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EPANALEPSIS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

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In the classical treatise On Style attributed to Demetrius we read that for the sake of clarity it is often necessary to repeat a word in the course of a lengthy sentence because the repetition "reminds us of the prelude and sets us again at the beginning of the sentence."¹ Demetrius calls this resumptive repetition "epanalepsis" and gives the following example of it:

all Philip's acts indeed--how he subjugated Thrace, and seized the Chersonese, and besieged Byzantium, and neglected to restore Amphipolis,-- these things, indeed, I shall pass over.²

In modern times, epanalepsis has come to take on other meanings as well, such as "ending a sentence with its own opening word or words,"³ but the classical definition fits perfectly to describe what is not an uncommon occurrence in the Book of Mormon. A typical example is found in the opening verse of the third chapter of Alma: (All Book of Mormon verses are quoted from the 1981 edition. All underlines are added.)

And it came to pass that the Nephites who were not slain by the weapons of war, after having buried those who had been slain--now the number of the slain were not numbered, because of the greatness of their number--after they had finished burying their dead they all returned to their lands, and to their houses, and their wives, and their children.

This paper presents the results of an investigation of epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon to find out just how common an occurrence it is and to discover the source of the device. Three possible sources were considered: first, that it is part of the writing style of certain authors, and perhaps more characteristic of some than of others; second that it is primarily a product of literary form; and third, that it was introduced to the text by Joseph Smith when he translated the Book of Mormon.

First, the frequency of epanalepsis was studied by carefully reading the Book of Mormon and identifying each occurrence of the device. In order to count as epanalepsis the following criteria had to be met.

1) The repetition had to occur within a single sentence. To be precise, the repetition had to be the resumption of the original sentence. Epanalepsis was often anacoluthic in that the writer would digress in the

intervening material and include complete sentences before resuming the original sentence.

2) The repeated word or words didn't have to be a verbatim repetition, but they clearly had to be a repetition of the idea expressed by the original word or words.

3) The repeated word or words could not be grammatical, i.e. they could not serve as their own sentence unit, such as subject or subordinating conjunction, rather they had to be a simple restatement of some other sentence unit.

Another example of epanalepsis which typifies the above criteria is found in Alma 1:1-2:

Now it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of the judges over the people of Nephi, from this time forward, king Mosiah having gone the way of all the earth, having warred a good warfare, walking uprightly before God, leaving none to reign in his stead; nevertheless he had established laws, and they were acknowledged by the people; therefore they were obliged to abide by the laws which he had made. And it came to pass that in the first year of the reign of Alma in the judgment-seat, there was a man brought before him to be judged, a man who was large, and was noted for his much strength.

As it turned out, all of the examples of epanalepsis had a common characteristic which could well serve as a sort of fourth criterium for defining it, although it wasn't used as such when identifying the examples in this study. This is that the intervening material was parenthetical in nature and was inserted as background or supplementary information to the main thought expressed in the sentence.

This fourth criterium is important because it most clearly separates epanalepsis from chiasmus, which is another and better-known stylistic device used in the Book of Mormon, and which involves the repetition of words and ideas. Besides the fact that chiasmus is not necessarily intrasentential and that it most often involves the imbedded repetition of several ideas, one of its most characteristic features is that the central statement, the one enclosed by the repetitive pairs, is the most important idea of the whole structure.⁴ In other words, while the form may be superficially the same, the function of epanalepsis is the exact opposite of that of chiasmus.

In addition to cataloging the straightforward examples of epanalepsis as described above, a certain type of possible epanalepsis dealing with participial phrases was also cataloged. 1 Nephi 4:26 gives us an example:

And he, supposing that I spake of the brethren of the church, and that I was truly that Laban whom I had slain, wherefore he did follow me.

However this type of device is very possibly not epanaleptic at all. Consider this verse in Mosiah 20:17:

Now when Gideon had heard these things, he being the king's captain, he went forth and said to the king....

In the latter case, the punctuation makes it clear that the first "he" is actually the subject of the participial phrase and that the second "he" is not redundant at all, but is the subject of the main clause.

Whether these subjects are actual participial subjects or merely redundant sentence subjects is not entirely clear. The punctuation is probably a very unreliable guide since neither the original engravings nor Joseph Smith's original manuscript of the translation apparently contained any punctuation marks at all. In fact, punctuation was first introduced to the text by an employee of E. B. Grandin, the publisher of the first edition.⁵

Looking at textual clues is also inconclusive. Some participial phrases clearly have a subject, such as 1 Nephi 4:22:

And he spake unto me concerning the elders of the Jews, he knowing that his master, Laban, had been out by night among them.

Many others clearly have no subject, however.

It is this author's impression that many, if not all of the so-called epanaleptic instances of these participial phrases are not really epanaleptic at all, but instead represent a participial subject plus a sentence subject. However, since there seem to be no clear criteria for deciding one way or the other, such instances were cataloged regardless of punctuation, but were kept separate from the firm instances of epanalepsis when compiling statistics.

For each instance of epanalepsis cataloged, the writer and the literary form of the occurrence were also noted. This was done according to "A Full Listing of Book of Mormon References by Author and Literary Form" by John Hilton and Ken Jenkins.⁶ This document also furnished the various word counts of Book of Mormon authors that appear later in this study.

Although many of the writers' words come to us only as they are quoted by the engravers of the Book of Mormon (primarily Mormon and Nephi), this fact was not taken into consideration when assigning authorship. If a writer was quoted directly, the words are assumed to be his own. This

may not be an entirely safe assumption, however. Quoted speeches were obviously transcribed by unnamed scribes, who may have phrased things in their own words, or it may be that Mormon and/or Nephi paraphrased the quotations when they engraved them. The effect of this is that the occurrences of epanalepsis by some of the writers may really be the product of unnamed scribes or of Mormon and/or Nephi. If the latter is true, Mormon and Nephi may be responsible for more occurrences of epanalepsis than they are given credit for.

Hilton and Jenkins identify basically four types of literary form in the Book of Mormon, namely first person narrative, third person narrative, sermons, and dialogue. For this study it seemed useful to generalize these into two categories: "narrative" (for both first and third person narrative), and "discourse" (for sermons and dialogue).

The results of this study are shown in figure 1. The angel listed is the one who spoke to Nephi in chapter 13 of 1 Nephi. "Jesus" refers to Christ during his personal visit to the Nephites; "Lord" is used to denote all the other times that he is quoted. The one reference to "miscellaneous" is an unnamed subject of King Noah in chapter 12 of Mosiah.

FIG. 1 OCCURRENCES OF EPANALEPSIS IN THE BOOK OF MORMON

The writer appears in the column on the far left. When more than one person of that name is mentioned in the Book of Mormon, an identifying superscript is used which corresponds to the superscripts used in the index of the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon.

Each occurrence of epanalepsis by a given writer is marked either with an "N" for occurrences in narrative, or a "D" for occurrences in discourse. Firm occurrences are underlined and in boldface type. Occurrences of the questionable "participial epanalepsis" are not.

MORMON ²	<u>NNDDNNNNNNNNNNND</u>
NEPHI ¹	<u>NDNNNND</u>
ENOS	<u>NNNN</u>
ANGEL	<u>DDD</u>
JESUS	<u>DDD</u>
BENJAMIN	<u>DDD</u>
MORONI ²	<u>NNN</u>
AMULEK	<u>DD</u>
HELAMAN ²	<u>NN</u>
JACOB ²	ND
ABINADI	<u>D</u>
LEHI ¹	<u>D</u>
MORONI ¹	<u>D</u>
ZENIFF	<u>N</u>
LORD	D
MISC	D

Approximately twenty-five different writers contributed to the Book of Mormon, and, as can be seen from the above chart, the eighty-three total occurrences of epanalepsis were divided among fifteen of them, fourteen of whom are almost insignificant when compared to Mormon and his use of the device.

The dramatic appearance of the chart is perhaps somewhat deceptive, however. At first glance it may seem that epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon is almost exclusively a characteristic of Mormon's writing style, a part of his "linguistic fingerprint" so to speak. However, certain other factors must be taken into consideration before any conclusions can be drawn.

First of all, Mormon wrote more of the Book of Mormon than any other writer. If epanalepsis is not characteristic of any one author in particular, then we would expect the writers who wrote the largest portions to use proportionately greater amounts of epanalepsis. This is not the case, however. Mormon wrote 36% of the Book of Mormon,⁷ but he is responsible for at least 60% of the occurrences of epanalepsis (63% if only the firm cases of epanalepsis are taken into consideration, and 59% if participial epanalepsis is included). All the other major Book of Mormon writers used less epanalepsis than might be expected for the amount they wrote.

Figure 2 demonstrates this by showing the amount of epanalepsis per amount of text written for the six most prolific writers in the Book of Mormon. The remaining writers were not included because the amount of text was so small as to make any statistical comparisons suspect. For example, Enos, who used 4 examples in a total of only 997 words, would average 4 occurrences per 1000 words, which is by far the highest ratio, but 1000 words is a very small sample compared to those of the writers listed in the chart.

FIG. 2 EPANALEPSIS PER AMOUNT OF TEXT WRITTEN

The pairs of figures in the last two columns represent "firm cases of epanalepsis" / "all cases"

	Words written	% of BM	% of epan.	# of occurrences of epan. per 1000 words
MORMON	97515	36	63/59	.38/.50
NEPHI ¹	28639	11	3/ 7	.07/.20
ALMA	20227	8	0/ 0	- / -
MORONI ²	19205	7	3/ 4	.10/.16
LORD	11507	4	0/ 1	- / .09
JESUS	10213	4	5/ 4	.29/.29

One conclusion, therefore, that can be drawn from this study is that, although many writers used the device occasionally, Mormon was by far the most frequent user of epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon, even when adjusted for amount of text written and excluding the minor authors who

didn't write enough to get a representative sample. However, there may be another reason besides his own characteristic style to explain Mormon's high use of this device.

Literary form seems to play a significant role in the use of epanalepsis. Fully 72% of the epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon occurs in narrative. And when compared to the fact that only 48% of the Book of Mormon is narrative text, it appears reasonable to conclude that narrative style lends itself quite naturally to epanalepsis. Indeed, perhaps epanalepsis is not due so much to any particular author's style as to literary form.

The preponderance of narrative epanalepsis in Mormon's writing really doesn't tell us, however, whether his epanalepsis is due to his own peculiar writing style, or whether it is simply due to literary form. Most of Mormon's epanalepsis (92%) is found in narrative, but it is also true that about the same proportion of all of his writing (94%) is narrative.

In other words, if it is more a product of literary form, then it would stand to reason that any writer who wrote predominantly narrative would use a considerable amount of epanalepsis in his writing. On the other hand, if epanalepsis is a stylistic device particularly characteristic of Mormon's writing, it would only make sense that almost all of Mormon's epanalepsis is found in narrative because almost all of Mormon's writing is narrative. It would also explain the relatively high amount of narrative epanalepsis compared with the amount of narration in the Book of Mormon. Mormon is responsible for most of the epanalepsis, and most of that just happened to occur in narration.

Perhaps the best way to test the effect of narrative form in the use of epanalepsis, at least in Mormon's writing, is to see if the other writers of narrative in the Book of Mormon used the same ratio of narrative epanalepsis per words of narrative that Mormon did. Again, comparison is made difficult by the widely disparate sample sizes of the other writers of narration. Nevertheless, figure 3 shows the amount of epanalepsis per 1000 words of narrative for the four most prolific writers of narrative. Helaman wrote so much less than the other three that his data is probably suspect, but he was included to show the dramatic decline of sample size.

FIG. 3 NARRATIVE EPANALEPSIS PER 1000 WORDS OF NARRATION

The pairs of figures in the last column represent "firm cases of epanalepsis" / "all cases"

	Narr. words written	# of occurrences of narrative epan. per 1000 words of narr.
MORMON	91282	.38/.49
MORONI ²	12473	.16/.24
NEPHI ¹	10443	.10/.48
HELANAN ²	5131	.19/.38

Here, Mormon's lead is not always quite so commanding; Nephi very nearly catches up to him if participial epanalepsis is included. Nevertheless, Mormon's lead is consistent and shows that even accounting for the effects of literary form, Mormon is still the most characteristic user of epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon.

In summary then, it is safe to say that while many Book of Mormon authors used epanalepsis, and while its use may have been influenced by narrative literary style, epanalepsis seems to be more characteristic of Mormon's style than anyone else's.

There is one remaining question to be answered, however. Did Mormon and the other writers really write in such a repetitive style? Or is this epanaleptic repetition something that Joseph Smith introduced to the text during translation? It could be that epanalepsis was the method which Joseph Smith chose to render complicated passages more readable in English. Or perhaps he used it to affect a sort of biblical religious style in his translation. Several tests were made to check the hypothesis that it was introduced by Joseph Smith, but all of the evidence points to epanalepsis as being a feature of the original text.

First of all, samples of Joseph Smith's writing were examined to see if he characteristically used the device. The first twenty sections of the Doctrine and Covenants were used because they were written contemporary to the translation of the Book of Mormon, and the Pearl of Great Price was also included because it contains numerous narrative passages. With the exception of one example in verse 16 of the "Joseph Smith--History" in the Pearl of Great Price, these writings were virtually devoid of epanalepsis.

Also, on the theory that Joseph Smith might have tried to emulate a biblical style when translating the Book of Mormon, the first twenty chapters of Genesis were examined to see if epanalepsis is a typical biblical idiom. While

there is an occasional use of epanalepsis in the Bible, the first twenty chapters were also devoid of examples.

Next, the structure of the epanaleptic passages in the Book of Mormon was examined carefully, giving rather clear-cut evidence that the epanalepsis is a product of the original authors and not of Joseph Smith. For example, the new material (especially the insertion of the first person pronoun) in the resumptive portion of the epanalepsis in 2 Nephi 25:20 hardly seems like the work of a translator who is merely trying to clarify the passage:

And now, my brethren, I have spoken plainly that ye cannot err. And as the Lord God liveth that brought Israel up out of the land of Egypt, and gave unto Moses power that he should heal the nations after they had been bitten by the poisonous serpents, if they would cast their eyes unto the serpent which he did raise up before them, and also gave him power that he should smite the rock and the water should come forth; yea, behold I say unto you, that as these things are true, and as the Lord God liveth, there is none other name given under heaven....

Also, in the previously mentioned cases of participial epanalepsis, the redundant subject after such short intervening phrases hardly seems like normal English.

The study of epanalepsis, therefore, not only gives us some insight into the writing style of the Book of Mormon authors, but it also gives us some appreciation of the style of Joseph Smith's translation. Whatever the exact process of inspired translation was, we can deduce that it produced an extremely literal translation of the sentences in the text.

Let us conclude with a few general remarks about the motivation behind the use of epanalepsis in the Book of Mormon. Unlike many stylistic devices and certainly unlike its cousin, chiasmus, epanalepsis seems to be an unconscious, or at least unplanned device. It is not an uncommon occurrence in spoken language when a speaker's thoughts begin to wander to use epanalepsis to put the story back on track. The same sort of process seems to have gone on in writing down the Book of Mormon, perhaps especially when narrating a story. And because the Book of Mormon was engraved in metal plates, the engravers didn't really have the option of erasing what they had written in order to better organize their thoughts. Epanalepsis is really the best means they had to return to their original train of thought. And given their obvious penchant for repetition anyway, as is evidenced by their love of chiasmus, it is quite likely that epanalepsis suited their tastes, and especially Mormon's taste, quite nicely.

Notes

1. Demetrius On Style (trans. W. Rhys Roberts) 196.
2. Ibid.
3. Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics, enlarged edition, s.v. "Epanalepsis."
4. See John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon" in Book of Mormon Authorship, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo: Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center, 1982), 39.
5. See Glade L. Burgon, "An Analysis of Style Variations in the Book of Mormon" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1958), 12-13, for a good summary.
6. John Hilton and Ken Jenkins, "A Full Listing of Book of Mormon Reference by Author and Literary Form" (Provo: Foundation for Ancient Research & Mormon Studies, preliminary report, 1983).
7. This and all further references to the word counts of the various Book of Mormon authors come from the preface to Hilton and Jenkins and will not be further footnoted.