"Dicebat Bernardus Carnotensis nos esse quasi nanos, gigantium humeris insidentes, ut possimus plura eis et remotiora videre, non utique proprii visus acumine, aut eminentia corporis, sed quia in altum subvehimur et extollimur magnitudine gigantea"

"Bernard of Chartres used to compare us to puny dwarfs perched on the shoulders of giants. He pointed out that we see more and farther than our predecessors, not because we have keener vision or greater height, but because we are lifted up and borne aloft on their gigantic shoulders"

(John of Salisbury, *Metalogicon* III, 4, tr. D.D. McGarry)[1]

THE SNARK IS DEAD

Helmut Satzinger, Wien & Ariel Shisha-Halevy, Jerusalem

*"For the Snark's a peculiar creature, that won't
Be caught in a commonplace way.
Do all that you know, and try all that you don't:
Not a chance must be wasted today!"*

The Heroe, Scourge of *Ingénuité* and *Naïveté*, couched his Lance and spurred his mighty Stallion. He bore on the trembling enemy like a tempest, charged him *en véritable sanglier,* and — a few echoing pages and many poignant footnotes later — what had been nasty *Standardtheorie* (more conveniently known to its rather dubious friends as 'the Snark')[2] was left a wretched, bloody bundle of opinions squirming on the ground. O great relief! The Menace, the obnoxious (and, if the truth be told, pathetic) *Skandalon* of modern enlightened Linguistics and Egyptology, is no more — to the everlasting gratitude and awe of future generations.

But that cause of peril, not to say constant vexation, the Snark, what had it looked like before it was overtaken by well-deserved fate? What had its monstrosities been? Fortunately, we can gain a good impression of its vicious erring essence and qualities so corrupting to fair Egyptian Grammar, from the pages just mentioned:[3]

1. In general, it was given to errors, and especially theoretical and methodological excesses of all kinds, with which it also contaminated others (p. 3f.); it was based on simplistic, naïve, artless postulates — its approach was even *willingly* warped (p. 5). It was dishonest (pp. 7, 17).

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1   A traditional *topos*: cf. R. Klibansky, "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants", *Isis* 71 (XXVI, i) 147-149 (1936).

2   With apologies to Lewis Carroll. See *The Hunting of the Snark*, Fit the Fourth.

3   P. Vernus, *Les parties du discours en Moyen Égyptien. Autopsie d'une théorie.* Cahiers d'Égyptologie 5, Genève 1997. (ISBN 2-940011-07-9, 81 pp., SFR 36,-)

2. First and most unforgivably of all, it propagated an «égyptien sans verbe» (p. 9): it thus betrayed the sacrosanct totem of Euro-style linguistics! True, this was not exactly so, as the verb was ever in its focus of discussion — indeed, it had always been a verb-centered theory — but, apart from the imperative form, «(le verbe) ne pourrait accéder à la prédication qu'en tant qu'un des constituants d'une phrase nominale, en étant transposé en adverbe ou en substantif» (p. 4); «la prédication ne s'organise qu'à travers des phrases nominales» (p. 10).

3. It claimed that Middle Egyptian morphology carries («véhicule») basically syntactic meanings — it subordinated, *horribile dictu* (we blush to write this out), morphology (again, Euro-style, and also the sovereignty of the word) to syntax! Suggesting that Egyptian — and imagine the corrupting influence on other languages — was a language in which «les caractérisations morphologiques se révélaient avant tous syntaxiques, un élément appartenant à l'une des trois catégories considérées comme fondamentales (le substantif, l'adjectif, l'adverbe) pouvant être transposé dans chacune des deux autres grâce à des masques appropriées» (p. 4). One of its many errors was to regard substantives and adjectives as syntactically different parts of speech. It offered to organize verbal morphology «en une sorte de triangle isocèle» (meaning «équilatéral»?) — a "brilliant theory" which, however, «se révèle bien fragile» (p. 19).

4. Unfortunately, H.J. Polotsky's pivotal discovery of the pan-Egyptian focalizing construction and his explanation of its being built, like certain Cleft Sentence constructions in Semitic, on the matrix of the Adverbial Sentence, cannot but be acclaimed, as is also the fact that the place of the subject is occupied by «la forme "emphatique"»: «sur ces deux points...l'accord est général» (p. 31). The perverseness of the Snark, however, lies in that «elle fait [de la forme "emphatique"] un équivalent algébrique du substantif, et de cette construction un équivalent algébrique de la prédication de situation [= Adverbial Sentence]» (p. 31).

5. The truly unacceptable face of the Snark was that, indulging itself in its vicious syntax, it made short work of topics of Modern Linguistics, so dear to our Hero, either by cunningly, and cowardly, failing to recognize them as all-powerful alchemists' stones, or by ignorantly not heeding them, since it simply detested them — it would have liked to eliminate them altogether, but couldn't well do so, and indeed did recognize them, although in bad grace (p. 6): tense, aspect, mood; pragmatics; indeed, "semantics". It ignored semantics — it looked the other way! It was, or pretended to be, quite unaware of the complexity of language — in fact, it had no notion of what a true language was like: «une théorie qui vous délivre de tous ces problèmes compliqués de temps, d'aspects, de modes...» (p. 5); «elle est contrainte d'ignorer les oppositions aspectuelles qui risqueraient de faire apparaître un système de caractérisations typiquement verbales» (p. 10); «Quant à ce qui relève du point de vue énonciatif, c'est-à-dire de visée communicative, ou, dans la terminologie anglo-saxonne de la pragmatique, elle n'en a pas même idée» (p. 11); «une théorie qui vous dispense d'entrer dans...l'énonciation (ou de la pragmatique)» (p. 5). «La "Standardtheorie" se

préoccupe essentiellement de syntaxe, relégant la sémantique dans la pénombre d'un *cagibi* où l'on entasse des objets qu'on n'aime guère, mais qu'il faut bien conserver par piété familiale» (p. 11).

All this cannot lead to anything but the objective verdict that the *Standardtheorie* is — was — «linguistiquement invraisemblable» (p. 8). It is childish; it is archaistic and outdated (p. 9); it rests (we already said so) «sur des postulats linguistiques simplistes» (p. 4-5); it would — had it not been happily terminated by our author — be in urgent need of theoretical updating (p. 10), in its pitiful state of ridiculously reflecting «une certaine linguistique des années 50» — O Benighted Fifties, Dark Age of Linguistic Theory! — «quant le structuralisme, après avoir donné ses lettres de noblesse et son statut scientifique à cette discipline, commençait à s'éssoufler, à perdre de sa puissance explicative...» (p. 14): our intrepid Hero doing away, *en bloc*, in one fell swoop and *en passant*, with structural linguistics: De Saussure's heritage, Hjelmslev, Frei, Kuryłowicz bite the dust...

6. And look what indignities this rat of a Snark had offered to the noble, pure person of the Egyptian language! «L'égyptien de la "Standardtheorie" se situerait à l'écart des toutes les autres langues connues, avec ses caractérisations presque exclusivement syntaxiques» (again, what obscenity!) «et étrangement redondantes, et, corrélativement, une grammaire ne prenant en compte ni la sémantique de l'action, ni la dynamique de la communication»; «...on ne peut produire aucune langue digne de ce nom où la distinction entre nom et verbe soit absente» (p. 8); «l'étique et diaphane *ersatz* de langue que nous propose la "Standardtheorie"...» (p. 9). «Le moyen égyptien de la "Standardtheorie" pourrait tout au plus être un de ces *pidgins*» — perish the thought! — «utilisés dans des conditions très restrictives, par exemple les quelques occasions où deux peuplades distinctes et distantes se trouvent en contact pour échanger des harengs saurs contre des noix de coco» (p. 8. Pidgins are, of course, conceivable only in barter situations. Long live Colonial Linguistics!).

This shocking *cahier des doléances* raises the question where the defunct *Standardtheorie* is, or was, to be found; who its partisans were. Surely, it must have had something to do with Hans Jakob Polotsky, but it is obviously not his own doctrine that is being incessantly knocked about: to one of Polotsky's crucial discoveries general accord is attributed (p. 31). It is also admitted that he laid the basis for a pragmatic approach as early as 1944, although «avant la lettre» (!); indeed, the *Standardtheorie* is reproached for having deviated from Polotsky, basing itself on «les vues d'avant-guerre» (p. 9) — O Dark Ages of pre-war linguistics! Even that priceless French generic person, *On*, is held responsible (p. 17, § 20).

For a general account of the *Standardtheorie*, the author refers the reader to Schenkel, *Tübinger Einführung...*, 1994, 272 [recte 273] — 297 (p. 4, n. 9). But alas, one looks there in vain for bibliographical references. It is only on p. 25 that we succeed in finding "Schlüsselwerke zur Standardtheorie" listed, to wit Polotsky, *Egyptian Tenses*; *idem*, "Les transpositions"; Junge, *Syntax*. Is it, after all, Polotsky

who is primarily responsible for perpetrating the scandalous doctrine, so bravely exterminated by our Hero? This cannot be (see above). But that would leave us with one author, and one publication, only (and as a matter of fact it is the one quoted by the author as reference for what he calls (p. 6) «les versions systématiques de la "Standardtheorie"»). But then, why call it "Standardtheorie", and not "Junge, *Syntax*"? — and isn't Junge, *Syntax* fully generative in method, as Polotsky was sharply not? Is it after all a Snark-like creature, a mere phantom, that was laid to rest?

But it is high time to end the burlesque. What has happened is most deplorable: a scholar has raised the severest accusations, a blasting criticism in an intemperate attitude, against an entire school, paradigm, or line of research, in an outrageously dismissive, bad-mannered and bad-tempered vein unworthy of a scholar, often making close reading almost intolerable, but did not deem it necessary to specify exactly what publications he was criticizing in this sweeping manner. Thus the author not only offends colleagues to whose work his reproach simply does not apply (insofar as it is at all justifiable), but also slings mud at the most eminent scholar that has ever contributed to our field — indeed, one of the greatest linguists of the twentieth century, who is no longer alive — by the mere association of all these colleagues (roughly all scholars engaged in linguistic work on Egyptian, barring the author) with the school he has founded.[4]

Perhaps most unacceptable of all, and most patently absurd, are Pascal Vernus's allegations or insinuations of Polotsky's theory being "simplistic" and naïve (p. 5, p. 10 and often *passim*), aprioristic, conceptually and methodologically "blind" (p. 7). His insinuations of intrinsic scientific dishonesty (pp. 7, 15, 19 and elsewhere), frankly inconceivable for a scholar of integrity, are a different matter, and very grave. Such accusations, which one is reluctant even to quote, are refutable by an intelligent perusal of the work so disgracefully inveighed against and dismissed, work so very carefully and subtly formulated (as anyone who knew Polotsky's fussy way of composition would testify) with the will to penetrate to its argument and import; but the author's obvious, real or pretended incomprehension, delivered in a tell-tale blend of bullying arrogance and venomous mockery (see p. 22 f. for a prime instance) cannot exculpate him. Nor will he be able to complain of being misunderstood or misconstrued: his contentious claims (hardly arguments) are repeated again and again, sometimes *verbatim*, in unambiguous terms. Self-appointed smug and opinionated judge, jury, contemptuous prosecutor and hangman (note the juridical terminology on p. 42 f.), Vernus gives what he calls "la Standardtheorie" short shrift. This is hardly responsible scientific controversy: it is one scholar's extended and unrestrained ego-trip, which ought not to have been offered us as a scientific publication.

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4   The association of the terminological concept "Standard Theory" (not a compound) with Polotsky goes back to 1983 (see A. Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian: a Linguistic Introduction,* p. 9 and n. 25); as far as we know, the compounded (and thus hypostatized) term has never been employed in the comprehensive and reified, almost personified, sense programmatic in the book under review.

The present writers feel it is their obligation to call on the author to mend the damage he has caused as far as this is possible, *inter alia* by specifying at what persons and what publications he was aiming. In other *tempora et mores*, public penance or a public apology would have been in order, to the body of intelligent working colleagues as well as to the memory of an absent Master.

It is surely superfluous to point out in fitting words the enormity of trying to dispose, so crudely and *en bloc*, of considerably more than half a century's work by the founder of Egyptian linguistics, by his followers and those who took and are still taking his work as their *point de repère*,[5] — not to mention the various schools of general linguistics, especially the structuralist ones[6] — in exactly fourty-three pages of sloppy, self-important linguistic thinking. (The remaining 35 pp. consist of commented documentation for two constructions, *viz.* #Noun Phrase + adverbial phrase# as «énoncé complet» and "indicative *sḏm.f*"; one would wistfully wish this were the main, even the only part of the book, since here there are several features of real interest, calling for attention and response). Pascal Vernus seems to consider — his bibliography, and most of his statements are explicit in that respect — all Egyptological and General Linguistic work prior to the Sixties to be "archaic", meaning benighted, erroneous and naïve, hence negligible: it is he who turns out in this pamphlet to be aprioristic, fundamentalist and reductionist, bedevilling the highly complicated issues with doctrinaire labels.

It is sadly true the Old/Middle Egyptian grammar has ever been easy prey to dilettantic and cavalier handling, much more so than later phases of the language. It is irresistable, if disturbing, to reflect that Late-Egyptian-to-Coptic grammatical theory, of which the last is especially an inseparable part of Polotsky's heritage and a crucial constituent of the Polotskyan paradigm (which is, contrary to Vernus's allegation [p. 42], intensely historicist) — is left unscathed.[7]

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5   Not taking into account Gunn's *Studies in Egyptian Syntax* (1924), the seminal work hailed and carried on by Polotsky: indeed, the time has come for a (commentated?) reprint of this work by the first of the two giants of Egyptian linguistics.

6   Not irrelevant, this, for the subject in point. For Polotsky was essentially a Saussurean structuralist, in the enlightened critical comprehension of De Saussure now emerging, with the new light shed on De Saussure's thought by the publication of the course note-books themselves (so different from the manipulated edited *Cours*) and the current Saussurean philology and interpretation (not least by Tullio de Mauro) in general. Vernus's invective against the founding fathers of linguistic analysis is contemptible («frilosités effarouchées», of Leonard Bloomfield [p. 42; see also p. 10]).

7   It is of course possible that Vernus's interest in Coptic is limited to the bare requirements of a "modern Egyptologist", according to A.H. Gardiner's precedent: "My knowledge of Coptic is that which every competent Egyptologist must have, no more" (in *Charles Allberry: a Portrait.* By Patricia K. G. Lewis, privately published. Cambridge 1984. We warmly thank John Baines, Oxford, for the reference). Coptic is, alas, used (when convenient) selectively, superficially and opportunistically to throw light on pre-Coptic Egyptian. Vernus's own slip concerning the only Coptic feature he mentions, the durative Tswtp, is a case in point: the form «remonte à une prédication de situation, alors qu'il ne subsiste plus la moindre trace de la préposition marquant l'élément adverbial» (p. 39). This last issue has been discussed by Polotsky, Elanskaja, Schenkel

To deal critically with Pascal Vernus's own exceptionable statements in matters of Egyptian grammar would be to grant his pamphlet the privilege of recognition as a scientific essay, and give his views the thoughtful and discriminating hearing withheld from the targets of his sweeping censure. He often makes here statements that cannot be taken as proven or that beg the question. Even if Vernus's criticism were based on sound arguments, these could never justify his critical bad manners; but with his argumentation being of the aprioristic standard it is, Vernus's censure is nothing short of ludicruous. His thin metatheoretical and methodological discussion, his facile and offhand approach to concepts of modern descriptive and general linguistics are flagrant;[8] he trumpets constantly «la linguistique moderne», as if this were always sound, clear, simple and monolithic, as if there were not many approaches, schools and theoretico-methodological currents, a dialogue between many of which being next to impossible; the author takes for granted, with intolerable arrogance, the incontestability of his theoretical statements. To mention but a few examples: "grammaticalization" — observe the author's ridiculously patronizing attempt to teach scholars the meaning of this concept (p. 11 ff.), scholars who have no need of this, having never denied or been unaware of this phenomenon in Egyptian diachrony.[9] "Tense and aspect", these so very difficult and elusive notions, among the "heaviest" in grammar, get an equally brief space (p. 9 f., in which we are even offered the laughable statement that "the Slavonic languages constitute a very bad illustration of [the category of aspect]"). "Aspect" especially seems to be a buzz-word rather than a well-founded and clarifying notion; the author's use of "etymology" in the context of two elements of different grammatical valeur and identity is unacceptable (p. 12); his approach to narrative grammar is, to say the least, simplistic (pp. 13, 30); the use of "weakening", a subjectively quantitative notion, for describing thematization is highly dubious (p. 39

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and Shisha-Halevy, and is far from straightforward diachronically as well as synchronically, not least because of the existence of a non-durative (generic) present, postulated by Shisha-Halevy for Coptic and now conclusively proven for Demotic in Robert S. Simpson's recent excellent *Demotic Grammar in the Ptolemaic Sacerdotal Decrees* (Oxford: the Griffith Institute, 1996). See also Satzinger, *Neuägyptische Studien,* for Late Egyptian (key-word „Aorist"). Polotsky's heritage has been carried on (with proper elaboration and modification) *i.a.* for Late Egyptian by Groll and Goldwasser, for Demotic to an extent by Johnson and Simpson (*op. laudat.*). It seems that the chasm between Coptic and pre-Coptic Egyptian linguistics, so often warned against in Polotsky's latter years, has not narrowed, but has now been frozen as a "natural" status quo: Coptologists will unfortunately not act to correct this — the initiative for this may, we hope, start with Demotists.

8   In striking contrast with another challenger of the Polotskyan paradigm, namely M.A. Collier; see "Predication and the Circumstantial *sḏm(.=f)/ sḏm.n(.=f)*", *Lingua Aegyptia* 2: 17-65 (1992), with which the present writers take issue, but which is a well-argued critique, well within the prevailing norms of polite scientific controversy.

9   This phenomenon, of high but not highest explicative importance, is continuously invoked by Vernus, used as a buzz-word and as his "hammer" (the Law of the Hammer: a child discovers the hammer, and uses it as an only tool, to repair everything — from his toy-train to his watch to his sister's doll and his parents' VCR...). This phenomenon (to be kept distinct from 'formalization'), if used indiscriminately for any element employed grammatically, runs the danger of becoming trivialized. Moreover, whereas grammaticalization is an important *diachronic* notion, its *synchronic* status is much less straightforward.

f.); and so on. While it is legitimate and vital to apply to Egyptian refined tools developed in the course of the last decades in general and specific descriptive linguistics,[10] two acute interrelated methodological flaws strike one at once in the work under review: first, the absence of real *analysis* as a heuristic notion — not the analysis of the language, but of its corpus/corpuses (as already pointed out, Polotsky's "class of classes" approach is no less than a level and a phase in a descending text-grammatical analysis);[11] second, the total ignorance or abnegation of the import of the linguistic sign, Saussurean or post-Saussurean: language is and has ever been a semiotic system, after all, at the end of this century as it was at its beginning — and not an unstructured plasma-like "soup" of grammatical/lexical elements and assembly of realized and potential utterances. Treating the grammatical elements of Egyptian strictly according to their *signifiants* and *signifiés*, their analytic substitutabilities and compatibilities (and *iw* is a fine example) will prove to be the real key out of the maze.

The present writers — and H.J. Polotsky, who died just over seven years ago — have never been happy about the unfortunate label "Standardtheorie". Polotsky's insights regarding Old and Middle Egyptian were expressly presented as a "panoramic" schematic picture which, like such paradigm-founding accounts at their best, pointed incessantly at possible routes for precision, development and modification rather than foreclosed them. In his teaching, as anyone would reminisce who had the good fortune to attend any of his classes — in Egyptian or Coptic, Turkish, Amharic or any other of the Ethiopic dialects, Neo-Syriac or Arabic — Polotsky would but rarely repeat his published statements, but would suggest — as it were, hand out to his students, to be carried further in research — ideas for this very end: two such topics for Middle Egyptian were the existence of "circumstantial converter" *iw* and the significance of "non-indicative" (syntactically speaking) status of zeroed-*iw* clauses in Middle Egyptian (with corresponding features in Semitic and Turkish: see *Egyptian Tenses* § 50, p. 24 f. = *Collected Papers* p. 94 f.). If Pascal Vernus's use of "Standardtheorie" is meant to apply to H.J. Polotsky's views on the morphosyntactics of Egyptian, why not give it his name? All the scholars who followed Polotsky's ideas brought about minor or major modifications, often in disagreement with Polotsky, occasionally criticized by him. It is absurd and crassly unfounded to suggest that Polotsky's theses blocked the progress of Egyptian linguistics.

A conspicuous feature of Egyptian is a focalizing construction which makes use of particular verbal forms, viz. the so-called Second Tenses of Coptic and their so-called "emphatic" precedessors. The focalized element in pre-Coptic Egyptian is essentially of adverbial syntactic status (commutation privilege). The early scope and matrix of this

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10 A successful instance of an attempt to do this systematically is Antonio Loprieno's *Ancient Egyptian: a Linguistic Introduction* (Cambridge 1995) which, while explicit in its disagreements with the Polotskyan paradigm (see e.g. p. 147 ff.), is responsible and accurate, and keeps to the norms of scientific controversy; so too most of Pascal Vernus's contributions hitherto.

11 "Analysis" and "system/structure" are among the terms most deplorably "burnt out" in the process of terminological devaluation and trivialization in the modern phases of our discipline.

construction can still be seen in the oldest attested stages of the language, where it is formed after the pattern of the Adverbial Sentence (adverb-rheme nexus clause pattern). The verbs that occur in the subject (theme) position are of particular forms of syntactically substantival status. Although attested in a consonantal skeleton only, at least one of these forms is in some verbal-stem classes clearly distinct from the non-substantival form of the same tense/aspect (viz. the so-called *mrr.f* form). As for other verbal grammatical formal categories (*sḏm.n.f*, the so-called prospective *sḏm.f*), a formal-and-functional distinction from corresponding non-substantival forms may be postulated, although it cannot always be ultimately proven. Note, however, two fully valid formal suppletive criteria: the suppletion feature between non-substantival *sḏm.n.f* and the Stative ("Old Perfective") and the fact that passive *sḏm.n.tw.f* for substantival form is opposed to suppletive *sḏmw.f* as passive "of" non-substantival *sḏm.n.f*. An important point of control and evidence is the existence of a parallel set of attributive ("relative") gender/number concording forms in neat morphological association with the non-concording substantival ones. Clear evidence from other languages — genetically related to Egyptian or not — further corroborates the thesis that Egyptian disposed of particular nominal (substantival as well as attributive) verb forms. Observe that the non-nominal verb forms are arguably of *adverbial* syntactic commutation, whether as adjuncts or as rhemes and foci.

In Egyptian we encounter two morphosyntactic categories that broadly agree with two traditional part of speech ones, namely the forms of the relative clause (~ 'attributive adjective') and the circumstantial clause forms (~ 'adverb'). Whereas the attributive category may be traced back to the oldest stages of the language, the adverbial-circumstantial category "emerges" (i.e. appears in our written sources) in (Old and) Middle Egyptian only. This process (if one prefers the dynamic perspective) is arguably triggered by another, namely the emerging of the *iw*-prefix[12] for signalling a certain discourse-syntaxic status for adverb-rheme nexal patterns, which virtually amounts to signalling their initial status, or autonomous or "indicative" (Polotsky's early hesitant term, syntactically conceived; Vernus's «objectivement validé» [p. 26] is an echo of Polotsky's "indicative").[13] This leaves — by structural token — *iw*-less or zero-*iw* constructions marked, for non-initial, non-autonomous status — cotextually

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12 Perhaps a grammaticalized formal-theme nominal occupying the initial position of the adverb-rheme nexus, which would thus be unintroduced and thus formally not marked (so Polotsky in *Transpositions*, see esp. § 3.8.3.2; cf. Loprieno, *Ancient Egyptian* 178 "integral component of the adverbial or verbal phrase"). Be that as it may, Polotsky never claimed for *ꜣw* the copular status of «marqueur de prédication» (Vernus, p. 31 and elsewhere): this is a distorting claim typical of the author's "critical" method. Similarly, Polotsky never considered the substantival verb forms «un équivalent algébrique du substantif» (p. 31); or the Cleft Sentence with the substantival verb forms topical, «un équivalent algébrique de la prédication de situation» (*ibid.*). Generally speaking, the book under review makes strange reading, for one falls often to wondering whence the author draws the non-issues, unfounded or misconceived statements with which he keeps shadow-boxing.

13 Incidentally, "nynegocentric", used in the *Transpositions*, is not of Polotsky's own coining but well-established in French Tense Linguistics, first used by Damourette and Pichon: probably too early to be within Vernus's cognizance (see p. 27).

included ("subordinate", sequential or circumstantial), backgrounded (in narrative), titular, contextually "included" (i.e. as exclamative), and so on. For reasons that have not yet been satisfactorily accounted for, the situation seems to change drastically — indeed, to be reversed — from Late Egyptian on: *iw-* now marks its clause for non-autonomous status, zero for initial/autonomous status.[14]

It may well be that Egyptian was originally characterized by morphosyntactic or "syntaxic" duality, *viz.* autonomous (initial) and part-clausal (included) status. The latter was differentiated into nuclear (substantival) forms and attributive forms, of which the latter was formally distinguished by nominal concord (gender, number). Autonomous constructions could function as initial, sequential and as clauses of circumstance or background; it being only later that a specific initiality marker emerged, which left the unmarked constructions with sequential and circumstantial roles.

The error of attributing to the form (in the word-sovereignty morphological, text-detached sense) prime importance, has been pointed out seventy years ago by Charles De Boer, who called it variously «la tyrannie de la morphologie» and «la superstition de la forme»,[15] coupling it with the methodological error of superimposing an historical on a synchronic profile. The higher rank of syntax — indeed, the subsuming of functional morphology under syntax — has been asserted and re-asserted since the First International Congress of Linguists («Question III» in the Sixth Congress, Paris 1948),[16] in a progress of theoretical thinking that reached its logical conclusion in the programmatic establishment of Text Linguistics in the Sixties and Discourse Analysis of our own days (both, needless to say, heralded by the Circle Linguistique de Prague). Indeed, the significance and value of Egyptian linguistics for General Linguistics lies, we believe, in the unique opportunity to break free of the Eurocentric word-oriented focus on morphology, and thus also of imported or "squinting" categorization. (This was observed of Coptic early, by nineteenth-century typologists — H. Steinthal and F. Misteli — and even by August Schleicher). Vernus seems to miscomprehend the significance of the structural (paradigmatico-syntactic) definition of a word-class and

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14 The possibility of two *ꞌw* homonyms in Middle Egyptian cannot be discounted; in Late Egyptian it is *de rigeur.*

15 C. De Boer, "Études de syntaxe française, V: Facteurs troublants dans les études de syntaxe française", *Revue de linguistique romane* 4 (1928) 301-310. See also *idem,* "Morphologie et syntaxe", *CFS* 6 (1946-7) 5-25. More reservedly, cf. Hugo Schuchardt's "Wortform ist grammatischer Art im engsten Sinn...es besitzt...keine volle Untrüglichkeit" (1920; *Schuchardt-Brevier* 278 f.).

16 pp. 19-30, 471-496 (Trnka, Hjelmslev, Togeby, Godel, Frei, Bazell, Kuryëowicz, Marcel Cohen and others). Some pertinent formulations, also for the conception of syntax at the base of Polotsky's analytic procedure: "Linguistiquement, la morphologie n'a pas d'objet réel et autonome"; "La syntaxe est *definiens* de la morphologie". "La syntaxe est la théorie des relations mutuelles contractés par les signes permutables à l'intérieur des textes"; (478); "L'objet donné est un *texte,* qu'on procède à analyser; à chaque stade de cette analyse, l'opération consiste à analyser certaines grandeurs qui sont d'un même rang....C'est l'*analyse* qui constitue la condition préalable de la linguistique..." (476). The real methodological issue is thus not the delimitation of syntax and morphology, but the *analytic procedure.*

its function: this is made fully manifest when he criticises the Polotskyan School for "postulating that Middle Egyptian morphology carries basically purely syntactic signifieds", or blames it for "narrow syntaxism" (p. 10 f. and often; note the pejorative derivation), or refers to the absurd "syntactic etymology" (p. 13). Morphs — and morphological forms — do not lie arrayed separately, waiting, like products on the shelves of a store, to be selected, picked up and used inserted in a text. They are valued, get their value determined, *by, from* and *in their syntagmatic and paradigmatic environments*. There cannot be a greater distortion than to attribute to the Polotsky school the logic-based Part of Speech conception. Following De Saussure and the European Structuralist Schools (considered by Vernus démodé, but, luckily for the future of analytic descriptive linguistics, still alive and well in schools that focus on the semiotic and textual nature of language), Polotsky considered the traditional Part of Speech model essentially "extralinguistic".[17] Thus, the paradigmatic isolation of a category would refer to the commutation in its textual (syntagmatic) slot, no more, no less: a substantival verb form may have actants (but hasn't Vernus heard of finite substantival verb forms [p. 33]?); an "umbrella" nexal #theme + rheme# pattern may subsume several subpatterns, with different constituencies, prime patterns and pattern-constituent categories turning out to have sub-patterns and sub-categories, on an increasing level of analytic delicacy.

We would like to conclude this uneasy and unpleasant tractate by quoting (again from John of Salisbury's wise *Metalogicon* [II, 18]) the following warning, as singularly appropriate: "Each, to make a name for himself, coins his own special error. Wherewith, while promising to correct his master, he sets himself up as a target for correction and condemnation by his own disciples as well as by posterity".

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17 "Principe purement logique, extralinguistique, appliqué du dehors sur la grammaire": Engler, *Lexique terminologique*, 39).