

“They took courage”

The War Chapters and *Rasa* Aesthetics

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The accounts of the battles of Mulek and Antiparah (found in Alma 52 and 56 respectively) are linked on many levels: causal (Teancum’s killing of Amalikhah), temporal (same years), authorial (one is partially inserted into the other) and linguistic (phrasal borrowing). Each contains similarly structured scenes which seemingly repeat. This analysis adds the level of emotional coherence using the Indian aesthetic theory of *rasa*. *Rasa* seeks to suggest or induce various emotional states by showing their causes and consequences in ‘*rasa* units’. *Rasa* denotes the heightened aesthetic experience of an emotion and not the emotion itself. The battle of Mulek under Moroni deals with different aspects of the so-called Heroic *rasa*, including having the Lamanites as the center of various *rasa* units. The effect of previous experience and emotion is shown. The battle of Antiparah under Helaman is more emotionally charged and many of the roles are reversed from the battle of Mulek. The emotional content of the battle is heightened by being related to its linked narrative of the battle of Mulek. The climax with the 2000 young Ammonites includes the ninth *rasa* called *shanta*, which expresses transcendence of the world. *Rasa* shows that the events of life need to be grouped and organized to produce meaning. Narratives must be molded for particular purposes. By centering *rasa* units on the Lamanites as well as on the Nephites, the text shows the contingent nature of meaning-divisions as well as perspective. *Rasa* blurs the distinctions between temporally removed text and present reader. This is similar to Nephi’s exhortation to “liken the scriptures” unto ourselves, and opens the realm of experiential and transformative readings of the Book of Mormon.

1 Introduction

“And as Teancum saw the armies of the Lamanites coming out against him, he began to *retreat* down by the seashore, northward. And it came to pass that when the Lamanites saw that he began to flee, they *took courage* and *pursued* them with vigor¹. (Alma 52:23-24, my emphasis). Compare this with a scene in Helaman’s struggle: “[T]herefore the men of Antipus being confused, because of the fall of their leaders, began to *give way* before the Lamanites. And it came to pass that the Lamanites *took courage*, and began to *pursue* them” (Alma 56:51-52, my emphasis). These two passages, taken from two events in the Book of Mormon ‘War Chapters’, share two things: First, each uses a pattern of CAUSE > EMOTION > CONSEQUENCE and second, each is a variation of the ‘same’ scene. Furthermore, the larger maneuvers of each battle are linked by Teancum killing the Lamanite king Amalikhiah (Alma 51:34). This action set the scene for the stratagem employed by both Moroni (Alma 52) and Helaman (Alma 56), while also preserving the forces of Helaman (Alma 56:18-19).

Moroni’s council of war (Alma 52:19) occurred² at the “commencement of the twenty and eighth year”. Helaman’s struggle occurred one year earlier “in the commencement of the twenty and seventh year” (Alma 56:20). The narrator interrupts the account of Moroni’s war to relate Helaman recruiting the 2000 Ammonites (Alma 53:10-22). The text adds a seemingly normal piece of information: “And thus ended the *twenty and eighth* year of the reign of the judges” (Alma 53:23, my emphasis). Yet Helaman’s epistle mentions the “*twenty and sixth* year” in which “Helaman, did march at the head of these two thousand young men” (Alma 56:9, my emphasis). Moroni’s events, not Helaman’s, end with the twenty and eighth year. The narrator appears to have deliberately inserted Helaman’s narrative into that of Moroni, which strengthens their connection.

¹ Unless otherwise specified, all Book of Mormon text is from the 1830 edition. While I worked with and here quote the 1830 edition text (which lacks versification), the chapter : verse citations are according to the current 1981 edition, for ease of access. “While the versification enhances the book’s didacticism, making it easier both to cite and to teach from, it also in large measure disintegrates the text, obscuring many of the narrators’ deliberate strategies of coherence” (Hardy 2007:18).

² Each narrative is presented in the past tense and the paper uses past tense as well. This makes the scenes seem ‘historical’ or ‘real’ and this is a major point of contention in Book of Mormon scholarship. However, I use the past tense mainly out of convenience, so that I need not change the verb tenses in all the quoted passages.

The two accounts are also linked by their language-use and their plot. Each narrative can be crudely summarized as: Small Nephite force lures Lamanites out of their stronghold. The Lamanites realize the trap but are eventually surrounded by the smaller force and the main Nephite army. An intense battle ensues and the Nephites finally triumph. Beyond this the two are very similar in their phrasing. These “phrasal borrowings” often occur in the Book of Mormon to link different accounts and events (cf. Hardy 2007:26-27). In Moroni’s case the Lamanite army was “one of the greatest” (Alma 53:6). Helaman describes his foes as “one of the strongest” and “the most numerous” (Alma 56:34) and as “the most powerful” (Alma 56:36). Both accounts involve a party “supposing” they can “overpower” the other side (Alma 52:23, Alma 56:23). Moroni’s men “*did not* give way before the Lamanites” (Alma 52:34, my emphasis), whereas the exhausted army of Antipus “began to give way before the Lamanites” (Alma 56:51). Both accounts have armies being “weary” due to a “long march” (Alma 52:31 and 56:50). This is by no means an exhaustive list of the phrasal borrowing, but it should suffice to show that these two accounts are linked on a phrasal and plot level on top of the authorial, temporal, and causal connections. I add another level: emotional coherence.

2 Rasa Theory

The theory of *rasa*³ deals with the representation and reception of emotions in and through an aesthetic work. Abhinavagupta (950-1016 AD), who first systematized *rasa*’s psychological functioning, explains *rasa* as follows: “Here, after we become aware of the [consequents] and [determinants] and have joined ourself (sic) to them by empathy, the meaning, in the form of a *rasa*, makes itself felt” (Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta 1990:108). The emotion is not stated, but ‘suggested’⁴ or implied by the interplay of the determinants and consequents. Abhinavagupta puts it

³ *Rasa* has both a literal and a technical meaning. It’s literal meaning is “the sap or juice of plants, juice of fruit, any liquid or fluid, the best or finest or prime part of anything, essence, marrow...taste, flavor...” (Monier-Williams 1899:869).

⁴ Abhinava’s *Locana*, and Ananda’s *Dhvanyaloka*, on which it comments, present the relationship between *dhvani* (suggestion) and *rasa* and how *dhvani* differs from things like connotation and metaphor (cf. 1990). In the introduction, Daniel Ingalls, one of the translators, explains further: “There is nothing in our Western classical (Greek and Latin) tradition of criticism that corresponds to *rasa* and nothing that corresponds to *dhvani* in the grand dimensions in which Ananda and Abhinava conceived it” (38).

thus: “[R]asa is something that one cannot dream of expressing by the literal sense...It is, rather, of a form that must be tasted⁵...on the part of a delicate mind” (81). By empathetically tasting the emotion in an aesthetic context it is ‘raised’ to the quality of *rasa*.

The original list by Bharata-Muni contains eight *rasas* (aesthetic sentiments or states of aesthetic enjoyment). Each is based on a “dominant state”, which is represented in the text, namely “love⁶, mirth⁷, sorrow⁸, anger⁹, energy¹⁰, terror¹¹, disgust¹² and astonishment¹³” (1951:102). When experienced as *rasa*, they are called “Erotic [Caritative]¹⁴, Comic, Pathetic, Furious, Heroic, Terrible, Odious and Marvellous”, respectively (ibid.). Abhinavagupta later added a ninth *rasa*, which he called *shanta*¹⁵. It is transcendence of the world and is based on bliss, quiet and serenity (cf. Masson and Patwardhan 1969:92).

“By *determinants* are meant these factors which make the realization of the emotion and the *rasa* possible. They are of two sorts, objective and stimulative” (Ānandavardhana and Abhinavagupta 1990:16, my emphasis). The **objective determinants** are “the objects toward which the emotions are felt” (ibid.). In the Book of Mormon passages quoted above it is the Lamanites, since the reader (who is sensitive to *rasa*) identifies with their courage. The **stimulative determinants** are those things that

⁵ The central metaphor in *rasa* theory is of ingesting mixed foods and drinks. Bharata-Muni (the first to formalize *rasa* into an aesthetic system) explains: “[T]aste (*rasa*) results from a combination of various spices, vegetables and other articles” (1951:105). One need only look to Indian cuisine to understand this image.

⁶ *rati*: “rest, repose, pleasure, enjoyment, delight in, fondness for, ‘to find pleasure in’, the pleasure of love, sexual passion or union, amorous enjoyment” (Monier-Williams 1899:867).

⁷ *harṣa*: “joy, pleasure, happiness” (1292)

⁸ *śoka*: “sorrow, affliction, anguish, pain, trouble, grief” (1091).

⁹ *krodha*: “anger, wrath, passion” (322).

¹⁰ *utsāha*: “power, strength; strength of will, resolution; effort, perseverance, strenuous and continuous exertion, energy; firmness, fortitude” (182).

¹¹ *bhaya*: “fear, alarm, dread, apprehension; fear of, or [fear] for” (747).

¹² *jugupsā*: “dislike, abhorrence, disgust” (423).

¹³ *vismaya*: “wonder, surprise, amazement, bewilderment, perplexity” (1002).

¹⁴ In orthodox *rasa* theory, *Erotic* (*śṛṅgāra*), “sexual passion or desire or enjoyment” (1087), only covers the narrow field of heterosexual erotic love leading to union (cf. Patnaik 1997:55). I am here using an expanded idea of ‘love’. For my purposes, *Erotic rasa* is the heightened aesthetic form of these ‘normal’ loves. However, since the term ‘erotic’ has too many distracting associations in English, I will instead use *caritative* (the adjective form of *caritas*) as a more neutral term.

¹⁵ *śānta*: “appeased, pacified, tranquil, calm, free from passions, undisturbed” (Monier-Williams 1899:1064). I use the spelling *shanta* in-text instead of a more detailed Sanskrit transliteration.

‘trigger’ the emotion (cf. *ibid.*) In the two passages it is Teancum and his men beginning to retreat and the men of Antipus beginning to give way, respectively. In each case, it creates the conditions for the Lamanites “[taking] courage”. The **consequents** of a *rasa* are “its Symptoms” (*ibid.*). As a result of seeing their opponents retreat, the Lamanites feel courage (Heroic *rasa*) and this emotion’s symptom, the action that results from the presence of the emotion, is in each case that the Lamanites pursue the Nephite forces.

In *rasa*, the unity of a work “stems from the achievement of a dominant mood or emotional tone” (Higgins 2007:44). The dominant *rasa* is the one with “varied representation” (Bharata-Muni 1951:146). In the two Book of Mormon battles, the *rasa* with the most complex and nuanced representation is the Heroic *rasa*.

3 Application

The following analysis will focus on *rasa* ‘units’ in the text, meaning portions of text which are centered on an emotion that can then lead to *rasa* in the reader. Each ‘unit’ is composed of four parts, which in turn may each be composed of one or more pieces: The **stimulative determinant (SD)** (what induces the emotion), the **objective determinant (OD)** (the person or persons whose emotion is empathetically felt), the **consequent (C)** (the ‘symptoms’ of the emotion), and finally the **dominant state** (the suggested **emotion**). The functioning of a *rasa* unit is summarized in Figure 1.

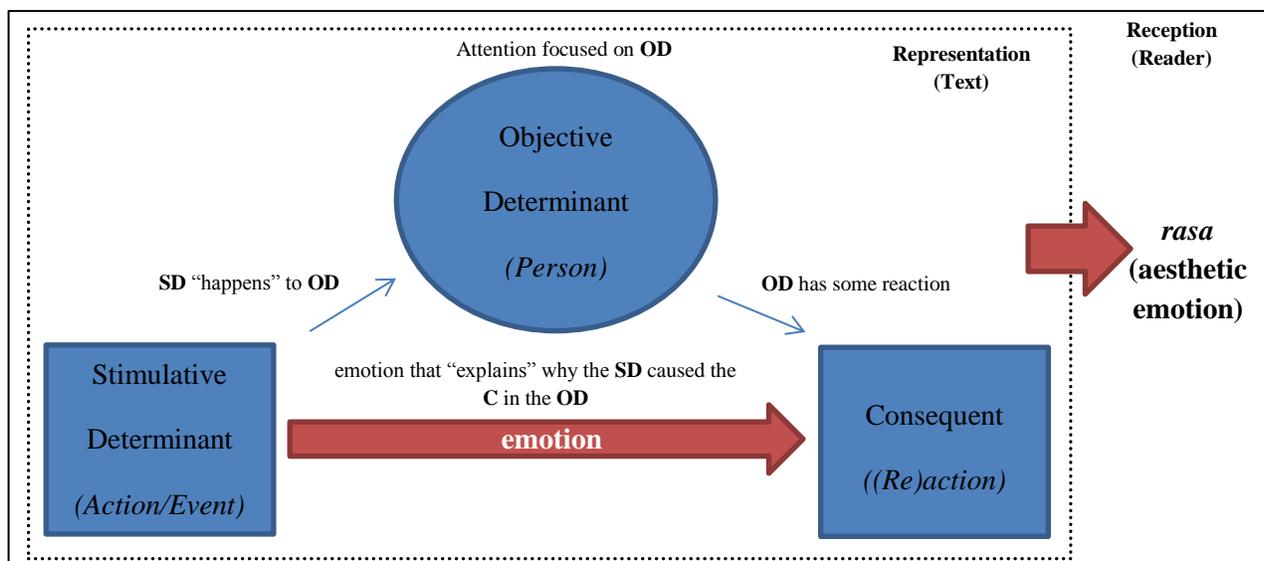


Figure 1: Schematic of a Rasa unit

3.1 Moroni and the City of Mulek

Once the first phase of Moroni’s plan was complete (Alma 52:28), the “Chief Captains of the Lamanites (OD)” saw “Lehi, with his army, coming against them (SD)” causing them to flee “in much confusion (C)”, out of fear of not reaching their stronghold in time. The Lamanite forces “were wearied because of their march (SD)” and “the men of Lehi were fresh (SD)”. The Lamanites here experienced terror mixed with confusion. The terror was not just from meeting a fresh army, but from that army being led by a famous commander. Lehi had become famous and feared among the Lamanites during the battle at the river Sidon (cf. Alma 43). This is represented in Figure 2.

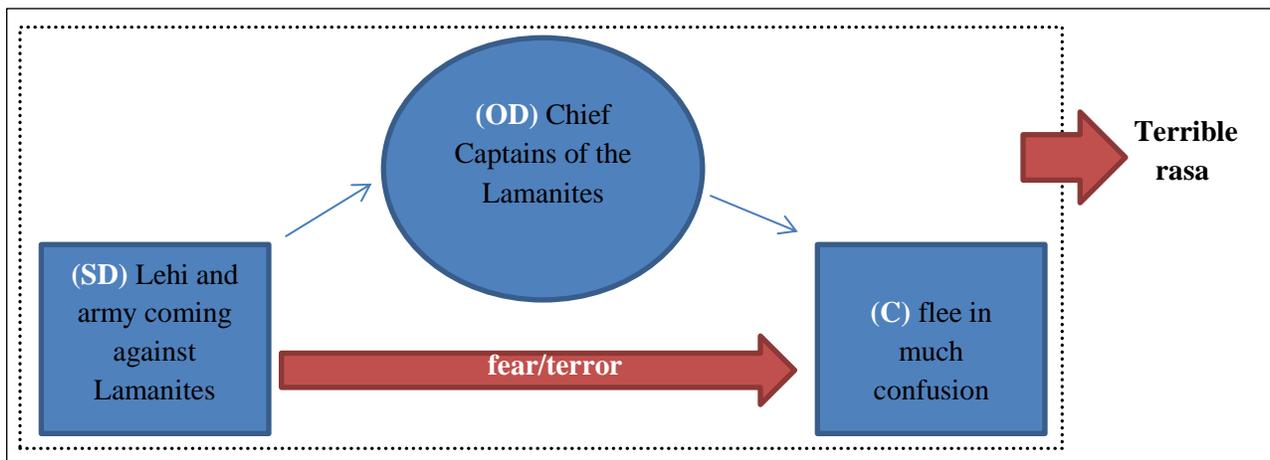


Figure 2: Rasa unit – Lamanites and Lehi (Alma 52:28)

Finally, the second phase of Moroni’s plan was in full effect and the Lamanites were met by Moroni’s forces in the front and Lehi’s men in the rear (Alma 52:31-32). “[The Lamanites] (OD) were surrounded by the Nephites (SD)”. The Nephites were all “fresh and full of strength (SD)” but “the Lamanites were wearied, because of their long march (SD)”. Moroni ordered “his men that they should fall upon them, until they had given up their weapons of war (SD)”. For now there are no consequents in this unit. The unit itself acts as a stimulative determinant for several subsequent units.

Jacob (OD), the Lamanite commander, had “an unconquerable spirit (SD)”. Combining this stimulative determinant with those from Alma 52:31-32 made Jacob’s anger and his stubborn energy burst through and made him lead “the Lamanites forth to battle” (Alma 52:33). Being surrounded

turned him and his men into dangerous cornered animals. At the battle of the river Sidon, the Lamanites “did fight like dragons” (Alma 43:44). Their determination was no less intense in this situation (Alma 52:34). Jacob was “determined to slay [the Nephites], and cut his way through to the city of Mulek (**SD**)”. But “Moroni and his men (**OD**)” were powerful warriors and “did not give way (**C**)”. Moroni and men showed a calm steadfastness (Heroic). They were not shaken by the rage of their opponents.

The battle dragged on (Alma 52:35) and “they fought...with exceeding fury (**SD**)”, but for the first time, the narrative does not emphasize the emotions of one side (Nephite or Lamanite), instead stating that the fighting continued on “both hands (**OD**)”. The reader feels the mess of emotions raging on the entire battlefield and experiences both sides not as sides but as desperate souls similarly engaged in the same terrifying maelstrom. In the end, “there were many slain on both sides; yea, and Moroni was wounded, and Jacob was killed (**C**)”. There were no glorious, brave warriors. This scene is an example of anger, terror, and sorrow over the death of a comrade channeled into a desperate push for survival. There are no –ites. The division of friend and foe is meaningless. There is only death or survival. Here, the objective determinant is not based on partisanship, but on universal humanity. This pulls the reader’s view ‘up’ out of mundane and petty concerns.

After a while, even the determination of the Lamanites wore off and the Nephite forces began to have the upper hand (Alma 52:36). “And Lehi pressed upon their rear with such fury (**SD**)” that the “Lamanites in the rear (**OD**) delivered up their weapons of war (**C**)”. This group of Lamanites finally gave up, overcome by fear and by the futility of it all and by wanting to survive the war. The Terrible *rasa* of their fear mixes with the Pathetic *rasa* of their giving up. The rest of the army, “the remainder of them (**OD**)”, “knew not whether to go or to strike (**C**)” (ibid.). This group was overcome with astonishment (Marvelous *rasa*).

Moroni (**OD**) then seized on this lull in the battle (Alma 52:37). “[S]eeing [the Lamanites’] confusion (**SD**)” he did not use this advantage to finish off his opponents, but instead offered terms,

stating that if the Lamanites give up their weapons, the Nephites would “forbear shedding [the Lamanites’] blood (C)”. Moroni was not a bloodthirsty warmonger. He was magnanimously willing to offer his opponents terms (Heroic), like at the river Sidon.

3.2 Helaman and the City of Antiparah

Unlike the complex plan of Moroni, Helaman’s and Antipus’ plan was far less elegant (Alma 56:36-37). “And thus we [Helaman and his troops] did lead away the most powerful army of the Lamanites (SD)”. The Lamanites (OD) then saw “the army of Antipus pursuing them, with their might (sic) (SD)” and as a result “they did not turn to the right nor to the left, but pursued their march in a straight course after us (C)”. There was no fresh army waiting for them. There was no famous and feared war hero facing them. Here, the Lamanites only had to catch and defeat Helaman’s troops and then focus on the main army in the rear. The cool heroism of this Lamanite army is all the more calculated and impressive when compared with the terror of the other Lamanite army’s reaction upon seeing Lehi and his men.

Antipus, who saw that the Lamanites had chosen to fight smart, knew there was a problem (Alma 56:38): “And now Antipus (OD), beholding our danger (SD), did speed the march of his army (C)”. Antipus initially experienced a shock (Terrible), as a lengthy pursuit was not planned. Lehi had been able to calmly pursue the Lamanites as part of a well-thought-out plan. Antipus had no such certainty. However, this terror did not make him falter. The shock was overcome by his care for Helaman (Caritative) and his drive to engage the enemy (Heroic).

In the morning (Alma 56:39), Helaman and his men (OD) saw that the Lamanites were pursuing them (SD) and they were “not sufficiently strong to contend with them (SD)”. Helaman also did not want to “suffer that [his] little sons should fall into their hands (SD)”. As a result, his troops “did continue [their] march (C)”. Helaman experienced terror due to his love for the young men under his command (Caritative). He was not the calm, calculating Teancum who “retreat[ed]”. He fled for his life and so did his men (See Figure 3 on the next page).

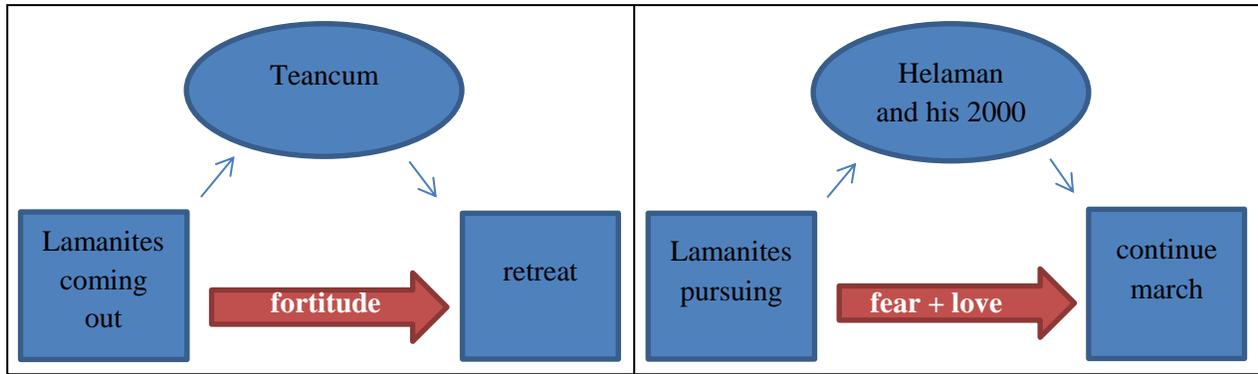


Figure 3: Comparison – Teancum (Alma 52:23-24) and Helaman (Alma 56:39)

The narrative does not forget the Lamanites, however. “They [the Lamanites] (**OD**) durst not turn to the right nor to the left (**C**), lest they should be surrounded (**SD**)” (Alma 56:40). The Lamanites were also concerned for their lives, but in a much calmer manner. In the earlier narrative, Moroni and his men were shown to be the calm, heroic ones, while the Lamanites were the over-eager young hounds. In Helaman’s battle, these roles were reversed and he and Antipus were the ones desperately looking for a way out, while the Lamanites were the professionals making the best of the situation.

The experience of Helaman’s dread and terror is heightened by two more similar units. Helaman would not “turn to the right or to the left (**C**)” (ibid.). The only difference between this unit and that of the Lamanites is that the 1830 text uses the word “nor” for the Lamanites, instead of “or” with Helaman. The next morning, a ‘fleeing’ unit is reenacted. Repeating the same unit centered on terror three times in slight variation intensifies the experience of Helaman’s terror to the point that it can almost be ‘tasted’. This is an existential dread, made all the more intense by contrasting it with the Lamanites’ unyielding determination to catch and kill them.

The next morning (Alma 56:42-46), Helaman and his men (**OD**) were not pursued very far “before [the Lamanites] halted (**SD**)”. The reason for this halt “[they] knew not (**SD**)” and they did not know if it was a trap: “Behold we know not but they have halted for the purpose that we should come against them (**SD**)”. Helaman asked his 2000 young soldiers if they wanted to engage the enemy despite this uncertainty. They declared their faith in God and simply answered: “[T]hen let us go forth (**C**)”. They wanted to go and fight in the *possibility* that Antipus was in danger (**C**). This is

the emotional highlight of this battle: the calm heroism of these young men due to their love of God and their fellow man. This is very different from the chaotic fury of Jacob and his men. Helaman’s story is still full of Heroic *rasa*, but in this case it is tempered with love for his men (Caritative).

The heroism of the young men is heightened through contrast with the calm Lamanites and the professional soldiers in Moroni’s army (Alma 56:47). “[T]hey (**OD**) [had] never fought (**SD**)”, yet in the face of a disciplined and powerful enemy “they did not fear death; and they did think more upon the liberty of their fathers, than they did upon their lives (**C**)”. This is energy and a drive forward, yet it has a different flavor than Jacob having an “unconquerable spirit”. Their spirit lets the ninth *rasa*, *shanta*¹⁶, appear. In the face of what seemed like certain death, these young men did not shirk their duty and were willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of others as they knew Antipus and his men had already done for them.

The source of this transcendence had been brought from home (Alma 56:47-48). The young men “had been taught by their mothers (**SD**)” to trust in God. This faith was strengthened by trust in their mothers: “We do not doubt (**C**) our mothers knew it (**SD**)”. The love (Caritative) towards and trust in their mothers¹⁷ exhibited by these young men stand in stark contrast with the individually-minded Lamanites under Jacob. Those Lamanites fought bravely out of fear and anger at their enemies. These young men, however, were brave due to a loving relationship with their mothers. Both their love and the calm conversion to God caused the small army to attack (Alma 56:49). “I did return with my two thousand (**OD**), against these Lamanites (**C**)”. This conversion which causes the young men to exhibit great courage and heroism is felt as *shanta*, the experience of transcendence.

Antipus had in fact caught up with and engaged the Lamanites (**SD**) despite the exhausted state (**SD**) of his men (**OD**) from the long, forced march (**SD**) (Alma 56:49-50). Eventually Antipus,

¹⁶ *śānta*: “appeased, pacified, tranquil, calm, free from passions, undisturbed” (Monier-Williams 1899:1064).

¹⁷ One reason for the specific nature of the Erotic/Caritative is that many of the other forms of ‘Western’ love fall under the purview of *dharma* in Indian philosophy (cf. Patnaik 1997:55). A non-exhaustive definition of *dharma* is “usage, practice, customary observance or prescribed conduct, duty” (Monier-Williams 1899:510). There is no special act in loving one’s parents. It is one’s *dharma*.

their commander, “and many of his leaders” “had fallen by the sword (**SD**)” (Alma 56:51). Here the *Nephites* (instead of the Lamanites as in the previous narrative) had lost their commander and their officers. As a result of this, the men of Antipus “were about to fall into the hands of the Lamanites (**C**)” (Alma 56:50) and even “began to give way (**C**)” (Alma 56:51). This is one of the most heart-wrenching passages in these two chapters as the great heroic energy shown by these men and their willingness to push themselves to the limit for the sake of Helaman and his young Ammonites were finally overcome by exhaustion and fear. The loss of their command structure caused the men to become confused (*ibid.*). This scene is all the more painful in contrast to the steadfastness of Moroni and his men *not* giving way before the Lamanites.

After the Nephite *rasa* units, the text returns to two Lamanite units in a row. Helaman’s contingent fell upon the rear (**SD**) of the Lamanites (**OD**) who had been pursuing the men of Antipus (**SD**) and the Lamanite army halted and turned (**C**) towards Helaman and his men (Alma 56:52). The Lamanite army showed astonishment and surprise (Marvelous), but still tempered with discipline since the “whole army” halted and turned and not just the rear-guard.

The fleeing men of Antipus (**OD**) saw that the Lamanites had turned to Helaman’s army (**SD**) and they “gathered together their men, and came again upon the rear of the Lamanites (**C**)” (Alma 56:53). In contrast with their previous rout, this rally shows their uncompromising dedication to supporting Helaman’s men. The men of Antipus exhibited a brilliant courage and endurance (Heroic).

The Lamanites were finally surrounded and the fight began anew (**SD**) (Alma 56:56). The Lamanites were awed and frightened by the “mighty power (**SD**)” of Helaman’s young men. The battle turned against the Lamanites (**OD**) and “they were compelled to deliver up their weapons of war, and also themselves as prisoners of war (**C**)”. These Lamanites never exhibited the ferocity of the army faced by Moroni. Their heroism was overcome by the terror-inducing assault of Helaman’s troops and the anguish of seeing the futility of fighting on (Pathetic). They still offered a fight, but not the maelstrom seen at the battle for Mulek.

While Moroni’s fight ended with many dead on both sides, Helaman’s army (**OD**) was spared those atrocities. Helaman describes his 2000 as having “fought as if with the strength of God (**SD**)”. This stands in contrast to the furious Lamanites under Jacob, but also the Lamanites at the river Sidon who fought “like dragons”. As a result of fighting with the strength of God, “not one soul of them [had] fallen to the earth (**C**)” (Alma 56:55-56). Whereas Moroni had ended on a magnanimous Heroic *rasa*, the battle for Antiparah ends with *shanta*. These young men were filled with faith in God, which resulted in them fighting with the strength of God. This led to their preservation. These young men had already overcome the fear of the world.

4 Discussion and Conclusion

The two war accounts are quite similar in their emotional content, both being focused on facets of the Heroic *rasa* (even including the Lamanites in the exploration). However, there are striking differences, with Helaman’s account being much more loaded with the Terrible *rasa* and *shanta* (serene) *rasa*. *Rasa* shows that life is made up of singular ‘events’ and that narrative and history *perform* the distinctions found in them. On their own, stimulative determinants (such as advancing Lamanites) are just events that do not yet ‘mean’ anything. Only once they are brought into relation with an objective determinant (Teancum or Helaman) can they begin to take on meaning. A different reader will also add different experiences and predispositions to the *rasa* constellation, resulting in a different emotional experience and meaning for the ‘unit’. We can merely mold the events of our lives or of our nations into narratives for particular purposes like the narrator of the Book of Mormon did.

Rasa shows that even the cultural and political divisions between Lamanite and Nephite are contingent. The emotional content does not focus only on one ‘winning’ (Nephite) side but includes the Lamanites as objective determinants many times. Former Lamanites are held up as great heroes and Jacob, a former (Zoramite-) Nephite, is the main cause for the maelstrom. The battle of Mulek even erases all such divisions for a short time by pulling the reader’s view ‘up’ over the entire scene.

The divisions of time are also broken down, with both accounts hearkening back to the battle at the river Sidon and Helaman’s account hearkening back to Moroni’s. Are these still discrete events when their emotional content is so dependent on intertextual referents? Are they two separate but ‘comparable’ accounts or a single temporally and causally complex narrative? *Rasa* would suggest that the delineation of an epic like the Book of Mormon into discreet accounts is nigh to impossible, as the emotional impact of the Lamanites’ fight is lessened without knowledge of the centuries of conflict going back to Nephi and his brothers. The Book of Mormon, like life in total, is a collection of events that are (intentionally and subconsciously) arranged into relation with a subject in order to create emotions, meaning, and emotional meaning.

Finally, *rasa* eliminates—or at least lessens the importance of—one of history’s basic ideas, the distinction and separation between past and present. The events play out like a stage play and the reader feels swept up in the drama, blurring past and present. Through the reader’s experience of *rasa*, the past bleeds into the present, similar to Nephi’s exhortation to his people concerning the scriptures: “[L]iken them unto yourselves¹⁸” (1 Nephi 19:24). The events of the Book of Mormon need not feel foreign and old or different and removed, but can be a realm to experience human struggle and striving as if contemporaneous. This temporal folding is echoed in Moroni’s first parting words: “Behold, I speak unto you as if ye were present, and yet ye are not” (Mormon 8:35). The Book of Mormon is not trying to be a modern history where one neutrally gazes at a time and place removed from the present, but instead it seeks to pull the past and present into an experiential whole. This experience, both according to *rasa* and LDS theology, is transcendental and transformative. We let the text enter our present and let it help us to take courage.

¹⁸ Taken from the 1981 edition. The 1830 edition uses the singular “it” instead of “them”.

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