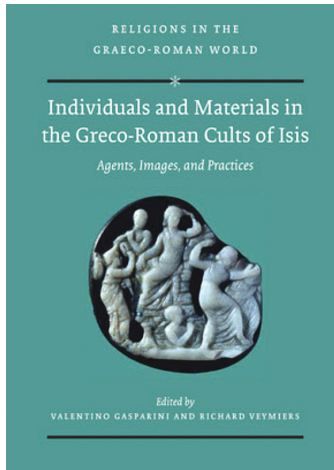


## INDIVIDUALS AND MATERIALS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN CULTS OF ISIS




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THIS BOOK REPRESENTS AN IMMENSE STEP FORWARD not only for Isiac studies but for the study of the ancient world as a whole. The contributions present a great range of methodologies as well as focal points within the broader topic at a consistently high level of research and editing. Such a kaleidoscope of good work is hugely valuable for the discipline. What sort of information we want to attain about the ancient world, and how we go about doing so, naturally varies from scholar to scholar; gathered into a single volume like this one, the resulting picture of the ancient world has more texture and resilience than any smaller-scale work could achieve. This is the best possible outcome for an edited volume of this nature, a gargantuan undertaking that began with the two conferences in the title and now has come to its thousand-page fruition.

One underlying goal of the volume is to question some of the most fundamental assumptions and conclusions of traditional Isiac studies. If Isiac studies in the past

were often too literal in their approach to textual sources (such as Apuleius, long seen alternately as either documentary evidence or pure fiction) and too eager to find a single “meaning” in material sources (e.g., a shaved head indicates an Isiac priest), this book problematizes both sources and approaches. The authors call for an examination of the objects and their contexts in a way that allows for great variety in the ways that ancient people made Isis a part of their lives. What is meant by Isiac when we speak of the rituals and lived experiences of the people involved? What are our sources for finding out, and what can these truly tell us? The most provocative unseating of traditional authority is in the ingenious preface by Vinciane Pirenne-Delforge, who points out that identifying something as “Isiac” inherently separates it from other things to which it may in fact be related, but which are then not taken into consideration because they are categorized as “non-Isiac.” All aspects of Isis cult, Pirenne-Delforge suggests, must be viewed in the context of Greek culture at large. Ultimately, while the recent massive effort to document Isiac material is invaluable, in her view it is perhaps time for Isiac studies to break its own boundaries and look outside the *a priori* circumscribed set of evidence (x-xiii).

This volume rises to Pirenne-Delforge’s challenge in many ways, even if it does of course define its parameters in terms of Isis cult. Veymiers’ introduction (translated into beautiful English by Gil Renberg) frames the history of the study as well as the primary problematics. The immensity of this task is evidenced by the double length of the essay as well as its sundry mix of subtopics. Veymiers takes us through the ancient and modern use of the word “Isiac,” Isis aretalogies, prosopographies, social structures, and iconography. The final pages touch on current trends and future directions, including the archaeology of cult practice, the study of a “material landscape” rather than individual components, the “archaeology of gesture” (here not further defined), and finally the social and emotional aspects of cult.<sup>1</sup> The author makes many convincing points, even if they are not cohesive beyond being in some way Isiac and requiring revised interpretations. Simultaneously, this essay shows how strong the inclination towards the traditional methods is. While stressing that Isiac iconography is not fixed, and should therefore be studied as much as possible through the objects themselves and their contexts, Veymiers still calls for an iconographical corpus (36-40). This seems contradictory to the former point, since corpora both ignore context and belong to some of the oldest methods of study. Nor is the tendency toward one-to-one iconographical interpretations definitively banished; a *cista* by the

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1. His call for exploring an “Isiac identity” (27) and specifically women in the dress of Isis (43-46, also Malaise and Veymiers 470-508) is taken up by Mazurek, forthcoming.

foot of a woman represented on a grave stele is taken to mean that the woman was an Isis initiate (45), although later on such simple identifications are rejected (507).

Situating the cult within Greek and Roman culture – indeed, pointing out how embedded yet flexible it was – is a common theme of the essays, following Pirenne-Delforge's lead. Jörg Rüpke (61-73) takes this up in his sketch of a theoretical framework for understanding religion, not only Isis cult. He suggests that the intersection of religion and individual agency can be usefully conceived and explored in three directions: the way religion equips an individual to deal with life challenges; the way it motivates an individual to see herself as part of a group; and the way it facilitates communication between people. He addresses each of these in sections titled "Action," "Identity," and "Communication." One of the most striking parts of this essay for me was Rüpke's definition of religion: "the enlargement of the situationally relevant environment beyond the immediately plausible social environment of co-existing human beings (and frequently also animals)" (69). This perfectly embodies Rüpke's phenomenological approach, and forms a fantastic complement to the other reflections on Isis cult in this volume.

Giulia Sfameni Gasparro (74-107) takes as her starting point a line from Plutarch about a Greek girl, Clea, who had a position in the cults of Dionysus, Apollo, and Isis, and was dedicated by her parents to Osiris. This essay offers a few reflections on the question of identity in this context and some methodological caveats. One of the main points here is that identity is not fixed, but evolves. A worshipper can even experience a "continuous recreation" of identity in tandem with the evolution of the cult itself. The integration of Isis cult with other religious practices, including temple buildings shared between the gods, is one indicator that an Isiac identity was diverse, flexible, and in no way framed as oppositional or contradictory to other social roles.

Joachim Quack (108-126) uses Egyptian texts to sketch out the life of an Isiac priest in Egypt. He starts with an illuminating summary of the priestly function in Egypt as opposed to Greece. He goes on to show that overall the priests of Isis in Egypt are no different from priests of other cults, and that they often deal with surprisingly mundane business. Ultimately, the life of an Isiac priest in Egypt has less to do with this particular deity than with the status of the temple where they worked, or their status in the hierarchy of temple employees. The overwhelming power of social determinants is a common factor in other essays as well, even if they mostly treat communities outside of Egypt.

With a sociological approach, Paraskevi Martzavou (127-154) echoes Quack's findings in Egypt for priests in Greece. Investigating how Isiac priests in Greece were seen in their communities, and what they did, Martzavou stresses that their daily lives were highly varied and in no way unique because of their service to Isis. If the

priests represented any hint of alterity in their communities, for instance in their dress, this was limited, and needs to be separated from their actual roles as agents of change. The engines behind civic change could equally be priests of Isis or other individuals, whether from Egypt, Italy, or elsewhere. To be an Isiac priest, it seems, was also to be a civic benefactor; choosing to become an Isiac priest may have been a way to practice euergetism without exacerbating preexisting tensions among local cults. Therefore, if Isiac priests drove change in a certain direction, we should not see this as a given condition of their priestly role but “ask when change becomes attractive and why communities honour and support their Isiac priests” (154).

Laurent Bricault (155-197) looks at inscriptions to determine the demographics of Isiac priests in the Roman west (1st century BC – AD 390). They are mostly men, sometimes working together as father/son or brother/brother but never man/wife. Their priesthood is usually not named only as that of Isis, but of another deity as well. They may not have been strongly visually marked out in life, except in processions, but after death their appearance on grave monuments is markedly Isiac. A table of the sources follows the text, and will be a useful resource for future work.

Willy Clarysse (198-220) presents an impressive onomastic study of “all the personal names within [Greco-Roman] Egypt which may include a mention of the goddess Isis” from the 3rd century BC to the 6th century AD. Sorting through 500,000 references to 370,000 individuals, he analyzes “how they were spread in place, in time, and according to sex, ethnic and social groups” (199). With the help of tables and diagrams, Clarysse can point out certain trends in Isis names over time, even into the Christian period. However, the relevance of the names to any cult practice or other significant experience is impossible to determine; the influence of family or cultural traditions in naming, and the potential for a name’s meaning to shift over time, complicate the use of onomastic studies to explore lived experience (199).

Jaime Alvar’s essay (221-247) on social agency in the Isiac community meshes well with Martzavou’s. Alvar uses inscriptions to describe Isiac “social agentivity” – how individuals act under the influence of their society – and to divide it into three categories. “Founders” are those who, by virtue of their social weight (such as monarchs), established Isiac cult and its social model in their communities. “Normalizers” helped spread cult practice through their own connections to local ruling powers. “*Cultores*” also helped to ground the cult but did so through family practices. All of these highlight the fact that an individual acts only within a social framework. This holds even for the cases in which actors are not active but potentially passive, such as children or family members who may have had no choice to dedicate their lives and wealth to the cult.

Ilias Arnaoutoglou (248-279) attributes an active rather than passive role to private religious associations, namely in spreading Isis cult rather than merely resulting from it. If they indeed had an active effect, examining these groups can help to draft a “sociology of Isiac agency:” what are their features, when do they appear and disappear, what is their social makeup, what are their connections with other groups? Arnaoutoglou concludes that association members are similar to those of other cults, being male-dominated and mainly Greek. That the associations were not simply offshoots of the cult itself, and that their foundation rests primarily on social forces, is highlighted by the fact that cult sites are not the only places where cult associations spring up. Further work on this intriguing topic will be aided by the appendix, “Epigraphic Testimonia of Isiac Associations.”

Ludivine Beaurin (283-321) tackles the appearance of “Isiaques” as transmitted in textual sources, usually involving shaved heads and linen robes. To what extent are these texts accurate? Beaurin shows how the texts were written by certain authors for certain audiences that did not necessarily prize accuracy, particularly in pagan-Christian debates. What is more, the evidence for the dress of Isiaques shows a much greater variety over time, place, and circumstance than is recorded in the texts from Rome. The reason for this can be found in the motivations of both wearers and authors. Wearing such a consistent costume reinforces the group identity; written references to the uniform emphasize their otherness. In the Christian period, polytheists could wear the costume as a sign of their religious beliefs, just as Christian authors could refer to it synecdochically for pagan religion as a whole. A table of the textual sources rounds out the essay.

Marie-Christine Budischovsky (322-339) revisits a spectacular object, the *Mensa Isiaca*, already the subject of many iconographical studies. Budischovsky’s starting point is the fact that the pharaoh depicted on this elaborate bronze tabletop has no name inscribed next to him. This leads her to posit an Italian workshop specialized in Egyptian models,<sup>2</sup> yet happy to create indecipherable hieroglyphs. That Apuleius also mentions “indcipherable characters” is cited as evidence that the table served in ritual, perhaps initiations, but I would caution against this. Apuleius’ character may describe hieroglyphs as indecipherable simply because this is how they would appear to his readers, not because of any actual lack of grammatical integrity. Either way, this aspect of the *Mensa* raises more questions than Budischovsky can address: for one, if the Italian workshop wanted to reproduce hieroglyphs without knowing the Egyptian language, why would it not have copied a single text or sections of text rather

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2. See Giumlia-Mair and Mráv, 2014.

than rearranging hundreds of signs into nonsense? The fact that Egyptian texts were magical implements might suggest that a nonsense text like this one was used precisely because it was ineffective, leaving the object inactive. This hypothesis will have to be elaborated elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> but it is worth thinking about its repercussions on what we imagine the Mensa's context to have been. Was the text deliberately rendered impotent because the Mensa was not intended for a religious purpose?

Adeline Grand-Clément (340-365) argues that color in Egyptian art manifests the splendor and realm of competence of the gods, as well as contains an “intrinsic efficacy that guarantees the success of rituals in creating favorable conditions for communication with the divine” (340). Much of the essay follows the white linen robes already mentioned, reading them as signifiers of joy, purity, and light. Other colored garments worn by Isis' followers are also addressed. The burial of a body in black linen with a sistrum in the Gubbio necropolis is a tantalizing piece of evidence that could tell us much more than simply color symbolism. The black and gold elements of Isis cult (especially for depicting Anubis and the gods, respectively) form a stark visual contrast with the white garments. Isis' robe, on the other hand, is colorful beyond all measure, as seen in both Apuleius' text and some visual material. Although I am skeptical that this translates cleanly as an indicator of her multiple competencies, as Grand-Clément suggests, certainly this riot of color marks Isis out as special.

Eric M. Moormann (366-383) addresses Roman wall paintings of Isiac figures. To what extent these figures should be read simply as a part of the greater corpus of Egyptian fresco motifs in Rome, which Moormann (in keeping with the current consensus) recognizes as decorative rather than cultic, is unclear. Moormann takes the relative paucity of the “priest” motifs (in which priests are not differentiated from other Isiac figures) to indicate that they may have been used in religiously-charged contexts, such as houses whose owners were cult members. But were these motifs especially rare? In addition to the eight cases cited by Moormann, they also decorated the Building of Eumachia in Pompeii.<sup>4</sup> Even if we were to decide, despite the highly uneven nature of the evidence, that this number of motifs counts as rare, rarity alone cannot indicate religious belief. Both the Building of Eumachia and the sites named in Moormann's study, aside from the Temple of Isis in Pompeii, have no demonstrable connection to cult. The evidence thus does not seem to logically lead to the conclusion that “[p]riests, priestesses, and other cult ministers, apparently, were a serious matter and did not serve as decorations within the private realm” (383).

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3. This suggestion by Christopher Hallett is explored in Pearson, forthcoming.

4. *Pompeii: Pitture e Mosaici* 7, p. 318, fig. 5.

Richard Veymiers and François Queyrel (384-412) examine the so-called “Scipio” portrait heads marked by cross-shaped scars, long considered religious markers but here argued to be individualistic traits in line with veristic portraiture. Further, the authors show that the Scipio BnF head inspired many modern copies and reworkings of other ancient heads to fit the scarred portrait type. The argument against the religious readings is skillful, and effectively shows (like much of Veymiers’ work) how faulty modern interpretations can become ingrained in the scholarship. Because of the convincing conclusion that scars are a veristic portrait feature, I would have liked to see a serious consideration of them in this light – that is, as traces of medical interventions. The authors get close with a footnote to a medical text saying that this shape of incision was used to reveal the skull, but to my mind this needs elaboration: was this a common medical procedure, perhaps even associated with a certain type of wound? Certainly a scar can bespeak *virtus* in battle and other values mentioned by the authors, but only if it was in fact associated with battle wounds. If cross-shaped scars resulted from a specific medical procedure, this could have interesting implications for how this very particular scarring was read by Roman viewers.

Gaëlle Tallet (413-447) offers a new interpretation of Roman Egyptian mummy portraits. She points out that the Greco-Roman sources on Isiac cult have often been read onto the Egyptian material, subordinating or neglecting their actual Egyptian context. She shows that the features long held to be Isiac – attributes held in the hand, Serapis-like features, and Horus locks on children – are instead functions of these images’ efficacy in a funerary context. Thus, Egyptian women thought by scholars to resemble Isis are in fact possibly intended to resemble Hathor, whose fertility and eroticism are invoked in this context to regenerate the cosmos, and who is the partner to the funerary god Osiris. Tallet systematically examines the attributes long considered Isiac (crowns, knotted garment, garlands, sistrum, corkscrew locks) and convincingly reinterprets them in light of Egyptian funerary culture, including purification and mourning. Ultimately these traits are signs of the deceased becoming living again at the gates of the afterlife in the presence of the gods.

Sabine Albersmeier (448-469) attends to the attire of male and female members of Greco-Roman Isis cult. Like so much else, these garments can be shown to derive from pharaonic origins and undergo transformation in the Greco-Roman tradition; they are not an exotic fantasy invented by the Greeks and Romans. Instead they attest to an intimate knowledge of Egyptian material among the artists and viewers outside of Egypt. The male wrap-around garment goes back to pharaonic priestly attire but is not specific to priests of Isis. The “Isis garment” worn by both Isis and her female devotees outside of Egypt also has a pharaonic origin, although in Egypt it was not worn by Isis or by priestesses – rather, it was a garment popularized by the Ptolemaic queens.

Richard Veymiers, this time co-authoring with Michel Malaise (470-508), continues the subject of Albersmeier's essay with a look at the women who wear the knotted dress associated with Isis. They elaborate on Albersmeier's point that the dress originates with Ptolemaic queens in the third century BC and is thence adopted by Isis – just as she adopts the *basileion* from the queens as well, although the headgear and dress seem not to be used in combination. Posing the question of who the women were who wore this dress, and in what contexts they wore it, the authors delve into a intensive analysis of the textual sources on women in Isis cult – leading somewhat away from the original topic of the garment, but concluding with the inarguable point that women wearing this dress do not manifest “assimilation, deification, or incarnation” of the goddess, but express a communal identity as a cult member.

Annika Backe-Dahmen (509-538) asks of the so-called Horus lock: is it only for boys? Is it related to consecration? In Egypt the side lock was worn by children, and in Greco-Roman tradition in religious contexts – yet only the lock on the right-hand side of the head is a sign of consecration. Children could be consecrated to the gods, on the model of Isis, Osiris, and Harpocrates making a sort of model family. Girls could be devoted to Isis, but did not wear the Horus lock. A unique child portrait with two locks in Copenhagen probably indicates consecration to two gods. Although Backe-Dahmen notes that no image of a side lock has yet been found in a sanctuary, her analysis goes a long way to showing the religious valence of the side lock nonetheless. Overall she effectively combats some of the long-held presumptions about the “Horus lock.”

Emmanuelle Rosso (539-567) examines the connection between Roman emperors and Egyptian religion as manifest in sculpture outside of Egypt. The sculpture in question displays the emperor either with divine attributes, including hairstyle; with the attributes of a worshipper; or present in relief scenes of Egyptian cult. Because these depictions do not simply follow the popularity of Egyptian religion, their motivations must be investigated. Nor can they be understood merely as assimilation to the gods: because so few gods at all are chosen as references for imperial portraits – Zeus, Hercules, and Apollo for emperors, Juno, Ceres, Fortuna, and Venus for empresses – the choice of Isiac gods is not at all self-evident. Rosso argues that the connection between Caligula, Drusilla, and Nero with the Egyptian gods has been overstated, and that the only securely identified portraits of emperors with Isiac traits appear in gems (which she calls a distinctly private medium). She even throws the interpretation of Septimius Severus' “Serapis locks” into question, and points out that Domitian's portraiture is unique in combining pharaonic with imperial portrait features – but indeed, pharaonic features rather than Isiac.



William Van Andringa (571-583) presents an archaeology of cult practice. The question, he urges, is not what the archaeology can tell us about Apuleius' text, but what it can tell us about rituals and experiences. This essay looks specifically at architectural remains rather than paintings, objects, or inscriptions. Despite the difficulties of poor preservation, lack of stratigraphic excavation, and hard floors that were regularly cleaned and thus preserve no traces, much can be gleaned from the remains. Particularly altars, basins, and oil lamps are revealing, such as deliberately broken lamps that show a sequence of action. The location of water sources for ritual also helps to paint a picture of ritual, as does the mysterious stone box for burning things ("fosse à crémation") found in several *Isea*. The *Iseum* in Mainz shows a huge amount of chicken and finch sacrifices in such a fosse, and the bones preserve information about the temperature at which they were burned – indicating either burning on an altar (cooler temperatures) or in a pyre (warmer temperatures). This essay is commendable for looking at small archaeological details in new ways to fill rather large gaps in our knowledge of ritual practice.

Molly Swetnam-Burland (584-608) focuses on personal experience in Isis cult as revealed by the material aspects of objects: specifically, their "medium, manufacture, and later interventions such as damage, repair, or reuse" (585). Because objects' agency is constructed by their human counterparts – in this case, seeking to communicate with the divine – they can shed light on ancient people. Swetnam-Burland divides her attention between two bodies of evidence, representations of ritual and inscriptions on votive offerings. For the former, she focuses on shrines. A small depiction of a shrine within a shrine on the Aventine may have modeled behavior for visitors. In another shrine, graffiti and dipinti show the concerns and experiences of worshippers in the form of wishes, greetings, and lewd phrases. These physical traces are carefully distinguished from representations such as the two Herculaneum panel paintings of ritual, which Swetnam-Burland cautions are more decorative than cultic.<sup>5</sup> In the second part of the essay, Swetnam-Burland collects 51 inscriptions from Rome which either record offerings to Isiac gods or were found in their sanctuaries. These pieces were intended not only to communicate with the divine, but to highlight family and social status; thus this essay harmonizes well with Alvar's and Martzavou's.

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5. With which I strongly agree, *contra* Moormann, Backe-Dahmen, and Bricault and Veymiers in this volume, who use the paintings for information about cult practice (372, 529-530, 710). See Stephanie Pearson, cat. nos. 158-162, in Spier, Cole and Potts, 2018.

Jean-Louis Podvin (609-627) examines lighting in Isiac cult (the “lychnology” mentioned in the introduction, 53). This essay gives a thorough overview of the evidence, including lamps excavated in *Isea*, texts mentioning lamp-bearers, and visual representations of lighting sources. Podvin finds that lighting in the form of candelabra and lamps is unusually well recorded for Isiac cult. Lamps could be used as votives, for everyday lighting and cult statues, during ceremonies, or perhaps for lychnomancy (not well attested, perhaps more of a magical practice than cult practice). If not a unique feature of Isis cult, perhaps this emphasis is a feature of mystery cults, including Christianity.

Françoise Dunand (628-648) evaluates the evidence for Isiac pilgrimage in Egypt, focusing on the sites of Philae, Abydos, and Narmouthis in the Fayum. Egyptians went on pilgrimage not only for Isis, but many other gods. Pilgrims could come from far-off places, particularly in the Ptolemaic and Roman periods, and recorded their visits by scratching their names into the architecture (perhaps next to the depiction of the god whose favor they sought) and rubbing their fingers on the surfaces, sometimes wearing deep grooves. The names and languages preserved in the graffiti reveal trends, such as Greek graffiti recorded more at the outer gates of the Philae sanctuary and Demotic in the inner spaces. Pilgrimage is also known in Greece, but not well attested for *Isea* outside of Delos and Thessaloniki. Even here the names cannot be securely identified with pilgrims as opposed to local people, as they lack the Egyptian “I have come” formula, and the people behind them may have been merchants or religious functionaries come to the area for other purposes.

Gil Renberg (649-671) analyzes 120 Greek and Latin inscriptions of “divine communiqués” with Isiac gods (out of some 1400 inscriptions naming any god). In their placement on altars, dedications, and architecture, they are like other dedicatory inscriptions. Their formulaic nature is also similar. What separates them is the use of formulas including *viso* or *iussu* to proclaim that the dedicant either saw a god or was ordered by a god to make the dedication. Some inscriptions say that one god ordered the dedication for another god, suggesting a link between cults. By isolating these *viso/iussu* inscriptions from other dedicatory inscriptions, Renberg sets himself up to say something about visions and dreams in Isiac cult, but the evidence for incubation or other practices is thin. Perhaps the most important trend he demonstrates is that incubation or divination is more popular in the east (and possibly in the city of Rome) than in the west, as no more than one such inscription comes from any *Iseum* in the West except Italica (2) and the *Iseum Campense* (5), but in Greece, many are found in twos, and there are many more overall.

Stefan Pfeiffer (672–689) explores the “pseudo-Egyptian” origin of the scene described by Apuleius in which cult personnel carry sacred symbols for the *Navigium*

*Isidis* festival. As evidence he looks to, first, visual representations of Egyptian priests in both Egypt and Rome; and second, texts of Egyptian priestly processions. What did they carry? Pfeiffer establishes the origins of the items that Apuleius names as follows: ship-shaped vessel (possibly Egyptian); altars (Greco-Roman); *palma* and caduceus (perhaps derived from the Egyptian *horologos*, a staff with crosspiece); hand of justice and *situla* (Egyptian); winnowing basket (Greek idea of Osiris cult); amphora (too general to tell). Drawing on such a breadth of sources, Apuleius' *Navigium* is ultimately "an invented tradition" (689).

Richard Veymiers teams up with Laurent Bricault (690–713) to reconstruct the sounds and smells of Isiac cult. They collect the textual and visual evidence primarily for music-making (auletes form a large part of the investigation) but also for dramatic action. The value of this contribution lies in its collection of many sources, as there is little offered in the way of interpretation.<sup>6</sup> The fact that Isiac cult was simply one of many Greek cults and thus has commonalities with them emerges again here in the musical instruments: these are so uniform that it can be hard to tell which cult is shown. Only the *sistrum*, the angular harp, and certain flutes seem to be specific to Isiac cult, and even this latter is questionable. Whether holding an instrument is synonymous with playing it, and who the responsible musicians were, are unfortunately unanswerable questions.

Valentino Gasparini (714-746) uncovers the "theatrical" elements of Isis cult and their significance for participants. Because the concept of theater is governed by historical conventions, Gasparini begins with the observation that ancient theater was substantially different from modern theater – particularly in its participatory aspect, in which actors and spectators were not clearly separated. He goes on to show how ritual and ancient theater shared several fundamental traits. Both involved a performance in space and time meant to conjure emotional states and a communal experience. Both also prompted the audience to self-reflection and perhaps even to modify their identity based on their experience. Small wonder, then, that Isiac ritual was highly dramatic: from the *anubophori* dressed as Anubis, to the spectacles staging Isis' mourning (in which worshippers beat their breasts along with the goddess), to the tendency for *Isea* to be located near theaters. Gasparini's point that the normally reviled profession of actor becomes socially acceptable through its deployment in cult is fascinating, especially in light of the sociological themes in the rest of this

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6. A theoretically sophisticated study of depictions of music in cult, with close attention to sensory experience and communication with the divine, will be published in a forthcoming book by Carolyn Laferrière.

volume (737); the topic deserves further study. Throughout the essay, I did find myself wondering to what extent these features were unique to Isis cult, especially considering this volume's concern with situating Isis cult within its Greek frame. Does emotion play a similar role in the worship of other gods? Are temples near theaters disproportionately dedicated to Isis rather than other gods, and the finds within the theaters disproportionately Isiac? (Perhaps this is addressed in Gasparini's earlier articles on the subject). These points would be necessary to address in an argument that Isis cult was unique in its use of dramatic elements. But this is not Gasparini's focus. Ultimately he builds a careful and intriguing argument that performance is essentially "an act of memory and creation" (715), and in the service of Isis cult, that it was a way to access the mythological past and the deity via personal experience and reflection.

As an archaeologist and art historian, I delighted in the range of approaches that these essays used to shed new light on some very familiar material. Not only are the phenomenological, sociological, and agentivity studies cutting edge, but together with the critically self-aware iconographic, onomastic, and philological pieces, they offer an exemplum of what interdisciplinarity (or better, methodological diversity) can do to improve our understanding of antiquity. This volume is already a reference work for the ages and sets a high bar for future research.

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