

Memo

To: Dr. Karen C. Holt

From: Toben S. Racicot

Date: October 9, 2014

SUBJECT: Research Proposal “ Explicit Content and Mormon Written Fiction”

PURPOSE

In this paper I examine the reason why certain Mormon authors avoid including certain mature content in their writing while other LDS authors include things like language or sexuality. The difference between the two parties will be identified and examined. I want to explore why some Mormon writers follow church standards in writing and others do not. This paper will allow readers of those authors to understand more as to why choices of content are made. It deals with personal censorship and not censorship based on the part of the industry. I will add my perspective to this topic with my own opinions about how certain content aids the verisimilitude of the fiction. I want to understand both sides of the argument before I present it.

What I discover will aid readers and writers to understand the impact that one’s faith and religion have on works of fiction. This question of limiting content will also look into the specific genres that these writers stick to. For example, Orson Scott Card is known for science fiction while Brandon Sanderson is known for fantasy. Does the genre the writer prefers determine the content that they include? Other questions that I address are:

- Why do some Mormon authors avoid content and others don’t? (Oppenheimer.)
- How do you define what is explicit and sensational? (Card.)
- To what extent do LDS authors put their religion or faith in their writing? (Sanderson.)
- How does that measure the credibility of the author whether they have to lower their standards or not? What reality are they trying to portray? (Lund.)
- If this content changes across genre? (Stevens.)

The answers to these will reveal why LDS writers do and do not include certain content in their works and help readers to determine which fiction is best suited for them depending on their personal beliefs.

BACKGROUND

Mormon authors have recently come to greater fame than in previous years with novels such as the *Twilight* series, *Ender's Game*, and *The Maze Runner* series. Although the writers of these novels are practicing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, some do not hold back when it comes to including content and others are more careful about the things they write about. The reason why I want to research into this difference is because I feel like limiting that content actually takes away from the reality of the novels. For example, when dealing with a group of teenage boys, author of *The Maze Runner*, James Dashner, creates alternative profanities rather than using the real world counterparts such as, "shuck" and "clunk." On the other hand, Orson Scott Card uses profanity, even though his book is set in the future.

SIGNIFICANCE

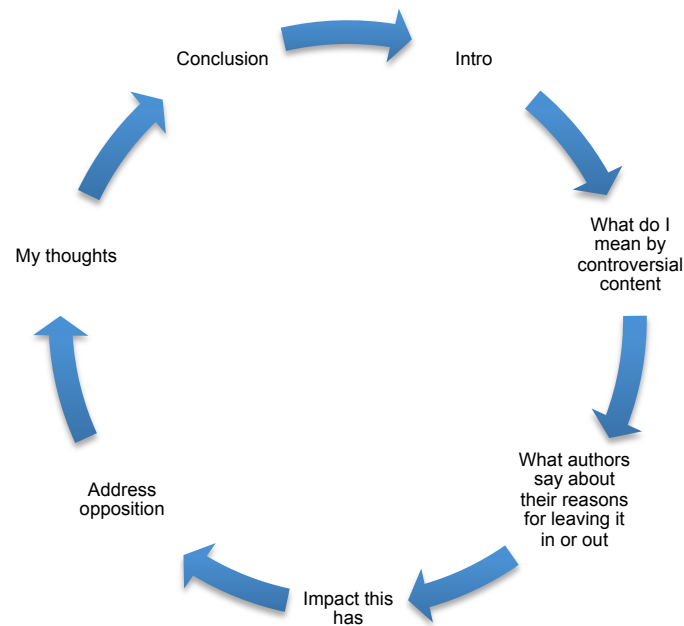
The significance this paper has is to demonstrate the role that religion has in writer's lives. I don't mean that Mormons should only write stories about Mormons but rather how does their faith and religion influence the subject matter of their writing. This research will benefit the readers of those authors. I have always wondered why a faithful Mormon, like Orson Scott Card who has lost jobs because of his desire to stand for what he believes, writes adult content in his novels. Others who wonder similar things about LDS writers will understand the reasons why these choices are made. Therefore, anyone who either does not want or does want such content included will understand the feelings of the authors on the subject.

DESCRIPTION

Much of the research I perform is through secondary sources. I use interviews of writers, Orson Scott Card, Brandon Sanderson and Gerald Lund for example, performed by other LDS members. Articles written about LDS authors and their writing will also be used. Those have been found on the Mormon Artist website and Academic Search Premier. For primary sources I will perform interviews with professors who read literature written by LDS authors to hear their thoughts about including or excluding certain content.

OUTLINE

Thesis: Mormon authors avoid the use of explicit content in their work to appeal to their target audience and to keep in line with the standards of the Church.



ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Card, Orson Scott, "A Mormon Writer Looks at the Problem of Evil in Fiction" *Nauvoo.com*, 13 Mar. 1980. Web. 8 Oct. 2014.

- Orson explains how evil is portrayed in fiction and how it should be when dealing with certain audiences.

Collings, Michael, *In the Image of God: Theme Characterization, and Landscape in the Fiction of Orson Scott Card*. Westport CN: Greenwood, 1990. Print.

- Discusses the ways that Card uses religion and God in his writings.

Du Plessis, Jacqueline. "Gerald Lund." *Mormon Artist*, April 2011. Web. 8 Oct. 2014.

- Gerald Lund discusses his experience as a writer.

Harrell, Jack. "Human Conflict and the Mormon Writer." *Jackharrell.net*. Web. 9 Oct. 2014

- Harrell discusses his view of why Mormon authors write the way and the things that they do.

Jepson, Eric. "Orson Scott Card." *Mormon Artist*, Dec 2010, Web. 2 Oct. 2014.

- Science fiction writer describes his process and inspiration.

Morris, Nathan. "Brandon Sanderson." *Mormon Artist*, March 2009. Web. 8 Oct. 2014.

- Brandon Sanderson explains his joys of writing and how his faith impacts his works.

Olasky, Marvin. "Interview with Flannery O'Connor." *World Magazine*, 28 Sept. 2007. Web. 9 Oct.

2014

- Flannery talks about her life, the success she has had as a writer, and what has influenced her.

Oppenheimer, Mark. "Mormons Offer Cautionary Lesson on Sunny Outlook vs. Literary Greatness."

The New York Times, 12 Nov. 2013. Web. 2 Oct. 2014.

- Article discussing the trend of Mormon authors.

Stevens, Abby. "Why Mormon Writers Thrive in the Fiction Genres, According to a New York Times

Columnist." *Deseret News*, 13 Nov 2013. Web. 2 Oct. 2014.

- Addresses the previous article from a Mormon perspective.

Young, Michael. "Tracy Hickman." Interview. *Mormon Artist*, Dec. 2010. Web. 8 Oct. 2014

- Tracy Hickman recounts how she began writing and how her current career is progressing.

Jettboy. "Why I Don't Read Mormon Fiction." *Millennial Star*, 22 Feb. 2012. Web. 8 Oct. 2014

- Blogger "jettboy" recounts the reasons why Mormon fiction does not appeal to him.

SCHEDULE

Date	Time	Activity	Place
8 October 2014	7:45 am	Research Proposal- peer review and submission	In class
8 October 2014	1-2 pm	Begin reading sources	Library - second floor
10 October 2014	1-2 pm	Read sources	Library – second floor
11 October 2014	5:00-5:30 pm	Schedule interviews with students	Home
11 October 2014	9:00-10:00 pm	Read through sources	Home
13 October 2014	9:00-10:00 pm	Create Outline	Home
14 October 2014 (tentative)	8-9 am (tentative)	Interview- Brother Dietz	Rigby 218
15 October 2014 (tentative)	TBD	Interview- Staff	TBD
16 October 2014	5:00-6:00 pm	Review interview notes and add to citations; create title page and write intro	Home (Idaho Falls)
17 October 2014	8:00-10:00 pm	Write body paragraphs for first section (practice)	Library- second floor and Home
18 October 2014	9:00-10:00 pm	Write body paragraphs for second section	Library- second floor and Home
19 October 2014	8:00-10:00 pm	Write body paragraphs for third section and conclusion	Library- second floor and Home
24 October 2014	7:45 am	Electronic Draft - DUE	In class
24-5 October 2014	3:00-6:00 pm	Revisions	McKay First Floor
27 October 2014	7:45 am	Research paper DUE	

REQUEST FOR APPROVAL

This paper should be approved because in this school which houses many current and future writers there is a benefit to knowing how successful writers manage their beliefs in their writing.