and speculations add nothing of substance, as Ashe almost admits in his conclusion (pp. 274-278).

Betty Meggers's treatment of Asiatic influences on the major American cultures of early times is disappointing, perhaps because of its brevity. Had she treated the *Valdivia* (Ecuador) and *Jomon* (Japan) ceramic similarities more carefully, while attempting to meet some of the cogent objections which archaeologists have raised about her comparison, the paper would have rested on sounder ground. The few artistic and architectural motifs she adduces in favor of contacts between Mesoamerica and East Asia are not set in context sufficiently to persuade many culture specialists of their significance.

The Mormon position is referred to twice. Ashe's introduction alludes briefly to Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon but begs off fuller consideration since "the nature of the prophet's experience is outside our present scope." Then Heyerdahl observes in passing that "religious sects," including the Mormons, have made "mystical claims" which have not furthered "the Diffusionist cause."

If this book can be seen by LDS readers, as Ashe intended it, as an opening up of the problem of "the quest for America" for scientific examination, they will profit from reading it. Unfortunately the predispositions of most such readers, reinforced by the manner in which parts of the volume are written and illustrated, is likely to lead them to conclude that the issues are all settled. The book is so handsome that it is too bad it proves to have little enduring value.

SAMUEL W. TAYLOR. *Nightfall at Nauvoo.* New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971. 403 pp. $8.95.

(Reviewed by Neal E. Lambert, associate professor of English at Brigham Young University. Dr. Lambert has published articles on Mormons and Western literature in *BYU Studies, Utah Historical Quarterly, South Dakota Review, Western American Literature,* and *American West.*)

In this latest of several books based on the Mormon experience, Samuel Taylor has perhaps aspired higher than in any of his previous efforts. His purpose is to tell the unique

story of Nauvoo, Illinois—how it "started from scratch, quickly became the largest city in Illinois—about four times the size of Chicago—and then was abandoned as the population moved out and headed across the plains toward the Salt Lake Valley." It is a story the outline of which most of us know. But Mr. Taylor brings a special purpose to his effort. His intent is to transcend the limits of what he calls "nit-picking detail" to get at and render the significant human experiences of those involved in this epoch of American history:

> The historian is concerned with fact—*who, what, where, when, how.* A writer has to know *why.* A profound difference of method is in perspective. The historian's viewpoint is like that of the gooneybird, which flies backwards because it doesn't care where it's going but only where it's been. He interprets events at Nauvoo in light of what subsequently happened. As a writer I couldn't look ahead, any more than the people I met on the streets of Nauvoo could forsee the future, not a month, not a day, or an hour. I couldn't judge events any more than they could by what hadn't yet happened. I wasn't looking back at Nauvoo; I was there. . . . My research was not for proof or for fact, but for essential truth . . . and this is what I prize above all.

That is high literary purpose, for certainly the "truth" of that episode would be a moving tale of endurance, sacrifice, pity, comedy, and tragedy, a tale which "facts" only imply. Regardless of one' religious persuasion or belief, the story of Nauvoo is in every respect a subject worthy of the high serious· This is high literary purpose, for certainly the "truth" of ness of the greatest art.

But, however high and serious Mr. Taylor's intent, the book is a disappointment. If one opens *Nightfall at Nauvoo* expecting "the essence of an epic saga" he finds instead melodramatic situations, stereotyped characters, and the worn style more characteristic of slick magazines than significant writing. Consider for instance an episode at one of the council meetings following the death of Joseph Smith:

> Brigham called upon his chief of police to make a report. Hosea Stout, raw-boned, cadaverous, with burning eyes, said that he had organized a spy ring to go into all parts of the surrounding country to watch the movements of the mob and report their acts. Anti-Mormon sentiment was rising to fever pitch, and violence could be expected any time. . . .

> Lowering his voice, Hosea Stout announced an appalling fact: Tower had discovered that the enemy had its own spies in Nauvoo—and some of them had infiltrated into Hosea's own guard.
>
> At this intelligence, the men in the room felt for their guns, and each man turned to look at his neighbors. It was entirely possible, Hosea said, that in this very room was a double agent, a spy for the Gentiles. As he said this, Bernhisel fancied that Hosea's burning eyes rested on Bishop George Miller. There was bad blood between the two.

This is not the stuff of serious, significant writing but the clichéd mannerisms of melodrama. The reader of pulp Westerns would find the scene familiar.

But, we remind ourselves, Stout and Brigham and the others are historical people. This really happened. These should not be cardboard figures but real human beings, significant men involved in significant human situations. And so we read with regret that such significance could not have been a part of the writing itself, part of the book. In real life, Hosea Stout's eyes may well have been impressive, especially when we think about what those eyes must have looked upon. But "burning" is too worn to help us as readers sense what impressions those eyes made, and, if it is too worn for one to use, it is even more so when it is used twice in the same scene. I don't mean to quibble over one choice in a book of 120,000 words. But again and again the author seems satisfied to be stylistically ordinary if not hackneyed. When we are told that Noah Rogers's hair is "shot with gray" and then turn two pages and read that John C. Bennett's black hair was "shot with gray" we must wonder how much artistic effort has been devoted to rendering the appearances of these people, to say nothing of the significance of the events in their lives.

And this, finally, is the biggest disappointment. The figures themselves, whom even their severest critics call men of significance, seldom come alive on the pages of the book, and when they do it is only to demonstrate a pettiness that explains nothing of their significance. Sidney Rigdon, for instance, is reduced to a scheming manipulator, clipping newspapers and hiding evidence against Mormonism "as protection and insurance for himself" should he ever be cast out. The complex, perhaps tragic, John C. Bennett is a village dandy,

"slight and debonair, at once the admiration and scandal of Nauvoo, enormously popular, intensely hated by some, whispered about by everyone, and repugnant to thte Twelve." Willard Richards is a figure devoid of dignity, a "very fat man . . . subject to many ills of the flesh." As he accompanies Joseph Smith to Carthage, his thoughts are more given to the discomfort of his indigestion and his longing for his forbidden pipe than they are to the fate of his Prophet. And Joseph Smith himself, a unique figure in American history and the center of the whole story, is less a wonder or even an enigma than he is a conglomeration of stereotypes:

> Joseph's habit of mixing humor with spirituality, of combining physical contests with divine revelation, endeared him to his people but was at times unsettling to strangers and unbelievers. A big and vital man, full of the juice of life, he was a far cry from the popular concept of an ascetic and bloodless prophet. Joseph loved physical activity, wrestling, running, jumping, pulling stakes; he had overcompensated for the lame leg. He had a hearty appetite, and an eye for a pretty girl.

None of this brings us very far in understanding the deep currents of human feeling that were the ebb and flow in Joseph Smith or in the history of Nauvoo.

Indeed, there is little, if anything, in the book which explains the vitality of the people of Nauvoo. One looks in vain for the viable faith which sustains any institution. The Nauvoo Temple, for instance, is described as a rather poorly executed make-work project whose floor and font are rotten. However provable such facts may be, they do not reflect what the temple must have been to the people of Nauvoo, who fought to finish it while abandoning their own homes.

In *Nightfall at Nauvoo* polygamy is an institution sustained not by devotion and sacrifice, but by lechery and adultery:

> A notable case was that of Porter Rockwell, who at gunpoint abducted the wife of Amos Davis, a tavern owner and captain of the Legion. The gun was for the husband's benefit, not the wife's, for Mrs. Davis was entirely willing. Rumor had it that this attractive cupcake was given to Port by Brigham Young as a reward for Rockwell's having avenged the blood of the prophet by killing Frank Worrell, who'd been chief guard at Carthage jail.

Although this particular situation is not technically polygamous, the episode is used in the book to describe the "current attitude."

We are introduced to but one man of absolute devotion, Milo White, who "somehow epitomized the indestructability of Mormonism." But the faith of Milo White is patently ridiculous. He encounters John C. Bennett as that dandy is leaving the local house of prostitution. Bennett explains his presence by saying he had been preaching to the "soiled doves," and White believes him! "Milo's broad face was alight with devotion. He declared that it was men like Bennett who sustained his faith in the gospel, and gave him strength to meet trials and tribulations." So much for the faith of the people of Nauvoo.

The book may well be in fact historically accurate. The extensive bibliography at the end is evidently supplied to suggest as much. I leave it to others more qualified to comment on the history. It is the significance of the facts as they function in the book itself that is of concern here. For facts, real or imagined, have only one purpose in any work of literature, to define and illuminate something important about a man. If they do this, then they have a rightful place in the story. But having facts function this way is not a quality of the facts themselves. It depends on the insight and the skill of the writer. As a good critic once said, "Some writers cannot make falling off a thousand foot cliff important; Henry James could make taking off a glove important." so our concern is no more with the "secret history" of Nauvoo than it is with the "official history" of Nauvoo. Our concern is the motive forces that built that city and then moved it, wholesale into the American desert. Pettiness, ineptness, delusion, and lust couldn't do that.

Without question, Mr. Taylor is capable of good writing. He has done so before. But if one looks in *Nightfall at Nauvoo* for the endurance and dignity and faith that is rendered so beautifully in *Family Kingdom,* one looks in vain.