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‘Word Play’ in the Ramesside Dream Manual

Scott Noegel and Kasia Szpakowska

Abstract

Word play has long been acknowledged as a common feature in ancient Egyptian texts. This article offers an examination of word play in one divinatory text: the Ramesside Dream Manual (P. Chester Beatty III, r.1–11). While scholars have noted some examples of word play in conjunction with sociological and philological analyses of the Dream Manual, the phenomenon has not been studied in depth. This investigation offers a typology for word play in the Dream Manual by examining it in the light of ancient Near Eastern word play generally. It also provides an inventory of and commentary on the relevant passages that contain word plays and an analysis of the various functions the device has in the Manual. It is the authors' hope that the study will provide a model for the systematic analysis of word plays in other Egyptian texts.

1 Word Play in Egyptian Texts

Egyptologists have long been aware of the presence of word play in ancient Egyptian literature.¹ Despite a general familiarity with the phenomenon, however, most scholars have

¹ See, e.g., K. Sethe, *m-hn.w* Im Innern eine Rebuspielerei, in: ZÄS 59, 1924, 61–63; É. Drioton, Une figuration cryptographique sur une stèle du Moyen Empire, in: RdÉ 1, 1933, 203–229; Id., Recueil de cryptographie monumentale, in: ASAE 40, 1940, 305–429; Id., Les principes de la cryptographie égyptienne, in: CRAIBL 1953, 355–364; H. W. Fairman, The Myth of Horus at Edfu-I, in: JEA 21, 1935, 26–36; J. J. Clère, Acrostiches et mots croisés des anciens égyptiens, in: CdE 13, 1938, 35–58; A. Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung (Pap. Carlsberg XIII und XIV Verso), 1942, 59–64; C. E. Sander-Hansen, Die phonetischen Wortspiele des ältesten Ägyptischen, in: AcOr 20, 1948, 1–22; H. Grapow, Der stilistische Bau der Geschichte des Sinuhe, 1952, 44–47, 117; O. Firchow, Grundzüge der Stilistik in den altägyptischen Pyramidentexten, 1953, 215–235; H. Brunner, Änigmatische Schrift (Kryptographie), in: H. Kees, ed., Ägyptologie: Ägyptische Schrift und Sprache, 1959, 52–58; R. Moftah, Ära-Datierungen, Regierungsjahre und Zahlwortspiele, in: CdE 39, 1964, 44–60; J. Zandee, Das Schöpferwort im alten Ägypten, in: Verbum: Essays on Some Aspects of the Religious Function of Words, Dedicated to Dr. H. W. Obbink, 1964, 33–66; H. M. Stewart, A Crossword Hymn to Mut, in: JEA 57, 1971, 87–104; E. S. Meltzer, A Possible Word-Play in Khamuas I?, in: ZÄS 102/1, 1975, 78; S. Morenz, Wortspiele in Ägypten, in: Religion und Geschichte des alten Ägypten: Gesammelte Aufsätze, 1975, 328–342; W. Guglielmi, Wortspiel, in: LÄ VI, 1287–1291; W. Schenkel, Schrift, in: LÄ V, 713–735; P. Vernus, Ecriture du rêve et écriture hiéroglyphique, in: Littoral 7/8, 1983, 27–32; H. Goedicke, Mennas Lament, in: RdE 38, 1987, 63–80; J. L. Foster, Wordplay in *The Eloquent Peasant*: The Eighth Complaint, in: BES 10, 1989/1990, 61–76; C. J. Eyre, Yet Again the Wax Crocodile: P. Westcar 3, 123 ff., in: JEA 78, 1992, 280–281; W. Guglielmi, Der Gebrauch rhetorischer Stilmittel in der ägyptischen Literatur, in: Ancient Egyptian Literature: History and Forms, 1996, 465–497; L. Morenz, Der Erste sei Zweiter, oder: der Leib als Kopf – ein Wortspiel als diffamierendes und also textkonstituierendes Mittel, in: GM 156, 1997, 81–83; L. Colon, La rhétorique et ses fictions: Pouvoirs et duplicité de discours à travers la littérature égyptienne du Moyen au du Nouvel Empire, in: BIFAO 99, 1999, 103–132; G. A. Rendsburg, Literary Devices in the Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor, in: JAOS 120, 2000, 13–23; T. Schneider, Die Waffe Der Analogie. Altägyptische Magie als System, in: Das Analogiedenken. Vorstöße in ein neues Gebiet der Rationalitätstheorie, 2000, 37–85; M. de Meyer, Some Ptolemaic Spielerei with Scribal Palettes, in: JEA 90, 2004, 221–223.

been content merely to record the presence of puns in footnotes or to mention them parenthetically. Indeed, to date, no exhaustive study on word play exists for ancient Near Eastern literature generally, much less Egyptian literature specifically.² Consequently, there currently exists no consistent formal typology for the phenomenon³ and only a handful of studies that discuss the function of word play in Egyptian literature.⁴ Even fewer studies place the device in the larger cultural and social contexts of ancient Near Eastern literature.⁵

1.1 Definitions

The study of word play in ancient Near Eastern literatures in general has historically been plagued by a loose and inconsistent vocabulary. The commonest terms usually applied to the phenomenon have been „word play,“ „paronomasia,“ and „punning,“ but each of these masks a wide array of devices and possesses connotations that do not adequately convey the purposes of the phenomenon in antiquity. This is especially the case with the term „word play,“ the problems of which we discuss below.⁶ Since its use in Classical Greece, the term „paronomasia“ has had a long and equally inconsistent history of usage.⁷ However, it is generally used today as an umbrella term to describe a number of different sound devices (including alliteration and assonance). „Punning“ is the most general of the three terms and can be used to cover word play and paronomasia, as well as visual devices.

Since these three terms are too broad to account for all the types of punning found in the Dream Manual, we offer here the following eight types and their definitions. We fully realize that the types do not represent native (emic) categories. Nevertheless, they shall allow us to classify the various phenomena in order to appreciate more fully the range of sophistication found in the Dream Manual specifically and Egyptian texts generally.

1. Alliteration: punning that ties words together by means of identical or similar sounding consonants.⁸

² This state affairs will be remedied in S. B. Noegel, *Word Play in Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, forthcoming.

³ However, a preliminary typology was presented by S. B. Noegel, *Pungent Puns with a Punitive Punch: Contextualizing Ancient Near Eastern Word Play* on March 14, 2004 at the annual meeting of the American Oriental Society (Plenary Session on Word Play). See also note 2 for a forthcoming work on the subject in which the subject of typology will be addressed exhaustively.

⁴ Representative examples include: W. Guglielmi, *Zu einigen literarischen Funktionen des Wortspiels*, in: Fs Wolfhart Westendorf, 1984, 491–506; F. Junge, *Zur Sprachwissenschaft der Ägypter*, in: Fs Wolfhart Westendorf, 257–272; A. Loprieno, *Puns and Word Play in Ancient Egyptian*, in: *Puns and Pundits: Wordplay in the Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, 2000, 3–20; *Le signe étymologique: le jeu de mots entre logique et esthétique*, in: A. Loprieno, *La pensée et l'écriture pour une analyse sémiotique de la culture égyptienne. Quatre séminaires à l'École Pratique des Hautes Études, Section des Sciences Religieuses*, 15–27 mai 2000, 2001, 129–158.

⁵ For a preliminary attempt see Noegel, ed., *Puns and Pundits*.

⁶ Hence also why the title of our article places „word play“ in quotation marks.

⁷ See A. Welsh, *Pun*, in: *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 1993, 1005–1006.

⁸ Both alliteration and assonance (puns based on similar sounding vowels) belong to the broader category known as paronomasia. Since all vocalizations of Egyptian words are reconstructions, we resist here

2. Antanaclasis: words which appear identical in form but which possess different meanings when they are repeated.
3. Homoeoteleuton: different words that possess the same endings.
4. Onomatopoeia: words that imitate the things to which they refer or which imitate sounds.
5. Paronomasia: punning that ties words together by way of a similarity of sound, such as alliteration and assonance.
6. Polysemy: words that convey more than one meaning in a single context.
7. Translexical punning: a device in which the lexical association of one word is evoked upon by another word even though the said lexical item does not appear in the text.
8. Visual puns: punning that is achieved by way of determinatives or other orthographic features that are not meant to be pronounced.

These categories are by no means mutually exclusive, and in fact, as will become evident below, they often overlap a great deal.

2 The Study of Word Play in the Ramesside Dream Manual

The general lack of scholarly attention to word play in Egyptian texts is demonstrated by previous work on the New Kingdom Dream Manual from Deir el-Medina.⁹ Though the Manual has received extensive critical attention for its philological and historical data, and more recently, for its sociological information,¹⁰ its numerous word plays have received neither an exhaustive study nor extended discussion. It is with this in mind that we offer the following examination.¹¹

3 Word Play in the Ramesside Dream Manual

We have divided our study into three sections: the first establishes a context for punning within ancient Egyptian culture specifically and ancient Near Eastern literature generally. The second provides a full inventory of the relevant Dream Manual passages along with a commentary that details the puns they contain. The third section analyzes the data by type

speculating on any examples of assonance.

⁹ The papyrus (Chester Beatty III. r. 1–11, P. BM 10683) dates to the reign of Ramesses II (1279–1213 BC) and was published first by A. H. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri in the British Museum, Third Series: Chester Beatty Gift. 2 Vols*, 1935. See also S. Sauneron, *Les songes et leur interprétation dans l'Égypte Ancienne, in: Les songes et leur interprétation*, 1959, 18–61. Dated to Ramesses II by P. W. Pestman, *Who Were the Owners, in the 'Community of Workmen,' of the Chester Beatty Papyri*, in: *Gleanings from Deir el-Medina*, 1982, 155–72.

¹⁰ See K. Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes: Dreams & Nightmares in Ancient Egypt*, 2003.

¹¹ The subject of this article derives from the authors' mutual interest in dream materials. See Szpakowska, *Behind Closed Eyes*; and S. B. Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers: The Allusive Language of Dreams in the Ancient Near East*, in press; *On Puns and Divination: Egyptian Dream Exegesis from a Comparative Perspective*, in: *Through a Glass Darkly: Magic, Dreams, and Prophecy in Ancient Egypt*, 2006, in press. The authors intend to study the Demotic Dream Manual for its word plays as well once the awaited revised and enlarged edition has been published.

and function. We hope this organization will help avoid needless repetition and facilitate future research.

3.1 Understanding Punning in the Egyptian Dream Manual

Any analysis of punning in ancient Near Eastern texts must integrate the cultural context of words upon which punning depends. Invariably this demands that we acknowledge two important conceptual differences that separate ancient and modern approaches to punning. The first concerns the purpose of punning and the second, the basic linguistic units that comprise an Egyptian sentence.

3.2 Purpose of Punning

As in the contemporary world punning could serve a variety of functions in the ancient Near East. However, unlike the contemporary understanding of punning, there is little that might be considered playful about word play in antiquity. Since some words were deemed as inherently powerful (whether in written or spoken form), manipulating them constituted an act of potentially serious consequence.¹² Punning was hardly a „literary“ device, in the contemporary sense of the word, though it has been treated as such consistently in the literature. Rather it was considered a rhetorical, hermeneutic, and illocutionary tool of ritual power.

Within the context of the Dream Manual, puns often connect the recorded dream (protasis) to its interpretation (apodosis); an interpretive strategy that the Manual shares with oneirocritic texts found elsewhere in the ancient Near East, most notably from Mesopotamia.¹³ Thus, for example, we find the following:

r. 2.21

... *hr wnm jwf nj ʕ.t; nfr, sʕ=f pw*


... consuming the flesh of a donkey; good, it means that he will become great.

Note how the word ʕ in the dream's protasis resounds alliteratively in the word sʕ in the apodosis. Note also that this particular dream constitutes an example of homoeoteleuton.

r. 9.10

... *hr kfʕ ph(.wy)=fy ds=f; DW,¹⁴ jw=f r nmh hr ph.wy*

... baring his own rear-end; BAD, (it means that) in the end he is going to be poor.

In this dream the connection between dream and its interpretation is achieved by way of the words *ph(.wy)* in the protasis and *ph.wy* in the apodosis. In addition, since the script uses the  (F22) sign (i.e. the rear section of a lion) this particular dream also demonstrates visual punning discussed more fully below.

¹² See D. Frankfurter, *The Magic of Writing and the Writing of Magic: The Power of the Word in Egyptian and Greek Traditions*, in: *Helios* 21, 1994, 189–221.

¹³ For an extended discussion, see Noegel, *On Puns and Divination; Nocturnal Ciphers*.

¹⁴ We have chosen to represent the negative evaluation here in uppercase letters (as opposed to the positive evaluation) since it is written in red ink in the text.

Nevertheless, as the third section of our study demonstrates, this method of connecting protases to apodoses is not the only form of punning that one finds in the Dream Manual. Even so, the frequency with which word plays connect protases to their apodoses in the Manual (see below) evidences a mantic insecurity and preoccupation with demonstrating that the universe works according to discernable principles—that even the most ambiguous and strange dreams make sense and thus fit within the cosmic order when deciphered by someone with the proper technical training. A punning interpretation both *resolves* the inherent ambiguity of a dream’s images, and in so far as the dream was considered a divine message, it *solves* the dreamer’s anxiety concerning the god’s intent. Since the dream image may be interpreted as positive or negative it also reifies the authority of the interpreter.¹⁵

4 Towards a Typology of Egyptian Word Play

4.1 Basic Linguistic Units

The issue of native systems of classification raises a related point. When we discuss word play in contemporary Western contexts, we invariably assume that the basic linguistic unit upon which word play is founded is the word. Yet, as Friedrich Junge has shown,¹⁶ the basic linguistic unit upon which puns are founded in Egyptian was not the *word*, but the *colon*. In Akkadian, it is arguably the *syllable* or individual *sign* that serves as a basis for puns. Indeed, it ultimately might not prove useful or appropriate to use the term „word play“ in conjunction with these languages since it imposes a foreign classificatory scheme. If we also see punning as operating in a mantic and illocutionary context, then, as noted above, we similarly will need to discard the term „play.“ At the very least, greater attention to *native* classificatory and ontological systems will undoubtedly change the way research on punning is conducted.¹⁷

4.2 Puns in the Dream Manual

Having established a context for punning in the Dream Manual, we kindly request the reader’s indulgence as we herewith provide the data for our analysis, along with brief comments.

5 Catalog of Punning in the Ramesside Dream Manual

5.1 Background

Papyrus Chester Beatty III originally formed part of the archive of Qenherkhopshef, a well-known scribe from Deir el-Medina. The collection included a diverse assortment of letters, memoranda, documents related to family and domestic affairs, exercises, *belles-lettres*,

¹⁵ Despite the theoretical problems this poses, this point is typically not addressed in psychoanalytical works on the subject of ancient dream interpretation. For a treatment on the influence of Sigmund Freud’s work on the study of ancient Near Eastern dream texts generally, see Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers; On Puns and Divination*.

¹⁶ Junge, *Zur Sprachwissenschaft der Ägypter*; cf. *supra* note 4.

¹⁷ S. B. Noegel, *Word Play in Ancient Near Eastern Literature*, forthcoming.

medical prescriptions, spells, hymns, as well as the Dream Manual on the recto of P. Chester Beatty III. While many of the texts were written by Qenherkhopshef himself, the copyist and author of the Dream Manual remain unknown. To date, this document remains the only Dream Manual attested from Egypt through the New Kingdom.

5.2 Catalog of Punning

Each interpretation begins with *jr mꜣꜣ sw s m rsw.t* „if a man sees himself in a dream...“ written vertically in columns. Horizontal rows consist of a protasis, then an evaluation of the dream image as *nfr* „good“ or *DW* „BAD“ followed by an apodosis.

The categories of word play are listed here in the order of the most to least frequent in P. Chester Beatty III.

5.2.1. Alliteration

r. 2.3

... [] *dꜣ.t; nfr, ṛwdꜣ pw*

... a crane; good, it means prosperity.

This couplet features alliteration between *dꜣ.t* in the protasis and *wdꜣ* in the apodosis.¹⁸

r. 2.8

... [*hr rdꜣ.t n=f hmtj m* [...]; [*nfr, ht [qꜣꜣ]=f jm=sn*

... giving him copper as [...]; [good], [it means] something at which he will be exalted.

See 2.9.

r. 2.9

... [*hr ...*]^ꜣ *hm.t=f n hꜣy; [nfr, hm dw.wt pw jry=f*

... [...] his woman to a married man; [good], it means that the bad things related to him will retreat.

Note the alliteration between *hm.t* in the protasis and *hm* in the apodosis as well as with *hmtj* in the protasis of the previous line (r. 2.8).¹⁹

r. 2.11

... *ꜣ.n hnn=f; nfr, ꜣꜣ nj ht=f pw*

... after his penis has enlarged; good, it means an increase of his possessions.

Here the words *ꜣ.n* in the protasis resound alliteratively with the words *ꜣꜣ nj* in the apodosis.


r. 2.19

...*hr hb*[.....]; *nfr, mn hb.t p[w.....] mr*[.....]

... reducing(?) [.....]; good, it means reducing [.....] desire(?) [...]

¹⁸ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 11 n.6; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63.

¹⁹ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 12 n.2; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63.

Although the determinative is missing for the word *hb*  in the protasis, Gardiner suggests reconstructing *hb.t* „reducing.“ Other possibilities include *hbj* „dancing,“ *hb3* „ravaging,“ and *hbs* „hack up,“ all of which provide an alliterative word play with *hb.t* in the apodosis.²⁰

r. 2.21

... *hr wnm jwf nj ʕ3.t; nfr, sʕ3=f pw*

... consuming the flesh of a donkey; good, it means that he will become great.

This dream was discussed above with regard to the alliteration and homoeoteleuton that obtains between the words *ʕ3* and *sʕ3*.²¹

r. 2.23

... *hr nh3.t rwd.tj; nfr, nhy=f pw m[.....]*

... upon a sycamore tree which is flourishing; good, it means that he will lose [.....].

Here we find alliteration between *nh3.t* in the protasis and *nhy* in the apodosis.²²

r. 3.1

... *hr h[.....]š; nfr, gs3 n=f w3j.t pw*

... [.....] a pond(?); good, it means that the road will be partial towards him.

See line 3.2.

r. 3.2

... *m33=f g(3)s; nfr, ʕ3.w nj ht=f*

... while he sees mourning; good, (it means) the multiplying of his possessions.

This line is linked to 3.1 via alliteration between *gs3* in the apodosis of 3.1 and *g(3)s* in the protasis of 3.2. This line is connected to the next line with *ʕ3*²³ appearing in both the apodosis of 3.2 and the protasis of 3.3.

r. 3.3

... *ʕ3.n šn.w=f; nfr, ht pw hd hr=f n=sn*

... after his hair has lengthened; good, it means something at which his face will brighten.

This line is linked to the previous line in that *ʕ3* appears in both the apodosis of 3.2 and the protasis of 3.3.

²⁰ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 12 n.2; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 59.

²¹ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 12 n.2; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 63; R. K. Ritner, *Dream Oracles*, in: W. H. Hallo/Jr. K. Lawson eds., *The Context of Scripture*, Leiden, New York, Köln, 1997, 53 n.6.

²² Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 12 n.2; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 63; Israelit-Groll, *A Ramesside Dream Book*, (112 ex. 140).

²³ Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 16. Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 12 n.10 offers an alternative explanation: „Perhaps 3,1b and 3,2b have by some accident been moved up from the following lines. If so, there would be paronomasia of *g3s* in 3,2 and *ʕ3* in 3,3. The repetition of 3,4b in 3,3b seems to confirm this suggestion.“

r. 3.4

.. *dj.tw n=f t-hd; nfr, ht pw hd hr^r=f* [*n=sn*]

... white-bread being given to him; good, it means something at which his face will brighten.

Here we find alliteration of *t-hd* in the protasis with *hd* in the apodosis²⁴ and perhaps with *ht* in the apodosis as well.

r. 3.11

... *hr [...]=f rmt m sht; nfr, ht pw [...]* *n=f*

... people [...]ing him with a blow; good, it means that something [...] to him.

Note the clear alliteration of *sht* in the protasis with *ht* in the apodosis, as well as homoeoteleuton. All cases of homoeoteleuton will be discussed more fully below.

r. 4.3

... [*hr*] *m³ mjw ³; nfr, smw pw ³ r h[pr n=f]*

... seeing a large cat; good, it means that a large harvest is going to come to him.

This passage features alliteration within the protasis between *m³* and *m³ mjw ³* and also with the phrase *smw pw ³* in the apodosis. In addition *m³ mjw* in the protasis resounds alliteratively with *smw* in the apodosis.²⁵

r. 4.4

... [*hr s*] *w(r)j jrp; nfr, wpj r=f r mdwt*

... drinking wine; good, (it means that) his mouth will be opened in order to speak.

The first alliteration we find here is within the protasis alone, specifically between the consonants *(r)j jr* that appear in the phrase *sw(r)j jrp*. A second example of alliteration links *sw(r)j jrp* in the protasis with *wpj r=f* in the apodosis.²⁶

r. 4.16

... *hr sf.t jh¹ m dr¹.t=f; nfr¹, sm³ p[³]y=f jry-n-^ch³(.t)*

... cutting up a bull with his own hand; good, (it means that) his (own) opponent will be killed.

In this passage the *jh* in the protasis resounds alliteratively with the consonants ^c*h* in ^c*h³* in the apodosis. C. Peust notes that the dissimilation of the ^c to *j* in the neighbourhood of *h* is a phenomenon that is attested since the Middle Kingdom.²⁷

²⁴ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 12 n.2; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63; Ritner, Dream Oracles, 53 n.9.

²⁵ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 13 n.2; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63; Ritner, Dream Oracles, 53 n.11.

²⁶ Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63.

²⁷ C. Peust, Egyptian Phonology. An Introduction to the Phonology of a Dead Language, 1999, 103–104. We would like to thank Professor Thomas Schneider for drawing this alliteration to our attention.

r. 4.17

... *hr jn [hn].w hr mw; [nfr], ᵚgᵚm(.w) ᵚ[nh] n-hʒw m pr=f*

... fetching jars out of the water; good, (it means that) a life of abundance will be found in his house.

In this passage there is alliteration of *jn hn.w* in the protasis with *n-hʒw* in the apodosis.²⁸

r. 4.21

... *hr [s]kʒ.t bdt m sh̄ty; nfr, s[...n(h)f(?)] ht m [.....]*

... ploughing emmer in a field; good, (it means that) ... something [to(?) him(?)] in(?) [.....]

Here we find alliteration between *sh̄ty* in the protasis and *ht* in the apodosis. There seems also to be alliteration in the protasis between *[s]kʒ.t* and *sh̄ty*.

r. 5.9

... *hr [šd m] šfd.t; nfr, smn s m pr=f*

... [reading from] a papyrus roll; good, (it means that) a man will be established in his home.

This passage features two cases of alliteration. The first *[šd m] šfd.t* remains within the protasis; the second *smn s m* within the apodosis.

r. 5.13

... *hr hmsʒʒ [hr] hsp.t nj šw²⁹; nfr, ndm pw*

... sitting in a garden of sunlight; good, it means pleasure.

This passage has alliteration in the protasis with *h* repeated four times: *hr hmsʒʒ [hr] hsp.t*.

r. 5.21

... *hr [mʒʒ] w^ch.w; [nfr], gm ᵚnh nfr*

... seeing tiger nuts; good, (it means that) a happy life will be found.

See the next line (5.22).



r. 5.22

... *[hr mʒʒ] j^ch [w]bn=f; nfr [ht]p n=f jn ntr=f*

... seeing the moon when it is risen; good, (it means) being clement to him by his god.

The alliteration in the protasis of 5.21 (*w^ch.w*) and the protasis of 5.22 (*j^ch*) links the two dreams. The passage also displays a purely visual play and is discussed below.

²⁸ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 14 n.2; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 63.

²⁹ Note that the determinative used here for *šw* is the divine falcon (G7) . For this word the use of the divine determinative of the sitting god (A40)  is attested in the New Kingdom (Wb IV, 430), but not the divine falcon. The divine falcon reappears in this text as the determinative for related words such as *wbn* „rise, shine“ (r. 5.22) and *šw* „sunlight“ (r. 9.22).

r. 6.20

... *ḥr dj.t n=f wd[.....]; nfr, wdʒ [pw]*

... material being given to him [...]; good, it means prosperity.

Note here the alliteration between *wd* in the protasis and *wdʒ* in the apodosis.³⁰

r. 6.25

... *ḥr mʒʒ=f ḥn^c ʕ r r=f; nfr, s^c=f pw jn kʒ=f*

... seeing himself with one greater than himself; good, it means that he will be exalted by his own ability.

Here is another case of alliteration between *ʕ* in the protasis and *s^c* in the apodosis,³¹ as well as another case of homoeoteleuton.

r. 7.9

... *ḥr wš^c dʒj; DW, dʒjs pw*

... chewing a *djai*-plant; BAD, it means a debate.

Here we note alliteration between *dʒj* in the protasis and *dʒjs* in the apodosis.³²

r. 7.28

... *mʒʒ ḥʒm.w nt ʒpd.w; DW, nḥm ḥt=f pw*

... while seeing the catching of birds; BAD, it means that something of his will be carried off.

In this passage *mʒʒ ḥʒm.w* in the protasis resounds alliteratively with *nḥm* in the apodosis.³³

r. 8.2

... *ḥr mʒʒ ḥnn=f nḥt; DW, nḥt n ḥfty.w=f*

... seeing his penis stiffen; BAD, (it means) the stiffening of his enemy.

Alliteration may also be detected between *nḥt* in the protasis and *n ḥfty.w* in the apodosis. See below for an explanation of antanaclasis in this passage.

r. 8.4

... *ḥr rdj.t n=f bn.t; DW, ḥt pw bjn=f ḥry=s.t*

... giving a harp to him; BAD, it means something through which he might come to harm.

Alliteration occurs between *bn.t* in the protasis and *bjn* in the apodosis.³⁴

³⁰ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 15 n.9; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63.

³¹ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 16 n.1; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63.

³² Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 16 n.9; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63. One wonders whether the word „bad“ (*DW*) also figures in to the punning connection.

³³ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, (17 n. 3); Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 63; Israelit-Groll, A Ramesside Dream Book, 112 ex. 142; Ritner, Dream Oracles, 54 n.22.

³⁴ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 17 n.7; Volten, op. cit., 63. Israelit-Groll, A Ramesside Dream Book, (112 ex.143) notes the possibility of this word play in the Coptic equivalents (**BOINE OYΩNI / BΩON**).

r. 8.7

... *hr jtj.t* ^c*n.t n.t db*₃.w=fy; *DW*, *jtj.t b*₃k.w n.t ^c*wy=fy*

... removing the nails of his fingers; BAD, (it means) the removing the works of his hands.

Note the alliteration here between the consonants *b* and *ʃ* in the word „finger“ in the protasis and the word „work“ in the apodosis. This alliteration is bolstered by the idiomatic use of the word „hands“ in the apodosis’ „works of the hands.“³⁵

r. 8.12

... *jbh.w=f hr hry=f*; *DW*, *mt sj pw nj hry.w=f*

... when his teeth are falling out under him; BAD, (it means that) one of his underlings will die.

Here one finds alliteration between *hry* „under“ in the protasis and *hry.w* „underlings“ in the apodosis.³⁶

r. 8.15

... *hr shj.t=f tr.t*; *DW*, *prj prr.w pw mt=f*

... being beaten by a willow; BAD, it means mourners will go forth when he dies.

Alliteration occurs in the apodosis alone between *prj prr.w* and *pw*.

r. 8.16

... ^c*q r h hbs.w=f jwh.w*; *DW*, ^c*h*₃ pw

... having entered a room when his clothes are wet; BAD, it can mean fighting.

Alliteration occurs between *jwh.w* in the protasis and ^c*h*₃ in the apodosis.³⁷

r. 8.17

... *hr h*^c*q h*^c.t=f *hr.t*; *DW*, *prr.w pw*

... shaving his lower body; BAD, it means mourning.

This passage may be related to 8.15 by alliteration (*prj prr.w pw* in the apodosis of 8.15 and *prr.w pw* in the apodosis of 8.17) and by the appearance of *prr.w* „mourners“ in both.

r. 8.26

... *hr rdj.t sntr* [*hr*] *ht n ntr*; *DW*, *b*₃w [*nj*] *ntr r=f*

... placing incense on the flame for god; BAD, it means that the power of god will be against him.

³⁵ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 17 n.7; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 59 suggest alliteration between *jtj.t* in both protasis and apodosis, but the two words are the same and thus this is not a case of word play.

³⁶ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 17 n.12; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 64.

³⁷ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 17 n.7; Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 64.

Note the alliteration between *sntr* in the protasis and the etymologically related *ntr* in the apodosis.³⁸

r. 9.6

... *hr g(s)=f m mrht; DW, nhm rmt=f r=f*

... smearing himself with oil; BAD, (it means that) his people will be taken away from him.

Alliteration occurs between *mrht* in the protasis and *nhm rmt* in the apodosis.

r. 9.12

... *hr hm jrp; DW, nhm ht=f*

... pressing wine; BAD, (it means that) his possession(s) will be confiscated.

Here alliteration occurs between *hm* in the protasis and *nhm* in the apodosis.³⁹

This dream also constitutes another example of homoeoteleuton.

r. 9.25

... *hr qd n=f pr; DW, md.t [n]h3.t r h3.t=f*

... building a house for himself; BAD, (it means that) contrary words will be ahead of him.

Alliteration (as well as homoeoteleuton) occurs in the apodosis only between the words *nh3.t* and *h3.t*.

r. 10.6

... *hr wnm jwf nj jh; DW, h3 r h3t=f*

... eating the flesh of a cow; BAD, (it means that) fighting is ahead of him.

Alliteration occurs between *jh* in the protasis and *h3* in the apodosis.⁴⁰

5.2.2. Visual puns

r. 3.2


... *m33=f g(3)s; nfr, c3.w nj ht=f*

... while he sees mourning; good, (it means) the multiplying of his possessions.

r. 3.3

... *c3.n sn.w=f; nfr, ht pw hd hr=f n=sn*

... after his hair has lengthened; good, it means something at which his face will brighten.

The determinative for „mourning“ *g(3)s* (r. 3.2) and for „hair“ *sn.w* (r. 3.3) is the three locks of hair  (D3). There is therefore a visual play between this dream and the previous one in that the hair has now lengthened after mourning. The


³⁸ Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 62.

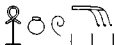
³⁹ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 18 n.4; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 64.

⁴⁰ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 19 n.3; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 62.

related

relationship between the two is emphasised by the careful alignment of determinatives.⁴¹

3.2 mourning $g(\beta)s$ 

3.3 hair $\dot{s}n.w$ 


y from

r. 3.11

... hr [...] = f $rm\dot{t}$ m $sh\dot{t}$; nfr , ht pw [.....] $n=f$

dosis.

... people [...]ing him with a blow; good, it means that something [.....] to him.

This passage features visual play in that the determinative (A24)  appears twice in the protasis and once in the apodosis.

... hr [...]  = f $rm\dot{t}.t$ m $sh\dot{t}$ ; nfr , ht pw [.....]  $n=f$

dosis.³⁹

r. 5.21

... hr [$m\beta\beta$] $w^c h.w$; [nfr], gm $^c nh$ nfr

... seeing tiger nuts; good, (it means that) a happy life will be found.



See the next line (5.22).

ead of

r. 5.22

... [hr $m\beta\beta$] $j^c h$ [w] $bn=f$; nfr [ht] p $n=f$ jn $ntr=f$

... seeing the moon when it is risen; good, (it means) being clement to him by his god.



In addition to the alliteration noted above, there is a visual play within the passage with the determinative of the divine falcon (G7)  used for „risen“ (wbn) in the protasis thus anticipating the word „god“ (ntr) in the apodosis. Passage 5.22 is also visually linked to the preceding passage with the same sign  (N 12), appearing as determinative for both $w^c h$ (protasis of 5.21) and $j^c h$ (protasis of 5.22).

een the

r. 8.3

... hr $\beta j-t\beta w$ m hd ; DW , $^c nh$ pw nj shh

... sailing downstream; BAD, it means a life of running backward.

This passage involves a strong visual play featuring a combination of $\beta j-t\beta w$ „carrying the wind“ (i.e., „sailing“), which is the normal way of travelling upstream on the Nile (the winds flow North to South in Egypt), and hd (with the boat with oars determinative  P1), which means traveling downstream (South to North) with the flow of the Nile. The mental image of a boat using sails to go downstream would have been conceived of as going backwards, and thus provokes an interpretation of a life going the wrong way as well (emphasized by the determinative of the legs going backward (D55) in the word shh ). An

ce will

is the

dream

g. The

⁴¹ See S. B. Noegel, Word Play in the Tale of the Poor Man of Nippur, in: Acta Sumerologica 18, 1996, 169–86.

identical dream image appears in the protasis of r. 3.6 and r. 10.1 (in the latter case the dream is interpreted as bad).

r. 9.9

... *hr m33 k3.t nj s.t hm.t; DW, ph.wy nj qsn.t r=f*

... seeing a woman's genitalia; BAD, (it means that) the ultimate misery upon him.

See 9.10.

r. 9.10

... *hr kf3 ph(.wy)=fy ds=f; DW, jw=f r nmh hr ph.wy*

... baring his own rear-end; BAD, (it means that) in the end he is going to be poor.

In addition to the antanaclasis discussed above, there may be an underlying visual play with the preceding image of a woman's genitalia protasis of r. 9.9, and the image in the protasis of r. 9.10 of the dreamer's buttocks.⁴²

The visual play is emphasised in r. 9.10 by the three determinatives Δ (F22) after *kf3* and *ph(.wy)* in the protasis and *hr ph.wy* in the apodosis.⁴³

5.2.3. Antanaclasis

r. 2.1

... *r=f r's'd.t; nfr, ht pw m snd m r'jb' =f r'sd' sw ntr*

... when his mouth is broken; good, it means that as for something which is terrifying in his heart, god will break it open.

This passage features the same word in the protasis and apodosis *sd.t / sd*.⁴⁴ In Pyr. § 249, fear occurs in a similar context as *sd*: „O [Osiris the King], here is this Eye [of Horus]; [take] it, that you may be strong and that he may fear you — break the red jars.“

r. 2.17

... *hr s[wjr] hnq.t [.....]; nfr, [n]d3d3 nj jb=f pw*

... drinking [.....] beer; good, it means a surging of his emotions.

Gardiner suggests that paranomasia may be at work here for the verb *nd3d3* appears in P. Ebers as a liver or lung disease.⁴⁵ He cites examples where one of the medicaments used to treat the latter is *nd3d3.yt* beer, which he suggests could be restored into the lacuna in the protasis. The traces that can still be seen in the


⁴² Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 60.

⁴³ Israelit-Groll, *A Ramesside Dream Book*, 112 ex. 141, and Ritner, *Dream Oracles*, 54 n.25 note the pun in r. 9.10.

⁴⁴ Word play noted by Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 11 n.5; Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 59; Israelit-Groll, *A Ramesside Dream Book*, 113 ex.147.

⁴⁵ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 12 n.5.

e latter

lacuna would fit Gardiner's suggested restoration of . In this case, the word *nd3d3.yt* in the protasis would be linked antanaclastically with the etymologically related word *nd3d3* in the apodosis.

him.

r. 4.2

... [*hr*]^r*m33*^r *hr=f m 3by; nfr, jrj.t hry-tp*

... seeing his face as a panther; good, (it means) acting (as) a chief.

This is a case of antanaclasis between *hr=f* in the protasis and *hry-tp* in the apodosis.

oor.

visual

and the

r. 4.22

... *hr rdj.t n=f^cnh.w n [hw.t]-ntr; nfr, sw^rd^r n=f^cnh.jn ntr=f*

... giving himself victuals of the temple; good, (it means that) life will be bequeathed to him by his god.

This passage reflects antanaclasis between *n=f^cnh.w n [hw.t]-ntr* in the protasis and *n=f^cnh.jn ntr=f* in the apodosis.⁴⁶

2) after

r. 6.11

... *hr qrs.t [.....] ^cnh.w; nfr, wd3 pw ^cnh*

... burying [.....] alive; good, it means a lively prosperity.

This passage illustrates another example of antanaclasis, this time between *^cnh.w* in the protasis and *^cnh* in the apodosis.

rifying

d.⁴⁴ In

is this

ou —

r. 8.2

... *hr m33 hnn=f nht; DW, nht n hfty.w=f*

... seeing his penis stiffen; BAD, (it means) the stiffening of his enemy.

This alliterative passage features antanaclasis between *nht* in both protasis and apodosis.⁴⁷ The word *nht* can mean „be stiff, hard, or victorious,“ and the orthography is identical in both sections of this dream.⁴⁸

nd3d3

one of

could

in the

r. 9.9

... *hr m33 k3.t nj s.t hm.t; DW, ph.wy nj qsn.t r=f*

... seeing a woman's genitalia; BAD, (it means that) the ultimate misery upon him.

See 9.10.

r. 9.10

... *hr kf3 ph(.wy)=fy ds=f; DW, jw=f r nmh hr ph.wy*

... baring his own rear-end; BAD, (it means that) in the end he is going to be poor.

the pun

Israelit-

⁴⁶ Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 63.

⁴⁷ Gardiner, *Hieratic Papyri*, 17 n.4 notes this as paronomasia.

⁴⁸ Volten, *Demotische Traumdeutung*, 63; Ritner, *Dream Oracles*, 54 n.23.

Another example of antanaclasis occurs between *ph.wy* and *hr ph.wy*.⁴⁹ Also note the *ph.wy* that appears in the preceding passage (r. 9.9) thus linking the apodosis of the preceding passage with the protasis of this one, a connection that was discussed under visual puns above.

5.2.4. Homoeoteleuton

r. 2.21

... *hr wnm jwf nj ʕ.t; nfr, sʕ=f pw*

... consuming the flesh of a donkey; good, it means that he will become great.

This particular dream constitutes an example of homoeoteleuton between *ʕ.t* in the protasis and *sʕ* in the apodosis.

r. 3.11

... *hr [...] =f rmt m sht; nfr, ht pw [.....] n=f*

... people [...]ing him with a blow; good, it means that something [.....] to him.

Note the clear example of homoeoteleuton between *sht* in the protasis with *ht* in the apodosis.

r. 6.25

... *hr mʕʕ=f hnʕ ʕ r r=f; nfr, sʕ=f pw jn kʕ=f*

... seeing himself with one greater than himself; good, it means that he will be exalted by his own ability.

Here is a case of homoeoteleuton between *ʕ* in the protasis and *sʕ* in the apodosis.

r. 9.12

... *hr hm jrp; DW, nhm ht=f*

... pressing wine; BAD, (it means that) his possession(s) will be confiscated.

Here we find homoeoteleuton existing between *hm* in the protasis and *nhm* in the apodosis.

r. 9.25

... *hr qd n=f pr; DW, md.t [n]hʕ.t r hʕ.t=f*

... building a house for himself; BAD, (it means that) contrary words will be ahead of him.

Homoeoteleuton occurs in the apodosis between the words *nhʕ.t* and *hʕ.t*.

⁴⁹ Gardiner, Hieratic Papyri, 18 n.4.

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podosis
that was

5.2.5. Translexical punning

r. 2.22

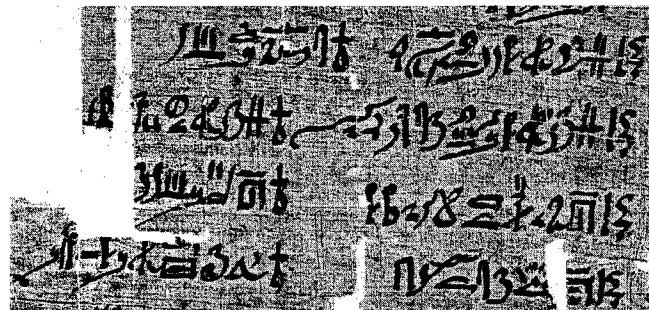
... *hr wnm jwf n msh; nfr, wnm ht sr [pw]*

... consuming the flesh of a crocodile; good, it means consuming the possessions of an official.

On the one hand this dream connects to its apodosis by way of repeated action of „consuming.“ Nevertheless, there is also a translexical pun here that is achieved by way of mention of a crocodile. Gardiner points out that officials are often likened to crocodiles because of their alleged greed. Notice that crocodiles and officials are associated in this dream as well as in r. 5.11 and r. 5.17 (with an identical protasis). There is also visual punning. The hieratic determinative for the crocodile (which is quite clearly a crocodile in the hieratic) is so large that it forces the *nfr* sign of the following line towards the left. From then on, the next lines follow this new alignment.

n 5.t in

m.
th *ht* in



exalted

in the

r. 4.16

... *hr sf.t 'jh' m 'dr'. t=f; 'nfr', sm3 p[3]y=fjry-n-^ch3(.t)*

... cutting up a bull with his own hand; good, (it means that) his (own) opponent will be killed.

r in the

If the bovine sign is read as *jh*, it forms a translexical association with ^c*h3*.⁵⁰ The translexical association is strengthened if we note that there are a number of well-known alliterative puns that connect bovines to smiting and killing in the Pyramid Texts (Spell 580, §1543–1544):

1543 (a) O you who smote (*hwj*) my father, who killed one greater than himself,
(b) You have smitten (*hwj*) my father, you have killed one greater than you.

1544 (a) O my father Osiris this king, I have smitten (*hw*) for you him who smote you as an ox (*jh*),
(b) I have killed (*sm3*) for you him who killed (*sm3*) you as a wild bull (*sm3*),

head of

⁵⁰ Volten, Demotische Traumdeutung, 62.

- (c) I have broken (*ngʒ*) for you him who broke (*ngʒ*) you as a long-horn (*ngʒ*),
 (d) On whose back (*hr sʒ=f*) you were, as a subjected bull (*hr sʒ=f*).

6 Typology of Punning in the Dream Manual

As we have noted, for the purposes of analysis the puns in the Dream Manual are most usefully organized into two categories: one of position (i.e., depending on where a pun appears in the Dream manual vis-à-vis its protases, apodoses, etc.), and one of kind (i.e., depending on whether puns obtain strictly aurally, visually, or translexically (by means of a shared association)). Each of these two categories constitutes an axis that naturally overlaps with the other and each offers separate insights into the nature of punning – the former suggesting various types of functions and the latter revealing something of the written component behind the oneirocritic process.

6.1 Category of Position

We can organize the first axis, that of position, into the following three groups.

6.1.1. Those puns that connect protases to apodoses.

Though we recognize that we do not possess the entire Dream Manual it is clear that this type of punning constitutes the largest group. Since they serve to explain or justify a particular interpretation we may attribute to them a hermeneutic function. Such puns include the following: r.: 2.1, 2.3, 2.9, 2.11, 2.17, 2.19 (but lexeme uncertain), 2.21, 2.22, 2.23, 3.4, 3.11, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.16, 4.17, 4.21, 4.22, 6.11, 6.20, 6.25, 7.9, 7.28, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.7, 8.12, 8.16, 8.26, 9.6, 9.10, 9.12, 10.6.⁵¹

6.1.2. Puns that occur within single protases (P) or apodoses (A).

This group includes: r. 4.3 (P) 4.4 (P), 5.9 (both P + A), 5.13 (P), 8.15 (A), 9.25 (A). Since these puns do not connect protases to their apodoses they cannot be said to serve a hermeneutic function. Probably they should be understood as serving a stylistic function. Alternatively they may result from well-established idiomatic usages that are either based on cognates, have formed because of their paronomastic features (4.3, 4.4, 5.9 [P], 10.5), or represent scribal idiosyncrasy (r. 5.9 [A], 5.13, 8.15, 9.25).

6.1.3. Puns that connect one dream and its interpretation to another that appears in close proximity.

This group includes: r. 2.8 > 2.9, 3.1 > 3.2 > 3.3, 5.21 > 5.22, 8.15 > 8.17, 9.9 > 9.10. Since these puns cross interpretive boundaries, and thus do not appear hermeneutic in function,

⁵¹ We have not included in this group those dreams that contain the same or etymologically related lexemes in their protases and apodoses since they cannot, pedantically speaking, be said to be puns. These are more properly speaking examples of polyptoton. Thus we have excluded: r. 2.1, 2.13, 2.22, 3.13, 4.1, 4.8, 5.15, 6.4, 6.25. However, in a couple of cases (i.e., r. 6.11, 7.16, 8.7, 9.23) the same words appear in the protasis and apodosis but appear to represent a significant semantic shift in the latter. We have thus included them in a separate group below.

it seems reasonable that they served as an organizing principle for the catalog of dreams, perhaps even as a mnemonic device.

6.2 Categories of Kind

We can subdivide the second major axis of our analysis, that of kind, also into three groups.

6.2.1. Those puns that obtain both aurally and visually.

With only a few exceptions (marked below) all of the puns we have examined belong to this group. Since these puns are connected by way of stint of sound, we can assume an oral context for their origins. This group includes: r. 2.1, 2.3, 2.8, 2.9, 2.11, 2.17, 2.19, 2.21, 2.23, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.11, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.16, 4.17, 4.21, 4.22, 5.9, 5.13, 5.21, 5.22, 6.11, 6.20, 6.25, 7.9, 7.28, 8.2, 8.4, 8.7, 8.12, 8.15, 8.16, 8.26, 9.6, 9.9, 9.10, 9.12, 9.16, 9.25, 10.6.

6.2.2. Those puns that obtain strictly on a visual level.

Usually, but not always, these puns are based on determinatives and include r. 2.22 (non-determinative type), 3.11 and 8.3. Since each dream’s interpretation requires knowledge of the script to be realized, these puns underscore the role of the written component in the process of dream interpretation.

6.2.3. Puns that depend on translexical punning.

Three examples appear in the Dream Manual, namely r. 2.17, 2.22 and 4.16. These examples demonstrate the repertoire of associations and scribal knowledge requisite for the oneirocritic task.

7 Conclusion

The various types of punning in the Dream Manual demonstrate that they functioned primarily to establish for the dream an interpretation that was based upon the sounds and signs used to convey the dream. Many of the apodoses appear to be linked to the protases by a similarity of sounds, suggesting that the interpretations were realized when the dream was said aloud. On the other hand, it is important to recognize the importance of the written component as well. In some dreams, a correlation between the protasis and apodosis appears to have been impossible without being able to read the signs used to convey the dream. These connections would not have been realized aurally. Indeed, even the dreams whose protases and apodoses appear to be linked by way of sound are also connected by way of the script. Thus, it seems likely that some dreams (perhaps all dreams) were written down before they were interpreted. Such evidence strongly suggests the importance of recognizing the ritualistic aspect of writing in the oneirocritic process.⁵²

⁵² The ritual aspect of writing is only now beginning to be recognized by scholars of the ancient world. See, e.g., M. Beard, *Writing and Religion*, in: *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, 2004, 137; L. Pearce, *Sacred Texts and Canonicity: Mesopotamia*, in: *Religions of the Ancient World: A Guide*, 628–629. A complete treatment on this subject is forthcoming in Noegel, *Nocturnal Ciphers*.

Moreover, the evidence garnered above demonstrates that punning is more prevalent in the Dream Manual than usually observed. Far from being a stylistic device of whimsy, the puns in the Dream Manual were grounded in a profoundly religious cosmology in which the ontology of the written and spoken word was deemed operative. Insofar as the dreams' interpretations demonstrate that even the most puzzling dreams make sense when examined by an oneirocritic expert in the scribal arts, the punning apodoses both reify the belief system upon which such ontological conceptions of the word are based and legitimate the scribal profession. While the identity of the author of the Dream Manual remains unknown, the evidence here suggests that he was someone familiar with the intricacies of scribal wisdom.

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