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The Book of Mormon, like the Bible, is far from a generically unified work. Although the narratives, the epistles, the sermons, the exhortations, and the poems may well constitute a specialized encyclopedic form with a thoroughgoing figurative unity of the sort that Northrup Frye associates with the Bible, each section can profitably be read in terms of its own generic conventions in such a way that the understanding of the parts as well as the comprehension of the whole will be significantly enhanced.[1] The question of specific generic types within sacred writ is not simply an academic exercise in literary taxonomy, but rather a problem at the very heart of scriptural exegesis. One of the reasons, for example, that Isaiah appears particularly difficult to many readers may derive from the rather futile attempt to read the book as a simple linear narrative rather than as a collection of thematically related oracles. Much of the meaning of the Song of Solomon, moreover, depends directly on the generic assumptions that are initially made about the book.[2] Similarly, many passages from the Book of Mormon become more immediately and fully accessible when their study is guided by accurate generic inferences which facilitate interpretation in terms of appropriate conventions. To be sure, much can be said without any reference to the question of genre, but generic insights can heighten both the understanding and the appreciation of many passages. It might be argued that the use of generic concepts as a heuristic tool is tantamount to the inappropriate application of profane categories to the study of sacred texts and consequently in itself a violation of generic norms. The genre of sacred text, though, is very general, and sacred texts consist demonstrably of many more specific literary types involving various conventions and norms. Surely texts held to be religious in nature should be read with an eye to religious values while at the same time admitting of study in terms of appropriate generic practices which in turn add new levels and dimensions of meaning.[3]

Because by far the greatest portion of the Book of Mormon is narrative—though admittedly in several different ways—other literary modes embedded in the narrative flow are less obvious and consequently less easily identified and read in terms of their own unique generic conventions. One such passage occurs in the fourth chapter of 2 Nephi, verses 16 though 35, a passage that is often referred to as the "Psalm of Nephi," at least since Sidney Sperry provided this formulation in his commentary on

the Book of Mormon.[4] The question to be discussed with reference to these
verses is not whether they are a psalm in the biblical sense of the term but
rather the nature and extent of their poetic qualities and some of the most
central interpretive implications inextricably connected with their lyricism.

It may at first seem fatuous to argue for the presence of accomplished
poetry in a volume identifying itself as a translation, particularly if one remem-
bers Shelley's caveat that it is impossible to translate poetry[5] or Robert Frost's
quip that poetry is what gets lost in translation. Although Shelley's and
Frost's objection may well apply to the lyric mode they knew best—that
based in formal terms on acoustical patterning like rhythm, rhyme, and
alliteration and that which relies heavily on subtle connotations and asso-
ciations of individual words—it does not necessarily apply in general.

Poetry can be viewed more broadly and taken to include all those
utterances in which language artfully and significantly draws attention to
itself by the intensification of its own linguistic and formal properties;
poetry, thus, celebrates language as its medium of communication and as
at least part of its raison d'être.[6] While rhythm, meter, alliteration, asso-
nance, and rhyme are some of the ways most familiar to modern readers in
which the poet can foreground his language, they are by no means the only
possibilities at his disposal. In other epochs and in other cultures many dif-
ferent linguistic devices have been used. In the "Psalm of Nephi" just as in
Hebrew poetry, an intricately patterned system of ideatonal parallels is the
essence of lyricism. Logical, formal, or conceptual units are set parallel to
one another rather than acoustic properties as is the case with rhythm,
rhyme, alliteration, and assonance. Formal construction also survive, it
should be noted, the process of translation far more readily than purely
acoustic properties.[7]

This use of ideational parallelism in Hebrew poetry was first noticed
by medieval Jewish biblical scholars and was given its technical name—
parallelismus membrorum—during the eighteenth century by the Anglican
bishop and scholar Robert Lowth. The basic principle is that "every verse
must consist of at least two 'members,' the second of which must, more or
less completely, satisfy the expectation raised by the first."[8] A third member
may on occasion be present, but if there are more than three, it is usually
possible using some rationale to group the members into twos or threes.
Parallelism may exist, though, in many forms. The first and simplest is syn-
onymous parallelism which occurs when the first member states an idea
that is restated with variation by the second member:

> I am like a pelican of the wilderness;
> I have become like an owl of the ruins. [Psalm 102:7][9]

The second kind is antithetic parallelism in which the second member states
the idea of the first but in negative or contrasting form:

> A time to weep,
> And a time to laugh. [Ecclesiastes 3:4]

The third kind involves a certain parallelism of form but continuous rather than balanced thought. It remains questionable, though, whether this synthetic or formal parallelism should be counted as parallelism at all. Further subordinate and specialized forms of parallelism also are attested, the most important, perhaps, being that known as introverted in which the first member is parallel to the fourth and the second to the third.

The Bible, though, is by no means the only example of parallelism being used as an organizing poetic principle: parallel structural arrangements of varied kinds play an important role in the poetry of many folk traditions as well as in works of highly divergent modern poets. Walt Whitman, for example, frequently uses parallelism as a structural device as in Song of Myself.

> I too am not a bit tamed. I too am untranslatable.
> I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.[10]

Whitman is not alone in his interest in exploiting the poetic potential of formal parallelism: Charles Péguy, a French poet of the Third Republic, also makes extensive use of poetic parallelism, as does Augusto Frederico Schmidt, a Brazilian modernist who frequently drew on Péguy's stylistic innovations. [11] The poetry of Dylan Thomas abounds in parallelism of a particularly subtle and refined sort, as she first stanza of the poem "A Process in the Weather of the Heart" illustrates.

> A process in the weather of the heart
> Turns damp to dry; the golden shot
> Storms in the freezing tomb.
> A weather in the quarter of the veins
> Turns night to day; blood in their suns
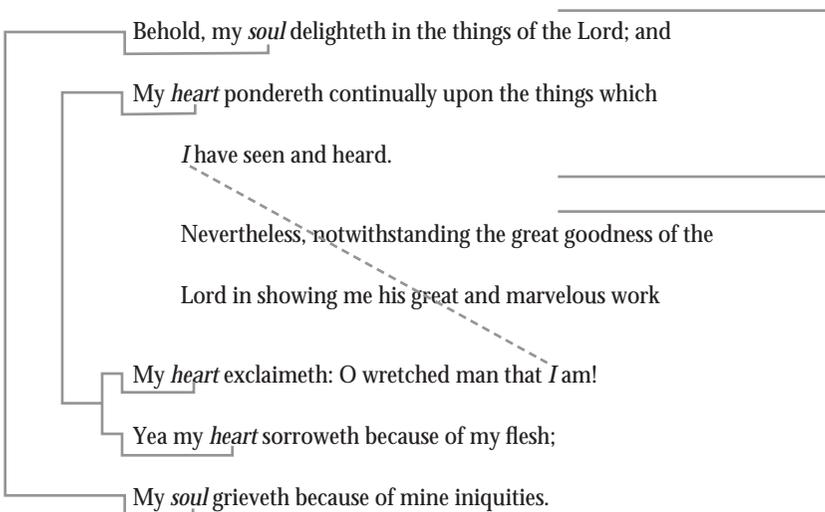> lights up the living worm.[12]

Modern poets not only have used parallelism as a particularly effective poetic device but have also on occasion sought to explain its importance. Gerard Manley Hopkins, for example, in an early essay which seeks to define the essence of poetic expression suggests that it is ultimately the use of parallelism on many levels that distinguishes poetry from other modes of discourse.

> But what the character of poetry is will be found best by looking at the structure of verse. The artificial part of poetry, perhaps we shall be right to say all artifice, reduces itself to the principle of parallelism. The structure of poetry is that of continuous parallelism, ranging form the technical so-called Parallelisms of Hebrew poetry and the antiphons of Church music up to the intricacy of Greek or Italian or English verse. . . . Now the force of this recurrence is to beget a recurrence or parallelism answering to it in the words or thought and, speaking roughly and rather for the tendency than the invariable result, the more marked parallelism in structure whether of elaboration

or of emphasis begets more marked parallelism in the words and sense. And moreover parallelism in expression tends to beget or passes into parallelism in thought. This point reached we shall be able to see and account for the peculiarities of poetic diction.[13]

Against the background of this assessment of the importance of parallelism as well as that of its rich and venerable tradition extending at least from the Old Testament through Dylan Thomas, the arresting formal parallelism of the "Psalm of Nephi" invites particular attention. Although comparisons between this passage and other poems making use of parallelism—biblical psalms, for example—may help to isolate and identify the nature of the passage's lyric impact, the issue in question is emphatically not the proximity per se of Book of Mormon poetics to any other specific system but rather the inherent lyric qualities of the "Psalm of Nephi."

The basic characteristics of the parallelism of the "Psalm of Nephi" can easily be seen in what may well serve as the first of the four stanzas of the Psalms.[14] The parallelism here is introverted or chiastic: the first member is antithetically parallel to the fourth, and the second synonymously to the third. In the first and the fourth members, the soul of the lyric I expresses two emotional effects—delight and grief respectively—and the source of the delight and grief are the antithetical poles in the individual's search for salvation, "the things of the Lord" and "mine iniquities." The parallelism of the second and third elements is somewhat more complex: the *heart* of the lyric I (in distinction to soul) engages in activities—pondering and exclaiming—which directly involve activities of the lyric I: "my *heart pondereth* continually upon the things which I have seen and heard" and "my *heart*

Behold, my *soul* delighteth in the things of the Lord; and

My *heart* pondereth continually upon the things which

I have seen and heard.

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the

Lord in showing me his great and marvelous work

My *heart* exclaimeth: O wretched man that *I* am!

Yea my *heart* sorroweth because of my flesh;

My *soul* grieveth because of mine iniquities.

exclaimeth: O wretched man that I am." The second element of the chiastic pair is itself a synonymously parallel couplet: "my heart exclaimeth" and "Yea my heart sorroweth." This sort of doubling of one element is found throughout the psalm and has the effect of conceptual reinforcement or expansion. The phrase in the middle of this stanza—"Nevertheless, notwithstanding the great goodness of the Lord in showing me his great and marvelous works"—is an introduction to the third member and the pivot at the center of the introverted parallelism. The lines of this stanza may be organized not only in this introverted parallelism but also in terms of a secondary synonymous couplet and triplet. The delight of the soul and the pondering of the heart are spiritual virtues that are extensions of one another whereas the heart's declaiming its wretchedness, the heart's sorrowing because of the flesh, and the soul's grieving because of iniquity are linked by their common concern with sin. It should be noted, moreover, that the soul, a relatively abstract notion, is appropriately concerned with abstractions—"the things of the Lord" and "mine iniquities," whereas the heart, a metaphorical but more concrete figure, deals with similarly concrete realities—"the things which I have seen and heard," "[the] wretched man that I am," and "my flesh." The verbs of each parallel structure also function in a telling way: the soul in delighting and grieving is engaging in essentially emotional activities, while the heart in pondering and exclaiming is performing more or less physical actions. The spiritual nature of the soul is, thus, emphasized by its emotive properties, and the corporality of the heart is suggested by its tendency toward action. The second element of the inner chiastic pair, though, describes the heart sorrowing, an obviously emotional quality. Rather than a contradiction or an anomaly within the structure, this line is a synthesis of the two poles and provides a carefully wrought transition from the inner chiastic pair to the outer.

The lines constituting the second stanza of the psalm present a far more complex but basically similar organization. Three chiastic pairs surround a nucleus of two sets of six parallel members with each set further divisible into sets of parallel couplets. The outermost structure (1 / 23–25) is defined by the use of the first person singular pronoun *I* as the subject of the sentence. The second element of the pair consists of three parallel members all in the form of a rhetorical question: "Why should I yield to sin?" "Why should I give way to temptations?" and "Why am I angry?" While the lexical parallelism of this outer pair is synonymous, the grammatical parallelism is antithetic. The second pair (2–19) is defined by the use of the heart as the subject of the sentence: "my heart groaneth" and "my heart weeps." The parallelism is further established by the conceptual proximity of "groaning" and "weeping." As with the first pair, the second element of this pair is composed of multiple members (19–22) in the form of

1   *I* am encompassed about, because of the temptations and the sins
     which do so easily beset me.

2   And when I desire to rejoice, my *heart* groaneth of my sins;

3   Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted.

4   My God hath been my support;

5   He hath led me through mine afflictions in e wilderness;

6   And he hath preserved me upon the waters of the great deep.

7   He hath filled me with his love, even unto the consuming of my flesh.

8   He hath confounded mine enemies, unto the causing of them to quake
     before me.

9   Behold, he hath heard my cry by day, and

10   He hath given me knowledge by visions in the nighttime.

11   And by day, have I waxed bold in mighty prayer before him;

12   Yea, my voice have I sent up on high;

13   And angels have come down and ministered unto me.

14   And upon the wings of his Spirit hath my body been carried away
     upon exceeding high mountains.

15   And mine eyes have beheld great things, yea, even too great for man;

16   Therefore I was bidden that I should not write them.

17   O then, If I have seen so great things,

18   If the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited
     men in so much mercy,

19   Why should my *heart* weep and

20   my soul linger in the valley of sorrow, and

21   my flesh waste away, and

22   my strength slacken, because of mine afflictions?
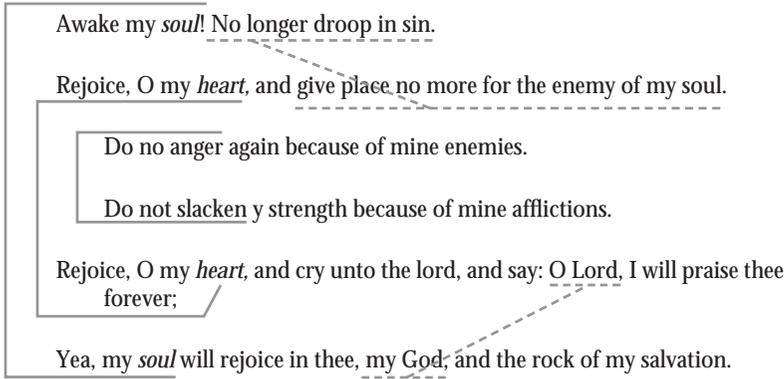
23   And why should *I* yield to sin, because of my flesh?

24   Yea, why should *I* give way to temptations, that the evil one have place
     in my heart to destroy my peace and afflict my soul?

25   Why am *I* angry because of mine enemy?

a question: here, though, two couplets replace the triplet of the first pair. The first of the two deals metaphorically with the afflictions of the heart and soul—the principal elements of the preceding stanza—while the second is concerned with the more concrete concepts of atrophying flesh and strength. In addition to this relatively obscure stanza—while the second is concerned with the more concrete concepts of atrophying flesh and strength. In addition to this relatively obscure introverted parallelism, the last seven members (19–25)—the couplets and the concluding triplet—are all parallel to one another in terms of their rhetorically interrogative form and their implied antipathy toward that which would detract from a rich relationship with God. Similarly, the first two lines of the stanza (1–2), which were respectively the first elements of the two chiastic pairs, are synonymously parallel in describing what alienates man from God. The inner nucleus of the stanza (5–16) is introduced by a couplet announcing the subject of the next six lines: "Nevertheless, I know in whom I have trusted. / My God hath been my support" (3–4). This introductory couplet is in turn balanced by another couplet which is a kind of summary of the last six lines and the bridge to what follows: "If I have seen so great things, / If the Lord in his condescension unto the children of men hath visited me in so much mercy" (17–18). The first six of the twelve-line nucleus are all parallel in that they specifically detail how God has been a support and in that all have parallel structures beginning, "He hath . . ." (5–10). The first two of the six (5–6) are linked by their description of God's protection from environmental dangers, "the wilderness" and "the waters of the great deep"; the second two (7–8) by detailing God's love for the righteous and the confounding of the enemies of righteousness; and the third (9–10) by the play on the antithesis of day and night. The second set of six lines (11–16) turns from the actions of God to those of man but can similarly be divided into three couplets. The first (11–12) portrays the ways in which the poetic voice has been raised to God; the second (13–14) discusses the ministrations of divine messengers; and the last (15–16) mentions the results of these ministrations. The parallelism of this last couplet, it must be admitted, is certainly not as that of the others, but it is similar to the synthetic or formal parallelism common in Hebrew verse.

The third stanza is the simplest, yet, perhaps, the most elegant of the entire poem and parallels, moreover, as a stanza the first stanza of the psalm. The outer chiastic pair is defined by the awakening and rejoicing of the soul, while the inner pair is characterized by the rejoicing of the heart. The first member of the inner pair is supported by a subordinate couplet that expands the meaning of the line. The chiastic pairing of statements about the heart and the soul is, thus, the structural foundation of both stanzas and provides a formal parallelism of a new order.

Awake my *soul*! No longer droop in sin.

Rejoice, O my *heart,* and give place no more for the enemy of my soul.

    Do no anger again because of mine enemies.

    Do not slacken y strength because of mine afflictions.

Rejoice, O my *heart,* and cry unto the lord, and say: O Lord, I will praise thee
    forever;

Yea, my *soul* will rejoice in thee, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

    This strophic parallelism is continued in the fourth stanza in that it generally reflects the structure of the second stanza. The outer chiastic shell around the conceptual nucleus of the second stanza is missing in the fourth, but the structural pattern of the nucleus itself still obtains. The stanza consists of two parts, each introduced by the parallel exclamatory expressions, "O Lord." As in the second stanza, the first part describes the actions of the Lord, albeit those for which the lyric I is praying, while in the second part the actions of the lyric I itself are evoked. In both sections the lines are even more intimately associated in conceptual couplets and triplets. In the first part, lines one and two are synonymously parallel, and line two forms an outer chiastic pair with line eleven, both centering on the escape from enemies. Line three and line ten form the inner chiastic pair in that they deal with the antithesis of sin and righteousness. Lines four and seven are related by the opening or not opening of gates and are supported by a subordinate pair, lines eight and nine, based on the image of walking the path of life. This image is taken up again in the couplet consisting of lines twelve and thirteen and enlarged in another subordinate couplet also based on the same image.

    In the second part, lines sixteen, seventeen, and eighteen constitute a triplet defined by the trust of the lyric I in the Lord and expanded by a subordinate couplet evincing the curse upon those who trust in the arm of flesh, lines nineteen and twenty. Lines twenty-one and twenty-two form a parallel couplet in their description of the manner in which God will give liberally. The final three lines—twenty-three through twenty-five—are a triplet which enumerate the ways in which the lyric I will raise his voice to God. The second part is thus symmetrical in that the central couplet is surrounded by two triplets.[15]

    The representation of this passage in poetic lines and stanzas rather than in the usual narrow, newspaper-like columns leads unavoidably to the

O Lord, wilt thou redeem my soul? 1

Wilt thou deliver me out of the hands of mine enemies? 2

Wilt thou make me that I may shake at the appearance of sin? 3

May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, 4

Because that my heart is broken and 5

my spirit is contrite! 6

O Lord, wilt thou not shut the gates of thy righteousness before me, 7

That I may walk in the path of the low valley, 8

That I may be strict in the plain road! 9

O Lord, wilt thou encircle me around in the robe of thy righteousness! 10

O Lord, wilt thou make a way for mine escape before mine enemies! 11

Wilt thou make my path straight before me! 12

Wilt thou not place a stumbling block in my way— 13

But that thou wouldst clear my way before me, 14

And hedge not up my way, but the ways of mine enemy. 15

O Lord, I have trusted in thee, and 16

I will trust in thee forever. 17

I will not put my trust in the arm of flesh; 18

For I know that cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh. 19

Yea, cursed is he that putteth his trust in man or maketh flesh his arm. 20

Yea, I know that God will give liberally to him that asketh. 21

Yea, my God will give me, If I ask not amiss; 22

Therefore, I will lift up my voice unto thee: 23

Yea, I will cry unto thee, my God, the rock of my righteousness. 24

Behold, my voice shall forever ascend up unto thee, my rock and mine everlasting God. Amen. 25

insight that this passage is extraordinarily tightly structured in linguistic and conceptual terms and differs substantially from the surrounding narrative sections.[16] Its balanced ideational patterns are unlike the exhortations, the prayers, the epistles, and the epic narrative that constitute most of the Book of Mormon. This careful and obviously intentional structuring certainly seems to invite—if not to demand—interpretation on its own terms, and the terms that the passages seem to suggest are those that easily accommodate the arresting emphasis given to language as language, to formal structure as structure. The poet—a designation entirely appropriate for the author of this passage—seems intent upon drawing the careful reader's attention to the aesthetic fulfillment that intricate formal balance can provide and, in so doing, creates a text that is at least in part self-referential. Although debate continues on the definition of poetry and, indeed, whether a generic category as large as poetry can be defined in any meaningful way, many critics could agree that the extensive parallelism of the passage would warrant at least a tentative reading in terms of general poetic conventions.

A lyric convention which very significantly distinguishes a poetic reading of the passage from one determined by the norms and expectations of expository prose, for example, is the lyric practice of concentrating and symbolizing meaning. The delight of the soul in the things of the Lord is, thus, an animating and vivifying attitude rather than a prosaic report on psychic health; the grief because of iniquity is a soul-searing regret rather than a relatively passive evocation of guilt. And similarly, the final resolve to cry unto God eternally is heightened and amplified by the power of lyrical articulation to the level of an all-consuming passion. The joy in righteousness, the grief for sin, and the resolve to praise God are, moreover, all universalized and, within the poetic framework, all generally accessible. The text does not evince a historical time in the same sense as the ambient narrative with its specific temporal references, but rather evokes a heightened, eternal lyric present. The past events are only prior to the enduring poetic present and the future tenses suggest more a logical consequence than a chronological ordering. By recognizing the non-temporal lyric time, the reader engages the mind of the lyric I in a highly intimate yet universalizing way which is notably different from the reader's contact with the epic narrator.

In all verbal structures identified as literary, or more especially as lyric, meaning and value ultimately depend not on descriptive accuracy but rather on conformity with the postulates implied by the work itself. The poem does not literally describe nor does it directly assert: as poetry, the "Psalm of Nephi" cannot necessarily be taken to provide reliable information about Nephi's actions or attitudes.[17] The psalm rather evokes a lyric world responsive to its own internal rhythm and having only an indirect

relationship with the world of externality. The inward striving for heightened reality must, perforce, take precedence over the outward motion toward empirical reality. In this rarefied world of lyric intensity, truth becomes, at least in part, a question of poetic (poietic) coherence rather than referential veracity.

When the "Psalm of Nephi" is read with attention to its lyric qualities, it may be subsumed within the lyric genre and thus be in a position to enrich and to be enriched by other poems. Although it can be esteemed and valued in aesthetic isolation, its significance and appreciation expand when read in relation to and comparison with other works. Other poems may also conceivably emerge in new light as their poetic context is expanded to accommodate this poem.[18] It is true that in the sciences the discovery of a new example of a given species as a whole. Yet in matters aesthetic concern, this is not the case: each new example necessarily not only extends and enlarges but also subtly and invariably changes the genre.[19]

A particularly good example of this kind of intertextual enrichment with regard to the "Psalm of Nephi" can be seen in its comparative juxtaposition to thematically similar Old Testament psalms. Psalm 51, which tradition holds was occasioned by Nathan the prophet's visit to David after David had sinned with Bathsheba, like the "Psalm of Nephi" express profound grief for sin and transgression and looks forward to God's righteousness. David's pleas to "create . . . a clean heart, O God and renew a right spirit" (v. 10) evoke the sympathetic vibrations of Nephi's heart that sorrows because of his flesh and of his soul that grieves because of his iniquities but nonetheless knows in whom to trust and upon whom to rely. Although Nephi's sorrow for sin is certainly genuine and sincere, the gravity and immediacy of David's transgression emerges with harrowing power in contract. David yearns for deliverance, so that his tongue can sing aloud of the righteousness of God (v. 14); yet in comparison, Nephi's resolve to lift his voice forever to the rock of his righteousness, to his everlasting God, is at once more ecstatic and more compelling. When Nephi exclaims, "May the gates of hell be shut continually before me, because that my heart is broken and my spirit is contrite!" he echoes David's assertion that "the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (v. 17). And with this poetic echo comes some of the urgency and tragedy of David's penitence that shapes and colors the aesthetic impact of the line in such a subtle yet important way that it could be missed if the generic similarity of the two statements were not explicit.

Similarly, the avowal of the poet of the eighty-fourth psalm that "my soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the LORD; my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God" (v. 2) and Nephi's affirmation that "my soul delighteth in the things of the Lord and my heart pondereth

continually upon things which I have seen and heard" mutually provide enriching and broadening interpretive contexts which potentially render the broadest meaning of both passages more accessible and more fully real.

Yet one further and more distant comparison may well serve to illustrate the point. In the thirty-first canto of "Purgatorio," Dante's weakness and shortcomings are brought fully and painfully to his mind. He stands conscience-stricken and penitent with his eyes cast toward the ground as Beatrice rehearses his transgressions; he is then told that the grief at hearing is not sufficient, so he must lift his eyes to behold and to experience even greater pain. Eventually the suffering is too great for Dante to endure; he collapses exclaiming: "Tanta riconoscenza il cor mi morse/ ch'io caddi vinto" (So much recognition [i.e., self-recognition, self-condemnation] bit at my heart, that I feel overcome).[20] By means of a sensitivity to certain broadly shared generic conventions coupled with even the vaguest memory of Dante's penitential collapse at the sight of his weakness, the experience of hearing Nephi's heart exclaim, "O wretched man that I am," of seeing the poet come to an awareness of his own shortcomings to the extent that his heart groans and weeps, can be heightened, extended, and enriched and, more significantly, moved one step closer perhaps, to full poetic universality. The two passages partake of the same traditions, and the lyric strength of one, consequently, poetically reinforces the other.

Neither the enrichment nor, indeed, the aesthetic fulfillment it produces in itself justifies the application of lyric conventions to the reading of the "Psalm of Nephi." Ultimately, the reason for reading this text as a poem is that the complex system of parallelisms suggests the author intended, at least in part, to call attention to language, his medium of expression, to write a text which was, at least to a degree, self-referential, and to celebrate the essence and power of the word as such: he intended his text should be read as a poem. By reading these words as they were intended to be read, by engaging the poetic mind, indeed the prophetic mind, on its own terms, the reader is warranted the most profound understanding of the meaning of the text and the richest appreciation of its significance.[21]

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1. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1957), pp. 315–16.

2. See *The Anchor bible: The Song of Songs,* ed. and trans., with commentary, Marvin H. Pope (New York: Doubleday, 1977), as an example of the problem of generic identification.

3. See E. D. Hirsch, Jr., *Validity in Interpretation* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1967), pp. 68–126, for a detailed description of the importance of accurate generic definition in the process of interpretation. See also Hans Robert Jauss, *Literaturgeschichte als Provocation* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970), pp. 173–83.

4. *Book of Mormon Compendium* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1968), pp. 152–53. Although Professor Sperry may be right in his unsubstantiated argument that "this is a true psalm in both form and ideas," he seems to have misunderstood the basic poetic structure of this passage, at least insofar as his arrangement of lines and stanzas allows inference. Reynolds and Sjodahl in George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Philip C. Reynolds, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1955), 1:264–71, describe the passage as "A Song of Nephi" and call attention to some of its poetic qualities. The proximity of the passage to Hebrew poetry is also emphasized. At times the analysis is rather superficial, and many of the central lyric elements seem to have been misunderstood.

5. "It was as wise to cast a violet into a crucible that you might discover the formal principle of its colour spring again from its seed, or it will bear no flower—and this is the burthen of the curse of Babel." ("A Defense of Poetry," *The Complete Works of Percy Bysshe Shelley,* ed. Roger Ingpen and Walter E. Peck, 10 vols. [New York: Gordian Press; London: Ernest Benn, 1965], 7:114.)

6. This view of poetry is based on insights of the Prague School aestheticians and structuralist approaches to poetry. Jan Mukarovsky argues, for example, that "in poetic language foregrounding achieves maximum intensity to the extent of pushing communication into the background as the objective of expression and of being used for its own sake; it is not used in the services of communication, but in order to place in the foreground the act of expression, the act of speech itself" ("Standard Language and Poetic Language," A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style, ed. and trans. Paul L. Garvin [Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1964], p. 19). Roman Jakobson makes a similar point: "The set (Einstellung) toward the MESSAGE as such, focus on the message for its own sake, is the POETIC function of language. . . . Poetic function is not the sole function of verbal art but only its dominant, determining function, whereas in all other verbal activities it Acts as a subsidiary, accessory constituent. This function, by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects." ("Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," Style in Language, ed. Thomas Sebeok [Cambridge: Technology Press of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1960], p. 356.)

7. See Ruth apRoberts, "Old Testament Poetry: The Translatable Structure," PMLA 92 (1979): 987–1004. Matthew Arnold was also aware of the translatable potential of Old Testament poetry:

> And the effect of Hebrew poetry can be preserved and transferred in a foreign language, as the effect of other great poetry cannot. The effect of Homer, the effect of Dante, is and must be in great measure lost in translation, because their poetry is a poetry of metre, or of rhyme, or both; and the effect of these is not really transferable. A man may make a good English poem with the matter and thoughts of Homer or Dante, may even try to reproduce their metre, or to reproduce their rhyme; but the metre and rhyme will be in truth is own, and the effect will be his, not the effect of Homer or Dante. Isaiah's, on the other hand, is a balance of thought, conveyed by a corresponding balance of

sentence; and the effect of this can be transferred to another language. ("Intro-
duction to Isaiah of Jerusalem," *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, 15 vols. [New
York: AMS Press, 1970], 11:333–34.

8. Theodore H. Robinson, *The Poetry of the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth,
1947), p. 21. See also Stanley Gevirtz, *Patterns in the Early Poetry of Israel* (Chicago:
University of Chicago Press, 1963, 1963), and Freedman, New York: Ktav Publishing
House, 1972). James Muilenburg provides a useful description of the value and limits
of form criticism and *Gattungforschung* in "Form Criticism and Beyond," *Journal
of Biblical Literature,* vol. 88, pt 1 (March 1969), pp. 1–18. James L. Kugel's *The Idea of
Biblical Poetry: Parallelism and Its History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981) did
not appear soon enough to be considered in this study.

9. All biblical quotations are form the Kind James Version.

10. Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself," stanza 52, *Leaves of Grass*, ed. Harold W.
Blodgett and Sculley Bradley, vol. 9 of *The Collected Writings of Walt Whitman*, ed. Gay
Wilson Allen and Sculley Bradley (New York: New York University Press, 1965), p. 89.

11. See Joseph Barbier, *Le Vocabulaire le Syntaxe et le Style des Poemes Reguliers de
Charles Peguy* (Paris: Editions Berger-Levrault, 1957), especially pp. 434–56 for a dis-
cussion of Peguy's use of parallelism. See Jon M. Tolman, "A. F. Schmidt and C. Peguy:
A Comparative Stylistic Analysis," *Comparative Literature Studies* 11 (December 1974):
277–305, for a discussion of Schmidt's use of parallelism and Peguy's influence on him.

12. *The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas* (New York: New Directions, 1957), p. 6.

13. "Poetic Diction," *The Journals and Papers of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, ed.
Humphrey House and completed by Graham Storey (London: Oxford University
Press, 1959), pp. 83–84. For a discussion of the import of parallelism in poetry from a
linguistic point of view, see Roman Jakobson, "Grammatical Parallelism and Its Russ-
ian Facet," *Language* 42 (1966): 399–429. See also Paul Kiparsky, "The Role of Linguis-
tics in a Theory of Poetry," *Daedalus* 102 (Summer 1973): 231–44.

14. The stanza divisions used in this analysis are, of course, not in the printed text
of the Book of Mormon, nor are they even suggested. They are, rather, divisions that
the structure of the passage itself seems to dictate and have been used here to facilitate
analysis. The line Numbers refer to lines within the stanza. The terms *line* and *member*
are used more or less synonymously. In the course of this discussion, several passages
will be described as exhibiting introverted or chiastic parallelism. The term and concept
of chiasmus have been widely discussed and have invited considerable speculation in
certain circles; in the context of what follows, chiasmus is to be understood only in the
sense of a rhetorical figure similar to *antimetabole* which has been used by writers—
both religious and secular—since antiquity. The essential feature is an *abba* pattern in
which the second part of the structure is balanced against the first but in reverse order
as in the poetic line "Flowers are lovely, love is flowerlike." In the "Psalm of Nephi,"
it will be noted, chiastic structures are much more extended. (See the article on chias-
mus in Alex Preminger, ed., *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, enlarged ed.
[Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974], p. 116.)

15. These embedded chiastic patterns could also well be considered in terms of the
rhetorical principle associated with ring composition, a technique with a long and
extensive history in which the final element in a series reflects or echoes the first in
some way, the penultimate the second, and so on. This procedure was first investigated
by W. A. A. van Otterlo in *Untersuchungen über Begriff, Anwendung und Entstebung der
griechischen Ringkomposition, Mededelingen der Nederlandsche Akademie van Weten-
schappen, Afdeling Letterkunde,* NS 7, no. 3 (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers

Maatschappij, 1944); "Ein merkwürdige Kompositions form der älteren griechischen Literatur," *Mnemosyne,* 3d ser. 12 (1944); and *De Ringcompositie als Opbouwprincipe in de epische Gedichten van Homerus, Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Nederlandsche Akademie van Wetenschappen, Afdeling Letterkunde,* NS 51, no. 1 (Amsterdam: Noord-Hollandsche Uitgevers Maatschappij, 1948). Cederic H. Whitman extends and amplifies this approach in *Homer and the Heroic Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1958). (See especially the detailed foldout chart at the back of the book. See also Julia Haig Gaisser, "A Structural Analysis of the Digressions in the Iliad and the Odyssey," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 73 [1969]: 1–44.) This method of analysis has also been applied to literary traditions other than the ancient Greek (see David Buchan, The *Ballad and the Folk* [London: Routledge, 1972]; John D. Niles, "Ring-Composition in La Chanson de Roland and La Chancun de Willame," *Olifant* 1 [December 1973]: 4–12; John D. Niles, "Ring Composition and the Structure of Beowulf," *PMLA* 94 [1979]: 924–35.) Of particular interest in conjunction with the "Psalm of Nephi" is Michael Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22)," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 26 (1975): 15–38.

16. The present arrangement in poetic lines and stanzas does not alone create, determine, or define per se the lyricism of the passage but rather makes more obvious the inherent lyric elements obscured by printing conventions. For an exchange of letters concerning the implications of typographical rearrangements, see the TLS of 4 February 1965, p. 87, for the beginning of the controversy which continues in the issues of 11 February 1965, p.107, and 18 February 1965, p. 127, the latter touching on the question of biblical poetry. Finally, in a brief article in the issue of 25 February 1965, p. 147, an earlier (27 September 1928) letter of T. S. Eliot discussing the question is published. The question is also discussed by Hirsch, *Validity in Interpretation,* pp. 94–98. Jonathan Culler raises the issue with regard to the generic expectations that typographical rearrangements can imply (see Structuralist Poetics [Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1975], pp. 161–62; see also Gerard Genette, *Figures II* [Paris: Seuil, 1969], pp. 150–51).

17. Hans-Georg Gadamer argues convincingly that the essential difference between literary and nonliterary texts resides in their fundamentally different claims to veracity. ". . . der Unterschied zwischen einem literarischen Kunstwerk und irgendeinem anderen literarischen Text [ist] kein so grundsätzlicher. Gewiss besteht ein Unterschied zwischen der Sprache der dichterischen Prosa und der 'wissenschaftlichen' Prosa. Man kann diese Unterschiede gewiss auch vom Gesichtspunkt der literarischen Formung aus betrachten. Aber der wesentliche Unterschied solcher verschiedener 'Sprachen' liegt offenbar woanders, nämlich inder Verschiedenheit des Wahrheitsanspruches, der von ihnen erhoben wird." (*Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutic*, 3. erweiterte Auflage [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1972], p.155.) It is, thus, questionable whether the "Psalm of Nephi" gives the reader any reliable information about Nephi's actions or attitudes. This view is contrary to that represented by Reynolds and Sjodahl and more recently by Steve Gilliland, "'Awake My Soul!': Dealing Firmly with Depression," Ensign 8 (August 1978): 37–41. (See also Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, pp. 74–76.) Gadamer's view of poetry, however has not gained universal acceptance. Among the opposing theories, for example, is that advanced by Kate Hamburger in *Die Logik der Dichtung* (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett Verlag, 1957) in which lyric poetry is approached as a "real utterance" (*Wirklichkeitsaussage*) having the same status as a historical narrative.

18. T. S. Eliot advances this general arguments in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Selected Essays, new ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and World, 1964),

pp. 3–11. Though working within a very different framework, that of Russian formalism and semiotic theory, Julia Kristeva makes a similar point. ". . . tout texte se construit comme mosaîque de citations, tout texte est absorption et transformation d'un autre texte. A la place de la notion d'intersubjectivité s'installe celle d'intertextualité, et le langage poétique se lit, au moins, comme double." (Σημειωτικη *Recherches pour une Sémanalyse* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969], p.146).

19. ". . . *toute* oeuvre modifie l'ensemble des possibles, chague nouvel example change l'espèce. . . . Plus exactement, nous ne reconnaissons à un texte le droit de figurer dans l'histoire de la literature ou dans celle de la science, que pour autant qu'il apporte un changement à l'idee qu'on se faisait jusqu' alors de l'une ou de l'autre acrivite. Les textes que ne remplissent pas cette condition passent automatiquement dans une autre categorie: celle de la literature dite 'populaire,' 'de masse,' là; celle de l'exercise scolaire, ici." (Tzvetan Todorov, *Introduction à la litterature fantastique* [Paris: Seuil, 1970], p. 10.)

20. Dante *Purgatorio* 11. 88–89. (The edition cited is that edited by Giorgio Petrocchi [Rome: A. Mondadori for the Società Dantesca Italiana, 1966–68]. The translation is my own. I side with Singleton against Grandgent in taking Dante's collapse to result from his contrition, the last stage of the sacrament of penance, rather than satisfaction. (See Charles S. Singleton, ed., *The Divine Comedy*, Purgatorio, 2. Commentary, Bollingen Series 80 [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973], p. 767.)

21. To regard Nephi as a poet is entirely consistent with what is otherwise known about him. Hugh Nibley in *An Approach to the Book of Mormon*, 2d ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1964), pp. 220–21, notes that "in Lehi's day an inspired leader had to be a poet." Nephi, moreover, of all other figures in the Book of Mormon, seems most concerned with questions of language and is the most moved by the difficult yet lyrical mode of Isaiah.