CAROL LYNN PEARSON. *Beginnings*. Provo, Utah: Trilogy Arts Publication, 1967. 63 pp. $2.50.

(Reviewed by Edward L. Hart, professor of English at Brigham Young University. Dr. Hart, a former Rhodes Scholar at Oxford, has published in *Beloit Poetry Journal, Western Humanities Review, Shakespeare Quarterly, PMLA* and *Bucknell Review* as well as *BYU Studies* and *The Improvement Era*.)

Although it is refreshing to meet with so devout an assertion of faith as is found in Carol Lynn Pearson's *Beginnings,* one wishes that the earnestness were matched by an equally viable poetic art. The reviewer, having come to an examination of the work with a predisposition in its favor (in view of its reputed wide sale), found himself, poem after poem, expecting more than was delivered.

The chief cause of disappointment was the failure of most of the poems to *be* poems. In reading poetry, one expects to find the author putting to good use those devices that yield a high concentration of poetic effect. If rhythm, sound, and tropes are not functioning in a more concentrated and effective way than they do in prose, we must ask: Why is this in the form of poetry instead of prose? When the author, in "Ritual," says, "All cries out/For form," we are tempted to respond, "Amen." Rhythm, sound, and figures, are, of course, more than adjuncts of meaning. They reinforce meaning and, in fact, become meaning. I have failed, in *Beginnings,* to find any place where it seems to me that the sound and the rhythm of a poem have an organic function, any place where they are more than decorative embellishments.

Most of the poems are in free verse, which is another way of saying that metrical pattern and line length are not established and repeated. This choice of free verse as the predominant pattern seems to me a wise choice on the part of the author because those few poems having meter succeed less well, on the whole, than those in free verse. For the some six or seven poems in conventional verse, the author has employed a ballad meter, quatrains made up of alternating iambic tetrameter and trimeter lines, as in the following poem, "To a Beloved Skeptic":

> I cannot talk with you of God
> Since sober wise you grew;

So my one recourse in charity
Is to talk with God of you.

This comes off pretty well, with the clever reversal in the last line. But the wit is achieved at the expense of tone. I suspect that the "beloved skeptic" will find "charity" extended to him somewhat condescending and that he will likely be offended by the smugness of the familiarity with which the persona cuddles up to God. Aside from this, prosodically, there seems to be no relationship between the form and the meaning. Rhythm, sound, and structure alike seem irrelevant and externally imposed. How, for example, can one justify the inverted word order of the second line, except as an expedient to place the rhyming word at the end of the line?

Other poems employing the ballad stanza fare even less well. The rhythm of "Day-old Child," for example, seems singularly inappropriate because it suggests movement and there is none. It suggests the kind of action found in the ballads: a fast moving, highly concentrated narrative with overtones of the weird and the wild. Actually, the mood of "Day-old Child" is one of quiet contemplation. From this, leaving the conventional verses, we descend to the weakest of all, a poem called "Bound," which moves with the remorseless, inevitably trite beat of a valentine verse.

In her figurative language, the author shows much promise. Perhaps in figures more than in anything else a poet's true capacity for excitement over words and inventiveness becomes apparent. I was struck most, in *Beginnings,* as far as figurative language is concerned, by the effectiveness of the metaphor in the first stanza of "Guilt" (ballad stanza again):

I have no vulture sins, God,
That overhang my sky,
To climb, grey-feathering the air,
And swoop carnivorously.

This, it seems to me, is well imagined. The imagery is clear, appropriate, and consistently developed. The metaphor makes sharp and immediate the threat to self of great sins. The shadows that are connoted by the "overhang" of the vulture foreshadow the meaningful doom of a person's being consumed in the flesh by his own sins. This is good, and to me this stanza is the poetic highlight of the volume.

The second stanza reads:

> It's just the tiny sins, God,
> That from memory appear
> Like tedious, buzzing flies to dart
> Like static through my prayer.

This begins well. The imagery is still appropriate; if the big sins are vultures, the little sins may, consistently, be gnats. Vultures can eat flesh and insects can suck blood. Either way we are consumed (though I could wish the author here again in the second line had not inverted word order, spoiling a colloquial tone for the sake of a rhyme). In the last line, the flies, however (instead of mildly annoying us with stings), are like static; the imagery is shifted, the mood is broken, the natural aptness of the figure is lost, and we are left at the end with the mechanical tinniness of *static.* Still, this is, I should say, a successful poem.

Part of my annoyance with the last line of "Guilt," I am now aware, stems from my repugnance at the comparison of prayer to a mechanical contraption like a radio—a comparison made in another poem called "Prayer":

> This radio set
> Called prayer
> Is designed
> For remarkably
> Simple repair.
> When the lines fail,
> There is no doubt
> Which half
> Of the set
> Is out.

Somehow the analogy (aside from the fact that it is a hackneyed comparison) has the effect of cheapening prayer, of pulling it down to the level of gadgetry. This is especially true when, as in this poem, there is a confusion in the imagery. "When the *lines* fail" is more suggestive of a gadget telephone than of a gadget rado. Even if it were carefully explained that the *lines* are "lines of communication," we are still balked because this is itself still one more trite, mechanical metaphor.

In still other poems it seems to me that the values of religion are cheapened by weak comparisons. In "Investment,"

for example, we are told concerning the birth of a child that "what is bought/ With coin of pain—/ Is dearly kept." Rather than enhancing the value of the birth, the argot of the market place cheapens it by making it common.

The most pervasive imagery of *Beginnings* is associated with the physiology of birth or of prebirth, the embryonic; and not being a mother myself, I am overpowered in the fetal presence, not unlike a father in the waiting room. But here it is not so much the words that betray me into uneasiness as it is the pictures. I am not unaware of the intended symbolism, but somehow the adult in the fetal position on the dust jacket (and in the first picture inside the book) puts me off, reminding me of nothing so much as those unfortunates huddled in this position in sad regression on the floors of the state hospital. The author has forgotten that in the beginning was the *word,* not the picture. I know few books of poems whose value has been enhanced by illustration. Unless a person's name is William Blake, he will probably be better off letting his words stand, as they inevitably must anyway, on their own merits. And speaking of words, I should think the author would be well advised to avoid such solecisms as *specked* (p. 7) and *til* (p. 34). *Specked* can hardly be thought to have connotations different from or better than those of the existing word *speckled;* and I see no justification whatever for creating a word to replace the ancient and respectable English word *till.*

In summation, concerning the overall effect of this volume, I am convinced that the author has revealed some budding powers. As they appear in this volume, likewise, I believe them to be predominantly powers of wit rather than of poetry. The individual pieces, at their best, have a Dorothy Parkeresque quality, a cleverness in turn of phrase, as in "To the Mormon now Blessed with Roses instead of Tar and Feathers."

Remember Aesop's
Tale of the
Traveler?
Please note:
The wind failed
To make him
Shed his coat.
It was the sun
That won.

I believe, however, that the author gives hints of qualities that can be developed beyond wit into the genuine poetic. This volume is, after all, as the title says, *Beginnings;* and full-fledged maturity is not to be expected from the start. The author is young, and one hopes and expects that in subsequent volumes she will submit herself more fully to the disciplines of the craft.

LLOYD, K., PRICE, K., MERRELL, V. D., JOHNSON, E. *The Church Executive: Building The Kingdom Through Leadership Development.* Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1967. 90 pp. $1.50.

(Reviewed by Joseph Bentley, associate professor of educational psychology at University of Utah. Dr. Bentley has published widely and presently has a book at the press.)

It may be that the most important aspect of the training project reported in this book is that it actually happened! By this I mean to say that an administrative training program for Church leaders was organized, designed, and carried out. The fact that it was planned and executed by competent and trained professionals and that it carried the implicit, if not explicit, support of the church hierarchy (Howard W. Hunter attended the first session in Los Angeles and spoke informally) makes this training program a significant event.

The issue of training programs for LDS Church leaders is one that has not been fully explored. The relationship between a formal educational or training program and reliance upon the powers of inspiration and revelation is not clear. For example, for generations we in the Church have taken pride in the fact that our leaders are not "learned" men in the sense that they have attended schools designed to prepare them for religious work. Indeed, I have heard some sneer at the Protestant clergy and its heavy emphasis upon academic and intellectual preparation. Yet at the same time, training programs in the LDS Church are extensive and seem to be expanding rapidly: seminary has been with us for many years; institutes of religion are proliferating; teachers in the Church school system are encouraged to take advanced degrees (not in religion, however, unless at BYU) and are returned every other summer or so to a campus experience; some missionaries are given language