



BULLETIN DE L'INSTITUT FRANÇAIS D'ARCHÉOLOGIE ORIENTALE

en ligne en ligne

BIFAO 117 (2018), p. 293-317

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Reden und Rufe, a Neglected Genre? Towards a Definition of the Speech Captions in Private Tombs

AURORE MOTTE*

INTRODUCTION

Within the scope of my PhD research, I investigated a neglected corpus in Egyptology: the speech captions found in “daily life” scenes in private tombs. Such speech captions are sometimes called *Arbeiterreden*¹ or, more frequently, *Reden und Rufe*, a label coined by Adolf Erman (1919) and re-used by Waltraud Guglielmi (1973). Both studies² can now be refined for several reasons among which the quantity of materials now available thanks to the tombs published since. One of my major goals is consequently to provide a philological commentary for every single speech.³ In order to frame the discussion, the broader material

* F.R.S-FNRS – University of Liège, Belgium. This work was supported by the *Fonds de la recherche scientifique – FNRS*. I warmly thank James P. Allen, Stéphane Polis, and Jean Winand for reading my manuscript and suggesting valuable improvements. The remaining shortcomings are, of course, my own responsibility. I am also very grateful to the *Deutsches Archäologisches Institut Kairo*, the *Institut français d'archéologie orientale*, and Naguib Kanawati for giving me the kind permission to use their figures in this paper.

¹ KROEBER 1970, pp. 13, 26–27, 212, 216. J. Spiegel (1953) also makes use of this expression but it refers to reported

speech in the *Pyramid Texts* (see in particular PT 235 [= § 239a-b] and 243 [= § 248a–b]).

² Several *ad hoc* papers or studies are dealing with the subject (see *inter alia* JUNKER 1943; ALTENMÜLLER 1973; ALTENMÜLLER 1978; ALTENMÜLLER 1984–1985; ALTENMÜLLER 1987; ALTENMÜLLER 1989; ALTENMÜLLER 1994; MERZEBAN 2007; VERNUS 2010a; ALTENMÜLLER 2011; and VERNUS 2015) but A. Erman (1919) and W. Guglielmi (1973) remain, with P. Montet (1925) and B. Dominicus (1994), the main studies on *Reden und Rufe* in private tombs to this day.

³ My study is mainly based on the published material but we may easily imagine that more *Reden und Rufe* will appear thanks to the on-going or future excavations. As a matter of fact, the recently discovered 18th Dynasty tombs of Amenhotep and of Samut by the American team (ARCE) in the Theban Necropolis (east of TT 110) revealed new speeches. See “New Tomb Discovery East of TT 110”, ARCE, 2015, <<http://www.arce.org/news/2015/03/1153/new-tomb-discovery-east-of-tt110>> accessed 20 May 2017.

and cultural context to which the literary⁴ genre directly contributes need to be taken into account. As Pierre Larthomas pointed out:

Toute étude stylistique d'une œuvre est prématurée, qui n'a pas défini d'abord le genre auquel elle appartient; et elle sera, sinon mauvaise, toujours incomplète, si elle n'est guidée et soutenue par une définition correcte de ce genre. [...] C'est dire qu'à côté (ou plutôt au-dessus) de cette stylistique grammaticale, il y a une stylistique des genres; c'est elle finalement qui commande toutes les autres, qu'il s'agisse du matériel grammatical, du lexique ou des figures.

Larthomas (1972, p. 146).

In this respect, this paper intends to better understand the identity of *Reden und Rufe* (and thus their genre) by using the theory of the French literary critic, Gérard Genette. The shape of the paper is composed of three main sections. In the first section, I provide a theoretical frame by shortly presenting the structuralist theory of G. Genette,⁵ which aims at defining any textual genre. In the second section, I make some preliminary remarks pertaining to the study of literary genre in Ancient Egypt. The third section is devoted to the generic analysis, strictly speaking. I first briefly return to the previous studies of A. Erman and W. Guglielmi. I then consider the chronological and the geographical dispersion of *Reden und Rufe*, which chart the dynamicity of this corpus, before seeking to define the genre to which they belong with the help of Genette's theory. In the conclusion, I resume the discussed characteristics of such speech captions and propose to enlarge the scope by considering the presence of *Reden und Rufe* in other contexts.

It has to be mentioned here that the present paper does not intend to present a comprehensive study of the genre, but rather to draw some attention to this still overlooked genre in Egyptology. The focus exclusively lays on Old and Middle Kingdom speeches. Material from the New Kingdom tombs, and Late Period ones to a lesser extent, is still subject to on-going research. This paper is thus part of a work in progress, a first step towards a generic definition of the *Reden und Rufe*.

THE STRUCTURALIST APPROACH OF GENETTE

The approach of G. Genette (1986, pp. 89–159) offers to define the identity of any text (and thereby its literary genre) through three interconnected axes: modes, themes, and forms. I go into more detail in section 3 (the generic analysis) as to what each axis consists of but a brief explanation is in order. The *mode* is related to the rhetorical dimension; the *themes* have to do with the space-time frame and the set of recurrent patterns; and lastly, the *forms* deal with the interplay of the two first axes.⁶

⁴ In this paper, I use the concept of “literary genres” in its widest meaning, *i.e.* all the written texts, by opposition to “musical genres,” “film genres,” etc.

⁵ GENETTE 1986, pp. 89–159.

⁶ For a comprehensive explanation of these three concepts, I refer to GENETTE 1986.

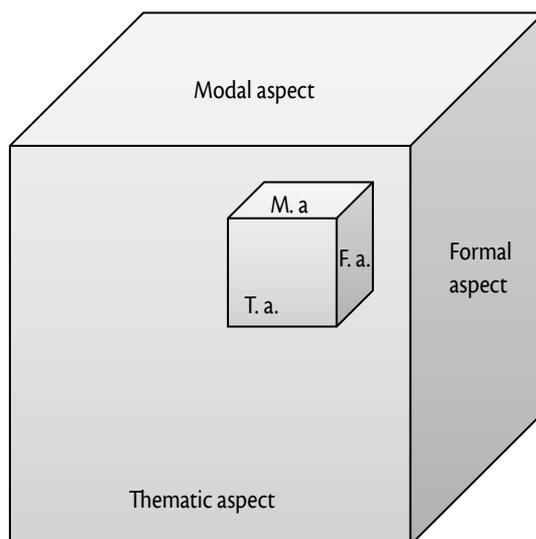


FIG. 1. Cube crossing the modal, the thematic, and the formal dimensions.

Those axes can be conceived as an imaginary cube (see fig. 1 *supra*),⁷ where the x-axis represents all existing or possible modes; the y-axis all existing or possible themes; and the z-axis all existing or possible forms. Consequently, it provides a method to define all existing and possible literary genres.⁸ It even allows one to suggest a precise definition of a genre by bringing to light analogies and structural logics without establishing anachronistic cultural principles.⁹ Bernard Mathieu¹⁰ (1996) first applied this approach to *Love poetry* and lately, Chloé Ragazzoli (2008) to *Les éloges de la ville*. Yet, both authors investigated a New Kingdom genre belonging to the *Belles-Lettres*.¹¹ Further, this approach has not been *comprehensively* applied to a genre known throughout the pharaonic era. Indeed, in her study on the *Letters to the Dead*, Sylvie Donnat Beauquier¹² reaches the conclusion that this very genre virtually disappears after the Middle Kingdom, which thus prevents us to consider it as an active genre throughout the pharaonic era. All these reasons prompted me to analyse in my PhD thesis the *Reden und Rufè*, a corpus of texts attested during a wide period of nearly 2300 years. By using those three main criteria of forms, modes, and themes, I intend to establish the literary genre to which they belong (or in which they participate).¹³

7 The figure is inspired by MATHIEU 1996, p. 130, and more recently, MATHIEU in press.

8 GENETTE 1986, pp. 153–154.

9 RAGAZZOLI 2008, p. 96.

10 More recently, B. Mathieu applied the theory of Genette on a Ramesside

genre: the “*Caractères*.” See MATHIEU in press.

11 For similar study on Ancient Egyptian texts outside the realm of *Belles-Lettres*, see e.g. GNIRS 1996 and DONNAT BEAUQUIER 2014.

12 DONNAT BEAUQUIER 2014, pp. 166–174, 182–187.

13 For that matter, see the philosophical thought of DERRIDA 1986, pp. 262–265.

LITERARY GENRES IN ANCIENT EGYPT

Before getting to the core subject of the structural analysis, a few preliminary comments have to be made. In Richard Bruce Parkinson's words,¹⁴ Egyptian genres have no equivalents for our familiar categories of epic, tragedy, comedy, or pastoral, which are part of our cultural legacy from Ancient Greece. Projecting our own Western view onto Egyptian genres would inevitably lead to misunderstanding(s), inasmuch as each epoch has its own system of genres.¹⁵ Without repeating the arguments set forth above, suffice it to say that the structuralist approach of G. Genette seems appropriate for the study of a literary genre, for which no metadiscourse¹⁶ is known in Ancient Egyptian sources. Such an absence of metadiscourse should not hinder our investigation; cultural practices can obviously be analysed without any explicit analysis from within the culture.¹⁷

Another apparent pitfall in our investigation could be the absence of designation in Ancient Egyptian for what we call *Reden und Rufe*. Indeed, they have no explicit label, or at least none is known to us, unlike the didactic genre for instance, which bears the name *sbꜣyt* "teaching" at the beginning of the text.¹⁸ It incidentally explains why the German term given by Erman in 1919 is still used nowadays to refer to these speeches. This second absence neither thwarts our research, for the study of genres has to be done from their structural characteristics, not from their names.¹⁹

THE *REDEN UND RUFEN* IN PRIVATE TOMBS

Previous Studies

Three studies were *exclusively* dedicated to the study of speech captions in private tombs: A. Erman (1919), W. Guglielmi (1973), and Hermann Junker (1943). The latter, though highly relevant for a better understanding of a few speeches, does not intend to improve our comprehension of *Reden und Rufe* as a consistent corpus or a literary genre. It has accordingly been set aside from the present discussion.

A. Erman used the label "*Reden und Rufe*" for the first time in 1919 to describe speeches, dialogues, or songs uttered by workers (such as craftsmen, fishermen, or peasants) within the so-called daily life scenes²⁰ in Old Kingdom elite tombs (see e.g. fig. 2).

¹⁴ PARKINSON 1996, p. 297.

¹⁵ It was already raised by DUCROT, TODOROV 1972, p. 195; FOWLER 1982, pp. 132–134; and TODOROV 1987, p. 23.

¹⁶ No metadiscourse *strictly speaking* is known as is the case in our modern societies but it doesn't mean that ancient Egyptian scribes were not aware of the concept of (*literary*)

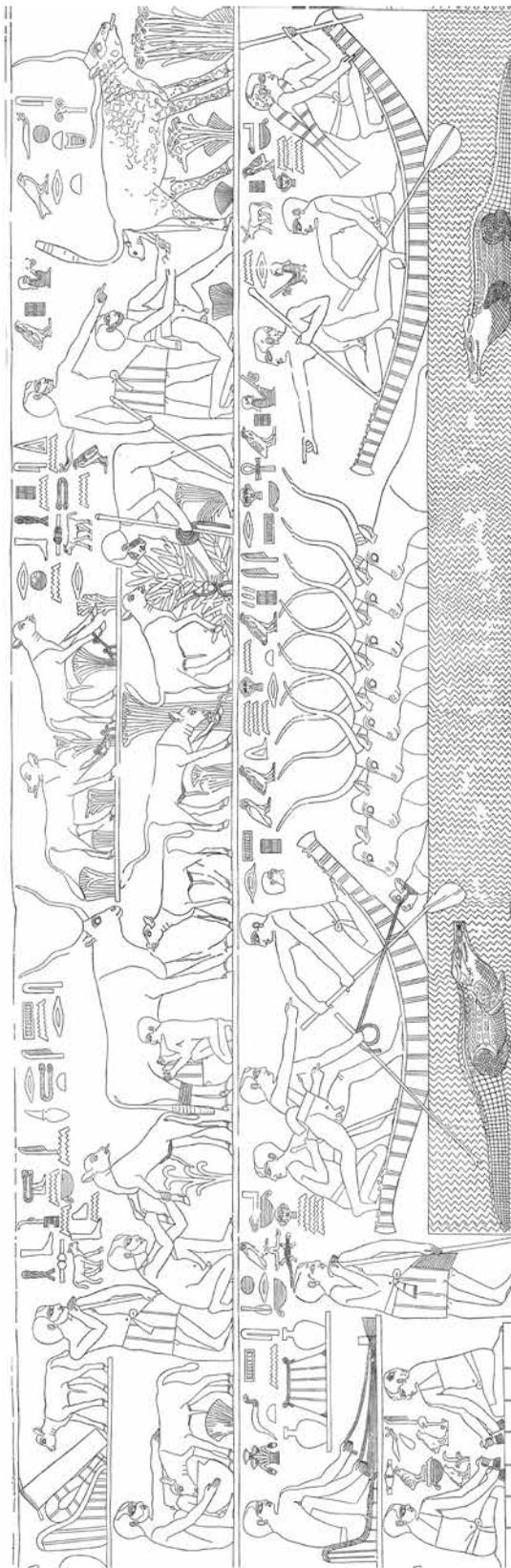
genres—quite the opposite in fact. See *inter alia* VERNUS 1978, pp. 117–144; MATHIEU 1996, pp. 143–148; and more recently VERNUS 2015 who discusses cases of *generic transgression*.

¹⁷ As pointed out in PARKINSON 2002, p. 29.

¹⁸ See e.g. PARKINSON 2002, pp. 108–110 with further references.

¹⁹ This issue was already stressed in DUCROT, TODOROV 1972, p. 193; and MATHIEU 1996, p. 129.

²⁰ For a discussion about the meaning of the "daily life scenes," see KESSLER 1987, p. 60 and VAN WALSEM 1998, p. 1205, n. 1.



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FIG. 2. *Reden und Rufe* in the tomb of Ti (Wild 1953, pl. CXXXIV).

Half a century later, W. Guglielmi (1973) studied such speech captions in elite tombs, from the Middle Kingdom to the Late Period, for three types of scenes: agriculture, husbandry, and hunting/fishing. No further large-scale study has been dedicated to the subject since then and several issues have been left unresolved, despite the quite numerous papers and books touching upon the subject.²¹

As such, another goal of my research is to determine precisely when they appear and disappear, in how many tombs, in which necropoleis, and in relation with which “daily life” topics.

Metadata

The issues of the geographical and the chronological dispersions pertain to the dynamic nature of a literary genre, an aspect on which G. Genette has remained silent.²² G. Genette did not consider the significance of such *metadata*, although they are highly telling for our purpose, especially when studying a genre attested during several centuries and so potentially open to changes or re-interpretations. The following graph (fig. 3) addresses the chronological spread of the *Reden und Rufe* by showing in how many private tombs they appear, from the 4th Dynasty onwards when this practice first emerged (the number is specified for each dynasty).

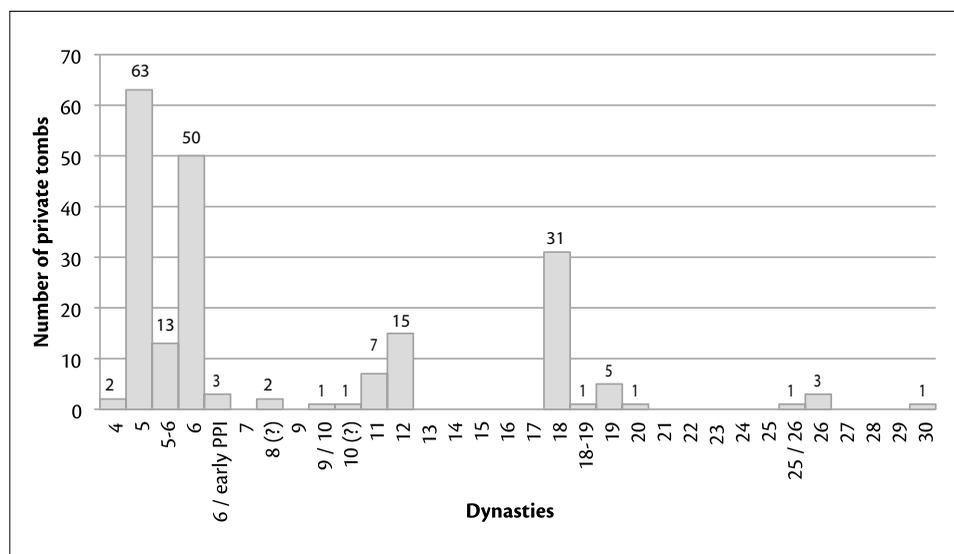


FIG. 3. Diachronic distribution of *Reden und Rufe* in private tombs.

²¹ See n. 2 *supra*.

²² MATHIEU 1996, p. 131.

After a shy emergence in 4th Dynasty tombs, the *Reden und Rufe* quickly reach their acme between the mid-5th Dynasty (under the reign of Niuserre) and the beginning of the 6th Dynasty. This peak is followed by a sharp decrease corresponding to the First Intermediate Period. An accurate dating is hard to determine for a few tombs whose decorative program suggest either late 6th Dynasty or early First Intermediate Period, as well as for a few others that can be dated either from the late First Intermediate Period or the early Middle Kingdom.²³ The Middle Kingdom is synonymous of stability and prosperity, which is notably reflected in the increasing number of private tombs containing *Reden und Rufe* in their decorative program. During the Second Intermediate Period, a hiatus is noticeable in their spreading, just as the Third Intermediate Period. Between these troubled times, a major rise of speech captions is seen in the New Kingdom tombs, especially these of the 18th Dynasty. Lastly, they sporadically appear during the Late Period, around the 25th–26th Dynasties and the 30th Dynasty.

The geographical distribution of the *Reden und Rufe* is equally indicative. Initially, private tombs were located near royal funerary complexes, so are the speech captions: they appear in Giza, Saqqara, Abusir, and Dahshur respectively.²⁴ From the end of the 5th Dynasty, the decentralization of the central power increases.²⁵ The speeches emerge accordingly in three provincial necropoleis, el-Hammamiya, Sheikh Saïd, and Zawiet el-Maiyetin.²⁶ The spread to provincial cemeteries grows during the 6th Dynasty.²⁷ Speech captions are consequently found in el-Hawawish, Beni Hassan, Deshasha, Deir el-Gebrawi, Meir, and Kasr el-Sayad, but they are also present in the royal necropoleis of Dahshur, Giza, and Saqqara.²⁸ *Reden und Rufe* are less present in the First Intermediate Period tombs. As a matter of fact, they were only recorded in the necropoleis of el-Hagarsa, el-Hawawish, Herakleopolis Magna, Mo'alla, and Saqqara.²⁹ During the Middle Kingdom, they are exclusively found in provincial cemeteries—Asyut, Beni Hassan, Deir el-Bersha, Deir Rifeh, Herakleopolis Magna, and Meir—and to a lesser extent in Thebes and Saqqara, although sites with Middle Kingdom tombs (with significant painted and relief decoration) are known throughout the country.³⁰ *Reden und Rufe* reappear then in four necropoleis during the New Kingdom: Elkab, Thebes, Saqqara, and Bahariya.³¹

23 Consult the *Oxford Expedition to Egypt: Scene-details database* for a list of Old Kingdom tombs, including likely early First Intermediate Period one and the *Meketre Project* website for a list of First Intermediate Period and/or Middle Kingdom tombs, both with further references.

24 It would be very un-user-friendly to quote all concerned tombs. In this footnote and the following ones, only one of the first recorded tomb-owners with speech captions in her/his decorative program is mentioned for each cemetery: the mastaba of Meresankh III at Giza in DUNHAM, SIMPSON 1974; of Neferiretinef at Saqqara in VAN DE WALLE 1978; and of Ptahchepses at Abusir in VERNER 1986 and VACHALA 2004.

25 See VERCOUTTER 1992, pp. 307, 313–314; KANAWATI 1980; and STRUDWICK 1985.

26 See the tombs of Rahotep in EL-KHOULI, KANAWATI 1990, of Uraïna 2 in GARIS DAVIES 1901b, and of Khunes in LEPSIUS 1849–1859.

27 See e.g. MORENO GARCÍA 2005 on the changes during the Old Kingdom and the First Intermediate Period.

28 See the tombs of Hem-min in KANAWATI 1985; of Ipi in LASHIEN 2016; of Shedu in KANAWATI, MCFARLANE 1993; of Aba in GARIS DAVIES 1902a and more recently in KANAWATI 2007; of Pepyankh the Black (A2) in BLACKMAN 1953 and more recently in KANAWATI, EVANS 2014; and of Thauty in SÄVE-SÖDERBERGH 1994.

29 See for instance the tombs of Wahi in KANAWATI 1995; of Rehurausen, in KANAWATI 1987; of Sehu in PADRÓ 1999; of Ankhthifi at Mo'alla in VANDIER 1950; and of Satinteti in FIRTH, GUNN 1926.

30 See KAMRIN 2015, p. 28 and n. 2. See *inter alia* the tomb of Intef (TT 386) in JAROŠ-DECKERT 1984 or the tomb of Baqet I (no. 29) in NEWBERRY 1893–1894 for 11th Dynasty tombs with *Reden und Rufe*.

31 See the tombs of Renni at Elkab in TYLOR 1900; of Puyemre at Thebes (TT 39) in GARIS DAVIES 1922–1923; of Merymery in *National Museum of Antiquities in Leiden (The Netherlands)*, AP 6-b; and of Amenhotep at Bahariya in VAN SICLEN 1981.

This decrease has to be linked, incidentally, with the predominance of religious topics from the Ramesside period onwards.³² Finally, Late Period *Reden und Rufe* are restricted to three necropoleis: Thebes and Saqqara during the 25th–26th Dynasties³³ and Tuna el-Gebel during the 30th Dynasty, the last survival of these speeches being the tomb of Petosiris.³⁴ Yet, other sites with elite tombs are known for both periods.³⁵

In a nutshell, whereas geographical specificities are noticeable for each era, *Reden und Rufe* are always dispersed from Memphite area to the beginning of Upper Egypt, along the Nile (with the notable exception of the tomb of Amenhotep in the Bahariya oasis) and, in addition, they were never found in tombs located above Elkab.³⁶

The Structuralist Approach

After having discussed the chronological and geographical spreads of the *Reden und Rufe*, the theory of G. Genette can now be applied to Old and Middle Kingdom material (as a reminder, the other periods are still under study) to seek to define the literary genre of such speeches through their structural characteristics. As a result, his three axes—modes, themes, and forms—are covered in the following sections.

Mode

The mode can be summarized as *how* an utterance is produced or in John Frow's words "the way textual relations between the senders and receivers of messages are organised in a structured situation of address."³⁷ It pertains thus to the rhetorical dimension.³⁸

In a first step, the speech context has to be determined in order to establish the situation of address. Two main situations of address may be distinguished: narrative texts versus discourses.³⁹ Each category has its own characteristics. While narrative texts pertain to the field of the past and mostly resort to the third person (he/she/they), the universe of discourse is rooted in the present and requires the first two persons (I/you/we).⁴⁰

In this regard, *Reden und Rufe* are, like the German name suggests, speeches or dialogues put into common workers' mouths, or into their superiors' mouths, in the so-called daily life

³² See *inter alia* ASSMANN 1995, p. 283; HOFMANN 2004, p. 130; KNIGGE 2006, p. 54 with further references; and VERNUS 2010a, p. 74.

³³ See for instance the fragments of Ankhafensakhmet's tomb in CAPART 1938 and HILL 1956–1957; and the tomb of Montuemhat in DER MANUELIAN 1994 and in GAMER-WALLERT 2013.

³⁴ It is well understood that Petosiris was living around the end of the 4th century BC (CHERPION, CORTEGGIANI, GOUT 2007, pp. 2–3 and especially n. 7 for a comment on the datation of its mortuary monument) but, for the sake

of clarity in fig. 1, only 30th Dynasty is mentioned.

³⁵ To date, no database, like the previous ones, exists. In the absence of such a tool, the main reference for a list of New Kingdom and Late Period tombs remains the colossal work of B. Porter & R. Moss, especially PM I², PM III², PM IV, PM V and PM VII².

³⁶ As a matter of fact, decorative programs used in that region of Egypt follow other rules. See for instance VISHAK 2007 and VISHAK 2015 for the Old Kingdom cemetery of Qubbet el-Hawa.

³⁷ FROW 2015, p. 82.

³⁸ It would be outside the scope of this paper to develop in depth the concept of mode. Therefore, for a comprehensive explanation, see GENETTE 1986, pp. 139–148.

³⁹ BENVENISTE 1966, pp. 238–241.

⁴⁰ A third category lies in between: the *narrative discourse*, which presents facts from the past but in the sphere of interest of the speaker. See e.g. WINAND 2006a, pp. 371–373.

scenes in private tombs. They are exclusively found in the above-ground structure, which is open to visitors and family members.⁴¹ Insofar as they are discourses, only first and second persons are used. Yet, one should keep in mind that those in whose name they were written were not those who actually composed the texts.⁴² Besides, *Reden und Rufe* are not to be understood as real recorded speeches; they are entirely fictional.

The discursive mode necessarily requires a speaker and an addressee, who can be either active—we will speak in this case of *interlocutor*—or passive—we will speak then of *auditor*. Based on this observation, six situations can be distinguished depending on their identity (chiefs, workers, or animals):

Speaker	Addressee		Example
	Interlocutor	Auditor	
Chief	Worker(s)		In the tomb of Pepyankh the Black at Meir, several bearers move forward with their offerings; the superior who is in the lead asks them to hurry up: <i>my jqr dr jyt sr</i> , “Come fully before the noble comes” and the first offering bearer answers him <i>jry(=j) r bz.t=k</i> , “I will act according to what you praise.” ⁴³
Chief		Worker(s)	In the tomb of Waatekhethor, a herdsman helps a cow giving birth under the supervision of his superior, who tells him: <i>sfb wr.t nr pw jw qsn r=s</i> , “Pull hard, oh herdsman! It is too difficult for her.” ⁴⁴
Worker		Chief	In the tomb of Pepyankh the Black, next to a fishing scene a fisherman brings fish in a basket to the tomb owner: <i>[jr n=j] w3.t n mhy.t [n] k3 n sr</i> , “Give me way for the fish for the ka of the noble.” ⁴⁵
Worker	Worker(s)		In the tomb of Ptahhotep I, two butchers remove the skin of a bull; one of them advises the other <i>zft nfr nt(y)-hn'(=j)</i> , “Skin well (my) companion” to which the other replies <i>mk jry(=j) r bz.t=k</i> , “Behold, I will act according to what you praise.” ⁴⁶
Worker		Worker(s)	In the tomb of Zau, four boatmen are jousting with sticks on their small papyrus boats. In the upper left corner, the following speech is written: <i>jn jw wn rmw</i> , “Are there fish?” ⁴⁷
Worker		Animal(s)	In the tomb of Ti, a peasant leads bulls in the threshing floor: <i>jzj h3 jzj</i> , “Go; hey, go!” ⁴⁸

TABLE 1. The discursive mode of the *Reden und Rufe*.

⁴¹ Speech captions also occur to a lesser extent in a few royal funerary monuments—note that relationships between royal and non-royal decorative programs are not yet fully understood—and sporadically on a few private stelae between the First Intermediate Period and the Middle Kingdom. Studies on speech captions in these two contexts are still lacking but it is worth saying that the three types of support, i.e. private

tombs, royal funerary monuments, and private stelae, are all strongly connected with the funerary and commemorative dimensions.

⁴² GUMBRECHT 1996, p. 14 already raised this question of authorship for autobiographies.

⁴³ BLACKMAN 1953, pl. XXXI or KANAWATI, EVANS 2014, pl. 91.

⁴⁴ KANAWATI, ABDER-RAZIQ 2008, pl. 56.

⁴⁵ BLACKMAN 1953, pl. XXX or KANAWATI, EVANS 2014, pl. 90.

⁴⁶ HASSAN 1975, pl. 38. For the meaning of *zft*, see *Wb* III, 443.15 as well as *ALex* 77.3566, *ALex* 78.3503, and *ALex* 79.2541.

⁴⁷ GARIS DAVIES 1902b, pl. IV, translation following SILVERMAN 1980, p. 28, ex. 33.

⁴⁸ WILD 1966, pl. CLII.

In a nutshell, the discursive mode always implies at least two participants, a speaker and an addressee. These participants, who act for the wellness of the tomb-owner in the afterlife, are either common workers or their superiors, or even animals in some agricultural scenes, such as threshing and ploughing. They all act in a very specific space-time frame, as discussed in the following section.

Themes

The second axis of the structuralist approach is devoted to the thematic content, which is expressed by a space-time frame and a set of recurrent patterns.⁴⁹

The decorative program of private tombs refers to an ideal and timeless place, the *pr-dt*.⁵⁰ This ideal place does not have a precise geographical position; it is a canon represented in each tomb.⁵¹ The landscape depicted within a tomb can then be seen as a small-scale replica of Egypt, with its three fundamental components: the desert, the Nile, and the arable surroundings, where the tomb owner maintains world order and preserves harmony, like a “miniature pharaoh.”⁵²

As a consequence, themes suited for the tomb decoration follow a decorum, which restricts the possibilities of expression.⁵³ The following table addresses the fourth issue raised above (p. 298), the “daily life” scenes in which speech captions may be inserted (see tabl. 2).

Types of “daily life” scenes	Old Kingdom		Middle Kingdom		New Kingdom		Late Period	
	scene	speech	scene	speech	scene	speech	scene	speech
Agriculture	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Animal husbandry	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Butchery	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Banquet					X	X		
Body care	X	X						
Crafts	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Dance and music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Fishing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Food (“kitchen”)	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Games	X	X	X		X		X	X
Hunting	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Market	X	X			X			
Offering bearers	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Palanquin	X	X						

⁴⁹ FROW 2015, p. 83.

⁵⁰ MORENO GARCÍA 1999, pp. 71–74 with further references and VERNUS 2010a, p. 72.

⁵¹ MORENO GARCÍA 1999, p. 71.

⁵² This subject has been widely discussed: see e.g. VERNUS 1985, pp. 45–66; FISCHER 1986; BAINES 1989, pp. 471–482; BRYAN 1996, pp. 161–168; KAMRIN 1999; MORENO GARCÍA 1999, pp. 71–74;

MORENO GARCÍA 2006, pp. 217–221; LOUANT 2000; VAN WALSEM 2006.

⁵³ MORENO GARCÍA 1999, p. 66, n. 6, with several references to Baines’ work.

Types of “daily life” scenes	Old Kingdom		Middle Kingdom		New Kingdom		Late Period	
Sailing	X	X	X		X	X	X	
Scribes	X	X	X	X	X		X	
Wrestling	X		X	X	X	X		
Total:	16	15	13	11	15	12	12	8

TABLE 2. “Daily life” scenes containing *Reden und Rufe* in private tombs.⁵⁴

Speech captions occur in fifteen types of “daily life” scenes during the Old Kingdom whereas they are restricted to less than twelve for the three other periods. Yet, this decrease is not synonymous with impoverishment. Each period stands out from the others by inserting *Reden und Rufe* in new topics, except for the Late Period, which is—not surprisingly—characterized by a return to the “classical” Old Kingdom topics. In that way, scenes of palanquin are in vogue in Old Kingdom tombs; speech captions appear in Middle Kingdom wrestling scenes;⁵⁵ and for a last telling example, in New Kingdom tombs, they break into a new flourishing topic, the “banquet scenes,” as in the tomb of Pahery at Elkab for instance.⁵⁶

That being said, the stress mark has to be put on the common core of “daily life” scenes with *Reden und Rufe*, on the understanding that each decorative program is unique in an attempt to present the tomb-owner’s status to his contemporaries (and to posterity), and so to highlight his own “distinction” among the elite.⁵⁷ Seven topics with speech captions are shared from the Old Kingdom through the Late Period—agriculture, animal husbandry, butchery, crafts, dance and music,⁵⁸ food (“kitchen”),⁵⁹ and hunting; they are thus the common core for the space-time frame of *Reden und Rufe*.

In a second step, the content itself of such speech captions is informative for the thematic axis. The *Reden und Rufe* tell us mostly about the ongoing or the forthcoming action depicted within the scene. This is why speeches are usually, but not always, written *without* determinatives and first-person pronouns are omitted: text and image are a whole, and so the scene itself stands for the determinatives, just like the worker does for the first-person pronoun.⁶⁰ Apart from their intrinsic meaning, several recurring patterns were gathered among Old and Middle Kingdom speech captions. They are hence called *topoi*. Whereas an exhaustive list would be outside the scope of this paper and premature, few of them can still be underlined, to offer a small synthesis. These *topoi* can be linked to two main categories, which Pascal Vernus (2009–2010) calls “*stratégie d’épure*” and “*stratégie d’appogiature*.” While the first tends to represent the ideal world of the tomb owner, the second lays more stress on the small facts, the anecdotes. I successively present a few examples of each strategy.

⁵⁴ In fig. 4, the data recorded for scenes attested during each period is based on information given in the following reference tools: KLEBS 1915; KLEBS 1934; KLEBS 1990; PM I²/1; PM III²/1; PM III²/2; PM IV; PM V; PM VII; *Oxford Expedition to Egypt: Scene-Details Database* and *Meketre Project*. The unrecorded scenes have been greyed.

⁵⁵ On this subject, see MOTTE 2017.

⁵⁶ TYLOR, GRIFFITH 1894, pl. VII.

⁵⁷ See *inter alia* ASSMANN 1983, pp. 64–93 and VERNUS 2010a, pp. 68–70 with further references.

⁵⁸ New Kingdom harpist songs have not been included in this label, insofar as they come out of the corpus to form their own literary genre. See *inter alia* LOPRIENO 1996a, p. 56 and

LOPRIENO 1996b, p. 523 with further bibliography. The topic would require an entire study, and so I will not discuss it further in the present paper.

⁵⁹ Scenes of viticulture and wine process are included in this category.

⁶⁰ FISCHER 1977, pp. 3–4; VERNUS 1985, pp. 45–66; BRYAN 1996, pp. 161–168; and WINAND 2006b, pp. 155–156.

The first strategy is quite commonly depicted through the *topos* of zeal. Quite often in butchery scenes, workers are presented as zealous men, as in the tomb of Pepyankh the Black,⁶¹ where the butcher getting ready to cut the foreleg of the ox asks his colleague “Hold on firmly” (*ndr r-jqr*), to which he answers “See, I am on it” (*mk w(j) hr=s*).

A direct corollary of this first strategy is the worker who presents himself as a zealous man, or what we could call the “self-glorification.”⁶² A craftsmen scene in the tomb of Mehu⁶³ is enlightening in this view. In fig. 4, four workers smelt metal using blowpipes. One encourages the others to hurry: *wr wr.t nt(y)-hn'(zj) jw bd3* [...], “Come on, hurry up (my) friend! The mold [...]” and gets the following answer: *jry(zj) r hz.t=k jw(zj) wrd.k(j) hr k3.t m pr² mhnk*, “I will act according to what you praise, while I am tired because of the work in the house (?), (oh) rewarded.” By saying so, the worker shows not only his zeal with the first sentence—*jry(zj) r hz.t=k*, which is the common answer to an order—but he also underlines his bravery with the second sentence: even tired, he is still hard-working.



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FIG. 4. Craftsmen scenes in the tomb of Mehu (Altenmüller 1998, pl. 33).

Another *topos*, raised and christened “Kiebitz attitude” by P. Vernus⁶⁴ is fully and joyfully accepted submission. The most telling example is the palanquin scenes, as in the tomb of Zau at Deir el-Gebrawi,⁶⁵ where the tomb owner is conveyed on a seat by his workers, who say *hr hr.w-hwd.t nfr s(y) mh.t(j) r wnn=s šw.t(j)*, “Those who bear the chair are delighted, it (i.e. the chair) is better full than empty.”⁶⁶

A fourth significant *topos* within the *stratégie d'épure* is efficiency at work. Among the many examples of effectiveness, one can mention a force-feeding poultry scene in the tomb of Ti,⁶⁷ where a peasant cries out about his work *dj(zj) hpr nw n(j) t*, “I made happen those (pieces)

⁶¹ BLACKMAN 1953, pl. XXXV or KANAWATI, EVANS 2014, pl. 96.

⁶² In this regard, see e.g. VERNUS 2006, pp. 148–149 about the rhetorical questions in speech captions.

⁶³ ALTENMÜLLER 1998, pl. 42.

⁶⁴ VERNUS 2010a, pp. 83–84.

⁶⁵ GARIS DAVIES 1902b, pl. VIII.

⁶⁶ See ALTENMÜLLER 1984–1985 for a study on speeches in palanquin

scenes. For an English translation, see KITCHEN 1999, pp. 75–78 or STRUDWICK 2005, p. 418 (no. 318).

⁶⁷ ÉPRON, DAUMAS, GOYON 1939, pl. V–VIII.

of bread,”⁶⁸ or cooking scenes as in the tomb of Aba,⁶⁹ where a man notifies that the food is ready (*ju n3 hpr(.w)*, “It is ready”) and in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Ukhhotep,⁷⁰ where two men are busy roasting a piece of meat; the left-hand cooker advises his colleague: *msnh dj=k hpr=f n k3 n wb-htp*, “Turn (the spit), make it happen for the *ka* of Ukhhotep.”⁷¹

A last significative *topos* belonging to the *stratégie d'épure* is the haste. The vocabulary in the *Reden und Rufe* is extremely rich to express this haste, either with several verbs of movement, such as *wnj*, “to hurry”⁷² in the tomb of Akhethetep⁷³ (*wn tn ju 0 wb3*, “Hurry up, it (i.e. the sky) is clear”) or *tbm*, “to be quick”⁷⁴ in the tomb of Ankhtifi⁷⁵ (*sh hps tbm*, “Cut the foreleg, be quick”), but also periphrases, composed of a transitive verb and a body part, as in the offering-bearers scene in the tomb of Ankhmahor,⁷⁶ where one can read: *jt n=k rd.wy=k*, “Use your (two) feet⁷⁷ (i.e. move, hurry up)!”

Next to those episodes of perfect life, where everyone seems to work in joy and in a good mood, the second strategy, the *stratégie d'appogiature*, is not outdone and has its share of *topoi*: laziness or idleness, complaints, irony, touches of humour or wit, warnings, and so on. The ploughing scene in the tomb of Senbi⁷⁸ illustrates quite well a case of laziness: the herdsman suggests to his companion to take a break, saying *my 3b tw hrw nfr*, “Come, stop you! The day is beautiful” but the other replies he’s busy and by saying so, he calls him to order.

In the tomb of Ti, two herdsman are seen engaged in petty theft.⁷⁹ They are milking a cow for their own consumption. One of the herdsman is on the lookout and warns the other: *s3r wn tw dr jyt r=f hq3 pw*, “Milk! Hurry up before this chief comes.”

Eventually, a telling example of complaint is found in the Theban Tomb 60,⁸⁰ on the north wall, which is about the preparation of food and drinks. In the last register, a man kneads the dough and complains that he is not able to do his job well because of the poor quality of products he received: *ju p3 bnr nt(y) m šnw.t js h3 m3=j sw pr hpr bw-nfr m-3=j*, “This date that is in the granary is (too) old. If I could see it when it emerged, something good would have happened to me!”

To sum up, the outline of daily life as depicted in private tombs tends to show us a “perfect” (or prototypical) worker who acts for the wellness of the tomb owner in the afterlife.⁸¹ Through these excellent workers, the purpose is to prove that the tomb owner himself has spent his life following the Maat, in the same way as a ruler loving and caring for his subjects, and thereby possesses a pure heart. To that extent, the *Reden und Rufe* can be opposed to other texts that describe the same social classes, such as the *Satire of Trades*, whose aim is to demonstrate the scribe’s supremacy against other trades, more manual labour, which are thereby backbreaking:

The jeweller pierces (stone) in stringing beads in all kinds of hard stone. When he has completed the inlaying of the eye amulets, his strength vanishes and he is tired out. He

68 For the construction *nw n(j) + noun*, see GARDINER 1957, § 110–111 and MALAISE, WINAND 1999, § 185.

69 GARIS DAVIES 1902a, pl. IX.

70 BLACKMAN 1915, pl. XXIII.

71 For a comment on the determinative of *msnh*, see MOTTE 2013, pp. 147–148; for the subjunctive *sdm=f* after an imperative, see MALAISE, WINAND 1999, § 610 and ALLEN 2014, § 20.13.

72 *Wb* I, pp. 313.10–314.6.

73 GARIS DAVIES 1901a, pl. VII.

74 *Wb* V, p. 364.4.

75 VANDIER 1950, pl. XXV.

76 KANAWATI, HASSAN 1997, pl. 41.

77 This idiomatic expression is also found in *CT* VII, 191h.

78 BLACKMAN 1914, pl. III.

79 WILD 1953, pl. CXII.

80 GARIS DAVIES 1920, pl. XI.

81 VERNUS 2010a, p. 83.

sits until the arrival of the sun, his knees and his back bent at (the place called) Aku-Re. The barber shaves until the end of the evening. But he must be up early, crying out, his bowl upon his arm. He takes himself from street to street to seek out someone to shave. He wears out his arms to fill his belly like bees who eat (only) according to their work [...] I shall also describe to you the life of the mason-bricklayer. His kidneys are painful. When he must be outside in the wind, he lays bricks without a loincloth. His belt is a cord for his back, a string for his buttocks. His strength has vanished through fatigue and stiffness, kneading all his excrement. He eats bread with his fingers, although he washes himself but once a day [...] But if you understand writings, then it will be better for you than the professions which I have set before you.

Extract from the Satire of Trades.⁸²

With this notion of “purpose,” we touch on the German concept of “*Sitz im Leben*.” Indeed, the historical and socio-cultural context is helpful in seeking to contrast literary genres that share some thematic contents, like the *Satire of Trades* on the one hand and the *Reden und Rufe* and the “daily life” scenes on the other. In this way, while the first falls within a didactic context, whose aim is to educate scribes and to substantiate their trade, in the latter, the purpose is to represent a funerary ideal.

Forms

The last axis concerns the *forms*, which are “the repertoire of ways of shaping the material medium in which it works and the ‘immaterial’ categories of time, space, and enunciative position.”⁸³ This is consequently connected to the material dimension (support, writing modes, etc.) as well as to the formal linguistic means, such as the lexical choices, the morphology and even the *état de langue*, among a few others.

Regarding the writing support, the *Reden und Rufe* are exclusively attested as funerary inscriptions, either on wall or, more rarely, on stelae.⁸⁴ They are mostly written with the monumental script, hieroglyphs, with a very few exceptions, such as the Middle Kingdom tomb of Khety at Beni Hassan.⁸⁵ This tomb contains speeches between wrestlers written cursively in red ink, possibly because the decorative program was not finished before the death of the tomb owner. Contrary to graffiti, which can also be written in private tombs, but neither especially in hieroglyphs nor exclusively in funerary monuments, speech captions are fully part of the initial decorative program.

⁸² Translation following SIMPSON (ed.) 2003, pp. 433–435; for a hieroglyphic edition, see JÄGER 2004.

⁸³ FROW 2015, p. 81.

⁸⁴ See n. 39 *supra*. As a matter of fact, the three axes are not clear-cut categories,

they partly overlap, which means that a same feature can be linked to two axes depending on how you look at it. See FROW 2015, p. 83. A study should be made on the figured ostraca, which sometimes bears captions, in order to

understand whether they have to be linked with the speech captions in funerary monuments.

⁸⁵ NEWBERRY 1894, pl. XV, XIX.

The sign orientation and the speech position within the scene are two other features pertaining to the material dimension and helping in the identification of *Reden und Rufe*.⁸⁶ Indeed, hieroglyphs are oriented according to the speaker and are written near to him (or her) either in lines or in columns, or even sometimes in a mix of both. In the following figure (see fig. 5) the left-hand speech is written from right to left, while the other is from left to right so that hieroglyphs are oriented in the same way as their speakers. Such a layout allows us to distinguish *Reden und Rufe* from other inscriptions occasionally found in daily life scenes: titles, names, or captions composed of infinitives that label the scene itself. Lines are also used from time to time to separate inscriptions, as in the example of fig. 5, where a vertical line is carved between both speeches and a horizontal line to separate the scene description from the scene itself.

Besides the inscription size, which depends on the available space, rather limited, around the scene and which rarely exceeds two or three sentences concerning *Reden und Rufe*, the hieroglyph size is another important characteristic. Hieroglyphs are written smaller in speech captions to distinguish the common workers from the tomb-owner, who deserves larger hieroglyphs. This smaller size would even be a kind of distancing, much like quotation marks.⁸⁷

From a linguistic point of view, the discursive mode and the thematic content induce several linguistic features, such as jussive and modal forms. Imperative and initial subjunctive *sdm=f* are the most frequent. The first is obviously the common way to order someone to do something but for quality verbs, an order can also be expressed with an Old Perfective.⁸⁸ The second is



FIG. 5. Offerings bearers in the tomb of Ankhmahor (Kanawati, Hassan 1997, pl. 43c).

⁸⁶ The sign orientation is relevant for the *mode* as well, inasmuch as it makes possible the identification of the speaker.

⁸⁷ VERNUS 2010a, p. 77.

⁸⁸ See GARDINER 1957, § 313; MALAISE, WINAND 1999, § 726, 840; and ALLEN 2014, § 16.6. For an example of *Reden und Rufe* with such a construction,

see the boat scene in the tomb of Niankhkhnum and Khnumhotep, MOUSSA, ALTENMÜLLER 1977, pl. 10.

quite commonly used to express an exhortation, a polite order, or a wish.⁸⁹ Indeed, the subject of the action being identical with the speaker, this *sdm=f* displays subjective future meaning, such as volitive and immediate future.⁹⁰ As a result, this form is usual for answering to an order.

A second significant linguistic feature resulting directly by both the context and the content is the profuse use of the Old Perfective. It is common knowledge that this pattern can be used to express a *state*, hence its name of “*stative*” in a few grammars in reference to Akkadian and that it considers a situation as acquired from the subject point of view.⁹¹ The Old Perfective suits thus perfectly for describing an action that is reflected in the adjacent scene.⁹²

Other induced features are the attention-getters, like the vocatives *nt(y)-hn'(=j)*, “my companion” (literally “who is with me”),⁹³ *rh.w*, “mates,”⁹⁴ or *jr-w-b.t*, “worker”⁹⁵ among so many others—no fewer than 250 vocatives are present in Old and Middle Kingdom *Reden und Rufe* alone. As well, the particle *mk*, “behold,”⁹⁶ which is used to present a statement or to attract the attention of the listener,⁹⁷ appears more than 100 times in the corpus to date.

As regards vocabulary, speech captions resort to a lot of daily words or technical terms, which are not always well understood and sometimes unknown from other textual sources. A good illustration is the verb *hwj*, usually meaning “to strike.”⁹⁸ It has a more specific meaning when it is used in threshing scenes. Donkeys or cattle, less often sheep, are encouraged to trample grain-stems by peasants who yell *hwj*, meaning this time “threshing.”⁹⁹ Such scenes conveying both textual and visual information are therefore highly significant for grasping the meaning of (near) *hapax legomena*, as in the Middle Kingdom tomb of Baqet III.¹⁰⁰ Among grazing scenes, a cow licks the neck of her calf, which suckles at her udder. In the meantime, a peasant kneels down to suckle in his turn. An inscription is written above the scene: *škn=s*. According to dictionaries or lexica of Ancient Egyptian,¹⁰¹ no other occurrence of this verb is known. The verb may be linked to a noun *škn* occurring in few New Kingdom sources, where it deals with the concept of a drinking place.¹⁰² It means hence in the present case “She suckles.”¹⁰³

89 See *inter alia* GARDINER 1957, § 450 and VERNUS 1990, p. 18.

90 VERNUS 1990, pp. 20–21.

91 See e.g. GARDINER 1957, pp. 235–236, obs. I and § 311; and MALAISE, WINAND, 1999, § 712, 715. For an enlightening study on the perfect tenses in Ancient Egyptian, see ORÉAL 2013.

92 It is well understood that the Old Perfective is not exclusively used in *Reden und Rufe* to describe an action, as discussed above with the jussive forms for instance.

93 See e.g. the fisherman speech in the tomb of Hesy, KANAWATI, ABDER-RAZIQ 1999, pl. 22.

94 *Wb* II, p. 441.8–12; see e.g. the grain harvest speech in tomb of Sekhemankhptah, SIMPSON 1976, pl. D.

95 *Wb* I, p. 124.10; see e.g. the butcher speech in the tomb of Duahep, MARIETTE 1889, p. 338.

96 *Wb* II, p. 5.3; see e.g. the saying in the fishing scene of Neferkhnun, MONTET 1936, p. 142.

97 MALAISE, WINAND 1999, § 415, 817–819; ORÉAL 2011, p. 297–331; and ALLEN 2014, § 10.4.1, 15.6.1.

98 *Wb* III, pp. 46.1–48.23.

99 ALTENMÜLLER 1994 studied speech captions in Old Kingdom threshing scenes. The polysemy of *hwj*

in speech captions was already raised by MONTET 1925, p. 306: “Le groupe  auquel nous avons déjà reconnu trois sens différents ‘arracher’, ‘frapper’, ‘fouler’, se rencontre ici dans une quatrième acception, ‘frotter.’”

100 NEWBERRY 1894, pl. VII.

101 See e.g. *Wb* IV, p. 550.4 and HANNIG 2006, p. 906 {33620}.

102 HOCH 1994, pp. 289–290.

103 This example has been more widely discussed in MOTTE 2013, pp. 126–127.

Last but not least is the *état de langue* in which the *Reden und Rufe* are written. It has long been assumed that the *Reden und Rufe* were vernacular speeches. Yet, we should not forget that such speeches are inscribed within highly codified spaces, in private tombs. P. Vernus has notably shown how they can imitate the phraseology of autobiographies in Old Kingdom and Late Period tombs.¹⁰⁴ Contrary to what could have been expected, they are *imitated vernacular* speeches rather than genuine colloquial language. They purport to evoke such spoken language.¹⁰⁵ New Kingdom and Late Period speech captions are expected to strengthen this hypothesis by revealing features of Middle Egyptian (or of *égyptien de tradition*) next to other features belonging to more colloquial registers.

CONCLUSION

The structuralist approach helped us to characterize the *Reden und Rufe* and to envision these texts as a genre *sui generis*. They are dialogues between workers and/or superiors written in hieroglyphs within the “daily life” scenes in funerary monuments and have accordingly a content linked to the scene itself. Although they are found up to Elkab in Upper Egypt, they are part of an initial Memphite decorative program. This approach also enabled us to unveil the profuseness of formal features in *Reden und Rufe*, but a complete picture of them will be possible only after the analyses of the New Kingdom and Late Period speech captions.

Additionally, our concise description showed that a genre is subject to modifications throughout its existence. From a large panel of sixteen kinds of “daily life” scenes with *Reden und Rufe* during the Old Kingdom, we ended up with a shared core of seven of them: agriculture, animal husbandry, butchery, crafts, dance & music, food, and hunting (see tabl. 2 *supra*). Nonetheless, they are not impervious to modifications or even insertions in other kinds of “daily life” scenes previously left aside, as we have seen with the wrestling scenes during the Middle Kingdom, or with the banquet scenes during the New Kingdom. This dynamic nature allowed the emergence of new genres, such as the harpists’ songs. First included in *Reden und Rufe*, they gradually separated from it to eventually form another genre.

A promising adventure for future research is to study the relationships of this genre with other ones, since the written production is intimately intertextual. For now, differences were raised with graffiti and other inscriptions within a tomb, but also with the *Satire of Trades*, which mentions the same categories of workers. A closer look at the other literary genres will make it possible to gather more differences and perhaps, more interestingly, similarities between some of them.

¹⁰⁴ VERNUS 2010a, pp. 79–80, n. 68 and VERNUS 2015, pp. 316–320.

¹⁰⁵ VERNUS 2010a and 2010b stressed first this hypothesis and was then followed by ORÉAL 2011, pp. 424–425 and STAUDER 2013, pp. 50–51. For other

cases of imitated spoken language, see e.g. WINAND in press who deals with the linguistic registers of the *Tomb Robberies*.

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