

**An Epic Reading of *The Two Brothers* (Ca. 1550-1080 BCE): Analysed and Understood  
Through Aristotelian Conventions**

**Mr Leival Brandon Richards**

University of South Africa

Lecturer in Ancient Near Eastern Studies

Department of Biblical and Ancient Studies

richarlb@unisa.ac.za

**Abstract**

Epics invariably prompt phantasms of Mesopotamian *Gilgamesh*, the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, the Indian *Ramayana*, and *Sunjata*'s sophisticated but less well-known West African epic. However, Africa has another neglected ancient epic. One that has been read, attributed properties, and categorised as a fairy tale, historical allegory, and political satire. The problem with the variety of perspectives of *The Two Brothers* is that they commonly read the story without considering what is confirmed in the Egyptian knowledge system. Reading sacred texts in the Egyptian intellectual tradition and indigenous African knowledge systems, in general, requires the reader to understand myth as a unified system of knowledge. Each epic is unique, but they do display patterns. Our study observed *The Two Brothers*, represented on the papyrus d'Orbigny (ca. 1215 BCE). We looked at the subject and its attributes to arrange the terms of the subject according to what was commensurate with the definition and criteria of epics and what is true in the Egyptian system of knowledge. This method of rigorous development by division allowed us to refute incorrect opinions about the story's nature, meaning, and its central point of tension. Ultimately, our study categorised *The Two Brothers* as a moralistic epic myth in the formative stages of the axial age and recognised it as one of the oldest epics in world literature.

**Keywords:** Material culture; Verbal arts and Literature; Research theory and Methodology; Ancient Egyptian mythology; New Empire literature; *The Two Brothers*; Epic myth.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

To answer the question of whether *The Two Brothers* is an epic and achieve our objective to place the story in this genre, it is hoped that the reader judges our study by the terms and definitions we set forth here, rather than those of other systems of thought. We intend to demonstrate that: one, our story is intelligible through the three-act structure, and two, our story contains all the mythic criteria that inhere to all epic myths. To establish the truth value of these two premises, we shall set out for your observation the appropriate evidence: the story divided according to the three-act structure and Lord's (1967) mythic criteria applied. If both premises are true, our conclusion that the story is an epic myth is sound.

We credit Aristotle's (1984, p. 2321) *Poetics* 7:26 as the origin of the three-act structure for his "beginning, middle, and end" observation. While his *Poetics* did provide some predicates for epic myth, like a nationalistic concern, and the interventions of gods. He doesn't provide many. So, we supplemented the predicates of the category with the Lord's (1967) criteria for this classification.

## 2. THE INSTRUMENT

### 2.1 The Plot

The plot is the story, and an epic plot is constructed like that of a tragedy. In *Poetics* 23, Aristotle asserts that the epic plot is: “based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature” (Aristotle, 1984, p. 2335). These three phases fundamentally form the basic structure of the plotted narrative in epic which, as poetic, dramatically imitates action in human life.

The three-act structure is our fundamental division—our epic-measuring instrument. It offers the opportunity to consider the principles that belong to *The Two Brothers* in general. As a whole, we typically expect a reversal, but each act also closes with a reversal or turning point of danger for the protagonist, which leads to a new path or phase of the story. Each act is further divided into scenes. In this way, we shall progress through the predicated stepping stones of a typical epic.

Let us first outline the whole. Poetic myth, the epic, aims at justice. So, it's reasonable to expect *The Two Brothers* to aim for and end in justice. The local Egyptian conception of this idea is mAat. Justice as the end and the end being a reversal regarding an initial problem; it must necessarily be held that the initial problem was injustice. The end, consequently, is evident in the beginning. The solution opposes the problem. So, the solution is the protagonist's discovery of justice. Between injustice and justice, we shall observe the requisite scenes of unjust suffering. Unjust suffering is a social state in the relation between two distinct individuals or groups: a dominant and vulnerable, or an elite and a commoner, in the political order. The protagonist, Bata, was a good subordinate with naivety as a character flaw. His antagonists, primarily classified as a bad characters, possessed the attribute of guile. Guile is a certain cleverness and wit used to achieve deception toward a bad end regarding desirable social standards. Being on the dominant side of a relation, and the accusation being one of sex and assault, we can specify that the problem involved libido and excesses of libidinally motivated actions on the part of the dominant individual or group, since it is invariably the case that the dominant exploit the vulnerable rather than the opposite. Consequently, the poetic should end with the protagonist being in the dominant social position, thinking and acting contrary to the antagonist's initial disposition. That is, Bata will be a pacifist, nonsexual king. From this outline, we can infer that imperial Egypt at this time was open to moral corruption and that this involved much objectionable behaviour.<sup>1</sup> We venture to guess that the author, Ennana, was attempting to moralise the *nouveau riche* of this period along the lines of

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<sup>1</sup>. Our presuppositions about the New Empire and the role of the king as a shepherd who protected the weak and the poor from the privileged are in agreement with Bellah's (2011, pp. 227-246) description of New Empire proto-axial mythospeculation. Egypt during this period had universal rule over a multiethnic empire. Lucre was flooding into the mainland and the moral boundaries of those with political, economic and social power would be transgressed. What Bellah (2011, p. 245) calls “the heart-guided individual” appeared in this period.

exercising some self-restraint in relation to your subordinates, or the tables will be turned. Considered as a whole, this is the ultimate end and proper intention of the acting agent, and it is proved in every effect of his actions.

The above being the order and idea of the whole, it follows that there must be ideas for the parts. We proceed to define and divide the parts and consider them in causal operation toward the end.<sup>2</sup>

### **BEGINNING: THE EXPOSITION**

#### **Act One**

**Setting** – Life at home in prosperous rural Egypt.

**Frame** – A particular household within the larger prosperous New Empire of Egypt.

**Problem** – An accusation of sexual assault within a family unit causes unjust death and fragmentation.

**Solution** – Truth and Justice. Bata dies in the act of protesting his innocence. The Ennead rewards him.

**Theme** – A physically adept and useful but naïve subordinate suffers injustice.

**Character** – Bata is round, being indirectly characterised as a multidimensional cowherd with divine qualities. His naivety<sup>3</sup> is an intension (logical function) of his categorical primary identity and extension of his social position as a second-born, subordinated dependent.

**Beginning of action** – Bata declines Anubis's wife's proposition to lay with her.

**Turning point** – The anonymous wife tells Anubis that Bata assaulted her and demands that Anubis murder Bata.

**Denouement** – Unable to reason with or persuade his brother toward truth,<sup>4</sup> Bata castrates himself and dies.

**Prospective action** – Causally connected chronological order of events. There is no retrospective action.

**Scene 1- *Ab initio*** Bata is a supernaturally gifted cowherd and excellent farmer who produces remarkable yields which provides a prosperous life for his family. However, he is a beast

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<sup>2</sup>. In the following structure of our story, an asterisk indicates a scene of dramatic and significant imagery, speech or action. These are points of interest and reference throughout the study. Our structure follows the narrative according to Lichtheim's (2006, pp. 203-211) translation.

<sup>3</sup>. To clarify Bata's character flaw, naivety. The good are more easily deceived until experience teaches them distrust.

<sup>4</sup>. Truth, being the equation of thought and reality.

of burden who, in the social hierarchy is the equivalent of his cattle. He talks, works, eats and sleeps with his cattle.

**Scene \*2-** The inciting incident. Anubis sends Bata to fetch seed from the house. Overcome by appetite, the lady of the house comments on Bata's strength and proposes to make him fine clothes if he spends an hour laying with her. Bata becomes furious at the thought expressing that the adulterous action would be the equivalent of incest. He declares that he will keep her proposition secret if she never makes it again.

**Scene \*3-** The wife, motivated by fear, makes herself appear as if she had been beaten. Anubis finds her having deviated from their daily custom and laying traumatised from an apparent physical assault. She exclaims the reverse of the previous scene. In her rhetorical version, Bata made the proposition to her, and she declined. She adds that it was he who assaulted her and demands that Anubis commit fratricide and by extension of their analogous roles, filicide.

**Scene 4** – Overcome by anger, Anubis sets off to murder Bata. Bata's cow warns him of the danger, so he flees with Anubis in pursuit. Bata prays for Re to judge between the wicked and the just. Re intervenes and creates a body of water full of gaping crocodiles to separate the brothers. Bata appeals for patience and then rebukes Anubis for his wicked intentions. Bata instantiates the parental role the couple play in his life. He then castrates himself with a reed knife and throws the separated phallus into the water. A catfish swallows it. Anubis watches Bata die, unable to reach him. In his last moments, Bata prophesies that he will go to the valley. When Anubis learns that something has happened to Bata, Anubis must look for him. Bata will place his own heart atop a tree. When the tree is cut, Anubis must search for it (the heart), without discouragement, even for seven years. The heart must be placed in water for Bata to live and right the wrong. The portent for Bata's fallen heart is a jug of beer that ferments in Anubis' hand.

**Forecast** – The method of suicide foreshadows re-birth and origin.

**Dialectic reflection, or Thesis for Act One** – Love and anger easily overpower the rational animal (humans) and social order. In conditions of prosperity the superior—voluntarily and involuntarily—overstep ethical limitations and perform acts of chaotic liberality and incontinence. The socially inferior and inherently naïve suffer from the excesses of the elite. This is the condition of imperial Egypt and the domain in which we shall find Ennana's offering of an exemplary character, Bata.

### **MIDDLE: THE OBSTACLE**

#### **Act Two**

**Setting** – Life in *Potentia*. Bata is outside Egypt's traditional borders.

**Obstacles and complications** – Having everything he could want provided by divine grace, Bata still suffers for his naivety.

**Confrontation** – The confrontations are between Bata and the current Egyptian king's soldiers who attempt to abduct Bata's wife for the king.

**Midpoint of journey** – At this point, everyone has practiced some excess appetite in relation to Bata. For Anubis and his wife, it was aggression and lust respectively. The king also,

inebriated by libidinal lust, abducted Bata's wife and she conforms her actions to the death principle by revealing his secret *axis mundi*.

**Disaster** – *Et in Arcadia ego*, as a leisurely hunter with a stable daily ritual, Bata dies when the tree on which his heart blooms is felled.

**Crisis** – His wife voluntarily leaves, returns to Egypt, to be the king's consort.

**Scene \*5** – Bata is in transition. He goes to the valley while Anubis goes home, kills his wife and casts her body to the dogs. Bata places his heart atop a tree, builds a mansion and continues his metaphysical life. The gods commune and make him a wife more beautiful than any other. Bata adores his wife; he hunts and serves her customarily. He warns her of his inability to protect her if she wanders beyond her designation, and he reveals the secret of his heart to her. The sea and the trees conspire to capture her and succeed in bringing a lock of her hair to Egypt. The scent of her hair infuses into the king's clothes. The scent enchants the king. The scribes infer that the scent is that of a divine woman from a foreign land and that it is an invitation to fetch her. Envoys are sent.

**Scene 6** – Bata killed the first contingent, except for one who reported to the king. The king sent another contingent with chariots and a woman offering jewellery to persuade Bata's wife. She accepted the offer and went to Egypt, amid celebration. The king loved her and gave her a title. He asked about her husband, and she requested that he have Bata's tree felled and separated. A third contingent was sent; they felled the tree, cut the blossom, and Bata fell dead.

**Scene \*7** – Anubis entered his house, was given a jug of beer, and it fermented. He was given another of wine, and it fermented. He packed and went on his journey abroad. When he found Bata's mansion and dead body, Anubis wept. He went to search for Bata's tree. Three years passed. In the fourth, he doubted success and missed Egypt but remained committed to the search. Eventually, he found the cut heart blossom. He got a bowl of water and customarily placed the heart in it. The heart soaked up the water, and Bata's body twitched. When Bata looked at his brother, Anubis gave him the bowl. Bata drank the water, and his heart returned to its place in his body. Bata was revived, they embraced, talked and were united again.

**Forecast** – In the meta-world, Bata is a hunter, not a farmer. His daily offerings are presented to his divine wife. These activities are predicates of the social elite and royals, gesturing at Bata's growth.

**Dialectic reflection, or Antithesis for Act Two** – The gods honoured and rewarded Bata with a divine wife. In a reversal, his wife became a consort of the king. The first act began with unity and ended in separation. The second act began in separation and ended in unity. Bata has suffered further injustice. But he got what he needed. Not only did he learn distrust, but he also achieved the maturity that comes from being reliant on the interdependence of members in a family unit. Customary action by the persevering Anubis saved Bata. A family unit, with its members in agreement and following through on agreed customs, is an atavistic conservative value for a cosmopolitan imperial society. Here, it is embodied by two of the older Egyptian mortuary and monarchical gods.

## **END: THE RESOLUTION**

### **Act Three**

**Setting** – Life in the Egyptian monarch's palace.

**Final struggle** – The wife has Bata mutilated several more times.

**Scene 8** - Bata turned himself into a beautifully coloured bull. Anubis presented the celebrated Bata-bull to crowds in Egypt. The king, being impressed by Bata, bought him. In the palace, Bata revealed his bull identity to his wife. The wife requested that the bull be slaughtered so she could eat his liver.

**Scene 9** - The bull was sacrificed, but two drops of his blood fell on either side of the king's portal. The drops grew into magnificent and celebrated Persea trees, which the king made offerings to. When the wife visited the trees, Bata again revealed his identity to her. She demands that the trees be felled and made into fine furniture.

**Scene \*10** - When the craftsmen cut the trees, a splinter flew into her mouth. She swallowed and became pregnant. She bore a son amid celebration, and the king made him the crown prince of Egypt. The king died, and Bata-the-son inherited the throne. As king, Bata officially accused the wife and judged her for all she had done to him; the royal officials assented. Bata made Anubis crown prince, and after thirty years on the throne, Anubis succeeded him.

**Climax** – In a reversal of the death process, the wife gives birth to Bata. The wife is officially accused by Bata and judged. Anubis, the elder brother, succeeds Bata, the younger.

**Resolution** – Bata becomes the substantial form, the nutritive and intellective soul of Egypt.

**Hindsight** – The initial separation and its imagery refer to Narmer (catfish) and the unification of contending fragments. It's a renewal of the original principles of the state. The hunting and offerings in the wasteland refer to Bata as king and high priest. He made himself high priest and king, through the mythological standards of Hathor as Narmer did.

**Dialectic reflection, or Synthesis for Act Three** – The household is the source and origin of political organisation and justice. And that which is proportional is just. As the physical embodiment and metaphysical soul of Egypt, Bata made a moral issue a legal one. The opening was particularly licentious, so the end is universally moralising. Bata is now the relational superior but exercises self-restraint, truth, and justice: mAat. In the character of Bata, self-control literally expressed as sacrificial self-mutilation, is the Egyptian moral standard offered by Ennana for imitation in prosperous New Empire Egypt.

## **3. METHOD: MYTHIC ANALYSIS**

Having set out the logical and artistic unity of this poetic according to the three-act structure, it is observable that the story ends with the protagonists overcoming the obstacles, rather than being overcome by them. We, therefore, submit that the story is not a tragedy. In consideration of its complexity, grandeur, plot, ethic and general conformity to the principles we have applied, this story is an epic. Its conformity to more predicates of the genre will emerge as we proceed through the organon of epic.

We have assumed that Ennana deployed *The Two Brothers* as a noble lie or myth to entertain, instruct, educate and connect prosperous and licentious cosmopolitan Egyptians to their humble origin and morals. Bellah (2011, p. 238) called it “the ancient Egyptian system of moral norms” or mAat. Having set out the plot and characters in the structure of the story as an epic, we shall now set out the categories for our analysis of Ennana’s myth.

Myth, defined and understood as a story, allows for some flexibility in research, but some specific intention and extension of the term is necessary at this point to clarify the epic myth so that we know exactly where to pick out the stitches that connect the categories. To avoid error in our judgment of the essence of myth and ensure proper definition, as well as correct parts, we turn to the demonstrations of previous reputable studies. For Wyatt (2001) myth is an intellectual inclination instead of a genre of literature, “a universal meaning-giving strategy.” (Wyatt, 2001, p. 61). This definition implicitly acknowledges teleology. Myth is a rational stratagem that gives meaning. There is no search for meaning, it provides meaning. Another presupposition here is that people are naturally inclined to fill the existential void with meaning. On this inclination, we turned to Peterson’s (1999) proposition.<sup>5</sup> A neuropsychological structure predisposes all humanity to give meaning to reality. Independent reality consists of the familiar and unfamiliar. By forming a metaphysical conception of the unknown, giving it meaning and purpose in a story, the mind resolves a real problem in intellectual abstraction, rather than unconstrained reality. The inference can then be reapplied to create order at the individual and social levels. Therefore, the mind is predisposed to form metaphysical concepts, based on personal value estimations to turn into stories. This ordering and articulating of reality includes our behaviour. As Peterson (1999, p. 75) states: “Myth is the distilled essence of the stories we tell ourselves about the patterns of our behaviour, as they play themselves out in the social and impersonal worlds of experience”. In brief: we use our intelligence to logically and artistically represent the world, including ourselves in that representation. The representation provides us with the option to know the best way to act for the good of ourselves and our community. At one level of perception, the story is a lie—it represents actual and fictitious beings and events. At another level, it’s a rational species of knowledge, practical knowledge to act wisely, hence our assumption on Ennana’s deployment of *The Two Brothers*.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to proper definition being a cause of error that we would prefer to avoid; we could also be vulnerable to error in composing definitions of the parts. To avoid this error, we refer to established terms. Aristotle focused on tragedy rather than an exclusive definition of epic in his *Poetics*, likewise, mythic analysis is notoriously undefined by any one of the scholars who are well-known for contributing to the method. Under the condition of such free predicates, we

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<sup>5</sup>. Peterson (1999, pp. 32-89) covers biological neuropsychological function and the nature of the mind.

<sup>6</sup>. When it comes to a mythic reading of narrative, Hiltebeitel (1993) observed that psychological definitions habitually tend to Freud (2010) and Jung (Snowden, 2017) as political tends to Marxism and comparative religion tends to feminism as high priorities. But the essential power evident over all these categories is that the mythic reading attempts to interpret and explain reality and by reality Hiltebeitel (1993) in agreement with Peterson (1999) meant: “social reality” (Hiltebeitel, 1993, p. 41).

endeavour to define the term in general, teleologically and then specifically by division. Generally, mythic analysis intends to explain the meaning and purpose of myths. This means that the function of the myth is the primary cause and reason for its existence. Specifically, because myth is a system of knowledge, mythic analysis employs a combination of approaches to explain. Literary, artistic, archaeological, psychological and philosophical with comparative points of reference for demonstration. However, there is the vague outline of criteria around which an epic revolves.

### 3.1 Criteria of Epic

It is intuitively evident that epic has specific intention and extension even though Aristotelian thought focuses on action. To state that the epic is long, heroic and moralistic with lament and praise would seem generally valid but the reason for not focusing on these as the categories is ambiguity and vagueness. These terms don't directly predicate epic. The *Epic of Gilgamesh* is not long; and certainly not when compared to the *Iliad*. That's because there is no standard length for epic classification. Heroism, moralism, lamentation and praise are present but are also not exclusive categorical terms. There are however some generic predicates that we can compose and divide for our intellectual interpretation. These are observable to the eye and the light of reason in all the epics we use as reference points. Lord's (1967, pp. 241-248) work on the *Hymn to Demeter* pointed out that even a hymn could have a narrative pattern structured on epic and mythic themes. In general, Lord demonstrated that the hymn shared epic predicates with the Homeric epics and these shared properties extended to the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. This is not to say that they are all connected in a single literary tradition that owes gratitude to the first. But it is to point out that classification can change according to where one decides to place the dissecting knife. The *Hymn to Demeter* need not be long or lyric to conform to epic myth structure.

Lord (1967, p. 241) made it clear that a moving of the parts is expected because each narrative is causally connected differently but the basic pattern would still be recognisable. We chose Lord's work on the *Hymn to Demeter* for two reasons. In general, because her mythic analysis demonstrated the epic pattern in a hymn. In particular, because Demeter is a fertility deity.<sup>7</sup> The following are Lord's (1967) principle elements and myth themes observed sequentially in the *Hymn to Demeter*, and non-sequentially in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*: “(1) the withdrawal of the hero (or heroine), which sometimes takes the form of a long absence; this element is often linked with a quarrel and the loss of someone beloved; (2) disguise during the absence or upon the return of the hero, frequently accompanied by a deceitful story; (3) the theme of hospitality to the wandering hero; (4) the recognition of the hero, or at least a fuller revelation of his identity; (5) disaster during or occasioned by the absence; (6) the reconciliation of the hero and return” (Lord, 1967, p. 241).

The *Hymn to Demeter* has the relevant common criteria of an epic shared with the Homeric and other epics. Likewise, these sufficient and necessary qualities and conditions are observable in *The Two Brothers*. But, with reference back to our plot structure, these are moving parts. They are not restricted to a standard sequence but there is a logical cause and effect connection to give reason to actions and events. Let us now set out our observation of Lord's epic criteria and their associated myth themes in the sequence of our story:

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<sup>7</sup>. She is also a grain god and shares many other relevant common properties of the domain with Bata/Osiris.

## **BEGINNING AND END: EXPOSITION**

### ***Act One and Act Three***

**THEME (4):** Prior recognition of the hero and posterior full revelation of his identity.

From the beginning (*Scene 1*), Bata is identified and described as possessing elements of divinity. The anonymous Lady of the House recognises these qualities (*Scene 2*). A complete perfection of his majesty and divinity is unachieved in these formative stages. Bata's defect or imperfection (his naivety evident in *Scene 2*) is the reason for his movement or journey toward that end. His antagonist exposes and exploits his privation by performing the hoax (*Scene 3*). She is the necessary and efficient cause of the hero's journey. Consequently, good and bad are identified and set in opposition (*Scene 4*).

At the end, and throughout *Act Three*, the fuller revelation and perfection of identity is achieved. Bata is consistently refined by his antagonist (*Scene 8* and *Scene 9*). When he creates himself through her, the defect that accompanies his formative stage is no longer present. The full majesty and divinity of perfection is revealed. His end is achieved when he is king (*Scene 10*).

### ***In light of Act One's thesis<sup>8</sup>***

Who and what Bata is, is a point of tension since the hero's identity (Theme 4) must be known prior to his withdrawal and his wandering. On the whole, he grows through a natural internal movement from beginning to end—defect to perfection—that is a perfection of the soul or self for the individual. This movement is also externally efficiently caused and maintained by the antagonist. The hero both grows and leaves home.

**Our progression by division and combination:** The criteria or principal epic element is identity. The principle of identity is, therefore, our axiom and starting presupposition. The further component theme of hero-identity for Bata, is demonstrated using literary, iconographic and archaeological material. Literary: the intent and extent of his name with inductive considerations of previous translations and opinions regarding the meaning of a name. We are in agreement with

Hollis (2008, p. 48) on translation of the name of the d' Orbiney's main character.

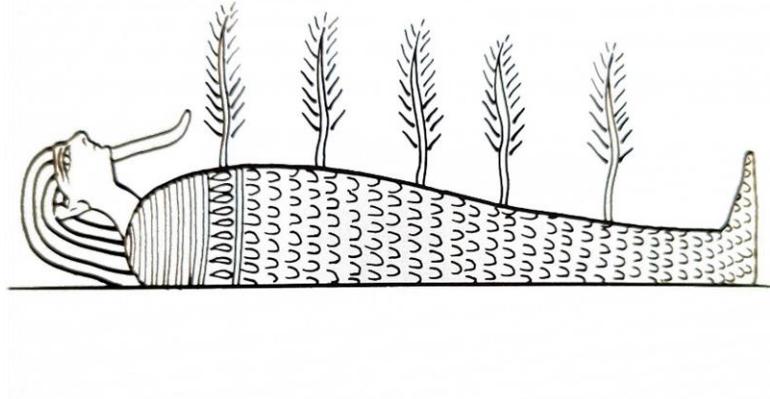
BAtAw or Bata. Soul of the land(s) or Soul of the bread. Soul, God, King, Bread and Land are the predicates or terms intended and delimited by the name. The word Bata contains any of these attributes and the sum of them.

Iconographic: the artistic standards and imagery that support the qualities Bata is expected to possess as a member of his ontological category. In the Egyptian tradition the economy of iconography that represents these terms are associated with Osiris.

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<sup>8</sup>. Note that the present enquiry is limited to definition, criteria, reasoning and development by division concerning *The Two Brothers* and epic myth. The particular orthographic, artistic and archaeological evidence within the Egyptian intellectual and cultural tradition is set out in subsequent submissions—being part of the larger project on this subject. Within our purview here we shall only set out the basic considerations that substantiated the dialectic model over the three acts. This is the thesis, antithesis and synthesis proposed by the whole story.

Figure 1 captures all our BAtA terms in a single image of Asir. Soul, God, King, Bread and Land in the funerary context.



(Wilkinson, 2003, p. 122)

Figure 1: The grain predicate of Osiride BA(w) as Coffin detail, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Archaeological: The reimagining of a popular old god was not anomalous. It is supported by archaeological material, which shows Osirian priority and investment during this period. Bellah (2011) called this period in mythospeculation, the period of the “god-guided individual” (Bellah, 2011, p. 245). Egypt had a stable multiethnic empire which required universalised ethics, to not lose the connection that maintained social order. In addition to the elite, the poor also need a connection to divinity. Observe the investment in Osiris in addition to Amun, Re, and Ptah by Nineteenth Dynasty Sety I: “At Abydos, a vast temple was at once a pantheon of Egypt’s chief gods, a memorial temple of the king as Osiris, and a new sanctuary of Osiris alongside his traditional temple. Behind it, Sety I built a subterranean cenotaph (the Osireion) for the rites of Osiris and himself.” (Redford, 2001, p. 535). The period’s trending concern for connecting all people to divinity and a social ethic accounts for the general rejection of Akhenaten’s privatisation of divinity around this time.

### **MIDDLE: THE OBSTACLE**

#### *Act Two*

**THEME (1):** Withdrawal of the hero in the form of a long absence that is linked to a quarrel or loss of a loved one.

In our reading, we have yet to observe a hero who stays at home.<sup>9</sup> Every identified hero is necessarily called to adventure and goes on the journey. And having deliberated on Bata’s identity

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<sup>9</sup>. Except for heroic Socrates who Plato had journey figuratively in his *Phaedo*, Section 117: a-c by drinking the poison and necessarily going for a walk: “Just drink it and walk around until your legs feel heavy, and then lie down and it will act of itself” (Plato, 2002, p. 153).

and categorical properties, it is inevitable that Bata withdraws (*Act One: Scene 4- Act Two: Scene 5*).

**THEME (3):** Hospitality for the wandering hero.

Bata is rewarded by the Ennead for his virtue, while in contradictory opposition, Anubis's wife is dealt a shameful death (*Scene 5*). In exile, Bata's form changes from the cowherd he was in *Act One* to that of the pious elite he is throughout *Act Two*. He appears to have reached a standard of nobility determined by the Ennead who host him and the tribute due to his wife.

**THEME (2):** Disguise during his absence and a deceitful story.

Throughout his absence, Bata's form and substance are separate. His form or essence is set atop a tree, and his emasculated substance is in service to his wife. Still naïve at this stage, his wife deceives him regarding his disguised existence (*Scene 6*). This flaw in Bata's character will be overcome under the same theme in *Act Three*.

**THEME (5):** Disaster during his absence.

Disaster occurs in two ways during Bata's exile, and his wife is the efficient cause of both. First, despite Bata's prophetic cautions, she inadvertently enchanted the Egyptian king (*Scene 5*), who, under the influence of his *eros* instinct, sends contingents who succeed in abducting her. This licentious action from the king of Egypt perfects the wider social issue, which Anubis and his wife participated in, and Bata opposes. Second, the king's soldiers felled Bata's heart-tree, consequently killing him (*Scene 6*). In this sense, the king has acted on the other libidinal drive, *thanatos*, thereby perfecting the social problem of the period that Bata must remedy.

**THEME (6):** The reconciliation of the heroes and Bata's return.

After witnessing the prophesied signs and years of searching for Bata, Anubis performs a ceremony of a magnitude that may be called a ritual that appears analogous to the planting or sowing of seed (*Scene 7*). Bata is revitalised when the slip that was his heart enters the substrate of his body with water as the rejuvenating medium. The brothers reconcile and return to Egypt.

***In light of Act Two's antithesis***

Symmetry and proportionality are important here as Bata's obstacles are amplified through rising tension. The antagonist is doubled. The quantity and extent of the hero's problem are emphasised. The wives share anonymity and have some perspective of the whole; the opposition of good and bad is distinct. Earlier actions, like the hoax and castration, are integrated and explained. And continuing the symmetry, the separated brothers are united. An atavism is evident as the Egyptian monarchical and mortuary divinities reconcile.

**Our progression by division and combination:** The criteria or principal epic element is the journey/absence or period of wandering. The principle of non-contradiction is our axiom and starting presupposition. On the principle of non-contradiction, they are the same characters operating outside the borders. Overall, the crisis is perfected, and we witness the hero's lowest point (*Scene 6*). Our division intends to understand why the hoax was necessary by understanding the absolute perfection of the good and bad characters, through the apparent full failure of the male hero and triumph of the female antagonist. The failing and dying male god and his relationship to the proportionately dominant goddess have an observable material and ritual form in and outside

the Egyptian homeland. Our literary, archaeological, and iconographic evidence accentuates the relationship between the removed and transitional male Egyptian cultural exemplar and the wife/mother archetype.

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 the Osirian myth is significantly older and separate in tradition, the priestly ritual followed by the Phrygian “*gallois* of Cybele” offers some imagery to assist in understanding the degree to which Bata had removed himself from the material world (Casadio, 2003, p. 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.<sup>10</sup> By intransitive change, he bloomed into his state of communion with his gods. An example of a man recreating himself through violence.

As Osiride predicates dictate in the “*Book of the Dead 175*”, Bata intended to exist in potentiality, without sexual pleasure, surrounded by timber and utterly alone (Hallo, 2003, pp. 27-28). Though the tomb imagery (*Scene 5*) of leisurely hunting and mansion living keeps him occupied. His heart, the organ of memory, emotion, and reason, and his life, grew as a blossom atop the *axis mundi* beneath which he slept. Figure 2 provides the sensory experience of Bata’s ontological state.

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<sup>10</sup>. The scale of being understood in Aristotelian terms as nutritive (plant), sensory (animal) and rational (human) according to the conventional general assertion from, *On the Soul*, I-III concerning: what a soul is (Aristotle, 1984, pp. 641-692).



(Richards, 2020)

Figure 2: Bata's state of being in the Valley of the Pine.

We reason *a posteriori* to submit that Bata, through the act of castration, imitated the actions of a particular ceremony of such magnitude that it may to be called a ritual. A ritual that had the requirement of bloodletting.<sup>11</sup> This letting of blood specifically concerned the phallus thus necessarily involving the rape hoax problem presented by the female antagonist in *Act One*.

### **END AND BEGINNING: RESOLUTION**

#### ***Act Three and Act One***

**THEME (2):** Disguise upon the return of the hero, accompanied by a deceitful story.

Like the plan executed by Athena and Odysseus in the *Odyssey*, from Book 13:490 to the theatrical absolute revelation of Odysseus's identity to Penelope, for most of Bata's homecoming, he is in disguise. However, the king of Ithaca's disguise was intended to have the locals overlook and disregard him, while he observed and estimated their virtues. Bata's disguise was intended to attract the attention and admiration of all who saw him. Specifically, his queen. Throughout *Scene 8*, *Scene 9*, and *Scene 10*, he practices deception through perception and never actually says anything contrary to the truth. Thus, never leads the queen astray, by perverting the fabric of the social relationship. It is kept in mind that Dundes (2002, p. 379) called Bata's identity revelation to the woman trying to kill him "foolish" in the ongoing debate over Bata's innocence.

**THEME (4):** Complete revelation of the hero's identity.

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<sup>11</sup>. The precise ritual that Bata was associated with is a significant point of tension in the continuing debate (Hollis, 2003). It can be identified when one understands Bata as a sacrificing king on the journey from human substance to divine form.

The revelation in *Scene 10* is of Bata being born into the role of crown prince and begins the attainment of his perfection. This end could only be attained under the natural direction of his Osirian nature. Like every god of this category, when Bata blooms (as god/king) he starts to die. This *telos* was foreshadowed by his evident qualities in *Act One* and perfected in *Act Three*. The reversal in *Act Three* takes the form of Anubis succeeding Bata. The mythical drama concludes in perfect proportion and symmetry with the terms of the relationship between *The Two Brothers* set out in *Act One*. *mAat* achieved.

**THEME (6):** *Nostos*, the reconciliation of the hero and return.

From his call to action to his perfection and magnification, the peculiarity of Bata and his epic is magnitude. He went from the field through to the palace. From farmer and cowherd, through hunter to king. And from physical through meta-physical to a synthesis of both. Bata has been fauna, flora, and phantasm. In his *nostos*, *Scene 8*, *Scene 9*, and *Scene 10*, the good is ascendant. Bata constantly sacrifices himself for the truth, and the irrational capacity of the bad, while constant, is ineffective. From his predestination to his terminal destination, he was dead-set against libidinal liberality. This is his *kleos*, he authors an ethical vision and the triumph of good.

#### *In light of Act Three's synthesis*

The destination is the final cause of Bata's movement from an accused subordinate to asexual divine Egyptian standard. In truth, Bata sacrificed libidinal drive and the range of his categorical being. According to Wilkinson (2003, p. 120), in Osiride myth, these actions were intended to present Osiris as "a benign deity, who represented the clearest idea of physical salvation available to the ancient Egyptian." Vulnerability, loyalty, and devotion to family are themes in the Osirian drama, which is the reason for his eminence in ancient Egyptian "popular religion" (Wilkinson, 2003, p. 122). With Bata as a mythic offering under these predicates, the Egyptian was encouraged by Ennana to imitate a hero's will and natural intellect, and tend to these predicates during a period of decadence, boorishness, and liberality.

**Our progression by division and combination:** The criteria or principal epic element is the triumph of the sacred over the secular. The principle of sufficient reason is our axiom and starting presupposition. That is, all the characters acted according to their nature for the sake of the end (*Scene 10*). There is an internal order, purpose, and final cause. Atavistic kingship is that end. Bata in substance, form, movement, and reproduction is purposeful and therefore performs the actions proper to the self-abnegating Osiride standard of kingship.

In conclusion, the spiritual value<sup>12</sup> of an epic myth was overlooked because the hero was not identified correctly or understood in terms of his state of being during that period. Bata's *telos* connotes that the qualities proper to Osiris are his. He is predestined to suffer injustice through naivety (shortsighted as to the will and intention of his antagonist) and to have his character traits magnified *ad populum*. Our intuitive moral principle that good ought to be done and evil avoided, shared by natural reason, is evident from the triumph of the self-sacrificing character over those who acted on the instincts of *eros* and *thanatos*. By the end of the story, Bata's particular identity

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<sup>12</sup>. Apparent contradiction in myth is part of its religious mystery. Mythic analysis allows one to follow the internal logic for meaning.

is conflated with Egypt's collective identity, and true to conservative values, he accused his wife formally in court for a collective decision.<sup>13</sup>

#### **4. IN BRIEF**

In this article, we set out our instrument and method to investigate *The Two Brothers*. The instrument is the three-act structure from Aristotle's *Poetics*, which is the essence of real literary criticism, and which reflects the dialectic model as the imagination, feelings, and intellect are engaged. The method of analysis was further distinguished by a deliberate definition of myth and established criteria for epics. In general, our reasoning was *a posteriori*, allowing us to generate new knowledge of *The Two Brothers* based on observation. The reader is encouraged to observe the definition of myth, the criteria for classification as an epic, and the Aristotelian principles applied. Then judge whether the tale should be classified as an epic myth. Our assessment of the genre is categorematic equivalence. *The Two Brothers* evidently have enough of the requisite predicates to be categorised as an epic myth and suitably respond to the instrument.

For further distinction and clarity, we have also presented all of our terms, premises, and propositions with their extension and intension. Our principles of thought were elaborated to ensure that our initial deductions are obvious and sound. One, the subject is intelligible through the three-act structure. Two, it contains the mythic criteria that inhere in all epics. Both premises were evidenced and shown to be true. Therefore, our conclusion must be valid.

Having here considered our subject as a whole, all of Bata's actions can be understood for the sake of which they happen. The end gives reason and meaning to all. Bata ends up as god-king, so all his actions naturally tended toward this end, even if this level of perception was not obvious in a particular action. With a broader notion of why *The Two Brothers* is an epic myth and why the plotted events and particular actions occur, in the following articles, we will inquire into the tendency of Bata's nature and why the liberation of the libido appears to be such a concern for the Egyptians during this period. In this regard, we will investigate the work of the anthropologist, JD Unwin.

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<sup>13</sup>. This is true to the main theme of justice, proportion or mAat offered in the *Eloquent Peasant*.

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