashire .....	268
Landscape circle two – distributed landscape and vicarious religion .....	276
Landscape circle three – the British Isles .....	287

Part Four – conclusion .....	291
<b>Chapter Five: Conclusion.....</b>	<b>296</b>
The metamorphic what.....	296
Who of this study.....	296
How – symbiotic efficacy, circular chains of memory and faithscape...	301
Where – the <i>interbetweeness</i> .....	306
When – circular time.....	309
Why – convergence in Christ.....	309
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>315</b>
Ethics Consent Form – <i>The British Pageant 2013</i> .....	315
Ethics Consent Form – <i>The Nauvoo Pageant 2015</i> .....	317
Questions.....	319
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>320</b>



## ***List of Illustrations***

Figure 1	<i>The Nauvoo Pageant</i> finale, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	39
Figure 2	Latter-day Saint statue of departing family, Liverpool Docks .....	53
Figure 3	<i>The British Pageant</i> performance venue, Chorley, Lancashire .....	55
Figure 4	<i>The Nauvoo Pageant</i> Evening Dance circular finale, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	168
Figure 5	<i>The Nauvoo Pageant</i> finale grouped together, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	193
Figure 6	<i>The Nauvoo Pageant</i> finale filling the stage, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	193
Figure 7	The Joseph Smith Academy as was, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	210
Figure 8	Original Nauvoo Temple, overlooking Nauvoo, Illinois .....	226
Figure 9	Ruins after destruction of Nauvoo Temple, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	229
Figure 10	Original Nauvoo Temple, built 1846 .....	230
Figure 11	Modern Nauvoo Temple, built 2002 .....	230
Figure 12	A grove of trees, bordering the audience, Nauvoo, Illinois .....	242
Figure 13	Preston Temple grounds, an aerial view, Chorley, Lancashire .....	269
Figure 14	<i>The British Pageant</i> , a family reading from the Bible in English ...	283
Figure 15	Convergence in Christ diagram .....	310

## ***Chapter One: Introduction***

This thesis considers the effect on participants of large-scale, twenty-first century theatrical performances that re-enact historical events sacred to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This religious community has over sixteen million members worldwide. Members are more commonly known as Latter-day Saints or simply Saints.<sup>1</sup> This thesis is primarily concerned with two performances staged by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. First, *The British Pageant: Truth Will Prevail*, which was initially staged in the United Kingdom in the summer of 2013 for two weeks, in Chorley, Lancashire. Approximately seventeen thousand audience members attended the two weeks of performances which involved approximately five hundred performers and five hundred volunteers. This performance was re-staged in the summer of 2017, in the same location in the UK, again with a similar audience size. Second, *The Nauvoo Pageant: A Tribute to Joseph Smith*, has been performed annually since 2005 for the month of July in the United States of America, in Nauvoo, Illinois. It has been performed each summer to an audience of between thirty-five and forty-five thousand people. The population of the town of Nauvoo itself stands at about one thousand people, meaning on any given night in July there are far more audience members watching this production than live within the town itself. During the month of performances about six hundred cast members and five hundred volunteers are involved. Only a little scholarly examination of these significant performative expressions of faith has taken place. This thesis not only sets out to map and describe these events but also to understand how they affect the

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<sup>1</sup> I will consider the term “Mormon” later in this chapter.  
Mackenzie Johns | 610045936

cast members, volunteers, audience members and wider community of Latter-day Saints. In so doing, it will reconsider the presumptions of the literature in theatre, drama and performance studies, both the role of religious faith and practice and the ways that traditional theatre forms can facilitate an increase in wellbeing for all participants before, during and after the performance event. Wellbeing includes, but is not limited to, contentment, personal spiritual growth, increased faith, healing and flourishing, as this study will go on to elucidate.

These are large-scale events that take on a pilgrimage-like quality for their audiences: in many ways they are the antithesis of some current scholarship which suggest religion, religious acts and largescale expressions of collective identity are in decline.<sup>2</sup> And so we ask, what is their appeal? Why are so many people participating in these pageants, whether as audience or performers, often with financial sacrifice, year after year, and from different nations? Such questions are partly the catalyst for this thesis. Moreover, whilst there is a small amount of existent scholarship on Latter-day Saint pageants that will be considered in this study, scholarship to date has not grappled deeply with transnational questions surrounding these pageants, nor has such a transnational study been undertaken by one in the unique insider/outsider position I occupy.

## **Research Positionality**

Through my involvement with the pageants, and my own cultural, artistic, and religious enculturation as a British Latter-day Saint theatre practitioner, I

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<sup>2</sup> This decline is articulated in secularisation theory, which has been normalized in European society though it is now challenged with arguments of post-secularisation. For further discussion on secularization theory and post secularization see: Wilson, Davie ("Religion in Britain since 1945"), C. Taylor, Habermas & Ratzinger.

occupy a unique position as a researcher. I am an insider, inasmuch as I am a lifelong member of The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am furthermore an insider inasmuch as I have been deeply involved with both these performances: I have acted in (2006 – 2008, 2018) and been artistic or associate director of *The Nauvoo Pageant* (2009 – 2012) and am a co-writer of, and an artistic director for *The British Pageant*, directing this latter production in both the UK and the USA (2013 – 2015, 2017). In other words, I know these performances intimately and from multiple angles. However, I am a cultural outsider in some ways: I have directed both pageants in the USA for a predominantly American cast and audience. And whilst involved with the pageants, I have consistently approached them both as a Latter-day Saint believer and as a theatre practitioner with training in British theatrical practice and history: both as a faithful insider looking out, and as an outside theatre practitioner and academic looking in. This unique insider/outsider perspective, (and the ownership of both perspectives simultaneously) allows for the discourses, narratives, behaviours and history of both the Latter-day Saint faith tradition, theatre studies and performance practice and discourse to converge. Furthermore, it allows for the socio-religious, historio-cultural and geopolitical factors at play in this study to be examined from this somewhat unique dualistic role. It is not often that faith and theatre scholarship combine in my experience; often the history of their relationship can be complex and fraught (Rozik, “Roots” and “Ritual”; Goldingay, ch. 3; Levy). However, this dualism need not automatically be a combination to be wary of, but rather one all interested parties, whether theatre practitioners/academics or religionists, can find value in. Such dualism, expressed by insider/outsider positionality, is located within a robust academic discourse, generated over the past several decades by the

ideas and writings of several ethnographers, anthropologists and scholars of religion. Their work and thinking is beneficent to grapple with here, to enable positioning myself more clearly in this study.

Renowned cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz's distinction between experience-near and experience-distant perspectives elucidates the discussion in helpful ways. Geertz preferred experience-near and experience-distant terminology and accompanying ideas to that encapsulated by the more commonly used terms of insider/outsider (Geertz 28). Building on the terminology of psychoanalyst Heinz Kohut, (Geertz 28) Geertz defined an experience-near concept as one which the participant would, "naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others" (28). Examples of such experience-near concepts given by Geertz are "love" and "fear" (28). In contrast, an experience-distant concept is "one that specialists of one sort or another--an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist--employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims" (28). So in contrast to "love" an experience-distant concept is "object cathexis"; instead of "fear", "ego dystonic". In this distinction, one is not elevated above the other as better. Rather Geertz argues that "an alternation or oscillation between near and distant perspectives is required" (Froggett & Briggs 2:1). This switching between the near and distant avoids the pitfalls of staying only in one or the other viewpoint. Such pitfalls Geertz succinctly articulates: "Confinement to experience-near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular. Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon" (Geertz 29). This study, located in the nexus between

theatre, performance, religion and ethnography, is diminished if “awash in immediacies” or “stranded in abstraction”, as Geertz helpfully articulates it. In recognition of such, I seek to actively embrace and move between his understanding of experience-near and experience-distant thinking, terminology, and positionality throughout this study, though I will utilise the terminology of insider/outsider for their more immediate accessibility. Furthermore, there are limitations in Geertz near/distant thinking, as it implies a binary, that in my experience, at least in these pageants, is not so. Indeed, near and distant experiences and perspectives may occur on a continuum or even simultaneously. The same challenges apply with the terminology of insider/outsider, though perhaps not quite as acutely so, as the terms seem to have a greater porosity to me. Lastly, the binary of experience near and distant can erase the power struggles at play in ethnographic research, which struggles Talal Asad highlights.

Asad’s seminal work on cultural translations further helps to locate within the discourse my insider/outsider role in this study. Asad, a renowned cultural anthropologist, writes in his book *Genealogies of Religion* that in the work of the ethnographer, the attempt to “translate” for their reader the religious world and life of those they write about, is laden with inequalities. This is primarily because there are unequal languages at play (189), with the language of the ethnographer nearly always acting as a dominant, stronger language due to a legacy of imperialism and capitalism (199), and the entire process enmeshed in the traditions of power (198). One result of this is that the ethnographer becomes the author of the meaning (196), which cannot be contested by those they write about (197). Ethnography, Asad argues, is deeply embedded in such imbalanced cultural translations, which leads to other cultures only ever being

translated into texts, when a dramatic performance, a dance or music might, for example, be more apt (193). Such textual dependency is focussed on meaning, and not the lived practices of those reading; as such the reader learns *about* other cultures, but not *from* them, and their own living heritage, or practices as reader, is not impacted (193).

Asad's thinking in relation to my own positionality in this study locates me in the liminal space betwixt/between the ethnographic cultural translator of large scale Latter-day Saint theatrical practices for a predominantly British middle-class academic audience (193), whilst simultaneously being the subject of such translation. This poses an interesting question around the relational strength and weakness, as Asad termed it, (193) of the two "languages" at play – Latter-day Saint culture and that of the Academy. I talk elsewhere about my bilingualism in these two "languages" (see page 20), but Asad's thinking elucidates that insider/outsider discourse is also intimately connected to questions surrounding power, namely, is there a power dynamic at play between these two "languages", and if so what is it? Is one weaker, or stronger, than the other? Does that power position change depending on what is being discussed and how? What language do I use in this study, when and why? Asad argues for the dominant, "stronger" language of academic ethnography being adapted and changed, transformed even, by the "weaker" language used by the subjects of the study, when what tends to happen, according to Asad, is the opposite (190). Is there a parallel at play here in this and other studies in the realm of religious theatre and performance, even when the only official language being used is English? If so, how does it play out? Is the language of faith, as expressed through theatrical performance, being transformed and culturally-translated into the language of academia, or is the academic language

of theatrical and performance studies being transformed by the language of faith, or is their mutual transformation in this study? Or is Asad's plea for the dominant language to be transformed by the weaker language (acknowledging the fluidity of those positions in this study, partially due to my insider/outsider role) even desirable? How does my position as an insider/outsider influence how this power dynamic plays out? These are questions that will be grappled with further, albeit indirectly, throughout this study.

Asad's further work on genealogies of religion problematizes, indirectly, my use of the terminology insider/outsider. Asad, in seeking to define religion (arguing that the definition of religion, and who gets to define it, is crucial (37)) roundly criticizes Geertz' "bland" definition which makes religion a purely private, internal belief rather than an activity in the world (47). This ultimately creates a definition, according to Asad, which resembles Marx's reductionary thinking on religion (46), which in the process makes it very difficult for western liberalism to genuinely engage with religious pluralism (306). Asad's writing here inverts the connotations embedded in my usage of the terms insider/outsider. If I use the term insider to imply my "inside" knowledge of Latter-day Saint theology, faith, practice, history and cultural memory, Asad's writings propose there can, however, be no "insider" role for religious minorities within western liberalism – they will always be outside and "Other" (306), destined to "complete assimilation or the status of despised difference" (306). Whilst I do not necessarily agree with the extremity of Asad's view here, his writing on the genealogies of religion brings other readings to the usage of the term insider/outsider, which will be touched upon further in this study, especially in Chapter Four in relation to the discussion on *The British Pageant* and British Latter-day Saints feeling like outsiders in the religious fabric of British life, whilst



simultaneously being deeply religious. Furthermore, Asad in his critique of Geertz, and secular discourse within western liberalism which assigns religion to only the private sphere, points out that within such thinking “religion is essentially a matter of symbolic meanings” (42). Asad argues that this reduction of religion, to symbolic meaning only, has played a role in making religion appear to many as “a more primitive, a less adult way of coming to terms with the human condition” (46). In my outsider role in this study, Asad’s writing here on the genealogy of religion is a helpful reminder to not reduce the religious practices of Latter-day Saints to symbolic meaning only, but to recognise their practices as instrumental activities connected to their everyday communal lives, and not only as private, internalised beliefs.

Any discussion of insider/outsider in scholarly writing is not complete without locating it within Kenneth Pike’s introduction of the terms emic and etic into the linguistics discourse in his 1954 publication (Pike “Language”). However, it was anthropologist Marvin Harris’ adoption and adaptation of Pike’s terms in 1964 (Harris “Cultural”), that led eventually to these terms occupying the central role they do today in the social sciences, in multiple fields (Headland ch. 1). Thomas Headland, in his book *Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate*, outlines just how many divergent definitions there are of emic and etic, and the confusion surrounding use of the terms (Headland ch. 1). It is not necessary for this study to delve into that discussion; interested readers can refer to Headland’s book. Though definitions have been contested, and Pike and Harris use and understand the terms somewhat differently, which adds to the confusion, the following articulation helps locate my use of insider/outsider positionality in the extant discourse.

Emic and etic have variously been understood as having connotations to do with specific versus universal; subjective rather than scientific knowledge; informal versus formal; cultural/within in contrast to orthodox/without; insider's local viewpoint versus outsider's scientific viewpoint; local positionality and understanding of the subject as opposed to the universal positionality and understanding of the observer, to cite but a few (Headland ch. 1). As I move between insider/outsider positionality throughout this study, these various connotations of emic and etic are somewhat at play, though I do not use the terms myself.

Emic and etic resonate with David Hufford's writings on reflexivity in belief studies, and the necessity for, and awareness of, both the scholarly voice and the personal voice. Hufford reminds us that, "Disinterest is urged on scholars of religion, but disinterest is impossible in religious issues" (60). Building on this he highlights, "I consider impartiality in spiritual matters an impossibility. That being the case, the tendency to count disbelief as the "objective" stance is a serious, systematic bias that runs through most academic studies of spiritual belief" (61). The approach he espouses, to navigate such bias and the impossibility of impartiality is reflexivity; to utilise our scholarly voice *and* our personal voice, and to be aware of when we are using them and for what ends. This gives scope to bring yourself, and your personal voice, into the study more fully, for beneficent ends (66). As Hufford explains it, such reflexivity, "is a metaphor from grammar indicating a relationship of identity between subject and object, thus meaning the inclusion of the actor (scholar, author, observer) in the account of the act and/or its outcomes" (57). Through the reflexive inclusion of the actor in the study, there is an avoidance of an unhealthy "asymmetrical political relationship between scholars and those they

study” (63), with similar power structures at play that Asad observes. I look to write with reflexivity through-out this study, acknowledging when there is use of my personal/insider voice (65), whilst simultaneously seeking to negate the pressure felt in scholarly work to write in a manner that “discredits one’s personal beliefs” (69), recognising the associated risks of that pressure.

Karen McCarthy Brown wrote of such pressures when discussing her own conversion to Vodou in her seminal and celebrated ethnographic text *Mama Lola: A Vodou Priestess in Brooklyn*. An early observation in her book reads,

ethnographic research is, whatever else it is, a form of human relationship. When the lines long drawn in anthropology between participant-observer and informant break down, the only truth is the one in between; and anthropology becomes something closer to a social art form, open to both aesthetic and moral judgment. This situation is riskier, but it does bring intellectual labor (sic) and life into closer relation. (12)

For McCarthy Brown then, the relational “truth” between participant-observer and informant is found in the liminality between the two. I discuss such liminality in far greater depth in Chapter Two, but suffice to say here that in using the terminology insider/outsider to locate myself in this study, the liminality between the two is the fertile soil this study springs from, and in such liminality the binary is somewhat avoided. Such a space and place may also be helpfully thought of as the liminality of friendship (more on this in Chapter Two). Or as McCarthy Brown simply states on her relationship with Alourdes (or Mama Lola), “through our friendship, we have served scholarship’s end of deepened understanding” (“Other” 56). Some of the participants whose stories I share in this study are dear friends to me; others are cast or audience members whom I do not know so well. Yet even then, these relationships have been forged, at least with those who are not in the audience, in the intense process of creating these

performances together. The relationships I have with those I interview are cocooned in reciprocal care, warmth and love. Such friendships have, I feel, deepened scholarly understanding, as friendship did for McCarthy Brown.

Lastly I address renowned scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith's work, who, similarly to McCarthy Brown, recognises that any study dealing with religion and religious faith is fundamentally "the study of persons" (Sec I) and that "Of all branches of human inquiry, hardly any deals with an area so personal as this" (Sec I). He poetically elaborates, "All religions are new religions, every morning. For religions do not exist up in the sky somewhere, elaborated, finished, and static; they exist in men's hearts." (Sec I). Cantwell Smith is insistent in this latter point, repeating in multiple ways the central idea that any study dealing with religion "must be a study not only of tangible externals but of human hopes and aspirations and interpretations of those externals" (Cantwell Smith footnote 6). He writes that whilst there is much necessary work to be done in the study of "The externals of religion" such as symbols, institutions, doctrines, practices etc. (Sec I) what is actually being dealt with is how these externals affect the lives of believers. The study of both is necessary he feels – the external and the internal – to fully get to the heart of the religious matter. And this study of religious externalia, personal belief, and the relation between them, must also be navigated with this caveat from Cantwell Smith, namely that, "no statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion's believers" (Sec I). Cantwell Smith acknowledges and discusses somewhat the issues surrounding his claim, and the interested reader can look to his essay to pursue that line. Here I raise his point as it bolsters one of my own desires in this study, as an insider, to write in a manner that Latter-day Saints recognise themselves in the work. As Cantwell

Smith writes, if in the academic's scholarly text, the religious believer, "cannot recognize his portrayal, then it is not their faith that he is portraying" (Sec I). I share this as I acknowledge, whilst mindful of my own defensiveness in it, that I have read various scholarly articles and books about Latter-day Saints, and watched various popular documentaries, in which I cannot recognise Latter-day Saints at all. This does not offend me, it is rather more puzzling, and I agree with the spirit of Cantwell Smith's call to write in such a manner that believers can recognise themselves in the work.

Taken together, the discourse on the insider/outsider role of the academic in the study of religion (of which the above review is by no means exhaustive) points us to meaningful dialogue, or "an encounter" (Sec III) as Cantwell Smith calls it, between the scholar and the believer. Whilst not wanting to iron out clear differences in the ideas of various scholars discussed above, a golden thread emerges, for me at least, about the relation between scholar and believer: Cantwell Smith calls it a dialogue or encounter, whilst for McCarthy Brown it is friendship; Geertz's call for an oscillation between experience-near and experience-distant, along with Pike and Harris' invitation to move between emic and etic, is to facilitate rich understanding, which is essential for the encounter of friendship; Asad invites deep consideration of how power has played out, been manipulated, and misused in the study of religiosity, which is clearly the antithesis of meaningful encounters; whilst Hufford, similarly to Cantwell Smith, invites us to consider deeply the benefit of the personal voice when in healthy counter-balance to the scholarly voice, which leads to a dismantling of power structures in studies connected to religious peoples and their beliefs. The mosaic revealed in the insider/outsider discourse has a form of academically robust gentleness, if you will. And whilst I

will only occasionally use the terms insider/outsider in this study, my position throughout is an attempt to find such academic robustness, tempered with the gentleness all true encounters require.

## **Object of Study**

These performance events are called *pageants* within the Latter-day Saint faith tradition, though that term may carry misleading connotations without definition in this context. Of the various and divergent definitions of *pageant* within the OED, aspects of the following come closest: “A commemorative play depicting scenes from history (esp. local history), usually performed outdoors in the form of a procession in elaborate, colourful costumes” (OED online). These Latter-day Saint productions are commemorative plays depicting local historical events, and are usually, though not always, performed outdoors within the Latter-day Saint tradition. However, they are not processional in nature, nor with elaborate costumes. Rather they can be thought of as large-scale, and complex, theatrical productions. Whilst the history of pageants within the Latter-day Saint tradition will be considered briefly in Chapter Four of this thesis, there is not scope in this study to pursue a comparative analysis to the pageantry of the medieval mystery cycles.

As I have mentioned, this thesis is concerned with the performances of *The British Pageant* in Lancashire, UK in 2013 and 2017, and the performances of *The Nauvoo Pageant* in Nauvoo, USA since 2005. The significance of the locale for these productions, Nauvoo, Illinois, USA and Chorley, Lancashire, UK, will be explored in depth at the end of this chapter, for they both play key roles in Latter-day Saint history, and inform the focus of this study. Furthermore, I will be examining the impact of *The British Pageant* and *The Nauvoo Pageant*

being staged in repertoire in Nauvoo, Illinois since 2014. Every summer since July of 2014 onwards, both pageants have been staged, alternating side by side in Nauvoo, one pageant on one night, the other on the next. *The British Pageant*, written for a UK audience in 2013, (eight years after *The Nauvoo Pageant* was written), was never envisaged to be staged in America in repertoire with *The Nauvoo Pageant*: comparative questions arising from this now annual transcultural event will be explored in this thesis articulated through analysis of interviews, fieldnotes and existent literature. Lastly, in the summer of 2017 *The British Pageant* was staged in both the UK and America simultaneously, being seen in both nations by somewhere between fifty to sixty thousand people. The creative, faith-based synergy experienced from this annual dual staging informs parts of this discussion. In addition to the performances themselves, their creation and rehearsal processes will be examined. To begin the discussion, some description of the practicalities of the performances will be helpful here.

The cast, in both the UK and USA stagings, are predominantly Latter-day Saints, usually with little to no performance experience. As mentioned, about five to six hundred cast members are involved in each pageant, with rotating casts throughout the summer of about one hundred and fifty people per cast. These different casts, called *family cast*, come to rehearse for a week and then perform for a week in rotation, taking on what may be considered the role of a chorus or ensemble, joining in with large group dances, occasional songs (though the pageants are not musicals in any way), but mainly large group scenes, portraying for example life at the docks, picnics, congregations at worship, a city-building community, funeral scenes, market scenes, and more. In such scenes, they do not have spoken lines but offer a vitality and power to

the production, both enriching the mise-en-scene, yet also, through performance, becoming the familial symbol of the substance, the living motif of the central message, as will be discussed throughout the thesis. Cast members usually come in family groups of various forms and sizes, from a parent and child, to a married couple, to a large family with several children, to inter-generational families with grandparents performing alongside grandchildren. Occasionally individuals will come and perform without an accompanying family member, but it is rare. Sometimes unrelated friends will apply and participate together. In *The British Pageant* in the UK there are two separate family casts and a large, rotating choir of about two hundred singers. In the USA there is no choir, but five rotating family casts. This largely family-based cast is important to the experiences participants have in these events. I have carried out surveys and conducted interviews with several members of the family cast, and their insight offers an important insider/performer perspective to compare and contrast with my own as researcher/director. These will be discussed in greater depth later in the subsequent chapters.

Those with spoken lines in the pageants, called *core cast*, perform for the entire run in the UK and the USA. The core cast has twenty or so Latter-day Saints, who often, though not always, have more performance background or training. The family cast and core cast rehearse together, conscientiously focussing on creating a culture of service-orientated supererogation in the process. Directors of these productions have expressed that this latter work, this service-focussed living, is the foundational work of the pageants (R. Robinson), the implications of which this study explores, by engaging with the creative context of these performances alongside the creative content.



In addition to analysing these pageants, this thesis will examine the context in which these pageants are made and experienced, as this offers a unique insight into Latter-day Saint faith, identity, community, history and memory. As well as affording such insights, the pageants and accompanying creative culture can play an active role in the formation, manifestation, and continuation of these multifaceted aspects of religious practice. In other words, Latter-day Saint faith is both forged and unfolded to view through these pageants. For the cast members, audiences and wider society, Latter-day Saint identity is both re-affirmed and revealed, community created and communicated, and Latter-day Saint history and memory enlarged and elucidated. This creative context is examined through qualitative research, including directed fieldwork. Data collection methods consisted primarily of personal interviews and focus group discussions with family cast, core cast, directors, and audience members. The interviews were in-depth, open-ended, and non-linear, generating reflexive narrative, and revealing an ethnography thematically underpinned by the Latter-day Saint vision of the eternal family, a concept which will be examined in greater depth shortly. Data was also collated from written responses from family and core cast to several open-ended questions. Understandably, such qualitative research led to sharings which slip and slide between various frames and ways of understanding, requiring a methodology of study that is commensurably fluid, reflexive and responsive.

Lastly, in my role as an insider in this study I recognise the potential pitfalls. Whilst an insider interviewing insiders carries some potential issues, the greater risk is my insider role in creative leadership and a writer in these projects. The power dynamic at play as a director interviewing those she has directed is evident, though I attempted to mitigate against it. In group interviews,

for example, I invited participants to share as fully and openly as possible, acknowledging my role with participants and how that might affect the sharing. Some participants shared some negative/critical feedback in discussions, obviously feeling comfortable enough to do this. However, even if the power dynamic was not fully negated, (unless others had run the interviews for me, though that also raises different questions) it should still be acknowledged.

### **Method of Study**

These ideas surrounding religious faith, identity, community, history and memory are multifarious, interwoven, knotty and contested. To examine them I have taken a transdisciplinary approach. I draw on discourses, literatures and methodologies from various disciplines: predominantly performance studies, but also the sociology of religion, anthropology, archaeology and philosophy, along with scholarship focusing on Latter-day Saint faith and theology. This offers a flexibility of analysis that enables me to move beyond the traditional limitations of a single approach. For example, sociology of religion is typically materialist in its approach: it stops short at an examination of the metaphysical. Yet, encounters with understandings of the Divine, the operation of time and timelessness and a connection to a living, yet long dead ancestry, are central to the descriptions offered in the experiences of cast and audience members. Therefore, the lens of religion and faith itself is utilised for its transmundane properties, enabling understanding of some aspects of this study which sociological religious studies and performance studies are unable to examine. In this respect, I find myself in partial agreement with Harold Bloom, who concluded that, "Only religion can study religion" (36). The occasional limits of theatre and performance studies and sociological religious studies to examine

faith-based performances are due to their complicated historical relationship with religion, touched upon in the section below. That said, it is through the symbiotic synthesis of these various modes of learning that the complex and tangled threads at work in the pageants can be unwoven, and a tapestry of understanding created.

### **Why this Study?**

Some may ask why such understanding matters? To many, it may not. Yet we live in a world in which secularisation theory, and its assumption of the inevitable demise of religion within modernity, is unravelling. Rather, our world is increasingly “characterized by an explosion of passionate religious movements” (Berger et al. 10). This shift has had an impact on the academic establishment. With the rise of secularisation theory, religion, unsurprisingly, seemed to fall off the scholars’ radar, as Terry Eagleton observes, leading to an academic culture in which, “many secular intellectuals with a reasonably sophisticated sense of what goes on in academic areas other than their own tout an abysmally crude, infantile version of what theology has traditionally maintained” (“Reason” 50). This theological and religious “gap” in the liberal arts education is evident in theatre departments across the Western world, as Lance Gharavi observes:

Graduate and undergraduate students in theatre and performance studies typically receive a more or less thorough grounding in contemporary theories of gender, class, race, sexuality, post-colonialism, and the implications these discourses have for their fields and vice versa. But these same students rarely receive any scholarly perspectives on religion. (4-5)

Given that religion is arguably the most enduring form of popular culture for billions of people (Eagleton, “Culture” ix), and a key marker of identity every

bit as important as those Gharavi lists for so many, this is a surprising gap. One effect for theatre and the performing arts from this gap in the discourse between scholarship and religion is a dramatic output that can struggle to move beyond portrayals of peoples of faith as anything more than stereotypes, from the inanely inept or promiscuous village vicar, to the sanctimonious yet hypocritical religionist. It becomes somewhat rare to see a portrayal of a religious believer on stage in which the production does not feel compelled to challenge that character's faith. As *The Guardian* theatre critic Mark Lawson observed, "Most contemporary drama on religious themes, though, is written from a sceptical, agnostic or even atheistic perspective" (Lawson). Or, if religious faith is not challenged, it is ridiculed, whether through satire, reductionary critique or ridicule; think *Tartuffe* (Moliere) to *Book of Mormon: The Musical* (Parker, et al.). Such critique can serve needed purposes – religious hypocrisy exists and should be examined on stage. However, so should genuine religious faith just as readily, but as performance practitioners we tend to shy away from that (though notable exceptions, do, of course, exist, including historical dramas in which the protagonists are celebrated historical figures whose religious beliefs shaped their work, such as plays that explore Joan of Arc, Thomas More or Ghandi).

And that phrase is a key challenge; how does an outside observer, a spectator, a witness understand what is "genuine religious faith"? In a time of post-modernity when metanarratives such as religion have been rejected, a homogenous experience of faith is not possible. And perhaps, rather than this signalling a 'death' of religion, this opens up a more nuanced understanding of our encounter with religion and spirituality. This thesis assumes that between the collective structure and understandings offered by Latter-day Saint beliefs

and practices, and individual, localised creative expressions and understandings of that belief, is a space where we might find a closer expression of “genuine religious faith.” These pageants offer a unique insight into what happens when the bottom-up creativity of individuals and families combines with the top-down structures of centralised Latter-day Saint leadership. They meet in a space that is both an inward-looking reflection of individual interpretation and community beliefs, and an outward-looking encounter with an audience and fellow cast members, which is shaped by a present day understanding of shared history. This personal and communal space both invites and requires a more nuanced and sophisticated approach to religious tropes, characters and the ethnography of faith than theatre and performance studies often allows, due in part to the naturalisation of secularisation theory within European society and academia.

That said, theatre practice and scholarship is slowly emerging from an academic establishment that has previously assumed, and framed, secularisation as normative, but is now grappling with post-secularisation theory (Gluhovic and Meno, ch. 4). The opportunity in so doing is for drama and its attendant discourse to engage with local religious practices as they too are emerging, rather than remaining wedded to the secularisation theorists’ predictions as to the inevitable rejection and demise of faith-based practice or with an engagement of practices that belong to some ‘exotic other.’ To the extent this is true, to have this thesis representing rigorous research on the theatre practices of a religious people, it will be beneficial. And for that scholarship to be from one who understands and can speak both languages, of the believers she is creating with, and the Academy she is writing for, allows for much needed translation to occur. In other words, part of the benefit of this

study is actually my positionality within it and my fluency in two different languages and cultures, Latter-day Saint faith and theatre and performance scholarship. Such bilingualism invites two essential benefits: an academic rigour that safeguards against the tendency by believers writing on religious theatre to proselytise, and conversely, a faith-based rigour that safeguards against the tendency of religious reductionism in the name of scholarship.

Such reductionism of religion is hard for academia to avoid. Danièle Hervieu-Léger, celebrated French sociologist of religion, in her book *Religion as a Chain of Memory* observes that within the social sciences there is a deep-rooted urge to obliterate the religious element of religion (19) and to “destroy religion in order to clear a space for a scientific explanation of society” (20). Theatre and performance studies has been influenced in methodology by the social sciences from an anthropological turn within performance practice and thought that occurred in the last half of the twentieth century. As Richard Schechner observed in his book *Between Theater and Anthropology*, “just as theatre workers are increasingly interested in anthropological thought and the techniques of fieldwork, so anthropologists find themselves more and more like theatre directors” (107). It is arguable that due to such an anthropological turn, theatre and performance studies have not been entirely immune to the tendencies Hervieu-Léger observes in the social sciences, hence the religious gap in the theatre and performance discourse, as already discussed: destruction through dismissal.

This study actively seeks to avoid any such reductionist or destructive tendencies, by using tools able to discover, yet not destroy “the essentially religious ingredient” - for Hervieu-Léger, the tools of the social-sciences were not ultimately capable of this (15). This study aims to model how a

transdisciplinary approach between performance studies, the social sciences, philosophy and religion itself becomes responsive and nuanced enough to discover and elucidate, without destroying, the essentially religious ingredient in the spaces these pageants open up.

And furthermore, the study offers a model that challenges an ingrained assumption within academics: that believers cannot write well (meaning objectively) on their own faith. Academic objectivity is a misnomer; we are all profoundly influenced by our life's experiences and the lenses through which we choose to view the world, which all have an impact on our research choices, agendas, thinking and writing. To write "objectively" is simply to be able to acknowledge such influences upon us, and try our best to understand how our own lenses are both being shaped by, and in turn shaping, what we see. This study comes from the position that I am better able to explore, understand, question, locate and articulate what is really taking place at these large-scale theatrical performances because of my Latter-day Saint practice and faith, not despite it.

Some of what is taking place at these performances will be unique to this study, whilst some of it offers a unique angle upon an existent discussion. This study will incorporate examining the following areas, amongst other things: the symbiotic potentiality between faith and performance as a profoundly transformative agent; how and why large-scale performances of a people's sacred narratives are affecting their faith and identity; how the different geopolitical, socio-religious and historio-cultural make-up of the USA and Europe affect these public expressions of performed Latter-day Saint faith and history; located within the discourse on applied theatre, a case study in working with a large number of cast members with little to no performance experience,

in a limited amount of time, in such a manner that cultivates, celebrates and honours their innate creativity; faith-directed creativity as a source of joy and the power of that creative joy in performance to serve as a transformative agent; and lastly how site-specific performances, at locales sacred to a people, can serve as bridges for them to traverse the materiality of their faith to the immaterial and transcendent. Whilst this is not an exhaustive list of the areas that this thesis will examine, it does give a sense of its beneficent contribution. If this beneficiary list seems to border on protestation, consider it a pre-emptive measure to ensure that standard defensive reactions are not aroused before a serious consideration of these ideas can be given.

Lastly, in addressing the why of this study, within a post-secular world “there is an urgent and continued need” as Grace Davie puts it in *The Sociology of Religion*, “to grasp the continuing and public significance of religion in the modern world order – including Western democracies.... Without such, very little can be done” (256). Whilst arguably much of our theatrical output and discourse is not yet fully grasping the “public significance of religion,” it is actually well-suited to do so as a discipline, and in agreement with Davie’s assessment of the relationship between religion and the “modern world order,” it is of vital importance that we do. The present world is deeply driven by questions surrounding religious identity, faith and practices. This requires an academic bilingualism, adhering to performance scholar Diana Taylor’s invitation to theatre makers and performance practitioners, to “learn the languages of the people with whom they seek to interact and treat them as colleagues rather than as informants or objects of analysis” (10). To learn the languages of those we study, if they identify as religious, requires that we learn their language: the language of faith. This does not require that we believe in



their religious beliefs personally; it does require, however, that we treat them as “colleagues” - and not reduce, destroy, ignore or distort them as a circus hall of mirrors is apt to do. This study aims to serve as a model of how, as theatre and performance scholars and practitioners, we can approach makers of religious theatre as colleagues. For problematic and limiting contradictions occur in our theatre and performance practice and study if the rationalist and Marxist tradition is continually embraced, (which is conscientiously defined by its historical rift with religion and accompanying impulse to break it up), without embracing the counter balancing, coterminous and equally scientific need to acknowledge the wonder of faith in all its “irreducible complexity” (Hervieu-Léger 19 – 22). Such metaphysical complexity is grappled with throughout this study, as the following chapter overviews reveal.

### **Structure of Thesis**

In the belief that we can enjoy the journey more when we have a clear sense of the various destinations en route, a brief preview of each subsequent chapter follows here.

#### *Chapter Two – The Sphere that Lies Between Things*

This chapter suggests and explores symbiotic efficacy as a central defining feature of how cast members co-create in these pageants. Using the work of philosopher Martin Buber, the term symbiotic efficacy builds upon performance scholar Jon McKenzie’s work on liminality and accompanying transformative efficacy in performance studies, with the chapter elucidating how theatre and performance practice can move beyond transgressive and resistant models of liminal inscription resulting in efficacious transformation. It is a

chapter about the liminal spaces between directors, cast and audience, and how those spaces are inscribed in I-Thou holiness of Buberian discourse. It is about these performances as gift-giving, examined through Lewis Hyde's seminal work in that area, and the circularity of gift-giving in this theatrical context, between audience and cast. Ultimately, aided by the work of various performance studies scholars brought to bear on participants' qualitative feedback, the chapter seeks to answer how the spaces between the cast and audience can be inscribed to aid profound personal transformation. What emerges in response to that question is a reciprocity of the transformative encounter between cast and audience.

### *Chapter Three – The Circular Chain of Believers*

Building on Chapter Two, this chapter explores the transformative spaces between the living and the dead they are representing on stage. Key scaffolding to aid this exploration is religious sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger's writing on religion as a chain of memory. The chapter seeks to understand how performative embodiment of one's own ancestors, especially in the pageants when staged in America, can reshape Hervieu-Léger's linear chain of memory into a circular chain, aiding what I have termed circular time on stage. Such circular time, as the name suggests, emerges as lives and time collapse into a "timeless oneness" as one cast member phrased it. Furthermore, such circular time is aided by the rupture of "the miracle" on stage, building on Adrian Heathfield's work on time and trauma in performance studies. It is a chapter that explores in depth the relationship between Latter-day Saints and their dead, and asks how the performance of their dead is transformative for cast members.

## *Chapter 4 – Faithscape*

The site-specific nature of these performances, in locales sacred to Latter-day Saints, plays an important role in connecting participants to those they are representing, and the Divine. In this chapter, I explore such sacral site-specificity by developing Tim Ingold's work on landscape, suggesting through his anthropological groundwork, the notion of faithscape; a frame to reveal the traces of faith in the landscape of the site-specific performance locale. In so doing, this chapter explores the co-creative relationship that cast and audience have with the materiality of the landscape and how that burnishes their transformative encounter with these two performances. This chapter also deals with questions surrounding chains of religious memory being culturally inscribed, and the consequences of such inscription. Building on such cultural inscription in religious chains of memory, I explore through these pageants how our encounter with site-specific locations as theatre makers and audience can be *distributed*; not solely an encounter with the immediate landscape and locale of the performance. This chapter ultimately seeks to answer how the relationship with the landscape for pageant participants – cast and audience - can be transformative for them.

## *Chapter Five - Conclusion*

In the conclusion, beyond a recapitulation of key findings, I seek to understand how and in what manner the various strands of this study converge. In so doing, a clear picture emerges of a profound, transformative unity experienced by participants: unity with fellow cast members and audience, unity with the dead represented on stage, and unity with the landscape of the site-specific location. Such unity for participants is remarkably liberating, and

ultimately leads to unity with the Divine. To understand such a unifying venture, however, it is helpful to understand a little more about the people who are the focus of this study.

### **Latter-day Saints: who are they?**

As these chapter summaries reveal, Latter-day Saint theology, practice, history, culture and worship are integral to both the content and context of the staging of these performances, and as such a basic understanding of Latter-day Saint thought will help to elucidate the territory of this thesis for the reader.<sup>3</sup>

While acknowledging that a brief overview of core doctrines risks misrepresentation, and certainly is guilty of simplification, I begin with terms and names.

The full name of the Church is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Whilst members have commonly been known as Mormons, and the theology as Mormonism, both are monikers that current leaders of the Church have asked people not to use when discussing Church members and their faith (“Style Guide — The Name of the Church”). As such, this study will use the term Latter-day Saints, members of the Church of Jesus Christ, Saints or simply members, when discussing members of the Church. Furthermore, the phrase “the Church” or “The Church of Jesus Christ” will stand in as abbreviation for the full name. The term Mormon is used when included in various quotations and in reference to The Book of Mormon. Occasionally the abbreviation LDS for Latter-day Saints is used by some scholars quoted in this study, though I do not use it outside of such quotations.

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<sup>3</sup> This is not to imply a misleading homogeneity to Latter-day Saints. See Douglas Davies (“Mormon Culture” ch. 5), for further discussion on this.  
Mackenzie Johns | 610045936

Latter-day Saints are Christians. Douglas Davies, a sociologist of religion who has written extensively about Latter-day Saints, says Jesus within Latter-day Saint thinking is “the proactive Christ,” choosing and accepting His soteriological God-given mission (“Mormon Culture” 49). Within Latter-day Saint theology, that mission is redemptive and restorative, ultimately leading to the ability for the family unit to be eternal, or eternal families, as expressed in Latter-day Saint thought. This understanding is key to the ways that the pageants are experienced.

The eternal family as a term carries both qualitative and durational implications within the Latter-day Saint mythos<sup>4</sup>. As Latter-day Saint writers and thinkers Fiona and Terryl Givens succinctly express it in *The God Who Weeps*, such theology and practice is driven by families in which, “present relationships are both the laboratory in which we labor to perfect ourselves and the source of that enjoyment that will constitute our true heaven” (112). Both *The Nauvoo* and *The British Pageant* are structured around a narrative arc that is a microcosm of the Latter-day Saint macrocosmic purpose for life: the uniting of a family forever. Audiences follow the journeys (literal and metaphysical) of protagonists who have lost loved ones, and through the course of their journeying turn to the Latter-day Saint temple as the symbol of their hope for an eternal family. The writings of sociologist Hervieu-Léger on religion as a chain of memory, which are discussed in Chapter Three, resonate deeply with Latter-day Saint teachings on the eternal family. The pageants tell the stories of real people and draw on their diaries, journals and contemporary accounts. There is, therefore,

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<sup>4</sup> Mythos is used here, and throughout, as defined in the OED: “A body of interconnected myths or stories, esp. those belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition. More generally: an ideology, a set of beliefs (personal or collective).”

a sense for participants that by performing and embodying former believers in the pageants, they connect more profoundly to their own eternal family, and in a sense perform for them - both representatively, for and on behalf of their dead, and also performing for their dead as an absent/present audience - a notion also discussed further in Chapter Three. This becomes especially pertinent, as family cast members are very often portraying their own ancestors' stories on stage. As will be examined in that chapter, by portraying their own foremothers and forefathers in Nauvoo, cast members become embodied testators of the Latter-day Saint doctrine that one's life, indeed one's salvation, is intimately connected to that of one's ancestors. And Latter-day Saint temples are the symbol of, and vehicle for, such doctrine. The pageants are performed on temple sites. This is theatre made on and for sacred ground.

Within Latter-day Saint thought, homes and temples are the most sacred places on earth, as they are both intimately connected to the family. Temples, unlike Latter-day Saint chapels or meetinghouses, are not used for weekly Sabbath meetings, but are rather places where families can be united, or sealed, for time and all eternity. As such, sociologist Douglas Davies has called temples, for the Church, "the medium of its message" ("Mormon Culture" 67). Church leaders have stated: "Each holy temple stands as a symbol of our membership in the Church, as a sign of our faith in life after death, and as a sacred step toward eternal glory for us and our families" (Nelson). Both pageants are staged on the grounds of, or in immediate vicinity to, a Latter-day Saint temple. *The Nauvoo Pageant*, performed in the open air, has the Nauvoo Temple as its backdrop, lit dramatically each night during the finale, as shown below (fig. 1):



(Fig. 1. *The Nauvoo Pageant* finale, Nauvoo, Illinois, from: Franklin, Kyle. 9 July 2019. Used with permission.)

And *The British Pageant* in Chorley, Lancashire is staged on the Preston Temple grounds. As such these edifices - so sacred to Latter-day Saints - become an intrinsic part of the site-specific performances studied, with impact for cast and audiences alike, as discussed in depth in Chapter Four in relation to faithscape.

It is also helpful to understand for this study a very brief overview of central Church leadership and its origins, as the writings and teachings of prophets and apostles are mentioned throughout, and their feedback was crucial in the development of both pageants. Latter-day Saints believe that Joseph Smith was chosen by God, by personal visitation in the early 1800s, to restore Christ's church and authority to the earth, which had been lost by a general apostasy from Christ's time onwards. Joseph Smith was called as a Latter-day prophet.<sup>5</sup> For Latter-day Saints, there has been a prophet called of God on earth since Smith was called as a prophet, down to the current prophet and president of the Church today. These prophets, for believing members, are equivalent to the prophets of the Old Testament, called by God with a divine

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<sup>5</sup> For the most detailed and authoritative cultural biography of Joseph Smith see Richard Bushman's *Rough Stone Rolling*.  
Mackenzie Johns | 610045936

mission to communicate God's will for His children, and testify of Jesus Christ. Joseph Smith taught that as part of his prophetic calling he (and another, Oliver Cowdery) were visited by Christ's early apostles, Peter, James and John, and also John the Baptist. From these angelic visitations Joseph and Oliver received apostolic authority, or as Latter-day Saints believe, Christ's priesthood, (which had also been lost) to perform sacred ordinances that are efficacious on earth and in heaven, such as baptism. Along with receiving angelic ministry, Joseph also called Twelve Apostles, as in Christ's day, to administer the spiritual affairs of the Church. This is a practice that has also continued to this day and is central to the life of the pageants.

The prophet and twelve apostles today are held in the greatest esteem by Latter-day Saints. Importantly in relation to this study, staged versions of both scripts were performed for apostles, with detailed authoritative feedback received, and the performances were authorised by the prophet. For some, such an approval process might be evidence of censorship on the part of the Church, for others, a demonstration of a collaborative and generous approach. Whilst this process and these counterpoint views will be touched upon in Chapter Four, for now, knowing the scripts went through revision processes with the most senior of Latter-day Saint leadership in a world-wide church, helps with understanding the value and care placed upon a theatrical representation of the Latter-day Saint story by global Church leadership.

Such grandiose claims of new apostles as in Christ's time, and restored authority, were divisive at the Church's foundation and remain so today. Joseph Smith too remains a controversial figure. Yet, whatever may be personally thought of Joseph Smith, from dangerous imposter to innocent delusional to prophet akin to Moses, it needs to be acknowledged that he excelled, as Harold



Bloom observed, in community and “religion-making” (126). That sense of the Latter-day Saint community of believers, intrinsic to Joseph Smith’s vision for the Saints, becomes a central idea explored in Chapter Three, in relation to how theatrical performance strengthens chains of religious memory.

Lastly in relation to this very brief overview of Latter-day Saint theology is an introduction to The Book of Mormon: *Another Testament of Jesus Christ*, from whence the sobriquet ‘Mormons’ is derived. It is a record of Jesus Christ visiting the ancient Americas after his resurrection, and is studied, along with the Bible, by Church members. Latter-day Saints believe Joseph Smith translated The Book of Mormon into English from ancient hieroglyphs on golden plates, which plates he received from an angel called Moroni. It is essentially a “clan history” (Givens, “The Book of Mormon” 16), spanning 600BC - 400AD, in which God’s dealings with both individuals and nations emerges through a familial and political narrative, commencing with an ancient patriarch called Lehi in Jerusalem. An excellent literary and religious overview of The Book of Mormon can be obtained from Terryl L. Givens contribution to the Oxford series of *Very Short Introductions*. In both pageants, The Book of Mormon is shown to be the key tool leading to conversion. Many lines in the script are based on documented conversion stories that relate to The Book of Mormon, and it is occasionally quoted from in this study.

Such transmundane founding stories for a people of faith, from Godly and angelic visitations to golden plates, can pose a challenge for an academic study. Whilst a people of faith may embrace a world view in which the physical and metaphysical co-exist and constantly inform one another, for the Academy, holding these two simultaneously poses challenges. It is hoped that this study offers an original route into how we understand, communicate with, write about

and portray people for whom the metaphysical and physical worlds are intimately connected through the structures and practices of an organised religion. Having looked at a necessarily brief overview of central Latter-day Saint thinking and teaching, it is helpful to ascertain a little about Latter-day Saints today, both numerically and in relation to how they are perceived in the present.

### ***Latter-day Saints Today***

There are about 65,000 full time missionaries for the Church, over 160 temples throughout the globe, and just over 16 million members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints today (“Facts and Statistics”). Whilst probable that Church members are most commonly known for observing health practices which include not drinking alcohol, tea or coffee (part of a teaching called *The Word of Wisdom*), this is, for practicing members of the faith, the smallest part of who they are or how they live their beliefs. Furthermore, there are many misconceptions about Latter-day Saint beliefs, including that members do not celebrate Christmas or birthdays, which is not the case. Actually, Latter-day Saint society, both historically and today, is characterised by an emphasis on celebration and creative play (Moore). With this understanding, the exuberant singing, dancing and joyful collective nature of the pageants framed within a ‘country fayre’ of games, food and playing become clearer as an integrated part of Latter-day Saint lived faith.

Rather than these common misconceptions, then, at bedrock, Latter-day Saints embrace a world cosmos and eternal meta-narrative in which this mortal sojourn is but the second act, so to speak, of a three act play which

encompasses a pre-mortal, mortal, and post-mortal life.<sup>6</sup> As such, members of the Church see themselves on an eternal journey, almost a *bildungsroman* in literary terms, seeking faith, learning, knowledge, developing talents and growing in moral character, in order to return home, through Jesus Christ, to loving heavenly parents who bless their daily lives with “tender mercies” (The Book of Mormon, 1 Nephi 1:20).

This archetypal “returning home” narrative is embedded within each of the two performances considered. They both end with physical journeys: in *The British Pageant* the final scenes are on board the ship bound for America with many Latter-day Saints passengers, representing the Latter-day Saint diaspora of the nineteenth century, which will be examined further below. *The Nauvoo Pageant* ends with the Latter-day Saints leaving Nauvoo, under threat of their lives, to begin their great exodus west to the Rocky Mountains. However, whilst these physical journeys serve as the material plot structures for the plays, the real journeys explored in the pageants are metaphysical; journeys of faith. In light of this, the Latter-day Saint temples become even more apposite staging grounds for these pageants. This is because whilst the geographic locations of Lancashire and Nauvoo are sacred places within Latter-day Saint history, as will be discussed, the temples at these places are the ultimate symbols for members of the material and the transcendent combined. If the pageants are exploring spiritual and transcendent journeys, manifest in material journeys on stage, then Nauvoo and Lancashire, both connected to the Latter-day Saint history of journeying, are likewise places which carry spiritual and transcendent stories in their material locale. In other words, the architecture of the pageant scripts is paralleling the material and metaphysical landscapes which Nauvoo

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<sup>6</sup> For an excellent overview of Latter-day Saint ontology see Fiona and Terryl Givens’ “The God Who Weeps”.

and Lancashire carry for Latter-day Saints, inviting powerful connections between place, play, and pilgrimage in these site-specific performances. To help the reader understand how and why these two locations, and these two temples, are so important for the Latter-day Saint people, and central to this study, a description of what happened in the nascent faith in Nauvoo, Illinois and England, most especially in Lancashire, follows. Lastly, these following brief overviews, whilst helpful for all the chapters that follow, are key to understanding the role of faithscape within the landscape as discussed in Chapter Four.

### **The Latter-day Saint story in Nauvoo**

Nauvoo, a name chosen by Joseph Smith, is derived from the Hebrew word *nawa* meaning “beautiful place” (Callary 244). The language of the Hebraic people, who in the biblical narrative sojourned in the wilderness to flee persecution, is not without parallels in Nauvoo; in 1839 this patch of swampland in Illinois, then the American frontier, was founded by Latter-day Saints as religious refugees escaping violent oppression in Missouri. The Missourian violence, both mob-led and state-sponsored, compelled Church members to flee, leaving behind homes, businesses and land without any legal redress. It left them in a pitiful state, as observed by a Wesleyan Reverend, George Peck, travelling up the Mississippi that spring:

Some two hundred miles above St Louis, we saw on the Illinois side of the river, a very singular encampment. A multitude of people, men, women and children, ragged, miserable generally, seemed to be living in tents and covered wagons, for lack of better habitations. This strange scene presented itself for a mile or more. We were informed they were Mormons, who had recently fled from Missouri. (Peck 201-202)

The description of this ragged multitude resonates for the modern reader, for Peck could well be describing, though on a much smaller scale, one of the many camps seen across the world today, serving as temporary shelters to displaced peoples fleeing persecution. Seeking refuge and a place of security, members of the Church of Jesus Christ chose to settle this bend of the Mississippi, then known as Commerce and boasting no more than a few log cabins. It was reported as being so marshy you could not walk across it. However, in just a few short years, due to the charismatic leadership of the city-building visionary prophet and leader, Joseph Smith, and the industry of the people, Commerce became Nauvoo; a thriving city with a population at its peak of over twenty thousand, rivalling Chicago in size, or the state capital of Springfield at the time (Black “Population of Nauvoo”).

A substantial part of this population were converts to the new faith who left the British Isles to gather to Nauvoo, the story portrayed in *The British Pageant*, so much so that in this obscure spot along the frontier, it was believed one in three spoke with a British accent (Cannon 64). One visitor reported seeing thousands of homes made of brick, noting “a goodly proportion of them large and handsome” (Cannon 29). Public buildings served as homes to theatrical performances, dances, lectures, art exhibitions and more. Schools and even university courses sprung up.<sup>7</sup>

This building up of Nauvoo is a primary narrative arc in *The Nauvoo Pageant*, as it was here that the community building nature of the Latter-day Saints, as discussed in Chapters Three and Four, came into its first real fruition. There are important parallels in the present day: if the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints who settled Nauvoo built a thriving city, then the thirty-five to

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<sup>7</sup> For a detailed historical overview of the Latter-day Saint history in Nauvoo see Glen M. Leonard’s “Nauvoo: A Place of Peace, A People of Promise”.

forty-five thousand people who come each summer in the twenty-first century, to perform in and watch the pageant, re-enact the community building narrative. This coming together of audiences and cast members each summer carries historical, spiritual and communal parallels of Nauvoo's early nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint history. The early Saints gathered to Nauvoo for safety, for respite, for healing from the persecution of Missouri. As Joseph Smith wrote of Nauvoo when they settled there, it was a place of "rest" (Bushman, "Joseph Smith" 403). The cast and audiences come with similar hopes of respite. Wrote one cast member, about his participation in 2016,

Before my time in Nauvoo this summer, I had been dealing with deep feelings of anger, confusion, loneliness, depression and worthlessness after enduring one of the greatest trials of my life. I took these feelings to Nauvoo in the hope that I would be able to spend time in a "safe environment" where I found it easier to connect with God. (Hunter)

Whilst not fleeing state-sponsored persecution as the early Saints, contemporary Saints, like this cast member, often come to Nauvoo actively seeking relief from their personal sorrows and burdens; they come for respite and beyond that they come for healing. Indeed, some of the accounts we will read in this study reveal participants who understand their own encounter with the pageants as a healing narrative. And the "safe environment" is the performance culture created by the casts and crew as they conscientiously seek to live in a service-orientated, "other" focussed manner. Cast members repeatedly refer to this experience as "Zion," which will be defined and discussed in greater depth in Chapter Three, though a brief introduction is beneficial here.

The Latter-day Saints in Nauvoo in the 1840s experienced living within what they termed a Zion community, or the kingdom of God on earth: in the company of prophets and apostles as in biblical times, seeking to lovingly serve

one another and God. Participants in the pageants each summer seek to model this loving ideal of a Zion community, with service-orientated living being at the heart of directors' invitations to the cast. And whilst directors rarely if ever use the term "Zion" in their descriptions of what is being attempted, it is the term repeatedly used by cast to capture and articulate their experience. As one woman in the cast put it, "Performing in Nauvoo, gave us a taste of Zion... A place where we are of one heart and one mind, bearing one another's burdens" (Ricks). This focus on unity and service, revealed in her comment, prompted one member of the Twelve Apostles to declare of the pageants, whilst visiting Nauvoo, "the dream of Zion is relived here each summer" (Holland).

At the heart of building Nauvoo in the nineteenth century was the building of the Nauvoo Temple. Whilst in Nauvoo the early Saints united their energies and hopes in the building of the temple, a place of singular worship and devotion for them; it was an impressive feat of engineering, given their circumstances, with every man donating one day in ten of his time to its construction. This sense of a people coming together to build an edifice is also paralleled in *The Nauvoo Pageant*; the pageant of the twenty-first century serves as the vehicle for, and material expression of, the modern community's connectedness and unity, just as the nineteenth-century temple did for the early Saints.

And yet the nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint community in Nauvoo was not to last. Just seven years after they arrived there, they were driven away, again at gun point. Motivated by fear and prejudice, hundreds of Latter-day Saint farms were burnt, leading ultimately to the prophet leader Joseph Smith being murdered by a vigilante mob (Bushman, "Joseph Smith" 526 – 550). Joseph Smith's martyrdom, portrayed with stylised simplicity in *The*

*Nauvoo Pageant*, was followed with continued threats and persecution until, for their safety, the early Saints left behind their beloved Nauvoo. Performers today in the cast, and to a lesser degree the audience, also see themselves as reenactors of this exodus, in a manner. Audience and cast arrive by the thousands each summer, and leave again in a few short days, or for the cast, weeks, just as the early Saints had to leave. A favourite quote from *The Nauvoo Pageant* script which family cast members take to heart is: “Nothing can erase what Nauvoo had given us. That we took with us” (Collier et al. Sc. 14). Thus, a part of the narrative for Latter-day Saints is that you come and gather, build a Godly, Zionistic community, and *then must leave Nauvoo*, having gained or experienced something of worth that could never be taken from you, nor “erased.” For the early Saints this cycle of arriving, settling and building Zion, and then leaving, having changed and grown, was a seven-year process; it is a process now repeated every summer by thousands. Though the time frame is contracted the echoing narrative is important as will be outlined in participant interviews in later chapters.

For those early Saints, the exodus west began in the depths of winter in 1846, crossing a frozen Mississippi. Again, there was no legal redress for their considerable losses. They left behind nearly everything save the very barest of essentials to survive. Thousands left Nauvoo under the able leadership of Brigham Young and made the two thousand-mile journey across the American plains to the Rockies. There, within the shadows of the mountains, they founded for the last time their place of safety and refuge. It would come to be known as Utah, which many read as meaning *people of the mountains* (Arave). Of interest here is that many (though certainly not all) of the cast and audience each summer come from Utah, or neighbouring states which the early Latter-day



Saint pioneers helped to settle. They reverse the historic journeys their spiritual or literal foremothers and forefathers took. The *people of the mountains* return to their *beautiful place* each summer, and there, in and through performance, find community, healing, connection to their forbears, and the promise of Zion afresh.

*The Nauvoo Pageant* recreates the very history it is portraying, not just through the dramatic narrative on stage, but more fully through a recreation of that history through the production processes of staging and viewing it. This is a performance of everyday life, then; the everyday lives of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints building up Nauvoo, finds repetitious echo in the everyday lives of twenty-first century Latter-day Saints who gather to build a play that stages that story. To that extent, there is something very pragmatic about these productions: contemporary Saints rolling up their sleeves, so to speak, and working hard to stage the pageants, just as their predecessors did to build Nauvoo. In relation to this echo of everyday pragmatism, Alan Read in *Theatre and Everyday Life: an Ethics of Performance*, reminds us that “theatre is in dialectical relation to the quotidian” (2), and we see such dialectics playing out in the staging of the pageants each summer. If twenty-thousand Latter-day Saints gathered to Nauvoo in the 1840s to build a community of Saints and believers, supporting one another and reaching for the divine in daily life, then every summer about forty-thousand gather now, to create and watch that very story, and in so doing experience what they understand as a holy community. If in the 1840s they built a temple, played together, ate together, and served one another, then today, cast and audience come and worship in the temple, play at the pre-pageant country fayre, an outdoor family event with games, food and dancing for all to enjoy, and try to “bear one another’s burdens” (The Book of

Mormon, Mosiah 18: 8) as one cast member shared. If in the 1840s they gathered to Nauvoo to find Godly solace and healing from Missourian violence, then today they gather to find Godly solace and healing from the vicissitudes of life.

This Latter-day Saint story in Nauvoo, however, is also intimately connected to the Latter-day Saint story in Britain. That history, of the Church of Jesus Christ in Britain, will now be reviewed briefly, in order to understand how the staging of *The British Pageant* in the UK is a transformative experience for those Saints, through weaving their otherwise fragmented, disparate and at times competing threads of cultural and religious memory into one.

### **The Latter-day Saint story in Lancashire and the British Isles**

On the 18<sup>th</sup> July 1837, Heber C. Kimball, from Vermont, New England, leapt ashore at the docks at Liverpool, the first Latter-day Saint missionary to arrive in the British Isles. Kimball felt entirely inadequate for this, the first overseas mission of the infant church, and yet despite his crippling feelings of inadequacy, Heber's efforts laid the foundations for what some have interpreted as the most crucial of chapters within Latter-day Saint history: the story of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Britain in the nineteenth century (Stark).

Key to understanding how seminal the nineteenth-century British converts were to the early Church is an appreciation of the numbers involved. Rodney Stark, renowned American sociologist of religion, has written extensively in relation to his premise that "Latter-day Saints present a unique opportunity to sociologists of religion: the chance to watch an extraordinarily rare event, the rise of a new world faith" (Stark). And the numerical growth of

that new world faith happened in Britain, as portrayed by *The British Pageant*. In charting the growth of the Church, Stark remarks, “One of the most astonishing episodes in LDS history, little known outside LDS circles, involves the incredible success of the Church’s mission to Great Britain” (Stark). This “astonishing” episode, serving as the historical architecture of *The British Pageant*, is not only little known about outside Latter-day Saint circles, as Stark rightly identifies, but is also little known nor appreciated even by many Church members today, whether in the UK or elsewhere (though the performances of *The British Pageant* are helping to change that in Britain for the general Church membership). The numbers are what elicit astonishment for Stark.

Stark compiles from early Church records (the Church kept meticulous records of converts) a comparative table of British Latter-day Saints to worldwide Church membership from 1830 until time of publication in 1995. The research reveals that in 1852, just 15 years after that first mission to the UK, there were 32,339 Latter-day Saints in Britain. Worldwide church membership at that time was 52,640, and 11,527 Latter-day Saints had already left the British Isles to join with the Saints in America by 1852. Thus, there were more Church members in Britain than in America in the mid-nineteenth century, and taking away British members of the Church, leaves worldwide membership at just 8,724. Put another way, 84% of Latter-day Saints worldwide in 1852 were British. A grasp of the significance of these numbers matters for this study because understanding, owning, performing and honouring this specific chapter in Latter-day Saint history has been a transformative experience for British Saints, as will be examined Chapter Four, helping them overcome a perpetual sense of being culturally and historically estranged somewhat from their dual identity of being Latter-day Saint and British.

Such estrangement is connected in part to the Church being perceived, both in Britain and globally, as being American to its core. This has given rise to book titles such as, *The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith*, in which author Matthew Bowman asserts that “The story of Mormonism is...the story of America itself” (Bowman x). Literary critic Harold Bloom has called The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints the quintessential “American Church,” declaring that “Mormons owe nothing to Europe” (12). Such a statement is a negation of the numbers involved in the migratory Latter-day Saints history from Britain, and all over Europe, to the American West in the 1800s; a startling example of historical revisionism par excellence. Furthermore, it represents a disregard for how the contemporary Church understands and frames these migrations within its own historical narrative. Regarding the British converts of the nineteenth-century, senior Church leaders have stated: “The early converts to the Church in Great Britain quite literally and very dramatically saved this Church” (“Apostles Visit the UK and British Pageant”), and, “The significance of the British Saints in the history of the Church is without parallel” (Pickup). In sharp contrast to Bloom’s fallacious claims, Latter-day Saint leadership feel that the Church owe those early European converts *everything*, as revealed in *The British Pageant*. And whilst not the primary intent of this thesis, it does bring new evidence to the scholarly discourse that helps to challenge such misconceptions.

That sense of connection and gratitude that the contemporary Church leadership has towards the role of Britain in its nineteenth century history is magnified even further for Lancashire, where *The British Pageant* is staged. The entire county played a role of key significance within British Latter-day Saint history: the first overseas public sermons of the Church were in Preston; the

first overseas baptisms occurred at the river Ribble in Preston; the town is home to the oldest continuous Latter-day Saint congregation in the world; thousands of people converted from towns and villages all over Lancashire, often with many members of the community, such as Downham and Chatburn, being converted and emigrating to America (Bloxham et al; Rasmussen ch. 3). In honour of this deep connection, today in Chorley, Lancashire stands one of only two Latter-day Saint temples in the UK, on the grounds of which the pageant is staged. Recording this little known history into the architecture and public spaces of Lancashire, are commemorative plaques, with several in Preston town itself. And at the Liverpool docks (part of Lancashire until the 1970s), stands a large statue commissioned and donated by the Church commemorating the thousands of converts who left Europe from Liverpool, as shown below (fig. 2).



(Fig. 2. Latter-day Saint statue of departing family, Liverpool Docks from: Connolly, Courtney. *Voyage from the Albert Docks: A Family History Experience*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 19 Dec. 2014, [www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/voyage-from-the-albert-docks-a-family-history-experience?lang=eng](http://www.churchofjesuschrist.org/church/news/voyage-from-the-albert-docks-a-family-history-experience?lang=eng))

Thus, across the region are signifiers of events read as seminal and salvatory for The Church of Jesus Christ; public expressions of the significance of Britain, and Lancashire especially, within Latter-day Saint history. These early British Saints were called upon by Joseph Smith and others to leave their native lands and gather to America, to build up Zion there. Thus began the Latter-day Saints emigrations from Britain and Europe to America, a practice which only really halted in the early 1900s, and only in recent decades from the 1960s onwards have Latter-day Saint communities really started to build up meaningful numerical strength again in Europe. *The British Pageant* has played a modest role in helping to rebuild that sense of Latter-day Saint strength in Britain post-diasporic leaving. As one woman said of her family's acting in the pageant, "It made us more grateful and proud of the early British saints, we are trying to be as faithful and dedicated as they were. It was as if the pageant was a reawakening, a rededication for us as a family" (Aitchinson).

Understanding the historical significance of Nauvoo as a place of Latter-day Saint gathering and community building, and Britain as a place of unprecedented numerical growth and strength for the nineteenth-century Church, is helpful for this study. This is because both *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants*, on one level, are functioning as large-scale living mnemonics. The historical content and the creative context of these productions parallel one another. Thousands of Latter-day Saints gather again each summer in Nauvoo, which they once fled as religious refugees. And in Britain, thousands of Saints, in gathering together to stage and watch a production, become bodily testators that the loss of strength experienced from American emigration has been built up anew. As one cast member said of the performance space in Lancashire, pictured below (fig. 3), a temporary, specially constructed theatrical venue

holding 1800 people a night for the pageant, “it became a tabernacle to us, a holy place where saints from all over the British Isles had gathered to worship the Lord” (Cook).



(Fig. 3. *The British Pageant* performance venue, Chorley, Lancashire from: “Images from The British Pageant.” The Church of Jesus-Christ of Latter-day Saints, 10 Aug. 2013, [www.mormonnewsroom.org.uk/article/images-from-the-british-pageant](http://www.mormonnewsroom.org.uk/article/images-from-the-british-pageant))

This converging of theatrical performance and worship is a re-emerging theme in data collected for this study; that in portraying, watching, lighting or costuming Latter-day Saints from previous generations, an act akin to the act of worship was occurring – this was not just storytelling, but sacred storytelling: holy, healing and transformative.

This opening chapter has explained the what and explored the why of this research, whilst framing my bilingual positionality as beneficial, given the reductionist/proselytising tendencies that can play out when writing on religious theatre. To locate these performances within their historio-cultural and faith-based landscape, I have shared a little of the central theology of the Latter-day Saints, a sense of who Church members are today, and touched, albeit briefly, on key historical events surrounding the geographic locales of the performances. The synthesising discussion of this opening chapter sought to frame the pageants as large-scale living mnemonics: gatherings of Latter-day

Saints that contextually mirror the community and faith building content of the performances. Such mirroring is central to the next chapter, which explores how the liminal spaces between participants are inscribed in such a way as to aid transformative storytelling for audience and cast alike. Such mirroring is not only between cast experience and audience experience, but furthermore between nineteenth-century communities of Latter-day Saints that sought to live in holy ways, and their twenty-first century counterparts that, in and through representing them, seek to do likewise.



## ***Chapter Two – The Sphere that Lies Between Things***

My initial purpose in this chapter is to understand the transformative encounter one audience member, named Michael, experienced through attending *The Nauvoo Pageant*. Building upon that scaffolding, I then seek to understand the transformative experience of one cast member, Sarah. I then seek to elucidate the nexus between these two experiences, revealing how reciprocal, symbiotic transformation between audience and cast, cast and audience, occurs. I am not approaching Michael nor Sarah's experience with the aim of proving a point, but rather, in the spirit of seventh and eighth (even ninth) moment qualitative research,<sup>8</sup> am seeking to understand their experience, modelling a stance that is "reciprocal and reciprocating rather than objective and objectifying" (Denzin and Lincoln 543). Whilst Michael's and Sarah's experiences are unique to them, what is shared with many other audience and cast members I interviewed is a similarly profoundly *transformative* nature to the encounter. The details of that transformation change from one person to another: one grieving, widowed man whose wife died three months earlier said of his pain, which he described as a dark cloud, that "my hurt was gone" (Davidson), and that it lifted for the first time whilst

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<sup>8</sup> For a detailed discussion on what has been termed the seventh, eighth and ninth moments of qualitative research, see the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, (2017) by Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, especially *Part VI – The Future of Qualitative Research* (887 – 929). What Denzin and Lincoln term the seventh and eighth moments of qualitative research, and the ninth moment which they see currently emerging, "create new spaces, new possibilities and new formations for qualitative research methods" (xiv). In deeply performative terminology they observe, "Lived experiences cannot be studied directly. We study representations of experience: stories, narratives, performances, dramas.... We study performers and performances, persons making meaning together, the how of culture as it connects persons in moments of co-creation and co-performance" (890). Approaching the qualitative research in this study in the spirit of observing such co-creation is deeply beneficial.

watching the pageant, the start of a profound healing journey for him; another audience member felt deeply connected to God's love for them for the first time in years, and started seeking spirituality in their life; one cast member felt their marriage was healed through their participation; another performer experienced a joy she had never felt before, which changed how she lived her life after the pageant. Each person interviewed shared a uniquely complex personal narrative, though concerns surrounding identity, faith, relationships, and spirituality regularly emerged. That said, I do not explore these particular accounts to stand in for others: Michael's experience is not that of every audience member, nor Sarah's that of every cast member. However, the richness of metamorphic *aliveness* embedded in their stories is shared by many interviewed; to that extent, they are representative of others, as well as themselves.

It is helpful at this juncture to share in greater detail how participants were selected and why throughout this thesis, before explaining in greater depth why Michael and Sarah's stories were chosen specifically for this chapter. Dates wise, whilst directing in the UK in 2013 and 2017, and in the USA in 2014 and 2015, I would carve out time each summer for qualitative research and data collection (the consent forms, attached in the Appendix, were amended accordingly for the different years and methodology of data collection, whether via group discussion, emailed answers to questions, or online/phone interviews). When in-person group interviews were conducted with cast members, I simply asked for volunteers from each family cast. Of the rotating casts any summer, of about 150 people per cast, I let participants know that for those who were interested in joining me there would be about a two-hour discussion at the end of their two-week process for my PhD research purposes.

Those interested reached out to me, and usually between ten to twenty people per cast joined group discussions. Some cast members who wanted to participate in these group discussions but could not join us at that time for whatever reason simply emailed me their responses to the questions (see Appendix for list of questions). Other summers I have simply emailed cast members at the end of the entire process and asked those who would like to be interviewed remotely, or to send email answers to the questions, to reach out to me. About thirty to forty cast members would reply when this was done and they would either be interviewed remotely via telephone or online, or be sent the questions, and email them completed back to me, depending on their preference. The six questions listed in the Appendix formed the basis of group discussions and individual remote interviews, though these tended to take on a life of their own, depending on what participants shared and the shape of the discussion. For audience member interviews, I simply asked various audience members I have met if they are interested in meeting with me for more detailed discussion and interview, to which several have said yes. These audience members were asked usually because they seemed wanting to talk about their experience in greater depth and had the time to meet with me and do so. A set list of questions was not used for audience member interviews, rather I simply asked very general, open ended questions about their experience initially, and was led by their answers to ask follow-up questions.

Having interviewed several audience members, I chose to explore Michael's sharing in greater depth in this chapter for various reasons. Firstly, his positionality is of interest. As can be read in his account, below, Michael had only very recently become a Latter-day Saint, and as he expresses it, his faith was "very much in its infancy" (Natrass). Whilst Michael is a member of the

Church then, his insider role is not one of great certainty – as he also expresses it, he only believed “part of it”. Michael does not represent an audience member who is outside the faith, though I had some engaging interviews with audience members who were not Latter-day Saints, nor is he fully integrated into the faith. He is betwixt-between insider-outsider in some ways, and in this liminal position, his story resonates with the liminality central to the discussion in this chapter. Furthermore, I was struck by how deeply transformative Michael’s experience of being in Nauvoo was. He says he was “completely different” because of the encounter (Natrass), and yet the events he recalls which led to such transformation were seemingly small, or could even be dismissed as insignificant. As researcher, the relationship between these seemingly tiny moments, and their impact, intrigued me. As I expressed above, other audience members I interviewed also had such profoundly transformative experiences watching the pageants, deeply personal to them, yet they did not recall what led to their transformation in such specificity as Michael, nor in quite as much detail. The detailed nature of his recollection and offering is a gift for myself as researcher in seeking to deeply engage with an audience member’s encounter with the production.

In choosing to focus on Sarah’s story, as a family cast member, I was again struck by the profundity of her transformative experience through being in the pageant, and the seemingly small moment that led to it – a brief directorial comment that struck her so deeply, she changed her parental model. Such small moments resonate with what Jill Dolan has termed “utopian performatives” which I discuss more in this chapter, and I personally am drawn to those stories which reveal such “small but profound moments” (Dolan 5) in such specificity as Michael’s and Sarah’s stories do. In this chapter, I chose to

focus almost exclusively on Michael's and Sarah's experiences in order, in the opening of this study, to avoid the risk of reducing participants in the pageants to tokens, and to avoid using their words to prove my own agenda. Having fully explored the richness of their individual experiences in this chapter, in Chapter Three I utilise far more experiences and voices of participants, rather than such an intense focus on just two individuals. Those interviewees whose words are shared from amongst so many volunteers in Chapter Three are chosen because their specific insights, lexicon, or stories revealed more fully, specifically or coherently what many others seemed to also be saying. Of course there is always also a personal preference playing out – that certain stories or voices I selected I did so because they struck a chord with me. However, having interviewed so many people over the four years of collecting data, probably too many if I am honest, the challenge for me has been leaving out so many rich offerings. In retrospect, more of them probably could have been shared in this specific chapter, rather than such an exclusive focus on Michael and Sarah's experiences, but such is the gift of hindsight and seeing the bigger picture. Yet in acknowledging that, there is still some benefit in unpacking two experiences so fully, which, to some extent facilitates and sets the stage for Chapter Three, wherein we will hear many more voices.

When speaking of such transformative encounters, I would like to elucidate it through Richard Schechner's insights on environmental theatre, followed by Erika Fischer-Lichte's writings on the transformative power of performance which she articulates through the term *autopoiesis*. In various ways these two ideas, Schechner's writings on environmental theatre and Fischer-Lichte's autopoiesis, are connected, if not directly through causality, then indirectly through the shared concern of audience-actor relations, and

furthermore through the genealogical development of performance studies. Schechner wrote his book *Environmental Theater* in 1973, with an updated second edition in 1994; Fischer-Lichte's insights on autopoiesis are articulated most clearly in her 2008 title, *The Transformative Power of Performance*; my point being that the latter's concerns regarding the audience-actor relationship are not birthed *ex nihilo*, but through academic and performative genealogy, carry, build upon, and reconfigure afresh, traces and features of Schechner's groundwork.

To begin with Schechner, his understanding of environmental theatre is often reduced in meaning to simply challenging conventional audience/actor spatial relations in site-specific locations. However, Schechner's understanding of what he, as coiner of the term meant by it, is richer and more complex than that, and is beneficial to understanding the transformative experiences of participants at these Latter-day Saint pageants. In the introduction to his book *Environmental Theater* Schechner invites this wider appreciation of what he meant by the term. He writes:

environments, ecological or theatrical, can be imagined not only as spaces but as active players in complex systems of transformation. Neither ecological nor performance environments are passive. They are interactants in events organically taking place in vivified spaces. Thus, to stage a performance "environmentally" means more than simply to move it off of the proscenium or out of the arena. An environmental performance is one in which *all the elements or parts* making up the performance are recognized as alive. To "be alive" is to change, develop, transform. (x)

Schechner's invitation here to consider theatrical environments as "complex systems of transformation" is a helpful touchstone throughout this chapter. Furthermore, the rejection of "passive" performance environments in favour of "vivified spaces" helps us to conceive of such environments as *alive*, synonymous with transformation and change. Lastly, his paralleling of a

theatrical environment to an ecological one furthers this sense of an organic, living space or place wherein *things grow*. This is a helpful way of thinking both about the Latter-day Saint pageant environments, and the way these environments are created. Whilst Schechner's well documented work with his company *The Performance Group* is clearly aesthetically far removed from the concerns of these religious performances, nonetheless his concept of a vivified, growing space coalesces with Michael and Sarah's experiences. Through understanding their encounters, we will come to see the pageant environments as *spaces alive*; theatrical spaces, in accordance with Schechnerian understanding, which demonstrate aliveness whenever elements converge to nurture the organic, transformative growth of participants.

If through Schechnerian lenses then, we think of these Latter-day Saint pageants as growth environments, through Fischer-Lichte we understand such growth as reciprocal and symbiotic between cast and audience. Fischer-Lichte uses the term *autopoiesis feedback loop* to help us understand this idea of reciprocal audience-actor aliveness and responsiveness. Whilst a necessarily over-simplified articulation on my behalf, at essence autopoiesis seeks to encapsulate the continual exchange of energy, meaning and embodied responsiveness between performers and audience. The term originated in the sciences, coined to help explain the self-maintaining chemistry of living cells, and Fischer-Lichte makes it central to her concept of the transformative power of theatre, framing performances, including theatre, as autopoietic events: circular systems that live by self-generation between actors and audience ("Transformative" 39, 150-155). As we go on to explore Michael's encounter as an audience member, below, followed by Sarah's as a cast member, we will come to see autopoiesis at play. In so doing, these Latter-day Saint pageants

are revealed as a circularity of growing things, to go back to Schechnerian insights. We see an autopoietic feedback loop in which actors and audience members “change, develop, transform” (Schechner, “Environmental” x). Such transformation occurs organically, concurrently, and as understood through autopoiesis, because of and through each other. Having laid a preliminary foundation for the conceptual heart of this chapter, the circular and reciprocal growth of audience and actor, we will look at Michael’s experience as an audience member in greater depth.

### **Michael’s story**

Michael came from the UK to Nauvoo for a few days one summer during *The Nauvoo Pageant*, as a friend of a cast member. Through his story, shared in interview, the pageant environment emerges as transformative theatrical liminoid. Due to his account being so seminal to this chapter, it is given below in full rather than in the appendix. Michael shared:

I had recently joined the LDS church and I believed part of it, though my faith was very much in its infancy. Before joining I was agnostic, but I wanted to have meaning in my life, so I tried to help people, and be good, at work, you know, to be generous, as much as possible. But I couldn’t stop thinking about what this life is really about. I couldn’t figure it out. So, though I tried to be good, I never felt settled. I felt out of place, somehow, unsure, worried. Upon visiting Nauvoo I immediately felt something different. There was something quite unique about the place, something special. Everyone I was encountering in the cast had a very positive, wholesome light in their eyes, a “light” light in their eyes. I didn’t know why they had it, and it was confusing. I spent about 5 days there altogether. I was trying to figure out why it felt different. Then I started to notice through a variety of different moments and circumstances, that people were acting differently.

When I made negative comments to cast members, (for example I criticised someone’s English accent on stage to another cast member), the cast member I was talking to never joined in with my critique. I suppose I was being critical; not in a nasty way; I was just being truthful. I wondered if people were being disingenuous.

I watched *The Nauvoo Pageant* for 5 nights, every single night. I sat at the back mostly, by myself. What I witnessed was wonderful. I’m not prone to thinking positively, especially in regards to religious and



spiritual things; I am usually looking for reasons not to believe. But I also try to acknowledge when things feel right. From the beginning to the end this show felt right. It felt home. The quality of the show was irrelevant; it was the warmest feeling I had ever had. When I watched it the second night, I remember really looking forward to putting that warm blanket over myself again. It never got boring. It never got old. It felt like coming home every night. It felt like a great, warm hug, really. The feeling didn't begin and end with the performance. Before and after the pageant was an extension of it, but it was concentrated in the performance.

There was one scene especially which struck me deeply. You see Joseph Smith pulling some kids out of the mud and talking to them. I remember thinking, "That's how I should be." Some things just hit you, I suppose. You see things and think "I should be like that." But watching Joseph Smith pull those kids out of the mud, talk to them, it was so clear to me.... I should be like that. I knew it wasn't Joseph Smith up there, but I knew that's how I should be. It was glorious. I reflect on that moment regularly in my life now. It was so clear. And another moment. There was a child who wouldn't leave the stage though the scene was over, and kept saying "Goodbye brother Joseph" and just hugging the actor's leg. The actor was so nice to that child. Was so patient with him. It was clear to us in the audience it was not meant to happen.... But his response was so warm. This was one of the reasons it was all so warm, I suppose.

Seeing these scenes was a seminal time in my understanding of everything. I had never understood up until that point how much loving people and letting go of negative things makes the most difference. I never saw so clearly until watching those scenes, that the way we choose to be with each other makes a difference in the way a community feels. Within three days of being there I realised that various cast members' choices not to engage in negativity in their conversation was not disingenuous, but rather their commitment to being their best possible self in the experience, and it was making a change to their environment around them. Every single person connected to the pageant was fully committed to seeing the best in every person around them, as far as I could tell.

There came a fundamental change in my life from being there and watching the pageant. I chose not to focus on the negative in my life anymore. I started to choose to see the light in people, and I learnt that that breeds positivity, and it brings or invites more light from them. It's funny that the most complete experience I had ever had in watching a performance coincided with meeting the warmest group of people I had ever met to that date. It's not disingenuous at all. Watching the pageant changed my perception of what religion is. What it should be. I am completely different now because of that experience. (Nattrass)

There are multiple seminal ideas revealed in Michael's story here, which help to elucidate his transformative encounter, ideas which will be unpacked throughout this chapter. However, before commencing in that, it is worth foregrounding one central notion which has an impact on any such unpacking,

and that is of Michael's openness and vulnerability to the entire encounter – his submission to it. We will go on below to discuss how and in what ways Michael's experience becomes pilgrimage, but it should be noted before elucidating that, that if Michael comes as pilgrim to Nauvoo, he does not come in a bubble of self-assurance, untouchable and untouched by the encounter. Rather he comes open and vulnerable, willing to submit himself, not of anyone else's accord but of his own volition, to the experience. This matters, as below we will unpack what could be read as minor details of his story - how long he stayed in Nauvoo etc. - but the point of this following discussion is that his immersive encounter in Nauvoo was not just submerging him, but rather it offered to him an invitation to open himself to others in profound and personally transformative ways. His transformative encounter, in other words, depended on Michael's willingness to openness; the cumulative effect of his immersion in Nauvoo is not about a forcing to the transformative, but rather an enticing to the transformative – an invitation that he chose to accept. With that in place, we can begin to look at the details, the nuts of bolts of Michael's experience as it were, that facilitated such a transformative encounter for him, of his own acceptance.

Michael stayed in Nauvoo for five days, slightly longer than most audience members it seems, but few seem to come to Nauvoo to see the pageant just once (Hall 15). Rather, audience members, often accompanied by their families, will watch it for two or three nights running. So, whilst Michael stays longer than most audience members seem to, it is fair to say that the majority seem to have an immersive experience. Understanding the nature of that is helpful in elucidating Michael's transformative encounter with the pageant, for it reframes him as audience member-pilgrim.

When audience members come to Nauvoo they tend to spend these two or three days immersed in the history of the town as it intersects with the Latter-day Saint narrative. There are multiple Latter-day Saint historical sites across the town, from a baker's, to a school house, all run by volunteers (not directly connected to the pageants, but rather full-time Church missionaries). These volunteers are all in period dress and share the Latter-day Saint history of Nauvoo with visitors through various demonstrations, performances and kinaesthetic activities. Pageant audience members will nearly always have visited these sites during the day, immersed in the stories of Nauvoo. Many will be retracing their own ancestral stories and homes (many audience members, unlike Michael, have ancestors who lived in Nauvoo in the time period portrayed in the pageant). They will be worshipping in the temple and attending to the practical needs of family members whilst on "holiday," all in the intense heat and humidity of Nauvoo for a few days. Furthermore, before the pageant each night there is an outdoor pre-show fayre, which entails multiple stalls run by pageant cast members in costume each night. These activities range from puppet making, which children can take away afterwards, to log sawing competitions, to children's games from the time-period, to the central feature of the pre-show, a live bluegrass band who play fast dance numbers which are called out, in which audience and cast dance together.

It is a physically demanding experience, then, to visit Nauvoo for a few days during the pageant, combining worship at the temple with joyful play at the pre-show, historical immersion at the sites, with watching the pageant in the evenings. To come to Nauvoo, even *before* engaging with the theatrical performance of the pageants, is to step into a living history performance, or a performative "museum" experience. A rich dialogue in the performance studies

discourse elucidates such living history, yet it remains outside of the scope of this work to enter that dialogue fully. Here, we are focussing on audience members' experiences whilst watching the theatrical plays, the pageants, in the evening. That said, however, the writings of Stephen Eddy Snow on living history performances at Plymouth Plantations, further frames a day for audience members spent in Nauvoo as an engagement with Schechnerian "environmental theatre" (Snow 190).

However, whilst there may not be scope to fully explore the living history experience for audience members in this study in the depth that Snow and others have done for similar historically significant locales as Nauvoo, we cannot disassociate the audience members' daytime activities from their nightly encounter with the theatrical performance of the pageant. From temple worship to living history somatic play, Latter-day Saint audience members, at least, come to the pageant performance in the evening having been immersed in embodied performative living history. They have not only observed early Latter-day Saint homes; they have performatively entered it, with little children, for example, having sat at school desks with chalk tablets on their laps, imagining and performing the educational set up of "old" Nauvoo. However they come to the pageant then, audience members do not remain as observers only. Rather they have performed as embodied living witnesses throughout the day, acting out the reality of early Latter-day Saint lives, who in the nineteenth century submitted to the requirements of living on that land; vicarious Saints populating the town of Nauvoo once again.

These daytime performances, of modern Latter-day Saints re-enacting the quotidian lives of early Latter-day Saints, means audiences in the evening do not come with neutralised bodies, as James Thompson observes of applied

theatre spectators (55). Rather they have “bodied” that day the very people they will be watching that evening. The results of such performed embodiment may be, we assume, uniquely different for each, (and beyond the scope of this study to fully appreciate and address), but to go back to Schechner’s opening quote – the performance environment leading to the pageant each night is not passive, but is alive with somatic interaction in a complex web of historical-cultural-sacral and very often familial history. The entire day spent as living historical and vicarious witnesses in Nauvoo is a performative and preparatory overture – in and amongst and alongside the “actors” – dancing with them even. With this in mind, we start to ask are people, such as Michael, audience members, tourists, worshippers, pilgrims or all of these combined? Exploring this question is useful in trying to understand Michael’s transformative experience more fully, for his change-encounter is connected to the immersive nature of the encounter.

### **Pilgrims in liminality**

Airen Hall, a sociologist of religion, writes convincingly that trips by Latter-day Saints to Nauvoo to watch the pageants inherently become pilgrimage, countering persuasively the arguments of those who do not read these journeys as such (16-24). Whilst it is not within the realms nor purposes of this study to fully enter that sociological debate, (as to whether Latter-day Saint visits to Nauvoo are indeed pilgrimages), I am more inclined to agree with Hall’s conclusions than not. However, for the purposes of this study, it is enough to understand that Hall’s findings challenge the traditional concept that tourism, seen as frivolity, is diametrically opposed to pilgrimage, which is seen as sacred. Rather, her study concludes that the behaviour and experiences of pageant audience members in Nauvoo rewrite the definition of pilgrimage,

framing it rather as a dialectic between the playful and the sacred, and that our understanding of pilgrimage needs to be reimagined accordingly: “(the) Latter-day Saint case can challenge and press scholarly definitions of pilgrimage and associated concepts, such as sacred space or the significance of play in religion” (17). The definition of pilgrimage, then, needs to be rewritten in Hall’s opinion, because of the Latter-day Saint case, and her definition of pilgrimage is of note in relation to this study. She writes:

A pilgrimage is a performative journey that an individual undertakes in a conscious or unconscious effort to fulfil a deeply felt obligation, whether to a religion, ideal, or custom, that has the potential both for transforming that individual internally through external means and for shaping the realities through which the individual moves. (17)

Hall’s emphasis on pilgrimage as a performative journey with transformative potentiality resonates with Schechnerian writings on environmental theatre as growth, change and transformation. (The porous membranes between performance studies and sociology, referenced in the opening chapter, are revealed here.) Furthermore, audience members coming to Nauvoo can be framed as pilgrimage because they have surrendered to their sense of purpose in this journey *a priori* – before they have come and experienced Nauvoo, they come with a purpose.

Whilst Hall is coming to these conclusions in the field of sociology, similar ideas have been explored through the performance studies lens. Sarah Goldingay in exploring how religious identity and spirituality are constructed and re-constructed through performance, asks if the performance of the tourist in Anglican cathedrals can be delineated neatly from the performance of the worshipper (184). Whilst Goldingay’s question is about an entirely different socio-cultural encounter than the pageants, being focussed on the tourist-as-

worshipper in Anglican cathedrals, it is nonetheless useful to this study. For coupling Goldingay's questions from performance studies with Hall's conclusions in sociology, creates space which prompts us to ask if an audience member watching the pageant, Michael in this instance, can be refigured as a pilgrim engaging in an act of worship? Hall invites us to understand him as a pilgrim, but is there something about his entire pilgrimage experience in Nauvoo, including his watching of the pageant, that is paralleled to worship in its intent? What place does such a question have in a theatrical study? How helpful is it to answer it? How connected are such teleological questions to Michael's transformative experience as an audience member? The answers to these questions, touched upon in the opening chapter, will emerge throughout this chapter and indeed thesis, helping us to deepen, I hope, our understanding of the transformative potentiality of the audience encounter.

The term "audience member" for Michael and others carries generalised connotations of attending a one-off artistic performance, which is often paid for in advance. It is useful for this study to acknowledge that such connotations do not help us appreciate nor remember the pilgrimage nature of these experiences. We cannot consider Michael's story in relation to him watching the pageant alone, devoid of being immersed in the living history and performative museum experience that is Nauvoo, and the culture of the cast through friendship connections. Nor can we understand the richness of his experience without grappling with his watching of the pageant each night, for there his experience was "concentrated" and he "never saw so clearly until watching those scenes" (Nattrass). So, the term audience member in this study needs to be understood with this pilgrimage definition in the forefront of our mind.

Airen Hall is not alone in this linking of audience experiences at the Latter-day Saint pageants to pilgrimage. Megan Sanborn Jones, a Latter-day Saint scholar writing from the performance studies lens, concludes that, “Pageants are a *liminal space*, where participants and audience members are caught between the everyday world and the utopian world” (Sanborn Jones “Imaging a Global Religion”). Whilst we will consider Michael’s “utopian” experience through the writings of Jill Dolan later in the chapter, for now, we are looking to his experience in pilgrimage, specifically the liminality of pilgrimage.

Of course, if we are going to even begin to consider Michael’s experience as the liminality of pilgrimage, as Hall and Sanborn-Jones invite us to, we start grappling with the anthropological writings of Edith and Victor Turner. Whilst their views on pilgrimage as an extraordinary and liminal event have been challenged,<sup>9</sup> the Turnerian view of pilgrimage is still a useful tool when considering narratives such as Michael’s. Though well-known ground in performance studies, a review of Turnerian thought is helpful here as we move forward into discussions of Michael in a liminal space and state.

During the early 1950s whilst studying the Ndembu tribe in Africa, V. Turner’s focus turned to ritual and rites of passage, and he subsequently enlarged upon Arnold van Gennep’s theories on the latter of these, developing and exploring liminality, the transitional stage between phases in rites of passage. V. Turner in *Blazing the Trail* concludes that a rite of passage has a

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<sup>9</sup>The most direct challenge to Turners’ insights have come from John Eade’s and Simon Coleman’s *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, and John Eade’s and Michael Sallnow’s *Contesting the Sacred: The Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*. In these, they challenge the Turner’s assertion that pilgrimage is an extraordinary event in people’s lives. Others, including Eamon Duffy, agree with their challenge, stating that, “For many medieval Christians, going on a pilgrimage was, it seems to me, not so much like launching on a long journey to the ends of the earth, as of going to a local market town to sell or buy geese or chickens [. . .] a local, not a liminal, phenomenon” (166). However, other pilgrimage writers continue to use the Turnerian paradigm and phrases in recent scholarship, seeing them as useful tools (Morris and Roberts 117-118).



tripartite structure; separation, margin (or limen), and re-aggregation, having been “inwardly transformed” by the marginal phase (51). Of this middle transformative stage, V. Turner writes:

Let us refer to the state and process of midtransition as “liminality”... Those undergoing it are betwixt and between established states of politico-jural structure... Out of their mundane structure context, they are in a sense “dead” to the world – and liminality has many symbols of death.... Against these emblems of death or limbo, other symbols and symbolic actions portray gestation... But the most characteristic midliminal symbolism is that of paradox, of being both this and that...as both living and dead, at once ghosts and babies. (51)

Michael’s experience as an audience member at *The Nauvoo Pageant* can be read as Turnerian liminality, as defined above. Michael is outside of his quotidian existence and mundane structures, “dead” to the world of his own politico-jural-cultural constructs. He immediately acknowledges that he “felt something different” in Nauvoo, “something special.” However, he does not immediately feel a part of this different world, but rather is in Turnerian identified “limbo,” betwixt-between, articulated by Michael as simply “confusing.” Yet, during what V. Turner would identify as a “gestation” period, Michael learns the social structures and socio-political values of this new world, and his confusion and fears of disingenuous behavioural practices give way to a profound personal transformation. Returning to previous observations regarding Michael’s submission to this process, it should be noted that he did not have to yield to it – the performance is not a manipulation. It is an invitation. Liminality in this sense is a stage very much like the mortal sojourn itself, inviting the use of agency, and the production encounter for Michael invited a yielding. In such yielding, it his experience as audience member each night at the pageant that is the seminal focus of his transformation.

Before looking at his experiences when watching the pageant, however, we should acknowledge that we are bumping up against that which permeates our discourse: the “liminal-norm” as performance studies scholar Jon McKenzie puts it. He writes in Bial’s seminal *The Performance Studies Reader* that “we have come to define the efficacy of performance....in terms of liminality,” and that, “liminality remains one of the most frequently cited attributes of performance efficacy,” making liminality “something of a norm” (McKenzie 26-27) in the process. McKenzie is, of course, right: Turnerian liminality is seemingly a guest to every performance studies party. (However, this guest’s conversation remains lively and elucidating, so the invitation is not unwarranted.) Yet as McKenzie examines the efficacy of performance founded in the liminal-norm, he posits that it is either grounded in *transgression* or *resistance*. By this he means that the efficacy of theatre, as a vital and powerful cultural performance, in the early days of performance studies was founded in transgressing a totalitarian power that was without, and has, in recent decades, now evolved to resisting a hegemonic power from within that structure (McKenzie 26). For these two models of efficacy which McKenzie identifies, transgressive and resistant, liminality is a key attribute. However, Michael’s experience, representative of many pageant audience members’ transformative encounter, whilst also liminality, is not based on a *transgressive* or *resistant* model of efficacy, but rather on what we may choose to term a symbiotic model of efficacy.

### **Symbiotic efficacy**

What do I mean by a symbiotic model of efficacy? *Transgressive* and *resistant* models challenge and confront domineering, toxic power structures,

usually built into societal scaffolding. This presumption of confrontation dominates in the scholarly discourse of theatre and drama. A *symbiotic* model of efficacy, in contrast, challenges the breaches between us on the most personal level. There is a steady gaze on one's own behaviour and practices, as opposed to resisting hegemonic power structures within or without society. Symbiotic efficacy, with that steady gaze, looks to question the interpersonal spaces between individuals, and how they are inscribed, leading to personal transformation. Such transformation occurs through a process of challenging our most private intrapersonal and interpersonal toxic behaviours, through the practice and modelling of behaviours which are antithetical to such toxicity, as will be explored throughout this chapter. In so doing, symbiotic efficacy is not ultimately examining politico-socio structures on the macro scale. Rather, if the pageant processes are examining any politico-socio structures, it is keenly focussed on the personal micro politics of how we choose to perform ethically in relation to individual others, most especially within the immediate family.

Of course, understanding within the post-modern discourse that the personal is political, such interpersonal micro politics cannot ultimately be neatly isolated from politico-socio macro structures; toxicity on the macro scale can, and does, affect what happens in the homes of any nation. I do not mean to separate the intrapersonal, interpersonal and macro politics unthinkingly. Rather, I am stating that if the pageants are examining any politico-socio structures, the gaze is keenly focussed on the most immediate, intimate and personal micro politics of interpersonal relations.

In fixing its gaze on the most intimate of interpersonal relations, symbiotic efficacy is dealing with the breaches between us.<sup>10</sup> By breach I mean the space

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<sup>10</sup> The term breaches is chosen in part from the discourse of Latter-day Saint leader Neill F. Marriott, "Abiding in God and Repairing the Breaches".  
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and distance between any two people - the *inter* - that naturally exists between us. This space, this *interbetweenness*, is inherently liminal. Martin Buber, the twentieth-century philosopher, wrote of this space as *interhuman*, observing that, "Through reciprocal relationships between individuals, new values, new psychic facts are created that are not possible in isolated individuals" (Eisenstadt 93). In Buber's "interhuman" relationships we are confirmed, and grow, only in and through the other (Buber, "Knowledge" ch. 2). This Buberian influence on my thinking in relation to symbiotic efficacy is explored more fully later in this chapter. For now, I am highlighting that the biocultural, spacial and temporal gap between any of us is unstable and acutely alive to the paradoxical symbolism of birth and death that defines Turnerian liminality. In other words, we are, in any given *interaction*, birthing one another anew – inviting, enticing, beckoning, welcoming one another - or aiding symbolic death. Symbiotic efficacy aids a Schechnerian growth environment through being laden with such Turnerian gestational symbolism, as our further discussion on Michael's story will reveal. As cast, crew, directors and audience members build bridges through symbiotic efficacy, where previously interpersonal breaches have been deepened by intrapersonal toxic thoughts and processes, growth and rebirth happen. We will see this playing out in Michael's story, as we look at it further throughout this chapter. Lastly, in using the term symbiotic efficacy, I have no intentions of commandeering, prescribing, imposing myself upon, or asserting academic ownership over the practices studied in this chapter. The term is simply a useful tool, a shorthand, to try and articulate an observed process of liminal based efficacy. It is limited in many ways, of course, and could serve to be harmful if used in a manner that negates the I-Thou encounter it seeks to identify, which will be discussed further.

Symbiotic efficacy, then, is when that liminal gap between us is inscribed with gestation symbolism and symbolic action. In other words, the human encounters which produce the theatrical artefact, (artistic directors to cast, cast-to-cast, cast to audience, crew to cast, to name but a few – there are clearly many more) are ones which foster a culture in which metamorphic rebirth and growth can occur. Before we seek to understand how such symbiotic efficacy is played out in Michael's story, let us review how deeply the liminal-norm, as McKenzie called it, is at work here. Michael, through the writings of Hall and Sanborn Jones, is understood as having a pilgrimage experience, and is in a state of liminality, as per Turner's definition of it as discussed above. These conditions mean that Michael's experience is profoundly transformative, as his story affirms.

Jon McKenzie argues that such transformative power within performance, in which he includes theatre as vital, is founded in transgressive or resistant models, which both rely heavily on liminality for their efficacy (26 – 27). In debt to McKenzie's writings, I suggest a further model of transformative efficacy, namely symbiotic efficacy, which is played out and practiced in the liminality that inherently exists in the space or breaches between us. This points us towards the consideration that the equally important network of performances taking place in and around these pageants is the performance of supererogation. This supererogation is expressed as participants seek to live as their very best selves, a concept we will discuss throughout this chapter.

Lastly, at the risk of complicating the discussion further, McKenzie points out that performance studies itself is in liminality. In this he builds on Schechner's insights, who observed that, "Performance studies is 'inter' – in between. It is intergeneric, interdisciplinary, intercultural – and therefore

inherently unstable” (Schechner, “What is Performance Studies Anyway?” 360). This “inter” liminality embedded in the paradigm of performance studies sharpens its ability to be an efficacious tool in the study of liminality in audience members’ experiences in Nauvoo – the interhuman of Buberian discourse, cited above. The “unstable” nature of performance studies, as Schechner puts it, actually lends itself to understanding a people going through an inherently liminal experience such as Michael’s, which is marked by instability and limbo, betwixt-between two selves, the former self and the transformed, “completely different” self, as Michael termed it. If liminality is central to efficacy in performance, it is also central to efficacy in studying that performance. In this moment of the study, that is in understanding more fully how the *inter*between in Michael’s encounters, with cast members both offstage and on-stage in the pageant performance, reveal symbiotic efficacy born of liminality.

The first encounter Michael shares in more detail is a small moment, but which left a large enough impact on him that he remembered it, reflected upon it and shared it; it marked him. Though seemingly insignificant, it became a stand-out thread in a tapestry of experiences that led to his change. It is also an example of symbiotic efficacy at play. It is worth understanding the specifics in context of his story, as that reveals the deeper meaning he attaches to it.

Michael observes that Nauvoo has “something different... something special...something quite unique” about it. He tries to understand what creates it, and rather than sharing anything about the sacral/historical nature of the place, he talks about the people he meets. That is an interesting observation, in and of itself. Whilst Chapter Four addresses the metamorphic impact of the site-specific nature of these performances, Michael’s liminoid experience is informed more by people than place, or rather people *in* place. He goes on to relate how

he criticised an aspect of the performance, a poor English accent, and observes that the cast member he was talking to “never joined in with my critique.” Whilst not part of the pageant performance, in the spirit of seventh and eighth moment qualitative research, this interaction warrants attention, because Michael himself cannot separate it from his experience of engaging with the pageant. Secondly, it is a performance by the cast member in question here, and, as we will go on to discover when we engage with a cast member’s performance below, one that burnishes and emboldens their on stage performance in the evening. Michael even states that in Nauvoo people were “acting differently”, not in reference to their on-stage work, yet the performative verb he chooses, acting, is revealing of the reality. Cast members are “acting” their entire time in Nauvoo – meaning engaging of their own will in a developmental activity - performing a version of their very best selves; staging the pageant production whilst seeking to live lives of supererogation. This is actively encouraged by leaders within the pageants. A consistent directorial invitation to the cast is to focus on living well together, on seeking and sharing “good fruit” (Young, “Journal” Vol 7: 268-269), and on negating intrapersonal and interpersonal negativity manifest as gossip, contention, frustration, anger, fear, pride and more.

Such invitations come in multiple forms; from inviting parents to be patient with their children when their choices make the family late for rehearsals, to invitations to resist frustrations with fellow cast members. Cast members, in acknowledging that such supererogation can require a greater energy and focus of self than learning and performing the dancing, blocking and singing on stage, draw explicit links between the performances of their best selves throughout the day and their on-stage evening performances, as we will discover later in the chapter when reading Sarah’s story.

The performance of best-self given by the cast member whom Michael speaks to, for example, reveals a response that is neither condemnatory of Michael, nor critical of the other performer's English accent. They chose, from Michael's account and memory of the interaction, liminal silence, in their refusal to either concur, gossip, or criticize Michael. And in that space of liminal silence is found symbiotic efficacy. Again, whilst a tiny moment, it *struck* Michael. The cast members silence fills the liminal space between them; Michael is not condemned nor judged as being critical by the listening cast member - he is not reprimanded by the listener as being ungenerous. Such would have diminished efficacious potency; reprimand usually elicits defensiveness and justification. Nor did the listening cast member humour nor join Michael in his critique; likely, such a reciprocating would have not felt at all "different" to Michael, which is how he described Nauvoo, nor carved out space for the questions he asks about why Nauvoo feels different.

Rather, in the cast member's performative silence, a growth space is opened for Michael, a gestation space, a liminal space. Michael becomes his own judge in it: "I suppose I was being critical; not in a nasty way; I was just being truthful." We are not seeking to enter a philosophical debate here on the ethical rights, wrongs or implications of this cast member's response. Rather, we are trying to find out what caused Michael to say, "I am completely different now because of that experience." And from what Michael shares, the performance of cast members to be their very best selves, on stage (remember the actor's kindness to the child not leaving the stage) and off, seems profoundly facilitatory in his personal transformation. To go back to Schechner's point, performance studies is liminal, it is interdisciplinary and slippery (27), in other words, it goes where it shouldn't. Michael's sharing accords with



Schechner's insight here on performance studies. Michael observes of his metamorphic experience that, "The feeling didn't begin and end with the performance. Before and after the pageant was an extension of it, but it was concentrated in the performance." If performance studies transgresses boundaries, so Michael's experience transgresses the boundaries of the stage, as the liminal spaces between him and others, whether on stage or off, model symbiotic efficacy.

The symbiotic efficacy occurring in the liminal space between people, Michael and the cast member in this instance, invites us to consider that in the pageant performance environment, the *interbetweeness* is a space where much of the seminal work of the pageants lie. The performances in the evening are a theatrical expression of the daily practice of symbiotic efficacy; a living artefact, or theatrical trace if you will, of lives lived in supererogation during the day. And it is when the *interbetweeness* is rich in gestational symbolic action (to return to Turnerian definitions of liminality), vivifying the actors in any given interaction (Michael and cast member; late parent trying to leave home on time to get to rehearsals; directors to cast etc.), that the deepest transformation can occur. Gestational symbolic action takes on many forms when played out in the *interbetweeness*: between Michael and the cast member it was silence, but it may be laughter, expressions of love, shared tears, a kiss, prayers, an in depth conversation, a hug or a "high-five". I have seen a cast member "high-five" a disruptive child backstage before going on – that too became a gestational symbolic action, modelling symbiotic efficacy. It cannot be prescriptive; to attempt such is anti-gestational and works contrary to transformative efficacy. Indeed, any of the above examples could be anti-gestational, working against

symbiotic efficacy, if used to fill the *interbetweeness* with I-It, rather than I-Thou, communication.

### **I-Thou Encounters**

Martin Buber's writings on I-It in comparison to I-Thou communication are enlightening at this point in the discussion, encapsulated in his book *I and Thou*. Whilst any summary of such rich thinking is inherently reductionary, a necessarily simplistic overview of the philosophical and ethical opus of his thinking is nonetheless helpful here. Buber's book explores how so often we relate to one another in what he terms an I-It manner, embedded in which is a sense of usury, in which others become an *it* for the *I* to utilise: leading to what Buber calls an experience. Buber's insights here are not without performative connections: in his book he likens I-It experiences to a monologue directed at another person, and I-Thou encounters to a dialogue. His theatrical metaphor here is not surprising, given his fascination with theatre, and the highly influential role it had upon him (Buber "Theatre").

Writing in the early to mid-twentieth century, Buber felt such I-It experiences were at the heart of modern man's existential anxiety. In order to be fully human, Buber calls us to move beyond I-It experiences to find the wholeness of I-Thou encounters. At the heart of such whole encounters is a meeting of another whole, irreducible, unassimilated person; a rational, reciprocal love (Buber, "I and Thou" 14-15). Crucially in relation to this study, this means that what changes is not the other person, but I. Therefore, such I-Thou encounters carry transformative potentiality and occur in the space I have been calling the *interbetweeness*.

If McKenzie sees liminality as a central condition of the efficacious power of performance, including theatre, in transgressive or resistant models, and I am observing a form of liminality in the pageants grounded in a model of symbiotic efficacy, played out in the spaces between us, then Buber's philosophical discourse helps enlighten what is in that liminal gap; what is the *interbetweeness* composed of? Through the Buberian lens, we read that theophany is most fully revealed in "the sphere that lies between beings" (Buber, "I and Thou" 120). This is a crucial insight in relation to this study. Buber, as one of the most celebrated of ethical and philosophical thinkers of the twentieth-century, asserts that God is revealed to man most fully in the spaces between. It is this space between us that I suggest is at the heart of symbiotic efficacy in the pageants, and Buber frames this space as sacred ground. He writes that in an I-Thou encounter we "glimpse eternity," ("I and Thou" 33), and observes in the same book that "Thou fills the heavens" (8) because "love is between I and Thou" (14-15). From this he concludes therefore that "all real living is meeting" (11). These insights, when applied to theatrical performances, reveal their metamorphic potentiality to become palimpsests of such Buberian meetings, most crucially, as autopoiesis affirms, in the theatrically defining meeting between audience and actors.

I would suggest that Michael's story reveals to us that he has such I-Thou encounters during his time as audience-pilgrim in Nauvoo; in the liminal space between himself and others he encounters love. And in that space the conditions for his transformation by love are met, and it changes him. This is perhaps most clear in his encounter with the performance each night, as we will now go on to explore.

## “What Theatre Does”

In addressing Michael’s response to the pageant performance, it is helpful to firstly address framings of audience within audience reception theory. Helen Freshwater, in writing on the theatre and audience relationship, observes that, “The engagement with ‘ordinary’ members of the audience is notably absent from theatre studies” (33). She recognises that the theatre industry is starting to engage more with audience experience, often through qualitative research approaches, but observes that academic theatre and performance studies seem to engage only with “hypothetical models of spectatorship,” and rarely ventures into an investigative approach as to audience members experience, or that if they do, it is often crediting the opinions of published reviewers – connected to the industry – over and above ordinary audience members (33). There is, in other words, a much deeper investment in studying the production of performance rather than its reception in the academic study of theatre performance (37). This is a tendency that carries through to today, since Freshwater’s writing in 2009, and I am wary of it. As such, I am attempting to approach Michael’s story from a positionality of hope for an I-Thou encounter, between myself, him and reader, rather than using his story for an I-It experience.

Freshwater further throws down the gauntlet when she observes that as theatre scholars we, “have yet to step up to the challenge of addressing the question of what we really know about *what theatre does* for those who witness, watch or participate” (74; emphasis added). This is essentially the framing question at the heart of this chapter: what do the pageants do for those who witness and participate in them? I concur with Freshwater that we do not, by and large, step up to the challenge, yet arguably it is a crucial, though complex

and contested, question: what impact does theatre and performance have on audience and cast? Peter Brook highlighted his concern regarding *what theatre does* in an interview with Michael Billington in 2017 to discuss his latest book,

*Tip of the Tongue:*

People have entrusted themselves to you for two hours or more and you have to give them a respect that derives from confidence in what you are doing. At the end of an evening, you may have encouraged what is crude, violent or destructive in them. Or you can help them. (Billington)

Brook's insight here asserts that audience members can leave having been helped (the assumption behind much artistic output) or with "violence" having been encouraged. This latter notion is rarely discussed, or if raised, dismissed as the iniquitous birthing ground of censorship - at times with valid reasons. Either way, as practitioners we ought not to be as wary of asking these questions, about what theatre does, as we currently are. In Brook's latter point there is the implication that the theatre can affect our moral compass. Coupled with Freshwater's probing questions on what theatre does, Brook's blunt assertions point to a rich seam of discussion regarding the moral and ethical impact of any given production upon audience members. Nicholas Ridout's book *Theatre & Ethics* is a helpful route into that complex discussion, and whilst it is not within the scope of this study to enter that discourse fully, it is helpful to clarify a few points to help us better explore Michael's willing reception of the pageant as audience member.

Theatre has become utilitarian, modelling itself as a means to an end, to community, to self-discovery, to political equality and human rights. Even in Brook's *Tip of the Tongue* he wrote: "Every form of theatre has something in common with a visit to a doctor. On the way out, one must always feel better

than on the way in" (Brook, "Peter Brook Returns.") Actors have been asked to become truth speakers, as Schechner observed:

In a period when authenticity was, and is, increasingly difficult to define, when public life is theatricalized, the performer was asked to take off her traditional masks – to be an agent not of "playing" or "fooling" or "lying" (kinds of public masquerade) but to "tell the truth" in some absolute sense....Instead of mirroring the age performers were asked to remedy it. The professions taken as models for theater included medicine and the Church. ("Performance Theory" 131)

This absolute sense of truth telling carries religious connotations. In a more explicit statement from Schechner, he wrote that his work with TPG was, "to fill a niche abandoned by religion: solidarity, mutual supportive belief, gathering in the catacombs, etc" ("Performance Theory" 221). This all places a remarkable burden on theatre, and in this I agree with Ridout who writes that we run, "the risk of creating a theatrical culture in which performances are valued only for what they might offer in terms of ethics" ("Ethics" 9). Indeed, Ridout observes that from Plato onwards, there is a push towards the justification of theatre being its contribution to our ethical life ("Ethics" 66). C.S. Lewis, when writing of how we read books in *An Experiment in Criticism* remarks that: "To value them chiefly for...morals we may draw from them, is a flagrant instance of 'using' instead of 'receiving'..." (78). This resonates deeply with Buber's writings, implying we can approach art in a usury, I-It manner, for our own *experience*, or with an openness to an I-Thou encounter. Whilst Lewis acknowledges that reading may share experiences with the moral encounter (124), he ultimately does not see that as its primary purpose. His writings on literature here are helpful in articulating my understanding on the ethical discourse in theatre and performance, clarifying my encounter with Michael's story. I do not see ethical nor moral efficacy as the primary role of theatre nor the pageants I have been so involved with. I do, however, see this profound connectedness of the I-

Thou encounter as one of the primary opportunities, and therefore sacred responsibilities, of theatre and the pageants. Such encounters have moral and ethical implications, or fruits, but are not primarily focussed on either. Rather, symbiotic efficacy, or filling the *interbetweeness* with the transcendent love that I-Thou implies, is primarily a spiritual affair, and when encountered, transformation follows. As Brook said of the theatrical encounter in his latest book, “This world, limited in space and time, can be changed and sometimes so unforgettably that it can change an individual’s life” (Brook, “Peter Brook Returns”). This is what happened to Michael from his own account, and the tightened gaze of this chapter is how and why that occurred for him, as we will continue to explore through his encounter with the performance each evening.

### **“It felt like a great, warm hug”**

What, then, does Michael say of his encounter when watching the pageant? One revealing phrase that he uses to try and sum up his experience is, “It felt like coming home every night. It felt like a great warm hug, really.” Such comments speak of a surprising intimacy to Michael’s watching; though he is sat at the very back of about three thousand people, in the open air, the experience is like “coming home” and “a great warm hug.” His description is familial in nature: if he is coming home each night when watching it, he is not walking through the family door to dysfunctionality – rather he comes home to a loving embrace to which he is invited; he is not forced to yield, and therefore he does yield.

Such a description, “a warm hug,” makes us ask what attitude the cast have towards the audience? Whilst the latter part of this chapter will look at cast experience in depth, through Sarah’s story, the following is representative of

casts members' attitude towards audience members in general in both these pageants. A choreographer named Amy shared the following with me after the *The British Pageant* was finished in 2013 in the UK:

One day during the show I heard Lucinda, a cast member, mention the idea that when she saw each audience she now thought to herself – “Ah! More people to love!” We had such a united desire to send God’s love out to the audience each night... and now I ask how I can transfer that same feeling to those I meet. At the grocery store... on the bus... at home. I remember that feeling – to look up and truly “see” the people around me. (A. Robinson)

Whilst a seeming leap, there is much in Lucinda’s impulse here, revealed by Amy’s comment above, that resonates with seminal twentieth-century Polish theatre director Jerzy Grotowski’s observations that we need to learn to love our audience and give ourselves fully to them, as in love, rather than seek to be loved by them (Grotowski 35 – 38, 58, 131, 246). As Helen Freshwater observes, the relationship that theatre creators have to their audience is complex. She even titles one section of her book, “Suspicion, frustration and contempt: attitudes towards audiences” (38 – 55). In this section, Freshwater discusses the profoundly ambivalent relationship theatre practitioners have with their audiences. This ambivalence manifests itself readily, and Freshwater charts it well: from Bertolt Brecht’s and Howard Barker’s seeming despair at finding a thinking audience, to Anne Wagner’s conclusion that in the 70’s and 80’s, “the preoccupation with audience took on a signally aggressive, even manic, desperate and coercive form” (qtd. in Freshwater 50). Such aggression towards the audience resurfaced, Freshwater observes, in *Forced Entertainment’s* work in the 90’s, with works such as *Showtime*, wherein cast swear at the audience and accuse them of voyeurism.

In relation to this study, it is Freshwater’s conclusion to this section of her book that bears particular relevance. Speaking of attacks issuing from the



theatre makers towards their audiences, she concludes: “perhaps the single most powerful reason for these aggressive attacks is the continuing investment in the idea that theatre going should be an improving and educational activity” (55). This study, built upon the foundations afforded by qualitative research, is not arguing that theatre going should be improving and educational. Rather I am observing that in the models of these Latter-day Saint pageants, it has been profoundly transformational for audience goers. The details of Michael’s story are unique to him, including the type of transformation that ensues, however, the reality of transformation is shared by many audience members. To return to Freshwater’s insights, if theatre makers have acted aggressively towards their audiences out of frustration towards the perceived duty of theatre to educate and improve, then it makes sense that such frustration is not evident in the Latter-day Saint pageant performances studied here, for reasons we will now explore.

In line with applied drama, which John Somers observes “has a job to do” (“Interactive Theatre” 63), so these pageants embrace a clear proselytizing agenda, removing in effect the source of frustration that various other theatre practitioners have felt. This agenda, whilst seeking to teach the doctrines and theology of the Latter-day Saint faith through the scripts, is as much about embodying and practicing that doctrine and theology in the creation of the pageants. That doctrine is best summed up in the following brief statement from a recently passed on Latter-day Saint prophet, Thomas S. Monson, “Love is the very essence of the gospel, and Jesus Christ is our exemplar” (Monson 2014). This love, exemplified in Christ, being at the heart of Latter-day Saint teachings leads us back to the cast member’s observation regarding the audience - “Ah! More people to love!” - and Michael receiving such love, (the *interbetweeness*

being filled) as a “great, warm hug.” The cast members’ true performance, as described previously, is their whole-hearted effort to love others as fully as possible, open to I-Thou encounters, with, as President Monson observes, Christ teachings and practice as their exemplar to model their performance of love on. Such symbiotic efficacy, then, rich in liminal gestational symbolic action, is rooted in the teachings of One who likened spiritual transformation to rebirth: “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Or, in Paulian terms, again rich with liminal implications, becoming a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17). This newness is what the choreographer Amy eludes to, sharing that she continued to truly “see” and love others “At the grocery store... on the bus... at home”; this I-Thou dialogue, or performance of Amy’s, bringing about a new creature in love, continues long after the pageant has finished, both for cast members and, in this instance, for Michael too.

The profound change and transformation that comes about for Michael is connected to how he, too, perceives and therefore interacts with others. Articulating this personal change he said, “I chose not to focus on the negative in my life anymore. I started to choose to see the light in people, and I learnt that that breeds positivity, and it brings or invites more light from them,” concluding, “I am completely different now because of this experience.” This self-reflection born from Michael is abundantly rich. His experience seems to confirm John Somers’ writings on applied drama. Somers observes that:

John Locke said 'I am what I remember myself being'...and I am suggesting that this 'remembered story' may be re-edited. The more effective the fictional story-encounter is, the more likely it is to intersect with our personal story and to change our perceptions of how the world is and our vision of our part in it. (“Interactive Theatre” 64)

The pageant encounter for Michael interacts with his own story in a profound way, affecting and interacting not so much the “him he remembers,” of John

Locke's observation, but rather the *him I long to be*. Michael sees a version of his better/best self in an experience he relates whilst watching the pageant. It is a simple scene, taken from historical accounts, of the Latter-day Saint prophet Joseph Smith talking to some children. Of this short scene, no more than ten lines in the pageants, it is worth restating what Michael observes:

There was one scene especially which struck me deeply. You see Joseph Smith pulling some kids out of the mud and talking to them. I remember thinking, "That's how I should be." ....it was so clear to me.... I should be like that. I knew it wasn't Joseph Smith up there, but I knew that's how I should be. It was glorious. I reflect on that moment regularly in my life now. It was so clear. (Natrass)

Michael's story of who he wants to be is, in Somers term, "re-edited" by this scene. It clearly affects his "perceptions of how the world is" and his own "vision" of the part he wants to play in it. Michael sees himself not so much in the scene on stage, but rather, behaving in similar ways in his life. Schechner's "twice-behaved behaviours," ("Performance Studies" 28) become multiplied here, through such re-editings and "glorious" imaginings. Joseph Smith's interactions with some children is recounted by them when adults, becoming a literary artefact, which is used to base a scene upon in *The Nauvoo Pageant*. As such it becomes, "restored behavior: physical, verbal, or virtual actions that are not-for-the-first time; that are prepared or rehearsed...twice-behaved behavior" ("Performance Studies" 29) to use Schechner's definition. Then, through his personal imaginings, Michael's narrative is "re-edited" with himself as audience-turned-protagonist. He simply repeats, "That's how I should be." We do not know the details of how Michael's thoughts, feeling and emotions combined for him to come to this conclusion, meaning we do not know if he saw himself talking to children he knew from his life, or if he saw himself in the scene, or if he simply thought and felt the impact of the idea: the spiritual

necessity of engaging with and talking with kindness to children (with moral and ethical implications, but primarily a call to Michael's soul to transform himself).

This small moment on stage, for Michael at least, seems to resonate with Jill Dolan's term "utopian performatives," articulated in her book *Utopian*

*Performance – Finding Hope at the Theater*. Utopian performatives are those,

small but profound moments in which performance calls the attention of the audience in a way that lifts everyone slightly above the present, into a hopeful feeling of what the world might be like if every moment of our lives were as emotionally voluminous, generous, aesthetically striking, and intersubjectively intense. (5)

These utopian performatives, though small moments, are profound in their ability to connect the audience to a remarkable abundance. Dolan's term and definition is elucidating here, as it helps us appreciate Michael's process in greater depth, specifically the intense hope he experiences in feeling and seeing himself in his minds-eye performative I-Thou encounters with the most vulnerable members of our society – little children. In transformative, performative imaginings he sees himself being just as "emotionally voluminous" and "generous" in his own life, the utopian performative of Joseph Smith helping little children who are stuck in the mud thus becoming a theatrical touchstone for Michael upon his return home. These "small but profound moments" of Dolan's writing are similar to what Fischer-Lichte terms moments of enchantment ("Transformative Power of Performance" 179-80); theatrical encounters in which everyday moments are portrayed on stage (talking to children in this instance), which are transfigured, and become extra-ordinary, and in the process transform our consciousness of our being in the world. Michael is, we may say, enchanted with, and even feels a reverence for, the possibility of who he may become through his reception of the short but impactful scene.

Regardless of *how* Michael perceived the necessity for himself to “be like that,” a performance of self of some sort has taken place in his mind’s-eye. Michael’s experience seems to resonate with Meyerhold’s belief, articulated in the opening decades of the twentieth century, that audience imagination is at the heart of meaning making, as discussed by Susan Bennett in *Theatre Audiences* (5-6). In more recent writings on audience relationship to theatre, Caroline Heim in *Audience as Performer*, argues that audiences in the twenty-first century have become performers themselves, co-creators in the production. Her argument is, however, examining more the embodied experiences of audience members. Whilst Michael’s personal imaginings when seeing the pageant cannot ultimately be described as entirely *disembodied* (he even articulates his encounter through that most physical of metaphors, a hug) when I am writing of the performance that plays out in his mind and heart, his feelings, I am approaching the idea of audience member as performer from a different angle to that of Heim and others. Michael in this instance performs in the play that is the unfolding of his life, in which the world itself is a stage.

The re-edit then, that Somers observes in one’s personal narrative, has occurred. And this re-edited self-performance has a powerful impact upon Michael. He reflects on the scene “regularly,” he treats people differently, seeking their light, and concludes he is “completely different” now from attending the pageant. We need not burden ourselves with judging how much Michael’s self-analysis is correct; we can only acknowledge that his language reveals an approach to others that is open to I-Thou encounters in his life. Such encounters point towards the utopian performatives that can continue once home, birthed in the performance event, but multiplying in the pedestrian life of Michael. Furthermore, as I re-read his words, I find myself repeating or reliving

the sentiments of his encounter with the scene: I too feel, “I should be like that,” choosing to seek the light in others, as Michael puts it. Schechner’s twice-behaved-behaviour may continue, then, in me – as researcher/writer, or in reader - in any of us as we encounter Michael’s story. This leads us to ask, is it collective enactment taking place, simultaneously with individual enactment? We cannot know the minds - nor the performances played out - for other audience members during the specific scene Michael mentioned. For myself as director I am usually tracking the performance in relation to underscoring during that scene, as it is musically technical, and I was somewhat surprised when interviewing Michael to hear it was that scene which had stayed with him so much. However, we can assume that others, if not with this specific scene, then with other scenes, are engaging with the performance in similar ways: seeing themselves, their life’s story, re-edited in relation to the material presented: collective enactment or re-editing of personal narratives.

In relation to this idea of collective enactment, Gareth White in his book *Audience Participation in Theatre* defines audience participation as participating in the physical action of the performance, similarly to Hein, and that any and each experience of audience involvement carries an inherent aesthetic. He writes:

(Audience) actions and experiences are aesthetic material and...it is no longer possible to have one theory of the aesthetic – it is necessary to recognise a different ‘aesthetic’ for each different practice of making and receiving work. (10)

Though Michael is not getting up on stage or directly interacting with the cast during the show, I am still framing his mental and spiritual involvement with the onstage events as participatory in the action. (Arguably, Michael’s involvement is even performative, though his embodied performance may come after the show has finished. And, as befitting the liminal nature of performance studies, in

the unmeasurable and unquantifiable actions of daily life once returned home from his “pilgrimage” audience experience). Furthermore, building on White’s insights, (though acknowledging he is writing about embodied audience participation in the action of the performance at the event) I am suggesting that whether for individual enactment or collective enactment, there is an aesthetic involved at the pageants. As White states, a different aesthetic is needed for each different practice, and I have proposed throughout this chapter an aesthetic, if you will, focussed keenly on the liminal spaces between us, which can be conceived of as symbiotic efficacy, in which I-Thou encounters, founded in deep love, flourish.

This performance in Michael’s mind when sat in the audience, whilst birthed through watching a rehearsed scene that reveals Schechnerian “twice-behaved behaviour,” becomes parent itself to thrice behaved behaviour. Michael changes how he interacts with others in a process of performances handed down, that ultimately ties back to Latter-day Saint leader President Monson’s observation that Christ is the exemplar here. The scene in the pageant, played out for a community of people well versed in biblical study, cannot escape the empathetic performance of profound love that Jesus played out when his disciples tried to shoo the little children away from him, the disciples seeing the children through only I-It eyes. Christ, facilitating an I-Thou encounter, gathers the children to him, saying to his disciples “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14).

Diana Taylor’s writings come into play here, as she explores how performers’ bodies replicate the movements, the gestures, the faith, of earlier bodies: the history of a people carried within the body (Taylor XVII – XIX, ch. 1).

Michael's account gives us an example here of an audience member replicating the gestures and faith of earlier bodies – whether Christ's or Joseph Smith's – initially through his own performance of who he wants to be in his own mind's eye, then, we assume from his latter comments, in his quotidian life.

We are dealing with multiple performances of I-Thou dialogues: Christ's, Joseph Smith's, the actor portraying him and the children from the account, Michael's, in his own mind's eye, and then performed in his actual life. What we start to see emerging are performances born of love, intermeshing, encountering and informing each other, and ultimately each playing a part in creating what Danièle Hervieu-Léger calls chains of religious memory for Latter-day Saints, strengthening cultural and societal bonds between generations of believers. Michael's experiences here start to become part of the Latter-day Saint religious chain of memory as he performs behaviours he has seen actors perform on stage, based on behaviours of the founders of his faith. Thus, we see the relationship emerging between the pageants and the continued practices of audience, cast and leaders once they have gone home from their pilgrimage encounter. As Schechner says,

Performances – of art, rituals, or ordinary life – are 'restored behaviours', 'twice-behaved behaviour', performed actions that people train for and rehearse... But everyday life also involves years of training and practice... of adjusting and performing one's life roles in relation to social and personal circumstances. ("Performance Studies" 28-29)

Michael, we assume, will both need and use the remainder of his life to practice his newfound commitment, born of attending the pageant, to fulfil his desires to see and foster the light in others, and to "suffer the little children."

We return in this last thought to the earlier discussion on Turnerian liminality. The pilgrim, through their liminal experience, is returned to her place inwardly transformed, which certainly seems to be Michael's experience.



Interestingly here, if we are to look at the Apostle Paul's writings, we see that to him, it is not the time in Nauvoo, but rather the life that Michael returns to, which is the true pilgrimage (Heb. 11:13). This Christian teaching, of reframing daily life as a pilgrimage, combined with Turnerian teachings on liminality, frames our quotidian lives as liminal in their nature. This framing is strengthened by Schechner's observations, above, on the similarities between rehearsing and training for a play, which he sees as an inherently liminal experience, and rehearsing and training for life. Through these readings, we can start to see Michael's return home as also liminal. He himself observed that his profound feelings each night of "coming home" and being "warmly embraced" did not begin and end with the pageant, but it was rather concentrated in the performance. Michael's own observation here, coupled with the above discussion, invites us to think of any membranes between his experiences in the audience, in Nauvoo outside of his audience role, and his experiences back home, as being profoundly porous. His return home is where he gets to act out the hope that the utopian performative awakened in him. Indeed, if the gaps between us are inherently liminal in their nature, then each time Michael encountered another person in his quotidian life he had the potential to enter that liminal space of the pageant once more. For it would be in the gaps between him and another that he could apply his hope into practice, and train, and perform "his re-edited" version of himself, in Somer's terms; a performance of one that seeks the light in others. Michael gets to practice and perform symbiotic efficacy in every encounter, extending the profound liminal experience he has whilst watching the pageant, out into every facet of his life.

## The transformative power of gifts

One aspect of Michael's transformative experience that we ought not to overlook is that he was able to see the pageant five nights in a row, free of charge, with no need to book tickets. This changes the dynamics. Whilst Susan Bennett acknowledges that traditionally the audience's role is a "social contract" usually put into place by "the exchange of money," (204) Nicholas Ridout takes his exploration further in *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems*, where he concludes that audience applause is an uneasy moment that reveals complicity with, and simultaneous disavowal of, the hegemony of consumerism in our society – it is an unstable moment (27-8, 164). Though they have already paid for it, he argues that applause seeks to obscure the financial transaction, with the audience instead "trying to figure itself as a recipient of a gift" (165). In the pageants, audience members do not need to pay for tickets, and in Nauvoo they do not need to get a ticket; they simply turn up. In *The British Pageant* in the UK, the event is ticketed but free of charge.

Whilst the pageants are not unique in being free events, it is somewhat unusual to watch such large-scale theatrical performances, with high production values, without paying. However, many audience members pay a great deal in travel and accommodation costs to get to and stay in Nauvoo – Michael, in this instance, coming from England. I have met audience members who have travelled from all over North America to come to Nauvoo to see the pageant, and from nations in Asia, South America and Europe. Clearly, then, you have to pay considerable amounts of money to get to Nauvoo and stay there, but not for the pageant itself. Such financial burden of travel negates, to some extent, the egalitarian impulse behind no ticketing costs. That said, no pressure, burden or expectation is put upon members in North America or elsewhere to attend the

pageants by Church leadership. Whilst it is not within the scope nor intent of this study to further pursue questions surrounding financial burden of such audience/pilgrimage-esq undertakings, it is worth noting for this study that many audience members, as Michael, view the pageants more than once. Does this change the encounter for them? Entering the discourse surrounding art and capitalism, it seems the terrain does shift.

Ridout's observation, that audience members' applause is attempting to reconfigure themselves as recipients of "a gift", (a gift for which they have usually paid), links to Lewis Hyde's seminal text *The Gift*. In it, he concludes that "when art acts as an agent of transformation we may truly speak of it as a gift" (48). This is interesting in relation to Michael's experience of meaningful long-term relational transformation, from watching the pageant multiple times. His applause at the end of each performance is devoid of the instability Ridout highlights, which exists when we attempt to obscure the financial transaction. The cast too, unpaid and with no programs that list any actors' names, speak often of their performances in a way that frames it as a gift; I have known families in the cast who forgo their own Christmas presents for one another in order to come and perform in the pageants for the audience. The core cast in Nauvoo, being on an eight-week contract, have their temporal needs taken care of with accommodation, food and travel, with a small honorarium. The family cast do not receive any support for their two-week undertaking. The collective sacrifice of time and money to stage the shows, from all cast members to technical crew, is immense and freely given, even sought after. The Church as producer funds all the production costs, not seeking any audience remuneration for the performance in return.

Combining Ridout and Hyde's insights, we can conceive of the pageants as a gift, both from The Church of Jesus Christ, performers and support crew, for without their self-funded and embodied participation, of course there would be no gift to offer. The gifts of Hyde's and Ridout's discourse resonate in this production context with biblical invitations where the prophet Isaiah, speaking messianically, declares "he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Isa. 55:1). When Ridout argues that modern day audiences are seeking to reconfigure themselves as the recipient of a gift, such reframing is partially created by the overwhelming burden theatre now carries to speak truth (Schechner, "Performance Theory" 131), and carry the role of the church in society, as mentioned previously – we desire the wine and milk without money and without price.

Furthermore, if actors carry the burden of being truth speakers, and one of the analogies used most often for the theatre since post-modernism is the church, then the burdens and issues surrounding paying for salvation are, albeit obliquely, at play for a paying audience. Perhaps this is part of the unease Ridout points out in the applause? Ought we to pay (or be paid) for facilitating or receiving transcendent, spiritual encounters? I'm not looking to answer such rhetorical questions here, but rather ask them to further highlight the tensions around commerce and art when art has been invited to step into the salvatory role of the church for many.

To go back to Hyde's insights on gifts in the arts, his thoughts are worth sharing at greater length, as his words could be describing Michael's I-Thou encounter in other terms:

The true commerce of art is gift exchange, and where that commerce can proceed on its own terms we shall be heirs to the fruits of gift

exchange: ....to the sense of plenitude which is the mark of all erotic exchange, to a storehouse of works that can serve as agents of transformation, and to a sense of an inhabitable world – an awareness, that is, of our solidarity with whatever we take to be the source of our gifts, be it the community or the race, nature or the gods. (161)

Hyde proposes here that if there is any commerce that ought to accompany the arts, it is the commerce of gift exchange. When this occurs, transformative plenitude follows – and we sense we can actually live in the world. This reminds us of Michael’s “coming home” reference in relation to watching the pageants; gift exchange in art makes habitation in the world, a home in the world, possible. This habitable world - or home as Michael called it – is possible because for Hyde, unity follows gift exchange in the arts, whether that unity is with our community, nature or the Divine. Hyde’s insights here reject the capitalist exchange of theatre, dissected so fully in Susan Bennett’s discussions. Theatre, Hyde implies, is not in its natural home when it is a social contract governed by money, with actors as paid labourers. He implies that unless the gift exchange model is honoured, the plenitude of the arts is diminished. Whether or not Hyde is right or not with this assessment, whether gift exchange and paid, paper tickets can exist simultaneously, is not part of this discussion. However, what should be noted, is that the pageants, according to Hyde’s definition above, do indeed “proceed on their own terms,” meaning The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ own terms: they are not beholden to the dictates nor concerns of the market for their continued annual staging. They are beholden to other concerns, namely their spiritual efficacy in the lives’ of participants and audience members: were the pageants not to be judged successful by senior leaders of the Church in these realms, I sense they would cease supporting them. There is perhaps a hazy parallel, or shadowing here, to the societal relationship between government, the public and art. The

Government, through tax payers' money, support the arts to greater or lesser degrees, trusting, or not as the case maybe, on the beneficial role of the arts in that society. In times and societies where the creative spirit is valued, it is often supported by tax-payers' money. Sometimes the opposite occurs, and the "killing of the creative spirit through the destruction, debasement or silencing of its art" (Hyde 156) occurs - of course with consequence. Whilst there is not scope to pursue this idea further in this study, there could be a fruitful exploration of the staging of local, large-scale community drama, government sponsored, that is modelled on the pageants, and crucially, free of charge for both the people of that community and others. Similar events do of course happen, one need only think of Michael Sheen's *The Passion* in Port Talbot in 2011. For that production, though you needed to buy tickets to access it live – it was free of charge live online. Of that performance Lyn Gardner observed in her *Guardian* review that "I'm prepared to bet that over the last three days, Port Talbot was one of the happiest places on Earth" (Gardner). Gardner's observation of the effect of such a large-scale, religious-based performance for the people of Port Talbot echoes of the transformative power of such work. And such events ought not to be one-off affairs – I suspect we would be, as per Gardner's observation, a happier people if we told our stories to each other more in such a way. As she concludes in the article, "we have to stop thinking about getting more audiences and paying attendees and think more about building communities" (Gardner).

At the pageants, free from such market constraints, Michael can, and does, return night after night, to experience the "great, warm hug" as he puts it, from watching the performances. He assures us of his repeated watching, "it never got old." Rather, Michael's transformation is deepened and enriched.

There is the abundance in Michael's repeated encounter that Hyde points to with his observation that true gifts carry the "plenitude which is the mark of all erotic exchange." Michael's metaphorical hug may not be erotic, but there is something physically, and emotionally, sensual about the whole encounter for him: the hug is not withdrawn, is freely and repeatedly offered to him, and feels like "coming home," night after night. He is the recipient of the gift of a nightly I-Thou encounter from the cast. While the dominant discourse of the Academy might dismiss this burnishing of an idealised, happier self in a religious context as merely exploitation of the gullible, it is sobering to note that there are significant health and wellbeing benefits to experiencing sustained positive emotions. Psychologists, Martin Seligman (University of Pennsylvania) and Christopher Peterson (University of Michigan), working with various medical experts, examined longitudinal datasets and found that three braided approaches to life created these conditions: feeling good, engaging fully and doing good (Barsky et al). While difficult to experience continuously in the quotidian, these are all opportunities that the immersive nature of the pageants abundantly affords.

If Michael receives such comforting, home-like connectedness as a gift from viewing the pageant each night, Hyde's writings on gift-giving imply that something, too, is required of Michael in return (though his financial sacrifice to be there – along with all other audience members - is already a gift to the cast). As Hyde writes: "a gift that has the power to change us awakens a part of the soul...but we cannot receive the gift until we meet it as an equal" (52). This is where Michael's transformative experience truly comes into play: he becomes equal to the gift given him by the cast (their gift of time, money, love and sacrifice), through his own performative I-Thou encounters upon returning to his

quotidian life, informed by his pageant encounter. His own gift-giving in his personal performances is expressed through how he chooses to see others: “I started to choose to see the light in people,” and in Michael’s experience this was in turn transformative for others, as “it brings or invites more light from them.” This is symbiotic efficacy multiplied through the transformative power of gift-giving ad infinitum. The circularity of autopoiesis, discussed at the opening of this chapter, a continual feedback loop of energy and meaning between actor and audience, comes back into play. I am following Marvin Carlson’s lead in extending the concept of autopoiesis beyond the realms of the theatrical event, when he observes in the introduction to Fischer-Lichte’s *The Transformative Power of Performance* “we are involved in autopoieses continually in our being in the world, but what theatre and performance art offer are occasions for heightening our awareness of and sensitivity to this process” (8). Michael seems to confirm Carlson’s observation here, of becoming heightened to the relational exchange between himself and others through theatre, yet he lives that heightened awareness out performatively back “in the world” as Carlson put it. In an act of audience-reception-agency, Michael’s choosing to see the light in others, “invites more light from them,” and the autopoiesis feedback loop of energy exchange that Fischer-Lichte observes between cast and audience continues here between audience member Michael, and others outside of the immediate theatrical event.

This is a lived out example of the transformative power of gift-giving, and is what Margaret Atwood is writing of when she states, in her introduction to Hyde’s latest edition, “Gifts pass from hand to hand: they endure through such transmission, as every time a gift is given it is enlivened and regenerated through the new spiritual life it engenders both in the giver and in the receiver”



(Hyde XV). Hyde shares a similar conviction when he observes that “a gift not only moves, it moves in a circle” (11). The gift of the pageants, given by the Latter-day Saint people to members of their own faith and other friends, finds new life and regeneration, and endurance as Atwood puts it, through the “new spiritual life” of Michael and others whom he meets. This is autopoiesis through the gift-giving of I-Thou symbiotic efficacy; the circularity and self-generation of Fischer-Lichte’s term coalescing with Atwood’s and Hyde’s celebrations on gift-giving. Such gift-giving is connected to the *aliveness* we so value in theatre – the vivified space - for to give gifts, as the cast do to Michael and he does to the cast and then to others, is to enliven, to enrich, to change and transform, to die and to be born a new creature. Indeed, such gift-giving can be seen as the rite of passage that Paulian pilgrims on earth must learn whilst in liminoid gestation in order to survive spirituality in a world dominated by extreme neo-liberalist ideology.

### **Questions of the Soul**

Such gift-giving in and through these theatrical productions may be read as an ethical imperative, but primarily it is a spiritual affair. Ridout, in his book *Theatre & Ethics*, writes, “I think there is something particular about theatrical spectatorship that offers ways of thinking about ethics” (14-15). This, he believes, is primarily because theatre is about spectatorship, and spectatorship is an inherently moral arena, both in spatial relations and also in subject matter. Ridout explores at length the “acute ethical problem” faced by Neoptolemus in Sophocles’ *Philoctetes* (1-6), a character who cries out “How shall I act?” when faced with an ethical dilemma about personal integrity versus national security - an ethical dilemma not foreign to us today.

Ridout argues that Neoptolemus is not alone in this heartfelt cry, but rather concludes that, by its very nature, "Theatre dramatizes ethical situations" (13). Of interest in relation to the pageants here is that actually they do not ultimately stage ethical dilemmas at all. Rather they are concerned with questions of the soul. If Neoptolemus cries out "How Shall I Act?" an equivalent crying out in the pageants might be *how shall I believe?* In *The British Pageant* this question is behind such lines as "Where is God's love in cholera?" (Collier et al. Sc. 3B), asked by a teenage son to his father regarding the death of his mother. Or, in *The Nauvoo Pageant*, a father whose child died on-board the crossing from Liverpool to America, asks of Joseph Smith, "Your God accepts such terrible sacrifices from children he supposedly loves?" (Collier et al. Sc. 2). Both pageants deal with questions of faith, of what it means to believe and trust in God in the face of personal tragedy and hardship, and are based on true accounts and records. Time and again in both pageants we see characters, often speaking lines taken verbatim from diary or letter extracts from the time portrayed, exploring their struggle with choosing faith in the face of opposition, persecution or personal doubt. But the dilemmas the characters' face are not ultimately ethical problems, as per Ridout's observation, but are rather questions of the soul. If Ridout argues convincingly that theatre is a fitting arena to pose ethical questions because spectatorship is inherently an ethical affair, then these Latter-day Saint pageants confirm that it is also a fitting and powerful arena to explore questions of the soul, because of the inherent abilities of creativity to connect us to spiritual matters. As Lewis Hyde argues, "Works of art are drawn from, and their bestowal nourishes, those parts of our being....from the spiritual world" (155). Indeed, the ability of theatre to connect us to an "unseen" world - even a world of spirits - has been touched upon by various

theatre practitioners and writers, which we will explore more in the following chapter.

The fruits of pageant participation may seem outwardly ethical, but ultimately such fruits are due to a deeper spiritual understanding, questions of the soul so to speak, explored, practiced and performed, throughout the script, and in the spaces or sphere between people. It is that careful attention to the I-Thou impulse - played out in the gaps between us - that I believe Michael, and other audience members, are responding to. In other words, the transformative growth Michael actually experiences is a response to, and mirroring of, the spiritual growth participants experience in the pageant. Michael's gift to the cast is to facilitate their growth through his attendance. Their gift to him, along with their own self-sacrificial attendance, is their spiritual transformation shared on stage with the audience. And it is the spiritual transformation of one cast member, Sarah, that we will now explore. Due to the scaffolding already in place in this chapter, our exploration of Sarah's experience will be shorter than Michael's account. After considering her experience, we will conclude by looking at the nexus between Michael and Sarah's transformative participation.

### **Sarah's Story**

Sarah is a mother of five children, who participated in the family cast with her husband and children for two weeks. I was especially struck in her feedback by how one seemingly small moment during rehearsals struck her so deeply that she transformed her parenting model because of it. She shared:

I will ever remember the first rehearsal when our young family was just beginning to learn the steps of one of the dances. I was very focused on getting my young children to "behave" and was frustrated with one child's lack of cooperation. Moments later was the first time I heard one of the directors call the cast in close and use the mantra, "We're not here to act like Saints, but to be Saints." He went on to explain that sometimes that

means attending to the needs of our children even if that means missing the rehearsal steps. I was immediately humbled and put in a new place in my heart and in my family, where my desires changed completely from acting out the perfect steps, to living in a more perfect way in my relationships, especially within my own family. This is the transformation that happens in Nauvoo through this experience, and I believe it is why my children have repeatedly begged to return to participating in the pageant. All five of my children would rather participate again than go to Disneyland or on another family vacation. I have wondered why this is so. Through this pageant experience, I believe my children glimpse a more exalted state of being, not only within our family, but within themselves, as they get to “shine their light” of what really matters in life through music, song, and participating in these incredible stories of truth. I marvel at who they become through this experience, and come home hoping the glow will continue throughout the year as they return to “real” life of school and peer influences that can be so difficult today. Emulating the directors in my parenting by focusing on the positive and the truth is what has impacted me most personally on returning home. I can think of no other two-week experience that comes closer to helping us realize as families Christ’s grace and light and power in our lives. (Ricks)

Sarah’s story here is compelling for many reasons. Her frustration with one child not learning some dance steps becomes the springboard for her deep, transformative learning that continues even once she has returned home, through her changed parenting model. She understands on a fundamental level, “*in my heart*” as she puts it, that both in this artistic event and in daily life (the paralleling of rehearsal and life, as per Schechner’s and Carlson’s observations, above), that the perfection of the steps, metaphorically speaking, is less important than the state of our hearts towards one another. Her desires shift from “acting out the perfect steps, to living in a more perfect way in my relationships, especially within my own family.” The affect for Sarah happened “immediately,” she states she will “ever remember it” and her desires “changed completely” - it is a seismic moment for her. In the lexicon of this chapter, symbiotic efficacy is dramatically revealed, through her commitment to practice I-Thou behaviours in the breaches or spaces between her and her children.

What is apparent in Sarah's sharing here is that she, like Michael, is making rich connections between her experiences in Nauvoo and her everyday life. Her observation reveals what the one-week rehearsal process is for; families do not ultimately come to rehearse for a pageant, they come to rehearse how to live in deep compassion, patience and tenderness towards each other, the rehearsal and practice of I-Thou relations, and the performance of that is manifest in their own lives upon returning home. Interviews with many other participants attest to family cast experiencing pageant rehearsals as a rehearsal for the performance of familial and daily life back home. One father in the family cast expressed it as follows: "Nauvoo for me was a boot camp to life. I felt like I was trained to have a better perspective and to forgive and see the good in those I'm around" (Coates). A husband in the family cast in *The British Pageant* in the UK observed that his acting in the pageant led to a profound deepening of "pure love" in his marriage, that had not been experienced in such depths before (Worthington). Lastly, a mother from the family cast in the UK simply observed, "I learnt from the example of the producers and directors to be more patient, loving and tolerant to everyone around me.... And our lives are better for it. We are closer and happier as a family" (Aitchinson). Whilst we will focus in greater depth on Sarah's story, such feedback from family cast members is shared to remind us that her experience is not unique in the depths of its transformative efficacy. Each of these comments (and the many more not shared here), reveal, as does Michael's, that the true "boot camp" work of the pageants is zoned in on the liminal spaces or breaches between us.

Whilst Sarah is able to pinpoint the very moment in rehearsals in which she committed to changing her parental model, her own utopian performative, most participants are not quite as detailed. They simply acknowledge that their

participation changed them, and they are a better wife or husband, mother or father, daughter, son or sibling for it. Sarah's transformative story is John Somers' observations on applied drama, quoted earlier, deeply at play, namely that the performance is able to "intersect with our personal story and to change our perceptions of how the world is and our vision of our part in it" ("Interactive Theatre" 64). For Sarah, it was a directorial invitation that enabled the pageant story to intersect with her personal story, which led to her metamorphic moment.

Sarah is connected fundamentally to who she truly considers herself to be through a directorial invitation, with dramatic consequences for her. Her daughter was not co-operating in learning the dance steps, and the director invites the whole cast to gather in and reminds them that "We are not to act like saints, but to be saints." (The terms "saints" here referring to Latter-day Saints and not to the Catholic tradition of that term.) The directorial invite facilitates that epiphany moment; the cast are invited not to *act* as saints, implying some sort of gap between who they are representing and themselves, but rather to *be* saints. This invitation seems to connect Sarah fundamentally with who she considers herself to be, a Saint, as per Somers' observation. She re-edits her personal story accordingly, with a narrative in which healthy interpersonal relationships supersede polished performance. Were the director to have violated I-Thou encounters in their leadership model, and focussed instead on an I-It experience (by asking the cast with evident irritation to pay attention – as surely Sarah's daughter was not the only person on a stage of one hundred and seventy people, outdoors in hot and humid weather, to be struggling), then the potential for symbiotic efficacy – the model of liminal transformation - would

have been lost. Indeed, an I-It demand from the director probably would have increased Sarah's frustration towards her child.

This discussion of one directorial moment in rehearsals invites us to think afresh about the audience experience in the autopoietic feedback loop of energy and meaning. Is Sarah's seismic learning moment in rehearsals connected to Michael's "great, warm hug" each night? I would answer yes. This is a bold claim in many ways, yet when we look at Sarah's account again, through the lens of Grotowskian writings on translumination and Jill Dolan's work on utopian performatives, we start to understand more fully how this may be so: how Sarah's transformative encounter in rehearsals facilitates Michael's transformative encounter in the audience, and vice-versa – gifts moving in circles, because that is the only trajectory that true gift giving - in the arts or elsewhere - can move on.

### **“A more exalted State”**

In her feedback, Sarah shares a revealing insight about her children (the mother-director, observing, analysing and articulating the impact of participation on her children-cast). She states that they reached “a more exalted state of being, not only within our family, but within themselves.” She articulated this more exalted state as “light,” stating that her children were able to “...“shine their light” of what really matters in life through music, song, and participating in these incredible stories.” She hoped this “glow” would continue once they were home. Whilst it is easy to dismiss at first glance the phrase of “shine their light” as a clichéd and worn idea with evangelical connotations, in the spirit of Sarah taking our hand to show us her experience, we ought not to do so. Rather, there is merit in recognising the echoes her words carry in our own theatrical

discourse, for they are not actually so far away from Grotowskian writing on translumination.

Grotowskian lexicon to explore what he sees as the sacred and holy actor-audience relationship borrows heavily from sacerdotal, specifically Catholic, terminology. His ideas culminate in his theory of “translumination” wherein the actors spirit literally shines through his body, and he or she can “illuminate” and become “a source of spiritual light” for the audience (Grotowski 33). It is an atoning act, as Grotowski sees it, that cleanses the performer of sin (Grotowski 33). Whilst Grotowski was practicing and formulating his ideas on this in the 1960s and 70s, his work is still a rich part of theatrical and religious discussion today. As recently as 2017 in *Rethinking Religion in the Theatre of Grotowski* Catharine Christof, writing from the religious studies perspective, outlines what she sees as a compelling need to explore Grotowskian practice “as a modality for experiencing theological understandings, one that uses a bodily–kinesthetic mode for exploring both knowledge and experience” (5). Building from both the religious studies and theatrical discourse, she highlights the centrality of the body in the religious experience, reframing religion through the body, showing how the religious encounter can and should be explored through theatre, with Grotowskian practice as her case study.

In many ways these pageants are doing just that - exploring the Latter-day Saint spiritual and sacral encounter, and indeed theological discourse, through the materiality of embodied performance. The results for Sarah’s children, from her perspective, enable them to share or shine their personal light, a light that seems to linger after the pageant has finished. (Of course, through Grotowskian lenses, we are inclined to question if their pageant experiences fill them with light, or eradicates the blocks, both her children’s and



her own, that may prevent their light from being revealed and seen; a familial *via negativa* that reveals to Sarah - as mother-audience to her children - their innate light.) There is a nexus here between Latter-day Saint doctrine and Grotowskian thought. We read in Latter-day Saint scripture that when engaged in selfless service for others, as the pageants facilitate (Grotowski terms it sacrificing one's whole self for the audience) then, your "whole bodies shall be filled with light" (The Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 62: 3). And within this scripture, similarly to Grotowskian thought, when such light is willingly shared, it is seen as a cleansing act - "your sins are forgiven you" as the remainder of the scripture shares. Whilst the strict exercise-based methodology the actors went through in early Grotowskian practice may bear little outward resemblance to the practices embedded in the culture of the pageant rehearsals, the desired intentions are similar, as both are intimately connected to profound spiritual strivings. This is borne out by Schechner's observation, as former pupil and friend, that Grotowski's life work and goals, his oeuvre, remained fundamentally spiritual in focus throughout his life (Wolford and Schechner 462). The parallel here is that the entire thrust of the directorial intent in these pageants is actually the same: to facilitate an organic growth environment which reveals the light-filled souls of participants to audience members through embodied practice - to reveal Latter-day Saints for who they truly are. The practices used to help create such an environment may differ greatly from Grotowski's, but the desire, to reveal the light of the human soul, is shared.

Interestingly, if we return for a moment to Michael's experience, we find evidence in his observations that cast members were luminous to him, echoing of Sarah's observations about her own children. Michael stated that when he arrived in Nauvoo, he noticed that, "Everyone I was encountering in the cast

had a very positive, wholesome light in their eyes, a 'light' light in their eyes. I didn't know why they had it." Whilst nodding to the ineffability of the attempt, between Sarah seeing greater light in her children, and Michael seeing what he termed "...'light' light in their eyes" (his repetition here revealing his own grappling with the beyond-words empyreal), we are wise to ask - is translumination occurring here? Such a question, asked with a steady gaze on the data received in the context of the rich discourse surrounding spirituality in theatre, leads me to conclude yes. It may not be translumination as Grotowski envisioned it, or then again, it may. That is hard to ascertain, and not so much the point. Indeed, the term itself is not the point, for neither Grotowski nor these Latter-day Saint pageants. Rather, I am clumsily suggesting that just as for Grotowski the actor's soul was revealed for the audience, becoming spiritual illumination for them, so a similar transluminal-liminal encounter is happening at these pageants.

Latter-day Saints come together and are invited to fully share themselves, and be themselves, (with the caveat invitation of it being their very best selves - spiritually, ethically, morally, physically) on stage every night. Rehearsals are the domain to learn the blocking, dancing and such, yes, but they are also the environment for practicing the performance of their best or better selves, as discussed. They share their faith, their history, their theology, and the intersection of their faith with their personal story, through acting, singing and dancing. They share, in other words, their most sacred selves on stage in a public forum and arena, and not just any aspect of their sacred selves – rather their most deeply held joys, their most spiritual encounters, their sacred and holy personal journey of faith in the Divine. Yes, they bring their pain and shadows and sorrow to their performance too, but ultimately even that is a

conscious choice to enable them to share the light, and, as Sarah terms it, offer up “what really matters in life” on stage. Grotowski saw this as the harder thing to do, observing:

Do not always seek sad associations of suffering, of cruelty. Seek also the bright and the luminous.... Often we can be opened by...moments.... when we had confidence, when we were happy. This is often more difficult than to penetrate into the dark stretches, since it is a treasure we do not wish to give. (Grotowski 241)

These Latter-day Saint pageants, in all material aspects, from script to music to choreographic steps to costumes choices, choose to focus their gaze on the bright and luminous. This is not a negation of the sadness and suffering, the cruelty, as Grotowski puts it. The narratives and stage action includes the death of loved ones, leaving of family, friends and country, the murder of beloved prophet-leaders, the systematic persecution of early Latter-day Saints, sickness, diasporic persecution, and tremendously difficult personal trials. Furthermore, all of this sadness, suffering, and indeed cruelty (at the hands of terrible mob persecution in Nauvoo) is based on, often verbatim sharing of, historical evidences and primary sources. And yet this is not the focus of the pageants at all. Rather, they are vehicles which, in the spirit of Grotowski’s insights above, are bright and luminous in their focus on faith in God, faith in the kindnesses of each other, and faith in the eternal nature of family relationships. Such faith, uniquely personal for each cast member, yet united under the sisterhood and brotherhood of shared religious traditions and teachings as found within the Latter-day Saint community and faith, is offered on stage each night. Cast are “opened” as Grotowski puts it, by their deepest held personal narratives of spiritual encounters with the Divine - the ultimate “...‘light’ light.” They share this treasure - the treasure of their faith – as the thing that *really matters*, as Sarah puts it. And at the centre of that faith-filled sharing is this

sacred ground of how we fill the gaps between us, going back to our earlier discussion. For at the centre of their faith is the hopeful desire of love of God and love of the other. So that the sphere or the space between cast members on stage, and the great autopoiesis which must always fill the actor-audience lacunae at the heart of every theatrical encounter, is filled with I-Thou love. Grotowski called this a “communion” between people and saw it as both a “biological and spiritual act” (58). I am writing for an understanding of this communion, which is indeed spiritual and biological, as one in which Sarah’s spiritual transformation in her own utopian performative moment, of treating her children with I-Thou regard, is what Michael is responding to when he experiences his great warm hug from the pageant each night.

When it comes to creating theatre then, we understand that the bodies of performers carry a mark made from their lives, from their behaviours performed and emotions experienced. The lived lives of cast members affect them as performer, “leaving traces on those bodies” as James Thompson puts it (60), and that consequently when Michael comes to the show each night he does not “meet the neutralised bodies of its participants” but rather he has an autopoietic encounter with the “rich, dynamic, and changing” matter that makes up peoples’ lives (Thompson 54). Sarah, then, carries the traces, the marks, of such profound spiritual discovery, *lived* discovery, with her into her performance each night. Her transformative journey is multiplied for Michael, as nearly every cast member has an equally deeply effecting change and growth and learning, though a different story. Process truly is product in an organic environment of lived and practiced spiritual growth for cast, and the songs, dances, movement and spoken words on stage, the corporeal artefact of the initial creative process,

becomes the vehicle that both facilitates and reveals the spiritual artefact of participants' experience.

In such revealing, does Michael see Sarah's family in their "exalted state"? If by 'see' we mean understand the specific details of each individual's story, then clearly, no. However, if by 'see' we mean audience members feel and experience and comprehend spiritually something of the journey that has taken place for participants, and go through it themselves, then absolutely. Michael sees cast members exalted bodies and spirits, their "...light' light" on stage fully each night. The communication of Sarah's transformative journey is, after all, shared through her body; her spiritual yearnings, learning and growth communicated through embodied offerings. To that extent, Michael clearly does see a woman performing on stage who said that no other experience had helped her family as much to encounter "Christ's grace, light and power in our lives." Such spiritually abundant happenings – Divine grace, light and power - clearly leave their mark and trace on Sarah as she performs. And when she offers her gift of self as a woman who has discovered the sacral joy of I-Thou encounters, with those who are most precious to her, her children, such a gift offering is transcendent, joyous, abundant and full. It shows in the bodies and faces of cast members that they have encountered and walked on the sacred ground of profound personal spiritual growth throughout their journey.

I could categorise what such embodied sharing looks like – and maybe should in more detail– but that is not the focus of the chapter as we conclude now. Suffice to say, that it includes a remarkable physical freedom on stage, (this from people who have largely never performed before), devoid of any theatrical self-consciousness so associated with amateur performers. It looks like loose limbs; energised bodies; great spontaneous creativity in dance and

blocking; open, easy smiles; open chests; tears; laughter; children playfully sticking their tongues out at each other during freezes on stage one night, but not the next; fathers and mothers picking up their little ones on stage and carrying them when tired one night, and tickling them in the same moment the next night; abundant easy, organic physical contact between cast members on stage, manifest as hugs, hand holding, throwing and catching little children in the air, or arms slung around each other by two young children as they sing. In conclusion, it is best described as sacralised bodies free of fear, because they are each experiencing a profundity and abundance of I-Thou affirmation, from every other cast member and the directors and - cast members would add – from the Divine. They are each sharing in and through their bodies a deeply spiritual transformative journey, akin to Sarah's. I have an enduring image of a woman which I, like Michael, reflect on often – a woman who was singing a song towards the finale, her arms flung wide open, her face radiant with a smile, tears pouring down her face, but only of joy as far as I could tell. And like Michael, and Sarah, I can only say that there was so much light coming from her. She illuminated as she shared her personal treasure of faith and love. It is not about the audience member's personal beliefs here. Michael's faith was "very much in its infancy" as he put it. Rather, if as audience members we so choose, and there remains a clear choice there for us, (the aesthetics of reception that Fischer-Lichte writes on), we are offered the gift or treasure of cast members deepest joys, happiness, hope and faith. It is a joyous thing to witness, even more so to receive. It led Michael to express that "it was the warmest feeling I had ever had." Such feelings in theatre, as Erin Hurley reminds us in *Theatre & Feelings*, are central to what we are about as theatre makers and receivers, though we discuss them so little (4-22). And the feelings

of Michael's heart, which led him to state that he had never felt such warmth before and was transformed by it, are in so many ways a direct spiritual reception of, and response to, the transformation expressed in Sarah's transformed, "exulted" and luminous body, which cannot but carry the traces of such transcendent learning. What the audience truly experience then, is the spiritual journey of the cast, which is rooted in profound, performative love.

## **Conclusion**

In the next chapter, we will be exploring the liminal encounter cast members have with the dead they represent – an extramundane expansion of the autopoietic loop. Before doing so, a review of this chapter helps to consolidate the theoretical scaffolding which we have built so far. In doing so, we will talk of audience and cast, rather than Sarah and Michael, as, as per the opening of this chapter and the data collected, the transformative aliveness of their encounter is shared by many.

For Latter-day Saint audience members, then, time in Nauvoo is pilgrimage, and they are liminal witnesses to somatic history. It is such liminality that is acknowledged by Jon McKenzie as being central to the efficacy of performance, yet the models of liminal efficacy explored so far in performance studies are based in transgressive or resistant models, which do not elucidate or articulate the clear transformative efficacy of these Latter-day Saint pageants for participants. I have suggested symbiotic efficacy as another liminal model which facilitates transformation.

Symbiotic efficacy is focused on the *interbetweenness*, a liminal breach which exists between all of us, and I have suggested that in the pageants, such *interbetweenness* is actively inscribed with the I-Thou encounter of Buberian

discourse, creating an autopoietic feedback loop, building on Fischer-Licthe's writings, of love. We explored two small moments for an audience member that revealed such symbiotic efficacy - a conversation with a cast member and a scene of Joseph Smith removing children from the mud - suggesting these moments were akin to Dolan's utopian performatives, imbued with generosity and feelings of hopefulness.

Such utopian moments are actually gift giving, and we explored the circularity of gift-giving within the pageants, between cast and audience. Cast encounter these profound utopian performatives themselves, one of which we explored in depth: a rehearsal moment in which a directorial invitation facilitated the organic processes of symbiotic efficacy.

One effect of such symbiotic efficacy for cast is, in Grotowskian terms, an increase of light, somatically revealed, and this chapter concludes with suggesting that what audiences receive, respond to, and re-enact themselves, is such love-filled light. This is sacred co-creativity between cast and audience, audience and cast. As Martin Buber puts it,

Man wishes to be confirmed in his being by man, and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other....Secretly and bashfully he watches for a YES which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one human person to another. ("I and Thou" 104)

These Latter-day Saint pageants attempt, however imperfectly at times, and guided by Christian teaching, to performatively live that YES in the spaces between us. Such a process becomes the product. In *Tip of the Tongue* Peter Brook writes, "In the tiny world of theatre, there are rivalries, hatreds, meannesses, fights ... but it is perfectly possible to go against the tide" (Brook, "Peter Brook Returns"). These pageants are a whole-hearted attempt from thousands of individuals to swim against the tide of their own meannesses and fights, most potently in the familial sphere, as Sarah's story so clearly



demonstrates. And that Buberian YES in the spaces between the cast on stage is revealed to the audience, and also extended to them. As Lucinda, (the cast member quoted above by the choreographer), shared when she saw a new audience each night, “Ah! More people to love.” Of that autopoietic encounter, Brook is quoted as once having said, “The relationship between the actor and the audience is the only theatre reality.” (qtd. by Morrison “My Theatre Workshop”). It is a reality filled with the potential for luminosity through reciprocal gift-giving. And such I-Thou gift-giving, for Latter-day Saint participants at least, is an echo of, and memorial to, the ultimate gift ever given: “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). This leads us to superliminal gift-giving, involving “the sphere of the lintel which is over the door: the sphere of the spirit” (Buber, “I and Thou” 127), as our next chapter explores.

## ***Chapter Three - The circular chain of believers***

### **Introduction**

Thus far, we have been considering the transformative power of symbiotic efficacy; when the liminal spaces between us in performance - cast, audience, crew - are inscribed with an I-Thou holiness described in Buberian discourse. That discussion was located firmly in the realm of the living. This chapter concerns the dead. It explores how performance enables an experience of connectedness for the cast, crew and audience with those who have passed on, that is both positive and transformative. To do this it asks a series of questions. How does performance deepen one's connection to one's ancestors? How does performance deepen one's connection to a community of believers that transcends time and place? What is it about staging a people's sacred stories, at their sacred locales, that invites the "ghosts" of the past into the present performance? How does performing the devotional words and songs of these absent dead become a holy, theatrical offering that binds generations of believers together? How does performing and embodying the religious faith of actual and spiritual forbears increase the faith of participants? Moreover, what is it about this nexus between the lived faith of present-day believers and their enactment of the experiences of the early Latter-day Saints that is efficacious in connecting people to their dead in transformative and potent ways?

Located in the ultimate *betwixt-between* of the human psyche, these questions occupy the liminal space between the materiality of our temporal world and the invisible world – a space Marvin Carlson in *The Haunted Stage*, along with many others, has written so compellingly of. Being in such a *betwixt-between* space in this chapter is both challenge and reward. If performance

studies, as Schechner and others have acknowledged, is inherently liminal in its practice and discourse, then in some ways it becomes one of the most effective disciplines in the academic armoury with which to grapple with questions of the soul regarding our connection to the dead and the Divine. As director Robert Lepage observed, the role of theatre, he felt, was to put us in touch with the gods (Delgado and Heritage 143). In going places where it ought not to go, performance studies has thaumaturgical properties – it is in the realm of miracles, magic, and wonder. As such there is an efficacious parallel between the supramundane liminality of the subject matter of this chapter – how performance can connect us to our dead with transformative results - and the liminality of the discipline itself. Paradoxically, it is in the liminal parallels between the subject matter and the discipline that both the challenge and reward of this chapter lies. Challenging because we can lose ourselves in a liminal study of how performance breaches the realm between the living and the dead. Rewarding, because if we do not lose ourselves in such liminalities, we understand more fully how that occurs - how performance breaches the realm between the living and the dead - and that is a thing worth understanding.

Divided into three sections, part one discusses three interconnected strands which, when woven together in these Latter-day Saint pageants, create immensely rich and fertile ground for connection to the dead; the DNA connection, the doctrinal connection and the lineage connection. In part two, I utilise this tri-pronged approach as a lens through which to analyse the production and performance processes. This analysis draws on primary evidence from my field notes and participants' feedback, which reveal how *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants* connect participants to their departed dead, and the transformative effect of it. In other words, part two is about what happens,

and then what happens because of what happens. Part three concludes the chapter, extrapolating to suggest that Latter-day Saints embody their doctrine in these performances in remarkable ways, and that such doctrine embodied makes each performer a nascent symbol of their entire faith system.

### **Part one: connections to the dead**

The key source of material for this chapter remains the two Latter-day Saint pageants. Considering the participants' relationship with the dead, there are three strands at work. Interwoven, these facilitate the cast, crew and audiences' experience of a remarkable intimacy with the dead who are represented on stage. These three strands are as follows:

- 1) The DNA connection to the dead: The shared genetic and familial connections between cast and those they are representing on stage.
- 2) The doctrinal connection to the dead: Latter-day Saint theology about the relationship between the living and the dead.
- 3) The lineage connection to the dead: The Latter-day Saint lineage of faith, memory, heritage and history – or the community of believers.

I will discuss each of these separately and in turn in this part of the chapter, whilst acknowledging that during the making and sharing of these performances (which we look at in part two) the three strands are woven together so complexly, that they are not so easily, nor neatly, unknotted as appears here. Such complexity, or knottiness, does not necessarily lie in each of these three strands in and of themselves, but rather in how they interact with one another throughout the process; they tangle, interlace and meld together. In so doing they cross-fertilise, conjugating to create a potency in performance that unites the living with the dead they represent. This is helpful to keep in mind as we move on in the chapter, as to look at each of these strands separately below, as we will now do, implies a neatness that belies the jumbled multiplicity of ways in

which they interact together. The first thread we will look at, then, is the shared genetic and familial connections between the cast and audience and those being represented on stage.

### **Genetics at play – the DNA connection to the dead**

On Monday 2nd May, 1842, an article by the prophet Joseph Smith was printed in Nauvoo in *Times and Seasons*, the local paper published by and for the Latter-day Saints. In the leading editorial, Joseph Smith wrote to his people, “generations yet unborn will dwell with peculiar delight upon the scenes that we have passed through” (Smith, “Truth will prevail”). Smith’s use of the dramatic lexicon - “scenes” - is not lost on cast members in Nauvoo when this quote is occasionally shared: they are part of the generations “yet unborn” in Smith’s time, who through theatrical scenes, share the scenes of the early pioneers’ lives, whom Smith was addressing. The cast sees their role as actors as helping to fulfil those prophetic words of Joseph Smith’s; thousands of audience members – (also generations yet unborn in the prophet’s time) do indeed “dwell with peculiar delight” upon the multiple, historically layered “scenes” on stage. What the early Saints may not have considered, however, was that the scenes of their life would literally, and theatrically, be portrayed by their own descendants.

On any given night during the performances in Nauvoo, for both pageants, the vast majority of the one hundred and forty or so cast members on stage are telling the stories of their own fore-mothers and fore-fathers through performance. This is so for nearly all five rotating family casts throughout the summer – around six hundred performers in total. When you include all the crew, production team, volunteers involved etc., you have a group of about one

thousand people each summer working together to tell the stories of their ancestors. Whilst this is not true of every single person involved, it is, as I have said, the vast majority. Whilst no official record has been made of how many who are involved are blood descendants of the people being portrayed, and it is not required to participate, whenever I, as director, have asked the question of the cast in rehearsals, a sea of hands goes up: very few cast members do not raise their arm in affirmation that they are indeed portraying their kindred dead. This is a remarkable thing. Whilst acknowledging this is the case for most of the crew, production team, costumers, security marshals etc. – the volunteers who make such a large-scale production even possible – we will talk of it in terms of the cast from here on, as they are the ones who literally embody their ancestors (even if other direct descendants of those portrayed make the costumes and run the spots that will clothe and light their own forbears). This focus on the cast is not to ignore nor diminish that experience – to sew a costume for an actor portraying your direct ancestor – but on a practical level, to not be writing with what could become overly cumbersome inclusivity throughout, and set some parameters around an already large study. That said, it should be remembered that when speaking of the cast portraying their ancestors, we are also speaking of hundreds of other volunteers, not on stage, who are also working to portray these scenes from their ancestors' lives, and also having a remarkable intimacy with their dead because of it.

Whilst in part two of this chapter I will consider specific ways such a performative posterity plays out in the process of the pageants, the general effect of this 'cast of descendants' is that cast members bring a richness of personal, familial understanding, knowledge and heartfelt connection to the scenes as I will evidence from my fieldnotes and their interview responses.

Whilst it is common to have cast members who are direct descendants of the named characters on stage, cast members also bring this wealth of family stories to the unnamed characters they portray. The cast often comes to the performance process having read the journals and letters of their ancestors whom they choose to portray. They know their names. They name their children after them. They walk to the houses their ancestors called home, and sometimes built, in Nauvoo. They tell these ancestral stories to their children and print thick, bound books with pictures and paintings of their family's stories in Nauvoo back in the 1800s, which they bring with them to rehearsals and may read during their lunch breaks. It is not uncommon to be rehearsing a scene and have a cast member raise their hand and begin to tell an anecdote from their family history of the very scene being portrayed. From a purely theatrical standpoint, it is a gift to any director, to work with a large cast who are so deeply invested in the roles they are playing, because they are portraying their own family. It becomes a form of unintentional Stanislavskian preparation par excellence for multiple unnamed characters onstage. It was Stanislavski, after all, who compared an actor to an archaeologist who had to dig deep into their own archive of memory, to find an intrapersonal connection that might bring life to a scene (163 - 193).

This thorough and committed research that many cast members make into their family history, which in-turn informs and drives their performances, is both theologically and emotionally driven. Latter-day Saints are deeply encouraged, commanded even in their lexicon, to seek out and search for information regarding their dead. We will cover why that is so further below, but the efforts and energies invested in such familial research resonate with the metaphor of the Stanislavskian actor-archaeologist. If the Stanislavskian actor

digs deep into the archive of their own memory to bring a scene to life, Latter-day Saint actors in these pageants dig deep into the literal archive of their own family history to bring a scene to life – their personal archival memory is expanded to include that of their fore-mothers and fore-fathers.

Whilst the cast are not couching it in the lexicon of theatre at all – the majority of them will probably not have heard of Stanislavski – they nonetheless are remarkable actor-archaeologists throughout the process, digging deep into this familial “archive” to intentionally bring deeper personal connections to their performances, by deepening their love for those they portray. In this regard, cast members on stage also carry the inevitable “imprint” which their forbears have left on them into performance. James Thompson, writing on applied drama, speaks more of this familial performance we are all a part of, calling it,

a mosaic. A multiple impression of many past fathers, mothers. The action matter of new moments is constructed from the tiniest embodied fragments of many others. These are Sheldon’s “little, dramatic performances” but refracted through history. My father is thus marked in me and many we are marked in and through him. We are as Scheurich writes, “webbed, arrayed, archaeological,” and through however many layers we might dig, we will never find an original. (54)

The cast members in Nauvoo perform this mosaic, even whilst being part of it. They become both the archaeologist and the archaeological in the process; the surveyor and the subject. As we will go on and see in part two, the genetic strand at work in these pageants brings a remarkable depth of emotional connectedness from the cast towards their own dead, whom they represent. And as Thompson’s insights above help us appreciate, they not only portray their kindred dead on stage but do so with and through the inherited bodies, gestures, expressions - those “tiniest embodied fragments” of the very people they are portraying. These people are not foreign to them; on the most intimate level, the cast members’ lives are informed by their forbears they



portray - they are indeed “marked” in them as Thompson puts it. Such familial-familiarity fosters an intimacy which bridges the gap between twenty-first century cast members and the dead they portray. Furthermore, this familiarity with their dead whom many cast members have researched thoroughly, leads to a deepening of potential for transformative encounters. This then is the DNA, genetic connection to the dead that informs these pageants, at least when they are performed in Nauvoo, Illinois. We will address the complexity of the Latter-day Saint UK identity and relationship to the dead in the next chapter, as it plays out a little differently when *The British Pageant* is portrayed in the UK. We move on now to the second strand which informs the remarkable intimacy between the living and the dead in these productions – the doctrinal strand.

### **“The dead are not dead” – the doctrinal connection to the dead**

The second strand at play which fosters transformative connectedness from the cast to those portrayed in these pageants is found in the Latter-day Saint theology about the relationship between the living and the dead. How Latter-day Saints view their relationship to their dead is perhaps best captured in the teachings of one of their former prophets, President Joseph F. Smith (1838 – 1918, Joseph Smith’s nephew). Whilst there are many teachings within the Latter-day Saint discourse we could look at to understand their theology, President Smith’s teachings, below, capture something of the remarkable intimacy the Saints enjoy with their dead. He said,

I believe we move and have our being in the presence of heavenly messengers and of heavenly beings. We are not separate from them. ... We are closely related to our kindred, to our ancestors ... who have preceded us into the spirit world. We cannot forget them; we do not cease to love them; we always hold them in our hearts, in memory, and thus we are associated and united to them by ties that we cannot break. ... (Those) who have gone beyond ... know us better than we know them.

... We live in their presence, they see us, they are solicitous for our welfare, they love us now more than ever. (J. F. Smith, 2 – 3)

This is a rich quote, giving a sense of a people intimately connected to their departed loved ones. President Smith's phraseology to differentiate the living from the dead is of interest in this study – the living are delineated from heavenly others by their movement and the unusual turn of phrase, to "have our being." The ontological has theatrical overtones here – movement and being carrying resonances that align living with the lexicon of performance studies.

There are resonances here to performance scholar Simon Shepherd's statement that "theatre is, and has always been, a place which exhibits what a human body is, what it does, what it is capable of" (1). When we remember that theatre exhibits the human body and what it does, central to which is movement, linking back to President Smith's quote, then we start to appreciate the echoes in President Smith's teachings of the actor-audience relationship playing out between the living and the dead. Drawing upon a well-established trope within the discourse, Shepherd reminds us, after all, that audience members are witnesses to the theatrical event which foregrounds the body, and that such witnesses are "something more than passive viewers. In the act of witnessing a person attests to the truth of something that is or was present for them" (73). This starts to resonate with Latter-day Saint understanding of their relationship to the dead, going back to Smith's quote, wherein he states that the dead, "see us." Yet the dead are not passive witnesses of the living within the Latter-day Saint mythos, any more than the audience member is to the exhibited body on stage. That, in the act of seeing the living moving and having their being, there is the profound care emanating from the dead towards them. There is a sense, then, in Joseph F. Smith's quote above, that the living as

embodied, moving beings perform their lives witnessed by the loving, empathetic dead who are their ancestors.

Such a notion, of the dead as witnesses to the living in a model that parallels the actor-audience relationship in theatre, is not a far stretch within the Latter-day Saint imagination. As one Latter-day Saint apostle, Boyd K. Packer taught:

In mortality, we are like one who enters a theater just as the curtain goes up on the second act. We have missed Act I. The production has many plots and sub-plots that interweave, making it difficult to figure out who relates to whom and what relates to what, who are the heroes and who are the villains. It is further complicated because you are not just a spectator; you are a member of the cast, on stage, in the middle of it all! (Packer)

Packer's metaphor here is very familiar for Latter-day Saints – the envisaging of mortality as the second act in a three-act play, with Act I being a pre-mortal, disembodied, spiritual life, which has been forgotten; Act II being mortality and Act III being life after death. What Latter-day Saints do not discuss as deeply, in their embracing of this metaphor, is that Joseph F. Smith's teachings frame the actors in Act III, the dead, as audience-ancestors to the living.

For Latter-day Saints, then, the living not only move and exist in the presence of heavenly beings, but those heavenly beings are audience-like in the seeing of them. Furthermore, they are not a quiet, polite audience for Latter-day Saints, for these are also heavenly messengers, beings who communicate messages from the heavens to earth. Instead, the ancestral audience continually interject and interrupt in Act II for Latter-day Saints, creating increased opportunity for symbiotic efficacy between the living and the dead. Joseph F. Smith continues and paints a picture of a people for whom the absent dead are actually remarkably present, like an audience with the house lights up. Indeed – the living are bound to their ancestors by “ties we cannot break.” Such

imagery could carry negative connotations, yet such a reading is mitigated against when we see that these are ties of “love” forged in the “heart” through affection-fuelled anamnesis.

And such affection and love is not one way within the Latter-day mythos, for their kindred dead not only love their posterity “more than ever” but furthermore are “solicitous” for them. This ancestral-audience, then, love and pray for the posterity-actors they are witnessing. This is a theological inversion of the traditional Christian notion of the living praying for the spirits of their departed dead. There is also the compelling statement from President Smith that departed ancestors “know us better than we know them.” This implies a world view for Latter-day Saints in which their ancestors are intimately involved with their lives – they are known by their departed dead – and known well; cared for and loved. Whilst most societal structures today are still built around the family as the primary nucleus of the care/support system for individuals, however that family formation might present itself, for Latter-day Saints that family support system is unbounded through the generations - each of us is cared for by our eternal, unending family, and actively watched by them, witnessed, to use Shepherd’s performance studies term. Sociologist of religion Douglas Davies summed this up succinctly when he simply observed, “In the case of Mormonism... it is almost as though the dead are not dead” (“Mormon Culture” 85). For Latter-day Saints, then, their ancestors are not absent nor distant, but rather present and intimately involved in their posterities’ lives - not really “dead” at all, and not even the euphemistic “elsewhere,” - but just beyond the footlights, witnessing their descendants’ lives, but sometimes, occasionally, coming right up onto the stage and helping out in a scene. This is what happens

in the pageants, and we will read accounts in part two of this chapter of actors' experiences of interacting with their departed loved ones on stage.

The specific impact of such doctrinal teachings playing out in the pageant, this remarkable intimacy with the dead, will be assessed in greater depth in part two of the chapter, but again, it is useful to begin to understand the general effect here and build upon that throughout. What does it mean, then, for cast members to not only be performing their ancestors, but to be performing *for* them simultaneously, believing whole-heartedly that those same ancestors are intimately connected with their lives, aware of them, supporting them and loving them, both on the pageant stage and the Act II stage that is their mortal life? It seems that one initial result is a cast who experience the ghosting of the stage, which Marvin Carlson in *The Haunted Stage* has written of extensively, in an unapologetically literal way: cast members experience the presence of the departed ancestors they are portraying on stage and engage with them, mid-scene, as we will go on and study. Simultaneously, the scripts themselves highlight this central doctrinal tenant.

The scripts of both pageants consistently and conscientiously reference this theological and personal connectivity to the dead. In *The Nauvoo Pageant* the opening monologue is delivered very simply, as a direct address to audience with one actor on stage representing Parley P. Pratt, a key historical early Latter-day Saint. He states towards the end of the monologue: "You see, when you're here, we're here also -- Because we are in you. Some of what you are now is because of what we are...." (Collier et al. Sc. 1). This is more than a pleasing turn of phrase in the opening of the pageant – for Latter-day Saints it is a metaphysical reality. Furthermore, we hear from Mary Ann Pratt, Parley's wife, in a parallel bookend closing monologue, "We know you, and you know

us!” (Collier et al. Sc. 14), echoing of Joseph F Smith’s teaching above that our dead know us better than we know ourselves. Many other such lines are shared in the script that highlight the doctrinal teaching of intimacy with the dead. A mother, Becky Laird, whose child has died is promised she will hold her son again in her arms (Collier et al. Sc. 2). In a funeral sermon, the actor portraying Joseph Smith shares actual recorded lines from Smith’s sermon at that funeral in 1844 (Smith, “History of the Church” Vol. 6, ch. 14: 316) saying:

Mothers, will you have your children in eternity? Yes! Yes! You shall, for they shall have eternal life. They are only absent for a moment. This is the purpose of the temple -- to bring together those who dwell on earth with those who dwell in heaven, that the hearts of our family members may be bound together for eternity. (Collier et al. Sc. 11)

Joseph Smith’s funeral sermon here, that the hearts of family members will be “bound together for eternity” finds echo in his nephew’s later sermon, shared above, that the living and dead are bound together with ties that cannot be broken. And in one of the closing scenes of *The Nauvoo Pageant*, Becky Laird asks her husband Robert, referring to their son Jamie who has died, “You feel him, don't you?” Robert replies, “Jamie? Aye, and m' grandparents and great-grandparents, too” (Collier et al. Sc. 13). Their short on-stage interchange here highlights Joseph F. Smith’s teaching that for Latter-day Saints, they “move and have their being in the presence of heavenly messengers.” Woven together, these various lines and more from *The Nauvoo Pageant* script give a very clear sense of a people for whom the dead are not dead, as Davies termed it. A similar doctrinal tapestry is interwoven into *The British Pageant* script, through both words, songs and staging, as a wife who has passed on watches over her family in various scenes.

It is perhaps no great surprise then, that in theatrical productions that speak so much of departed loved ones being present in our daily lives, that cast

members on stage should have encounters with their dead during rehearsals and performances. Such experiences are a source of consolation and joy for these cast members, as we will read in their interviews later in this chapter. This is in stark contrast to ideas in popular culture of what it may mean to encounter our dead on stage: who can forget the story of Daniel Day-Lewis' encounter with his dead father's ghost (in whatever form that was), on stage when portraying Hamlet at the National Theatre in London in 1989? Day-Lewis called that evening a "dreadful night" and has not performed on stage since (Trueman). I do not raise this story (now famous in theatrical folklore) as a comparative commentary on Day-Lewis' haunting encounter; rather, it is an illustration of what popular cultural memory conjures when we speak of encounters with our departed ancestors on stage. However, in this Latter-day Saint performative context, such encounters are vehicles of transformative joy for participants. Having discussed the doctrinal connection to the dead, building on the DNA connection to the dead, we move now onto the last of the three strands, the lineage connection, that connects Latter-day Saints to their dead in these pageants, being a community of believers who transcend time and place, forging a chain of religious memory.

### **The chain of memory and community of believers – the lineage connection to the dead**

The last strand of this trifocal lens is the Latter-day Saint sense of community that transcends time and space. Whilst connected to the previous point, this idea of community expands beyond connectedness to one's own kindred dead or ancestors only, and encompasses a profound sense of oneness with all members of the Latter-day Saint community, whether living, dead or indeed yet unborn. Such a deep sense of union with both the worldwide

and beyond-this-world community of Latter-day Saint believers is born out of three main elements - Latter-day Saint socio-cultural practices, theological teachings regarding Zion, and, lastly, sacred temple rituals, each of which we will now discuss in turn.

### **Socio-cultural practices:**

On any given Sunday, in services of Latter-day Saints worldwide, children may be found singing the following lyrics about the early pioneers' trek west, from *The Handcart Song*, in various languages:

When pioneers moved to the West,  
With courage strong they met the test.  
They pushed their handcarts all day long,  
And as they pushed they sang this song:

For some must push and some must pull,  
As we go marching up the hill;  
So merrily on our way we go  
Until we reach the Valley-o.

(McAllister and Reading)

Each child takes the hands of another child, and together they act out pushing and pulling each other in turn with rambunctious delight; needless to say, singing this song of memorial about the early pioneers was one of my favourite early memories of church attendance as a little girl. The song frames the epic Latter-day Saint journey West as a narrative of perseverance, physical exertion, camaraderie and joy – “merrily on our way we go” – but the early Saints did actually sing the last four lines as they crossed the plains and headed west in the 1840s and 1850s. Such recycling and use of the *haunted text*, to use Marvin Carlson's well-known term (“Haunted”, ch. 2), becomes a key consideration during part two, but for now, we are seeking to appreciate how the socio-cultural practices of Latter-day Saints link them to a community of believers. That link is



a crucial component in their remarkable transformative encounter with those they represent in performance.

Just as children learn about the epic pioneer trek West through playful singing at Church, so do teenagers and adults, (though lamentably without quite so much *joie de vivre* as the little ones), outside of the pageants. In short, Latter-day Saints hear their founding stories throughout their lives. For an entire year, weekly lessons for adults at church may be focussed on the early stories of the pioneers in the nineteenth century. Young adults aged between eighteen and thirty do even more in-depth study in a program called Institute on the early stories of the Latter-day Saint pioneers, and teenagers aged fourteen to eighteen participate in early morning seminary and study these stories, along with the scriptures, every morning before school. Within the cultural-educational practices of the Church then, links are continually being forged to Latter-day Saints who have already died. Such sharing has a doctrinal imperative, with former prophet Gordon B. Hinckley requesting that the pioneer stories be “repeated again and again” (Hinckley, “Teachings of Presidents” 88). These clarion calls to remember are replete within modern Latter-day Saint teachings, coupled with invitations to honour and emulate those early pioneers, including modern pioneers who are building the foundations of the church in multiple nations where it is relatively new.

This consistent and persistent focus on remembering through sharing the stories and faith of the early members of the Church is elucidated by the writings of Danièle Hervieu-Léger in *Religion as a Chain of Memory*. Here, while addressing religion in the general sense and not the Latter-day Saint faith in particular, she makes a compelling case to understand religion and religious beliefs as “chains of memory” shared from one generation in the community of

believers to the next. Such collective anamnesis within the Latter-day Saint community forges just such intergenerational chains of memory – and this imperative to remember has been happening since the founding years of the Church in the 1830s, with a focus on recording and collecting the Church’s history from the start. Without such intergenerational forging of these chains of memory, Hervieu-Léger argues and demonstrates how, religious communities crumble and ultimately collapse. Such a conclusion highlights that, “the future of religion is immediately associated with the problem of collective memory” (123). Of course, such collective memory and its relationship to theatre have become what Rebecca Schneider termed a “mantra” for theatre and performance studies (Schneider, “Haunted” 324). While the potent efficacy of theatre as embodied, collective memory will be explored more, for now, I am suggesting that Latter-day Saints already bring to the stage in these pageants a well-forged chain of collective memory, through the various teachings, stories and songs they have sung throughout their membership in the community.

To review; we are looking at three separate strands throughout the introduction to help create a frame through which to view and understand more fully how cast members in the pageants have such a transformative encounter with those they represent. We have looked already at genetic and family connections between the cast and those they represent, followed by teachings regarding how present and supportive “absent” ancestor-audiences are for Latter-day Saint, and lastly we are looking at a community of believers that transcend time and place. In this last strand of the three, a community of believers, we understand the three distinct ways this community of believers is formed; socio-cultural practices that create religious chains of memory, as discussed above, theological teachings regarding Zion, and specific rituals

within the faith, that take place in Latter-day Saint temples. We are now considering the notion of Zion within the Latter-day Saint discourse and how this helps to foster a sense of a community of believers that transcends time and place.

### **Zion – A Celestial Community**

Along with chains of religious belief, forged through the socio-cultural practice of remembrance, theological teachings within the faith outline a community of believers that transcend time and space, or Zion, as the Latter-day Saints refer to this concept. This understanding of Zion should not be understood as teaching believers about the past, as just discussed – though that may play a part in it - instead, it is a more future focussed doctrine. There is a clear theological discourse running through Latter-day Saints teachings, then, that illuminates the idea of a people united between this world and the next, who will come together at a future time, when all things will be gathered together and united as one (The Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 84: 100).

Zion for Latter-day Saints is a complex, multi-faceted term with specific yet different meanings. It is used to refer to both geographic places and various groups of people at different periods, personal morality, states and ways of being and even encompasses economic relations between people. In other words, an in-depth understanding of the different meanings of the term Zion within the Latter-day Saint lexicon is not possible nor actually needed in this study. There are many places the interested reader can go to find out more, including Latter-day Saint apologist and scholar Hugh Nibley's *Approaching Zion*, among others. For this study, we will be focussing on specific aspects of the term Zion as it is used within Latter-day Saint teachings. In so doing, I

acknowledge is it is a profoundly complex, politicised, and at times inflammatory term outside of this context. The weight the term Zion and Zionism carries outside of the Latter-day Saint context, especially in the Judaic religio-political context and Herzl/Weizmann's use of the term as an ideological movement connected to the formation of an independent Jewish state, is not part of this discussion at all.

What aspect then, of the complex meaning of the term Zion, within this context, are we focussing on here? When I use the term Zion in this study, I am referring to the Latter-day Saint idea of a celestial or heavenly community (celestial being the term for heavenly within the Church's terminology). Latter-day Saint scholar Hugh Nibley wrote: "Zion is any community in which the celestial order prevails" ("Zion" 4). What is meant by celestial order? Latter-day Saint scriptures give us a clearer sense of the attributes of celestial order, leading to a celestial community. In The Doctrine and Covenants, a book of scripture members study, we read that Zion is: "a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the Saints.... And it shall be called Zion" (Sec. 45: 65-66). The Latter-day Saint sense of Zion, then, carries many of the positive attributes ascribed to home. However, what leads to such peace, refuge and security? Here I share a slightly longer quote from Church leader and apostle Elder D. Todd Christofferson, who also quotes Latter-day Saint scripture:

Zion is Zion because of the character, attributes, and faithfulness of her citizens. Remember, "the Lord called his people Zion, because they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them" (Moses 7:18). If we would establish Zion in our homes, (and churches), we must rise to this standard. It will be necessary (1) to become unified in one heart and one mind; (2) to become, individually and collectively, a holy people; and (3) to care for the poor and needy with such effectiveness that we eliminate poverty among us. We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come as they happen. (Christofferson 37)

Again, the notion that we are talking of Zion as a community of people with shared, celestial attributes is evident. Zion is defined by the inner characteristics of its members here, including unity and holiness, which leads to outer signifiers – in this instance the utopian ideal of the elimination of poverty, in all its pernicious manifestations. Unity is essential in this definition – both unity of heart and mind, implying Zion is a community in which feelings and thoughts unify rather than divide the people. It also entails a sense of individual and communal “holiness,” which the scriptures define as a group of people devoid of “jarrings, and contentions, and envyings, and strifes” (The Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 101: 6). There is an explicit invitation to live in this unified, holy manner, to rise to this standard, as it were. This Zion ideal, then, is not seen as naïve nor unattainable by Latter-day Saints; instead in the smaller communities of their homes and at Church, they are asked to live this celestial order. Such a high ideal is clearly not always achieved in the home and churches of Latter-day Saints, but the ideal, of a Zion community, remains, for individuals and communities. As was taught by early Latter-day Saint prophet Brigham Young (1801 – 1877), “When we conclude to make a Zion we will make it, and this work commences in the heart of each person” (Young, “*Building Zion*”).

Such a Zion community can be comprised of the living here on earth; or it can be the dead, a celestial community living beyond this world. Crucially for this study, it can also be a combination of the two: a community of the living coupled with those who have passed on, who will come together at some unknown future time, to live on the earth together in this celestial order. The quote above from Christofferson references this future occurrence obliquely, stating, “We cannot wait until Zion comes for these things to happen—Zion will come only as they happen.” In a more explicit statement on this fusion of

celestial communities, of the living coming together with those who have already passed on, we read the following in The Doctrine and Covenants.

Though it is written in past tense, it is referring to future events:

The Lord hath gathered all things in one.  
The Lord hath brought down Zion from above.  
The Lord hath brought up Zion from beneath.  
(Sec. 84: 100)

This gathering in one of Zion, a celestial community from above (the realm of spirits) gathered to a celestial community from beneath (the realm of the living), coming together to dwell on earth is deeply woven into the Latter-day Saint imagination. This I will refer to as future Zion; when it will occur is unknown, but that it will occur is a deeply held faith of Latter-day Saints. The attempts to create Zion now are preparatory for the Zion that will come; indeed, the attempts now facilitate and enable the future Zion. When I use the term Zion in this study, I will use it in one of these two ways. First, either a mortal community seeking to live this celestial order, which I will call present Zion or Zion now. And second, this future gathering of Zion from above with Zion from beneath, a Zion comprising of the living and the dead, which I will call future Zion. This nomenclature of future, present or now in reference to Zion is not used within Latter-day Saint terminology but is merely a useful tool for this study to aid clarity. The following Latter-day Saint hymn captures something of this sense of Zion as it is being used here:

We will sing of Zion,  
Kingdom of our God.  
Zion is the pure in heart,  
Those who seek the Savior's part.  
Zion soon in all the world  
Will rise to meet her God.

When the Saints of Zion  
Keep his law in truth,

Hate and war and strife will cease;  
Men will live in love and peace.  
Heav'nly Zion, come once more  
And cover all the earth.  
(Bradshaw)

The first verse, above, gives a sense of Zion now as I am calling it, rising upwards to meet God. The last verse speaks more of future Zion, coming down to earth. While we will study more deeply how this concept of Zion plays out in the pageants in part two of this chapter, leading to transformative encounters with those portrayed, it is again helpful to plant a few seeds now that can grow throughout the reading. Firstly, as shared in the opening chapter, it is interesting to note that when apostle, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland, came to Nauvoo to see the two pageants in 2015, he stated, “The dream of Zion is relived here each summer” (Holland). His comment helps us understand that for Latter-day Saints the entire theatrical process and performance is read and framed as a Zion now experience for participants – a community living in celestial order. Cast comments bear this out – perhaps the phrase I heard the most when gathering feedback was “this was Zion”. One example here from a family cast member called Dean is typical of many such comments. He said, regarding the leadership paradigm of the pageant, “They taught us not just the moves but the teaching style, love & kindness of Zion. Between us all, we created a small piece of Zion on earth” (Beale). It is interesting to note that as pageant directors we rarely, if ever, use the term Zion to discuss what we are doing, and yet it is how participants understand it. This is partly because Zion is the communal effect of liminal symbiotic efficacy (to build from the last chapter) – inscribing the liminal spaces between us with I-Thou love, as Dean’s comment, above, clearly reveals. Indeed, Hugh Nibley’s definition of Zion is inherently liminal: Zion is the “midpoint” of everything, and “the great moment of transition, the bridge

between the world as it is and the world as God designed it and meant it to be” (Nibley, “Zion” 4). Zion as a bridge is the ultimate betwixt-between of the celestial and the terrestrial.

Nibley's insight also helps us understand that Zion is an inherently performative endeavour – a performance of how Latter-day Saints envisage their ideal, celestial community. The pageant rehearsal and performance process becomes a two-week window in which families can perform Zion, largely devoid of the distractions of paid labour. Nicholas Ridout has more to say on performance outside of the economic transaction for actors, which we will touch upon later. The utopian longing Elder Holland's comment reveals – the “dream of Zion” relived in Nauvoo each summer - is done so through the materiality of theatrical reproduction. Whilst *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants* are nominally performed, what is actually performed is the attempt of cast members to live Zion now and Zion future. This performance of Zion throughout the two weeks is Zion now – the attempt to live together the principles and attributes of Zion in interpersonal relationships. However, the pageant performance is also, crucially, a fore-taster or practice of the living and the dead coming together in one; it is also a performance of future Zion. We will discuss and understand how this occurs in part two of the chapter.

This notion of Zion now and future – a celestial community – resonates with Edith Turner's writings on the profound joy to be found in *communitas*. Like Zion, *communitas* is slippery and hard to define according to E. Turner, but as a key attribute of liminality, she writes that *communitas*, “has to do with the sense felt by a group of people when their life together takes on full meaning” (E. Turner, “*Communitas*” 1). Central to *communitas* then is the togetherness of a community infused by full meaning. We will come to explore more throughout



this chapter the *communitas* of Zion realised through theatrical performance, and how it creates a community of believers that transcends time and space, fostering further transformative intimacy with the dead in the process.

### **Vicarious Temple Rituals**

The third element we will explore that creates a community of believers that transcends time and space is related to Latter-day Saint temples. As mentioned in the opening chapter, Douglas Davies sees these temples as the “medium of the message” (“Mormon Culture” 67) for Latter-day Saints. If the message of the Church is that eternal families are possible through Jesus Christ, then the medium for such doctrinal teachings is in the rituals undertaken in temples. Within the temples, Latter-day Saints vicariously perform ordinances, or rites, on behalf of their departed ancestors or others who have passed on – making such ritualistic representation in the temples a form of reverential, sacred role-play. Latter-day Saints, then, are used to performing their dead. The parallels between the performative work in the temples and on the pageant stage has been drawn by Latter-day Saint performance and theatre scholar Megan Sanborn Jones. In her book *Contemporary Mormon Pageantry: Seeking After the Dead* published in 2018, Sanborn Jones observes, “participants in Mormon pageants feel a resonance between the work they do to embody a character of the past onstage and the work they do to redeem the dead in temples. They are “living proxies”...” (140). This sense of being a living proxy is framed by Sanborn Jones through the writings of Joseph Roach and his insights on what it means to effigy the dead (effigy as a verb in this instance, not a noun). Effigy, writes Sanborn Jones and quoting from Roach,

evokes the presence of an absence, particularly to “body forth” something from the distant past. In surrogation, performance creates history and provokes memory, as a performance is a “set of actions that hold open a place in memory”. (“Contemporary Mormon Pageantry” 139)

The Latter-day Saint who worships in the temple acts a living proxy for the materially absent dead, similarly to the Latter-day Saint actor on stage. In both vicarious, surrogate performances then, in the temple and on stage, the chains of religious memory burnished by proxy performance create a history wherein the individual locates themselves firmly within their own transcendent community narrative. In other words, Latter-day Saints do not just effigy the dead in performance; they commune with them.

This clear parallel between proxy temple work and proxy stage work (the first seen as sacred ritual by Latter-day Saints, but both seen as sacred service) are in constant reciprocal play with one another during the pageant process and performance, as cast will usually be doing both during their two weeks in Nauvoo, Illinois and in Lancashire, Chorley: temple work becomes preparatory for stage work; stage work becomes preparatory for temple work. Both proxy performative works consistently remind Latter-day Saints, (or create space to remember), that they are members of a community of believers that transcend time and place. Moreover, crucially, as Davies put it, the temple is the medium for that message of a transcendent community. In connection to this, Latter-day Saints firmly believe in a soteriological lineage, in which the living and the dead are crucial to one another’s salvation. As the Latter-day Saint prophet, Joseph Smith writes in The Doctrine and Covenants regarding this reciprocal saving between the living and the dead: “For we without them cannot be made perfect; neither can they without us be made perfect” (Sec. 128: 18). A soteriological theology in which the living and the dead are co-dependent upon one another shares clear parallels with the co-dependency of performance in which the living

effigy forth the dead. It furthermore deepens the essential chains of religious memory that Danièle Hervieu-Léger writes of. Indeed, Joseph Smith was writing of chains long before Hervieu-Léger, observing that the proxy performative work of temples was, “the chain that binds the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the children to the fathers” (Smith, “History of the Church” vol. 6, ch. 8: 184). The proxy performative work of the pageants helps strengthen that chain, through the intergenerational turning of hearts that occurs when cast members perform their dead.

These three practices and doctrine combined - socio-cultural teachings, a Zion community and temple rites - create a culture in which Latter-day Saints feel connected to the entire community of Saints who have passed on (and who are yet to be born). Church members learn about the Latter-day Saint dead throughout their membership, they live so as to be united in one with them in Zion future, and they perform vicarious proxy performances on their behalf in the temple. Acting together, the three locate cast members clearly within a transcendent, united community of believers. Stepping back and interweaving this transcendent community of builders, with our previous two strands - genetic connections between cast and those they represent, coupled with a theology in which the “dead are not dead” - creates remarkably fertile soil for profound, transformative encounters with the dead in performance. It should be noted that while the cast comes with the soil well fertilised for this encounter, their experiences in the pageants seem to be more profound and transformative than encounters with the dead they have had before their participation; “the play’s the thing” as Hamlet said. Moreover, it is the fecund nexus between this tri-part lens and the theatrical process and performances that is the focus of our next section, wherein we ask, what are these transformative encounters with the

dead in the pageants? How do they play out? What are the efficacious results in cast members lives? How does theatre practice informed by this tri-part lens facilitate, elucidate and consolidate such encounters? Or, more simply in this context, how does playing the dead transform the living?

## **Part Two: haunted pageants**

Throughout part two of this chapter, I will analyse various aspects of the theatrical process and performances in the staging of these pageants using the tri-part lens created above, with additional theatrical and performance scholarship where helpful. The aspects I have selected either reveal or play a compelling part in transformative encounters for cast members with their kindred dead. I take a thematic approach, looking at cast members' feedback, script and the body of the performer on stage, with some accompanying dance choreography. These areas correspond loosely with Marvin Carlson's insightful work in *The Haunted Stage*, in which he divided his discussion into four clear areas: "The Haunted Text," "The Haunted Body," "The Haunted Production" and "The Haunted House." His demarcations are useful here as we go on to explore, though not in his order, how the text, the body, the production and, in the next chapter, the venue or location for these pageants, are "haunted" and create a profound transformative intimacy with the dead. Indeed, I do not know how these performances could be any more "haunted, to use Carlson's phrase. As we will discover below, *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants* are the haunted text, body and production par excellence (and arguably house too, as Chapter Four addresses). We begin then by looking at cast members' feedback so that before we look at the haunted apparatus of these performances, we understand

fully just how transformative the engagement with the dead is. This is Don's story.

### **Don's Story**

Don was a father in the family cast who came to the pageant with some difficulty in finding a balance between his home life and working life. I share his feedback to me below in full, as it reveals just how transformative his encounter with the dead through performance was for him. Similar to Michael and Sarah's stories in the previous chapter, the specific circumstances of Don's story were unique to him, but many such stories which highlighted personal transformative change through intimacy with the dead were shared with me. These stories touched upon transformation in such areas as improved marriages, improved parenting, a deeper personal joy in daily living and an increased sense of God's love in their lives. Many of these stories, along with Don's, were shared with me months after the pageant had finished, implying at least to some degree, that the transformation was not just a temporary experience whilst in Nauvoo but had facilitated lasting change. While the scope of this study did not allow for a detailed look at how these transformative experiences lasted after the pageant had finished, my sense is that for many participants the transformation led to tangible, long-lasting changes in their lives once they had returned to their home environments, though it is beyond the scope of this study to fully verify that. Don shared:

I entered the pageant with a heavy heart in some respects. I have had a terrible work schedule (sixty-eighty hour weeks) for several years now and I have increasingly felt down about my lot in life. I watch from my work windows all that is going on and being experienced by those around me and it leaves me feeling shorted. I spend my time trying to provide for my family and not being able to enjoy life with them. This may seem a trivial thing when compared to those that suffer from illness and other personal tragedies, but for me, the pain is real. Going to Nauvoo was

'right' from the beginning, regardless of how hard it was going to make my schedule. With this as a background, I poured myself into my character to try to feel what someone in that circumstance would have felt. I watched the others on stage and often found my thoughts turning to those that we were portraying. I started to feel their faith, their load, their life. I could feel my burden being lifted. I felt my lot being put into perspective. I felt that I began to understand more that Heavenly Father expects me to do the best in my own circumstance and that things would be 'OK.' I felt an increase in faith as I turned more of my burden over to the Lord. Nauvoo for me was a boot camp to life. I felt like I was trained to have a better perspective and to forgive and see the good in those I'm around. I believe I'm on a good track to make improvements in my life after some of the pain of emotional inflammation was reduced. Once the infection subsided, the healing was more accessible. (Coates)

Don's experience prior to arriving in Nauvoo evokes an initial pathos in us – his work schedule is “terrible” for him, and has been for years; he gets little time with his family whom he works so hard to provide for, and he portrays his life, watching from his window at work, as a slow, drawn-out grieving for the life that could be. He is self-aware in his grief, acknowledging it may seem “trivial” for others, but, nevertheless, his pain is real for him. His final inflammation and infection metaphor frames his entire performance encounter as a time of transformative healing; the performance becomes the space that allowed for the inflammation of emotional distress to be reduced. At the very heart of the experience for Don was an encounter with the dead he represented, which changed his perspective and facilitated revelatory experiences for him as we will now discuss, utilising the tri-part lens outlined in part one.

Don's experience gives a clear sense of his awareness of belonging to a community of believers that transcends time and place, which is strengthened by his acting in the pageant, with transformative, healing results. He “poured” himself into his character in an attempt to “feel” what that character might have felt. We should remember here that Don is in the family cast; he does not have any spoken lines on stage – rather he joins in the singing, the dancing and the

group mise-en-scene. When it would be easy for him to assume his part does not matter as there are about 160 other cast members in the pageant, he instead commits wholeheartedly to the performative process and seeks to do all he can in his responsibilities as an actor to help tell his character's story. The family cast are very much encouraged to see themselves as co-creators in the show, as discussed in the previous chapter, and Don takes this invitation fully to heart it seems. In so doing he observes, in relation to the early Latter-day Saints he is portraying, that "I started to feel their faith, their load, their life." This is a clear example of the vital strengthening of chains of religious memory, that Danièle Hervieu-Léger speaks of.

When speaking of these chains of religious memory shared between past, present and future generations of believers, Hervieu-Léger argues that "there is no religion without the authority of tradition being invoked" (76). Interestingly, in the Latter-day Saint context, however, is that the tradition that is evoked both in these pageants and in the socio-cultural practices of the Church teaching the stories of the early Saints, is the tradition of individual and collective faith in the theology and practice of Zion. The chains of religious memory for Latter-day Saints, then, are initially forged around a shared faith and practice of Zion. This observation may seem obvious, but is important to appreciate, because faith, the act of hoping and believing in that which is not encountered through sight (Heb. 11:1), may be the most intangible of traditions woven into the religious chain of memory, yet the most potent for Latter-day Saints personally. When Don observes that he started to "feel their faith" the simplicity of his statement belies a multifaceted process in which feelings, (a key apparatus of theatre as Hurley reminds us), intersect with the tri-part lens outlined above, especially regarding a community of believers. Through

performance, Don feels the faith of his religious forbears in ways he has seemingly never done so before, increasing his own faith in the process. Don replaces the labour of his pedestrian job with the labour of theatre when he works hard to “feel what someone in that circumstance would have felt,” and his efforts are rewarded with personal, efficacious transformation: “I could feel my burden being lifted. I felt my lot being put into perspective.” The labour of theatre work, to learn to feel in order to portray the experiences of the early Latter-day Saints, changes his perspective upon his own life. The performative immersion he experiences which enables him to feel “their faith, their load, their life” implies a unity between him and the early Latter-day Saints he is portraying which echoes of future Zion in which all things are gathered in one. Such unity is what leads to his changed perspective, and he is healed.

It should be acknowledged here that inasmuch as Don’s transformative encounter is rooted firmly in his own unhappy work life, a tendency to want to read his story through a Marxist lens is hard to resist. Such a Marxist lens may ascribe such healing as simply the results of a temporary break from the oppressive work pressures of an extreme neo-liberal society, and as such the pageants could be read as tools which pacify the individual from rising up and questioning such politico-economic practices as excessively long working hours. While there may be some measure of validity in such a reading, it is not within the purposes nor scope of this discourse to pursue that path fully, though it should be acknowledged. Furthermore, a few other cast members shared feedback with me that was similar to Don’s inasmuch as they were not enjoying their work life, yet their experience was quite different to Don’s in the pageant. One cast member, for example, stated that whilst on stage performing one night he felt inspired by God to quit his job which he was not enjoying, move with his



family to a different country and continent and to start a training course in the arts, which they subsequently did (Cartwright). This individual ascribes that life-changing experience for their family to what he termed clear inspiration from God to him during the performance. Whilst a rich story in and of itself, I share it to highlight that what we are exploring here is not as much about the politico-jural structures at play in cast members lives: some cast remain in such unhappy jobs, some quit from their participation, and for most their transformative encounter has little to do with their paid labour. Instead, this chapter is more focussed on the nexus between their theatricalisation of their sacred history with the present religio-spiritual structures at play in their lives, leading to personal transformation. That said, where helpful the more politico-jural theatrical discourse will be called upon where and when it elucidates the religio-spiritual, as Nicolas Ridout's writings on romantic anti-capitalism do from his book *Passionate Amateurs: Theatre, Communism and Love*. Ridout's work here helps elucidate more how Don's unity with the dead is transformative for him, as it touches upon utopian futures, which in this context is connected to Zion.

In his book, Ridout writes that amateur theatrical performers, (which the family cast are inasmuch as this is unpaid work for them), engage in a form of "romantic anti-capitalism" in their stage work ("Passionate Amateurs", ch. 1). In defining romantic anti-capitalism, he quotes Michael Lowy, who states that it is a rejection of the "unbearable" and "degrading" way that some forms of paid labour lead to the "mechanization of life" and the "dissolution of community," (qtd. by Ridout, 8) which all seems an apt description for Don's experiences. While a wholesale application of what Ridout means by romantic anti-capitalism is not applicable here, one aspect of it is helpful. Ridout, quoting Lowy, writes

that it is “not a return to the past, but a detour through the past on the way to a utopian future” (qtd. by Ridout, 8). This is an apt description of what is happening for cast members in the pageants, and for Don especially, in this instance. There is no sense amongst the creators and cast of these two pageants of a rejection of the present in favour of some nostalgic return to the past through performance; that is not the feeling of this thing at all. Rather it is far more, as Ridout suggests, a group of passionate amateurs who detour to the past and in so doing come to taste, experience and indeed perform Zion future, their own religiously inscribed vision of a utopia yet to come.

The unity with the dead that Don experiences through performing them – keenly feeling their faith, load and life – furthered him in his personal creation of Zion now and future, which is clearly an ongoing endeavour in the lives of all Latter-day Saints. As he expressed it, from participating in the pageant, he felt trained to, “have a better perspective and to forgive and see the good in those I’m around,” which echoes keenly of the Church’s definitions of Zion as shared in part one, above, in which interpersonal relationships are holy and devoid of all ill-will.

Part of this change was catalysed by his encounter with the dead, as he talks more about his encounters with the dead than with the living in his description of his experience. While he does not explain for us how his encounter with them led him to a more forgiving attitude, he does repeat a few times the idea that through seeing their “load” – one assumes he means the trials and suffering of the pioneers he was portraying - his perspective on his own life shifts. It would be easy to not appreciate fully the efficacy of this shift in perspective that Don experiences – but we should remember he finds it profoundly healing. To help us more fully understand and appreciate how

performing the pioneers impacted his life so transformatively, we return to John Somers' profound insights on the efficacy of applied drama, which we touched on briefly in the last chapter. Here we look at a slightly longer quote of his drawn from "Interactive Theatre: Drama as Social Intervention". In it Somers writes:

Drama's power to change attitudes is rooted in the notion of intertextuality, the dynamic relationship and intertwining of stories, in this case the interpenetration of the performed story with the story which forms the personal identity of the individual. The intricate intertextual dynamic created when, in community theatre, inhabitants perform their own histories', thereby discovering more about and placing themselves within the community's identity involves a productive collision of the personal, the community and context.... (They) reedit their personal stories as a result of taking part in drama that connects fundamentally with who they consider they are. In this way Applied Drama provides experience that leads to personal growth through meaning-making in a complex, reflexive relationship between dramatic experience and personal identity. (65 – 66)

To use Somers' helpful frame here, the interpenetration and intertextualising of the performed story with Don's story is rich: he felt their faith, and their trials and burdens – indeed – he felt "their life." As he performs their stories, he performs his own faith's history as a believing Latter-day Saint. This history is central to his identity from the socio-cultural practices of being taught these stories at Church, as outlined in part one. Crucially to his healing shift of perspective, he places himself within his community's identity, as outlined by Somers; Don states simply, "I felt my own lot being put into perspective."

The resonances between Somers' writings here on applied drama and Danièle Hervieu-Léger's work on religion as a chain of memory should not be lost on us, as overlaid, they elucidate Don's transformative shift of perspective, facilitated by his encounter with the dead he represents on stage. Community drama's power, as Somers observes, lies in the intertextualising, intertwining and interpenetration of the community stories with the performer's stories. And religion, in order to not crumble and collapse, needs strongly forged chains of

religious memory between the living and the dead within that believing community (Hervieu-Léger, ch.7). Therefore, theatrical performance arguably becomes one of the most powerful of tools to create intergenerational chains of religious memory. Little wonder proxy performance is at the heart of Latter-day Saint rituals in the temple. For what are chains of religious memory, if not the intertwining and interpenetration of that religious community's stories, history, faith, traditions, rituals, people, doctrine, theology and hope between members throughout the believing generations?

Hervieu-Léger writes that at the source of all religions is just such a chain of memory, a "belief in the continuity of the lineage of believers. This continuity transcends history. It is affirmed and manifested in the essentially religious act of recalling a past which gives meaning to the present and contains the future" (125). To overlay Somers and Hervieu-Léger's work here, with the tri-part lens of part one, the pageants are an embodied, performative recalling of the past for Don, giving him a sense of greater meaning in the present through his "reediting" of his story (or perspective), due to locating himself in his community's identity and lineage, whilst simultaneously containing and rehearsing the utopian of future Zion.

Such a rich interlacing of past, present and future within the pageants and within the lineage of believers starts to resonate with Hervieu-Léger's further insights on rites. She goes on to explain that, more often than not, the religious practice of anamnesis, or recalling the past, is observed as a rite. She articulates that what defines a religious rite is,

...that the regular repetition of a ritually set pattern of word and gesture exists in order to mark the passage of time (as well as the transience of each individual life incorporated in the chain) with the recall of the foundational events that enabled the chain to form and/or affirm its power to persist through whatever vicissitudes have come, and will still come, to threaten it. (125)

Taking this definition from an eminent religious sociologist and scholar, *The Nauvoo and British Pageants* in Nauvoo have become rites, though they did not necessarily start in that way. As shared in the opening chapter, *The Nauvoo Pageant* has been staged every summer since 2005 in Nauvoo, with little changes after 2007. *The British Pageant* has been performed alongside it in repertoire every summer since 2014. Furthermore, leaders of the Church have recently announced that these pageants will continue to be supported in Nauvoo and that *The British Pageant* in the UK will be performed every four years from now on. In the performances themselves, while individual gestures of actors and family cast will change from year to year, there is a set pattern of words in the script that will change very little, if at all, over the coming years and decades that these pageants are staged. The choreography likewise, while there might be minor adaptations over the years will, generally speaking, be recycled.

The pageants' staging each year (or every four years in the UK) also mark the passage of time, with *The Nauvoo Pageant* already being talked about in terms of "the early years" that it was staged, and the first staging of *The British Pageant* in Lancashire in 2013 being seen as seminal to the annals of Latter-day Saint history in the UK. Furthermore, both pageants recall the "foundational events that enable the chain to form," with both of them having scenes that recount Joseph Smith's first vision, the restoration of the priesthood, (as discussed in Chapter One), the call to gather to Nauvoo, the purpose of The Book of Mormon, and the purpose of temples – some of the key events on which The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded.

While such scenes recall foundational events, other scenes, all based on actual events, clearly show the early Saints overcoming the "vicissitudes" of life

and religious persecution which “threaten” individual members, as Hervieu-Léger phrases it above, through their faith in Jesus Christ. In *The British Pageant* we see micro-aggressions played out with characters being fired from their jobs in economically uncertain times because of choosing to be baptised; other characters choose to gather to Nauvoo even though they know they will die en route; we see and hear of hundreds and thousands of individuals and families who sacrifice family, security, friends and love of home and nation to cross the ocean and gather to America. In *The Nauvoo Pageant* we learn of the violence and persecution experienced by the early Saints both in Missouri and then again in Nauvoo, of the murder of Joseph and his brother Hyrum Smith, and the Saints forced from Nauvoo at gunpoint. While all these stories are presented very simply, with no attempt to theatrically recreate the violence and oppression experienced beyond simple narration, nonetheless, each pageant certainly affirms for members that the Church (and her members) can “persist through whatever vicissitudes have come, and will still come”, as quoted above. The pageants, then, reveal the power to persist that Saints have had in the face of threats and trials.

Taken all together, these key elements frame the pageants as clear example of religious rites, in accordance with Hervieu-Léger’s definition: repetition of script and general staging; the pageants marking the passage of time with their regular, assured annual staging; the recalling of foundational events that enabled the religious chain to be originally formed, and the retelling of Saints overcoming the vicissitudes of life. Religious rites are central to creating a lineage of religious belief, and that lineage is, according to Danièle Hervieu-Léger, what differentiates religious memory from collective memory. While many theatrical productions deal in the realm of collective memory, not all

theatrical productions become religious rites as the pageants have become.

This is not to imply, from the Latter-day Saint perspective, that the pageants act as saving ordinances or rituals, like baptism or the events in the temples, but they do clearly act as religious rites, using Hervieu-Léger's detailed and thorough definition of the term.

If such rites are central to creating a lineage of belief, it is because of how they navigate the management of memory (Hervieu-Léger 123), which differs from religion to religion and from rite to rite. Indeed, you could say that how the religious manage their memory is what foundationally shapes them. Thus, it is helpful to recognise that one of the ways that The Church of Jesus Christ develops and maintains its authorised memory is through theatrical productions; in this instance *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants*. It is worth asking what that reveals about the Church, for not all religions use theatrical performances which restage their history to authorise and manage their lineage of memory; and furthermore what it says about theatre, and these pageants in particular, that they become such powerful tools to affirm the Latter-day Saint lineage or chain of belief? Before addressing these questions in the conclusion, I will share two final insights from Hervieu-Léger that play an important role in understanding the transformative efficacy of encounters with the dead in these pageants.

To take us back to Don's story, we can start to appreciate that in participating in the pageants he is performing in a theatrical, religious rite, in which his own life is incorporated into the chain of believers. Understanding the pageant as a religious rite helps us understand that Don does not just learn about the founding events of the chain, and vicissitudes of life which his lineage of believers have overcome – rather he embodies the chain, as simultaneously

himself and the dead he represents. In so doing, the linear chain of believers that Hervieu-Léger writes of ceases to be a linear chain at all, and becomes, during the time of the pageant, a circular chain of believers. What is meant by a circular chain of believers, how it happens through performance, and the effect of it, is the focus of this next section.

### **A Circular Chain of Believers**

In order to understand this aspect of the discussion more fully it is helpful to introduce the feedback of two other participants in the pageants. Whilst I may still occasionally refer to Don's transformative change of perspective, (fostered by locating himself in the lineage of believers), further accounts of transformative encounters with the dead here will help elucidate more fully the idea of a circular chain of believers. I begin by sharing the experience of one family cast member, Lisa, who shared the following account of talking to her deceased father one night during *The British Pageant* performance whilst in Nauvoo. She had just done the dance 'on deck' on 'the boat' and was sat in a 'berth' with a few other family cast members on stage. Lisa shared:

During the pageant one night I felt my father at my elbow, asking questions and watching. I was sitting on stage "on board ship" watching the stars... I felt him star gazing with us and I silently bore my testimony to him while Elizabeth pointed out constellations. It was such a joy to know he was there. The Holy Ghost magnifies our offerings on stage and collapses years and lives into a timeless oneness. (Dahlgren)

We will discuss Lisa's insights, above, in conjunction with Natascha's story, another family cast member, below, as the two resonate together so richly in helping us understand this notion of a circular chain of believers. Whilst a slightly longer account, Natascha's story, experienced whilst performing in *The*



*Nauvoo Pageant*, is worth sharing here in full, outlining as it does a moment when the linear becomes circular:

The line [in the script], "When you're here, we're here," from *The Nauvoo Pageant* has special meaning for me. I know that there are times during the pageants when the past and the present literally intersect and the two time periods become one story. I witnessed one such event during *The Nauvoo Pageant*. My family was assigned to be a part of the healing scene. This scene depicts the Saints during their early years in Nauvoo when they were sick and dying, likely from malaria. The focal point of the story is the healing of Brother Fordham. In the background, about eight other similar scenes are taking place. When the prophet Joseph sends out the brethren to heal, they go "heal" in these other smaller scenes.

During practice in the first week, Sister Clyde volunteered to be our "sick" person on stage. The rest of us would complete the scene by laying down a blanket, bathing her head with water, reassuring her, and setting up the little pretend fire by our scene. We are only on the stage for about ten minutes. At the time that Sis. Clyde volunteered to be sick, she was as healthy as any of us. However, by the time of the first performance one week later, she was struggling with her breathing and had become quite ill. No doubt the weather was a contributing factor. It was about one hundred degrees with near one hundred percent humidity and the air was heavy. Throughout that Tuesday, she got worse and worse; so much worse that by performance time that night, we weren't sure if she would be able to perform the whole play.

As the healing scene began Sister Clyde was coughing and breathing heavily as she slowly came up the ramp. Our worry for her was real as she lay there struggling for air on stage. We weren't sure if she would be able to get down the ramp after the scene. During the scene, the brethren were sent to lay their hands on the sick Saints. At some point, the comment is made that by priesthood power the Saints were healed from all manner of diseases. Just as that comment was made (I can't remember the exact line), two brethren holding the priesthood arrived at our camp and laid their hands on Sister Clyde. It was at that moment that we saw the past truly become the present and those brethren were no longer just actors on a stage. They were the Brethren actually healing from so long ago. They only stayed at our camp for seconds before moving on to another camp, but as they placed their hands on Sister Clyde, she was healed. Her coughing subsided and her breathing became normal. In that healing scene, the Lord performed a miracle and I knew that, "When You're Here, We're Here." Sister Clyde got up from her sickbed, right on cue, and walked off that stage. She finished the rest of the performance and remained healthy through the week. I have always believed that time is circular with God and not linear as we perceive time. As we re-enact the lives of the Saints in Nauvoo, their lives become our lives for brief moments within certain scenes in the plays. Their testimonies become our testimonies and we become one. There are moments when we truly see, not the actors but the actual people from the past up on the stage. We see them because they are there. (Jewell)

These two accounts combined, Lisa's and Natascha's, (there are many more similar accounts from cast members), reveal the pageant performances as lives, stories, history, people and place coalesced. Natascha's story is in reference to July 22nd 1839, when multiple accounts exist of a remarkable day of healing in Nauvoo. Hundreds of the early Latter-day Saints lay sick and dying as they had just gathered to the swampy bend of the Mississippi. The prophet Joseph and others went about laying their hands upon the heads of these sick and healing them. The scene in *The Nauvoo Pageant* is based upon these multiple accounts of that miraculous day. The account below, from Brigham Young, is one such account from many of that day, which Natascha and other family cast members seek to portray on stage. Young wrote:

Joseph arose from his bed of sickness, and the power of God rested upon him. He commenced in his own house and door-yard, commanding the sick, in the name of Jesus Christ, to arise and be made whole, and they were healed according to his word. He then continued to travel from house to house from tent to tent upon the bank of the river, healing the sick as he went. (Young, "*Autobiography*" July 22, 1839)

These accounts of historical healings portrayed on stage and amplified by Natascha's story/witness of present-day healings on stage, exceed us. The semiotic complexity of the account is apparent - Sister Clyde is the sick, while representing the sick; she is the loci of a healing miracle while representing the loci of the healing miracle. Her body as signifier on stage slips between the thing that was - the historical sick body healed - and the thing that is - both a representation of and an actual sick body healed. And the gap between the claim of the miracle - both historically and Natascha's reported account as a witness to a modern-day healing miracle, exceeds us. We cannot prove it; we cannot disprove it - the miracle story (on stage or off) thus enters the realm of

narratorial liminality. A miracle, like trauma, remains betwixt and between our ability to account for it. In other words, Natascha's witness of the healing miracle of Sister Clyde resonates with the parallel drawn in the performance studies discourse between performance and trauma.

While a seemingly odd link to make, what is apparent is that the parallel between performance and trauma is mirrored in the parallel between performance and miracles. This relationship between performance and trauma is explored by Adrian Heathfield in *Small Acts: Performance, the Millennium and the Marking of Time*. In a longer extract, below, I believe what he is observing in that relationship, between performance and trauma, can be applied to the relationship between performance and miracles in surprising ways. He writes:

the experience of performance is often something like a trauma, a witnessing of an event that is constituted by the very fact that it exceeds you. As such performance institutes a crisis in our ways of rationalising time: it leads us back to our elemental physical relation to time where time is not simply experienced as linear, progressive and accumulative, infused with suspension and loss. Performance makes apparent that it is neither original nor secondary, new nor old, but a kind of physical and imagistic repetition, in which the distinction between past and present falters and slides. And just like trauma, the best performance persists in recurrence: it remains unresolved, haunting our memories, documents and critical frameworks. Since it is neither knowable in the present of its enactment nor in its subsequent remainders, it stalls notions of progress, ruptures certainty and eludes historicisation. (105 – 106)

When Lisa experiences the arguable miracle of speaking to her deceased father on stage, whose presence she felt, and Natascha bears witness to the healing miracle of Sister Clyde, they both immediately go on to talk about time and how it operates in the performance of the pageants. Just as Heathfield observes that trauma and performance take us to a realm where time is no longer "linear, progressive and accumulative, infused with suspension and loss" so, too, the miracles that Lisa and Natascha experience lead them to re-assess time. Lisa observes that for her, speaking to her dead father was a

manifestation of Divine intervention on stage which “collapses years and lives into timeless oneness.” Such collapsing of time and lives is also suggested by Natascha, who concludes her miracle account by observing, “time is circular with God and not linear as we perceive time. As we re-enact the lives of the Saints in Nauvoo, their lives become our lives.” The distinction between past and present clearly “falters and slides” here for these two cast members, as Heathfield observes. The suspension and loss he alludes to, the natural by-product of linear time, is negated in the “circular” time and “timeless oneness” that Natascha and Lisa experience – Lisa is not mourning the loss of her father; how can she mourn for the present dead? Rather, it was, “a joy to know he was there.” If loss is a marker of linear time, then joy is a marker of circular time in these pageants.

The miraculous events of 22nd July 1839 – the healing of hundreds of the sick and afflicted in Nauvoo, is portrayed on stage yet remains, as Heathfield observes of traumas, “unresolved, haunting our memories, documents and frameworks.” For believers, it is ascribed to God’s power, but remains unresolved if viewed outside of that lens - and even for believers, there is a wonder that will remain “unresolved” in some degree. This and other such miracles haunt the chain of communal Latter-day Saint memory. Such haunting, as Heathfield sees it, is due to performance being “neither original nor secondary, new nor old,” but rather a “repetition,” in which time is slippery. Such slippery time in performance and trauma, is shared by the miracle; each “ruptures certainty and eludes historicisation.” And of course, the miracle is born in the seeds of the trauma that could have been – Natascha is genuinely worried for Sister Clyde who is struggling to breathe on stage. Had her health failed further, or indeed had she died in performance, the event would have

been traumatic for Natascha. Instead, Sister Clyde was healed through the miraculous touch of another cast member's hand on her head, and Natascha becomes witness to a miracle which eludes us. The day of miracles of July 22nd 1839 "persists in recurrence," on stage in performance, not just in the repetition and recycling of the story, but in the re-occurrence of the story. Natascha is no longer just an embodied representation of those nineteenth-century healings - she and Sister Clyde are those early healings playing out today: "their lives become our lives" as she puts it, and "we become one." She doesn't just see actors on the stage, but rather sees the very people represented, because, as she puts it, "they are there." This is the dead not being dead for Latter-day Saints, as Douglas Davies observed, above. It is also a foretaste of future Zion, in which the dead and the living combine in celestial communitas.

Natascha's and Lisa's experiences in the pageant do not just reinforce their sense of place in a lineage of believers, so crucial to healthy religious belief. Instead through performance and embodiment, and the wonderful rupture of the miracle, linear time and Hervieu-Léger's accompanying linear chain of believers, is re-choreographed. The chain is no longer linear, stretching back in time to the events of the inception of the faith - in this case, Joseph Smith and many of those early Latter-day Saints portrayed. Instead, due to Natascha and Lisa and many hundreds of other cast members performing on stage with those early Saints – it is a circular chain of believers, because time, in performance and miracles, (as in trauma), has been ruptured. Marvin Carlson's writings on the haunted body ("Haunted", ch.3) help us recognise that such a claim (made explicitly by the cast members themselves) is in no ways outside of the realms of the theatre discourse. We embrace the notion of the

haunted body and the haunted stage as theatre practitioners; we just do not often get to work with a people who embrace it in a way which is so much more literal than Carlson's interpretation of it.

In performing as the dead, with the dead, and for the dead in this theatrical rite, cast members step into a present chain of believers, constituting the living and the dead, rather than finding their place in a linear chain; they step into and rehearse future Zion; the coming together of the living and the dead. This is ultimately the miracle that both Lisa and Natascha refer to in their sharing – the miracle of combined lives with the dead; of oneness with the dead. Such unity, when achieved, is the miracle of Zion. However, if the linear chain of believers is re-choreographed into a circular chain of believers in these pageants, then that circular chain is not a neat one, in which members politely hold hands at all times. Rather it is messy, sometimes with hands held with the dead, at other times hands clapping along together, or hands in prayer together, or hands in play together. It is not a solemn chain, in other words, but a lively, joyful, playful and indeed celebratory chain forged between the living and the dead, moving in and out of multiple stage configurations which portray the lives of the early Saints and the lives of present Saints, simultaneously. Such scenes include, but are not limited to: praying together on stage, cooking, washing clothes, building, fishing, playing children's games, attending church, picnics, working, dancing, reading scriptures, being baptised, receiving healing blessings, attending funerals, digging, playing sports, socialising, selling goods, family time, travelling, going to school and many more besides. In other words, the quotidian lives of the early and contemporary Saints are portrayed on stage in both pageants, in which the temporal and the spiritual are intimately interwoven; prayer followed by play. There is little separation between events

which are classed as holy and those which are not within Latter-day Saints theology. Whilst there are certain events in the temple, and other rituals such as baptism and the sacrament which are seen as deeply sacred, the entire realm or existence of one's day life is seen as holy ground. As one of my previous Latter-day Saint film teachers remarked, for Latter-day Saints even peeling potatoes can be a holy act (as a film teacher, she may have unwittingly taken this insight from the film *Chariots of Fire* in which the character Reverend J.D. Liddell states, "You can glorify God by peeling a potato if you peel it to perfection.") The pageants, then, portray the daily events of life in such a way that the early lives of Saints are portrayed, but simultaneously the present lives of Saints are portrayed. The circular chain of believers is actually re-choreographed for each scene, expanding, collapsing, re-configuring and coalescing to tell the stories of faith of the Latter-day Saints, past and present. In such re-choreography of the chain of believers, members do at times, however, hold hands together in circles, in what becomes an embodied, imagistic, performative dance with dead; a stage moment that re-configures the linear chain of believers into a circular one quite literally, and Zion now, and Zion future, is danced.

Between the two pageants, there are five dances. In *The Nauvoo Pageant* one dance is called the evening dance, and central to the narrative of the dance is a Scottish couple, Robert and Becky Laird, whom we meet in *The British Pageant*, being welcomed into the Nauvoo community. The six-minute dance culminates in the entire cast joining in some steps of the highland fling, and when completed, all the cast members move into four concentric circles, facing outwards towards the audience, their backs towards the centre of the stage. The smallest inner circle probably has about ten people in it, the largest

outer circle about sixty people. With cast members holding hands, the circles move in opposite directions, hands being raised and lowered together on counts of four, as the cast dance for about twelve counts total in these concentric circles. Inasmuch as the stage is quite a steep rake in Nauvoo, you can actually see these four circles quite clearly, especially the further back you sit. The picture below (fig. 4) gives a visual sense of what I have just described.



(Fig. 4. *The Nauvoo Pageant* Evening Dance circular finale, Nauvoo, Illinois from: Franklin, Kyle. 23 July 2019. Used with permission.)

Whilst only fifteen seconds or so of stage time, the choreography embodies what has been at the heart of this last part of the discussion; a people united with their dead through performance, creating a circular rather than a linear chain of religious believers. Whilst having to step back physically to see these choreographed circles more clearly, you also need to step back in terms of perspective. In such stepping back, which facilitates a seeing of the bigger picture, you can start to see the larger view that is essential to understand the central dynamic of all religion. Hervieu-Léger in discussing this argues that *how* religious memory is managed is the “central dynamic of all religion” (127), as such management is what creates the chain of believers. In staging *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants* through the choreographers, directors, cast and others, religious memory is formed outside of the constraints of linear time, for



performance functions outside of linear time, as Heathfield reminds us. This is fitting for a people who see time as a mortal construct, which holds little sway in the celestial scheme of things. As we read in Latter-day Saint scripture: “all is as one day with God, and time only is measured unto men” (The Book of Mormon, Alma 40: 8) and further, “past, present, and future...are continually before the Lord” (The Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 130: 7). For Latter-day Saints, then, there is mortal time, but it is ultimately a temporal arrangement. Time does not really exist within the Latter-day Saint mythos outside of mortality.

Performance’s ability to disrupt time, then, becomes a useful attribute for a people who believe that ultimately past, present and future are one.

Understanding this, we start to see how the pageant performances do not just re-stage the past, then, they resurrect it.

Megan Sanborn Jones, in her book *Contemporary Mormon Pageantry: Seeking After the Dead*, writes:

In Mormon pageantry, the past is performed to strengthen the relationship between the living and the dead in literal ways that have real consequences for the future. I call this theological performance process resurrecting the past. (3)

Sanborn Jones goes on to address how resurrection, as a central Christian doctrine, is actually a combining of the past, present and future time, concluding “the resurrected body holds all these times together in one” (5). When the cast dance together in concentric circles on stage, Sanborn Jones’ insights help us further understand how the dead are intimate dance-partners in the choreography; for the past is resurrected, not simply recycled, as is Carlson’s understanding of performing the past. Whilst some Latter-day Saints, myself included, would not see these performances as a literal resurrection of the dead, (in how Latter-day Saints understand the term – the reuniting of the body

and the spirit), Sanborn Jones' usage of term resurrection in this discussion helps us envisage something that is happening beyond a recycling or repetition of the past. The resurrection of the past in these pageants becomes a rejection, of sorts, of the dominance of linear time.

Whilst Latter-day Saints are known for being a practical people - building cities in swamps and deserts being central to their historical make-up, they embrace a world view in which the dead are not truly dead, and in which time is only a human construct. In other words, the world of the spirits, of Godly time, of the supramundane, is constantly infusing their temporal lives. However, outside of connections with other Latter-day Saints, or within their families if they have family members who are also members, such a spirit-infused world view does not have a great deal of space for expression. The pageant processes and performances, in contrast, carve out space for a large number of the believing community to come together in ways that simply do not happen in such immersive depth in cast members' pedestrian lives. During the rehearsal and performance process, cast members' deepest-held beliefs – that through Jesus Christ we are not separate from our literal or spiritual foremothers and forefathers, but can be one with them - are given flesh; a resurrection indeed - a resurrection of the deepest held hopes and dreams of Zion future. Whilst not using the term Zion in the extract below, Sanborn Jones also sees the pageants as a utopian preparatory. She writes in the same book that the pageants,

create encounters with past, present, and future simultaneously in order to imagine exaltation.... This belief places an urgency to connect with ancestors of the past and to live life righteously in the present so that all are prepared for this glorious future. Mormon pageantry is one way that Mormons connect with their past and prepare for the future. (5, 8)

In choosing to connect with their past through the alchemy of theatrical performance, cast members encounter their religious chain of memory in a

personal, transformative, healing and joyful way. Their hope for Zion present is experienced with fellow cast members; their hope for Zion future is given flesh as the past is resurrected and they encounter the dead in and through performing them. Linear time is eschewed in favour of a taste of Godly time, - “circular time” or “timeless oneness” - as cast members above termed it, which is actually a “collapsing” of the past, present and future into one, to use Lisa’s dramatic verb. In such a theatrical collapsing of time, Zion (both present and future) is maybe not after all rehearsed for per se, but rather experienced, realised and brought into being. In other words, we should consider that maybe cast members do not represent nor rehearse present and future Zion, they are Zion, and they live Zion. In the theatrical presentation of religious community, cast members consciously seek to live the very thing they are portraying – lives lived in I-Thou holiness - as discussed in the last chapter. In so doing, it is not just linear time that collapses in these performances, but there is simultaneously a semiotic collapse – the cast members, as symbols of previous Saints, experience such profound unity with them – indeed *are* them in Natascha’s understanding – that the gap between the early Saints and the present Saints collapses. This is resurrection of the past indeed, and it occurs partially because of an I-Thou approach to the dead also.

If the gap between individual cast members and between the cast and the audience is a liminal space, as argued in the last chapter, then certainly so is the gap between the living and the dead. As that space is inscribed with I-Thou encounters also, it facilitates the circular chain of believers that this last section has been focussed on. For the collapse of linear time to circular time does not occur only because of theatrical representation (though time is notoriously slippery in theatre – so the performance element is key). Rather the

deep sense of love for actual and spiritual ancestors – the love fostered amongst Latter-day Saints for the chain of believers as discussed in part one above – is also part of the miracle that exceeds us. Such profound love from the cast towards those they represent (and for Latter-day Saints that love is seen and experienced as reciprocated by the dead) is part of the linear chain of believers becoming circular. To combine this chapter with the last, the reciprocity of I-Thou love and holiness between the living and the dead for Latter-day Saints is what leads to hands held in circular, rather than linear, chains. And that symbol of concentric circles on stage in the dance, which this section opened with, points to the Latter-day Saint temple, in which circles also act as sacred symbols. In returning now to the temples, the reminder is helpful that for Latter-day Saints the temple is central to the salvation of all people, the living and the dead; it brings together both time, immortality and eternity, and is not only the central symbol of such unity with Latter-day Saint thinking, but also the means to achieving that unity.

As discussed in part one, above, in the temples Latter-day Saints performatively proxy their dead. There are multiple circles carved onto the exterior of Latter-day Saint temples, functioning as a symbol of eternity, without beginning or end, pointing towards the eternal nature of relationships between the living and the dead. Furthermore, Latter-day Saints pray together standing in circles in the temples, as has been discussed by various Latter-day Saint writers (Quinn; Nibley “Temple” 313 - 6). Latter-day Saints’ temples, then, both exteriorly engraved upon them and internally practised by participants, utilise the symbol of the circle to point towards the eternal relationships between the living and the dead. That symbolic circle, so central to temple symbolism, becomes a dancing circle on the pageant stage. It is little wonder, then, that

multiple cast members shared how their time in performance felt like their time in the temple. As Natascha further expressed it:

This last year while we were practising and acting in the pageant, the comment was made more than once that it felt like we were in the temple while up on that stage: that in a sense this whole experience was a temple experience. We were given future strength from being on that stage just as the Saints were given future strength by going through the temple, almost as though we were the Saints. The more we gave of ourselves, the more strength we received. (Jewell)

For cast members to experience their time on stage as akin to temple time, helps us understand just how clearly the pageants are about creating and strengthening the chain of religious believers. For it is in the temples, after all, that Latter-day Saints are sealed to their departed ancestors for eternity through sacred rituals in which they act as proxy performers for the dead they are being sealed to. For Latter-day Saints, the temples become the place where the chains of believers are literally forged, following familial descent. On the pageant stage participants feel a strengthening, as outlined above, that feels similar to the strengthening received in the temple. Such strengthening comes in part because both the pageants and the temple reject a world dominated by linear time, and work-time, going back to Don's story. Rather, in the temple and on-stage, linear time is replaced with circular time, and participants experience the spiritual strengthening that comes when they are embraced, encircled and enfolded in the arms of their dead.

### **Circular Time**

I have mentioned several times above the idea of *circular time*, born as a phrase from Natascha's insight that, "I have always believed that time is circular with God and not linear as we perceive time." I have concluded that joy is a

central marker of circular time, as opposed to loss as a marker of linear time. However, it is worth pulling out this idea and phrase a little more and foregrounding it here, as the fruits of circular time, of which joy is central but not solitary, pervade this chapter, and indeed this study. What, then, do I mean by the phrase circular time? Similarly to E. Turner's *communitas* it can be a little tricky to pin-down, yet the following discussion should unpack it more.

Circular time helps us appreciate that the encounters that change participants may be facilitated by linear time, yet are simultaneously beyond it. That these performances are playing with linear time has been apparent, with a detailed discussion above on how miracles on stage disrupt linear time in a similar manner to trauma on stage. This is a realisation of what Schechner has discussed as theatre's ability to "bend time" ("Performance Studies" 28). However, the bending of time in these performances is specifically, I would argue, a bending into this notion of joyous circular time.

Before discussing this further it is helpful to understand how others have understood various forms of time within performance, including linear time, cyclic time, theatre time and performative time, as these function within circular time also. Starting then with linear time and cyclic time, Willmar Sauter in *Representing the Past: Essays in Performance Historiography*, writes that,

Linear time constructs the present as a process of development, mostly experienced as progression through innovation; cyclic time reconstructs the present as a process of repetition and imitation, mostly experienced as recall through recognition. (Sauter 122)

He goes on to conclude that "Each production negotiates the relationships between innovation and heritage or linear and cyclic time" (133). It is the dialogic relationship between linear time (development and innovation) and cyclic time (repetition, imitation and heritage) - that creates the theatrical event

for Sauter. The pageants clearly negotiate this relationship between linear and cyclic time as defined here, with the original creation of both pageants incorporating innovation and development, yet within such creative innovation is inter-generational repetition, imitation and heritage, with the re-staging of the healing miracles of July 22<sup>nd</sup> 1839, for example.

Moving on, Tracy C. Davis in her essay entitled “Performative Time” in the same book, posits and defines both theatrical time and performative time. Theatrical time Davis defines as dual chronic, in which clock time passes in tandem with the play’s demands upon audience members’ imagination (Davis 147). Theatrical time in her understanding also encompasses the performance ending as the audience disperses. This is in contrast to performative time, of which she writes, “whereas theatrical time has definitive markers—the performance begins, transpires, has convention-bound interruptions, resumes, and ends—performative time may reverberate indefinitely” (153).

This reverberation beyond the end of the play proper is due to a performative time which “participates promiscuously in the past yet is ongoing: it has a fulcrum in the present yet receives appreciable force from both past and future” (149). Clearly theatrical time and performative time are also playing out in these pageants: theatrical time as audience members imaginatively engage with several years of Latter-day Saint history during the ninety minutes of performance; performative time as the indefinite reverberation of the rupture of the miracle, and of symbiotic efficacy plays out after the pageants finish. This is Michael’s, “I started to choose to see the light in people, and I learnt that that breeds positivity, and it brings or invites more light from them” from the previous chapter. This indefinite reverberation of Davis’ performative time starts to nudge us towards my understanding of circular time.

Circular time, whilst negotiating linear, cyclic, theatrical and performative time, as defined by Sauter and Davis above, moves us beyond performative time's indefinite reverberations – which shares the closest parallels to circular time. Instead, in circular time, within the theatrical process and performance, the societal scaffolding of time falls away to reveal the eternal now, or timeless oneness as Lisa compellingly sought to articulate her experience with time. Just as linear time has its natural peaks and troughs, rhythms and markers in theatre, so too does circular time.

Its identifying markers, revealing the eternal now, have been articulated by many pageant participants, including in Lisa, Natascha and Don's accounts, above. Key markers of circular time, which coalesce to profound individual and communal joy, are as follows: peace; a profound and liberating sense of timelessness; a remarkable at oneness with other participants and with the dead; a dissolving of linear time and the seeming linearity of genealogy; an expansion of self in which all self-regard, fears, worries, frustrations, sorrows, regret, loneliness, self-will, yearnings and dreams, pride, grief, strivings, assertions, pettiness, meanness and societal expectations simply vanish. The vanishing of such self-assertions and sorrows is replaced with a visceral, embodied experience of joy, love and faith that seems to fill the spaciousness – inwardly and outwardly - of participants lives.

As participants experience these markers of circular time, they are in the eternal now - to be in and live in the state as described above. It is a state of profound faith, in which the totality of the theology, history and people of the Latter-day Saints is fully alive in the participant. It is liberating, and profoundly healing as it was for Don, to experience circular time, which of course is not



time at all; rather, it can be thought of fruitfully, and not without some grain of truth, as no-time.

Circular time in theatrical performance is the polar opposite of what Walter Benjamin, in his essay *On the Concept of History*, calls homogenous empty time, in which no appointed time is special and which shares a uniformed, measured sameness, a flavourlessness, which reproduces the old without transformation (thesis XIII & XVII). Circular time, in contrast, is inherently transformative time, as revealed by Don's transformative healing, Natascha's witness of a transformative miracle, and indeed Michael and Sarah's transformative encounters in the previous Chapter.

Circular time as transformative seems paradoxical when the circle seemingly denotes no beginning, middle, nor end – therefore no scope for the transformative rupture. However, the paradox is resolved in and through the remarkable unity the circle represents: the central transformation for participants therefore, is from disunity to unity. Such unity is through symbiotic efficacy as discussed in the previous chapter, with both the living and with the dead. Theatre's ability to bend and remake time, as Schechner observed, is fully utilised by these pageants to reshape time from a linearity which is metaphorically suggestive of progressive/aggressive individualism and its accompanying victories (whether over self or others), to a circularity that is symbolic of transformation born of unity, with the living and the dead.

Such unity, this central hallmark and experience of circular time experienced in and through these productions, is in some ways inherently revolutionary. Such a statement seems at odds when the Latter-day Saints, as producers and creators of these pageants, are perceived, understandably so, as inherently conservative, politically speaking. Yet such unity, and its

accompanying fruits of joy, faith and love, stands at odds to the everyday socio-political and economic discourses of division, disunity and distrust that can and often do saturate our public spaces.

The unity of circular time shares resonances here with Benjamin's messianic time, which is inherently redemptive because it resurrects the power and voices of all previous revolutions (Thesis II). The circular time of these pageants is likewise a resurrection, as discussed above in Sanborn Jones' work. However, the transformation within Benjamin's messianic time enables the revolution as it "avenges past generations," and is fuelled by "hate" (Thesis XII). However, within circular time the revolution is not the socio-political Marxist class struggle of Benjamin's discourse, in which messianic time "splinters" the present with hate-fuelled revolutionary force (Addendum A). Rather circular time, fuelled by inter-generational unifying love in contrast to revolutionary hate, unifies inhabitants of past, present and future into Lisa's timeless oneness – such unification through circular time is the opposite of Benjamin's messianic time.

Circular time then, within these pageants, reveals the eternal now, or no-time, by moving believing participants to a unifying encounter far above and beyond linear time, nor does linear time push upon them – whether from the past, present or future, as it does in Tracy C. Davis' understanding of performative time, above. Rather in circular time the pressing urgency of time in all its manifestations simply seems to give way, unable to scaffold the life of the participant in the face of such remarkable, experiential, embodied unity. This does of course resonate with Edith Turner's findings on *communitas*, as expressed in her work *Communitas – The Anthropology of Collective Joy*. *Communitas* may and sometimes does accompany union with the dead in

Turner's work on it (xii); circular time in the pageants, however, consistently and fully embraces unity with the dead, indeed is born of it, rather than birthing it.

It is worth remembering here that the suggestion of theatrical performance leading to a circular time which reveals the eternal now, or no-time, echoes with the findings of some of our leading scientists at present. Carlo Rovelli, whom many have compared to Hawkins, in his 2018 publication *The Order of Time* writes:

the course of time, the events of the universe succeed each other in an orderly way: pasts, presents, futures. The past is fixed, the future open ... And yet all of this has turned out to be false. One after another, the characteristic features of time have proved to be approximations, mistakes determined by our perspective, just like the flatness of the Earth or the revolving of the sun. The growth of our knowledge has led to a slow disintegration of our notion of time. (intro.)

This has led to what Rovelli explains as the "crumbling of time" (ch. 1) and he amusingly acknowledges that "The events of the world do not form an orderly queue like the English, they crowd around chaotically like the Italians" (61). Indeed, his writings make us wonder if future generations will look upon our lives governed by linear time akin to how we see flat earth theorists, past or present, today. Circular time as experienced within these pageants gives participants a tangible experience of what it may be to be in a world where time crumbles or collapses, as Lisa expresses it.

The pageants are experienced in circular time then, which is Godly time for Latter-day Saints, the eternal now, or no-time, when lives lived in different centuries, fore-mothers and fore-fathers and their posterity, become one through the theatrical embodied encounter. It is born from the circularity of co-creative love between the living and the dead. It is a form of abiding in others, past and present, via a theatrical encounter infused with I-Thou holiness. Such abiding for Latter-day Saints is found ultimately in the co-creative reciprocity of

Christian love; in the space between them and their God. The performance of their faith, their hopes, their trials – personal and historical, their own and their dead - becomes a form of worship. This is theatrical performance as religious rite, and performance which utilises all the tools of theatre on a large canvas to practice how to inscribe the spaces between. The spaces between living, growing things are dependent upon the scaffolding of linear time, cyclic time, theatrical time and performative time to bring them into correspondence with one another. Yet the symbiotic efficacy that creates Zion now and Zion future occurs in circular time; those moments in which the living participants and the dead they effigy merge together into a story of lives lived in faith: a circular chain of memory in which cast and audience connect their hands with one another, and with their dead, and dance together in love.

### **Sacrifice and remembrance: remembrance and sacrifice**

A recurring message that emerged from cast members' feedback was the relationship between remembering and sacrifice. Time and again participants highlighted the reciprocal relationship between the two: they sacrificed both financially, and valued holiday time, to come and remember the sacrifices of the early Saints. The more cast members sacrificed, the more deeply they remembered their dead; the more they remembered their dead, the more inspired they were to sacrifice. Fischer-Lichte's work in *Theatre, Sacrifice, Ritual* is interesting in relation to this idea. She argues that the theatrical search for communities throughout the twentieth century led to people trying to "regain the transformative potential of theatre" (255) accompanied by a "deep yearning for communal experience" (90). This search for community came from the nexus between theatre, ritual, sacrifice and liminality. Those four components

are apparent in these pageants, if we read the pageants as rites, as previously argued. However, Fischer-Lichte concludes that while communities did indeed result from this search (including performances staged by religious groups), they were “unable to survive the performance” (256). Such communities were, she wrote,

temporary, ephemeral communities that do not ask for any longer-lasting commitment nor for a collective identity to emerge.... Such communities are not based on common ideologies and beliefs – let alone on sacrifice. (257)

Fischer-Lichte’s conclusions here, whilst in a very similar realm to this study – theatre, sacrifice, ritual and liminality – reaches startlingly different conclusions to the case of these Latter-day Saint pageants. Here, the transformative potential of theatre is harnessed and realised, and the performances, crucially, strengthen the collective identity, precisely through being based on common ideologies and beliefs, and indeed sacrifice. One cast member’s insights in particular help to highlight this process, as understood from his perspective (he chose to remain anonymous). While a slightly longer quote it is such a self-aware and analytical insight from a cast member as to what is actually happening at these performances, that it warrants being shared in full.

Furthermore, his comments highlight the central role of sacrifice. He shared:

Our performance is uniting us with the entire purpose of our existence, which is to be faithful to Jesus Christ and willing to sacrifice. This is linked to the temple. Performing unites us with our forebears – as we perform, we remember them, we promise to emulate their example. To represent them, we have to be like their best selves; they were faithful and willing to sacrifice. There are parallels in our performance with the sacrament and temple ritual. Those rituals and ordinances point us to God, to home. In doing this performance, I have to acknowledge it is not really a performance at all – it is rather an alignment of ourselves with our ultimate destination throughout eternity. The pageants, for me, become a concentrated beacon of self-order, sacrifice and remembering. The performances behave in a similar way to our rituals, by helping us remember. The sacrament each week takes ten minutes, the temple ordinance takes about three hours. The effort to remember is immense in

the pageants – it takes two weeks. The sacredness is felt. The only place I have felt the same thing is in the temple; the same peace, the same purpose. Where everyone has thrown off their own agenda. It is a purifying, sanctifying and revelatory experience. The performance becomes a vehicle that we use to remember and to put into practice the gospel. It is the same as the early saints building the temple. It is an act of sacrifice.<sup>11</sup>

Here performance is framed as a unifying bridge “uniting” the Latter-day Saint actor to their overarching purpose: faithfulness to Jesus manifest in sacrifice. Performing their forbears becomes an act of transformative remembrance: in remembering them the cast member seeks to emulate them, especially their willingness to sacrifice. This frames the pageants less as performances – the cast member above acknowledges it is “not really a performance at all” - but rather a metaphysical map and compass. The pageants not only show him the way “home” then, but also help him find “alignment” with that divine destination. This is theatre acting as a space of profound spiritual training then, and at the heart of that training, similar to other Latter-day Saint rituals as this cast member observes, is remembering.

Here, Diana Taylor’s insightful work on embodied, performed memory helps us unpack why the pageants become such a “concentrated beacon” of remembrance, as this actor above puts it. She writes,

The 'live' performance can never be captured or transmitted through the archive.... Embodied memory, because it is "live," exceeds the archive's ability to capture it. But that does not mean that performance-as ritualized, formalized, or reiterative behaviour-disappears. Multiple forms of embodied acts are always present, though in a constant state of again-ness. They reconstitute themselves-transmitting collective memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next. Embodied and performed acts generate, record, and transmit knowledge. (20 – 21)

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<sup>11</sup> In-person interview, conducted by Alexandra Mackenzie Johns, 12 May 2017.  
Mackenzie Johns | 610045936

Taylor's work here helps us understand one way in which these pageants facilitate such transformative encounters with the dead. As cast members perform them, they act out "embodied memory" – and this is crucially something that exceeds the archive. (Taylor defines the archive as "documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, all those items supposedly resistant to change" (19).) Similarly to James Thompson's writings on the mosaic of our forebears performed in and through us, shared in part one above, Taylor argues convincingly that communal memories are transmitted powerfully from one generation to the next in and through performance. The implications of her argument for religious communities is apparent: if Hervieu-Léger shows us that the chain of memory between believers and how that memory is managed is central to religious survival, then Taylor's work makes a compelling case to not neglect embodied memory in the process of forming religious communities.

I am not arguing here for a disregard for the power of the archive, either as it plays out in these pageants or in religious community making; while researching the *The British Pageant* as a writing team we poured over archival records and delighted in what we found. In this regard, I agree with Rebecca Schneider, who in her book *Theatre & History* concludes, "not everything about the past can be accessed by the "living body," just as not everything about the past can be maintained in material archive or technological record" (60). I am not elevating the body over the archive as a way of accessing our past in looking to Taylor's work, but she does challenge us to appreciate afresh just how powerful embodied memory is. Of course, the pageants represent, as do many historical plays, a symbiotic and uniquely powerful coming together of the archive and the repertoire. Taylor defines the latter of these as "embodied

memory-performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing - in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, non-reproducible knowledge” (20). However, because the cast are portraying their spiritual progenitors and often their ancestors also, (who are already revealed and refracted in and through the cast - going back to Thompsons familial mosaic), the knowledge transmitted through the repertoire of embodied memory in these performances is acutely personal and spiritually powerful.

The cast member quoted above observes that “The effort to remember is immense in the pageants – it takes two weeks. The sacredness is felt.” For that two weeks this cast member, and hundreds of others like him, will have committed themselves wholeheartedly to both remembering their sacred past and “transmitting” those “communal memories” – as Taylor put it – through embodied performance. Two small examples help here; one based in song, the other in dance.

In *The British Pageant*, there is a song called “The Gallant Ship” that quickly becomes a firm favourite of cast members to sing. The song was originally written by William W Phelps in 1837 for the thousands of early British Latter-day Saints who left the United Kingdom from the busy docks at Liverpool. It grew to be very popular amongst the early Saints and it became traditional for it to be sung on board deck as the boats were pulled out of the Mersey by smaller tug boats to reach the open sea. As the account of one Frederic Gardner reads, from September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1849:

On the following morning... we were taken out of the dock. A tug was made fast to us to take us down the Mersey. The company nearly all of whom are on deck are singing. The gallant ship is under way and followed by other stirring hymns, after being towed a few miles, we set sail, with a stiff and fair breeze. I should think there was never a more happy company pass out from the docks of Liverpool....We have a good violinist and accordion player on board, and also a number of good



singers, and every night before or after prayers, we have a very enjoyable time with the company, dancing and singing. (qtd. in Garner 13)

Whilst church members now do not tend to know of this song until doing *The British Pageant* – indicating its loss from the communal memory – they quickly embrace it upon “rediscovering” it. Only the first and last verse is sung in the pageant. The first verse, below, is sung at tempo with energy, leading into an energetic and joyful dance on deck.

The gallant ship is under way, to bear me off to sea,  
And yonder float the streamers gay, that say she waits for me.  
The seamen dip their ready oar, as ebbing waves oft tell  
They bear me swiftly from the shore, My native land, farewell.  
(Phelps “The Gallant Ship”)

After this verse and the large-scale dance, cast members gather to line the “edge of the boat” at the stage edge and sing the final verse, far more slowly, and intermingled with another favourite and very well-known Latter-day Saint pioneer anthem called *Come Come Ye Saints* (Clayton). The final refrain of that song is “All is well.” Thus the final verse of the Gallant Ship, sung slowly and evoking both pathos and resolution, is sung as follows:

I go because my Master calls, He’s made my duty plain.  
No danger can the heart appall when Jesus stoops to reign!  
And now the vessel’s side we’ve made, the sails their bosoms swell;  
Thy beauties in the distance fade, my native land, farewell.  
All is well  
My native land, farewell  
All is well, All is well.  
(Phelps “The Gallant Ship”)

The experience for cast members in Nauvoo singing this simple song is quite profound. Many speak of the power of singing the very same words their own ancestors sang as they left the shores of Europe for an unknown future. They apply the refrain “All is Well” to their own present day difficulties, and draw strength from their ancestors’ faith in leaving behind their beloved homelands.

As the cast member quoted above shares, “as we perform, we remember them, we promise to emulate their example. To represent them, we have to be like their best selves; they were faithful and willing to sacrifice.” The song reveals aspects of that sacrifice with the focus on a willingness to leave behind ones’ “native land.”

Furthermore, the singing of the song will be contextualised within rehearsals by directors sharing accounts from archival letters and diaries which relate how heart-breaking this leaving behind of home and kin was for so many of the early Saints. As cast members sing these verses, then, Taylor’s insights play out clearly. The embodied acts of former Saints are “always present,” as Taylor puts it, through the singing again on stage of this song. The song is “transmitting communal memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next” (21). The memories, history and values in this song revolve around the profound religious faith, manifest in sacrifice, of many early Saints who said goodbye to their “native land,” often with great personal sorrow and heartbreak. They left because “my Master calls”, and contemporary Saints find themselves, like Don, with increased faith that they too can continue to follow Divine guidance in their own lives.

The singing of *The Gallant Ship* on stage, however, does not just “transmit” communal memory, it also “generates” and “records” communal memory, as Taylor phrases it, and we see this playing out too. This tri-part process that Taylor identifies occurs both on stage, the generating, transmitting, and recording of communal memory by embodied performances, and parallels what happens in the temple and when church members take the sacrament. The cast member’s quote, above, identifies this parallel. Both in the temple and when taking the sacrament (the taking of bread and water by church members),

Latter-day Saints embody former Saints. In the temple, this is the proxy performance of the dead, as discussed in part one, above. For the sacrament, there is a clear re-enactment of the Last-Supper, as church members take water and bread in remembrance of that event and Christ's sacrifice. Indeed, remembrance is at the very heart of church members weekly sacramental re-enactment of the Last Supper. While breaking the bread and serving the wine, Christ encouraged his early disciples to eat and drink, "in remembrance of me" (Luke 22: 19). In contemporary Latter-day Saint sacramental prayers, Church members promise to "always remember Him," (The Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 20: 77) speaking of Christ. The embodied, performative element of both the temple and sacramental rituals is an example of how communal memory is generated, transmitted and recorded through sacred role-plays of remembrance. For cast members, as the one above, to draw these parallels between the temple, the sacrament and the pageants is, from my "inside" reading, not to give the same sacred nature to the pageants that these rituals carry, but to draw the parallels between the focus on sacred, embodied remembrance, and the efficacy of it. As the cast member quoted above simply states, "The performances behave in a similar way to our rituals, by helping us remember." And embodied memory, it is apparent, becomes a powerful tool for the cast members to encounter the faith of the former Saints. They no longer only read of those early Saints singing and dancing on deck – they sing and dance on deck themselves. And in so doing, strengthen through embodiment not only communal memory but also Latter-day Saint theology.

### **Part Three: Conclusion**

In part one of this chapter, I outlined a frame through which to read part two. That frame argued that three clear elements of Latter-day Saint teaching and practice prepared cast members to have profound intimacy with dead in their performance; the DNA connection, the doctrinal connection and the lineage connection. The last of these, a lineage of believers, is created by a regular focus on teaching the stories of early Saints, the teachings and practice of Zion and vicarious temple rituals. In part two we saw how this frame elucidated the experiences of pageant cast members, from Don, to Lisa to Natascha and others. I argued that the transformative efficacy ultimately lay in re-choreography: the re-choreographing of the linear chain of memory and believers that Hervieu-Léger identified, into a circular chain, by collapsing time and distance between the living and the dead through a performance of I-Thou love for the dead, and the rupturing impact of the miracle on stage. The latter part of part two of this chapter explored the reciprocal relationship between remembrance and sacrifice, fuelled by the sharing of embodied, communal memory through performance, and its parallels with other rites and rituals of remembrance within Latter-day Saint practice. We end now in part three by drawing some concluding insights from these previous sections. As alluded to above, I conclude by elucidating how this profound, transformative encounter with the dead creates of the individual body on stage an embodiment of Latter-day Saint theology. In other words, the actor, in embodying the history, values and memories of the community through archival performance, as Taylor writes, actually embodies, generates, transmits and even records the theology of their faith simultaneously. In concluding with this idea, I do not mean to lose focus on the transformative intimacy with the dead that the pageants facilitate. Rather,

intimacy with the dead is central to Latter-day Saint theology, as discussed in part one, and revealing theology through performance becomes one way that church members strengthen one another in hope and faith and locate themselves within the circular chain of believers.

In order to appreciate quite how fully Latter-day Saints embody their theology on stage, it is helpful to understand a key insight from religious sociologist Douglas Davies. He observes that, “history within Mormonism often plays the role occupied in other religions by theology” (“Mormon Culture” 11). This is primarily because within the Latter-day Saint context, “deity acts in time and through events all of which can be suitably documented,” (11) making a sense of time and place palpable. For Latter-day Saints, to stage their history is to stage their theology, for the two are synonymous. If God acts in time and place, intervening in the life of Joseph Smith in upstate New York in 1820 in a grove of trees, as the founding story of the Latter-day Saints teaches, then such history becomes contested ground. To disprove Smith’s claims of Divine intervention, angelic visitations and golden plates translated into The Book of Mormon, is to disprove founding claims of the faith, and vice-versa. As such, Latter-day Saint history becomes contested space. When cast members embody, therefore, the sanctioned historical narrative of the religion, it is a personal, performative affirmation of their faith - an embodiment of their history and an embodiment of their theology. Whilst such embodied affirmation is performance as proselytizing (to predominantly fellow Latter-day Saints), such proselytizing can also be read as protest against those narratives and voices which actively seek to counter Latter-day Saint history/theology. The performance can be read, then, as an affirmation of contested history, but in so doing, there is simultaneously a profound affirmation of theology.

When referring to the theology embodied by cast members in these two pageants, I am not specifically talking about the theology as doctrine taught in and through the script, though that occurs. Rather I am addressing what I see in my insider/outsider role as specifically Latter-day Saint theology that is embodied by participants in the process of acting out these stories. Sometimes such embodied theology is reinforced within the script, sometimes not. In looking at how the individual body of the performer embodies their faith's foundational theology on stage, I am building on Taylor's insights on the repertoire. When she observes that embodied, performative acts, "reconstitute themselves-transmitting collective memories, histories, and values from one group/generation to the next" (21) I am reading into "memories, histories and values" theology, in this instance Latter-day Saint theology. With that in mind it seems that the following aspects of Latter-day Saint theology are embodied by cast members through performance: Zion present and Zion future; familial soteriology (as already discussed – the living and the dead within a family aiding one another's salvation); an embodied God; the body of performer as divine temple; eternal family, narrative and destiny; divine heritage and potentiality; family as exultant unit; salvatory sacrifice and remembrance; proxy performances of Jesus Christ – a performative extension of Christ's teaching that He is found in the other; familial love as fore-taster of divine love; children as Godly ensamples; the body as receptacle and reflection of Godly words, works and light; joy as divine inheritance and destination; faith in Jesus Christ and home as heavenly rehearsal. How some strands of this theology have been embodied in these performances has already been discussed in this chapter, namely Zion, familial soteriology and salvatory sacrifice and remembrance. Others have been obliquely touched upon, though not explicitly. Fittingly for the

conclusion of this chapter, I am going to examine how the finales of these two performances reflect, refract and reframe some aspects of this theology through embodiment within each individual performer. Whilst I will touch upon other scenes or the performances as a whole, I will mainly look to the finales to elucidate this notion of embodied theology. Whilst by no means an exhaustive exploration of how these interwoven theological strands are embodied in and through performance, I trust what follows will give an overview of the expansive theological tapestry the pageants seek to embody through the individual cast member on stage.

The finales of both pageants are similar, though with nuanced differences. In *The Nauvoo Pageant* the entire performing cast of about 150 people gather together into a tight huddle centre stage, combined with the rehearsing cast of another 150 or so people, also in costume but who have not performed so far that night, and sing a rousing verse of a well-loved Latter-day Saint pioneer hymn called *The Spirit of God*. Altogether then, about 280 to 300 people are gathered in a tight group centre stage. In the song they share, one line states, “The veil o’er the earth is beginning to burst,” implying that the separation between the heavens and the earth – the “veil” – is no longer stable. This is what is at the heart of these finales: Zion now and Zion future meeting, as the dead come down to earth and the living rise to greet them. The finales represent the ultimate liminality for Latter-day Saints, as the living, the dead, the earth and the heavens are all present simultaneously; you could say they represent what the angel states in CS Lewis’ *The Great Divorce*, “This moment contains all moments” (109). The cast, in being positioned in the finales as *betwixt-between* the earth, heavens, living and the dead – contain all moments.

As the song concludes, the actor portraying Joseph Smith steps out after that verse and with the music only continuing underneath him, shares verbatim Joseph Smith's own words and testimony about Jesus Christ, taken from Latter-day Saint Scripture, The Doctrine and Covenants. The entire cast then "explodes" from their small huddle centre stage, literally running to fill every space of the large stage individually, to repeat the final refrain of the song just sung, and raises their arms on the very last word of the verse, which is "amen." All the lights are up almost to maximum and the costumes of the cast members are all light – the performing cast have been gradually changing them throughout the evening into these finale "lights" as they are called. As they sing this final verse of song, the lights come up on the Nauvoo Temple which is on the hill behind them, approximately a five-minute walk from the stage site, which is also brilliantly lit by theatrical lights which have been pre-set by and are operated by the lighting designer/operator for the pageant. This matters, as the Nauvoo Temple acts as the backdrop of the finale. We will discuss more in the next chapter of the innate power of such religiously inscribed site-specific work, but for now I am trying to give a clear sense of the performative "nuts and bolts" as it were of the final scene - what we see as an audience. The two pictures, below, (fig. 5 & fig. 6) help give a visual sense of the overall effect of the finale. In the first image (fig. 5) we see the 280 or so cast members gathered on stage together, before they run out to fill the entire stage. In the second image (fig. 6), we see them having "exploded" out to fill the stage. The photos give some sense, combined, of *The Nauvoo Pageant* finale:





(Fig. 5. *The Nauvoo Pageant* finale, grouped together from: Franklin, Kyle. 9 July 2019.)



(Fig. 6. *The Nauvoo Pageant* finale, from: Franklin, Kyle. 9 July 2019.)

*The British Pageant* in Nauvoo shares some similarities in its ending, (though many differences) but for the purposes of this conclusion it is enough to appreciate that there is no gathering into one large group, but rather into several smaller family groups on stage, before splitting as individuals to fill the whole stage, as in the *The Nauvoo Pageant* picture, above, and the temple is not lit up. What becomes apparent, especially from the photo immediately above, is that in *The Nauvoo Pageant* the audience are invited to make connections and meaning between the brightly lit Nauvoo Temple and the brightly lit cast members. The scenographic space between the two images – the temple and the cast members - becomes theologically inscribed in the process. Firstly, the

sheer amount of stage lights on both the temple and the cast members, reflected by the lightness of the costumes and the whiteness of the temple, makes a clear parallelism between the two, framing each cast member's body as an echo or refraction of the temple. The Paulian theology, of human body as divine temple, (1 Cor. 3: 16-17), embraced deeply by Latter-day Saints, becomes theatrically realised in the process. Furthermore, this framing of the individual body of each performer as akin to the temple embodies a key theological teaching that Christ is found in and through the other (Matt. 25:40). As Simon Shepherd writes, theatre is a "a practice in which societies negotiate around bodily value and bodily order" (10). There is a sacred, even divine bodily value placed on individual cast members through the mise-en-scene of *The Nauvoo Pageant* finale due to the clear parallels between cast members and the temple. Holy places are not just the built edifice of the temples, in other words, but the body of each performer is a holy temple and holy place in this finale – the divine in the other.

Along with individual body, the sheer number of bodies is part of that theological inscription taking place in the finales, with approximately three-hundred people on stage. To return to Shepherd's insight above, though there may be a divine bodily value placed upon individual cast members, the bodily order is of plurality: Zion now and Zion future is one and many, the individual within the community, and the community within the individual. This idea actually becomes central for the pageant processes – the individual is informed by Latter-day Saint doctrine and theology (the community values at play within individuals' lives throughout rehearsals and performances) and Latter-day Saint doctrine, theology and values are simultaneously informed and reinforced by

the individual as they embrace the theology more fully. There is symbiotic efficacy at play between individuals, the community and the theology.

When all the cast come swiftly out together centre stage, as shown in the first image (fig. 5), we have a clear sense of the body or community as one – the unity of Zion, as it were. This is a fitting finale image for a play whose internal architecture is about the coming together of thousands to Nauvoo to build Zion. There is furthermore a sense of the eternal family unit, so central to Latter-day Saint theology – a gathering together of foremothers, forefathers and posterity. In *The British Pageant*, with a different internal architecture to *The Nauvoo Pageant*, built as it is around many families embracing the faith in the British Isles and preparing to leave, the image of seeing multiple families up on stage, rather than the one large group, is more fitting. The mise-en-scene of both, before cast members split to fill the stage, reinforces the central message of the pageants; the eternal nature of the family through Jesus Christ and the temple – which is central to Latter-day Saint theology. In *The British Pageant*, whilst the family-cast create that mise-en-scene of multiple families on stage, various core cast members are involved with telling and showing re-unions with departed loved ones down stage centre. Altogether there is a clear sense of familial soteriology and the eternal narrative and destiny of the family.

When these groups break and fill the stage as individuals (whether from the larger group in *The Nauvoo Pageant* or from the smaller family groups in *The British Pageant*) some children tend to run down to the very front of the stage, as can just be made out in figure six, above. The finales cannot be read in isolation from the pageants, but rather embody clear theological teachings that have been woven carefully into the pageants throughout. One of these doctrinal or theological threads is children as Godly ensamples. The pageants

consistently foreground children being children, and delight in their playfulness, with entire scenes dedicated to children at play. When the children run down to the front of the stage in the finale, there is a culmination of the clear performative trope in the pageants of Jesus' teaching that children are a Godly ensample (Matthew 19:14), and are to be loved and cherished. Indeed, audience members often mention this, remarking how much the children delighted them, and how rewarding it was to see families perform together on stage.

The clear pleasure audience members have taken in the children and in families performing together also points us to another theological strand woven into the tapestry of the pageants, regarding joy as divine inheritance and destination. As discussed in part two of this chapter, the pageants, through performance, are a rehearsal and fore-taster of Zion present and Zion future - a rehearsal for and of cast members' heavenly home. The joy cast members experience in their bodies is given voice through their bodies as they sing the finale songs of both pageants. From cast members' feedback, the experience of singing with hundreds of others on stage of their faith in Christ is a remarkably joyous experience. As one cast member said about singing in *The British Pageant* finale, "As we sang my body shook and tears welled and I was filled with the spirit and a feeling of indescribable joy" (N. Preston). For this cast member, the spiritual joy was so intense, or "indescribable" that such feelings, so crucial to the theatrical encounter, are manifest physically through the autonomic nervous system, in a shaking body and tears. Such responses on stage affect audience off stage, as discussed in the previous chapter. Building on the autopoietic reciprocal audience and cast encounter outlined in the previous chapter, it is apparent that such joy was experienced in return by many

audience members. As one audience member who watched *The British*

*Pageant* shared:

As the performance went on, the joy of the gospel sunk deep into me and I began to feel amazed by the amount of happiness that was packed into the performance. The pageant is helping me keep a smile on my face and a truer twinkle in my eye. I'm doing a much better job of counting my blessings – I feel more able to lift others. The trek is exciting! My husband told me he has seen a difference in me. (Roberts)

Such reciprocated joy is central to Latter-day Saint theology, with The Book of Mormon teaching that the purpose of mortal existence is joy (2 Nephi 2: 25). Such joy is experienced and exemplified in the finales especially, as the feedback above suggests, with data collected from both cast and audience members pointing to the finales as pinnacles of their joy. Such joyous experiences are theology encountered and manifest in and through the body, through the apparatus of theatrical performance. And, as Boon and Plastow have written regarding applied drama, the transformative power of creative joy should not be overlooked nor under-appreciated (11). The audience member quoted above certainly seemed a recipient of such transformative potentiality, noting the depth of the joy she experienced, with such a resultant change that even her husband saw a “difference” in her. Furthermore, her revealing phraseology about *The British Pageant*, that she was “amazed by the amount of happiness packed into the performance,” is interesting for a play which includes one family with grieving children and a widowed husband who is struggling to keep his family together emotionally and physically, and another family whose mother dies, whilst pregnant, on the boat crossing from England to America. In other words, the sacrifices made and losses experienced by so many of the early Saints who left the UK seemingly lend themselves more to tragedy than performances “packed” with “happiness.” Yet the embodied and visceral joy

cast members experience when performing these stories, as articulated above, frame these events within a theology of hope, joy and faith in the depths of the sorrows and vicissitudes of life.

A theological framing of hope, joy and faith shares resonances with what has been termed in the applied drama discourse as a “pedagogy of utopia” by Selina Busby. Busby defines this as “a pedagogy that acknowledges the current and yet ‘explores the possible’...” (416). The pageants acknowledge the suffering and trials of various nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, or their “current” situations, and yet through the performative practice and embrace of Zion now and Zion future, “explores the possible” through the theology/history of joy, hope and faith. Furthermore, embodying this theology through performance is an example of Kathryn Gallagher’s work in applied drama on practices of hope, in which Gallagher sees drama as a source and practice of “radical hope” (423). Such hope, which fosters resilience in the participants of Gallagher’s research, is a key component of Latter-day Saint faith. Whilst Gallagher is referring to “radical hope” in a secular context, it is a helpful lens through which to understand what is happening in relation to embodied theology within these pageants. Latter-day Saints in the finales sing with hundreds on stage, songs about Christ which they and their (unseen) “circle of believers” (unbound by time) know and hold sacred; such an act is a theatrical demonstration of radical hope and faith in communally embraced and personally practiced theology.

When cast members are singing in their hundreds in these finales, the deep sense of place, belonging, community, *communitas* (to use Edith & Victor Turner’s term), hope and faith they experience is tremendous. For many cast members, it is an unparalleled experience. Not that they do not regularly sing with other members of their faith; this happens weekly at worship services. But

the process of embodying the early pioneers and rehearsing, creating and performing the pageant each night, culminating in these finales, locates cast members in a place a profound openness to the central theology of their faith: divine love manifest in Jesus Christ, leading to eternal exalted families living with God again, or Zion future. The central theological narrative of the Latter-day Saint mythos, in other words, is embodied and lived throughout the pageant process. This idea requires a little more unpacking.

The creative process that cast members go through in gathering to Nauvoo and rehearsing and staging the pageants shares some profound parallels and resonances with the central Latter-day Saint theology of the eternal Plan of Salvation. The Plan of Salvation or Plan of Happiness as it is sometimes called, is the central driving narrative within the Latter-day Saint tradition. It is built around the doctrine of a pre-earth life in which we all lived spiritually as individuals with God (seen as Act I in the metaphor discussed in the opening of this chapter), came to mortality for an embodied, learning journey (Act II), and through Jesus Christ and temple practices, death is not the end of this mortal existence, but rather individuals and families can live together forever in heaven in the presence of God, (Act III). It is interesting to note that, like the dance choreography discussed in part two, this is a circular narrative or story; a leaving of God's presence to return to God's presence, having learnt and grown and found reconciliation to heavenly rather than societal modalities – an eternal form of *bildungsroman*, if you will. Religious sociologist Douglas Davies observes the same; "What church members often call the 'Plan of Salvation' is one extended and profound story. It begins in eternity and ends in eternity" ("Mormon Culture" 12). He goes on to state the key role of this foundational story within Latter-day Saint theology, concluding, "scholars of

religion, in their eagerness to set history within an abstract ideological context, easily overlook the phenomenological power of the told, experienced and believed story, rooted in individual lives and given collective support” (“Mormon Culture” 14). Davies’ reminder to the Academy highlights maybe why religious theatre in general, and these Latter-day Saints pageants in particular, are such a powerful tool for staging sacred history, for theatre foregrounds the story in compelling ways. Indeed, the original writer and director of *The Nauvoo Pageant*, David Warner, has remarked that, “We are only ever telling one story – the story of coming to Christ” (Warner “Interview”). That story, of coming to Christ, is at the narrative heart of both *The British* and *Nauvoo Pageants*, and is the story at the heart of the Plan of Salvation. In other words, the narrative structure the pageants are built upon mirrors, parallels and reflects the narrative structure that Latter-day Saint theology is built upon. *The British Pageant* follows the stories of a few key families, and individuals within those families - the Ashtons, the Turleys, the Cannons, the Lairds, the Benbows and others - as they nearly all embrace Latter-day Saint theology, leave to gather to Nauvoo, and ultimately come to Christ. *The Nauvoo Pageant* picks up and follows through the story of the Lairds, especially the husband Robert Laird, as he learns to come to Christ whilst embraced within the Zion of Nauvoo. All accounts are based on actual people and many declarations of faith in Christ made in the script come from the historical archive of letters, diaries and more. As such the story of coming to Christ is echoing through the generations, as discussed in part two, in profound ways. If Latter-day Saint mythos is built around the eternal story of coming to Christ, and the pageants likewise are ultimately scaffolded around that very same narrative, then the “phenomenological power of the told, experienced and believed story” (Davies



“Mormon Culture” 14), is amplified exponentially. In acting in the pageants, the cast embody their theology on the deepest, structural levels by performing the central, eternal story and narrative of Latter-day Saint theology – they perform the Plan of Salvation.

As well as performing the central narrative of their theology, cast members’ experience of coming to rehearse and stage the pageants becomes its own form of embodying and living the Plan of Salvation in microcosm. Whilst the parallel is necessarily a little reductionist in nature, it is nonetheless a valid understanding and lens through which to view the pageant processes, as it helps us appreciate that participants are not just staging the structural narrative of the Plan of Salvation, so crucial to their theology, but actually living it in microcosm themselves.

Cast members leaving of their homes to come and embody their foremothers and forefathers on stage, to come and do what they did in Nauvoo, shares clear echoes with the Latter-day Saint Plan of Salvation. This parallel is found when we appreciate that Latter-day Saints believe that everyone who is born is coming to earth to gain a body and to be tested in choosing between right and wrong; in other words, within Latter-day Saint theology, people come to earth to do as others have done before them.

Birth is seen as a rite of passage in many ways within the theology, even if that term is not readily used for it. It is not the beginning of one’s eternal life, but one crucial moment within it, much like death. In this understanding of birth and death, mortality becomes the ultimate liminal state, as mentioned in the previous chapter – that we are all strangers and pilgrims on the earth as Paul wrote in his letter to the Hebrews, (Heb. 11:13) and in this pilgrimage state, we experience our time on earth within the Plan of Salvation as the ultimate

*betwixt-between* of the liminal rite of passage. Likewise, when cast members come to Nauvoo having packed up their pedestrian lives for two weeks or six weeks, depending on their role in the pageant, they enter a liminal time, as discussed in the previous chapter. Furthermore, embodiment is a key component of both the Plan of Salvation and cast members' time in Nauvoo. Within Latter-day Saint theology individuals come to earth to gain a body, whilst in the pageants cast members come to embody and give birth and life to absent bodies, who through their lineage, gave birth and life to them. Even if not performing one's own ancestors in the pageants, cast members are performing their spiritual foremothers and forefathers, those whose faith and sacrifices gave spiritual birth and life to present faith through the lineage of believers. The semiotics of theatrical embodiment in these pageants are complex and run deep, and are intimately connected to notions of birth, both literal and spiritual. (It was Christ, after all, who taught that to come to Him is to be "born again" (John 3:3).) The pageant process parallels the mortal sojourn within the Plan of Salvation by being deeply interwoven with the symbols of birth and processes of embodiment, with birth being a key symbol of liminality, as previously discussed (V. Turner, 51).

Whilst embodiment is central to the pageants, as it is central to mortality within the Latter-day Saint Plan of Salvation, participants ultimately come to Nauvoo to learn and to grow and to become more Christ-like, both individually and as a family. In other words, they come to practice Zion, and in practicing, hope to live it more fully at home. This sentiment, of applying to be in the pageant process in the hopes of spiritual growth, was repeated in many interviews. The embodiment of their foremothers and forefathers (whether literal or spiritual) is viewed as a means to that growth then, not an end product in and

of itself. The parallels to the Latter-day Saint Plan of Salvation here are apparent when it is remembered that a key purpose for mortality within the theology is the opportunity it affords for individuals to learn and grow, spiritually speaking, through embodied practices. The things done on stage, the blocking and singing and dancing, become crucial tools in and through which to learn and apply the central lessons of I-Thou encounters. Likewise, the crucial matter of our daily lives, the work and education and play and more – become essential tools in and through which I-Thou encounters are learnt, rehearsed, performed and re-rehearsed; life as the ultimate performance as Schechner argued, and plays as a chance to rehearse for it (“Performance Studies” 29). Lastly, in this parallel which I am drawing between the pageant processes and the Latter-day Saint narrative of the Plan of Salvation, is the circulatory of both.

Participants return home from their liminal time in Nauvoo, having been through a transformative encounter, and continue with their learning journey applying such transformative learning in their home environment. The same is believed of the eternal narrative within the Plan of Salvation. For the believing Latter-day Saint, people return to their heavenly home through the process of death, to continue their learning in the eternities. Whilst necessarily a somewhat reductionary parallel, as mentioned, it is not so reductionary as to be without merit. As a line in *The Nauvoo Pageant* expresses it, spoken from the perspectives of the early Saints who were expelled from Nauvoo at gun point and lost nearly all their material goods, “Nothing could erase what Nauvoo had given us - that we took with us, and we taught our children, and they taught their children, which is why, when you’re here, we’re here also” (Collier et al. Sc. 14).

The beginning of this line, “Nothing could erase what Nauvoo had given us - that we took with us” is often put on a wooden sign or a T-shirt, as a

memento or tangible reminder of what the cast learnt and gained from their time in Nauvoo, and that their not being physically in Nauvoo is no hindrance to applying the spiritual lessons in their home environment and lives. It represents a performative circularity – the early Saints who left Nauvoo in the nineteenth century worked hard to take their spiritual learning and stories with them as they trekked west and settled the Great Salt Lake region and beyond. Now cast members leave Nauvoo (often heading west too), most as descendants of the early pioneers, determined to likewise remember the lessons and stories they have learnt and heard and lived in Nauvoo. Of course, the whole pageant process is a microcosm of the early gathering to Nauvoo followed by the leaving seven years later. But beyond that, it is also a microcosm of the story of the Plan of Salvation; a circular return to “home” (whether heavenly or earthly), via embodied learning, in which, like the early Saints who left Nauvoo, it is not material goods that are taken “home,” but the learning, the growth, the stories.

This parallel, between the process of the pageants and story of the Plan of Salvation, or the story of coming to Christ, is deeply connected to the focus of this chapter. If the soteriological narrative is a family affair within Latter-day Saint theology, with the living and dead as co-dependent in that story, then the transformative intimacy with the dead which the pageants facilitate – that embrace for cast members in a circularity of believers unbound by time or place – is at the very heart of the Plan of Salvation. The story of the Plan of Salvation, of coming to Christ, is not ultimately a solitary affair for Latter-day Saints, it is a family affair. The pageant process as parallel to the Plan of Salvation frames it as an embodied rehearsal of the theological narrative; a familial soteriological practice in microcosm.

As is apt for pageant processes which echo the liminality of mortality, multiple cast members have shared with me deeply personal stories of feeling (that word again) God's love for them during these finales more profoundly than they have ever done in their lives before. In so doing, they experience a visceral encounter with the theological scaffolding of their faith through embodying it on every level; structurally, semiotically and semantically, as they give voice to the deepest held feelings regarding their theology in song. The songs in the finales, framed and understood in this way, are not only embodied theology for participants, but become a rehearsal for what Latter-day Saint scripture refers to as heavenly choirs who sing in praise of their God (The Book of Mormon, Mosiah 2: 28 and Mormon 7: 7). Such singing becomes a practice, performance and pedagogy of utopia, hope, faith and joy on the deepest level for participants; a performative preparation for the future Zion that is their ultimate heavenly home.

We have looked, in the chapter, at the relationship between the living and the dead they represent in these pageants, and the transformative efficacy of the intimacy of that relationship, leading to circular time. In the conclusion we examined how the individual actor on stage embodies Latter-day Saint theology, becoming a potent symbol in the process of the totality of their faith. This is in accordance with one former Latter-day Saint prophet who, when asked what the symbol of the Latter-day Saint faith was, as the traditional Christian crosses are not used, replied that the lives of the members are the symbol of the faith (Hinckley, "First Presidency Message"). It is the lives of Latter-day Saints past, present and indeed future, with so many little children participating in each performance, that are revealed in and through these pageants. The pageants also reveal more about the transformative, co-creative

relationship between the living, the dead they represent, and the landscape, as the following chapter now discusses.

## ***Chapter Four - Faithscape***

### **Introduction**

The previous two chapters have dealt with the theatrical relationship between space, meaning and transformation. In Chapter Two I suggested symbiotic efficacy; an unpacking of how meaning is generated, recorded and shared in the liminal spaces between participants through transformative *I-Thou* encounters. In Chapter Three the nexus between spatial considerations and meaning continued as we traced how through the theatrical performance of Zion, the linear chain of believers within the Latter-day Saint tradition is re-choreographed to a circular chain of believers, with potent personal transformation resulting – a re-choreographing of self and time, and self in time, in relation to faith through performance. In this penultimate chapter, the overarching interest in space, meaning and transformation continues. If Chapter Two was learning about the transformative spaces between the living, and Chapter Three about the transformative spaces between the living and the dead, then this chapter is learning about the transformative spaces between performers (living and dead), and landscape. Both *The Nauvoo* and *The British Pageant*, in the USA and in the UK, are site-specific performances. Both are performed in locales where community, sacrifice, faith, labour and daily living, (concerns tightly interwoven into the fabric of both the creative content and creative context of the pageants), are interwoven into the materiality of the landscapes where these performances are staged, in uniquely different yet tangible ways.

In looking to learn from the spaces between the landscape, performance and performers (living and dead), this chapter is informed by the works of Cathy Turner and Mike Pearson in performance studies, anthropologist Tim Ingold,

and geographer Rana P.B. Singh. As such it is built upon their rhizomatic learning and lexicon: fragmentation, alienation, place and space (Turner); hosts, ghosts and palimpsest (Pearson); memories, community, archaeology, traces, motion (of people and nature and people in nature), stories and *things* (Ingold), and faithscape (Singh) Ironically, my thinking in the chapter is more deeply informed by and indebted to Ingold's work, writing from outside of the performance studies discourse, though Turner's and Pearson's insights burnish the ideas and secure the scaffolding, as it were. There will be referencing to other writers at times to help further elucidate ideas, including Grace Davie and Danièle Hervieu-Léger in sociology, Fiona Wilkie, Nick Kaye, Richard Schechner and Marvin Carlson in performance studies, philosopher Henri Lefebvre, and theologian Landon Gilkey. That said, the ideas of Turner, Pearson, Singh/Ingold are heard faintly (or loudly) drumming throughout.

The chapter is separated into four parts. In part one, below, I build predominantly upon Ingold's ideas around landscape and taskscape to elucidate Singh's ideas surrounding *faithscape*; a co-creating relationship between the performance and landscape which reveals the faith of the performers, both the living and the dead, in and through labours of faith. Having explained the idea of faithscape in depth in part one, in part two of the chapter I move on to seeing what we can learn from the staging of *The Nauvoo Pageant* in Nauvoo, Illinois through understanding its relationship to faithscape. In part three I look at what is learnt from both the creative process and staging of *The British Pageant* in Chorley, Lancashire by viewing it likewise through the lens of faithscape. What is revealed through both part two and three is a mnemonic merging of performers with place in a manner that enlarges memory and deepens faith. Furthermore, in part three, through learning from the creation



and performance of *The British Pageant* in Lancashire through the lens of faithscape, we come to understand that the circular chain of believers, as elucidated in the previous chapter, is actually culturally inscribed in vital ways. Part four concludes the chapter by bringing together the learnings from part two and part three to suggest that faithscape enables us to experience the landscape as a form of spiritual palimpsest which enlarges the memory of participants in healing ways.

Whilst part one is necessarily grounded in the discourse of the Academy as I create a clear working definition of faithscape, this entire chapter is somewhat influenced by Gregory Ulmer's advocacy for *my-story* (Ulmer, Sec. I. ch. 1) as a mode of formal discovery that does not rely solely on logical argument. Whilst clearly not written within the realm of patterns, montage, associations and affiliations that *my-story* suggests, there is more of the autobiographical, anecdotal and fragments of personal experience infused into the more traditional academic analysis in this chapter. The reasons I hope are apparent; I have spent various summers in Nauvoo negotiating the space between the locale of Nauvoo and the performances there which I have both acted in and directed. Likewise, as writer and director, I have been intimately involved with staging *The British Pageant* in Lancashire in both 2013 and 2017, and have had multiple experiences negotiating the relationship between place and performance in that context. The personal, anecdotal, fragmentary memories from these experiences reveal how faithscape is encountered and experienced. Whilst not a full immersion in Ulmer's *my-story*, there is a paddling in those waters that helps the purposes of this chapter. That explained, we move now into part one, outlining what I mean by faithscape and in the process discovering a vocabulary and way of thinking about site-specific performances

that foregrounds and materialises faith-fuelled action in and through the emergent, potent space between performance and place.

## Part One

The original creator and director of *The Nauvoo Pageant* once shared in a pre-show cast meeting that the most inspiring moment for him all evening was not actually within the pageant itself, but rather seeing all the cast, in costume, walk down the hill or “bluff” as it is called in Nauvoo, towards the stage to get ready to perform the show that night (Warner “Keynote speaker”). He shared this insight in a building called the Joseph Smith Academy. That building is shown below (fig. 7) on the left hand side of the image, with the re-built Nauvoo Temple in white on the right hand side, and the rolling green bluff that leads to the stage, which is about a five-minute walk from the Joseph Smith Academy.



(Fig. 7. The Joseph Smith Academy as was, Nauvoo, Illinois. Mays, Kenneth. *Picturing history: Joseph Smith Academy in Nauvoo, Illinois*, Deseret News, 2 Aug 2017, [www.deseret.com/2017/8/2/20616848/picturing-history-joseph-smith-academy-in-nauvoo-illinois#a-view-of-the-joseph-smith-academy-building-in-front-of-the-nauvoo-temple-in-2003](http://www.deseret.com/2017/8/2/20616848/picturing-history-joseph-smith-academy-in-nauvoo-illinois#a-view-of-the-joseph-smith-academy-building-in-front-of-the-nauvoo-temple-in-2003))

The Joseph Smith Academy was originally built by Catholics in the 1930s and called the Sisters of St. Mary Monastery and Academy. The Church of Jesus Christ bought it in 1998 to serve as a learning and accommodation academy for Brigham Young University (the Church owned university in Utah) students who were studying early Latter-day Saint history for a semester in Nauvoo. For the first three years of *The Nauvoo Pageant*, 2005 – 2007, cast meetings were held in the Joseph Smith Academy (or JSA as it was abbreviated to by cast and crew members), and it was from this building that cast members would walk after the pre-show devotional discussion down to the stage site to prepare for the show.

It was always of interest to me that the most moving and inspiring image for the creator of *The Nauvoo Pageant* was to see people walk down this hill, in costume, towards the stage. The image he would have been seeing, whether from the large upper glass windows of the JSA where meetings were held, or standing in front of the building, would have been of cast members backs, walking away from him towards the trees (just glimpsed in the right hand side of the photo above). Children running and skipping and playing – as children are apt to do – would have been part of what he observed. There would have been some teenagers walking together, some with their families. Some family members would have been holding hands. Others not. If he had watched carefully (and I do not know if he did or not, as I have not asked him about this moment), he would have seen the inevitable dynamics of family life playing out even in the walk down to the hall; some laughing and joking and playing, others struggling. He would have seen some with a bounce in their step, others battling tiredness with the labour of carrying costumes in the heat, along with all the snacks, toys and *stuff* – the detritus that is needed for an evening's

performance with multiple young children. Some families would have had a very modern-looking pram, or stroller as it is called in America, to carry all these “things” down to the stage, whilst the baby was carried by an older sibling. Others may have invested in a little four-wheeler cart you pull. Others still would be juggling bags and babies on their way down to the stage, unaided by wheels, but perhaps supported by a passer-by. In other words, he would have observed families and individuals performing the labour necessary to stage or build a play that night, which play itself is about the labour necessary to build Nauvoo in the 1830s and 1840s.

That this of all moments was most moving for the original creator of this play is revealing of the powerful interplay between place, performer and performance. Had he seen such a moment in a conventional (albeit large) theatrical venue, watching cast members in costume walking backstage or heading down corridors together to get ready to perform, I do not sense the moment would have held such potency for him. It may have been moving in other ways for him to see them prepare to perform in a theatre venue, but different ways – ways that were not as much about the poetic interplay between temporality, place, community, communal memory, ghosts of the past, nature and the land. Something in the nexus between people, performance and place is where the power of the experience lay for him. This may seem a self-evident statement but it is central to appreciating that something else is happening when we stage site-specific performances. Below, we go on to discover what that something else is, not to create any new overarching thesis about site-specific work – much has been written on that already and the interested reader can go to the works of Mike Pearson, Cathy Turner, Nick Kaye, Miwon Kwon and Fiona Wilkie, to name a few. Rather, I am looking to understand, articulate

clearly, and learn from these specific religious performances. The findings may indeed suggest other ways that we can read other site-specific performances in other locations, but that would be a by-product of the learning, not the main purpose. We begin by looking at the work of Pearson, Turner and Ingold then, to help lay a foundation for what is happening due to these pageants being site-specific performances. An understanding of their thoughts on site-specific performance and landscape, coupled with my own insights, lays the foundation needed to build the idea of faithscape, as expressed by Singh.

In Turner's essay "Palimpsest or Potential Space? Finding a Vocabulary for Site-Specific Performance", she turns to Mike Pearson's seminal work on hosts and ghosts and unpacks his work in helpful ways. Turner concludes that Pearson's host,

comprises not only the ordering vocabulary of place but the resonances of its former articulations. The 'host' is already the layered 'space' formed by lived experience, so that the givens of site-specific performance comprise not only the machinery of 'place', but also the patina it has acquired with past use. (374)

This "lived experience" of the host or place within the site-specific performance suggests that much like Taylor's writing in the previous chapter, namely that our bodies carry the history and knowledge of our people, so likewise places carry history and knowledge too, being the "patina" of past lives and people that Turner refers to above. This idea is more explicitly articulated by Ingold's anthropological writings on landscape. He observes:

landscape is constituted as an enduring record of - and testimony to - the lives and works of past generations who have dwelt within it, and in so doing, have left there something of themselves.... The landscape tells - or rather is - a story. ("Temporality" 152)

The idea that landscape is story is abundantly rich when applied to site-specific performances. For audiences are then no longer engaged with the story of the

play only, but also and equally the story of the place. And the story they are experiencing through the landscape (it is not *told* in Ingold's view) is of the "lives and works" of generations who have inhabited the area; a multifaceted story of people and their labour. Ingold's self-correction, "tells – or rather is – a story" - is not meant as metaphor. Ingold does not believe the landscape to be a semiotic space, lending itself to representational thinking ("Temporality" 171). The landscape does not represent a story of people and their work; it *is* a story of people and their work. This does not mean that landscape story is not about motion, change and growth – it clearly is ("Temporality" 164). Rather that whilst landscape story grows and changes and moves and is in motion with the world, it is not representative of other stories. It defies the slippery semiotics in which the post-modern world operates in many ways. A tree in a site-specific performance might *represent* something else in the story of the performers on stage, if incorporated into the play, but in the landscape story it is not representative of a tree, it is a tree. It does not tell the story of tree growing, to build on Ingold's self-correction above, it is the story of tree growing. And the actual story of the tree growing is happening in front of us, albeit on a grand time-scale.

This difference is important to appreciate in relation to site-specific work, when performers (or ghosts to go back to Pearson's idea), are functioning in semiotic ways, as performers do. In Carlson's notion of the haunted production ("Haunted"), mentioned in the previous chapter, any ghosting is that of *previous* productions haunting the current apparatus of the theatre, whether via the haunted text, body, production or venue. However, in Pearson's usage of ghosting, the *present* actors in site-specific productions become ghosts through being so semiotically unstable. The actor as unstable ghost in site-specific

productions, performing in the actual story of the host (or landscape), creates, I believe, a paradoxical tension. The paradox lies in the people being less stable, as semiotic agents and actors, than the landscape in which they perform.

Pearson's referring to the performers as "ghosts" points towards this semiotic instability of actors, which is heightened in site-specific performances through the actuality of landscape: the tree as tree highlights the acting of the actors. To integrate Pearson's and Ingold's thinking, you could say that in site-specific work, actors as ghosts on stage tell stories whereas the landscape as host is story. The tension between the stability of landscape story and the semiotic instability of the performers' story, leads, at least in my experience with these two pageants, to an unexpected outcome: increased hope and peace.

Whilst in parts two and three of this chapter I will explore in greater depth how this is happening, hints are helpful now. Increased peace and hope occurs because the stability of landscape story invites us to blend and meld into the landscape in liberating, assuring and ultimately healing ways. More simply put, it is big enough, old enough, alive enough, complex enough and simple enough to take us. Both Cathy Turner and Ingold speak of this blending of self into landscape. Turner concludes that site-specific work carries with it a suggestion of merging and the dissolving of boundaries ("Palimpsest" 389). Ingold is characteristically more forthright: "And through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it" ("Temporality" 154). Ingold's writings elsewhere elucidate how this merging of self and landscape is possible: landscape and people are both *things* in Martin Heidegger's understanding of the word. And *thing* for Heidegger is not reductionist at all, but co-creative. The longer quote from Ingold below, from his book *Making: Anthropology*,

*Archaeology, Art and Architecture*, frames his understanding of Heidegger's thoughts on this:

The object (Heidegger) argued, is complete in itself....We may look at it or even touch it, but we cannot join with it in the process of its formation. But if objects are against us, things are with us. Every thing, for Heidegger, is a coming together of materials in movement. To touch it, or to observe it, is to bring the movements of our own being into close and affective correspondence with those of its constituent materials... To witness a thing is not to be locked out but to be invited in to the gathering. As the mound persists in its mounding, so do cottage, cairn, tree, pond, brook, hill, each carrying on, or 'thinging', in its own particular way and, in so doing, issuing forth from a world that is itself 'worlding' [.....] To highlight the overlap between personhood and thinghood, as Jane Bennett observes (2010: 4), is to acknowledge 'the extent to which the us and the it slip-slide into each other'. Or as the title of a recent article by archaeologists Timothy Webmoor and Christopher Witmore declares, 'Things are us!'. (85 – 86, 94)

Landscape, for Ingold then, is clearly a *thing*, in which we as people can have close and affective correspondence; that we can "slip-slide into each other" as Bennett, quoted by Ingold, sees it. Ingold looks to archaeologists Webmoor and Witmore in his thinking – quoting their article title to us – "Things are us!" In the context of these performances, cast and audience members alike might actually declare, "Nauvoo is us!" and "Lancashire is us!" It may not be conceived of in these terms, but the thinking of Turner, Ingold and those he quotes here all point us toward a sense of self deeply merged into and with the landscape as thing. This sense of self merged with place, whether Nauvoo, Illinois or Chorley, Lancashire, deepens the sense of connection to former inhabitants of the place, and heals the sense of self as nomad in the existential condition in the process (Davies "Mormon Culture" 263). And of course, self-merging with landscape is even more heightened when the emerging landscape is one shaped, informed and created by your forbears, as discussed in the previous chapter. Nauvoo for these participants very literally is "us!" as they walk down streets that bear their



own surname, named after and by their city-building ancestors. We will continue this exploration in part two.

Crucially for Ingold, and helpfully in elucidating site-specific performances through his findings, he understands landscape as an emerging between manmade works and nature. This leads him to conclude that the distinction between what is a building and what is not building is not actually a given nor clearly delineated (“Temporality” 169 and “Making” 22, 87-88). This helps us locate landscape outside of the immediate pastoral images it conjures for us, and helps us appreciate that a site-specific performance in an abandoned car factory is dealing in the realm of Ingold’s insights on landscape as much as a performance in a seeming wilderness. This is also helpful to remember when we come to part three, looking at the staging of *The British Pageant* in Chorley, Lancashire, wherein a huge marquee is erected within which a temporary 1800-seater theatre is constructed. It too is a site-specific performance in a landscape that reveals stories of lives lived and works done, as we will go on to see.

Fittingly for seeing landscape as story, Ingold also writes in depth about how the exercise of imagination is crucial to how people encounter landscapes, writing, “the human imagination gets to work in fashioning ideas about (landscape). For the landscape, to borrow a phrase from Merleau-Ponty (1962:24), is not so much the object as 'the homeland of our thoughts'...” (“Temporality” 171). Ingold observes that landscape is a place where the work of memory takes place, especially at locations of pilgrimage (“Making” 80), as is Nauvoo. In this, Ingold agrees with Simon Schama in his text *Landscape and Memory*, wherein Schama states that landscape, “is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock ... it is our shaping perception that

makes the difference between raw matter and landscape” (Schama 7, 10). The notion of landscape as layers of memory becomes deeply resonant and pertinent within these pageants, both in Nauvoo and Chorley, as we will discuss in parts two and three respectively.

Landscape as story, then, in which imaginative/memory acts by people are central, echoes in profound ways the relationship between audience and theatrical performance. Story, we know, is central to theatre. Furthermore, theatre work is the work of imagination and also of memory, in which performances are haunted by audiences’ memories of past performances (Carlson, “Haunted”). This echo or parallel makes for audience members at site-specific performances a doubling of their memory/imaginative work; they are not only doing such work for the play watched, but also for the place it is performed in. Their experience as witness is found not in the layering of this double-fold theatre work of memory and imagination for both play and place, but rather in the coalescence. Place and production, or host and ghost, are co-creative; neither haunting the other, but rather creating each other. Ingold, not incorporating the theatrical performance into the equation but in language that is performative, argues that landscape and people *emerge together* (“Temporality” 156). Such co-creation between host and ghost, or emerging together between people and landscapes, is a crucial idea for this chapter, as it deeply informs the idea of faithscape, which we will now go on to explore. In looking to Rana P.B. Singh’s ideas on faithscape, my driving question is how faith shapes Ingold’s taskscape/landscape, and how performance reveals, foregrounds and co-creates with that shaping influence.

In order to understand faithscape fully, however, we need to first appreciate Ingold’s work on taskscape. His thoughts on taskscape and

landscape and the relationship between the two were originally articulated in his essay “The Temporality of the Landscape”, published in October 1993 in *World Archaeology*. Ingold’s thinking on taskscapes, encapsulated in that essay, has been deeply influential in anthropology, but even more so in archaeology; so much so that a book was published in 2017 entitled *Forms of Dwelling – Twenty Years of Taskscapes in Archaeology*, a collection of papers tracing and highlighting the importance of taskscape within archaeology, edited by Ulla Rajala and Philip Mills, and in which Ingold updates his thoughts in an essay entitled “Taking Taskscape to Task”, which we look at further below.

In his 1993 essay Ingold defines the term taskscape as, “the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking....an array of related activities” (“Temporality” 158). Rites, feasts and ceremonies are central to the taskscape, which comes into being through movement (159), revealing not just peoples’ activity, but their interactivity. The landscape, crucially, is, “the taskscape made visible” (167) as the activity of an entire community over generations is “sedimented” (167) into the landscape. As Ingold went on to explore the relationship between landscape and taskscape he asked, “Where does one end and the other begin? Can they even be distinguished at all?” (161). His answer was that the landscape should be “*understood as the taskscape in its embodied form: a pattern of activities 'collapsed' into an array of features*” (162). It is apparent then that landscape and taskscape are one and the same; landscape incorporates taskscape. Ingold felt compelled to write the essay to reclaim landscape’s temporality and to elucidate how clearly human beings belong to the land (“Taking” 16 - 24). He was concerned that human lives and activities were being written out of understandings of landscape; that people were forgetting that the ontology of “scape” is not from the Greek *skopein* meaning to

look, but rather from the old English *sceppan* – to shape (“Taking” 24). In other words, for Ingold, at the heart of the notion of landscape (which is the host of site-specific work and hence so central to this chapter) is not nature to be looked at, but rather nature shaped by human activity in the act of living, and human activity and lives in turn shaped by nature.

Crucially in his 2017 essay “Taking Taskscape to Task”, Ingold is more explicit in what he hints at in his 1993 essay – that the differentiation between taskscape and landscape is not needed: “Taskscape is no more and no less than the landscape brought back to life” (26) - he created it only to infuse human life back into landscape, but that ultimately it is redundant: we do not need both terms any more, and Ingold for one prefers landscape to taskscape, because landscape incorporates taskscape already, if we will but remember that.

How then does faithscape fit into this idea, and how is it beneficial to this study? Ingold is understandably wary of the proliferation of “scapes” that have entered the academic domain (“Taking” 26). That said, I will go on to define how Singh initially utilised the term, faithscape, and as Ingold did for taskscape in relationship to landscape, I will suggest that the landscapes of Nauvoo and Lancashire encompass faithscape in ways that are crucial for these performances. Faithscape, then, can be encompassed into landscape, in order to enrich our understanding of how the host is working in these site-specific locations. Furthermore, faithscape, as we shall go on to see, gives sacral purpose to the taskscape found in landscape, in which the pedestrian living activities of the taskscape are undertaken and framed as acts of faith.

Firstly, the term faithscape itself was initially coined by scholar Rana P.B. Singh in 1991 in his article “Panchakroshi Yatra, Varanasi: Sacred Journey,

Ecology of Place and Faithscape”, exploring pilgrimage and sacredscapes. From there, he went on to utilise the term in multiple publications, as for example his 1995 essay on Hindu pilgrimage in the *National Geographical Journal of India* (Singh “Towards”). In that work Singh defines faithscape, in what seems to be his most explicit definition of the term in his various publications, as “the overall wholeness of landscape creates a faithscape that encompasses sacred place, sacred time, sacred meanings, sacred rituals and embodies both symbolic and tangible psyche elements in an attempt to realize man’s identity in the cosmos” (96). This is a helpful way to start thinking about the sacral potential of faithscape, connecting as it does to sacred time, as discussed in the last chapter, and also sacred place, as focussed on in this chapter. Furthermore, in his 2009 publication *Cosmic Order and Cultural Astronomy*, Singh continues to utilise these ideas, exploring the relationship between faithscape and cartography, elucidating the relationship between spiritual-mental topography and physical topography (106). Also published in 2009, Singh’s book *Banaras - Making of India’s Heritage City*, expands our understanding of faithscape by connecting sacral meaning making and the senses: “Faithscape is the ultimate result of cosmic forms of human actions for divine search, i.e. the submergence of many scapes related to smell, sound, body intuition, fear, etc” (295). This explanation Singh makes of faithscape, incorporating smellscape, touchscape and soundscape, takes on vivid meaning to me having lived in India myself, and experienced how the smell of the incense, for example, is a central encounter at Hindu shrines. Within the context of faithscape for these performances, however, the sensory encounter is not as heightened, but nonetheless full of meaning making, as we will go on to discover throughout this chapter. In the same book, Singh writes that faithscape

“develops by the human quest for searching a divine connection between man and the environment” (300). Ultimately, as site-specific performances, the environment of the pageant performances, in America and England, matter tremendously, and as we will learn throughout this chapter, divine connection is central to these locations.

Whilst Singh uses the term faithscape elsewhere, and is prolific, I will lastly look briefly at another 2009 publication of his entitled *Geographical Thoughts in India*. In Chapter Seven of this book, entitled *Sacred Space and Faithscape*, Singh writes in depth about sacred spaces, or sacredscape, as he terms it, which is an inherent part of faithscape (261). Such sacred places, whilst sensory, ultimately create “a moral environment for mankind” (232). We will see in this coming chapter how in these productions, the sacred places which create the landscape act as a faith promoting environment above and beyond a moral environment for participants. I will go on below to articulate more clearly below how I am using and understanding the term faithscape more specifically in this study, whilst acknowledging Singh’s key work and initial creation of the term. It should also be recognised before moving on how other scholars have utilised Singh’s term.

Architectural scholars Krupali Krusche and Vinayak Bharne published a book in 2012 on Hindu temples with a chapter exploring faithscape in Varanasi, inviting a re-evaluation of cities and their layout. Premangshu Chakrabarty in 2012 wrote a paper exploring pilgrimage tourism in Assam in greater depth though the lens of faithscape. Faithscape as a lens to explore pilgrimage is also utilised outside of the Indian context, with Valantina Bold writing a chapter entitled “The Whithorn Way: Twenty-First Century Pilgrimage in Scotland” published in *Pilgrimage as Transformative Process*. Faithscape has also been

used to explain and explore the diverse religious practices in Germantown Avenue, Philadelphia, by Katie Day in her 2014 book *Faith on the Avenue*. This is not an exhaustive introduction to how the term has been used by scholars other than Singh, but does point towards its appeal, especially in relation to pilgrimage studies. And whilst predominately used in the Indian context, it has clearly been utilised outside of Asia also.

In explaining my use of Singh's term, it is helpful to return to Ingold's writings. If the landscape is the taskscape in embodied form to Ingold, then the taskscape is the faithscape in action for me. Faithscape, as I am utilising it, invites us to consider the relationship between the daily tasks/activities of life and religious faith, implying that the tasks and activities of daily living, the events which constitute life, are not in the least separate from religious faith. Rather, faithscape reveals the activities of taskscape as vital manifestations of faith. (It should be acknowledged here that I am defining faith within the Latter-day Saint context)., Within that context, appreciating that faithscape is at the beating heart of taskscape, and as such landscape, helps us understand that even the most seemingly banal and pedestrian acts or tasks of life, which make up the taskscape, become deeply informed and enthused by religious faith. And that faith made manifest in action is not separate from the daily tasks of living. Rather, it is manifest in and through the daily tasks of living; sacred and profane action cannot be separated within faithscape.

Faithscape, like taskscape, implies interactive and interlocking tasks, but crucially with the end goal of Zion in mind, as defined in the last chapter; everyday tasks then, with theologically sanctified aims. And just as landscape is story for Ingold, so the faithscape helps us read a story of faith into the landscape of Nauvoo and Chorley, as we will see in parts two and three, below.

Through the lens of faithscape, the paths and tracks, fences and walls, streets and trees and bushes and bluffs of Nauvoo (the host of the performance) are not just shaped by the taskscape of former inhabitants living their lives, rather they are shaped by *the faith* of former inhabitants, faith manifest in tasks and activities, from draining swamps to growing food to building homes and building a temple. And just as landscape gathers the past and future into itself (Ingold, "Temporality" 159), so when we include faithscape into our appreciation of taskscape, the faith of former believers is gathered into, and revealed, in and through the landscape. Likewise, memory and imagination continue to play a role in faithscape, as they do in landscape, for people today remember the faith-filled actions of earlier inhabitants of the lands, made flesh through taskscape in the landscape, and creatively imagine themselves in future acts of faith. The landscape, once again, acts as register for the inscription of labours and times past (Ingold, "Taking" 26), but the labour and time in faithscape is holy labour and time, as per Singh's writing on faithscape, sacralised through faith. In this study, then, landscape can be conceived of as incorporating taskscape which, crucially, is *driven by* faithscape. As such, landscape becomes an organic, living testator to faith-fuelled action. And crucially, when the pageants are staged in Nauvoo, Illinois and Chorley, Lancashire, that faithscape, through theatrical foregrounding, is remembered afresh through embodiment and brought into much clearer focus. Indeed, you could state that one of the many fruits of the performances studied here is that through their site-specificity, they reveal the faithscape within the landscape, through such embodied foregrounding of the faith-fuelled action of daily living of previous generations, both within the content of the performances studied and the context of those performances. The image of cast members in costume, walking through the trees and down to the stage



juggling babies and bags each night, to tell the story of the building of Nauvoo, is faithscape *theatrically* embodied. Just as landscape *is us* for Ingold, so faithscape *is us* for participants in Nauvoo and Lancashire. Cast members are *in* the faithscape – moving in and through the landscape inscribed with the former faith of their forbears – and they *are* the faithscape; engaged with faith-filled activities that are also leaving their very tangible mark in the landscape. The metal lighting towers and empty stage are a permanent fixture now in Nauvoo; the landscape of the town itself incorporates the story of faithscape as manifest in annual creative theatrical play and storytelling.

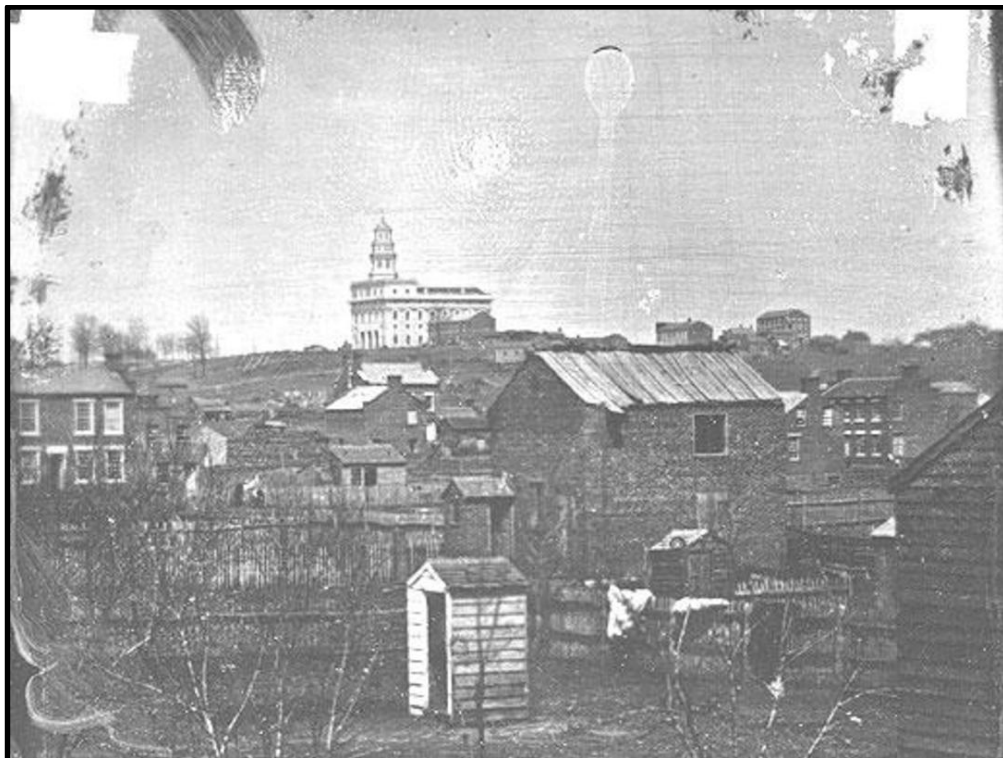
## **Part Two – Nauvoo, Illinois**

I opened part one, above, sharing how the original creator of *The Nauvoo Pageant* was deeply moved whilst watching the cast walk from the Joseph Smith Academy to the stage to perform each night. What is interesting to note, is that now the Joseph Smith Academy no longer exists. Whilst I do not know all the reasons behind why Latter-day Saint leaders decided to remove it, it seems that it was to do with both practical reasons of financial upkeep – it was an old 1930s build that was constantly needing maintenance - and also for reasons to do with space, landscape, community, history and spiritual potency: the Joseph Smith Academy blocked the view of the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple from the bottom of the hill, or bluff, as it is called, (as can be appreciated from figure 7, shared previously above).

Whilst we discussed extensively the proxy purposes of Latter-day Saint temples in the previous chapter, what we have not yet discussed is the original building, destruction of and rebuilding of the Nauvoo Temple. This matters for this chapter, for at the heart of the notion of faithscape is that when Latter-day

Saint cast members and audiences encounter both *The British Pageant* and *The Nauvoo Pageant* in Nauvoo today, what they encounter in the host of the site is faithscape, central to which is the temple. To help elucidate this idea, and how crucially both pageants help to reveal faithscape in and through their site-specific location, I will trace briefly the accounts surrounding the original building of the temple, its destruction, and rebuilding. This story is also central to the pageants and portrayed on stage.

When the early Saints arrived in Nauvoo, they were in a desolate state, refugees from state-sponsored violence in Missouri, as discussed in greater detail in the Chapter One. The bend of the Mississippi which Joseph Smith decided to settle was in no better state than they were - it was swamp-land, mosquito-infested and seemingly uninhabitable. Within seven years, the Latter-day Saints drained this swamp land and turned it into a thriving city rivalling Chicago in size. And crowning and overlooking the entire city was the Nauvoo Temple, as the image below (fig. 8) shows:



(Fig. 8 – Original Nauvoo Temple, overlooking Nauvoo, Illinois from: Church Archives. *Early Images of Historic Nauvoo, Historic*

*Photographs of Nauvoo, Temple on the Hill*, Church History, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [history.churchofjesuschrist.org/exhibit/early-images-of-historic-nauvoo?lang=eng#mv25](https://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/exhibit/early-images-of-historic-nauvoo?lang=eng#mv25))

The sacrifices the early Saints made to build the temple are well recorded within Latter-day Saint archives, with the entire community - children, men and women - doing what they could to help with the construct of the original building. This was the second temple the Saints had built; the first was in Kirtland, Ohio, which the Saints were compelled to abandon largely due to internal division and external persecution (“Saints” ch. 23 – 25). Nevertheless, they committed to the work and labour of the task; children collected pennies; men donated one day in every ten of their time to the construction, hauling and cutting and carving huge stones; women made clothing for the men to wear in the harsh winter conditions whilst they worked, and sold their most precious belongings to aid the build (McBride, ch. 1 & 2). As early Saint, Elizabeth Kirby wrote, “I could not think of anything that would grieve me to part with in my possession, except [my deceased husband’s] watch. So, I gave it up to help build the Nauvoo Temple” (McBride, “The First Nauvoo Temple”). It was a remarkable feat of communal labour and sacrifice born of faith, that those early Latter-day Saints managed to build their temple in such trying personal conditions. Despite such labours, the Saints had to leave Nauvoo due to growing persecution before the temple was completely finished; however, many made use of it for worship in its semi-completed state before leaving Nauvoo in February of 1846. According to the account of Brigham Young and others, the Saints were due to start leaving their beloved and newly built city on 4 February 1846. Young had stated they should stop attending the temple on 3 February and prepare to leave. However, he wrote that the Saints were to be found thronging the temple, so eager were they to receive the spiritual power and

nourishment they were finding there, right up until the hour of their departure (Young, “History” Vol. 7, ch. 28: 579), all of which is portrayed in *The Nauvoo Pageant*.

For the Saints, leaving behind their city, farms and homes, and especially the Nauvoo Temple, was an understandably emotional experience. As one Priddy Meeks wrote: “While crossing over a ridge seven miles from Nauvoo we looked back and took a last sight of the Temple we ever expected to see. We were sad and sorrowful” (McBride, “The First Nauvoo Temple”). In October of 1848 the now abandoned temple was set on fire by unknown arsonists. The report of it in the *History of Hancock County* reads:

About 3 o'clock (in the morning) fire was discovered (it) spread rapidly, and in a very short period the lofty spire was a mass of flame, shooting high in the air, and illuminating a wide extent of country. It was seen for miles away. The citizens gathered around, but nothing could be done to save the structure. It was entirely of wood except the walls, and nothing could have stopped the progress of the flames. In two hours, and before the sun dawned upon the earth, the proud structure, reared at so much cost—an anomaly in architecture, and a monument of religious zeal—stood with four blackened and smoking walls only remaining (as qtd. in Jensen, 1889: 872 – 873).

Due to a tornado of 1850, those blackened walls were also destroyed, with the front façade only standing, leaving behind broken stones which were subsequently taken and used in buildings all over Nauvoo and further afield. An artist, Frederick Piercy, travelling through sketched the scene of the temple just after the tornado, as represented below (fig. 9):



(Fig. 9. Ruins after destruction of the Nauvoo Temple, Illinois from: *The Nauvoo Temple: Destruction and Rebirth*, Museum Treasures, Church History, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 14 Jan. 2015, [history.lds.org/article/museum-treasures-nauvoo-temple-in-ruins-lithograph?lang=eng](http://history.lds.org/article/museum-treasures-nauvoo-temple-in-ruins-lithograph?lang=eng))

For safety the front façade was also knocked down and the stones used. Within a few years, there were little visible remains left of the once magnificent religious edifice.

However, from 1937 onwards the Church bought back the land the temple had previously been built upon, and finally, after decades of planning, the Nauvoo Temple was rebuilt and finished in 2002, in the same location as the original. Though the inside differs, the outward appearance is close to the original build, as can be seen by comparing the two images (fig. 10 & fig. 11) below.



(Fig. 10. Original Nauvoo Temple, built 1846, from: Iron County Company Daughters of Utah Pioneers. *Early Images of Historic Nauvoo, The House of the Lord, The Nauvoo Temple*, Church History, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [history.churchofjesuschrist.org/exhibit/early-images-of-historic-nauvoo?lang=eng#mv8](http://history.churchofjesuschrist.org/exhibit/early-images-of-historic-nauvoo?lang=eng#mv8))



(Fig. 11. Present Nauvoo Temple, built 2002, from: *Nauvoo Illinois Temple*, Additional Resource, Newsroom, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/nauvoo-illinois-temple](http://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/nauvoo-illinois-temple))

The ability to replicate the 1840s build is due primarily to the original architectural plans, which were lost to the knowledge of the early Church leaders, making their way back to into the Church's archives one hundred years later. A young Latter-day Saint missionary in California was knocking on an unknown door in the small town of Boron in 1948 and became friends with the family who answered. The husband of this family was the grandson of the original architect of the Nauvoo Temple, William Weeks, and though this descendent was not a member of the Church, he gave the original architectural plans of the Nauvoo Temple to the young missionary to donate to Church leaders. The plans had been kept in excellent condition for over one hundred years and made it possible for the re-build of the destroyed Nauvoo Temple to

be practically identical to the original, bar a few modern additions of fire exits (Bennion 73 – 90).

I share this brief overview of the original building, destruction and rebuilding of the Nauvoo Temple because it is central to appreciating how faithscape is working during the pageants in Nauvoo, and their role in helping to reveal it. When cast and Latter-day Saint audience members spend time in Nauvoo they are very likely to see some of the original stones used in the temple in some other buildings, and this may well be pointed out to them by locals or missionaries taking them on a tour. If they miss those for any reason, they will almost certainly see one of the original sunstones or moonstones from the 1840s temple, displayed at various visitors' centres in Nauvoo. In other words, the landscape today is constantly revealing the faith-fuelled taskscape of the early Saints – or faithscape - with the stones of the 1840s temple embedded in multiple locations in and around the town. Houses that residents live in today are built on foundation stones salvaged from the remains of the 1850s tornado - the temple is literally built into the foundations of the town of Nauvoo, acting as stony mnemonics to the faith-fuelled activity and labour of the early Saints who inhabited the land.

Whilst there would be some semblance of reading the landscape as faithscape without the pageants, the pageants serve as ghosts in the host of the town of Nauvoo, (to use Pearson's terminology), to dramatically embody and foreground these faithful labours of the early pioneers in building the temple. Indeed, in multiple ways, the script and staging of both pageants are structured around the building of the temple, as we shall now see.

In *The British Pageant* we see that the primary reason the Saints started to leave the UK was to build the Temple in Nauvoo. On 22 July 1840 Joseph

Smith issued a call to members in the British Isles to leave their homes and gather to Nauvoo in order to help with the building of the temple. In the scene that portrays this event we see multiple historic characters in *The British Pageant* reading various lines verbatim from Smith's original call, which was shared via a weekly Church publication in the UK, called the *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*. The characters read the following lines between them:

And it shall come to pass that the righteous shall be gathered out from among all nations. For the time has now come when it is necessary to erect a house of prayer, a house of order, a house for the worship of our God. This will call into action the energy, talent, and ability of the Saints. So let those who can, bid farewell to their homes, and unite with us in this great work. (Joseph Smith, History of the Church 1840: vol. 4. ch. 10: 186)

Joseph Smith's clarion call to the Saints here is to *work*; to come to Nauvoo to work. To come to Nauvoo to work on building the temple, which would require all the action, energy, talent and ability that the Saints had. The Saints in the UK responded en masse, as is portrayed in *The British Pageant*, and the results of their labours, along with many others, changed the landscape of Nauvoo in remarkable ways. *The British Pageant*, initially through the text, makes it abundantly clear that the motivation for thousands to gather to Nauvoo was the desire to build a temple. With the entire final third of the pageant revolving around this call to gather to Nauvoo to build the temple, the performance reveals the efficacious faith that led to people travelling thousands of miles to build this edifice which was so sacred to them. When cast and audience alike have spent the day in and about Nauvoo, which is framed around the newly built Nauvoo Temple, then *The British Pageant* in the evening reveals the faithscape within the landscape; it reveals through embodied performative practices the faith and sacrifices of those who crossed oceans to come and build a temple for their God and for themselves. The pageant, in other words,



acts as a lens which reveals the faithscape behind the landscape of this site-specific production for audience members and cast.

The cast members function as Pearson's ghosts in this transformative lens, reading and acting upon the words, above, that galvanised the early Saints' faith into migratory action. In so doing, the story tellers on stage reveal the faith behind the taskscape that is the temple in Nauvoo. And though Ingold is writing from the anthropological lens, he too acknowledges (in almost Grotowskian-like terms), that the story teller's role is to reveal the truth, not conceal it in anyway ("Temporality" 153). If landscape is story for Ingold, then the pageants help to reveal and foreground that the driving story behind the landscape in Nauvoo, dominated by the rebuilt temple, is the story of faith: sacred belief in Latter-day Saint theology, manifest in migration, labour, tasks, action and holy rituals within that community built sacred-temple.

This focus on the building of the temple within both pageants highlights a key concern of French philosopher Henri Lefebvre, which further elucidates the centrality of faithscape for the cast and audience in Nauvoo. Lefebvre in his seminal text *The Production of Space*, makes a compelling argument that warrants a little of our time here. He argues that any ideology or belief structure needs to ultimately find expression in physical space in order to take any real root or offer meaning in society.

Though a socialist and Marxist himself, Lefebvre criticised Marxist ideology for never actually creating a new space: "Change life! Change Society! These ideas lose completely their meaning without producing an appropriate space. A lesson to be learned from soviet constructivists from the 1920s and 30s, and of their failure, is that new social relations demand a new space, and vice-versa" (59). Lefebvre invites us to consider his ideas here in relation to

religion also, stating, “So much is intimated by myths, whether Western or Oriental, but it is only actualized in and through (religio-political) space” (34). This actualization is crucial through Lefebvre’s lens for the survival and continuation of faith practices. He writes:

What would remain of a religious ideology - the Judaeo-Christian one, say - if it were not based on places and their names: church, confessional, altar, sanctuary, tabernacle? What would remain of the Church if there were no churches? The Christian ideology....has created the spaces which guarantee that it endures. More generally speaking, what we call ideology only achieves consistency by intervening in social space and in its production, and by thus taking on body therein. Ideology per se might well be said to consist primarily in a discourse upon social space. (44)

Lefebvre’s insights here become the spatial equivalent of Danièle Hervieu-Léger’s; she advocates that the survival of religion is based upon a continuing chain of memory between the generations; Lefebvre argues it is dependent upon a continuing spatial presence, and therefore discourse, in civic life. Viewed through Lefebvre’s philosophical lenses, Latter-day Saint theology would be deemed radically successful even as early as the 1840s, in and through the building up of Nauvoo – the production of this new space to facilitate the flourishing of new social relations, with the temple at the symbolic and actual centre of urban, daily and spiritual life. These new social relations were ones wherein the living and the dead were intimately connected and co-dependent, as discussed in the previous chapter, wherein the living and the dead could not find salvation without one another (The Doctrine and Covenants Sec. 128: 18). These co-dependent social relations moved beyond unembodied ideology only; they were actualized in the sacred space of the temple – a physical manifestation in space, which in Lefebvre’s writings is crucial. The temple is also the central locale to create intergenerational bonds between

believers, so vital in Hervieu-Léger's findings. The Nauvoo Temple, then, could be viewed as a physical space which materialises the success and flourishing of intergenerational co-dependency Latter-day Saint theology. That the pageants are performed in front of the temple each night, and are both fundamentally about the temple, inscribes the space for the audience between Pearson's performing ghosts and stable host with transformative faithful affirmation.

What Latter-day Saint cast and audience see in the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple is the faith of their spiritual and actual foremothers and forefathers, and their own faith, coalescing - actualized in the bricks and mortar. The faith of those who went before is abundantly clear in the rebuild – they may not have cut the rocks this time, yet their faith within the landscape is present and actualised in the rebuilt temple; a monument which reveals faithscape. Yet it moves beyond monument only and actualises the faith of cast and many audience members also because they too will have likely worshipped in there and been involved with faith-fuelled activity within its walls. Hence the rebuilt temple, the central feature in the landscape to these site-specific performances, brings its own powerful resurrection narrative to the theatrical event. As anthropologist Marc Auge writes, landscapes become “palimpsests on which the scrambled game of identity and relations is ceaselessly rewritten” (as qtd. in Kaye, 11). This plays out in these performances through Latter-day Saint identity being reinforced via a strengthening of relations with the absent/present dead, facilitated through the cast and audiences' co-creative relationship with the landscape. This is partly made possible through the temple acting as a palimpsest of faith, with faith-fuelled activity being inscribed into the building itself; from the children who collected pennies in the 1840s, to the full-time temple volunteers who serve in there today. Indeed, Latter-day Saints who

know the story would also read the events surrounding the re-discovery of the original architectural plans as faith-fuelled labour – a young man serving a mission knocking on the door of William Weeks' descendent. In other words, the temple as site-specific host acts as a palimpsest of faithscape, wherein faithful tasks over the generations from 1840s onwards are inscribed into the very stones.

However, the temple is also a palimpsest of faithscape for the audience and cast in relation to Zion future. The finale of *The British Pageant* has the protagonist, Arthur Ashton, point to the Nauvoo Temple and speak directly to the audience of it, explaining how in temples like this one, families are sealed together forever. As he shares this monologue, we see him re-united with his wife who had died of cholera before the play begins, and whom we as audience saw only in spotlight as Arthur spoke to her during a few heightened or poignant moments during the performance. This on-stage reunion acts as a rehearsal for future heavenly reunions, becoming a vicarious performance on behalf of the actors for the audience, with the temple as central to the reunion. As such, the building is also the locus of faith-fuelled activities of the future, as well as of the present and the past. This echoes with the discussion in part one, above, that landscape according to Ingold gathers both the past, present and the future into itself ("Temporality" 159). The temple, so central to these performances both in content and context, like landscape, gathers the past, present and future into itself for believers. As Ingold writes, (with interesting resonances when applied to the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple), "Thus the present is not marked off from a past that it has replaced or a future that will, in turn, replace it; it rather gathers the past and future into itself" ("Temporality" 159). If Ingold writes that this is what landscape does, I believe it is amplified when the notion of faithscape comes

into play, as the theological gathering of past and future into one, discussed in depth in the last chapter, burnishes the anthropological, and vice-versa.

In *The Nauvoo Pageant*, the central visual activity of the entire play, and arc of the script, is the building up of the Nauvoo Temple. On stage we gradually see a large, fifty-foot wooden frame going up, with various pieces of the frame brought out onto stage by men in the cast, and we watch the frame being constructed before our eyes throughout various scenes. Prior to that we see a re-enactment of a parade when the principal corner stone was laid. We see children re-enacting those children who collected pennies. We see various men with tools miming the action of building the temple with slower, considered, large-scale movements to be read by all the audience members, as backdrop to various down stage scenes. We meet architect William Weeks and others as they discuss the building up of the interior of the temple, and we see women supporting the building of the temple in various ways. Eventually we see a huge embroidered front façade of the temple, hoisted up onto the front of the wooden frame, a complex theatrical action in which nearly the whole cast engage on stage, and in which the labour of raising such huge and heavy pieces of fabric about fifty-feet long, is revealed in Brechtian fashion. Accompanying the building of the temple are various scenes in which the whole cast act out the building up of the city, deciding as family members what actions they want to portray. Cast members are endlessly creative in revealing the sheer amount of work that went into the building up of Nauvoo from a swamp to a thriving city; from the firm favourites of digging and log sawing, whilst directing I have also watched families mime painting houses, washing clothes, hanging doors, planting seeds, sharing food, making fires, beating mattresses, chiselling rocks, carrying trunks and heavy stones, ploughing, sewing and chopping wood, all

interspersed by children in the cast who sometimes join the work and sometimes play, (which is, after all, the work of childhood). We also see a somewhat more comedic scene specifically about the draining of the swamps, that again, has many people digging in it. Taken all together, much of the physical effort and energy on stage within *The Nauvoo Pageant* is explicitly connected to the building of the city, especially the temple. Ozymoronically, the pageant could rightly be thought of as a “ghostly” embodiment of the taskscape, revealing the labour of the landscape onstage. However, something of Ingold’s work here challenges Pearson’s focus on actors as “ghosts” at site-specific “hosts,” and deepens our understanding of faithscape in the process, which is what these labours on stage truly reveal.

Ingold challenges the assumption embodied in Pearson speaking of actors at site-specific locations as ghosts, by questioning the whole notion of absence and presence that Pearson’s chosen lexicon here seems rooted in. Whilst not speaking specifically of site-specific actors at all, or Pearson’s ghosts/hosts, Ingold’s comment, below, elucidates the discussion. He states that he fundamentally disagrees with the idea that,

every being represents an ‘absence’, of a past long gone or a future not yet. In my view of evolution every being is a becoming. It is a line that stretches from the past and into future. But the line cannot be cut. The future is not set off from the present, or represented by the present in its absence. For the present discharges into the future.... This is not about presence versus absence, or about one representing the other. It is about growth. (Ingold, “Historische” 247)

Applying Ingold’s ideas here to site-specific theatre, specifically *The Nauvoo Pageant*, perhaps the present actors on stage are not ultimately Pearson’s ghosts then, representing a “past long gone”? Perhaps it is more semiotically complex than Nick Kaye’s argument that there must be absence in order for

there to be representation in site-specific work (Kaye 94 – 96). Rather, as Ingold helps us to consider, the theatrical semiotics at play in these site-specific performances move us beyond the presence/absence dialectic of the early Latter-day Saints, and their descendants representing them. Rather, as Ingold states, “It is about growth.” In focussing on growth, above and beyond absence/presence in these site-specific performances, we start to get to the heart of the matter for participants. The line between past and future cannot be cut, states Ingold, which starts to resonate with the circularity discussed at length in the last chapter. These pageants are not, to use Ingold’s terminology, about presence representing absence; rather they are about the reciprocal, co-dependent and salvatory growth of participants, living and dead.

When applied to these site-specific performances, Ingold’s lens here invites us to move the discourse beyond absence versus presence. Whilst the last chapter challenged the notion of the absent dead in many ways, this chapter being focussed on the role of the landscape in the pageants, and the attendant site-specific discourse, can take us firmly, and perhaps with some limitations, back to the absent/present discussion. I find Ingold helpful here as he invites us, in the quote above, to think in terms of lines that connect the past, present and future, rather than absence and presence. Pearson’s chosen moniker of “ghosts” for the actors in site-specific pieces does actually move beyond any simple binaries between absence and presence, but is still somehow swimming in those waters: ghosts are not fully absent, nor fully present. The terminology keeps us in the realm of absence and presence. Ingold’s thinking, however, by focussing on lines that connect past, present and future, rather than absences and presences, seems to resonate more deeply with what is happening at these Latter-day Saint performances. Cast members

are in a growth environment in which they are intimately connected to the past and the future, which are not actually absent to them. Ingold's "line," connecting the cast, is both familial and spiritual, and, as discussed in the last chapter, ultimately circular.

The many scenes of work in *The Nauvoo Pageant*, the building of the city and temple on stage, the sheer labour of the actors to portray the taskscape, may not, then, be presence representing absence, or semiotically slippery ghosts, but rather a continuous and circular line of labour from the early Saints to the current Saints to prepare for Zion future, when all is gathered in one. Previous Latter-day Saints built Nauvoo to practice Zion now and prepare for Zion future. Current Latter-day Saints on stage perform building Nauvoo for identical reasons; to practice Zion now and prepare for Zion future. The faithscape revealed by the performances is not simply, then, the faith-fuelled labours of the past; the faithscape includes the present actors, sweating and working each night on stage to build afresh the city of Nauvoo, or "beautiful place" as it means in Hebrew. And, of course, what they are ultimately looking to build through this taskscape of performance is their faith and the faith of their families. Faithscape then is not just the faith-fuelled activity of taskscape – the labour to build habitable and worshipful space, in Lefebvre's understanding; *it is also the labour to build faith*. The pageants reveal faithscape as a reciprocal process: if the landscape of site-specific locations is co-creative with the audience, as Pearson, Turner and others argue, then faithscape in these pageants reveal that it was faith that fuelled the labour of taskscape, but likewise, that such labour was performed to build faith – faith fuels the taskscape and taskscape fuels the faith. The pageants in these site-specific locations, through the lens of faithscape, reveal faith as both the fuel of the



labour and the fruits of the labour. This notion of faith as fuel and fruits of labour is apparent throughout the landscape, and the driving motivation of the casts' labour today, as mentioned. And this faithful parallelism between the early building Saints, who acted in faith to build a city, and contemporary performing Saints who do likewise on stage, deepens the linear-made-circular connection between them. Past, present and future coalesce in faithscape then, just as they do in landscape, but in and through the profundity of shared faith that builds a city and a temple out of the swamp and the creative representation of that out of the empty space of the theatrical stage.

This concept of landscape, and the temple even more specifically, drawing the past and future into its present self, resonates with the central discussion in the last chapter regarding a community that transcends linear time emerging into circular time. It is helpful in this chapter to appreciate that due to these being site-specific performances, cast and audience relationship with the landscape – how they experience the space between themselves and the landscape – also leads to circular time in and through the pageants. Whilst the city and temple in Nauvoo does this through the means discussed above, it is also done by nature within the landscape, especially the trees.

As mentioned in part one, above, the trees surrounding a site-specific performance are not semiotically representing trees, they *are* trees, and crucially, as Ingold helps us remember, they are trees which are growing and living (and dying) before our eyes (“Temporality” 167 – 168). The pageants in Nauvoo are staged in a field that has many trees to the audiences' left, also with some behind them and a few to their right. In other words, they are almost surrounded by trees, and will walk past them and through them to take their seats. The trees to the left of the audience especially are designated as a

“grove” with a blue signpost pointing out that Joseph Smith often preached in this very grove, and others like it, in Nauvoo. An image of the grove, located just to the left of the audience as they watch the shows, is shown below (fig. 12). (Indeed, some digging for pageant-related activities can be seen just through the trees in the lower left hand side of this image.)



(Fig. 12. A grove of trees, bordering the audience, Nauvoo, Illinois from: Mays, Kenneth. *Picturing history: The groves in Nauvoo, Illinois*, Deseret News, 16 Jan. 2019, [www.deseret.com/2019/1/16/20663467/picturing-history-the-groves-in-nauvoo-illinois#a-site-in-nauvoo-2006-representative-of-the-groves-where-the-saints-would-meet-to-hear-from-leaders](http://www.deseret.com/2019/1/16/20663467/picturing-history-the-groves-in-nauvoo-illinois#a-site-in-nauvoo-2006-representative-of-the-groves-where-the-saints-would-meet-to-hear-from-leaders))

To return to Ingold’s insights on Heidegger in part one of this chapter, trees are *things* to Heidegger, and things are fundamentally *with us* – we can enter into an “affective correspondence” (Ingold, “Making” 85), with them, in which we are changed by them, and in which we “slip-slide” (“Making” 94) into them. Such a relationship with the landscape, as Ingold observed, happens with cast and audience members in Nauvoo as they engage in very practical ways with the trees at the performance each night. At some point every audience or cast member will have walked through the trees or very closely past them to get to the stage and seating area. Whilst audience and cast look at one another

during the show, and not necessarily directly at the trees, their mutual looking is *framed* by trees on three of the four sides: the fourth side is the stage and temple, with plenty of trees in the distance. And some of these trees, the signs remind us, would have been present as Joseph Smith and the early Saints worshipped together in these groves. The trees as *things* in the process of moving and living act as powerful story within the entire theatrical encounter, then; whilst cast and audience might not declare it, they experience Ingold's sense of *the landscape is us* ("Making" 94). This is experienced in and through the growing trees, which act as living testators to the presence of the early Saints. In other words, the trees play a role in inviting us into the "gathering" ("Making" 85) as Heidegger phrased it, and in this instance, they invite us to the gathering with the early Saints, for these groves of trees were the site-specific locations to the performative sermons in the 1840s. If Carlson speaks of the previous actors and audiences as ghosts in such "haunted houses" as the Theatre Royal at Drury Lane in his iconic *The Haunted Stage: Theatre as Memory Machine*, in these site-specific performances the trees are still the very same "set" used for communal 1840s Latter-day Saint worship. As such, we are not walking through Carlson's *haunted houses* here, nor are we Pearson's ghosts representing the absent dead – rather in this site-specific work, cast and audience walking through the trees are very much *onstage*, playing in the 1840s set, in the ongoing performance of faith.

The trees and the earth they grow from, as living, growing theatrical frame and set to the early Saints and present Saints facilitates circular time, as discussed in the previous chapter, for participants. Such facilitation occurs through a form of theological monad; that the Divine is in and through all things for Latter-day Saints. Whilst a longer extract, in the Latter-day Saint scripture

below taken from The Doctrine and Covenants, Section 88, this omnipresence is clearly articulated. Speaking of Jesus Christ and his light and power, it reads:

- 7 he is in the sun, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made.
- 8 As also he is in the moon, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made;
- 9 As also the light of the stars, and the power thereof by which they were made;
- 10 And the earth also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand.
- 11 And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your eyes, which is the same light that quickeneth your understandings;
- 12 Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of space—
- 13 The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the law by which all things are governed, even the power of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of eternity, who is in the midst of all things.

This repetition of Divine light and power in and through the celestial bodies in the immensity of space above our heads, and the materiality of the earth beneath our feet, paints a picture of Divine, though not claustrophobic, envelopment. This envelopment includes the “immensity of space” including all liminal spaces *betwixt-between* the living, the dead, the earth and the landscape. Such Divine, creative light is not just found in the spaciousness, but also in materiality - “in the midst of all things” - including the earth, the trees, the landscape, and the stage, props, homes and towns. Such totality of a creative Divine light and presence, above us, beneath us, around us, through all things including ourselves and others, exceeds the notion of linearity. In this theology, if God dwells in the bosom of eternity and is in and through all things, then all things are shot through with the eternal now of Godly, circular time.

Furthermore, the creative light and power by which the landscape was made in this theology echoes the blending and melding of co-creativity between the landscape and participants, as outlined in part one above, resonating with Mackenzie Johns | 610045936

Pearson, Turner and Ingold's writings. In other words, people create the landscapes, but slip and slide into them also. Likewise, just as God in this omnipresent theology creates all things, including the landscape, then the Divine presence is in the midst of all things too. If people blend into the landscape at site-specific performances – if “Nauvoo is us!” - then there is a co-creativity in such blending that parallels in micro the Divine creation of the landscape for Latter-day Saints.

In this parallel, between us co-creatively in the landscape and the Divine in the landscape, faithscape at these site-specific performances finds expansion. Through the scripture above, faithscape is not just revealing the faith of former inhabitants of the land to create the taskscape, it is revealing the creative faithfulness of the Divine. For the landscape, created by and shot through with the faith-fuelled labours and indeed presence of former inhabitants, is also shot through with Divine power, presence and time. In this expansion then, faithscape incorporates a sense of Divine faith; the faith behind the ultimate taskscape of celestial bodies above our heads and the earth beneath our feet at these site-specific locations.

The boundaries between what is performance and what is not performance in all this blend and meld, just as the boundaries between the people and the landscape. Whilst hundreds of the returning Saints are in 1840s costume each night, thousands of the returning Saints are not. Any differences between the cast and audience in this respect are somewhat blurred; rather the host, the site, the landscape of Nauvoo is peopled once more with an abundance of believing Latter-day Saints (far more than the few hundred Saints who permanently live in Nauvoo today), and like the Nauvoo Temple, another resurrection of sorts has occurred – born of the gathering for a theatrical event.

Nauvoo as landscape was intimately shaped by the early Saints and shaped them in profound ways in return. They were expelled in a story of drama and violence; the destruction of the temple as the culminating event in that narrative. The return of Latter-day Saints en masse each summer to Nauvoo peoples the landscape afresh; coupled with the re-built Nauvoo Temple, this is a form of resurrecting the past, as Sanborn Jones called it, to deepen faith for the future (240). Yet the trees, in “treeing” as Heidegger suggests, (meaning their persistence in continuing in their own particular “thinging”) embody the discourse between permanence and temporality that is central to these theatrical performances. The trees as trees, then, not only act as set or host to lives lived, both past and present, and the permanence which that seems to speak of, but as *growing things* they parallel the temporality of human lives. Indeed, you could say trees themselves embody a clear resurrection narrative, paralleling annually the resurrection narrative found spatially in the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple, and in the repopulating of Nauvoo annually with thousands of Saints once more, which original population is the central narrative of the pageants.

In shedding and growing their leaves annually, and being so evidently in the process of temporality due to this, Ingold reminds us that trees capture short, annual cycles. Yet at the same time the trunk of the tree, “presides immobile over the passage of human generations” (“Temporality” 168). With the pageant performances each night framed by trees, they provide a physical embodiment of the inevitable temporality of the life and death cycle of humanity, and in relation to Latter-day Saint theology, a simultaneous embodiment of the permanence of the eternal families - there is a reason the familial landscape (if you will) is called the *family tree* in English. With their roots going down into the

ground where our ancestors are buried (Ingold, "Temporality" 169) and the shoots and buds witnessing of new life, with a clear connection between the roots and shoots, you could also argue they embody in nature Joseph Smith's teachings on the co-dependency between the living and the dead, which again is central to both pageants in content and context. In framing the show each night, then, the trees in this site-specific location are *living* the central message of the show, moment by moment. Indeed, for me, they become a living natural witness to the resurrection narrative so central to the content and creative context of these pageants. Furthermore, Ingold argues that, "the tree binds past, present and future in a single place," ("Temporality" 168), just as the temple and landscape does. With the pageants working so hard to create a community that transcends time, and in which the past, present and future are encompassed in one together on stage, the framing of the performance venue by trees doing likewise is poetically and powerfully apt.

Whilst the permanence of the trees highlights the semiotic role of the performers, as discussed in part one, they simultaneously act as nature's witness *to* the annual performances, and nature's witness *of* the annual performances, in paralleling the central tenants of the plays. The trees, like the entire landscape, are shaping those performances and being shaped by them in return, as thousands walk through the groves. Whether they touch the bark and listen for the faint whisperings of their literal or spiritual forbears through them, find much-needed shade and rest in the cool of their branches, or as the children do, play in the leaves and sticks of their dropped foliage, the groves and trees surrounding the theatrical space have their own relationship with the cast and audience. And that space between the cast, the audience and the landscape becomes healing, peace-inspiring and faith-promoting. Indeed, when

*The Nauvoo Pageant* refers to and represents bodily on stage the tasks of draining the swamp and building the city and farms in Nauvoo, then the framing trees become the living faithscape which the stage story tells: whether older trees or younger trees, they would not be growing there had the Saints not drained the swamps in faith-fuelled labour.

There are many other aspects of the relationship between the pageants and the site-specific location which could be discussed in and through faithscape. That said, I trust I have shared enough for the central idea to be apparent: that these two pageants in the site-specific location of Nauvoo are co-creative with the audience and cast in revealing faithscape - the labours of taskscape within the landscape fuelled by faith. In this chapter I have not had a specific focus on audience and cast feedback, regarding how this co-creative relationship between the performance and the site has been transformative for them. This is not because it has not been. These performances being staged in Nauvoo have been central to their transformative efficacy for cast and audience alike. Both audience and cast speak regularly of the power of seeing the temple lit up each night at the end of *The Nauvoo Pageant*, or the power of walking down the streets their forbears paved and named. The landscape is inherent to their transformative encounter; this is, after all, pilgrimage for all parties involved, as discussed in Chapter Two. Cast and audience alike speak of Nauvoo as sacred and holy ground, sanctified by the faith and sacrifices of those who went before them there. Indeed, the entire area of Nauvoo feels to many involved with the pageants as an extension of the temple, the most sacred of locales for Latter-day Saints. This makes perfect sense when the purpose of the temples for Latter-day Saints is the binding of families together in salvatory and reciprocal love, and the purpose of the pageants is aligned so



deeply to this. I have tried to explore here that perhaps one reason I may have heard so often in interviews, that to walk the streets of Nauvoo is to be on holy ground, and to be on stage feels like being in the temple, is because these performances co-create with the landscape in a way that embodies and reveals faithscape. The town of Nauvoo - comprising a mixture of 1840s builds and newbuilds, the resurrected Nauvoo Temple, the trees, the rolling Mississippi running along one side of the town, the streets and outlying farm lands - becomes holy ground for pageant participants. For in walking these grounds, and in building them or watching them being built on stage each night, cast and many Latter-day Saint audience members alike meet the faith of their foremothers and forefathers, and deepen their own faith in that sacred, spatial, faithscaped encounter.

### **Part Three – Chorley, Lancashire**

In America *The Nauvoo* and *British Pageants* performed in Nauvoo, Illinois co-create with the *immediate* landscape of the temple, town and trees of Nauvoo to reveal faithscape; in contrast, in England, *The British Pageant* staged in Chorley, Lancashire co-creates with the *distributed* landscape to reveal faithscape. By distributed, I mean that cast and audience are not in a co-creative relationship with the landscape that is as intensely focussed as it is in Nauvoo, rather the landscape (and faithscape it encompasses) is more scattered, geographically and through time. Whilst *The British Pageant* staged in the UK is still site-specific work, it is simply functioning differently as host than the town of Nauvoo is in Illinois. In talking of this distributed landscape I am acknowledging Andrew Jones' work in his book *Memory and Material Culture*.

In this book, Jones challenges the notion of the mind and its memory-making capacities as a self-contained distinct entity "set against the external

world” (6). Such thinking, Jones argues, leads to an understanding of the mind and specifically memory as a storehouse (6). Rather, Jones advocates for viewing the mind, memories, body, and extra-somatic artefactual entities in the world as far more deeply interconnected. This view-point, he argues, leads to what he terms a “distributed mind” (225), in which the mind and memories “spill out into the environment” as Ingold understands Jones’ work (Ingold, “Making” 97). Likewise, when considering faithscape in the staging of *The British Pageant* in Chorley, we need to engage with a sense of a distributed landscape, that encompasses the faith-fuelled actions of Latter-day Saints throughout the British Isles, most especially in Lancashire, but also which encompasses Grace Davie’s work, as Sociologist of Religion, on vicarious religion. Davie’s work on vicarious religion resonates with Jones’ insights on distributed minds that helps us understand how faithscape is working in this site-specific location, as we will discover in this section. With this distributed landscape in mind, I will discuss the actual location where *The British Pageant* is staged, but I will move on to speaking about other landscapes which are distributed - away from the actual site-specific location, but yet still intimately present, functioning a little if you will as Jones’ “distributed mind.” From discussion regarding where the play is staged, then, I will move out into the “distributed landscape” and faithscape that the pageant is also calling upon, concluding part three by showing how *The British Pageant* when staged in Chorley, Lancashire, actually frames the entirety of the British Isles as sacred ground within Latter-day Saint history and memory. Whilst looking at these three concentric circles - from the performance location in Chorley, to various distributed landscapes, to the entirety of the British Isles - we will return at times to Hervieu-Léger’s chains of religious memory, to appreciate how *The British Pageant* reveals those chains as both

theologically and culturally inscribed. However, first we need to grapple with the complex and knotty intersection between culture, theology and faith as it played out in the lead up to the first staging of *The British Pageant* in the UK in 2013. This is because landscape, incorporating faithscape, within *The British Pageant* in the UK is interwoven with multiple concerns regarding cultural mis-packaging, which need to be understood before the relationship between participant and site-specific space can be fully appreciated.

### **“You Will Tell Our Story?”**

In order to appreciate these concerns around cultural mis-packaging, I share an anecdotal moment prior to the first staging of *The British Pageant*. It was 2012, a year before the first performance, and I was about to enter a Latter-day Saint church in Chorley, Lancashire for a production meeting when someone introduced me as a writer of the pageant to a local Latter-day Saint. Her very first words to me were startling in their mixture of fear, sincerity and hope. Firmly taking both my forearms in her hands, she said in a soft Liverpudlian accent, “You will tell *our* story, won’t you?” Her question highlights a concern the announcement of *The British Pageant* brought to the fore for many British Church members: would the performance reveal the British story, or would it be framed through the American lens? This woman was not alone in her concerns; her fears were shared by many Latter-day Saints in the United Kingdom, and elsewhere, and not without some justification.

Such concerns, regarding whether the pageant would actually tell the British Latter-day Saint story or not, is partly a response to a time period of American-centric cultural packaging of Latter-day Saint history. Susan Easton Black, noted Latter-day Saint historian, has acknowledged that this crucial and

vital period of Latter-day Saint history – the story of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the British Isles as discussed in Chapter One - is often written from the perspective of the “American gospel hero” at the expense of the local voice (Black, “A Profile of a British Saint” 103). This same concern was expressed by a British online commentator, when the pageant was announced in the UK a year before its staging: “But I’ve seen these stories told before: the urchins cough on the fumes of industry/religious oppression before being rescued by the American Hero” (RJH). There was clearly a genuine concern that the pageant would not actually tell the story of British Saints and their faith, fears and struggles, but rather the performance would be solely focused on the perspective of an American missionary in Britain; a different story entirely. Another online commentator, when the pageant was announced, shared their fears in greater depth, asking whether:

such a pageant, especially if put on in the spirit of the imperialism of kitsch American cultural Mormonism, would serve to further alienate a religion that already stands on the outside looking in with regard to participation in the religious narrative of the country.... (This pageant) could actually set things back decades for British Mormons in terms of cultural integration and participation in the fabric of society. (John F)

The fears here evidently run deep, giving voice to concerns of the damage that can be done when cultural imperialism is interwoven into such endeavors. And such fears are not without foundation; whilst the Church has taken remarkable strides in the past decade to create materials suitable for a world-wide church for whom the majority of the membership is outside of North America, prior to this last decade or so, the theology has largely been packaged, culturally speaking, in Americana. Regarding this, the Mormon History Association, a group independent from the Church, invited respected theologian Langdon Gilkey, who was not a Latter-day Saint, to address them at their annual lecture in 1985. Whilst over thirty years ago now, his insights give

us a snapshot of that time for the Church, when he addressed how Latter-day Saint American missionaries, when in other cultures, can unwittingly be party to "an uncomprehending American imperialism" (Gilkey 305). Whilst any such unintentional tendencies have been clearly and well addressed by Church leadership in recent years, the impact of previous decades of such American-centric cultural-packaging for many long-established members in the UK, myself included, has been a filtering of gospel teachings from American, often Utah-centric, cultural norms and expectations; an act of cultural and spiritual unweaving and translation if you will, which members became adept at. Such unweaving has been seen by most as no more than a humorous and occasionally niggling necessity. However, with the announcement of *The British Pageant*, the stakes for British members of the Church were much higher; a culturally foreign lesson example in the Sunday School manual published in Salt Lake City is one thing, a large-scale theatrical performance packaged in Americana quite another. The emotional investment in the pageant of British members was heightened, concerns about inappropriate cultural packaging understandably magnified; large-scale theatrical expression meant that their story, their family and local history, and more importantly, their spiritual faith, was on public display at a time when the church was under intense media scrutiny, dubbed by some "the Mormon moment" (Woodland). Whether a production deemed "kitsch" and suffering from American cultural imperialism would have set the church back decades or not, as the concerns above express, I do not know. But that it could have happened, meaning *The British Pageant* being inappropriately culturally packaged, was a possibility – indeed such ideas were being discussed in the early days of its development - and it certainly would have created issues that were counter-productive to the stated

aims of the pageant to increase faith amongst Church members in the British Isles. The last point should not be overlooked – for *The British Pageant* to have been culturally mis-packaged would have been very distancing for some, though not all, members of the Church in the UK. Clearly there was a deep-longing for members that their faith, so cherished by them, be expressed through culturally familiar, not foreign, forms – that they both saw and heard themselves on stage. And that the final theatrical offering, in some ways, both reflect and magnify the richness of the spirituality they found within their Latter-day Saint faith.

What is revealing about these misgivings is not necessarily that they existed, in varying degrees, but that it was the announcement of a theatrical presentation about British Latter-day Saint history that brought them so pointedly to the fore for some members of the Church in the UK. Something in the depths of the response above - “if it went wrong, it could put British Mormons back decades” - points to this theatrical expression being perceived as profoundly revealing for this community of believers. And unless such revealing felt familiar to the cast and audience, any co-creative relationship between them and the site-specific landscape would be very difficult, because the work would have felt like a false cultural import. However, whilst I am wary of the pitfalls of being my own judge in this, I would argue that from audience and cast feedback, such mis-packaging was largely avoided. Rather than looking to evidence that now, (it will come later), I would rather like to focus on how it was avoided, because that has everything to do with the original creative context for *The British Pageant*, for it was unique in comparison to the genesis of other Latter-day Saint pageants. This uniqueness fostered the interweaving

of local British cultural, spiritual and religious DNA, so to speak, with the needs and concerns of a worldwide church.

To understand the creative context of *The British Pageant*, comparison to the genesis of other Latter-day Saint pageants is helpful. The tradition of staging historical commemorative pageants in their current manifestations within The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints goes back to 1937, when the first performance of *The Hill Cumorah* pageant occurred, in Palmyra, New York. It has been staged annually since then, with audiences of about 100,000 each summer, with its last performance announced as being in 2020. There have been six annual or bi-annual Latter-day Saint pageants that happen across America, which, including *The Hill Cumorah* pageant, are: *The Castle Valley Pageant*; *The Clarkston Pageant: Martin Harris – The Man who Knew*; *Manti – The Mormon Miracle Pageant*; *Mesa Easter Pageant* and *The Nauvoo Pageant* (now including *The British Pageant*). However, in December 2018 it was announced by the Church that only *The Nauvoo Pageant*, *The British Pageant* in the UK every four years and USA annually, and the Mesa Arizona Pageants would continue after 2020 (Christensen).

Apart from *The Nauvoo Pageant* the genesis for each of these pageants was remarkably similar; a local effort from Church members in the community to tell a particular story theatrically, which grew from strength to strength in attendance figures until such time as the Church officially decided to sponsor the production, and it became an “official” pageant of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A ‘bottom-up’ rather than ‘top-down’ approach was the norm. *The Nauvoo Pageant* broke this model.

Traditionally in Nauvoo there had been a pageant entitled *The City of Joseph*, which ran from 1975 until 2004, and had followed the above pattern of

a local production, turned official Church pageant. However, in 2004 it was announced that a new pageant would be performed in Nauvoo. This was staged in 2005 and entitled *The Nauvoo Pageant: A Tribute to Joseph Smith*. It was written and conceived creatively from a team employed by the Church at headquarters in Salt Lake City.

*The British Pageant* followed neither of these models for its creation. Rather the idea was conceived locally by British members of the Church, (similar to the genesis of other pageants), but then approval was sought and given by Church leaders at headquarters in Salt Lake City, and the creative team was actually a combination of local British Saints and American Church members and employees of the Church in Salt Lake City, who embarked on a profoundly collaborative journey together. This collaboration and dynamic, between the local faith and the centralised faith, offered a compelling model that allowed for British cultural sensitivities to be fully met, whilst ensuring that centralised Church leaders' vision for a worldwide church could simultaneously be fully realised. Crucially, our writing team worked exceptionally hard to honour the notion of the I-Thou sacred encounter with one another, as discussed in relation to symbiotic efficacy in Chapter Two. Furthermore, the pan-British and American writing team embodied the story told within *The British Pageant*.

The American members on the creative committee were the “fruits” of the history shared in *The British Pageant*. Each of them had ancestors who joined the Church in Britain in the nineteenth century who then emigrated to America. Their foremothers and forefathers were the very people we were portraying – Latter-day Saint pioneer ancestors who left Britain and crossed the plains of America. For these American writers, the chains of memory were personal, ancestral, and in their blood, as discussed in the previous chapter. For me, as a



British writer, the chains of memory were differently forged. The story we were telling was not ancestral for me, nor would it be for our British audiences.

Rather than this profound ancestral connection discussed in the previous chapter, mine and the British audience's chains of memory, whilst certainly carrying much of Latter-day Saint theology/history within them, also carried a uniquely British religious and cultural chain of memory, that needed to be honoured in order for the production not to feel like a foreign import for myself and other British Latter-day Saints.

It is helpful here, in order to elucidate the cultural inscription of the religious chains of memory, to return to Hervieu-Léger's writings on this, as discussed somewhat in the previous chapter. When writing on these vital chains of religious memory, Hervieu-Léger observed that religion could be defined by the interplay between three specific strands, "the expression of believing, the memory of continuity, and the legitimizing reference to an authorized version of such memory, that is to say, a tradition" (97). Whilst Hervieu-Léger does not address this directly, what is important to note here is that each of these strands, which we will consider briefly in turn below, cannot be separated neatly from national cultural inscription - to various degrees religion is culturally inscribed by the nation in which it is practiced. This may seem a self-evident point, but, as will become apparent, it has crucial bearings on this discussion.

Whilst the Church has a centralised system of weekly lessons that apply world-wide, and a high degree of conformity in multiple aspects of world-wide worship, including similar hymn books etc., there are local traditions that are central to how beliefs are expressed, Hervieu-Léger's first point. These are deeply inscribed with the worshipping community's local culture, ranging from language, to dress, to body language and movement, to music and more, which

change from locale to locale in more obvious or more nuanced ways. And all of these elements are, of course, crucial in theatrical representation. In other words, whether expressed in pedestrian life or on stage, expressions of believing, so central to religion and forging chains of religious memory, are culturally inscribed in multiple and meaningful ways. And the cultural inscription of expressions of believing are two-fold; the culture of the religion in question, and the national culture of the believers; in this instance British Latter-day Saints.

By using the phrase culturally inscribed here, as it applies to expressions of believing and chains of religious memory, we are dealing with the slippery notion of culture and it is helpful here to look to the Oxford English Dictionary definition for specificity: “The distinctive ideas, customs, social behaviour, products, or way of life of a particular nation, society, people, or period. Hence: a society or group characterized by such customs, etc” (OED online). This definition helps us appreciate that Hervieu-Léger’s first strand to define religion - “expressions of believing” - is closely connected to the “customs, social behaviour, products” of a group of believers; indeed, this latter triad could be seen as “expressions.” What does this convoluted dance around definitions reveal? Hervieu-Léger, in seeking to define religion in her key three strands, articulated the first stand of religion - expressions of believing – as something that is semiotically speaking remarkably similar to culture. Religion – and all it entails – cannot escape culture, any more than culture can escape religion. Raymond Williams’ foundational work on emergent and residual elements within dominant cultures is elucidating here (Williams, “Marxism & Literature” 121-128), for it reminds us to resist reading this profound interrelatedness between religion and culture in too simplistic or reductionary a manner. Furthermore,

Williams reminds us that it is the nature of culture, “that it is always both traditional and creative” (Williams 4), which could likewise be observed of the symbiotic relationship between religion and culture, and indeed of the religious theatrical productions studied here.

This matters in this chapter because the stakes, once again, were so high for British Latter-day Saints when the pageant was announced. That woman’s primary concern, when she first met me, spoke to the heart of this intimate relationship between religion and culture: that we told her story back to her, and not someone else’s story, mattered deeply.

Theologian Langdon Gilkey talked of this crucial relationship between religion and culture in his lecture to the Mormon History Association. In it, he stated:

The way we function religiously reflects and is patterned on that whole set of assumptions, standards, and goals that we call our culture and that shapes us.... Theology is (theologians say), eternal; culture is historical.... I do not agree with this view. Theologies are as much related to that community’s cultural setting as are the designs of the churches. (308)

The fears expressed by some, in relation to *The British Pageant* prior to its being staged, substantiate Gilkey’s insights. Their primary concern was that if the performance did not reflect this profound relationship between religion, culture and theology, as identified by Gilkey, it would feel like a false import to them. The point here is more nuanced than offending cultural sensibilities through reductionist arguments about national pride; that it is not it at all. Rather, had *The British Pageant* been packaged in Americana – (which to many was a very real, indeed central concern) - Gilkey’s insights help us appreciate that the damage of that would have been to the pageant’s ability to communicate, connect and indeed commune with all participants. For if the way

people function, religiously speaking, is patterned and shaped by their culture, as Gilkey posits (and I believe in many ways he is right), then a theatrical performance which is meant to be telling a specific religious story at its nexus with a particular culture, as per *The British Pageant*, must of necessity tell it through the “expressions of believing” of that culture. The damaging irony had *The British Pageant* been packaged in Americana is apparent.

The second strand of three which encompasses Hervieu-Léger’s definition of religion, and in turn is central to the process of forging chains of religious memory, is the memory of continuity. Just as expressions of belief, her first strand, is shown above to be inscribed by a nation’s culture, so likewise is the memory of continuity. The phrase itself encompasses compelling paradox. Memory, again with the aid of the Oxford English Dictionary, means, “Senses relating to the action or process of commemorating, recollecting, or remembering,” carrying the implicit notion of a past event, revisited. This is especially pertinent in theatre, wherein Marvin Carlson reminds us that as spectators our experience is one of engaging with memories, and that “*we are seeing what we saw before*” (1), and Mike Pearson asks how, in site-specific performances, do memories attach to places (“In Comes I” 14)?

Hervieu-Léger’s second chosen word, continuity, on the other hand, means “The state or quality of being uninterrupted in extent or substance, of having no interstices or breaks; uninterrupted connection of parts; connectedness, unbrokenness” (OED online). Here the second strand of Hervieu-Léger’s three-stranded definition of religion points to her chains of religious memory; so crucial are those chains, it seems, that a memory of continuity, or connected, unbroken memory, is central to her specific and considered definition of religion – without it, we do not have religion.

The memory of continuity is of interest here in connection to the specific narrative being told in *The British Pageant*, and the creative context of its telling; again we are back to content and context paralleling one another, in this instance between the writing team and the narrative told. To retrace steps and clarify, before we can meaningfully consider the relationship between participants – cast and audience – and physical landscape, we need to grapple with and unpack the cultural landscape *The British Pageant* was being staged in – we need to unpack “You will tell our story, won’t you?” As writers of *The British Pageant*, myself and a few American writers held primary responsibility for that. Memory of continuity intersects here because, as mentioned above, for the American writers of *The British Pageant* there was a clear memory of continuity in the story we were telling: we were writing up their ancestral narrative, as they were descendants of early British Latter-day Saint pioneers, the very characters portrayed in *The British Pageant*. As such, the memory for them is, speaking on the larger scale and not in particulars, continuous. For myself as a British Latter-day Saint, however, there was a strange form of caesura to the memory of continuity in my religious DNA, traceable to the en masse departure of British Latter-day Saints from the UK to America from 1837 onwards.

It is worth here repeating a little of the information and statistics shared in the opening chapter. Latter-day Saint missionaries, some of whom were British, arrived in Liverpool in July 1837, and baptised nine people at the River Ribble in Preston ten days later. From these modest beginnings, by 1852, just fifteen years later, 84% of the 52,640 Latter-day Saints worldwide were British, and, as was shared in Chapter One, this chapter in Latter-day Saint history is seen as crucial by many, including contemporary leaders of the Church, to the spiritual,

numerical and financial survival of the early Latter-day Saints; “The early converts to the Church in Great Britain quite literally and very dramatically saved this Church,” (“Apostles visit the UK”) as one apostle has put it. Whilst this en masse migration to America within Latter-day Saint history was clearly essential for the Church, it left a strange sort of caesura for British Saints in their own memory of continuity, with membership being so depleted and then only gradually starting to build up strength again in the early 1960s. The caesura or break in the British Latter-day Saint imagination for many has been that they knew so little about these seminal and crucial events to start with, and for others, it was the re-building of strength in the British Isles not occurring again until the 1960s. I do not mean to frame this narrative in a way that implies that British Church members resent this chapter of their history in any way - they do not, and if anything are proud of the salvatory role the early British Saints played in the Church. Rather, what I mean by my referencing a caesura in the memory of continuity is that the contemporary British Latter-day Saint imagination is relocated – even dislocated - to the Americas for decades. Whilst there are some histories available of Saints who stayed in the British Isles, and the oldest continuous unit of the church in the world is found in Preston, England, nevertheless for the majority of British members there is a strange gap, if you will, in the chain of religious memory. Of course, I am talking in generalities here, in the hazy, shadowy realm of a community’s religious memory and imagination – (for of course the two are connected). The Church’s history is well documented and individual stories of thousands of members who left the UK can be traced; I am not speaking here of the official, available-for-hunting history. Rather I am speaking of the less archival, documented narrative, more the story-in-the bones narrative – and that narrative, which does

exist, is one a people finding their strength again after a national caesura of sorts, in homelands they love, but who are viewed in their own country, religiously speaking, as outsiders, foreign, and occasionally with a little suspicion.

*The British Pageant*, in many ways, can be read as a theatrical bridge which spans that caesura in the memory of continuity or religious chain of memory, through both its content and context. In its content that bridge is created through a thematic through-line, coupled to a narratorial structure, that highlights seeds, growth and fruits. Whilst there is not the scope here to trace that through-line in depth, (it is interwoven into the script throughout), one very short scene, and a few lines from the closing scene should suffice in helping us appreciate how a bridge in the chain of religious British Latter-day Saint memory is built by the pageant.

Towards the latter end of *The British Pageant*, on the boat going from England to America, we see a scene wherein a husband and wife, a somewhat more light-hearted Cockney couple, are discussing some seeds they have brought with them on the journey, based on actual accounts of early Latter-day Saints taking various seeds with them to America. There have been previous scenes of banter about these seeds, and the husband, Twizzleton, is worried about keeping the seeds safe on the journey. The short scene reads as follows:

TWIZZLETON TURLEY  
They're not going to make it, I tell you.

MARGARET TURLEY  
Stop worrying about those seeds!

TWIZZLETON TURLEY  
I can't help it! They are the only bit of  
England we have got left!

MARGARET TURLEY

Not at all. You watch—we'll plant them  
there seeds, people will eat the fruit,  
and then there'll be a little bit of  
England in everybody!

TWIZZLETON TURLEY

I never thought of it like that...

MARGARET TURLEY

Well, God thought of it.

TWIZZLETON

I suppose He did.

MARGARET

There's something He wants us to do there  
Twizzleton; I can feel it.

TWIZZLETON TURLEY

Us? He must be desperate...

MARGARET TURLEY

Why not us? Jesus called fishermen to  
build His kingdom. Why not Mr & Mrs  
Twizzleton Turley? When all we want is to  
do His will.

TWIZZLETON TURLEY

That we do love.

MARGARET TURLEY

Then that's enough.

(Collier et al. Sc. 22B)

Other scenes, along with this one, foreground or point to the relationship between seeds from which produce grows, and family descendants. Whilst Margaret Turley's response here, "and then there'll be a little bit of England in everybody," might alert antennas with its potential neo-colonial undertones, that would be a mis-reading of the line. In the given context of this Latter-day Saint story, there is a profound truth in it. Whilst Margaret is nominally only speaking of the edible fruits from their seeds, the clear resonances, especially in context to other scenes, is of familial heritage. And today, it seems to me that I have



rarely met a Latter-day Saint in America who came from early Latter-day Saint pioneers who does not have British ancestry somewhere in their genealogy. Contemporary research attests to this: ethnicity data analysed from the U.S. Census Bureau's 2010 American Community Survey reveals that of the top five cities in America with people claiming English ancestral descent, four of them are in Utah, and one is in Idaho, which was also settled by the early Latter-day Saints (Thomas); a little bit of England in everyone indeed.

Towards the very end of *The British Pageant*, the thematic implications of the scene above are realised and embodied fully, for about fifty young Latter-day Saint full-time missionaries walk out through the audience and onto stage joining the cast for the finale, singing a stirring, energizing hymn. They are partly introduced with the words, “And in years to come, many of our posterity would return to our homeland.” It is a highlight of the show, and multiple audience members and cast alike reference it as being a profound moment for them. Many of the missionaries walking onto the stage are American descendants of the early British Saints portrayed in the pageant. In the theatrical staging of the story – from the first missionaries arriving in 1837, to seeing hundreds of cast members “board the boat” singing *The Gallant Ship*, to the finale in which actual descendants of the characters we have journeyed with come onto the stage – there is a panoramic sweep of the story of the Latter-day Saints in the British Isles that invites connectedness, completeness and comfort in the face of the historical caesura. The thematic through-line (amongst several) on seeds, growth and fruits, culminating in the dramatic entrance of multiple missionaries onto stage, facilitates a flourishing of Hervieu-Léger’s “memory of continuity” for Saints in the British Isles. The “seeds” of faith which left with the en masse

Latter-day Saint migration to America, are shown to have taken root there and borne fruit, in the bodies of their faith-filled, and faith-fuelled, proselytising posterity. Furthermore, Margaret Turley's clarion call in the script above - that if Jesus called fishermen to play a role in the continuation of the faithful, then why not the working class labourer in England in the 1840s - invites the audience into this finale of faith, by reminding them they too have a role to play. In fact, many audience members, though never specifically invited, start to sing along with the hymn sung by the cast, choir and missionaries when the missionaries enter the stage. The hymn is aptly entitled, *Called to Serve* (Gordon), and in this moment, there are British Saints "past" on stage, their actual descendants in the missionaries, and British Saints present in the audience united in the memory of continuation around the central message of serving Jesus Christ. Hervieu-Léger's chains of religious memory could not be more strengthened, any migratory caesura is overcome, and the British Latter-day Saint chain of religious memory is forged and strengthened anew.

Audience feedback seems to attest to *The British Pageant* helping the Latter-day Saint memory of continuation to flourish, and the chain of religious memory to be strengthened. Clearly this would not have been possible, or would have been severely compromised, had the performance been inappropriately packaged, culturally speaking. As one teenage girl shared after being in the pageant, "It is easier to be Mormon and British now" (A. Preston). Just as David Wiles asserts that English audiences become "more English" through watching Shakespeare (Wiles 53), so the same is true for Latter-day Saints in the UK with this production; they became "more Mormon," if you will, (to use the teenage girl's phraseology) though watching or participating in *The British Pageant*. Or as shared previously, one family observed, "It made us

more grateful and proud of the early British Saints; we are trying to be as faithful and dedicated as they were. It was as if the pageant was a reawakening, a rededication for us as a family” (Aitchinson). The memory of continuity was clearly strengthened, with the accompanying strengthening of chains of religious memory, through pageant participation.

The last of Hervieu-Léger’s strands that defines religion, and as such the chain of religious memory, is “the legitimizing reference to an authorized version of such memory, that is to say, a tradition” (97). *The British Pageant* in the UK, by being such a large-scale affair, approved, sanctioned, funded and visited by key leaders of the Church, became a legitimizing reference to an authorized version of this communal memory, this key chapter of Latter-day Saint history. And furthermore, it was very recently announced in December 2018 (Christensen) that *The British Pageant* would continue to be supported, being staged and funded every four years. It is already, only after two staging’s in Chorley, establishing tradition like qualities in the UK in the discourse and imagination of British Latter-day Saints. In other words, the tradition of *The British Pageant* in the UK every four years gives legitimizing reference to the authorised version of the Latter-day Saint faith tradition in the UK; the theatrical tradition supports the authorized religious tradition.

*The British Pageant* also feeds into Hervieu-Léger’s three strands of religion and religious memory through the context of its staging, not solely in the content. For this discussion, though, we can return to our three concentric landscape circles. We could not actually start to look at the relationship between participants and the site-specific location, the physical landscape of the staging, without first addressing the cultural landscape of the staging, as has been done, above. The necessity to “tell our story” was essential to the efficacy of *The*

*British Pageant* in the UK, and having unpacked that a little more, we move now into the first landscape circle, of the Preston Temple grounds, and what the lens of faithscape reveals there.

### **Landscape Circle One - The Preston Temple Grounds, Chorley, Lancashire**

*The British Pageant* has been staged in the UK in both 2013 and 2017, for a two-week run each time, with between seventeen thousand and twenty thousand audience members attending each staging. For both of those runs, it was staged on property the Latter-day Saint church owns, which is part of the grounds of the Preston Temple, which is actually in Chorley, Lancashire, not Preston. The entire complex consists of the Preston Temple, the Missionary Training Centre, where Latter-day Saint missionaries live and are trained for three to twelve weeks before their missionary service, an accommodation centre for people visiting and serving in the temple, a genealogical research centre, and a Latter-day Saint chapel, called a Stake Centre, which is a large church building to accommodate weekly worship services for multiple members. There are various car parks which are part of the complex, and also fields, one of which is traditionally used for the missionaries to play football on. It is a large complex, announced by the Church in 1992, and completed in 1998. It is the second of two Latter-day Saint temples in the UK, the first being the London Temple, built in 1958 in Newchapel, Surrey. *The British Pageant* has both times been staged in the field used for football. The red line below (fig. 13) shows the extent of the property, the yellow line the field on which the pageant has been staged. However, it should be noted that multiple other buildings within the complex are used for *The British Pageant*, whilst the marquee was erected in the field marked yellow.



(Fig. 13. Preston Temple grounds, an aerial view, Chorley, Lancashire from: Melling, John. *Preston / Chorley Mormon LDS Temple*, YouTube, 8 Jan. 2017, lines added, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQeCNJKahnl](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQeCNJKahnl).)

Though *The British Pageant* in the UK is being staged on the same complex as The Preston Temple, the results of that site-specific choice play out quite differently than *The Nauvoo Pageant* being staged near the temple there, and whilst faithscape within the landscape still functions in Chorley, it does so in a different way. In Nauvoo, as discussed above, faithscape is revealed in and through the material manifestations of labour, the taskscape, of roads, houses, trees planted, the temple and more, including the permanent pageant stage and lighting towers. At the Preston Temple site in Chorley, Lancashire, faithscape functions on two levels; first, the material manifestations of labour, and second in the people gathering to the pageant, and these two levels of faithscape are actually connected.

The first level of faithscape in Chorley, the faith-fuelled activity leading to the taskscape, with both encompassed within the landscape, is manifest in the sheer size of the complex at the Preston Temple. Just as the early Saints sacrificed in the 1840s to build the Nauvoo Temple, so members across the

was announced. Indeed, as a teenager I remember donating some of my pocket money specifically to the building fund for the Preston Temple for weeks on end, and feeling like I was contributing in meaningful, albeit small ways, to the building of that sacred edifice. When cast members and Latter-day Saint audience members come to the temple grounds in Chorley to participate in the pageant, they are coming home, and to a home many have helped contribute towards.

Such a spiritual homecoming for members when they come to see the pageant is located within a rich palimpsest of faith for them as they encounter the host of the production. They do not come to the performance feeling neutral about the space. Whereas in Nauvoo many, though not all, cast and audience members are coming to their *ancestral* home (though for all members it is their spiritual ancestral home), in Chorley, members are coming to their *own* spiritual home. Many will have experienced profound spiritual encounters in the temple during their worship there, or in the other buildings on the complex. Some audience or cast members will have been married in the Preston Temple, so that joyous occasion is overlaid onto coming to see a theatrical performance there, or they will have attended the weddings of loved ones, family and friends, on those grounds. Many members, young and old, will have attended and participated in social and cultural events in the church building, anything from dances to craft evenings to musical performances. Others will have lived on the grounds for three to twelve weeks at the Missionary Training Centre, or worked there. Others still will have been present when the Preston Temple was dedicated, a sacred religious ceremony for Latter-day Saints, and will have profound and personal spiritual memories connected to that occasion. For many members it is not just one of these events that have occurred on these grounds,

but several. Added to this there will be many joyous reunions during the pageant between members from different parts of the UK who have not seen each other in years. Whilst there will be some Latter-day Saints attending the pageant who will be coming to the Preston Temple grounds for the first time, I would hazard a guess that it is the minority. And even if they have come very few times before, or for the first time, connecting back to Jones' "distributed mind" in the role of memory making, by being on Church owned ground for the pageant, most Church members would automatically feel at home, as their memories of worship and play in their own Latter-day Saint chapels is overlaid onto the palimpsest of faith operating at this site-specific location. In coming to participate in any way with the pageant on the Preston Temple grounds, then, many Latter-day Saints are entering a site-specific location that is richly overlaid for them with faith, temple theology, sacred memories, spirituality, sociality and play, and often family; they come home. And just as Pearson and C. Turner both point out that participants blend into the location in site-specific theatrical work, and Ingold likewise concludes that people blend into landscape, so there is a blending of the people into location here, facilitated greatly through the spiritual, faithful and playful palimpsest they bring to the place. Andrew Jones' distributed mind is at full play here also; their memories are not in their mind only, but rather distributed out into the material culture of the temple grounds and other Latter-day Saint grounds elsewhere which they have made sacred and joyous memories in. Their memories are held in the landscape, as Jones argues, and the faithscape revealed is less about that of forbears or other Saints, but rather their own faith memory and histories, revealed back to them. To come to the Preston Temple grounds for contemporary British Saints to watch *The British Pageant* is to have their own faithscape, meaning their own

faith-fuelled tasks, revealed to them through the location of the performance; a form of faith-infused topophilia (Singh “Banaras” 228 and “Geographical” 238). The faithscape in this first level, then, is connected to the physical landscape, most especially the previously sacred or playful memories and encounters experienced and held there. In Henri Lefevbre’s thinking, discussed previously in this chapter, the sheer size of the complex also points to Latter-day Saint theology having its own crucial space in which to be materially manifest in the UK, creating sacred space for social relations inscribed by Latter-day Saint theology to flourish. Furthermore, just as I donated financially to the building of the Preston Temple as a teenager, so Latter-day Saints are aware that as a tithe paying people (Latter-day Saints pay ten percent of all their financial income to the Church), this large complex is in many ways *theirs*. Whilst of course it is appreciated that the Preston Temple and its grounds are officially owned by The Church of Jesus of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, members do feel a deep sense that it is truly owned by God, by the Church proper, and by them as members, and that they contribute towards it in some very small way. Thus, the taskscape manifest in the landscape is again the fruits of the faith-fuelled actions of both themselves and others – tithe payers across the world. It is different to Nauvoo in this regard, inasmuch as contemporary members did not (by and large) help to physically build the Preston Temple Grounds, as the early Saints did Nauvoo (though the architect of the Preston Temple, Peter Trebilcock, is a Church member, and he also served as the ecclesiastical leader of *The British Pageant* in 2017). Rather than the faithscape in Nauvoo, wherein the theatrical performances highlight the physical labour of the early Saints in building the city, here the theatrical performance highlights the faithscape of individual faith, combining to collective strength in a nation. This is



not a far stretch when we consider that Ingold is very clear that people and landscape blend and meld into each other so very much (“Temporality” 156). Let me expand.

Though the script for *The British Pageant* is largely identical in both Nauvoo and Chorley, with minor changes, the impact or feeling of it, affected by the site-specific location and engagement, is quite different. In Nauvoo it is deeply connected to, and conjures, thoughts of faithful ancestors and their motivation to leave England to come and build a temple in Nauvoo, as discussed. In Britain, *The British Pageant* has little to do with the ancestral line, but instead becomes a profound celebration of past and present faith in the British Isles; and that celebration in many ways is as much about the contemporary British Latter-day Saints as it is about early British Latter-day Saints. In *The British Pageant* in the UK the faith of the early Saints becomes a lens through which to highlight, celebrate and cement the faith of the contemporary Saints. It is maybe ironic that in America, with its much shorter history (in its contemporary guise) as a nation, *The British Pageant* is all about the history of the people. In Britain, with its much longer recorded history, the play is nominally about that same history, but in reality it is about the present Saints far more. This is connected to a sense of the continuation of faithful memory in and through the grounds, and also faithscape being located in the very participants.

When *The British Pageant* is staged in the UK it is probably the largest gathering of Latter-day Saints spread over a two-week period that the British Isles has seen for many decades, apart from the dedication for the Preston Temple. So many members travel from all over the British Isles to see it, that it starts to carry pilgrimage-like qualities, as discussed and defined in Chapter

Two. Furthermore, just as the Nauvoo Temple being rebuilt, and thousands of Saints being back in Nauvoo each summer resurrects that history, likewise, the gathering together of so many Latter-day Saints on the Preston Temple grounds for the pageant attests to a numerical strength once again in these lands, after the mass migration of Latter-day Saints in the nineteenth century. There is a form of Sanborn-Jones' resurrection of the past achieved here, and in it, members find celebration, strength, and joy.

Such joy and strength in gathering together and participating in the pageant is found also in part through the creation of religious chains of memory, or a continuation of memory, that moves members far beyond the “dull memories” of modern capitalism that Hervieu-Léger believes Westerners live in (128). She argues that through industrialisation, urbanisation, and globalisation, the memories of many Western societies are “technical, functionalized and neutral memories... the memory of modern societies took on the aspect of surface memory, dull memory, whose creative capacity seemed to have dissolved” (128). In contrast, when believers creatively engage with their beliefs, through embodiment of the stories of earlier believers, the meaning-making process and resultant chains of memory forged are memories characterised by an abundance of emotional intensity and substantial connectedness. The feedback from a couple in the family cast in the UK, shared below, reveals just such abundant memories, in contrast to “dull, functionalized” memories. They wrote:

The history of the Church in the British Isles is not greatly publicised and we knew little of these early Saints. We felt whilst we were performing, we took on the plight of the characters we represented and we experienced a glimpse of their feelings, their dilemmas, their faith and their fortitude. We scarcely got through one rehearsal or performance without shedding tears – one moment for sorrow – the next for joy and exuberance! And when speaking to the audience afterwards – they had the same experience. (Patricia & Tom Wilde)

If Hervieu-Léger reads modern societies as having lost their “creative capacity,” then the pageants, performed largely by people of little to no theatrical background, unleash remarkable creative capacities in them, creating memories that are filled with, “sorrow”, “joy” and “exuberance.” These seem the opposite of surface memory or dull memory, and reveal a people whose religious chains of memory are being forged in a theatrical crucible of creative empathetic responses, serving as powerful corrective to the challenges of crumbling memory, dull memory, and functionalized, fragmentary memory in industrialised society (Hervieu-Léger 127 – 130). The location of the site-specific performance is seminal in forging such abundant, creative memories, because as a location it already carries them for the people, whether in distributed form or not. It is interesting to note here that the research of George E. Vaillant, Professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, confirms that the positive emotions of awe, love (attachment), trust (faith), compassion, gratitude, forgiveness, joy and hope are “rooted in our evolutionary biology” and the focus on them in religion is what makes religiosity so fundamentally “nourishing” for so many (Vaillant 48). The unapologetic focus on positive emotions in the pageants, without negating the impact of negative emotions, but choosing not to focus on them at the expense of the “joy” and “exuberance” that the couple quoted above expressed, is an example of what Vaillant sees as religion bringing positive emotions into the “ambit of conscious reflection” (62). This, in Vaillant’s assessment, is in stark contrast to the social sciences which have “profoundly neglected” these crucial positive emotions (62).

We did discuss staging *The British Pageant* in an established theatrical venue quite seriously for the 2017 staging, including costing that two-week run

etc. But there was an innate sense amongst the production and creative team that something would be lost were it performed elsewhere. That something, I believe, is partly the powerful, personal palimpsest or faithscape Latter-day Saints experience in the Preston Temple grounds, as discussed above, which prepares the way for religious chains of memory making, connecting them to past and present Latter-day Saints in the British Isles, which bolsters their personal faith. And, as with landscape, they experience the faithscape, and *are* the faithscape themselves, and to each other. Faithscape at *The British Pageant* in Chorley is not just the Preston Temple complex, the faith that represents, the sacred memories it holds; it is also the thousands of people who attend the pageant there when it is staged, whose very presence speak of resurrected faith in these lands. Faithscape in Chorley is a blend of people and place in a way that does not occur quite as clearly in Nauvoo.

### **Landscape Circle Two – Distributed Landscape and Vicarious Religion**

*The British Pageant* has several scenes which stage seminal Latter-day Saint history which occurred in multiple locations in the British Isles, which locations are now seen as sacred places to Latter-day Saints. These locations include, but are not limited to: the River Ribble in Avenham Park in Preston, where the very first baptisms occurred; where Vauxhall Chapel used to stand in Preston, where the first sermon occurred; Preston Town Square where the missionaries saw a political banner declaring “Truth Will Prevail” and took that as their saying for their mission; Liverpool docks, where the first missionaries arrived in 1837, but also where converts emigrated from, often singing *The Gallant Ship* as they did so, and the villages in Lancashire of Downham and Chatburn, in which almost the entire populations of those villages converted to

the Church. Many members will have visited these locations before, some of them on their same trip to see the pageant. As shared in the opening chapter, these places nearly all have markers, plaques or statues at them, placed by the Church, stating the historical connection to the landscape. When *The British Pageant* occurs in Nauvoo, these places are understandably distant for many; foreign names of foreign places. However, when referenced in Chorley on the Preston Temple grounds, they seem so very close to the performance itself, and the faithscape within these distributed landscapes (returning to Jones' distributed minds), comes into play. Again, faithscape in this context is not that Latter-day Saints built any of these places as they did in Nauvoo, the faith behind the taskscape so to speak, as they clearly did not. Rather the faithscape is in the people in that place and their faithful acts there, and the plaques and memorials that speak of them, because crucially for Latter-day Saints, those landscapes truly do incorporate those faithscapes, even if not thought of in such terms. And, in Ingold's understanding of taskscape – the various labours that shape a place – the plaques and statues in these locations fit squarely into his understanding of taskscape – labours which have shaped a landscape. Faithscape helps us here to remember that any such tasks that occurred in these places, from baptisms to sermons to raising memorial statues on the docks of Liverpool (see Chapter One for picture), are fuelled by faith – faith to act on the theology of The Church of Jesus Christ, and the faithful act of memorialising those faithful acts of baptisms and sermons and setting sail. In the distributed landscape, though these locations are not immediately present at the site-specific performance in Chorley, they are nonetheless a powerful part of the faithscape for the pageant participants – they are faith revealed in the taskscape.

However, in speaking of a distributed landscape at this site-specific location, I actually want to focus not on these locations, but rather on the Christian faith inscribed and embedded in the landscapes of every village, town and city in the British Isles. Whilst the purpose of looking at faithscape in Chorley, Lancashire for this site-specific performance is not to be comparative to faithscape as it plays out in Nauvoo, nevertheless in this instance there is a compelling comparative study to be made in how faithscape operates differently in both places. In this section I will elucidate, through Grace Davie's insightful work on vicarious religion, how *The British Pageant* is seeking to help Latter-day Saints in the UK find deeper integration into the spiritual fabric of their culture and nations, and to no longer be spiritual "outsiders," as expressed above in one person's online commentary, in their own communities.

Firstly, then, what is Grace Davie's work on vicarious religion, and how does it play out in *The British Pageant*? Grace Davie, a celebrated sociologist of religion, gives the clearest sense of the lay of the religious landscape in the UK, or socio-cultural-spiritual landscape if you will, in her seminal book *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Central to her exploration is the seeming mismatch between "high levels of belief and low levels of practice" (5) in Britain, a phenomenon Davie's termed *believing without belonging*. As she explores this mismatch, which she feels ought not be ignored, the unique relationship between the Church of England and the state emerges time and again (see ch. 8 especially). In context of the writing of the pageant, I was coming from a country wherein there was a long established church-state relationship (as complex and contested as that relationship has been over the centuries). And that relationship, between The Church of England and the state, even though I am a practicing Latter-day Saint and do not consider myself

Anglican, becomes a part of my religious chain of memory, through enculturation. I do not think I am alone in this. In other words, as British Latter-day Saints, we also carry Anglican religious chains of memory in our spiritual DNA, which feeds into Davie's ideas of *vicarious religion*.

Davie came to feel that though her work on *believing without belonging* had served a helpful purpose, it was not nuanced enough to fully envelop the complexities of both belief and belonging. This led to her thoughts on what she termed *vicarious religion* ("A Methodological Challenge"). Davie defined vicarious religion as the idea that the historic churches in Europe still had a key role to play at crucial moments in the lives of modern Europeans, even though they no longer influenced key practices of those people ("Vicarious Religion: A Response" 4). In other words, though most people may not worship in the historic churches, they are still glad that the bells are being rung. Crucially, in relation to this field of study, Davie's insights need not be understood simply as the state churches playing a role for those Europeans who have some beliefs in God, but little or no levels of practice. Rather, the state churches play an active (even if minor role) in the religious chains of memory of those, as myself, with high levels of practice in what Davie terms *new religious movements*.

I do not mean this to be misread in implying somehow that Latter-day Saints feel torn between Anglican and Latter-day Saint theology; they do not. Rather, I am seeking to articulate that the religious chains of memory formed by British Latter-day Saints, going back to the earlier discussion in this section on Landon Gilkey, are culturally inscribed. But when that cultural inscription is coming from a country that has an acutely developed church-state relationship, notions of vicarious religion start to slip and slide into the picture. We referred to Gilkey's work earlier in this section to highlight the need for *The British Pageant*

to not be mispackaged in Americana. His teachings, on the inevitable cultural inscription of theology, are helpful again here for highlighting how Latter-day Saint religious chains of memory in the UK are interwoven with the cultural inscription of being from a country with a church-state relationship.

What is the impact, then, of such inscription? Namely, that as chains of religious memory are strengthened at *The British Pageant*, those chains are not bound by the denominational title of Latter-day Saint. My personal chains of religious memory, for example, are formed by connecting to a lineage of believers across different faith practices, across geography and across time. And due to my upbringing in British culture, some of that connection to a lineage of Christian believers has happened within the structures, practices and spaces of Anglicanism. Such a church-state relationship is not part of the make-up for Latter-day Saints in the USA, changing how the landscape (distributed or otherwise), is read by British Saints in the UK at this site-specific performance. Davie notes that when she spoke on vicarious religion across Europe, even with her words in translation, people were nodding in agreement and discussing the notion in depth. However, this was not her experience in America. As she wrote,

In the United States, conversely, where the religious situation is very different, even an English-speaking audience finds it difficult to grasp this idea (of vicarious religion) – quite clearly it does not resonate with American self-understanding. Indeed vicarious religion captures the contrast between the patterns of religion in Europe and the United States almost better than anything else. (“Vicarious Religion: A Response” 8)

In this chapter, looking at how the space between the site-specific location and the participants is inscribed with faithscape in both Nauvoo and Chorley, Davie’s insights are intriguing. For of course, Ingold, Pearson and C. Turner’s notions that as people and audience we blend into and experience the landscape/story and site-specific host, cannot be separated in this study from



Davie's insights here on vicarious religion. In America, cast and audience's relationship with the site-specific location may well be a blending into the host and story of the landscape there – a “We are Nauvoo” - unaffected by notions of vicarious religion. However, in Chorley, Lancashire, participants' relationship with the site-specific location and landscape is ultimately impacted by this notion of vicarious religion, because it is at the heart of how we approach religion as Europeans. The second circle of landscape, then, encompasses all the Anglican churches, graveyards, grounds and halls in all the villages, towns and cities in which we live as British Latter-day Saints. For we too as Latter-day Saints are glad those bells are ringing, even if we are not the ones to be ringing them; vicarious religion works on multiple levels. Those ubiquitous spires on the landscape of any civic scene in Britain act as tangible connection to a community of Christian believers across time and space; they are the ultimate faithscape in the landscape of the British Isles, creating a palimpsest of vicarious religion within our “lifeworld” as Pearson called it (“In Comes I” 15), which is a person's involvement with the places and environments of everyday life. As British Latter-day Saints our relationship with this “lifeworld” landscape, somewhat similar to *cynefin* as it is called in Welsh (the intimacy with which you know the environment in which you grew up, and with which you have a binding and co-creative relationship (Pearson, “In Comes I” 14) ), is infused with Anglicanism through enculturation, which threads into our religious chain of memory. What is the impact of this when it comes to participation in *The British Pageant* in the UK, and relationship to the site-specific location?

Firstly, as hopefully made evident above, the faithscape participants encounter expands beyond the realm of the site-specific location to encompass those spires and churches of the state religion; this is distributed faithscape.

Secondly, unless *The British Pageant* acknowledges and includes this landscape/faithscape thread within the chain of religious memory, it does not feel wholly authentic, as it is not encompassing the full richness and density of Latter-day Saint British religious chains of memory. As creators of the pageant we sought to include and acknowledge that distributed faithscape as it were (though we didn't frame it in such terms at the time) primarily through two things - the music and the inclusion of earlier British Christian Reformers and their taskscape, with a specific focus on their efforts to translate the Bible into English. In this study I will only engage with the latter of these, whilst acknowledging the key role of the former also.

The distributed faithscape of Latter-day Saints, and their experience with vicarious religion, was partly honoured through the inclusion in *The British Pageant* of the role British Reformers played in bringing the Bible into English. The opening scenes of the pageant depict very short vignettes of various Reformers' efforts to bring the Bible into English, including Ann Askew, William Tyndale, Hugh Latimer, John Wycliffe and John Lathrop, interlinked and threaded together by a narrator. The focus of the Reformers section, which perhaps lasts no more than six minutes, is the effort, labour, sacrifice and sometimes martyrdom of these Reformers to have the Bible translated into English, culminating in its eventual acceptance by the law of the land in 1539, having previously been outlawed. These opening scenes then have a clear focus on the Christian artefact of the Bible in English at its centre, and the work and labour that brought it into fruition. These scenes reveal in broad strokes a little of the politico-religious landscape of the British Isles in relation to the Bible being outlawed in English up until 1539. The scenes culminate in us seeing multiple families reading from the Bible in English, from props which have lights

embedded in them, representing the “light” of God’s word as it becomes available to the people, as the image below (fig. 14) from performance reveals.



(Fig. 14. *The British Pageant*, a family reading from the Bible in English from: Brophy, Nicola. Aug. 2017.)

This scene slip slides, as per C. Turner’s and Pearson’s insights, into the site-specific immediate landscape (circle 1) of the Preston Temple complex. Such slippage into the immediate landscape is due to the crucial role of the Bible within the immediate landscape; there are multiple Bibles inside the temple which the members will have studied in there, and also in the Church building on the grounds, and even during rehearsal breaks in the pageant. However, just as this scene seeps out into the immediate landscape, coalescing with participants’ memories carried in the non-somatic, physical surroundings, it also slip sides into the distributed landscape, and faithscape, of the British Isles at large. Again, just as Jones writes that our memories are actually “distributed” amongst the non-somatic artefacts in the landscape, blending into them (Jones 225), so it is with this notion of distributed faithscape; the foundational role the English Bible plays in the British landscape is revealed and celebrated by *The British Pageant*, in both script and staging. Seeing multiple families from the cast emerge on stage reading from the Bible as the narration highlights its

eventual acceptance by law, the numerical size of the cast alone at one hundred and fifty people, starts to give a sense of a people “of the book.” The moment becomes a powerful theatrical homage to the impact the English Bible has had on the British people, including our language, our buildings, our politics, our holidays, our customs – indeed, our entire linguistic, cultural, geographical and imaginative landscape, (Spencer, and McGrum). That distributed faithscape, so deeply informed by the English Bible, is acknowledged through such blocking and staging, and in so doing, the dual strand of both the Latter-day Saint chain of religious memory along with the national chain of religious memory is honoured. The duality of this chain of religious memory within British Latter-day Saints starts to act like the gaze of the two lovers in John Donne’s poem *The Ecstasy*, who look up together and have their eye beams twisted, thread “upon one double-string,” their souls converging and becoming one. Likewise, the religious chain of memory for Latter-day Saints – ultimately the two different strands of faithscape with which they engage at this performance – the faithscape of the first circle of the immediate performance site which is steeped in Latter-day Saint theology, practice and worship, and the distributed faithscape of the second circle, shaped by vicarious religion - coalesce and become one, and cannot be neatly un-braided. However, and interestingly, there is a desire to do just that amongst some critics of the Latter-day Saint faith – a desire to take that dual religious chain of memory and deny it of any strand of vicarious religion or distributed faithscape connected to the British Christian tradition.

There were fellow Christians called *Hope for Mormons UK* who set up a station outside every performance of *The British Pageant* in 2013, to give

outreach by focussing on challenging Latter-day Saints doctrine. A member of the group stated in an online video review after seeing the pageant one night:

They were looking at people like William Tyndale, um John Wykliffe, and and you know the martyrs like Hugh Latimer, Ann Askew... But it's our history, it's not Mormon history, that's the point.... It's quite appalling... Use Mormon martyrs, but don't use Christian, Evangelical, Protestant martyrs.... They're Christians, they're not Mormons... It's disingenuous. (Stockport Evangelical Church 10:05 – 10:31,14:14 – 14:16, 14:45 – 15:00, 15:36 – 15:37)

Or, as another Christian video blogger expressed it, talking about the references to reformers in *The British Pageant*, “Really you, you have no business in invoking these names. That they are the forbears of my tradition, biblical Christianity, and really cannot be invoked by those of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints” (Gourlay 19:52 – 20:15). Whilst I understand their position and evident affront, their positionality gives no space for the dual chains of religious memory vicarious religion creates for British Latter-day Saints, and no space for the distributed faithscape experienced in watching the pageant. Latter-day Saints study and read the Bible almost daily; the denial of them revealing in performance the faithscape that led to it being translated into English denies their inheritance of that text. Again, it was theatrical performance that brought such protests to the fore. Latter-day Saint talks are replete with references to multiple reformers, again with a focus on bringing the Bible into English (Ballard). No such vlogs or blogs, that I can find, protest those talks within the UK from Hope for Mormons UK. However, when such religious chains of memory are embodied in theatrical performance, rather than just shared through the spoken word only, the stakes are raised, and feelings are heightened. The response from Hope for Mormons UK also underlines a comment made by a British Latter-day Saint, quoted above, when they were

fearful the pageant, packaged in Americana, would set the Church back decades in the UK. They shared in that comment that such a move would further, “alienate a religion that already stands on the outside looking in with regard to participation in the religious narrative of the country” (John F). The comment reveals a truth that is paradoxical for Latter-day Saints; they are framed as being on the outside looking in on the spiritual narrative within the British Isles, but they *feel* very differently. Due to Davie’s vicarious religion and their dual chains of religious memory, forged and formed through their lifetimes interaction with their landscape within their “lifeworld” or *cynefin*, British Latter-day Saints feel profoundly connected to the Christian heritage of the British Isles; it is part of who they are. To be denied that heritage by others, however, (and this is speaking more broadly than the Hope for Mormons UK thoughts, above), not intentionally but by being consistently framed as outsiders, places British Latter-day Saints in an odd place of liminality with regards to their connections to their spiritual heritage through being British. Perhaps such liminality though, going back to Chapter Two, becomes the very betwixt-between space that Latter-day Saints need to grow? I do not know. However, whilst the effects of this liminality may not be discussed very much by members in the UK, it is once again very telling to me the feedback I received from that teenage girl after being in the pageant: “It is easier to be Mormon and British now.” The pageant, then, through embodied practice, burnishes the dual chains of religious memory for individuals; she was British and Mormon before the pageant – that duality, and the challenges it created, was easier for her after the pageant. Seeking to honour that distributed faithscape and vicarious religion within the creative process was essential I believe in making *The British Pageant* a theatrical performance that bolstered faith for Latter-day Saints

throughout the British Isles. It would have done good without it; much of the chain, of course, is the Latter-day Saint chain of memory. However, it would not have felt complete, whole, deeply rooted or connected for participants; to be truly efficacious in strengthening the chain, the entirety of that chain, through distributed faithscape, needed to be remembered, honoured and embraced, so that a fourteen-year old young woman could, in turn, embrace the different strands of her own religious and national identity, and the nexus between them, more readily.

### **Landscape Circle Three – The British Isles**

In conclusion to this section, I would like to propose briefly that there is a final, third circle of landscape that participants at the pageant are interacting with, and that is the entire landscape of the British Isles. This of course seems too broad and sweeping a statement, and in some ways it may well be.

However, this idea is not unconnected from the distributed faithscape discussed above; the spires and graveyards and church halls and more that participants interact with through vicarious religion. Rather it encompasses that but adds more; a sense of the Divine presence interwoven deeply into the narrative of the British Isles. *The British Pageant* clearly frames the British Isles as sacred and holy ground, and whilst there are various moments I could talk about which reveal this, I will discuss only one; the scenes set in Downham and Chatburn.

As mentioned above, Downham and Chatburn are two small villages in Lancashire that Heber C. Kimball, in the group of first Latter-day Saint missionaries to the British Isles, visited. As is portrayed in the pageant, he had been told not to go there, that the people would reject him squarely, though he saw this as even more reason to go. Upon arrival in Downham he stated in his

diary that he got a small wooden barrel, and, next to a stone wall, started to share a sermon from it. Many people at the end of that first sermon requested baptism, and eventually, over a few months of him visiting both Downham and neighbouring Chatburn, almost every inhabitant of both villages were baptised (Kimball). This is all portrayed in the pageant, based closely on diary entries from Heber and others who were with him. Consequently, quite a few Latter-day Saints in Britain have visited Downham in a pilgrimage, of sorts, where this story is shared and they are often invited into the local Anglican church and are permitted to hold their own worship service there, sharing prayers, hymns and faith. Along with the position of Hope for Mormons UK, evidence of such a welcome demonstrates the complexity of belief, inclusion and allowance that exists within many faith communities in the UK. The scene culminates in the following monologue from Heber C Kimball, taken verbatim from his diary, and staged with about fifty actors, representing the people of these villages. The music underneath is a score of *Jerusalem*, culminating in the hundred strong choir (not the cast on stage), singing the final two lines of that hymn. Heber says,

HEBER C KIMBALL

As I left them, my feelings were such as I could not describe. These were sisters and brothers to me now, and I felt as if the place were holy ground. Upon returning home to America, I described the experience to the Prophet Joseph, who explained to me, That is a place where some of the old prophets travelled and dedicated the land. And their blessing fell upon you.

CHOIR

Till we have built Jerusalem  
In England's green and pleasant land.  
(Collier et al. Sc. 6)

In this diary entry/speech by Heber he quotes Joseph Smith in explaining to him that old prophets travelled and dedicated the land (Kimball 54: note 16).



The import and power of this line and what it means for Latter-day Saints should not be underestimated. Joseph Smith, remember, is seen as a prophet of God. When he tells Heber that former prophets dedicated these lands, Saints today take that as truth, though no further statements have been made, and there is no recorded history of whom Smith was referring to, so any ideas are just conjecture. However, many Latter-day Saints read it as a reference to one of Christ's early apostles, though there is no evidence within Latter-day Saints teachings for that reading as far as I am aware. Regardless of whom Joseph Smith was referring to, however, it remains that when Latter-day Saints become aware of this account from Heber (some are not aware of it until participating in the pageant, usually those who have not visited Downham), they read it as a clear sign of God's hand in the religious, spiritual and sacred narrative of the British Isles. The reference to these ancient prophets "dedicating" the land is a familiar ordinance or sacred rite to Latter-day Saints; they dedicate their homes, their churches, their temples, their burial places and even nations to God's sacred works, through sacred ordinances including prayer. Furthermore, for this moment of the script to be underscored with, and culminating in, the final lines from *Jerusalem*, brings together a key narrative, sacral to the English imagination of Christ walking these lands, with Latter-day Saint thought on ancient prophets walking and dedicating these lands. The culminating effect for Latter-day Saints in the cast is, as Heber shares on stage, a sense that they too are on "holy ground" in the British Isles. Such a notion is not disassociated from Zion as discussed in the previous chapter. Indeed, this scene could be said to be framing the British Isles for Latter-day Saints as a holy land of Zion past, present and future, with all the sense of unity through circular time connectedness which that implies, incorporating fellow Christian believers.

As the third and final landscape that *The British Pageant* incorporates, this one seems to move the cast and audience the most. Many speak of it being a profoundly powerful and spiritual moment for them. I conclude that whilst this final larger landscape is informing the imagination of participants, and the faithscape it reveals clearly stirring their souls, it is actually in the space where the three circles of landscape overlap that such power is found, as faithscape in all its manifestations is revealed. And this scene encompasses all three faithscapes within the landscapes in potent ways: the landscape of the faith-filled personal palimpsest at the site-specific location at the Preston Temple grounds; the distributed landscape, including the village of Downham where the scene is set, calling upon the distributed faithscape that encompasses specific sacred locations for Latter-day Saints in the UK, as Downham is, coupled with the power of vicarious religion as they worship in the Anglican church there; and lastly, the entire landscape of the British Isles as holy ground. Through these different types of landscapes interacting together for participants, the entire encounter with the site-specific location is one where the following converge: personal play, worship, family – immediate and eternal, faith, home - heavenly or otherwise, reunions, safety, distributed sacral places and narratives, the spires and spaces of the nations' Christian heritage and faith, topophilia and patriotism, Zion, religious and spiritual heritage and tradition, sacrifice, gathering, peace, affirmation and connection to early Saints. In such convergence, that local Latter-day Saint woman who took my forearms in her hands – so rightly concerned that we might not tell the story of British Latter-day Saints – finds herself, her people, her place, her love of her Latter-day Saint theology, worship and traditions and her love of her nation's faith tapestry, combined. Inasmuch as landscape is story, she therefore recognises herself in

that story which embraces all her landscapes, and, with her chains of religious memory and attendant faith burnished anew, she embraces a fellow pageant participant, and smiles.

#### **Part Four – conclusion**

This chapter has discussed faithscape, wherein faith, at these site-specific locations, is shown to be the motivating force behind the works and activities foregrounded in Ingold's taskscape. Furthermore, through the performances studies lens and methodology, Singh's understanding of faithscape has been expanded, to include *the participants themselves* as part of the faithscape, (see page 217 above). It is through the writings of performance studies scholars such as Pearson and Turner, and Ingold in anthropology, writing on the blending of self into host in site specific performances (see page 207 above), that this expansion of faithscape occurs, to include participants themselves.

If performance studies scholars help us expand our understanding of faithscape to include the participants themselves, then faithscape as an idea expands the performance studies discourse in return. In this chapter I have articulated and expanded faithscape as follows: a lens through which to see how the co-creative role of faith, manifest in action and tasks (taskscape), is shaping the landscape-story of site-specific performance locations, and the participants themselves in the process. This working definition invites us to consider more fully how faith has inscribed and shaped the performance venues of various site-specific locations and participants. I would propose that faithscape can be utilised within the performance studies discourse and lexicon to invite us to

consider how faith has played a key role in shaping and creating any given site-specific performance location.

Of course in this larger application, the *faith* within faithscape would need to be interpreted more broadly, or differently at least, than within the Latter-day Saint context, as I have done here. In considering various common site-specific performance locations within the British Isles, for example, we can start to see, to a lesser or greater extent, the role of various religious faiths in shaping these venues: churches, both still used for worship and those no longer used by active congregations; castles; ruins; woods and forests; hospitals; abandoned factories; town halls; court-rooms; grave-yards; monasteries; fields and more. Whilst by no means an exhaustive list, it is beneficent to consider how religious faiths as manifest in faith-fuelled tasks of previous generations have shaped the spaces we perform in as theatre practitioners in site-specific locations today, and how their faith shapes us, as an active participant in that faithscape. This chapter considers such questions in detail as applied to these Latter-day Saint performances. However, there is merit in bringing such questions and frames of thinking as faithscape implies into the study of site-specific performances more broadly. In so doing, our understanding in relation to site-specific performances and how they work on us, and in us, is deepened. For as we bring faithscape into the performance studies lexicon and discourse we have eyes to see more clearly how the landscape of site-specific locales may, to a greater or lesser extent, be shaped by the faith of those who worked that place before us. And how, through that, their faith continues to work in us, today.

This chapter has sought to understand how these two theatrical performances help to reveal the faithscape within the landscape. In part two, I explore how in Nauvoo, the pageants reveal that the central physical loci of the

faithscape is the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple, which gathers past, present and future into itself. However, the pageants also reveal the faithscape within the landscape in the entirety of Nauvoo, including, but not limited to, the groves of trees, surrounding the audience in their watching each night. Current theatrical participants, both cast and audience, as they tell or witness the stories of faith, blend and meld into the faithscape and shape the physical landscape in the process. This becomes co-creative; their faith-fuelled participation is shaping the landscape of Nauvoo annually; the faithscape within the landscape of Nauvoo is shaping them and their faith in return.

In part three, I looked at *The British Pageant* staged in the UK and proposed that faithscape is at work both within the immediate landscape of the performance, and furthermore within the distributed landscape, away from the immediate locale (and even time) of the theatrical event, but of central importance to it as a site-specific event. Through this notion of the distributed landscape, I explored how faithscape is both culturally and theologically inscribed, proposing that honouring this dual inscription was central to the transformative efficacy of *The British Pageant* when staged in the UK.

Here in the conclusion, in weaving part two and part three of this chapter together, it seems to me the pageants, in revealing the faithscape within the landscape, are actually enlarging the Latter-day Saint memory, collectively and individually. The notion of the enlarged memory is not new to Latter-day Saints - the phrase is used within The Book of Mormon to cite the purpose and impact of preserving sacred texts for the people: "And now, it has hitherto been wisdom in God that these things should be preserved; for behold, they have enlarged the memory of this people" (Alma 37:8). If scripture as an archival record enlarges memory for Latter-day Saints by recording and transmitting their sacred

histories as a people, then the landscape, most especially when these pageants are performed there, act in similar ways. After all, the landscape, incorporating faithscape, is story, and as we read above in part one, “is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock” (Schama 7), and is where the work of memory occurs. The landscape of these site-specific performances become palimpsests of acts of somatic faithfulness. We appreciate through Ingold’s work that in site-specific performances, the landscape acts as an enduring record of and testimony to the lives and works of past generations. However, faithscape helps us appreciate that the spaces between the landscape and those past generations was inscribed with salvatory hope. In other words, as the pageants reveal faith as the motivating force behind the taskscape, faithscape simultaneously reveals a deep care for those sacred spaces: both past generations towards the land as they perform their own faith inscribed tasks in it and on it, and present generations as they recreate and remember those faithful tasks through their own present day engagement with the landscape, through performance. Faithscape, then, is love of God made manifest in the landscape. And when cast and audience members today, whether in Nauvoo, Illinois or Chorley, Lancashire, engage with these performances, the landscape, immediate or distributed, acts as a record of and witness to a love for the things of the heavens, in, on and through the earth.

That record, recorded in and through the taskscape, expands the faithful memory of Latter-day Saints. And as pageant participants blend and meld into the palimpsest landscape of ancestral and spiritual faith, they find a unity and oneness with the early Saints, other Christians, each other, their families, and within themselves. Such expansion of their memories in and through the

landscape of the performances helps strengthen the chains of their own religious memory – and joyous, healing, faith-filled transformation occurs.

## **Chapter Five – Conclusion**

### **The metamorphic what**

This thesis has sought to understand how participation in two large-scale theatrical performances, *The Nauvoo Pageant* and *The British Pageant*, produced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, has been profoundly transformative for individuals. This transformation is the 'what' of this thesis. This 'what' is always in the process of change, a metamorphic condition. In this conclusion, to describe why this 'metamorphic what' occurs, I will describe the emerging patterns of who, where, when, how and why.

### **Who of this study**

Though seemingly self-evident, it is helpful to re-articulate that central to this study has been participants' experience in the pageants, shared through qualitative research procured in interviews and written responses. These far exceeded what could be used as exemplars, but all of the generous contributions of the project's participants were invaluable to the development of this thesis. I chose specific examples to illuminate the complexity of the systemic experiences at work for participants. These included audience member Michael experiencing the pageants as a great big hug each night, to Sarah changing her parenting model, to the miracle encounters with the dead shared by Lisa and Natascha in Chapter Three, and Don's remarkable healing journey. These transformative accounts represent just a very small fraction of the stories shared with me and were selected from around 250 interviews and written responses from audience and cast members. The vast majority of



stories shared have a similarly rich vein of personal transformation at the heart of their narratives. For the stories I have included here, I have endeavoured not to use them in reductionist ways, but rather, in the spirit of Buberian discourse, encounter their offerings from an I-Thou positionality, and therein honour the sacral terrain we are in as interviewers, researchers and writers. Their stories, shared so generously with me, have changed me, and are part of my story now.

The other who of this study has, of course, been the voices of the Academy – the individuals cited within this thesis whose work has elucidated and burnished the stories shared by the participants. Whilst I may not have met the vast majority of these individuals, I am reminded of the Latter-day Saint apologist Arthur Henry King's insight that to read great writing is to have a conversation with a great mind (King 128 – 9). I have conversed with many great minds throughout this study and have been created anew in and through their work and findings. Their thoughts, voices and words are also the who of this study and point towards the palimpsest that is academic thinking. Words are a semiotic representation of scholars' and participants' experiences and thinking, meaning that even the "primary" quotes shared in this study are actually "secondary," inasmuch as they too are expressing feelings and thoughts in representational codes (Canning and Postlewait 13 – 14). I share this only to highlight that the liminal spaces between - which have been so central to this study - arguably exist between experiences, thoughts and feelings, and the expression of them in language. In the attempt to express the thing itself, in that metaphorical gap, between these scholars' thoughts and feelings and expression and my comprehension of them, is a space that I personally have been transformed through and in – and their ideas too are part of my story now.

These minds and voices I have conversed with have come from a varied yet vital family of methodologies, including performance and theatre studies, sociology of religion, anthropology, archaeology, cultural and literary studies, philosophy and theology. In performance and theatre studies I have walked with, and been transformed by, the thinking of many. Here follows a brief review of some, though not all of those practitioners, and their thoughts and voices. Likewise to participants' stories, the majority of which were not shared here, so the thoughts and writings of many which I have encountered in this study, from disparate academic fields, are not directly referenced throughout but have been part of the conversation for me.

Following are some of the voices with various accompanying seams of their thinking which have shaped this work: Jon McKenzie, whose work on transformative liminality was so crucial to Chapter Two; Erika Fischer-Lichte, whose autopoiesis offers a model to engage with the circularity of symbiotic efficacy; Richard Schechner, whose insistence on growing, alive environments in theatre shapes Chapter Two, as does his twice behaved-behaviour, which multiplies to thrice-behaved, as symbiotic efficacy reverberates; Helen Freshwater, who invites us to turn our gaze more carefully to the audience experience; Peter Brook, as the sage on the mountain, who unapologetically invites us to swim against the tide by shunning all that is mean and small within us in our theatre work; James Thompson, with his profound perception that we are a mosaic of past mothers and past fathers within ourselves – we perform them, refracted; Nicolas Ridout's thinking on passionate amateurs who journey through the past to shape their future, and his clear thinking on theatre and ethics and the unease of the applause have also shaped this study; Jill Dolan and Selina Busby's work on hope-filled utopian performatives and the pedagogy

of utopia respectively; Susan Bennett's thinking in her seminal *Theatre Audiences*, and the invitation to understand the customary contractual relationship between the cast and audience; Marvin Carlson's authoritative work on ghosting and haunting in theatre; Grotowski's translumination and invitation to choose the harder task of revealing our joys on stage; Erin Hurley, who with clarity of thought reminds us to focus on the feelings of theatre; Mike Pearson, Cathy Turner and Nick Kaye, whose remarkable work on site-specific theatre was so helpful in shaping my own ideas in Chapter Four; Diana Taylor and Rebecca Schneider who grapple with the role of the archive and the repertoire in transmitting knowledge through performance; Adrien Heathfield's work on trauma and time in performance; Richard Boon and Jane Plastow's understanding on the transformative power of joy in applied drama; Kathleen Gallagher's work on practices of hope and the radical hope of applied drama; John Somers' incredibly insightful thinking on re-editing our lives' story through theatre, and also Megan Sanborn Jones' crucial work on Latter-day Saint pageants as resurrections of the past that contain the past, present and future within them.

Whilst this performance and theatre studies discourse has been central, the thinking of sociologists of religion has informed the research deeply, with the work of Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Grace Davie and Douglas Davies being key, with theologian Landon Gilkey furthering my thoughts in Chapter Four. Hervieu-Léger's work on chains of religious memory, their centrality to the continuity of faith practices, and how they are forged, has shaped this study throughout. And Grace Davie's work on vicarious religion helped to shape my application of Singh's faithscape and how it works.

In relation to faithscape, key writers in anthropology have clearly been essential, most especially the work of Tim Ingold - his thinking on taskscape is crucial in Chapter Four. Also, within anthropology, Edith and Victor Turner have been influential; their foundational work on liminality and *communitas* have shaped the thinking of this study. Within archaeology, Andrew Jones work on distributed minds helped to enrich and enlarge the application of faithscape, beyond the immediate loci of the site-specific performance. As a cultural and literary theorist, Lewis Hyde's thinking and work on the transformative reciprocity of gift-giving helped to shape my thinking on symbiotic efficacy. Likewise, Terry Eagleton in the same field raises a clarion call to scholars and academics to engage and grapple with theology and faith in far more meaningful ways, which this study has aimed to do. In philosophy, Martin Buber's work on I-Thou encounters is foundational to Chapter Two and the spirit of this entire study, and Henri Lefebvre's work on the production of space was helpful in burnishing the ideas in Chapter Four. Lastly, the writings and work of various Latter-day Saint scholars, ecclesiastical leaders and scriptures have also helped elucidate this study throughout.

Though a niche study, this work has clearly required frames and ways of thinking from multiple disciplines to truly elucidate the transformative experience of participants. This is not surprising. Whilst clearly theatrical performances, the pageants are large-scale, large-canvas events, intimately connected to issues and questions surrounding identity, religiosity, faith, place, history, memory, community, family, heritage, culture, sacred stories, sacred rituals and sacred places, the dead, embodied theology, supererogation, futurity and lineage. It is no surprise then that performance and theatre studies alone do not offer all the tools to grapple with these productions. Moreover, as discussed in the

introduction, performance and theatre studies, influenced by anthropology, can at times be inclined in their present practices to unwittingly destroy that which is religious about religion. While the main seams within this study then have been taken from performance and theatre studies, it has required a myriad number of other seams to truly reveal the transformative efficacy of these events.

Furthermore, my bilingualism as insider/outsider cast member, director, writer, community member, believer, theatre scholar and academic has helped reveal what may have otherwise been missed in seeking to understand the transformative efficacy of these performances. My range of roles within these productions, coupled with a wide range of fields of study, has created a large enough canvas, I trust, to look at and understand more fully such large and complex events.

These various fields of study have not operated in silos within this work; rather the thinking of performance studies scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, philosophers, theologians and cultural and literary critics have coalesced, burnished one another and been developed, in and with and through the stories of participants, to create new frames for understanding the transformative efficacy of performance. These frames, developed herein, can be thought of as the how of this study; how such transformation, or the 'metamorphic what', occurs.

### **How – symbiotic efficacy, circular chains of memory & faithscape**

The remarkable transformation participants experience in these pageants has been revealed in this study to be intimately connected to their relations with others: their relations with the living in Chapter Two, between the living and the dead in Chapter Three, and the living, the dead and the landscape in Chapter

Four. Within these three chapters, key concepts of how such transformation occurs is revealed: namely symbiotic efficacy in Chapter Two, the re-choreographing of religious chains of memory into circular chains in Chapter Three with accompanying circular time, and faithscape in Chapter Four.

In symbiotic efficacy, I furthered Jon McKenzie's work on models of transformative practice within performance studies and proposed a way of being with one another that inscribes the inherently liminal spaces between us with I-Thou Buberian holiness. The notion, then, of symbiotic efficacy suggests a way of being, creating and growing together that does not find its transformative genesis in transgressive or resistant models of liminality. Instead, it posits that if there is any resistance to be made, it is against ourselves, and our own I-It reductionist tendencies towards the sacral other, most notably within our families. Such symbiotic efficacy expands the discourse on the transformative potential of liminal modalities of theatrical and performance practices. It also suggests, crucially, that for a performance to have transformative efficacy for its audience, the actors and crew need to have experienced a profound transformative journey, individually, together, and only then can they ultimately, and reciprocally, have that with the audience themselves. Symbiotic efficacy, then, expands I-Thou holiness to how the cast and crew think about and perceive the audience.

The second 'how' that emerged in this study was the re-choreographing of the chains of religious memory, as discussed in Chapter Three, from linear chains to circular chains, exploring a spatial re-structuring of Hervieu-Léger's foundational work in this area. If her findings help us perceive of religion as a chain of memory, then through performance studies and its inherent engagement with spatial considerations, we can start to ask questions

regarding the shape of that chain of memory. Whilst it may initially seem an intangible domain – the shape of chains of religious memories - the point is, that when religious memories are staged, they do take shape - they are embodied memories. And embodied memories live and move and have their being in and through effigy (as in Roach's verb). When chains of religious memory are embodied on stage, their shape emerges and that shape both reveals and reinforces central tenets of the religious faith being staged. In these two performances, the shape of the chain of religious memory for Latter-day Saints has been revealed to be circular, informed by Zion theology and temple rituals, as embodied on stage in various ways, including dances. Were other religions to embody their chains of religious memory on stage, the shape of their chains may emerge as quite different, or may indeed emerge as circular also; that is a question for a different comparative study.

Building on Hervieu-Léger's work within the sociology of religion, these ideas offer performance studies methodologies for thinking about how we learn about, internalise, articulate and strengthen religious faith. In other words, we come to understand that theatrical performances can strengthen religious faith by revealing and reinforcing the shape, through embodiment, of the chains of religious memory. If chains of memory are central to religious survival, in revealing the shape of them through embodiment on stage, then the central theological tenants of those memories can be more fully revealed. Furthermore, when a shape to those chains of memory emerges, there is a tangible fleshiness to what can otherwise be incorporeal. Such fleshiness in this study reveals Latter-day Saint chains of religious memory which work in circles, revealing and reinforcing the central tenant and doctrine of the circular eternal family, experienced through effigy. Through such effigy, the doctrine and

theology, the history and the hopes, the stories, the lineage, time, the mythos – all these strands and more which make the chains of religious memory are shown to be circular within the Latter-day Saint imagination. Is it any wonder, then, that Michael's nightly encounter of symbiotic efficacy was metaphorically a great warm hug – that most fleshy of circular encounters? Without stretching his metaphor too far, if Hervieu-Léger's chains of religious memory are circular for Latter-day Saints, then Michael's circular embrace becomes a metaphor for the focus of this entire study – circular, reciprocal warmth and love between audience, cast, crew, the represented absent/present dead, and the landscape.

The landscape within Chapter Four emerges as the third vital how for the transformative what of this study. That chapter reveals a contribution to the current discourse on site-specific work in performance scholarship through bringing and building upon Ingold's anthropological work on taskscape and Singh's work on faithscape. Faithscape enables us to see the co-creative role of faith in shaping the landscape-story of site-specific performance locations. For the specific theatrical plays studied here, the faithscape within the landscape is a vital frame for helping to understand how these performances are so transformative, as the faith of participants is burnished anew through engagement with the faith of former inhabitants as shapers of the land.

However, I would suggest that faithscape could also be a very beneficial frame for elucidating multiple other site-specific works more fully. For example, I have watched various performances in the bombed remains of Coventry Cathedral. I remember the performances less than the roofless remains of those graceful walls and windows, as I watched plays beneath a world that is worlding. Whilst I did not have the words for it at that time, faithscape was deeply at work here, as the faith of previous generations of Christian believers co-created with me, in



and through the host of the remains of Coventry Cathedral – that vital space for worship, in Henri Lefebvre's understanding. Faithscape, then, gives us eyes to see more clearly just how much faith has shaped the landscape, and how the landscape has shaped faith. This symbiotic relationship is both a part of discrete theatrical performances, and also in the durational performance that is our daily lives, as Schechner and Carlson remind us.

Faithscape also suggests, by bringing the work of archaeologist Andrew Jones into the performance studies discourse, that our relationship with site-specific locations can be distributed. This suggests that our encounter with Pearson's host at site-specific performances can be distributed to other non-somatic things, and is not as simple as an encounter with the present site only. As Chapter Four continued, I used these braided ideas to consider a distributed faithscape for cast and audience at *The British Pageant* in the UK, incorporating the work of Grace Davie on vicarious religion in the process. If faithscape deepens our gaze, then, to reveal the religious faith materialized in the taskscape at our performance host, it also broadens our gaze, to see the canvas of faith in the landscape of our daily lives, and crucially bridges the two.

In this bridging, between the distributed faithscape and the local or immediate faithscape of the site-specific location, is a linkage to symbiotic efficacy and circular chains of religious memory. Andrew Jones was, after all, writing about memory when he argued that the material, object world is a form of distributed mind, wherein things carry and aid our remembrance in their non-somatic form. If one aspect of faithscape is its ability to traverse geographically and temporally, leading to the site-specific location being distributed, then there is a likeness in the similar traversing of symbiotic efficacy and circular chains of religious memory. The various 'hows' of participatory transformation in this

study traverse place, time, people, and the betwixt-between of the spiritual realm. In such traversing, there is increased blending and melding between people, place and things, which leads us to consider the where of this study.

### **Where – the *interbetweeness***

The loci of the transformative journeys are found in the liminal spheres and spaces between co-creative entities: the spaces between the living in Chapter Two, between the living and the dead in Chapter Three, and the living, the dead and the landscape in Chapter Four. Running throughout this study then is a thread that the spaces between is the where of transformative change, and in the spaces between, the circularity of co-creative love is inscribed. By this I mean a profound, co-creative reciprocity found in the liminal spaces betwixt-between organic, growing things: between givers of gifts and receivers; between ancestors and posterity; between people and landscape; between audience and cast; between directors, crew and cast; between fellow cast members; between the past with the present and with the future; between one's best self and one's pedestrian self; between believers throughout time and space; between immediate family members; between Zion now and Zion future; between a people and their sacred stories, memories and texts; between a people and their sacred spaces; between a people and their history-theology and accompanying rites; between a people and their visions; between local believers and centralised leadership; between a people and their miracles; between a people and their somatic history, and ultimately, the co-creative reciprocity found in the liminal space betwixt-between a people and their God. Such co-creative reciprocity within these liminal spaces helps us comprehend

that, whether in life or on stage – for the two blend and meld into one another - our performance is not our own.

Such seemingly immaterial happenings in these spaces between is not to denigrate or make obsolete the tangible role of things within the personal transformation; Olsen cautions us wisely against that within *In Defense of Things*, charting how anti-material academia can be when we ignore the vital and crucial role of material things in our experiences, whether pedestrian or otherwise. On the contrary, the stage, the costumes, the props, the rehearsal spaces, the tents and homes cast members sleep and live in, the food preparation, the cars that ferry families to and from rehearsals and performances, the pram that carries the goods to rehearsals – all of these things are essential for the creative endeavour, and have their own inherent purpose and existence (B. Olsen 121). In acknowledging that the spaces between are the geographic "where" of transformative participation, I do not mean to make the transformative experience of participants an immaterial event; things are crucial to their transformative encounter. Rather I am recognising that even with the vital role of things throughout this process, there is an inscribing occurring in the spaces between which is filled with a form of co-creative wonder, which is the blending, melding and dissolving of self into and with others - whether living or dead - and place, and through such dissolving finding oneself restored anew. The where matters in this sense, because the opposite of such dissolving is a physical, emotional, spiritual and temporal demarcation between participants; a barrier between the spiritual and the fleshy, the people and the place, the family members, cast, crew, directors, audience, the represented dead, the landscape, the Church and her people. Such firmness of boundaries stands in contrast to the transformative principles

of unity at the heart of Zion, which these pageants are a practice and performance of. In a sense, then, the where of participants' transformation is when the spaces between collapse, as Lisa put it in Chapter Three: "The Holy Ghost magnifies our offerings on stage and collapses years and lives into a timeless oneness." In symbiotic efficacy, in re-choreographing the chains of religious memory with the dead, and in faithscape, we offer ourselves fully into the spaces between us and the other, and are met in return from others, people and place, doing likewise. Those spaces between are the truly co-creative spaces of these theatrical endeavours. Theatrical performances here are created in and through people being created anew through unity. The where of such unification then is found in oneness – whether in the spaces between or the collapsing of those spaces between - such unity and oneness is central to the visceral and transformative joy participants experience.

Such joy, which participants often refer to, is one of the key fruits of such unity. It is a joy born of unity that surprises participants in its depth and intensity, catching them unawares. And just as chains of religious memory are re-choreographed into circular chains, so this remarkable joy, experienced through unification of the spaces between, can best be thought of as loving, co-creative circularity between people and people, and people and place. If Lewis Hyde and Margaret Atwood help us appreciate that gifts move in circles, as discussed in Chapter Two, so then do these pageants move in circles, as large-scale theatrical gift offerings. And if the where of their transformative impact is in the co-creative, reciprocal spaces between, then the when of these pageants is also circular, occurring in what I have termed circular time.

## **When – circular time**

Circular time is the *when* of participants' transformative experience, as discussed in Chapter Three. It is Godly time, the eternal now of no-time, in which linear, cyclic, theatrical and performative time collapse and a "timeless oneness" emerges for the cast, as Lisa expressed it. The re-choreographing of the religious chains of memory, through effigy, into circular chains is central to this emergence. It is inherently transformative time. One of its key markers is joy, born of co-creative love and unity between the living, the dead and the landscape. Circular time is furthermore inscribed into the faithscape through Latter-day Saint lenses that see God as being in the midst of all things; the landscape shot through with Godly traces and time.

## **Why – convergence in Christ**

If this study has been an attempt to unbraid and articulate the different strands of participants' transformation – from sacrifice, remembrance, symbiotic efficacy, effigy, faithscape, circular chains of religious memory and circular time, to name the most central – in actuality they are clearly all fully braided and interwoven in the experience of participation. In and through the hermeneutics of this study, the various strands and ideas about participants' transformation, converge. The when of transformation for example, in circular time, cannot be separated from the symbiotic efficacy between the living, and between the living and the dead. Or as further example, the faithscape within the site-specific location facilitates re-choreographing the chains of religious memory into circular chains, through performance. This study is replete with such convergence. The ultimate convergence of this study, however, is found in and through the theology and resurrected body of the Christ.

The image below (fig. 15) helps to visualise this convergence of transformation in and through the theology and body of Christ, as understood within Latter-day Saint belief.

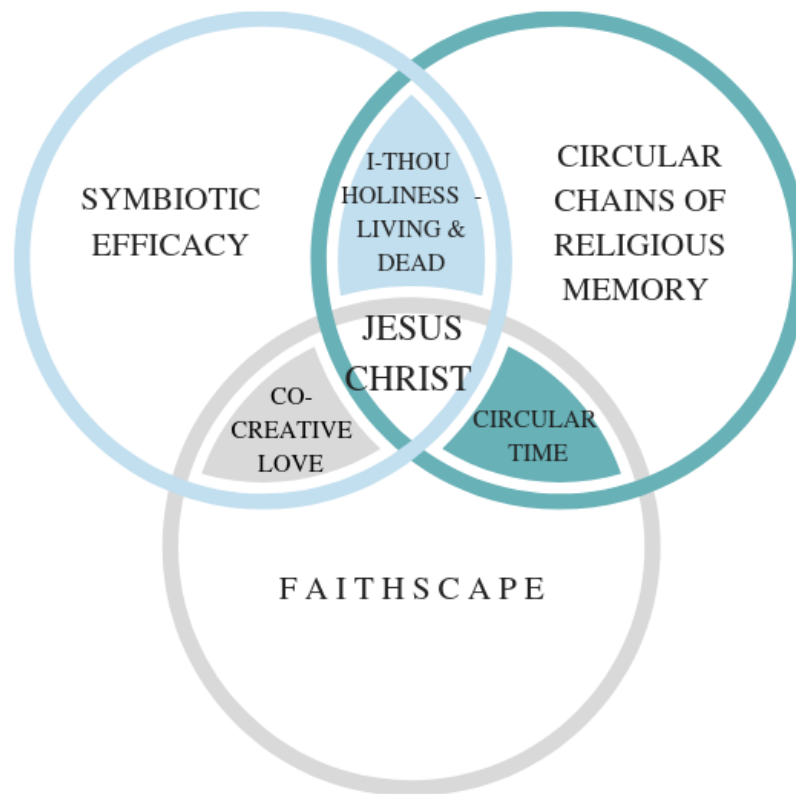


Fig. 15 Convergence in Christ diagram

It has been suggested throughout this study that Latter-day Saint theology about Jesus Christ has been central to the transformative process individuals have experienced. He is the 'why' of the 'metamorphic what' in this study. For participants, Christ is the eminent example of the co-creative I-Thou holiness which is central to symbiotic efficacy, as discussed in Chapter Two, through the biblical account of Christ playing with the children. Within Chapter Three, the re-choreographing of linear chains of religious memory into circular chains is ultimately only possible in and through Christ for Latter-day Saints. The temple, as the medium of the message for the eternal family, is efficacious space in and

through the soteriological mission and resurrection of Jesus Christ: the circular chains and accompanying circular time emerge in and through Him. The central mythos of the religion, the eternal, circular narrative of a return to God's presence, has Christ as its fulcrum. Lastly, faithscape is shot through with the Divine. This is through two main seams: the light of Jesus Christ being the creative power in the midst of all things for Latter-day Saints, as discussed in Chapter Four; and secondly, the faith in Christ of previous generations that the faithscape reveals - whether from the rebuilt Nauvoo Temple or the accompanying, framing trees. Indeed, the scripture quoted in the last chapter, that Christ is "in the midst of all things" rings true of the findings of this study also. Christ's example and teachings are central to symbiotic efficacy; his atoning mission and resurrection are central to circular chains of religious memory and circular time, and his light and power, and the faith of those who follow him, both create and reveal the faithscape. Such conclusions are not to reduce nor diminish the discussions that have emerged throughout this study. On the contrary, the convergence in Christ of these findings articulate a paradoxical simplicity and complexity to participants' transformative experiences. The simplicity lies in appreciating that the transformation, for participants, occurs through lives lived closer to Christ: as Sarah said of her family as shared in Chapter Two, no other experience in their lives had given them such an encounter with, "Christ's grace and light and power." What is it, about these two performances, in other words, that enable participants to come closer to Jesus Christ and be transformed in the process? The simplicity of the question belies the complexity of the answer, which is found through the pageants as theatrical palimpsests that facilitate the nexus between communal and individual sacral memory, ancestors, ritual, history, place, theology, faith,

labour, embodiment, community, supererogation, culture, joy, effigy, repetition, miracles, time, co-creativity, growth, love, story, meta-narratives, landscape, family, pilgrimage, worship, play, artefacts, sacrifice, remembrance, liminality, communitas, gifts, spiritual light, dance and home. This list is not exhaustive, yet reminds us of the complexity, size and knotty heterogeneousness of these performances. My attempts to grapple with this complexity have been articulated in the terms/ideas, and accompanying discussions on, symbiotic efficacy, circular chains of religious memories, circular time and faithscape. Yet the point is not these terms, in and of themselves. Rather, the point is that these two performances, staged in the USA and UK, are leading to profound levels of personal transformation for many participants by bringing them closer to Jesus Christ, as understood within the theology and faith of Latter-day Saints. The terms and ideas are helpful inasmuch as they elucidate how the breached, liminal spaces between participants and their God are healed. And these terms and ideas reveal that theatrical performances become profoundly metamorphic events for Latter-day Saints, bridging the gap between them and their God, through transforming their relationships with others, their relationships with their dead, and their relationship with the land.

In seeking to answer how this experience was transformative for participants, there was not space to explore if there were any parallels between these pageants and the medieval mystery plays, whether in purpose, process or production. Others have drawn initial comparisons between the Latter-day Saint pageants and the medieval mystery plays, (LoMonaco) but an in-depth exploration does not seem to have been done, and such a comparative study may teach us more about both. Furthermore, there was not full scope to explore where the locus for the dramatic conflict lies in these pageants. Whilst there



was an exploration of the choice to focus on the role of faith, over and above the sufferings experienced by the Saints in Nauvoo, a richer exploration of that question, the locus of the dramatic conflict, was not included and warrants further study. Lastly, had the scope of this study allowed I would have explored the directing process in greater depth. Whilst it was clearly touched upon in the discussion on symbiotic efficacy, especially in relation to Sarah's experience, as her seismic parental shift occurred from a directorial invitation, there was not scope to explore the directorial process in depth. This would prove interesting to understand in greater depth, for the directorial model that has emerged for me, whilst not in the least prescriptive, seems rooted in a form of theatrical arboriculture, if you will, focussed on creating an environment of growth. Elements of this have clearly been touched upon in this study, but there is more to explore, in relation to how the liminal gap between the actor and the character they are portraying is approached.

In the introduction to this study, I included insights from various scholars who questioned our ability within academia to grapple with religion without reducing it, or challenged the removal of religion as a crucial marker of identity from the discourse. This study has attempted to model how questions surrounding religious identity as they have played out in these productions can be explored through performance and theatre studies whilst avoiding reductionist tendencies. Such modelling requires, foundationally, a willingness to navigate the *betwixt-between* of religious faith, without subsuming it. This means, in Ingold's terminology, if the world is worlding, and the mound is mounding, then faith is faithing – faith alive, in the process of growing, changing and creating - which should be reflected in any given study, rather than faith fixed, pinned and splayed upon the academic canvas, dissected, without

revealing the thing itself. This study, in attempting to honour the richness of the surrounding academic discourse, whilst simultaneously honouring the richness of faith, faithing, offers a model, I hope, not only for theatre and performance studies, but also for the sociology of religion, in how not to destroy the religious element of religion, as Danièle Hervieu-Léger phrased it.

The tension remains, the desire to subsume that religious element, to dissect and explain it fully or explain it away. Perhaps I have not been fully immune to that in this study. Nonetheless, what has emerged for me as an insider-outsider is a far deeper and more nuanced appreciation of how faith for Latter-day Saints - their growing, changing and creating in and through the power, light and grace of Christ – is deeply transformed by these pageants. Embodiment of sacred stories in sacred locales informed by the performative methodologies of symbiotic efficacy, inscribes the liminal spaces between the living, the dead and the landscape in ways that brings participants into a transformative unity with Christ. Whilst such unity remains a little beyond us, the processes which can facilitate it are grounded in a theatrical materiality that is not. On the contrary, symbiotic efficacy, circular chains of religious memory, circular time and faithscape emerge out of the fleshiness of theatrical performance in tangible, transformative ways. Through these converging ideas, the living participants, the dead they represent and the landscape blend together into the unifying oneness suggested by circular time, and through such oneness, Zion now and Zion future are rehearsed: a people, living and dead, in transformative, unifying love, at one with each other and their God.

# Appendix



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### Proposal and Ethics Consent Form for Research Projects –

#### *The British Pageant 2013*

#### **Title of Research Project:**

An examination of how contemporary sacred re-enactments reveal Mormon faith and strengthen Mormon Identity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century

#### **Name and title of Researcher, and Details of Project:**

Alexandra Johns, PhD in Performance Practice, completion deadline March 2016.

This project aims to;

- examine how the staging of sacred LDS history reveals Mormon faith
- understand how such staging increases faith and strengthens Mormon identity, both in the short and long term
- explore what practices may be connected to this increase of faith

The interviews and use of questionnaires will take place between September – November 2013.

#### **Definition of invited participants:**

The invited participants are those who have been involved with re-enactments of sacred British Mormon history, through “The British Pageant: Truth Will Prevail”, (July 31<sup>st</sup> – Aug 10<sup>th</sup> 2013, Chorley, UK) whether as performers, crew, production side, or audience member.

#### **Data or information to be collected, and the use that will be made of it:**

Data will be collected in the following ways:

- Written responses to questionnaires, consisting of six questions
- Phone and Skype interviews lasting up to an hour
- Shorter phone and Skype interviews lasting about 10 – 15 minutes. Interviews will be audio recorded (with the written consent of the participants) and/ or written notes will be taken. Data will be used solely in the context of my research and writing for the dissertation and will not be given to or used by third parties. Participants will be named in full and cited within the writing (they though may choose to have their name changed or to be anonymous).

**How will the information supplied by participants be stored?**

The materials collected will be stored on my personal computer and backed up on an external hard drive.

**Contact for further questions:**

Alexandra Johns

*Personal address, phone number and email removed for Data Protection purposes*

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**Contact in the case of complaint or unsatisfactory response from the above named:**

Dr Zoë Boughton  
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**Consent:**

I voluntarily agree to participate, and agree to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewer.

*Note:* Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Printed name of participant: .....

Signature of participant: .....

Preferred contact - email or telephone: .....

Signature of researcher: .....

***One signed copy to be retained by the researcher, and one by the participant.***

## **Proposal and Ethics Consent Form for Research Projects –**

### ***The Nauvoo Pageant 2015***

#### **Title of Research Project:**

"When you're here, we are here also". An examination of how contemporary sacred re-enactments reveal Mormon faith and strengthen Mormon Identity in the 21st century.

#### **Name and title of Researcher, and Details of Project:**

Alexandra Mackenzie Johns, PhD student, Drama Dept

#### **This project aims to:**

Understand participants experience in re-enactments of sacred Mormon events in relation to:

- connection to the past
- community
- revealing faith

The interviews will take place in July 2015

#### **Definition of invited participants:**

Twenty selected families from a cast of about 500 will be invited to participate. The families will be performing in the Nauvoo and British Pageants in July 2015, outdoor theatrical presentations staged in Nauvoo, Illinois, USA by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS or Mormon).

Participants under 18 will be in some of the families and will also be interviewed alongside their parent/ guardian who is also being interviewed and with consent from that parent/ guardian. Feedback from participants under 18 is sought to provide a representative sample of age ranges and to assist with understanding the experiential effects of performance on those of a younger age.

#### **Data or information to be collected, and the use that will be made of it:**

In all cases, I will ask for respondents' name, age and sex.

Information gathered here will be used solely in the context of this research project and will not be given to or used by third parties. Participants can be given alternative names within the writing if they so choose.

- Through group interviews with other families, participants will be invited to talk about their experience at the end of the two-week rehearsal/performance process. All responses will be audio recorded and later transcribed.

Written consent will be obtained at the start of the two-week process in July

**How will the information supplied by participants be stored?**

The material collected will be stored on my personal computer and backed up on my external hard drive.

**Contact for further questions:**

Alexandra Mackenzie Johns

*Personal address, phone number and email removed for Data Protection purposes*

**Contact in the case of complaint or unsatisfactory response from the above named:**

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 Ethics Officer, College of Humanities  
 University of Exeter  
 Department of Modern Languages  
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 The Queen’s Drive  
 EXETER EX4 4QH, UK  
 Tel: +44 (0) 1392 724209

**Consent:**

I voluntarily agree to participate, and agree to the use of my data for the purposes specified above. I can withdraw consent at any time by contacting the interviewer.

*Note:* Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.

Printed name of participant: .....

Signature of participant: .....

Preferred contact - email or telephone: .....

Signature of researcher: .....

***One signed copy to be retained by the researcher, and one by the participant.***

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**Questions:**

Please answer in whatever format suits you best – a few words, bullet points or full paragraphs, skipping over some if you do not choose to answer those, etc. Basically please answer it whatever manner suits you best, including an audio recording if you prefer to typed responses.

- 1) Describe the motivating factors for you to seek to be involved with this experience, or watch it as an audience member.
- 2) What has been the meaning of actually participating in this event and process for you, as audience member, on stage, as crew, or production team?
- 3) Describe your feelings towards those whose stories you have portrayed or seen portrayed?
- 4) Has this experience connected you to what it means to you to be a Mormon today, or understand the Mormon faith if you are not LDS?
- 5) How have you understood your purpose in participation, whether as cast or audience member? Do you feel you have achieved that?
- 6) Any other stories or experiences you would like to share in relation to your participation?

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