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Introduction

In the 169 years since Joseph Smith completed translating the Book of Mormon in July 1829, the English language has changed; some common phraseologies and word meanings are dissimilar to today's. Often, in reading the Book of Mormon, we impose our current definitions onto a term that in 1830 had a different meaning. Our interpretation of these words, as well as the passages in which they are found, are skewed by our modern definitions.

In my study I investigate words in the Book of Mormon text that present rare forms of words, words that have taken on different meanings, and words that present possible errors in transmission of the text, thus causing modern readers of the Book of Mormon to misread and misinterpret some passages of the text. I discuss words that potentially cause misreading of the Book of Mormon due to historical changes in the meanings of these words.

I located words in the Book of Mormon text that are commonly misread, then located every occurrence of that word in the Book of Mormon as well as other standard works through the WordCruncher database. I analyzed definitions of these words listed in dictionaries that provide earlier definitions of the word, and I researched texts that provide examples from Early Modern English and Modern English to determine if the sense and example of the word paralleled the Book of Mormon examples.

This study is a part of my work on the Book of Mormon Critical Text project under Royal Skousen. I obtained words that cause potential misreadings of Book of Mormon passages from Royal Skousen, editor of the Book of Mormon Critical Text, and from my own reading of the text. We looked for words that seem inappropriate in the given context and lead to potential misreadings. The following is a list of words or phrases I studied in the Book of Mormon:

1. *adieu*
2. *anger* (as a verb)
3. *awful*
4. *beloved*
5. *carry*
6. *ceremony*
7. *clap hands upon someone*
8. *counsel someone*
9. *cumber*
10. *cunning*
11. *curious*
12. *daunt* (as a verb)
13. *desirous*
14. *devoured*
15. *goodly*
16. *interposition*
17. *mar*
18. *marvelous* and *wonderful*
19. *molten* (as a verb)
20. *only*
21. *particular*
22. *pleasing* (*bar of God*)
23. *preparator*
24. *retain* (versus *keep/recall/regain*)
25. *scourge*

26. *teasings*
27. *thrash*
28. *will* (as a main verb)
29. *would* (as a main verb)

Three words that represent the findings of this study are *beloved, carry,* and *scourge.*

Methodology

In order to locate occurrences of these words within the Book of Mormon and in other written sources, I employed three types of analysis: a WordCruncher analysis, a dictionary analysis, and a source analysis.

WordCruncher Analysis

Using WordCruncher software, I was able to specify the word I wished to find within a given database and locate every occurrence in its context. I accessed three databases by means of WordCruncher:

1.   *The Standard Works of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,* for locating the occurrences of these words in the Book of Mormon and other scriptures.

2.   *The Riverside Shakespeare,* for studying late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century usage and comparing the Book of Mormon's King James English with the Early Modern English of Shakespeare's texts.

3.   *The Helsinki Corpus of English Texts*: a collection of about 1.5 million words from Old English, Middle English, and Early Modern (Southern) English Language texts, for locating earlier examples of word uses; here I concentrated on the Early Modern English corpora, which contains a total of 551,000 words (Rissanen et al., 1993).

Dictionary Analysis

In order to look for definitions of earlier words that are commonly misread in the Book of Mormon, I used the following dictionaries:

•   Samuel Johnson's 1755 *A Dictionary of the English Language*

•   Noah Webster's 1828 *An American Dictionary of the English Language*

•   *The English Dialect Dictionary* (1898)

•   *The Oxford English Dictionary,* 2nd. ed. (1989)

•   *Dictionary of American Regional English* (thus far, Vol. I, A–C, 1985; Vol. II, D–H, 1991)

Source Analysis

In analyzing the context of definitions, I noticed that sometimes the OED's contextual example was insufficient in determining if the OED definition actually applied to the Book of Mormon example. Therefore, it was important to review the longer text from which the OED citation was taken.

Beloved

Any speaker of modern English understands the adjective *beloved* with little or no difficulty, realizing the term means 'loved.' The term *beloved* is not an example of a significant semantic change. Yet there are verbal constructions of *beloved* in the Book of Mormon which seem odd or unusual to modern English speakers. Two examples are as follows:

Alma 26:9 For if we had not come up out of the land of Zarahemla, these our dearly beloved brethren, who have so dearly **beloved** us, would still have been racked with hatred against us . . . .

Alma 27:4 Now when Ammon and his brethren saw this work of destruction among those whom they so dearly **beloved**, and among those who had so dearly **beloved** them . . . .

In Alma 26:9, the first use, "these our dearly beloved brethren" demonstrates *beloved* as an adjective. The use is familiar to readers of the Bible in constructions such as in the New Testament, Matthew 3:17, "this is my **beloved** Son, in whom I am well pleased." The OED defines the adjective sense of *beloved* as 'loved,' and gives the example from the *Book of Common Prayer,* "Dearly **beloved** brethren," which is used in the Anglican Church's wedding ceremony. The OED defines the elliptical use as 'one who is loved.' Common examples of the elliptical sense are repeated throughout the Old Testament, particularly in the Song of Solomon, such as 5:6, "I opened to my **beloved**; but my **beloved** had withdrawn himself, and was gone . . . ." The Book of Mormon contains 100 total uses of beloved (see below); 86 are elliptical, 6 of which are attributive adjectives, and 5 are past participle (either as predicate-adjective or passive-verb forms, depending on how the sentence fits within the passive gradient (cf. Quirk et al. 1985, 167).)

The past-participle and adjectival uses do not present problems to present-day English speakers, and thus Book of Mormon readers. But the 3 uncommon uses of *beloved* as an active verb do seem odd.

These three uses of *beloved* in the Alma passages function differently; that is, "who have so dearly **beloved** us," "whom they so dearly **beloved**," and "who had so dearly **beloved** them" demonstrate *beloved* functioning as an active verb, which is rare. The OED defines this use as 'to love.' According to the OED, the verbal use of *beloved* exists today only in the passive, yet the above examples from Alma show the active verbal sense. The OED shows, by example, that *beloved* in the verbal sense (although passive) was in use at the time of the Book of Mormon translation.

One example dates 1818, just twelve years prior to the Book of Mormon translation, from Lord Byron's *Mazeppa,* which states, "I loved, and was **beloved** again" (vii). The example is passive, unlike the three active Book of Mormon constructions, yet these samples account for the verbal use during the time period of the Book of Mormon translation.

The OED does give examples of the active use for the early seventeenth century; for example, in 1604, Thomas Wright's *The Passions of the Minde* states, "Those persons cannot but bee accounted hard hearted . . . who **belove** them of whom they are loved," (1621, V.4.212); and in 1623, John Wodroephe's *The Spared Houres of a Souldier in his Travels; or the True Marrowe of the French Tongue* states, "I would wear it about my neck for a certain testimony that I **belove** it much" (1625, 322). These earlier examples correspond with the three active uses of *belove* in the Alma passages and account for its use.

Carry

The use of *carry* in the Book of Mormon demonstrates a word that denotes various meanings which, in the Book of Mormon context, leads to lexical ambiguities. One such ambiguity occurs near the beginning of Mormon.

Form of *Beloved*	Number of Occurrences
Elliptical	86
Attributive Adj.	6
Pred. Adj./Passive Verb	5
Active Verb	3

Occurrences of *Beloved* in the Book of Mormon

Mormon 1:6 And it came to pass that I being eleven years old, was **carried** by my father into the land southward even to the land Zarahemla.

As speakers of present-day English, we interpret *carry* to mean that Mormon's father physically bore up his son in transporting him to Zarahemla. However, Mormon was, at the time, an eleven-year-old boy, and the distance to Zarahemla was lengthy; it is unlikely that Mormon's father could have accomplished such a physical feat. The misreading of *carry* as 'to physically bear up' is due to an incorrect interpretation of *carry*.

The OED lists two possible definitions of *carry* for this context: "To bear from one place to another by bodily effort"—the meaning modern readers would assume signifies *carry* in Mormon 1:6—and "To conduct, escort, lead, 'take' (a person) with one, without reference to the mode of transit; to 'take' (a horse, a ship) to a place, a given distance, etc"—more feasibly the definition intended for Mormon 1:6. The meaning 'to take a person' is more appropriate in Mormon 1:6; that is, Mormon's father took young Mormon to the land of Zarahemla.

The OED also provides dated and printed examples of these different definitions of *carry* in context. Examples dated within a century of the Book of Mormon translation demonstrate use of the meaning 'take a person with one.' For example, the OED gives an example of *carry* dated 1771, from Benjamin Franklin's autobiography: "My father **carried** his wife and three children to New England." The OED, however, fails to provide the complete context for this use of *carry*. The autobiography itself clearly demonstrates the physical impossibility of Benjamin Franklin's father carrying his wife and three children to New England, since the context indicates that they were sailing from England to America (1884, ?). It is impossible for *carry* to imply that this man could physically bear up three children and a wife while crossing the Atlantic Ocean.

Carry must instead mean 'to take a person with one,' and because it parallels the situation in Mormon 1:6, I conclude that *carry* also means 'to take a person with one' in the Book of Mormon passage.

In checking dialectal uses of *carry* in reference to moving or transporting, the English Dialect Dictionary (EDD) offers such examples. The definition of *carry* is "to take, convey, conduct." Examples of this use are as follows:

(1) (said by school boys to the master) "If you are going out will you **carry** us with you?"

(2) "Will you **carry** the mare and car to so and so?"

(3) "How many sheep will you **carry** to the fair?"

From example (2), the use of *car* requires that the mare moves along pulling the cart, not the bearing up of the horse. In addition, this example assumes the physical impossibility of carrying both a horse and cart any distance. Thus, this definition and these examples justify the meaning of 'to take' in the Mormon 1:6 verse.

The Mormon 1:6 example is not the only Book of Mormon example of *carry* in the sense of 'to take':

Ether 2:3 And they did also **carry** with them deseret, which, by interpretation is honey bee; and thus they did **carry** with them swarms of bees, and all manner of that which was upon the face of the land,seeds of every kind.

It is less likely for Book of Mormon readers to misinterpret the *carry* in this verse because the *with* that follows *carry* requires the meaning 'to take.' That is, in this passage the use of *with* prevents the interpretation of 'to physically bear up.' In addition to *with* aiding the interpretation here, it is obvious that *carry* here means 'to take with one'; semantically, it is actually impossible to bear up a swarm a bees, and physically dangerous to try to carry bees.

As in the Book of Mormon, a similar potential misreading of *carry* occurs in Genesis 31:18: "And he **carried** away all his cattle and all his goods which he had gotten . . ." Clearly, in this context, Jacob is not manually carrying all his cattle as he moves his family to Canaan. Thus, even the KJV faces the same ambiguity from the use of *carry* in reference to transporting. The use is unfamiliar to current readers of both the Book of Mormon and Bible, so the text seems to present the images of bearing up cattle or an eleven-year-old boy in transporting them far distances. The problem is inevitable due to this archaic and dialectal sense of *carry*.

Evidence from the 1996 Summer Olympic games in Atlanta suggests that *carry* meaning 'to take' is difficult for present-day speakers of English to interpret. An article in the *Deseret News*, dated Saturday, July 20, 1996, is entitled, "Will Translators Run into a Mess of Trouble with Southern-speak?" and discusses the difficult task translators have in translating "Dixieisms." Lisa Howoworth, the author of *Yellow Dogs, Hushpuppies and Bluetick Hounds: The Official Encyclopedia of Southern Culture Quiz Book* gives an example of the "Dixieism" as "'**carry**' meaning 'transport' ('I've got to **carry** Mama over to Tupelo')" (A3). This

evidence shows not only *carry*'s meaning of 'transport,' but confirms the difficulty present-day English speakers have in determining *carry*'s meaning in such contexts as Mormon 1:6.

Scourged

The Book of Mormon presents a unique use of *scourged* in Mosiah 17:13:

> And it came to pass that they took him and bound him, and **scourged** his skin with faggots, yea, even unto death.

The use of *scourged* in this verse should mean 'to whip,' which is the appropriate definition of the word *scourge*, but this word then forces a possible misreading of *faggots* as a tool used for whipping. *Faggots*, however, are bundles of sticks used for the fire, not for whipping.

Scorched is the more appropriate word for *scourged* in Mosiah 17:13 and clarifies the meaning of *faggots*, as well. The OED defines *scorch* as "to heat to such a degree as to shrivel, parch, or dry up, or char or discolour the surface; to burn superficially." In the Book of Mormon all other occurrences of *scorch* mean exclusively 'a burning of the skin,' an example of which is found in the following verse (in Mosiah 17:14): "And now when the flames began to **scorch** him, he cried unto them . . . ." Likewise, the Book of Mormon uses *burn* to mean solely 'consumption by fire.' An example of this is in 3 Nephi 9:9:

> And behold, that great city Jacobugath, which was inhabited by the people of king Jacob, have I caused to be **burned** with fire because of their sins and their wickedness . . . for it was they that did

destroy the peace of my people and the government of the land; therefore, I did cause them to be **burned**, to destroy them from before my face . . . .

Thus, the Book of Mormon reserves the term *burn* to mean 'consumption by fire' and *scorch* to mean 'to burn superficially,' as is the context in Mosiah 17:13. These examples serve as internal evidence, suggesting that the proper word for Mosiah 17:13 is *scorched*.

The OED provides an example of *scorch* used similarly to the Mosiah passage. Percy Shelley's *Queen Mab* (1813) uses *scorch* with the meaning 'to burn superficially,' stating, "His resolute eyes were **scorched** to blindness soon" (VII.9). This example is similar to the Mosiah context in which Abinidi's skin is scorched until his death.

Scourged is phonetically and orthographically similar to *scorch*, and internal Book of Mormon evidence demonstrates that all uses of *scorch* in the Book of Mormon mean 'to burn the skin,' suggesting that *scourged* is not meant to be interpreted as 'to whip' and is possibly an error in transmission. I suggest that the more appropriate word is *scorched* in this passage.

Conclusion

These unique word forms, semantic shifts, and potential transmission errors lead to possible misreadings within the text, and this lexical analysis of the Book of Mormon could eventually affect various areas of Book of Mormon scholarship, such as translation, scriptural footnotes, and the Book of Mormon critical text. Translators must know the exact, or closest, meaning of a word in choosing a foreign-language

equivalent. Because this study clarifies word meanings within the text, it could help determine how words should be translated in foreign-language editions of the Book of Mormon. Because this study refers to words that create possible misinterpretations in reading the Book of Mormon, its results could be given in footnotes in future editions of the standard works. Strangely used words that fail to show an older, dialectal, or less-common definition as possible errors in the text may need to be emended (such as *scourged* to *scorched* in Mosiah 17:13).

This lexical analysis facilitates our interpretation of the Book of Mormon by discussing words in the text that have changed in meaning and usage. Already, many of the words common to Joseph Smith's time have changed in meaning and, in fact, in centuries to come; and as English changes, further changes will undoubtedly occur. We cannot avoid these changes; therefore, this problem of semantic change must be recognized and taken into account when producing future editions of the Book of Mormon.

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