

she combs it "clipped and brittle and drug-dead/ Into a basket/ In the bathroom/ Of my mother's home," and she joins her mother "in mourning."

The worst is yet to come. Her life waits on a tube that she compares to "Shiva, Preserver and Destroyer/ In one essence" where she must "trust the drop-lets/ That carry death/ Into my waiting vein/ To carry life instead" (p. 87). Perhaps writing these poems helped Meg find the final courage to orchestrate her death.

Meg didn't want to die. "God, God!

Not yet!" she cried. "Keep me longer/ From the darkness of those beds. . . . Let me be here to see/ With open eyes/ And well-loved people/ Just a call away" (p. 90). I mourn the loss of one who still had many poems to write, but I can rejoice in a life well-shared. I hear her calling to the autumn leaves, "Hold on! Hold on!" (p. 91) She sets her feet "Fearful but willing/ As the blind curves loom,/ Singing a prayer/ For a completed year. . ." (p. 97).

Margaret Rampton Munk. She showed me how to die. She showed me how to live.

## Women Coping

*Sideways to the Sun* by Linda Sillitoe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 255 pp., \$7.95.

Reviewed by Gary Topping, curator of manuscripts at the Utah State Historical Society.

WHAT HAPPENS when a Mormon housewife, faithful to husband and church, encounters the dark side of human experience including adultery, child molestation, spouse abandonment, and divorce? In this fine first novel, Linda Sillitoe answers that question with a courage and honesty that is most welcome in Mormon literature.

She gives us the story of Megan Stevens, whose husband vanishes without warning or explanation, leaving her and their children to fend for themselves. Trying to cope with her bereavement and locate her husband, she draws strength from Kristen, a divorced woman in her ward, and from her own newly discovered inner resources. The novel contains no epiphanies, no sudden and magical solutions. Life simply deals rotten cards sometimes, Sillitoe is saying, and we have to play them as best we can, with all the patience, creativity, and good humor we can muster.

In working through her tribulation, Megan finds most of the expected sources

of support to be neutral at best. Her church is especially ambiguous; as a faithful married woman with children but no husband, she fits none of the Church's convenient categories, a fact that neither she nor the Church can immediately assimilate. The predictable Relief Society casseroles are as effective as aspirin in a cancer case, and other programs prove little better. Megan finds it helpful to establish a certain distance from the Church: she serves as a visiting teacher but attends only the church meetings that she expects will be personally useful. She discards her temple garments in a particularly memorable and significant passage, finding in the absence of their symbolic armor an opportunity to engage the world directly in a way she has not done before. Megan never leaves her church, but she finds that in coping with experiences for which it neither prepared her nor offers satisfying answers, she has to back away from it and find her own solutions.

Megan does not automatically flee to another man, or to men in general, for support. She engages in a mildly romantic relationship with another man, but he offers few practical solutions to either the day-to-day necessities of living or her recent emotional trauma. When her daughter is recruited as a possible plural wife by her seminary teacher, Megan realizes it is a

matter properly left to the priesthood but instead takes matters into her own hands and achieves the satisfaction of dealing with the problem herself.

Mormon women have their own heritage and their own problems not shared by women elsewhere. The women's movement applies to them in unique ways. In coping with their problems, they need to develop their own thinkers, their own history, and their own literature. Mormon feminism is the mainspring of *Sideways to the Sun*, and Mormon women trying to find a new identity ought to find much interest and inspiration in it.

Sillitoe's literary power is so impressive that I sometimes wish she had sought a broader audience than the Mormon public to which this novel is directed and

to which it will be limited. Interpreting Mormon experience for a wider world is, as Wallace Stegner has observed, a formidable task, since the writer is constantly obligated to explain the culture about which he or she is writing — an obligation not imposed upon writers interpreting cultures with more widely recognized traditions. Sillitoe explains nothing; she assumes an understanding of Mormon theology, institutions, and folkways that only Mormon readers, or those who have lived in Mormon country or made a special study of it, will possess. She has, of course, the right to seek whatever audience she wishes, but writers of her sophistication emerge so rarely within Mormondom that I have to hope her future work will accept the greater challenge.

## Livre d'Artiste

*The Book of Abraham*. Printed and designed by Day Christensen, lithographs by Wulf Barsch (Pleasant Grove, Utah: Wormwood Press, 1985), 19 folios, \$950 unbound in a linen box; \$1450 full leather binding.

Reviewed by Lowell Durham, Jr., past president of Deseret Book Company and editor of the *Journal of Mormon History*.

ON FIRST PICKING UP *The Book of Abraham*, printed and designed by Day Christensen with hand-printed color lithographs by Wulf Barsch, I flinched, then looked over my shoulder to see if any of my children were near. My fear was that one of them might tear a page, spill Coke on it, lose it, or draw on page eleven with an orange crayon. Why publish such an expensive book? The answer is simple. It elevates the genre "book" to an art form.

For that reason, a review of this book cannot be a typical critical analysis of the text which ignores the design, production, and the art. Rather, it is the process of bookmaking as a whole that expresses itself in this, the "livre d'artiste." This symbiosis

of book and art is described by Constance W. Glenn: "Books recognized by this designation [livre d'artiste] are valued for their beauty and their rarity, and sell for prices that climb rapidly from a few hundred dollars to tens of thousands. They are usually handmade, published in limited editions, and represent either a close collaboration between artist and writer, or a sympathetic involvement — on the part of an artist — with historic literature or themes" (*Architectural Digest*, May 1984, p. 62).

For me, there is a dimension far more important than rarity or value. It is that the "livre d'artiste" approaches what a book should be — a miracle. This edition of *The Book of Abraham* is as uniquely designed and solidly crafted as were the great books of antiquity such as the Gutenberg Bible. For example, the margin ratios are 2:3:4:6, starting with the gutter margin of each right-hand page and going clockwise around the page. The left page is the same counterclockwise. The body type adheres to Aristotle's "golden mean." A diagonal from the top gutter corner to