

... To Translation

Aegyptiaca, Seth/Typhon, and Human/Animal/Divine Permeability

There is a lot to be gained by taking a synoptic view of Greeks' and Romans' heterogeneous interest in Egypt's animals. Overemphasis on barbarizing strands of Roman literature hides spaces where Egyptian religious practices were discussed in starkly different terms. Philosophical literatures used Egypt's religious animals as a point of departure for comparative discussions about how humans imagine gods. In this comparative framework, animal-shaped, zoomorphic gods are not inherently less opportune than anthropomorphic ones.¹ By juxtaposing different approaches to a fundamental human issue—giving shape and physical form to transcendent metaphysical entities—authors like Cicero, Pliny, and Plutarch brought Egyptian and Roman practices onto a par with each other.

It is not just that some strategies of cultural representation of Egypt's animals have been given more attention than others. It is also that the very framework of cultural representation falls short. The previous chapter made the first of these two interrelated arguments—that barbarism, exoticism, and the cult of Isis do not fully encompass Greek and Roman discussions of Egypt's sacred animals. This chapter sets out to make the second argument, to replace a model of cultural representation with a framework of translation that better captures the movement of the animal/god nexus from Egyptian-language contexts, through Greek-language *Aegyptiaca*, to Greek and Roman authors.² It will follow this path in reverse, starting with

1. Kindt (2019) and Bremmer (2021) both trace the way that scholarship has broached (and often tried to minimize) zoomorphism in Greek religion. Buxton (2009, 32) summarizes earlier theories in which Greek anthropomorphism evolved from, and thus was superior to, more primitive zoomorphism.

2. Kindt (2021b) is illustrative; she reevaluates with nuance the motivations for Greeks' engagement with zoomorphism, but her exclusive focus on cultural representation fossilizes an association

Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris*, the text that closed the previous chapter. Then I will trace the thread of translation back to authors of *Aegyptiaca* and the Egyptian-language evidence on which they drew, before ending with Apuleius's own debt to *Aegyptiaca* and its presentation of animal symbolisms.

Anthropomorphism, Animal Worship, and Other False Premises

There are several false premises that foreclose the possibility of cultural translation. In one, dynastic periodization dictates when and how authors barbarized (Julio-Claudians) or domesticated (Flavians) Egypt's animals. In another, the Apis cult and the Anubophores of Isis religion imply that "animal worship" encapsulates Romans' engagement with Egypt's sacred animals.³ Both premises box out Egyptians' own presentation of sacred animals to a Greco-Roman audience. Ovid's etiology of Egypt's animal-gods via Typhon and fugitive Olympians (*Met.* 5.321–31) points to a key vein of inquiry hidden by both the Julio-Claudian/Flavian dichotomy and by the "animal worship" concept.⁴ Through Ovid, one begins to see the processes of translation—from Egypt to Rome and between human, animal, and divine—that I will focus on in this chapter. This form of "translation" coordinates a shift between forms (human, animal) and a physical movement between Greece and Egypt. Both modes of translation create a bridge that connects across difference.

Typhon shows both that Greco-Roman narratives of the divine had long relied on zoomorphism and that "animal worship" has hidden *Aegyptiaca*'s contributions to the sacred animal *topos*.⁵ Hesiod, whose *Theogony* includes one of the first extant descriptions of Typhon, is a good starting point:

When Zeus had driven the Titans from the sky, huge Earth, because of golden Aphrodite, made love with Tartarus and bore as her youngest son Typhon. His hands are holding deeds upon strength, and tireless the strong god's feet; *and from his shoulders there were a hundred heads of a snake, a terrible dragon's, licking with their dark tongues*; and on his prodigious heads fire sparkled from his eyes under the eyebrows, and from all of his heads fire burned as he glared. And there were voices in all his terrible heads, sending forth all kinds of sounds, inconceivable: for sometimes they would utter sounds as though for the gods to understand, and at other times the sound of a loud-bellowing, majestic bull, unstoppable in its strength, at other times

of Egyptian religion with zoomorphism that fails to capture an Egyptian-centered perspective on this issue.

3. To reiterate, this is not so much a criticism of Smelik and Hemelrijk (1984), who place "animal worship" in the title of their work, as it is a critique of the sense that animal worship circumscribes the issue of animals and the divine.

4. Bremmer (2021, 113n124), relying on Griffiths (1960b), shows how Ovid is the inheritor of an Egyptian tradition filtered through Alexandria. On this specific Typhonic myth, see also the brief synopsis of Griffiths (1960a).

5. Aston (2017, 21–23), for Egyptian influence on Greek mixanthropy, and Bremmer (2021, 108–11), for Poseidon and Dionysus, underline the centrality of zoomorphism in Greek religion.

that of a lion, with a ruthless spirit, at other times like young dogs, a wonder to hear, and at other times he hissed, and the high mountains echoed from below.⁶

Animals allow Hesiod to paint a vivid portrait of Typhon in all his monstrosity.⁷ Typhon is the same kind of impossible, multiform figure—a collage of animal and human parts—that is so regularly associated with Egypt's animal-headed, human-bodied gods. Typhon's theriomorphism is even more obvious in his visual representation. Throughout his iconography—Corinthian vase production, reliefs, shield decorations—Typhon is winged and has a serpentiform tail.⁸ This constellation of body parts underlines his fearsomeness and transcendent metaphysics. Typhon's different representations were flexible; they drew on zoomorphism and polyphony in various proportions according to media and context. That flexibility in representation reveals just how inbuilt zoomorphism, theriomorphism, and multiform bodies were to Greek imaginations of the divine world. The same holds true for Egypt, where Egyptian gods could occupy the full suite of corporal media, variously anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, or a mixture of the two.

Typhon also shows the limits of the phrase “animal worship.” As a paradigmatically anti-order, anti-Olympian figure, Typhon is not the object of cult worship. Nor does he fit very well into a vision of the divine oriented around gods worshipped in temples. But he points to the essential role animals played in Greco-Roman cosmological thinking. When one pivots to the Egyptian side and to authors of *Aegyptiaca*, pushing past the animal worship template recenters central divine-animal pairs, like Seth and his animals. Egypt's relatively well-known animal cults are certainly important, but they threaten to drown out the core role of animals as a means of characterization and identification of the divine.⁹

This broad issue of identification is the critical one. The semantics of the relevant Egyptian terms *ba* and *whm* specify that animals were a medium with which to imagine and approach the divine, rather than independently divine in and of themselves.¹⁰ Animals like the Apis bull or a Horus falcon were earthly impressions (*ba*) or incarnations (*whm*: lit. “repetition”) of different gods. The basic idea is relatable across religions. Whether Catholic transubstantiation, Hindu avatars, or

6. Hes. *Th.* 820–35, text and (adapted) translation from Most (2006), who obelizes the phrase “deeds upon strength.” The italicized passage reads ἐκ δὲ οἱ ὤμων / ἦν ἑκατὸν κεφαλαὶ ὄφις δεινοῖο δράκοντος, / γλώσσησι δνοφερῇσι λελιχμότες.

7. Per Strauss Clay (2020, 318), Typhon's serpentiform hybridity is inherited by the catalogue of monsters (Hes. *Th.* 306–33) he and Echidna beget.

8. For examples, see *LIMC* 8.1 148–52.

9. Kessler (1989) and Ikram (2005) remain the best sources on Egypt's animal cults. Te Velde (1980) does a fine job broaching this larger domain of animals in Egyptian religion.

10. For overview, see Kessler (1989, 12–15) and Hornung (1982, 136–38). As I discussed in the previous chapter and as Kindt (2021b, 135–37) makes clear in the case of Plutarch, Greek and Roman authors couched their authority in part on their ability to see animals and statues as media for rather than objects of worship.

Hawaiian kinolau, the embodiment and incarnation of the divine are fundamental issues. In both anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations of the divine, medium can bleed into essence. I do not want to over-schematize the distinction between god and the incarnation of said god.¹¹ As with wooden statues, there was certainly fluidity between animals as a vehicle for the divine and animals as divine *per se* in Egyptian thinking.¹² But prioritizing the identification of animals with gods, rather than the divinity of animals *per se*, creates space for authors of Aegyptiaca, whose authority rested on philosophically inflected explanations of the connections made between animals like hippopotamuses and gods like Seth.

SETH/TYPHON AND THE PATH FROM REPRESENTATION TO TRANSLATION

Plutarch and the Philosophy of Animal Identification

Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride* (*DIO*) creates a bridge from Greco-Roman interest in Egypt's animals back to authors of Aegyptiaca.¹³ I do not want to rehash here the introduction I gave in the previous chapter for Plutarch's philosophical framing of the Osiris myth. There, I recentered Plutarch's surprisingly enthusiastic endorsement of animals as medium in which to imagine the divine. Plutarch was just one participant in a longer debate about the risks and benefits of anthropomorphism and zoomorphism. That comparative impulse and its importance to imperial philosophy is reflected in Plutarch's discussion of the Apis bull, criticism of Ovid's Typhon etiology, and preference for living animals over inorganic statues as divine media. But I have deferred until now the core role that animals play in Plutarch's presentation of the Osiris myth. Animals associated with Seth/Typhon justify Plutarch's philosophical presentation of Seth/Typhon's stupidity, passion, and volubility.

My use of the composite phrase Seth/Typhon, while conventional in discussing the *DIO*, speaks to a cross-cultural translation of this specific god that is worth pausing over.¹⁴ I have freely discussed the Egyptian god Seth where Plutarch refers to the Greek monster Typhon. This is, in and of itself, not a major problem, and I

11. Plutarch had, in the section of the *DIO* (71, 379c–e) about looting gods' statues quoted in the previous chapter, made precisely this point about the separability of medium and the actual divinity accessed through that medium.

12. This is an issue shared by Egypt's statues and Egypt's animal cult. The complementarity of the incarnated divine and the inaccessibly distant divine is well theorized by Dunand and Zivie-Coche (2004, 71–104).

13. For text and commentary, see Griffiths (1970). For scholarship, see particularly Parmentier (1913), Griffiths (1960b, 1970), Hani (1979), and Richter (2001; 2011, 207–29).

14. Pfeiffer (2015) presents Egyptian examples of *interpretatio Graeca* (using a Greek god's name to identify an Egyptian god) as a form of "translation," largely by focusing on Greek-language inscriptions in Egypt.

am in good company when doing so.¹⁵ Seth and Typhon had long been identified with each other.¹⁶ Plutarch himself, in a discussion of the natural-philosophical resonances of the Osiris myth, clarifies that Typhon and Seth are alternative names for the same divinity: “That’s why the Egyptians always call Typhon ‘Seth.’”¹⁷ Diodorus, Ovid, pseudo-Apollodorus, Antoninus Liberalis, and presumably Nicander all referred to Seth as Typhon. There is similar evidence for the Seth/Typhon pairing in both Greek and Demotic papyri from Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt.¹⁸ The felicity of the mutual identification is obvious, at least for Seth as he came to be understood in the Late through Roman periods.¹⁹ Seth and Typhon both represented principles of disorder and opposition to the divine rule of Osiris or Zeus. The unambiguously inimical view of Seth in the *DIO*, fossilized through an identification with the anti-Olympian Typhon, aligns well with the later role of Seth as a god connected with outsiders, the foreign, and the dangerous.²⁰ This departs from his earlier role in Egyptian accounts of the Osiris myth, where his claim to the throne is legitimized by his protection of Ra and defeat of the abominable snake Apepi during the sun’s underworld journey.²¹ For most of pharaonic history, Seth cult flourished in sites like Avaris.²²

In other words, Seth and Typhon are uniquely suited to a cross-cultural translation that syncs fundamental Greek and Egyptian myths of divine conflict and underlines the role of animal identification in them both. Their pairing reflects a specific cultural context—Hellenistic and imperial Alexandrian intellectual culture—that incentivized a set of culturally mixed Egyptian authors of Aegyptiaca to make a strategic identification of kindred cultural symbols. The Hellenistic social dynamics that motivated this cross-cultural identification is often lost in the conventional use of the term “syncretism,” which presents the divine pairing of

15. See von Lieven (2016, 71).

16. Griffiths (1970, 259).

17. *DIO* 41, 367d: διὸ τὸν Τυφῶνα Σῆθ [ἄει] Αἰγύπτιοι καλοῦσιν.

18. See Dieleman (2005, 130–38) for Egyptian-language perspectives on the Seth/Typhon pairing. Similar is the presence of Seth/Typhon in magical papyri, as discussed by Pintaudi (1977). Antoninus Liberalis (§28) epitomizes Nicander (cf. Diod. Sic. 1.21–2, Ov. *Met.* 5.321–31, and pseudo-Apollodorus 1.6.3).

19. The nuances of Seth’s role in Egyptian religion, especially his earlier role as a patron of Upper Egypt and protector of the sun during its nightly journey in the Duat, were leveled over time; by the Ptolemaic period he had become the chaos-sowing antagonist connected with foreignness (though cf. Moyer 2011, 178, for the continued popularity of the *Contendings* and the Horus/Seth trial in the Hellenistic period). See Kees (1924), Griffiths (1960a), te Velde (1977, 2002), DuQuesne (1998) for this evolution of Seth’s divine role.

20. As discussed by Griffiths (1960b), te Velde (1977, 109–51), and Loprieno (1988, 72–83).

21. That claim is still present (4, 5) in the Ramesside *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, an important if problematic source for the Seth/Horus myth. This presentation of Seth as legitimate claimant to the throne is also important to the *Memphite Theology* (lines 7–47), a Twenty-Fifth Dynasty text that claims to copy an Old-Kingdom original (on which see Sethe 1928 and Junker 1940).

22. See the discussion of the Seth temple at Avaris in Bietak (1996, 36–48).

Seth/Typhon as a *fait accompli* rather than a continually renewed argument sustained by Egyptians and Greeks alike.²³

As in Typhon's multiform theriomorphism, Seth came to be known through animals. This begins with the predynastic king Peribsen, who for reasons that are still opaque swapped out Horus for Seth in his titulature. For the remainder of Egyptian dynastic history, Seth was represented with the aptly if uncreatively named "Seth animal," a fictional creature that Greeks and Romans usually associated with asses.²⁴ The strength of the Seth/Typhon pairing resides, in part, on the importance of animal iconography for them both. Typhon's hybrid animal form and changing animal voices mirror the chaos and disorder that Typhon exemplifies; Seth too came to be associated with wild and fierce animals like the hippopotamus to cement his later, antagonistic role as combatant of Horus.

Plutarch's philosophical analysis of the Osiris myth spends a good deal of time discussing Seth/Typhon's animal resonances.²⁵ Early in the *DIO*, Plutarch (8, 354a) suggests that the pig is an animal connected to Seth/Typhon:²⁶ explicitly, because Seth/Typhon was hunting a pig when he came upon Osiris's coffin, and implicitly, because the pig's uncleanness links it up with the essential qualities that Plutarch assigns to Seth/Typhon.²⁷ Soon thereafter, Plutarch introduces Seth/Typhon's identification with donkeys to underline a symbolic association between Seth/Typhon and everything that hinders philosophical inquiry: "That's why they allot Typhon the stupidest domesticated animal, the ass, and the most savage wild animals, the crocodile and the hippopotamus."²⁸ Once he enters into the Seth/Typhon section proper (72, 380c), Plutarch additionally mentions dogs and the Oxyrhynchus fish, though it is possible they are only an aside, rather than meant as Seth animals.²⁹ Plutarch's emphasis on the wide range of Seth animals is well encapsulated by his catch-all phrase "these animals" to refer back to all the animals he had designated as Sethian.³⁰ Different Seth animals help Plutarch make

23. To repeat the caution around (but ultimate validation of) the term syncretism in Frankfurter (2018, 15–20).

24. The predynastic king Peribsen replaced the typically falcon-topped serekh with one topped with the Seth animal, a choice (when seen through Khasekhemwy's shift to a dual falcon/Seth animal serekh) whose political and religious significance has been debated, as outlined by Wilkinson (1999, 75–79).

25. Smelik and Hemelrijk (1984, 1960–65) spend very little time on this aspect of Plutarch's discussion. Seth animals are mentioned only in passing (1963).

26. It is worth noting that this connection is included among Manetho's fragments: *DIO* 8, 353f–354a = *BNJ* 609 F 23b.

27. For this phase of the myth, see Assmann (2001a, 125–29).

28. *DIO* 50, 371c = *BNJ* 609 F 20: διὸ καὶ τῶν μὲν ἡμέρων ζῴων ἀπονέμουσιν αὐτῷ τὸ ἀμαθέστατον, ὄνον· τῶν δ' ἄγριων τὰ θηριωδέστατα, κροκόδειλον καὶ τὸν ποτάμιον ἵππον. See also: 8, 353e–354a; 19, 358d; 30–1, 362f–363a; and 49–50, 371c–d.

29. Griffiths (1970, 549) prefers this reading.

30. *DIO* 73, 380c: ταῦτα τὰ ζῷα.

different arguments, a flexibility concordant with the various representations of Typhon one sees across Hesiod and material culture.

Plutarch's enthusiastic coordination of Typhon with Seth via their animal associations might be well precedented, but referring to Seth as Typhon remains a textbook example of *interpretatio Graeca*. In this view, Plutarch only narrates the Osiris myth because he thinks it fits Middle Platonism's dualistic cosmology so well. Platonic philosophy is a straightjacket that reduces the myth—in its variability and multiplicity when viewed within Egyptian-language evidence—into a schematic tale of good's triumph over evil.³¹ To other scholars, the latent rivalry between Greek and Egyptian wisdom that runs throughout the text deserves the largest emphasis.³² Plutarch regularly marks out the unseemliness of Egyptian interpretations of the myth. He offers pained reactions to various facets—the god Horus decapitating his mother Isis in a fit of rage, for example—that he suggests are inappropriate.³³ In both arguments, the fact of equivalence-drawing one sees in the *DIO* gives way to Plutarch's attempts to center and elevate Greek culture in a culturally mixed world.

By presenting Plutarch as a bridge to Aegyptiaca and by underlining the pedigree of the Seth/Typhon pairing, I have already played my interpretative hand. Both arguments fail to capture essential elements of the *DIO*. This is not to trivialize Plutarch's hellenocentric interpretation and elevation of Greek cultural sensibilities. Plutarch's defense of Hellenism against barbarism elsewhere shows how readily he perpetuates—if winkingly and perhaps subversively—a binary that separates out Greek self from non-Greek others.³⁴ But it is all too easy to miss out on the translation of specific Egyptian cultural traditions from Egyptian-language sources into Plutarch's text. It is striking, for instance, that Plutarch's description of Seth/Typhon's birth and eruption through his mother Nut's side seems to match evidence from the Old-Kingdom Pyramid Texts.³⁵

I do not want to use slippery and dangerous words like “correct” or “accurate” to characterize this alignment of Plutarch with earlier pharaonic discussions of this same material. That risks essentializing culture into a singular form that flattens out heterogeneity across time—Egyptians discussed the Osiris myth for thousands of years—and across different groups. So, to borrow from the famous description of ethnographic fidelity offered by Clifford Geertz, it might be better to say that Plutarch's *On Isis and Osiris* is so striking because it recognizes the

31. That multiplicity is well demonstrated by Assmann (2001a, 123–47).

32. Richter (2011, 192–98); cf. Richter (2001, 195–97) for discussion of the Greek-language Isis etymology.

33. Plut. *DIO* 20, 358e.

34. *On the Malice of Herodotus*—discussing Herodotus's lenient view of the Egyptian Busiris at 12, 857a–b—is a good example of that hellenocentrism and the playful way that Plutarch delivers it.

35. *Spr.* 222, 205a–b, ed. Sethe (1908).

“winks” of Egyptian myths where other Greek and Roman authors see “blinks.”³⁶ As a Greek-language author discussing Egyptian material, he offers a much thicker description of an Egyptian myth than all of the authors whom I discussed in the previous chapter.

This is not so much praise for Plutarch himself as it is for the authors of Aegyptiaca who were his informants. Plutarch’s concordance with Egyptian-language discussions of the Osiris myth bespeaks the remarkable power and efficacy of Egyptian authors of Aegyptiaca. Only by juxtaposing source (Egyptian-language discussions of the Horus-Seth cycle) and destination (Plutarch’s presentation of the quarrel of Isis and Osiris against their brother-turned-enemy Seth/Typhon) can one appreciate the deft cultural translations that authors of Aegyptiaca undertook. By the same token, the path of translation reveals the different ways that different authors in different cultural contexts used the same syncretism of Seth/Typhon.

Seth Animals in Manetho

Authors of Aegyptiaca are the ones providing Plutarch the means to identify Seth/Typhon with animals like hippopotamuses. This means of access to Aegyptiaca via Plutarch is as exciting as it is perilous. It opens up a can of worms of *Quellenkritik* that can be a bit tedious.³⁷ But even if source criticism is old-fashioned, it can reveal a path of translation for Seth/Typhon, one that begins in Egypt, travels through authors of Aegyptiaca, and continues to Greek and Roman authors like Apuleius and Plutarch.

The only author cited for information in Plutarch’s section on Seth animals is, perhaps unsurprisingly, Manetho. The association is important in both directions. First, it makes clear that Manetho’s authority derived in no small part from his explanation of Egyptian religion, in addition to his dynastic history.³⁸ Second, it shows how Plutarch skirts the intervening authors of Aegyptiaca on his way to Manetho, as a rubber-stamp of his presentation of Egyptian religion. Plutarch reaches back to the exalted archetype of Aegyptiaca even as he remains indebted to the larger sweep of Aegyptiaca and imperial-era authors like Apion and Chaeremon. But even if he is named explicitly, to some scholars Manetho remains less persuasive as the key source of Plutarch’s information about Egypt’s sacred animals. J. Gwyn Griffiths, whose work on the *DIO* is still authoritative, is the most important of these doubters: “Manetho is the only writer named, but the material

36. This, and the following “thick description,” are from Geertz (1973, 3–30).

37. For the sources of the *DIO*, see Wellmann (1896, refuted by Griffiths 1970, 88–93), Frisch (1907), and Parmentier (1913, 28–30). For broader discussion of Plutarch as citing authority, see Theander (1951), Helmbold and O’Neil (1959), and Cornell (2013, 105–13).

38. This is often slotted to the background in work reconstructing Manetho’s historical narrative (Dillery 2015, 301–47) or annalistic framework (Redford 1986, 203–30).

is factually not up to his standard.”³⁹ It is not my goal here to critique Griffiths’s source criticism.⁴⁰ But it is still important to push back a bit against this slippery concept of “standards.” It captures a common view of Manetho as unimpeachable cultural authority that is understandable, but often marginalizes the more problematic fragments.

Manetho’s animal fragments have posed commentators the biggest problems, because they fail when judged by a “correct” versus “incorrect” rubric that is more often calibrated to pharaonic-Egyptian than to contemporary Ptolemaic-Egyptian evidence. But it is worth asking if this mode of evaluation is running in the wrong direction. In a tradition as fragmentary as Aegyptiaca, it is difficult to know with any certainty what really constitutes Manetho’s own standards as arbitrator of Egyptian religious knowledge. It is a critical question for the *DIO*, where claims vouchsafed via Manetho are sometimes iffy. To make sense of these citations, we need an inductive process that replaces the overly disjunctive language of standards with more evidentiarily sound analysis of how cultural concepts change when they are translated between Egyptian, Greco-Egyptian, and Greek intellectual domains.

On two occasions Plutarch cites Manetho during a discussion of Seth animals. The first passage comes at the end of Plutarch’s recapitulation of the cosmogonic implications of the Osiris myth generally, and Seth/Typhon’s antagonism specifically. As a Platonist, Plutarch is keen to show that this macrocosmic quarrel is mirrored in each individual person, whose constituent parts mix Typhonic and Isiac elements. This discussion of a soul’s Typhonic aspects segues naturally into the consequent animals associated with Seth/Typhon, which I quoted above:⁴¹

Typhon is the impassioned, Titan-ic, illogical, impulsive part of the soul and the perishable, sickly part of the body, the one prone to the seasons and bad air and solar and lunar eclipses, which one might call the outbursts and rebellions of Typhon. The name Seth, by which they refer to Typhon, speaks volumes: it indicates the overpowering and constraining, and frequent reversal and transgression. *Some say Bebon was one of Typhon’s companions, but Manetho says that Typhon himself was also called Bebon.* The name means restraint or prevention, as when Typhon’s power disrupts well-conducted affairs heading in the right direction. *That’s why they allot him the stupidest domesticated animal, the ass, and the most savage wild animals, the crocodile and the hippopotamus.*⁴²

39. Griffiths (1970, 98).

40. Griffiths (1970, 75–100, with a helpful breakdown on 98–99). I find Plutarch’s at-least-partial use of Apion (defended by Wellmann 1896, 249 and Lévy 1910, 177–96) more probable than Griffiths does.

41. This is the passage as excerpted in the relevant fragment of *BNJ* 609 F 20, written by Lang (2014).

42. *DIO* 49–50, 371b–c = *BNJ* 609 F 20: Βέβωνα δέ τινες μὲν ἕνα τῶν τοῦ Τυφῶνος ἐταίρων γεγενῆσθαι λέγουσιν, Μάνεθος <δ> αὐτὸν τὸν Τυφῶνα καὶ Βέβωνα καλεῖσθαι . . . διὸ καὶ τῶν μὲν ἡμέρων ζώων ἀπονέμουν αὐτῷ τὸ ἀμαθέστατον, ὄνον· τῶν δ’ ἀγρίων τὰ θηριωδέστατα, κροκόδειλον καὶ τὸν ποτάμιον ἵππον.

One has to decide where Manetho's original information ends and Plutarch's extrapolation begins, which is why source criticism is so tricky. Plutarch cites Manetho only for a small piece of information—that Bebon is in fact a name for Seth/Typhon, rather than one of his companions. But that identification is the springboard for the causal chain that nests consecutive sentences in a logically interconnected sequence. Manetho's identification of Typhon with Bebon is a prerequisite for the subsequent etymology Plutarch applies to Typhon. That etymology then allows Plutarch to underline Seth/Typhon's disruptive role, which itself explains why stupid and savage animals are considered Typhonic. Through this logical sequence—Bebon, its Greek etymology, and the animal identifications—Plutarch implicates Manetho into the larger constellation of associations that radiate out from Seth/Typhon.

Through Bebon, Manetho helps Plutarch underwrite the natural-philosophical connections between Typhon and the natural world. I have already suggested that a model of co-authorship is the soundest way to deal with these embedded citations of fragmentary authors.⁴³ Co-authorship captures the collaborative constitution of this network of meaning around Seth/Typhon. Pragmatically, it avoids aporetic debates about where to bound these loose citations of fragmentary authors that so often bleed into their immediate narrative context. There are also, to my mind, good reasons why Manetho might reasonably be the source for the Seth/animal pairing. Plutarch assigns the actual identification of the donkey, hippopotamus, and crocodile as Seth animals to a vague "they" that seems to recast his specific informant Manetho into Egyptians writ large. Plutarch's debt to Manetho for this cultural datum is further supported, if admittedly circumstantially, by an argument *ex silentio*. The identification of hippopotamus and crocodile with Seth required a source with knowledge beyond that typically displayed in the Greco-Roman tradition. Diodorus Siculus and his own source Hecataeus of Abdera make no mention of the hippopotamus or crocodile as Seth animals.⁴⁴

But even if one takes a narrow point of view and restricts oneself to the explicitly cited information, Manetho's clarification about Bebon's connections to Typhon is illustrative on two grounds. First, it provides a good example of Manetho's interest in Egypt's religious topography. In this instance, he spent time explaining the process of identification that linked together major (Seth) and regional (Bebon) Egyptian gods. That mutual identification of gods with overlapping roles was a critical part of the Egyptian religious landscape that Greeks and Romans encountered. The tripartite deity Ptah/Sokar/Osiris, well represented in Ptolemaic and Roman Egyptian grave goods, is the product of the same process through which

43. As I have discussed more fully in chapter 1, in Pliny the Elder's citation of Apion (Plin. *HN* 30.18 = *BNJ* 616 F 15).

44. The crocodile and hippopotamus are discussed at Diod. Sic. 1.35, with no mention of Seth/Typhon. For Hecataeus's fragments, see Lang (2012). For Diodorus's use of Hecataeus, see Murray (1970).

regional gods (in this case of the city Memphis) were “combined” with the major god Osiris.⁴⁵ Second, and more importantly for present purposes, the Bebon gloss refocuses attention on Seth’s importance to Manetho and those who read Manetho. As a god who became, over the Late and Ptolemaic periods, associated exclusively with disorder and foreignness, Seth was a prime object of attention.⁴⁶ That should not be lost sight of just because it falls between the disciplinary cracks that separate those interested in Manetho’s dynastic history and those interested in Greek representations of Egypt’s sacred animals. Manetho’s citation of the Bebon/Seth pairing begins to reveal how Seth’s cosmogonic role created systems of significance that looped together myth, the natural world, and animals in ways that have yet to be captured by a cultural representation model.

Plutarch’s other reference to Manetho’s discussion of Seth/Typhon implicates ritual into that web of significance. Manetho reappears after Plutarch has listed the various animals identified with Seth, a catalogue whose extensiveness helps Plutarch prove Typhon’s symbolic representation of the bestial and irrational.⁴⁷ As a part of his focus on god-animal pairings, Plutarch makes clear that Egyptians’ views of Seth/Typhon shape their behavior toward animals identified with him. To show appropriate deference to Seth/Typhon’s power, they honor his animals. When in times of drought they need to use stick rather than carrot, they threaten Seth/Typhon by sacrificing his animals. In this instance, Plutarch’s claim aligns well with representations (fig. 5) of ritual sacrifice of red-colored (and thus Sethian) asses and bulls in the first east Osiris chapel in the Temple of Hathor at Dendera.⁴⁸

Plutarch cites Manetho for one of the more striking examples of this kind of apotropaic sacrifice: “Indeed in Eileithyiaspolis they used to burn men alive, as Manetho has recorded, calling them Typhonians.”⁴⁹ Once more, there is striking evidence that Manetho took time to build out the set of ritual practices that were bound up in Egyptians’ hatred of Seth/Typhon. Once more, it poses immediate difficulties when measured against a correct/incorrect dichotomy.⁵⁰ The specific designation of some people as Typhonian—perhaps because of their red complexion,

45. That impulse, called “combinatory” by Dunand and Zivie-Coche (2004, 40), is discussed by Hornung (1982, 91–99).

46. The exact chronology of Seth’s demonization is tricky to pin down, as te Velde (1977, 138–51) makes clear.

47. This helps explain why he uses the vague “these animals,” which tries to present as large a group of Seth animals as possible, per Griffiths (1960, 549–50).

48. For Plutarch’s discussion of Egyptian sacrifice of red-colored cattle and hatred of red-colored asses, see *DIO* 30–1, 362e–363d. The east wall of the first east Osiris chapel at Dendera (published by Cauville 1997, 51–54; 1990, 68–71, for outline) narrates the Khoiak festivals, including the ritual sacrifice of asses and bulls identified with Seth.

49. *DIO* 73, 380c–d = *BNJ* 609 F 22 (translation from Griffiths 1970): καὶ γὰρ ἐν Εἰλειθυίας πόλει ζῶντας ἀνθρώπους κατεπίμψασαν, ὡς Μανέθως ἱστορήκε, Τυφωνείους καλοῦντες.

50. I take it as significant that such a troublesome fragment is not included in Moyer (2011) or Dillery (2015).



FIGURE 5. The goddesses Isis and Nephthys preparing a chained and bound donkey, identified with the god Seth, for sacrifice. From the east wall of the first east Osiris chapel of the Temple of Hathor, Dendera, late Ptolemaic to Roman period. Photo courtesy of the author.

if Diodorus is to be believed—suggests that some humans count toward the set of animals identified with Seth.⁵¹ If it were not for the human sacrifice part, this coordination of animals and humans would be a representative—albeit ghastly—example of Egyptians' remarkable non-anthropocentrism and relative disinterest in human exceptionalism. But regardless, I would de-emphasize human sacrifice, which is attention-grabbing but difficult to corroborate with Egyptian evidence. Instead, it is worth reemphasizing that Manetho's specific discussions—Bebon, sacrifice at Eileithyiaspolis (Egyptian Nekheb, modern El-Kab)—spun around the figure of Seth/Typhon a network of significance that included divine syncretism, animal-god pairings, and a cult geography of Egyptian rituals.

Aelian, the author of a sprawling text on animals, provides corroborating evidence that Manetho took time to discuss Seth animals. In his Egyptian section, Aelian mentions Manetho's discussion of the Egyptian abhorrence for pigs.⁵² Manetho, as Aelian hears it, says that the pig is "most hateful to the sun and moon," a claim that must depend upon the pig's Sethian associations and the common identification of sun and moon with Osiris and Isis.⁵³ Aelian's citation helps confirm that Manetho is the probable source behind Plutarch's own etiology of the Egyptian hatred for pigs. It is more likely than not that Aelian and Plutarch reflect the same path of transmission of Manetho's original passage, even if the exact contours of that path are impossible to reconstruct fully.⁵⁴ The end results might be distorted via textual transmission, but Manetho's original presentation of the association between Seth and pigs is well founded: as texts like the Edfu reliefs and the Book of Gates make clear, Seth was himself identified with and represented as a pig.⁵⁵ As a pair, Aelian and Plutarch call attention to Manetho's importance as a source for Seth/Typhon's association with animals and the rituals and festivals whose significance depends on those animals' Sethian connotations.

51. On the shared complexion, see Diod. Sic. 1.88.5. Cf. *DIO* 30, 362e, where Plutarch similarly mentions scorn directed at redheads. For ritual sacrifice of red-colored Seth animals, see Frankfurter (1998, 204–5).

52. For Aelian's Egyptian material, see Smith (2014, 149–65); for his mention of Manetho's interest in pigs, see *NA* 10.16 = *BNJ* 609 F 23a.

53. Osiris *qua* Ptah/Sokar/Osiris played a key role in, and was closely associated with, the solar deity's nightly travel through the Duat.

54. Lang (2014) agrees, including both Aelian's and Plutarch's pig passages as Manetho's Fragments 23a and 23b, respectively (*DIO* 8, 353f–354a = *BNJ* 609 F 23b). It is possible that Aelian is relying on Plutarch's own text, while claiming that Manetho is the original source for Plutarch's pig/Typhon pairing. I find it more probable that they each rely on the same tradition of Aegyptiaca, but integrate citations in different ways. Per Smith 2014 149–53, in his Egyptian section Aelian names Herodotus (8.24, 11.10) and Apion (10.29, 11.40) twice, and Manetho (10.16), Eudoxus (10.16), Aristagoras (11.10), Eudemus (5.7), Pammenes (16.42), Phylarchus (17.5), Ptolemy Philopator (7.40), and Theophrastus (15.26) once.

55. A resonance (sometimes explained by seeing the Seth-animal as a pig) discussed by Bonneau (1991) and te Velde (1992, 21–22).

Manetho's interest in Seth/Typhon and his animals is only coherent when integrated into a full picture of ritual, kingship, and myth that remains out of view when a *topos* like zoomorphism is cleaved off and repackaged as a stand-alone object of cultural representation. Even when Manetho's presentation of Seth and Seth animals appears indirectly in Plutarch, one can still see that different Seth animals looped Seth into different cultural contexts. Plutarch recognizes that the significance of Seth's connections to asses and his connections to hippopotamuses are distinct. To trace these different threads, I will follow Plutarch's lead, dividing out Seth's associations with wild animals from his identification with an ass.

SETH AND THE HIPPOPOTAMUS FROM EDFU TO PLUTARCH

To chase down those different webs of significance, one must individuate the paths of translation that Seth's hippopotamus and ass pairings took from Egypt, through Aegyptiaca, to Greek and Roman literature. For the Seth/hippo pairing, that web of significance includes the royal ideology that Manetho includes in his dynastic history. To be sure, Manetho's kings list is a very indirectly transmitted text, so one needs to be careful not to overstep the available evidence.⁵⁶ But that said, Manetho's kings list loops in Seth animals at interesting moments. This occurs twice: the first king of the First Dynasty, Menes, was seized by a hippopotamus; Akhthoes, the mad first king of the Ninth Dynasty, was killed by a crocodile.⁵⁷ The former has some corroborating evidence, most notably in the Palermo Stone, the royal annals composed sometime during the Fifth Dynasty. This records that a First-Dynasty king (likely Den) undertook a ritual called "the harpooning of the hippopotamus."⁵⁸ In other words, there is something interesting in Manetho's hippopotamus reference. Menes's death by hippopotamus points toward hippopotamus hunts, among the many pastimes that communicated Egyptian kings' fight against and control over the wild and savage. By killing these animals, kings participated in a symbolic assertion of order over chaos prefigured by the Osiris myth and Seth's role therein.

56. Here I leave aside the probable role of Seth in Manetho's Hyksos narrative, on which see Moyer (2011, 123–25) and Dillery (2015, 317). The succession in question is laid out explicitly in the Armenian redaction of Eusebius's *chronographia*, Euseb. Armen. (ed. Karst) 63.15–69.30 = *BNJ* 609 F3a. Menes's death by hippopotamus is also included in Syncellus's epitome of Eusebius, at p. 100 (ed. Dindorf) = *BNJ* 609 F 2.

57. Manetho's Menes is an alternate *nebty* name for the early-Dynastic king Narmer, of Narmer palette fame.

58. Dillery (2015, 176–77) cites the passage in the same vein and also mentions seals in which Den hunts hippos. I would add to Dillery's list of corroborating evidence the presence of wooden hippo models in the temple equipment listed in the Abusir papyri (translated in Strudwick 2005 no. 91.A; see 173n6 for explanation). For the relevant passage of the Palermo stone, see Wilkinson (2000, 112).

Manetho's interest in man-eating hippos and crocodiles recenters the heterogeneous significance underlying the nexus of animality, the Seth/Horus conflict, and royal ideology. Since the Pyramid Texts, Seth's murder of Osiris and subsequent struggle for rule with Horus had been a mythological reflection of the death of a king, the threat of disunity in the succession, and the consolidation of the "two lands" of Egypt into a unified state supportive of the new king's rule.⁵⁹ That literary motif is one of many Manetho relies on to explain royal ideology to a non-Egyptian audience.⁶⁰ It helps explain why his dynastic history begins with the rules of Osiris, Seth/Typhon, and then Horus.⁶¹ An etiology of the royal succession is a core function of the whole Osiris myth, which created a drama that heightened and then resolved the tension that came with the transfer of power from father to son. Hippopotamuses' connections to Seth play one small part in this work. By killing hippopotamuses, as Den does in the Palermo Stone, kings play the part of Horus and reassert order by conquering the savage and chaotic. Menes's hippo death is certainly only the most indirect view onto these dynamics, but it offers a valuable insight into the threads connecting the Manetho that appears in the dynastic history and the Manetho that appears in the *DIO*.

By the time Manetho was writing in the early-Ptolemaic period, hunting hippos continued to be a display of pharaonic strength framed against the Horus/Seth struggle for power. The madness of the Ninth-Dynasty king Akhthoes and his death by crocodile might very well point to the same idea. It is significant that these folkloric tags—death by hippo and by crocodile—are attached to the consolidation and then disintegration of the Old Kingdom in the First and Ninth Dynasties, moments when a myth of royal succession was especially apposite.⁶² References to hippos and crocodiles in Manetho's kings list hint at larger points of connection between animals, annalistic history, and the trial of Horus and Seth.

The Horus/Seth conflict dramatized at the Temple of Edfu provides an Egyptian-language *comparandum* for the Seth/hippo pairing in the *DIO* and Manetho's dynastic history.⁶³ The Edfu reliefs show how authors of *Aegyptiaca* translated Egyptian religious lore around animal identifications into a Greek mode that Plutarch and others then incorporated into their own texts. The Temple of Horus at Edfu also reemphasizes that authors of *Aegyptiaca* were translating an Egyptian culture specific to the times in which they lived. It is exciting to show how Manetho's text aligns with evidence, like the Palermo Royal Annals, that

59. On display in *Memphite Theology* 7–47 and argued by Assmann (2001a, 123–47).

60. Moyer (2011, 84–141, esp. 140–41).

61. Again, from the Armenian recension of Eusebius's *Chronographia* (BNJ 609 F 3a).

62. Per Moyer (2011, 128n144), crocodile death can indicate divine punishment, which fits well with the cruelty that Manetho assigns to Akhthoes.

63. Horus was displayed spearing Seth in the guise of hippopotamuses and crocodiles in his temple at Edfu, a Ptolemaic construction which Dillery (2015, 176–77) persuasively connects to the hippopotamus reference in Manetho.

predates him by some two thousand years. But the Temple of Edfu is reflective of Ptolemaic-Egyptian culture in ways that should not be glossed over.

To provide some of the basics: the Temple of Horus at Edfu (Apollinopolis Magna) was constructed in the late third century BCE, soon after Manetho was writing his *Aegyptiaca*.⁶⁴ The relief cycle contains a specifically Ptolemaic recapitulation of the Horus/Seth conflict, written in the typically arcane “Ptolemaic hieroglyphic” script.⁶⁵ The mythic cycle, like the script in which it is written, thus simultaneously builds on and departs from earlier, canonized pharaonic equivalents. The Horus myths that it relates rely heavily on animal metamorphosis and on a flatly inimical, rather than ambivalent, characterization of Seth.

The Tales narrate the victory of Horus of Behdet—a version of Horus specific to Edfu—over Seth and the latter’s expulsion from Egypt. In the temple relief cycle, Horus of Behdet fights on behalf of Re-Herakhte, and Ptah provides running commentary. The explanation of the text’s historical framework has been various. Some see it as an allusion back the expulsion of the Hyksos, the Second Intermediate Period kings of West Asian descent whose associations with and worship of Seth at Avaris were well-known in later periods. Others present the myth’s etiologies of sites of cult worship as a politically inflected debate about the on-the-ground worship of Horus and Seth in the Late and Ptolemaic periods.⁶⁶ Regardless of motivation, the myth crystallizes a contrast between Horus of Behdet, pharaonic power, and the falcon on the one hand, and Seth, foreignness, and the hippopotamus and crocodile on the other. There is a nexus of signification—Egyptians and non-Egyptians, order and chaos—on which Horus’s and Seth’s different zoomorphisms depend.

In the Edfu text, Horus chases Seth northward and fights him after Seth had metamorphosed into male hippopotamuses and crocodiles (fig. 6).⁶⁷ These fights served as aetiologies of key entries in the Egyptian cult calendar, of cult locales (Edfu chief among them), and of the standards of each Egyptian nome, a long-standing administrative subdivision of Egypt.⁶⁸ Of even more importance for Manetho’s allusions to hippopotamus and crocodile hunts in the deaths of Menes and Akhthoes, the Horus/Seth myth related at Edfu further underlines the mythological resonances of pharaonic beast hunts, through which the Egyptian king embodies Horus and his fight against Seth.

64. For an overview of the Edfu material, see Finnestad (1985) and Kurth (1994). For text, see Chassinat (1897–1934), Kurth (1994), and the Göttingen Edfu Project (<https://adw-goe.de/la/forschung/abgeschlossene-forschungsprojekte/akademienprogramm/edfu-projekt/die-datenbanken-des-edfu-projekts/edfu-datenbank/>, accessed January 2024), with Fairman (1935) and Budge (1994, 57–95) for the Seth cycle. For interpretation, see Alliot (1950), Griffiths (1958), and Fairman (1974).

65. It is *the* corpus of Ptolemaic hieroglyphic, as Wilson (1997) makes clear. For the role of the Horus/Seth myth in Edfu’s wider cosmological program, see Finnestad (1985, 15, 87).

66. Griffiths (1958) provides an overview of the different interpretations of the myth’s significance.

67. As opposed to the female hippopotamus, associated with Taweret (and by extension the affiliated goddesses Ipet, Reret, and Hedjet).

68. Fairman (1974, 27–33), from which the translation is taken.



FIGURE 6. The god Horus spearing a hippopotamus identified with the god Seth. From the internal east enclosure wall of the Temple of Horus, Edfu, Ptolemaic period. Photo courtesy of the author.

The story cycles through different animal metamorphoses. The sheer variety of animals into which both gods transform speaks to the centrality of animals as a mode of identification for gods, rather than as objects of worship per se. It also provides some legitimacy to Plutarch's open-ended list of Typhonic animals. At one point Horus, taking on the guise of a hawk, fights Seth, who had transformed into a serpent:



... From this day, the seventh day of the first month of the season *Pr-t* [= 7 Tybi] shall be called the 'Festival of the Sailing.' Then Seth took upon himself the form of a hissing serpent, and he entered into the earth at this place without being seen. Ra said, 'Seth hath taken upon himself the form of a hissing serpent. Let Horus, the son of Isis, in the form of a hawk-headed staff, set himself over the place where he is so that he may never be able to come forth again.'⁶⁹

This presentation of animals and the divine, typical of Egyptian thinking of the Ptolemaic period, serves to tether animal metamorphoses of the type seen in Ovid to emic accounts of gods' fluidity of form. The actual hieroglyphs are worth looking at, if only to emphasize the natural scope of zoomorphism as a category. The second half of the second line, representing as it does the Seth animal, the *hmhm.tj* serpent ("roarer," an epithet of Apepi when identified with Seth), and (in the third line) the Horus falcon, helps reemphasize the primacy of zoomorphism as a key association of a Greco-Roman audience presented with Egyptian iconography and hieroglyphic signs.⁷⁰ This specific section of the larger Horus myth, and the image of Horus-as-falcon atop Seth animals, makes its way into Plutarch.⁷¹ The presence of this same imagery in the *DIO* shows that Greco-Roman authors did have access to this Egyptian material via authors of *Aegyptiaca*. In this case, it is unclear just what path of translation the passage took from Edfu to Plutarch. Manetho would be a good guess, given his temporal proximity to the Edfu temple and general

69. Text from Chassinat (1931, 121, ll. 9–11) (digitized on the Göttingen Edfu Project, <https://adw-goe.de/la/forschung/abgeschlossene-forschungsprojekte/akademienprogramm/the-inscriptions-of-the-ptolemaic-temple-of-edfu/the-database-of-the-edfu-project/>, accessed January 2024). Translation from Budge (1994, 77), though for translation and commentary see also Fairman (1935, 1974).

70. This change in the Seth/Apepi relationship is a telling example of the flattening of Seth's later mythic significance. At Edfu, Seth is identified with Apepi. But texts like the *Memphite Theology* make clear that Seth claimed the throne because he *killed* Apepi. I address hieroglyphic signs as a mode of animal signification in chapter 5.

71. In his discussion, te Velde (1977, 59) notes a similar translation from Edfu to Plutarch of a different theme, of Seth's castration by Horus.

authority. Even if we might not know for certain the specific author of *Aegyptiaca* who translated this Seth/Horus animal imagery into Greek, clearly *somebody* did so. Placing the Edfu material beside Plutarch shows beyond any doubt the ability of Egyptian thinking about animals to move into Greek and Roman contexts:

In Hermopolis they display a statue of Typhon as hippopotamus, on whom stands a hawk fighting with a serpent. By the hippopotamus they indicate Typhon, and by the hawk power and rule. When Typhon gains power by force, he is often stirred again, simultaneously confused by his own evil and causing confusion himself. That's why, when sacrificing on the seventh day of Tybi, which they call "Isis's arrival from Phoenicia," they stamp a bound hippopotamus on their sacred cakes. In Apollinopolis it is a custom for absolutely everyone to eat crocodile.⁷²

There is certainly a mishmash of elements, but core components of the Edfu imagery reappear in due order here in Plutarch.⁷³ Plutarch clearly has in mind the same festival, providing the same exact date (7th Tybi) as the one given in the Egyptian-language Edfu text. The scene of hawk fighting serpent, and the explanation provided for it, matches the Edfu passage quoted above. Even more definitively, Plutarch locates crocodile-eating specifically at Edfu (Apollinopolis in Greek). This all speaks to a remarkable translation of the Edfu narrative for a Greek audience, one that paves the way for the wider cosmological significance that Plutarch attaches to the Seth/Horus myth and its animal symbolisms. To be sure, Manetho is not named by Plutarch as his source for this specific Edfu-adjacent narrative. If my goal were the reconstruction of Manetho's work specifically, rather than of *Aegyptiaca* generally, this evidence would be a bridge too far.⁷⁴ But the alignment of the two passages draws an *Aegyptiaca*-sized outline that sits between the original Edfu material and Plutarch's representation of it.⁷⁵ Even if it is debatable which author of *Aegyptiaca* is the source for this specific bit of information, it had to be one of them—not least because whoever is presenting Edfu material in Greek for a Greek and Roman audience is, by that very fact, an author of *Aegyptiaca* in the way I am defining that term.

A model of cultural translation creates space for this incorporation of Edfu material into Plutarch's text in ways that cultural representation cannot. Important dynamics of divine transformation into animals canonized in Ptolemaic-Egyptian cult sites were available to Greek and Roman authors. That fact speaks to the authors

72. *DIO* 50, 371c–d: ἐν Ἐρμοῦ πόλει δὲ Τυφῶνος ἄγαλμα δεικνύουσιν ἵππον ποτάμιον, ἐφ' οὗ βέβηκεν ἰέραξ ὅφει μαχόμενος. . . .

73. Kindt (2021b, 135) touches on this passage of the *DIO*, but does not position it against the Edfu material or the Seth-Horus cycle.

74. Griffiths (1970, 490–91) notes the Edfu material and its relevance for this passage in Plutarch, but underlines the incongruities separating the specific imagery in Edfu and in Plutarch.

75. Despite Plutarch's own travel to Egypt, I find it more likely (with Griffiths 1970, 98) that Plutarch depended on literary sources (rather than autopsy) for the *DIO*'s animal and hieroglyphic material.

of Aegyptiaca who not only laid out the transformations between god and animal, but also underlined the ideological significance which those transformations—especially Seth’s metamorphosis into wild and threatening animals—facilitated. Plutarch reads into a falcon/hippopotamus fight a philosophical narrative of order’s victory over disorder. It is only because of authors of Aegyptiaca that he was able to do so. There are certainly limits to source criticism; there is more we do not know than there is that we do know. The specific animal imagery on display in Edfu does not find a perfect match in Plutarch’s rendition. But that ambiguity notwithstanding, it is clear that the Egyptian source Plutarch drew on for this Edfu anecdote translated this material. So too is it clear that Edfu and its Egyptian exegete, no less than Plutarch, were the authors of the deeper systems of significance which are often taken as Plutarch’s Platonist projections. Long before Plutarch, Seth/Typhon’s identification with pigs, crocodiles, and hippopotamuses already was symbolically significant. Put another way, it is not just important to see that Manetho and other Egyptians presented animals that were not objects of worship. It is also essential to appreciate that they talked about those animals as part of a larger mythic-cum-historical narrative through which the animal/divine pairing became meaningful. Scholarly discussions of Rome’s interest in Egypt’s animals that abstract said animals from these original webs of significance cannot but conclude that animal identifications were either meaningless or an entirely Greek projection.

APULEIUS AND THE EXODUS: MAKING AN ASS OF SETH

The translation of the Seth/hippo pairing is appealing largely because of its relatively direct path from Edfu, through Aegyptiaca, to Plutarch. The paths of translation around the Seth/ass pairing are more wending, but no less productive. Like the hippo’s royal-ideological significance, Seth’s asinine associations also show how animals and the divine were bound up in other essential areas that defined Aegyptiaca—in the ass’s case the Exodus story and imperial philosophy. As in the Temple of Horus at Edfu and its representation of Seth’s metamorphoses into hippopotamuses and crocodiles, depictions of sacrificed asses in the Temple of Dendera (fig. 5) provide a point of origin for the Seth/ass pair’s translation from Egyptian-language evidence, through Aegyptiaca, to Greek and Roman literature.⁷⁶ The Seth animal builds on one of this chapter’s themes while introducing a new one. Apuleius’s *Metamorphoses* is a text that, like Plutarch’s *DIO*, seeks to underline the felicity of the Seth/Typhon-ass pairing for a philosophical reading of the Osiris myth. But unlike the hippopotamus imagery, the pairing of Seth and

76. The first and second registers of the east wall of the first east Osiris chapel (published by Cauville 1997, 51–54) shows ritual sacrifice of a Seth-identified ass and bull, an event known to Plutarch (see n48, above) through authors of Aegyptiaca (likely Manetho).

ass shows how animals became an important part of the intellectual antagonism between Jewish and Egyptian authors.

Seth's asinine pairing returns to a foundation of Aegyptiaca, a genre defined in large part by the vociferous criticism it receives in Josephus.⁷⁷ Seth, as a ritually hated god eventually associated with foreigners, was particularly important within debates between Egyptian and Jewish authors. Both groups tried to disparage the other's religious practices and assimilate themselves to Greek and Roman norms. Seth was one among many ropes through which the Jewish/Egyptian historiographic tug-of-war was contested. Since Manetho, Egyptians forged a connection between the Exodus story and the Hyksos kings of the Fifteenth Dynasty.⁷⁸ The Hyksos, Levantine "rulers of the mountains" who controlled the Delta during the Second Intermediate Period, were retroactively identified as Jews who migrated into and were then expelled from Egypt. Seth was worshipped by the Hyksos at his cult site (and their capital) Avaris due to his easy identification with the Canaanite god Baal.⁷⁹ As a result, Seth entered into the debates about the Exodus that form such an important thread in Aegyptiaca. Apion's discussion of Jewish history and religion, at least as it is presented in the thoroughgoing takedown offered by Josephus in the *Against Apion*, leveraged Seth's asinine associations to disparage Judaism. According to Apion, the Temple of Jerusalem included a gilded ass's head: "For Apion presumed to publish that Jews had placed the head of an ass in this shrine, and that they cherished it and deemed it worthy of great religious devotion; and he maintains that this had been disclosed when Antiochus Epiphanes pillaged the temple and the head was discovered, fashioned from gold and worth a lot of money."⁸⁰ The specific interest in the ass has clear resonances with Seth, as Bezalel Bar-Kochva has explained.⁸¹ As far as one can reasonably surmise, Apion concatenated Seth, the Seth-animal-turned-ass, the Hyksos, and Jews. Apion bends this chain of association to his own purposes. Hyksos support of Seth turns into Jewish worship of an ass-headed god.

Plutarch offers another vantage on the connection between Seth and the Exodus debates. In a passage on Seth/Typhon's flight from his battle with Horus, Plutarch mentions a version of the myth in which Seth/Typhon "begat Hierosolymus and Judaeus," but concludes that the Egyptian propagators of this version of the

77. I use "foundation" only in reference to the central role of Josephus in Jacoby's consolidation of authors of Aegyptiaca, as I discuss in the Introduction.

78. For Manetho's interest in and development of the Hyksos narrative, see Moyer (2011, 118–25) and Dillery (2015, 315–42).

79. For the identification of Seth with Baal, see the material remains discussed by Bietak (1996, 36–48) and the historical overview provided by te Velde (1977, 120–29).

80. Joseph. *Ap.* 2.79 = *BNJ* 616 F 4h: in hoc enim sacrario Apion praesumpsit edicere asini caput collocasse Judaeos, et eum colere ac dignum facere tanta religione, et hoc affirmat fuisse depalatum, dum Antiochus Epiphanes expoliasset templum et illud caput inventum ex auro compositum multis pecuniis dignum.

81. Bar-Kochva (2010, 244).

myth “are manifestly, as the very names show, attempting to drag Jewish traditions into the legend.”⁸² When viewed alongside the condemnation of Jewish donkey-icons, this anecdote from Plutarch points to a sustained tradition that triangulated Judaism, the Seth/Horus conflict, and religious animals. Seth animals thus played an important role in debates about Judaism’s and Egyptian religion’s proximity to or distance from Greco-Roman norms.

This donkey head is certainly a looser translation of Seth’s animal connections than Plutarch’s rendition of the Edfu myth. Apion’s reference to ass icons in the Temple of Jerusalem continues the same dynamics of looseness and creativity that have distinguished his from Manetho’s cultural authority. This ass icon datum does not have as exalted a pharaonic pedigree as royal hippopotamus hunts. But it does similar work, showing how *topoi* that are analyzed independently in their Roman reception were interconnected in the original texts in which they appeared.

Any discussion of the philosophical significance of donkeys demands mention of Apuleius. His *Metamorphoses* hinges on the transformation of the bon vivant Lucius into an ass. What is otherwise a picaresque adventure story that catalogues Lucius’s asinine travails is, famously, reframed by its conclusion. Early in Book 11, Lucius learns in a dream that the Egyptian goddess Isis, an object of cult worship across the Mediterranean, will be the instrument of his salvation. She instructs him to meet one of her priests, who will offer Lucius the roses he needs to change back to a human. After his transformation back to human form, Lucius becomes an Isis devotee in a succession of initiations whose repetitiveness has become fodder in the debate about the tone of Book 11.⁸³ It is not my purpose here to wade into that debate.⁸⁴ No matter the tone, Lucius’s turn to the cult of Isis injects an Egyptian mythological framing that complements the overarching philosophical resonances of Lucius’s journey.⁸⁵

82. *DIO* 31, 363c–d: οἱ δὲ λέγοντες ἐκ τῆς μάχης ἐπ’ ὄνου τῷ Τυφῶνι τὴν φυγὴν ἐπὶ τὰς ἡμέρας γενέσθαι καὶ σωθέντα γεννῆσαι παῖδας Ἰεροσόλυμον καὶ Ἰουδαῖον, αὐτόθεν εἰσι κατὰ δῆλοι τὰ Ἰουδαϊκὰ παρέλκοντες εἰς τὸν μῦθον.

83. Winkler (1985, 215–47), van Mal-Maeder (1997, 105–10), and Harrison (2000, 238–52) all point to some kind of comic note in these initiations, even as they differ over the serious message that might exist together with that comedy. Shumate (1996) emphasizes the “conversion” motif, and Finkelpearl (2004) sees the later initiations as an “epilogue.” Mazurek (2022, 41–45) teases out the history of Isiac initiation from *Met.* 11 and epigraphic evidence.

84. The tone of Book 11 has long been the subject of disagreement (Tilg 2014, ch. 5, provides valuable background). Winkler (1985) first championed a serio-comic reading; Schlam (1992) and Egelhaaf-Gaiser (2012) have followed in this vein. Harrison (2000, 2012) underlines Book 11’s tonal similarity to the more comic Books 1–10; Sandy (1978) and Graverini (2012a, 2012b) argue for a shift toward philosophical sincerity. More recently, an “aporetic” approach has been defended by myself (Kelting 2021, 129) and others (Benson 2019, 226–33).

85. O’Brien (2002), Graverini (2012a), and Fletcher (2014) offer Platonic readings of the *Metamorphoses* that show how the turn to Isis continues the themes which they (“discourse,” the high/low genre dynamics, and impersonation respectively) suggest connect the *Met.* to Apuleius’s own Platonism.

Instead, I want to build on those like Jack Winkler who have emphasized the importance of the Seth/ass pairing to the themes developed in Book 11 of the *Metamorphoses*.⁸⁶ The turn to Isis in Book 11 reorients the significance that readers are meant to attach to Lucius's metamorphosis into a donkey. Scholars too have had to decide how to balance the Egyptian mythological framing of Lucius's time as an ass with the Platonic resonances that animate the earlier books.⁸⁷ That Egyptian turn is already hinted at in the prologue's mention of an Egyptian reed pen.⁸⁸ As a result, an audience familiar with Lucius's eventual initiation into the cult of Isis reads Lucius's time as an ass through the prism of the Osiris myth and the role of donkeys therein.

Apuleius very intentionally clues readers into the connection between Lucius's donkey exterior and the Seth/ass pairing. Isis's instructions to Lucius during his dream reference the mythological background that connects his current asinine form with her inveterate enemy Seth: "Immediately divest yourself of the hide of that most terrible beast, long loathsome to me."⁸⁹ It is unsurprising, but still important, that a North African author like Apuleius is aware of the Seth/ass pairing. Apuleius shows the potential for the metamorphosis narratives one sees in the Temple of Horus at Edfu to enter into and enrich Greco-Roman metamorphosis literature.⁹⁰ It is typical of Apuleius that this critical evidence for the Roman reception of the Seth/ass pair is plunked into a brief, one-sentence allusion that does not actually mention the name Seth. Book 11 is challenging and enriching in equal measure precisely because Apuleius winkingly buries essential mythological framing in character speech that is all too easy to miss. As a final tag, the specific way that Apuleius has Isis refer to the Seth/ass pairing emphasizes the importance of ritual hatred as an object of cultural translation, a point that I have tried to underline throughout this chapter. Lucius's Sethian associations are put into the mouth of Isis precisely because, in her eyes, Lucius's asinine form makes him loathsome and in need of redemption.

CONCLUSION: ANIMALS AS A DIVINE SYMBOLISM

The Seth animal's entrance into Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* was one among several paths of translation that Egypt's animals took. I have chosen to prioritize Seth

86. Winkler (1985, 292–321), who cites the Seth/ass pairing as part of an argument about the "golden ass" title.

87. DeFilippo (1990) does a good job presenting those connections.

88. This circularity has long been an object of scholarly attention, not least in Kahane and Laird (2001).

89. *Met.* 11.6.2: pessimae mihiq; detestabilis iam dudum beluae istius corio te protinus exue. Text from Zimmerman (2012). See Griffiths (1975, 162) for the Seth reference.

90. In addition to Seth's hippopotamus transformations, the Edfu inscription also narrates Seth's transformation into a donkey in Section E, per the division of Fairman (1935, 26–27) (Chassinat 1931, 222 l. 4 in the overall Edfu text).

animals in this chapter, but one could tell a similar story about animals connected with solar deities. In key cosmological texts like the Book of Gates and the Book of Hours, the nascent sun was identified with and represented as the scarab-god Khepri.⁹¹ Apion, the author of *Aegyptiaca* with whom I opened this book, had promoted the connection. To Pliny the Elder, Apion's explanation is as well-intentioned as it is unimpressive: "... the scarab beetle that rolls balls of dung. For this reason most of Egypt worships scarab-beetles among the gods, in Apion's elaborate interpretation, in which he gathers that the labor of the sun is similar to this animal's, to make excuses for the rites of his own people."⁹² Apion touts the direct connection of natural philosophy and animal to ward off the charges of misdirected worship that the lowly scarab beetle invited. Apion is briefly, but obviously, attempting to redirect attention to the network of significance that explained why a scarab beetle was a felicitous way to represent the sun. It is a different application of the same impulse that led Manetho to translate the network of meanings that clustered around Seth's animals.

While Pliny appreciates the excusatory intent of Apion's *curiosa interpretatio* of scarabs, he ultimately dismisses it as a coerced defense of his countrymen's behavior. Apion's explanation of the scarab points to a larger backdrop against which Roman criticisms of Egypt's sacred animals should be read. This holds particularly true for the biting criticism of imperial authors like Lucan and Juvenal, whose denunciation of Egyptian animal worship is so pronounced.⁹³ Barbarizing Egypt's animals was, in an interconnected imperial world, reactionary rather than unmarked. That is as true under Hadrian as it is under Nero or Domitian or Augustus. The popularity of *Aegyptiaca* is what makes Lucan's epic and Juvenal's satires so productively unrepresentative of, and deliberately inimical to, the times in which they were written. Lucan and Juvenal are a nice contrast to Plutarch's and Apuleius's enthusiastic reception of these explanations. Even when translations of sacred animals' significance were rejected (as in Pliny) rather than endorsed (in Plutarch and Apuleius), the fact of translation remains.


I have prioritized the networks of meaning where the significance of Seth's connections to hippos or asses or crocodiles resided in Egyptian culture. Those webs of significance were the focus of authors of *Aegyptiaca*, who translated the cultural practices, cult geography, and annalistic history that surrounded Seth's animal associations. That concept of "network of meaning" or "web of significance" brings one onto the doorstep of "symbol," "enigma," "allegory," and other hermeneutics of the Greek philosophical and literary-critical tradition, whose

91. *LdÄ* 1.934–40 and Dunand and Zivie-Coche (2004, 189).

92. Plin. *HN* 30.99 = *BNJ* 616 F 19: scarabaeum, qui pilas volvit. propter hunc Aegypti magna pars scarabaeos inter numina colit, curiosa Apionis interpretatione, qua colligat solis operum similitudinem huic animali esse, ad excusandos gentis suae ritus.

93. I discuss both authors in chapter 3. As an example, Geue (2017, 263) suggests that Juvenal's tale about Egypt's barbarism is "the type of thing on every Hadrianic subject's lips."

presence in Aegyptiaca is the focus of the next section.⁹⁴ That contiguity matters. It is not entirely surprising that when Egypt's animal-shaped gods were mentioned in Greek and Roman philosophical literature, they were discussed in a language of symbol or enigma that had long been used to push past the superficially strange to access underlying meaning.

The Seth animal did not just connote Seth. It also, literally, denoted him in the hieroglyphic script. As the Edfu text quoted above suggests, the Egyptian language is far and away the most obvious piece in the network of association that constituted Egypt's animal symbolisms. Animals were multifaceted, troubling the line that divides language and image. Khepri, as a scarab beetle connected to the sun, was a mechanic of solar iconography reflected in widespread solar-scarab imagery.⁹⁵ But the thread connecting sun and scarab runs through language. To see a scarab is to read the Egyptian verb  *kheper*, meaning "to come into existence" or "to be born." The scarab, as hieroglyphic sign, signified a core cosmological concept, the "birth" (*kheper*) of the sun each morning. That is the necessary framework through which Apion's identification of the scarab with the sun makes sense. The denotative function of hieroglyphic characters spun the thread connecting animals with the divine. Animal-shaped gods will thus give way to animal-shaped words for animal-shaped gods, to which I turn in the next chapter. It is through this symbolic function of hieroglyphic characters that I will respond to the questions of cultural legitimacy that have hounded latter-day authors of Aegyptiaca.

94. See the intellectual history of the symbol provided by Struck (2004).

95. For example, the winged scarab amulets through which the deceased identified herself with the sun's rebirth, per Andrews (1994, 58).