A Survey of Mormon Literary Criticism

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A SURVEY OF MORMON LITERARY CRITICISM

A Thesis
Presented to the
Department of English
Brigham Young University

In Partial Fulfillment
of Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Colin B. Douglas
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

From the earliest years of the restoration of the gospel and the Church of Jesus Christ, General Authorities, less official Church spokesmen, and Mormon students of the arts have remarked on the implications of the gospel for the creative arts, and a few have attempted systematically to derive or to create a Mormon philosophy and criticism of the arts, including literature. However, Mormon literary criticism is in its present condition still fragmentary and tentative and thus needs organization, winnowing, and development. The purpose of the following survey of representative critical statements—including some that were originally addressed more particularly to problems of music and the visual arts but that have bearing on problems of literature—is to present the principal questions that have been addressed by writers working explicitly from the doctrinal premises of Mormonism and the principal answers that have been offered to those questions, and thus to contribute to the task of organization.

For the most part only more extended and systematic attempts to develop principles of criticism are treated here. Although General Authorities, including President Brigham Young,¹ Joseph F.

Smith,\(^2\) Joseph Fielding Smith,\(^3\) David O. McKay,\(^4\) and Spencer W. Kimball\(^5\) have occasionally remarked on the moral effects and the teaching value of the arts, their remarks are brief and their positions on these matters are fully represented by virtually every writer treated in this thesis.

The representative statements here presented are treated first in essentially chronological order in order to demonstrate such historical development as has occurred. (This is not, however, a historical study as such, inasmuch as Mormon criticism has virtually no history in terms of development from one stage to another, as becomes evident in the discussions to follow; there is not even a sense of a dialogue or conversation among these critics, since virtually none of them acknowledges the work of any other, each speaking as if in a vacuum.) It has seemed advisable to organize this presentation for the most part according to individual authors in order to preserve the integrity of the more complex and comprehensive statements. The second chapter serves to summarize the ideas presented in a somewhat fragmented fashion in the first by organizing them more or less independently of their spokesmen according to questions and answers. Both approaches to the organization of Mormon literary


criticism—by author and by issue—should facilitate in some measure the tasks of winnowing and development.
Chapter 2

REPRESENTATIVE STATEMENTS

A. Elder Orson F. Whitney

The first extended statements concerning the place of literature within the framework of the restored gospel were made by Elder Orson F. Whitney, a member of the Council of the Twelve from 1906 until his death in 1931. Elder Whitney's views are set forth principally in the preface to his Poetical Writings,¹ the essay "Poets and Poetry"² (which appeared in Poetical Writings), the essay "Home Literature,"³ and a series of five essays, "Oratory, Poetry, and Prophecy."⁴ (It should be noted that although the first three of these pieces were written before Elder Whitney became an Apostle, he did not seem to modify any of his views after his ordination.)

¹ Poetical Writings of Orson F. Whitney (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1889). Further references to this preface will be cited in the text as Poetical Writings, with the page number.

² Ibid., pp. 154-68. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text as "Poets and Poetry," with the page number.

³ "Home Literature," The Contributor, 9 (1888), No. 8, 297-302. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text as "Home Literature," with the page number.

⁴ "Oratory, Poetry, and Prophecy," Improvement Era, 29 (1926), five parts as follows: part 1, No. 5, 401-04; part 2, No. 6, 530-33; part 3, No. 7, 628-31; part 4, No. 8, 714-16; part 5, No. 9, 857-60. Further references to parts of this series will be cited as "Oratory, Poetry, and Prophecy," with the part number and the page number.
Elder Whitney viewed the poet as a kind of prophet. He wrote in "Oratory, Poetry, and Prophecy," part 5, that "poesy is another name for prophecy" and then referred with approval to Carlyle as telling "us that the ancient word 'Vates' meant both prophet and poet" and as maintaining "that they are fundamentally the same, 'in this most important aspect especially, that they have penetrated both of them into the sacred mystery of the universe;--what Goethe calls the open secret * * * open to all, seen by almost none'' (p. 857).

In "Poets and Poetry" he quoted Josiah Guilbert Holland as saying that "verily the poets of the world are the prophets of humanity. They forever reach after and foresee the ultimate good. They are evermore building the Paradise that is to be, painting the Millenium that is to come, restoring the lost image of God in the human soul. When the world shall reach the poet's ideal, it will arrive at perfection, and much good will it do the world to measure itself by this ideal and struggle to lift the real to its lofty level" (pp. 163-64).

Elder Whitney went on to say in the same essay:

I am not prepared to admit--nor do I suppose Holland meant to say--that the poets of the world are its only prophets, or that they are prophets in the same sense and degree as the inspired oracles of sacred writ. But I do believe the gift of poesy and the gift of prophecy to be akin to each other; that both are of divine origin, and that they generally go hand in hand. Prophets are almost invariably poets; and poets, in many instances, have been remarkably prophetic. Of the former class attest the writings of David, Isaiah, Jeremiah and others--veritable prophets and veritable poets--who, in some of the grandest poetry ever sung, have indeed "built the Paradise that is to be, foretold the Millenium that is to come." Read the parables and sayings of the Savior, you who love poetry and desire to pluck some of its sweetest and most fragrant flowers:
"Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin, and yet I say unto you that even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these."

Can our language boast anything purer, tenderer, truer, and more beautiful? Jesus of Nazareth was a poet, no less than a prophet, of pre-eminent genius. (Pp. 164-65)

In "Oratory, Poetry, and Prophecy," part 5, Elder Whitney wrote that "when we have a poet of the highest order, we have a Prophet of the Most High, one standing next to God, and best able, therefore, to comprehend him and make known his purposes" (p. 859). So thoroughgoing was Elder Whitney in his identification of the "gift of poesy" with the gift of prophecy that in the preface to Poetical Writings he insisted that "all poetry is religious" and refused to call by the name "poetry" anything that is "irreligious, unchaste, unjust, unheroic, untrue in spirit" (pp. iv-v).

It should be kept in mind that the terms "prophet," "prophecy," and "gift of prophecy" are normally used in Mormon discourse with particular meanings that were not necessarily Carlyle's. Prophecy is normally understood in Mormonism as a gift of the Spirit, 5 that is, of the Holy Ghost. Joseph Smith taught that a prophet is a person who knows by personal revelation from the Holy Ghost that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. 6 That Whitney is using the word prophecy and related words in the particular sense of a gift of the Holy Ghost is suggested by the central importance of the Holy Ghost.

5 See Doctrine and Covenants 46:22.

in his theory of literature. Whitney declared, syncretically, it would seem, that "the Holy Ghost is the genius of 'Mormon' literature. Not Jupiter, nor Mars, Minerva, nor Mercury. No fabled gods and goddesses; no Mount Olympus; no 'sisters nine,' no 'blue-eyed maid of heaven'; no invoking of mythical muses that 'did never yet one mortal song inspire'" ("Home Literature," p. 300). Elder Whitney concluded in that essay that the inspiration of the Holy Ghost ought to be sought in order to create a distinctive Mormon literature:

Above all things, we must be original. . . . No pouring of new wine into old bottles. No patterning after the dead forms of antiquity. Our mission is diverse from all others; our literature must also be. The odes of Anacreon, the satires of Horace and Juvenal, the epics of Homer, Virgil, Dante and Milton; the sublime tragedies of Shakespeare [sic]; these are all excellent, all well enough in their way; but we must not attempt to copy them. They cannot be reproduced. We may read, we may gather sweets from all these flowers, but we must build our own hive and honeycomb after God's supreme design. (P. 300)

Elder Whitney's suggestion that the Holy Ghost will be the "muse" of Mormon literature should perhaps be understood in light of Joseph Smith's account of his conversation with President Martin Van Buren. 7 The Prophet recorded that President Van Buren asked "wherein we differed in our religion from the other religions of the day," and that he told the president, "in mode of baptism, and the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands." The Prophet observed: "We considered that all other considerations were contained

in the gift of the Holy Ghost." Although Joseph Smith certainly did not indicate a relevance of his remark for literature, his remark does invite conjecture concerning the full significance of Elder Whitney's connection of the Holy Ghost with literature. If the gift of the Holy Ghost is the peculiar possession of the Saints, it would seem plausible that the defining characteristics of a distinctively Mormon art will lie in the transmutation into art of the experiences made available to the Saints through the gift of the Holy Ghost, and of other human experience viewed by the light of the Holy Ghost; that among the defining questions of a distinctively Mormon criticism will be whether and how those transmutations occur in a given work and how a work is to be judged by the light of the Holy Ghost. As a matter of fact, as will be seen in subsequent discussions, such ideas have been recurring themes in Mormon discussion of the arts.

Also in "Home Literature," Elder Whitney elaborated on "our mission," on the distinctive calling of the Mormon writer, declaring that "it is by means of literature that much of this great work—the establishment of Zion will have to be accomplished; a literature of power and purity, worthy of such a work" (p. 208), and further that "our literature . . . , like all else with which we have to do, must be made subservient to the building up of Zion" (p. 299).

In attempting to define further the nature of what he called "poetry," Elder Whitney revealed himself to be essentially a typologist, in the sense of one who is preoccupied with objects as they symbolically represent things yet to come into being, or as they possess or exemplify qualities of a higher category. In his lengthiest statement on the subject, "Poets, Poetry, and Prophecy," part 5,
he asserted that "anything is poetic that stands for something greater than itself" (p. 857). He wrote further that "God has built his world, or his systems of worlds, upon symbols, the lesser suggesting and leading up to the greater, pointing the mind from earth to heaven, from man to God, from time to eternity. The poetic faculty recognizes this symbolism. Poesy holds the key to its interpretation" (p. 857).

The essay continues:

The greatest poem in existence is the Gospel of Christ. Adam's offering of the sacrificial lamb, in the similitude of the Lamb of God, who was to take away the sins of the world; the Hebrew Passover, with its wealth of prophetic symbolism, also pointing to the Lamb of God, the Great Deliverer of whom Moses, meekest of men, was typical; the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in which the broken bread and poured wine or water represent the body and blood of the world's Redeemer; the ordinance of baptism, instituted in the likeness of his burial and resurrection; all these are poems--poems in action and form, parts of the great Gospel Poem, whose author is God, even the Son of God. (Pp. 857-58)

And further on: "The Universe, composed of things great and small, the smaller symbolizing the greater, is one vast poem. Filled with types and foreshadowings, the seen and heard bearing witness of the unseen and unheard, it is a mighty prophecy, ever fulfilling and ever awaiting further fulfillment. To read this poem, to interpret this prophecy, requires a poet of the highest order" (p. 859).

The reader familiar with Emerson's essay "The Poet" will note some striking similarities between the language of that essay and that of Elder Whitney's writings. For instance, the last passage quoted from Elder Whitney is comparable to this passage from Emerson:

"Nature offers all her creatures to him [The poet] as a picture-language. . . . Things admit of being used as symbols because
nature is a symbol in the whole, and in every part."\(^8\) However, the similarity between Elder Whitney's thought and Emerson's should not be pressed too far. At least one important difference between them lies in their respective understandings of the relationship between poetic form and the "thought" that the poem communicates. Emerson said in his essay that "it is not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem,—a thought so passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing."\(^9\) Elder Whitney agreed that "the essence of poetry is in thought and sentiment, not rhythm and rhyme" and declared that "the commonest error made in relation to poetry is that it consists simply in verse-making." However, rather than viewing rhythm and rhyme as themselves integral to the expression of thought—as the "architecture of thought"—Elder Whitney viewed such devices as merely "beautiful means of embellishment," the "casket" within which "the jewel of thought" is enclosed (see Poetical Writings, pp. 5, 156). Such divergent views of the nature of poetry will obviously imply divergent approaches to the explication and evaluation of a poem. (For examples in Mormon discourse of the different understandings of a single poem to which these two conceptions can lead, see Robert K. Thomas's "Platonic" and


\(^9\) Ibid., p. 15.
"Aristotelian" treatments of Emerson's poem "Days" in Thomas and Bruce B. Clark's *Out of the Best Books*, volume I.\(^{10}\)

Although this summary of Elder Whitney's theory of literature may seem unduly brief, Elder Whitney himself had little more to say. His essays on the subject largely repeat the same ideas with virtually no further development. Most of those ideas are summarized concisely by Woodruff C. Thomson as follows:

> In sum, then, Whitney views the world as an idealistic, teleological creation. Man exists in the world to gain knowledge of it so that he can "progress" in accordance with the Divine scheme. Knowledge may be gained if the symbolic keys to the great allegory are rightly read. The true poet, therefore, has the function and obligation to instruct mankind in these highest truths. The vanities and sensualities of depraved, fallen man are beneath the level of his art, and in this art itself technique and expression are regarded as more or less separable from, and in any event, inferior to moral "message."\(^{11}\)

To Thomson's summary must be added the ideas that the poet, as a kind of prophet, may be inspired in his poetry by the Holy Ghost and that the Mormon artist has a significant contribution to make to the building up of Zion; that, in effect, artistic talent is subject to the law of consecration. As will become apparent in the following discussions of the ideas of other Mormon students of the arts, Elder Whitney's essays are significant for having first presented in anything approaching a unified form certain themes that have frequently recurred in Mormon esthetic discourse.

\(^{10}\) See *Out of the Best Books*, vol. I (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1964), pp. 7-11. (Excerpts from Thomas's essay are included as an appendix to this volume.)

B. Merrill Bradshaw

One of the more comprehensive and systematic attempts after Elder Whitney's to relate Mormon spiritual experience to art was that of Merrill Bradshaw, a Mormon composer, who first presented his views on the nature of Mormon art and on the critical standards implied by the gospel in 1961, in "The Articles of Faith--Composer's Commentary," followed over a period of fifteen years by "Reflections on the Nature of Mormon Art" and Spirit and Music: Letters to a Young Mormon Composer. Although his statements are primarily concerned with music, Bradshaw himself believes that they are applicable for the arts generally, including literature, and, as Elder Whitney's thinking was largely parallel to the Emersonian transcendentalism still in vogue in his day, Bradshaw's parallels the formalism dominant in criticism during the first half of this century.

In the first of the Letters, Bradshaw suggests that "the expressive values of music are not carried by the notes themselves but rather by the movement," and then defines music as "movement in sound when it embodies the inner gestures of the human spirit"

12 "The Articles of Faith--Composer's Commentary," Brigham Young University Studies, 3, Nos. 3 and 4 (1961), 73-85. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text as "The Articles of Faith" with the page number.

13 "Reflections on the Nature of Mormon Art," Brigham Young University Studies, 9, No. 1 (1968), 25-32. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text as "Nature of Mormon Art" with the page number.

14 Spirit and Music: Letters to a Young Mormon Composer (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Publications, 1976). Further references to this booklet will be cited in the text as Letters with the page number.
(Letters, pp. 1-2). He suggests further that other human activities, including dance, sculpture, literature, and prayer, may embody these gestures (Letters, p. 2). Bradshaw does not precisely explain the meaning of this metaphor of "gestures" of the human spirit, but in "The Articles of Faith" he speaks of art as the expression of emotion, and it may be conjectured that emotion is at least one of the things he means by "the inner gestures of the human spirit." "Prayer," he continues, "especially consists of the human spirit striving to express itself to God" and is thus described as "the motion of a hidden fire that trembles in the breast" (Letters, p. 2). Bradshaw suggests that, considered together, "the motion of a hidden fire" and 'expressive movement in sound' . . . make it easy to understand the D&C description: 'the song of the righteous is a prayer unto me'" (Letters, p. 2).

"Our task as composers," Bradshaw goes on to say, "is to find the 'hidden fire' or the expressive contours of our spiritual impulses and embody them in sound. . . . The process consists of relating your sensitivity for sound to your sensitivity for the spirit" (Letters, p. 2).

As Bradshaw uses the words "spirit" and "spiritual" here, he seems to be speaking only of the human spirit, and he does state in "Reflections" that "the inward nature of both prayer and the arts suggests that they are both basically human in their origin" (p. 28). However, he also relates the arts to the Spirit of God. He speaks, for instance, of "the parallel between artistic expression and 'bearing one's testimony'" ("Reflections," p. 28) and asserts that "just as the need for prayer may be motivated by the strivings of
the human spirit and the precise utterance of prayer inspired by the Holy Ghost, so may art be inspired; and the Mormon artist may properly seek the inspiration of the Spirit in his creative activities" ("Reflections," pp. 28-29). In one of the Letters he writes: "Be true to the Spirit... Let it dictate both style and content" (p. 18). In another of the Letters, he states that the "fundamental task" of the Mormon composer is "to find the Spirit of God and embody its expressive movement in your music so that performers who have the Spirit may give it life as they perform your music and listeners may be inspired with the love of eternal things" (p. 5) and that the greatness of works of art is to be measured by "the intensity with which they bring us face to face with the Spirit" (p. 4).

Although Bradshaw sees a possibility that art can be a kind of bearing of testimony, he sees those functions of art as being more than a "propaganda" function ("Reflections," p. 28). He observes that "the function of the arts in the Restored Church is suggested by [Doctrine and Covenants] Section 82, verse 14: 'For Zion must increase in beauty and in holiness; ... yea, verily I say unto you, Zion must arise and put on her beautiful garments'" ("Reflections," p. 28). Bradshaw observes that "significant here is the association between beauty and holiness," that "the idea that the arts as the embodiment of beauty can have a profound spiritual value is one most of us have instinctively recognized," and that "the suggestion that the arts might function parallel to the increasing of holiness in Zion seems to place the artist in a more acceptable relation to the activity of the Church than does the present commonly held idea that art serves only a propaganda function," for, he goes
on to say, "holiness is something that is achieved not through propa-
gandizing but through inspired effort towards perfection, which effort
is both encouraged and epitomized in the masterpieces of great art" 
("Reflections," p. 28). One of the tasks of the artist "is to inspire
them [his audience] with insights into eternal things" (Letters, p. 6).
It is here, ultimately, in the experiences of the Spirit and the
insight into eternal things that the Spirit gives, that Bradshaw
places the "Mormonness" of Mormon art. He advises young composers:
"To accomplish your task. . . . you must live so that you can feel
the movement of the Spirit in your heart. What you do in music will
always betray what you are. . . . Consequently you must become so
attuned to the eternal that you live in, for, and by the Spirit. . . .
Your 'Mormonness' must become the fundamental impetus of your creati-
vity. (Mormonness means your Mormon view of eternal things)"
(Letters, p. 6).

Bradshaw makes it clear that, in his opinion, letting the
Spirit "dictate both style and content" will not result in uniformity
of artistic creation. In "Reflections" he says: "I suspect neither
God nor the Church would want to make sincerity impossible by pre-
scribing what one should pray or sing or paint except in the most
ceremonial situations. Thus we are left to decide for ourselves
artistic principles that seem logical within our culture and consis-
tent with what we individually wish to express" (p. 28).

Commenting further on the matter of style in "Reflections,"
Bradshaw suggests that the Mormon artist has a special interest in
the styles of many eras and cultures. He observes that the Mormon
idea of the "dispensation," the belief that "history has been
punctuated with repeated heavenly affirmations of basic principles of action and belief," is a concept that "brings the Mormon artist into direct theological contact with several periods of world history not only in the developmental, evolutionary sense that the age to age chain of their thought has provided some of the roots of our system, but also in a nonevolutionary sense that affirms certain principles as unchanging and allows certain ideas to leapfrog over the various stages of cultural-historical development" (p. 29). Bradshaw believes that since the patriarchs and the prophets are our brethren and are directly inspired of God, "the details of their way of life and thus the cultural systems in which they lived become significant to us" (ibid., p. 29). Furthermore, Bradshaw suggests, "the extension of this way of thinking to historical periods not directly involved with the dispensations, and to influences from other cultures, opens up wide vistas of style and technique" (ibid., p. 29). He believes that "the point is quite defensible that art has taken different forms in the different dispensations and that in this, the 'dispensation of the fullness of times' when 'all things are to be gatherd \textit{sic} in one,' influences from all of these past forms of art are legitimate and important" (ibid., p. 30). The concept of the gathering of all things in one during the final dispensation suggests to Bradshaw "another direction, involving the tendency of Mormon thought to reconcile opposites so that they might exist in the same system."

Bradshaw reasons that "in the artistic realm the mere acceptance of influences from the various epochs and styles . . . becomes insufficient," for "the Mormon artist has the responsibility of bringing these styles into a system where their divergent, conflicting
characteristics are balanced against each other in a single, dynamic, unified manner of expression' ("Reflections," p. 30). Bradshaw makes it clear that he is not talking about "a simple eclectic combination of styles into an unintegrated stylistic hash," but rather "the creation of a true synthesis of these many facets of his experience into a unified, integrated expression of his culture, his thought and his deepest, most precious possession, his testimony" ("Reflections," p. 32).

Bradshaw also remarks on the subject of the relationship between art and emotion in "The Articles of Faith." He speaks first of his "secret desire" in composing The Articles of Faith "that we should . . . try to depict some of the more intimate experiences of Mormonism" ("Articles of Faith," p. 73). At least some of these experiences, it seems, are emotions, for he continues in the next sentence: "There are emotions in Mormon experience that belong in the heart rather than on the mouthpiece of a trumpet, emotions beclouded by tears in the eyes and fire in the breast until words become sacrilege and actions fumble awkwardly through their embarrassment at their own inadequacy. Other religions have given birth to profound expressions of their most personal sacred yearning; should not Mormonism also be represented in its intimate, contemplative aspects?" ("Articles of Faith," p. 74). Further on in the same article, Bradshaw observes that "often we mistake rather shallow imitations of emotion for the real thing." He continues:

There are images and cliches which have become popular as means of stimulating what I call "pushbutton emotions." Someone sings about "mother" in sweet harmonies and we feel a twinge of emotion because we love our mothers. Someone holds up a picture of a baby and we simulate
feelings of tenderness. It is good that we love our mothers and feel tenderness about babies, and to use the images of these things is certainly legitimate. Like most sacred things, however, these images lose a lot of their meaning when they are used so often that they become stereotyped. The habitual sentimental responses that accompany such images get in the way of more specific emotions that a composer wishes to depict. Some composers, especially those in the areas of popular and commercial music, play upon the trite sound image because it evokes automatic responses which are entirely predictable and thus useful for popularity and commerce. In any case, the use of images which are such common coin tends to dilute the intensity of the emotion that is evoked; and the composer trying to depict profound, sincere feelings avoids them." ("Articles of Faith," pp. 74-75)

Bradshaw then explains that he excluded from The Articles of Faith "selections from hymns and other known Mormon songs . . . because they have their own imagery and evoke their own feelings which could block the emotions [he] wanted to depict in [his] music" ("Articles of Faith," pp. 74-75).

Bradshaw's meaning in the above-quoted passages is not in all points clear. It is not clear, for instance, why the tenderness that we supposedly feel when a picture of a baby is held before us is merely "simulated." His use of the word stereotyped is also somewhat puzzling. If stereotype is defined as "a fixed or conventional expression," then it would seem to involve not loss of meaning but rather the attachment of overly specific meaning. Finally, it is not completely clear what Bradshaw means by "expression" of emotion, since he seems to equate it with both the "depiction" of emotion and the "evocation" of emotion and does not define it further.

The last major topic that Bradshaw addresses is the relationship between the artist and his audience. Bradshaw assigns to the Mormon artist, at least, a responsibility toward his audience similar
to the vatic responsibility assigned to the poet by Elder Whitney. As has been observed, he states as his ultimate criterion for the greatness of works of art "the intensity with which they bring us face to face with the Spirit." Bradshaw rejects what might be called the consensus genitum approach to criticism, that is, the "Mass Audience Heresy," as he calls it, that "the piece that is accepted by the most people is the best piece." He says in regard to that "heresy": "I'm not against having people like my music, nor do I despise income from the sale of my creations. These are both pleasant. But when they become the basic motive for my creative efforts they degrade the product of those efforts until they become incapable of satisfying my hunger to express the things of eternity" (Letters, p. 3). He writes further on: "When the earthly audience refuses because of ignorance, prejudice, or laziness to participate with the Spirit, we have contentions that can only lead to paralysis of creativity or a certain propagandistic pandering to the degenerating tastes of those who are too lazy to think and feel" (Letters, p. 7). He advises the artists: "It is not your task to do only what they want you to do—your task is to inspire them with insights into eternal things. Audiences tend to like only that which they know already. A composer has no prospects for success if that tendency is not challenged. To challenge it successfully you must capture the hidden fire so vividly that the lethargy of the audience is overcome and they feel the motions of the Spirit in spite of themselves" (Letters, p. 6).

Although Bradshaw warns the artist against "pandering" to his audience, he also warns against "arrogant put-down of the
audience" (Letters, p. 3) and observes: "There have been very few instances where people have been inspired by a discourse in a language they didn't understand, ... choosing a style so foreign that it gives your audience no way to relate is as ridiculous as speaking Schwytzertutsch to the natives in Oaxaca. It makes it exceedingly difficult to establish contact with the Spirit. You should gain a command of many styles, but you should speak Chinese only when there are Chinese to hear it."

Bradshaw's thoughts about audience are succinctly stated in his own words: "The ultimate audience for all that we do here on earth is God. This means that no matter what the demands of other audiences, we must please Him first."

Merrill Bradshaw thus continues certain strains of thought earlier propounded by Orson F. Whitney, principally the notions that art can be inspired by the Holy Ghost; that the ultimate criterion for the judgment of art is its spiritual significance; and that art has a function in relation to the upbuilding of Zion. On that last point, Bradshaw is more specific than Elder Whitney, describing art variously as a proselyting tool, as a means of beautifying Zion, and as an expression of the holiness of Zion. To Elder Whitney's idea of art as divinely inspired expression, Bradshaw adds the essentially romantic notion of art as the expression of the personal emotions of the artist. Bradshaw also goes beyond Elder Whitney in considering the artist's relationship to his audience, both in warning explicitly against the "Mass Audience Heresy" and in reminding the artist of the necessity of speaking in a language that is intelligible to the audience. Bradshaw seems actually to diverge from Elder Whitney in
at least one respect. Elder Whitney espoused an extreme form of the form-content dichotomy, considering the "idea" of the poem to be its central element and the formal elements to be mere embellishments of the idea, the "jewelled box" in which the idea is encased. Although he does not acknowledge any such debts, as Bradshaw relates to the mainstream of esthetics he approaches the semiotic school in considering art as what might be called "significant form," the term introduced into art criticism by Clive Bell, and particularly as that concept has been elaborated by Susanne K. Langer, when he refers to music as embodying the expressive movement of the Spirit and as embodying the "expressive contours of our spiritual impulses" and when he speaks of dance, sculpture, literature, and prayer as also embodying the gestures of the spirit.

C. Robert K. Thomas

In "The Appreciation and Criticism of Literature," an essay introducing an anthology prepared for use in the literature program of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Robert K. Thomas attempts to demonstrate the value for the Latter-day Saint reader of the four traditional approaches to criticism—what broadly may be called the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the

15 See Art (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1913).


Longinian, and the Horatian. Although they comprise a necessarily elementary introduction to principles of criticism, being directed to the lay reader with possibly little or no formal instruction in literature, these statements are significant as an explicit effort to bring traditional terminology and method and objective standards into officially-sponsored Mormon discussion of the arts.

In his essay Thomas suggests that, although "the Scriptures help us recognize the responsibility of being a judge, and we are all a little uncomfortable in the presence of the faultfinder, ... it is important to remember that, in one sense, we must always judge" (p. 3). He argues that "our most basic gift from God is free agency, our right to choose, and in choice there is always judgment—whether we recognize it or not" (p. 3). He concludes that "if we accept accountability we must become critics—and not simply literary ones. We must learn to choose the best in every area of our lives" (p. 4).

Turning to the criticism of literature, Thomas discusses the limitations of "appreciation," defined as "an immediate, highly personal and emotional reaction" (p. 4). He describes the characteristics of "appreciation" as "vagueness, a positive identification, and strong but random emotions" (p. 5), and terms these characteristics "hopeless barriers to an understanding, by others, of the things we cherish, whether they be material beauties or spiritual truths" (p. 5). "Good criticism," he writes, "attempts to remedy the shortcomings of appreciation by deepening, enlarging, and objectifying our efforts" (p. 6).
Thomas then enters into a discussion of the possible critical positions, which, he claims, are limited by their sources: "Historically, the sources have been four: (1) ultimate, transcendental values, often philosophical or religious, which the critic brings to his task from some outside source; (2) the work itself, which is viewed as being unique in that it sets its own standards; (3) the author, whose total environment becomes the criteria for understanding; and (4) the audience, from whose many interpretations of a given work an acceptable synthesis has finally emerged" (pp. 5-6).

Thomas identifies the first approach with Plato and explains: "Plato makes no real distinction between literary and other kinds of criticism. Everything is evaluated by the same ultimate standard. Since, for Plato, the world about us is only a world of appearance, and only the ideal is 'real,' he checks everything by its approximation to the concept of truth which undergirds all his evaluations. . . . Plato's ideal truth becomes a yardstick against which anything can be measured, for ultimate truth is not distinguishable from ultimate goodness or ultimate beauty" (p. 7).

Distinguishing between Plato's philosophy and his method, Thomas points out that "whenever we judge on the basis of fundamental beliefs, we are using the Platonic method" and then states that "as Mormons we are clearly in the Platonic tradition, since it is impossible for most of us not to use the principles of the Restored Gospel as our critical yardstick, no matter what we are evaluating" (p. 7). He observes that although this is "a thoroughly legitimate critical position. . . . We need . . . to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of our position as a critical method" and continues:
The real advantage of a Platonic approach lies in the ease with which our position can be understood by those who share our basic tenets. We need spend little time in justifying our standards; they will be recognized and accepted within our group. One danger however, in espousing such a position is the temptation to apply our standards without enough thought. It is possible, for instance, to object to Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* as a tale of adultery, but to do so is to miss Hawthorne's real theme—the consequences of sin—to focus solely on one of the devices by which this profoundly moral and uplifting story is told. Another difficulty in using the Platonic method alone is that it is not very meaningful outside the believing group. To people who do not share our ultimate belief, criticism based upon them is at best irrelevant and at worst incomprehensible. If we can never wholly escape our religious or philosophical orientation—and most of us surely have no desire to—we must recognize that we limit our audience in keeping rigorously to it as the sole source of our critical standards (pp. 7-8).

The second position, "the one in which the work itself becomes the source of critical standards" (p. 9), Thomas associates with Aristotle:

Without really rejecting a Platonic approach, for Aristotle is always aware that no one judges in a vacuum, he does try to make criticism less parochial. If we can't be totally objective, we may be able to find some elements on which there can be widespread agreement within a given context. To keep these elements from having strong religious or philosophical connotations, he emphasizes form. Since he is not talking about ultimates, he can talk about beauty quite apart from truth; so we are not surprised to find Aristotle gauging beauty solely on the basis of harmony and size. To stress harmony is to concentrate on relationships, and we soon see that organic relationship is the key to Aristotle's method. When each part is in dynamic and illuminating relationship to every other part, we have a superior work. If critical principles are formulated, they must evolve out of the works themselves (pp. 9-10).

Thomas then argues that "the main strength of the Aristotelian approach is, potentially, its greatest weakness. Since we can only be truly objective about those things which concern us not at all,
this critical approach can obtain agreement, but often at the expense of significance. It can degenerate into a sterile manipulation of formal elements" (p. 10).

The third critical approach—concern for the author and his environment—Thomas identifies with Longinus, who finds "the 'sublime' in the 'ring of greatness in the author's soul'" (p. 10). He classifies as Longinian the statement that he takes from Sainte-Beuve that a classic is "'an author who has enriched the human mind'" (pp. 11-12) and the statement that he takes from Hippolyte Taine that "any creative work is only the 'fossil shell' of its creator, a transcript of the author's 'race, place, and time'" (p. 12). He adds that "even the attempts of modern psychological criticism to probe into the mind of the artist are clearly Longinian" (p. 12). Thomas concludes: "The strength of this approach is that it accounts for things. We can understand Milton's tremendous interest in space when we know that he was blind. Emily Dickinson's repeated images of herself as a bride take on an added poignancy when we know of her withdrawn, single life. The difficulty here is that we can spend so much time learning about the poet that we never get around to reading his poetry, or we may read everything with such a biographical bias that we praise or blame unfairly" (p. 12).

The final source of critical standards, the audience, Thomas identifies with Horace, who "is quite aware of the other critical positions, but ... adds a charmingly down-to-earth touch. He mentions that, in addition to the usual places that we should check in trying to form an estimate of a book, we should stop in at the booksellers! If intelligent people have kept a book in demand over
the years, we cannot ignore this appeal, whether the work fits any of our usual standards or not" (p. 13). The weakness of this approach, Thomas then points out, "is that it cannot be applied to contemporary works; its strength is the weight of evidence which reviews, discussions, and comments over the centuries can provide" (p. 13).

Thomas illustrates each of these four approaches by applying them to Emerson's poem "Days." The reader is referred to the appendix to this thesis for the key passage of each of these commentaries and Thomas's summary of them.

It should be noted that Thomas's application of the Platonic and the Aristotelian modes of criticism is not fully consistent with his explanations of them. In his explanations he defines them primarily as methods of evaluation, whereas in his applications he defines them primarily as methods of understanding. However, when Thomas's analyses are simply accepted for what they are and considered in light of the essay as a whole, it is evident that Thomas is advocating and exemplifying a broad eclecticism in criticism, the bringing to bear of whatever kinds of information will contribute to the final understanding of the work of literature. It further becomes evident that, although he does not explicitly state it, in Thomas's view, accurate "Aristotelian" criticism must precede accurate "Platonic" criticism; that is, that for him the full understanding of a work requires a reading of it as a formal whole, placing Thomas to some degree, at least, in alignment with the "significant form" school of esthetics, and thus, in Mormon discourse, with Merrill Bradshaw.

Using Thomas's own terminology and in so doing acknowledging his particular contribution of bringing some of the terminology of
more general criticism into specifically Mormon discourse, Thomas can be understood as advocating moral and religious evaluation of works of literature in the Platonic mode, as well as purely formal evaluation; as demonstrating that Platonic evaluations can be made accurately only after the work has been understood in the Aristotelian mode as a formal whole and that historical research, in the Longinian mode, can contribute to an accurate reading of the elements of that whole; and as finally advocating that criticism be conducted with the widest possible awareness, in the Horatian mode, of previous attempts at understanding and assessment by intelligent readers.

D. Robert Rees

In "The Imagination's New Beginning: Thoughts on Esthetics and Religion," Robert A. Rees begins by observing that, for various possible reasons, Mormons have tended to be suspicious of the imagination; that even today "women throughout the Church engaged in the serious study of literature are told that there is no such thing as literature for literature's sake," and that "this unfortunate de-emphasis on esthetics tends to make literature lessons little different from Sunday School lessons" (pp. 22-23). Rees concedes that "all art has meaning and that meaning is important," but suggests that "in finding the 'message' of a work of literature we may come away content that we have understood everything about that work" (p. 23). He quotes Wallace Stevens as saying that "it would be fantastic to

18 "The Imagination's New Beginning: Thoughts on Esthetics and Religion," *Dialogue*, 4, No. 3 (1969), 21-25. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text by page number.
suggest that the overt meaning, what the poem seems to say, contributes little to the artistic significance and merit of a poem. . . . The 'something said' is important, but it is important for the poem only insofar as the saying of that particular something in a special way is a revelation of reality" (p. 23). Rees concludes that "to come away with only the message of a work of literature is to come away with partial meaning, is to come away with shadow instead of substance" (p. 23). He goes on to say:

The attitude that literature and life cannot (and indeed should not) be enjoyed on a purely esthetic level reflects an erroneous view not only of literature, but of the Gospel as well. The Prophet Joseph Smith stated that an article of our faith was a belief in seeking after things that are lovely, and of good report or praiseworthy. Ideally, beauty is not separated from truth. As we are told in I Chronicles 16:29, "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness." Father Lehi states that we exist that we might have joy. Sound in literature is intended for our joy as it is in music; form in literature is intended for our joy as it is in the graphic arts; movement in literature is intended for our joy as it is in dance. Poetry doesn't need a reason for being any more than does a flower; as Emerson said, "Beauty is its own excuse for being." (P. 23)

Turning to another problem, Rees suggests indirectly that a responsiveness to symbols ought to be a part of the Mormon esthetic experience when he observes: "We have . . . lost (or perhaps never gained) an ability to use symbols. We wear symbols next to our bodies hardly aware of the meaning they hold; we repeat metaphorical and symbolic language in temple ceremonies unaware of the multiple meanings they contain. We are like those who Jesus said have eyes but don't see and ears but don't hear" (p. 23).

Rees goes on to observe a "kinship between the poetic imagination and religious experience" (p. 23). He says: "When Jeremiah
speaks of his testimony, he uses a poetic metaphor: "His God's word was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay." (20:9) We are struck here by both the beauty and the truth of Jeremiah's statement. All our attempts to say just what a testimony is fall short of this simple poetic statement" (p. 24).

Rees compares with scriptural examples of the kinship between poetic imagination and religious experience a couplet by Robert Herrick: "God's hands are round and smooth, that gifts may fall / Freely from them, and hold back none at all," and observes: "Herrick engages our imagination in contemplating an object we might otherwise never have considered. The sound and the imagery (of 'round' and 'smooth') suggest something not only about God's hands, but about the quality of His love, something which is confirmed by our spiritual sense" (p. 24).

Rees takes as an additional example the sestet of Gerard Manly Hopkins' sonnet "God's Grandeur." He remarks in some detail on the devices used by Hopkins in this poem "to body forth his central poetic and religious idea," on how, for instance, "the caesura, or pause, is used effectively in several key places (as with 'morning' and 'springs'), but especially in the last line--'with aha! bright wings'--as the poet sees the wings of the Holy Ghost reflecting the light of the sun (Son of God) to a darkened world," and "ah!" expressing "wonderment and surprise, as if the poet himself were unprepared for the vision which he sees" (pp. 24-25). He observes also Hopkins' use of diction "to expand the possibilities of his poetic expression and to make his meaning more concrete"; "bent world," for example,
to represent both the physical roundness of the world and also its moral distortion "because of man's callousness and his rejection of Christ" (p. 25).

Rees concludes near the end of his essay:

Although the esthetic and the spiritual are not the same, and although we can have one kind of experience without the other, there is a way in which they are similar. Wallace Stevens says, . . . "The affinity of art and religion is most evident today" in that "both have to mediate for us a reality not ourselves." Our need for affirming and ordering our lives is satisfied to a large extent by religion and art, ultimately and preferably as united and complimentary forces.

When our awareness of things either terrestrial or celestial is quickened by the esthetic as well as by the spiritual imagination, we have what might be called a double witness, by which the truth is made more profound and more penetrating and our sympathies are both broadened and deepened. That art can do this suggests that it may be part of God's plan to draw us closer to one another and back to Him. If this is true then we should seek to multiply the number of times we are touched esthetically, just as we should seek to multiply the number of times we are touched spiritually. (P. 25)

Rees does not go as far as Orson Whitney to suggest that art might be directly inspired by the Holy Ghost, but he does go as far as Merrill Bradshaw in suggesting that spiritual experience can be rendered in artistic form and, as Bradshaw does with music, offers what he considers to be concrete examples of such a rendering. He goes somewhat beyond Bradshaw in suggesting more explicitly that formal explication of a work be completed by the test of direct spiritual confirmation and also--here harking back to Elder Whitney--in suggesting that symbolism should play an important part in the Mormon esthetic experience. As to the question of the essential nature of art, Rees tends strongly toward a "significant form" theory,
as is indicated by his quoting of Stevens to the effect that "the 'something said' is important . . . for the poem only insofar as the saying of that particular something in a special way is a revelation of reality," and more specifically toward the semiotic school of esthetics represented by Eliseo Vivas\(^{19}\) and Susanne K. Langer when he further quotes Stevens to the effect that the function of poetry is "to mediate for us a reality not ourselves"; and in the close formalistic reading that characterizes his practical criticism in this essay Rees most closely resembles the New Critics.

E. Clinton F. Larson

Clinton F. Larson, besides having produced a significant body of poetry and poetry dramas, has also made a number of remarks contributing to a Mormon philosophy and criticism of literature. Unfortunately, since he has made no single comprehensive statement of his position and no statement published under his own authorship, his position must be pieced together from interviews, private conversations, class lectures and discussions, and second-hand reports.

Marden J. Clark, in whom Larson privately expresses great confidence as an explicator of his work and his intentions, observes in his foreword to *The Mantle of the Prophet and Other Plays,\(^{20}\) a collection of five of Larson's poetry dramas, that through all of the plays in the collection "run the constant, if not the dominant,

\(^{19}\) See particularly *Creation and Discovery* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1955).

\(^{20}\) Clinton F. Larson, *The Mantle of the Prophet and Other Plays* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1966). Further references to this book will be cited as *Mantle of the Prophet* with the page number.
themes of the nature of prophecy and the transmission of the power of prophecy" and further: "Beneath these themes and supporting them, stands a simple and surprisingly orthodox faith that provides a larger, more sublime theme: that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of Mankind. On this familiar Christian and Mormon ground Dr. Larson stands without equivocation, using his art to explore and bolster and define both the faith and the fact" (p. viii). Clark continues: "From this standpoint all five plays are didactic, in purpose as well as fact. Dr. Larson makes no apology for this, though he lives and writes in an age when didacticism is belittled as never before in the history of art. The artistic defense of such didacticism as Dr. Larson's, however, is simple enough: (1) Nearly all art is didactic in effect, and (2) this work is not merely didactic" (p. viii). Clark explains:

Any work that gets involved with meaningful moral and ethical spiritual problems (and what significant works do not?) must sooner or later take an attitude toward those problems. As soon as the work does so and then employs the techniques of persuasion, i.e., rhetoric, to support its attitude, it becomes didactic--whether its author wills it to be or not. We need hardly worry about this. All the way from Aristotle through Sir Philip Sydney to Shelley and even the later T. S. Eliot, critics have defended literature precisely on its ability to please and instruct. It is, the argument runs, an even better teacher than history or ethics because it gives concrete form to abstract ideas and precepts, and hence teaches by involving us emotionally in those ideas and precepts. No student of Mormon literature, I dare say, will ever read those last chapters of Ether or Moroni with quite the same emotional response after he has really experienced Dr. Larson's Coriantumr and his Moroni. (P. viii-ix)

Further on Clark says: "To make us aware of the spiritual through beauty--this is the task Dr. Larson sets himself, as he has defined it to me" (p. x).
Larson himself acknowledges his didacticism while qualifying it, as he is quoted as saying in an interview:

... All poetry has a moral, and all poetry should teach, but it’s the idea of a parable—tell a story, tell it the way it is, then give the reader an opportunity to come to his own interpretation of what has happened. Don’t tack the moral on by any means—that ruins it. Christ gave his parable, simply told a story, and then walked away. He wanted it to rest in people’s minds and hearts so they would develop something on their own. 21

He further says, as quoted in another interview:

I am concerned that we do not lose the tradition of love of language and the great verbal ability ... that was invested in the early brethren of the Church. Not that this ability has been completely lost, but sometimes we adopt opinions that seem to negate its importance. We get doctrinaire rather than affective in our use of language. Mormons should cease sounding like medieval schoolmen, to whom religion became an abstract adjustment to religious theories; rather, we should leave most doctrinal matters to the latter-day oracles and then convey testimony and religion into the actualities of art and life. 22

Larson sees a danger in what he views as the Church’s characteristic ignoring of the power of artistic teaching in favor of doctrinaire teaching:

The doctrinaire teaching characteristic of the Church is simply inappropriate for certain kinds of people; chief among these are the artists. Artists ordinarily do not respond to doctrinal discussions. They respond to

21 Douglas Airmet, "Mormon Poets Talk about their Craft," New Era, 5, No. 8 (1975), 46. Further references to this article will be cited in the text as "Mormon Poets" with the page number.

22 "A Conversation with Clinton F. Larson," Dialogue, 4, No. 3 (1969), 75. Further references to this interview will be cited in the text as "Conversation" with the page number.
spirituality when it is artistically conveyed. They are temperamental, antithetical people. You cannot expect them to alter their personalities so that they can accommodate the doctrinaire style exclusively. It is axiomatic that the Church reach out with compassion to all men, not simply to a single middle-class stratum. ("Conversation," p. 77)

Also Clark warns that although Larson's plays are didactic in effect and purpose, the reader ought "not to expect any literal transcription of historical events in these plays," and continues:

For one thing we have no detailed historical record of most of the events he depicts. But even for those for which we do have a record, the events of The Mantle of the Prophet, for example, Dr. Larson's primary concern has not been historical accuracy. We hardly worry when reading Hamlet or experiencing it in a production that Shakespeare sends his young Catholic hero to a Protestant university at Wittenburg which had not even been established at the time the historical Hamlet lived. Not factual, historical truth, but ideal, spiritual truth is the aim of the poetic imagination. It seizes upon object or event and tries to body it forth, to give it an ideal form, to catch it in its physical and psychological and emotional and spiritual essence—not as it actually existed or happened but as it must have existed or happened in its essential significance. (Mantle of the Prophet, pp. ix-x)

Larson's didacticism is something like the idea of the poet as prophet. He suggests that "one of the finest things we have is our notion of spirituality. A transmutation of God and the Holy Ghost into poetry would be a real achievement" ("Mormon Poets," p. 45). In "Conversation" he says:

Take, for example, the great prophet-poet Nephi, who in Second Nephi indicates his great love of books. He claims that he is a poor writer, but to my mind he is a fine symbolist poet. He used the branch of the olive tree as a viable figure of speech. He had the same vision that his father Lehi had, a vision which involved profound metaphors and the affective interpretation of metaphors. Nephi's expression was, of course, for the benefit of Laman and
A little further on he says more explicitly: "It seems to me that without question poetry is the principal language of the spirit. And I think this is generally agreed upon by the modern poets. There is plenty of precedent for this view: for example, the Apocalypse and Isaiah. In the Bible the tradition of poetry is a spiritual matter" ("Conversation," p. 75). Elsewhere he says that "the gift of the Holy Ghost in poets will enable them to achieve an authentic new voice and to aid the cause of the Church in richly significant ways" ("Conversation," p. 80).

Larson does not, like Elder Whitney, virtually equate poetry with prophecy; he merely sees the possibility of the poet's writing by the spirit of prophecy, and he distinguishes carefully between the prophetic function of the poet and that of the General Authority:

"[The artist's] work is his gift and witness; only the General Authorities have the power to speak for the whole Church. These positions should not be confused" ("Conversation," p. 78).

Larson emphasizes the importance of respecting the individuality of the poet. This is part of the meaning of his stress on the his in the remark just quoted. He says:

... I see the possibilities of a range of contrasting styles that can be used for expression of Mormon ideas. For example, S. Dilworth Young has a kind of sinewy, pioneer-like style; it is somewhat hard-bitten and stoical, and I think he does very well to capture this aspect of pioneer life, of Mormon life. But I think there are other avenues that can be explored stylistically, with the idea of creating a flexibility in the Mormon spirit as it is today. In other words, we should not be hide-bound by one
prosaic or poetic style in the Church. For the artist, this individuality comprises the stewardship of his talent as it applies to the Law of Consecration. ("Conversation," pp. 76-77)

And also:

The chief problem for the artist in reaching the members of the Church is that too much power is vested in committees. Committees are able to perform only in certain ways. Whenever a committee gets together and decides something, there is a compromising of creative intent in favor of democratic purpose. The committee by its very nature is antithetical to the nature of art, which has to do with the aristocracy of talent. And in the Church we have, as you know, a great many committees that decide on cultural matters. Everyone has his voice, and as a result the significance of the artistic work or performance is minimized or negated, along with individuality, artistic distinction, and style. The negative aspect is almost always minimized by a committee. They seem afraid of it, not realizing the value of the individual integrity of a work of art. Committees ought to extend a spirit of trust to artists and accept them as conveyors of individualistic truth. ("Conversation," p. 78)

It is perhaps this keen sense of the Mormon artist's responsibility to convey his individual testimony of spiritual truth that underlies Larson's refusal to lower his own artistic standards to please an audience or to make his work more easily understood by an audience. He says:

A great many poets are interested in being clear, but I get a little uneasy when they come on this way because it seems to me that they have a definite audience in mind. My standard is accuracy. . . . To be honest, you have to be faithful to impressions and images, which manifestly will not be clear, particularly to those of us who don't understand the processes involved. I personally write from the point of view of a number of voices—the personae—trying to be accurate in my perceptions. Some things I write are lucidly clear (I write for children) and other things are not so clear, depending on the voice I've taken. I like to think of myself as a dramatic poet. So audience?
I'm interested in an audience if that audience is interested in accuracy.\textsuperscript{23}

That this refusal to compromise his standards for an audience does not mean that Larson is arrogant toward his audience or that he is unconcerned about reaching an audience is evidenced by his answer to the question, "For whom should the Mormon writer write?" "Everybody. This is a missionary church. We have an obligation to deal with various styles and ethnic groups in their terms. If you really think your way into the lives and hearts of people, then you can show the connection that is necessary for their spiritual transformation" ("Mormon Poets," p. 47).

Despite his wish that the Mormon poet might succeed in speaking to all men, Larson does not expect that this will always be possible. He points out that Nephi's attempt "to communicate spiritually through symbolic language ... failed, ... because of Laman's and Lemuel's in-transigence regarding the Lord's will" ("Conversation," p. 75). In a guest column in the \textit{Daily Universe} he presents an excerpt from one of his plays in which he interprets the love and hope of Joseph and Hyrum as being "open, free, and full of light," and asks, "Would New York audiences respond appropriately to these qualities and, also, to references to modern-day Zionism and to intimations of the spirit of prophecy?" He also presents from one of his plays a lyric spoken by Joseph to Emma and asks, "Would New York audiences accept references to

\textsuperscript{23} "Earth and Sky: A Dialogue between Two Poets," Century \textit{II}, 1, No. 1 (1976), p. 55. Further references to this interview will be cited in the text as "Earth and Sky" with the page number.

\textsuperscript{24} "Guest Column," \textit{Daily Universe}, 12 Dec. 1972, p. 18. Further references will be cited as "Guest Column" with the page number.
celestial marriage?" ("Guest Column," p. 18). He presents other passages from his plays and asks the same kind of questions about them. Clearly, Larson believes that the correct answer to his rhetorical question is, "No, New York audiences could not be relied on to respond appropriately to such a work." He then asks: "Is it not true that any meaningful play about Joseph Smith must involve direct and indirect appeals to an audience to be incisive in dealing with human conscience and to accept the God of the land? Can a play intended for general popular appeal successfully make these demands?" ("Guest Column," p. 20).

Clearly, again, Larson believes that the answer is "probably not." Undoubtedly for that reason, he decries what he views as a populist philosophy prevalent in the Church: "One thing that stands against the development of art in the Church is populism. Populism is the idea that if a lot of people agree that the work is good then it must be good. It is the use of concensus genitum as a critical criterion. Only in the long historical view does this position have value. The thing that is popular in the football stadium, in other words, may not be the best work of art" ("Conversation," p. 79).

An important theme in Larson's thinking is a form of Keats's "negative capability," the Mormon writer's obligation to be what Larson calls a "dramatic poet," to "think his way into the lives and hearts of people." (It should be noted that Larson's definition of the negative capability is much broader than the strict Keatsian usage. The phrase is used in this thesis with Larson's broad meaning.) He speaks of the poet's obligation not only to "express himself, but to think and feel himself into another person's position" ("Mormon Poets," p. 44), since, after all, "the Lord understands all experience and has a
relationship to it" ("Earth and Sky," p. 61). Larson is thus disturbed that "many people in the Church don't understand that literature deals with the totality of life, and that in life there is opposition in all things. . . . The negative aspect is as necessary in literature as it is in life" ("Conversation," pp. 77-78).

One of the most powerful instruments, in Larson's view, for exploring various viewpoints is style. This interest in style has already been noted in connection with Larson's observations that "a range of contrasting styles . . . can be used for expression of Mormon ideas," that in his view the clearness of the poetry that he himself writes varies with the persons, the whole viewpoint he is trying to perceive, and that to teach the gospel to people "we have an obligation to deal with various styles and ethnic groups in their terms."

Larson's view of style as one means of exploring experience as seen from various viewpoints is perhaps illuminated by a passage from Wylie Sypher's Four Stages of Rennaissance Style,25 from which Larson has claimed in private conversation to take much of his understanding of the meaning of style:

If style is a vocabulary, it is also syntax; and syntax expresses the way in which a society feels, responds, thinks, communicates, dreams, escapes. By tracing changes in literary syntax we are able to interpret the varying modes of consciousness in different eras of European culture. Doubtless the abrupt phrasing in The Song of Roland shows that the poet thinks and sees in sharply divided categories; the very parataxis indicates a rigidly feudal view of the world, when the concept of reality is limited,

25 Four Stages of Rennaissance Style: Transformation in Art and Literature, 1400-1700 (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1955). Further references to this book will be cited in the text by author with the page number.
static, simplified, hierarchal, unarticulated. So too the syntax of Rabelais is adapted to the somewhat disorderly, disoriented, expanding world opening before the renaissance consciousness. Syntax is conditioned by the structure of the world in which we believe we live; and the whole organization of the artist's sensibility is a screen through which appears the world he creates. . . . Consequently each style tends to reveal, and to create, a world of its own. Wölflin said: "Styles crystallize the world in certain forms." (Sypher, pp. 161-7)

Because style, as understood by Sypher, "expresses the way in which a society feels, responds, thinks, communicates, dreams, escapes," it is, in Larson's view, an important instrument for exploring experience as viewed through the eyes of many kinds of men.

The style that seems to have interested Larson most as a Mormon writer is what he calls the "baroque." Larson defines the baroque style in various ways. He says in one place that the baroque style is "the style that relates the realities of earth to the realities of heaven" ("Conversation," p. 76). In class lectures and private conversations he has further defined it as "the perception of heaven as the highest reality" and also as "perception from the point of view of heaven." As a matter of fact, he understands the poet's obligation "to think and feel himself into another person's position" as one aspect of "perception from the point of view of heaven" and thus as one aspect of the baroque style. He also believes, as he has expressed it in private conversation, that writing from the viewpoint of heaven means "asking the reader to be more than he is," or, as he has said in an interview, doing "what Nephi is trying to do . . . to cause his brothers to flex their minds and spirits so that they can accommodate greater and greater truths" ("Conversation," p. 7). He has suggested in private conversation that his poem
Christ the Mariner, in which occur the lines "Immediacy encumbers me like the willows / Before the sea, where the milfoil galaxies / Shimmer across its surface as retortion for sin," is in that respect baroque because "most readers will need to go to a dictionary to understand it."

Larson also uses the term baroque to denote a style that he finds particularly desirable for achieving "a transmutation of God and the Holy Ghost into poetry," as spoken of earlier. To understand Larson's use of the term in that context, it is necessary to digress into Sypher's account of the origin and characteristics of baroque.

Sypher argues that the foundation for the baroque style was laid by the Council of Trent, which closed in 1563. Sypher writes: 
"... The Council of Trent announced its decrees with majestic voice; it overwhelmed heresy by splendor; it did not argue, but proclaimed; it brought conviction to the doubter by the very scale of its grandeurs; it guaranteed truth by magniloquence" (Sypher, p. 181).

According to Sypher, the art that arose out of the climate established by the Council of Trent "speaks with the voluminous tones of a new orthodoxy... The baroque style reaches its decisions through spectacle. It resolves the uncertainties in mannerist art by overstatement in the flesh, energy, mass, space, height, color, and light. After the bloodless and shrunken mannerist forms, the baroque is a style of plentitude, capable of absorbing, and robustly transforming to grandeur, every sort of realism. It is an art given to superlatives" (Sypher, p. 181). Further on, he says that "in general, ... baroque art has an effect of decision, release, and
fulfillment, and resonantly declares the glories of heaven and earth" (Sypher, p. 185).

Sypher further observes that "the materialism of baroque art is justified theologically by certain recommendations and doctrines of the Council of Trent, notably the permission to use images and the dogma of transubstantiation" (Sypher, p. 187).

Certain obvious parallels can be drawn between the effects on Christians of the Council of Trent and the effects of the first revelation to Joseph Smith on those who are convinced of its truth, as well as between the theology of Milton and the theology of Joseph Smith, which declares that "all spirit is matter," that "man is spirit," that "the elements are eternal, and spirit and element, inseparably connected, receive a fulness of joy," and that "the Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also." Larson thus concludes, as he has stated in classroom discussions, that an art that captures the glory of the Restoration will exhibit all the splendor and energy of the baroque and that an art that represents heavenly things will be as full-bodied and sensuously rich as Milton's.

Larson has suggested in class lectures that the baroque style is illustrated by some of his own poetry, such as "A Letter from

26 Doctrine and Covenants 131:7.
27 Ibid., 93:33.
28 Ibid., 93:33.
29 Ibid., 130:22.
Israel Whiton, 1851. In this poem Larson alternates, with passages of a letter written by Israel to his mother in Israel's own half-literate English, Larson's poetic transmutations of the feelings that Israel can convey only crudely and imperfectly. Israel knows that his mother, whom he and his wife left in the east when they migrated west with the Saints, is dying and will not live to read his letter, and so he tosses it into the wind, as described in his concluding passage:

But Eliza is still as I write, and I must only
Listen. I, Israel Whiton of the Salt Lake Valley,
Write this letter to you, Mother, from the canyons
And the butte above my land; it is a leaf
From the spring before we came, as both you and Eliza
Know, unanswerable except in the signs that come,

That I cannot seek. So I give it to the wind
From the tips of pinons or the butte, and it lifts
Away, and I try to see it as it diminishes
Away, then vanishing though I know it is there,
As you know better than I, Mother . . . And it will rise
Beyond the golden seal and touch the white hand
In the cirri plumbing the Oquirrh crest west
Over the sunset, and it is as if I take a veil
Full in my hand as I write, as if to let it yield
To the days consecrated to the journey west
That holds me aloof from all I have ever known,
The East and the Cities of my common being,
As I am here, in Zion, wondering about you
Who cannot respond except in the barest hints
Of being that lift over me and show me the way
To yield and rise into the Kingdom, the sky
And the land like the white silver spirit
That we know but is fathomless before us
And indefinite as the planes of God rising
Into the sun . . .

With love,
Your son Israel

The metaphorical "stacking" of clauses in that last sentence to create a syntactical analogue of great height; the sense of effortless upward movement conveyed by the image of the letter lifting and rising to the cirri; the light of the sun and the white silver spirit and the brightness of "golden seal," "white hand," "plumes of cirri," "sunset," "Oquirrh" (with its suggestion of gold); and the sense of enormous space in the sky and the landscape all combine to bring this passage close to the baroque as defined by Sypher. Larson himself has, in class lectures, described this passage as being baroque and stated that it is an attempt to convey "the feeling of the Spirit."

Larson can thus be seen as continuing the tradition of Elder Orson F. Whitney and Merrill Bradshaw of identifying poetry with the gift of prophecy, broadly defined. He further parallels Bradshaw in his suspicion of the standard of consensus genitum and in his concern for the encouragement of individual styles in rendering the Mormon experience. He also parallels Robert Rees in his interest in the possibilities of the Mormon use of symbols. Larson's particular contribution is the idea of the baroque style, as he understands it, as being especially appropriate for Mormon expression. In the mainstream of criticism, Larson is identifiable with Sir Philip Sydney, according to Marden J. Clark's interpretation. His interest in style makes him, broadly speaking, a formalist and in that respect more closely aligned in Mormon criticism with Bradshaw, Rees, and Robert K. Thomas than with Elder Whitney. His particular interest in style as a means of exploring material recalls Mark Schorer's similar
interest as it is expressed in his essay "Technique as Discovery."

His idea of the poet's thinking himself into the viewpoint of other men sounds very much like a version of "negative capability," and in this respect Larson parallels two other Mormon writers, Sterling W. Sill and Ronald Wilcox (both of whom are considered in the following section). The idea of style as a means of exploring and revealing modes of consciousness approaches Susanne K. Langer's concept of the presentational form symbolic of human feeling.

F. Sterling W. Sill and Ronald Wilcox

Although neither uses the term and although they might not agree about all of its implications, both Elder Sterling W. Sill, a member of the First Quorum of the Seventy (formerly an Assistant to the Twelve Apostles), and Ronald Wilcox, a Mormon actor, advocate a kind of "negative capability" as a literary value for Latter-day Saints.

Elder Sill suggests in The Majesty of Books:

Through the white light of great literature we may see into every corner of experience from the most advantageous points of view. We may see the most tragic failures side by side with the greatest successes. . . . We may feel the possibilities of both the evil and the good in their true perspective. Then we may perfect our own lives quite as much from the one as from the other.

Through the printed page we may live with criminals and try to understand the forces that brought them to where they

31 "Technique as Discovery," The Hudson Review, 1, No. 1 (1948), 66-87.

are, without suffering the consequences that would attach to that kind of personal experience. (P. 13)

Elder Sill's remarks are very brief, but they are significant as a rare instance of a General Authority's suggesting that literature might be valuable as a means of seeing through other's eyes as well as helping others see through Mormon eyes.

Ronald Wilcox, in "Morality or Empathy? A Mormon in the Theater," 33 arrives at a similar version of negative capability by grappling with the questions, "Where and how does the Mormon fit into contemporary theater? Or does he fit? Or should he?" (p. 15). He approaches the problem through a single narrow question: "Should a Mormon actor swear on the stage?" (p. 15).

The problem of profanity in the theater—and larger, more complex problems that profanity typifies—were posed for Wilcox by his own experience as an actor in the role of James Tyrone in Eugene O'Neil's Long Day's Journey Into Night. Of that experience he says: "I soon found myself center stage in the middle of four hours of drinking, swearing, dope addiction, allusions to wenching, violent and continual recriminations, atheism, etc., not to mention two large cigars which smoked me. The whiskey wasn't real, of course, but that held little consolation—it was substituted with either weak tea or watered down coke. For thirty bleary-eyed nights, four hours a night, I lived in the depths of O'Neil's blackest agonies—me, a Mormon" (p. 17).

33 "Morality or Empathy? A Mormon in the Theater," Dialogue, 2, No. 1 (1967), 15-27. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text by page number only.
Wilcox's explanation of why he thought it was worth his while to subject himself to such an experience is, essentially, that the stage affords the opportunity to see life as the author sees it, to witness his vision of life. He concedes that "when our visions differ . . . it is understandable that our own dramatic experience in the theater . . . is frustrated," that "an audience cannot be coerced into liking, or pretending to like, that which it simply does not like," that "this is natural and within the realm of legitimate human differences" (p. 21). He contends, however, that "when we respond to a different vision of life, such as O'Neil's, with an antagonism which seeks to prevent others from experiencing his vision and deciding for themselves its cogency," it is proper to "question whether the motives of this response, honest as they may be, are those of the Mormon ideal of truth" (p. 21). Wilcox argues that "as long as we can acknowledge the artist's basic integrity, we should be able to accommodate different viewpoints, even when we do not agree. To question a man's basic honesty ends the possibility of dialogue, on-stage or off" (p. 21).

Wilcox observes that "art is an expression of the truth of an artist's personal vision of life. If we wish to experience the artist's vision with him, we, too, must seek after the truth he is trying to tell us, whether it coincides with our personal vision or not. Though we can only react according to our personalities, we can try to delay immediate value judgment until we understand the nature of his vision" (p. 22). Wilcox concedes that "at no time are we forced to seek after a particular artist's vision. If the incidentals of his expression (swearing, for instance) offend us, we are free to dismiss his work
without attempting to understand it further" (p. 22). But Wilcox questions both the intelligence and the moral basis of such a response. He quotes Joseph Smith as teaching that "truth is the knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come" and John A. Widtsoe as adding that "truth is synonymous with accurate knowledge or a product of it" (p. 22). Wilcox himself adds: "The question of accuracy and the means to determine accuracy can be debated at length, but one thing is clear: Mormons believe that truth is not wishful thinking; it is not defined as what should be, but what is. . . . Swearing does exist, and Eugene O'Neil created realistic characters who do swear. We may dislike it, but there it is" (p. 22). He argues that "it is one thing to seek virtue, but quite another to distort life; and that "to circumscribe our vision of what is in order to favor what should be may be a well-meaning lie, but is still a lie."

Whether Elder Sill would follow Wilcox in Wilcox's broad view of artistic decorum is left moot, but both of them are clearly in agreement with Clinton F. Larson that one of the major values of literature is its power to enable the reader to see through the eyes of other men. It should be noted that each of the three writers values such negative capability for a different reason—Elder Sill because such vicarious experience can help guide us to the good life, Larson because it brings us nearer to the viewpoint of the Savior and thus to more effective teaching of the gospel, and Wilcox for the more general reason that it adds to our store of knowledge of truth. Despite these differences, all three would seem to agree with C. S.
Lewis in his conclusion to An Experiment in Criticism:  

... Good literature... admits us to experiences other than our own... Those of us who have been true readers all our life seldom fully realize the enormous extension of our being which we owe to authors. We realize it best when we talk with an unliterary friend. He may be full of goodness and good sense, but he inhabits a tiny world. In it, we should be suffocated. The man who is contented to be only himself, and therefore less a self, is in prison. My own eyes are not enough for me, I will see through those of others. Reality, even seen through the eyes of many, is not enough. I will see what others have invented... In reading great literature I become a thousand men and yet remain myself. Like the night sky in the Greek poem, I see with a myriad eyes, but it is still I who see. Here, as in worship, in love, in moral action, and in knowing, I transcend myself; and am never more myself than when I do. (Pp. 139-41)

G. Lorin F. Wheelwright

In a series of essays published in Mormon Arts, Volume One, Lorin F. Wheelwright (who is treated here with appreciably more detailed analysis than most of the writers because he is a pivotal figure around whom other writers, such as Elder Boyd K. Packer and Eugene England, can be grouped) addresses himself to the interrelated issues of the nature of art in general and of Mormon art in particular, of the standards for evaluating art that are appropriate within the gospel framework, and of the proper relationship between the artist and his audience. Wheelwright's effort can be described as largely an attempt to turn the aesthetic philosophies of Leo Tolstoy and John Dewey to Mormon purposes. However, because of unanswered questions and certain apparent


35 Lorin F. Wheelwright and Lael J. Woodbury, Mormon Arts, Volume One (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1972). Further references to this book will be cited by page number.
contradictions in this work, it is difficult to discover in it a consistent critical stance.

Wheelwright begins in his first essay, "Is there a Mormon Art?" with the assumption that "the characteristics of style are terms that he does not define that distinguish schools or periods of art... reflect the basic ethos of their creators," that "men paint, sculpt, design, build buildings, and make music that express their basic beliefs" (p. 1). When Mormon values "are expressed esthetically," he says, "a Mormon artist does precisely for his culture what the ancient Greek artist did for his, or the Chinese, or the American Indian or others have done for theirs" (p. 5). Wheelwright suggests that the views of John Dewey, along with those of Leo Tolstoy and some Mormon artists, can help to "guide the reader to a clearer understanding of art criticism as applied to Mormon values" (p. 6), and given Wheelwright's emphasis on his understanding of the views of Dewey in this book, it seems probable that the foregoing statements should be understood in light of Dewey's statement in *Art as Experience* that "esthetic experience is a manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of a civilization, a means of promoting its development, and is also the ultimate judgment upon the quality of a civilization." 36 A further debt to Dewey is revealed in the essay "Man Creates in the Image of God," in which Wheelwright includes a chart showing certain parallels between divine revelation, physical discovery, and esthetic expression, such as the fact that revelation tells that "for as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being

many, are one body: so also is Christ" (1 Corinthians 12:12)"; that physical discovery tells that "the planets revolve around the sun, held in orbit by a balance of centrifugal force and gravity"; and that in esthetic expression "the instruments of a symphony orchestra play together in balance and harmony, united by a conductor and the score of a composer"; all of these instances supposedly illustrating the unifying principle that "all parts of creation are related: all parts belong to a whole" (p. 36). This seems clearly to be an attempt at a Mormon application of Dewey's principle that, there being no sharp divisions in nature, art differs only in degree, and not in kind, from other human experiences.

At other points in this book, Wheelwright subscribes to the romantic theory held by Leo Tolstoy that art is the expression of the artist's personal emotions in such a way as to stir the same emotions in the audience. He quotes Tolstoy, for instance, as speaking of art in terms of its power to transmit feelings (p. 19), and he himself writes that art "is the power of one man to create in another feelings akin to his own" (p. 22). That by feelings is meant emotions is shown by the fact that Wheelwright cites Tolstoy as speaking of "the simple feelings of common life . . . 'such as feelings of merriment, of pity, or cheerfulness, or tranquility, etc.'" (p. 19). Wheelwright nowhere explains his conception of the relationship between the expression of ethos, values, and beliefs and the expression of emotion. Some difficulty in understanding his final meaning arises from the fact that when he states those definitions of art he states them as absolutes. If his

37 See Art as Experience for Dewey's most complete exposition of this idea.
language were to be taken at face value he would have to be understood as using the terms ethos, values, beliefs, and emotions synonymously. This might be an unfair pressing of the point, but the fact is that Wheelwright does not seem to suggest any other relationship. Some further discussion of his understanding of their relationship would be helpful.

Considering art as the expression of ethos, values, and beliefs, Wheelwright lists some of the values and beliefs that are among the "distinguishing lines that infuse Mormon artistic expressions" as follows (pp. 2-5):

"1. Men are that they might have joy." According to Wheelwright, this "absolute in Mormon belief dispels pessimism," and "faith in the healing power of Christ replaces" the "negative values" of "emphasis on misery, degradation and hopelessness" with "a spirit of buoyancy."

"2. Man is an eternal being, created in the image of God." Wheelwright observes that "artistically, such belief finds expression in reverence for human life," that "Mormon artists work to express the divine in man by revealing his beauty of spirit, by revering the human body, by considering the act of procreation as sacred, and by avoiding the contemporary vogue of exploiting hedonistic sex" (p. 2). By so doing, "they reinforce their pursuit of eternal perfection and their goal of becoming Christlike in control of human emotions" (pp. 2-3).

"3. It must needs be that there is an opposition in all things." This means, according to Wheelwright, that "temptation, in the sense of trial rather than enticement to evil, thus becomes a requirement for spiritual growth." He claims that "the esthetic
necessity of showing opposing forces, particularly in drama, is balanced in Mormon art by the value of showing how evil is overcome by forces of righteousness." (In his summary at the end of "Is There a Mormon Art?" Wheelwright speaks of Mormon art as expressing "opposing forces without defeat" (p. 6).)

"4. All truth and all good are of God." Wheelwright explains that "the dedicated Mormon seeks the truth . . . as revealed in scripture, as told by living prophets, and as sealed in the handiwork of God." He claims that "in the artistic expression of such pursuit, one sees an honest attempt to find truth and beauty in all of God's creations," and that "a breadth of interest and a search for beauty and truth," which he calls "admirable traits of Latter-day Saints in the world of today," distinguish the "esthetic expression" of the artistically inclined Church member.

"5. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been restored in its fullness and is the only way to personal and world peace." Wheelwright explains that "because of his dedication, the Mormon artist would hope to lead others to this insight by his artistic expressions."

Wheelwright summarizes: "Again, is there a Mormon art? Yes, if one can see an emerging flower in the growing seed. It is characterized by a spirit of optimism, faith in the eternal destiny of man, expression of opposing forces without defeat, reverence for God's creativity in nature, and revealed truth as the basis of peace" (p. 6). Two observations that can be made concerning the foregoing are, first, that Wheelwright does not explain what form the expression of these values and beliefs through "style" might take, and so does not suggest how they might be applied in practical criticism of
particular works; and second, that it is not clear how the beliefs 
and values that Wheelwright lists as peculiarly Mormon are very 
different from those of, say, the Christian fabulist C. S. Lewis, 
except perhaps for the specific beliefs in eternal progression and 
the Restoration. It does not seem certain that Wheelwright has 
justified, on the basis of the beliefs and values he cites, the claim 
that there exists, or could exist, an art that is peculiarly Mormon. 
On the basis of the evidence that he presents, the more modest sug-
gestion that out of Mormonism there might arise, or have arisen, an 
art that is merely recognizably Christian would seem more defensible.

Wheelwright's description of what he calls the distinguishing 
characteristics of Mormon art can also be considered as a set of 
norms for evaluating art, since the tone and substance of his presen-
tation clearly show approval. Wheelwright, thus, in this respect, 
falls within the so-called "Platonic" tradition of Mormon criticism. 
However, he also approaches art from other positions, not all of 
them obviously compatible with this first one.

In "Art as Joy of Man and Instrument of God," Wheelwright 
discusses the concepts of **instrumental value** and **consummatory value**, 
which he has taken from Dewey. He explains: "A consummatory value 
is one derived from an activity that is worth pursuing for its own 
sake. It relates to the appreciation and enjoyment of art. An 
instrumental value is one derived from an activity pursued as means 
to an end. It relates, for example, to art created to sell a product, 
a personality, or an idea. Instrumental values include the skills, 
techniques, and social understandings used to pursue consummatory 
values" (p. 8). Wheelwright goes on to say that "among the ultimate
consummatory values for which men strive is the value of "happiness," or "joy." Comparing the consummatory and instrumental values of health he says: "If we examine 'health,' our consummatory values might be: I want to feel good, rested, at ease, alive, clean, unpolluted, well coordinated; and sensitive in taste, hearing, and seeing... When we think of health in its instrumental set of values, we think of sleeping, exercising, eating, drinking, breathing, working, playing, golfing, fishing, and dozens of other pursuits that lead to the consummatory values" (p. 8).

After defining instrumental and consummatory values, Wheelwright turns his attention to the application of these concepts to art used in the Church. He observes that the Church teaches as a fundamental doctrine that "men are, that they might have joy" (p. 12). He continues:

Following are some consummatory values of Mormonism. These are the kinds of spiritual joy toward which faithful Latter-day Saints strive.

- To feel inner peace from certainty regarding one's place in the universe.
- To feel spiritual renewal through sacred ordinances.
- To feel triumphant in victory of good over evil.
- To feel ecstasy in one's personal progress toward perfection and empathy for the progress of others.
- To feel expanded in spirit through the brotherhood of all men.
- To feel such closeness to God as to be godlike.

The Church aims to enhance such values in all men. It uses art instrumentally to induce conversion. For those who become members, the Church uses art instrumentally to remind them of the consummatory values yet to be realized in eternity. The Church also uses art to a limited degree to induce esthetic joy here and now. (p. 12)

To illustrate these uses of art, Wheelwright tells of an incident involving some pictures that were used for proselyting
purposes at the New York World's Fair in 1966 and subsequently moved
to the information bureau on Temple Square. Wheelwright recounts
that "at a cottage meeting of artists who were lamenting the fact
that these pictures are 'not very good art' (p. 15), a Church member
who was not an artist responded as follows:

I am not an artist and I have belonged to your church
for only nine months, so I hesitate to speak in such a
learned group. You say the paintings on Temple Square
are not very good art. Perhaps they are not, but they
are very efficient as teachers. I am here tonight be-
cause I happened to stay over several hours between
planes and took a run into Temple Square where your very
efficient guide escorted me through the Information
Bureau. As they told me the story of the Church, they
pointed out the various paintings and other exhibits
which illustrated that story. In one hour's time I
realized that I had found a religious background and
doctrine which moved and stirred me. When I returned to
the East, I made further inquiry and study and joined
the Church soon thereafter. What those pictures may
lack in artistic quality, they make up in efficiency.
(Pp. 15-16)

Wheelwright relates that "at that point, those who had been
most critical of esthetic values acknowledged that art serves more
than one function" (p. 16).

Some observations can be made concerning this discussion of
the concepts of consummatory and instrumental values and this example
of their application as Wheelwright understands them. The relevance
of the acknowledgement that "art serves more than one function" to
the concern of the artists in the gathering spoken of is not plain;
the artists were not discussing the use to which the pictures had
been put, they were rather discussing the nature of the works them-
selves, whereas Wheelwright concerns himself entirely with the use
of the works. Wheelwright thus seems to be equating criticism of art
with criticism of particular uses of art. Actually, it seems questionable whether the pictures whose use Wheelwright is defending are to be considered works of art at all. The artists who were discussing them seem to have felt that their credentials were inadequate, and if, in Wheelwright's own language, works of art are expressions of value and belief, it is difficult to see how works that are deficient as art can, as art, be other than deficient as expressions of value and belief. If the pictures do not qualify as art, then this is an example of a conversion assisted not by art, but by something else, and the entire cottage meeting incident is irrelevant to a discussion of art as defined by Wheelwright in either its consummatory or its instrumental uses. (What the "something else" might be is perhaps suggested by C. S. Lewis's discussion in An Experiment in Criticism of the distinction between art and ikon, the work of art being an object that is received for what it beings to the audience, and the ikon being an object that is used by the audience to recall memories or emotions that the audience already possesses or to direct the audience's attention to an object of devotion outside the ikon. Lewis argues that the use of an ikon is not at all necessarily vulgar or silly, but that the ikon and the work of art are simply not to be judged by the same standards.) Even if such an extreme position is not taken, the picture being conceded at least marginal value as art, and if the new member's conversion was assisted by exposure to the values and beliefs as they were expressed in some marginal degree by the pictures as art, then Wheelwright's remarks seem to be a condoning

of mediocrity precisely where Wheelwright might logically be expected to call for the highest excellence, on the grounds that it did, after all, get some results. Two obvious questions to be asked in that case are: How much more effective might the pictures be if they were excellent artistic expressions of value and belief? How does the condoning of mediocrity square with Wheelwright's own professed belief in the doctrine of perfectionism? If Wheelwright is held strictly to one of his own definitions of art his argument reduces to an assertion that the Church is justified in using as proselyting tools works that convey religious truths in an inferior manner whenever the Church is doing so to convey religious truths.

Another difficulty occurs in the passages just discussed. Wheelwright is using the vocabulary of Dewey in speaking of consummatory and instrumental values in art. In Wheelwright's thinking, it seems a work that has high instrumental value but little consummatory value might still qualify as a work of art. For Dewey, however, a work of art is precisely that sort of object in which consummatory and instrumental values unite. In a passage that Wheelwright himself quotes (p. 21) from *Art and Education* in summarizing his own argument in this essay, Dewey says: "A consummatory object that is not also instrumental turns in time to the dust and ashes of boredom. The 'eternal' quality of great art is its renewed instrumentality for further consummatory experiences." Even more to the point, Dewey wrote in the same work that "art, so far as it is truly art, is a union of the serviceable and the

39 *Art and Education* (The Barnes Foundation Press, 1929), pp. 7-8.
immediately enjoyable, of the instrumental and the consummatory" (Art and Education, p. 8), by which he means that a work of art is an object "whose perception is an immediate good, and whose operation is a continual source of enjoyable perception of other events" (ibid., p. 8). By disuniting the consummatory and the instrumental in the definition of art, Wheelwright seems to invert Dewey's theory while using Dewey's own language and invoking Dewey's authority.

In connection with his discussion of consummatory and instrumental values, Wheelwright introduces what must be described as a consensus genitum standard of criticism. The key passage follows:

A dispute arose between Lyndon Johnson and the painter of his portrait, Peter Hurd. Mr. Hurd painted in a style to express himself and to give himself satisfaction. Mr. Johnson, as the subject, was instrumental in this process. Therefore, if Mr. Hurd felt that he should make changes of line, shape, or color to effect a more pleasing and esthetically satisfying composition to meet his own inner hunger, Mr. Johnson could become very much a secondary consideration in the process. Mr. Johnson objected to this.

Mr. Hurd has a prototype in Rembrandt, who was once asked to paint the important citizens of his town. He did so in The Night Watch. He disregarded their personal desires, however, and created a composition to fit his own esthetic taste. Opposition arose against Mr. Rembrandt; he became an outcast. His words were undoubtedly quite similar to those of Mr. Hurd, and the text of the citizens's response probably paralleled that of Mr. Johnson. The issue is really, whose happiness is to be served? An old adage generally prevails: He who pays the fiddler calls the tune. But there is always the other dimension of criticism, namely, the unseen, untapped audience of the future. What will those critics say? The generations since the time of Rembrandt have voted for Rembrandt and against the burghers of Holland. (Pp. 9-12)

In his first essay, Wheelwright offers a list of objective values supposedly rooted in eternal gospel truths, and to which the
Mormon artist supposedly attempts to adhere. It is not clear how these objective values are to be squared with the idea of letting him who pays the fiddler call the tune and of criticism by vote—Wheelwright's own words. A reconciliation of these two positions would seem to require the assumption that the audience subscribes to and can be trusted to accurately apply the correct standards. Wheelwright does not suggest a basis for such confidence in an audience.

A similar problem is created by the sentence with which Wheelwright concludes his account of the Rembrandt and Hurd incidents: "Only the future can tell us whether Mr. Johnson or Mr. Hurd has come closest to creating the greatest happiness for the greatest number" (p. 12). Does Wheelwright mean to imply that the ethic of Benthamite utilitarianism is an appropriate standard for Mormon criticism of art? He does not develop this idea further, and indeed it only appears this once, at least in such an obvious form, but its conspicuous position as the concluding statement of an important argument in Wheelwright's work justifies the wish that Wheelwright had explained his meaning more fully.

Another problem arises from Wheelwright's acceptance, at some points in his essays, of Tolstoy's theory of art as the expression of the personal emotions of the artist in such a way as to induce those emotions in another person. Wheelwright quotes (p. 19) Tolstoy from What Is Art?

... The subject matter of Christian art is of a kind that feeling can unite men with God and with one another. ... The expression, "unite men with God and with one another" is that which unites all without exception.

... It must not transmit feelings accessible only to a man educated in a certain way or only to an aristocrat
or a merchant or only to a Russian or a native of Japan or a Roman Catholic or a Buddhist, and so on, but it must transmit feelings accessible to everyone. Only art of this kind can, in our time, be acknowledged to be good art worthy of being chosen out from all the rest of art and encouraged.  

Wheelwright adds to that: "Tolstoy grants that, in addition to a perception of sonship to God and brotherhood of man, there is another type of expression that unites all men: namely, the simple feelings of common life accessible to everyone without exception, such as feelings of merriment, of pity, or cheerfulness, or tranquility, etc. Only these two kinds of feelings can now supply material for art good in its subject matter" (pp. 19-20). Wheelwright further adds that "Tolstoy outlines as one criterion of art that it 'remains what it was and what it must be, nothing but the infection of one man or of others with the feelings experienced by the artist'" (p. 20).

Wheelwright balances against these quotations from Tolstoy one from Dewey in which Dewey disagrees on certain points: "I can but think that much of what Tolstoy says about immediate contagion as a test of artistic quality is false, and what he says about the kind of material which can alone be communicated is narrow. . . . the artist works to create an audience to which he does communicate" (p. 20).

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41 The Tolstoy quotation is from What Is Art?, p. 150.

42 The Tolstoy quotation is from What Is Art?, p. 156. The Maude translation reads, "... by the infector."

43 The Dewey quotation is from Art As Experience, pp. 104-05.
Wheelwright does not say explicitly whether he agrees with Tolstoy that the artist is obligated to seek the lowest common denominator of understanding and emotional responsiveness in his contemporary audience (a premise that led Tolstoy himself to reject, among others, the works of the Greek tragedians, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and Goethe, and to value above these *A Christmas Carol* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*); or with Dewey, that the artist might legitimately create works beyond the understanding of his contemporary audience, in the hope that he can create an audience that will understand them. One paragraph that seems to be a summary of Wheelwright's own thinking on the matter points in both directions: "... As the people become increasingly sophisticated, the language of Mormon art ... must change to remain communicative. The pioneers of this change are the artists. Those who have sensitive, esthetic natures and powers of expression—those who may see, feel, and create in idioms not identical with those of the past—need to be heard and viewed with humility and respect" (p. 22). As the paragraph begins, the artist is expected to follow behind the people; before it ends the artist is expected to take the lead.

Thus, Wheelwright seems to entertain simultaneously two main lines of thought that are, if not contradictory, at least not obviously compatible, stating both lines in absolute terms and suggesting no bridges between them. On the one hand, art is the expression through "style" of the artist's ethos, values, and beliefs; on the other hand, art is the expression of the artist's personal emotions. On the one hand, there exist eternal truths and values that the Mormon artist seeks to embody and against which the critic can judge the
validity and worth of a work; on the other hand, the final standards are the judgments and emotional responses of the audience, as he who pays the fiddler calls the tune—this standard also being related somehow to the hedonic calculus of Jeremy Bentham. On the one hand, the artist may legitimately challenge his contemporary audience to rise to new levels of perception and understanding; on the other hand, he is to gauge his audience’s level of understanding and not aim above it for fear of not communicating. On the one hand, again, works of art, their very nature as art, embody values and beliefs; on the other hand, mediocrity in art is justified when the Church uses art to communicate its own values and beliefs. One impression left by these essays in *Mormon Arts, Volume One* is of an unreconciled, and perhaps unreconcilable, division between commitment to a vision of eternal values and deference to the demands of the market place. Furthermore, Wheelwright, unlike such Mormon writers as Merrill Bradshaw, Robert Rees, and Clinton F. Larson, does not attempt to demonstrate in a practical way how the Mormon ethos, values, and beliefs might be revealed through style, nor how the art that reveals them is different from non-Mormon Christian art, as he seems to believe it is. Finally, Wheelwright seems to bring under the umbrella of the word art two kinds of objects—those to which C. S. Lewis applies the terms art and ikon, respectively—in such a way as to confuse the standards of judgment of the two.

Despite these difficulties in his essays, Wheelwright does contribute to Mormon criticism a reaffirmation in principle of Robert K. Thomas’s suggestion that the Mormon critic need not work in a vacuum, that the concepts and standards formulated by critics and
estheticians outside of Mormonism might be of value to the Mormon critic. Furthermore, Wheelwright attempts to define more explicitly than any other Mormon writer the particular moral and doctrinal standards that Mormons should bring to bear on the arts. Some of the difficulties in these essays must finally be considered in the larger context of Mormon criticism. Elder Orson F. Whitney opens the door to a confounding of art and ikon by his definition of the poem as a worthy moral or doctrinal proposition embellished by certain linguistic ornaments, and Merrill Bradshaw opens it by considering the deliberate evoking of particular emotions as a legitimate aim of the artist. Both Eugene England and Elder Boyd K. Packer, as shall be seen, also do not distinguish clearly between art and ikon.

Wheelwright's concern for audience approval is perhaps largely motivated by a recognition shared by virtually every writer here considered on the subject that works of art can have proselyting and teaching value for the Church. The difficulties in Mormon Arts, Volume One might well be interpreted as egregious manifestations of tendencies that are common in Mormon criticism.

H. Eugene England

In an address delivered at Brigham Young University and in a review of Richard Cracroft and Neal Lambert's A Believing People:

44 "Great Books or True Religion? Defining the Mormon Scholar," Dialogue, 9, No. 4 (1974), 36-49. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text as "Great Books" with the page number.
Literature of the Latter-day Saints, Eugene England undertakes to "consider some new directions for defining a Mormon esthetic, a set of principles upon which to assess and encourage our own literary tradition ("Great Books," p. 40). England speaks of three experiences that have caused him to recognize a need for such new directions in Mormon criticism. One of these experiences was his attendance at the dedication of the Washington Temple, of which he says:

At the climax of the service, after we had all stood to express our joy in that unique Mormon ritual of celebration, the "Hosanna Shout" following the dedicatory prayer, a volunteer choir, which like none others for the other sessions had traveled by bus hundreds of miles from one of the various regions in the Temple District, remained standing in their places to the side of the room, facing at an angle both the audience on the main floor and the General Authorities and other leaders on the stand, and sang the "Hosanna Anthem." We, our leaders, and the choir, all still standing and facing each other, then joined in singing at the Anthem's close, "The Spirit of God Like a Fire Is Burning" while the choir voices soared above us in a descant, welding us together in one unbroken ring of—not esthetically great art, perhaps, but what is much more important—unparalleled spiritual unity and power and beauty, which the musical quality of the choir (diminished partly by the emotion they felt along with all of us) did not create but did in fact contribute to. I've heard and deeply appreciate some great music, written and performed by great musicians, including some great religious music by people of sincere faith, but I have never experienced any other music nearly as moving—or pleasing—or "worthwhile" as that singing in the Temple. ("Review," pp. 365-66)

Another experience was that of teaching literature at St. Olaf, a Lutheran college, where teachers are encouraged "to deal openly and continually with the religious and moral implications of their subject.

45 Review of A Believing People, Brigham Young University Studies, 15, No. 3 (1975), 365-72. Further references to this review will be cited in the text as "Review" with the page number.
matter" ("Great Books," p. 39). England says that in the process of exploring openly with his students the religious and moral dimensions of literature, he has been "forced to consider certain things much more directly than ever before--the intellectual perspective and moral vision of the authors, and the qualities of the societies they describe or from which their writing emerges ("Great Books," p. 39). He says that he has also "been more forcefully confronted with the effect on ... students' thinking and life decisions of all those things" that he exposes them to, and that he has become increasingly uneasy about the inadequacy of "formalist criteria (those concerned with esthetic qualities--structure, style, organization, etc.)" to account for his students' and his own experiences with certain literature which powerfully affected them despite its obvious lack of formal or esthetic perfection ("Great Books," pp. 39-40).

The third experience of which England speaks is a conversation with Robert Scholes in which the talk turned to the lack of a "great" literature among mountain peoples, including the Mormons, "a lack, that is in terms of general fame and by traditional formalist standards," and Scholes conjectured that "it might have been because their social vision was more successful that the literature of such peoples has been less successful . . . at least less successful by those orthodox literary criteria" ("Great Books," p. 40).

These experiences have led England to certain conclusions. One is that "the truth and goodness of the author's vision must be weighed into our assessment and will sometimes compensate for formal inadequacy or even give rise to more intuitive formal achievements" ("Great Books," p. 46). He explains that he is "certainly not
advocating that we intentionally neglect the formal and other values of great literature, just because we rejoice in our religion and the comparative greatness of the societies it has produced" ("Great Books," p. 40) and he suggests, in fact, that "it could well be argued that the decline in quality of the content—the moral and philosophical vision—in most recent literature, especially poetry, is a direct result of the intentional neglect of form," but he asserts that "there are values, even in literature itself, other than purely literary or esthetic ones; there are social and religious and moral values, and they are not always intrinsically bound up in the formal perfections."

Another conclusion is that Mormonism is not likely to produce any literature that can be called "great" by traditional formalist standards ("Review," p. 366), since "Mormonism answers so well so many basic questions and provides such a satisfying way of life for most of its people that there is not sufficient tension or tragedy" ("Great Books," p. 40). England further concludes, however, that "there is no need to apologize; religious success is infinitely preferable to literary success ("Great Books," p. 40) and that "to the extent we have to choose between great books and true religion . . . we should rejoice that we can choose true religion, and without apology ("Great Books," p. 41). He further suggests that, as a matter of fact, "at least in America 'great' literature has almost invariably grown out of the religious failure of a group (e.g., The Scarlet Letter) or the religious despair of an individual (e.g., Moby Dick)" and that at least in the twentieth century, 'great' literature (meaning usually that it is commercially or esthetically
successful) has itself been shot through with serious moral or philosophical error" and that we "should . . . better be pleased to have been saved such greatness" ("Review," p. 367).

England acknowledges that "of course there is value in great literature, and that he is "continually refreshed and strengthened and challenged by it" as he engages in "the lonely task of working out" his salvation ("Review," p. 366). He insists, however, that great books are not the most important things in the Latter-day Saint's life ("Great Books," p. 41). He further suggests that the greatness of a literature such as the Mormons' lies not in its form, which may be inferior to that conventionally recognized as great, but in its superior content and vision ("Great Books," p. 43).

As an example of such "great" Mormon literature England presents the journal of an obscure missionary, Elder Joseph Millet. He quotes passages from Elder Millet's journal and comments on them in such terms as "simple but effective narrative skill and sense of drama, combined with sincere, almost humorously direct reliance on the Lord"; "self-effacing but clearly communicated sense of a life lived in great spiritual beauty"; "sense of well-placed dialogue and dramatic timing, which conveys both humor and the steady seriousness of conviction" ("Great Books," p. 45).

It should be noted that although England suggests that his approach to a Mormon esthetic is a new one, it is actually a reappearance of certain ideas in Mormon discourse. In his separation of form and content in literature, England seems to be echoing Elder Orson F. Whitney's definition of the poem as a proposition ornamented with linguistic devices. The idea that works of art, including
literature, must ultimately be judged by moral and theological standards is shared by every writer considered in this thesis and by a line of critics in the larger history of criticism extending from Plato through the T. S. Eliot of "Religion and Literature." His remarks on the Washington Temple experience indicate the same lack of distinction between art and ikon that characterizes Lorin F. Wheelwright's thinking. In all of these respects England's remarks must be seen as a restatement of older ideas in Mormon esthetic discussion.

I. Elder Boyd K. Packer

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve has publicly stated his views on the implications of the gospel for art in a Brigham Young University Twelve-Stake Fireside address entitled "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord" and in a newspaper interview following that address. Elder Packer's remarks are in many ways a reaffirmation of principles advocated by earlier spokesmen, but he also contributes an emphasis on the power of art to invite the presence of the Spirit and a notion of criticism as guided by the Spirit.

Elder Packer's main concerns are with "how the Spirit of the Lord influences or is influenced by music, poetry, drama, dance, creative writing, all the fine arts" and with the teaching power

46 "The Arts and the Spirit of the Lord," address delivered 1 Feb. 1976; subsequently published under the same title in the Ensign, 6, No. 8 (1976), 60-65. Further references to this interview will be cited by the Ensign page number.

that results from those relationships with the Spirit. Because of what gifted artists and performers do, according to Elder Packer, "we are able to feel and learn very quickly through music, through art, through poetry some spiritual things that we would otherwise learn very slowly" (p. 61).

Elder Packer seems to believe, as did Elder Orson F. Whitney and as have others since Elder Whitney, that works of art can literally be inspired, in the sense of being given by the Spirit. Speaking of the preparation required for that kind of inspiration, he says: "It is a mistake to assume that one can follow the ways of the world and then, somehow, in a moment of intruded inspiration, compose a great anthem of the Restoration, or in a moment of singular inspiration paint the great painting. When it is done, it will be done by one who has yearned and tried and longed fervently to do it, not by one who has condescended to do it. It will take quite as much preparation and work as any masterpiece, and a different kind of inspiration" (p. 63). In another place he says: "Inspiration can come to those whose talents are barely adequate, and their contributions will be felt for generations. . . ." (p. 64). He also speaks of the possibility of there being written hymns with lyrics near spiritual in their power" (p. 63).

Even more than with the possibility that art can be literally inspired, Elder Packer concerns himself with the possibility that art can invite the presence of the Spirit. He says, for instance: "Think how much we could be helped by another inspired anthem or hymn of the Restoration. Think how we could be helped by an inspired painting on a scriptural theme or depicting our heritage. How much
we could be aided by a graceful and modest dance, by a persuasive narrative, or poem, or drama. We could have the Spirit of the Lord more frequently and in almost unlimited intensity if we would" (p. 63). He says further on: "I have been lifted above myself and beyond myself when the Spirit of the Lord has poured in upon the meeting, drawn there by beautiful, appropriate music" (p. 65).

The word appropriate is important in Elder Packer's remarks, particularly in those regarding the power of art to invite the Spirit. He says, speaking particularly of music but observing that "the . . . point applies to all the arts," that vigilance on the part of priesthood leaders is necessary to "ensure that music presented in our worship and devotional services is music that is appropriate for worship and devotional services," and he says that he has heard a president of the Church declare after some meetings in which the music was not appropriate that "something spiritual was lost from our meetings because the music was not what it should have been" (p. 61). As an illustration of inappropriateness, Elder Packer relates the following incident involving the visual arts:

Several years ago one of the organizations of the Church produced a filmstrip. The subject matter was very serious and the script was well written. The producer provided a story board. A story board is a series of loose, almost scribbled sketches, sometimes with a little color brushed across them, to roughly illustrate each frame of the filmstrip. Very little work is invested in such a story board. It is merely to give an idea and is always subject to revision.

Some members of the committee were amused by the story board itself. It had a loose, comical air about it. They decided to photograph the illustration on the story board and use them in the filmstrip. They thought they would be quite amusing and entertaining.
When the filmstrip was reviewed by four members of the Council of the Twelve, it was rejected. It had to be made over again. Why? Because the art form used simply was not appropriate to the message. You just don't teach sacred, serious subjects with careless, scribbled illustrations. (P. 62)

Elder Packer further says: "We would be ill-advised to describe . . . the visit of Elohim and Jehovah [to Joseph Smith] in company with rock music, even soft rock music, or to take equally sacred themes and set them to a modern beat. I do not know how that can be done and result in increased spirituality. I think it cannot be done" (p. 62).

Elder Packer observes, however, that different styles and forms are appropriate for different occasions. He says, applying the test of asking "What would Jesus think?: "I think He would rejoice at the playing of militant martial music as men marched to defend a righteous cause. I think that He would think there are times when illustrations should be vigorous, with bold, exciting colors. I think He would chuckle with approval when at times of recreation the music is comical or melodramatic or exciting. Or at times when a carnival air is in order that decorations be bright and flashy, even garish. . . . I would think that He would think that there is a place for art work of every kind--from the scribbled cartoon to the masterpiece in the hand-carved, gold leaf frame" (p. 65).

It should be noted in these remarks on appropriateness that Elder Packer sees appropriateness as largely a matter of form. Although he does not explain this term, in his use of it and in his examples he seems to approach the conception held by several Mormon writers that form itself is an embodiment of meaning. However, Elder
Packer does not subscribe to such a strictly formalistic theory as do, for instance, Merrill Bradshaw or Robert Rees. He sees the work of literature in terms of definitely separable "technique" and content. In response to the question of a newspaper interviewer, "Would you make a distinction ... between technique and content in the fine arts?", he is reported as answering: "Yes I would. I think the content is where our Latter-day Saint artists must put their first emphasis, but it would be best if we could get superior technique combined with it" (Monday Magazine). Elder Packer's conception of the work of art seems very similar to Elder Orson F. Whitney's, of the casket encasing the jewel of thought.

Another important theme of Elder Packer's remarks is that of the moral significance and effects of literature. He says:

It is sad when members of the faculty here would assign students to read degenerate compositions that issue from the minds of perverted and wicked men. . . .

There is the temptation for college teachers, in the Church and outside of it, to exercise their authority to give assignments and thereby introduce their students to degradation under the argument that it is part of our culture. Teachers in the field of literature are particularly vulnerable.

I use the word warning. Such will not go unnoticed in the eternal scheme of things. Those who convey a degraded heritage to the next generation will reap disappointment by and by. (P. 64)

Elder Packer elaborates on these statements as follows, as reported in the Monday Magazine:

Monday Magazine: Brother Packer, there has apparently been some confusion among students of literature at BYU as to what exactly your viewpoint on literature is. You warned teachers against assigning students to read degraded works. What would you consider "degraded"?
Elder Packer: Anything that doesn't uplift. There is certainly much among the great literature of the world which is very uplifting, and I hope that no student uses my talk as an excuse not to study literature in depth. But there are many works that have been written in our century—and some in past centuries—which are evil and perverted, and should not be assigned to students to read.

Monday Magazine: Is it possible for literature to deal with themes of sin or destitution in a way that is not degraded, that could be considered moral and worthy of reading?

Elder Packer: Yes, that is possible. The way in which certain things are presented become very important in judging. Now, I consider Shakespeare a great writer. I've always enjoyed him; I've read most of his works. But I certainly wouldn't quote certain lines from his plays in sacrament meeting.

Unfortunately, nowadays our writers not only want to deal with themes of human weakness, they insist on doing it in living color—and such literature (or film or art) is corrupting and evil. A generation ago if a dramatist wanted to portray a girl of the streets, it was done by the way she chewed gum. The impression that she was a cheap woman could be conveyed without her being dressed suggestively. But now artists and writers overdo it. They give the audience no credit for intelligence.

Monday Magazine: But if done tastefully, there might be some value in a story about immorality or a broken family?

Elder Packer: Yes. But I am saddened that that seems to be the only kind of theme so many writers deal with. They seem to think nothing else has dramatic value. As a result the only kind of family we ever see in literature and on the stage is the broken, problem family. That isn't realistic. I wish some writer would learn to portray the joy of a solid, righteous family in an artistic, uplifting way.

Elder Packer calls for a high standard of excellence in the arts. He exhorts those who are gifted:

Set a standard of excellence. Employ it [Talent] in the secular sense to every advantage, but never use it profanely. Never express your gift unworthily. Increase our spiritual heritage in music, in art, in literature, in dance, in drama.
When we have done it our activities will be a standard to the world. (P. 65)

As examples—touchstones—of the standard of excellence to which he would have Latter-day Saint poets aspire, Elder Packer recommends two poems by Elder Orson F. Whitney: The Soul's Captain (a reply to William Ernest Henley's Invictus) and The Mountain and the Vale, which he quotes in his address (pp. 63, 64).

Elder Packer does not advocate artistic excellence with complete consistency. As regards the Church hymns, he says: "... Some of them are not really as compelling as they might be. Their messages are not as specific as we could have if we produced our own. But by association they have taken on a meaning that reminds members of the Church, whenever they hear them, of the restoration of the gospel, of the Lord, and of his ministry" (pp. 62-63). Although this latter statement could be construed as revealing a contradiction in his thinking, it can also be construed as revealing that Elder Packer does not distinguish between art and ikon, in C. S. Lewis's terminology, and thus not between the standards of excellence for the two kinds of works.

A final point, in light of which all of Elder Packer's remarks probably should be considered, is that, in Elder Packer's view, at least one aspect of criticism, the testing of the spiritual validity of a work, can be conducted reliably without any particular expertise in the criticism of the art form itself. Near the beginning of his address, Elder Packer says:

Now, I'm sure there are those who will say, "Why does he presume to talk about that? He is uninformed. He is
just out of his province." It may comfort them to know that I know that. . . .

... My credentials, if I have any (some of them should be obvious), relate to spiritual things.

I hope for sufficient inspiration to comment on how the Spirit of the Lord influences or is influenced by the art forms that I have mentioned. (Pp. 60-61)

He repeats that statement near the end of his address:

My credential to speak does not come from personal mastery of the arts... I speak on this subject because I have a calling, one which not only permits, but even requires, that we stay close to Him and to His Spirit.

If we know nothing of the arts, we know something of the Spirit. (P. 65)

Thus, in some respects, Elder Packer falls within well established traditions in Mormon criticism, particularly in his belief that works of art can be directly inspired by the Spirit, in his concern for the moral effects of art, and in the assumption that the vision of life revealed in a work must be tested against moral and theological standards. In his concern with appropriateness of form he seems to subscribe to some theory of significant form, edging him toward the position of such writers as Robert Rees and Merrill Bradshaw, but in his definite separation of form and content and in his emphasis on content over form, he is much more like Elder Whitney, and in his willingness to compromise excellence of form, of content, or of both in a work that will evoke in the audience the associations he immediately desires (and here perhaps not distinguishing between art and i kon) he somewhat resembles Lorin F. Wheelwright. Elder Packer's particular contributions to Mormon esthetic discussion are his suggestions that works of art can invite as well as reflect the
presence of the Spirit and that the spiritual validity of a work can be judged accurately in the absence of any critical expertise in the art form as such.

J. Marden J. Clark

Marden J. Clark's position as a Mormon critic is summed up in "Liberating form," 48 "Keynote," 49 and "We Have Our Standards." 50 In these statements, Clark falls clearly within both the "Aristotelian" and the "Platonic" traditions defined by Robert K. Thomas.

Clark's Aristotelian regard for form is revealed primarily in "Liberating Form," in which he argues, using X. J. Kennedy's Petrarchan sonnet "Nothing in Heaven Functions As It Ought" as an example, that a poem "gets most of its energy from what the poet does with its form: from the way it works within or strains against or plays with the conventions of its form," that form is "the means of releasing . . . energy." In "Keynote," he recommends organic unity, the notion that "every part of a piece of writing" should "relate integrally with every other part and with the whole," as an important standard for judging literature. He observes that "such a standard of integrity was one of the most important standards for the

48 "Liberating Form," Brigham Young University Studies, 15, No. 1 (1974), 29-40. Further references to this essay will be cited in the text by title with the page number.

49 "Keynote," unpublished keynote address, LDS Writers Convention, July 1975. Further references to this address will be cited in the text by title only.

50 "We Have Our Standards," unpublished keynote address, Rocky Mountain Writers Conference, Aug. 1977. Further references to this address will be cited in the text by title only.
New Critics" and that it harks back through Coleridge and Aristotle. "It still strikes me," he says, "as a very important and meaningful standard. The work, as Coleridge said, 'must contain within itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise.'"

In "We Have Our Standards," Clark also insists on "relating religious and moral standards to literature." He admits that he has come to this position late in his career, that for most of his thirty years of professional life he "lived fairly secure in the "conviction" that he could evaluate a literary work on its "intrinsic merits," that he could "analyze such things as style, imagery, tone, symbolism, structure, and meaning--with the confidence that full description and evaluation of such things would constitute full description and evaluation of the work." He acknowledges that "throughout the history of literary criticism, voices such as Plato's or Tolstoy's had told us otherwise," and that "even T. S. Eliot, the high priest of the New Criticism, had argued not too many years after 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' that literary criticism must be completed by criticism from a definite moral and religious standpoint," but explains that he dismissed these voices until recently, when he has found "especially convincing" E. D. Hirsch's argument that such standards as "irony, paradox, complexity, formal beauty, delicacy or distinctiveness of tone are not really inherent in the nature of literature itself."

In both "Keynote" and "We Have Our Standards," Clark calls for high standards of both artistic and moral excellence in writing by Mormons, arguing in "Keynote" that the Mormon belief that "we are sons and daughters of God . . . means to us as Mormons that we
consecrate all our talents to Him. . . . that all our writing be conceived somehow as in His service, as our offering to Him, as our attempts to express what we are," that "we will have to combine our sense of total consecration with ancient Israel's sense of fitness: Only the best is good enough for sacrifice to Jahveh, only the firstings of the flock and the first fruits of the field, only the unblemished lamb and the unblemished fruit."

In "Keynote," Clark relates the idea of consecration to the idea of the poet as vates, in the sense of "maker," suggesting that "... perhaps we can rediscover a high sense of ourselves by remembering that ancient Greek and Latin words for the writer, the poet, meant maker and prophet." Clark shies away from identifying the poet as a prophet, explaining: "For Mormons prophet has too specific a referent to be available to Mormon writers. We would hardly presume to the role except perhaps metaphorically where we might on occasion see ourselves as speakers for the Prophet." He sees maker, however, as "a different thing," and suggests that "in a real sense every writer is a maker, unless he is simply taking the easy way, parroting or plagiarizing or assembling cliches."

Clark argues that achieving the standard of excellence that will make the writer's work a worthy offering to God requires a knowledge of what the best is: "We must steep ourselves in what Matthew Arnold calls 'the best that has been thought and said in the world,' or in T. S. Eliot's 'tradition.' I'm afraid Eliot is right that anyone who wants to be a poet past the age of twenty-seven must develop a full sense of the tradition from the past. Perhaps some kinds of writing don't need quite so demanding an awareness,
but I don't see how anyone can know his own best or work toward it unless he knows what 'best' has meant for others." Clark says that both his own experience and the experience of others convince him that "knowing critical standards, whether by formal study or by immersing ourselves in the best that has already been thought and said, or preferably by both, can guide us toward that best." He offers as evidence the "knowledge of how often in the long tradition of English criticism the great critics have also been the great writers," from Sir Philip Sydney through Ben Jonson, Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Matthew Arnold, and Henry James to T. S. Eliot. "Nor," Clark says, "does it end with Eliot. Many of his contemporaries and many of ours are both critic and artist. It is an imposing list and should strengthen our trust in the value of criticism."

Clark mentions the works of Bernard Malamud, T. S. Eliot, and Milton to suggest a standard of excellence that Mormon writers should aspire to, and then says:

You have probably noticed that I have taken most of my examples from great literature. I needn't have. I could have found plenty of examples of fine Mormon writing, without even having to go to original sources, in the pages of A Believing People, recently published by Professors Cracroft and Lambert. Or I could have found examples of simple, rough eloquence in the pages of my own Grandmother's journal, in which she describes the problems and joys of being a second wife during and after the period of the Manifesto. Or I could certainly have found plenty of examples from the rapidly increasing body of fine literature, imaginative or otherwise, produced all around us today in Mormondom.

Clark suggests that much of what he has said "can be summed up in a single word: professional," that "if writing is our
profession—even only in the sense that we profess to be writers—then we need professional standards," and he finds it "important and comforting that the root meanings of professional are the same as those of professor (we are all professors in that we 'speak or confess' for or before someone) and prophet." He suggests that although Mormon poets do not presume to be prophets they can "enjoy the fact that prophets have sometimes been poets and nearly always powerful users of words, whether in the magnificent poetry of Isaiah or the quieter, persuasive prose of President Kimball."

In further defining the role of the writer in Mormon society, Clark expresses the hope that if the commitment of Mormon writers is strong enough, they might "be able collectively to help do for the Church what good writing always does for the writer: it always helps him better to know and define himself and his attitudes and responses and beliefs." Clark acknowledges that "such large definition for the Church is mostly the province of the Prophet and his associates," but he argues that although "theirs may be the official definition, . . . the definition of what it means to be a Mormon, to live as the Gospel guides us or to fail in our struggle to live that way—that is the province, even the stewardship, of each of us."

In remarking on the Mormon artist's relationship to his audience, Clark observes in "Keynote": "... I would hope that the Gospel would . . . give them a hunger and thirst after excellence. We can minister to that hunger and thirst, even help it to develop. I have a great faith, I hope not just a naive one, in the power of the excellent to get people to rise to it, and in the power of people to rise to it if they have it constantly before
them. That is our burden: to create the excellent on whatever level and for whatever purpose we are writing. I think we can trust our audience to rise to it." However, Clark does not depend for his satisfactions as a writer on his audience's appreciating excellence: "... even if they don't rise to excellence we will have had our reward, in the very fact of having created excellence, and even more important, in the wonderful paradox that the process of creating, though it may take something out of us, puts even more into us. We will have created better selves and--it must be true!--more worthy sons and daughters of God."

Clark further defines his standards of artistic and moral excellence in "We Have Our Standards," in which, after listing certain practices that he claims to have observed as common in Mormon society, and that he finds undesirable--exploitation analogous to pornography of materials and people, plagiarism, ghost-writing, "scissors and paste" writing--he suggests that the answer to all of these undesirable practices is honesty and integrity. He suggests that "the answer to the refusal to treat materials honestly is the absolute commitment to honest treatment," which requires "total control of... intentions, emotions and technique" and "the total use of our technical resources in the catching and creating and projecting of significant emotions and feelings." He suggests that "at least one answer to the complex problems of pressure from the community, whether church or state, would be a full concern for that community." He observes that the community "is part of what we are as writers," that "it may be our only audience and hence is an important and legitimate part of our rhetorical stance as we write," and that "it has its needs too."
He concludes: "I would hardly think of our job as pandering to those needs, but rather as being profoundly aware of them, assessing them as sensitively as we can, and fulfilling them where we can, but questioning them, challenging them, persuading toward more meaningful ends--responding as profoundly as we can to them."

"The answer to playing to the market," Clark suggests, "would be total involvement with the creative process" and with an "unseen audience." He observes that "one usually writes with the trust that his experiences and insights will have some kind of meaning, validity, and persuasive power for both himself and his audience."

Opposite the "scissors-and-paste" approach Clark sets "total integrity, considered less as a moral or ethical quality than as a literary quality, resulting from the struggle to make every part of a piece of writing relate integrally with every other part and with the whole." As has already been noted, he observes that "such a standard of integrity was one of the most important standards for the New Critics and that it harks back through Coleridge to Aristotle, and he says: "It still strikes me as a very important and meaningful standard. The work, as Coleridge said, 'must contain within itself the reason why it is so and not otherwise.'"

The opposite of ghost-writing and plagiarism, according to Clark, "would be total integrity, considered this time precisely as a moral and ethical quality and resulting from the total exploration of self, not the implicit denial of self that both represent." He argues, however, that "such an exploration of self through the writing process should also result ... in the kind of literary integrity valued so deeply since Coleridge--or maybe since Aristotle."
The opposite of exploitation of people and materials in a negative sense, Clark argues, "would be the totally positive exploitation of materials and talent that results in significant art. He explains: "As so often with words, the root meaning of exploitation helps me here. The root word is Latin explicare, to unfold or display. Such unfolding, as with our critical activity of explanation, can be the most positive kind of exploration of the values inherent in a given subject and of the powers in one's self. Again, this is the process by which significant art is created and which our standards should lead us to."

As a formalist in his understanding of what constitutes literature, Clark is in the Aristotelian tradition represented in Mormonism by such critics as Merrill Bradshaw, Robert Rees, and Clinton F. Larson. Like Rees, Clark tends toward the semiotic theorists when, in setting for the Mormon writer the task of defining through the creative process the values of Mormonism and the very meaning of Mormonness, he parallels Eliseo Vivas's definition of the artist's task as "to discover in its specificity the nature and structure of experience as lived, and to present it in terms that men can grasp," to "tell us what is the dramatic pattern of human life" and thus to define "for us its sense." As a "Platonist" working from Mormon moral and theological premises, he is in perhaps the one tradition that is represented by all of the critics considered here. Like Robert K. Thomas and Larson, Clark brings to Mormon criticism the notion articulated by Arnold and Eliot that neither excellent

creation nor excellent criticism can take place in a vacuum of knowledge of what has been considered best in the past, of "tradition," and Clark includes in the tradition that should be significant to the Mormon writer both the best writing of "the world" and the best work of Mormon writers. Rejecting the notion of the poet as prophet (in direct contrast to Elder Orson F. Whitney) because prophet has too specific a referent in Mormon usage, but accepting the notion of the poet as maker, Clark argues, in agreement with Elders Whitney and Boyd K. Packer and with Larson and Lorin F. Wheelwright, that what the Mormon writer makes should be presented in the spirit of consecration as an offering to God and that the Mormon writer is thus obligated to strive for the highest degree of excellence of which he is capable.
Chapter 3

CONCLUSIONS

Three general questions concerning literature have been addressed by the writers considered here: What constitutes a work of literary art? What ought to be valued by Latter-day Saints in a literary work? How should criticism be conducted by Latter-day Saints?

As to the first question, what constitutes a work of literary art, five basic answers have been proposed. One answer, to which Merrill Bradshaw, Robert K. Thomas, Robert Rees, Clinton F. Larson, and Marden J. Clark subscribe with great consistency, Lorin Wheelwright, Elder Boyd K. Packer, and Eugene England with less consistency, singles out significant form as the defining characteristic of art. Various but not incompatible answers have been offered as to what is signified by form: emotion (Merrill Bradshaw); a "revelation of reality" by the saying of "a particular something" in "a special way"; character, values, and outlook as revealed by style (Clinton Larson, Lorin Wheelwright, Eugene England, Elder Boyd K. Packer, Marden Clark); spirituality or the lack of it (Merrill Bradshaw, Clinton Larson, Elder Packer). At the opposite pole from the significant form definition is the definition of literature as some sort of thought "content" clothed in "form" which may or may not be essential to the final meaning of the work. Elder Orson F. Whitney,
Eugene England, and Elder Packer at times adhere to this view. Elder Whitney at times subscribes to a third view of literature, particularly of poetry, as being composed of typological symbols, poetry being construed to include any sort of type. A fourth definition of literary art, subscribed to at times by Lorin Wheelwright, Eugene England, and Elder Packer, is that of what C. S. Lewis terms the ikon, an object valued not for inherent qualities but for its associations with some other object of devotion or interest outside itself. A fifth grouping of writers, Elder Sterling W. Sill and Ronald Wilcox, view literature and the drama, respectively, almost exclusively in terms of their power to provide vicarious experience and to achieve for the audience a kind of negative capability.

As to what should be valued by Latter-day Saints in literature, according to these writers, it should be noted that for all of them the terms art and literature tend to be honorific—that is, each author tends to apply those words to those sorts of works that he values; thus formal perfection, moral and doctrinal purity, emotionally charged associations, or negative capability each become for different writers, and sometimes all at different times for a single writer, the primary elements of value in, as well as the primary elements in the definition of, literary art. That being the case, it is logically conceivable that a work highly esteemed as art by one Mormon critic—Elder Whitney, for example—might not even be admitted to discussion as art by another critic, such as Clinton Larson.

Despite these divergent and even contradictory definitions and values, there is an area of agreement among all of the writers.
There is virtually unanimous agreement that literature must ultimately be evaluated against the moral and doctrinal standards of the gospel. Of course, although all of these writers appreciate the power of literature to instruct as well as to please, some, such as Elders Whitney and Packer, seem to be interested in the didactic aspect of literature almost to the exclusion of all others, while others, mainly those who emphasize significant form, seem equally interested in beauty for its own sake, perhaps as one expression of the holiness of Zion. These writers perhaps would not all agree on what constitutes morality and truth in literature. On the one hand, Elders Packer and Whitney seem to tend strongly toward the view that morality and truth reside in the accurate presentation of gospel truths and values; whereas others, such as Clinton Larson, Elder Sill, and Ronald Wilcox, are also willing to admit the accurate presentation of diverse, even all, points of views as being of value to the Latter-day Saint. Again, despite these divergences, there is fundamental agreement that, as T. S. Eliot has said, literary criticism must be completed by criticism from a specific theological position, although whether a work is literature at all must be determined by strictly literary standards (it being necessary to remember that Mormon critics do not all agree on what those "strictly literary" standards should be).

There is also widespread agreement among these writers, and no apparent disagreement, that the Latter-day Saint should particularly value the artistic rendering of spiritual experience, this value being related to the belief of some Mormon critics—Elders Whitney and Packer explicitly, and Merrill Bradshaw and Clinton Larson
at least by strong implication—that literature can be directly inspired by the Holy Ghost. For those who emphasized significant form, in the belief that literary art is the revelation of reality by the saying of a particular thing in a particular way, this spiritual element in art becomes merged inseparably with the esthetic, and this most fully and explicitly in Clinton Larson's definition and advocacy of the baroque style. For those critics who distinguish sharply between form and content in literature, the locus of spirituality must be the moral or doctrinal proposition, and for the ikon theorist it must be in the capacity of the work to evoke the memory of some object of devotion or other emotion (there being, of course, no Mormon critic who maintains either of these latter two positions with complete consistency).

As to the third question of Mormon criticism, how evaluative criticism should be conducted, only those who emphasize significant form and Elder Packer, Eugene England, and Lorin Wheelwright have offered any definite answers. For the former group, accurate moral and theological evaluations must be preceded by formalistic interpretation and evaluation; in somewhat simplistic terms, Platonic criticism must be informed by Aristotelian criticism. Those critics who are less consistent in their theory of art are also less consistent in their method. For instance, for Elder Packer, who values some works as art for their moral, doctrinal, or spiritual validity or for their qualities as ikons, and separates these aspects of works from the formal aspects, no particular knowledge of the art form as such is required for the conduct of criticism, the witness of the Spirit being sufficient for the evaluation of the first kind of work, and the
emotional responses of the audience for the second kind. There is wide agreement among those who emphasize significant form that spiritual confirmation of critical judgments is necessary, but they differ from Elder Packer in their emphasis on the preliminary intellectual activity, in what might be described as a special application of the counsel to "study it out in your own mind" and then to ask the Lord "if it be right" (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:7-9). Lorin Wheelwright and Eugene England, insofar as they subscribe to the iKon theory of art, concur with Elder Packer on the importance of the audience's emotional responses. Lorin Wheelwright, alone, advocates a fourth method of criticism, a rather simple and extreme form of consensus genitum, actually speaking in terms of criticism by majority vote. Since Elder Packer, Eugene England, and Lorin Wheelwright also claim to value formal qualities in literature, they might be expected to discuss the place of formalistic criticism in Mormon esthetics, but none of them does so extensively or systematically and only Eugene England conducts that sort of criticism.

Mormon estheticians and literary critics, then, can be described as united in the belief that literary criticism must be completed by criticism from the specific theological position of the gospel, and as at least not in disagreement on the belief that such criticism must be guided and confirmed by the Spirit. On the basis of other issues, they may be placed in three categories: those (Merrill Bradshaw, Robert K. Thomas, Robert Rees, Clinton F. Larson, and Marden J. Clark) who consistently subscribe to a formalistic definition of literature and to the conduct of formal criticism prior to the conduct of moral and theological criticism; those (Elder Orson
F. Whitney, Lorin F. Wheelwright, Eugene England, and Elder Boyd K. Packer) who subscribe simultaneously to divergent definitions of literature (such as significant form, *ikon*, and embellished thought, or embellished thought and type) and shift accordingly in their standards of judgment and either shift in their critical method or suggest no method at all; and those (Elder Sterling W. Sill and Ronald Wilcox) who consistently view art in terms of negative capability, broadly defined (a value shared by Clinton Larson), and offer no other standards or any particular critical method. It would seem that, if any of these writers should fail to agree in their judgments of the esthetic or didactic qualities of any particular work as literature, it may be because they disagree more fundamentally on what kind of work should be considered literature at all, and that that may thus be the most important unsettled issue in Mormon criticism.
APPENDIX

Four Approaches to Criticism as Exemplified by

Robert K. Thomas's Analyses of Emerson's Days

1. Platonic

Unless we recognize this poem, and thereby identify both author and historical period, there is little need, in using a Platonic method, to try to discern either. Since we are gauging by profound truth, this alone is what we are looking for, and so we concentrate on the "message" of the poem. At first reading this seems to be a slightly unconventional poem on neglected opportunity. Because part of our belief is the necessity for each man "to work out his salvation" we are interested enough to read it again. This time we see that the theme is a little more complex than we thought. "Hypocritic days" suggests that we are deceived by what seem to be equal and endless opportunities. We then realize that the deception is not in the opportunities—they really are endless and magnificent—but in our base and unimaginative choices. Our "pleached garden"—that is, our hopelessly routine life—makes us insensitive to anything except the most obvious outward show. Our choices are inevitable and dismaying. We choose herbs (help for pain?) and apples (obvious satisfactions?) instead of the "sky that holds them all"—and we are immediately reminded of "seek ye first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added unto you." We leave this poem with our idea of opportunity deepened: perhaps the problem is not that we are away from home when opportunity knocks but that our homes must teach us to choose greatly from the gamut of daily opportunities which surround us.

2. Aristotelian

... We still do not need to know who wrote it or when, and we avoid the prose paraphrase of its "message," which

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is so often the hallmark of the Platonic approach. We concentrate rather on internal relationships. To begin, we note its overall form. The lines are unrhymed and uneven metrically, nor does it fit any of the standard verse patterns common in English poetry. Yet we note that there is a culmination of the first five lines in the sixth (even the length of the line reinforces this) and then a shift from metaphoric description of opportunity to the author's reaction to it in the last five lines. This rough balance and contrast is typical of the conflict which is the poem. "Hypocritic days" prepares us for the unreconciled "diadems and fagots," "bread . . . stars." By the end of the poem we realize that the conflict may not only be unresolved; it may even seem to be unresolvable. As man grows up, his daily requirements lead him to impose his will upon nature. Only a "pleached" or controlled garden will satisfy his needs. His problem is not that he is simply lulled into a false position by the regularity and monotony of each day's passing. The lines of the poem do not move easily. The meter is as irregular as life itself. The only pattern is opposition. The days may serve, but they do not cooperate. They are muffled in the beginning and still hooded ("solemn fillet") at the end. The balance between possibility and expediency is almost exact. The "scorn" which might precipitate action comes "too late." Nothing in such an interpretation suggests that the condition presented is either good or bad. It simply is, and the poem is your experience of it.

3. Longinian

It is important now to find out that "Days" was written in 1857 by an American, Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was the leading exponent of transcendentalism. This point of view—for it was hardly more formal than that—was an extremely individual one, but the "day" was a symbol which most of the transcendentalists shared. The twenty-four hour day, that is day and night, was an epitome of life, with its positive and negative aspects fused into a whole. Each day, in fact, was a commentary on life, and this helps explain Emerson's personification of Time and Day. "Morning wishes" becomes more meaningful as we realize that, in transcendentalism, morning is the symbol of youthful purity, the uncorrupted divine in man. Even such choices as "dervishes" are explained when we know the unusual interest of many transcendentalists in the East and Eastern religion. A dervish is usually a wandering priest, often under vows of poverty, who lives an austere life of the spirit while serving humbly. Such a symbol has all the right connotations for Emerson and his circle. But perhaps the most transcendental view
in the whole poem is the silence of the day, the dumbness of the dervishes. For nature reveals to man only what he is ready to receive; the gifts to each are "after his will." If man can remember his "morning wishes" and choose according to them, he will retain his divinity.

4. Horatian

Since "Days" is only a hundred years old, we still cannot expect the synthesis of critical judgment which Horace prizes. But we have been able to balance the vague and somewhat mystical interpretations of Emerson's contemporaries with the overly simple paraphrases of some of his early twentieth century detractors. If the poem continues to be read, it will gradually integrate the best of many interpretations. Perhaps our grandchildren will see this poem in the critical perspective most of us now have toward the works of Milton.
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A SURVEY OF MORMON LITERARY CRITICISM

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ABSTRACT

Three general questions concerning literature have been addressed by the writers considered in this thesis: What constitutes a work of literary art? What ought to be valued by Latter-day Saints in a literary work? How should criticism be conducted by Latter-day Saints? To the first question, five basic answers have been proposed: significant form, uplifting content clothed in decorative form, typological symbol, ikon (as the word is used by C. S. Lewis in An Experiment in Criticism), and capacity for helping the reader achieve a kind of "negative capability." These definitions also tend to be statements of value, and thus answer the second question, with the proviso that works must ultimately be tested against the theological standard of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As to the third question, virtually all of the writers agree that all critical judgments must be informed and confirmed by the Holy Spirit; otherwise, critical method, like critical value, is closely related to definition of literature.

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