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Mouvance and the art of fiction in performance in manuscripts of a Demotic Egyptian novella

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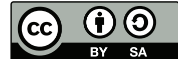

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Abstract: Substantial textual variation found across manuscripts of a Demotic Egyptian novella, *The prebend of Amun*, bears upon closer examination the features of *mouvance,* a kind of textual impermanence found in written versions of literature for which performance contexts are not only ongoing but are constitutive of their very textual shape. Alongside this *mouvance*, manuscripts of this work also maintain a high level of similarity and coherence down to the phrasal and word level. I argue that this unique combination of sameness and *mouvance* points to the desire of performers who possessed libretto-like copies of *The prebend of Amun* to tweak their texts in order to match their understanding of this work of prose fiction.

Keywords: Egyptian, Demotic, literature, *mouvance*, prose fiction, orality, performance, novella

'In mimesis, every performance is a recreation.'
(Nagy 1996: 58)

Introduction

When comparing manuscripts of *The prebend of Amun*, a popular work of Demotic narrative literature written and read by Egyptians in Graeco-Roman Egypt, two Roman-period (30 BC–AD 395) copies of the text show significant variation when compared to the better preserved, earlier copies dating from the Ptolemaic period (332–30 BC). Due to the number and nature of the divergences, it is unlikely that a common textual ancestor or archetype can be constructed in a stemmatic sense. In this paper, I will propose that this variation should be identified as *mouvance.* This concept was devised by Paul Zumthor for medieval literature, who identified widespread variation in the manuscript record of certain work as an 'unceasing vibration and a fundamental instability',[1] a textual impermanence found in written versions of literature which point to performance contexts which are not only ongoing but are constitutive of the very shape of the text in question. Identifying this phenomenon in the textual tradition of *The prebend of Amun* is of inherent interest since it is prose fiction, a kind of literature that, in the way that it resembles modern fiction, risks being uncritically associated with permanence and authorial intention. Alongside noted textual fluidity, manuscripts of *The prebend of Amun* nevertheless maintain a high level of similarity and coherence down to the phrasal and verbal level, and thus do not suggest that the text is completely 'in progress' (Nagy 1996: 9) like many examples showing *mouvance*. I will argue that this combination of sameness and *mouvance* points to the desire of storytellers who possess copies of *The prebend of Amun* which served as libretti for dramatic performance to tweak their texts in order to match their understanding of the story. This paper, then, in step with the approach of New Philology, connects a manuscript phenomenon to the reconstructed living context of an ancient work of literature, and argues that the principle of change stemming from that life is an expression of the art of fiction in performance.[2]

[1] Zumthor (1972: 507). For *mouvance* in general, see also Nagy (1996: 9–35) and Rosenstein (2010). Bachvarova (2016: 38–41) argues for *mouvance* in Hurro-Hittite poetry.

[2] See Restall (2003) and Lundhaug and Lied (2017) for New Philology. For New Philology in Egyptology, see Parkinson (2009: 6–7), an approach exemplified in Hagen (2012), Parkinson (2004, 2009) and Ragazzoli (2008).

The prebend of Amun and Demotic novellas in Graeco-Roman Egypt

Literary texts on papyrus scrolls written in Demotic Egyptian[3] emerge in early Ptolemaic Egypt after a significant dearth of such texts surviving in the manuscript record starting in the Late period.[4] Originally, the Demotic script was a regional shorthand limited to Lower Egypt which was used as an official script for documentary purposes, but it became widespread throughout Egypt during the Saite period (the 26th Dynasty, 664–525 BC), and by the Ptolemaic period, as far as the evidence shows, it was in widespread use for literature strictly speaking. Demotic developed out of the traditional Egyptian cursive, called hieratic, which was based on the hieroglyphic writing system, both of which developed simultaneously in Egypt in the mid- to late-fourth millennium BC, during the so-called Dynasty 0 (see Gardiner 1957: 1–10; Ritner 1996). While some of the literary texts written in Demotic that survive are well-preserved, none are completely intact, and the vast majority are extremely fragmentary in their current state.[5] Many well-preserved Demotic literary texts stem from the Ptolemaic period, but the lion's share have been found in Roman-period contexts, especially from temple libraries in the towns of Tebtunis and Soknopaiou Nesos in the Fayyum region of Lower (northern) Egypt. Though closer to vernacular Egyptian than texts which continued to be written in the older hieratic and hieroglyphic scripts in Graeco-Roman Egypt, Demotic was nevertheless a language of learning and scholarship and was restricted to a class of literati, something which probably became more marked as time went on. The intended audience of much if not all of Demotic literature were priest-scholars attached to Egyptian temples, with many genres clearly meant to be enjoyed in recreational settings (Hoffmann 1995a: 22; more generally, Tait 1992, 2014). This can be seen above all in the work which is the focus of this paper, *The prebend of Amun*, an entertaining story which is also learned, relishing in a creative play with formal genres of discourse drawn from the religious, scholarly, and administrative spheres.

While there is evidence of some Egyptian literature being translated into Greek,[6] Demotic

[3] For a general orientation to Demotic and Demotic studies, see Depauw (1997) and Jasnow (2020). Demotic refers both to a script and to a phase of the Egyptian language. The two almost entirely coincide and comprise a virtual literary book-hand and dialect used for documentary as well as belletristic texts, though there are occasional Demotic-language texts inscribed in hieratic or even in hieroglyphs.

[4] For the question of the rise of Demotic literature in general, see Hoffmann (2009), Quack (2016a: 1–7) and Jay (2016: 51–68). The earliest preserved Demotic literary texts are from the late fourth or early third century BC at Saqqara, at the dawn of the Ptolemaic period (H.S. Smith and Tait 1983).

[5] The most comprehensive collection of Demotic literature in translation is Hoffmann and Quack (2018). English translations for a smaller selection can be found in Simpson (2003: 445–529), translated by Robert Ritner, and in Lichtheim (2006). For a general introduction to Demotic literature, see Ryholt (2010), Quack (2016a), and Hoffmann (2016).

[6] See Escolano-Poveda (2020: 86–87). An example of a non-literary, but religious text translated from Egyptian into Greek was the important *Book of the Temple*, a (still unpublished) manual of temple ritual with a complex history of

literature was intimately concerned with traditional Egyptian culture (textual and otherwise) from an insider's perspective, standing on the threshold between the local sphere of its authors and readers and the wider Greek world: witness the marked lack of Greek loanwords in these texts side-by-side with the prominent adaptation and transformation of Greek literary forms and motifs by Egyptian authors.[7] Alexander Beecroft identifies such sociocultural systems of literature which stand between a purely local and a cosmopolitan, transnational literature as 'panchoric,' characterized by more extensive circulation than a purely local (which he calls 'epichoric') literature, and a degree of self-awareness vis-à-vis the wider world within which they exist. Panchoric literatures, according to Beecroft, are concerned with effecting unity in the textual record as a way to reflect (and create) a kind of cultural subjectivity (Beecroft 2015: 33–4).

Narrative is particularly prominent in what survives of Demotic literature.[8] Demotic narrative literature is written in prose (Tait 1996: 183; Jay 2016: 90–1) and is relatively uniform (though by no means simplistic) stylistically, and features a widespread use of stock narrative formulae (Jasnow 2007; Jay 2016: 157–63; Vinson 2018: 178–82). The works of Demotic narrative literature as we have them are to be firmly located in the sphere of written literature. At the same time, many of these works would have been based on folklore and historical legends, something that has been argued in particular for works of what is called the Inaros Cycle (more on which below). Furthermore, as Jay (2016) has argued in depth, both their composition and their transmission were not far removed from orality. Much of Demotic narrative literature can be rightly called 'fiction'— a term which, though risking being a 'weak and ambiguous concept' (Williams 1977: 146), I take to identify narrative works, typically in prose, which are not only fictive in their invented content, but above all in the way that they are framed by a construct of a speaking storytelling subject (the narrator) who is agreed upon by convention not to reflect a recorded historical utterance but to speak 'as if' one.[9] 'Fiction' is more naturally applied to narratives that are set in historical

composition and transmission whose Demotic version was likely redacted—probably in the hieratic script—during the Saite period between 664 and 525 BCE (see Quack 2016b).

[7] See Volten (1956); Thissen (1999); Quack (2005); Ryholt (2013). For a rich collection of studies on the interaction between Greek and Egyptian culture in this period, see I. Rutherford (2016). See Hoffmann (1995b: 49–127) for a prominent dissenting view concerning Homeric influence on the Inaros Cycle. The posture of native Egyptian reading cultures vis-à-vis the Greek cosmopolis in the Ptolemaic period, which would have been both open to interaction but also significantly inward-looking, should be contrasted with developments in the Roman period, where the Egyptian priesthood was increasingly isolated, raising the possibility that a preservational and canonical impulse began to motivate the collection of literary texts. See Ryholt (2004: 505–6; 2005: 162–3; 2009).

[8] For an overview of texts, see Quack (2016a: 18–105). In the Roman period library at Tebtunis (discussed more below), narrative literature makes up about one quarter of the surviving Demotic texts. See Ryholt (2005).

[9] Cf. Brooks and Warren (1979: 511); Cuddon (2013: 279); *OED* s.v. 'fiction' 4a. The 'fictive utterance' concept here is indebted to B.H. Smith (1978: 14–40). For ancient (especially Greek) prose fiction in general, especially from the 'fictive content' perspective, see Whitmarsh (2010). The concept of fiction has played an important role in literary studies in Egyptology since Loprieno (1996), especially in Moers (2001). As summarized by Di Biase-Dyson (2013: 32:6) who draws on Loprieno and Moers, fictional texts are said not only to portray unreal, 'fictive' events and existents, but

time and in something resembling the everyday human world, and thus arguably not appropriate for mythological narratives, of which there are numerous examples in Demotic (Quack 2016a: 28–31). 'Fiction' also comes across as inappropriate for works like Homeric epic or *Gilgamesh*. This distinction may not hold for Demotic fiction, however, since many important examples are based on the exploits of legendary figures of the past (cf. Hoffmann 1996: 113–20).

Several structurally distinct genres of Demotic prose fiction are apparent: attested works range from short stories and animal fables embedded in story collections to long, episodic tales of romance and adventure. The first-discovered works of Demotic prose fiction were originally called novels when they were published in the mid- to late-nineteenth century (Brugsch 1866; Krall 1897b). These long works should rather be called novellas today in order to keep them distinct from the significantly longer and more complex Graeco-Roman novels (cf. Spiegelberg 1898). The term novella is especially apt for this genre of prose fiction since these works are of neither extreme brevity nor length, and with their dense and at times intricate plots are more complex than the short stories found in anthologies (such as, from Egypt, the stories in *The Story of Petese*; Ryholt 1999, 2006), but not truly sprawling in the way that novels (ancient and modern) are. Thus are novellas defined today (see, e.g., Leibowitz 1974; Cuddon 2013: 653; *OED* s.v. 'novella': 'a short novel, a long short story'). The best-preserved Egyptian novellas are (as they are normally entitled by scholars today) *First Setna*, *Second Setna*, *The armour of Inaros*, and *The prebend of Amun*, the subject of this paper. There may have been other genres of Demotic prose fiction that were lengthy like novellas but not as focused in terms of story, but rather more sprawling and episodic akin to the Greek novels or to epic poetry. Examples of such lengthy, episodic works are the still-unpublished *Inaros Epic*, the longest work of narrative literature surviving from Egypt which is perhaps seven or eight times as long as the preserved text of *The prebend of Amun*,[10] and *Egyptians and Amazons* (also called *Petechons and Sarpot*), whose episodic nature can be glimpsed by the presence of a kind of 'table of contents' on the surviving copy which helps a reader identify a particular episode or scene (Ryholt 2013: 76–8).

Returning to the genre of the novella: inscribing these texts within the wider body of De-

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to have a structure and texture that couch them in a way that is clearly different from everyday means of portraying the same or similar. For this reason, a topos of Egyptian fiction *par excellence* is boundary crossing, making depictions of foreignness in Egyptian fiction an appealing topic of research for Moers and Di Biase-Dyson. Although 'fiction' is a term commonly used in English-language studies of Demotic literature (e.g., Tait 1994, 1996; Jay 2016), its use has not been explicitly theorized.

[10] Cf. Ryholt (2018: 168 n. 50). For the *Inaros Epic*, see Ryholt (2004: 492–5; 2018: 168). The figure of eight was calculated by using Ryholt's estimation (2018: 168 n. 50) that one manuscript of the *Inaros Epic* which is remarkably densely inscribed contains an equivalent text of 240 columns of Papyrus Spiegelberg. I am assuming that Papyrus Spiegelberg contains, as presently preserved, a minimum of 27 columns (eighteen columns in Spiegelberg 1910; plus cols. A–G of Hoffmann 1995b; and the single column of Ryholt 2004) and originally contained at least 3–5 more (cf. Hoffmann 1994).

motic prose fiction allows us to uncover an important, international literary and cultural nexus in the wider Southeastern Mediterranean world. Broadly contemporaneously with Demotic literature, and no earlier than the Achaemenid period, novellas were also written by Jews, such as *Jonah*, *Ruth*, *Esther*, *Tobit*, *Judith*, and *Joseph and Aseneth*.[11] A prose genre unique to non-Greek literary communities in Egypt and Judea, the novella was a hallmark of learned, local storytelling literature after the Iron Age, written from within the provinces of world empires. The collection of novellas by Judeans that continued into the Roman period eventually combined with the processes we identify as canonical and scriptural, preserving them for perpetuity alongside other classics of Israelite and Judean literature in the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament. In Egypt, this process of collection, and perhaps even incipient canonization, ended with the dissipation of the Egyptian priesthood which began in the third century CE, leaving the Egyptian novellas in Demotic to be rediscovered and deciphered starting in the nineteenth century.[12]

The novellas (both Egyptian and Jewish) are usually set in the past, in a time of native rule before the era of empires. They are all immensely entertaining and often involve multiple levels of intrigue and, sometimes, sub-plotting, but are nevertheless highly integrated and not prone to episodizing. While late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century research on Demotic and Jewish novellas considered them to be uninspired, 'late' epigones of their 'classical' Egyptian and Israelite/Judean forbears (Gunkel 1906: 36, 96–7; Spiegelberg 1931: 152, 154, 160), in the last several decades they have increasingly been given their due as a uniquely shared creative impulse within local literatures which continued apart from, yet in interaction with, the cosmopolitan world of society and letters of the Achaemenid and Hellenistic empires (Wills 2021; Honigman 2020). The Egyptian novellas in particular are argued by some to play an important role in the history of prose fiction in the wider Eastern Mediterranean and North African world based on their potential influence on Greek fiction, meaning that a golden thread of influence could be traced from Demotic fiction through Greek authors like Heliodorus, through Cervantes, and thus to the modern novel itself (I.C. Rutherford 1997; Vinson 2016; Jay 2016: 293–344; Quack 2016a: 212–16; for the line of influence from the Greek novel, see Pavel 2013).

The novella whose textual history I will consider in this paper, *The prebend of Amun*, is one of a group of independent works of prose fiction that is called by scholars the Inaros Cycle. While not closely integrated in terms of an overarching plot like the Greek Epic Cycle or medieval Arthurian legends, the cyclic works centre on the exploits of a widely-shared cast of

[11] The Joseph story of *Genesis* 37–50 is also typically identified as a novella today, following Hermann Gunkel. Unlike the other Jewish novellas, however, it is not preserved as an independent work of literature, but rather contiguously with the complex, compiled narrative literature of the Pentateuch. See recent discussion in Römer, Schmid, and Bühler (2021).

[12] A historical argument defining and inscribing the Egyptian and Judean novella, followed by a literary argument concerning their shared plot structure and features, was the subject of my dissertation (Cross 2022).

characters such as the kings Inaros and Petubastis as well as many others, most of whom are historical personages known from the era surrounding and during the seventh-century-BC Assyrian invasion of Egypt under Esarhaddon (Kitchen 1986: 455–61; Ryholt 2004). Besides *The prebend of Amun*, the Inaros Cycle includes other novellas as well as works of other genres such as the *Inaros Epic* (Hoffmann 1996: 105–7; Jay 2016: 127–40; Quack 2016a: 55–75). While bearing the unmistakable imprint of the post-Achaemenid world and of learned, native Egyptian culture in the Ptolemaic period,[13] it is generally assumed that the cyclic works reach back to legends that circulated close to the time of the historical figures themselves, perhaps even as propaganda (Jay 2016: 138–9). This is suggested not only by their historical content, but also by the existence of a dipinto bearing a narrative text in Aramaic, probably translated from Egyptian and inscribed in the fifth or fourth century BC at Sheikh-Fadl in Egypt, which mentions Esarhaddon, Inaros, and others (Köhler, Driaux, et al. 2018: 81).

The most important manuscript of *The prebend of Amun* (also known as *The battle for the prebend of Amun*) is the late Ptolemaic or early Roman Papyrus Spiegelberg, purchased in 1904 in Giza and published in 1910 by Wilhelm Spiegelberg (see Fig. 1).[14] Its preserved length is 3.17 meters (10.4 feet), with 18 consecutive columns remaining of perhaps an original 28, making it one of the best-preserved examples of narrative literature in Demotic (Hoffmann and Quack 2018: 100). The scroll likely came from a tomb in Akhmim (Panopolis), buried with its owner along with other scrolls.[15] Further fragments of P. Spiegelberg have been identified in Cairo, Copenhagen, Philadelphia, and Paris, beginning already in the 1910 *editio princeps* of Spiegelberg and continuing until the present.[16] In addition to P. Spiegelberg and its fragments, several further copies are known from Roman-period Tebtunis, two of which have been published so far: P. Carlsberg 433 (part of which was published earlier as P. Tebt. Tait 2; Tait 1977: 14–20) and P. Carlsberg 434,[17] both datable to the second century AD and stemming from two different copies of the novella.[18] P. Carlsberg 433 and

[13] Jay (2016: 152); cf. also Spiegelberg (1910: 10). See Quack (2016a: 66–70) for a discussion of the novella.

[14] Spiegelberg (1910). This *editio princeps* remains the only critical edition of the novella. The papyrus is currently held in the Bibliothèque Nationale of Strasbourg, apparently without a registration number made publicly available. A digitized version of the *editio princeps* can be found in the Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/dersagenkreisdes00spie, including photographs of the scroll (beginning on page 191 of the PDF; accessed February 2023).

[15] For the dating, see Hoffmann (1995c: 13). Quack (2020: 97–100) argues that the scroll could be slightly younger, from the early Roman period. For its place of origin and other associated scrolls, see Ryholt (2019a: 415–18).

[16] Friedhelm Hoffmann (1995b; 1995c: 30–8) has combined a number of these fragments to form an additional seven columns (designated as A–G), most quite fragmentary, of the beginning of the scroll. While none of the eight columns reconstructed after 1910 consist of more than half of a column of text, and most far less, this painstaking work has advanced our understanding of the first part of the novella by leaps and bounds, although there has yet to be a sustained assessment of their value for reconstructing the lost first part of the story.

[17] Referred to throughout this paper as no. 434, following the *editio princeps*, it should be noted that the keeper of the Papyrus Carlsberg collection, Kim Ryholt, has redesignated it as P. Carlsberg 128 based on newly discovered joins.

[18] P. Carlsberg 433 and 434 are published in Tait (2000). Tait considers it very likely that P. Carlsberg 433 and P. Tebt. Tait 2 are from the same scroll; see Tait (2000: 61–62).

434 come from the massive and important collection of literary, religious, and scholarly papyri from the library of the temple of the god Soknetubnis in the Fayyum town of Tebtunis. The collection, numbering to around 400 literary papyri, most of which are written in Demotic and hieratic, dates to the first/second centuries AD and is one of the most important assemblages of ancient literature ever discovered.[19] These two copies of *The prebend of Amun* could stem from the primary holdings of the temple library, either from related, private collections made by priest-scholars who worked there, or from secondary, ephemeral or accidental kinds of assemblages (e.g., scrap paper; Ryholt 2019a: 393–8). The Tebtunis temple library was one of a handful flourishing in the Roman-period Fayyum. Their extensive literary holdings, including substantial amounts of prose fiction as well as texts for religious and scholarly practice, existed against the backdrop of a rapidly declining country-wide production of Egyptian-language documents and literature, meaning these libraries became the last existing centres for the native scholarly study of traditional Egyptian textual culture in the original languages. It is significant, then, that multiple copies of *The prebend of Amun* (including others still awaiting publication)[20] were held in association with the temple library at Tebtunis, attesting to the novella's enduring popularity at least a century after P. Spiegelberg was copied, as well as its prestige alongside other important works of Demotic literature.[21]

The prebend of Amun contains a complex plot with three converging parts. Since this text has not been translated into English and is not very well known outside of specialist circles,[22] giving a brief summary of its plot is important for the argument that follows. Pharaoh Petubastis of Tanis, spurred on by his advisor Djedhor and supported by his general Wertepamunniut, seeks to negotiate the transfer of the prebend (also called 'benefice') of the office of High Priest of Amun at Thebes to his son, Ankhhor, which would make him the high priest and would greatly increase Petubastis's prestige and authority across Egypt.[23] Petubastis gathers a fleet and sails south to Thebes, and succeeds in effecting this transfer during the celebration of an important festival of the god Amun

[19] For an overview, see Ryholt (2005) and (2019a: 393–400). The papyri, the majority of which are held in the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection of the University of Copenhagen, but which are also found in papyrus collections throughout Europe and beyond, are almost all extremely fragmentary and are being published gradually in the Carlsberg Papyri series published at the University of Copenhagen by Museum Tusculanum Press, with some other examples published elsewhere in previous decades. For the Papyrus Carlsberg Collection and publication projects, see https://pcarlsberg.ku.dk/ (accessed February 2023).

[20] Tait (2000: 60). One such unpublished copy has already been designated as P. Carlsberg 483.

[21] For the scribes of P. Carlsberg 433 and 434, and other texts that they copied, see Ryholt (2018: 177–78) and Quack (2018: 190).

[22] For translations, see Hoffmann and Quack (2018: 100–120) (German); Agut-Labordère and Chauveau (2011: 71–94) (French); Stadler (2015: 348–444) (German).

[23] The names Djedhor and Ankhhor, transcribed here conventionally following their original hieroglyphic meaning and writing, are arguably better rendered as Teos and Chayris, following contemporaneous Greek transcriptions of these common names.

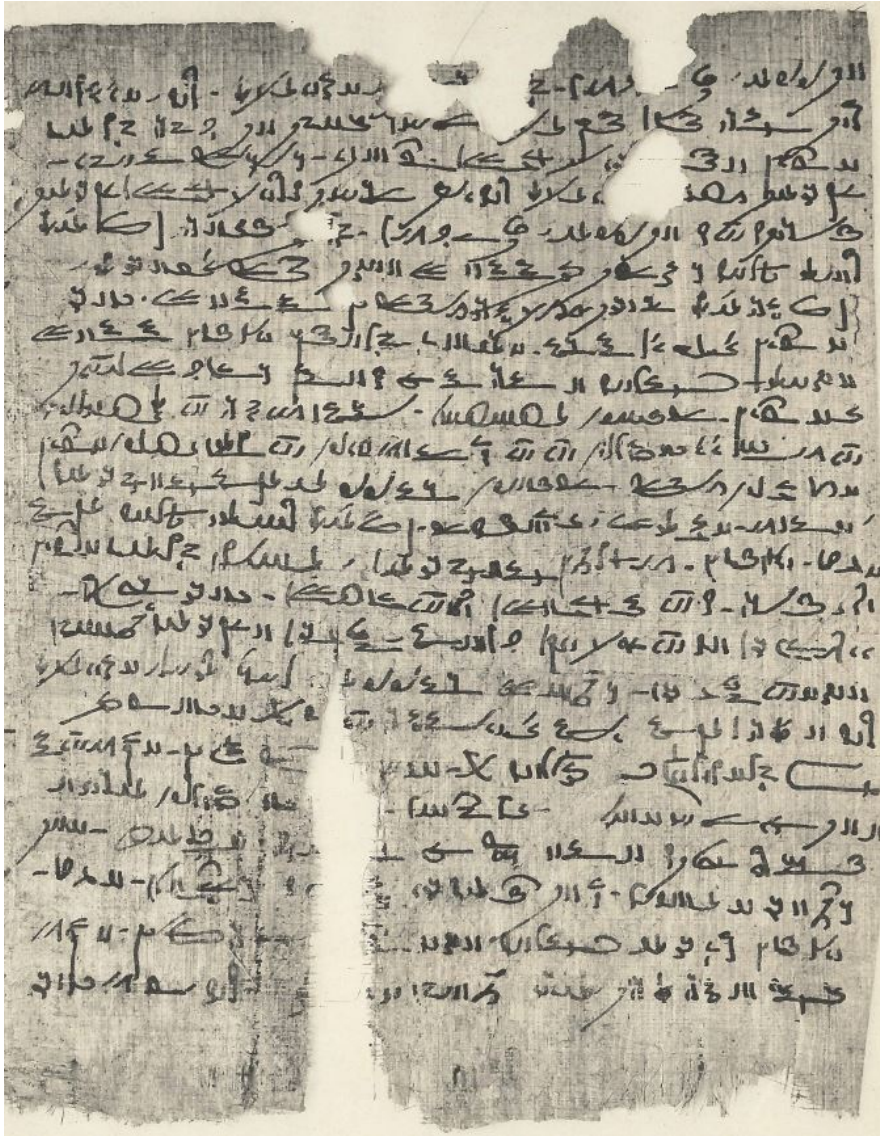

Fig. 1: Column 4 of Papyrus Spiegelberg, containing *The prebend of Amun* (from Spiegelberg 1910: Taf. IV).

(likely the Beautiful Festival of the Valley),[24] which involves ferrying a cult image of the god across the Nile from the temple of Karnak to visit tombs in the great necropolis of Thebes West. Before the pharaoh is able to conduct the cult image of Amun back to Karnak, a priest of Horus from Buto supported by a band of thirteen herdsmen[25] appears out of nowhere and makes a formal claim that the prebend rightfully belongs to him. The two sides come to blows, and after capturing Ankhhor in combat, the party from Buto commandeer the barge that was meant to ferry the cult image of Amun back across the Nile as it was docked at the quay before the temple, holding the entire festival hostage until the prebend is handed over to him. Shortly afterward, Wertepamunniut too is defeated in combat and captured by the Buto party. Unfortunately for Petubastis, an oracular inquisition to Amun upholds the rightfulness of the claim of the priest from Buto. This is not the only difficulty that Petubastis finds himself in. In an earlier portion of the novella that is unfortunately missing except for a small portion of heated dialogue, Petubastis is described as having alienated Pami, son of the deceased rival pharaoh Inaros, prior to his arrival at Thebes by not inviting him or his close ally Petechons to participate in the Theban festivities. This rekindles an older rivalry between the Petubastids and the Inarids, which is memorably the focus of another Demotic novella, *The armour of Inaros* (Hoffmann 1996). As it turns out, none other than Pami and his ally Petechons are named by Amun in another oracular consultation to be the only ones who will be able to defeat the Buto party and allow the cult image of Amun to return to Karnak. The three parts of the plot converge in a showdown which, unfortunately, is not preserved in any surviving text. Most of the novella's action is set outside of a temple in Thebes West (likely the *Djeser-Set* temple of Amun at Medinet Habu) on the quay of its *dromos* (the public, processional way that leads into an Egyptian temple), where the ships of the various parties were docked, and where the ceremonial barge of Amun awaited. This is where the Buto party intercepts the festival procession, and where the conflict over both the prebend and Petubastis's legacy is waged.

[24] For this festival in the Ptolemaic period, see Dogaer (2020). It was previously argued by Traunecker (1995) that the festival depicted in *The prebend of Amun* reflected the way that the Valley festival had merged, by the Ptolemaic period, with the Osirian Decade Festival. While Dogaer shows convincingly that the two festivals were kept separate, it is still a question which festival is being depicted in the novella. This is, unfortunately, difficult to answer because most of the manuscripts' descriptions of the festival are missing.

[25] For the similarity of these herdsmen to the hostile *boukoloi* known from the novels of Heliodorus and Achilles Tatius, bands of raiders who live in the marshes, see I.C. Rutherford (2000).

Mouvance in copies of *The prebend of Amun*

The prebend of Amun, then, is one of several works of Demotic narrative literature that are attested in Ptolemaic-period manuscripts (from different sites) and which are also found at Roman-period Tebtunis, only some of which are novellas. All Roman manuscripts which overlap at least partially with their respective earlier Ptolemaic exemplar show significant variation. This preponderance has been noted in scholarship and given different explanations. Kim Ryholt envisions two kinds of relationships between earlier and later exemplars of individual narrative texts found at Tebtunis. One is based on written transmission and copying, with differences between earlier and later versions the result of 'continuous re-editing' (Ryholt 2012: 83). Ryholt suggests that there was a need to update the language of stories to match the contemporary (literary) idiom or stylistic trends, and speculates that 'the first century [AD, i.e. the period represented by the earliest Tebtunis manuscripts] saw a general re-edition of older literature' (Ryholt 1999: 88). Numerous such examples of small-scale, local variation of this nature (on which see Jay 2016: 237–9) can be found, for example, in manuscripts of the *Myth of the Sun's Eye,* a complex and lengthy collection of fables embedded in a mythological narrative (Hoffmann and Quack 2018: 205–40).

Elsewhere, Ryholt proposes that significantly different versions of a work are independent instantiations in writing of orally composed and transmitted stories, 'committed to writing at different locations and at different times' (Ryholt 2000: 114). Jacqueline Jay, in her 2016 monograph *Orality and Literacy in the Demotic Tales*, fleshes out this latter approach, but instead of arguing that Demotic literature is through-and-through oral-traditional literature that was improvised, then dictated or transcribed, like Homeric poetry according to the Parry-Lord theory, she understands orality as a coexisting matrix of written literary traditions. Drawing especially on the theory of Walter Ong (1982), she observes numerous features characteristic of oral literature, such as the use of formulae and additive style which have adhered to the textual tradition. Turning to the Parry-Lord approach to oral-traditional literature, she also demonstrates the presence of type scenes, like arming for combat, and feasting, found in particular in works of the Inaros Cycle that feature armed combat. These features, when put together, suggest that authors employed the conventions of oral storytelling in written literature, or even drew on folklore in composition.

When it comes to understanding the widespread variation in manuscripts of Demotic narratives, Jay argues that textual features associated with orality and memorization, especially the presence of so-called memory variants, a kind of 'good' variant that crops up in the recording of a traditional text that has been memorized, are prevalent (Jay 2016: 141–53; cf. Carr 2011: 18–36 on memory variants). For more dramatic discrepancies between versions of the same work, Jay posits either, like Ryholt, the independent recording of mem-

orized texts, or the creative work of an involved editor. Demotic narratives, while being a fundamentally written literature, evince the impact of orality not only in their origins but in the context of their continued reception. Furthermore, as Jay (2016: 346–47), drawing on Baines (2007: 162), suggests, Demotic narrative literature would have been copied out with an oral realization, a performance, in mind, like a libretto (cf. Foley 1995: 65–6).

As the following examples drawn from the different versions of *The prebend of Amun* attest, the later versions contain significant amounts of text that reflect Papyrus Spiegelberg, or an archetype close to it, *verbatim*, down to specific phrases that are not formulaic. At the same time, in their wide-scale variance, they also imply significant freedom and invention. This is most noteworthy in character speech. Yet, even when a speech is significantly different vis-à-vis Papyrus Spiegelberg, the general dramatic relationship between what the character says and what is happening in the story, as well as memorable, dramatic and structural features of the texts of the speeches, are maintained.

In what follows, I will present examples of *mouvance* found in manuscripts of *The prebend of Amun* which point to three different, deliberate interventions in the story: adjusting the speech of characters to match the storyteller's understanding of their characterization, elaborating a scene more fully by following type-scene-like conventions, and smoothing over inconsistencies in the plot. It should be noted that P. Carlsberg 433 preserves portions of only two columns of the original scroll, and no. 434 but one, representing only small portions of the length of the original novella. Furthermore, no line of text is preserved in its full extent. There is also no overlap of text between these two copies: they could be copies from an identical or near-identical archetype, or there could have been significant variation or *mouvance* between the two. We are fortunate, however, that most of the published Tebtunis copies parallel text in P. Spiegelberg (the final column of P. Carlsberg 433 corresponds to a portion of the story that takes place after P. Spiegelberg breaks off). While there are numerous interesting differences between, on the one hand, P. Spiegelberg, and on the other, the Tebtunis versions, here I will focus on a handful of examples that allow us to get to the heart of the *mouvance* and illustrate the kinds of creative differences that exist. I will present text from P. Spiegelberg in each example, followed by the equivalent extract from a Tebtunis version. The fact that the texts, even in their fragmentary state, can be lined up relatively easily like this, attests to their wide-reaching similarities. For each example, I will give enough background in the story to allow the *mouvance* to be considered in terms of the wider story. While it is unknown what archetype the Tebtunis texts originate from, P. Spiegelberg appears to resemble whatever this may have been, especially given the high number of textual similarities, and the fact that plusses, not minuses, as well apparent reworkings, are generally found in the Tebtunis versions. Significant differences will be marked in **bold**, while simpler changes of wording or the use of synonyms will be marked in *italics*.

References to P. Spiegelberg can be found in the *editio princeps* (Spiegelberg 1910), while passages from the Tebtunis versions will be cited according to the edition of Tait (2000). For the sake of space I will not discuss the original Demotic text here, but will closely follow for the most part the understanding of P. Spiegelberg in the standard translations and Tait's translation for the Tebtunis versions, modifying some wording in the latter to make equivalences between the manuscripts clear.

Example 1: adjusting character speech

After Wertepamunniut, a hero on Petubastis's side, is summarily defeated and captured by the Buto party, just like Ankhhor, Petubastis's son and newly-crowned holder of the prebend of Amun, was earlier, Petubastis's advisor Djedhor urges the pharaoh to order all the men under his control to attack. Pekrur, an advisor of Petubastis, responds to Djedhor and upbraids him:

> **P. Spiegelberg 10.1–10**
>
> The [Great of the East, Pe]krur, ans[wered him:] 'Isn't it madness what you have done? Or is....to take revenge on the herdsmen who captured Prince Ankhhor and General Wertepamunniut? The army will not be able to withstand any of them. Do you say, "Let the army of Egypt prepare against them!" so that the herdsmen cause a bloodbath among them? And further, Amun, the great god, is here with us. [It is] not [appropriate] that we do anything without consulting Amun. Let Pharaoh make an inquiry before him! If he commands us to fight, we will fight. If what Amun will command happens to be something different, we will act accordingly.'
>
> **P. Carlsberg 434, ll.3–9 (Tait 2000: 75–6)**
>
> (3)] the Great of the East, Paklul, **the Exceedingly Great**, saying [
>
> (4)] **your (attempts at) cleverness are what have let them capture Prince Ankhhor and [**
>
> (5)] **their hands and their feet, as they sent them on board** [
>
> (6) ... the army of] Egypt [will not (be able?)] to withstand **him upon the banks of the [**
>
> (7) ... they (*sc.* the herdsmen)] cause a bloodbath among [*the*] *army of Egypt* [
>
> (8)] with them. It is not appropriate *to do* anything without consulting him (sc. Amun). Please make an inquiry [
>
> (9)] fight, (then) we shall fight. *That which he* (sc. Amun) will com[mand ...

The overall structure of Pekrur's[26] reply is similar in each version, but the details differ. The first part diverges greatly, with Pekrur describing in greater detail in P. Carlsberg 434 than in P. Spiegelberg how the herdsmen captured the two men, binding their hands and feet and sending them on board the bark (l. 5). In both versions, Pekrur ridicules Djedhor's suggestions as inept; yet, more specifically, the Tebtunis version raises the stakes, implying that Pekrur believes the capture of Ankhhor and Wertepamunniut to be a direct result of Djedhor's actions (l. 4), something not stated explicitly in P. Spiegelberg. This likely refers back to Djedhor's original provocation of the Buto party (see P. Spiegelberg 3.2–6), something Pekrur sarcastically calls 'cleverness'.[27]

As Pekrur's speech to Petubastis continues, each version follows the other closely, down to specific wording. In vividly describing the consequence of an attack against the herdsmen, Pekrur calls it a 'bloodbath', using the same phrase in each case. The need for Pharaoh to petition Amun in each is introduced with an identical sentence type, though differing in word choice. Finally, the imagined affirmative oracular response is worded the same in each, while the alternative scenario is introduced with a fronted, emphasized subject in P. Carlsberg 434, possibly followed by a conditional as in P. Spiegelberg.

In the next example, Petubastis turns to Pekrur for advice once he learns from the oracle of Amun that Pami and Petechons, the Inarids whom he had offended by not inviting them to Thebes, are the only ones who can save him. His initial exclamation in P. Carlsberg 433 is missing, but P. Spiegelberg has him lamenting the fact that, if he were to summon Petechons and Pami, they would not come. Pekrur responds:

> **P. Spiegelberg 11.8–17**
>
> The Great of the East, Pekrur, said, 'If it is pleasing before Pharaoh, may the youths (i.e. Pami and Petechons) be sent for (and) they come south! Everything that Pharaoh will desire, they will do all of it.' Pharaoh spoke, 'By Amun! If I send for them [at my behest], they will not come because of the contemptuous actions I did to them. I came south to Thebes without sending for them (to invite them) to the procession of Amun the Great God. My father, Great of the East, Pekrur! It falls on you to send for them. If anyone else sends for them, they will not come south at (my) behest.' The Great of the East, Pekrur, said: 'My great lord: millions are they, the contemptuous acts that you do to

[26] The name Pekrur is spelled 'Paklul' (i.e. with an *l* instead of an *r*; the vowels are reconstructed by convention) in the two Tebtunis versions following the Fayyumic dialect of spoken Egyptian (a phonetic feature called lambaization).

[27] Before Djedhor spoke up, the claim of the priest from Buto to the prebend was affirmed by the oracle of Amun, and Petubastis appeared to be willing to allow it to be transferred (cf. P. Spiegelberg 2.15–18). Yet Djedhor's hostility led directly to the confrontation with Ankhhor, followed by Wertepamunniut, as well as the commandeering of the processional barge of Amun: in other words, this was a major turning point of the novella that led to the dire situation—its central crisis.

the young ones, to one after another! You never think of warriors until you desire them because of your misfortune!' Pharaoh spoke: 'By Amun, the great God! It was not I who insult them, (but) the evil confusions of Djedhor, son of Ankhhor...'

P. Carlsberg 433, y+1.3–10 (Tait 2000: 68–70)

(3)] The Great of the East, Paklul, [said, 'If I][28] **send for them, they will not come.** If Pharaoh so desires [

(4)] come south...*everything that is required of them*.' Pharaoh said, 'If I send for them, they will not come [

(5)] **as I have not brought them** south to Thebes**. It falls to you, O my father, Great** [of the East, Paklul ...

(6)] Bulls of Egypt (to) send for them.' The Great of the East Paklul said, '**But they treat you with** *contempt*, **these young** [

(7)] misfortune!' Pharaoh said, '*As* Amun the great god [lives ...

(8) ... **as for** *Djedhor, son of*] *Ankhhor*: **it is he who caused me to do it**...'

While, at first glance, the two texts are generally close in spirit, a careful reading shows important differences in the dialogue between Petubastis and Pekrur, and that the attitude of the character of Pekrur has been tweaked. In P. Carlsberg 433, Pekrur, having heard the declaration of the oracle of Amun, states outright that he does not believe that Pami and Petechons will come to help unless Petubastis himself sends for them, anticipating what Petubastis will ask of him. This is in contrast to P. Spiegelberg, where Pekrur, after hearing of the oracle, bluntly encourages Petubastis to send for them—something which is undercut in its earnestness by his later harsh criticism of the pharaoh, thus making him come across as sarcastic. This Pekrur in the Tebtunis version appears to be more earnest across the board, although it should be noted that the lacuna in ll. 6–7 of P. Carlsberg 433 is particularly unfortunate in trying to determine this. The harshly worded criticism of Pekrur in P. Spiegelberg ('My great lord: millions are they, the contemptuous acts that you do to the young ones, to one after another!') does not appear to be present in P. Carlsberg 433; instead, with a few of the same key words being used in changed form (notably "contempt" for "contemptuous acts"), Pekrur may be speaking of the Buto party and not the Inarids, and thus highlighting for Petubastis the urgency of the situation. It is also noteworthy that Pekrur does not address Pharaoh at all with the honorific 'my great lord', as in P. Spiegelberg, but speaks to the point, something which could suggest to a reader that he is being rude (especially since such honorifics are typical in literary narratives),

[28] Following a restoration suggested to me personally by Kim Ryholt, and entertained in Tait (2000: 70).

or that he is speaking bluntly yet familiarly.[29] By using more toned-down and subtle dialogue, the characterization of Pekrur is arguably more open to individual interpretation. If Petubastis's ineptitude is de-emphasized in the Tebtunis version as a result, the villainy of Djedhor is magnified, although it should be said that Petubastis is still presented as weak and easily swayed by others. Nevertheless, the Tebtunis version implies an the absence of the overtly hostile rhetoric against Petubastis by one of his own men that was present in P. Spiegelberg. Eventually, as is evident in both versions, though with significantly different wording, Petubastis pleads innocence, blaming Djedhor for the machinations that alienated Petechons and Pami, and asks Pekrur to write a letter to them instead.

Example 2: elaboration of a type scene

After Ankhhor is captured, Wertepamunniut arms to fight against the Buto party, and is defeated (see P. Spiegelberg 8.12–9.10). Despite a frustratingly poorly preserved text, P. Carlsberg 433 seems to convey the arming portion of the scene significantly more fully:

P. Spiegelberg 8.12–9.7 (selections)

He (*sc*. Wertepamunniut) girded himself with his armour. He came to the upper part of the barge of Amun. He spoke in the direction of the ship's deck to the young priest ... [*omitting here the dialogue between Wertepamunniut and the priest from Buto in 8.13–23*] The young priest looked towards one of the thirteen herdsmen who were on board with him. He [the herdsman] rose up, girded himself with his armour, and went to the quay. He faced General [Wertepamunniut] and ... him [in the way(?)] that a nurse would with [her] young ch[ild]. He [fl]ew at General Wertepamunniut, grasped [the inside of] his armour, and threw him to the ground. [He] brought himself [before him (sc. Wertepamunniut)], held his limbs fast, bound [him,] and thr[ew him under his] foot. He brought him on board the barge of Amun and [cast him into the be]lly (of the ship), inside of which [wa]s Prince Ankhhor, and made the [hatch] go down [over him.]

P. Carlsberg 433, x+1.14–19 (Tait 2000: 64–65)

(14)] Wertepamunniut [

(15)] *his fellow* [

[29] In other works of Demotic fiction, bluntness can be an indicator of someone speaking familiarly, and not necessarily a sign of hostility. In terms of politeness theory, this would be an example of speaking baldly on record with the purpose of 'giving face' to the one being addressed, dignifying them by not wasting their time with formalities. For examples, see *First Setna* 5.32 and 5.35–6 (Vinson 2018: 126), and P. Petese A 2.26 and 8.20 (Ryholt 1999: 14, 20, 53, 59).

(16)] **He called to a young ...** He fought with **the Great** [

(17)] behind [his] back [

(18)] **He received his armour from** [

(19)] [they] made the hatch go down over him [

The elaborations here resemble the arming scene before the combat between Ankhhor and the priest from Buto earlier in the story, preserved in P. Spiegelberg:

P. Spiegelberg 3.21–4.6

Prince Ankhhor turned his face to the [kios]k.[30] He tossed the fine garments which had been on him [onto the gr]ound along with the golden jewelry with which he had been adorned. [He had] his arms brought to him and donned the amulets [of the] battle. He came to the *dromos* of Amun, tu[rning his face] to the young priest (and) to the kiosk itself. Behold, a young servant was opposite him, hidden among the crowd, with a new, exquisitely adorned piece of armour in his hand. The young priest approached him, took the piece of armour from him, and girded himself with it. He came to the *dromos* of Amun and faced Prince Ankhhor ...

Unlike in P. Spiegelberg, the herdsmen chosen to fight Wertepamunniut—who seems to be given an honorific title in P. Carlsberg 433 not found in P. Spiegelberg—is described as summoning a helper to bring him his armour and weaponry, in a sequence lasting perhaps the length of a line or more. This resembles what we have earlier in P. Spiegelberg, quoted above, when Ankhhor and the priest from Buto arm themselves, a process given a relatively elaborate description which appears to be similar to what we have in the Tebtunis version of the later passage, especially since a 'young servant' is the one who brings the armour to the warrior. In P. Spiegelberg, the second arming scene preceding the combat between Wertepamunniut and a herdsman, corresponding to the present scene in the Tebtunis version, is much shorter than what is found in P. Carlsberg 433, lasting a single sentence. After Wertepamunniut is defeated in P. Carlsberg 433, the herdsman despoils his armour, something also missing in the parallel scene in P. Spiegelberg. Both versions, nevertheless, mention the hatch of the ship's hold closing over the head of the captive Wertepamunniut, a detail found in the scene with Ankhhor as well (see P. Spiegelberg 5.10–11). It is tempting to explain the fuller narration found in P. Carlsberg 433 in the light of Jay's argument that

[30] For this word in Demotic, see Hoffmann (1991), but cf. also Wallet-Lebrun (1987) (with thanks to Joachim Quack for this reference). Regardless of the actual meaning, it refers to a structure situated on the quay where temple visitors, or official processions, would dock their boats.

Homeric-like type scenes were instrumental in the composition of Demotic narrative literature, with arming and combat scenes taking centre stage in works of the Inaros Cycle (Jay 2016: 166–9). In the present example, the agent behind the expanded version of P. Carlsberg 433 drew on their storytelling competence to flesh out this scene when producing a copy of *The prebend of Amun.*

Example 3: making the plot consistent

The final example to consider involves another kind of harmonization, where an important aspect of the plot of the novella that is not mentioned at a corresponding scene from P. Spiegelberg is explicitly referenced in the Tebtunis version. The oracular response of Amun that identifies Petechons and Pami as the ones to save Petubastis is the central turning point of the novella. While the version of the oracle in P. Spiegelberg 11.5–6 states that Pami and Petechons will rescue the captives and return Amun to Thebes, in P. Carlsberg 433, y+1.1, the oracle also states that someone will 'install Montu, lord of Thebes, in his shrine.' The statue (that is, cult image) of the god Montu is referenced elsewhere in P. Spiegelberg (D.2, E.23, 8.3)[31] in a way that makes it clear that its return to Karnak was not only an important part of the festival that has been interrupted, but was an original reason for Petubastis to sail to Thebes in the first place, perhaps using the (lost and found?) statue in his negotiation to secure the prebend of Amun for Ankhhor. The statue of Montu is also mentioned in P. Carlsberg 433, x+1.1, paralleling closely P. Spiegelberg 8.3: after Ankhhor is captured, Petubastis reflects on the terrible turn of events, lamenting that, despite trying to do something good by 'installing Montu ... in his shrine' (with nearly identical wording in the two versions; Tait 2000: 69), he has suffered so much misfortune at Thebes. Although it is unknown exactly how the statue of Montu factors into the end of the novella (P. Spiegelberg breaks off as soon as Pami and Petechons arrive), it seems that P. Carlsberg 433 wishes to make sure that the plot information provided by the oracle of Amun matches both Petubastis's own perspective on the events gone awry and the actual way that things unfold towards the ending.

[31] For D.2 and E.23, see Hoffmann (1995b: 55, 58).

Mouvance and the art of fiction in performance

Although there are more examples of interesting variance between P. Spiegelberg and the Tebtunis versions of *The prebend of Amun,* those discussed above point to two essential phenomena that, together, suggest a *mouvance* accompanying the transmission of written literature: a significant amount of the parallel text matches closely on a word-to-word basis, but much of the variation is extensive, reaching beyond what memory variance or scribal interventions (for updating language, replacing rare words, etc.) could explain. The easiest explanation is that a textual archetype similar in wording to P. Spiegelberg underlies the Tebtunis versions, transmitted in writing or by memorization, and that this text was 'moved' sometime (likely multiple times) between its authoring in writing and its collection on scrolls in Roman-period Tebtunis. As Nagy (1996: 10) summarizes, *mouvance* springs from 'a performance tradition that is still alive'. Although *The prebend of Amun* was not composed in performance, whoever created the changes reflected in the Tebtunis versions 'moved' the text by recomposing it (cf. Nagy 1996: 15), producing versions which, in comparison with P. Spiegelberg, evince a kind of textual freedom seen in the medieval *chansons de geste*, which in part led Zumthor to formulate the concept of *mouvance*.

The nature of the *mouvance* considered in the examples of the previous section points to a performer of the text of *The prebend of Amun* (see the discussion below for my choice of 'performer' and not 'reader') who is not merely re-composing the novella, but making targeted interventions in its script due to an evolved understanding of its plot and characters, thus synthesizing the art of storytelling with that of performing through the act of 'moving' the text. The *mouvance* in example 1 implies someone honing characterization through tweaking and manipulating speeches, and not for the sake of variation or invention alone: the changes are consistent. The clearest example of this is the way that Pekrur appears less sarcastic in the Tebtunis versions. Since one cannot adjust, even slightly, one character without changing others, this results in Pharaoh Petubastis being painted in not so harsh a light as he is in P. Spiegelberg (or a text like it), all the while making another character, Djedhor, a more overt villain. In example 2, the fuller deployment of features associated with the type scene of arming and battle speaks directly to a creative performer using techniques drawn from oral tradition, or even from their conversance with written Demotic literature, to present a more elaborate scene in comparison with the stripped-down presentation in the equivalent in P. Spiegelberg. This evinces a desire to luxuriate in storytelling by building on a received text, 'moving' it in a significant way without changing the story in its essence at all. Finally, example 3 shows a particular focus on plot and, in particular, plot consistency, by making the oracle of Amun, whose pronouncement fore-

shadows the resolution of the crisis, mention an aspect of the narrative that, while perhaps not as central as the crisis surrounding the interruption of the festival of Amun, was part of one of the protagonists' motivations (Petubastis) and resulted in the crisis taking place. All of these ways in which the text of the story represented in P. Spiegelberg was 'moved' make sense if they stem from a performer of the text who is intimately familiar with it and has become an expert to the degree that they believe that it can be told better.

While speculating where and when a performer-storyteller in the process of transmission of *The prebend of Amun* would have done this is beyond the scope of the present article, it is possible to concretize the kinds of situations that could license and give rise to this *mouvance* based on evidence from Graeco-Roman Egypt. The most general background for this phenomenon is the oral-performative essence of the normal encounter with Demotic prose fiction (Jasnow 2007: 436; Jay 2021: 92; cf. Redford 2000: 159–63 for earlier Egyptian literature). The book-scrolls of these works were therefore tantamount to libretti for performance. The oral-performative essence of Egyptian literature going back to the poetic fiction of the Middle Kingdom is well-established in Egyptology (Baines 2007: 158–61; Parkinson 2009: 30–40, with a re-enactment on 41–68; Parkinson 2010: 57). Nevertheless, realization in dramatic performance would also have been the norm for the prose narrative literature of Graeco-Roman Egypt.[32] The real effect of the performance of prose fiction on the textual record, as seen in the marked *mouvance* with *The prebend of Amun*, is worth reiterating, especially since *mouvance* in Demotic literature is more substantial than what is seen in Middle Kingdom poetic fiction, which Parkinson (2011: 25–26) argued would organically develop out of performance (as is argued here).[33]

That book-scrolls in the Graeco-Roman period containing prose fiction like novellas were considered by the Egyptians to be libretti, intended to find their full realization in dramatic reading to an audience, is evident in a Demotic term attached to works of storytelling, *sḏy*, as both a noun and a verb. The root of the word is the verb *ḏd* 'to speak,' inflected with the causative prefix *s*. The Demotic verb *sḏy* is usually translated 'to speak, narrate', and the noun, 'speech, report, story'.[34] In Demotic, *sḏy* identifies narratives that are both oral and written (Jay 2016: 233), continuing the semantics and usage of the word in earlier Egyptian. Uniquely in the Demotic evidence, as Camilla Di Biase-Dyson shows, *sḏy* is associated with narratives that are newsworthy or of a particularly tellable nature, and not, as in earlier

[32] For a 'libretto' theory for Demotic literature, see Jay (2016: 87); for Israelite/Judean literature, see Niditch (1996: 8–24, 99–117) and van der Toorn (2009: 9–16).

[33] For the limited scope of variance, see Parkinson (2009: 166–67) (with thanks to a reviewer for the references). Against the temptation to connect the degree of *mouvance* with the poetic nature of Middle Kingdom fiction as opposed to the prose nature of Demotic, see, e.g., Klooster (2014: 258–60).

[34] In earlier phases of the Egyptian language, the cognate verb *sḏd* is used for an act of oral storytelling or, more generally, any kind of oral narrative which can serve as an explanation. See Redford (2000: 176–82) for this and other related terms.

Egyptian, with the transmission of information in narrative form more generally speaking.[35] This can be seen in the numerous examples of the noun being used within novellas and other works of prose fiction to describe a formal tale told aloud by one character to another, where the noun is closely associated with the verb *sḏm* 'to listen to' (Tait 2015). In a copy of one novella (*First Setna*), *sḏy* is found in its colophon to identify the nature of the text found on the scroll itself (Ritner 2003: 469).

The performer of a novella does not merely read aloud, but reads dramatically, which means embodying the voices of characters. This implies that they relied on the power of their own voice inflection, not on costumed actors and staged performance, or the use of different human speakers, to present a cogent, coherent, and engaging story. Other genres of Demotic literature of a dramatic type that were recorded similarly on book-scrolls, including fully-fledged staged dramas, as well as dramatic readings, contained 'roles' for narrators as well as characters, where speeches meant to be recited by different speakers are marked in the running text. A good example is *The Myth of the Sun's Eye* (see Fig. 2), where the speech of the two primary characters of the frame story (an ape and a cat), who also serve as narrators of the embedded stories, is demarcated with brief paratextual notes in the running text indicating that what follows is in their 'voice.' This could mean that the text was dramatically read as a dialogue by two different speakers (cf. Hoffmann and Quack 2018: 209), or that a single reciter would read the whole dramatically and perhaps modulate their voice (cf. Jay 2016: 235). In contemporary non-literary texts, such as mortuary rituals which would have been recited by a priest but which indicated at times that he spoke as a certain god or goddess (e.g., Isis, Nephthys, or Anubis), paratextual headings identifying speakers would have been read aloud by the reciter or performer, and that alone would have been enough to frame the persona of their voice, e.g., P. Berlin 3008 (M. Smith 2009: 124–34) and P. Rhind 1 (M. Smith 2009: 302–34). In contrast to these textual configurations of distinctly performed voices, the libretti of novellas require that but one speaking voice realize the text on the scroll: a performer playing the role of a storyteller reading the 'part' of what is conventionally called today the narrator. When the text was encountered or realized in its intended fashion, it was not only read aloud, but performed, with the storyteller reading the 'role' of the narrator simultaneously and necessarily embodying the voice and thoughts of characters as well. To borrow a term from Greek poetics, the language of prose fiction like the Demotic novellas is 'mimetic prose' (cf. Aristotle, *Poetics* 1147a28–b13). Drawing on Plato and Aristotle, Leslie Kurke (2006; 2011: 256–57) has re-formulated this concept to describe the prose artistry of authors like Aesop and Plato: they create verbal or textual constructs that are realized as voices speaking, non-poetically, 'as' a certain figure, with the potential for further voices to be embedded in the primary figure's speech, as in the 'mimetic prose' of Plato's dialogues (Charalabopoulos 2012: 107–8).

[35] Di Biase-Dyson (forthcoming). My sincere thanks to the author for sharing the unpublished article.

The person dramatically reading from the libretto assumes the voice of the speaking persona, who is figured by the text of the Demotic novellas as an anonymous narrator speaking in the 'third person'. While texts construed as mimetic prose are not by necessity intended for dramatic reading, the embedding of many character voices within a consistent, overarching voice makes coherent recitation by a single voice from beginning to end possible.

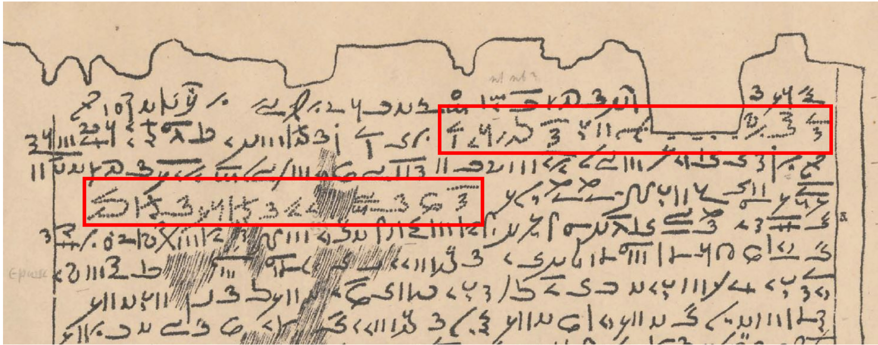

Fig. 2: Closeup of a hand copy of column 4 of P. Leiden I 384 containing the *Myth of the Sun's Eye*, with speaker indications originally written in red ink (conveyed with dotted lines in the black-and-white publication reproduced here) surrounded by boxes; from Krall (1897a), image from a digitization of the book by the University of Chicago Library.

The *mouvance* found in manuscripts of *The prebend of Amun* should be connected with the recitative, mimetic, and single-voiced nature of Demotic prose fiction. When performing the speeches of characters from the libretto, and not solely those of an omniscient narrator, the dramatically speaking voice has to make certain enunciative decisions concerning speed, volume, tone, and other features in order to embody the character fully: the dramatically-embodied speech of characters is ripe for adaptation and innovation by a performer-storyteller. The speeches of characters are meant to be lifelike utterances of human subjects which, when performed, demand interpretation beyond the lexical and phrasal level. These features are especially crucial in the dramatic environment of stories, where characters address each other in order to advance the plot. To complicate matters further, different characters demand different approaches, and the full oral performance of a character requires the embodiment of a speaking persona that has a particular bent in the story: the conniving antagonist who wilts under pressure; the bombastic yet melancholy pharaoh; the wise and calming or perhaps sarcastic and world-weary advisor. We may imagine the *mouvance* seen in character speech in the later versions of the novella originating in the oral performance of the novella by a performer-storyteller who chose to embody the characters differently, as speaking human figures, while ensuring their co-

herence within the story as understood by the performer-storyteller.[36] Adjustments to character speech could happen in the moment of performance, such as through unconscious micro-adjustments of wording based on one's understanding of a character, building on themselves as the story develops while maintaining a consistent characterization. Performers of the same novella libretto may have learned from their mistakes and 'moved' the text in response to audience reception: micro-adjustments that did not work well in performance, such as by confusing or boring listeners, may have been modified in advance of a subsequent performance.

Given the growing consensus that the ancients not only read, that is, performed literature out loud, but also encountered it individually and often silently in private reading (Johnson 2010: 3–9; McCutcheon 2015), it cannot be excluded that someone in possession of a copy of *The prebend of Amun* reflected on its story and characterization separately from contexts of actual performance. One who possessed a libretto with the intention of performing it would have sought deeper understandings. In this respect, one can compare portrayals of modern readers of texts whose engaged and energetic activity has been theorized as a 'wandering viewpoint' (Iser 1978: 118) which continually seeks to make sense of what they are reading. Someone who possessed a libretto of *The prebend of Amun* could ask, for example, what the cult image of Montu has to do with where the story is going, once the oracle reveals what Petubastis is up against. The same individual could also draw on preconceived ideas or biases, perhaps not wishing to fault Petubastis and thus taking issue even with the parodic portrayal of a pharaoh. This could lead to 'readings'—in the sense of interpretations yoked to particular text sites, as is used in philology and text criticism, as well as in the sense of actual readings aloud—that, with a basis in the text, look for ways to see Petubastis as merely hapless, and blame his bad situation on others (Djedhor, as we have seen, naturally fits this bill). Even in private reading, a context can be simulated by reading aloud for an 'audience' by discerning the reaction of an implied or ideal reader, 'translated into an experience rather than left a libretto only' (Foley 1995: 43; for Foley's discussion of Wolfgang Iser, which I follow here, see Foley 1995: 42–7).

The *mouvance* itself—the textual(ized) realization of variation of the changing text sprung from engaged performance—would occur when the text of the novella attains a form that matches the storyteller's differing understanding. In the case of written literature like *The prebend of Amun*, such text is not re-composed and improvised anew, but dramatically read from a modified libretto or from one's memory. A 'moved' text could have taken shape as a newly inscribed copy with deliberate changes, that is, as a new libretto. Alternatively, *mouvance* could have originally taken place not on the written page but in a dramatic per-

[36] Raymond Person's work on the structural symmetry of everyday conversation and narrative technique, especially in performative (including oral-traditional) contexts (2015) as well as scribal contexts (2022), may provide a grounding in linguistics for the performance-based *mouvance* of character speech and dialogue discussed here.

formance, the text being supplemented, expanded, or reconfigured by a performer with good knowledge of the story and their reading of it. To further complicate the picture, the origin of the *mouvance,* as well as the hypothetical explanations just entertained, could all take place when someone heard the novella, perhaps on more than one occasion.

It is appealing to see the existence of divergent copies of the novella of *The prebend of Amun*, inscribed on new or repurposed book-scrolls, as an attempt to make concrete and preserve different librettos of the novella for the use of performers, making their innovations re-readable (in both senses of the term, as described above). As for the surviving copies of *The prebend of Amun* which show *mouvance,* they could have been made at Tebtunis or elsewhere, with scribes simply copying as many works of literature as they could get their hands on. There is proof of the circulation of texts in Graeco-Roman Egypt: a Demotic letter has been preserved that records how two friends or colleagues exchanged book-scrolls (Zauzich 2000), and manuscripts likely originating in other libraries were found in the ruins of Tebtunis, showing that written texts circulated among centres of literature in the first and second centuries AD (Ryholt 2019b: 249–53). 'Moved' versions of *The prebend of Amun* could have taken shape as personal copies belonging to self-styled performers of the work, 'house versions' of the novella, or even geographically-bound master copies or recensions intended for local use. The act of 'moving' the text may have been spontaneous and virtual during performance, and later written down, or may have taken place during copying with an eye towards performance.[37] Using Nagy's model of the crystallization of the text of the Homeric epics as one example of potential long-term trends and results of a process of performance and *mouvance*, the textual evolution of Demotic prose fiction like *The prebend of Amun* may not have survived beyond initial phases of crystallization before Demotic died out.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have argued that textual variation in manuscripts of the Demotic novella *The prebend of Amun* reflects the creative acts of performers engaging in the art of storytelling who 'moved' (as Nagy puts it) a received text of the novella to match better their understanding of the story, or of the kind of experience that the story should create. Several specific examples of *mouvance* seen when comparing copies of *The prebend of Amun* bespeak a storyteller rethinking characterization, endeavouring to construct a consistent plot, and even desiring to produce a fuller, more elaborate story. Besides reconstructing a

[37] A reconstruction of a similar process of redaction in writing of multiple copies of a work that derive from a still-living performance tradition can be found in Graeme Bird's discussion of the Ptolemaic papyri of Homer (Bird 2010). For scribes as performers, and a critical discussion of Bird, see Ready (2019: 203–90). For scribal performance in Israelite literature, see Person (1998).

potential window, albeit small, into the living, performative world of written literature in Graeco-Roman and associated reading cultures, I have endeavoured in general to show the relevance of *mouvance* and associated concepts to written prose fiction from antiquity. The *mouvance* of *The prebend of Amun* attests to the life of such a work, written to be performed, in its living textualization. Considerations of orality are decidedly not 'residual' but spring from the intended setting of a literature of storytelling, read and performed by individuals who engaged in reflection on the meaning of the story itself and who desired a text that reflected their understanding and which they would consequently perform well.

It is possible that the genre of *The prebend of Amun* contributed particularly to this kind of *mouvance*. The relatively short yet complex nature of novellas means that a significant amount of story material (such as dramatic speeches, plot twists, colliding motivations, set pieces and tableau scenes) needed to be conveyed cogently to an audience in a short period of time. Requiring virtuosic reading performance and the managing of an audience's attention and comprehension of a multi-sided story, novellas are at the same time not too long to preclude reading in single sittings over the span of, at most, a few hours: the entire work of art can come into view as a whole, and indeed, it seems, was engineered to do so. From a cross-cultural literary perspective, the coherent and complete iteration of novellas like *The prebend of Amun* differs from that of other genres of narrative literature, such as epic, novels, and other lengthy narratives, as well as story collections with parts meant to be read in isolation. The poetics of novellas raises the bar for what a performer could accomplish in terms of an engaging and entertaining storytelling experience. The multiple textual witnesses of what must have been a popular novella, *The prebend of Amun*, show different approaches to what makes a dramatic telling of a novella work better. Since the evidence suggests that *mouvance*-like variation is a 'feature' rather than a 'bug' of Demotic prose fiction, the art of fiction in the act of storytelling must have been widespread among the ranks of those who participated in traditions of native Egyptian literature in the Graeco-Roman period.

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