The Egyptian Heroic Myth of the Two Brothers (ca. 1550–1070 BCE): An Aristotelian and Philosophical Interpretation of Bata as an Osirian Hero

by

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Abstract

The accusation against Bata in *the Two Brothers* has long generated interpretative dispute, particularly concerning the significance of his self-inflicted castration. Scholars have questioned whether the act undermines or confirms his claim to innocence and, by implication, the falseness of the accusation. The absence of a sustained structural and philosophical analysis of the narrative as a unified composition has left this problem unresolved.

This study examines the hieratic text of the Papyrus d'Orbiney (ca. 1215 BCE) within the cultural and intellectual context of New Kingdom Egypt (ca. 1550–1070 BCE). Employing Aristotelian poetics as a primary analytical framework, and integrating philological, archaeological and comparative mythological evidence, the thesis evaluates the narrative according to criteria of plot coherence, character, causality, and mythic structure. Rather than isolating the controversial episode, the analysis situates it within the complete dramatic and theological arc of the text.

The study demonstrates that *the Two Brothers* conforms to a three-act structural pattern consistent with epic composition and satisfies formal mythic criteria observable within both Aristotelian theory and the broader Egyptian narrative tradition. Within this structural and symbolic framework, Bata's self-castration functions not as evidence of guilt but as a sacrificial act consistent with Osirian theological symbolism. The analysis suggests that the narrative presents a coherent heroic myth in which the protagonist embodies moral endurance, self-sacrifice and eventual vindication.

The principal contribution of this research lies in establishing, through a systematic Aristotelian philosophical analysis, that *the Two Brothers* constitutes a deliberate Egyptian articulation of epic myth grounded in theological and philosophical reflection. By resolving the interpretative impasse surrounding Bata's innocence and reclassifying the tale within the genre of heroic myth, the study advances both the literary understanding of the Papyrus d'Orbiney and the broader study of Egyptian narrative theology.

Keywords: The Two Brothers; Papyrus d'Orbiney; Egyptian mythology; Osirian hero; false accusation motif; Aristotelian poetics; philosophical analysis; New Kingdom Egypt.

Isifinyezo

Ukusolwa kukaBata endabeni ethi *the Two Brothers* sekunesikhathi eside kudala impikiswano yokuhumusha, ikakhulukazi maqondana nokubaluleka kokuzisika kwakhe. Abacwaningi baye babuza ukuthi leso senzo siyaphikisa noma siqinisekisa isimangalo sakhe sokungabi necala, futhi ngalokho kusikiselwe ukuthi icala elalibhekiswe kuye lalingamanga yini. Ukungabikho kokuhlaziywa okuqhubekayo kwesakhiwo kanye nefilosofi yendaba njengokwakheka okukodwa okuhlangene kushiye le nkinga ingaxazululiwe.

Lolu cwaningo luhlaziya umbhalo we-hieratic we Papyrus d'Orbiney (ca. 1215 BCE) ngaphakathi komongo wamasiko nowokucabanga waseGibhithe leNkathi Yombuso Omusha (ca. 1550–1070 BCE). Lusebenzisa imiqondo ye-Aristotelian poetics njengohlaka oluyinhloko lokuhlaziya, futhi luhlanganisa ubufakazi befiloloji, bezokuvubukula kanye nokuhlaziywa kwezinganekwane eziqhathanisayo. Indaba ihlolwa ngokwezindinganiso zokuhleleka kwesakhiwo sendaba, ukwakheka kwabalingiswa, imbangela nemiphumela, kanye nesakhiwo sengweletshe. Esikhundleni sokuhlukanisa isigameko esiphikisanayo, ukuhlaziywa kusibeka ngaphakathi kohlelo oluphelele lwesakhiwo sedrama kanye nomongo wenkolo wombhalo.

Ucwaningo lukhombisa ukuthi *the Two Brothers* ihambisana nesakhiwo sezinyathelo ezintathu esihambisana nokwakheka kwenganekwane yeqhawe, futhi ihlangabezana nezindinganiso ezisemthethweni zesakhiwo sengweletshe ezibonakala emfundisweni ka-Aristotle nasemasikweni okubhala aseGibhithe. Ngaphakathi kwalolu hlaka lwesakhiwo nesimboli, ukuzisika kukaBata akusebenzi njengobufakazi becala, kodwa njengesenzo sokuzidela esihambisana nezimpawu zenkolo ka-Osiris. Ukuhlaziywa kusikisela ukuthi indaba iveza inganekwane yeqhawe ehlelekile lapho umlingiswa oyinhloko ebonisa ukubekezela kokuziphatha, ukuzidela kanye nokubuyiselwa kwesithunzi ekugcineni.

Umnikelo oyinhloko walolu cwaningo usekukhombiseni, ngokusebenzisa ukuhlaziywa okuhlelekile kwefilosofi ka-Aristotle, ukuthi *the Two Brothers* iyindlela eqondile yaseGibhithe yokwethula inganekwane yeqhawe enezimpande ekucabangeni kwenkolo nasekuzindleni kwefilosofi. Ngokuxazulula impikiswano yokuhumusha ephathelene nokungabi necala kukaBata kanye nokuhlela kabusha indaba ngaphakathi kohlobo lwenganekwane yeqhawe, lolu cwaningo luthuthukisa ukuqonda kwezincwadi ze Papyrus d'Orbiney kanye nomkhakha obanzi wocwaningo lwenganekwane yenkolo yaseGibhithe.

Sifinyeto

Sinsolo lesibhekiswe kuBata endzabeni letsi *the Two Brothers* sesidale kuphikisana lokukhulu ekutolikweni kwayo, ikakhulu mayelana nencazelo yekuzisika kwakhe. Bacwaningi babuze kutsi lesento siyaphikisa noma siyacinisa yini simangalo sakhe sekungabi nelicala, ngaleyo ndlela kutsi lensolo lebibhekiswe kuye beyiliciniso noma beyiyinkhohliso. Kungabikhona kwekuhlaziywa lokujulile kwesakhiwo nendzaba njengentfo leyakhiwe njengelilodvwa kushiye lendzaba ingakasombululeki.

Lolu cwaningo luhlola umbhalo we-hieratic wePapyrus d'Orbiney (cishe nga-1215 BCE) ngaphansi kwesimo senhlalo nemcondvo weGibhithe yeNew Kingdom (cishe nga-1550–1070 BCE). Lusebentisa i-Aristotelian poetics njengeluhlaka lolukhulu lwekuhlaziya, futsi luhlanganisa bufakazi bephiloloji, be-archeology kanye nekuqhathanisa tinganekwane. Lendzaba ihlolwa ngemigomo yekuhleleka kwesakhiwo, sakhiwo sebalingiswa, imbangela nemiphumela, kanye nesakhiwo sengweletshe. Esikhundleni sekwehlukanisa lesigameko lesiphikisanako, kuhlaziywa kusibeka ngaphakathi kwesakhiwo lesiphelele sedrama kanye nemongo wenkholo wombhalo.

Lolu cwaningo lukhombisa kutsi *the Two Brothers* lulandzela sakhiwo setigaba letintsatfu lesihambisana nengwenyelo yelichawe, futsi luhlangabetana nemigomo yesakhiwo sengweletshe lebonakala kokubili emfundzisweni ka-Aristotle nasemasikweni emibhalo yaseGibhithe. Ngaphakathi kwaleluhlaka lwesakhiwo nesimboli, kuzisika kwaBata akusebenti njengobufakazi belicala, kodvwa kusebenta njengesenzo sekutinikela lesihambisana netimphawu tenkholo ya-Osiris. Kuhlaziywa kukhombisa kutsi lendzaba iveza ingwenyelo yelichawe lehlangene lapho umlingiswa lomkhulu abonisa kubeketelela kwemoya, kutinikela kanye nekubuyiselwa kwesitfunti ekugcineni.

Umnikelo lomkhulu walolu cwaningo usekutinikeleni, ngekuhlaziywa lokuhlelekile kwefilosofi ye-Aristotelian, kutsi *the Two Brothers* iyindlela lehloswe kahle yaseGibhithe yekwethula ingwenyelo yelichawe lesisekelwe ekucabangeni kwenkholo nasefilosofini. Ngekucacisa kuphikisana ekutolikweni mayelana nekungabi nelicala kwaBata kanye nekuhlela kabusha lendzaba ngaphansi kohlobo lwengwenyelo yelichawe, lolu cwaningo lutfutfukisa kucondza kwemibhalo yePapyrus d'Orbiney kanye nemkhakha lomkhulu wocwaningo lwenganekwane yenkholo yaseGibhithe.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The tale of *the Two Brothers*, the subject of this study, is an ancient Egyptian composition embedded in the cultural, religious, and intellectual world of New Kingdom Egypt (ca. 1550–1070 BCE). Its narrative logic arises from categories of thought—political, theological, and symbolic—that are historically and conceptually distant from those of modern readers, rendering the text vulnerable to anachronistic interpretation.

Modern scholarship has tended to cluster around two principal interpretive positions regarding the accusation scene: first, that Bata is morally innocent within an Egyptian ethical and narrative framework; and second, that he embodies latent or symbolic guilt when interpreted through psychoanalytic theory. The former position is represented by Hollis (2008), whose reading situates Bata's self-castration within the moral coherence of the Egyptian worldview, and is supported by early textually grounded analyses such as Assmann (1977), which emphasise the structural unity and internal coherence of the narrative. The latter position is advanced by Dundes (2002), who interprets the episode through the concept of "projective inversion" and treats the act as symptomatic of unconscious guilt. This psychoanalytic approach, which follows from Rank (1914), stands within a broader interpretive tradition associated with Freud (2010) and Jung (2017), while also intersecting with the comparative study of narrative motifs, as reflected in Goldman (1995), whose analysis of the Potiphar's Wife motif situates *the Two Brothers* in a wider folkloristic framework.

This study is grounded in several interrelated scholarly approaches that collectively inform its framework and analysis. The philological and iconographic research of Wilkinson (2003) provides essential insights into Egyptian religious symbolism and narrative representation, forming a critical basis for understanding the cultural context of the tale. Complementing this, the perspectives on Egyptian religious anthropology developed by Assmann (2001) and Bellah (2011) offer interpretive tools for examining the social and religious dimensions underlying the narrative structure. Additionally, the material-cultural analyses advanced by Kemp (2018), drawing on archaeological data, present valuable insights on ancient Egyptian cultural realities and the intellectual climate of New Kingdom Egypt. By

first establishing that the Egyptian intellectual tradition furnishes a framework for analysis, the study then applies Aristotelian poetics as a clarifying lens, enabling a systematic exploration of narrative causality and moral logic within the tale.

Against this scholarly background, the present study adopts the rape-hoax motif not as a thesis but as a guiding concept for tracing narrative causality and moral logic. Before proceeding, we set out the underlying interpretive premise upon which this study depends. This thesis proceeds from the assumption that the accusation scene in *the Two Brothers* must be read as an instance of the rape-hoax (hereafter referred to as rape-hoax, except where cited differently). This does not function as the central thesis of this work but rather as a guiding concept and conceptual key that allows the narrative structure to be followed, and its moral logic interpreted within its cultural frame. As with all Aristotelian demonstrations, the first principle is granted so that the reasoning may unfold from it. Accepting the rape-hoax term for the Potiphar's wife motif as our central conceit, rather than our central thesis, enables the reader to follow the story as an epic myth structured around Bata's innocence, transformation and Osirian identity.[1]

The story starts *ab initio*, leading to the hero's dissatisfaction with the state of affairs and his departure. Bata and Anubis were brothers with theophoric names. Bata worked for Anubis and Anubis's unnamed wife. According to Robins (1993, 136–137), household organisation in ancient Egypt operated within a recognised legal framework in which women possessed documented juridical and economic agency, including the capacity to own, inherit, and dispose of property, to enter contractual arrangements, and to appear independently in legal proceedings. While monogamous households appear to have been normative among non-elite populations, royal families practised polygynous marriage for dynastic and ideological reasons (Robins 1993, 60–64). These observations were also made by Durant (1935, 164–165) in broader civilisational analyses; Egyptian women enjoyed a degree of legal independence that distinguished them within much of the ancient world. Within this context, the wife of an elder brother occupied a position of recognised authority within the domestic hierarchy, a structural proximity that intensifies the tension inherent in the accusation scene that follows.

While working out in the field, Anubis sent Bata for more seed. Back at the house, aroused by his feat of strength in carrying a large load, Bata's sister-in-law proposed that he lie with her for the favours that her wealth and social position could provide. Her proposition and

[1] The technical demonstration of this supposition is presented in Appendix A.1.

offer were explicit: “Come, let us spend an hour lying together. It will be good for you, and I will make fine clothes for you” (*The Two Brothers,* in Lichtheim 2006, 205).

Bata rejected her and offered never to speak of her proposition. Later, when her husband was home, she dramatised a scenario in which she claimed that Bata attacked her in the manner of a physical and sexual assault. She demanded that Anubis kill his brother for her honour. When Anubis caught Bata, Re separated them by creating a crocodile-filled river. Bata exclaimed his innocence without success and castrated himself as a display of virtue. He died and went to the “Valley of the Pine” (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 207). After a succession of mythical transformations, he became the divine king of Egypt (See the Appendix for the full story in Hieroglyphic transcription and English translation).

Until an older version is found, the scene described on the Papyrus d’Orbiney may be regarded as one of the first recorded articulations of the rape-hoax. A ‘rape-hoax’ is a provocative term used by media writers to appeal to the popular imagination.[2] Our primary definition is that rape-hoax refers to a performance of sexual victimhood intended to garner emotional support, and subsequently, social favour.[3] We agree with Larson’s (2018, 682) definition that it is “a story of rape that a woman conjures up for fame or attention.” As a motif, the rape-hoax exists in literature and folklore across cultures and periods in ancient Egyptian, Jewish, Greek, Christian and Islamic legends.[4] In this study, the term functions as an interpretive conceit through which the narrative and moral logic of *the Two Brothers* are made intelligible.

The Egyptian composition may be regarded as the earliest known document depicting what may be termed the rape-hoax motif. To place this concept and our purpose in their proper limits, we first endeavour to clarify its form and its extent. The motif is present in the different versions of the Joseph narrative, familiar to readers of Genesis 39:1-23 and Surah 12:23-35.[5] It is from the Joseph narrative that the folkloristic classification, Potiphar’s wife motif, was derived. Motif K2111, “Potiphar’s wife”, from Thompson’s Motif-Index of Folk-Literature is defined as: “A woman makes vain overtures to a man and then accuses him of attempting to force her” (Thompson 2016, 1911). Premised on Thompson’s index, Goldman (1995) and

[2] The term is thought to have been coined by *the Daily Caller* “who ran no fewer than 16 stories on it” (Graves 2019).

[3] Although classified as a media created public myth, even cautious estimates determined that up to eight percent of reported rape accusations turn out to be false allegations (Sacks 2018, 1239).

[4] Each tradition having only minor idiosyncratic differences, comprehensively studied by Goldman (1995, xi-xxxiii).

[5] Biblical citations are taken from the King James Version and Douay-Rheims Bible; Qur’anic citations follow Pickthall.

Dundes (2002) use the term Potiphar's wife motif to refer specifically to any variation of its two formal essentials—the woman's unsuccessful seduction of the man and her claim that he lustfully physically assaulted her—the central concept is situated in the Hebrew, Christian and Islamic traditions and we rhetorically extend it to include other traditions, in which we observed it, for instance, to the Greek tradition. In the *Iliad*, we read about the attempted seduction of Bellerophon by Proetus's wife, Antea, and her demand to have him killed for an assault that did not occur: "I wish you'd die, Proetus, if you don't kill Bellerophon! Bellerophon's bent on dragging me down with him in lust though I fight him all the way!" (*Iliad 6.*190-195).[6] Extending it further, in the ancient Egyptian story of *the Two Brothers* we observe the hero of the Papyrus d'Orbiney, Bata, experience the Egyptian version of it and its implications as a control unifying his story. In terms of the chronological, logical, grammatical and rhetorical extensions, it makes little sense to prioritise and centralise the concept around Potiphar's wife any further. Potiphar and his wife are limited to the Abrahamic traditions. The earliest known documented instantiation of our formal concept is in *the Two Brothers*.[7]

Reasoning from the essence of the rape-hoax, there are evidently some valid hypothetical propositions. Antecedent: if a wife is an unsuccessful seductress. Consequent: she will not continue as a wife. The evident relation of this logical order: the antecedent is the reason for, rather than the cause of, the consequent.

The consequent proposition here is that the failed seductress who initially plays the role of Anubis's wife cannot continue in that role. The hoax she conjures is her performance of sexual victimhood intended to garner emotional support and, subsequently, social favour. Continued existence is her reason. A compound definition precipitates from our primary definition, the concept on which the motif was established and our deductive consequent. There is an implicit formal cause, inherent intention, or the reason why the spurned seductress conjures the malicious deception. Particulars like revenge, fame, attention, or a universal reason like self-preservation. For both Bata and Bellerophon, the accuser demanded death. Establishing why is commensurate with the purpose of this work and particular to the detail and context of each story. Our compound definition: The rape-hoax refers to that performance of

[6] All references to the Homeric epics follow the translation of Fagles (1990; 1996).

[7] *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, with its attempted seduction by Ishtar may be an older version of one essential of the Potiphar's wife motif but only partly in the character of a sexually provocative goddess. Ishtar wanted Gilgamesh punished for his refusal of her will. That is, a man's refusal of a gods will. There was no claim of assault (*Epic of Gilgamesh* VI, i-iv). All references to *the Epic of Gilgamesh* follow the Standard Babylonian Version (SBV) as represented by Dalley (2000).

sexual victimhood by a failed seductress, which is intended to garner support for a particular self-serving end, which in our story is self-preservation.

Interpretations and conclusions about this concept in *the Two Brothers* generally fall into two categories. On the one side, the conventional opinion is that Bata is innocent. Hollis (1984) is the interlocutor arguing that Bata is innocent. On the other hand, he is guilty of sexual assault. Dundes (2002) holds the latter view. For instance, psychoanalysis using Freudian methods revealed that Bata had the unconscious internal desire for his brother's wife and was therefore guilty of assaulting her (Dundes 2002).

How, then, could we advance our understanding of the meaning of the alleged sexual assault in *the Two Brothers*? This study maintains that the alleged assault should be conceptualised and contextualised within the cultural dynamics that constitute its setting to understand its nature, specific meaning, relevance, and importance. Cultural dynamics is a term used to refer to all the aspects (categories) within a culture and accounts for change over time. This term includes but is not limited to religion and politics. Language, law and kinship are all included under the term culture. It is not a concept and is not referring to a concept. A concept is the abstraction created by the intellect through recognition of the essence. In this study, motif refers to the folkloristic classification, while concept refers to the analytical abstraction developed here, and conceit to its methodological application.

In our opinion, a mythic analysis is best suited to understanding the meaning, as internal contradiction seems as apparent as in all Egyptian myths, amid the cacophony of convoluted interpretations. There are two reasons we chose to do a mythic analysis. One, to remove vagueness and ambiguity regarding the meaning and use of terms in the story. Two, to establish the intention and extension of the terms used. Myth analysis, or the development of the myth by logical division, allows us to see the whole predicated on each of its parts.

1.1 Research Problems

The identity of the main protagonist is not obvious. New Kingdom (ca. 1550-1070 BCE): Bata is not a familiar Egyptian god. Bata has been tentatively identified with the Old Kingdom deity *Bt* by Hollis (1984), whereas his association with Seth in the New Kingdom and Late Period further complicates his identity (Pinch 2002, 28–29). Therefore, this study seeks to investigate the identity of Bata, considering the overlaps that he has with other Egyptian gods.

The alleged assault instigated the progression of this journey. Of all the creative ways an author could introduce chaos to set up his story, he used uncontrolled passion and accusation within a family unit. This is a controversial opening act and a bold narrative decision.

Bata emasculated himself. On the one hand, interpreters held this action as contingent evidence of his formal guilt (Dundes 2002); on the other, explicit evidence of his loyalty and innocence (Hollis 2003). These are the only two scholars engaged in the dialogue over this point of tension. These positions cannot both be maintained without contradiction and a synthesis of their assertions has yet to be achieved. Traditional scholarship tended to avoid interpretation and focused only on the motif classification. Even for Goldman (1995, 31-32), Motif K2111 from Thompson's Motif-Index of Folk-Literature, perceived in the story as "Potiphar's Wife", was enough to classify it as an Egyptian tale. And that's despite the same motif being evident in an epic like the *Iliad*.

Subsequently, only folkloric methods provided the few interpretations that were attempted. They focused heavily on the cross-cultural comparison, exemplified by Goldman (1995). When Egyptological methods were applied, as in Hollis (2008), they did not include a philosophical approach, to deliberate and understand the story in the context of its social and intellectual world. That is, the story as a finished form of knowledge. Overall, the Egyptological techniques followed the same trend as the folkloric. They compared elements in Egyptian tradition with others outside it. The exact method never seemed to be clearly defined or described beyond an initial statement of a name. This resulted in some known practical elements used to inform reputable opinions but no clear judgment of which is correct. We proceed thus to our main research question.

1.1.1 Main Research Question

In the tale of *the Two Brothers*, it seems that Bata's innocence is not self-evident. Further, his demonstration of innocence, self-castration, is viewed by some as a symbol of guilt. But the self-castration is not an incomprehensible or contentious act within the Egyptian tradition.

Our enquiry treats the alleged sexual assault under the categories of nature and meaning. Our main question: Is the hero of *the Two Brothers* guilty of sexual assault on his sister-in-law, or is he a self-sacrificing martyr of the Osirian standard?

1.1.2 Additional Research Questions

The main question is a logical consequent of the nature of the scene and interpretations of its meaning. Bata can be innocent or guilty. Not both. This assessment is based on the principle of non-contradiction—either statement about Bata cannot be true and false at the same time and in the same respect. To maintain that both are valid is a sophistic paradox that renders

a conclusion unsatisfying and effectively ends knowledge on the subject. But in addition to our chief concern, there are other difficulties to treat and resolve.

Why should the tale be classified as an epic myth? What and who is Bata and the unnamed women in the story? Why does the plot open with such a perverse episode? How does the self-castration function in the story? What affective meaning did these images have for New Kingdom individuals? In resolving these difficulties, we can go on to prove, if possible, the truth[8] of this whole story and the incorrectness of some opinions.

1.2 Aim and Objectives

The primary aim of this study is to explore *the Two Brothers* as the Egyptian New Kingdom written epic myth. To accomplish this, five specific objectives are set forth, each contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the narrative and its broader socio-cultural significance:

1) Assess the story through observation, categorisation and teleological purpose for reasonable and correct classification.

2) Determine the identity of Bata and argue for the impossibility of his existence as his own negation. This addresses key philosophical questions raised by the narrative and the character's role within it.

3) Analyse the alleged sexual assault and examine its function within the plot of the story. It will also address the complexities and difficulties presented by various scholarly opinions on this episode.

4) Establish reason(s) for the existence and structure of the story itself, grounding the analysis in the broader philosophical and literary context.

5) Understand the story's wisdom,[9] affective nature and its interpretation within the Egyptian intellectual and social world. This involves not only the extraction of lessons or morals but also an investigation into how the narrative was perceived and what emotional responses it evoked in its original context.

[8] By truth we mean that in the Egyptian intellectual tradition words are signs for ideas that truly represent things. Because they correspond to ideas and things, they have stability or truth. There can be no arbitrary manipulation of words and ideas to change meaning. This means that a modern interpretation can have internal consistency but be false in the Egyptian context. The ideas and things Egyptian words represent can't be changed because the language is dead.

[9] Here we are referring to wisdom in the classic sense of the word. An understanding of the whole reality in light of the principle of sufficient reason.

1.3 Hypothesis

All statements in this work rest on and were built from three axioms in traditional logic. The principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. These three bedrocks are taken as self-evident and commonsensical in the methods of this discipline, even if they may not hold true for cases of scientific probability and the paradoxes of other systems. Our intuitions, or acts of reason gesturing at truth, born from reflection, are as follows:

Proposition concerning identity: Bata is a distributed term for Osiris.

Proposition concerning the alleged assault: Bata is the victim of a false accusation, and the hoax is observed in both a specific scene and in a specific interpretation.

Proposition concerning the whole story: Emergent features of the whole story in context cannot be explained by the opinion that Bata is guilty.

Proposition concerning classification: Observable conformity to a specific structure and criteria makes the cumulative case for classification of the story as an epic myth.

Valid syllogistic hypothesis: Osiris is not his own negation. Bata is a term used to refer to the form of Osiris. Therefore, Bata is not his own negation. To test that this hypothesis is true *reductio ad absurdum* we would assume that it is false. In which case Bata is an unfamiliar god who is a "form of Seth" according to Pinch (2002, 117). Seth is not a Chthonic god, and almost three millennia of Egyptian intellectual history would testify to the absurdity of Seth ascending the throne.

Sophistic rhetorical epicheirema: Given that Bata is Osiris, we can presumably claim that in this story he is not a rapist, since Osiris is Chthonic in Egypt and will generally be syncretised with Anubis, on account of his historical development and iconographic standards, unless he is Seth, in which case there would be some evidence of an Osiris-Seth syncretism in this context. But Osiris cannot be his own negation.

1.4 Principal Sources and Review of Scholarship

1.4.1 Principal Source: Papyrus d'Orbiney

The primary text examined in this study is the Papyrus d'Orbiney, dated to the reign of Seti II (ca. 1251 BCE). The hieratic manuscript names its author as Ennana and situates the composition within the Nineteenth Dynasty. The tale has been classified in modern scholarship in various ways, including as "a fairy tale, a historical allegory and a political satire, among others" (The British Museum 2021).

The hieratic text has been copied, reproduced, and made widely available in modern editions. Moldenke (1898), for example, published a reproduction of the Papyrus d'Orbiney that includes the hieratic text, a hieroglyphic transcription, and an English translation. Although this edition reflects the limitations of early scholarship and requires careful verification against later philological work, it remains valuable as an initial point of reference for transcription, transliteration, and translation in the present study.

1.4.2 Review of Scholarship

Scholarship on *the Two Brothers* has developed along several interpretive paths, each illuminating distinct dimensions of the narrative. These include early mythic interpretations, literary and narrative analyses, intertextual and comparative studies, socio-political readings, psychoanalytic and gender-focused approaches, and more recent structuralist investigations. The following review surveys these major perspectives before identifying the conceptual space within which the present study is situated.

1.4.2.1 Early Mythic Interpretations

Early scholarly engagement with *the Two Brothers* frequently approached the tale through mythological classification. As Pehal (2010, 26–27) shows in his overview of interpretive approaches, such mythological readings are consistent with a broader Egyptological tradition represented by scholars such as Sethe, Schott, Jéquier, Otto, Vandier, Morenz, Helck, and Hornung. Bata has been interpreted as a dying and resurrecting deity, often associated with Osiris, and at times linked with vegetation symbolism. Hollis (1984) examined the "nature of Bata" within the Egyptian intellectual tradition and noted parallels with the Old Kingdom *Shepherd Song* and the Ptolemaic Papyrus Jumilhac. The orthographic and determinative features of the name ***Bt***, including the reclining ram ideogram  associated with divinity, were understood to carry mortuary connotations.

Within this framework, Bata's self-castration and subsequent transformation were read in relation to broader Egyptian theological motifs, particularly the Osirian cycle of death, dismemberment, and regeneration. Agricultural symbolism, especially the imagery of seed cast into water, reinforced the association with both fertility and mortuary transformation. These mythic readings foreground the theological dimension of the narrative and situate it within Egyptian cosmological imagination.

At the same time, the Seth-Bata syncretism noted in the Papyrus Jumilhac complicated the identification of Bata as purely Osirian. The ambivalence introduced by such associations

raised questions concerning the hero's moral and theological status. While these interpretations successfully identify symbolic correspondences within Egyptian mythology, they do not fully resolve how these associations function within the internal logic of the narrative as preserved on the Papyrus d'Orbiney.

1.4.2.2 Literary and Narrative Approaches

In addition to mythological classification, a number of scholars have *approached the Two Brothers* as a carefully constructed literary composition. This perspective is most clearly articulated in the work of Lichtheim (2006) and Hollis (2008), and is further supported by analyses such as those of Assmann (1977) and Pehal (2010), which emphasise the unity and structural coherence of the narrative. Lichtheim (2006) treated the text as part of the broader corpus of Egyptian narrative literature and situated it within the intellectual and aesthetic traditions of the New Kingdom. Her translation, widely regarded as authoritative, made the story accessible to subsequent scholarship and foregrounded its narrative coherence.

Within this perspective, the story contains recognisable literary elements: plot progression, character development, dramatic tension, irony, moral themes, and transformation. The episode of the false accusation serves as the narrative catalyst that introduces chaos into an initially ordered domestic setting. The dramatic self-emasculation, though startling to modern readers, functions as a decisive turning point in the plot.

Hollis (2008), building on earlier work, sought to understand the meaning and *raison d'être* of *the Two Brothers* within its cultural and historical context. Proceeding through language, archaeology (textual and iconographic), anthropology, and psychology, she constructed a comprehensive model for examining the story within Egyptian tradition. Her study ultimately emphasised the transformation of shepherds into kings and the integration of mythological reasoning with narrative structure. Although this approach clarified the protagonist's theological associations and the narrative's literary unity, certain tensions, particularly those surrounding the opening episode and Bata's identity, remained unresolved.

Literary readings thus illuminate the artistry and internal organisation of the composition. Yet while these approaches acknowledge structure and symbolism, they do not consistently integrate the narrative's mythic, theological, and philosophical dimensions into a single sustained interpretive framework.

1.4.2.3 Scribal Culture Approaches

A further and increasingly influential direction in scholarship examines the institutional and pedagogical structures of New Kingdom scribal culture, within which texts such as *the Two*

Brothers may be situated. In this view, the story is not merely inherited folklore committed to writing, but a literary artefact emerging from a socially embedded and ideologically formative intellectual class.

Allon and Navratilova (2023, 49-50) observe that classical informants did not treat "scribes" as a separate caste, and that literacy cut across social barriers, creating what has been described as a "vertical link in horizontal strata". The title of scribe, therefore, does not automatically define a rigid social category but must be understood within its broader administrative and social context. This observation already complicates simplistic assumptions about scribal identity and situates literacy within the functioning of state structures.

More importantly for the present study, the same discussion notes Adolf Erman's characterization of scribes as setting up "an ideal of the official," one who is impartial, protective of the insignificant against the powerful, clever in difficulty, and humble in self-presentation (Allon and Navratilova 2023, 50). Erman's formulation may reflect a particular historiographical moment, but it also demonstrates that scribal discourse was associated with normative models of conduct. The ideal official was not only an administrator but a moral exemplar.

Eyre's position, cited in the same context, further clarifies that there were "not distinct classes of person, but simply more or less learned members of the same literate class of office holders, whose greater personal learning might reflect their access to more prestigious and profitable offices… a single, culturally homogeneous group of scribes" (Eyre 2013, 352; cited in Allon and Navratilova 2023, 51). Accordingly, for Allon and Navratilova (2023, 51), literacy is presented "as a function of state administration or culture in the hands of diverse practitioners". Such observations suggest that scribal culture was embedded within the machinery of governance and the articulation of social order.

The broader literary environment of this scribal culture is illustrated by collections such as those edited by Gardiner in *Late-Egyptian Miscellanies* (1937). These compilations preserve letters, instructions, hymns, and other compositions copied and transmitted within the scribal milieu of the Ramesside period. Such miscellanies demonstrate that literary texts circulated alongside administrative and didactic compositions within the scribal milieu, forming part of the broader processes of scribal training and cultural transmission. Narrative compositions, therefore, belonged to an established intellectual tradition in which literary form and moral instruction were closely intertwined.

Read within this framework, the Papyrus d'Orbiney appears not simply as a preserved narrative but as a product of Ramesside[10] intellectual formation. *The Two Brothers* may function as entertainment, yet it also participates in articulating ideals concerning authority, hierarchy, kingship, and moral legitimacy. Scribal culture, in this respect, does not merely record the New Kingdom Egyptian; it contributes to shaping the normative image of what such a person is understood to be within that historical context.

1.4.2.4 Intertextual and Comparative Studies

Another significant trajectory in scholarship has been intertextual and comparative analysis. Goldman (1995), drawing on folklore studies and comparative philology, focused on the contentious episode commonly associated with the "Potiphar's wife" motif. His analysis extended across Hebrew, Christian, and Islamic traditions, identifying recurring narrative elements and variations in characterisation.

Goldman (1995, 42-46) outlined repeated structural features across traditions:

1. The hero has semi-divine status.
2. He is strong and handsome.
3. His master's wife attempts to seduce him.
4. He rejects her advances and is punished.
5. He is eventually vindicated and rewarded.

The comparative method demonstrated the widespread diffusion and adaptation of this motif. However, while the structural parallels are compelling, the social and theological frameworks of New Kingdom Egypt differ significantly from those of later Hebrew and Islamic traditions. In Genesis 39, Joseph is imprisoned; in the Qur'anic account, imprisonment was preferable to temptation by his own choice.[11] In *the Two Brothers*, Bata flees and castrates himself, even after divine assistance (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 206). The Egyptian hero's response is therefore distinctive and demands explanation within its own cultural horizon.

Comparative studies clarify shared narrative patterns, yet interpretive conclusions sometimes depend upon frameworks external to the Egyptian intellectual world. The emphasis

[10] The Ramesside period refers to the Nineteenth and Twentieth Dynasties of Egypt (1292–1069 BCE). The Papyrus d'Orbiney is generally dated to the reign of Seti II (ca. 1203–1197 BCE).

[11] Surah 12:26-36 presents a pragmatic justification for its hero to be imprisoned, despite having established the falsity of the accusation by way of his coat being torn as he fled her overture. An experiment is conducted to confirm that the women could not restrain themselves in Yusuf's presence. Likewise, Yusuf could not be expected to remain stoic under so much temptation (Qur'an 12:26–36).

on cross-cultural parallels, though illuminating, may fragment the narrative's internal coherence when the Egyptian context is subordinated to broader typological concerns.

1.4.2.5 Socio-Political Interpretations

A socio-political reading of *the Two Brothers* may proceed from the conditions of its production. As John Baines argues, Egyptian high culture was socially restricted and institutionally controlled. Elite institutions "prescribed the correct cultural forms and materials as constituting societal values" (Baines 2007, 304). Writing, therefore, functioned within a system in which representation was regulated, not neutral.

This regulation operated through what Baines calls a "system of decorum" that "circumscribed the content of representational art and focused ultimately on the world of the gods" (Baines 2007, 304). Decorum was not superficial convention. It was "deeply embedded in the civilization" and integrated with "high-cultural, aesthetic, and cosmological concerns," thereby reinforcing an "elite commitment to a fragile order" (Baines 2007, 28). The order was not merely political. It was representational.

Within this structure, literary texts occupy a distinct position. Whereas the monumental record privileges stability, "written literature too incorporated ambivalent themes" (Baines 2007, 28). Literature could stage tension without dissolving the ideological frame that authorised it. Disorder appears, but only as intelligible deviation within an ordered system.

The Two Brothers may be read in this light. The false accusation, mutilation, exile, death, and eventual kingship of Bata do not constitute narrative rebellion. They exemplify controlled exploration. The text permits the representation of rupture because it culminates in reintegration. Kingship is restored, not destabilised. The narrative therefore participates in the elite management of meaning rather than its subversion.

Baines further notes that "the elite appropriated resources, while restricting materially and symbolically what was available to others" (Baines 2007, 305). Scribal literature belongs to this restricted sphere. Its imaginative freedom operates within defined boundaries. Bata's ascent to sovereignty is thus not an anti-structural fantasy. It dramatizes the reconstitution of legitimacy according to the values decorum protects.

The socio-political significance of the story lies, therefore, not in explicit political doctrine but in its disciplined participation in elite written culture. It stages injustice in order to reaffirm order. It represents a fracture in order to secure coherence. As a product of scribal cultural production, the narrative becomes a medium through which the fragility of order is acknowledged, and its restoration affirmed.

1.4.2.6 Structural and Semiotic Approaches

A further strand of interpretation reads *the Two Brothers* through structural and semiotic models in order to explain how its meaning emerges from relations rather than from isolated scenes. Pehal's (2010) analysis is representative. His central claim is that the story's tensions become intelligible when its oppositions are read as part of a broader mythic logic, that is, when the composition is situated within a network of related narratives and recurring structures. In this approach, coherence is not exhausted by plot sequence, but is sustained by patterned relations, transformations, and conceptual contrasts that govern what can be said and how it can be said within a given cultural matrix.

Pehal frames myth as a cultural instrument that educates desire and stabilises social meaning by giving form to contradiction. Hence, "model structure is expressed in paradoxes, binary oppositions and their fusions and concerns ethics and problems of existence pervading a certain culture" (Pehal 2010, 253). This matters for our enquiry because the opening accusation scene, and the self-castration that follows it, can be treated not merely as a sensational incident but as a structural device. It introduces a controlled disorder that sets the whole moral and political sequence in motion, while the deeper work of interpretation attends to the relations that organise that sequence.

Within this same framework, Pehal also advances a theological reading of Bata's identity, arguing that the protagonist's character is defined by shifting relational alignments with major divine figures rather than by a single stable essence. As he puts it, "the various aspects of Bata's character which link him to the four major gods (i.e. Horus, Seth, Osiris, and Re) are stressed" (Pehal 2010, 198). This claim, even where one does not follow every step of his structural mapping, is useful as a statement of the approach: the story is read as a structured field in which identity is disclosed through patterned roles, oppositions, and transformations, and in which Bata's seeming contradictions are treated as meaningful placements within a mythic architecture rather than as mere inconsistency.

These structural and semiotic readings do not, by themselves, settle the question of Bata's guilt or innocence. They do, however, clarify why the episode has generated such interpretive dispute: the story is constructed to concentrate moral tension into formal oppositions, and it invites the interpreter to decide whether meaning is to be sought primarily in plot-level events or in the deeper grammar that orders them. This prepares the way for the next perspectives, which shift from structural logic to the social and ideological stakes of power, legitimacy, and gender in the New Kingdom imagination.

1.4.2.7 Gender and Power Dynamics

Another line of interpretation situates *the Two Brothers* within the gender expectations and domestic structures of ancient Egyptian society. In this perspective, the accusation episode is read in relation to the social roles of men and women within the household and the anxieties surrounding sexuality and honour that could threaten domestic stability.

Studies of Egyptian society show that women possessed recognised economic agency within the household. Textile production, for example, often took place within domestic space. As Robins (1993) notes, evidence from settlements such as Deir el-Medina indicates that "the mistress of the house and other women of the household were involved" in spinning and weaving, activities that could contribute both to household provision and surplus production (Robins 1993, 104). Women, therefore, occupied an important economic position within the domestic sphere even while broader public authority remained largely male.

At the same time, Egyptian society maintained clear gender distinctions in labour and activity. Robins observes that some occupations mentioned in narrative texts were associated primarily with men. Significantly, *the Two Brothers* itself refers to the "washermen of Pharaoh," suggesting that professional laundry work was undertaken by men rather than by women working within the household (Robins 1993, 120). The narrative thus reflects broader patterns in which male activity was associated with public or institutional work, while women were linked more closely to domestic management.

Within literary tradition, however, women could also appear as figures who introduce disorder into the household. Robins notes that Egyptian narrative literature sometimes portrays "dishonourable women," citing *the Two Brothers* directly: "the elder brother's wife tries to seduce the younger brother. Later in the story the wife of the younger brother abandons him to become the wife of the king of Egypt, and then repeatedly attempts to betray her former husband to his death" (Robins 1993, 178). The failed seduction and subsequent accusation, therefore, function as the narrative catalyst that transforms a harmonious domestic setting into a scene of dishonour and crisis.

This pattern has been further examined in literary studies of the tale. Katary (1997, 45–52) situates the female figures within the conventions of folktale construction and, in doing so, highlights several features that have drawn attention in a more gender-oriented reading. She notes that the women are not individually named and are instead defined primarily through their relationships to male figures, such as "the elder brother's wife" or "the wife of Pharaoh," reflecting a narrative structure in which female identity is relational rather than autonomous. At the same time, their roles are shaped less by individual characterisation than by their narrative

function within the story's social and symbolic framework. In this regard, the actions of the wives, particularly the attempted seduction and subsequent accusation, reflect broader concerns surrounding sexuality, honour, and power within the household, while also positioning female agency as a recurring source of disruption within both the domestic and narrative order. Such portrayals have led to the observation that the tale reflects a strongly patriarchal orientation. Katary (1997, 46) explicitly notes the possibility of "deliberate misogyny" in the depiction of female figures, who are consistently associated with desire, deception, and the destabilisation of otherwise ordered male domains.

This pattern is further noted in broader Egyptological discussions of New Kingdom narrative. As Pinch (2002, 28) observes, surviving Egyptian stories frequently assume a shared mythological framework and incorporate recurring motifs in which female figures are associated with disruption, desire, and the destabilisation of established order. In *the Two Brothers*, the accusation against Bata and the subsequent actions of the women in the narrative reflect this wider literary tendency, in which gendered behaviour is not merely social but participates in a mythologically informed narrative logic.

Gender-oriented interpretations accordingly emphasise the social tensions embodied in the accusation episode. The narrative reflects concerns about sexual desire, reputation, and the vulnerability of the household to internal disruption. Yet such approaches tend to focus primarily on the social dynamics of the accusation itself. They do not fully account for the broader narrative movement through which Bata undergoes transformation and ultimately attains kingship.

Taken together, these approaches illuminate important aspects of the narrative but do not fully account for the structural unity and mythic logic through which the story resolves its central crisis.

1.4.3 Synthesis and Conceptual Gap

The foregoing review indicates that scholarship on *the Two Brothers* has developed along several distinct but partially overlapping interpretive trajectories. Several studies engage the narrative directly. Early mythological interpretations examined Bata through the framework of Egyptian divine traditions, emphasising parallels with Osirian themes of death, dismemberment, and regeneration (Hollis 1984). Subsequent literary and narrative analyses drew attention to the text's compositional artistry and its place within the broader corpus of Egyptian narrative literature (Lichtheim 1976; 2006; Hollis 2008). Comparative and intertextual studies have explored recurring narrative patterns, most notably the so-called

"Potiphar's wife" motif across Near Eastern traditions (Goldman 1995). Structural and semiotic readings have sought to explain the story's coherence through underlying patterns of opposition and transformation (Pehal 2010), while gender-oriented interpretations have examined the accusation episode in relation to domestic authority, sexuality, and honour within Egyptian social structures (Robins 1993).

Alongside these direct interpretations, broader studies provide important contextual frameworks for understanding the narrative's cultural setting. Research on scribal culture emphasises the institutional environment within which such texts were produced and transmitted, highlighting the role of literate elites in articulating and preserving cultural ideals (Allon and Navratilova 2023). Similarly, analyses of Egyptian culture and representational decorum underscore the ideological structures through which elite literary production engaged questions of order, authority, and legitimacy (Baines 2007). Although these works do not focus primarily on *the Two Brothers*, their insights illuminate the intellectual and social context in which the narrative was composed and received.

Taken together, these approaches illuminate important aspects of the narrative and its cultural background. Yet they frequently isolate particular motifs, thematic concerns, or interpretive frameworks without fully accounting for the story as a unified artistic composition. The sequence of events surrounding Bata's accusation, exile, death, transformation, and eventual accession to kingship suggests a carefully structured progression rather than a loose aggregation of folkloric motifs.

The present study, therefore, approaches *the Two Brothers* as an integrated narrative whole and examines its structure in relation to principles of narrative unity and dramatic development. Drawing on the analytical framework of Aristotle's *Poetics* and related traditions of narrative analysis, this study investigates how the sequence of events in the story coheres into a dramatic movement.

By analysing the narrative as an artistic whole, this study argues that *the Two Brothers* is deliberately constructed to guide its audience through a sequence of events that culminates in the affirmation of a distinct New Kingdom ethical and ideological order. The story, therefore, functions not merely as a collection of traditional motifs but as a carefully shaped narrative designed to inspire and shape its audience in accordance with the values of its cultural milieu.

1.5 Methodology and Theoretical Framework

The present study examines *the Two Brothers* as a narrative composition preserved on the Papyrus d'Orbiney and situated within the intellectual and cultural context of New Kingdom

Egypt. The methodological approach combines Egyptological contextual analysis with structural examination of the narrative as an artistic whole. Egyptian concepts of order, personhood, and mythic reasoning provide the primary interpretive framework through which the story's symbolic elements are understood. At the same time, principles derived from Aristotelian narrative analysis are employed as analytical tools for examining plot coherence, causality, character transformation, and the progression of events from initial disruption to final resolution. This combination allows the narrative to be interpreted both within its indigenous cultural context and by formal criteria that clarify the internal logic of its composition. In this way, the study approaches the story as a unified work of narrative art through which the values and ethical imagination of New Kingdom Egyptian society may be expressed, examined, and communicated.

1.5.1 Research Orientation

This study undertakes a qualitative interpretive analysis of *the Two Brothers* as a literary narrative produced within the intellectual environment of New Kingdom Egypt. Rather than treating the composition merely as a folktale motif or textual artifact, the present investigation approaches the story as a coherent narrative work arising from the milieu of Egyptian scribal culture. In ancient societies, narrative literature frequently served as a medium through which ideas concerning social order, justice, and proper conduct were articulated and transmitted. Within the Egyptian intellectual tradition, such concerns were closely connected with the concept of *mꜣʿt*, the principle of cosmic and social harmony. The study, therefore, proceeds from the assumption that *the Two Brothers* functions as a unified narrative composition whose structure, symbolism, and transformation of its protagonist communicate ethical and ideological meaning within the cultural framework of New Kingdom Egyptian thought.

1.5.2 Primary Sources and Textual Basis

The primary source examined in this study is the hieratic manuscript known as the Papyrus d'Orbiney, dated to the reign of Seti II of the Nineteenth Dynasty (ca. 1203–1197 BCE). The papyrus, preserved in the British Museum as Papyrus EA 10183 (British Museum 2021), contains the most complete extant version of *the Two Brothers* and provides the textual foundation for all subsequent interpretation. The composition is generally attributed to a scribe named Ennana, whose name appears in the colophon of the manuscript.

The hieratic text of the Papyrus d'Orbiney has been reproduced and translated in several modern editions. Among the earliest complete reproductions is that of Moldenke (1898), which presents the hieratic text alongside a hieroglyphic transcription and an English translation.

Although early editions must be treated with caution due to developments in Egyptological philology, they remain valuable as reference points for the manuscript's transmission and interpretation.

For the purposes of this study, the narrative is cited primarily through the translation of Lichtheim (2006), whose rendering of the text in *Ancient Egyptian Literature* remains widely accepted within Egyptological scholarship. Lichtheim's translation is supplemented where necessary by comparison with the anthology of Hallo (2003) and with philological observations found in subsequent Egyptological studies, including Pritchard (2011).

The analysis undertaken in this thesis does not seek to produce a new critical edition of the text but rather to interpret the narrative as a literary and symbolic composition. The existing translations, therefore, are regarded as textual mediators through which the narrative structure, imagery, and theological symbolism of the story may be examined. Where interpretation depends on particular lexical or symbolic features, attention is paid to the underlying Egyptian terms and the broader iconographic and cultural context in which they occur.

1.5.3 Egyptian Intellectual Context (Emic Framework)

The intellectual foundation of this study is an Egyptian system of knowledge articulated in its own conceptual terms. The purpose of this section is to establish the indigenous framework within which the narrative of *the Two Brothers* is interpreted. It, therefore, provides a brief formalisation of key elements of Egyptian thought in order to supply a conceptual base for the analysis that follows. The outline presented here draws primarily from Hornung's synthesis of Egyptian intellectual traditions in *Idea into Image: Essays on Egyptian Thought* (1992).

Egyptian metaphysics begins with the idea of unity or primordial oneness as the originating reality from which duality and plurality emerge as the visible and intelligible world. Egyptian cosmogonies expressed this generative principle through different mythological formulations, attributing creative agency to figures such as Atum, Re, Ptah, or Amun across distinct theological traditions. Present at creation was the principle of *mꜣᶜt*, commonly understood as truth, order, and justice, which functioned as the normative horizon binding cosmology, political authority, and moral action. *mꜣᶜt* was not merely descriptive but prescriptive: it articulated the standard by which both divine and human activity were expected to sustain harmony. Although no extant Egyptian source provides a formal definition of the concept, its meaning is conveyed symbolically through the feather  against which the human

heart was weighed in the judgement of the dead. The opposing condition was *ỉsft,* a term associated with disorder, injustice, and falsehood.

The Egyptian political order was understood to be part of this cosmological framework. The unification of Upper and Lower Egypt traditionally attributed to King Narmer (*nʿr mr*)  represented the extension of order into historical time through the establishment of the dynastic state. In Egyptian thought, however, order was never assumed to be permanent. Because all things were subject to degradation through time, they required continual renewal. Each ruler, therefore, inherited the responsibility not only to maintain but also to extend the order of the state. Hornung (1992, 72–92) describes this dynamic as the Egyptian principle of the "extension of the existing," a conception that emphasised continuity, balance, and the preservation of established forms.

Within this intellectual environment, narrative and image were not merely descriptive representations but acts that fixed contingent events within a meaningful cosmological framework. This theological structure accords with Assmann's (2001, 54) formulation of Egyptian religion as a system in which the divine was immanent within what he described as an "un-demystified world," expressed through material culture, political institutions, natural phenomena, and symbolic orders. Egyptian religious language functioned as a symbolic grammar through which cosmic order, moral truth, and divine legitimacy were articulated and ritually enacted (Assmann 2001, 54; Jeffers 1996, 2–4; Wente 1982). In this worldview words, images, and ritual actions were mutually reinforcing forms of knowledge. As Jeffers (1996, 3) observed, Egyptian magic and divination operated within a holistic conception of reality in which human action and cosmic order were interconnected and intelligible through symbolic signs.

Egyptian moral anthropology was expressed through concepts of personhood such as *bꜣ*  the mobile and affective agency of the individual, and *kꜣ*  the sustaining principle of being.[12] A further category, *ḫ*  represented the transfigured spirit associated with the "blessed dead" was "always shown as a mummy" (Hornung 1992, 184). These concepts describe a unified view of human existence in which material and immaterial aspects of personhood are integrated rather than strictly separated. The iconography of the human-headed

[12] Hornung (1992, 183) distinguishes these further: "The *ba* plays a role in every kind of metamorphosis, where certain gods and even animals are considered the *ba* s of others". The *kꜣ* "embodies the causal principle" (Hornung 1992, 183).

bird representing the *bꜣ* and the judgement of the heart in the presence of *mꜣꜥt* illustrates how Egyptian anthropology linked personal moral conduct to cosmic order. Personhood was therefore understood as a composite reality operating across material and spiritual domains while remaining accountable within the framework of *mꜣꜥt*. As Wente (1982, 20) observed in poetic Egyptian formulations, the relationship was expressed succinctly: "the corpse to the earth, and the *bꜣ* to heaven."

Within this emic framework, concepts such as Osirian loyalism, priest-king ideology, and the ethical imperatives of *mꜣꜥt* become coherent intellectual commitments. These ideas informed political theology, moral conduct, and the narrative representation of heroic figures such as Bata. They also provide the conceptual logic through which themes of accusation, truth, transformation, death, and restoration become intelligible within Egyptian narrative tradition.

In Egyptological scholarship, it is common practice to use familiar philosophical or theological terms as approximations when describing Egyptian concepts. For example, Greek or Christian vocabulary such as *psyche* or "soul" is often employed to render Egyptian categories like the *bꜣ* and *kꜣ*, even though these concepts are not identical. In a similar way, the present study uses Aristotelian terminology as a descriptive framework through which the structure and causal logic of *the Two Brothers* can be articulated without replacing the Egyptian conceptual horizon.

Aristotelian poetics is therefore employed in this study as a secondary analytical instrument to examine the narrative structure of *the Two Brothers*. The Aristotelian framework does not replace the Egyptian conceptual horizon but serves as a heuristic tool that allows the internal logic of the narrative to be expressed within the vocabulary of modern philosophical analysis. The methodological priority, therefore, remains with the Egyptian sources, while Aristotelian concepts assist in clarifying the dramatic and structural coherence already present within the text.

This conceptual framework grounds the interpretation that follows by situating *the Two Brothers* within Egyptian intellectual history and by clarifying the relationship between narrative form, moral reasoning, and the political theology associated with Osirian kingship.

1.5.4 Narrative and Structural Analysis

The narrative structure of *the Two Brothers* is examined in this study through principles derived primarily from Aristotle's *Poetics*, particularly those concerning the organisation of plot, the relationship between action and character, and the causal progression of events within a unified narrative whole. Aristotle's analysis of dramatic composition provides a conceptual

vocabulary through which the internal structure of the narrative may be described and evaluated.

Within this framework, narrative is understood primarily as action organised according to causality. Events in a coherent narrative are not arranged as a simple succession of episodes but unfold through a chain of causes and consequences that produce unity. Aristotle characterised such unity as the defining feature of a complete plot, in which the beginning establishes the conditions of action, the middle develops the resulting complications, and the end brings the sequence to its appropriate resolution.

Applying this analytical perspective allows the narrative of *the Two Brothers* to be examined as an integrated composition rather than as an assemblage of loosely connected folkloric motifs. The accusation against Bata, his exile, death, transformation, and eventual accession to kingship are therefore interpreted not as isolated episodes but as stages within a continuous dramatic movement. Particular attention is given to the relationships between events, the role of transformation and reversal within the narrative, and the progression from initial disruption toward the restoration of order.

Although Aristotelian concepts of narrative structure are drawn primarily from the *Poetics*, the analytical reasoning employed in this study is also informed by logical principles articulated in Aristotle's broader philosophical corpus, traditionally known as the *Organon*. References to Aristotle are therefore taken from the modern English edition of *The Complete Works of Aristotle* edited by Barnes (1984). These concepts are employed descriptively as analytical tools rather than as claims concerning historical influence.

1.5.5 Analytical Principles

The narrative analysis outlined above is supported by principles of logical reasoning derived from the broader Aristotelian philosophical tradition. While Aristotle's *Poetics* provides the conceptual framework for examining narrative structure, the interpretation of the narrative evidence also proceeds on the basis of the basic principles of classical logic articulated in Aristotle's logical writings. These principles guide the evaluation of competing interpretations and ensure that the analysis remains internally coherent.

The analytical reasoning employed in this study is based on three fundamental principles of traditional logic: the principle of identity, the principle of non-contradiction, and the principle of sufficient reason. These principles serve as the logical foundations for examining and interpreting the narrative evidence of *the Two Brothers*.

The principle of identity affirms that a thing is identical with itself. In interpretive terms, this principle requires that the identity of a character or concept within the narrative remain internally coherent across the sequence of events. The analysis, therefore, proceeds on the assumption that the meaning and function of narrative elements must remain consistent with their established identity within the cultural and symbolic framework of the text.

The principle of non-contradiction maintains that contradictory propositions cannot both be true at the same time and in the same respect. This principle is particularly relevant to the interpretive dispute concerning the accusation against Bata. The competing claims that Bata is simultaneously guilty and innocent represent mutually exclusive interpretations. Analytical reasoning, therefore, requires that the narrative evidence be evaluated in such a way that internally contradictory conclusions are avoided.

The principle of sufficient reason, more fully articulated within the later rationalist tradition, holds that every event or condition must have an intelligible explanation (Russell 1946, 540-541). Applied to narrative analysis, this principle requires that the actions and transformations within the story be interpreted in relation to their causes and functions within the broader structure of the narrative. The sequence of events in *the Two Brothers* is therefore examined with attention to the reasons that govern the progression from accusation to exile, transformation, and eventual kingship.

Together, these principles provide the logical framework through which narrative evidence is analysed. They ensure that the interpretation of the text proceeds through coherent reasoning while remaining attentive to the cultural and symbolic context within which the narrative was originally composed.

1.5.6 Analytical Procedure

The analytical procedure employed in this study proceeds through a sequence of interpretive stages designed to maintain consistency between the Egyptian intellectual context of the narrative and the analytical tools used to examine it. The procedure is structured so that the conceptual framework of New Kingdom Egyptian thought provides the primary interpretive scope, while Aristotelian narrative analysis and logical reasoning serve as secondary analytical instruments through which the internal organisation and meaning of the narrative may be clarified.

The first stage establishes the cultural and conceptual framework within which the narrative becomes intelligible. Egyptian concepts of order, kingship, and personhood, together with the broader intellectual horizon of *mꜣꜥt*, provide the interpretive context within which the

actions and symbolic imagery of *the Two Brothers* must be understood. By grounding the analysis within Egyptian language and intellectual tradition, this stage ensures that the narrative is approached in terms consistent with the worldview within which it was originally composed.

The second stage examines the narrative structure of the composition as a unified sequence of actions. Drawing upon principles articulated in Aristotle's *Poetics*, the story is analysed as an integrated plot governed by causal development rather than as a collection of loosely connected motifs. Within this framework, attention is given to the organisation of events, the development of conflict, and the progression of the narrative from initial disturbance through crisis toward eventual resolution. The analysis therefore focuses on how the narrative constructs meaning through the ordered relationship between actions, transformations, and outcomes.

The third stage evaluates the interpretive implications of this narrative development. Using principles of logical reasoning derived from the Aristotelian tradition, the study assesses competing interpretations of the narrative and considers the coherence of different explanations for the central events of the story. In particular, the analysis addresses the interpretive tension surrounding the accusation against Bata and the significance of his transformation within the narrative. Through this evaluative stage, the study seeks to determine how the sequence of narrative actions ultimately contributes to the restoration of order and the articulation of kingship within the story.

Taken together, these stages establish a method of interpretation that proceeds from contextual grounding to narrative analysis and finally to interpretive synthesis. This procedure allows the narrative of *the Two Brothers* to be examined as a coherent literary composition while remaining attentive to the language and intellectual tradition within which the text was originally produced.

1.5.7 Scope of Interpretation

The present study interprets *the Two Brothers* primarily as a literary composition preserved on the Papyrus d'Orbiney. The analysis focuses on the organisation of the narrative, the development of its central actions, and the symbolic and conceptual logic through which the text constructs meaning. The study does not attempt to produce a new philological edition of the hieratic manuscript, nor does it seek to reconstruct exhaustively the historical circumstances surrounding the composition of the text.

At the same time, the narrative is not treated as an isolated literary artefact. The interpretation situates the story within the intellectual and cultural horizon of New Kingdom

Egypt. Particular attention is given to Egyptian concepts of *mꜣꜥt* kingship ideology, and Egyptian understandings of personhood expressed through categories such as *bꜣ* and *kꜣ*. These concepts provide the cultural framework within which the actions and transformations described in the narrative become intelligible.

Historical considerations are therefore addressed insofar as they clarify the intellectual environment in which the narrative was composed and received. References to New Kingdom political and social structures, as well as to broader developments in the Late Bronze Age Eastern Mediterranean world (ca. 1550–1200 BCE), a period marked by extensive political and cultural interaction among the major powers of the region, are employed to illuminate the ethical and ideological concerns reflected in the composition. Such discussion serves a contextual and interpretive purpose rather than constituting a comprehensive historical reconstruction.

Similarly, the use of Aristotelian concepts in this study should be understood as analytical rather than historical. The study does not claim that Egyptian authors were influenced by Aristotelian philosophy or that Egyptian narrative literature developed according to Greek theoretical models. Rather, Aristotelian terminology is employed as a descriptive framework through which the structure and causal development of the narrative may be articulated in a systematic and philosophically intelligible manner.

The scope of the study is therefore interpretive and contextual. Its purpose is to examine how the narrative of *the Two Brothers* organises action, conflict, and transformation within a coherent literary structure and how that structure reflects broader concerns regarding order, kingship, and moral conduct within the intellectual world of New Kingdom Egypt.

1.6 Limitations and Delimitations

The present study is subject to several methodological limitations which arise from the nature of the source material and the interpretive aims of the investigation. The analysis focuses on the narrative preserved on the Papyrus d'Orbiney and does not attempt to produce a new critical edition of the hieratic manuscript. Questions of detailed philological reconstruction, variant textual traditions, and the broader manuscript history of the composition fall beyond the scope of this study. Instead, the existing and recommended Egyptological editions and translations provide the textual foundation through which the narrative is examined.

A further delimitation concerns the historical reconstruction of the social and political environment in which the story was composed. While reference is made to the intellectual and cultural context of New Kingdom Egypt and to broader developments within the Late Bronze

Age Eastern Mediterranean world (ca. 1550–1200 BCE), these discussions are intended to clarify the conceptual horizon within which the narrative was produced rather than to provide a comprehensive historical reconstruction of the period. Historical material is therefore employed selectively insofar as it illuminates the ethical, symbolic, and ideological concerns reflected in the composition.

The study is also limited in its comparative scope. Although *the Two Brothers* has been examined in relation to wider folktale motifs and cross-cultural parallels in previous scholarship, the present investigation does not attempt an encyclopedic comparative survey of world narrative traditions. Selected points of comparison are introduced where they clarify particular narrative features or interpretive questions. References to other literary traditions, including well-known epic narratives such as the Homeric epics and examples drawn from African and Indian epic traditions, are therefore used selectively as heuristic reference points through which aspects of narrative structure, heroic transformation, and moral conflict may be more clearly articulated. These comparisons function as illustrative aids rather than as claims of direct historical relationship or transmission. The primary interpretive framework of the study remains the Egyptian intellectual and cultural context within which *the Two Brothers* was composed.

Finally, the use of Aristotelian concepts in this study should be understood as an analytical delimitation rather than a claim of historical influence. The study does not propose that Egyptian narrative literature developed according to Greek philosophical principles, nor that Aristotelian theory represents the exclusive framework for literary interpretation. Aristotelian terminology is employed as a descriptive and analytical instrument through which the organisation of narrative action, conflict, and resolution may be articulated in a systematic manner. Within this approach, Egyptian concepts and categories remain the primary interpretive scope of the analysis.

These limitations define the scope of the study while clarifying its central objective: to examine *the Two Brothers* as a coherent narrative composition situated within the intellectual world of New Kingdom Egypt and to interpret the organisation of its actions, transformations, and resolution through a structured analytical framework.

1.7 Significance and Expected Contribution

The Tale of the Two Brothers has long attracted scholarly attention because of its striking narrative episodes and its apparent combination of mythological, literary, and folkloric elements. Yet despite extensive discussion, several central aspects of the narrative have

remained unresolved or insufficiently integrated within a coherent interpretive framework. Questions surrounding the identity of Bata, the significance of the accusation against him, and the broader purpose of the narrative within Egyptian intellectual culture have generated a range of competing interpretations. The present study seeks to contribute to this discussion by approaching the composition as a unified narrative whose structure, symbolism, and ethical implications may be clarified through a combined contextual and analytical reading.

One expected contribution of the study lies in its re-examination of the narrative identity of Bata. Previous scholarship has variously interpreted the protagonist as a mythological figure, a symbolic representation of divine transformation, or a literary hero shaped by folkloric tradition. By examining the narrative within the conceptual horizon of Egyptian religious and political thought, the present investigation clarifies how Bata's transformations and eventual accession to kingship function within a coherent symbolic and narrative progression.

A second contribution concerns the longstanding interpretive dispute surrounding the accusation episode at the beginning of the story. The dramatic act of self-castration and the subsequent events of the narrative have produced divergent interpretations regarding Bata's innocence or guilt. By analysing the internal logic of the narrative sequence and the relationships between its successive actions, the present study offers a structured interpretation of this episode and its role in the development of the narrative.

The study also contributes to the classification and interpretation of the composition within Egyptian literature. Rather than treating *the Two Brothers* primarily as a collection of folkloric motifs or as an isolated mythological narrative, the analysis demonstrates that the story functions as a carefully organised narrative composition. The sequence of accusation, exile, transformation, and eventual kingship forms a coherent dramatic progression through which ethical and ideological concerns regarding order, legitimacy, and authority are articulated.

Finally, the study contributes methodologically by demonstrating how Aristotelian concepts of narrative structure may be employed as analytical tools for interpreting ancient texts without displacing their indigenous conceptual frameworks. By allowing Egyptian intellectual categories to remain primary while using Aristotelian terminology as a descriptive framework, the study proposes a methodological approach that may prove useful for examining other narrative compositions within the ancient Near Eastern literary tradition.

Taken together, these contributions aim to clarify the narrative coherence, symbolic logic, and cultural significance of *the Two Brothers* while situating the composition more firmly within the intellectual and ethical limits of New Kingdom Egyptian thought.

1.8 Structure of Thesis

The thesis is organised into seven chapters, followed by a series of appendices that provide supporting material for the analysis.

Chapter Two establishes the analytical instruments employed in the study. This chapter clarifies the methodological foundations of the research and introduces the conceptual tools, drawn from the Egyptian intellectual tradition and Aristotelian narrative analysis, that guide the interpretation of the text.

Chapter Three examines the beginning of the narrative action. Applying the analytical instrument developed in Chapter Two, it considers the initial narrative situation, the inciting accusation that disrupts the original order, and the identity of the protagonist whose actions structure the mythic development that follows.

Chapter Four analyses the middle movement of the narrative through the stages of journey, obstacle, and crisis. It traces the development of the conflict that unfolds after the accusation against Bata and examines the sequence of ordeals and transformations that structure the progression of the myth.

Chapter Five considers the culmination of the narrative action. It examines the climactic moments of conflict and transformation through which the dramatic tension reaches its highest point and moves toward resolution.

Chapter Six explores the movement from tragedy to triumph within the narrative. The chapter analyses the final transformations of Bata and the restoration of order through kingship, situating these developments within the broader religious and political thought of New Kingdom Egypt.

Chapter Seven presents the conclusions of the study. It synthesises the findings of the preceding chapters and evaluates their implications for understanding *the Two Brothers*, the identity of Bata, and the classification of the composition within Egyptian narrative literature.

The appendices provide supporting materials, including textual and analytical resources that supplement the argument developed in the main chapters.

1.9 In Brief

This chapter has introduced the central problem addressed in this study and situated the investigation within the broader scholarly discussion concerning *the Two Brothers*. The review of existing interpretations has demonstrated that previous approaches have often focused either on motif classification or on isolated elements of the narrative, leaving unresolved the

interpretive tension surrounding the accusation against Bata and the significance of his self-castration within the story as a whole.

In response, the present study proposes to examine the composition as a coherent narrative shaped within the intellectual and cultural framework of New Kingdom Egypt. By grounding the analysis within Egyptian concepts of order, personhood, and kingship, and by employing Aristotelian principles of narrative structure and logical reasoning as analytical tools, the study seeks to clarify the internal organisation and meaning of the story.

The following chapter, therefore, turns to the analytical instruments and methodological principles that guide this investigation.

CHAPTER TWO: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to set out the methodological framework through which the narrative of *the Two Brothers* is examined in the present study. The investigation is guided by principles derived primarily from the Aristotelian philosophical tradition, which provides conceptual tools for analysing narrative structure, evaluating the coherence of claims within a story, and examining the moral significance of human actions represented in literary compositions.

Aristotle's works offer a systematic account of reasoning, narrative construction, and human action across several treatises. His logical writings, commonly grouped within the *Organon*, articulate principles by which propositions may be examined for consistency and contradiction. The *Poetics p*rovides a theory of poetic composition that explains how events are organised into a coherent narrative structure governed by causal relations. Aristotle's ethical and political works further situate human action within broader moral and social frameworks, describing how actions reveal character and how order is established within household and political life.

Taken together, these works provide a coherent analytical framework through which literary narratives can be examined as structured representations of human action. The procedure adopted in this study is intentionally reductive in form, not as a simplification of the material, but as a means of distinguishing its essential structural relations. Such a reduction follows the classical philosophical principle that clarity is achieved not through the multiplication of explanatory frameworks, but through the ordered articulation of parts within a unified whole.

In the present study, Aristotelian reasoning is employed not as a system imposed upon the Egyptian text, but as a descriptive vocabulary through which the internal organisation and logical coherence of the narrative may be articulated.

The following sections, therefore, outline the principal components of this methodological approach. The discussion begins with Aristotle's theory of poetic composition, which provides the primary framework for analysing the narrative structure of *the Two Brothers.*

2.2 Aristotelian Poetics and Mythic Narrative Analysis

Aristotle's *Poetics* offers one of the earliest systematic analyses of narrative composition.[13] In this work, Aristotle examines how poetic representations of human action are structured and how the arrangement of events produces intelligible and meaningful narratives. Central to this theory is the concept of *mythos*, commonly translated as "plot," which Aristotle describes as "the combination of the incidents, or things done in the story" (*Poetics* 1450a3–5). Plot, therefore, refers not simply to the events of a story but to the manner in which those events are organised into a coherent structure.

Aristotle emphasises that plot constitutes the organising principle of poetic composition. A narrative must represent a unified action that forms a complete whole. Aristotle defines such a whole as that which has "beginning, middle, and end" (*Poetics* 1450b26–27). Within such a structure, events do not occur arbitrarily but follow one another according to probable or necessary causal relations. Aristotle observes that incidents should follow one another so closely that the "transposition or withdrawal of any one of them will disjoin and dislocate the whole" (*Poetics* 1451a33-35). This emphasis on causal coherence allows narratives to be analysed as ordered sequences of actions rather than as collections of disconnected episodes.

The Aristotelian concept of *mythos* is particularly relevant for the present study because it provides a method for examining the internal organisation of the narrative preserved on the Papyrus d'Orbiney. The story of *the Two Brothers* unfolds through a sequence of actions that begins with an accusation within a household, develops through exile and transformation, and concludes with the restoration of order through kingship. By analysing the narrative according to Aristotelian principles of plot structure, the progression of these events can be examined as components of a unified composition.

At the same time, the narrative has traditionally been interpreted within the broader category of mythic literature. Modern scholarship has approached myth through a range of interpretive frameworks, including comparative approaches that situate myths within cross-cultural patterns of religious meaning (Eliade 1959), structuralist analyses that examine the underlying relational systems governing narrative form (Lévi-Strauss 1978), and symbolic or semantic interpretations that emphasise the construction of cultural meaning and memory (Assmann 2002). These approaches have significantly expanded the study of myth and clarified its cultural, structural, and conceptual dimensions.

[13] References to Aristotle follow the Bekker numbering system.

It is with awareness of these traditions that the present study adopts the term mythic narrative analysis to describe the methodological approach employed here. The methodological use of the term mythic analysis in the present study derives directly from Aristotle's conception of *mythos*. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle defines *mythos* as the structured arrangement of the incidents that constitute the plot of a narrative and describes this structure as the central element of poetic composition (*Poetics* 1450a3-5; 1450a15–20). The organisation of events into a coherent sequence is therefore the primary object of analytical inquiry. Mythic analysis in the present study thus refers to the examination of the narrative's *mythos*: the ordered configuration of actions through which the story's meaning and unity emerge.

While the present study may be situated in the broader field of narrative analysis, it adopts a limited and specific focus within that broader domain. As Forster (1927) observes, narrative may be understood at its most basic level as the sequence of events arranged in time, while more complex forms of analysis attend to the manner in which those events are presented. The present analysis remains at the level of ordered action, examining the progression of events as a unified whole. It therefore does not proceed primarily through the analysis of narrative technique or discourse, but through the organisation of action itself. In this respect, it aligns with Aristotle's conception of *mythos* as the structured arrangement of incidents within a coherent plot.

By analysing the structure of the plot rather than isolated motifs, the method follows the Aristotelian principle that the intelligibility of a narrative resides in the organisation of its action as a whole. The expression acknowledges the Aristotelian concept of *mythos* as the structural principle of narrative composition while also recognising the mythic character of the Egyptian text itself. The analysis therefore examines the narrative both as a structured plot governed by Aristotelian principles and as a mythic composition embedded within the intellectual and religious traditions of New Kingdom Egypt.

As recent Aristotelian scholarship has clarified, the purpose of Aristotle's *Poetics* is not to prescribe rules for poetic composition nor to defend poetry on moral or political grounds, but to establish the basis for a properly literary criticism grounded in the principles internal to the art itself (Ford 2015, 1–3). Aristotle's concern is therefore with identifying the causes and structure of poetic works, and with evaluating them according to the coherence and intelligibility of their composition. As Ford (2015) further emphasises, criticism must proceed from the nature of the work itself, since it "should base itself on the art of poetry and not on other arts" (Ford 2015, 13).

The method adopted in the present study follows this approach by examining the narrative of *the Two Brothers* not through external psychological, symbolic, or historical frameworks, but through the organisation of its own action. The question is therefore not what the events might represent within another system of thought, but whether they cohere within the unified structure of the narrative and fulfil the function proper to that form. In this sense, the analysis proceeds on the principle that correctness in poetry is determined by its internal causes and end and is not reducible to correctness in other domains such as politics or ethics.

The relationship between logical reasoning and poetic representation articulated in Aristotle's writings later became central to the classical educational tradition known as the *Trivium*, in which grammar, logic, and rhetoric were understood as complementary disciplines concerned with the discovery, communication, and representation of truth. Modern expositions of this tradition, such as Joseph's *The Trivium* (2002; reprinted 2014) and Martineau's *Trivium* (2016), clarify how grammar, logic, and rhetoric function as complementary disciplines in interpreting texts. Within this framework, Aristotelian logic provides the principles by which the coherence of narrative claims may be evaluated. While the present study relies directly on Aristotle's works as primary philosophical sources, these later expositions help clarify the intellectual framework within which logical reasoning and poetic narrative analysis may be understood as related forms of inquiry.

The following section turns to the logical principles that further guide the present analysis and that assist in evaluating the coherence of the narrative claims presented within the text.

2.3 Logical Reasoning and Narrative Analysis

2.3.1 The Interpretive Problem in Scholarship

Interpretation of *the Two Brothers* has generated sustained scholarly discussion, particularly concerning the accusation brought against Bata and the significance of his act of self-castration. Among modern interpretations, a notable disagreement emerges between the approaches of Susan Tower Hollis and Alan Dundes. Their analyses illustrate the methodological tensions that arise when different interpretive frameworks are applied to the narrative.

Hollis (2003) approaches the narrative primarily within the context of Egyptian cultural and narrative traditions. In her response to Dundes's psychoanalytic interpretation, she emphasises that the meaning of ancient narratives cannot be derived from isolated symbolic elements but must be interpreted within the broader narrative and cultural framework in which

they were produced. As she explains, narrative interpretation must recognise that such in such materials "the narrative does not and never has stood alone, writ on a *tabula rasa*, but rather it depends on its audience, both as individuals and as a collective whole, for its emergent meaning." (Hollis 2003:212–213).

From this perspective, the accusation against Bata is interpreted as false, and the act of self-castration functions within the narrative's moral logic as a dramatic demonstration of innocence.

By contrast, Dundes (2002) interprets the same episode through a psychoanalytic framework. Drawing upon Freudian theory, he argues that the narrative reflects a process of psychological projection. In this interpretation, the desire attributed to the woman is in fact Bata's own repressed desire, a mechanism Dundes describes as "projective inversion" in *the Two Brothers* (Dundes 2002:378).

Within this reading, the act of self-castration becomes evidence of unconscious guilt rather than proof of innocence.

These two interpretations, grounded in fundamentally different methodological assumptions, therefore arrive at contradictory conclusions concerning the central episode of the narrative. Hollis emphasises cultural context and narrative structure, whereas Dundes isolates the episode and interprets it through psychoanalytic symbolism. The disagreement illustrates a broader methodological problem within the scholarship. While Egyptological, folkloristic, and psychoanalytic approaches illuminate important aspects of *the Two Brothers*, they do not necessarily provide a means for resolving contradictions that arise between competing readings. If the accusation against Bata is to be evaluated within the narrative itself, the question arises whether the events of the narrative form a logically coherent sequence capable of supporting one interpretation rather than another.

The coherence of the narrative as a unified whole imposes a necessary constraint upon interpretation. Where the events of a story are bound together within a single structure of action, their meaning cannot remain indefinitely indeterminate. The unity of the whole requires that the relations between its parts be intelligible and consistent, and therefore compels the selection of an interpretation that accords with the internal logic of the narrative itself. Competing readings cannot be equally sustained where they produce incompatible accounts of the same sequence of events, for the structure of the plot admits only those interpretations that preserve its coherence.

For this reason, the present study turns to the principles of logical reasoning articulated in the philosophical tradition associated with Aristotle. Rather than isolating individual episodes

or imposing external psychological interpretations, this approach examines the narrative as a unified composition in which events follow according to relations of probability or necessity (*Poetics* 1451a20–35). Through this framework, the analysis seeks to evaluate the internal coherence of the narrative and determine whether the accusation against Bata can be sustained within the logical structure of the narrative itself.

2.3.2 Limits of Existing Interpretive Approaches

Modern literary criticism has developed a variety of methodological approaches for analysing narrative texts. One influential concern in literary theory has been the role of the reader's emotional response in interpretation. In their well-known critique of reader-response approaches, Wimsatt and Beardsley (1949) described what they termed the "affective fallacy," the practice of evaluating literature primarily on the basis of the emotional reaction it produces in readers rather than on the structure of the work itself. Focusing exclusively on one point within the communicative chain between author, text, and reader risks distortion because it isolates the reader's response from the broader literary act. Such approaches do not provide a method for examining the internal relations between events within the narrative itself. Consequently, according to Wimsatt and Beardsley (1949), "The critic whose formulations lean to the emotive and the critic whose formulations lean to the cognitive will in the long run produce a vastly different sort of criticism" (Wimsatt and Beardsley 1949, 47).

Related concerns appear in broader debates within modern literary criticism regarding the interpretive treatment of works of art. Sontag (1966) famously criticised what she described as the modern "project of interpretation," arguing that contemporary criticism often approaches literary works primarily by extracting hidden meanings from them rather than examining their formal organisation. As Sontag observes, interpretation frequently proceeds by isolating elements from the text and translating them into another conceptual scheme imposed upon the work. In this sense, interpretation becomes "virtually one of translation," in which the critic identifies particular elements and asserts that they "really mean" something else (Sontag 1966, 11). Although such approaches may illuminate symbolic aspects of literary texts, they may also shift attention away from the internal organisation of the narrative itself.

Literary criticism has likewise explored the formal structure of narrative composition. In his influential study of the novel, Forster (1927) emphasised that narrative literature is fundamentally structured through the arrangement of events in time. As he observes, "the novel tells a story," and this story forms "the fundamental aspect without which it could not exist" (Forster 1927, 21). For Forster, the basis is a story, and a story is "a narrative of events arranged

in time-sequence" (Forster 1927, 24). While such observations clarify the temporal organisation of narrative composition, they do not in themselves provide a method for evaluating the logical relations among the selected events that constitute narrative action.

Debates within narrative theory further illustrate the methodological complexity involved in interpreting literary texts. Modern narratology has produced a wide range of theoretical frameworks concerned with narration, perspective, and narrative communication. Yet these frameworks are themselves the subject of ongoing disagreement. As Patron (2023) notes in her examination of narratological theory, the concept of the narrator has been the focus of sustained theoretical debate, particularly regarding whether all narratives necessarily presuppose a narrating instance or whether certain narratives may present events without an identifiable narrator. These disagreements illustrate that narrative interpretation often depends upon the theoretical assumptions brought to the text, and that different analytical frameworks may produce divergent interpretations of the same narrative.

Scholarly discussion of ancient Egyptian narrative literature reflects similar methodological diversity. As Pehal (2010) observes, the interpretation of Egyptian narratives frequently requires the application of analytical categories developed outside the ancient cultural context itself. The very concept of "narrativity," he notes, is an etic analytical construct through which modern scholars attempt to organise and interpret the products of ancient Egyptian thought: "the notion of narrativity is an etic term created by us as part of a very specific categorisation system which enables us to group and somehow grasp the products of the ancient Egyptians' minds and subsequently 'translate' them into our system" (Pehal 2010, 40). This difficulty is evident in studies of *the Two Brothers*, where scholars have proposed widely differing interpretations of the narrative. Katary observes that the text has long been the subject of interpretive debate, with scholars proposing widely differing classifications; indeed, "a swirl of controversy has ever since surrounded the famous story as to its proper classification: as folktale (*Märchen*), myth, mythic folktale, or folkloric myth" (Katary 1997, 39). For Schneider, the text has been interpreted in a wide variety of ways, including as "the creation of a gifted and imaginative tale-teller," a conflict between sedentary farmers and nomads, an Osirian myth, or even a narrative expressing male hostility toward women (Schneider 2008, 315). Such diversity of interpretation illustrates the methodological complexity involved in analysing ancient Egyptian narrative texts and highlights the extent to which interpretive conclusions may depend upon the analytical framework applied to the material.

Within Egyptological scholarship, the narrative of *the Two Brothers* has been interpreted through a variety of methodological perspectives. Studies have variously emphasised the

literary structure of the narrative, its mythological symbolism, and its cultural or historical context within New Kingdom Egypt. Such approaches have contributed significantly to understanding the narrative within the intellectual world of ancient Egypt. Nevertheless, as the disagreement between the interpretations of Hollis (2003) and Dundes (2002) demonstrates, these approaches do not necessarily prioritise the evaluation of logical coherence within the internal structure of the narrative itself. Interpretations diverge considerably depending on the interpretive framework applied to the text.

For this reason, among the available analytical frameworks, the present study adopts a different methodological emphasis. Rather than focusing primarily on reader response, symbolic interpretation, or narrative technique, the analysis examines the internal relations between events within the narrative action itself. In this respect the study draws upon the analytical principles articulated by Aristotle, whose discussion of plot (*mythos*) emphasises the causal relationships that unite the events of a narrative into a coherent whole (*Poetics* 1451a20-25). The following section therefore turns to the classical framework of the Trivium, within which these logical principles were historically understood.

2.3.3 The Classical Framework of the Trivium

The analytical framework employed in this study draws upon the classical tradition of the Trivium, the educational system that historically governed the study of language and reasoning within the liberal arts. The Trivium consists of the three arts of grammar, logic, and rhetoric, disciplines concerned with the interpretation, analysis, and communication of thought. As Joseph (2002) explains, “Logic is the art of thinking; grammar, the art of inventing symbols and combining them to express thought; and rhetoric, the art of communicating thought from one mind to another, the adaptation of language to circumstance” (Joseph 2002, 3).

Within the classical tradition the disciplines of grammar, logic, and rhetoric formed an integrated framework for analysing discourse. Logic provided the principles through which the relations between ideas could be examined and evaluated. As Joseph observes, rhetoric and dialectic operate within the domain of probability and argument, generating reasoning on “two or more sides of a question” (Joseph 2002, 227). These logical principles were also applied to literary composition. Aristotle’s discussion of poetic narrative emphasises that “the plot, not the characters, is the first and the essential element in poetic” (Joseph 2002, 229). Narrative analysis, therefore, concerns the ordered sequence of events that constitute the action of the story.

While Aristotle accords primacy to plot as the organising principle of narrative, he does not exclude the role of character (*ethos*) within this structure. Characters are understood in relation to the actions they perform and the decisions through which the plot unfolds. The present study, therefore, considers character and identity not as independent objects of analysis, but as elements that derive their meaning from their function within the narrative sequence. In this sense, the analysis remains focused on the organisation of action, while recognising that character is disclosed through that action.

This logical emphasis is particularly relevant for the analysis of narrative composition. Rather than focusing primarily on symbolic interpretation or reader response, a logical approach examines the relations between the events that constitute the narrative itself. Within the classical tradition these principles were articulated most fully by Aristotle, whose discussion of plot *(mythos)* in the *Poetics* analyses the causal relations that unite the events of a narrative into a coherent whole.

The following section therefore turns to Aristotle's analysis of narrative composition and the logical principles that govern the structure of plot.

2.3.4 Aristotelian Principles of Narrative Composition

The preceding discussion introduced the logical foundations that underlie the reasoning of this study. In particular, the principles of identity, non-contradiction, and sufficient reason (established in Chapter 1, Section 1.5.5 "Analytical Principles") were presented as the basic axioms of classical logic through which truth claims may be evaluated. These principles govern reasoning in general and provide the philosophical framework within which the present argument proceeds.

The present study proceeds by analytical division in the Aristotelian sense, examining the narrative through a series of interrelated categories derived from the structure of action itself. These categories include identity, conflict, crisis, transformation, and restoration, and do not function as independent analytical domains, but as aspects of a unified narrative progression governed by the logic of mythos. Within this framework, identity is not treated as an autonomous feature of characterisation, but as something disclosed and maintained through the sequence of actions that constitute the narrative.

The analysis that follows, however, concerns not the logic of propositions but the structure of narrative composition. For this purpose, the study turns to the literary principles articulated by Aristotle in the *Poetics*, where the logical ordering of events within narrative is examined.

The most systematic classical account of narrative structure appears in the work of Aristotle, whose *Poetics* analyses the principles governing poetic composition. Central to Aristotle's discussion is the concept of plot (*mythos*), which he identifies as the organising principle of narrative. As Aristotle explains, "We maintain, therefore, that the first essential, the life and soul, so to speak, of tragedy is the plot" (*Poetics* 1450a38–39). Plot therefore refers not simply to the presence of events in a story but to the ordered arrangement of actions that together constitute a unified whole.

For Aristotle a narrative is intelligible only when its events form a coherent action. The defining feature of plot is therefore the unity of action, whereby the events of the narrative are organised according to their contribution to a single complete action. Aristotle accordingly emphasises that a plot must represent "a whole" that is, "a beginning, middle, and end" (*Poetics* 1450b26–27). These elements are not merely chronological divisions but structural positions within the narrative itself. The beginning introduces the action without necessarily following from earlier events, the middle develops the action through events that arise from what precedes and lead toward what follows, and the end brings the sequence to completion.

A further principle governing narrative composition concerns the relation between events within the plot. Aristotle maintains that the incidents of a narrative should follow one another according to relations of probability or necessity, rather than occurring arbitrarily. According to Aristotle (*Poetics* 1451a20-35), the events of a well-constructed plot occur in accordance with probability or necessity. The significance of this principle lies in its emphasis on the causal relations that connect the events of the narrative. Each incident must arise intelligibly from preceding circumstances so that the narrative forms a coherent sequence of action.

Taken together, these principles provide a methodological framework for analysing narrative texts. By examining the ordered sequence of events in terms of unity of action and causal relation, it becomes possible to evaluate whether the incidents of a narrative form a logically coherent whole. Such analysis proceeds through the careful division of the narrative into its constituent episodes and the examination of how each event contributes to the unfolding action of the story.

The present study therefore employs Aristotle's account of plot as an analytical instrument for examining the internal relations between the events of *the Two Brothers*. Rather than approaching the narrative primarily through symbolic interpretation, reader response, or comparative motif analysis, the investigation focuses on the logical organisation of the narrative action itself. By tracing the sequence of events according to their causal relations and narrative

function, it becomes possible to clarify the structure of the plot and to evaluate the coherence of the story as a unified composition.

The following section therefore applies these Aristotelian principles to the narrative of *the Two Brothers*, examining the structure of the plot through the ordered sequence of events that constitute the action of the story.

2.3.5 Application to Narrative Interpretation

The Aristotelian principles outlined above provide the immediate method by which the narrative of *the Two Brothers* is examined in the present study. Their application does not consist in imposing an external philosophical system upon the Egyptian text, but in using a clear analytical vocabulary to describe the internal organisation of the narrative itself. The question is not whether the story can be made to resemble an Aristotelian plot by interpretive force, but whether the events as they stand in the composition form an intelligible and coherent action.

The method employed here therefore proceeds by division of the plot according to its principal movements. Since Aristotle defines plot as the ordered combination of incidents within a complete action, the present analysis examines the narrative in terms of its beginning, middle, and end, and then considers how the major episodes contribute to the unity of the whole. This division is not merely chronological. It seeks rather to determine the structural role of each movement within the unfolding action and the manner in which each episode arises from what precedes it and leads toward what follows.

Particular attention is given to the causal relations that connect the major incidents of the narrative. The accusation against Bata, his departure from the household, his transformation and concealment, the intervention of divine and royal agencies, and the final restoration of order are examined as parts of a single sequence of action. In this way the analysis tests whether the narrative progresses according to relations of probability or necessity and whether the removal or displacement of any major incident would disjoin the whole.

This method is especially important for the central interpretive problem considered in the present study. If the accusation against Bata is to be evaluated responsibly, it must be examined not as an isolated episode but in relation to the complete structure of the plot. The significance of Bata's self-castration, for example, cannot be determined merely by reference to modern symbolic or psychological theories, but must be assessed according to its place and function within the narrative sequence as a whole. Plot division therefore serves not only a descriptive purpose but also an interpretive one, since it allows the meaning of the contentious episode to be tested against the internal logic of the composition.

The analysis that follows accordingly treats *the Two Brothers* as a unified narrative composition whose episodes are to be examined in relation to the whole action. By dividing the plot into its principal movements and tracing the causal relations between them, the present study seeks to determine whether the narrative forms a coherent whole and whether its central claims can be sustained within its own structure. This application of Aristotelian principles provides the methodological basis for the subsequent discussion of myth, epic, and narrative classification.

2.4 Myth and Epic as Analytical Categories

Before identifying epic characteristics within *the Two Brothers*, the analytical meaning of the terms myth and epic must be clarified. These terms are not indigenous Egyptian literary categories. Egyptian authors did not classify texts according to the formal genres later articulated in Greek literary theory. Consequently, the terms myth and epic are employed in the present study as analytical categories that allow the narrative structure of the text to be examined.

Within Egyptology the relation between myth and literature has often been discussed in terms of the forms through which mythic material appears in written texts. Baines (1996) notes that myth in Egypt does not necessarily exist as an independent narrative genre but appears in multiple literary contexts. According to Baines, "literary realizations of myths therefore constitute only one type among many" through which mythic material is expressed (Baines 1996, 362). Mythic ideas may therefore appear within hymns, ritual compositions, or narrative texts without requiring the existence of a separate genre devoted exclusively to mythological narration.

While Baines demonstrates the instability of myth as a distinct narrative genre in Egyptian literature, this problem underscores the importance of Loprieno's emphasis on analysing such texts as coherent literary compositions structured by internal relations.

This observation reflects a broader characteristic of Egyptian literary discourse. Loprieno (1996) likewise emphasises the importance of examining Egyptian texts as coherent literary compositions. In discussing the development of theoretical approaches to Egyptian literature, he observes that individual texts increasingly became the "paradigmatic object of interpretation," analysed in terms of their contextual structures and relationships rather than simply as historical documents (Loprieno 1996, 41). This perspective underscores the importance of treating Egyptian literary works as unified compositions whose meaning emerges through the organisation of the text itself. Accordingly, the analysis of Egyptian narrative must

attend to patterns of discourse, narrative structure, and thematic development that unfold within the composition rather than relying primarily on external genre classifications.

The narrative of *the Two Brothers* illustrates the importance of this methodological caution. The story contains elements that have frequently been analysed through the methods of folklore studies, particularly through the identification of recurring narrative motifs. However, motif analysis alone cannot determine the literary character of the narrative as a whole. The presence of widely distributed motifs does not necessarily imply that the text itself lacks unity or coherent narrative structure.

Assmann (1977) addresses this problem directly in his structural study of the Papyrus d'Orbiney. He observes that earlier scholarship often treated the story as a composite of several independent folktales. According to Assmann, such interpretations overlook the structural coherence of the narrative. He therefore proposes that the text must be analysed on several levels, including the organisation of the text surface, the structure of the narrative action, and the thematic coherence that emerges across the development of the story (Assmann 1977, 3).

When examined in this manner, the narrative reveals a consistent progression of actions rather than a collection of disconnected motifs. Events follow one another in a sequence that produces thematic and narrative unity. Bata's exile, transformation, death, and restoration are not independent episodes but stages within a continuous narrative development.

This structural coherence allows the narrative to be examined through the analytical categories of myth and epic. In the present study, myth refers to narratives that connect human action with a wider cosmological or theological framework, a conception consistent with the interpretation of cultural meaning and memory in ancient Egypt (Assmann 2002). Epic narrative, in Aristotelian terms, refers to a specific narrative form within mythic storytelling in which the experience of a central heroic figure is organised into a structured sequence of action, often involving trials, transformation, and restoration (*Poetics* 1459b11–12).

The narrative of *the Two Brothers* invites analysis in these terms. The story presents the trajectory of a protagonist whose experience moves from innocence and accusation to exile, transformation, death, and eventual kingship. These developments suggest a narrative structure that extends beyond the level of isolated motifs and instead reflects a unified heroic narrative.

To evaluate whether this structure corresponds to the characteristics of epic narrative, it is necessary to establish the criteria by which epic form may be recognised. The following section therefore sets out the narrative principles that guide the identification of epic structure in the present study.

2.5 Criteria for Epic Narrative

Having clarified the analytical use of the terms myth and epic, it is now necessary to establish the criteria by which epic narrative may be identified within the present study. These criteria derive from two complementary considerations: the structural principles of narrative composition articulated by Aristotle and the recurring narrative patterns observed in epic tradition.

Aristotle's discussion of plot (*mythos*) provides the fundamental principles for analysing narrative structure. In the *Poetics*, he defines the plot as "the combination of the incidents, or things done in the story" and identifies this arrangement of actions as the most important element of poetic composition (*Poetics* 1450a3–5, 1450a15-20). Narrative therefore consists not merely of a sequence of events but of a structured configuration in which actions are organised into a coherent whole. These principles provide the structural framework within which narrative coherence may be evaluated.

While Aristotle's analysis establishes the formal organisation of narrative, studies of epic tradition have identified recurring patterns that characterise heroic storytelling. Lord (1967) observes that epic narratives frequently exhibit a recognisable sequence of thematic elements centred on the withdrawal and eventual return of a central figure. This pattern may include the absence or exile of the hero, periods of concealment or disguise, encounters with hosts or helpers during the hero's absence, the recognition or revelation of identity, disruption caused by the hero's absence, and finally reconciliation or restoration (Lord 1967, 241–242). These elements do not necessarily appear in identical form in every narrative, but they tend to occur in related combinations that produce a recognisable epic structure.

The significance of such patterns lies not in the repetition of isolated motifs but in the structural relationships between narrative events. As Lord (1967, 241) notes, traditional narratives organise groups of themes according to the internal "logic of the narrative and by the consequent force of habitual association". Individual stories may therefore vary in detail while still exhibiting an underlying narrative configuration characteristic of epic tradition.

Taken together, these perspectives provide the criteria employed in the present study. Aristotle's account of plot establishes the structural principles governing coherent narrative composition, while the epic pattern described by Lord identifies the sequence of actions commonly associated with heroic narratives. A narrative may therefore be examined as epic when it presents a unified sequence of events organised around the experiences of a central figure and structured through recognisable stages of departure, transformation, and restoration.

These criteria provide the basis for evaluating the narrative structure of *the Two Brothers*. The following analysis therefore examines the sequence of events within the story in order to determine whether its narrative organisation corresponds to the structural characteristics associated with epic composition.

2.6 In Brief

This chapter has established the methodological framework employed in the present study. The analysis proceeds from the Aristotelian conception of *mythos* as the structured arrangement of actions that constitute a coherent narrative. By examining the internal organisation of events within the story, it becomes possible to evaluate the narrative as a unified composition rather than as a collection of isolated motifs or folkloric elements. In this sense, the method adopted here may be described as mythic narrative analysis, understood as the examination of the structured plot through which the meaning of the narrative emerges.

Within this framework, the categories of myth and epic have been employed as analytical tools rather than as indigenous Egyptian literary classifications. The discussion has shown that mythic material in Egyptian literature may appear in a variety of textual forms and that narrative unity must therefore be established through the internal structure of the composition itself. The criteria for identifying epic narrative have accordingly been derived from two complementary perspectives: the Aristotelian principles governing coherent narrative composition and the recurring patterns of heroic narrative identified within epic tradition.

These methodological principles provide the basis for the analysis that follows. The following chapters examine the narrative through the progressive application of this analytical framework. Rather than treating narrative structure in abstraction, the method is applied across the sequence of the composition as a whole. Chapter Three considers the beginning of the story, establishing the hero's identity and the inciting incident that sets the narrative in motion. Chapter Four examines the development of the action through the hero's journey and initiatory ordeals, corresponding to the middle of the composition. Chapter Five analyses the climax and resolution through which the narrative is brought to completion. For convenience of reference, these three movements will also be designated Act One, Act Two, and Act Three.

CHAPTER THREE: HERO IDENTITY AND CALL TO ACTION

3.1 Introduction

Having established the analytical instrument in the preceding chapter, we now proceed to apply it to the narrative of *the Two Brothers*. Aristotle maintained that a complete poetic composition must possess a beginning, middle and end (*Poetics* 1450b26-27), ordered according to relations of probability or necessity (*Poetics* 1451a20–35), and that the unity of the work arises from the arrangement of the incidents of the story, which together constitute the plot (*Poetics* 1450a15). If the Egyptian composition under consideration is correctly understood as an epic myth, then its narrative should exhibit a discernible structure consistent with these principles.

The present chapter, therefore, addresses the opening movement of the composition. It examines the narrative beginning, the disruptive accusation that initiates the plot, and the identity of the protagonist whose actions structure the mythic development that follows. Within this framework, identity is not treated as an independent object of characterisation, but as a function disclosed through action, emerging from the sequence of events that constitute the plot and contributing to the coherence of the narrative as a unified whole.

3.2 The Narrative Beginning

The narrative of *the Two Brothers* opens within the household economy of rural Egypt during the New Kingdom. The story situates its action within a prosperous agrarian environment, presenting the domestic life of the brothers Anubis and Bata as part of the wider social order of Egyptian rural society. Within this setting, the narrative establishes the hierarchical relationship that defines the household. Anubis occupies the position of household head, while Bata functions as a subordinate member of the family whose labour sustains the prosperity of the estate.

From the beginning of the narrative Bata is characterised as an exceptionally capable agricultural worker. The text describes him as a cowherd of extraordinary skill whose labour produces remarkable agricultural yields. His diligence and physical strength contribute directly to the prosperity enjoyed by the household. At the same time, the narrative emphasises his subordinate social position. Bata lives among the cattle, working, eating, and sleeping in close association with them, a detail that symbolically situates him within the productive economy of the household rather than within its authority structure.

This opening description establishes the stable order that precedes the disruption of the narrative action. The household functions as a productive and harmonious social unit, and the relationship between the brothers appears orderly and mutually beneficial. Within the structure of the plot this equilibrium constitutes the narrative beginning in Aristotelian terms, providing the initial condition from which the subsequent conflict will emerge.

3.3 The Inciting Incident

Within the Aristotelian framework outlined in the previous chapter, the beginning of a narrative action is not simply the first event described in the story, but the moment at which the equilibrium of the narrative world is disrupted, and the causal sequence of incidents that constitute the plot is set in motion. The narrative has often been referred to in scholarship as *The Tale of Two Brothers*, reflecting its traditional classification within folktale literature. The present study, however, adopts the designation *the Two Brothers* in order to emphasise the unity and structural coherence of the composition as a mythic and epic narrative. This terminological distinction is maintained consistently throughout.

In the opening section of *The Tale of Two Brothers*, the household of Anubis initially appears stable and orderly. The relationship between the two brothers is presented as harmonious, with Bata functioning as a subordinate member of the household who labours diligently in support of the estate. This initial situation establishes the narrative equilibrium from which the subsequent action develops.

The equilibrium is disrupted when Bata is sent by his older brother to retrieve seed from the household and encounters Anubis's wife alone. The Papyrus d'Orbiney (3,1-4,1) recounts that Bata found the wife of his elder brother seated and braiding her hair, she instructs him to fetch what he wants, after which she seizes him and proposes that they lie together. This moment introduces the moral and relational conflict that initiates the narrative action. Bata rejects the proposition with indignation, declaring that such behaviour would violate the familial order that defines his relationship to the household. He describes Anubis as a father and the woman as a mother to him, thereby invoking the ethical framework that governs kinship relations within the narrative world.

The significance of this episode lies not merely in the sexual proposition itself, but in the chain of consequences that it sets in motion. The rejected wife, motivated by fear and resentment, reverses the circumstances of the encounter and accuses Bata of assault. This false accusation leads Anubis to attempt the murder of his younger brother, an act that in turn precipitates Bata's dramatic self-castration, exile, and eventual transformation. The entire

mythic development of the narrative therefore originates in the disruption introduced by this single encounter within the household.

From the perspective of Aristotelian narrative theory, the episode functions as the inciting incident of the plot. It constitutes the first event that produces a decisive alteration in the established order and generates the causal sequence of actions that follows. What had previously been a stable domestic environment becomes the site of deception, conflict, and moral testing. The narrative action of *the Two Brothers* thus begins not with Bata's later transformations or adventures, but with the moment in which the ethical structure of the household is violated and the hero is drawn into a conflict that ultimately leads to his death and rebirth.

3.4 Hero Identity

The preceding analysis has identified the structural beginning of the narrative action and the incident that initiates the conflict. Before examining the further development of the plot, it is necessary to clarify the identity of the protagonist whose actions structure the narrative. The meaning of Bata's behaviour within the story depends upon the nature of the character the text presents. In Egyptian narrative compositions, names, attributes, and symbolic associations frequently function as indicators of a character's essential identity. Establishing the conceptual identity of Bata is therefore necessary for understanding the significance of the actions that follow.

The following discussion examines the character of Bata through the attributes assigned to him in the narrative and through the symbolic implications of his name within the Egyptian intellectual tradition. These elements together suggest that the protagonist is not simply a subordinate agricultural labourer within the household of Anubis, but a figure constructed according to a recognisable pattern of Egyptian mythic thought, in which identity is articulated through the convergence of name, divine association, symbolic attributes, and narrative function in the unfolding structure of the narrative.

3.4.1 Bata the Virtuous

Having established the narrative situation and the inciting accusation, we now turn to the identity of the protagonist whose actions structure the mythic development of the tale. The figure of Bata is not presented merely as a narrative agent but as a character whose name, attributes, and behaviour invite theological interpretation within the Egyptian intellectual framework. Bata is not a well-known figure within the Egyptian pantheon, and comparatively little scholarly attention has been given to his identity. Pinch (2002) has him only as: "a bull

god and a form of Seth" (Pinch 2002, 117). A male bovine deity conceptualised in the manner of Seth constitutes a broad category, yet it carries distinct iconographic and theological implications within Egyptian religion. Pinch (2002) doesn't elaborate, but bull god connotes iconographic standards. She takes Bata as a general virility figure and the form of Seth has different connotations in the various periods of Egyptian history.

According to Wilkinson (2003, 197), Seth was originally a desert deity. He was associated with desolation, violence, and chaos, generally *ỉsft*, the opposite of *mɜꜥt*, and opposed to Osiris. True to the negative myth-theme, after the Hyksos period, he became associated with foreign rulers and their Baal. According to Pinch's (2002) assertion, Bata is a Seth-type bull god, limited to the New Kingdom (ca.1550-1070 BCE) and associated with fertility, through the Baal standard. The indigenous negative conception added to the foreign aspect makes this deity the embodiment of disharmony, injustice and chaos. He is the embodiment of the challenge to ordered Egyptian rulership and prosperity. And, according to Wilkinson (2003): "In this ongoing contest Seth put out the eye of Horus who in turn castrated Seth, doubtless an allusion to the suppression of the sexual power and violence of the god who was associated with rape and unnatural sexual desire" (Wilkinson 2003, 198). This identification has significant implications for the interpretation of the accusation scene.

Conventionally, Bata's guilt, as asserted by Dundes (2002) depends primarily on his identification as a Seth character, but Seth in the traditional Egyptian intellect, is barren and desolate, so the foreign Baal extension is applied to introduce the virility aspect. Both properties, desolation and foreign rule were perceived as chaotic in the Egyptian tradition. So why would Ennana conclude *the Two Brothers* with Seth/Bata and Anubis as Egypt's rulers?

Bata's identity is an ongoing problem. It is not obvious from his name which category of being he fits into, physical or metaphysical. At specific points in the story, it's not even certain which sexual category he belongs in. The original Papyrus d'Orbiney refers to Bata as *bꜣ* by using the *bꜣ* bird and the *tꜣ* roll of bread symbols. The name appears clearly twice in this section of the papyrus reproduced in Figure 1.

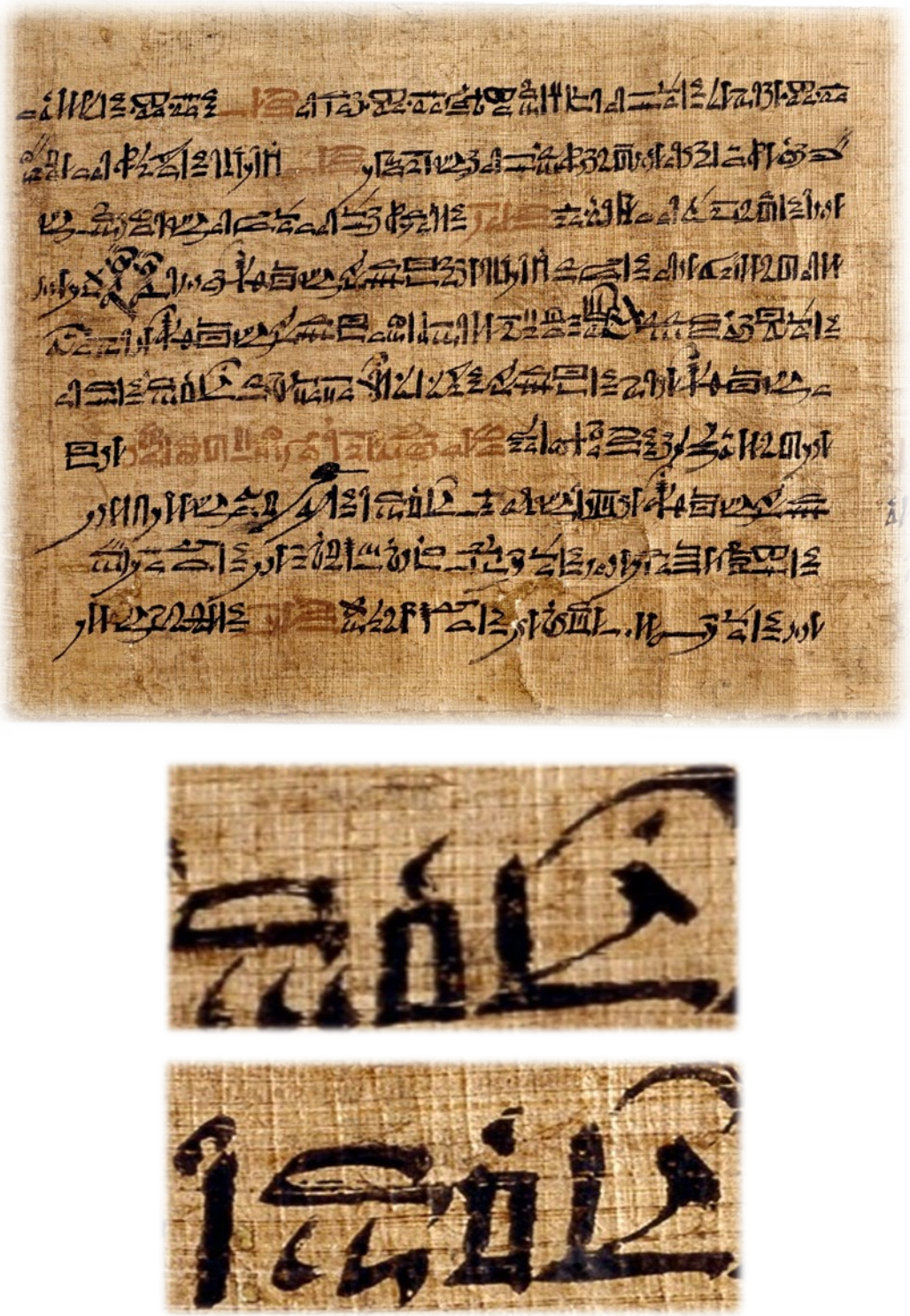

***Figure 1**: Bata's name as it appears on a photo of the original Papyrus d'Orbiney purchased from The British Museum (2021) for the purpose of study.*

The ligature  represents  for *bꜣ* (soul). In the second instance, the sign  at the end of the name is the determinative  or  which transliterates to *nṯr* for god or *nsw*

meaning king (Roberson 2018).[14] The group  is the determinative *t* for bread, which is a sign group frequently found in mortuary offering formulas. Although the hieroglyphic  is certainly commensurate with the hieratic signs, also refers to the phoneme *tꜣ* but with this symbol means land, as in *tꜣwy*, which was frequently used as the general reference to the combined body of the Egyptian state. Which is to say, two lands, like Upper and Lower Egypt in the *nsw* context referring to the king's sovereignty. These grammatical confusions are evident in the previous studies.

Moldenke (1898, 108) transcribed  but translated it as Bata (u), implying that his transliteration was *bꜣtꜣ*(*w*). The u or *w* implies that he attributed the lands (plural) meaning to the name. Hollis (2008) transcribed  and stated from her orthographic study that the land meaning of the name makes more sense. "*bꜣ* of the land" rather than "*bꜣ* of the bread" is more appropriate and evidently more convenient for her percept of a connection to the "Shepherd Song" (Hollis 2008, 49). However, she still refers to *bꜣtꜣ* as Bata rather than *bꜣtꜣw* or "Batau" (Moldenke 1898, 108). Which implies that she prioritised the singular. Subsequently, *bꜣ* of the land or even still, *bꜣ* of the bread, precipitates for the farmer/cowherd/hunter's name.

Having observed his name written in different forms in the original source, as well as its two meanings, there are already several primitives which can induce a general property for Bata. This property could define what distinctive Egyptian thing Bata is and demonstrate what is true of that thing through some shared terms.

Although the opinions stated above are well informed and thorough, they don't indicate clear understanding of what Bata, as their subject, is. Interpreting a god's name is always an endless and convoluted problem. But what they have provided are predicates that belong to our subject. Terms that are not a definition of our primary subject but could belong to one. Soul, God, King, Bread and Land. At any point in the story, the word Bata contains any of them and the sum of them. While this may at first suggest that the question of Bata's identity remains open, the convergence of these predicates indicates not indeterminacy, but a composite structure of identity, in which these elements are integrated within a unified mythic figure whose meaning is progressively disclosed through the unfolding sequence of the narrative.

[14] These signs have been cross-referenced for confirmation using Gardiner's (1957) sign list and Vervloesem's (2006) version of Möller's index.

The *bꜣ* or soul represents the formal spiritual element of Being. The standard icon is a winged bird, typically with a human head, indicating the capability of flying between the material reality of life and the formal reality known after death. It follows that Bata is a physical and metaphysical gestalt possessing an identity of material substance (body) and immaterial form (soul).

A *nṯr,* or god, is slightly different in the Egyptian tradition because the modern god-concept doesn't accurately capture the wide variety of uses of the term *nṯr*. ,  and frequently  signify and identify a quality in the subjects to which they are attached. The determinatives associated with *nṯr* may be understood as indicating specific qualities or modes of divine presence, rather than functioning as a fixed definition of the term. Wilkinson (2003, 26-27) similarly treats the term as a quality of divinity rather than as a strictly delimited category. In consideration of the determinative term, Bata may be understood as embodying a form of charisma perceived as a quality of divinity, thus placing him in the category of a god, and among other sacred things and beings, determined as such in the Egyptian imagination.

One of many such divine power embodiments was the king (technically: *nswt*). The real world being at the top of Egyptian society whose will, and behaviour organised their world in the same way as the will and behaviour of a god. This term conveys a relation designating Bata's social and moral position in his society. It places, in the realm of possibility, that he could not be judged by the same social and moral standards that controlled his inferiors.

Bread or *tꜣ*, is a substance, and universally, a food substance about which people hold no contrary opinions regarding its meaning and value. Bread is an edible form of a staple crop—emmer, in ancient Egypt. *tꜣ* represents food, and the conceptually implied, distribution of food. Particularly, in the Egyptian tradition, we find it offered along with beer (another important edible form of a staple crop—barley)[15] in mortuary contexts as part of the formulaic ritual of offering food to the eternal soul of the dead. According to Teeter (2011) the Egyptians were pedantic about the daily offerings, especially their frequency and regularity. She states: "The offerings given to the god are specifically referred to as meals" (Teeter 2011, 47). All ritual activity was done in the name of the king. And this is affirmed in the offering formula: *ḥtp dỉ*

[15] The meaning and value of beer to Bata and Anubis is clear in the story where it functions as the portent of his need. "You will know that something has happened to me when one puts a jug of beer in your hand and it ferments. Do not delay at all when this happens to you" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 206).

nswt or an offering which the king gives. A formula that mostly involved *t* and *ḥnḳt,* bread and beer.

tꜣ, *tꜣwy* or *tꜣw*, a land, two lands or all lands, does not signify anything other than a quantity or extent, which more accurately, is a domain. An area of influence. *tꜣwy* is simply double  when indicating land. Most frequently it identifies a king through the title *nbtꜣwy* or lord of the two lands. Meaning, either the united kingdom or the two sides of the Nile. The east and west banks, which is to say, the land of the living and the land of the dead, both of the two states of existence.

On the terms communicated by ***Bꜣtꜣ*** we have covered the variety of ways in which any of them could be used, the differences between the things they refer to and their similarity to each other. But still, what exactly is the ***Bꜣtꜣ*** proposition?

3.4.2 Bata and the Osirian Model

The exposition and resolution from Act One to Act Three have Bata, as a divine being in the dying domain, connected to kingship, the consumable form of the staple crop and constrained to a brotherly relationship. These terms place him in the Osirian category of ancient Egyptian topics.

God, in ancient Egypt, was a reference to the divinity, charisma, and actionable power of any person, animal, or perceived natural or cosmic pattern. It follows then, that god-identities, in this context overlapped through processes like syncretism. In such cases, gods could be combined, based on the evident premise that one manifested the characteristic mode of action associated with another. Which is to say, they shared the same essential terms. Being divine, in the Egyptian context, may be understood not as a fixed ontological state but as the manifestation of particular qualities and modes of action within a broader symbolic and cosmological framework (Assmann 2001; Wilkinson 2003). In this sense, a god is best understood as the embodiment of a patterned form of behaviour, expressed through the convergence of attributes, functions, and narrative action. Bata was the material substance and form of Osirian divinity. Performing the function of Osiris.

The two gods share the same predicates.[16] So intuitive logic would simply have been the recognition and acknowledgment of the specific actionable power of one god like Osiris, in another material, like Bata. In which case we expect descriptions like those in Act One (Papyrus

[16] The same descriptive vocabulary applies to both.

d'Orbiney 1,3-1,4): "He was the one who did the plowing, and he harvested for him. He was the one who did for him all kinds of labour in the fields. Indeed, his young brother was an excellent man. There was none like him in the whole land, for a god's strength was in him" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204). The reference is to a domain while the preceding agricultural terms are evident facts of reality.

The grammar provided Osirian terms for the audience's knowledge of what Bata was. These terms were used in the same way for both. Meaning there was neither a difference in name or kind between *ꜣsỉr* (Osiris) and *Bꜣtꜣ* (Bata) other than that of sound. To briefly and broadly outline[17] the invariable use of their terms in myth. Like Bata, Osiris was human. He was killed by his murderously jealous brother and went through the process of resurrection and transfiguration. Gahlin (2014, 58-61) précised the Osiris cycle using Plutarch's version supplemented by some isolated Egyptian sources.[18] Osiris was believed to have civilised the entire region by teaching people how to farm the land and conduct themselves according to unwritten moral rules. In Act One, Bata has this Osirian *techne* like none other in the land. And his actionable power is declared directly by the wife of Anubis: "There is great strength in you. I see your vigour daily" (Papyrus d'Orbiney 3,6). Osiris, "During his reign as king of Egypt, he taught his subjects how to make bread and wine" (Gahlin 2014, 59). In Act One, Papyrus d'Orbiney 1,5-1,6 Bata serves his immediate community in the same way. After his material death, Osiris became king of the underworld. Bata is similarly rewarded in Act Two, Papyrus d'Orbiney 9,6-9,7. In his casket, Osiris's dead body drifted across the Mediterranean to Byblos, where it was resorbed into a tree. Bata's *axis mundi* is clear throughout Act Two from Papyrus d'Orbiney 8,9-9,1. The Osiris tree was felled and made into a palace column. In Act Two, Papyrus d'Orbiney 12,6-12,7 the Bata tree is felled and then another Bata tree which forms part of the palace is felled in Act Three, Papyrus d'Orbiney 18,2-18,3. The comparison at this level could keep going. For instance, Osiris was dismembered in a feud with his brother. Bata performed the self-castration in disputation with his brother. These are only some observable terms of Osirian myth, but already they are all affirmative for our Bata story. We observed the same state of physical and metaphysical being, quality of actionable power, consumable staple substance and quantity or area of influence. While Osirian myth was certainly not limited to these terms, Bata, to the grammatical extent of his name, is.

We have demonstrated the same middle terms used for Bata and Osiris, but some clarity is required for the assertion that Bata is Osiris in a different myth. This is the mushy foundation

[17] Osiris myths are extremely well-known.
[18] There is no known coherently organised myth of Osiris in the Egyptian tradition.

stone at the base of the Dundes (2002) dispute, to which Hollis (2003) responded. Dundes made the proposition of Bata's guilt by focusing on the words used. Hollis made her deductions in terms of ancient Egyptian linguistic usage and cultural context. Their arguments were not addressing the same topic. Bata does not have an unlimited range for the use of the terms that identify him. On this basis, divinity may be understood as the expression of a consistent pattern of qualities and actions, allowing figures within the narrative to be identified according to the roles they embody. By identifying and ordering the elements evident in the primary source, we can observe the basic system of knowledge. What and who we are talking about is properly identified in the general grammar. Bata is the role of Osiris in this drama. The range of terms that dictate his behaviour is the Osirian model. Idiomatically, he is a creature who moves in predestined grooves. Bata was limited in values and virtues to the paragon that was ancient Egypt's most prominent god in "monarchical ideology and popular religion as god of death, resurrection and fertility" (Wilkinson 2003, 118).Our foundational principle is the principle of identity: a thing is what it is. A is always A; it cannot simultaneously be A and something else. This identity does not depend on external confirmation in order to be valid. From this principle, we reason causal connections. Entities act according to what they are, and the nature of the acting entity determines the character of its actions. An entity, therefore, cannot consistently act in contradiction to its own nature. If the narrative consistently attributes to Bata the predicates that define the Osirian model, then his identity within the logic of the narrative must correspond to that model.

3.4.3 Beloved of Re

If Bata therefore embodies the Osirian model within the narrative, the question remains why the solar deity Re intervenes on his behalf. Bata's name implies that he was understood to be an extension of Osirian divinity. He was the *bꜣ*(*w*), or soul of the being believed to have been the first king, the spirit of the dead king. A chthonic god in human form, exercising a human will in historical conditions. According to Wilkinson (2003) "the human origin, vulnerability, and resurrection of the god and the emphasis on family devotion and loyalty which runs through the Osirian myths meant that Osiris was viewed as a benign deity, who represented the clearest idea of physical salvation available to the ancient Egyptian" (Wilkinson 2003, 119-120). It follows then, that the nature of all Bata's actions was caused and predestined by the nature of the type of entity that he was. He could not act in contradiction to any, and all, of the Osirian terms that he shared. Working with human hands, reasoning with a human mind and feeling with a human heart are the predicates of his virtues, not his weaknesses.

Observe the following images, which constitute iconographic standards for Osiris. They agree with the grammatical description and our demonstrated understanding of the name Bata.

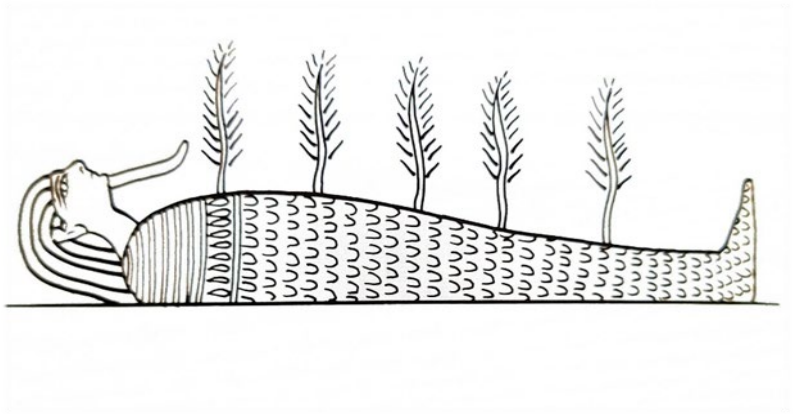

***Figure 2**: The grain predicate of Osirian bꜣ(w). This image from Wilkinson (2003, 122) is a Coffin detail, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.*



***Figure 3**: The phallic predicate is an explicit confirmation of our assertion that Osiris and Bata act in the same domain. The image from Wilkinson (2003, 119) is of a papyrus scene from the Egyptian Museum, Cairo. It also appears in the tomb of Rameses IX and other funerary papyri.*

The two figures require a demonstration that we are not simply addressing parallel or converging words and icons but the reality of the same being. This requires further unpacking of the concept *bꜣ*(*w*).

Wilkinson (2003) offered Figure 3 as a phallogocentric image of Osiris connected to Re. Observe the *ḫpr-rꜥ* which is the beetle pulling the sun while being pushed by the rising *ꜣsỉr* phallus. The term *ꜣsỉr* is generally defined by its connection to the word *wsr* which means powerful. Osiris, consequently, means mighty one. Figure 2 captures all of our ***Bꜣtꜣ*** terms in a single image of *ꜣsỉr*. Soul, God, King, Bread and Land in the funerary context. But through what natural flow of intuitive thought was Bata Osiris and what was the Re connection?

3.4.3.1 The Soul

Here, we intend to address only the perceived metaphysical aspect of an entity. What concept did the average Egyptian imagine based on this perception? For Redford (2001, 161) the Egyptian meant something like the social reputation of an entity as estimated by others. Human, god and grain could all be valued by their perceived *bꜣ*(*w*). To make this more obvious, something could become so valuable to a culture that reference to its formal essence became the standard for estimating other entities. This applied to all phenomena. For instance, the effect of the sun in Egypt would be perceived, conceptualised and expressed as the *bꜣ* (soul) of Re. By the same reasoning Redford (2001, 161) offered the Apis bull as the soul or *bꜣ* (soul) of Osiris. For the modern mind, the *bꜣ* could be, in this respect, thought of as a metaphysical will representing itself in different material substances throughout the history of a culture but always remaining the same will and therefore, always having the same value in terms of action, effect and meaning. According to Aristotle, *De Interpretatione:* "A name is a spoken sound significant by convention, without time, none of whose parts is significant in separation" (*De Interpretatione* 16a19–20). It was through the representation of an ancient soul in a new circumstance that behaviour became custom, and through reflection upon that custom, it became imperative moral behaviour. Pritchard (2011, 11) stated that our subject was a story limited to Nineteenth Dynasty entertainment and was void of any moral intentions. But, on Bata (Act One), "Why, the strength of a god was with him" (Pritchard 2011, 11). Based on that statement and the proposition of his theophoric name, we submit that the Egyptian audience knew exactly who's strength was with Bata (Papyrus d'Orbiney 1,4) and exactly what kind of strength it was—and this much was certain from the meaning of his name—***Bꜣtꜣ***. That is, he was the Nineteenth Dynasty representation of the *bꜣ* of Osiris. Bata was consequently expected to embody the nature and values of Egypt's most characteristic divinity. Custom would act as biological heredity or instinct in him as an individual. He would possess the appropriate conscience that was derived from the feeling of uneasiness in response to the mention of anything that deviated from custom.[19] This was the foundation of his moral code and the great task of morals in a society is always, first and foremost, to regulate sexual behaviour, especially when one possesses the soul of a fertility god.

[19] The conventional co-operative family unit as the bedrock of an ordered society here being the custom from which deviation was offered. Bata's reaction: "See here—you are like a mother to me, and your husband is like a father to me! Because—being older than I—he was the one who brought me up. What (iv 1) is this great crime which you have said to me? Don't say it to me again!" (Pritchard 2011, 12).

3.4.3.2 Re-animation

Being Osiris, the audience expected that Bata was going to die and be re-animated. The Osirian form could be expressed in different substances. But he would be dying according to his values. It would be with characteristic displays of human emotion, vulnerability and emphasising family loyalty and devotion. This hero of Egyptian myth is not going to reject the customs and principles of the society he represents. His moral code fits him into the whole society and means that his individual conscience could be perceived as a collective social consciousness. He acts in the interests of the group. Which means that his death displays the depth of his faith in the rules that order his people.

As evidenced in Figure 3, by the New Kingdom, the slow magic of syncretism had innovated the myths involving Osiris and Re. The resurrection process exemplified by grain-Osiris, during this period, animated the rising sun of every new day. Which is to say that the restorative *bꜣ* of Osiris now assisted the *bꜣ* of Re. Sun and seed became two elements of one concept, Re-Osiris or Osiris-Re were equally valid. Osiris, the righteous man-god who suffered the jealous cruelty of another god must also be assisted by the godhead (Re) and be rewarded by the other gods (the Ennead) for his virtuous conduct in life. This is the reason Osiris was worshipped in every period of Egyptian history and had become essential to the solar cycle by the New Kingdom. Observe Figure 4 in which the souls (bird icon) of both Re and Osiris meet. While this figure was reproduced from Budge (1908, 63) for its collated iconographic rendering of the *bꜣ* birds, serpent, and Persea tree, corresponding depictions of the same motif with firmer Egyptological grounding are provided from Wilkinson (2003) in Appendix E.3.



Figure 4*: Vignette showing the bird icon for the bꜣ (souls) of Re and Osiris. The divinity of Re in the form of a cat defeats a serpent in front of a Persea tree.*

The image depicts the soul of Re with a solar emblem meeting with the soul of Osiris with the state's crown. Re is then able to slay the demon Apophis, who's intention was to

swallow the sun. Re then was able to rise as *ḫpr-rˁ,* who was observed in Figure 3 (also aided by Osiris). New Kingdom Osiris was essential to the daily re-animation of Egypt. It was his *bꜣ* that invigorated Re's *bꜣ,* which brought vitality to materials on earth. According to Assmann (2001, 44), this was the energy that brought the statues of gods to life in the daily temple rituals conducted by priests. The idea behind the ritual is referred to in the Eighteenth Dynasty *Instructions of Any*: "God of this earth is the sun in the sky, While his images are on earth; When incense is given them as daily food, The lord of risings is satisfied" (Hallo 2003, 133).[20] Osiris was the god of the land, *Bꜣtꜣ*—literally being the soul of the land—manifesting as the sun in the sky.

The idea we presented here is that Bata is essential to Re's nature in this period. Being Osiris, as Budge's vignette demonstrated, he was part of the solar cycle myth at this point in ancient Egyptian history. The soul of the land and of the bread was beloved by Re. And this would explain the godhead's unswerving support to Bata throughout the plotted logic of *the Two Brothers*. That is, despite the accusation. To consider Re's intervention from the Dundes (2002) perspective. If Bata were guilty of the assault, Re's intervention would imply that the Egyptian godhead itself acts unjustly. It then follows that his intervention to save Bata from the demands of both Anubis and his wife introduces the idea of *Deus ex machina*. Meaning that Re, against the moral code of the society[21] that venerates him, aids a guilty Bata very early in the plot only to let him die immediately afterwards. From what we observed as the relationship between Osiris and Re in the New Kingdom, it follows that the soul of the land has the same relationship with the godhead. Which is, assisting each other in the expression of their *nṯr*. Here the god of the land and the sky, the judge of the dead and the animator of life, the growth of the seed and cycle of the sun operate as a tandem soul of New Kingdom Egypt. Re aids and rewards Bata for his obvious virtues in the Osirian tradition. Bata, despite being the soul of a fecundity god, had self-regulated his own reproductive instinct for the benefit of an ordered family structure. But if Bata was the Osirian soul of a body that was the entire state of Egypt, what exactly was his duty?

[20] Note that the first mention of earth refers to land. "The god of this land is the sun in the sky" (Assmann 2001, 44).

[21] As seen in Act One from Bata, specifically in Papyrus d'Orbiney 4,1, straightforward adultery was against the social ethic before even introducing the idea that he would contravene the customs around sexual morality in the manner of a Seth-type character.

3.4.4 Bata the Conservative

The will of Osiris embodied as Bata, no matter how virtuous it was, must invariably encounter changing circumstances and new problems and be estimated accordingly. In the exposition, life was stable, first and second-born brothers worked together in the field, and the wife of the former was content braiding her hair at home in the village. Everything was in idyllic order. But like Gilgamesh, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jonah, and even Rama[22] in the Indian epic, *the Ramayana*, Bata was called to action by divinity.

Our story's embodiment of the will of Anubis (the god who dignifies the process of death through the performance of appropriate rituals) commands Bata to act.[23] "And [their hearts] were very pleased with this work they had undertaken. And many days later, when they were in the field, they had need of seed. Then he sent his younger brother, saying: "Hurry, fetch us seed from the village" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204). Leading up to this fully pleased and content of heart condition, Bata had been acting and growing according to his nature, that of a fecundity god. He had provided every good thing of the field for the couple he served and was so prolific at agro-pastoralism that he could communicate with their cattle. "And he [returned] to his house in the evening, laden with all kinds of field plants, and with milk, with wood, and with every [good thing] of the field. He placed them before his [elder brother], as he was sitting with his wife" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204). This far, the nature of the events is not in contradiction to the nature of the entity causing the event. Even communication with cattle is logically consistent within the narrative tradition.

3.4.4.1 Deviant or Obedient

At this point, we know the funerary and fecundity nature of the entity being called to action. So, we know the cause and the effect. The cause is Bata, and the effect is death and self-renewal. What we need is a specification on where he is sent to understand the intention of the call to action by Anubis, god of funerary ritual and kingship. What we have in Anubis's command is an official doctrine. Although it is certainly shared with his wife, authority appears to be held by Anubis, who, after the passing of much time[24] has noticed a dead seedbed in need

[22] Called by the eminent and saintly sage, former king: "Viswamithra" (Narayan 1972). A particularly apt turn of phrase lends its weight to the requirement that the hero depart: "A seed that sprouts at the foot of its parent tree remains stunted until it is transplanted" (Narayan 1972, 9). All references to the *Ramayana* follow the prose adaptation of R. K. Narayan (1972).

[23] One must be aware here that Anubis was originally the god associated with kingship and the afterlife. Historically, he precedes Osiris as the divinity of that sphere of activity. Over time Osiris incorporated Anubis terms which are evidenced by the appropriation of his titles. By the end of our story Anubis will succeed Bata on the throne and return to the original state of affairs.

[24] In Act One, the author stresses the passing of time. The call to action is made: "Now [AFTER] MANY [DAYS] AFTER THIS, they were in the fields and ran short of seed" (Pritchard 2011, 12). And many days were

of Bata's unique qualities and abilities. The conditions for renewal are evident in the passing of time, but is Bata heading to the wife, the house, or the village?

If he is being called to journey to Anubis's wife, it implies something similar to that which Pirson (2004) proposed about Potiphar intentionally offering his wife to Joseph. This perspective would make Dundes's (2002) view of Bata as a deviant extend to Anubis for initiating and offering his wife.[25] If, however, Bata was called to journey to the house or the village, it implies that the old authority, Anubis, had recognised the conditions for the renewal of society, to extend the existing, the field required more seed.[26] Metaphorically, old seeds must be recovered and planted in the dead seedbed to generate abundance. In this respect, we are discussing the self-knowledge and reinvigoration of a society from the smallest unit, the family, upward. Which is to say, that the obedient embodiment of Osirian will, was summoned by his predecessor in customary practice and called to action, to journey from the agro-pastoral country (the past) to civilisation (the present).

This being the case, Bata's fecundity implies the regeneration and renewal of Egypt's old intellectual concepts and customs in the urban conditions that would apparently have required their value. But this requires the period of composition to be a time of decadence, sexual liberty and moral decay in need of a return to conservative customs. The social milieu is evident in the author's description of the lesser characters and their behaviour. Katary (1997) argued her point that our Ramesside (ca.1292-1069 BCE) story portrayed archetypal Egyptian women as evil and assumed the pharaoh of the narrative from Acts Two and Three as "wimpish" (Katary 1997, 51). Proceeding from that premise, Bata, the soul of the land and the soul of the bread, was called to suffer moral hunger, injustice and deviation from tradition in Egypt.

3.4.4.2 Humble Origins

For the metaphorical to be allegorical, our interpretation must be extended, applied and include archaeological evidence. As a form of art, this story is selecting and bringing something into high relief. It is strengthening and weakening selected values—social, moral and religious values. In the Egyptian tradition, there was no concept of *l'art pour l'art*. Egyptian art served practical purposes. Aligning the effect with the cause, *the Two Brothers* appears to have been

already stated to have passed before this. All that can be inferred here is that the land is old and there is an awareness of its incalculable antiquity.

[25] Such a gesture should be considered anomalous in the Egyptian tradition and certainly not a known custom. Proposing that the common Egyptian husband contented himself with his wife's fidelity and orderly family life would not provoke much argument.

[26] From the primary source through all secondary interpretations,  for *niwt* is used, meaning the consensus is that Anubis specifically stated town or at least intended village.

intended as popular entertainment with connotations.[27] What then was Ennana promoting, praising, strengthening, glorifying, or weakening through his art?

By the Eighteenth Dynasty, New Kingdom Egyptian society had evolved in relation to the growth of its middle class. Already at this stage, moralists like Any were addressing their instructions to any member of Egyptian society who had basic education and material comfort. Egypt was an empire, and wealth was spreading to a growing stratum of people who were not nobility and certainly did not have old-fashioned aristocratic values. The *Instructions of Any*, contains an epilogue to accommodate rebuttal. There seems to be an expectation of the instructed for the instructor to change or at least accept that times and people are different. Old virtues had not quite become vice but had become impossible to live up to. In brief, the author and the audience here state that while the instructive virtues are good, this period's people are not. They need the gods to set them right. This is expressed in the following passage:

> "The scribe Khonshotep answered his father, the scribe Any: Do not proclaim your powers, So as to force me to your ways; Does it not happen to a man to slacken his hand, So as to hear an answer in its place? Man resembles the god in his way If he listens to a man's answer. One (man) cannot know his fellow, If the masses are beasts; One (man) cannot know his teachings, And alone possess a mind, If the multitudes are foolish. All your sayings are excellent, But doing them requires virtues; Tell the god who gave you wisdom: "Set them on your path!" (*Instructions of Any*, in Lichtheim 2006, 145).

The people are referred to as a mass of beasts who respect the old ways but have a problem behaving in the appropriate manner. A different method of accustoming the individual to higher social consciousness was required.

In the Nineteenth Dynasty, Sety I took stability of the empire and a cultural return to the old ways very seriously, and his dynastic successors followed suit. His reign was no atavistic throwback. He was applying the old moral code and adjusting it to changing circumstances and especially, changed demographics.[28] Egypt's limits contained and controlled a diverse population. Identity had to be reasserted and competent administration re-imposed, so we

[27] The words carry images, nuances and emotional triggers. The name of the protagonist alone is carrying so much familiar, emotional and psychological content that it would lend itself easily to what a modern reader would consider propaganda.

[28] Egypt, in this period controlled, the Near East and Africa. This was also the period in which the tribes of Hebrews became the nation of Israelites, who would have their stories—featuring the son and successor of Sety I, Ramesses II—remembered. This is why the reader should anticipate and consider Egyptian antecedents to the Hebraic, and subsequent Biblical literature. Exodus, as a whole also betrays some of our epic myth criteria. Disguised Moses, called to action, journeys across the boundaries, finds a grail and establishes the new collective Israelite identity. But that's beyond our purview for this study.

witness his state's strengthening and glorification of the gods who embodied their humble agro-pastoralist origins. Redford (2001, 535–536) notes that Sety I dedicated temples, pylons, and halls to major deities in their traditional cultural centres: Amun in Thebes, Re in Heliopolis, and Ptah in Memphis. This pattern reflects the maintenance and reinforcement of longstanding religious traditions in Egypt's principal cities. However, as Redford (2001:535) observes, Sety I's most profound instinct was to restore Osiris to prominence. At Abydos, he constructed a vast temple that served multiple functions: it was a pantheon for Egypt's chief gods, a memorial temple for the king in his Osirian aspect, and a new sanctuary dedicated to Osiris, built alongside the traditional temple. Behind this complex, Sety I established a subterranean cenotaph known as the Osireion, which was intended for the rites of Osiris and himself. In the sphere of administration, Sety I demonstrated a keen awareness of individual character, appointing capable men to high offices such as the vizier Paser and the cup-bearer and troubleshooter Asha-hebsed. His approach to governance included active efforts to eliminate corruption and abuse, as evidenced by the Nauri decree issued for the great temple at Abydos, which sought to address administrative malpractices.

This trend with the same fierce instinct to maintain traditional Egyptian values through the continuously overspreading empire, continued through the reigns of Ramesses II and Merenptah so it follows that we should expect it to be apparent in the literature of the period. For our next moralist, in the *Instructions of Amenemope*, we encounter a formulation of the ethical ideals characteristic of New Kingdom Egyptian society. The ideal Egyptian is prompted to be receptive and humbly content. "His chief characteristic is modesty. He is self-controlled, quiet, and kind toward people, and he is humble before God" (*Instructions of Amenemope*, in Lichtheim 2006, 146). The honesty, justice, prudence and temperance of the Old Kingdom aristocrat are now advised, but certainly not forced on the average middle-class Egyptian. This moral code even overlaps with the Hebrew proverbs in extent and intent. Observe the values brought to prominence by Amenemope: "Do not desire a noble's wealth, Nor make free with a big mouthful of bread; If he sets you to manage his property, Shun his, and yours will prosper" (*Instructions of Amenemope*, in Lichtheim 2006, 155). "Greater is the might of the threshing floor, Than an oath by the great throne" (*Instructions of Amenemope*, in Lichtheim 2006, 157). These instructional texts articulate the moral and intellectual framework in which the narrative of *the Two Brothers* is situated, allowing the behaviour of Bata to be understood as a dramatic embodiment of these same values within a mythic context.

With the democratisation of the luxury that was New Kingdom Egyptian civilisation came the need to promote their moral and intellectual heritage. And, to inculcate the expected behaviours for diverse individuals who would be naturally inclined to act on their liberties, social, and sexual instincts. Where formal religion and instruction would fall short or only appeal to the few in their empire, entertainment would be useful for indoctrinating the masses described as beasts in the *Instructions of Any*. Thus, the narrative presents Bata not merely as a mythic figure but as the embodiment of Osirian order, whose trials dramatise the renewal of moral and social stability within the Ramesside world.

3.5 In Brief

This chapter examined linguistic, iconographic, and archaeological evidence through Aristotelian presuppositions in order to clarify the identity of the otherwise obscure figure of Bata. Through this approach the first element of the mythic analysis was established, namely the identity of the hero and the nature of his call to action.

Bata was shown to embody an Osirian identity characteristic of the New Kingdom religious imagination. In particular, he was defined as the soul of the land and the soul of the bread. These expressions correspond directly with established Osirian categories of identity and with the agricultural symbolism through which Osiris was understood in Egyptian religious thought. No speculative expansion was required for the roles of Anubis or Re beyond what the narrative itself presents. Anubis stands in relation to Bata in the same way he stands historically and mythologically in relation to Osiris. He appears as a predecessor, mortuary guardian, and facilitator of transition. Re likewise functions within the narrative according to his established theological role. The use of these divine names presupposes a shared framework of faith and mimesis through which the audience could recognise the mythic significance of the events described.

Within this framework Bata represents the living will or operative expression of Osiris. His nature therefore reflects the moral consciousness of Egypt and the value placed upon its inherited customs. Although fecundity is an essential quality of his character, it is inseparable from the chthonic and royal dimensions of Osiris. Fertility in this context does not imply unregulated vitality but vitality ordered through kingship, restraint, and responsibility within the moral structure of society.

The historical setting of the Ramesside empire provides an important context for understanding this representation. The period reveals signs of deliberate efforts to reinforce traditional Egyptian values within an increasingly expansive and socially diverse imperial

environment. Political authorities and moral teachers appear to have used multiple forms of cultural expression to communicate and reinforce accepted standards of conduct. Instruction texts represent one such effort. Narrative literature and entertainment likely served a similar purpose by presenting exemplary figures whose actions reflected the desired moral order.

In this sense the figure of Bata may be understood as the Osirian tradition presented in a form suited to changing historical circumstances while preserving the same fundamental *telos*. The narrative offers an exemplar of Egyptian moral and intellectual heritage in the form of humility in daily labour, respect for established authority, and fidelity to the ordered structure of family life. Bata therefore appears not merely as a divine figure but as a god who shares the conditions of human existence and whose actions model the disciplined expression of divine will within society.

While the theme of fecundity necessarily implies sexual potential, the Osirian framework in which Bata operates suggests that the central episode of the narrative concerns the regulation of relationships between individuals, particularly the sexual relationship between men and women. Such relationships represent a persistent source of tension within human communities. When left without moral regulation they threaten the stability of the household and ultimately the cohesion of society itself.

Seen in this light, the narrative presents Bata as the embodiment of an Osirian moral order in which fertility, authority, and social harmony are held together within a single principle of life. His trials demonstrate that the preservation of that order requires restraint, loyalty, and adherence to custom. The story therefore concludes not simply with the vindication of a wronged hero but with the restoration of the moral equilibrium that sustains Egyptian civilisation.

CHAPTER FOUR: EPIC JOURNEY, OBSTACLE AND CRISIS

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter established the identity of the d'Orbiney hero and demonstrated the circumstances that initiated his movement into the narrative action. Bata was shown to embody the Osirian principle within the story and to exemplify the moral qualities associated with Egypt's traditional social order. His call to action emerged from the disruption of that order within the household of Anubis. Having identified the hero and the event that compelled his departure, the analysis now turns to the next major phase of epic narrative: the hero's withdrawal and ordeal.

In epic composition, the journey of the hero frequently begins with a departure from the social world in which the narrative first situates him. This movement often involves separation, conflict, and prolonged absence from the community whose order he previously embodied. Lord (1967, 241-248) demonstrated that traditional epic narratives regularly organise this phase around a recognisable pattern of themes, including the withdrawal of the hero, disguise or concealment, hospitality encountered during wandering, the delayed recognition of identity, the disaster produced during the hero's absence, and the eventual restoration that follows the crisis. These elements tend to occur in predictable association with one another, forming a structural sequence that shapes the middle movement of many epic narratives.

The events that follow Bata's departure from Egypt conform closely to this pattern. Removed from the ordered social world that had defined his earlier life, the hero enters a phase of prolonged absence in which a series of obstacles and confrontations gradually escalate toward a point of crisis. In this portion of the narrative Bata exists outside Egypt's traditional boundaries and must confront dangers that arise precisely because he no longer inhabits the protective structures of kinship, village life, and customary authority. The journey therefore functions as a process of testing in which the hero's nature is revealed through conflict and misfortune.

Central to this phase of the narrative are two anonymous female figures whose actions initiate and sustain the movement of the plot. Their anonymity is not incidental but structurally meaningful, signalling that they function less as individual personalities than as catalysts within the narrative mechanism. Through their actions, the hero is forced into exile, and through their later intervention, the conflict between Bata and the Egyptian king is brought to its point of greatest intensity. The analysis that follows therefore examines both the narrative logic and the cultural symbolism that informs their role in the story.

The chapter proceeds by tracing the sequence of events that constitute the second movement of the narrative. It begins with the hero's withdrawal from Egypt and the conditions of his life beyond its borders. The discussion then turns to the anonymous women whose actions precipitate the escalation of the conflict, followed by an examination of the symbolic and social framework that informs their behaviour. The final sections analyse the obstacles confronting the hero, the crisis generated by the betrayal of his secret, and the catastrophe that culminates in Bata's death in the Valley of the Pine. Through this sequence, the narrative advances toward its lowest point, preparing the transformation and restoration that follow in the subsequent chapter.

4.2 The Hero's Withdrawal

With the inciting conflict resolved through Bata's self-mutilation and the exposure of the false accusation, the narrative moves into the next structural phase of epic composition: the withdrawal of the hero. Bata leaves the ordered environment of the household and departs from the settled life that had previously defined him. The text describes his movement away from Egypt's cultivated land toward a remote and liminal landscape where he establishes a dwelling in the Valley of the Pine. In narrative terms, this relocation marks the transition from the social world of the exposition to the uncertain terrain in which the hero's ordeal will unfold.

The significance of this withdrawal is both geographic and structural. In the opening scenes of the narrative, Bata had lived within the stable rhythms of Egyptian agrarian life. His identity had been defined by labour in the fields, obedience to his elder brother, and conformity to the moral expectations of the household. The accusation and its aftermath disrupt this equilibrium and make his continued presence within that social structure impossible. Withdrawal therefore becomes the necessary consequence of the conflict. The hero is separated from the society whose moral order he represents and is placed in a setting where his nature will be tested through new circumstances.

In epic narratives, this removal from the familiar world frequently serves to initiate the sequence of obstacles that shape the hero's journey. As noted by Lord (1967, 241-242), the withdrawal of the hero often takes the form of a prolonged absence that becomes the structural condition through which subsequent narrative elements unfold. Bata's relocation beyond Egypt's traditional boundaries performs precisely this function. His absence from the land introduces a space in which other characters may act against him, while simultaneously exposing him to encounters that would not have arisen within the protected environment of the household.

Despite the apparent isolation of this setting, the hero's withdrawal does not represent a state of deprivation. The narrative emphasises that the gods themselves intervene to provide for Bata's continued existence. A dwelling is established for him and divine assistance ensures that he possesses all that is necessary for life. In this respect the hero enters a condition that may be described as life in *potentia*: a state of suspended possibility in which his nature remains active but is no longer constrained by the ordinary structures of Egyptian society. Removed from the immediate obligations of the household, Bata exists in a liminal position between civilisation and wilderness, between human order and divine intervention.

Yet this condition of potentiality also exposes the limitations of the hero's earlier innocence. In the ordered environment of the village Bata's virtues had been expressed through diligence, obedience, and fidelity to customary behaviour. Outside that environment he must confront circumstances that demand new forms of prudence and caution. The narrative therefore begins to introduce the obstacles that will test the hero's character. These challenges emerge gradually through the actions of other figures who, drawn by reports of Bata's extraordinary circumstances, attempt to exploit his situation for their own purposes.

The hero's withdrawal thus initiates the central movement of the narrative's middle act. Removed from Egypt yet still connected to it through the unfolding conflict, Bata enters a phase in which the consequences of earlier events continue to reverberate. His absence creates the conditions under which new antagonists will emerge, ultimately leading to the confrontation with the Egyptian king and the catastrophic events that follow.

4.3 The Anonymous Women as Catalysts of Departure

To understand the significance of the two female figures in *the Two Brothers*, it is necessary to turn to the Egyptian symbolic and cosmological framework within which the narrative was composed. Their anonymity is not incidental. It is structurally and philosophically meaningful.

This structural interpretation does not preclude alternative readings. For example, feminist approaches have examined the roles of these female figures in terms of agency, gender dynamics, and their function as narrative catalysts within broader symbolic and social frameworks (Katary 1997). However, the present study remains concerned with their function within the mythic and structural logic of the composition.

The anonymity of the two women is integral to their narrative and symbolic function. In literary and ritual discourse, anonymity often signals an archetypal or universalised role rather than an individual personality. By withholding personal names, Ennana situates these

figures within a broader symbolic domain, allowing their actions to represent the patterned feminine principles such as seduction, deception, mediation, and ultimately the disruption that precipitates renewal which Goldman (1995) observed as "wiles". Their namelessness underscores their role as catalysts rather than as fully individuated subjects. They embody the feminine force that provokes the hero's departure and transformation without requiring an independent personal identity.

This technique accords with Egyptian mythic convention, in which divine and semi-divine feminine figures often operate through relation, habiliment, and action rather than through named personhood. As Hornung (1992, 41-42) observed, Hathor and related goddesses could be imagined as the "celestial cow" who gives birth to the sun each day, embodying the creative and regenerative principle of the cosmos. This same principle, outlined earlier in our Emic Framework, is also visibly present in the bovine motifs presiding over the Narmer Palette registers,[29] where they signify divine oversight, cosmic legitimacy, and the renewal of order. It is this universal quality that makes the anonymous feminine ritually legible to the Egyptian audience and places these figures at the structural fulcrum of Bata's ordeal.

This Hathoric and bovine symbolism belongs to a broader symbolic vocabulary that pervades Egyptian material and mythic expression. Among the most significant of these complementary motifs is the Persea tree, the vegetal image associated with lasting fame and eternal life for those whose names were inscribed upon it. As Gahlin (2014, 82-84) notes, the sacred Persea tree functions in Egyptian iconography as a visible expression of continuity and rebirth, frequently appearing in contexts where divine order is re-established or cosmic harmony renewed. Read in this symbolic register, Bata's renewal is not merely a literary device but a philosophical act, ritually intelligible to an Egyptian audience accustomed to reading such images as manifestations of divine order. Schneider (1997, 46-47) likewise notes that the king, guided by *mꜣʿt*, was responsible for protecting and perfecting the cosmos with Egypt at its centre, while Assmann (2001, 231) describes kingship as a "manifestation of divine will" in the human sphere. Jeffers (1996, 2-4) observes that signs participate in the reality they signify, which is particularly helpful here. The symbols structuring Bata's ordeal would therefore have been legible to an Egyptian audience as morally charged analogues of cosmic significance.

Manniche (1975) and Katary (1997) offered what appears to be an unstable consensus regarding the two wives, namely that they are duplicate embodiments of Hathor and reflect Ennana's commentary on the royal wives of the Amarna period. Yet that conclusion remains

[29] The figures are likely Bat, an earlier manifestation of the celestial cow.

incomplete. First, it is possible to argue more broadly that Egypt's conception of any wife as a social role participates in the wider Hathoric domain. Second, Hathor is identified as a distinct entity within the narrative itself when the seven Hathors appear and pronounce their prophecy concerning Bata's wife: "She will die by the knife" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 207). The women, therefore, cannot simply be equated with Hathor in a narrow personal sense.

Nonetheless,[30] to read the women as Hathoric is to recognise that their role, pattern of behaviour, and symbolic force are being signified. Hathor possesses a wide domain of model behaviour. The implication of Ennana's omission of specific names, together with the observations of earlier scholars, is that we are dealing not with particular substances but with a universal form. Both women in the story should therefore be placed within the wider category formally exemplified by Hathor. They are not, and are never explicitly presented as, fully individuated women. Rather, they are defined through relation, habiliment, and action. This helps explain the similarity in behaviour to which Katary (1997) drew attention, whether in the pairing of Anubis's wife and Bata's motherly language, or Bata's wife and queenly function. The Hathorian terms are distributed throughout the domain.

That domain is admittedly wide, but Egyptian thought nevertheless delimits the manners proper to Hathoric behaviour. This is the pattern we should expect from the distributed wife and mother figures in the narrative. For clarity, in the Egyptian system of knowledge, Hathor is best understood here as the principle through which the author arranged the antagonist's character and organised her actions.

Initiation is necessary for the heroic parvenue. Bata must prove the superiority that has been attributed to him, and for that to happen he must be forced out of the initial state of ordered and idyllic life. The hero's journey requires withdrawal, ordeal, and eventual return. This pattern is not unique to Egypt. In Genesis 3:1-24, Eve precipitates Adam's withdrawal through the shame associated with sexuality.[31] In *the Epic of Gilgamesh*, Shamhat initiates Enkidu's departure from his original condition into the discontent of civilised life.[32] In *the Ramayana*,

[30] Contradiction, even in Egyptian in myth, is exactly the point at which knowledge and understanding have an opportunity to be furthered. They are points for further speculation and deliberation. As has been demonstrated with Osirian essence, the wives are perceived as having Hathorian essence stamped on their character and actions.

[31] "And Adam said: The woman, whom thou gavest me to be my companion, gave me of the tree, and I did eat" (Genesis 3:12 DRV).

[32] "Enkidu had been diminished, he could not run as before. Yet he had acquired judgement, had become wiser" (*Epic of Gilgamesh* I, iv-v)

Kaikeyi is the agent through whom Rama is forced into exile.[33] In each case a feminine figure stands at the threshold between stable order and transformative ordeal.

Whatever item of value is to be found through the hero's withdrawal, a moral boundary appears to be overstepped in the original state of affairs. There is no reason to suppose that the Egyptian story does not participate in this wider narrative logic. Indeed, the moral imperative is expressed with particular clarity in Egyptian wisdom literature. The *Instruction of Any* warns the young man against the unknown woman who ensnares through secrecy, beauty, and the danger of illicit desire.[34] In this respect, the narrative role of the anonymous woman in *the Two Brothers* accords with a recognisable Egyptian moral pattern: she is the agent through whom desire becomes danger and through whom the hero is driven into ordeal.

4.4 Hathor and the Social Logic of the Proposition

4.4.1 Hathor and Mild Matriarchy

Before our Hathorian forms interrupt the peaceful monotony of Bata's life, we must delimit the domain, the variety of terms and their uses for the universal we are attempting to understand. Pinch (2002, 137) described Hathor as a "complex deity."[35] This goddess changes over time; eventually, she was superseded in her attributes and behaviours by the well-known Isis, and ultimately the Greco-Roman world associated her form with their Aphrodite and Venus. Her name is found in so many contexts and over such a long period that the terms mother, wife, consort and even daughter are all used at one point or another.

To get to the operating principle of what appears to be a universal goddess we will briefly pull back some of her outer forms. Her origin is prehistoric, so early representations are difficult to discern. But over her long history, most of her images utilised the cow or a woman wearing bovine icons. The Narmer palette (see Appendix E.3), may depict her as Bat or generic bovine figures in the predynastic context, as she appears in multiplicity as a cosmic deity. Wilkinson (2003, 140) has portrayed her as a sky goddess in his reading of *Pyramid Text 546* and she does appear to endorse or exist as the domain of Egypt's historical kings from both these contexts and the translated meaning of her name. According to Pinch (2002, 137), *ḥwt-*

[33] Kaikeyi, one of Rama's self-professed mothers, is advised by her maid Kooni to use the "spell" that is her charm and beauty to convince Dasaratha to banish Rama which breaks the settled life that Rama has with Sita and gets their epic ordeal going (Narayan 1972, 38).

[34] "Beware of a woman who is a stranger, One not known in her town; Don't stare at her when she goes by, Do not know her carnally. A deep water whose course is unknown, Such is a woman away from her husband. "I am pretty," she tells you daily, When she has no witnesses; She is ready to ensnare you, A great deadly crime when it is heard" (Hallo 2003, 111).

[35] Even by Egyptian standards.

ḥrw (Hathor) means "domain" and her hieroglyph  implies that she was thought to be the realm enclosing the living king (the embodiment of the will of Horus).

Hathor then, was the reality of kingship. But we can specify that iconographic implication a little more through her behaviour in literary Egyptian myth. In *Horus and Seth,* an offended Pre-Harakhti (Re) seeks solitude. "After a long while, Hathor, Lady of the southern sycamore, came and stood before her father, the All-Lord. She uncovered her nakedness before him; thereupon the great god laughed at her. He got up and sat with the great Ennead; and he said to Horus and Seth: "Speak for yourselves!" (*Horus and Seth*, in Lichtheim 2006, 216). Attributed the quality of sexual pleasure (*eros*) she was equally attributed destructiveness *(thanatos*). In the *Destruction of Mankind* part of *The Book of the Cow of Heaven*, Re grew tired of humanity and decided to punish them accordingly. He was advised to: "Let your Eye go and smite them for you, those schemers of evil! No eye is more able to smite them for you. May it go down as Hathor!" (*The Destruction of Mankind*, in Lichtheim 2006, 198-199). In this episode, Hathor goes into an irrational bloodlust that has to be, and evidently can only be, stopped by outwitting and intoxicating her. From that idea, followed the ritually ecstatic aspects of her cult that involved drinking, music and dancing to pacify her and ensure rebirth and continuation. Most notably, the "Festival of Drunkenness" (Redford 2001, 85). All these attributes (proposed through images, literature and ritual action) imply two things, Hathor as a principle is symbolic of female sexuality and, some admission from the authors and adherents of an unknown or uncontrollable instinct.[36] This is likely also the reason for her association and role as a goddess of foreign lands and their resources. According to Wilkinson (2003, 143) she patronised localities as far as Punt and Byblos.

Given enough time we could attribute any number of qualities to Hathor. Having all these for all of Egyptian recorded history and the time preceding it, being in name, everything to the extent that Hathor means domain of Horus. It's reasonable to venture that we can conclude nothing orderly about Hathor, and neither could the Egyptian. What we can confirm is that she is female, the rest is as unknown as the omission of the names of the women in our story.

However, unknown in pagan terms does not imply evil women as Katary (1997) suggested. It is a practical recognition of reality. A shortcoming or limitation on the part of the

[36] Freud (2017) was certainly not around at the time to attribute his love and death instincts to humanity and embody them in one goddess but it does appear that the ancient Egyptians were gesturing in the direction of psychoanalytic theory.

hero referring to human qualities as imperfections. Which is to say that the domain of circumstantial reality reveals human limitations. One can only control and order reality as far as one's fingertips. Everything beyond that boundary is to be thought of as Hathor.

In the *Destruction of Mankind*, Re was upset with humanity, he didn't expect Hathor to go as far as she did and then was unable to stop her. Bata, in our story, does not accuse the woman of being evil but of suggesting an evil thing.[37] These gods were not omniscient and omnipotent in the monotheist Hebraic and Christian intellectual sense. For the Egyptian polytheist, there was no conception of evil embodied in an entity separate from the godhead, not even in Seth. Hathor was a wild card. She was the idyllic garden that was the domain of the king, and in that garden, the snakes also do their thing.

4.4.1.1 Mild Matriarchy

Here we shall venture to move from the hypothetical Hathor as a conceptual consort, to the historical condition of Egyptian women. What was evident about Hathor also stands true of Egyptian women. Which is, that it's too large a category of reality to articulate, understand, or draw any conclusion that would be immune to contradiction. From a cosmic deity to the principle of female sexuality, Hathor conceptually spanned all of the reality we are attempting to understand. That said, Anubis's wife falls into a smaller category that may be tagged as elite woman, while Bata's wife ultimately belongs to the category of royal woman.[38] So, our study could be constrained by class parameters. We are discussing Anubis's unnamed wife (Act One) in the category of elite women and Bata's wife (Act two and Act Three) in the category of royal women. And we won't hide Durant's (1935, 164) considered assumption that in general, the members of any elite adjust the use of their resources to imitate their royals. Which implies that Anubis's wife, to a lesser degree, behaves in the same manner as Bata's, just as any elite would share the manners proper to that of a royal. The limitation being affordability.

We submit that Anubis's wife, being characterised by Hathorian predicates was the dominant reality on their property. One reason is ownership. In Egypt, women inherited, managed and bequeathed property. The legal framework of Egyptian society supports this interpretation. As Robins (1993) notes, women in pharaonic Egypt could "inherit, own, and dispose of property in their own right, enter into business transactions, and appear in court as

[37] "Look, you are like a mother to me; and your husband is like a father to me. He who is older than I has raised me. What is this great wrong you said to me" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 205). Pritchard (2011, 12) translates great wrong as "great crime". In both cases, we are dealing with conceptions of right and wrong conduct, not evil.

[38] Manniche (1975,33) notes that the latter is brought to Egypt and elevated to queenship, receiving the rare title *špst*.

plaintiffs, defendants, or witnesses" (Robins 1993, 136). For example, Redford (2001, 511) cites a Twentieth Dynasty elite woman called Naunakht of the village in Dier el-Medina who had a document composed to transfer properties she inherited, and some that she owned jointly with her husband, to her children as she felt inclined. The administrators of estates "were not automatically male" heirs (Robins 1993, 136). When we consider management, we are not imagining a single household but a large estate of the sort described in Genesis 39, where Joseph is appointed as an "overseer" of Potiphar's house (Genesis 39:4–6 KJV). The elite Egyptian woman organised resources and labourers in production on a fully functioning farm, notably and appropriately, food production was traditionally her domain. She was the agent of threshing, grinding and converting grain to bread. To imagine Anubis's position in this Hathoric domain we refer again to their moralist, Any: "Do not control your wife in her house, When you know she is efficient; Don't say to her: "Where is it? Get it!" When she had put it in the right place. Let your eye observe in silence, Then you recognize her skill;" (*Instructions of Any*, in Lichtheim 2006, 143). We cannot claim that this was the *modus operandi* at home but certainly that this was the aspirational moral ideal. The author, audience and characters understood that Bata (Act One) was entering the domain of the *nbt pr*, the "Lady of the House" (Sasson 1995, 374). Consider that conceptual Hathor represented the kingship perimeter, her irrational and uncontrollable savagery in going about her duty, and her traditional duty as the agent of threshing, grinding and converting grain to bread. Then consider that Bata is a subordinate manifestation of the grain god of bread entering her domain. And the first thing Bata does when he finds her seated and braiding her hair[39] is announce an order: "Get up, give me seed, so that I may hurry to the field, for my elder brother is waiting for me. Don't delay" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204).

Observe her response: "Go open the storeroom and fetch what you want. Don't make me leave my hairdo unfinished" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204). Bata submits and follows her instruction. The audience at this point, is aware that Bata is vulnerable as a man, a subordinate and as the soul of the grain god. He has encountered the limit of his original reality. And that some sort of violent death, conceptually imagined as splitting chaff from grain, is in store for him.[40] With Egypt's mild matriarchy and the formal nature of their hero's vulnerability,

[39] Symbolically weaving, which was another traditionally female duty.

[40] This is well-known Middle Eastern agricultural imagery that extends from pre-classical Osirian-type antecedents to present-day Christianity. For instance, in Matthew 3:12: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12 KJV). It's also evidently useful in the Islamic tradition, Surah 21:15: "And this their crying ceased not till We made them as reaped corn, extinct" (Qur'an 21:15).

death and resurrection, Bata had reached the threshing floor and was about to witness the skilful hand of the Lady of the house. This violent agricultural imagery continues through his successive deaths at the hands of his wife who has him felled (Act Two), slaughtered (Act Three) and felled again (Act Three) in his successive Pine, Bull and Persea forms.

At this point the hierarchy governing the scene has already been established. Anubis's wife occupies the position of the *nbt pr*, the Lady of the House, whose domain includes the management of resources, labour, and the productive processes associated with grain and bread. Bata, by contrast, enters this space as a subordinate figure and as the symbolic manifestation of the grain itself. Within such a hierarchy, initiative and desire are not expected to move upward from inferior to superior but downward from superior to inferior. The narrative situation therefore prepares the conditions under which the proposition must occur.

4.4.2 The Social Logic of the Proposition

Before we submit that Anubis's wife made the proposition of adultery,[41] we must take the social hierarchy that we've introduced into account. In Act One she is the Lady of the house and recognised as a universal mother figure, in addition to a particular Bata's mother figure. Our standard of reasoning is the principle of non-contradiction. When we consider the convention that emotion and passion move downward from superior to inferior,[42] we must accept that it can only go this way in our scene. The association can be divided as such. Bata's value is estimated by his utility. Hathor's function corresponds to her activity and is perfected by pleasure. In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle observes: "Benefactors are thought to love those they have benefited, more than those who have been well treated love those that have treated them well" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1167b16–18). Simply put, the benefactor imagines the object of their action to be grateful and expects their gratitude.

The inferior is unlikely to offer a sexual dalliance to the superior, let alone impose it. For instance, the epithet 'beloved' demonstrates the direction of love, *mry* or *mry*(*t*), from the superior to the inferior person. Love is, by nature, excessive passion. The position of the superior is that she can delight in the object of her action through her natural function and activity. Not even when the inferior is the speaker will the direction of affection move upward from inferior to superior. This can be observed on the *Stela of Thutmose IV* offering to Hathor,

[41] This is the main point of disputation. Fundamentally, according to Hollis's (2003) continuing dialogue, Dundes (2002) values the latent content more than what is explicit in the text. But his latent content is more his own attribution than what should be considered latent content from the Egyptian tradition.

[42] Conventionally, the master needs the slave, the slave does not need the master. One would be hard-pressed to observe evidence of masters breaking free of their slaves and slaves pursuing their masters. Authority, and consequently responsibility, disproportionately are the burden of the superior.

lady of sycamore, from Giza where  means *mry ḥwt-ḥrw*, beloved of Hathor. Here, even though Thutmose is active in making the offering, he is the inferior beloved of the superior goddess. The inferior is potentiality waiting for the handiwork of the superior's activity for his perfection.

This is also demonstrated in love poetry where the man usually addresses the woman. The *Papyrus Harris 500* offers a demonstration of the male voice: "The mansion of my sister, With door in the center of her house, Its door-leaves are open, The bolt is sprung, My sister is angry! If only I were made doorkeeper! Then I would make her rage at me, Then I would hear her angry voice, And be a child in fear of her!" (*Papyrus Harris 500*, in Lichtheim 2006, 189-190). This verse was chosen specifically because it displays something uniquely Egyptian, the expression of male vulnerability in this domain. Even more unique to Egypt and rare in Near Eastern literature, we get the active female voice expressing her feelings: "My heart thought of my love of you, When half of my hair was braided; I came at a run to find you, And neglected my hairdo. Now if you let me braid my hair, I shall be ready in a moment" (*Papyrus Harris 500*, Lichtheim 2006, 191). Here we observe the same imagery of Anubis's wife braiding her hair, which suggests her amorous intentions for Bata who had entered her house. We must also be cognisant of the idea that the superior is entirely responsible for the outcome of acting in these situations. Note the Nineteenth Dynasty case of Paneb, according to Sasson (1995, 375), being accused of adultery, this Deir el-Madina foreman was found entirely to blame for the seduction of wives and their daughters. He was held accountable for adultery, specifically because he was their superior and they were thought to not have been in a position to resist his enamoured intent.

Similar reasoning to the Paneb case was offered by Abasili (2011) as a meta-narrative governing the ancient adultery committed by the Biblical figures David and Bathsheba in 2 Samuel 11 (2 Samuel 11 KJV). Which is that, with such a precise social hierarchy governing them, it was not possible for Bathsheba to refuse any attempt by King David to act on his sexual lust for her. His socio-political power dominated their interactions and coerced her into non-consensual adultery. In consideration of the historical punishments for adultery, Bathsheba risked too much to consent. This path of reason allows for the modern definition of rape to apply. "Rape in the contemporary parlance denotes, among other things, the abuse of another through engaging in a non-consensual sexual act that is perpetrated by the use of intimidation, domination, subjugation and/or violence. Here the intimidation or domination need not be

physical; it may be psychological, emotional, political and so on. In addition, the victim and/or rapist can be male or female as the case may be" (Abasili 2011, 14).

Nineteenth Dynasty Paneb's behaviour was evidently estimated and measured by a very sophisticated meta-narrative governing these types of crimes. Egyptian legal sources are not always clear in distinguishing between different forms of sexual accusation. As one study of the Deir el-Medina judicial texts observes, "it is difficult to actually distinguish these two offenses from each other within the sources," since in known cases the question of the woman's consent "is never discussed" (Van Loon 2014, 11-12). This ambiguity is significant for interpreting the accusation against Bata. The narrative presents the charge not through a formal legal inquiry but through the immediate testimony of the woman within the household. The absence of investigation reflects a broader cultural context in which accusations of sexual misconduct could function socially and morally even without juridical clarification.

May we suggest then, that the constraints evidently imposed on our historical precedent of the same period, apply to our conceptual dominant and vulnerable subjects. Anubis's wife made the proposition of adultery from her superior social position through emotional and even economic intimidation. But she did not expect him to refuse because he was not in a position to do so, hence the need for her subsequent theatrical claim, the rape-hoax. However, whether he did or did not engage may well be meaningless, as in Paneb's case, the superior would inevitably be found responsible on the same grounds. Consequently, the hoax was absolutely essential for Anubis's wife.

Dundes's (2002, 387-388) claim that Bata was latently attracted to her premised on an Oedipal instinct is axiomatic for any conception of a Hathoric form. That Hathoric figures necessarily are attractive is inherent to the predicates of the category. But in the Egyptian tradition, the attribution of appetite, desire and even lust should be to Hathor. She was customarily the mother or wife of Horus, the mother or wife of the king and the wife or daughter of Re.[43] The tradition certainly inclines the scene of tension more toward a Jocasta complex than Oedipal. Doubtless, Bata was expected to be in awe of her, in the same sense that Bathsheba could not refuse David, and the wives and daughters of villages were understood incapable of refusing Paneb. They were not in a social position to think or act otherwise on the proposition of their superior. They were not expected to assert their will against such an entity.

[43] We have covered her as the eye of Re, but most of her complex relationships as a wife or mother or daughter to Horus, the living king, and Re respectively were catalogued by Wilkinson (2003, 140-142). Her myths reflect the lives and relations of Egyptian royals and nobles, in which incest, infrequently, was acceptable. Labouring commoners on the other hand, according to Durant (1935, 164), were content with monogamy.

We are tempted to add, that Bata may have been expected to be flattered and grateful for her objectifying interest and condescending compliments on his physique, strength and the offer of the accoutrements of higher status. “There is great strength in you. I see your vigour daily” (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204). “And she desired to know him as a man. She got up, took hold of him, and said to him: Come, let us spend an hour lying together. It will be good for you. And I will make fine clothes for you” (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 204-205). Bata declined her offer. And we should not think this unusual in the broader Near Eastern tradition because, Biblical Joseph aside, Gilgamesh, was also disposed to decline the lustful advance of his goddess Ishtar (who became similarly vengeful after her objectifying gaze was rebuffed).[44] However, for a god whose nature it is to be destroyed, death is a virtue that brings future life. And so, Bata’s threshing began according to her device. Aristotle observes that character is revealed through the choices embodied in action, for “character in a play is that which reveals the choice of the agents” (*Poetics* 1450b8–9). As later summarized in the classical tradition of the trivium: “Thought and action reveal character” (Joseph 2002, 236). Since character is disclosed through the choices embodied in action, the conduct of Anubis’s wife must be evaluated in light of her actions within the narrative sequence. These actions do not readily support an interpretation of her as Bata’s victim.[45]

4.5 Obstacle and Withdrawal

The accusation against Bata introduces the first decisive obstacle within the narrative. Once the charge has been believed by Anubis, the situation of the household becomes irreparably unstable. Bata can no longer remain within the same social and moral space without confronting immediate danger. The narrative therefore moves from accusation to withdrawal. Bata flees from his brother and abandons the household, initiating a separation that will structure the subsequent development of the story. The obstacle created by the accusation thus produces the first major displacement within the action.

“Then the youth became like a leopard in his anger over the wicked speech she had made to him; and she became very frightened” (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 205). Here we observe the reaction of a traditional soul to a conceptual noble’s inclination for corruption. This is precisely the problem of the period that we’ve already seen the moralists of their wisdom attempting to eradicate it. Egypt was an empire with lucre pouring in from Africa

[44] Ishtar displays the same approach as Bata’s Hathorian figure, offering the trappings of status: “I shall have a chariot of lapis lazuli and gold harnessed for you, With wheels of gold” (*Epic of Gilgamesh* VI, i).

[45] Though, like Ishtar, she could be classified as a victim of unrequited love. If, in categorical error, we generously attributed human action to a privation.

and the Near East. The average Egyptian was now wealthy, cosmopolitan and tempted to ignore traditional customs and antiquated ethical instructions.[46] The *nouveau riche* necessarily required some sort of imperative governor to be placed on their capability and their newfound opportunities to abuse their social inferiors. Which is to say that religion was now required to bind elite passions and appetites with the intention to prevent a Dionysian frenzy. Bata's self-restraint and precise anger re-asserted Old Kingdom morality as early as Act One. Especially in the sense that he offered to keep his mouth shut and her reputation upheld. We refer to the *Instruction of Ptahhotep* on the ancient and didactically repeated virtue of silence: "Guard against reviling speech" (*Instruction of Ptahhotep*, in Lichtheim 2006, 65). Despite her perverse conduct, Bata's atavistic morality guides him to act in an agreeable manner and with respect for her reputation. His naivety in this choice makes him an accomplice in vice and subsequently vulnerable to unjust injury.

There was a social need for the rule so Bata's journey proceeds when Anubis's wife, in a state of paranoia and anxiety, conjures her trick. There are two possible scenarios she is connoted to have considered based on our knowledge of Egyptian society. One, adultery was a punishable crime, in which case she was fearful of the punishment she would inevitably bear. And two, the problem of guilt being that she made a bad decision when she could have been her respectable divine self and she was disappointed, even angry, with herself for flouting her own values. While she had the appearance of an elite, she decided to be something else.[47] Consequently, Bata's references to her change, by extension, it follows that intention was more important for the author than the act or consequence for both these characters and Egyptian morality on the whole. This is another reason for the story's religious slant, meaning that Bata's journey is the anagogical journey of Egypt's soul from exploitation, disregard, death and re-emergence to regain control of its body of people. The type of soul it is will be evident in the obstacles ahead. For now, we have an imperative for a moralistic epic myth, Bata has a destiny, and through imitation Egypt will learn how to act.

[46] As we observed the argumentative respondent Khonshotep makes his point on the foolish masses and their disinclination to follow moralistic instructions on virtue.

[47] Keep in mind Hathor's mythic terms, she is effective in her domain but inclined to liberality and excess. In the *Destruction of Mankind* we observe her tendency to exceed in those things she finds pleasurable, even when her restraint is required: "Welcome in peace, Hathor, Eye who did what I came for! Said the goddess: "As you live for me, I have overpowered mankind, and it was balm to my heart" (*The Destruction of Mankind*, in Lichtheim 2006, 199). In this extract, Hathor took her pleasure in slaughtering mankind and consequently developed a bloodlust. Even Re could not order her to stop and instead resorted to duplicity. He had to deceive her to make her stop.

4.5.1 Obstacle

We were introduced to Bata the anomalous man, and we were told of his feats of god-like physical strength, he also had the ability to communicate with his herd, which was described as listening to the opinion of his cattle and catering for them. This is why they were healthy and abundant. We also know that he was beloved by Re in the historical and the conceptual sense. Re, as a symbolic ray of light and universal icon of justice, intervenes to assist Bata. In our pivotal scene, Bata exclaimed and maintained a conservative moral standard. Which he did not enforce by using his attributes but rather he attempted to reason the consent of his peers.

The categorical sexual assault hoax in Act One: "Now the wife of his elder brother was afraid on account of the speech she had made. So, she took fat and grease and made herself appear as if she had been beaten, in order to tell her husband, "It was your young brother who beat me." Her husband returned in the evening according to his daily custom. He reached the house and found his wife lying down and seeming ill. She did not pour water over his hands in the usual manner; nor had she lit a fire for him" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 205).[48] On Anubis's arrival, the scene described her indiscreet break from regular family custom and routine. She related her interaction with Bata, but she deliberately reversed the subject and object roles.[49] She demanded satisfaction by Anubis honour-killing Bata: "Now if you let him live, I shall die! Look, when he returns, do not let him live! For I am ill from this evil design which he was about to carry out in the morning" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 205).[50] The break from traditional routine and custom of the home family setting has, at this point, continued and escalated into total disorder and irrational chaos. This is poetically apprehended in the person or agent who introduced and perpetuated the disorder, exclaiming and admitting that it was an evil (wrong) thing. The reader should acknowledge that the villains in stories are universally identifiable by two specific character traits and behaviours: they lie, and they instigate conflict.[51] Mrs Anubis has done both.

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[48] Although rape was concluded by interpreters, Anubis's wife only claimed to have been beaten for not consenting to a dalliance and Bata's implied fear that she might report the physical assault. It was Dundes (2002, 388) following Rank (1926), who concluded rape by projecting the Oedipal complex on Bata. In Dundes (2002) words: "young Master Bata who cuts off his phallus after being accused of raping his brother's wife" (Dundes 2002, 388). However, we have suggested that intention was the important motivating factor. It does indeed follow that sexual assault was intended in Act One since that premise was evidently true from her initial comments and her proposition to lie with him. We are therefore in agreement with the idea that the accusation is of a sexual nature.

[49] Dundes (2002, 385) insisted that projective inversion involves exactly this reversal, but it is evidently our paranoid Jocasta-type wife—not Oedipal Bata—who reversed subject and object.

[50] The day is over at sunset, so in the morning is literally yesterday.

[51] Consider as a touchstone the role, the craft, the method and the effect of the serpent in Genesis 3:1: "Now the serpent was more subtle than any of the beast of the earth which the Lord God had made" (Genesis 3:1

Anubis, infected by the contagion of irrational feelings, sharpened his spear and set off to kill his brother. His method, congruent in nature to his passionate motivation, was to hide in the darkness. Meanwhile, Bata was still following custom through the darkness: "Now when the sun had set he loaded himself with all the plants of the field according to his daily custom" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 205). His first obstacle is apparent. He could not reason with his brother. First, the natural world recognised wrongdoing and came to the aid of that which is evidently inherently good. Which is to say that the cows warned Bata and allowed him to flee. Next, Re, the sun god himself shined the light of rationality through the darkness of deception, ignorance and chaos; and separated the brothers with a crocodile-filled river.

4.5.2 Withdrawal

The river and animals here either symbolise the *Vagina Dentata* through which the audience anticipated Bata's destruction and instantiates that it was by feminine device[52] or it's a moral insight like the preceding cow, and the succeeding sunlight of Re; the natural, historical and crocodilian Nilotic world is recognising that the soul of the political state is inherently good and right as was stated at the beginning. Both interpretations lend themselves to Bata's innocence. In the former case, Dundes (2002, 389) asserted that it is the *Vagina Dentata* motif. That would be Motif F547.1.1 from the Indian literary tradition: "Woman kills her husbands with her toothed vagina" (Vervloesem 2006, 1134). On this premise, Dundes (2002) reasoned that the castration was consequent.[53] In the latter, Hollis (2008) tending to interpretive and theoretical simplicity, advocated that this is simply the Egyptian environment. That the river Nile is populated by aggressive toothed crocodiles is observable and stands true for the ancients. The crocodiles were a threat to Anubis, not Bata. As with the cows, Anubis could not get to Bata, according to Hollis (2008): "because of the crocodiles" (Hollis 2008, 4).

By the end of Act One, the lie has been told, the conflict has been instigated and the protagonist's obstacle is clear, to overcome the irrationality that accompanied the flow of wealth

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DRV). This character is inextricably linked to mythic narrative and present in idyllic paradise even before the concept of evil is embodied as the negation of good. This character intentionally misleads another to do evil and is particularly pernicious when it is a figure of authority.

[52] Note that whether the hero accepts sex like Enkidu with Shamhat (*Epic of Gilgamesh* I, iv-v) or declines sex like Gilgamesh does to Ishtar (*Epic of Gilgamesh* VI, i-iv). It is through the feminine device that he and his path change.

[53] It evidently occurred to Dundes (2002) that the *Vagina Dentata* motif implied antecedent sex and consequent castration for Bata from Anubis's wife. But it did not occur to him that the motif equally instantiated the warning against the dangers of unknown women. A theme we have already observed in this period from their local moralist, Any.

at this nascent Axial Age.[54] Bata continued to attempt to reason with his contemporaries and expect them to self-regulate their libidinal instincts—sex (wife) and aggression (Anubis)—by appealing to their memory of traditional custom and ritual. From the presumed western bank of the river,[55] Bata reminded Anubis of three atavistic concepts in his rhetorical appeal: One, the superior's attempt to punish without having heard the subordinate disputant speak. Two, they are kin and a family unit. And three, the servant followed the master's instruction. All three are the basic values of noble conduct advocated since Ptahhotep's Old Kingdom instructions.

Having failed in his appeal to their common faculty of reason, Bata castrated himself and died in youth. The catfish, the image and hieroglyphic  apprehension of Egypt's first historical king, Narmer  for *nʿrmr,* here poetically consumed the phallus—Egypt's primordial emblem of life's rebirth—of the soul of their mythological and vaguely historical first king, Osiris.[56] This imagery reveals the cosmological presupposition of cyclical time in ancient Egyptian thought. Circular time implies a cyclical nature which gestures at cyclical human life. It follows that, material Bata can die and go back to the beginning to be reborn in the mould of the first kings and the old ways. As he is an Osiris, he will always be what has been. This was the hope that ancient Egypt offered its people in times of anomie. The idea that collectively and individually, the end took them back to the beginning, where they re-discovered their traditions and continued eternally. This was the primitive bedrock of Egyptian conservatism. The idea was clarified by Osiris in a dialogue with godhead Atum in the context of Egyptian social corruption in *Spell 175* of the *Book of the Dead*: "What is the span of my life — so says Osiris. You shall be for millions of millions of years, a lifetime of millions" (Hallo 2003, 28). Hornung (1992, 65-66) pointed out that everyone was Osiris after death, so this eternal lifespan applied to everyone. "Osiris, the lord of the underworld, often characterised by epithets as "master of *neheh*" and "ruler of *djet*" (Hornung 1982, 65). Eternity is as close to an English equivalent as we can get to ideas about *neheh* and *djet.*

[54] The reader must keep in mind that by wealth, the researcher means, possession of a variety of real and valued material objects, not financial symbols. Money as "coinage" was invented later, though not much later, and elsewhere to represent the desire for such a diversity of material possessions and efficiency in the trade thereof (Beinkowski 2000, 77-78). What this connotes is that the goal of attempts to moralise against the vices that accompanied this kind of economic epiphenomenon at this time and in this culture, is stability—social stability—not the curtailing of avarice.

[55] Their conceptual and traditional land of the dead.

[56] The *Papyrus d'Orbiney* calls it  which using Gardiner (1957, 477) is *nʿrdw* accurately meaning *nʿr*-fish which is specifically the ubiquitous wels catfish.

But another aspect of the Osiris character withdrawing from morally distasteful human reality, also clarifies the Bata method of execution. *Book of the Dead 175*: "O Atum, what does it mean that I go to the desert, the Land of Silence, which has no water, has no air, and which is greatly deep, dark and lacking? Live in it in contentment. But there is no sexual pleasure in it. It is in exchange for water and air and sexual pleasure that I have given you spiritual blessedness, contentment in exchange for bread and beer — so says Atum" (Hallo 2003, 28). Bata, once before, and now (at the end of Act One) permanently renounced sexual pleasure. He asserted and then affirmed his piety and presented himself as a suffering servant who will accept the iniquities of the group. He honoured the Ennead by serving their, at this point, morally corrupt creations.[57]

This was the Egyptian conventional *wissenschaft* on Osiris. And as evidenced by Casadio (2003) in later periods, understanding voluntary castration as a ritual through which spiritual blessedness could be achieved was not unusual in the dying and rising god myths populating the Mediterranean region. Although there is significant variation in Attis, Dionysus, Adonis and Mithras myths, they fall into a grouping constrained by the concept of voluntary castration as the psychological and spiritual equivalent of male death and the mother goddess feminine archetype as the embodiment of the male fear of emasculation. Although Osirian myth is significantly older and separate in tradition, the priestly ritual followed by the Phrygian "*galloi* of Cybele" offers some imagery to assist in understanding the degree to which Bata had removed himself from the material world (Casadio 2003, 237). In castrating himself Bata became the teleological prime mover, or the cause of change in himself, which scaled him up from material reality as the nutritive soul of Egypt to become its intellective soul.[58] By intransitive change, he bloomed into his state of communion with his gods.

4.6 Initiatory Crisis

To borrow T.S. Eliot's trope, by Act Two, Bata has the look of Egyptian kings that are looked at.[59] Which is to say that the audience has the pre-existing traditional idea of the form Bata necessarily embodies. Saint Thomas Aquinas was perhaps most precise with the

[57] Since there is no evidence for a tradition of eunuchs in ancient Egypt. One is inclined to imagine Egyptian ritual circumcision from this point of view, as a form of performance art; that is, pruning a pubescent boy to tame and control his growth into urbane adulthood.

[58] The scale of living beings may be understood in Aristotelian terms as corresponding to different powers of the soul. Plants possess the nutritive power alone, animals possess the sensory powers in addition, and human beings uniquely possess the rational faculty (*De Anima* 414a29–414b18).

[59] Likely what Eliot meant in *Burnt Norton (No. 1 of Four Quartets),* or at least what Wagner (1954, 26-27) and Hart (2015, 252) think Eliot was gesturing at. That reality is perceived and apprehended through the memory and imagination and responds to that gaze.

articulation of this intuition. *Summa Theologiae* 1, q.15, a.1: "the form of the thing to be made pre-exists according to intelligible being, as in those that act by the intellect; and thus the likeness of a house pre-exists in the mind of the builder" (Aquinas, *ST* I, q.15, a.1).

There are a few changes to note from the middle movement. Anubis, true to his mortuary function, was requested to perform specific material-world ritual actions for the dead Bata. The quantity of time has become irrelevant.[60] And Bata's heart, separated from his body, is the blossom on a tree. True to Lord's (1967) criteria, the hero is in disguise during his absence. From the start, Ennana's terms and propositions fall into the category of relation, there is half, double and amplification. In Act Two Bata is half of what he was in Act One. The anonymous wife is doubled commensurate with Hathor's iconographic standard. And the deception is greater. Here Bata's wife betrays his secret.

The unique shepherd had separated his soul from his uncorrupted, and therefore assumed, incapable-of-decay body.[61] By conventional Egyptian wisdom at this point, the audience would be anticipating his resurrection. The instruction of *Merikare* asserted that: "The *ba* comes to the place it knows, It does not miss its former path, No kind of magic holds it back, It comes to those who give it water" (Hallo 2003, 63). And so, water, as a liminal substance, is again breathing life into the form of the epic, even in the Egyptian imagination.

There are different paths to imagining where Bata had gone but ultimately, they merge like the cosmopolitan society of this period. As we have suggested in reference to ritual self-castration by Phrygian priests, it's possible to perceive parallels for our story across the variety of Mediterranean cultures that offered castrated and dying gods. But in the line of thinking that anywhere outside of civilised Egyptian culture was considered a wasteland populated by barbarians; and with reference to the stated belief that Osiris's coffin drifted to Byblos where he fused into a tree,[62] the proposition from Ayali-Darshan (2017) was that this is the tipping point from which Western-Asian traditions bleed into the Egyptian empire's mythology. After a rigorous philological inquiry, Ayali-Darshan (2017, 186) went as far as pointing out that the Egyptian author and audience seem confused about a prominent feature. They were unfamiliar

[60] Implied perspective in *Book of the Dead, Spell 175*, and stated in the wisdom instruction to *Merikare* "Do not trust in length of years, They view a lifetime in an hour! When a man remains over after death," (Hallo 2003, 63). This conception of eternal time perceived by material humanity continues even through Islamic tradition, Surah 22:47: "a Day with Allah is as a thousand years of what ye reckon" (Qur'an 22:47).

[61] Invoking the tradition of Egyptian mummification.

[62] Gahlin (2014) provided the summary of: "The death of Osiris" (Gahlin 2014, 58). Osiris's dead body trapped in a chest, was believed to have drifted across the Mediterranean Sea to Byblos. Where, caught in the roots of a tree, it became part of the trunk. The tree was felled, and the timber used as a column in the palace. This idea pre-existed in the mind of Ennana and the audience, though they had no need to split hairs over the genus and species of flora.

with the type of trees they attempted to describe. This confusion of thought and grammar meant one thing. Bata is in the land of *potentia* forms, outside of their internal logic. Consequently, they could not come to terms on the subject of particular trees.

Through the middle movement Bata spent his days in leisure, hunting, presumably desert game, and indulging in the fine things that filled his mansion. Intuitively, one is moved to imagine the material remains of idealised paintings that animate typical noble and royal Egyptian tombs. The gods who "walked about administering the entire land" met with him, informed him of the justice his brother had dispensed[63] and decided to make him a companion (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 207). Upon the gods rewarding him, as gods tend to do in regard to human virtue, it is apparent that his initiatory ordeal was complete.

In Act Two, Bata is on his journey, but he is in *potentia*. He had yet to discover, win, or prove anything meaningful, let alone return with some new value; for all intents and purposes, he was only a half-formed idea wandering in the obscurity of exile throughout the second Act. Although the truth is out, Bata did not have justice. So, how could this be the mythic hero for an expanding and ethically contaminated Egypt?

4.6.1 Refinement

To speak from an objective, *sub specie aeternitatis*, point of view let us start by pointing out the types of 'superior man' that organised Western knowledge has traditionally offered. Mesopotamia had Gilgamesh and Enkidu who exemplified what Ayn Rand (1961, 8) called an "Attila". Whether urbane or animalistic, they did not need to reason through their epic if they could subordinate and order people through brute warrior conquest. This was the man who compelled people by force and ordered them through fear. There was no definite moral justification for what the Mesopotamian heroes did, they were desirous, physically powerful and practical. This was evidently not Bata's disposition. Rand also offered the "witch doctor" as a category (Rand 1961, 12). He ruled by offering to order souls through "self-sacrifice, renunciation, suffering, obedience, humility and faith" (Rand 1961, 14). This was the archetypal man of faith who guided others through their chronic feeling of guilt. By damning life and worshipping death this type of hero binds and directs society under a higher metaphysical moral purpose. For this philosophical archetype, self-destroying Bata certainly and not accidentally, has demonstrated all the priestly predicates. But it's a big group.

[63] Note that the justice dispensed by his brother was very similar to the justice dispensed by Rama's brother Lakshmana on the rejected seductress Soorpanaka in *the Ramayana*: "mutilation and humiliation" (Narayan 1972, 69).

The Levant offered paragons of resignation to a higher intellect and will in Old Testament Job and New Testament Jesus. These were characters completely resigned to the will of a higher consciousness and reality. But there were variations regardless of the similar essence as we moved west, which we have already seen in the cults of the Phrygians. When empirical reality is viewed as the lower of the human values, feelings of guilt motivating acts of faith in the field of ethics is necessarily the higher. Subsequently, asceticism becomes an aspiration to the point of Dionysian ecstasy.

If we take the Mediterranean as the centre of the ancient world or *axis mundi*, on the other side of the Mediterranean, the Greeks offered, as their ideal man, the Promethean mythic hero who believed the higher reality and its high-minded occupants to be capricious and unreliable. So, he followed his own defiant intellect and will. Achilles and Odysseus are the best examples of this ideal man. The Promethean type suffers eternally for that admirable decision but disciplined his believers with self-determination and the overarching idea that humanity is perfectible through its own will and intellect.

Back in Egypt, Bata, we venture to suggest, was the Egyptian offer to refine urban man in the centuries preceding the Axial Age. He was New Kingdom Egypt's attempt to legislate in an empire that had no written civil or moral laws, where the real power is in the subjective mind of the scribe who standardised a nation's conceptual framework in myth. To refine the *nouveau riche,* Ennana offered, for lack of an original English common point of reference, an Apollonian[64] mythic hero. Bata, as Ennana's offering of Egypt's model man, determined a basic rule of thumb and true to his Egyptian intellect, he conserved what had practical value.[65] He was an attempt to give Apollonian coherence to the Dionysian *psyche* of an expanding and contaminated society. A new tool, which for the conservative was the same old tool,[66] re-deployed to stabilise, refine and control the appetites of New Kingdom Egyptians. What was the definition of a good Egyptian and what did he do? He was a pious man who could commit an ephemeral act of self-destruction to achieve transcendent alignment with the beings who governed his universe. The Egyptian witch doctor offered a reasonable and intelligible regulator of individual emotions. One always had the option to die, come back, and do it over again. Gradual moral refinement until justice is realised. Bata is the Egyptian hero who valued self-restraint and was inclined by nature to self-destruction as a method of self-control.

[64] We are limited to English words to define the intention of this type of literary hero. Apollo, as a point of reference, helps create the distinction for Bata as a culture hero.

[65] This is where we extract *logos* from *mythos* or the flowering of reason from the soil of sentimental tradition.

[66] Always conform to and represent the will of Osiris.

4.7 The Valley of the Pine and the Hero's Lowest Point

At the mid-point of his journey. The failing and dying phantasm of Osiris, named Bata, is a miasma of abstraction. The audience had the knowledge of his essence and recognised it in every material item of that class. Which is to say that the concept was remembered and thought when the senses perceived the plants, the animals and the land. Act Two's setting was a dream state, and this analogy should not be thought far-fetched when we consider that dreams are the only time and place that one may see and communicate with acquaintances known to be dead.

It has been set out that Bata, even as a remarkable subordinate, was not prepared to help himself to the wealth and woman of his social superior. But we have also seen him treated as a resource belonging to an elite couple. Like Osiris, in *Book of the Dead 175,* Bata intended to exist in potentiality, without sexual pleasure, surrounded by timber and utterly alone. Though the tomb imagery of leisurely hunting and mansion living keep him occupied. His heart, the organ of memory, emotion, reason and his life, grew as a blossom atop the *axis mundi* beneath which he slept. Figure 5 provides the sensory experience of Bata's ontological state.



Figure 5*: Bata's state of being in the Valley of the Pine. Photograph taken by the author, Luxor Museum 2018.*

Keeping in mind Ayali-Darshan's (2017) submission states the Egyptians did not have an unambiguous understanding of the species of tree that they were imagining in the valley that Bata went to. They called it ꜥš which gives the impression that it should be defined in terms of their own practical use of imported timber, rather than their knowledge of specific species.

Nonetheless, Bata, as per the Osirian dispute with Atum, was lonely, his gods intervened again, pitied the pious agro-pastoralist turned hunter, and created him a wife. Act two proceeded to his lowest point. His wife betrayed his secret. Commensurate with Lord's (1967) theme of disaster, the tree was felled. Anubis, mortuary god that he was, performed the customary mortuary rituals, as and when required. And, closing the middle movement the two brothers were reunited in agreement with Lord's (1967) theme—reconciliation and return. As the crisis overlapped with the climax, Act Two transitioned to Act Three and antithesis merged with the initial thesis to become a synthesis. The miasma of abstraction that was the disaster and reunion require a turn of approach toward the resolution. Psychoanalysis, we think, is more sufficiently effective for the task of navigating the next part and negating a critical opinion and point of tension.

It has been acknowledged as a limitation that one would have to be an ancient Egyptian to understand and appreciate the rest of *the Two Brothers*. Goldman (1995) dropped out after the first Act: "In the continuation of the story the younger brother, Bata, undergoes a series of magical transformations after death. Eventually he is elevated to the ranks of the God-Kings" (Goldman 1995, xxxi). But we shall endeavour to continue dividing and combining the misty metaphysical content of the second part of Act Two and the first part of Act Three, while holding onto the thread of material culture we have already pinned down here.

4.8 In Brief

This chapter examined one of the most familiar elements of mythic narrative: the withdrawal of the protagonist from his initial stable condition. The hero must leave home. Bata's journey begins with this movement away from the household and into a world structured by ordeal and refinement. Like other mythic heroes, his path contains obstacles that must be overcome if he is to embody the superior model of man required for his time.

Egypt, it may reasonably be argued, possessed strong matriarchal traditions among elite women. Women could inherit, own, manage, and bequeath property and estates. Both Anubis's wife and Bata's royal wife belong to this elite category. Yet the women in the story are not presented as individual personalities. Rather, they represent the organising principle of Hathor. Their actions embody Hathoric imperatives under the conditions of imperial prosperity. In this sense they represent the excess and liberality of the period and therefore function as the hero's obstacles.

As Bata's obstacle, Anubis's wife becomes the efficient cause of his movement and refinement. Her deception is simply Hathor acting excessively within her erotic domain, just as

she acts excessively in her destructive domain in myths such as the *Destruction of Mankind*. Egyptian moral cultivation clearly prioritised restraint and self-control within the larger concern for harmony, proportion, and justice (*mɜʿt*).

As evidenced in love poetry and legal cases, the direction of *mry* or *mry*(*t*)—love—often extended from social superior to inferior. It was therefore not unimaginable that the socially dominant might propose romantic or sexual relations with their social inferiors without great concern for consequences. This proposition becomes Bata's first obstacle, and the first display of the virtue required of him.

The villain of the narrative, operating in symbolic darkness, lies and instigates the conflict, while the hero proceeds according to conservative custom and order. In this respect Bata belongs to the broader Mediterranean tradition of dying and reviving gods. Yet his action differs significantly from the ritual frenzy of the *galloi* of Cybele and similar cultic traditions. Bata's self-castration is not an act of ecstatic frenzy but a rational act consistent with Egyptian moral logic.

The Egyptian pattern remains that of the dying and resurrecting god. Bata renounces the material world and moves toward a realm of spiritual forms. His castration becomes an act of seeding the material world for renewal. The imagery of the fish and the phallus further suggests an iconographic resonance with Narmer and the primordial establishment of the Egyptian political state.

Structurally, the developments traced in this chapter correspond closely with the classical movement of plot described by Aristotle. The narrative proceeds from an initial condition of stability through the introduction of an obstacle, followed by withdrawal, crisis, and refinement toward the hero's lowest point in the Valley of the Pine. In Aristotelian terms this sequence forms the complication of the action, preparing the conditions for the reversal and recognition that will unfold in the subsequent movement of the narrative.

What should now be expected is the continuation of this pattern. Bata, as the intellect and will of Osiris and as a universal vegetative god, will suffer further transformations. His blood will be spilled, he will die, and he will be reborn. Like grain separated in the harvest, he will be refined through successive transformations until the desired end state is achieved. His divinity will be perfected. Ultimately, he will be honoured for his sacrifice in renewing the decayed condition of his people. Following this reasoning, we should anticipate that Bata is a god destined to be consumed, for in the Osirian cycle consumption precedes renewal.

CHAPTER FIVE: CATASTROPHE, TRANSFORMATION AND RESTORATION

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter we examine the consequences of Bata's lowest point and the beginning of reversal. At this stage of the narrative the hero has already reached the depth of his crisis in the Valley of the Pine, and the movement of the story now turns toward transformation and eventual resolution. Our process of development by division has therefore naturally led us to a discussion of the *psyche*, for it is precisely at this stage that the nature of Bata's being becomes most evident.

Our reading has demonstrated that Egypt was in a state of anomie and that, coded into the first Act of *the Two Brothers*, the nutritive soul of Egypt was dead. The second Act led to further crisis along the same principle. Yet it was precisely at the moment of apparent failure that the reversal and eventual resolution of the narrative began.

There were difficulties and hesitations when dealing with such a high level of abstraction, but the most reasonable course was to cling to the known starting points. Crisis, climax, and resolution all have a reason, the point of rest, end, or goal, which evidently, for this hero, was not death. Rather, the affections of the soul were prominent throughout the story, and these extend even into the opinions held by our research predecessors.

The second part of Act Two doubled Bata's struggle, but his antagonist, having perfected herself, allowed us to state something conclusive about her. In doing so, something equally conclusive may be stated about the relation between the main points of tension in the narrative: the accusation of assault and the act of self-castration, Bata's guilt or innocence, and the reason for his epic journey.

We shall first conduct an exposition of our knowledge concerning the soul of Egypt and then observe the perfection of his antagonist. Our intention is to set aside, conclusively, those opinions on *the Two Brothers* that cannot withstand rational examination. According to the principle of non-contradiction, no statement can be simultaneously true and false. While Bata may be both dead and alive with respect to material and form, we cannot maintain that he is both Seth and Osiris in the same respect regarding his relation to women, since these referents stand in opposition.

Yet it is precisely through the female form that Bata's threshing and refinement continue. As the ancient maxim expresses it: "For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and

he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath" (Matthew 13:12 KJV).

5.2 Psychological Vandalism and the Misreading of Bata

This section addresses the principal interpretive dispute surrounding Bata's self-castration and examines the methodological assumptions underlying psychoanalytic readings of the text.

5.2.1 Psychoanalysis and Narrative Atomism

Now that the *cogito* of the autonomous construct called Bata has been agglutinated, it is time to deal with the primary point of dispute, the knowledge of which was open to modern perversity. Fundamentally, the Freudian (2010) method of psychoanalysis that Dundes (2002) applied was an on-trend scientific separation of the mind into structural components. In the same way that the physical and natural scientists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries broke down the material and biological world into smaller and smaller components, namely the molecules and atoms which structure reality, and then even proceeded to the inevitable splitting of the atom, the psychoanalyst presumed to break down and name the metaphysical soul or *psyche* into components he called consciousness, unconsciousness and pre-consciousness.

This poetic narrative atomism went further. Adding the Jungian contribution, one must perceive the variety of imagined apprehensions as "archetypes" of "the collective unconscious" (Snowden 2017, 60), the collective unconscious being the bedrock of the individual *psyche*.

These combined arrangements or codes for understanding the mind are generally easy for our emotions to believe because, as with natural reason, all humanity was presupposed to paint with the same primary colours. However, they were difficult to prove due to the obviously undefined ontology and dismissal of human error. For instance, incorrect grammar and limited diction are often normative and likely not an indication of deep-seated instincts and hidden impulses in the unconscious mind. We linguistically acknowledge this as our understanding of the malapropism and the *faux pas*. Do we ever really know when something is a misspelling, mispronunciation or misunderstanding before assuming and attributing the Freud or Fraud "parapraxes" (Freud 2010, 42)?[67]

[67] To make this a little clearer. The psychoanalyst only has the human subject as the source of his data. There is no reality in which the consciousness or its archetypes exist to be observed either by internal or external sensory cognition. The human subject provides the data according to their own discretion, values and experience of reality. One cannot assume that any part of that information is a Freudian slip and that what was said connotes deeper meaning as latent content to be attributed as a cause of the manifest content of their experience. The subject

5.2.2 The Problem of Hidden Knowledge

Dundes (2002) attempted to construct a broad argument on an insufficient evidentiary basis. His hidden assumption was that the mind, with its bedrock collective concepts and dark impulses, was unknown to the thinker of those concepts and experiencer of those impulses. One must remember the inclination of knowledge, what is known and what can be known, to subjectivity or Descartes's (1998, 63–69) admission that the 'I' is the thing that experiences, imagines and thinks. In "*Meditation Two: Concerning the Nature of the Human Mind: That It Is Better Known Than the Body*," he writes: "I manifestly know that nothing can be perceived more easily and more evidently than my own mind" (Descartes 1998, 69).

At any point, the rational human subject knows more about him or herself than the psychoanalyst could reasonably claim to know. This was why the analyst Freud (2010) settled on listening as the method of understanding. The subject talking about themself was premised on the true principle that the subject knows themself best. Other than listening, there was no other way to measure their impulses.

Our position, in brief, is that if the deep-seated impulse or feeling is not known to the subject, or has not been stated by the subject, then it is unlikely that anybody else could know of these emotions. If the thought is not known to the thinker, how could it be known to someone from another time and place?

Consequently, there was good reason for Hollis's (2003, 213) expectation of a modern psychoanalyst's opinion on Dundes's (2002) elaboration of projective inversion. Bata's sexual desire for Anubis's wife was evidently not known to the author (Ennana), not known to the character (Bata), not known to the audience, and never expressed verbally by any character in the story. Dundes's (2002) latent content is therefore an abstract unknown variable that he valued over the facts of reality. This is why he attributed the deep-seated desire for incestuous adultery to the dark impulses of an unconscious mind.[68]

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may have made an honest or deliberate error. For example: One can only know that a subject does not have a headache if the subject honestly informs. The imperceptible nature of the psychanalyst's claim grants this type of knowledge infallibility. For him, there is no distinction between consciousness and reality. And whenever there is a clash between emotional cognition and reality, it is reality that he ignores.

[68] According to Freud's (2010) outline of psychoanalysis: Manifest and latent content are the smaller categories that he broke dreams into. As a source of information on a subject, dreams were an expression of the Id. They are generally nonsensical because the subject imposed objective reality onto the content of their dreams. Interpretation, therefore, was based on the subject's memory of the nonsensical content onto which they imposed objective reality. The Id, Freud (2010) believed, was the inherited part of the *psyche*, the instinct to *eros* and death fixed into the constitution of every human. Consequently, Bata can only be attributed the capacity, not the intention or the act, according to the methods of Freudian psychoanalysis.

We are tempted to suggest, based on Descartes's (1998) *cogito* principle, that this knowledge tends toward the thinker himself. It was Dundes (2002) who projected the phantasm of a lustful, rageful and guilty Bata onto the ancient papyrus.

5.2.3 Methodological Concerns with Dundes' Psychoanalytic Interpretation

The Papyrus d'Orbiney tells the story of a peasant working for a landowning couple who goes on a journey and ultimately becomes king. Dundes (2002) proposes a psychoanalytic reading that distinguishes between "manifest" and "latent" content and then privileges the latent level as interpretively decisive. On this account, Bata's self-castration is treated as psychosomatic evidence of unconscious Oedipal desire and guilt, from which it follows that the accusation of assault should not be regarded as false.

We find this approach to be methodologically problematic. Dundes' analysis, as Hollis (2003) observes, fails to analyse *the tale of Two Brothers* in light its broader context and historical setting. Dundes' (2002) conclusions depend on interpretive assumptions drawn from contested psychoanalytic premises rather than on constraints supplied by the text's grammar, narrative logic, or historical-linguistic context. In effect, the evidential basis for Bata's supposed "deep impulses" and for the proposed mechanism of projective inversion is not provided by the narrative itself but is introduced by the interpreter. As a result, affective plausibility is permitted to override textual evidence. The Dundes' claim (2002, 388) that Bata's "[s]elf-emasculation surely reflects guilt, not innocence" cannot be sustained from the extant linguistic and narrative evidence, but instead relies on claims about an unconscious domain that cannot be independently verified. While such a move may be acceptable within a particular psychoanalytic framework, it is difficult to reconcile with philological interpretation, which must treat the semantics of a dead language as constrained by grammar, usage, and context. In this respect, the reading risks substituting conjecture about interior states for analysis of what the text actually represents.

The central issue in evaluating an accusation within a narrative remains straightforward: does the story present the accuser's claim as true or false? Psychoanalytic interpretation may offer hypotheses based on speech, omission, or actions construed as psychosomatic,[69] but such hypotheses should not displace the narrative's own cues regarding credibility and motivation. As we have argued, antagonistic figures in many traditions characteristically employ deception

[69] And even then, the opinion would be based only on the psychoanalyst's estimation of which subject communicated should be considered *parapraxis*, what should be dismissed as trickery, or what should be considered a human error.

and provoke conflict.[70] In this episode, the wife's actions function narratively to redirect knowledge and determine the protagonists' fate through calculated misrepresentation and rhetorical strategy.[71]

Within the story's presentation, the wife appears to Anubis as distressed and wronged in Act One, while Bata, observing established norms, remains silent[72] and subsequently maintains a consistent account across Acts One through Three. This contrast—between the immediate persuasive force of the accusation and the later disclosure of events—structures the audience's assessment of reliability.

Bata's association with Osiris, the broader mythic cycle, and rituals concerning dying gods in the Mediterranean world provides a culturally intelligible framework for interpreting the self-castration motif as part of a tragic pattern in which a representative figure undergoes loss and renewal. On this view, the episode is sufficiently explained by the mythic and ethical logic the narrative activates. A further appeal to castration as a psychosomatic symptom of Oedipal guilt is therefore unnecessary for making sense of the plot's function and meaning.

Ennana's allusions to Osiris, Hathor, Narmer, and kingship presuppose an audience conversant with Egyptian myth and political-theological concepts. The narrative draws on theology, history, and memory to articulate an ethical vision through the literary arc of a single protagonist, organised with a clear beginning, middle, and end.

Like many New Kingdom compositions, Ennana's tale is constructed through intertextual reference. Osiris, Hathor, and Narmer provide sufficient narrative and cultural motivation for the self-castration, which in turn motivates the subsequent development of the plot. In Aristotelian terms, the story mobilises *ethos* and *logos*, and the castration episode intensifies *pathos*.

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[70] To re-assert this concept at the appropriate archetypal scale and with more familiarity, the Biblical conception was the embodiment of evil, Satan, who demonstrated this archetypal behaviour from the book of Genesis 3 through Job 1. In the Egyptian tradition, there was no such singular conception of evil, not even in Seth. Evil actions and intentions were found in various characters. In Bata's case, Hathor was exemplifying liberated libido, through unrestrained lust and appetite, as she did in her *Destruction of Mankind*, "*The Book of the Cow of Heaven*" (Hallo 2003, 36-37). This was the action considered evil. Bata exclaimed: "What is this great wrong you said to me? (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 205).

[71] This method has been well documented by Goldman (1995) and expertly deployed in the characters of Bamba Suso's "Nyakhaleng Juma Suukho" (*Sunjata* 750–790) and Banna Kanute's "Nene Faamaga" (*Sunjata* 1620–1670). In these cases, it is deployed in aid of the protagonist, against the forces of evil and animism in the *denouement* of the West African *Sunjata* epic. The antagonist Sumanguru is defeated because the protagonist's sister is able to seduce him and trick him into betraying the secret of his magical invulnerability. All references to *Sunjata* follow the versions performed by Bamba Suso and Banna Kanute (1999) and are cited by line number.

[72] Remaining silent in any disputation at any social level with a superior or an inferior was repeatedly emphasised as a moral virtue from the Old Kingdom through New Kingdom (ca.1550-1070 BCE) instruction texts. Old Kingdom Ptahhotep was pedantic about silence being golden while the New Kingdom Any maintained: "A man may be ruined by his tongue" (*Instruction of Ptahhotep*, in Lichtheim 2006, 140).

Bata's Osirian characterisation would have been recognisable to an Egyptian audience, along with the expectations such a figure carries. By reworking Osiris's predicament through another individual, the narrative renews emotional engagement while remaining anchored in familiar cultural material. This literary effectiveness does not require positing hidden "latent content" that is weakly supported by, or external to, the historical and cultural context of ancient Egypt.

Accordingly, readings that seek to establish the protagonist's guilt tend to rely on speculative inference rather than on demonstrable narrative causation.[73] On our reading, Dundes' (2002) argument fails to provide a reasonable explanation of the text, even if one were to grant, for the sake of argument, that unconscious desire could supply motivation, the narrative repeatedly presents Bata's decisive action as the refusal of sexual engagement and the preservation of social and moral order.

In the narrative, it is primarily characters' actions that invite the audience to ascribe moral qualities and that determine outcomes of flourishing or suffering. Actions, rather than desire or capacity alone, shape character as the story unfolds. In Act Three, Bata attains happiness and justice; reasoning *a posteriori*, the narrative encourages the inference that his restraint and choices in Act One contribute causally to that just end.

5.3 The Perfection of the Antagonist

Considering the narrative form and content of *the Two Brothers* and consistent with the symmetry of the three-act structure, duplication appears in the second half of the story. The later events reflect and resolve what has already occurred by employing solutions familiar within the mythic tradition.[74] Egyptian narratives frequently operate through such doubling. Mythic pairs such as Isis and Nephthys, or the *nbty* (Two Ladies), exemplify the expectation that important forces appear in complementary forms. Osiris himself produces a son who inherits the throne and continues the divine cycle. These premises must therefore be kept in mind as the epic of Bata continues.

As a general principle in Egyptian cosmology, maternal power appears active, while the paternal figure is often temporarily prostrate or dismembered.[75] The Egyptian literal worldview

[73] In which persuasive conjecture replaces demonstrable causes.

[74] For instance, if the protagonist left home in the first half, he returns in the second. Crisis leads to opportunity. Things searched for are found.

[75] This was an Egyptian geographic and iconographic standard. As a river civilisation, the annual discharge of seminal fluid that fertigated and recreated their agrarian world came from the revitalisation of the same old observable source of life—the Nile River. A virile sky god was not the source of primordial fluid in this context as it would be in the rain dependent Levant. Consequently, as this observation was conceptualised in myth,

became their figurative worldview. The plot of life became the plot of their stories, simple and effective through repetition. Be born, die, and be born again. Regeneration through violence, the agricultural allegory underlying Egyptian religion, was the rule, while death through old age remained only a secondary possibility.

In accordance with this pattern, the second movement of the narrative reproduces elements already introduced in the first. Bata's journey follows the familiar mythic pattern of the hero who departs from home in search of something valuable. At first glance, the prize appears to be the woman fashioned for him by the gods. Yet the hero's task is not merely to obtain a companion but to return to his point of origin with some transformative gain acquired through ordeal. Whatever value is discovered during the journey must be introduced back into the original order so that the whole may be renewed.

The process of acquiring this prize therefore duplicates the initiatory ordeal itself. Through repeated trials the hero is cultivated and refined until he becomes capable of returning home in triumph. In the Egyptian imagination this process is expressed through the familiar icons of rural agricultural violence. Death produces life, destruction produces regeneration, and repetition implies value.

Within this pattern, the antagonist must also appear in duplicate form. Just as Bata's ordeal intensifies through repetition, so the feminine obstacle that first confronted him in the household reappears in the royal court. The two women in the story, therefore, function not as isolated individuals but as successive manifestations of the same mythic principle.

5.3.1 The Duplicate

Initially, Bata was a peasant labourer who slept like an animal. By Act Two, however, he possessed a mansion and spent his time engaged in recreational activity commensurate with Lord's (1967) myth theme, hospitality for the wandering hero. These were the activities of a noble elite. Yet he remained as alone as he had been at the beginning, and this condition was remedied by the gods who created a wife for him. Act One ended in the tragedy of death. Act Two therefore began with the comedy of union, the restoration of life through marriage.

We agree with Hollis (2008, 192) that this wife was intended to be understood as a second woman rather than a reincarnation of the first, but we disagree with Katary's (1997, 43) description of such figures as "archetypal evil women." Bata's wife should instead be understood as the duplicate of Anubis's wife within the logical content of the Hathoric principle.

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the primal female, Nut, was the active superior above the primal recumbent Geb and following the trope through the next generation, Isis fluttered over a prone and passive Osiris. Hathor was the cosmic sky goddess.

As before, she is not given a personal name. She is defined only through the relational designation "wife." Yet an important difference is immediately apparent. This second woman was created directly by the gods.

The gods had already recognised Bata as exceptional and intervened repeatedly to ensure that justice prevailed. Yet divine justice in Egyptian thought did not prevent the privation of good. That responsibility belonged to the king, who acted as the earthly guarantor of order. Bata had already established the coordinates of his behaviour. He spoke the truth, even when silence would have served him better, and his steadfastness repeatedly exposed him to tribulation. The threshing of his character continued, but the symbolism is clear: in the end he will hold the flail.[76] Such imagery expresses the Egyptian apprehension of sacrifice and salvation.

Bata's wife was therefore not simply a companion but a figure constructed according to mythic expectation. A prophecy of her death is already implied through her association with the Seven Hathors.[77] Like the first woman in the story she is not individually named but defined through the relational expression *ḥmt=f mr(y)t=f* (his beloved wife). She exists within a pair. She can only be understood in relation to her husband, just as Anubis's wife can only be understood in relation to Anubis. The first wife introduced the disorder of chaos into the idyllic household. Through deception she instigated the conflict that began Bata's ordeal. The second woman continues this mythic function.

Within the archetypal structure associated with Hathor, the feminine principle represents both creation and danger. As Peterson (1999, 156) observes, the unknown frequently appears symbolically as female because the female body represents the hidden gateway of creation. Without literalising the metaphor, Bata's wife therefore functions as the portal through which he passes from ordinary experience into his present otherworldly condition. Through her, the hero enters a new stage of transformation.[78]

This logic becomes clear as Act Two continues. According to Lichtheim's (2006, 207–209) translation, Bata tells his wife the truth about himself and reveals the secret of his heart, which lies upon the blossom of the tree that sustains his life. When the waters attempt to seize her, the trees catch a lock of her hair. The current carries this lock to Egypt where its fragrance

[76] An iconographic standard for Egyptian kingship.

[77] "She will die by the knife" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 207).

[78] The reader was expected to imagine this through the persisting icons. The seed or grain must be mutilated and die to be transfigured as bread, beer, or a new plant. This can be done by an external agent or the self-same seed by reason of its final cause.

enchants the pharaoh. The king, captivated by the scent, sends expeditions across foreign lands to find the woman from whom it came.[79]

The first group encounters Bata and is destroyed, leaving only one survivor to report the encounter to the king. The second expedition arrives with gifts and succeeds in persuading Bata's wife to return to Egypt. Once there she reveals the secret of Bata's heart. The soldiers return to the valley, fell the tree and thereby bring about his death. By the end of Act Two the hero is again destroyed through the agency of the feminine principle. Lord's (1967) theme, disaster during the hero's absence, is therefore fulfilled.

As expected within the traditional framework, the death of Bata immediately summons the ritual specialist. In Act Two, Anubis observes the signs that the offerings of beer and wine have spoiled and recognises that something is wrong. He sets out in search of his brother, finds the body and begins the ritual process of restoration. After years of searching he recovers Bata's heart, revitalises it with water and restores him to life.

Anubis's actions are entirely consistent with his mythic role. As a mortuary god he performs the mortuary function. Death followed by ritual produces revivification. Such formulae are well attested in Egyptian funerary tradition, where offerings to both Osiris and Anubis sustain the cycle of death and renewal.

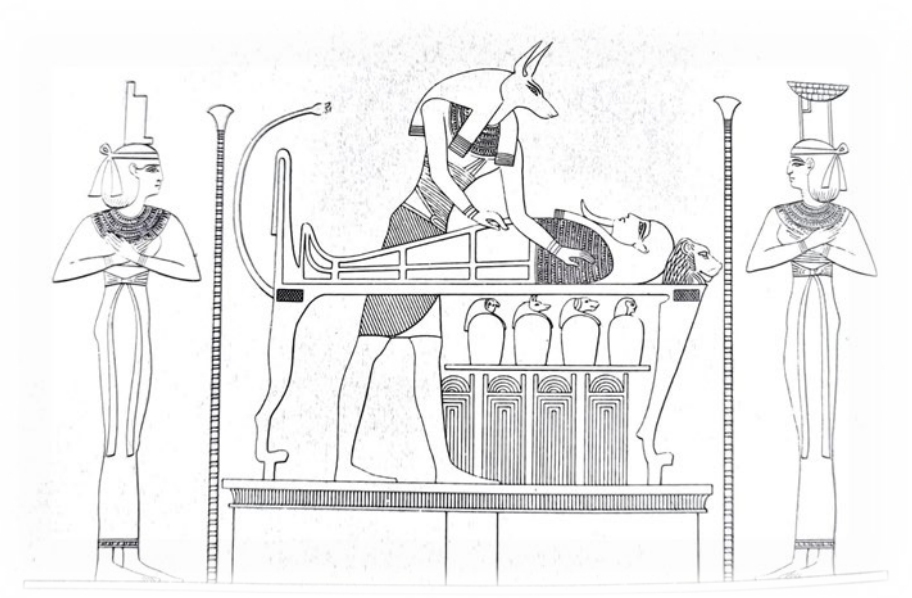

Figure 6*: An image of the mythological script for a mortuary ritual from Hornung (1992,168) shows Anubis, Osiris, the Two ladies and canopic jars containing vital organs.*

[79] The attentive reader should notice here the allusion to the stated Dionysian *psyche*. The pharaoh was not portrayed as a bad man. Rather he was intoxicated by the scent or efflux of divinity. His consequent thoughts and actions were certainly not rational and were employed as a dichotomy with respect to Apollonian Bata. Within the same category, we have a logical division that allowed for progress to the realisation of the ideal corporate image.

What becomes increasingly clear about the duplicate wife is first that she is divine in origin, second that the narrative has elevated her social status from the noble sphere of Act Two to the royal sphere of Act Three, and third that she lacks the restraint expected of the virtuous Egyptian character. Her curiosity and ambition propel the narrative toward catastrophe. As the story continues it becomes evident that the true prize of Bata's journey was neither the heart nor the wife. The true value remains the demonstration of proper conduct in opposition to the unrestrained impulses associated with power and privilege.

5.4 Betrayal and Catastrophe

According to Durant (1935, 69), myth does not make morals; it functions to give celestial sanction to desirable forms of conduct. Having died, connected with Egypt's gods and returned to an uncorrupted body at the end of Act Two, our supposition is that Bata appears to possess some esoteric knowledge[80] that legitimated his means and the end. His ordeal, as we shall illuminate, was a suicidal fight in favour of old values and judgments. This was typically Egyptian in that there was no adjustment to new conditions and forms of social conduct. There was only the ascetic fight to conserve the past by extending the existing. The intention was to extend the past eternally. This estimation of present conditions, by reasserting the old, constituted their form of innovation through self-renewal. What Hornung (1992, 72–92) noted as the Egyptian principle "extension of the existing", TS Eliot expressed in *East Cocker (No. 2: V of Four Quartets)*: "And so each venture Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate With shabby equipment always deteriorating In the general mess of imprecision of feeling, Undisciplined squads of emotion. And what there is to conquer By strength and submission, has already been discovered Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope To emulate—but there is no competition—There is only the fight to recover what has been lost And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions That seem unpropitious. But perhaps neither gain nor loss. For us, there is only the trying. The rest is not our business." (Eliot 2000).

The final struggle or ordeal in Act Three was a purposeful repetition of what had already occurred and the moral political theory to be reasserted. Bata appears as a figure of supernatural superiority. He had already journeyed and shown us the Egyptian understanding of the material world with its abstract forms. His name was a distributed or universal term for the soul of their land and its produce. Linguistically and culturally, he was the exemplar of the society that created him. Osiris was the proper name for the d'Orbiney's Egyptian moral paragon. And as

[80] As other gods of the dying and resurrecting category tend to have.

the soul of Osiris, he represented and legitimised old, and possibly the original, Egyptian virtues. He was on his way to becoming, what Ennana expected the ideal Egyptian social elite to be, according to the old values. The incarnation of tamed nature. And so, the audience was taken on a few more repetitions of truth,[81] self-sacrifice[82] and incorruptibility.[83] In order to move the apprehension of this myth as a grand unifying moral theory to understanding and affecting behaviour at an individual level.

Continuing with Lichtheim's (2006) translation: Anubis performed the proper mortuary ritual, so he and Bata were reunited. Bata, as predicted by the terms of Lord's (1967) theme—disguise upon the return of the hero, accompanied by a deceitful story—suggested that he take the physical form of a bull. In synthesis, Act Three begins with the re-instantiated Act One, premise that Bata's appearance was remarkable on a quantifiable scale (none like him in the land). This fantastic bull was the likes of which no one had ever seen. In the light of day and wisdom, Anubis should take the bull on another journey to be seen by the king. When the king was inevitably and sufficiently impressed, he would reward Anubis for the bull. Anubis will be enormously wealthy in his community. As depicted in Figure 7 the *nostos* goes according to plan and the Bata-bull was at the palace when he encountered his wife.

[81] As we now expect from Bata and the foundation of his being.

[82] True to his nature rather than habit or compulsion his, was a suicidal fight.

[83] Teeter (2011), despite all the variation of opinion, ventured a brief comment on the "Egyptian attitude toward death" (Teeter 2011, 119-121). In our judgment, the mythic idea legitimising mummification was that having lived correctly, according to the social and moral conscience, both the soul and the body, of the individual and the political state, were incorruptible or undecaying thereby achieving immortality and eternity. There was a distinct idea here that collective and particular human nature was perfectible. The idea applied to everyone.

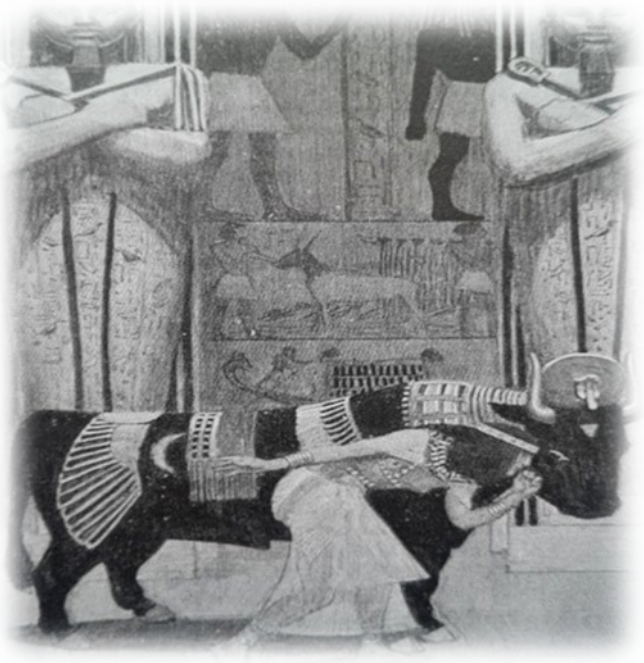

Figure 7*: The Wife-Mother and the Bata Bull from the painting by Maurice Greiffenhagen reproduced in Geddes and Grosset (1997, 69).*

Commensurate with Lord's (1967) theme, the complete revelation of identity, and according to his ethic, in truth, Bata identified himself and stated that he knew that she divulged the information entrusted to her about his heart. The frightened wife then charmed the pharaoh into having the bull slaughtered, and at this point, the action reaches its catastrophe, the complete destruction of the hero in the explicitly Osirian and fertility-bearing form he had assumed.[84] She exclaimed: "Let me eat of the liver of this bull; for he is good for nothing" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 209).[85] The pre-scientific understanding and significance of the liver would be speculative, but it's reasonable to conclude that she followed through on this eating of his vital organ. One does not have to stretch the imagination too far to arrive at the consumption of a martyr's body and blood as a rite or covenant. Similar statements seem to breathe life into other epics. The *Iliad* had many statements of opponents threatening to eat each other raw. The most disturbing and indicative of its formulaic purpose was the vocalised wish by the honourable King Priam: "Oh would to god that I could sink my teeth in his liver, eat him raw!" (*Iliad* 24.252). This trope is embedded in Egyptian mortuary symbolism. The liver,

[84] The lesser man who tended to the *eros* instinct was susceptible to and influenced by duplicitous charm and exploitation.

[85] Bata sacrificed for the satisfaction of a goddess may not have been entirely metaphorical in the Egyptian intellect. It is within the realm of possibility that it alluded to the apparently rampant barbarism and cannibalism that Gahlin (2014, 58) mentioned as the pre-civilisation *status quo* before Osiris—as was believed—civilised the Egyptians. Either way, the wife was the gateway, and current-form Bata was sacrificially destroyed.

explicitly mentioned in the wife's speech, evokes a powerful ritual logic. Wilkinson (2003, 88-89) showed that in Egyptian mummification, the liver was preserved in a canopic jar under the protection of Imsety, one of the Four Sons of Horus. As Hornung (1992, 169) observes, by the New Kingdom, the treatment of the organ was equivalent to that of the corpse itself, underscoring its metaphysical importance. Its inclusion here signals more than a physical threat; it marks an assault on Bata's moral and cosmic identity, ritually legible to an Egyptian audience. Her symbolic assault amplifies the narrative stakes of his restoration. As Jeffers (1996, 4-5) notes, Egyptian ritual actions were conceived as doing what they signify. Bata's restoration, therefore, is more than narrative resolution; it mirrors the ritual grammar through which mortuary rites reasserted cosmic balance. This iconographic logic is materially embodied in the canopic chest of Tutankhamun, where Isis is depicted with protective wings above the four canopic lids representing the Sons of Horus. The arrangement of these figures around the preserved vital organs visually expresses the Egyptian theology of moral and cosmic preservation through mortuary rites (see Appendix E.3).

5.5 The Resolution: Act Three

With the catastrophe complete, the narrative proceeds to its final movement, the resolution. In accordance with the structure already established, this stage brings the action to its proper end by revealing what the preceding events were ordered toward. The end is not merely a termination of events, but the completion of the whole.

The setting shifts to the Egyptian royal court, where the consequences of the earlier conflict are now worked out at the highest level of social and political life. What was initiated within the household is carried forward into the domain of kingship. The same forces remain active, but they are now expressed through repetition and intensification.

Bata, having been restored through the intervention of Anubis and the proper mortuary rites, does not immediately return in his original form. Instead, he assumes the form of a magnificent bull, a creature of exceptional beauty and strength. Through this transformation, he re-enters the world in a manner consistent with the pattern already established. His appearance once again distinguishes him from all others, and through Anubis, he is brought before the king. The king, recognising the extraordinary nature of the animal, receives him into the royal household and rewards Anubis generously.

Yet, as before, concealment does not define Bata's character. In accordance with his established ethic, he reveals himself to his wife and declares his continued existence. The antagonist responds as she has throughout the narrative, employing persuasion and

manipulation to achieve her ends. She convinces the king to have the bull slaughtered, thereby repeating the earlier betrayal in a new form. The destruction of the hero is thus enacted once again, but it does not achieve its intended result.

From the sacrifice, new life emerges. The continuity of Bata's being is maintained through transformation. What appears as destruction becomes the condition for further development. The narrative proceeds through repetition, each cycle advancing the action toward its completion.

This pattern is intensified as the sequence continues. The manifestations of Bata are repeatedly destroyed through the intervention of the wife, yet each destruction gives rise to a new form. The persistence of the hero through these successive transformations demonstrates that his essence is not reducible to any single material expression. Rather, it is maintained through the continuity of form across changing embodiments.

The process reaches its culmination when Bata is restored in human form through birth. The cycle of death and renewal is reversed and completed. What had been fragmented and dispersed is gathered into a unified and perfected state. The hero, who had been subjected to repeated destruction, now attains his final condition.

At this point, recognition follows. Bata reveals himself fully and brings the truth of the narrative to light. The deception that had governed the earlier stages is exposed, and judgment is rendered. What had been a private moral conflict is now transformed into a public and political act. Justice is no longer implicit but formally enacted.

With the death of the king, Bata ascends the throne. The movement of the narrative from household to kingship is thereby completed. The hero, who began as a subordinate figure within a domestic setting, becomes the ruler of the land. The resolution thus establishes a new order grounded in the principles demonstrated throughout the narrative.

Bata becomes the substantial form, nutritive and intellective soul of Egypt. The end reveals the purpose of the whole. Through repetition, transformation, and recognition, Bata becomes the embodiment of Egypt's moral and political order. What was initially presented as a conflict within a household is shown, in its completion, to concern the structure of the state itself. The resolution, therefore, does not merely conclude the narrative; it establishes its meaning.

5.6 Resurrection and Transformation

Initially, Bata sacrificed himself as a morally perfect man, as was expected for the eternally good Osiris. In Act Three, this pattern is extended. He is no longer sacrificed merely

as a man, but as a physically perfect animal. The sacrificial series therefore intensifies and moves toward its final expression.

As the narrative continues, the logic of transformation becomes explicit. Following his dismemberment, Bata's being is not extinguished but persists through new forms. As the text records, "And when he had been sacrificed and was carried on the shoulders of the men, he shook his neck and let fall two drops of blood beside the two doorposts of his majesty, one on the one side of the great portal of pharaoh, and the other on the other side. They grew into two big *Persea* trees, each of them outstanding" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 209-210). Through this process, Bata becomes the trees, again characterised by perfection and the absence of blemish. The sacrificial sequence continues, not as repetition without purpose, but as ordered development.[86]

The persistence of Bata across these forms demonstrates that his identity is not reducible to any single material state. Rather, it is maintained through continuity of form. Each destruction becomes the condition for a further manifestation. The logic is agricultural, but also metaphysical. Life proceeds through dismemberment, transformation, and renewal.

The pattern is repeated once more when the wife, consistent with her established character, persuades the king to have the trees felled and converted into objects. Yet even this destruction does not terminate the process. As the craftsmen cut the trees, a splinter enters the mouth of the queen, and she conceives. "They felled the *Persea* trees of Pharaoh, and the Queen, the Lady, stood watching it. Then a splinter flew and entered the mouth of the Lady. She swallowed it, and in a moment, she became pregnant" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 210). In this moment, the cycle of destruction and regeneration reaches its decisive turning point.

What had previously been expressed through external transformation is now internalised. The principle of life that had persisted through successive forms is gathered into a new beginning. The process of death and renewal is not merely repeated but brought toward completion. Through this final transformation, the conditions are established for Bata's full restoration.

[86] The audience knows the Osirian mythological script for this sequence.

5.7 Recognition and Kingship

With the birth of the child, the process reaches its end. Bata, who had undergone successive transformations, is restored in human form.[87] What had been dispersed across multiple embodiments is now unified. The final cause, which was implicit from the beginning, becomes fully evident.

The king recognises the child and appoints him as heir. Upon the king's death, Bata ascends the throne. The movement from peasant to king is thus completed. The hero, who began in a subordinate domestic position, becomes the ruler of the land. His journey is not merely personal but political, culminating in the reconstitution of order.

At this point, recognition is accompanied by judgement. Bata reveals the truth of the narrative and publicly accuses the wife. What had been concealed through deception is now brought to light. The moral conflict that originated within the household is transformed into a legal and political act.[88] Justice is formally enacted, and the structure of authority is restored.

The question then arises: what was the prize of the hero's journey? It was not the wife, nor the preservation of any particular form. Rather, it was the attainment of a perfected state through repeated sacrifice. Bata, beloved of the gods, has moved from peasant to king and has been legitimised through the maternal line associated with the Great Mother. In doing so, he achieves a collective identity.

He is now, in a literal and symbolic sense, the embodiment of the Egyptian state. His physical and moral perfection, in accordance with the Osiris and Horus mythic framework of kingship, renews a corrupted order. Each time Bata revealed his identity, the other characters became aware of their place within the narrative. Through him, light was introduced into what had been a domain of obscure understanding. Self-discovery and responsibility were therefore not incidental but central to the process.

Bata, as king, judges *sub specie aeternitatis*. His conduct expresses a universal standard. He becomes the figure through whom Egyptian identity is articulated and understood. His private moral code is elevated into a public and political principle. In this way, the individual and the state are unified within a single order. This is why Wilkinson (2003, 119-120) offers Osiris as "the clearest idea of physical salvation available to the ancient Egyptian".

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[87] Note that Bata was conceived in a mystical union and this wife remains a consecrated virgin. Bata, throughout the story, has never acted on the *eros* principle and therefore remained pure. Sexual regulation is the great task of morals because the *eros* instinct is the constant threat to social order. Freud (2017, 61) thought this type of virtue was never rewarded on earth and so was preached in vain.

[88] Politics is presented as ethics writ large.

5.7.1 Incorruptibility

From catfish bait, through cut flowers, livestock, and the manufacture of furniture, Bata appears in substance as a perishable entity. Yet in form, he remains the essential and enduring principle of Egypt's economy and existence. He is present in every material expression of the agro-pastoral state, not as matter, but as the organising form that gives these elements their meaning.

This idea may be clarified through reference to Aquinas (*ST* I, q.76, a.8), where it is argued that the whole soul is present in each part of the body by totality of essence, though not by totality of power. The soul, as the basic operating principle, is wholly present in every part, even if its functions differ according to the organ. Applied to the present case, it becomes possible to understand how each fragment of Bata could be conceived as containing the whole.

Man, grain, fish, livestock, and timber are all materially perishable. Yet the incorruptible principle that organises them persists. This principle, apprehended through the logic of sacrifice, is not destroyed but transmitted. Participation in these forms nourishes and sustains the whole.

In *the Two Brothers*, the scribe Ennana appears to encode this sacred idea within a narrative form accessible to a broader audience. Religious concepts are communicated through the medium of story, allowing the terms of piety to be expressed in a form that is both intelligible and compelling. This aligns with Kemp's (2018, 253) observation that Egyptian priests functioned less as interpreters of divine speech and more as administrators of ritual and economic systems. The scribe, in turn, becomes the figure who shapes understanding, articulating the roles and expectations of individuals within the state.

In this way, priest and poet operate together. Through ritual and narrative, they unite disparate elements of society within a shared symbolic and moral order.

5.8 In Brief

In this chapter, we continued the attempt to reason through Bata's wandering and return as a unified and intelligible action. The movement of the narrative was not treated as a sequence of isolated events, but as a structured whole in which each part follows from the previous according to necessity or probability. In this respect, the analysis has proceeded in a manner consistent with the principles set out in the *Poetics*, where a complete action is understood to possess a beginning, middle, and end, each ordered toward a final cause.

The chapter first addressed the problem of interpretation, particularly the application and misuse of psychological methods. While the contributions of Freud and Jung were acknowledged, it was shown, by appeal to Descartes's *cogito* principle, that the attribution of

latent guilt to Bata rests on an unknowable premise. Neither the character, the author, nor the audience presents any evidence of such guilt. The attempt to ground interpretation in what is not known to the subject collapses the distinction between the perceiver and the perceived. In contrast, the present reading has proceeded from what is manifest in the text, allowing action rather than conjecture to disclose character.

The development of the narrative then demonstrated a progressive refinement of its principal elements. The duplication of the female figure, understood through the Hathoric principle, revealed the structural logic of repetition within Egyptian thought. What first appeared in the domestic sphere was reproduced at the level of kingship, with the antagonist perfected in accordance with the increasing scale of the action. This pairing, consistent with the Egyptian tendency toward duality, allowed the narrative to refer back upon itself in order to resolve its initial tensions.

The action reached its catastrophe in the destruction of Bata in the form he had assumed, marking the lowest point of the narrative and the culmination of the antagonist's agency. From this point, the movement turned toward resolution. Through a series of transformations, the hero persisted across changing forms, demonstrating that his identity was not reducible to any single material expression. The logic of regeneration, expressed through agricultural and mortuary imagery, revealed a continuity of form underlying apparent destruction.

Recognition followed this process of transformation. Bata's identity, previously concealed or obscured, was revealed fully, and the truth of the narrative was brought into the open. The private moral conflict was thereby elevated into a public and political act. In this moment, the narrative achieved what Aristotle identified as the proper function of recognition, a "change from ignorance to knowledge," producing decisive consequence within the action (*Poetics* 1452a29–31).

The final stage of the movement was the attainment of kingship. Bata, having undergone repeated destruction and renewal, was restored in a unified and perfected form. His ascent from peasant to king completed the trajectory implicit from the beginning. In this capacity, he became not merely an individual character but the embodiment of a moral and political order. His conduct, consistently marked by truth, restraint, and self-sacrifice, was elevated into a universal standard.

The chapter has therefore shown that the narrative of *the Two Brothers* conforms to a coherent structure of action. The movement of the narrative corresponds closely with Aristotle's identification of the principal elements of plot, namely suffering, reversal, and recognition (*Poetics* 1452a), which together constitute the intelligible structure of the action. Beginning

with conflict, proceeding through complication and catastrophe, and culminating in recognition and resolution, the story operates in accordance with intelligible principles. At the same time, it expresses a distinctly Egyptian conception of renewal, in which destruction is not terminal but preparatory, and in which the restoration of order depends upon the reassertion and extension of an original and incorruptible standard.

In this way, Bata's journey yields its final significance. What appears as a series of transformations is revealed to be a process of refinement, through which the hero is progressively abstracted from perishable matter and reconstituted as form. In becoming king, he does not merely return; he becomes the organising principle of the state itself. His private moral code is thus elevated into a public and enduring order. The hero's return is therefore identical with the restoration of Egypt, and the completion of his action is at once the completion of the narrative and the renewal of the world it represents.

CHAPTER SIX: FROM TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

6.1 Introduction

This chapter situates *the Two Brothers* within the historical horizon of the Egyptian New Kingdom (ca. 1550–1070 BCE), with particular attention to the Ramesside period (ca. 1292–1069 BCE). This was the broader Late Bronze Age world of imperial expansion, diplomatic complexity, and eventual systemic strain. Establishing that setting here provides the temporal and social horizon required for the moral, political, and affective interpretation that follows. (see Appendix B.1)

At this stage of the inquiry, after having established sufficient reason for the principal scenes and for the movement of the story as a whole, larger questions emerge. Bata, like other epic heroes, was gifted. Yet he did not behave like Gilgamesh, Achilles, or even Odysseus. He did not simply take the women he desired, compel by force the cooperation of other men, or seize by violence what he lacked. Those epic protagonists often murder, enslave, rape, and plunder.[89] Some grow, some die, and some change, but all act within societies that must somehow continue to hold together.[90] The question therefore becomes more precise: what sort of hero was Bata intended to be, and what kind of civilisation required such a hero?

Our supposition is that religion and moral principle were operating together as forces of social formation. By religion we mean a humanly constructed ethical form intended to unify unequal social strata for cooperative action. Religion, in this sense, is the intellectual structure through which a substantial civilisation guides its growth and preserves its order. Our governing moral principle remains that good ought to be done and evil avoided, and that this principle becomes visible in the conduct expected of the citizen within an ordered *polis* and *cosmos*.[91]

Thus far, *the Two Brothers* has been shown to reflect enough of the themes, motifs, ritual logics, and organising principles of epic myth in general to justify its treatment within that category. The final phase, as we should expect from such principles, is the homecoming and

[89] In *the Epic of Gilgamesh,* the complaint against Gilgamesh is that he is overbearing and does not leave the young girls and brides alone, he is likened to a rampant wild bull (*Epic of Gilgamesh* I, ii–iii). Achilles' "murderous" rage is explicit from the opening of the *Iliad*, where Chryses, a father, comes to ransom his daughter (*Iliad* 1.11–42). And Odysseus is precisely the kind of sea-wolf Polyphemus takes him to be in *the Odyssey*: "roving the waves like pirates, sea-wolves raiding at will, who risk their lives to plunder other men?" (*Odyssey* 9.280–290).

[90] According to Aristotle: "man is by nature a political animal" (*Politics* 1253a1).

[91] This was our conclusion from Aristotle's *Politics*: "Every state is a community of some kind, and every community is established with a view to some good; for everyone always acts in order to obtain that which they think good" (*Politics* 1252a1). It follows that politics, the character of the *polis*, may be understood as scaled ethics, the character of the person extended into communal form.

triumph. Lord's (1967) theme, the hero's *nostos* and *kleos*, now comes fully into view. The hero won. But the question remains: what precisely has triumphed?

It is reasonable to conclude that what triumphs in this story is the sacred. There is a vindication of the old gods, of an older ethical and political theory, of the agro-pastoral basis of Egyptian life, and of Bata's personal moral code. With Bata as king, his moral code becomes the state's collective moral code. He embodies the triumph of the sacred over the profane. In him, New Kingdom Egypt appears to evaluate itself, judge itself, and attempt to preserve its values under changed historical conditions.

For the average Egyptian, such a story would have had value precisely because it addressed the domains of love, lust, libido, self-restraint, and death. We shall venture to argue in this chapter that Bata was offered as a political and moral philosophy for Egyptians living through a period of anomie. The audience observed, in poetic imitation, the sacred attempt to resist the corrosive effects of the profane in a society that had expanded into the outside world and had thereby exposed itself to new temptations, new wealth, and new forms of disorder.

After the world has been conquered, human nature and its tendency toward libidinal excess remain to be conquered. The older regulations governing relations in the family, the state, and international society were evidently no longer as effective or as secure as they were expected to be. Bata's image has already been shown to be beautiful, unblemished, orderly, and productive of jubilation. Theologically, this economy of iconography belongs to the sacred image, that is, to what is holy. At the same time, he demonstrates a definite manner in which one ought to behave. He therefore appears not merely as a narrative figure, but as a religious and priestly model who introduces a way of thinking intended to govern conduct.

Through death, incorruptibility, and new life, Bata attains the highest theological values available within the story's symbolic world. Ennana's offering of Bata may therefore be understood as the liturgical template for the renunciation of genital satisfaction as one of the first conditions of communal life. Bata, the soul of the land and the soul of the bread, was intended to become the soul of the Egyptian New Kingdom subject.

If his emasculation is taken as the mythologically recommended condition of urbane man, in opposition to the barbarian world beyond Egypt's civil boundaries, the moral proposition of the story becomes clearer. The ordinary Egyptian was expected to be an exemplary worker, to deprive himself of libidinal licence, and especially to restrain disorderly sexual gratification. What emerges is the figure of the pious servant and the logic of taboo observance, where codified law was limited or absent. Bata becomes an instrument of indoctrination for preparing the mind of the empire for disciplined coherence. The Egyptian

New Kingdom did not need mere conquerors to stabilise the state. It needed self-sacrificing men capable of preserving order through self-restraint.

This chapter, therefore, turns from the structural completion of the narrative to its affective and civilisational meaning. It asks how Bata's suffering, mutilation, restoration, and triumph would have been understood within the Egyptian intellectual and social world, and what wisdom such a story was intended to convey to those who heard it.

6.2 The Ground of Sacred Order

The transformation of Bata must therefore not be understood as an incidental narrative development, nor as a merely symbolic embellishment. It is the structural centre of the composition. What appears, at the level of immediate perception, as catastrophe is, within the Egyptian intellectual framework, the necessary condition for the manifestation of a higher order.

Bata's mutilation marks the decisive break between two domains. In the first, he exists within the ordinary structures of kinship, labour, and social obligation. It is within this domain that accusation, deception, and disorder arise. In the second, he is entirely removed from these conditions. The act of self-castration, while shocking to the modern reader, is not unintelligible within the Egyptian system. It is a severance, not only from the body, but from the sphere in which the accusation has force.

This movement is immediately followed by divine intervention. The gods do not restore Bata to his former place. They do not resolve the conflict within the original setting. Instead, they remove him from it. The creation of the Valley of the Pine establishes a new ontological condition. This space is not merely geographical. It is a reconstitution of the terms of existence. Bata is no longer subject to the same vulnerabilities that governed his previous life.

The displacement of his heart into the cedar must be read in this light. The heart, in Egyptian anthropology, is not simply an organ but the centre of being, judgment, and identity. Its relocation signifies that Bata's life is no longer grounded in the visible and perishable body, but in a hidden and protected principle. The narrative thus shifts from a concern with external action to an emphasis on internal essence. Bata's identity is no longer contingent upon his social role or bodily integrity. It is secured within a sacred order.

This is the point at which the narrative reveals its governing principle. The movement from disorder to order is not achieved through restoration but through elevation. Bata does not regain what was lost. He is transformed into something that transcends the conditions of loss altogether. This is consistent with the Egyptian conception of *mꜣʿt*, in which truth, order, and

justice are not reactive but generative.[92] They do not merely correct disorder. They establish a superior form of coherence.

The accusation belongs to the domain of *isft*: deception, instability, and moral inversion. It is contingent upon circumstance and sustained only within the fragile structures of human relations. By contrast, the divine response removes Bata from that domain entirely. The sacred does not engage the profane on equal terms. It supersedes it. What is false is not argued against; it is rendered powerless by the establishment of a higher order.

In this respect, Bata's transformation differs fundamentally from the trajectories observed in other epic traditions. Figures such as Gilgamesh, Achilles, and Odysseus remain within the sphere of human conflict. Their crises are resolved through action, contest, or return. Bata's crisis leads instead to withdrawal and reconstitution. His transformation is not the restoration of honour within the same order, but the establishment of a new one. This distinction is critical. It marks the Egyptian narrative as operating according to a different philosophical and theological logic.

The cost of this transformation is not negated. The mutilation is real, and the suffering that precedes it is not undone. However, within the structure of the narrative, this loss becomes the condition for transcendence. What is removed from Bata is precisely that which binds him to the unstable domain of accusation and desire. In relinquishing it, he is made capable of participating in a higher form of existence.

The triumph of the sacred, then, is not a reversal in the ordinary sense. It is not the correction of fortune within the same frame of reference. It is a redefinition of the frame itself. Bata's passage from the household to the Valley of the Pine, from embodied vulnerability to hidden vitality, represents a transition from one order of being to another. The narrative compels the reader to recognise that what appears to be destruction may, within the Egyptian intellectual framework, be the necessary prelude to transformation.

This prepares the ground for the subsequent development of the narrative. The sacred has been established as the governing principle, but it has not yet reached its full expression.

[92] This understanding of *mꜣꜥt* is consistent with broader Egyptian conceptions of law and order. As Van Blerk (2017) observes, *mꜣꜥt* formed the basis of the legal and social system, functioning as the principle through which order, truth, and justice were maintained in both divine and human spheres. Law, in this context, was not conceived as an independent or purely secular mechanism, but as an expression of *mꜣꜥt* itself, with justice understood as its practical enactment within society. In this sense, the "ancient Egyptians' lives were governed by *maat*, with their law being justice in action" (Van Blerk 2017, 53). The preservation of order was therefore not merely juridical but cosmological. It may be observed then that the restoration of order in the narrative is not complete until Bata himself pronounces judgement upon the wife.

That expression will occur in the movement toward kingship, where the transformation of the individual is extended into the transformation of the political order.

6.3 Fear, Death, and Moral Formation

The narrative of *the Two Brothers* does not present moral order in abstraction, but in response to a recognisable human condition. Central to this condition is the experience of vulnerability within hierarchical social structures. Where disparities of power exist, the possibility of exploitation arises. The narrative gives form to this reality through the encounter between Bata and the wife of Anubis, in which asymmetry of status frames the episode and informs its moral significance.

Bata is introduced as a subordinate figure, a labourer operating within the authority of his household. The wife, by contrast, occupies a position of relative autonomy and control within that same structure. The episode that follows is therefore not simply a matter of individual desire, but an instance in which imbalance permits transgression. The narrative does not elaborate this condition theoretically but renders it intelligible through action. The approach of the wife, her offer of material inducement, and Bata's refusal together establish the moral tension that initiates the sequence of events.

Within this framework, fear emerges not as an abstract emotion but as a structural feature of human existence. It is the condition of those who lack autonomy and are exposed to the will of others. The servant fears injustice, loss, and the unpredictability of power. At the same time, the narrative suggests that those in positions of authority are not exempt from fear but encounter it in a different form. Their freedom from restraint introduces the possibility of excess, and with it the consequences of disordered action.[93] In this way, both vulnerability and licence are shown to generate instability.

The narrative therefore situates fear within a broader moral anthropology. It is neither wholly negative nor merely incidental. Rather, it marks the limits of human control and points beyond itself. Where established norms are disrupted, and customary boundaries ignored, fear becomes the condition through which the need for order is apprehended. The recourse available to the characters is not political resistance, but an orientation toward the restoration of *mꜣʿt*, the governing principle of order, truth and right relation that structures both divine and human existence.

[93] In Act Two, the first wife suffered a humiliating excarnation through the mortuary dog-god Anubis. "When he reached his house, he killed his wife, cast her to the dogs, and sat mourning for his young brother" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 207). And, according to Van Loon (2014, 11), the expected consequences for undifferentiated sexual assault/adultery would be mutilation for the offender regardless of social status.

6.3.1 Death and the Resolution of Fear

If fear arises from the instability of human relations, it reaches its fullest expression in the prospect of death. The narrative engages with this problem directly through the repeated deaths and restorations of Bata. These episodes are presented as structured responses to the fundamental anxiety surrounding mortality.

Bata's suffering, dismemberment, and death are followed by ritual action and eventual renewal. The intervention of Anubis, who restores his brother through prescribed actions, reflects the Egyptian conviction that death does not terminate existence but transforms it. Ritual, in this context, provides the means through which continuity is secured. The narrative thus aligns with broader Egyptian beliefs concerning the preservation of the body and the survival of the individual beyond death.[94]

The contrast between the fates of Bata and his wife is instructive. Bata's death is followed by restoration and elevation, while the wife's destruction is final and without renewal. The difference does not lie in arbitrary divine preference, but in their respective relations to order. Bata's conduct remains aligned with the principles that sustain life, whereas the wife's actions disrupt them. The narrative expresses this distinction through imagery that would have been readily intelligible within the Egyptian context, particularly in relation to burial practices and the preservation of bodily integrity.

In this way, the story offers not a speculative doctrine, but a practical orientation. Death remains inevitable, but its consequences are not uniform. The manner in which one lives, and the degree to which one participates in the maintenance of order, determine the form of existence that follows. The narrative therefore provides a resolution to fear, not by removing its object, but by situating it within a larger and intelligible framework.

6.3.2 Order, Self-Regulation and Human Action

The problem of fear and death is closely connected to the regulation of human behaviour. The narrative presents two contrasting modes of action. On the one hand, there is conduct governed by impulse, exemplified in the actions of the wife and, at moments, Anubis. On the other hand, there is conduct governed by restraint and deliberation, exemplified in Bata.

[94] What the doctor is to life, religion is to death. In addition to following the specific requests of Bata, Anubis also recreated the "ritual drama" of a New Kingdom Egyptian funeral (Teeter 2011, 137-147). Placing "his hand on his head and smeared with dirt" (*The Two Brothers*, in Lichtheim 2006, 207). Here the story offered a direct reference to professional mourning, people employed to weep and throw dirt on their heads at a funeral. This is evidenced by images from the Eighteenth Dynasty Tomb of Ramose, at Thebes provided by Teeter (Teeter 2011, 142).

The distinction is not framed in abstract philosophical terms, but through narrative contrast. Actions driven by immediate desire led to disorder and fragmentation, while actions governed by restraint contribute to stability and continuity. Bata's refusal, his endurance of suffering, and his adherence to established norms are not presented as passive qualities, but as forms of disciplined action directed toward the preservation of order.

Bata's progression from subordinate labourer to king may therefore be understood within this framework. His development is not a movement from weakness to power in a conventional sense, but from vulnerability toward increasing alignment with the principles that govern the whole. The stages of his journey, labour, exile, restoration, and kingship correspond to a deepening participation in that order.

6.3.3 The Moral Function of the Narrative

Taken together, the narrative treatment of fear, death, restoration and ordered action, each as a response to disorder, indicates that *the Two Brothers* performs a moral function within its cultural context, namely the articulation and reinforcement of *mɜʿt*. Rather than presenting formal instruction, the narrative embodies patterns of conduct through which its audience may interpret their own condition.

Bata's actions provide a model of behaviour characterised by restraint, endurance, and adherence to established norms. The consequences of alternative forms of conduct are likewise illustrated through the fate of other characters.[95] In this way, the narrative operates through representation rather than prescription.

This mode of communication is consistent with the broader Egyptian tendency to express ethical principles through narrative, ritual, and symbol rather than codified law. Order is not imposed externally but internalised through participation in shared forms of meaning. The story therefore contributes to the maintenance of social and moral cohesion by rendering abstract principles visible and intelligible.

The figure of Bata, in particular, functions as a point of convergence between human experience and ideal order. His actions are recognisably human, yet oriented toward a standard that exceeds immediate circumstance. In this respect, the narrative offers not merely an account of events, but an articulation of the conditions under which order may be sustained. The function of poetic narrative, in this context, is not to instruct in the manner of didactic discourse, nor to

[95] It's not uncommon for the writers of the world's myths to make women the subjects and exemplars of prohibited actions. Homer presents a comparable motif in *the Odyssey* (4.160-162), where Helen reflects on her past actions in terms of self-reproach for the role her sexuality played in the Trojan War.

serve external ends, but to render intelligible the structure of action and the conditions under which human beings come to knowledge.

6.4 Liberty, Autonomy, and Self-Regulation

The narrative engages directly with the problem of human conduct within communal life. As has already been observed, this condition is marked by vulnerability, fear, and the instability that arises from unequal relations of power. At this point, the question becomes one of freedom, and specifically how human beings act within these conditions.

Freud's (2017) discontent with civilisation underlines the perpetual individual struggle inherent to communal living. This is the struggle to restrain instinctual impulses, such as the sexual impulse evident in Anubis's wife, and the aggressivity released by Anubis once provoked. Russell (1946, 3) similarly described this condition as the tension between "social cohesion and individual liberty." Both observations identify a problem that is not limited to a single culture but is evident across systems of human organisation. Communal life, by necessity, places limits upon individual liberty.

Rand (1961) framed this tension in terms of alternative modes of ordering human behaviour. One may be compelled by force, persuaded by religious or mystical authority, or guided by reason toward a self-regulated form of conduct. In the context of New Kingdom Egypt, the narrative of *the Two Brothers* may be understood as presenting another form of mediation. Through its characters and sequence of events, the story offers a representation of conduct in which restraint is not imposed externally but rendered intelligible through example.

The problem may first be observed in the form of individual liberty. Anubis's wife embodies this condition through the unrestrained expression of the *eros* instinct.[96] Positioned within a structure of relative social superiority, she acts without regard for established boundaries, progressing from desire to dissimulation, accusation, and the disruption of the household. Her actions do not present evil as an external force but rather demonstrate that the capacity for disordered action is an inclination within the individual.[97]

A similar pattern is evident in Anubis. When provoked, he responds with uncontrolled aggression and attempts to kill his brother. In this respect, he exemplifies what Freud (2017,

[96] Freud (2017, 31) observed a similar pattern in modern psychological literature on attraction pertaining to power and offered that the female tendency to the stronger man is an obligation in the interests of helpless young. Hollis (2003, 213) also noted that it's not unusual for older women to attempt seduction of younger men.

[97] The Hathor figure embodying the instinct of *eros*, the Anubis mortuary figure embodying the instinct of death (*thanatos*), and the Osiris figure embodying suffering and renunciation means that this family of characters cover all the Jungian archetypes of a collective unconscious. Love, Death and the Suffering condition of human life are the spiritual expressions of this psychological state.

44) described as an “instinct of death.” Taken together, these figures illustrate that individual liberty, when unregulated, becomes indistinguishable from licence. The capacity for action, when detached from restraint, leads not to order but to its dissolution.

Autonomy, by contrast, is presented in a different form. It is not the absence of limitation, but the capacity to act in accordance with recognised ends. Bata’s conduct throughout the narrative exemplifies this mode of action. By refusing the initial provocation, enduring accusation, and maintaining alignment with established norms, he demonstrates a form of self-regulation that is neither reactive nor externally compelled.

This distinction becomes clearer when considered in relation to the structure of the narrative as a whole. The progression from peasant to king is not merely a change in social status, but a movement through successive stages of ordered existence. In the first instance, Bata appears as a labourer and shepherd, situated within a domestic and agrarian setting. Following his exile, he establishes a household, builds a dwelling, and participates in a renewed form of life structured around basic social units. In the final phase, this order is extended to the level of the state, where Bata assumes kingship and becomes the organising principle of the land.

This progression may be understood as a movement from potentiality to fulfilment. The audience can perceive, through the narrative structure, the correspondence between the initial and final states. The endpoint of kingship gives form to the earlier stages, rendering them intelligible as part of a continuous development. Within this framework, Bata appears not only as an individual character but as a figure aligned with the broader principles of Egyptian order, often associated with Osirian renewal and the life of the land.

The significance of this development lies in the relationship between individual conduct and collective stability. Bata’s actions provide a model in which self-restraint and adherence to established norms are shown to produce not only personal preservation but also the restoration and maintenance of order at a larger scale. This is not presented as a formal doctrine, but as a pattern of action embodied within the narrative itself.[98]

If such a model is apprehended by its audience, it offers a means through which individual and collective aims may be brought into alignment. The narrative does not compel behaviour through explicit instruction, nor does it impose a system of external enforcement. Rather, it presents a form of conduct that may be recognised, understood, and, potentially,

[98] In the performance of its moral function, religion conserves established values, it never creates new ones. It is material change like technology and economics that creates new values. Atavistic re-assertion was Egypt’s default response to new problems.

imitated. In this respect, the story functions as a mimesis of ordered life, in which the regulation of the individual contributes directly to the stability of the whole.

6.5 Priest, Prophet, and King

6.5.1 Priest

Eros and death may be understood as fundamental conditions of human life, and their regulation as a source of tension within civilised society. In the narrative, these conditions are not denied but confronted and brought into relation with a higher order. Bata, through his self-sacrifice and the mortuary-ritual assistance of his brother, passes through both domains and emerges transformed. In doing so, the narrative offers a form of relief from the fear of death and from the instability associated with unrestrained human impulse.

Within this framework, Bata comes to function not merely as a character, but as a principle to which conduct may be aligned. This functional understanding of divine and semi-divine figures is consistent with broader Egyptological scholarship, in which divinity is understood in terms of manifestation, effective presence, and attributed quality rather than fixed individual identity (Assmann 2001; Wilkinson 2003), with the narrative framework grounded in the textual analysis of *the Two Brothers* (Hollis 2008). The present study extends this approach by identifying in Bata a convergence of priestly, prophetic, and royal functions articulated through the narrative structure itself.

His human substance is of particular significance. The name does not designate an individual in the ordinary sense but may be understood as signifying the presence of an Osirian essence across multiple forms—human, animal, and vegetal—extending through the stages of the narrative. In this way, the figure of Bata renders intelligible a continuity between human experience and divine order.

Rather than presenting codified commandments, the narrative embodies a pattern of conduct within a familiar human form. This form is capable of suffering, acting, and undergoing transformation, and thereby provides an example through which the audience may apprehend a standard of behaviour. Bata's initial self-sacrifice achieves resolution within the immediate context, while his later transformations extend this principle across a broader domain, culminating in kingship.

This movement becomes more explicit when Bata is considered in relation to priestly activity. The most evident instance is his eventual role as king, the high priest of Egypt. However, this culmination reflects earlier indications within the narrative. In the valley setting of Act Two, Bata establishes a dwelling at a significant location, enters communication with

divine forces, and participates in a structured domestic and sacred order. The creation of a divine wife and her placement within a bounded space further reinforces the impression of a sanctified environment.

The Papyrus d'Orbiney (10,1) describes Bata's daily activity: *ỉw wrš.f ḥr bḥs ỉꜣwt n ḫꜣst ḥr ỉn wꜣḥ m-bꜣḥ.st* "and he spent the day hunting small game and bringing (it) to place before her" (Hollis 2008, 148). While this may be read as ordinary domestic behaviour, the recurrence of ritual elements suggests a more structured pattern of action. The preparation and presentation of food, the maintenance of a designated space, and the restriction against leaving it correspond closely to what has been identified as the "Daily Offering Ritual" (Teeter 2011, 46–51).

Hollis (2008, 149) notes the possibility of a non-ritual interpretation,[99] yet the accumulation of symbolic features within the scene renders such a reading less persuasive. As Kemp (2018, 253) observed, the distinction between administrative and priestly roles in New Kingdom Egypt is not always sharply defined: "Much of the work in temples was either the routine performance of well-established rites and ceremonies or the administration of commodities and personnel." Within this context, Bata's actions may be understood as consistent with a priestly function.

This priestly dimension implies not authority in a coercive sense, but a form of service. Bata's actions are directed toward maintaining order, sustaining a sacred space, and demonstrating a pattern of conduct. In this way, the narrative presents a model through which individual behaviour may be brought into alignment with a broader communal and political order. His myth therefore operates as a sacred narrative that renders intelligible the ritual practices through which such order is maintained. Which is illustrated in Figure 8, where the priest-king performs the daily offering ritual, providing a visual parallel to the structured sequence of actions attributed to Bata within the narrative.

[99] Which is likely based on the d'Orbiney's use of ⊏⊐ for *pr* meaning house, not a temple. However, the imagery of providing this goddess with a sanctuary in which she is served ritually, and warned against leaving holds true. Certainly, in consideration of her identity as *ḥwt-ḥrw* meaning house of Horus. And Horus, being the identity and role Bata will ultimately be born into and through her in Act Three.



***Figure 8**: Nineteenth Dynasty priest-king performing the "daily offering ritual in the Second Hypostyle Hall of the Temple of Seti I at Abydos" (Teeter 2011, 46).*

6.5.2 Prophet

Another occasion in which the sacred emerges within the narrative is in the role of the prophet, where knowledge is expressed not through ritual action but through foresight and warning. This role is frequently associated in religious literature with the possibility of vindication, particularly in cases where the innocent suffer unjustly.

In this respect, Bata shares a recognisable pattern with the Biblical figure of Joseph, most notably in the motif of false accusation. Both figures are described as remarkable in appearance, and this feature is not incidental to the narrative. Bata's recurring physical distinction has already been noted. Joseph's appearance is likewise emphasised, and, as Goldman (2003) observes, the Hebrew root associated with his name conveys the sense of beauty. This aspect provides a clearer context for the actions of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:7: "And it came to pass after these things, that his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and said, Lie with me" (Genesis 39:7 KJV). The description in Genesis 39:6, "a goodly person, and well favoured", is thereby given greater narrative weight (Genesis 39:6 KJV).

The parallel between Joseph and Bata extends beyond appearance. In both cases, the figure progresses from an agrarian or pastoral context to a position of authority within Egypt, and both are associated with forms of knowledge that anticipate future developments. Joseph's

role as a dreamer, particularly in Genesis 37:7–9, situates him within a prophetic framework oriented toward broader political and international concerns. Bata, by contrast, embodies a form of foresight expressed within the internal structure of the narrative, where his warning is directed toward the preservation of order.

Bata's prophecy, however, is not presented in explicit or systematic terms. Rather, it appears as an indirect articulation of forces that are not immediately intelligible. The warning concerning the sea and the tree, *m ỉr pr r-bwn-r tm Pɜ ym ỉtɜ.ṯ* "Do not go out lest the sea seize you" (Papyrus d'Orbiney 10,1–2; Hollis 2008, 157) introduces imagery that is difficult to interpret within a strictly literal framework. Lichtheim's (2006, 207) translation further elaborates this sequence, describing the pursuit of the woman by the sea and the intervention of the pine, which removes a lock of her hair. The episode resists straightforward explanation and instead conveys a convergence of natural and symbolic elements.[100]

Attempts by Hollis (2008, 158), to account for this imagery through broader cosmological references, such as the association with Nun or Hapi do not fully resolve its function within the narrative. Its significance becomes clearer when considered in relation to the ritual framework already established. If Bata's actions in the valley correspond to a priestly role, then his warning to *wʿ šrỉw n Pɜ-Rʿ-Ḥr-ɜḫty* (a daughter of Pre-Harakhte) may be understood as an extension of that function. Within Egyptian temple practice, the preservation of sacred space required vigilance against forces that might introduce disorder.

As Teeter (2011, 48) notes, the daily ritual included acts intended to prevent the approach of impurity, such as the "Bringing of the Foot," in which the priest-king erased his own traces to deny access to the divine presence. In this light, Bata's warning assumes a comparable significance. It is directed not only at immediate danger, but at the maintenance of boundaries that sustain order.

The failure to observe this warning results in transgression. By moving beyond the defined limits of the sacred space, the woman becomes exposed to forces associated with disruption and instability. The loss of the lock of hair signifies not merely a physical alteration, but a breach that allows for further transformation. What follows is a movement away from the ordered domain established by Bata, and toward a trajectory that unfolds in opposition to it.

[100] A comparable episode appears in the *Iliad* (21.232–240), where Achilles confronts the river Scamander, which assumes a human voice and form. The scene illustrates the participation of natural forces in narrative action, offering a point of comparison for the convergence of natural and symbolic elements in the Egyptian account.

In this way, the prophetic element within the narrative is not concerned with prediction in an abstract sense, but with the articulation of consequences. It renders intelligible the relation between action and outcome, particularly in contexts where the preservation of order depends upon adherence to established limits. Bata's role, therefore, extends beyond ritual performance to include the communication of knowledge that guides conduct within the boundaries of the sacred.

6.5.3 King

In becoming king (Act Three), Bata offers the same service he has always offered, though the scale has changed. He remains the servant of his community, the shepherd of his flock, and the hunter making his ritual offerings to the temple. The soul of the state now governs the body of the state, which is to say that the state is consecrated through Bata as high priest and king.

In this role, we observe a religious justification for the Egyptian empire. The allegorical seed was planted in the symbol of the first king of the political state. This new state of being of the grain god, with its roots in the Nile, unfolds across the structure of the narrative. It emerges in foreign forests and comes to maturity in Egypt's crown land. The movement is continuous and organic, extending from origin to fulfilment.

Bata's transformation may be understood as a form of transcendence. The path to this condition is mediated through the feminine figures associated with Hathor, who embody both attraction and the possibility of corruption. In refusing and in being rejected by the physical love they offer, Bata moves beyond the level of immediate desire toward a more universal relation. The king, in overcoming *eros* and entropy, achieves a form of unity that extends beyond the individual.

From this pattern emerges a principle that is central to the narrative. The one who governs himself is capable of governing the state. Religion, in this context, does not function primarily as a system of prescriptions, but as a mode of formation. It presents a figure who is recognisably human, yet ordered toward a higher standard, and whose actions provide a model through which conduct may be aligned with that standard. In Bata, the audience is presented with a traditional suffering and dying god in human form, whose actions indicate the path toward continuity beyond the limits of mortal existence.

This movement toward unity is not confined to the narrative alone but corresponds to broader historical developments. During the first four hundred years of the second millennium BCE (Early Bronze Age, 2000-1600 BCE), the Levant was characterised by extensive

fortification, with cities enclosed by glacis and moats. By the Late Bronze Age (1550-1200 BCE), however, this pattern changes. As Sasson (1995, 1529) notes, new fortifications largely cease, and the region comes under Egyptian imperial authority. The conditions that follow are marked not by isolation but by increasing interaction and integration.

A similar tendency is evident in the development of written communication. As Bienkowski (2000, 13) observes, the alphabet reached a standard form in the Levant under Egyptian influence. The emergence of Proto-Sinaitic inscriptions, particularly in the mining regions of Serabit el-Khadem, suggests an attempt to adapt writing systems to new linguistic contexts. The earliest signs appear to reflect local identity while remaining connected to Egyptian symbolic forms, including references and dedications to Hathor as "the lady, mistress" (Bienkowski 2000, 12).

These developments indicate a broader inclination toward unity, achieved not through uniformity but through the ordering of diversity. Within this context, the narrative may be understood as participating in the same movement. It articulates, in symbolic form, a principle that binds disparate elements into a coherent whole. The image of kingship presented in the text is therefore not merely political, but ethical and psychological.

The king is defined by restraint. He does not yield to the impulses associated with desire or aggression but subjects them to a higher order. In this sense, the language of sacrifice is not incidental. It expresses the subordination of individual impulse to the stability of the collective. As Freud (2010, 58) suggests, symbolic acts of renunciation may be understood as forms of submission to a governing principle that orders communal life.[101] Within the Egyptian context, this principle is not external to the individual but is realised through the alignment of personal conduct with the structure of the whole.

In this way, kingship represents the culmination of the narrative movement. What begins as vulnerability within a household is transformed into the capacity to sustain order at the level of the state. The individual who was once subject to instability becomes the principle through which stability is maintained. The transformation is not a reversal of circumstance, but the completion of a process in which the sacred is made operative within the political order.

[101] This also appears to be the understanding evident in the *Sunjata* epic, where castration was planned and intended during the circumcision of the future king. The circumcision in the epic of the mythic king was necessary but to murder him during the process would seem a deliberately excessive exaggeration for the sake of causing a movement in the soul of the audience. On the mythic king Sujata: "You must cut off his genitals completely and remove them so that he dies" (*Sunjata* 1098-1101). In the next scene Sunjata naively goes for his circumcision.

6.6 Moral Function and the Education of Empire

Peasant-Bata's refusal to succumb to the instinctive tendencies of the human *psyche* characterised him as a rational and intellectual being. In this sense, he is not merely an individual figure, but a formal subject. What is shown in him is not unique to his person alone. Rather, the narrative implies that all individuals, both singular and collective, are capable of such rationality. Natural reason is understood as common to the human being, consistent with Aristotle's conception of the human as a rational being and political animal (*Politics* 1253a1–18).

In his later form, king-Bata signifies that this mode of behaviour is not incidental but normative. His conduct becomes the standard by which the behaviour of subjects within the empire may be measured. As king, he embodies not only political authority but also the ethical and cultural order of society. The standard he represents is presented as attainable, and the narrative consistently associates adherence to it with a corresponding reward.

The narrative does not present this standard through formal instruction or codified maxims. Instead, it is embodied in the figure of Bata himself. His actions provide a model of conduct characterised by deliberation, restraint, and alignment with established norms. In this respect, Bata functions as a concrete expression of a rational *ethos*. The principle is not abstractly stated but made visible through action.

The operation of this model depends upon imitation. The narrative presupposes that human beings are capable of recognising and internalising patterns of behaviour presented in symbolic form. Bata's identity as a grain god is significant in this regard. His substance is not only observed but, in a symbolic sense, consumed. Across the social spectrum, individuals partake of his material form through bread and, in doing so, internalise the corresponding intellectual and ethical principle.[102]

The moral function of the narrative is therefore realised through myth and taboo. Myth establishes the pattern of conduct to be affirmed, while taboo marks the limits not to be transgressed. In the absence of a codified legal system of the kind found elsewhere, these distinctions operate in a comparable manner. They designate what is to be regarded as ordered or disordered, clean or unclean.

Within this framework, Bata stands in contrast to figures who oppose the principles of restraint, deliberation and alignment with *mꜣʿt*, that govern ordered conduct. The narrative does not develop this contrast as a theoretical argument but renders it intelligible through the

[102] Subjects consumed his nutritive material substance (bread) and, in doing so, internalised his intellective form (soul).

consequences of action. Certain forms of conduct are shown to disrupt order and lead to dissolution, while others sustain and restore it. The emphasis remains on the preservation of social cohesion.

The underlying opposition is that between *mɜʿt* and *ỉsft*, between order and disorder. The narrative does not impose this distinction externally but invites its recognition through the structure of events. In this way, the story contributes to the formation of a shared moral orientation.

What emerges is a system in which moral self-restraint is not merely advisable but is presented as sacred. The figure of Bata serves as the organising centre of this system. Through him, the narrative articulates a form of conduct that binds individual behaviour to the stability of the collective, and, in doing so, participates in the broader project of sustaining an ordered political and moral world.

6.7 The Mystery of Bata

The mystery of Bata may be understood as a form of theoretical knowledge that articulates both the nature of this mythic character and the principles governing his action. As a theophoric figure, these principles are not confined to the character alone but are directed toward the regulation of human conduct within the cosmopolitan order. They are presented as a system of knowledge upon which the ancient audience might base their civil and ethical life.

For clarity, Figure 9 presents this sacred mystery in schematic form, as an indigenous African mythic system of knowledge.

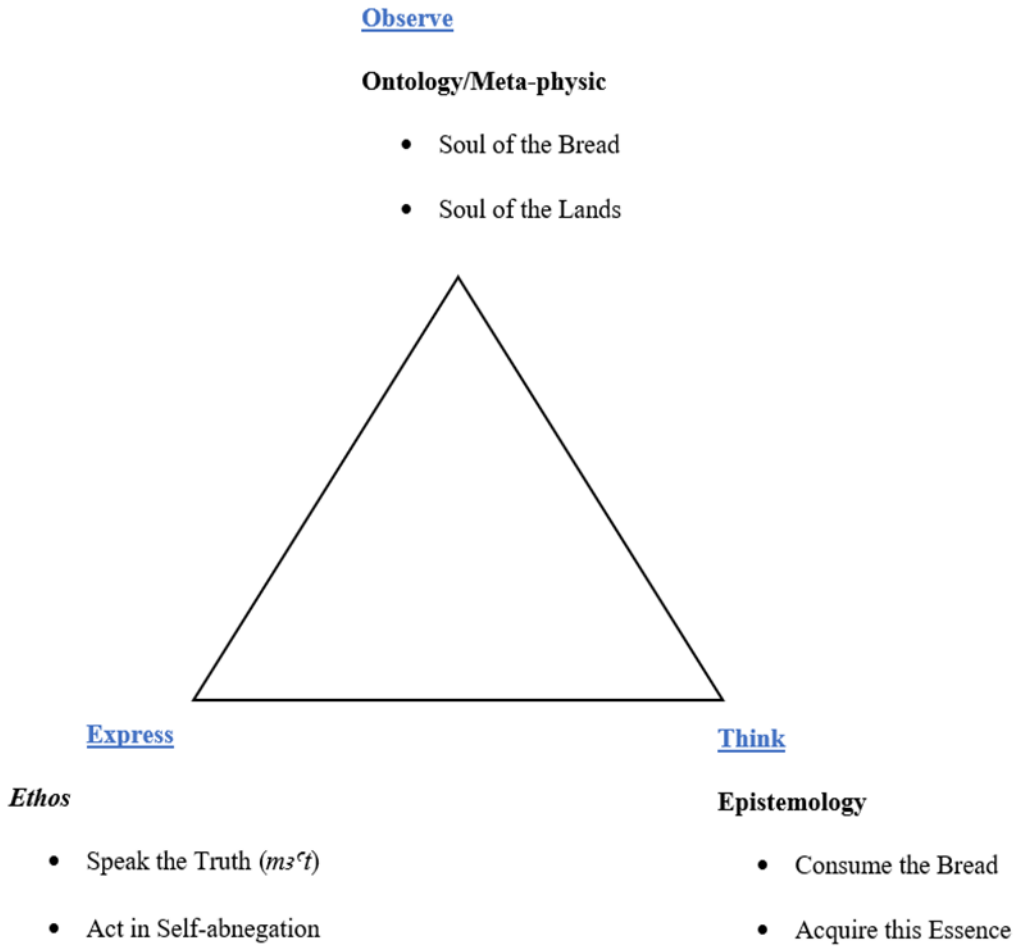


***Figure 9**: The sacred mystery of Bata as a theoretical system of knowledge.*

6.8 Triumph of the Sacred

By the end of the narrative, Bata and Anubis assume the form of divine kingship in a manner consistent with the Osiris–Horus pattern of succession. In this transformation, the pattern of their behaviour is no longer confined to the individual but is presented in a form that may be more widely recognised. What is embodied in their actions acquires a broader significance within the symbolic and political order.

This pattern corresponds to what Assmann (2001) describes as the manifestation of divine efficacy within the Egyptian worldview, in which the intervention of the divine restores order within conditions of disruption and instability. In this sense, what is here described as the triumph of the sacred designates not an abstract principle imposed upon the narrative, but the narrative expression of this underlying theological structure.

The narrative thereby affirms the persistence of traditional religious forms in the face of conditions that tend toward disorder. The structures associated with ancestral religion are shown to prevail over forms of conduct arising from unrestrained desire. This is not presented as a

sudden reversal, but as the outcome of a process in which order is restored through alignment with an enduring pattern.

The renewal described in the narrative depends upon a correspondence between the individual and the larger order to which he belongs. To align oneself with the uncorrupted and enduring principle represented by the land is to participate in its continuity. In this sense, the distinction between individual and collective is mediated through a shared orientation toward what is stable and generative.

This movement may be understood as a prioritisation of form over matter, and of continuity over dissolution. The narrative gives expression to the possibility that what is ordered and intelligible may be preserved beyond the immediate conditions of change and decay.

What is offered in *the Two Brothers* is therefore not instruction in a formal sense, but an inducement to return to a centre of order when existing structures are compromised. This centre may be understood as the organising point of the narrative, what might be termed its *omphalos*, from which orientation is restored. The image is not imposed but suggested through the pattern of events. The figure of the inseparable brothers, and particularly that of the shepherd, provides a point of orientation through which conduct may be understood and, potentially, imitated.

6.9 In Brief

In this chapter, Bata has been presented as a religious model, whose myth culminates in the triumph of the sacred over the secular. Through this model, grounded in patterns of death and renewal, the narrative addresses the human condition and promotes social cohesion. This is achieved through the integration of the roles of priest, prophet, and king—consecrated forms of conduct whose habits are made available for imitation.

As a priest, Bata embodies obedience and self-abnegation in the face of passionate inducement. Sanctioned by the gods, this role upholds taboo and unwritten law, preserving order and protecting the vulnerable from abuse. As a prophet, he functions as a warner of danger and a guide toward stability, rendering intelligible the consequences of action within a broader framework of order. As king, Bata is self-governing and self-sacrificing. In contrast to the previous king's susceptibility, he restores the integrity of kingship and demonstrates the institution's enduring validity despite the failures of individual rulers.

In this way, Bata, as obedient and self-regulating, is ultimately elevated to rulership of the land. His story, as a system of knowledge grounded in fixed principles of conduct, consecrates the behaviour of those who participate in it. Expressed more simply, the narrative offers an intelligible proposition: those who take part of the substance of the land, acquire its

animating principle, speak the truth, and act in self-abnegation may expect a corresponding participation in its enduring order.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The Problem and Aim Reconsidered

This study began with an interpretive problem concerning the nature and meaning of *the Two Brothers*. Earlier approaches have tended to treat the narrative either as a moral anecdote or as an isolated mythic episode, often without sustained attention to its internal structure or its broader cultural function. The present study proposed instead that the text be examined as a unified narrative, capable of yielding intelligible meaning when approached through a consistent method.

The primary aim was to explore *the Two Brothers* as a written epic myth of the New Kingdom, and to determine whether its structure, characters, and sequence of events could be understood as expressing a coherent system of thought. This required a method capable of accounting for both narrative form and symbolic content. The Aristotelian framework, with its emphasis on unity of action, probability, necessity, and mimesis, provided the means by which the internal logic of the story could be made explicit.

Proceeding from this method, the study demonstrated that the narrative is not a loose aggregation of episodes, but a structured representation of action oriented toward intelligibility. The figure of Bata emerges not as an isolated character but as a coherent symbolic form, whose actions are consistent with a broader pattern of death, renewal, and transformation associated with Egyptian religious thought. The narrative, taken as a whole, articulates a model of conduct that is rendered intelligible through representation rather than imposed through instruction.

At the same time, the study has shown that this model must be understood within its historical and cultural context. Composed in the New Kingdom during a period of imperial stability and increasing social complexity, the narrative reflects conditions in which traditional structures of authority were required to accommodate new forms of wealth, mobility, and cultural interaction. In such a context, myths functioned not merely as entertainment but as a medium through which a unifying ethic could be expressed and sustained.

What emerges, therefore, is not simply an interpretation of a single text, but the identification of a broader pattern. The narrative of *the Two Brothers* presents a form of moral and symbolic reasoning that anticipates later developments commonly associated with the Axial Age. The emphasis on self-regulation, the ordering of the individual in relation to a larger whole, and the articulation of ethical conduct through exemplary figures indicate that such patterns were already present, in nascent form, within the Egyptian intellectual and religious tradition of the Late Bronze Age.

7.2 Method and Approach Justified

The method adopted in this study was necessarily reflective of both its subject and its limitations. As already indicated, the work proceeded from an interpretive premise and sought to move from one true proposition to the next, beginning with what appeared most evident in the narrative. In this respect, the approach may be understood as a rational reconstruction of myth, grounded in observation, comparison, and structural analysis.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that such an undertaking is not without its difficulties. As Kemp (2018, 3–4) observed, even the most general statements about ancient Egypt involve a degree of abstraction, reducing complex historical realities to intelligible formulations. Similarly, Bellah (2011, 227) articulated the broader challenge inherent in reconstructing ancient worlds: "I am aware as I write this book that I am creating in my own mind images that I hope correspond to the way things were in ancient Egypt. I also know that the more I try to make sense of the facts, the more what I write is speculative and begins to merge with the world of historical fiction, a modern form of myth. My ancient Egypt is very much an imagined world, though I hope that it cannot too readily be shown to be untrue to the ancient sources."

This recognition does not invalidate the method but rather defines its proper limits. What is offered is not a direct recovery of the ancient Egyptian mind, but a disciplined attempt to render its expressions intelligible through available evidence. In this sense, the study operates within what Bellah (2011) described as the speculative dimension of myth, or "mythospeculation," and what Assmann (2001) elsewhere termed "explicit theology."

The adoption of an Aristotelian framework was therefore not incidental. It provided a means of organising the narrative according to principles articulated in both the *Poetics* and the logical works of the *Organon*, particularly regarding unity of action, probability, necessity, and the intelligibility of representation. Through these principles, the narrative could be understood as a coherent whole, in which events arise in accordance with an internal logic rather than by arbitrary succession. In this way, the method did not impose an external system upon the text, but rendered explicit the structure already present within it.

This approach accords with the interpretation advanced in recent Aristotelian scholarship that the purpose of the *Poetics* is not to prescribe rules for composition nor to defend poetry on moral or political grounds, but to establish the basis for a properly literary criticism grounded in the principles internal to the art itself (Ford 2015, 1–3). In this sense, the present study has proceeded in accordance with the requirement that poetic works be understood in terms of their own causes, structure, and end, rather than through categories imposed from

external disciplines. The interpretation of *the Two Brothers* has therefore not depended upon psychological, symbolic, or speculative frameworks extraneous to the text, but upon the intelligibility of its action as it unfolds within its own narrative logic. What has been demonstrated is that the meaning of the narrative emerges from the ordered relation of its events, and that its coherence, when analysed according to its own principles, is sufficient to sustain interpretation without recourse to external explanatory models. Correctness in poetry is not the same as correctness in politics.

At the same time, the study remained conscious of the distance between the modern interpreter and the ancient Egyptian context. Educated within a Western intellectual tradition, the analysis necessarily made use of comparative material, most notably the figure of Joseph in Biblical and Qur'anic traditions, as a point of orientation where the Egyptian material proved opaque. This was not intended as a substitution, but as provisional aid in maintaining intelligibility where direct access was limited.

Underlying this approach was the working assumption that the ancient Egyptian audience possessed a form of natural rationality, in which myth and divine action were integrated into their understanding of reality. The narrative was therefore treated not as irrational or arbitrary, but as an intelligible expression of a system of thought consistent with its cultural context.

Finally, the study proceeded on the basis that myth, particularly in the context of the New Kingdom, functioned within a broader social and political framework. In a period characterised by imperial stability, increasing wealth, and social differentiation, narrative and entertainment served as means of education and orientation. As such, *the Two Brothers* was approached not only as a literary composition, but as a medium through which a unifying ethic could be expressed, internalised, and sustained.

7.3 Identity of Bata

Most stories from ancient Egypt allude to the myths of Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Osirian myth is widely regarded as the "central myth" of the Egyptian state, with the king as its principal actor (Assmann 2001, 159). The deceased king is identified with Osiris, the living king with Horus, and the birth of the latter is understood as the result of a mystical union through Isis. This cycle of myths contains the principal concepts of Egyptian culture: life and death, fertility and rejuvenation. Osiris, in this framework, was the transcendent god of popular piety, the god of individual faith or personal religion. Although the king occupied the central role, each individual, like the king, possessed a *bꜣ* that journeyed through the other world to become an

Osiris. As his iconographic standard suggests, Osiris exemplified the relation between man and god, while Isis and Horus extended this structure into the domain of the family. Through Osiris, loyalty to the king was simultaneously loyalty to the divine, and therefore a moral standard.

Within this framework, the identity of Bata may be expressed in formal terms. Proposition one: Bata is an Egyptian dying-god. Proposition two: Osiris is the Egyptian dying-god. The conclusion follows: Bata is Osiris. In the present study, what is implicit in these premises has been made explicit through textual, structural, and comparative analysis. The shared term, Egyptian dying-god, contains the predicates that define the subject in each case, including its qualities, functions, and narrative pattern. Where two premises are shown to be true, the conclusion follows necessarily. The argument proceeds, therefore, from one true premise to the next, yielding a coherent conclusion grounded in the internal logic of the narrative.

On this basis, Bata is Osiris. The principle of identity applies: A is A. It follows that predicates incompatible with the nature of the subject cannot be affirmed of it within the narrative. Sexual assault is not a predicate proper to the Osirian type as it is presented in this text. Nor is it attributable to the category of the dying[103] and rising god more generally within this narrative structure. For this reason, the accusation must be understood in a different light, not as a statement of fact within the moral order of the story, but as a narrative element whose function is resolved through the unfolding of the plot.

Further support for this identification emerges from linguistic analysis. The name Bata does not function as a conventional proper name designating an individual. Rather, it operates as a general term that instantiates an essence. This essence may be articulated through the dual expressions developed in this study: the soul of the land and the soul of the bread. These propositions correspond to Osirian theology and are consistent with the symbolic and ritual framework within which the narrative operates.

By contrast, these predicates are incompatible with the nature of Seth, the Egyptian god associated with violence, disorder, and inversion. On the principle of identity, Bata cannot simultaneously instantiate both Osiris and Seth in relation to the same narrative function. The predicates do not coincide. In respect of the accusation in Act One, the identification of Bata with Osiris excludes the attribution of characteristics proper to Seth. The distinction is therefore

[103] The category was also expanded across the Mediterranean to include other dying-gods. The self-abnegation and renunciation of *eros* and death were typical traits of the category. Sexual assault on the female characters was not.

not interpretive in an arbitrary sense but grounded in the coherence of the narrative's own structure and categories.

7.4 Narrative Resolution of the Central Problem

7.4.1 The Opening Scene

Anubis's householder-wife is presented through the familiar figure of Hathor. Her character corresponds to the privileged and licentious elite, consistent with her divine domain as wife, mother, and mistress. She is not a particular individual but a universal figure, representing the eternal feminine as the gateway through which the protagonist advances. Her carnality and sexuality correspond to parallel figures across mythic traditions: Shamhat in *the Epic of Gilgamesh*, Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:7 and Surah 12:23, and analogous figures in the *Sunjata* epic and *the Ramayana*.[104]

The point of tension in the opening scene concerns whether Bata transgresses his fixed social boundary. The narrative resolves this question through the alignment of intention, action, and consequence. The wife is explicit in her desire and appeals to her status and wealth. The emphasis falls on the moral condition of the elite, whose inclination toward licence and transgression is presented as a central problem within the New Kingdom context.

Bata, by contrast, possesses capacity but not intention. He chooses to suffer rather than to act unjustly. His response is not corrective in a punitive sense, but exemplary. He demonstrates that it is better to suffer injustice than to commit it. This pattern corresponds to the Osirian model, in which endurance and self-restraint establish moral order.

Temperance, in this framework, produces order, proportion, and harmony, which together constitute justice. These principles are unified within the Egyptian concept of *mꜣʿt*, where truth, order, and justice are not separate categories but aspects of a single governing principle. Although the immediate circumstances appear adverse, Bata's alignment with *mꜣʿt* secures justice at the level of the whole.

7.4.2 The Self-Castration

Bata's self-castration must be understood within the Osirian framework and the narrative structure established in this study, in which action is interpreted according to its

[104] A comparable feminine archetype appears across epic and religious traditions: Shamhat in the *Epic of Gilgamesh* (I, iv–v); Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:7 (KJV) and in the Qur'anic account (Qur'an 12:23); the corresponding figures in the *Sunjata* epic (*Sunjata* 1620–1670); and in the Indian epic the *Ramayana* (Narayan 1972, 38).

function in the restoration of order. It is not an index of guilt, but the decisive expression of self-governance. The figure of Bata represents the man whose intellect governs his appetites. In this sense, he is the fully realised rational being, capable of subordinating bodily impulse to a higher principle.

Interpretations that treat this act as evidence of guilt rely on external frameworks that do not cohere with the internal logic of the narrative. The act is better understood, in continuity with ritual practices such as circumcision, as a symbolic submission to order and to the authority of a higher principle. Within this structure, Bata's power lies not in domination, but in consent and self-abnegation.

This form of power is consistent with Osirian theology. It reflects a transformation in which vulnerability becomes the condition of transcendence. Bata acts not from compulsion, but from will. He renounces immediate gratification in favour of a higher and more enduring good. In classical terms, this capacity is reason.[105]

Through this act, Bata exemplifies the ethical principle that governs the narrative: that self-mastery is the foundation of both personal and political order.

7.5 Moral Function and Affective Meaning

The narrative of *the Two Brothers* operates as a moral and affective instrument. It presents intelligible patterns of action through which the audience may interpret their own condition. Justice is not delivered abstractly, but through the visible consequences of conduct.

The corrupt suffer not because of arbitrary punishment, but because their actions reveal a lack of self-governance. Disorder is shown to be self-destructive. By contrast, restraint and endurance are shown to produce stability and continuity.

This mode of communication is consistent with Egyptian traditions of instruction, where ethical principles are conveyed through narrative, ritual, and symbol rather than through codified law. The effect is pedagogical. The audience is invited to imitate the pattern embodied in Bata.

The figure of Bata functions as a point of convergence between human experience and ideal order. His actions demonstrate that self-regulation is both possible and necessary. The narrative therefore contributes to the formation of a shared moral orientation, grounded in the preservation of *mꜣʿt*.

[105] According to Aristotle, action may be attributed to reason when it proceeds from rational desire directed toward a perceived good (*Rhetoric* 1368b–1369a).

7.6 Priest, Prophet, and King

The progression of Bata from subordinate labourer to king reflects a movement from vulnerability toward the embodiment of order. Each stage of this development corresponds to an expansion of the same principle. The one who governs himself becomes capable of participating in the governance of the whole.

In Aristotelian terms, this progression is grounded in the formation of virtue through habituated action. As Aristotle observes, "we become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts" (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1103a31–33). Bata's conduct is not incidental but formed through repeated acts of restraint and deliberation, establishing the ethical condition necessary for higher responsibility.

This ethical formation is the basis for political participation. Aristotle maintains that the capacity to rule presupposes prior formation in obedience, since "he who has never learned to obey cannot be a good commander" (*Politics* 1277b13–15). Bata's kingship is therefore not a reversal of fortune, but the extension of an already established principle: the governance of the self as the condition for the governance of the state.

7.7 Resolution of the Central Question: Guilty or Not

The question of guilt is resolved within the structure of the narrative itself. The events of the plot, taken in their proper sequence, present Bata as aligned consistently with the principles that define order. The accusation belongs to the domain of disorder (*isft*) and inversion. Its function is not to establish fact, but to initiate the movement through which truth is revealed.

The interpretation of this episode therefore depends not on external frameworks imposed upon the text, but on the internal coherence of the narrative. When considered within this structure, the conclusion follows from the alignment between character, action, and outcome.

What may be expressed more formally is that the conclusion reached in this study is not imposed upon the narrative but follows from the identity of its central figure as it is revealed through the structure of events. If Bata is understood, within the logic of the narrative, as participating in the Osirian pattern of death, transformation, and renewal, then the predicates proper to that pattern must be maintained. The attribution of actions belonging to an opposed category would introduce a contradiction at the level of narrative identity. The accusation, therefore, cannot be sustained as a statement of fact within the logic of the story, but must be

understood as belonging to the domain of disorder through which the truth of the character is disclosed.

7.8 Contribution and Historical Significance

The narrative reflects a broader historical movement toward the formation of unifying ethical systems within complex societies. In the New Kingdom context, characterised by imperial expansion and increasing social differentiation, narrative and ritual functioned as instruments of cohesion, providing a shared framework through which conduct could be ordered and sustained.

Within this framework, the figure of Bata represents an early articulation of a moral ideal grounded in self-restraint, endurance, and alignment with a higher order. This ideal is not presented in abstract or prescriptive form but embodied in a narrative pattern that renders it intelligible through action and consequence. In this respect, the story anticipates developments more commonly associated with later Axial Age traditions. It suggests that the movement toward ethical universalism does not emerge abruptly in the first millennium BCE but has discernible antecedents within the Egyptian intellectual and religious world.

7.9 Final Philosophical Statement

The narrative presents a model in which the individual who governs himself participates in the maintenance of order at the level of the whole. Self-abnegation is not loss, but the condition of unity. In this sense, the triumph of the sacred is the restoration of intelligible order within both the individual and the state.

7.10 In Closing

The Two Brothers offers not instruction in the form of abstract doctrine, but an inducement toward a pattern of conduct. It reflects a society concerned with maintaining order in the absence of codified law, through the assimilation of shared values.

Bata is presented as both memory and aspiration. He represents a return to foundational principles and a vision of their fulfilment. The narrative operates as morally formative entertainment, guiding conduct through example rather than coercion.

The implication is that the development of unifying ethical systems, later articulated in more formal terms, may be traced to earlier traditions in which narrative, ritual, and symbol performed this function. In this way, the Egyptian New Kingdom may be understood as contributing to the broader history of moral and political thought.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Supplementary Interpretive Analysis

The following appendices provide supplementary material intended to clarify methodological choices, define key terms, and present contextual information that would otherwise interrupt the flow of the main argument. These include elaborations, chronological estimates, and general descriptions of concepts as they are used within this study. The meanings of these terms are derived from the sources listed in the bibliography and are formulated in accordance with their established usage and their application in the present analysis.

A.1 The Rape-Hoax Interpretive Motif

This appendix presents a secondary interpretive thread concerning the accusation episode. It examines what is here termed the rape-hoax motif as a narrative and cultural device, situating it in relation to gendered power, accusation, and moral order within the story. The discussion is included to provide transparency regarding the interpretive process. The central argument of this study remains the Aristotelian and moral-philosophical reading of Bata as an Osirian hero. The present analysis is therefore positioned as a supporting consideration rather than a primary claim.

The use of the term requires clarification. Words function as symbols that represent reality, while terms express the concepts communicated through those symbols. The meaning and origin of this term have been outlined in Chapter One. What follows is a specification of its logical extension and intension.

The term rape-hoax is here used as a categorematic term, that is, a term denoting a class of phenomena sharing relevant properties. By extension, it refers to instances of false accusations of sexual non-consensual physical assault. It is not necessary to specify each individual case, as the classification depends upon the presence of a common set of defining properties.

By intension, the term is applied only where these defining properties are observed. In this study, it refers to the performance of sexual victimhood intended to elicit emotional support and social advantage, as defined in Chapter One. Within *the Two Brothers*, this configuration of elements is presented as the central point of tension in the narrative.

It is important to note that this interpretation remains contingent upon the evidence presented in the text and does not claim necessity beyond it. The term is employed because it provides a precise conceptual description of the narrative configuration observed, where

alternative terms such as false accusation or slander do not sufficiently capture the full set of relevant predicates.

The so-called Potiphar's wife motif offers a comparative instance within a broader narrative tradition. However, as a referential label, it identifies a recurring narrative type without fully specifying its conceptual content. In contrast, the present term is intended to describe the phenomenon itself rather than merely indicate its occurrence.

The aim of this appendix is therefore not to introduce an additional thesis, but to clarify the terminology and reasoning underlying one aspect of the interpretive framework. It is offered as a supplementary analysis, included for the sake of precision and methodological transparency.

Appendix B: Chronological Framework

Chronological tables are provided by numerous scholars, both for the ancient Near East broadly and for Egyptian history in particular. These often vary slightly in their specific dating. The following framework reflects widely accepted chronological ranges and is informed primarily by Goldman (2003), Kuhrt (1995), and Lichtheim (2006), in alignment with the usage adopted throughout this study.

B.1 Timeline of the New Kingdom and Late Bronze Age Context

ca. 1550–1070 BCE — Egyptian New Kingdom

Period of imperial expansion and internal consolidation.

ca. 1550–1200 BCE — Late Bronze Age (Levant)

Wider interconnected system linking Egypt, the Levant, Anatolia, and Mesopotamia.

ca. 1292–1069 BCE — Ramesside Period

Height of imperial organisation, followed by increasing structural strain.

ca. 1250 BCE — Estimated date for the Hebrew Exodus

Traditionally associated with Egyptian imperial presence in the Levant.

ca. 1215 BCE — Composition of the Papyrus d'Orbiney

Belongs to a late phase of the New Kingdom, reflecting a mature narrative tradition.

ca. 1200–1150 BCE — Late Bronze Age collapse

Marked by the breakdown of established political and economic systems.

ca. 1000 BCE — Estimated date for the United Monarchy of Israel

Period of regional political reorganisation following earlier collapse.

ca. 800 BCE — Approximate beginning of the Axial Age

Associated with the emergence of more explicit ethical and philosophical traditions.

Read together, this chronological framework situates *the Two Brothers* within the closing phase of the Late Bronze Age system, at a point where imperial consolidation and emerging structural strain coincide. The composition of the Papyrus d'Orbiney belongs to this late New Kingdom context, preceding the wider collapse of interconnected political systems in the eastern Mediterranean. The subsequent emergence of more explicit ethical and philosophical traditions in the first millennium BCE suggests that the narrative participates in an earlier stage of this broader historical development, in which patterns of moral order are articulated in narrative form prior to their later systematic expression.

Appendix C: Conceptual and Terminological Clarifications

The following terms are used throughout this study within broadly Aristotelian, Thomistic, and related philosophical traditions, including the Objectivist framework as articulated by Ayn Rand (1961). While precise one-to-one definitions are not always possible for complex concepts, the meanings provided here reflect their conventional usage in the relevant literature and their specific application within this project. In formulating these definitions, particular attention has been given to the work of Robert Bellah (2011) and Sister Miriam Joseph (2002), whose treatments of religion, language, symbolism, and conceptual clarity have informed this glossary.

C.1 Glossary of Key Terms

Anomie: A term derived from Durkheim, referring to a condition in which the normative standards and values that regulate social and individual behaviour break down.

Axial Age: A period in the middle of the first millennium BCE characterised by significant intellectual and religious developments concerned with questions of justice, order, and ultimate authority. These movements, centred around the Mediterranean and adjacent regions, include forms of mysticism, prophecy, and rational inquiry. As noted by Bellah (2011, 266), a recurring concern is the question of legitimate authority and the nature of just rule.

Epicheireme: An extended rhetorical argument structured to make a logical claim more persuasive by explicitly stating its supporting reasons.

Epic Hero: The principal character of an epic narrative who embodies the ethical vision, values, and virtues of a culture.

Essence: That which makes a being what it is, without which it would not belong to its kind; the set of properties that define a thing's nature.

Ethics: The discipline concerned with the formation of character and the cultivation of good conduct.

Form: The essence or nature of a thing; that which determines what a being is.

Justice: A principle concerned with the proper ordering of relationships within a whole, often understood as a form of harmony or proportion.

Meaning: That which is conveyed through the structure of a narrative, particularly through the relation between action, character, and outcome.

Phantasm: A mental image produced by the imagination.

Poetic: Relating to plotted narrative that imitates human action, whether in epic or dramatic form.

Presentism: The imposition of modern categories, assumptions, or values onto the interpretation of past cultures, resulting in anachronistic or distorted understanding; avoided in this study through attention to historical and cultural context.

Proposition: A declarative statement that can be either true or false.

Reason: The faculty by which relations are apprehended in logical order.

Religion: In this study, understood as a system of symbols, practices, and narratives that function to unify social and ethical life within a given community.

Rhetoric: The faculty of observing, in any given case, the available means of persuasion.

Soul: The metaphysical form that animates material substance, together constituting a living being.

Story: A structured representation of human action through which events are rendered intelligible in narrative form.

Terms: Concepts expressed through linguistic symbols, used in combination to predicate something of a subject.

Truth: The correspondence between thought and reality; the conformity of an intellectual judgment with what is.

Ad verecundiam: The fallacy of appealing to authority in place of evidence or reasoning; avoided in this study by grounding interpretation in textual and logical analysis rather than assertion.

Virtue: A stable and excellent condition of the soul, in contrast to vice, which represents its corruption or deficiency.

These definitions are not intended as exhaustive philosophical accounts, but as working clarifications to ensure consistency of usage within this study.

Appendix D: Reference Notes on Figures and Traditions

The following notes provide brief contextual descriptions of key figures referenced in this study. These figures are well established within their respective traditions. The present descriptions are based primarily on standard scholarly treatments and the primary sources used throughout the thesis.

D.1 Egyptian Figures

The following figures are conventionally well known in ancient Near Eastern studies. The present study relies primarily on their interpretation as presented in Wilkinson (2003), Gahlin (2014), and Pinch (2002).

Anubis: A deity associated with death, funerary practices, and aspects of kingship. These domains overlap with those of Osiris, though Anubis appears to represent an earlier formulation of these functions.

Ennead: A term of Greek origin used in Egyptological studies to refer to a group of nine deities.

Hathor: A highly versatile goddess associated with love, sexuality, fertility, and foreign lands. She is frequently linked to kingship as a maternal or protective figure.

Horus: The falcon and sky god associated with kingship. His avian symbolism reflects the king's capacity to oversee and govern. He is the son of Osiris.

Osiris: The god of death, resurrection, and fertility, central to both royal ideology and popular religion. Both the deceased king and the lay individual were believed to become Osiris in the afterlife.

Re: The principal sun god and creator deity. Light, in this context, is associated with knowledge, truth, and order.

Seth: A deity associated with violence, chaos, and disorder. Despite this, his strength and cunning are also incorporated into protective and cosmic functions.

D.2 Biblical Figures

The following descriptions are based on the KJV and the DRV.

Job: A wealthy man from Uz who, in a divine test, loses his possessions and family. Despite his suffering, he remains faithful and is ultimately restored.

Joseph: A central figure in Genesis. Betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, he rises to a position of authority in Egypt and later saves his family during famine.

D.3 Greek Figures

These figures are well established in the classical tradition. The present study draws primarily on Homeric and tragic sources, including the *Iliad*, *the Odyssey*, and the *Three Theban Plays.*[106]

Adonis: A figure of exceptional beauty loved by both Aphrodite and Persephone. His cyclical existence between life and death is associated with themes of seasonal renewal.

Apollo: A god associated with intellect, healing, the arts, and the sun. He represents order, clarity, and measured form.

Dionysus: The god of wine, fertility, and ecstatic experience. His domain includes both creative expression and the excess associated with revelry.

Oedipus: A tragic hero who unknowingly kills his father and marries his mother. His story was later used by Freud in formulating psychoanalytic theory.

Pandora: Created as the first woman, she opens a container that releases suffering into the world, leaving only hope behind.

Prometheus: A Titan associated with forethought and benefaction toward humanity. He is credited with giving fire to humans and is punished for this act.

D.4 Philosophical Figures

The following philosophers are referenced as part of the intellectual framework of this study. Their primary works informed the conceptual and methodological approach adopted here.

Aquinas: St. Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274), a medieval philosopher who integrated Aristotelian philosophy with Christian theology, most notably in the *Summa Theologiae*.

Aristotle: (384–322 BCE), a Greek philosopher whose works span logic, ethics, politics, and poetics. His thought forms the primary analytical framework of this study.

Descartes: René Descartes (1596–1650), an early modern philosopher known for methodological doubt and the formulation of the *cogito* ("I think, therefore I am") as the first principle of knowledge.

Kant: Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), an Enlightenment philosopher known for the formulation of the categorical imperative in his moral philosophy.

Rand: Ayn Rand (1905–1982), a modern philosopher and novelist who developed Objectivism, a system emphasising reason, individualism, and the principle of identity.

[106] All references to Greek epic and tragic texts follow the translations of Fagles (1990; 1996; 1984).

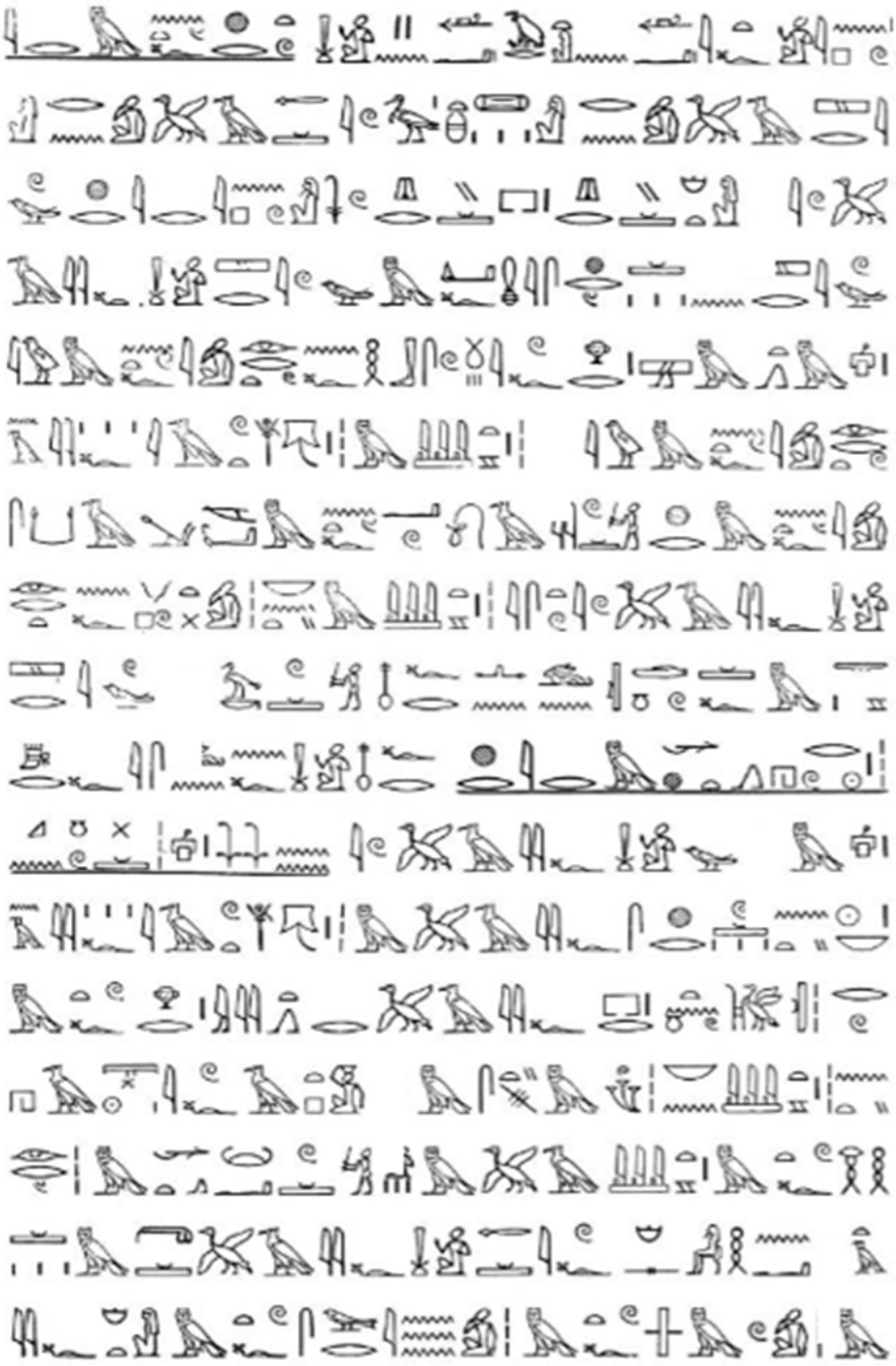
Appendix E: Primary Text Addendum

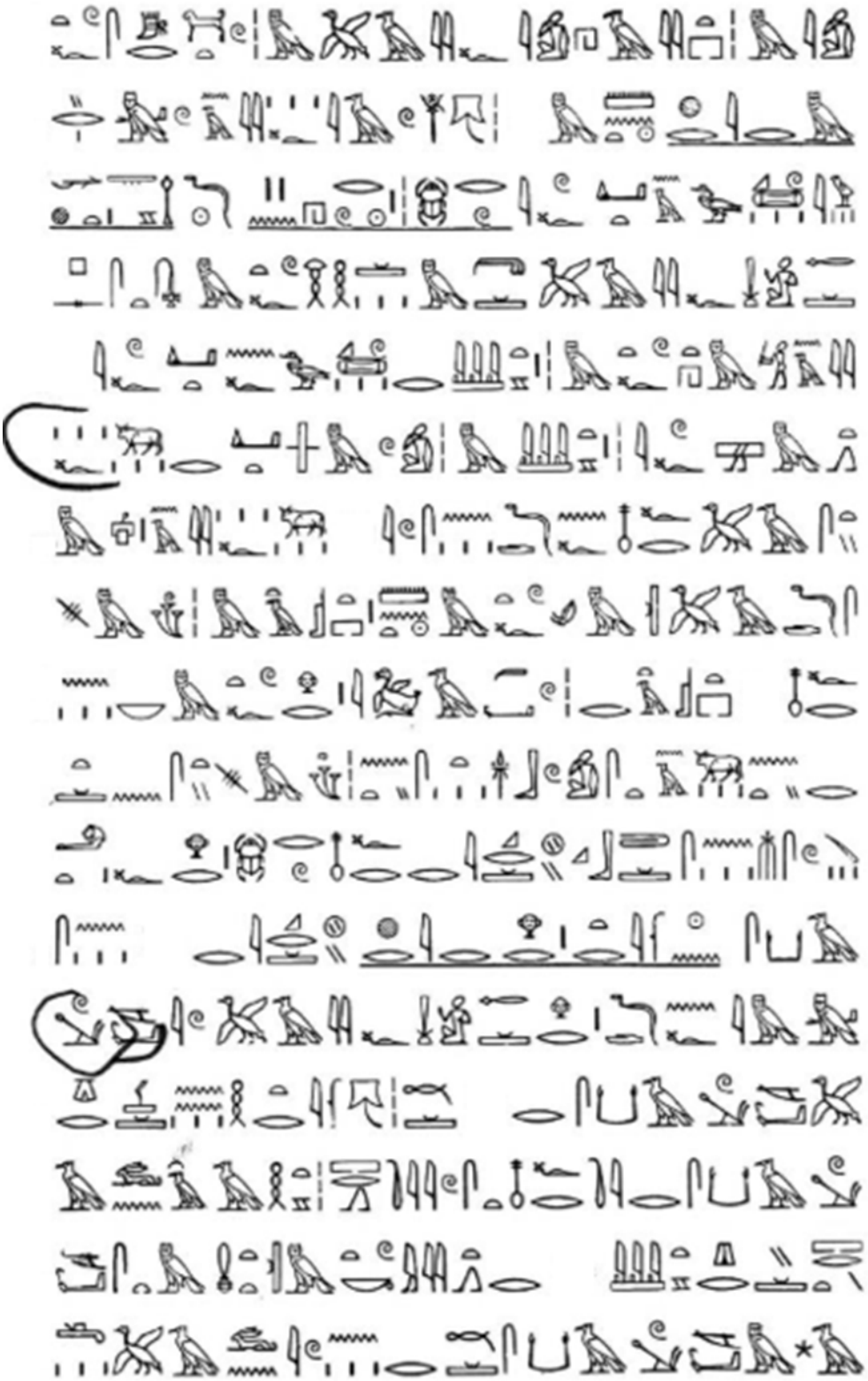
The following primary source constitutes the textual basis upon which the present analysis has proceeded. The text has been examined, compared, and interpreted in accordance with the methodological principles outlined in this study.

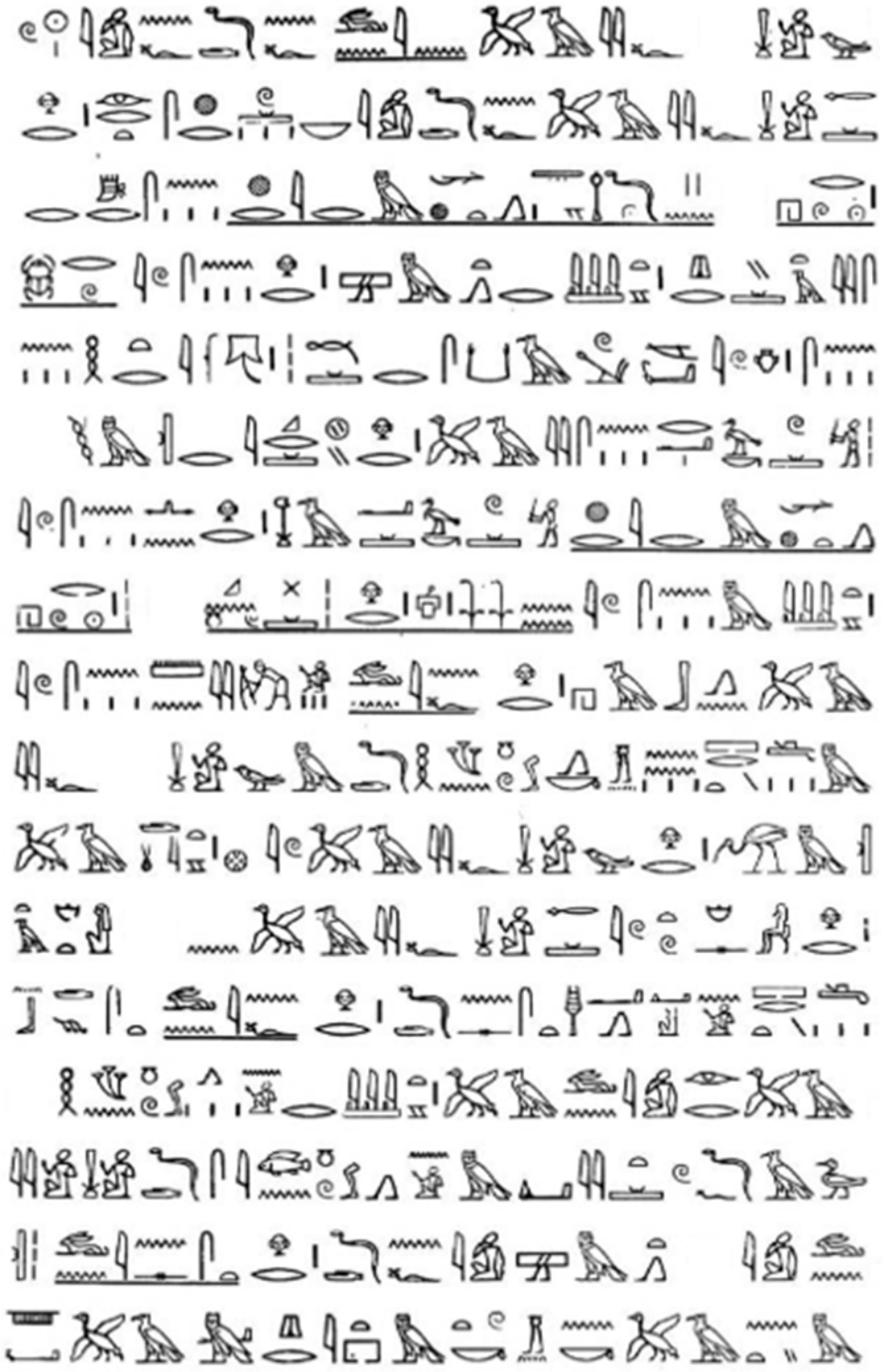
Included here are the hieroglyphic transcription (E.1) and the English translation (E.2) of *the Two Brothers*, both derived from Moldenke (1898). This edition, being in the public domain, permits full reproduction of the text. The material has been standardised in formatting and presentation for clarity and consistency within the structure of the thesis, without alteration of the substantive content. No modern copyrighted translation is reproduced in this appendix.

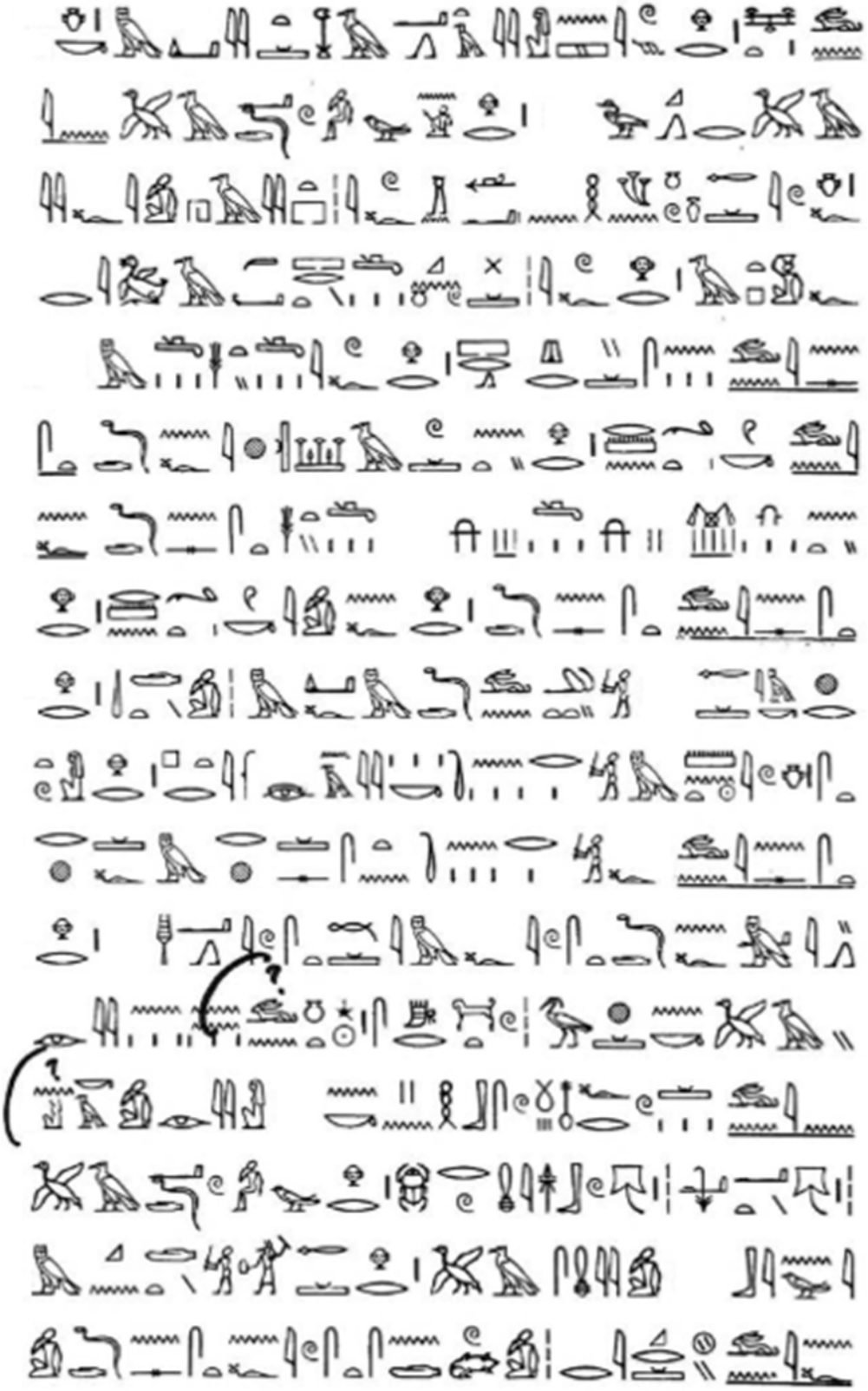
E.1 Hieroglyphic Transcription (Moldenke 1898)

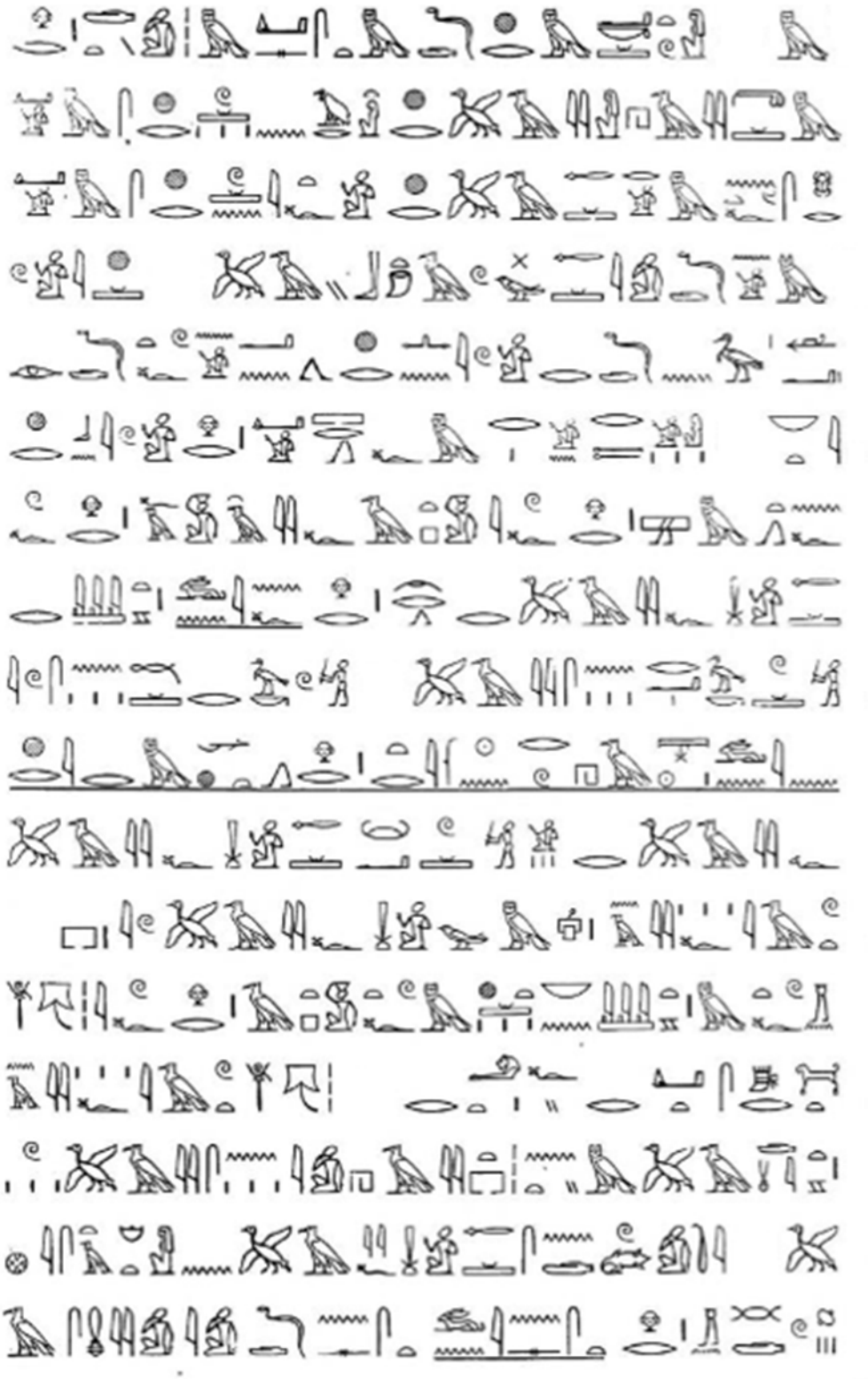
For clarity and consistency, marginal annotations, line numbering, and other editorial apparatus have been removed or obscured in the reproduced images. These adjustments affect presentation only; the hieroglyphic text itself remains unchanged.













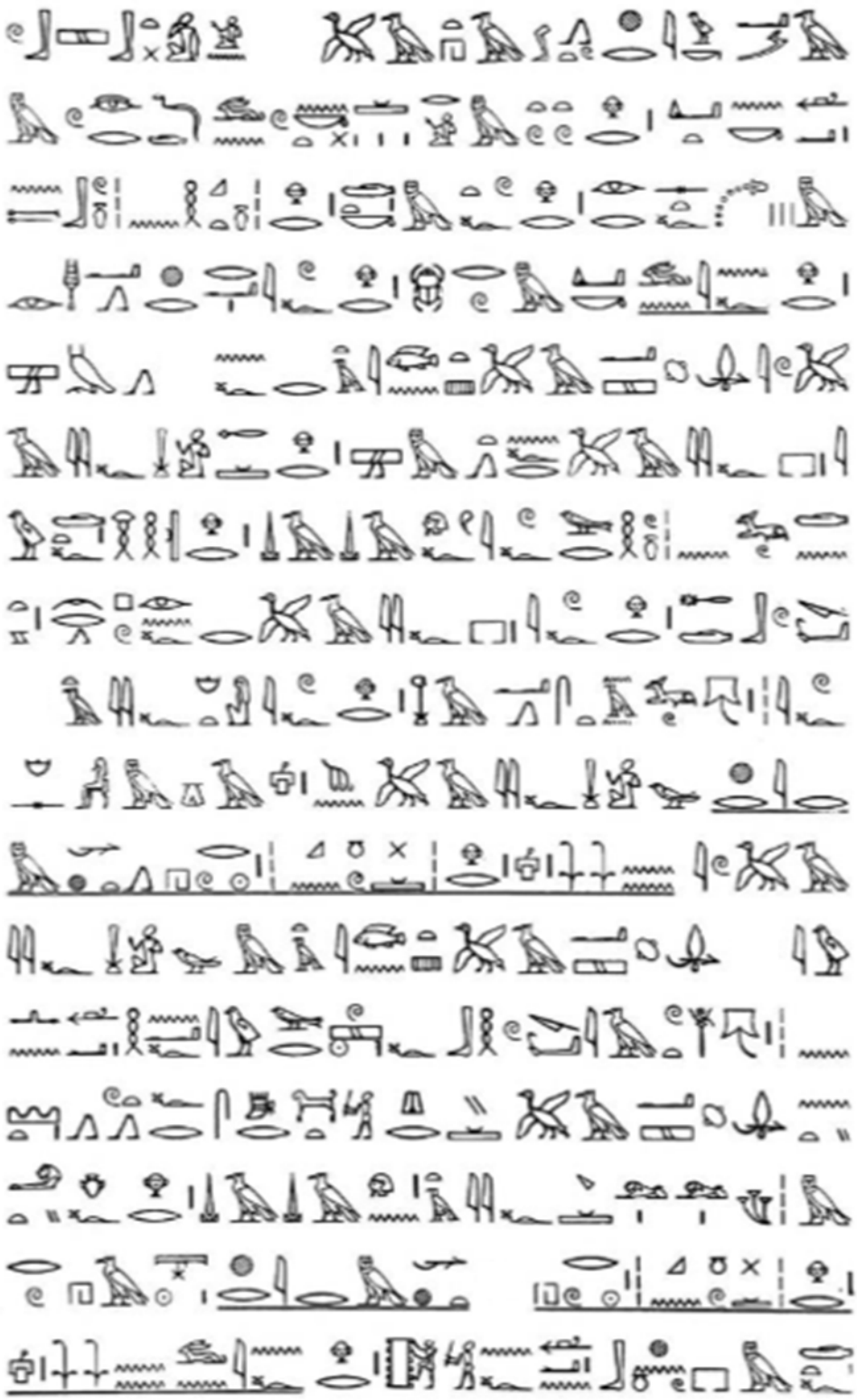






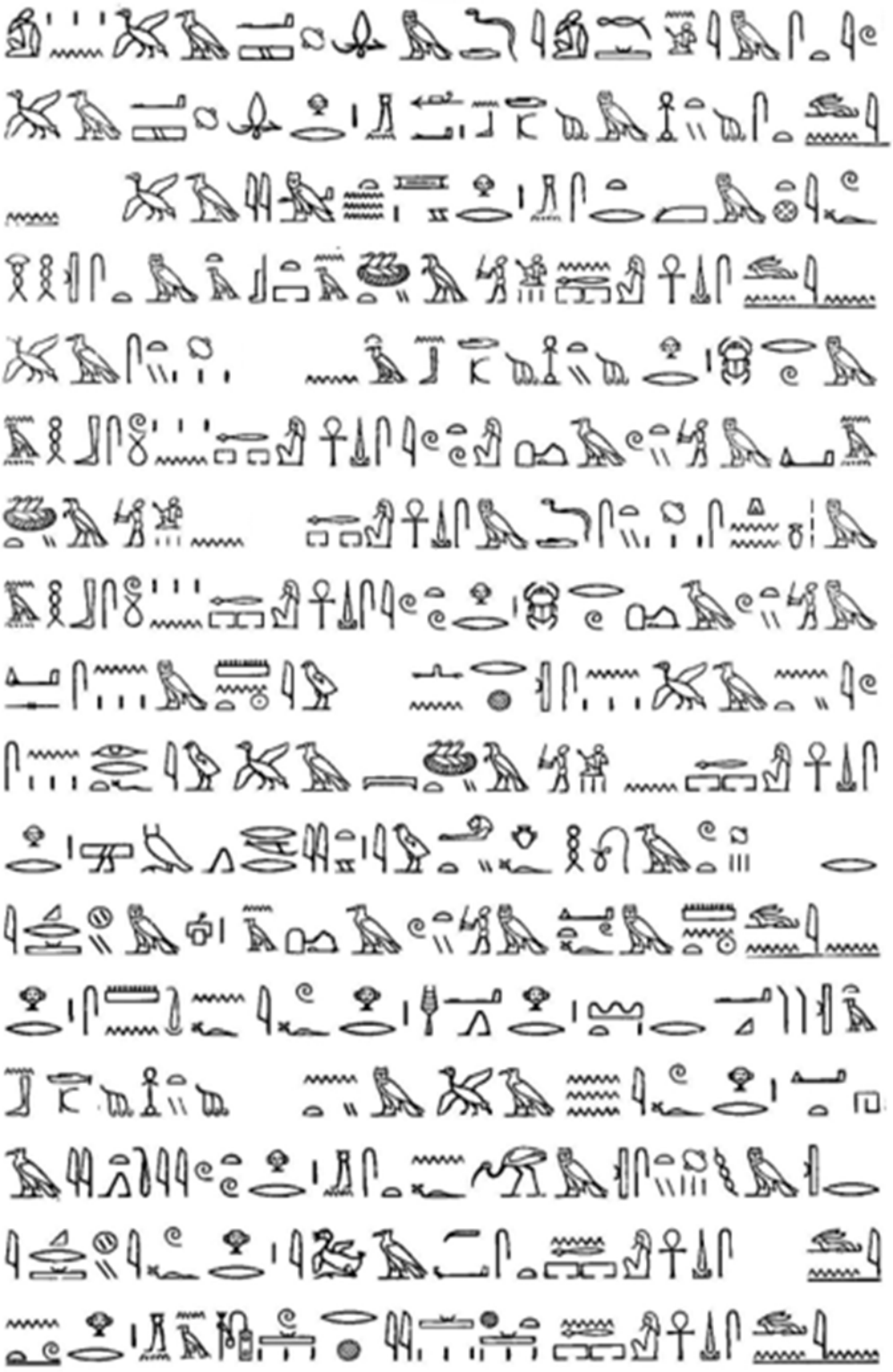




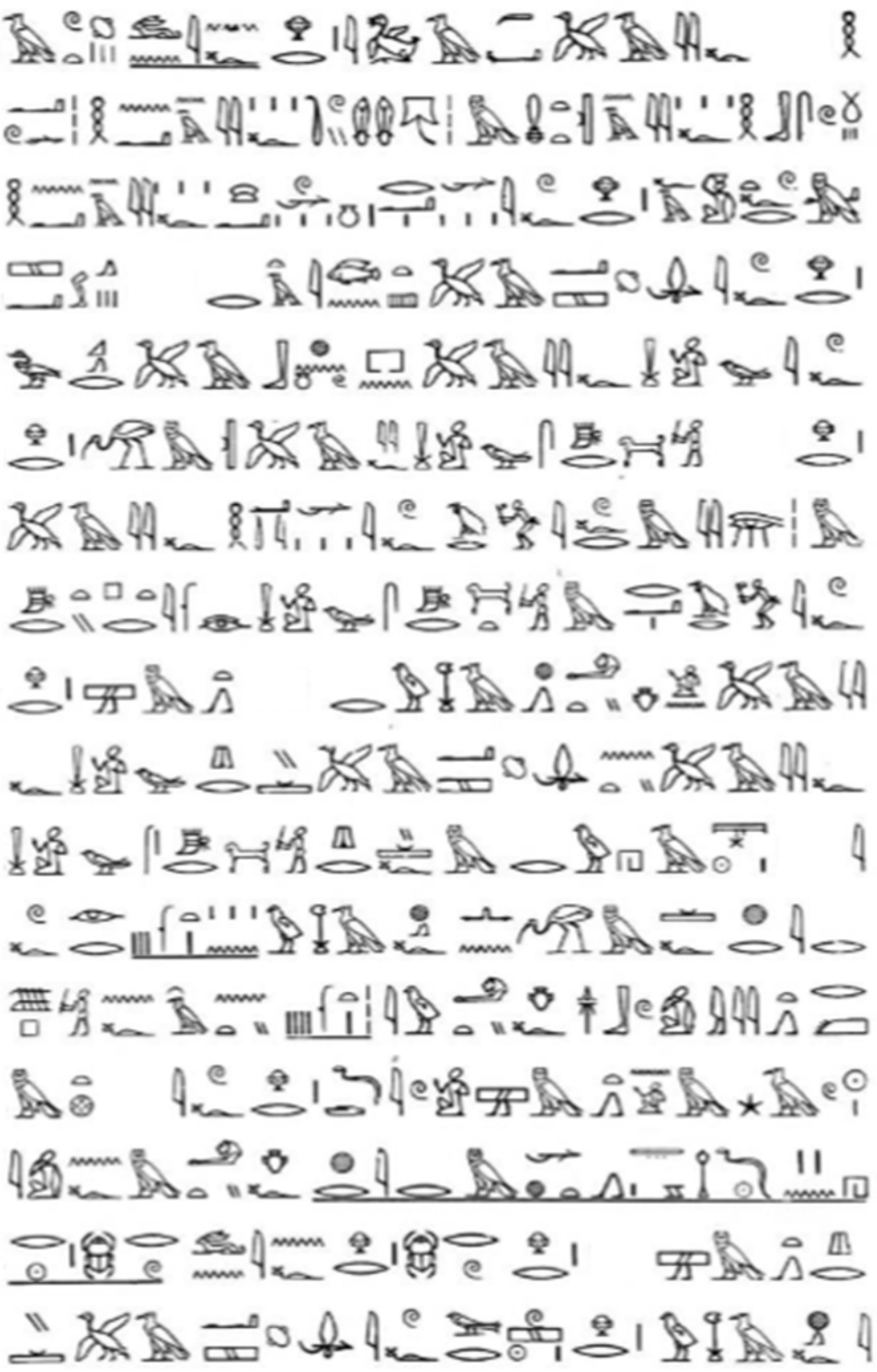








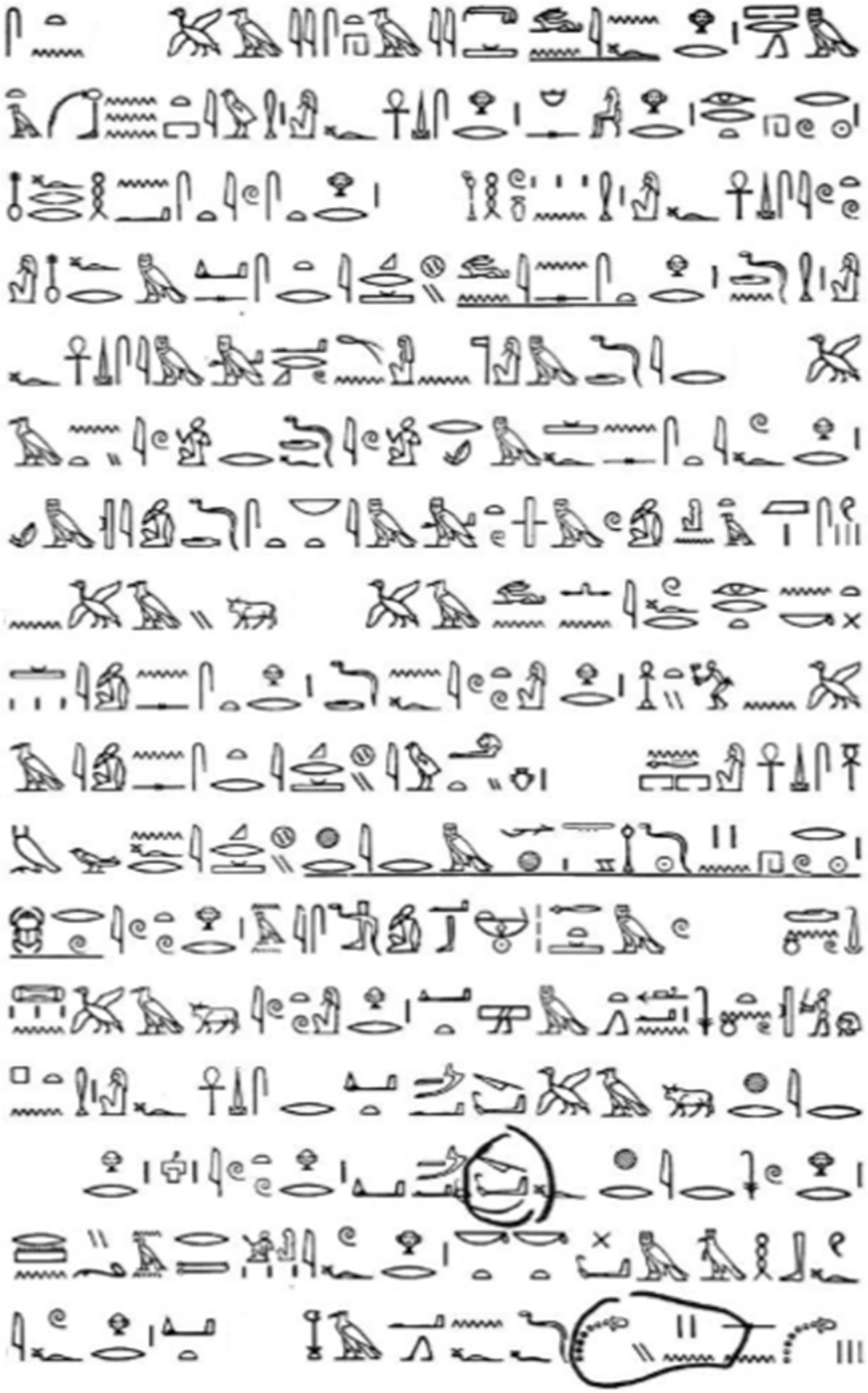




















E.2 English Translation (Moldenke 1898)

Once upon a time there were two brothers of the same mother and father. Anubis was the name of the elder, and Batau that of the younger. Now Anubis was married and had a house while his younger brother was his servant. He attended to the clothes, followed the cattle to pasture, and did the ploughing and the threshing; in fact, he did everything connected with the farm. He was, indeed, an excellent workman, and none could be found like him in the whole country. He was, besides, a good brother.

Now for a long time this younger brother was tending the cattle according to his daily wont, returning home every evening, having on his back the herbs of the field that he had gathered while on the pasture, and setting them down before his elder brother, who passed the time with his wife in eating and drinking. Then he lay down to sleep in the stable with his cattle as usual. The next day he would bake loaves of bread on the fire and place them before his elder brother, and take some loaves to the field. Here he tended his cattle, pasturing them and walking behind them. But they would tell him where there were good herbs growing, and he would listen to all they told him and drive them where they could find the good herbs they loved so much. His cattle, consequently, thrived under his hands, and their young multiplied greatly.

Now when the time of ploughing arrived, the older brother said to him: “Come, let us take our yoke of oxen and get ready for ploughing: for the soil is beginning to appear (after the inundation) and is now in excellent condition for ploughing. Do you, therefore, go to the field with seed. To-morrow we will begin to plough.” Thus he said, and his younger brother made all the arrangements with which his older brother had charged him.

On the following day they went out on the field with their yoke of oxen and began to plough. They were quite cheerful at their work and not idle for a moment. Now after a few days they were again at work in the field when the older brother came to the younger and said: “Run and fetch us some seed from the town!” Then he went and found the wife of his older brother sitting in the house arranging her hair, and said to her: “Come, give me some seed, that I may take it to the field; for my older brother has sent me, saying: ‘Run, and do not be long about it!’” But she answered him: “Oh, go yourself! Open the bin and take as much as you need. I am afraid lest my tresses fall to the ground.” So the young man went to the stable and took a big basket, which he filled with as much seed as he needed and put on his shoulder full of barley and spelt. But when he came back with it, his brother’s wife asked him: “How much have you on your shoulder?” He answered: “Of spelt I have three bushels, and of barley two, making in all five bushels that I have on my shoulder.” That was all he said. But she replied: “You are,

indeed, very strong. I have for some time already been admiring your strength." And her heart grew desirous, for she knew his strength.

Then she arose, being passionately enamoured of him, and said: "Come, let us enjoy an hour of intercourse, and I will do many favours for you and will surely make you two beautiful garments." But the young man became like a southern panther, and flew into a towering rage, because of her solicitation to such a sin that she asked him to commit. When, therefore, she became very much afraid, he said to her: "Are you not as a mother to me and your husband as a father? Is he not older than myself and supporting me? Oh, what terrible sin is that which you want me to commit! Do not ask me again! As for me, I will not divulge it to a living soul, nor shall any mention of this matter issue from my lips to any one." Thereupon he went to the field, and when he arrived where his older brother was, they kept on in their work.

In the evening, however, the older brother went home, while his younger brother walked behind his cattle, bearing on his back all the produce of the field and driving his cattle before him to let them rest in the stable which was in the town. But the wife of the older brother was afraid that his younger brother had told him all that she had said; so she besmeared herself with grease and dirt and gave herself the appearance of one who had been ravished; for she intended to say to her husband: "Your younger brother has done me violence." Now when her husband returned in the evening as usual and came to his house, he found his wife lying on the floor like one who had been outraged by some villain. She did not fetch him water for his hands, as she always did, nor did she light the lamp for him; but his house was in darkness, and she was lying besmeared on the floor. Then he asked her: "Who has had intercourse with you?" She answered: "Who else but your younger brother, when he came to get some seed for you and found me alone. It was then he said to me: 'Come, let us enjoy an hour of intercourse! Put on your knew dress!' But I did not listen to him and answered: 'Am I not as a mother to you, and is not your older brother as a father to you?' This is what I answered him. He, however, became alarmed and assaulted me, so that I might not disclose this to you. Now, if you let him live, then I must die; for he will come to beat me, because I have betrayed you his wicked words. He will surely do so."

Then the older brother became like a southern panther, and whetted his knife, and took it in his hand. Then he hid behind the door of the stable in order to kill his younger brother, when he should return in the evening and drive his cattle into the stable. Now when the sun had set, the younger brother loaded himself with all the herbs of the field, as was his daily custom; but when he came home, and the leading cow was about to enter the stable, she cried out to her driver: "Take care, for your older brother is standing in front of you with his knife, to kill you.

Step aside and flee from him!" Then he listened to what his leading cow had said. When the next cow was about to enter the stable, she said the same thing. So he looked under the door of the stable and saw the feet of his older brother, who stood behind the door with a knife in his hand. Then he dropped his load and ran away. But his older brother pursued after him with his knife. Then the younger brother invoked the sun-god Râ-Hor-khuti, praying: "Oh, my Lord and gracious God, be thou the judge here between the guilty and the innocent!" Then Râ heard his prayer and caused a big river to flow between him and his older brother. This was full of crocodiles. Each of the brothers was, therefore, on a different side of the river. Then the older brother threw (a stone) twice at the younger brother without hurting him, however. But as he did this there called out to him the latter from the other side, saying: "Lo! on the morrow, when the sun is risen, I will explain everything to you and will give you the true facts: but I can not be a son to you any longer, neither will I stay in the same place with you. I shall start for the acacia-hill."

On the following day, when Râ -Hor-khuti had risen, the two brothers met again. Then the younger addressed the older brother, saying: "Why do you pursue me, and why do you wish to kill me without cause? You have not heard me say such words as I am accused of, for I am truly your younger brother. Indeed, you have been as a father to me, and your wife as a mother. Now listen, when your wife told me to get the seed for us she said to me: 'Come, let us enjoy an hour of intercourse!' Alas! see how she has perverted the truth to you." Then he revealed to him everything that had passed between himself and his brother's wife and swore by Râ-Hor-khuti, saying: "What did you mean by acting so wickedly and trying to kill me, when you were standing behind the door with your knife? Fie upon such treachery!" Then he took a sharp knife and maimed himself, casting the flesh into the water as food for the fish. Then he became very weak and faint.

But his older brother took it very much to heart and wept violently; still he could not cross over to his younger brother on account of the crocodiles. Then the latter called out to him, saying: "Behold, you imagined an evil thing of me and were ignorant of the good service I had done you. Come now, go home and tend your cattle; for I will not remain with you, but will go to the acacia-hill, because you came to harm me. Learn, however, what will happen to me in the transformation of my heart, which I will place in the highest blossom of the acacia. When the tree is cut down the heart will fall to the ground, and you will come to look for it. But when seven years of your quest are ended, be not discouraged, for you will then find it. Put it into a jar of clear water, and I will revive again and give you further instructions. You will then learn everything from me. Then take a jug of beer in your hand ; as soon as it begins to ferment, haste

away!" Saying this he departed for the acacia-hill. But his older brother went home, putting his hands to his head and strewing it with dust. When he arrived home he put to death his wife and cast her body before the dongs. Then he sat down and wept for his younger brother.

Now for a long time the younger brother lived on the acacia-hill with no one to keep him company. He passed his time with hunting the beasts of the country and resting during the night under the acacia, in whose highest blossom his heart lay. After a while he built for himself a house with his own hand on the acacia-hill and fitted it out with all the good things he wanted. But one day he walked forth from his house, when he chanced to meet the circle of the gods as they walked about, deliberating concerning the affairs of their land. Then the circle of the gods addressed him with one accord, saying: "Oh Batau, hero of the circle of the gods, you are here all alone, having left your village on account of the wife of Anubis, your older brother. Know that he has killed her after you reported to him all her false statements against you." Then they pitied him, and Râ-Hor-khuti said to Khnum: "Do you fashion a wife for Batau that he may not be alone." Then Khnum made him a companion to be with him, more beautiful than any woman in all the land. The whole godhead was in her. But the seven Hathors came to view her and said with one accord: "Oh, she will surely cause Batau's death." But the latter loved her very much. She remained in the house while he was occupied with hunting the beasts of the country, which he placed before her. But he cautioned her, saying: "Do not go far from the house, lest the river seize upon you; for I am too weak to rescue you from it, because I am a woman like yourself and my heart is in the highest blossom of the acacia. If any man were to find it I would fight for it." Then he told her all the circumstances of his life.

Now after some time Batau went out to hunt, as he was accustomed to do daily, when the young woman began to promenade under the acacia near the house. Lo, the river desired her, and the water dashed up to follow her. But she ran away from it and entered the house. Then the river called to the acacia, saying: "Oh, how I love her!" So the acacia gave it a lock of her hair, which the river carried to Egypt and deposited where the washermen of the reigning Pharaoh were. Then the odour of the lock of hair pervaded the clothes of Pharaoh, so that there arose a dispute among the washermen on account of the odour. They quarreled amongst themselves daily without knowing the reason. Then their overseer went to the river's edge, while his mind was perplexed sorely because of this daily contention. Here he stood directly opposite the lock of hair, which was in the water, and ordered one of his men to fetch it. When it was brought, he found that it had a most delicious odour: so he took it to Pharaoh.

Then there were brought the scribes and wise men of Pharaoh, who said to him: "This lock of hair belongs to a daughter of Râ-Hor-khuti, and in her is all the essence of the godhead.

Now since you rule over the foreign countries, despatch messengers to them to look for her; but let the messenger who shall go to the acacia-hill take many people along to fetch her." To this his majesty replied: "What you say is very good." Thereupon he dismissed them.

Now many days after this the messengers who had gone to the foreign countries returned and delivered their message to his majesty. None, however, returned of those who had been sent to the acacia-hill, for Batau had killed them, sparing but one to carry the news to his majesty. But the latter again sent many people with infantry and cavalry to fetch her; and they took along a woman who had all sorts of nice trinkets that women fancy. Then Batau's wife accompanied her to Egypt. But the whole country rejoiced on her account, and his majesty loved her passionately, and raised her to the dignity of a legitimate wife. Then she told him everything about the condition of her husband, saying to his majesty: "Only have the acacia cut down, and he will surely die." So the king despatched men and soldiers with axes to cut down the acacia. When these arrived at the place they cut down the acacia together with the blossom, in which the heart of Batau was lying. But he fell down dead instantly.

But on the following day after the acacia had been cut down Anubis, Batau's older brother, entered his house and sat down to wash his hands. When he took a jug of beer, however, it turned to froth. Another jug of wine, which he then took, fermented likewise. Thereupon he took his spear and his sandals, and put on his back his garments and implements of work, and started for the acacia-hill. When he arrived there he entered the house of his younger brother and found him stretched out on the bench dead. Then he wept, when he saw him there so still in death, and went out to search under the acacia for his younger brother's heart; for under it did he lie down to sleep at night. Three years of search for it were fruitless; but when the next four years had passed, Batau's heart would fain have gone to Egypt, and said: "Tomorrow I shall start." So said his heart.

On the following day it happened that the older brother was walking under the acacia, occupied with searching for the heart. In the evening he again resumed his search. Then he found a pod of the acacia, and took from it the heart of his younger brother; for, lo, it was there. Thereupon he took a jug of clear water, casting the heart into it, and remained in the house all day. But when it was evening Batau's heart absorbed the water, while his body was still lying motionless; for when he beheld his older brother he swooned. But Anubis, the older brother, took the jug of clear water, in which the heart of his younger brother lay, and washed it in the water. Then the heart revived and Batau became his former self. After they had embraced the one spoke to the other.

Then Batau said to his older brother: “Behold, I shall be transformed into an Apis-bull, which has all the required markings and whose origin is mysterious. Do you take your seat on my back. Oh, do this; for when the sun-god Shu shines we will arrive where my wife now is. Furthermore, I beg you to take me to the king, who will give you many presents and will bestow on you silver and gold, because you have brought me to Pharaoh. But I shall be considered a great prodigy, and there will be joy on my account in all the land. You, however, return to your village.”

On the following day Batau became transformed, as he had told Anubis, his older brother, who mounted on his back. At day-break they arrived where the king was. Then it was announced to his majesty who, when he saw the bull, rejoiced exceedingly and offered up to it sacrifices in great number, saying: “A great miracle has been wrought, let there be joy in all the land.” But the king gave silver and gold to the older brother, who thereupon returned to his village. Then there were provided for the bull many servants and many dainties, because Pharaoh and all the people in the whole land had become exceedingly fond of it. Some time after this the bull went into the harem and stood in front of the queen, and addressed her, saying: “Behold, I am still alive!” But she asked him: “Who are you?” He answered her: “I am Batau. You knew that when you caused the acacia to be cut down by Pharaoh, that then I would die. But see, I am still alive. I am this bull.” Then the queen became exceedingly alarmed at the words of her husband. The bull, however, departed from the harem.

But one day his majesty was enjoying the society of his wife who was with him at the table, when he became so fond of her, that she begged him: “Oh, swear to me by the deity and say to whatever I may ask: ‘I will do it for you.’” But he listened graciously to all that she said. “Then I want to eat the liver of this bull, which is of no use to you at all.” That was what she said to him. But the king was very much grieved at her words and his heart was exceedingly troubled. On the following day, however, after he had offered up large sacrifices in honour of the bull, he despatched his chief of the butchers to kill the bull. But while they were killing it, it stood by the side of the men and lowered its neck for the death blow. Then there oozed from the wound two drops of blood which fell by the side of the two large doors of Pharaoh’s house. One was on the one side of the grand staircase of Pharaoh, while the other was on the other side. They were transformed into two large perseas, each of magnificent growth. Then the people came and told his majesty: “Two large perseas have sprouted out of the ground during the night as a great and good sign for Pharaoh. They are by the side of the royal staircase.” But the people rejoiced because of them in all the land, and the king offered up sacrifices to them.

Some time after this his majesty appeared in state in the coronation-hall of lapis lazuli, wearing around his neck a wreath composed of all kinds of flowers, and standing on a chariot of gold-metal. He issued from his royal palace to view the perseas. But the queen came also on a chariot behind Pharaoh. Now while his majesty sat beneath one of the perseas, [she sat beneath the other. Then Batau] addressed his wife: "Oh, you wicked one! I am Batau. I am still alive to your mortification. You imagined that you could have me killed by Pharaoh even here; for when I became transformed into a bull you ordered me to be killed."

Now some days after this it happened that the queen was sitting at the table with his majesty, who was very affectionate to her, when she said to him: "Come, swear to me by the deity and say: 'Whatsoever the queen asks me to do, that I will certainly do for her.'" But he listened graciously to all that she said. "Then," she replied, "let the two perseas be cut down, and have good planks made of them." Then the king acceded to her wish. A few days later his majesty summoned skillful workmen, who cut down the perseas at his command. But there stood by stood looked on the royal wife and queen. And a splinter flew off and entered the queen's mouth. Then she felt that she had conceived. (But she was happy) because she now had all that she desired.

Some time after this she gave birth to a male child, and the people came to tell his majesty: "There has been born to you a male child." But the king gave the child nurses and waiting-women, and the people rejoiced in all the land. The king celebrated a holiday and gave the child a name. His majesty loved him so much from this time, that he made him a prince of Nubia. Soon thereafter his majesty made him governor over the en-tire country. After he had been for many years governor over the entire country his majesty flew up to heaven.

Then (Batau) said: "Let there be brought to me the great chiefs of his majesty, and I will explain all the matters relating to my transformation." After that, when his wife had been brought, he laid his charges against her before the chiefs, who judged between them. Then there was brought to him his older brother, and he made him governor over the entire land. But he remained king of Egypt for thirty years. Then he departed this life and met his older brother on the day when he cast anchor in heaven.

The story is finished to the entire satisfaction of the scribe of the treasury Qagabu, of the royal treasury , and of the scribe Hora, and of the scribe Meremapt. It was copied by the scribe Annana, the head librarian. Now, whatever (good or bad) any one may say of this story, may Thoth either bless or curse him.

[The owner of this papyrus is] the fan-bearer at the king's right hand, the governor , the royal scribe, the commander of the infantry, the oldest prince, Setimerptah.

The fan-bearer at the king’s right hand , the royal scribe, the commander of the infantry, the oldest prince, (Setimerptah)

(Text reproduced from Moldenke (1898); formatting standardised.)

E.3 Visual Documentation of Primary Sources

The following images are provided as visual documentation of some key primary materials referenced throughout the study. They are included to supplement the textual analysis and to facilitate direct engagement with the symbolic and material context of the narrative.



Figure 10*: Side 2 of the Narmer Palette. Photograph taken by the author, Egyptian Museum, 2018.*



***Figure 11**: Canopic chest of Tutankhamun, depicting protective iconography associated with the afterlife. Photograph taken by the author, Egyptian Museum, 2018.*



***Figure 12**: Depiction of Apophis slain by Re beneath the sacred sycamore (Persea) tree, symbol of solar renewal (Wilkinson 2003, 221). Tomb of Inherkhau, Deir el-Medina.*



***Figure 13**: The bɜ-souls of Re and Osiris, illustrating their association in Egyptian funerary belief (Wilkinson 2003, 207). Vignette from the Papyrus of Ani, British Museum.*



***Figure 14**: Painted wooden representation of the bꜣ-bird, Late Period (Schneider 1997, 12–13). The solar disk signifies participation in cosmic renewal and the enduring presence of the divine.*

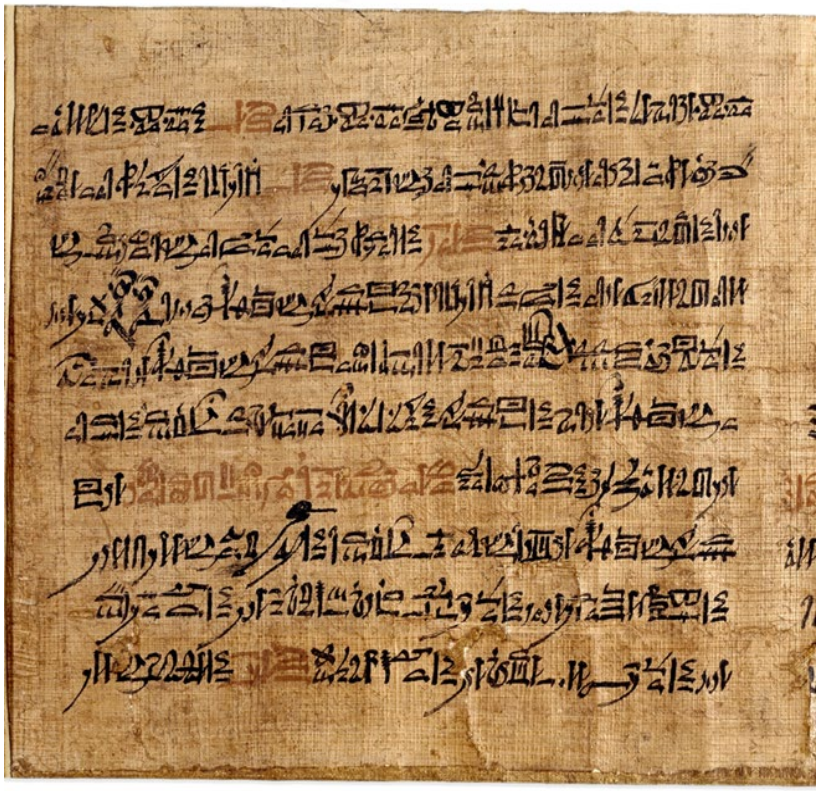


***Figure 15**: Hieratic text from the Two Brothers, Papyrus d'Orbiney (British Museum EA 10183). Photograph reproduced for scholarly use.*

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