

The Wolf and the Lion: Synesius' Egyptian Sources

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ONE OF THE FEW established facts of Synesius' early career is that he pursued the higher education available at Alexandria. The lifelong friendships he formed there suggest the importance this period always retained for him. Less attractively, perhaps, so does the intellectual smugness displayed in collegiate sniffs at rival Athens (*Ep.* 56[54].136) or in apt interpolations of the classics he read aloud to friends (*Dion* 62A–D).¹ It is no surprise that, as Cyrene's ambassador to the court of Arcadius,² Synesius sought an intellectual approach to his city's practical advantage. He wooed one official, Paeonius, with the gift of a silver astrolabe. The gift came wrapped in flattery for Paeonius' taste for erudition, with a hint that it should work for the advantage of cities.³ The tactic had some success, he later reported (*Ep.* 154), but not enough; he was obliged to remain in Constantinople seeking other support. The *De regno* reflects his frustration at this period with the luxurious and unresponsive court. More usefully, it also repeated the appeal he had made to Paeonius before a wider audience.⁴ This application evidently had the desired effect, for from Aurelian, who succeeded Eutropius' appointee Eutychian as praetorian prefect and led the tribunal that condemned the eunuch himself to

¹ References and texts follow those of N. Terzaghi, ed., *Synesii Cyrenensis hymni* (Rome 1939) and *Opuscula* (Rome 1944); A. Garzya, ed., *Synesii Cyrenensis epistolae* (Rome 1979, followed by the standard numeration when his diverges).

² On the embassy see T. D. Barnes, "Synesius in Constantinople," *GRBS* 27 (1986) 93–112; Alan Cameron, "Earthquake 400," *Chiron* 17 (1987) 332–50; Alan Cameron, J. Long, and L. Sherry, *Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius: Synesius' de Providentia* (forthcoming).

³ *Paeon.* 309B–C; cf. the introduction to a kindred request years later, *Ep.* 73 (p.130 Garzya).

⁴ As Barnes shows (*supra* n.2), the *De regno* was meant for a sympathetic private audience and cannot have been delivered as a real *logos stephanotikos*; but whatever the ostensible form of Synesius' mission, he himself always referred it to Cyrene's interest: *Hymn.* 3(1).429–504; *De insom.* 148c; *Ep.* 154 (p.277.2–5). The *De regno* certainly reflects Eutropius' predominance (15B, cf. Barnes 108 and n.48). *Regn.* 7B–C and 15B strikingly recall *Paeon.* 309B–C with their interplay of compounds of *φρήν* and *νοῦς*, *ισχύς*, and other expressions of capacity; and *Regn.* 2C–D explicitly couples Cyrene and philosophy in general terms.

death,⁵ Synesius received his city's tax relief (*Prov.* 113B). Unfortunately, the general Gainas could not tolerate Aurelian's ascendancy either, and soon had him exiled.⁶ Synesius' benefits were cancelled (*Prov.* 114B). He returned to his wait for better developments, again enlivening it with pungent satire of current affairs.

His new production, *Egyptians* or *On Providence*, represents figures and events of court politics in the guise of the Egyptian myth of Osiris and Typhos. Synesius' benefactor Aurelian appears as Osiris;⁷ Typhos is Aurelian's brother Caesarius, who succeeded him as praetorian prefect.⁸ Developed very loosely from the myth as the specific agent of Typhos' conspiracy against Osiris, the Scythian commander of barbarian mercenaries in the Egyptian army represents Gainas. He is brought into the plot by his wife and by Typhos', "a meddling troublemaker" (105c);⁹ they take the rôle of Aso, Typhos' one female conspirator in the Egyptian myth. Eutropius is by-passed completely. Synesius develops the characters of his hero and villain through narrative of their childhoods and junior careers¹⁰ but his plot truly begins with Osiris/Aurelian's election to the "kingship," the praetorian prefecture. The kingdom is at once filled with virtue, prosperity, and happiness. These novel conditions rouse the forces of evil, impelling Typhos to a coup, and everything is reversed. But amidst despair, a god reveals hopeful omens of Typhos' downfall to an upright stranger in the kingdom, Synesius' double (115B):

⁵ Philost. *HE* 11.6 (pp.136f Bidez). Eutropius had many enemies, and probably the several bolts of Gainas, Tribigild, Eudoxia, Aurelian, and their parties all combined to bring him down: Zos. 5.17f; Eunap. fr.70 Müller (=65.3 Blockley); Soc. *HE* 6.5; Soz. *HE* 8.7.3; Claud. *Eutr.* 2 praef. 28, 2.174–80, 189–92; Chrys. *Hom. in Eutr.*, *Hom. de capt. Eutr.* 1; *Cod.Theod.* 9.40.17; cf. recently G. Albert, *Goten in Konstantinopel* (Paderborn 1984) 43f.

⁶ Soc. 6.6, Soz. 8.4.5, Zos. 5.18.

⁷ Discerned by J. G. Krabinger, *Synesios des Kyrenaers Aegyptische Erzählungen über die Vorsehung* (Sulzbach 1835) 126–28 (a useful translation and commentary still), and demonstrated at length by O. Seeck, *Philologus* 52 (1894) 442–83.

⁸ For the identification of Typhos see now Barnes (*supra* n.2) 97–99, who summarizes the problem and refers to a forthcoming paper of Alan Cameron ("Barbarians and Politics at the Court of Arcadius," in *Byzantium and the Barbarians in Late Antiquity*, and the introduction to Cameron *et al.* (*supra* n.2)). In view of Synesius' elaborate digression on the distribution of good and evil within a family (*Prov.* 125D–127A), there seems no reason to doubt that Aurelian and Caesarius were brothers, not merely cast into that rôle for the sake of the myth. The tendentious but still factual preface calls them simply "the sons of Taurus" (88A).

⁹ Caesarius' wife did in fact enjoy some prominence and close friendship with a deaconess of the Macedonian heresy who lived just outside Constantinople: Soz. *HE* 9.2.

¹⁰ A technique of contemporary panegyric: cf. D. A. Russell and N. G. Wilson, *Menander Rhetor* (Oxford 1981) ad 371.17–372.2.

And he waited, now understanding what was to happen regarding Osiris in the near future, as well as in the years yet to come, when Osiris' son Horus would decide to select the wolf rather than the lion for his ally. The identity of the wolf is a matter of sacred discourse which it would be irreverent to expound, even in the form of a myth.

This riddling prediction, which is the subject of this paper, stands as the conclusion of Book 1, the whole of the work as Synesius had originally conceived it. Typhos/Caesarius still reigned supreme, and Osiris/Aurelian was still in exile. The god's prediction that the "Giants—by this he meant the aliens—[would] soon be driven out, themselves their own Nemeses" (114D) suggests that by the time Synesius finished writing, Gainas' troops had already departed the city, leaving Gothic civilians to be slaughtered as they took refuge in a church in the ensuing riot;¹¹ but it was not yet possible for Synesius to associate the massacre with any improvement in Aurelian's fortunes. Instead, he looked forward to the next stage of the myth, when Osiris' son Horus would avenge his father. Aurelian did in fact have a son, Taurus, whom in a letter Synesius once called "the good hope of the Romans" (*Ep.* 31, p.46.10); but a son's vengeance has no natural analogue in late Roman court politics. When Synesius wrote Book 1, he cannot have hoped for anything more than that Caesarius in his turn would fall from power and that his successor would resume Aurelian's policies, particularly in regard to Cyrene. Significantly, he does not suggest even the possibility that Aurelian himself might be restored.

Shortly afterward, however, Aurelian and his party did return from exile. They encouraged Synesius "to continue the tale on their better fortunes" (*Prov.* 88B). Synesius complied, and when he came to publish the two parts together, he added a preface to the whole that explained their disjunction. The original story, "up through the riddle of the wolf," as he says (88A), is artistically unified and complete; but although the same characters pass over into the continuation, the return of Osiris/Aurelian utterly ruptures the premises of the myth.

The structural notice in the preface also calls attention to the riddle itself. Synesius was proud of it, his final embellishment on a tale whose "riddling likeness" (128B) to recent events was patent. He did not want it overshadowed by the more dramatic new climax of the massacre. Modern scholars have heeded Synesius' pointer, though more to decode the riddle than to admire its technique, as Synesius sought. The

¹¹ Cf. Soc. 6.6; Soz. 8.4.15–17; Zos. 5.19; Th. Mommsen, ed., *Chron.min.* II (=MGH AA XI) 66.22–26; Philost. *HE* 11.8. Synesius gives his version in Book 2, his continuation (*Prov.* 117D–121B).

solution now generally favored was proposed in 1913 by Georg Grützmacher.¹² Assuming that—like the principals in the tale—the beasts had definite historical referents, he identified the lion as the Goths and the wolf as the Huns. He adduced in support Zosimus' statement (5.22) that by killing the Goth Gainas and sending his head to Arcadius, the Hunnic king Uldin showed himself ready to oblige the Eastern Empire. In 1946 Christian Lacombrade endeavored to substantiate Grützmacher's conjecture.¹³ The Unnigardae (whose military aid Synesius was to applaud years later, as a bishop [*Ep.* 78]) he identified as Huns.¹⁴ He added that the Huns' importance in the Empire was increasing even before Synesius' episcopate: Rufinus had kept a personal guard of Huns, and in 405–406 the Huns had settled just across the Danube. Lacombrade suggested that Synesius recognized a regime's need for tangible military support and, once the Goths had been expelled, could look for it to no one other than the Huns. In his view, the riddle itself relies on physical resemblances: the Goths, like lions, were tall and blond, in contrast to the short, dark, shifty-eyed Huns. Lacombrade concluded by declaring the riddle singularly jejune but consonant with the preciousness of contemporary literary taste and with the defeated faction's need for concealment.

But although the physical resemblances may be a sufficiently banal key to the riddle Synesius presents, they hardly seem a compelling reason for Synesius to select those two particular beasts when he devised it. Moreover, although Gainas was indeed killed by Huns, he only encountered them when he was already in flight beyond the Roman frontiers. He and his Goths had already been defeated by the Roman army under the command of another Goth, Fravittas.¹⁵ Nor did Gainas' defeat by Uldin affect the positions of either Aurelianus or Caesarius.

Still more seriously, both Grützmacher and Lacombrade disre-

¹² *Synesius von Kyrene* (Leipzig 1913 [hereafter 'Grützmacher']) 58. The identification (either simply as Grützmacher proposed it or as developed by Lacombrade [see n.13 *infra*]) is reported by, for example, A. Fitzgerald, *The Essays and Hymns of Synesius of Cyrene* II (London 1930) 432; E. Demougeot, *De l'unité à la division de l'empire romain* (Paris 1951) 255 n.114; S. Nicolosi, *Il 'De Providentia' di Sinesio di Cirene* (Padua 1959) 205; O. J. MAENCHEN-HELFFEN, *The World of the Huns* (Berkeley 1973 [hereafter 'Maenchen-Helfen']) 8; R. Lizzi, *RendNap* 56 (1981) 49–62 and n.31; W. Liebeschuetz, *Actes du VII^e Congrès de la F.I.E.C.* II (Budapest 1983) 39–46 n.14; Albert (*supra* n.5) 139 n.230; Barnes (*supra* n.2) 94f n.6.

¹³ *REA* 48 (1946) 260–66.

¹⁴ Maenchen-Helfen (255) concurs tentatively, comparing the Hunnic forces later used by Belisarius; but he rejects Lacombrade's onomastic speculations.

¹⁵ Zos. 5.20f, Eunap. fr.82 Müller (=69.4 Blockley), Philost. 11.8, Soc. 6.6, Soz. 8.4.19f, Joh. Ant. fr.190 (*FHG* IV 611B), *Chron.min.* II 66.22–27.

garded Synesius' explicit statement in the preface that he composed the first part, including the "riddle of the wolf," while Aurelian and his party were still in exile. He continued the story after their return during what he called Osiris' "eponymous year" (*Prov.* 124A), Aurelian's consular year of 400. But Uldin killed Gainas in late December of that year, and his messengers did not reach Constantinople with the head until 3 January 401.¹⁶ Synesius himself had hastily departed the city while Aurelian was still consul (*Ep.* 61), by mid-November at the very latest.¹⁷ He would need to have been genuinely prophetic to have composed the riddle with Uldin in mind.

Even a more general reference to the Huns seems impossible. Their other activity to date showed their hostility to the Romans most vividly, and Synesius' own strident, consistent, and comprehensive xenophobia would have blinded him first of all his contemporaries to any contrary possibilities.¹⁸ Theodosius had been able to use Huns as well as other barbarian mercenaries against Maximus in 388¹⁹ and against Eugenius in 394;²⁰ Rufinus seems to have favored the Huns particularly.²¹ But even before his assassination in 395, large hordes of Huns had begun to pillage terrifyingly in the East.²² They were also among the raiders whose defeat won Eutropius the consulate for 399 despite his servile origins.²³ Synesius himself may have been thinking of the Huns when he charged the court with indolently suffering tribe after tribe of barbarians to cross into the Empire and demand an indemnity for not breaking the peace.²⁴ In any case, the entire *De*

¹⁶ O. Seeck, *Geschichte des Untergangs der antiken Welt* (Berlin 1913) V 570 ad 325.25, tampers least with the sources to derive a feasible chronology; alternatives would have to date the arrival of Gainas' head in Constantinople even later: cf. *Chron.min.* II 66.21–30, Zos. 5.22, Philost. 11.8; Maenchen-Helfen 59.

¹⁷ On the crucial (transmitted) reading *ὑπατον* and the dates of *mare clausum* limiting Synesius' departure, see Cameron, "Earthquake 400" (*supra* n.2).

¹⁸ For a broader survey of Hunnic activity and its Roman reporters in the late fourth century see Maenchen-Helfen 1–72.

¹⁹ As a panegyrist, Pacatus naturally emphasizes the marvel of Rome's old enemies serving under her banners (*Paneg.Lat.* 2[12].32.4; cf. 11.4).

²⁰ Joh. Ant. fr.187 (*FHG* IV 609B=Eunap. fr.60 Blockley).

²¹ His Hunnic bodyguard: Claud. *Ruf.* 2.75–77, *Chron.min.* I (=MGH AA IX) 650.34; association with pro-barbarian policy of Theodosius: Claud. *Stil.* 1.106–15; broader accusations of treachery: Claud. *Ruf.* 1.319–22, 2.268–71, Soc. 6.1, Soz. 8.1.2; cf. E. Demougeot, *AnnPhilHist* 10 (1950) 185–91; Maenchen-Helfen 48–51.

²² Claud. *Ruf.* 1.306–14, 2.1–85, *Eutr.* 2.569–75; Philost. 11.8; Socr. 6.1; Soz 8.1.2; Hieron. *Epp.* 60.16, 77.8; Maenchen-Helfen 51–59.

²³ Claud. *Eutr.* 2 praef. 55, 2.367, 572–74, cf. 1.234–86; G. Albert, *Chiron* 9 (1979) 621–45.

²⁴ *Regn.* 17A; so E. A. Thompson, *A History of Attila and the Huns* (Oxford 1948) 32 n.4, and C. Lacombrade, *Le discours sur la royauté* (Paris 1951) 54f. *Μασσαγέρη* and falsification of countenance would be the key references: cf. Maenchen-Helfen 3–7, 358–67.

regno decries impartially all barbarian encroachments.²⁵ It urges that Romans fight for the Empire themselves, and not rely on barbarian arms (*Regn.* 21D–26B). No evidence whatever suggests that Synesius modified his opinions while he was in Constantinople, or that he made any exception for the Huns. *Letter* 95 attests that even on the verge of his episcopate he still connected the presence of foreign mercenaries in the army with abusive practices.²⁶ Only subsequently did the prowess of the Unnigardae soften him, and even then he stressed the need for a general to control them (*Catas.* 1.306B, 2.300C–D). In short, the Huns cannot be the wolf of the riddle. The case for regarding the lion as the Goths is correspondingly weakened.

Grützmacher's solution supplanted others no more adequate. H. Druon, on consultation with the Egyptologist J. Maspéro, in 1878 identified the lion as a Typhonian beast and the wolf as the jackal-god Anubis, Horus' ally against Typhos.²⁷ But he did not explain how such an allusion might have functioned in Synesius' tale nor, more tellingly, where Synesius could have learned his information. The one hieroglyph that enters into the *De providentia* is a piece of arcane symbolism, not a form of writing that might be read for information in the

²⁵ Peter Heather has very kindly shown me the appendix to his unpublished dissertation in which he argues (convincing Barnes [*supra* n.2] 108 n.48) that a major section of the *De regno* (21C–26B) refers specifically to the Goths led by Alaric. Nevertheless, the very passage in which these allusions are clearest (*Regn.* 25C–D) is paraphrased by Synesius himself against Gainas' Goths at *Prov.* 118A–B (*n.b.* his reuse of *ἰκέτης/ἰκετεία, πολιτείας ἀξιοῦν, γερῶν μεταδίδοναι*), indicating that Synesius at least tended to see all barbarians as one. He says as much at *Regn.* 17A: they only change their names and appearances artificially to seem to be a new threat. Thus if Synesius does allude to the Huns specifically here, they serve as a current example of the general rule. They are also identified with Herodotus' Scythians suffering from "a feminine malady" (*Regn.* 25A; *Hdt.* 1.105); such assimilations are standard in late-Greek references to contemporary, wholly unrelated barbarian groups: Maenchen-Helfen 5–9. Similarly, for example, the claim that they are "always in flight from their home" is a generic element of some of Ammianus' ethnologies (Saracens, 14.4.4; Huns, 31.2.10).

²⁶ The letter is traditionally associated with Synesius' own embassy: *e.g.* M. le Nain de Tillemont, *Mémoires pour servir à l'histoire ecclésiastique des six premiers siècles XII* (Paris 1707) 509; Grützmacher 116; Lacombrade (*supra* n.24) 13–15, and *Synésios de Cyrène* (Paris 1951) 73f; Lizzi (*supra* n.12) 54. W. Liebeschuetz (*Byzantion* 55 [1985] 146–64) argues persuasively for referring it to the period when Synesius was trying to avoid consecration as bishop—thus either 406/7 or 410/11 (see Lacombrade, *Synésios* 209–12; *cf.* T. D. Barnes, "When Did Synesius Become Bishop of Ptolemais?" *GRBS* 27 [1986] 325–29; W. Liebeschuetz, "Why Did Synesius Become Bishop of Ptolemais?" *Byzantion* 56 [1986] 180–95). Liebeschuetz's suggestions in the earlier article as to the nature of these abuses are attractive, but Synesius' language is too vague to pinpoint it.

²⁷ *Oeuvres de Synésios* (Paris 1878) 267n.

ordinary way.²⁸ Synesius can have turned for Egyptian information only to sources written in Greek.

Johann Georg Krabinger recognized as early as 1835 that the wolf reflects a tradition reported by Diodorus Siculus (1.88.6): to aid Horus in the final struggle against Typhos, Osiris returned from the dead “likened in appearance to a wolf.”²⁹ But he did not fit this fact into the context of Synesius’ fable. Grützmacher was left to infer that Krabinger took the wolf simply as a reference to Aurelian, and this, as he said (58), makes no sense.

But Synesius’ handling of his Greek literary sources for Egyptian traditions reveals how he meant the riddle to be approached. Intellectual peacock that he was, he did not let all the relevant details stand discreetly in the background. Rather, he ornamented his account with conspicuous quotations, new combinations, and elegant reformulations of his sources, pointing self-consciously to his own cleverness in deploying them. This literary display was for him an end in itself. For example, the father of Typhos and Osiris

was king and priest and sage. Egyptian tales say that he was also a god. For the Egyptians believe that thousands of gods were their kings one after another, before the land was ruled by men and the kings’ descent was traced, Peiromis from Peiromis (*Prov.* 93D).

This passage exactly reproduces the substance of Herodotus 2.144,³⁰ where he reports the priestly tradition that, before the human kings and high priests just discussed, the gods had ruled in Egypt. One of them was always supreme, and the last of them was Horus, the son of Osiris, who reigned after deposing Typhos. The somewhat tangential remark about human genealogy and the quotation “Peiromis from Peiromis” are taken from Herodotus’ immediately preceding discussion of the high priests. Synesius’ paraphrase transfers the detail rather to the human kings of Egypt, but he meant it to identify his source for anyone sufficiently well-read.

Osiris/Aurelian’s accession restates at length the multiple rôle Syne-

²⁸ *Prov.* 114C; on the obscurity or willful interpretation of hieroglyphs see Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 354E–355B, 363F, 371E, 374A, (cf. J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch. de Iside et Osiride* [Cardiff 1970] 102–10 and *ad locc.*); Soc. 5.17; Claud. *Ruf.* 1.145–53; Horapollon: T. Hopfner, *Fontes Hist. Rel. Aegypt.* II⁴ (Bonn 1924) 576, has fl. 379–395; J. Maspéro, *BIFAO* 11 (1914) 163–95, argues for identification with a different, mid- to late-fifth century Horapollon.

²⁹ *Supra* n.7: 311.

³⁰ Krabinger (*supra* n.7: 105) compares Diod. 1.90.3, a statement that the Egyptians honored their kings as gods—but for euhemeristic reasons rather than historical, as in Herodotus and Synesius.

sus here assigns to the king. Both passages reflect Plutarch's remark in the *De Iside et Osiride* that kings of Egypt were created from among the priests or the warriors, and that a warrior so appointed straightaway became a priest as well.³¹ A lengthy philosophical digression elaborates Osiris' priestly initiation. The election itself is essentially fabulous propaganda in Aurelian's interest, but details gleaned from Synesius' sources on Egypt provide a veneer of authenticity. Besides his Plutarchan basis, he reflects Herodotus in banning swineherds alone of native Egyptians from even the sight of the elections (94A). Herodotus (2.47) had reported that because of the uncleanness of their charges, "swineherds alone of all, native Egyptians though they be, enter none of the Egyptian temples." Synesius bans foreign mercenaries from the elections as well, thereby contaminating them with the swineherds' traditional pollution. Swineherds do not otherwise figure in his narrative; Synesius introduced them purely to validate his slur against the barbarians. Here, he develops his traditional detail tendentiously.

Herodotus (2.164) and Diodorus (1.73f) set forth more expressly the social hierarchy implicit in Plutarch's remark: the first citizens among the Egyptians were the priests, just below them the warriors, then the rest of the population. Synesius portrays this hierarchy both in terms of physical positions at the election and in relative power in it: the old king occupies the peak of the mountain, the priests stand in a circle about him, the soldiers surround them in a second circle, and the commoners fill the mountain's lower slopes; again, each priest's ballot has the force of several of the soldiers' single votes, and the commoners merely shout their approval (94B–95A). The general structure of the election as a ceremonial judgment on individuals by a specific segment of the society on behalf of the whole, and particularly the detail of the commoners' shout, reflects even more closely the funeral practices described by Diodorus at 1.72.4–6 and 1.92. Synesius' election shares with the latter passage also the detail that the recipient of a favorable judgment then crosses water in a *βᾶπις*.³² As Herodotus explained, this was the Egyptian name for a type of native cargo boat;³³

³¹ *De Is. et Os.* 354B, based in turn on Pl. *Plt.* 290D–E; see Griffiths, *CR* n.s. 15 (1965) 156f.

³² *Prov.* 96A. The funeral use of the *βᾶπις*, though not the funeral judgment, is recapitulated at Diod. 1.96.8. Griffiths, *Apuleius of Madauros. The Isis-Book (=EPRO 39 [Leiden 1975])* 31–47, discusses at length the connections of boats with Egyptian cult. He remarks that the regular identification of the deceased with Osiris naturally caused "purely Osirian and general funerary usage" to coalesce (36).

³³ *Hdt.* 2.96, where he describes its construction and handling. A. B. Lloyd's commentary, *Herodotus. Book II (=EPRO 43 [Leiden 1975–76]) ad loc.*, offers extensive Egyptological and nautical detail, with further references.

he reports its use in both religious and mundane contexts (e.g. 2.41.4–6, 179). Greek authors adopted the term, sometimes with and sometimes apparently without ethnological force.³⁴ Suggestively, however, the one other boat Synesius mentions in the *De providentia*, that in which the betrayed Osiris “crosses the river” to face the barbarian assembly, is designated a *ὄγκας* (111A). Synesius may have wished to retain *βάρης* as a technical term recalling the funeral practice.

With this one tenuous exception, Synesius never shows the close verbal ties with Diodorus that he does with Herodotus and Plutarch.³⁵ The information reflected in both is usually of a relatively general character, such as the social stratification already mentioned. The honor Synesius’ Osiris/Aurelian pays learned men (103B–C) corresponds with the honor Diodorus’ Osiris pays Hermes, the inventor of language and expression (Diod. 1.15.9–16.2)—fortuitously: the interested authorial motives behind these honors also corresponded. Hecataeus of Abdera, from whom Diodorus took the detail, like Synesius wanted similar favor from his patron, Ptolemy.³⁶ It is also noteworthy that the two funeral procedures Diodorus describes seem ultimately to reflect a single observance. A specific royal funeral rite could have developed out of the general one, or Diodorus may have garbled his sources. Synesius need have known only one version, either a royal funeral incorporating the *βάρης* or the general rite (Diod. 1.92), which he would then have decided independently to apply to his royal election. In any event, it seems likely that he knew Hecataeus’ *Aegyptiaca* rather than Diodorus’ *Bibliothēke*. Diodorus’ version stands between us and the lost work. Although the Egyptian framework of Synesius’ royal election appears to be functional and not ostentatious, it may be that some feature more surely conspicuous than the *βάρης* would, with a purely literary flourish, have advertised Synesius’ actual source to his contemporaries.³⁷

³⁴ E.g. Aesch. *Supp.* 836, 873; *Pers.* 553 (apparently the earliest reference; cf. Lloyd [*supra* n.33] *ad* Hdt. 2.60); cf. the citations in LSJ *s.v.*

³⁵ W. S. Crawford, *Synesius the Hellene* (London 1901) 528, could find only two echoes of Diodorus, neither in the *De providentia*, neither from the Egyptian book, and both questionable in any case; A. Hauck, *Welche griechischen Autoren der klassischen Zeit kennt und benützt Synesius von Cyrene?* (Mecklenburg 1911), did not include Diodorus.

³⁶ O. Murray, *JEA* 56 (1970) 141–71, esp. 161f; cf. Osiris/Aurelian’s other benefactions (*Prov.* 103D–104B), especially to Synesius’ cultured double in the tale (113B); and again, *Paeon.* 309B–C, *Ep.* 73 (p.130), and my discussion above.

³⁷ Murray (*supra* n.36: 158) believes that Diodorus took over both 1.72 and 92 (and 96) from Hecataeus, and that they were already a doublet there. Although A. Burton, *Diodorus Siculus. Book I* (=EPRO 29 [Leiden 1972]), rejects the traditional view that Diodorus simply plagiarized Hecataeus, she regrettably does not discuss the issue with regard to these passages.

He makes plain his dependence on Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*. In Plutarch's narrative, Osiris' first acts as king give the benefits of civilization to the formerly wild Egyptians (356A–B):

Later, he traversed and civilized all the world, with very little need of arms; he attached the majority to himself by charming them with persuasion and reason, along with all song and poetry.

Synesius stylizes this passage. Following his philosophical initiation into the kingship, Osiris/Aurelian

immediately strove to banish evils from the land, without making any use of force. Instead, he sacrificed to Persuasion and the Muses and the Graces, and brought all men willingly into accord with the law.³⁸

These particulars all help to authenticate Synesius' tendentious fable by tying it to the Egyptian traditions he and his audience knew. But he also intended them in themselves to arrest the attention of a cultivated audience. In this way he pressed the claim of his propagandistic tract to be a refined literary fiction. The claim was implicit in the original tale, but Synesius asserted it more baldly in the preface to the continued version. He cared that his artistry not be neglected.

Plutarch's *De Iside et Osiride*, antiquity's most complete narrative of the myth,³⁹ supplied the basic structure of Synesius' plot. Modifications in Osiris/Aurelian's progress from birth to reign have already been noted. Later stages in Synesius' story reflected recent history, but he also retained certain correspondences with the myth. Typhos/Caesar's relatively mundane coup succeeds because Osiris/Aurelian surrenders to his brother voluntarily (111A), as Osiris enters the chest Typhos has prepared (*De Is. et Os.* 356c). Each is at once confined, Osiris/Aurelian by a guard and Osiris in the chest. Typhos/Caesar demands Osiris/Aurelian's death, whereas Typhos, by implication, actually achieves it; then Osiris/Aurelian is exiled from the country (111B) and Osiris is carried in the chest down the Nile and out through the Tanitic mouth "to the land of Byblos" (*De Is. et Os.* 356c, 357A). The forced traversal of water also appears when Osiris/Aurelian

³⁸ *Prov.* 102D. In Diod. 1.17.1f, as in Plutarch, Osiris is a universal civilizer, but contradistinctively collects "a great army" before setting forth. Murray (*supra* n.36) follows F. Jacoby (*ad FG rHist* 264F25) in considering Diodorus to have taken 17.1–20.6 from some source other than Hecataeus. Synesius uses Plutarch's details and restricts Osiris/Aurelian's activity to "Egypt." Sacrificing to the Graces (them only) was a commonplace: cf. Eunap. *VS* 458 Boissonade; D.L. 4.6; Plut. *Mor.* 141F.

³⁹ See Griffiths (*supra* n.28) 75–100, esp. 98.

“crosses the river in a barge” to face the barbarian assembly that will determine his fate.⁴⁰

Synesius’ narrative extends only as far as Typhos’ triumph. He simply discards the greater part of Plutarch’s account (356D–358B), Isis’ quest for the body of Osiris. The goddess herself is replaced as Osiris’ wife by an embodiment of the Greek feminine ideal, a woman whose very existence can be surmised by the outside world only from the sight of their son: “for the virtue of a wife, Osiris thought, was not to leave the courtyard either in person or in name.”⁴¹ Even Horus does not really figure in the actual narrative. Synesius only looks forward at the end to his eventual selection of “the wolf rather than the lion for his ally.”⁴² Horus’ choice between two animal allies is an element of the final portion of Plutarch’s narrative (*De Is. et Os.* 358B–c):

Afterwards Osiris came to Horus from Hades, and drilled and trained him for the battle. Then he inquired what he thought was the fairest action. When Horus said, “to succor one’s father and mother when they suffer wrong,” he asked him a second question: which did he think the most useful animal for those who were going out to battle? When Horus said “a horse,” he was amazed and demanded, “why not a lion rather than a horse?” Horus said that a lion was helpful to one who needed assistance, but a horse routed the enemy in flight and utterly destroyed him. Osiris was pleased when he heard this, taking Horus to be suitably prepared.

Indeed, this reference confirms that Synesius’ vague language does refer to Horus’ eventual victory. But the discrepancy in the animals turns the allusion into something more enigmatic, about which Synesius is ostentatiously mysterious.⁴³ In this context his reticence broadly suggests Herodotus’ refusal at 2.171 to discuss Egyptian religion further. The suggestion helps cast a certain literary glamour over Synesius’ refusal to continue his tale.⁴⁴

But the key to the riddle is the wolf, a figure from a variant tradition preserved, as Krabinger noted (*supra* n.7), by Diodorus (1.88.6):

⁴⁰ 111A. Gainas did in fact demand Aurelian’s exile in Chalcedon, across the Hellespont from Constantinople: Soc. 6.6, Soz. 8.4.5, Zos. 5.18.

⁴¹ *Prov.* 105D: characteristically, an epigrammatic formulation of the traditional view, cf. Thuc. 2.45.2, Xen. *Oec.* 7.5ff, Men. fr.546 Körte (=592 Gomme/Sandbach).

⁴² *Prov.* 115B, quoted more fully above.

⁴³ The emendation by G. E. Benseler, *De hiatu in oratoribus Atticis et historicis Graecis* (Freiburg 1841) 406, of ἵππον to λύκον in this passage, citing Synesius in support, is unwarranted; see Griffiths (*supra* n.28) 12–14 and references cited there.

⁴⁴ His heavy-handed invocation of philosophical propriety at the end of Book 2 has the same goal.

They say that when Isis along with her son Horus was about to contend with Typhos, Osiris came from Hades to aid his child and wife, likened in appearance to a wolf.

No choice is presented. There is only the wolf. Synesius capped his other erudite allusions by conflating the two versions of the myth to produce a trickier but kindred puzzle. Its solution provides intellectual satisfaction rather than concrete political advice. Synesius' practical suggestion, such as it was, had already been set forth in the *De regno*: get rid of the barbarians. He did not abandon this view in the *De providentia*. In Book 1, ever so delicately, he criticizes Aurelian for having failed to follow this policy: the gods' prediction that Osiris' specious but misguided leniency towards Typhos would prove his downfall (96B–97B) is fulfilled through the barbarian general, as in fact it was Gainas who had Aurelian deposed and exiled. The general is represented as a reluctant conspirator. He is willing to move against Osiris only because he fears the allegations of Typhos' wife, that Osiris plans to destroy his family and eliminate all barbarians from Egypt (110D, 108C–109A). But she also assures the general's wife that Osiris' inaction will protect the conspiracy (109D). This image accords with the gods' perception and Synesius' authorial assessment of Osiris' reign (104B–C); implicitly, her other charges are false, and had Osiris/Aurelian actually exercised such resolve he would not have suffered. The remarkable exoneration of the general involved in this exiguous web of circumlocution reveals that at the time he wrote Book 1 Synesius could not afford to antagonize Gainas.⁴⁵ In such an atmosphere, a riddle bearing any intelligible suggestion of a means to oust him and the praetorian prefect he found acceptable would have been far too dangerous to pose.

Synesius no doubt hoped privately for just that result. But it was out of the question that he should express that hope in the form Grütz-macher and Lacombrade imagined. They failed to appreciate the way in which the *De providentia* oscillates between historical reference and the purely literary adornment in which Synesius wrapped it. He proclaimed it, after all, "a history of current events" only among other things (*Prov.* 88B). The appearance of intellectual sophistication, quite characteristically, was his goal no less than propaganda. He could expect his audience to recognize books as well as people. In default of a

⁴⁵ In deducing from this exoneration an advance in Synesius' views from the *De regno*, Lizzi fails to take into account his open return to his earlier position as soon as Gainas was out of the picture: cf. *supra* n.25, and contrast the exculpatory *Prov.* 110D, 111B with the complacent mockery opening Book 2 (116B–C, 117A–B).

tenable historical solution to the riddle,⁴⁶ it is no defeat to admit that Synesius took refuge from grim current history in the realm of his literary sources and the myth, by a double reference that united his two divergent traditions. Their discrepancy resolved, Typhos was certain to fall eventually and a better order to be restored.⁴⁷

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⁴⁶ Richard Billows calls my attention to the possibility that the lion might suggest Eutropius' unfortunate general Leo (Claud. *Eutr.* 2.407–61, Zos. 5.17). Other writers did exploit the pun (Claud. *Eutr.* 2.379, Eunap. fr.76 Müller [=67.6, 7 Blockley]), and it might well have raised a smile; but the allusion to a dead general who had never figured in the present conflict could not have been more than glancing, no part of a genuine political proposal.

⁴⁷ This paper has profited throughout from the comments (and library) of Alan Cameron.