OTHERING AND THE
ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

On profound experiences and their effect on collective identities

Figure 1 Eleusinian relief of Demeter and Hekate in the Acropolis Museum (during an exhibition in May 2018)

SEPTEMBER 2018
RADBOUD UNIVERSITY
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INTRODUCTION

“Happy is he among mortal men who has seen these rituals;
but he who has not been initiated and who has no part in them,
will never share such things
after he disappears under the murky darkness”1

One of the most important cult sites of the ancient world was the sanctuary of Eleusis, a cult place dedicated to the Greek goddess of harvest, Demeter, and her lost daughter Persephone.2 This cult place and its rituals have been shrouded in mystery throughout time, from its earliest beginnings to its demise by the hands of Christian Goths at the end of the 4th century.3 Throughout antiquity Eleusis has been revered and respected by all, convinced its initiation ritual would impart wisdom and facilitate experience of a divine nature, bringing one closer to their gods. There are few religious rituals that have had such an impact on individuals on such a large scale. This initiation ritual and its procedure is unfortunately lost to the ages. However, the effects they had on its participants and uninitiated alike are still interesting subjects to explore, with ample evidence available.

For millennia the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries has managed to elude scholars and others interested in the secrets of ancient Greece. No one knows what happened during the ceremony and what this experience might have meant to those that had participated in it. There are, however, no studies that look at the effect that the difference between knowing the secrets of the initiation and not knowing them might have had on those that lived in a time when these mysteries were active. The starting point of this thesis is my hypothesis that the knowledge shared during the Eleusinian Mysteries influenced the identities of and relationship between individuals that were initiated in the Mysteries and those that were not. The knowledge that was shared during these rituals might have caused a divide between these two groups and I believe that his divide occurred in the realm of identity of groups and individuals and othering.

“Othering” is a topic that is becoming increasingly more popular to study due to the state of modern world and this interest is visible in contemporary academia.4 To illustrate the manner

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3 H. Kloft, Mysterienkulte der Antike, Götter, Menschen, Rituale (Munich 2010) 25.
in which this phenomenon came to be, it is imperative that its trajectory through history be examined. I have chosen to use the 5th century BC as the stage to conduct my research, specifically the time period between the end of Persian Wars and before the end of the Peloponnesian wars. From this point on, this period will be referred to as the 5th century for the sake of clarity and readability. Antiquity is viewed by many as the start of Western civilization, or at least an important period of its history. In the context of othering, many scholars view the 5th century as the starting point of this phenomenon, specifically when the Athenians othered the Persian barbarians after defeating them in 480 BC. Another reason this time period is convenient is that Eleusis was annexed by Athens in the 7th century BC. After the time of the Thirty Tyrants Eleusis became independent again. During this time period in between Eleusis was a part of the Athenian city state and had a part in the construction of a collective Athenian identity.

Even though it is impossible to know exactly what went on during the Eleusinian initiation ritual, the effects this ritual had on people can be analysed. The Eleusinian Mysteries created a divide, not unlike othering, between people that participated in the initiation ritual and those that did not. This divide othered those that were not familiar with its initiation rites and wisdom or knowledge that would be imparted. The experience and knowing the secrets of the mystery ritual and the imparted wisdom would have clearly set apart those familiar and those not and aided in the creation of an individual identity, creating a divide that was not instantly noticeable.

To examine the divide between those initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries and the uninitiated in a religious and social context the research question of this thesis will be: “In what manner did the Eleusinian initiation ritual create a divide between the initiated and uninitiated in the 5th century?” The focus will lie on culture, society, religion, othering and archaeological evidence.

The importance and relevance of this research can be primarily found in the historiographic debate concerning the shaping of identity in the classical era and the history of the othering phenomenon. My thesis will analyse former research on history, archaeology, social studies

653, especially 646-648; S.K.N. Bendixsen, The Religious Identity of Young Muslim Women in Berlin, An Ethnographic Study (Leiden 2013). These articles vary greatly on topics, but they are modern studies and focus on the role of religion in othering and vice versa, and there are many such examples.


6 E.S. Gruen, Rethinking the Other in Antiquity (Princeton 2011); E. Said, Orientalism (New York 1978).


and most importantly othering to participate the existing debate. In the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the initiation ritual was an individual experience powerful enough to create a divide between those that were initiated and those that were not. I believe the basis of this divide lies in the inability to identify with such an experience if one has not gone through it. In the first chapter of his *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*, Hugh Bowden explains that an imagistic religion, such as the polytheistic religion of classical Greece, consists of rituals that cannot be shared by explanation or the written word. Instead, rituals consist of experiences that can only be shared by initiation and are impossible to commune in any other matter. These experiences are very personal and, according to primary and secondary sources, very impactful. That is why I believe intense experiences played a part in the shaping of identity and the occurrence of a divide between two groups. After reading a number of primary and secondary sources, and studying the archaeological evidence, I believe that this can be applied to the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries and that it is possible to clearly distinguish between those that were initiated and those that were not, with an active manner of othering by those that were initiated.

This thesis will rely on the intertwinement of studies and theories from multiple disciplines within the humanities and social sciences. The first chapter will examine the way these disciplines can complement each other and how they have done so in the past in order to justify an interdisciplinary approach. The second chapter will clarify the concept of othering by examining its history as a theoretical concept and the ways collective identities and othering are visible in Athens in the 5th century. Theories like Said’s orientalism will be examined, as he is commonly viewed as an important catalyst in the early theories surrounding othering. His predecessors and some more modern approaches will be examined as well to create a clear picture of the concept of othering, for example Gruen’s *The Other in Antiquity* which adds more nuance to Sāïd’s theory. These theories will be used to examine some examples of Greek and Athenian othering, the creation of identity in the 5th century. These theories rely on assumptions concerning the intention of 5th century Athenians, which is problematic since it is nigh impossible to accurately prove intention of people that lived roughly 2500 years ago. Subjectivity is of course impossible to eliminate entirely but striving for objectivity can be important in historical research in order to accurately study and reconstruct the past. Therefore, an introduction of the term “inner othering” will end the chapter. This term concerns othering

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on a relatively small level, based on experience and it does not assume intent, which would make it less subjective than the additional theories on othering that will be discussed.

The third chapter will analyse othering in the context of archaeological studies. Two studies will be examined that incorporate the phenomenon of othering into archaeological evidence, which is in their case monuments of the Periclean building programme. Following the examples shown in Theodore Leslie Shear’s *Trophies of Victory* and Rachel Kousser’s article *Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis*, some of the archaeological evidence of the Eleusinian sanctuary can be examined in a similar manner as presented in these articles. Both use orientalism and othering in the same vein as Saïd and Gruen, including an assumption of intent. Even though this may be taken with a grain of salt, the divide they illustrate is still visible and well argued in their studies. The fourth chapter will provide and examine the relevant religious and historical context of the Eleusinian Mysteries in the 5th century. That way, the theory of othering can be applied to determine whether or not such a concept accurately describes the divide between the initiated and uninitiated. This will be done in the penultimate chapter.

The fifth chapter will examine the archaeological evidence of the Eleusinian Mysteries and its sanctuary as well as the history of its excavations, including its monuments and some artefacts with iconographical clues pointing to the Eleusinian ritual. These summaries will be used to study othering and inner othering. The sixth chapter will examine reconstructions of the Eleusinian initiation ritual. Included in these reconstructions are some theories on the experience the participants went through and the possible effects this experience had on them. The seventh chapter will use the concepts of othering, inner othering and the examined evidence and context to analyse the divide between the initiated and uninitiated. The last chapter of this thesis will be its conclusion, answering the research question, giving some modern, and fictional examples of inner othering based on experience and will provide a view on further research. Most of the mentioned chapters and steps are illustrative and analytical, examining othering in the context of 5th century Athens. It is important to note, however, that this thesis is illustrative and not exhaustive, because it would be impossible to examine all the available scholarship on othering and archaeological evidence concerning the Eleusinian sanctuary.

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Combining multiple disciplines has been of great interest to me from the start of my academic career and a significant factor in the choice of pursuing a bachelor’s degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences. It has allowed me to create a more complete and encompassing picture of specific research topics and continues to do so. This interdisciplinary approach will be used to examine the concept of othering in the context of Classical Athens and the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries. This chapter will explain and justify the manner in which certain disciplines within social studies are able to complement archaeological and historical research.

Archaeology, history and social studies: a brief history of impact

In Chris Gosden’s *Anthropology and archaeology: a changing relationship* the history and effects of this intertwinment of disciplines is clearly mapped out and explained.\(^{11}\) He tells his readers that:

“*There has been a complicated trade of concepts and discoveries between archaeology and anthropology over the last five centuries, such that the history of one would have been totally different without the other. Archaeology and anthropology can be seen as a double helix with their histories linked, but distinct.*”\(^{12}\)

Gosden starts his study of the intertwinment of these disciplines in the 16\(^{th}\) century.\(^{13}\) He claims that the emergence of these disciplines was a development rooted in colonialism, describing this as the need to understand and control. Archaeology and anthropology had worked together to understand the high number of encounters between widely different cultures, which was the result of colonial expansion. Until the Victorian age, mostly amateurs were involved in such studies since there was no stable intellectual framework for these subjects yet. These amateurs were therefore not solely dedicated to the pursuit of archaeological and anthropological knowledge. He explains this by describing two individuals from the Victorian era who started using a methodology that was unusual for their time period. These amateurs focussed on the studies of archaeology and anthropology for most of their lives, which was almost entirely unheard of: He describes Edward Burnett Tylor, who worked on ethnography and Pitt Rivers

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\(^{13}\) Ibidem, 16.
who focussed on ethnography as well in addition to archaeology. They introduced fieldwork to these subjects, which was crucial to their development.\textsuperscript{14}

After the Victorian era, these scientific disciplines diverged. In a time where intellectual frameworks for these differing subjects were created a clear distinction became evident in aspects such as methods and evidence the research had to be based on. Different social constructions such as institutions had to be created as well, which emphasized the new distinction. Even though these disciplines introduced fieldwork, the ways in which such research was executed were too different to be considered a part of the same discipline.\textsuperscript{15} The most important methodical distinction is the fact that anthropology needs face-to-face interaction, whereas this is not needed in archaeology.\textsuperscript{16} Aside from its origins anthropology and archaeology have other aspects in common as well, such as the topic of identity.

**Archaeology and identity**

An important field of study that archaeology borrowed from social studies is identity studies. Primarily found in social sciences such as anthropology, sociology, social psychology and philosophy, identity theory remained separate from archaeological research until the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{17} To understand a phenomenon like othering, it is important to understand identity studies and its history in relation to historical and archaeological research. As will be explained in the following chapter, theories on othering are a part of identity studies. An important shift in archaeological and historical research can be traced to a time before the postmodern era. This shift concerns the focus on identity studies; an aspect that was previously primarily found in the political ideologies such as nationalism and racialism.\textsuperscript{18}

An important catalyst in the incorporation of identity studies into archaeological research happened in 1925, when V.G. Childe’s *The Dawn of European Civilization* studied the assemblages of material instead of artefact types.\textsuperscript{19} He claimed that these assemblages identified or typified certain cultures. His premise was that homogenous cultural entities corresponded with particular peoples based on shared ideas, beliefs, space, and thus material culture. This led to studies intent on researching the Minoan people and enabled an emphasis on the way people

\textsuperscript{14} Ibidem, 31 and 32.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibidem, 33.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibidem, 61 and 62.
\textsuperscript{18} Hales and Hodos, *Material cultures and identity in the ancient world*, 5.
lived and how they interacted with others. Childe concluded that they must have had different ethnic identities as well.  

The postmodern era stopped this trend, turning away from imperialist and nationalist rhetoric of the 19th century and early 20th century. Soon archaeological research gave way to what would be called “New Archaeology”. Due to postmodern scholarship, archaeological research did not focus on identity anymore but started to value a holistic and systemic view of culture and its relationship with environmental, technological and economic factors, disregarding social and ethnic identities. During the 1980’s, this movement received backlash and classical archaeology started to focus more on social interpretations of archaeological and literary evidence. The emphasis of this shift was put on the interpretation of the available evidence, giving scholars the opportunity to create and study many different perspectives concerning the manner in which the same text may be read or artefact studied. These perspectives include, for example, gendered, political and sociological interpretations. Due to this shift, other disciplines such as sociology and other social sciences were increasingly used in archaeological and historical research.

One of the latest significant shifts concerning identity studies and archaeology is discussed in the last chapter of Hodos and Hales’ *Material cultures and identity in the ancient world*, using statistics from the 1997 Roman Archaeology convention and the same convention in 2007. In the 1997 version, most abstracts included the words Hellenization or Romanization, whereas in 2007 these terms were dropped in favour of the term identity. This signifies the growing importance of identity as an aspect in archaeological studies. Othering is an interesting aspect of identity studies, and thus becomes relevant concerning archaeological research of ancient Greece.

**Archaeology and cognition**

A relatively new approach to archaeology and history is the use of theories on human cognition. Using archaeological evidence, anthropological research and the science of cognition, it becomes possible to theorize about the experience of certain initiation rituals and its effects. This can be done by using the link between archaeology and anthropology to find similarities

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21 Ibidem, 7.
22 Ibidem, 8.
23 Ibidem, 9.
24 Ibidem, 9.
in the past and the present when it comes to, for example, religious rites. Cognitive science can then compare modern anthropological studies, testimonials and other evidence to study the human cognition and apply it to ancient rituals.  

Bowden’s *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World*, which will be discussed more in depth in the following chapters, relies partly on a theory by Harvey Whitehouse. Whitehouse’s *Theorizing Religions Past: Archaeology, History and Cognition* explains the manner in which biology and evolution can influence such a human cerebral phenomenon as religion.  

His theory concerns the manner in which religion and rituals can be separated in modes, namely “imagistic” and “doctrinal”. The latter mode can be seen in the most prevalent religions in the modern world: Christianity, Islam and Judaism. These religions rely heavily on their written dogmatic books, such as the Bible, Qur’an and Torah. Their rituals, beliefs and philosophy can be found in these books, and are currently practiced accordingly. This enables followers of these religions to have a concrete reference when they want to explain their religion as well. This is a clear contrast to the imagistic mode of religiosity. This approach will be important to inner othering because the term is used to describe the divide between experiences of and the effect of such a divide on the worshippers.

**Conclusions**

As demonstrated by this chapter, the re-emergence of social studies within ancient archaeological and historical research manages to create an interesting alternative approach to such research. Integrating these disciplines will enable scholars to create a more complete picture of their chosen study objects. In the case of archaeological and historical research on the lives of individuals, groups and societies can be theorized to further research that deals with the lives of people in the Ancient World. This new dimension of research will manage to create a broader picture of the ancient Greek society and its population. However, due to the lack of evidence that is available to the archaeology student, it is nigh impossible to prove a social theory in the context of the ancient world in the same way it is possible in, for example, anthropological research, because the subjects of studies do not longer exist.

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CHAPTER 2

OTHERING AND ANCIENT GREECE

As discussed in the previous chapter, two disciplines that have complemented each other throughout the 20th and 21st century are anthropology and archaeology. Relevant to this thesis is the cultural anthropological theory of othering in the context of archaeological and historical research. To understand this theory and the manner in which it can be applied to research concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries, this chapter will delve into the meaning of the term “Othering”, its history and the way it has been used in archaeological and historical research. At the end of this chapter, I will argue that othering could be applied to a religious event like the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian mysteries on a smaller scale of than discussed in the rest of the chapter. I will refer to this manner of othering as “inner othering”. This term will be explained and justified at the end of this chapter and applied to the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian mysteries in the following chapters.

History of “the Other”

The origins of the terms other and othering can be traced back to the German philosopher Hegel. In one of the notoriously most difficult pieces of philosophical literature, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Hegel summarizes his thoughts on the conscious and self-consciousness of the subject using a metaphor, which he describes as “Herrschaft und Knechtschaft”.28 This metaphor tells the story of a master and his slave and uses their interaction. According to Hegel’s metaphor, the master is dependent on the slave because the slave does the work the master will not do. The slave is not free but has the ability to simply do and act. The master thinks of himself as free, but due to his dependence on the slave, this is not the case. The master is not yet an actuality but has the potential to become so as well as self-dependent. Hegel’s synthesis is that the modern man should be both.29 This is rather difficult philosophical matter and theory and encompasses much more than described here. The relevant section shows and enables a clear explanation of Simone de Beauvoir’s work on othering in the context of gender, which was an important step concerning research on identity and othering.

29 Hegel, *Fenomenologie van de geest*, 91.
Hegel’s theory and metaphor show that Hegel does not believe women play a part in this dialectic of consciousness and self-consciousness. In de Beauvoir’s *Le Deuxième Sexe*, she interprets Hegel’s metaphor differently, relating the roles of the master and slave to those of men and women.\(^{30}\) Without attributing either of Hegel’s described master-slave roles, she claims that due to the exclusion of women in Hegel’s work, they became the “absolute Other”. She writes: “Thus humanity is male, and man defines woman not herself but as relative to him”, illustrating the women as “the Other” in this narrative.\(^ {31}\) Beauvoir’s work can be seen as one of the first steps that describe the social, cultural, ethnic and, especially in her own work, gender divide. This divide is characterized by deeming the Other as less than the subject attributing such a term to another individual or group.

The establishing as well as reviewing theories concerning “the other” in science and the humanities continued in a pivotal work by Edward Said: *Orientalism*. It coincides with the increasing awareness and construction of collective identities and the anthropological turn, which added more nuance and complexity to the opinions on othering.\(^ {32}\) Said’s book focusses primarily on the attitude of Western people to the Eastern world. He explains the way these Westerners created a divide between themselves and the Eastern world. He describes the divide by using the terms “Orient”, referring to the Eastern world and the “Occident”, which refers to the Western world. The use of the term othering in relation to cultural identification was inspired by Said and he opened the doorway to many theories and ideas on identity and the manner in which people create their own identity by using people that differ from them and make them their opposites.\(^ {33}\) Said concludes that the “Western knowledge of the Eastern world” sees the East, or the Orient, as an irrational, psychologically weak and feminized other. This is a strong contrast with how the West perceives itself, namely as rational, psychologically strong and masculine. Said also states that this emphasised division stems from a need to create a difference of cultural values, between West and East, describing the Orient as inherently lesser.\(^ {34}\) This notion has helped Europe to construct its own culture and helped to define it by contrasting it with a culture that is very different from itself and, according to Europeans, less


\(^{33}\) Ibidem, 2.

\(^{34}\) Ibidem, 65–67.
developed. Saïd’s book, he claims that this form of orientalism started in classical antiquity and that the Western world had sought to dominate the Eastern world for over 2,000 years.35

Other scholars do not agree with Said’s work and it has seen its fair share of criticism. Examples include accusations of cherry-picking evidence, where a concern on Said’s writing is that he was using certain examples that would make his theory seem stronger, while ignoring examples that would contradict him.36 Another criticism is that Said’s work seemed to push a narrative that would work in the favour of his own theory. There are also instances where it seems that Saïd’s theory uses assumptions that are simply not supported by historical research. For example, the claim that the West dominated the Eastern world, ignoring the existence of the Ottoman empire.37

Another important criticism concerning Saïd’s work is the idea that this view of othering is not nuanced enough.38 In the example of Saïd’s Orientalism the phenomenon is described as a manner of self-aggrandizement.39 In the case of Saïd’s research, this would be the Western attitude of superiority over their Eastern counterpart. Erich Gruen gives an alternative approach to Saïd’s rather black and white approach. In *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, Gruen theorizes that the Greeks and Romans of the ancient world had far more mixed, complex and nuanced opinions on others, not necessarily believing themselves superior.40 In the conclusion of his work, he sees othering as a part of the fashioning of collective identities.41 According to him, the Greeks took pride in their culture and did accentuate differences between themselves and others, sometimes painting these others in more negative light as Said describes, though oftentimes in a positive light as well. His opinion is, however, that Saïd’s theory dwells too much on the negative. He concludes with the following sentiment:

“Many ancients took the affirmative route, set the alien in a softer light, found connections among peoples, appropriated the traditions of others, inserted themselves into the genealogies

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38 Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 3.
40 Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 1-6.
41 Ibidem, 352-358.
and legends of foreigners, and enhanced their own self-image by proclaiming their participation in a broader cultural scene.”

Following this refinement of the theory concerning orientalism and othering the term inner othering will be introduced and discussed at the end of this chapter. As will be explained, inner othering is not othering in the same vein as Saïd’s orientalism but relates more to Gruen’s idea, since the differences between those that were initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries and those that were not lie in a differentiation that did not necessarily have the goal of self-assertion or superiority. From here on, these two sides will be referred to as either Saïd’s orientalism or Gruen’s othering, even though Gruen’s theory does not exclude the existence of othering in the same vein as Saïd’s orientalism.

Before continuing the discussion concerning othering in antiquity, a definition used by modern scholarship and education will be given:

“The term “other” serves as both a noun and a verb. By placing one’s self at the centre, the “other” always constitutes the outside, the person who is different. As a noun, therefore, the other is a person or group of people who are different from oneself. As a verb, other means to distinguish, label, categorize, name, identify, place and exclude those who do not fit a societal norm.”

This definition of other and othering comes from a general handbook concerning political geography. This means that the given definition of othering is being taught to a modern audience of students. This definition is relatively objective, without assumptions of cultural context or, as discussed, assuming the goal of self-aggrandizement or other assumed intentions. That is why this definition fits this thesis better than Saïd’s orientalism or Gruen’s nuanced and more complex view of othering. Therefore, the aforementioned definition of other and othering will be used in this thesis. It be used to argue the link between the Eleusinian Mysteries and inner othering. In the case of the Athenians, “regular” (as in, not inner) othering existed on different levels of society and culture and was applicable to many different subjects which will be discussed in the following paragraphs after establishing the link between othering and identity.

42 Ibidem, 356 and 357.
Identity

As mentioned in the introduction and the previous chapter, an important aspect to consider when researching a topic like othering is identity. One needs a clear identity to be able to other those that are not a part of the same social or ethnic group. In the same vein as Said’s work on Orientalism, which clearly describes the western identity and their view of an oriental identity, it is important to describe an Athenian identity that fits the 5th century and focusses on the most important parts of this identity. That way, it is possible to adequately illustrate the way they othered those that did not fit their criteria. Identity is an interesting topic when studying the democratic polis of Athens in the 5th century. The city state was the first known democracy, which is why identity shaping in the context of Athens in the 5th century is a very interesting topic to study. For the first time in (“recorded”) history, political individuality and opinion became a factor on a larger scale than just the appointed rulers. Establishing identity differences between citizens of Athens is somewhat more difficult, because the Athenians valued their citizenship, especially in contrast to barbaroi. An important part of Athenian citizenship was religion, as it was expected from all citizens to participate in the polis as a duty of citizenship. Othering in religion will be explained further on in this chapter.

Greek othering

Athenians of the 5th century fashioned their identities on many levels. These collective identities are partly shaped by othering those not belonging to their group in many different ways and on many different levels. Both Saïd’s and Gruen’s interpretation of orientalism and othering can be used to explain the collective identity of the Athenians and their way of othering. A prime example of this time period of this thesis is discussed by both authors, namely Aeschylus’ Persae, a tragedy from 472 BC. Said believes that Aeschylus’ depiction of the grieving Asiatic women would have been an artificial enactment of what he, a non-Oriental, made as a symbol for the entire Orient. According to Saïd, Aeschylus would illustrate the other, in this case the Persians, as weak, softened by luxury and effeminate, seeing this as an example of the self-aggrandizement of the Athenian city state after the Persian wars. Gruen adds some nuance. He mentions that some scholars share an opinion similar to Saïd’s, and that other scholars believe that Aeschylus created a perspective of supranational sentiment or ethnic antagonism.

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47 Said, Orientalism, 21.
48 Gruen, Rethinking the Other in Antiquity, 10.
Gruen suggests that one does not have to pick one of those sides in the debate on the author’s intention. He argues that, while Persians may enjoy luxury in Aeschylus’ depiction of them, he does not mention Athenian austerity as a national trait. Gruen instead mentions that some Persian luxuries and clothing became status symbols for the elite and later even became popular in lower classes as well.\(^{49}\) Other factors of interconnectedness, such as trading routes and the Persian familiarity with Greek mercenaries and skilled professionals, would discourage a poet like Aeschylus to directly demonize the “Oriental”. Aeschylus did fight in the Persian wars, where a lost a brother, so he would not have not been all too sympathetic.\(^{50}\) The play does not have a clear goal, such as creating a divide between ethnicities or the promotion of sympathy for the enemy. To quote Gruen: “Persians constitute the enemy; their actions engendered divine retaliation; and their failure gratified the audience”, all hallmarks of tragedy. Gruen does not see this play as a ploy to categorize the Persians as other. It is hard to pick a side in this particular debate, since either explanation is not satisfactory enough. Said’s theory is too black and white and Gruen exaggerates the importance of the Persian audience of Aeschylus’ work, since these festivals were Athenian and held in the city.

Another example of othering can be found in the context of slavery in Classical Greece. Athenians considered people that were not Greek to be barbaroi and had no problem enslaving them, since they thought of these barbaroi as lesser human beings.\(^{51}\) They named these others barbaroi, since they were unable to speak Greek and their speech sounded like the bleating of sheep to them.\(^{52}\) The only significant exception to this rule were the Egyptians. When Herodotus writes about them in his Histories, where instead of contrasting the Egyptian culture with Greek culture, he sets them apart from all other people.\(^{53}\) This signifies that even though the Greeks othered non-Greeks in a derogatory manner, believing themselves superior, there is a level of nuance as Gruen explains. Believing the Egyptians to be different, but not less than themselves, the manner of othering that exists is not as black and white as Said’s Orientalism would suggest.

\(^{49}\) Ibidem, 11.  
\(^{50}\) Ibidem, 12.  
\(^{52}\) Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 1.  
\(^{53}\) Ibidem, 3.
Another example of othering on an alternative level can be found in the rivalry between city states. An example of this is Sparta, since the Athenians of the 5th century truly did see them as rivals and very different from themselves, even though they were not barbaroi. The Spartan city state used to be an Athenian rival for centuries and used to be one of the larger city-states. Even though both the Athenians and the Spartans belonged to the group of “Greeks”, there are clear signs of othering to be found. This is exemplified by the setting up of the Delian Bond, an intentionally anti-Spartan endeavour. This othering gained intensity as the years progressed after the Persian war and the forming of the Delian Bond since Athens and Sparta slowly started to see each other as rivals. This reached its peak when the Peloponnesian war broke out between Sparta and its allies versus Athens and their allies.

After the end of the first year of the Peloponnesian war, Thucydides tells us Pericles delivered his famous funeral Oration. This piece of writing is an example of Athenians othering inhabitants of city states that they believed to be inferior. This piece is often considered an important source of evidence on the identity of the 5th century Athenian, at the start of the Peloponnesian war. Presumably, if one is to believe Thucydides’ account of events, one year after the war started, Pericles honoured the dead by delivering a funerary oration that described the character of the Athenian polis, comparing it with its Spartan neighbour:

“Then in the studies of war we excel our enemies in this. We leave our city open to all men; nor was it ever seen that by banishing of strangers we denied them the learning or sight of any of those things which, if not hidden, an enemy might reap advantage by, not relying on secret preparation and deceit but upon our own courage in the action. They, in their discipline, hunt after valour presently from their youth with laborious exercise, and yet we that live remissly undertake as great dangers as they. For example, the Lacedaemonians invade not our dominion by themselves alone but with the aid of all the rest. But when we invade our neighbours, though we fight in hostile ground against such as in their own ground fight in defence of their own substance, yet for the most part we get the victory. Never enemy yet fell into the hands of our whole forces at once both because we apply ourselves much to navigation and by land also send many of our men into divers countries abroad. But when, fighting with a part of it, they chance to get the better, they boast they have beaten the whole; and when they get the worse, they say they are beaten by the whole. And yet when, from ease rather than studious labour and upon natural

55 S. Todd, Athens and Sparta (Bristol 1996) 10-11.
56 Todd, Athens and Sparta, 10.
rather than doctrinal valour, we come to undertake any danger, we have this odds by it that we shall not faint beforehand with the meditation of future trouble, and in the action, we shall appear no less confident than they that are ever toiling, procuring admiration to our city as well in this as in divers other things.”

Thucydides’ Pericles clearly distinguishes the Athenian polis in comparison to the Spartan polis. Therefore, it seems to be a clear example of Athenians that othered their Spartan neighbours. Thucydides account of Pericles’ funerary oration shows a manner in which the Athenian people distanced themselves from their Spartan neighbours. By comparing themselves to their enemies, Pericles underlines Athenian greatness. In the citation above, primarily directed at their differences in military habits, he claims Athenians to be braver and worthier of admiration. This shows that the Athenians othered their enemies by claiming themselves to be superior due to differences in city states and citizens. This manner of othering would fit better with Saïd’s theory on Orientalism, since it creates a divide that labels another city state as inferior.

An interesting phenomenon that occurs the classical era is what Perlman calls Panhellenism in the article Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism. In this article, Perlman describes the efforts in the fifth and especially in the fourth century of Greek people wanting to overcome the political disunity between the Greek city states. The Panhellenic ideal concentrated on the similarities in culture and social norms between the Greek poleis and the ideal was often used to justify war against barbarians. After the Persian War, this ideal was used also a propaganda tool to validate the hegemonial rule of one polis, since the Greek poleis could unite to fight such a war or protect themselves against barbarians. An example of this within Greek society is the aforementioned creation of the Delian League, which was not only anti-Spartan, but also contributed to an Athenian hegemony in the fifth century. This idea of Panhellenism can be seen as a form of othering by exclusion and self-aggrandizement in the fifth century and would thus, as many of the Athenian examples discussed, fit Saïd’s idea of Orientalism more concerning the divide between Greek people and barbarians, and Gruen’s nuanced alternative considering the attempt to unite the Greek city states.

58 S. Perlman, “Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism”, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 25 (1975) 1, 1-30, there 4.
59 Perlman, “Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism”, 5.
60 Ibidem, 14.
Citizenship

Another level of collective identity and othering in 5th century Athens is based on citizenship.61 An ancient proverb even underlines the importance of the Oikos of a Greek household: “Starting from Hestia”. Hestia is the goddess of the Hearth and refers to the home, thus the Athenian’s Oikos.62 This Oikos forms the foundation of any Athenian family and their worship. Ancestral gods and ancestral tombs where incredibly important to the Athenians throughout the centuries, and this is no different in the classical era of Athens. The importance of ancestry in Classical Athens is evidenced by the many myths and additions to myths that “proved” a divine heritage for groups of people or even entire city states. Citizenship itself was also based on ancestry and more directly on parentage. In her book Race and Citizen identity in the classical Athenian democracy Susan Lape writes that the distinction made between those that were Athenian citizens and that were not was based on their parentage. If someone’s parents were Athenian citizens, they would be viewed as Athenian as well.63 This created a divide between people with and people without Athenian parents. This exclusion fits with Saïd’s idea of Orientalism, even though this manner of othering is not necessarily aimed at people from the “Orient”, or in the case of 5th century Athens “barbarians”. This example shows that exclusion and othering happened at many different levels. The discussed ideal of Panhellenism would create a collective identity between Greeks, whereas the example of Athenian citizenship and the exclusion of others occurred on the same level.

Within Athenian citizenship itself, divides existed as well. Josine Blok has studied participation of citizens in her book Citizenship in Classical Athens. She analyses the terms and practices of Hiera kai Hosia, a phrase pointing out a clear distinction between devotion to the gods and to the political polis.64 She describes Hiera as acts of worship which were demanded by the gods and are gifts given to them with the idea of reciprocity in mind. This means that whenever one would make an offer to the gods (or one specific god), it was expected that the person giving would receive as well, establishing a good relationship between humankind and their preferred deities. The Athenian version of this Greek idea included the Hosia. A similar cycle of reciprocity would exist between a person and the polis. This bond was important in the context

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61 Lape, Race and citizen identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy, 44.
63 Lape, Race and citizen identity in the Classical Athenian Democracy, 45. I use he, since only male inhabitants of Athens were allowed to partake in political aspects of the Athenian polis.
64 Blok, Citizenship in Classical Athens, 70-74.
of citizenship as it anchored the polis’s cults, customs, laws, obligations and social values.\textsuperscript{65} This would imply that those citizens that may have qualified by birth to become an Athenian citizen, would still have been othered in a way fitting Saïd’s theory on othering if they were not participating in the political aspect of their life in the polis.

**Religion**

Religion and othering are, as discussed in the introduction of this thesis, a popular topic of research in anthropology and political sciences. In the ancient world, these phenomena interplayed as well. Instead of othering in the form of Saïd’s orientalism, Gruen’s more nuanced explanation would be better equipped to discuss the othering in the religion of 5\textsuperscript{th} century Greece. The example of the god Dionysus shows the inclusive nature of Greek religion, which helped setting the other in a softer light than Saïd’s orientalism would suggest. Herodotus claims Dionysus came from Egyptian worship.\textsuperscript{66} Dionysus travels in his myth through Asia and is therefore seen as a mediating figure between Greek and Asian culture. He is also seen as mediator between man and woman, between death and life and between peace and ecstasy.\textsuperscript{67} In 5\textsuperscript{th} century Athens, Dionysus was an important god because theatre became an important part of Athenian life. An example of this importance is the Dionysia, a yearly festival in Athens. This festival originated in the 7\textsuperscript{th} century BC and later led to the tragedy competitions during which the most well-known playwrights competed, namely Aeschylus, Euripides and Sophocles.\textsuperscript{68}

The worship of the gods was similar in the demes, based on studies on some surviving sacrificial calendars in Attica. Even though the worship of the Greek gods was similar on the calendars, there were some important differences concerning the local heroes. These heroes were an important part of the shaping of a local identity since they were viewed as the ancestors of the locals.\textsuperscript{69} Sometimes these heroes would have an entire month dedicated to them. For example, the month Boedromion is dedicated to the hero Thorikos on the sacrificial calendar of the deme Thorikos.\textsuperscript{70} Another example can be found on the sacrificial calendar of the deme Erchia. The hero Epops, who was a part of the mythical past of Erchia, is specifically mentioned on the

\textsuperscript{65} Ibidem, 75.
\textsuperscript{68} O.S. Brockett, *History of the Theatre* (Boston 1968) 18–25.
sacrificial calendar of Erchia. This example illustrates the role religion has in the shaping of identity on a local level.

Another example of religious identity shaping, and othering can be found in the initiation rituals of Artemis Brauronia. This initiation ritual is a clear example of Whitehouse’s theory on imagistic religiosity and doctrinal religiosity, which states that doctrinal religions like Christianity and Islam can be explained and learned from, for example, a book like the bible or the Quran. Imagistic religions rely more on experiences, such as initiation rituals. Imagistic rituals can be understood as identity-shaping religious experiences. These are experiences that do not only impact the self-image of a person undergoing such a ritual, but the view of the community regarding an initiated individual as well. In the case of Artemis Brauronia, the girls that underwent this ritual were seen as adult women when they finished this ritual. The transformation from girl to woman is an important part of one’s identity. This example shows that religion did Other in Athens of the 5th century on a rather small scale. From various local demes to the line between a girl and a woman, religion was able to create a distinct divide between these differing identities. This is an important aspect to remember when determining whether the Eleusinian Mysteries could have had an othering effect, since it had such an impact on the identity of an individual. This is a more nuanced form of othering in the same vein as Gruen’s theory because the intention of labelling a young girl as other means that it is clear that she has to undergo a rite de passage to claim womanhood and belong to the collective identity of woman.

Othering in knowledge?

The Hymn to Demeter underlines that Demeter taught the inhabitants of Eleusis about her mysteries and initiation ritual which would grant them eschatological knowledge. Whether or not this was the case is still a topic of debate, but using Whitehouse’s theory on imagistic religion, the ritual itself would be an identity-shaping experience. Undergoing such an experience could be seen as the obtaining of religious knowledge shared between initiates.

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73 H. Whitehouse, Modes of Religiosity: A cognitive theory of religious transmission (Maryland 2004).
74 Blundell and Williamson, eds, The Sacred and the Feminine in Ancient Greece, 34.
Having established that a form of knowledge was imparted during the initiation ritual, knowledge itself can be analysed in the context of othering and the shaping of identity.

To associate a phenomenon like othering with knowledge, it must be established if knowledge can be classified as a part of someone’s identity or a group’s identity, as othering is a tool in the shaping of a collective identity. Post structuralist Foucault wrote many essays and lectures on the relation between power and knowledge. In a compilation of these, the following can be found:

“The exercise of power itself creates and causes to emerge new objects of knowledge and accumulates new bodies of information ... the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power.... It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power.”  

While not explicitly connecting othering with identity, he does describe a clear link between power and knowledge. Othering can be used as a tool to accumulate power. An example of that is political Panhellenism. By othering those that are not Greek, wars against barbarians were justified, thus making othering a powerful political tool.  

In his *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*, Bowden theorizes that mystery cults did not share “secret knowledge” in the straightforward sense, for example a clear explanation of the afterlife or how to ascend to the most desired level of the underworld like the Elysian Fields. Bowden continues to illustrate that what was shared during these initiations was not a deeper understanding of the afterlife, but the experience would let the initiates believe to be in an intimate and personal connection with the gods. Bowden argues that this experience was an important part of the Mysteries and the secrets they hid, as these experiences would be something that only the initiated shared and did not share with the rest of the world. He is also correct when claiming that there is no evidence that tells us anything concerning a secret that might have existed in a doctrinal sense. The absence of such evidence does not mean that there was not any doctrinal knowledge shared during the initiation ritual. I will use Bowden’s theory that the shared experience was an important part of the secrets of the initiation ritual, but I will not go as far as to claim that there was no doctrinal knowledge shared, even if there is no

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77 Perlman, “Rethinking the Other in Antiquity”, 14.
evidence of that. A part of the secret religious knowledge I refer to will be knowledge of this experience instead of some specific dogma concerning the afterlife or a similar religious topic.

“Inner othering”

The analysed examples of othering show that this phenomenon occurred on many different levels, both cultural and societal. Many of these examples can be explained by either Saïd’s theory or Gruen’s. Bowden’s explanation of the secret knowledge shared during a ritual like the Eleusinian initiation, creates a new avenue to explore aside from cultural and societal divides. Namely, the divide between people that possess knowledge in the form of an experience and those that do not. As stated in the introduction of this chapter, “other” is both a verb that labels a person or a group as different based on societal or cultural norms and a noun to refer to groups or individuals that are labelled, distinguished, or excluded for not adhering to these norms. A divide based on experience does not necessarily occur because of cultural and societal differences. A divide can exist between people of the same cultural background who adhere to the same societal norms, even though a divide based on experiences exists on a smaller, more personal level than most of the examples discussed in this chapter. There is a clear distinction between the collective identity of those that underwent the Eleusinian initiation and those that did not, as will be discussed in depth in the following chapters. To describe the form of othering that exists on this level, I would like to introduce the term “inner othering’.

Inner othering does not entirely fit with either Saïd’s view on othering or Gruen’s but lies somewhere in between. Following Saïd’s theory that views orientalism as based on self-aggrandizement and a negative view of the “lesser” other and Gruen’s refinement of this idea, which includes a more positive lens to view the divide between peoples and cultures, inner othering takes another step in a slightly different direction. Inner othering is not a phenomenon that attempts to appropriate traditions, include others, underlines one’s own greatness or alienate those that are not the same, it points at a divide that makes it harder to understand each other due to an unshared experience.

Conclusions

After studying the extensive scholarship surrounding othering, it is clear that this phenomenon is an abstract and subjective concept. The practice of othering is visible in the context of the creation of a collective identity. However, some of the aspects and examples of othering, in this thesis mostly discussed in the context of Saïd and Gruen’s work, are based on an assumption of the intention of people that lived roughly 2500 years ago. This is rather difficult to accurately
determine since the subjects of ancient studies have been gone for a long time and the evidence of their existence is relatively scarce. Even though there is a layer of subjectivity, Saïd’s and Gruen’s theories do not have to be disregarded. These theories are well argued and make excellent use of their source material but should be taken with a healthy grain of salt. Aside from the problem of subjectivity, it is clear that divides did exist in 5th century Greece on cultural and societal levels. Without assuming too detailed intentions, it is clear that the othering phenomenon had two distinct goals: creating or emphasizing a divide between collective identities and the attempt to include and appropriate aspects of varying collective identities. To each discussed example, one of these goals can be attributed.

Aside from the analysis of this complicated phenomenon, a new nuance has been added in the form of inner othering. This term will enable the clear identification of a divide between people belonging to a collective identity that is less outspoken and obvious than can be seen in, for example, Saïd’s study on Orientalism. Inner othering could be seen as an extension of Gruen’s work who theorised that othering is not necessarily a practice of negatively viewing the other or believing oneself to be superior and is of the opinion that othering in antiquity was more nuanced and points out examples that show Greek attempts of cultural inclusion and connections between their own people and those that were other. Where Gruen adds nuance to the complexity of opinion, inner othering adds nuance to the levels of othering, by describing othering on a small scale based on experience and knowledge which creates a divide between people from the same culture with the same societal standards. In other words, two different kinds of divide exist: conscious othering which usually has a presumed intention or political goal and inner othering which is formed subconsciously and without a goal. These two forms can be applicable to the same evidence, focussing on different aspects of collective identity.
An important change occurred in Classical Athens regarding the way the Athenian citizens celebrated their victories.\textsuperscript{80} After the Persian Wars many victory monuments were erected, and buildings were reconstructed if they had been destroyed by the Persian invasion, one of these being the Eleusinian Telesterion.\textsuperscript{81} These monuments helped to shape the Athenian identity and bore a clear message to both Athenian citizens and others. In the middle of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century, the Acropolis was still in a state of ruin because of the devastation the Persian army had left behind. According to a supposed oath the Greeks had taken, the Oath of Plataea, they would not rebuild any of the destroyed sanctuaries and other divine area’s that belonged to their gods.\textsuperscript{82} As is evidenced by the acropolis of Athens of today, this is not an oath that the Athenians stuck to. The Periclean building programme is a clear example of this. This building programme was financed by the enormous wealth and power the Athenians were able to amass in the context of the Delian Bond and the Athenian hegemony that occurred after the Persian Wars.\textsuperscript{83} Both the oath of Plataea and the Periclean building programme could have been part of the Panhellenic ideal that the Athenians used to create the Delian Bond and establish their hegemony.\textsuperscript{84}

After a failed expedition to Egypt in 454/3 BC, the treasury of the Delian Confederacy was moved from Delos to Athens. At the time, there was no large temple present at the acropolis where such a large amount of money could have been stored. Between 453 BC and 447 BC, the year the Athenians started building the Parthenon, they had begun debating restoration plans.\textsuperscript{85} According to Plutarch’s \textit{Life of Perikles}, there were a series of heated debates on the potential use of the tribute from the Delian bond that was now stored at Athens. According to him, the opposition was not sure whether it was prudent to use the tribute for a building programme since they were still at a state of war with Persia. It is impossible to determine whether or not this is what actually happened, since Plutarch was also not very aware of the economics of temple building in the Classical era. But Shear concludes in \textit{Trophies of Victory: Public Building in Periklean Athens} that, according to the wording of the Eleusinian decree, it might

\textsuperscript{80} Shear, \textit{Trophies of Victory: Public Building in Periklean Athens}, 13.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibidem, 14.
\textsuperscript{82} P. Cartledge, \textit{After Thermopylae} (Cambridge 2013) 28.
\textsuperscript{83} Perlman, “Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism”, 3.
\textsuperscript{84} Ibidem, 13-14.
\textsuperscript{85} Shear, \textit{Trophies of Victory: Public Building in Periklean Athens}, 22.
have been possible that there was some kind of political opposition and administrative changes that caused the delay.  

**Periclean building programme**

The Periclean building programme itself showcases a clear change in the manner that the Athenians celebrated their victories and how they chose to honour their gods. There are clear examples in the victory monuments at Marathon and Salamis that displays the significant difference in comparison to the Periclean building programme. The buildings on the Acropolis and in Eleusis illustrates the Athenian effort to aggrandize the most prominent and important cults and festivals of Athens. There is a clear focus shift visible that shows the Athenian goal of glorifying their own deities and their city itself. It became important to show the Greek world the “gifts” Athens had shared with them. For example, the goddess Athena, who had granted the Athenians victory over their Persian adversaries, received her own monument in the form of the Athena Nike temple, after Pericles’ death, next to the entrance of the acropolis: the Propylaia. This religious imperialism, as Shear calls it, is a manner of othering the Athenians communicated using their monuments and piety. As victors over the Persian barbarians, the Athenians glorified their own culture and accomplishments. This is an example of the manner in which Athenians liked to identify themselves after their victory over the Persians: as a grand city state that gifted the Greek World with their fine cults, festivals, temples and other favours. This signifies the importance of the rebuilding of the Acropolis to the Athenian identity but does not necessarily show othering on behalf of the Athenians.

Shear’s theory illustrates how the Athenians were able to shape their identity and set themselves apart from the rest of the Greek World. He discusses the Periclean building programme that specifically othered the Persian barbarians in the context of orientalism. The grand monuments that were built during the Periclean building programme themselves serve as a testament to this form of identification by the Athenians and the iconography present tells a similar story in which orientalism and othering is more explicitly visible. An article by Rachel Kousser, *Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis*, provides an analysis of the Parthenon as a case study in which the Parthenon is studied to discover evidence of orientalism and thus, othering. The Athenian Acropolis was the heart of the democratic, 5th century city state of Athens. This part of the city, its religious centre, should be able to unveil in what manner the

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86 Ibidem, 26. The decree will be further discussed in chapters 4 and 5.
87 Ibidem, 13-16
88 Ibidem, 36.
Athenians saw themselves and othered different people in the 5th century, since the Periclean building program seems to have had a clear political agenda which can be related to the practice of othering.

She starts her article by describing three ways in which the Athenians dealt with the destruction of their Acropolis. They either left the destroyed temples and monuments to commemorate their loss, destroyed their memory of this happening or used the damaged buildings and statues to recall their victory and loss against the Persian invasion.89 Kousser describes in her article the manner in which the Athenians of the 5th century othered their Persian enemies, using the Parthenon as her object of study.90 She uses the metopes on the Parthenon as an example to illustrate her argument. She describes the centaurs on the metopes and writes that they are a mythical representation of the barbaric Persians. She explains that the Athenians must have believed that they fought inhuman barbarians. They distanced themselves from the weak, sacrilegious creatures that destroyed their Acropolis. This destruction was used by the Athenians to “other” the Persians that sacked their city.91 She assigns political meaning to the imagery created on the pediments of the Parthenon and uses her interpretation of the temple as an argument that support her idea that the Athenians of the 5th century would have othered the Persians they defeated after the sack of the Athenian Acropolis. By rebuilding the monument even grander than before after the destruction by the Persian’s “barbaric” hands, they would have conquered their enemies in another way as well. By displaying their enemies in this manner, they were able to other them and illustrate them as barbaric, lesser, weak and uncivilized.92 She believes that the Athenians did this to glorify their own culture in this manner, which would fall in line with Saïd’s theory on orientalism.

The Eleusinian Telesterion and its construction and meaning in relation to othering will be discussed in the following chapter, but for now it is important to know that the renovation of the Telesterion was a part of the Periclean building programme as well, continuing the trend of showing outsiders that the Athenians were able to overcome the Persian destruction. This signifies the importance of the cult as part of the Athenian identity and the manner in which they believe they shared the gift of this cult with the rest of the Greek world. The aggrandizement of this particular temple is evidence of the importance of its cult for both the Athenians and the rest of the Greek world. The article by Kousser and the book by Shear

89 Ibidem, 270-272.
90 Kousser, “Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis”, 263-270.
91 Ibidem, 272-275.
92 Ibidem, 271.
illustrate Saïd’s theory on orientalism clearly. Even though intent is assumed, Kousser’s and Shear’s theories are well researched and argued. The self-aggrandizement and negative outlook on the other are in the case of the Periclean building programme rather evident. A divide seems to be created to emphasize their victory and strength of the Athenian people and the weakness of their Persian enemies. It seems to be an Athenian pattern to use othering to overcome the Persian invasion and its devastation. Gruen’s theory could be argued since the Persian imagery was appropriated by the Athenians, but the goal of cultural inclusion would not have been a logical one since the Persians were shown as the losing party.

Conclusions

The practice of othering can be clearly seen in archaeological monuments and objects of the fifth century. The Panhellenic ideal of unification and othering towards barbarians like the Persians can be found in the archaeological and architectural evidence of the Periclean building programme. The self-aggrandizement that was the goal of the Periclean building programme, by showing both foreigners and citizens of the polis that the Athenians could thrive after the Persian invasion, are clear signs of the theory of orientalism found in Edward Saïd’s work, if one assumes the intention of 5th century Athenians.
CHAPTER 4

HISTORICAL AND RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

After studying the phenomenon of othering (and “inner othering”) in relation to archaeology, I will now examine the relevant evidence concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries. First and foremost, some religious and mythical context will be given to further understand the findings and excavations of the Eleusinian sanctuary. The next chapter will be on the archaeological evidence and its historical context since the Eleusinian sanctuary has existed for many centuries and in very different political landscapes.

Religion

The second chapter of this thesis explains the use of religion in the Athenian Polis of the 5th century. In the same vein, the following religious context can be added to the aforementioned discussion on religion in the Athenian city state. To be able to put the Eleusinian cult in the correct context, the most famous and widely used piece of literary evidence on the Eleusinian mysteries shall be discussed. This is the Homeric Hymn to Demeter. This hymn can be summarized as follows:

Persephone was the daughter of Demeter, the Goddess of agriculture. She was kidnapped by the God of the Underworld, Hades. As she was simply picking flowers, the Earth opened, and Hades emerged on his chariot. He took Persephone with him to make her his wife. Demeter heard her daughter’s scream and was unable to find her. For days she refused to eat ambrosia or drink nectar and searched for her lost child. She ran into Hecate who was aware of Persephone’s scream but did not know what had happened to her. Helios, the sun God, had seen what happened. He told her what happened and not to worry, since Hades would make a fine husband. In anger, Demeter decided to turn her back to her fellow Olympian gods and disguised herself as a mortal to wander amongst them.93

Figure 2 Bernini’s depiction of the Rape of Persephone, Villa Borghese, Rome.

93 Foley, Homeric Hymn to Demeter, 1-6.
She came to Eleusis and was perceived by many as a grieving old woman. The four daughters of Keleos, the Eleusinian king, saw her. Demeter pretended to be a mortal woman with a tragic backstory involving pirates, asking if the women knew a place for her to work as a housekeeper or nurse. They went to ask their mother and Metaneira proposed them to hire the disguised Demeter to nurse her beloved son. As she arrives, she fills the home with divine light and Metaneira is awestruck. She offers Demeter her chair, which she refuses. Demeter sat down in a second offered chair, with a silvery fleece over it, grieving. Iambe, the servant of the Eleusinian women, tries to cheer the grieving woman up using jokes and manages to make Demeter smile. Metaneira goes on to offer Demeter red wine which she refuses. She then orders Metaneira to mix meal, water, and mint. She accepts this drink to observe the holy rites.  

Demeter, taken with the young child, feeds him ambrosia and he grows like a god. She intends to make the boy immortal and hides the quick growing form of the child in the fire of the hearth. Metaneira sees this and screams in terror. Demeter, annoyed with Metaneira’s stupidity, reveals herself to be a Goddess. She instructs the Eleusinians to build her a temple and adhere to the rites she desires. She disappears and leaves a terrified Metaneira. King Keleos sees this and complies with Demeter’s demands. Demeter goes on to look for her daughter and causes a dreadful year for the mortals, since harvest is impossible. This means that the other Gods cannot enjoy their sacrifices as usual and Zeus takes notice. Sending Iris, he demands that Demeter joins the Gods, which she refuses until she can see her daughter again.  

Therefore, Zeus is forced to make Hades return Persephone. Hades begrudgingly lets Persephone go, but not before explaining that he would be a fine husband to Persephone and that all mortals who would not honour him with rites and sacrifices would find eternal retribution. Persephone joyously returns to her mother, but not before eating a pomegranate offered by Hades. Demeter reunites with her daughter and questions her. She finds out Persephone had eaten the pomegranate and is therefore bound to the Underworld and Hades, having to spend a third of every year there. Hecate arrives and shares in their joy. From then on out, Hecate would serve as a guide to Persephone whenever she travelled from or to the Underworld.  

Rhea, sent by Zeus, tells Demeter that he is prepared to offer her any and all the honours among the immortals that she wants, and that Persephone has to live a third of the year in the

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94 Ibidem, 6-12.
95 Ibidem, 12-18.
Underworld. The rest of the year she will live with the Gods, including her mother, on Mount Olympus. Demeter restored fertility to the earth. After the ordeal, Demeter returns to Eleusis to instruct them on how to perform sacred rites in honour of her. She also shows them her mysteries, which no one was to question, violate or reveal to any uninitiated.\footnote{Ibidem, 18-26.}

The hymn ends with the following words:

“\textit{Blessed is the mortal on earth who has seen these rites, but the uninitiated who has no share in them never has the same lot once dead in the dreary darkness.}”\footnote{Ibidem, 26.}

This citation suggests that knowledge on the afterlife was shared during the initiation ritual in honour of Demeter. A significant part of the scholarship on the Eleusinian Mysteries includes the notion that the Eleusinian initiates might have received some eschatological knowledge or advantage in regard to the afterlife. It is, however, extremely difficult to reconstruct this or even prove this happened or not, since the secrets the initiates received during the ritual were never to be shared. The possibility of the existence of such knowledge and whether or not it was part of the initiation ritual will be discussed later on, along with some reconstructions.

Aside from the discussion concerning whether or not knowledge on the afterlife has been shared, an important work by Kevin Clinton, \textit{Myth and Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries} discusses whether or not this famous version of Demeter’s search for her daughter was an actual part of the widely known version of this story or whether it was perhaps a specific dedication to the Eleusinian cult. The validity of the hymn will be discussed in chapter 5.

\textbf{Historical context}

A summary of the relevant historical context will be provided here to illustrate the position of the Eleusinian Mysteries in this time period. Using this context and an understanding of how the Eleusinian mysteries and its position in the Ancient Greek world changed from its earliest days to the Classical period, a more complete picture will provide the necessary social and historical context to accurately study the archaeological evidence and the effects the Eleusinian initiations might have had on the Athenian civilizations of the 5\textsuperscript{th} century. This will be used to analyse the Eleusinian Mysteries in the context of othering and “inner othering”. Since this thesis focusses mainly on Athens of the Classical era, in particular after the Persian wars and
before the Peloponnesian war, the development of the Eleusinian mysteries until that period will be discussed and the fate of the mysteries and the sanctuary will not.

Eleusis’ story starts in the second millennium BC. The archaeological excavations show that the earliest period in which the city of Eleusis existed was the Early Helladic period.\(^98\) However, only a few sherds were found that can be traced to this time period. Therefore, it is hard to reconstruct any social and political organizations since architectural remains do not survive. There is no evidence either to be found that would suggest social differentiation between groups.\(^99\) Some evidence suggests religious activity in the Late Helladic period, though not very enlightening when it comes to research on social and religious activity and the form it might have had in that time period, whereas there is evidence that suggest that the sacrifice of animals was a regular occurrence.\(^100\)

Evidence of that corresponds with the Mycenaean period and suggests the emerging of social regional elite in the form of a Mycenaean house (Megaron B) and a relatively larger tomb, which both seem to have belonged to an important family.\(^101\) This shows that at least a small part of the inhabitation of Eleusis uses mechanisms to distinguish themselves as elites.\(^102\) There is also evidence of religious evidence in the Megaron B house.\(^103\) There is evidence of animal sacrifice but the religious context behind this occurrence in this time period is not known, even though an agricultural deity would not have been out of place. Even though there is clear evidence of Mycenaean remains, a clear palace administration, an important part of the social structure that existed in that time period, was never found.\(^104\)

The Protogeometric and Geometric periods in Eleusis are still very mysteries because so little remains from that period.\(^105\) The Archaic period, however, shows evidence of Eleusis becoming a larger and more important sanctuary. For example, building activity in the 7th century BC shows the enlargement of the Telesterion, which means that Eleusis became a religious site that would have been visited more than previously.\(^106\) This was also the time period in which Eleusis

\(^98\) Cosmopoulos, *Bronze Age Eleusis and the Origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, 43.
\(^99\) Ibidem, 74.
\(^100\) Ibidem, 75-77.
\(^101\) Ibidem, 103.
\(^102\) Ibidem, 104.
\(^103\) Ibidem, 105.
\(^104\) Ibidem, 123.
\(^105\) Ibidem, 132.
\(^106\) Ibidem, 139.
became part of the Athenian city state. The sacred rites where mentioned by Solon’s reforms, according to George Mylonas, one of the excavators of the Eleusinian sanctuary.107

In the Peisistratan period Eleusis became a Panhellenic sanctuary and access to the Mysteries would have no longer been restricted to those that were citizens of Athens and it was in this time period that Eleusis’ fame as a Mystery cult would have increased significantly.108 The Telesterion that was already altered to accommodate more initiates grew even further. The aristocratic Peisistratos launched his plan to create an Athens that could be considered the leading city-state in the Hellenic world and this is visible in Eleusis as well. Eleusis was expanded with seemingly two clear goals: religious and military.109 Peisistratos used the Eleusinian sanctuary as a tool in this goal since Eleusis’ importance grew as a Panhellenic sanctuary with an open invitation to all those that were able to afford their time and the necessary ritual costs.110

A historical aspect to consider is the absence of Athens in the Homeric Hymn. Athens was not yet the powerful city state it would become in the 5th century. According to France R. Walton’s article Athens, Eleusis and the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, Athens became more interested in Eleusis and its mysteries, which the city of Eleusis in turn used to gain some political power.111 Important point to consider, however, is that the epigraphical evidence points out that the ritual required a relatively expensive offering and time to complete the preparatory rituals.112 Therefore it seems that only a few wealthy people possessing the gift of time were able to participate in the initiation ritual. It seems that the political power would be primarily gained from the wealthier citizens of Athens.

Eleusis and Athens during the Classical era

The position of Eleusis in Classical Athens can be clarified by inscriptions, laws and other writings. These pieces of evidence grant us the opportunity to examine rules, legislation and accounts of individual experiences that could help create a broader picture concerning the relationship between the Athenian citizens and the Eleusinian Mysteries. One of the most important pieces of evidence that can be used to reconstruct the relationship between Athenians,

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108 Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, 77.
109 Ibidem, 78.
110 Ibidem, 77.
112 Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, 3.
people outside of Athens and the Eleusinian sanctuary and mysteries can be found in an important piece of epigraphical evidence, the First Fruits decree.

On this important inscription, both Athenian citizens and even more so its allies and other Greek cities are reminded of the benevolence of the Athenians. Maureen Cavanaugh discusses this in her book *Eleusis and Athens* and comes to some interesting conclusions that include the position of hegemony Athens had during Pericles’ time and the manner in which the Eleusinian sanctuary was organized on a practical level. On the decree there is a reminder to all worshipers of Demeter, which would have been most of the Greek city states since the Eleusinian sanctuary was open to all, had to sacrifice a significant portion of their agricultural products to Demeter and in extension, Athens. This would fit with the discussed idea of Panhellenism, a propaganda tool used to justify and establish the Athenian hegemony during the time of the Delian Bond. Compliance with this decree meant that the other Greek cities and allies of Athens recognized the Athenian hegemony of the years before the Peloponnesian war. Both Saïd’s theory on orientalism and Gruen’s nuanced version of othering can be applied to this artefact by including people that are not Athenian citizens in the worship of Demeter at an Athenian sanctuary, but doing this to emphasize the Athenian hegemony of the 5th century. In the context of othering, the Telesterion was also a part of the Periclean building programme after being destroyed during the Persian invasion.

The religious aspect of the Eleusinian Mysteries might be a point of contention. A popular assumption is that most Ancient Greeks believed in their polytheistic pantheon, yet this is not a certainty. Even though religion was celebrated by many festivals each year and many sanctuaries tended to by priests, the manner in which the Athenians believed in the gods had changed somewhat in the 5th century. There are examples in tragedies and legal orations that people were mocked when they blamed their actions on a deity in a courtroom. This meant that Athenian law was not theological and solely focused on the responsibility of the individual. Religious beliefs were somewhat different than Homeric verses in the Iliad and the Odyssey were the Gods were blamed for most actions of mortals. Because of this shift in religious

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115 Perlman, “Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism”, 14.
belief in the 5th century, religious knowledge itself may have been less important. Still the knowledge of the experience of the initiation rituals and the myth can be considered knowledge in a manner comparable to modern initiation rituals of freemasonry and, in a less secretive manner, Christian baptism. This would create a divide in knowledge, othering those that were not initiated.

Another important clue that underlines the significance of Eleusis in the Athenian city state is the manner in which secrecy surrounding the rituals was ensured. The secrecy surrounding the ceremonies that took place in the Telesterion was enforced strictly by the appropriate officials. Initiates were not allowed to share their knowledge of the ritual with others. There are a few ancient sources that tell us of the consequences of breaking this rule. For example, the poet Aeschylus almost lost his life when the people of Athens believed he divulged some of the secrets of the ritual in his tragedies. This clearly signifies the importance concerning the secrecy. Aside from a clue alluding to the important place Eleusis had in Classical Athens, the enforced privacy ensured a divide between the initiated and uninitiated. A line was created that was not to crossed, or terrible things might come to those that do.

Conclusions

Thanks to the study of the hymn it becomes possible to realise the mythology behind the Eleusinian Mysteries. In that manner, the story of Demeter and Persephone can be used as a context to explain the ritual itself and the manner in which it was regarded by the people living in the 5th century. The historical knowledge then enables the archaeological evidence to be placed within the correct context, especially the place of Eleusis and the Mysteries in the Athenian Polis of the 5th century. This significance is important to understand the impact the knowledge shared during the ritual had on individuals who underwent the ritual. If it was a relatively unknown cult, it would be harder to conclude whether or not inner othering would have taken place and the character of this othering would probably have been very different.

The religious context of the Eleusinian mysteries emphasizes the exclusivity and the knowledge surrounding the initiation ritual and the sanctuary. The historical context also shows a similar case of othering that can be found in Saïd’s theory, showing a focus on Athenian (and

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120 The knowledge Demeter supposedly shared with the Eleusinians.
121 Bowden, Mystery Cults in the Ancient World, 198
122 Mylonas, Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries, 224-228.
123 Ibidem, 224-228.
124 Ibidem, 228.
Eleusinian) greatness. The secrecy surrounding the mysteries strengthened the existing othering by creating a divide that is even more emphasized by the city-state and its laws. Adding Gruen’s perspective, there does appear to be a goal of cultural inclusion as well because the Eleusinian Mysteries boasted an open character. It is important to remember that only the wealthiest people were probably able to participate, so the aspect of inclusion was relatively small.
As discussed, the literary evidence concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries and the corresponding sanctuary in Eleusis are rather scarce, consisting of a few ancient inscriptions and some literary sources authored by Church fathers, who provide a prejudiced view. Therefore, the most reliable sources are the archaeological finds, both architectural and religious objects like votive offerings.  

Excavations at Eleusis

The excavation of the ancient sanctuary of Eleusis started in 1811 when the European Antiquarian Society obtained permission of the Sultan during the Turkish rule of Greece. The excavations later continued when the Greek government awarded a French archaeologist, Lenormant, permission to start a new excavation. Both these first attempts to excavate the Eleusinian sanctuary were thwarted by the presence of private houses that were built over the deep layer of earth that covered the remains. After these attempts, the Greek Archaeological Society decided to remove these buildings to start the excavations of the Eleusinian sanctuary.

In 1882, the Greek archaeologist Demetrios Philiós was able to secure funding from the Greek government and carried on with the definitive excavation of the area until 1892. According

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125 Bowden, *Mystery Cults in the Ancient World*.
128 Ibidem, 22.
to Michael Cosmopoulos, in his book *Bronze Age Eleusis and the Origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Philios launched the first systematic exploration of the Eleusinian sanctuary.\textsuperscript{129} Demolishing the houses of the people that lived on the site in the area of the Telesterion, he proceeded to clear the Stoa of Philo and excavated and studied it alongside the Telesterion in the same time period. He unearthed part of the Periclean wall as well and remains of the Peisistratan gate, the Geometric and Archaic walls and some ritual pyres of the Late Geometric and early Archaic era’s and the Kimonian Gate.\textsuperscript{130}

Andreas Skias continued his work from 1894 to 1907. After that, Konstantinos Kourouniotos took over the excavation until his death in 1945. His systematic records have been of immense use to scholars wishing to study the Eleusinian sanctuary and its remains. In the early 1930’s, Kourouniotos asked George Mylonas, an art historian, to examine the remains of the Bronze Age. Mylonas was able to excavate even further and discovered houses dating to the Middle Helladic and the Mycenaean period. After the second World War and Kourouniotos’ death, Mylonas took over as director of the excavations. After his death in 1988, one last important systematic excavation took place to gather important stratigraphic evidence to use in comparative studies. The published studies and articles that followed supplied comparative material and stratigraphic evidence for the Bronze Age and the Classical period as well.\textsuperscript{131} Kourouniotos book will therefore be used as a guide to provide a summary on the archaeological evidence that was found in the Eleusinian sanctuary. Despite the age of this book (it was published in 1936) it is still a clear guide to the excavations and the monuments. Other publications tend to omit parts of the sanctuary their research does not cover.

Kourouniotos’ book describes his finds and their meaning, according to him. He starts off by explaining the relative lack of evidence outside of the archaeological site which he ascribes to the mandatory secrecy of the Eleusinian rites. After that he describes the remains of the architecture present on the site. He describes the Roman

Figure 4 Roman Propylaia

\textsuperscript{129} Cosmopoulos, *Bronze Age Eleusis and the Origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, 37.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibidem, 38.
\textsuperscript{131} Kourouniotes, *Eleusis: a guide to the excavations and the museum*, 38 and 39.
Propylaea which were the place the initiates would have entered the sanctuary. These were made during emperor Antoninus Pius’ reign, which he deduces from the presence of statues dedicated to his family.\textsuperscript{132} According to Kourouniotis the initiates would enter a large court, also of Roman make, where the acts of purification would have taken place. After the entrance gates, a fountain was found of which only the lower part is present, surrounded by marble blocks that might have been part of the structure.\textsuperscript{133} Next to the fountain there are remains of a Roman triumphal arch. Then on the right side of the court there were some altars and a small temple. This temple was dedicated to Artemis Propylaia and Poseidon.\textsuperscript{134} One of the most important altars close to the temple was the Eschara, called so because of its shape, namely that of a hearth. Most of the remains are Roman, but Kourouniotis determined that a polygonal wall shows that a much older structure that was probably built in the 6\textsuperscript{th} century BC.\textsuperscript{135} Another part of the structure, a curved wall, seems to be constructed in “a very remote period”.\textsuperscript{136}

Kourouniotis then describes the Kallichoron well, which is mentioned in the Hymn to Demeter.\textsuperscript{137} Surrounded by a carefully constructed wall consisting of large blocks of Eleusinian stone and two doors through which one could enter the well, the well was built in such a manner that there was enough open space surrounding it.\textsuperscript{138} This construction was built with greater care than customary in other ancient wells. This convinces Kourouniotis of the importance of the well to the ancients. The walls were larger than they appear now, and the construction was probably built during the Peisistratan era.\textsuperscript{139}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Figure_5_Kallichoron.png}
\caption{Kallichoron}
\end{figure}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{132} Ibidem, 37.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibidem, 28.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibidem, 40.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibidem, 41 and 42.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibidem, 42.
\textsuperscript{137} Ibidem, 44.
\textsuperscript{138} Ibidem, 45.
\textsuperscript{139} Ibidem, 46.
\end{footnotesize}
Kourouniotis then moves to the sacred precinct of Eleusis, comparing it to “great monasteries of the Middle Ages”. He describes the court as a place that was enclosed by “Massive walls of great height” in which the buildings for religious use were built. These walls separated the Telesterion from the rest of the sacred precinct during the time of Kimon who had extended the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{140} In this precinct, the houses of the religious officials and buildings of the administration and management of the sanctuary were placed.\textsuperscript{141} Aside from these buildings, the large Telesterion was situated in this precinct as well. He explains that two sets of walls surround the court, one encompassing the entire precinct and the other the Telesterion, and that those who entered through the Propylaia had to pass the administrative and other buildings before entering another gate to the temple, the small propylaeae. These walls were built during the Peisistratan period, whereas the walls containing the rest of the precinct were built during the era of Kimon. He calls the large, fortified wall surrounding the Telesterion “the peribolos wall of the sanctuary”.\textsuperscript{142}

He then describes the Small Propylaea, of Roman built as well, but the entrance existed during the Peisistratan period. The massive polygonal wall of which the smaller gates were a part were built in the time of Peisistratos. To the right of these smaller gates a high rock can be found with the sacred cave, called the Ploutonion, which will play a larger role later on when

\textsuperscript{140} Ibidem, 50 and 51.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibidem, 47.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibidem, 47.
discussing Clinton’s theory on the validity of the Hymn to Demeter. According to Kourouniotis the ancients believed that this cave is the place where Hades carried Persephone into the Underworld to make her his bride. Surrounding this cave there exist some walls dating from the 4th century BC. Within this enclosure there are some foundations of a small temple. Next is a paved road that leads to the Telesterion, which was flanked by high, square, stone pillars that were placed where the Athenian demes could store the grain they would sacrifice to Demeter. Over these artefacts, a roof was built that connects them to the Telesterion.

The most important building for the initiation ritual was the Telesterion. Here the celebrations of the mysteries took place. It consisted of an immense room (four sides spanning 54 meters), with stone steps on all four sides and two doors in three of the four walls. The fourth wall was part of the rock, as the Telesterion was built against a hill. Forty-two columns served as support for the ceiling. On top of the larger columns, a few smaller columns were built that reached the top. Aside from these, there were a few smaller columns found that did not reach the roof. On all four sides of the interior a balcony was built at the height of these smaller columns. The steps functioned as seats, creating a construction that would be like a square theatre. The Periclean building programme also added the Porch of Philon to the façade.

\[143\] Ibidem, 52.
According to Kourouniotis, this version of the Telesterion was the last one that was built during the time of the Periclean building programme. Its link to Othering and the Athenian culture and identity will be discussed in the following chapter. The Periclean Telesterion was larger than its predecessor and therefore masses of rock had to be cut away on the hillside and a large fill was created to support a larger terrace and the immense walls that surrounded the sanctuary.\textsuperscript{144} The actual remains of the Telesterion that Kourouniotis found were the lower walls, with a few seats and door openings. The west side, which is cut out of the rock of the hill is better preserved, which allowed Kourouniotis a “good impression of the interior of the room”. The roof of the Telesterion was long gone, and the columns are not complete either. Only a few parts of the upper section of the temple were found, so Kourouniotis was unable to determine how the ceiling was made. The roof had a feature that was called the \textit{opaion} which Kourouniotis compares to the high domes of Byzantine churches. Ancient authors did mention that the building was very large and that the architects Koroibos, Metagenes and Xenokles worked with Iktinios, who was the architect of the Parthenon. The \textit{anaktoron}, which held the sacred objects and where the mystic rites were performed by the hierophant, has no remains left. Kourouniotis theorises that the altar must have been in the centre of the Telesterion.\textsuperscript{145}

Kourouniotis describes evidence that suggest that the Telesterion was a very old structure, dating back to Mycenaean times. In the monument itself, a large relatively open court existed. In this area, there probably were two alters devoted to the goddesses, Demeter and Persephone, of which the exact location is not known. At the southern part of the court a tower was built. Kourouniotis goes on to explain that the wall surrounding the wall was extremely well built in comparison to sanctuary walls from the same time period (Peisistratan through Periclean eras). In the court there were also statues of officials connected with the sanctuary. Bases of these statues have been found and placed in front of the temple.\textsuperscript{146} Kourouniotis then describes a number of walls and sacred buildings from the era of Lykourgos (which was in the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BC), including a shrine to Mithras. He ends the description of the ruins by mentioning cisterns and fountains along the east wall of the precinct, created during Roman imperial times. Another Roman addition were some shops, baths and a drain that led the waste water away from these buildings.\textsuperscript{147}

\textsuperscript{144} Ibidem, 53-55.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibidem, 56-57.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibidem, 58-64.
\textsuperscript{147} Ibidem, 64-70. Then he describes ruins of the Eleusinian city, but that part will be omitted in this thesis because it is not relevant to the hypotheses formulated in the introduction.
Iconographical evidence

Another important aspect of the archaeological excavations and finds are the iconographical images that can be discovered on reliefs and vases. Two important examples of this are the Ninnion Tablet and the so-called Regina Vasorum.\textsuperscript{148} Kevin Clinton describes the images on these finds in his book \textit{Myth and Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries}. The Regina Vasorum shows a group of deities associated with the cult of Demeter, where, according to Clinton, the ritual has been documented, including the reunion between Demeter and Persephone. He theorises that such a vase would tell a story to someone who was initiated in the Eleusinian mysteries that an uninitiated individual would not be able to grasp.\textsuperscript{149}

The Ninnion Tablet tells the story of the ritual as well, except this ancient artefact tells a story of mortals instead of deities. Regarding this tablet, a similar divide would exist between the initiated and the uninitiated. It also on this tablet that one of the holy objects seems to be ears

\textsuperscript{149} Clinton, \textit{Myth and Cult: The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries}, 82-84.
of grain. Since this is a rather common object and still featured on an artefact that shows the Eleusinian Mysteries, it must mean something to the initiated individuals.\textsuperscript{150}

If Clinton is correct in assuming that these artefacts tell the story of the initiation ritual of Eleusis, it seems to be in contrast with the rules regarding secrecy. Clinton therefore theorises that creators of artefacts alluding to the mysteries had more liberties. Aside from that, an artefact like the Ninnion tablet was kept somewhere that was inaccessible to the uninitiated.\textsuperscript{151}

This would strengthen the idea that artefacts like these existed to tell a different story to two different groups of people.

**Epigraphical evidence**

Maureen Cavanaugh discusses some of the epigraphical evidence in her book *Eleusis and Athens* and comes to some interesting conclusions that include the position of hegemony Athens had during Pericles’ time and the manner in which the Eleusinian sanctuary was organized on a practical level.\textsuperscript{152} On an important inscription, the *First Fruits Decree*, both Athenian citizens and even more so its allies and other Greek cities are reminded of the benevolence of the Athenians. On the decree there is a reminder to all worshipers of Demeter, which would have been most of the Greek city states since the Eleusinian sanctuary was open to all, had to sacrifice a significant portion of their agricultural products to Demeter and in extension, Athens.\textsuperscript{153} Compliance with this decree meant that the other Greek cities and allies of Athens recognized the Athenian hegemony of the years before the Peloponnesian war. This example of epigraphical evidence can be interpreted by using both Saïd’s and Gruen’s theories. On the surface, the Greek people that recognize the Athenian hegemony under Pericles are invited to participate in the worship of Demeter. The fact that the required sacrifices and otherings

\textsuperscript{150} Ibidem, 90 and 91.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibidem, 90.
\textsuperscript{152} Cavanaugh, *Eleusis and Athens: Documents on Finance, Religion and Politics*, 216.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibidem, 38 and 39.
described on the Decree had to be given to Athens emphasizes their power and implies superiority. They used the religious authority to gain political power, which can be related to Perlman’s Panhellenism. Athens underlined their supposed greatness by including others and benefitting of this seemingly inviting gesture.

**Literary evidence**

Another field of study that helps to recreate the experience and its consequences on initiated individuals can be found in ancient literature, written by those who had experienced the initiation ritual themselves. Since there is not an abundance of literary confessional on these matters, a wider chronological range than the established time frame of roughly the 5th century should be considered. These texts and commentary on them will be showcased in a chronological order and I will recover what might be useful in the reconstruction of the Eleusinian Mysteries and the experiences that were shared during their rituals.

As discussed, the *Hymn to Demeter* has always been regarded as an important piece of evidence of the Eleusinian Mysteries and their contents. Kevin Clinton is rather sceptical of this text and if its validity is to be trusted. An example he uses to illustrate his scepticism is that Demeter had no particular reason to travel to Eleusis in search of her daughter. He thinks that the poet might have made the poem to honour the Eleusinian sanctuary, thus inventing a tradition. Another important example he uses is the absence of the “Mirthless Rock” in the hymn. This is an important object in many of the other depictions of the Mysteries, and Clinton places this rock at the Ploutonion that can be found in the Eleusinian sanctuary. Whether or not this research is accurate, it is important to realise that sources such as the Hymn cannot be taken as absolute truth but must be read with a healthy grain of salt. I do believe, however, that the Hymn is reliable in telling the story of Demeter, Persephone and Eleusis in a manner that was broadly acceptable in the context of the Eleusinian rituals, even when some details do not match up with the archaeological evidence.

Aside from the *Hymn to Demeter* and allusions from tragedy and judiciary texts, most of the sources that describe the experience of mystery initiations date from the Hellenistic period to Late antiquity. They provide explanations and retellings of the experiences. Perhaps this is because the laws regarding the secrecy of the mysteries were less enforced. Some of the sources

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154 Perlman, “Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism”, 5.
156 Ibidem, 14-16.
were also written by those of the Christian faith and written with disdain and ridicule towards the pagan rituals they despised. Nevertheless, they do provide us with the only literary evidence to the ritual itself and can be used, if taken with a grain of salt.

In one of the fragments of Plutarch’s Moralia, he lets one of his characters describe the Eleusinian experience. This fragment is a conversation between two people, discussing the soul and its entanglement to a body. They discuss death, sleep and the idea that the soul would depart from the body during it, celebrating its freedom. The speaker uses the initiation ritual of the great mysteries as a metaphor of the “unnatural” confinement of the soul to the body. This citation describes the effect and experience the initiates might have been through, focusing on them being terrified at some point:

“In this world it is without knowledge, except when it is already at the point of death; but when that time comes, it has an experience like that of men who are undergoing initiation into great mysteries; and so the verbs teleutân (die) and teleisthai (be initiated), and the actions they denote, have a similarity. In the beginning there is straying and wandering, the weariness of running this way and that, and nervous journeys through darkness that reach no goal, and then immediately before the consummation every possible terror, shivering and trembling and sweating and amazement. But after this a marvellous light meets the wanderer, and open country and meadow lands welcome him; and in that place there are voices and dancing and the solemn majesty of sacred music and holy visions. And amidst these, he walks at large in new freedom, now perfect and fully initiated, celebrating the sacred rites, a garland upon his head, and converses with pure and holy men; he surveys the uninitiated, unpurified mob here on earth, the mob of living men who, herded together in mirk and deep mire, trample one another down and in their fear of death cling to their ills, since they disbelieve in the blessings of the other world. For the soul’s entanglement with the body and confinement in it are against nature, as you may discern from this.”

This text dates from the late first century AD, which means this might not have been the same experience the initiates in Classical Athens might have had. The notion of being terrified has existed throughout the ages though, so perhaps it was a part of the ritual after all. Aside from the experience itself, the citation describes those that were not initiated as “unpurified mob here

on earth... herded together in mirk and deep mire, trample one another down and in their fear of death cling to their ills”. It seems that in Plutarch’s time individuals that were not initiated were seen as lesser.

Clement of Alexandria provides us with the following text:

“I have fasted; I have drunk the kykeon; I have taken from the chest (καστη); having done the work, I have placed in the basket (καλαθος) and from the basket into the chest.”

This piece of text provides the idea that the initiation ritual required the initiates to perform a few tasks. Drinking from the ceremonial kykeon and to have at least witnessed the sacred objects. This text does not delve deep into the experience that might have occurred during the initiation ritual and its aftermath, but it does provide the idea that the initiation ritual was a rather systematic performance required from the initiate.

Another Christian text is authored by Asterius of Amaseia in Pontus:

“Are not the Mysteries at Eleusis the core of your worship [...]? Are the dark crypt (καταβάσιον) not there and the solemn meeting of the hierophant with the priestess, the two alone together? Are not the torches extinguished while the whole huge crowd believes its salvation (σωτηρίαν: note the Christian interpretation) to lie in the things done by the two in the dark?”

This 4th century text illustrates the belief the Christian bishop had regarding the contents of the Eleusinian initiation ritual. It describes the relationship between a “dark crypt” and those that worship at Eleusis. Furthermore, it confirms the existence of the Hierophant and the priestesses and the idea that the initiated might have believed that they would earn “salvation”. These ideas are still alive today, and one must be careful with taking a text like this at face value due to the time gap and the known disdain Christians harboured towards pagan religion.

A rather comical example of these literary sources is the Roman Lucian, who wrote a satire piece on someone who called himself Alexander. Alexander, the false prophet as Lucian calls him, claims to be able to initiate people in the mysteries of a new deity, Glykon, the talking snake companion of Asclepios. As Lucian describes the way this false prophet fools the public, he does compare the contents of his “ritual” to that of the Eleusinian Mysteries.

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He established a celebration of mysteries, with torchlight ceremonies and priestly offices, which was to be held annually, for three days in succession, in perpetuity. On the first day, as at Athens, there was a proclamation, worded as follows: “If any atheist or Christian or Epicurean has come to spy upon the rites, let him be off, and let those who believe in the god perform the mysteries, under the blessing of Heaven.” Then, at the very outset, there was an “expulsion,” in which he took the lead, saying: “Out with the Christians,” and the whole multitude chanted in response, “Out with the Epicureans!” Then there was the child-bed of Leto, the birth of Apollo, his marriage to Coronis, and the birth of Asclepius. On the second day came the manifestation of Glycon, including the birth of the god. On the third day there was the union of Podaleirius and the mother of Alexander—it was called the Day of Torches, and torches were burned. In conclusion there was the amour of Selene and Alexander, and the birth of Rutilianus’ wife. The torch-bearer and hierophant was our Endymion, Alexander. While he lay in full view, pretending to be asleep, there came down to him from the roof, as if from heaven, not Selene but Rutilia, a very pretty woman, married to one of the Emperor’s stewards. She was genuinely in love with Alexander and he with her; and before the eyes of her worthless husband there were kisses and embraces in public. If the torches had not been numerous, perhaps the thing would have been carried even further. After a short time, Alexander entered again, robed as a priest, amid profound silence, and said in a loud voice, over and over again, “Hail, Glycon,” while, following in his train, a number of would-be Eumolpids and Ceryces from Paphlagonia, with brogans on their feet and breaths that reeked of garlic, shouted in response, “Hail, Alexander!”

A few important clues can be uncovered here. In the Athens of Lucian’s time, there was a proclamation the first day of the Eleusinian festival. Directly after that, he talks of an expulsion. Since the texts suggests that Lucian is comparing the ruse of the false prophet to the Eleusinian Mysteries, perhaps this was part of the festival and ritual as well. If that would be the case, it would be a very clear example of religious othering since he calls for the expulsion of those that did not believe in a polytheistic pantheon. However, this is probably a more recent development since there was not much religious diversity or animosity between religions in the Classical era in comparison to time periods and places where various religions that were very different from each other existed. Even so, Lucian was alive when the Eleusinian mysteries were still a known occurrence, otherwise he would not have written so casually and un-

exploratory. To support the idea of Lucian’s awareness of the Eleusinian ritual, it is important to note that in Lucian’s time Roman emperors regularly underwent the initiation ritual of the mysteries.\footnote{J.H. Oliver, “Roman Emperors and Athens”, \textit{Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte} 30.4 (1981) 412-423, there 419-420.}

These texts probably do not reflect the Eleusinian rituals that were the same as those performed in Classical Athens, but they describe the knowledge people had regarding them in their respective time periods. They must be taken with a grain of salt, of course, but they do provide an insight in the opinion people had on those that were initiated and the contents of the ritual. This information does provide information that points to the existence of a divide between the initiated and uninitiated. The relatively hostile tone that can be found in the texts written by Christian authors speak of a clear divide between the pagan and Christian religion.

**Conclusions**

The discussed evidence suggest that a divide existed between the initiates and the uninitiated. The recovered monuments, especially the Telesterion and the walls of the sanctuary, show a physical barrier between the initiated and the uninitiated, making sure that those that are not supposed to know its secrets will not. The iconographical evidence creates a divide in knowledge. Those in the know are able to interpret vases and other decorated objects of the Eleusinian Mysteries in a more complete manner than those that were not initiated. The epigraphical evidence in the form of the First Fruits Decree also emphasizes the Athenian attitude of self-aggrandizement of the Classical era. The discussed literary evidence, even though written 500 years or more after the classical era, seem to point at a rift between the initiated and uninitiated as well. The pieces of evidence all seem to enforce a divide between the discussed groups. The archaeological and literary evidence discussed in this chapter seem, for the most part, to not entirely fit in with either Saïd’s orientalism or Gruen’s nuanced othering. The sanctuary and its buildings are part of the Periclean building programme, underlining Athenian greatness. The First Fruits Decree is a bit more complicated. While underlining Athenian benevolence, it seems to be inviting to others as well, as long as they pay tribute. On the level of the individual and knowledge of the initiation ritual, it seems to be a bit more inclusive and inviting, which would fit with Gruen’s view. The iconographical evidence is are harder to determine. Unlike Saïd’s orientalism, the divide between those that understand the imagery on the artefacts and those that do not is not explicit or visible for everyone. Only
the initiated know of it and that may strengthen their collective identity, it does not create a divide on both sides. And lastly, Plutarch’s character speaks of the uninitiated as lesser, adding negative judgements on those that are not initiated. The discussed evidence is complicated in the context of othering and will be discussed in a slightly different context in the last chapter.
Experience is an important factor in the studies on the Eleusinian initiation ritual. In the last decade, two important publications came out that have attempted to analyse and recreate the Eleusinian initiation ritual and the experience of those who undertook the initiation ritual. These are Bowden’s *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* and Jan Bremmer’s *Initiation Into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*. These publications are examples of modern takes on the Eleusinian Mysteries and illustrate two distinct approaches. Whereas Bremmer’s work strives to examine and analyse the existing literary evidence and scholarship, Bowden adds a new theoretical concept to the scholarship on the Eleusinian Mysteries by positioning the experience of the initiation ritual in the context of cognitive science. Using Harvey Whitestone’s publication on imagistic religion and its effects on the individual, he concludes that the experience of the initiation ritual was an identity shaping event. This theory continues the modern trend of interdisciplinarity and intermingling of identity studies and history.

Both publications describe the manner in which the festival and rituals regarding the Eleusinian Mysteries started. Even before these celebrations were scheduled, the importance and significance were illustrated in the manner that the city state handled their citizens. Battles were stopped, and everyone was eligible to participate in the *pompe* and celebration before the mysteries. The Athenians, including the initiates, would travel to Eleusis for the ritual.166 The ceremonies were impossible to ignore to those in and around Athens, both citizens and others.167 This prominence in the public eye is also illustrated by the aforementioned preparatory rituals and the pomp to Eleusis. During the *pompe* there were some other attention-grabbing moments. For example, some sources tell us that during the *pompe* hierarchical roles were reversed, where slaves were treated as upstanding citizens and whores would mock the virtuous.168 This symbolized the duality that was important in Greek worship, signifying the border between life and the afterlife. This is an important part of Greek worship and in the myth of Hades and Persephone as well.169 The rules of the mundane world were not in place anymore for the

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169 Ibidem, 6.
participants. This created a strange phenomenon where the daily rules and order seemed to have no footing.

Bremmer uses the most recent literature on the Eleusinian Mysteries to recreate the proceedings of the initiation ritual. This publication clearly illustrates the manner in which the Eleusinian initiation ritual was performed. Bremmer starts by explaining which people in the ancient world would have been able to participate in the ritual, which is an important aspect of this thesis and the premise that inner othering might have taken place. According to Bremmer, joining the Mysteries was relatively open, to both men and women, slaves and free and Greeks and non-Greeks. It is important, however, to remember that the costs of the needed supplies for the ritual were relatively high and that not many people would have had the time to participate.\textsuperscript{170} Bremmer goes on to describe the preparatory rituals and the festival before the actual initiation ritual.\textsuperscript{171} An important part of this was the \textit{pompe} that moved the sacred objects, which played an important part in the ritual itself. These objects were transported from the Athenian Eleusinion to the Eleusinian sanctuary.\textsuperscript{172} The participants had to travel from Athens to Eleusis after the preparatory festival on foot. According to Victor Turner, the participants would have entered the world of reversal and confusion of the social order. Bremmer writes:

\textit{"During the journey the young mocked the old, at the bridge over the Athenian river Kephisos a prostitute hurled mockery at the passers-by, and the wealthier women who rode in buggies reviled one another."}

Bremmer describes some psychological effects the long trek and fast pace may have had on the participants, based on psychological research. He claims that a long walk and the light of the torches in the night might have had hallucinatory effects on the participants. Assuming the participants would have been in a euphoric state when they arrived, dancing towards the sanctuary. He does not delve too deeply in the psychological and cognitive theories at the foundation of these assumptions and uses sources that analyse a Christian pilgrimage.\textsuperscript{173} Without the consideration of the ancient evidence to adequately place the ritual in the appropriate historical and religious context, it might be misleading to compare a Christian pilgrimage to an ancient initiation ritual. The night would have progressed with the initiates resting from their travel and the rituals commenced as was fairly common, sacrificing to the

\textsuperscript{170} Ibidem, 3.
\textsuperscript{171} Ibidem, 3-6.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibidem, 5.
\textsuperscript{173} Ibidem, 7.
Goddess. After sunset, the initiates would proceed to the Telesterion. Here the initiation ritual take place over two nights. He describes the Telesterion as a closed of space, able to seat 3000 people. In the centre there was a small chapel, the *anaktoron*. This chapel would have housed the aforementioned sacred objects. After washing themselves for purity, the initiates would have sat down on stepped seats around the walls “in awe and silence’. Bremmer then goes on to describe the ritual itself by using ancient literary sources from very different time periods.\(^\text{174}\)

He then continues to reconstruct the ritual according to the *Hymn of Demeter* that has been used by many scholars to do the same. As mentioned, the legitimacy and link between the hymn and the Eleusinian Mysteries is a debatable subject and it is hard to determine whether a link can be discerned at all. Basing this analysis on the premise that Demeter would promise her initiated a better afterlife and its secrets, Bremmer claims that some part of this myth would have been acted out by high placed Eleusinian officials in the form of a “mystic drama” and dancing.\(^\text{175}\)

After that, the initiates were encouraged to look for Persephone using the light of their torches. The Hierophant would sound a gong after a while to call up Demeter’s wayward daughter, signifying her recovery and the promised fertility of the land. The initiates would rejoice, and the ritual would be over.

The next stage would be the *epopteia*, which according to Bremmer took place on the second night and was reserved for those that had already finished their initiation the year before. Burkert refers to a subterranean crypt that might have symbolised a portal to the underworld, but Bremmer points out that there was no crypt underneath the Telesterion.\(^\text{176}\) Bremmer uses a literary text, *The Hymn to Isis*, to reconstruct what might have happened in the Eleusinian Mysteries since this hymn uses the rites of Eleusis to describe those of Isis. The most important parts of Bremmer’s description in the context of this thesis are: initiates being subjected to a “horrifying” experience, quoting Plutarch’s description of the event,\(^\text{177}\) the Hierophant exclaiming “the reverend goddess has given birth to a sacred boy, Brimo to Brimos, that is the strong one has born a strong child”, and stepping forward from the *anaktoron*, illuminated by the torches in the dark Telesterion.\(^\text{178}\) Bremmer also discusses possibilities of the meaning of this scene and what the Hierophant might have said, but the point stays the same. The initiation

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\(^{174}\) Ibidem, 10.
\(^{175}\) Ibidem, 10.
\(^{176}\) Ibidem, 12.
\(^{177}\) Ibidem, 12.
\(^{178}\) Ibidem, 14.
ritual must have been an awesome and startling experience, ending in relief and joy, the wellbeing of the initiates assured.\textsuperscript{179} 

Hugh Bowden’s analysis, published in 2010, describes not only what might have happened during the mysteries but, just as Bremmer has attempted, also the effect this might have had on those undergoing the ritual and focuses more on this aspect instead of a step by step reconstruction such as Bremmer has created. Before he starts his analysis, however, he discusses some important theoretical considerations in the intro to adequately explain his analysis. He uses Harvey Whitehouse’s theory on imagistic and doctrinal religion to explain the impact the ritual had on its participants, stating that the experience of such a ritual was an intense and unique event that helped in the shaping of one’s identity.\textsuperscript{180} The shaping of identity in the context of the initiation ritual created a collective identity for those that underwent the initiation ritual and created a divide between them and the uninitiated individuals.

Bremmer mentions Bowden’s work only in the preface of his book, describing his work as fit for a more general readership. He also refers his readers to Bowden’s work for “richly illustrated work for plans of sanctuaries and iconographical representations of the initiations”, claiming that his own analysis is “much more detailed”.\textsuperscript{181} Bremmer evidently values his approach as more useful for scholars that are familiar with the Eleusinian Mysteries already. Bowden has written an extensive review on Bremmer’s work.\textsuperscript{182} Bowden notes that Bremmer has thoroughly analysed the existing literature but does not carefully consider the site and the archaeological evidence itself or a broader social context, instead creating a comparison between the initiation rituals of the ancient world and of the modern world. Bremmer relies on literary sources to determine the importance of the Eleusinian ritual and believes that eschatological knowledge was not necessarily the most important part of the initiation ritual, instead focussing on the agricultural benefits of the ritual.\textsuperscript{183} This benefit would set apart the initiated from the uninitiated. Bowden argues that such an approach is rather narrow and is not able to adequately explain and analyse these rituals and their effects, because the comparison between the ancient and modern is rather limiting and misleading. Bowden also criticizes Bremmer for mentioning the importance of the field of cognitive science of religion, without citing Harvey Whitehouse

\textsuperscript{179} Ibidem, 16. 
\textsuperscript{180} Bowden, \textit{Mystery Cults in the Ancient World}, 15. 
\textsuperscript{181} Bremmer, \textit{Initiation Into the Mysteries of the Ancient World}, XV. 
\textsuperscript{183} Bremmer, \textit{Initiation Into the Mysteries of the Ancient World}, 20.
or some others, even though Whitehouse’s scientific theory focusses on initiation. Bowden acknowledges that not all scholars of the ancient world attribute any value to such scientific theories but finds it odd that Bremmer is aware of their value but does not discuss them.184

Bowden’s approach seems to not only mention cognitive research but use it as well, whereas Bremmer is content in mentioning the importance of the experience of the initiation ritual. Bremmer seems to be aware of this important aspect of the initiation ritual and the value of scientific approaches but does not discuss this in depth. Bowden, on the other hand, uses Whitehouse’s theory to explain that the experience gained during the initiation ritual was an inexplicable aspect, impossible to communicate to those that had not experienced the same which created a divide. Bowden’s approach is able to add more nuance to the analysis of the effects of the initiation ritual. He is able to more thoroughly discuss the cognitive theory of Whitehouse in relation to the experience of the initiation ritual and its relation to identity, which is important in the context of this thesis. Bowden’s broader approach encompasses the existing evidence and literary sources more thorough and adequately than Bremmer’s.

**Hierarchy in the Initiation Ritual**

A factor that differs from religious knowledge in the form of religious experience but one that can certainly play a role in social identity and the practice of othering is the practiced social hierarchy that occurred in the Eleusinian Mysteries. During the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries, the sacred officials of the initiation ritual were organized in a clear hierarchy. Kevin Clinton has delved into the social hierarchy of the Eleusinian Mysteries and derives evidence from inscriptions. In his study he explains the roles of the Hierophant, Daduch, Priestess of Demeter and Kore, Sacred herald, Alter-priest, Hierophantides, Exegetes of the Eumolpidae, Pyrographos and some other notable officials.185

According to Clinton’s research, the Hierophant and the higher officials oversaw the rituals and had a standing superior to the initiates. There was a clear hierarchical divide between those that were part of the ritual and those that underwent it. These important officials that had a role during the initiation ritual were mainly members of two important families in the city of Eleusis: the Eumolpidae and the Kerykes.186 These relatively small groups had created their own identity


in accordance with the tradition of the city of Eleusis. This manner of identification can be clarified by using Hobsbawms *Invention of Tradition*. Hobsbawm theorises that certain groups of people invent their own tradition for different reasons. One of those reasons is to establish status. These families used their role in this ritual to solidify their status and authority as leaders and it would elevate the status of the participants. This invented tradition entails that the families of the Eumolpidae and Kerykes managed to create an identity that set them apart from other initiates and those that were not initiated. Even though there is no clear evidence of othering in this case, it does show individuals were able to create an identity based on their religion built on the myth of the Eleusinian Mysteries and set themselves apart according to their superior knowledge.

**Conclusions**

These reconstructions paint a picture of the manner in which the rituals of the Eleusinian played out. The added value of Bowden’s work is the interpretation and explanation of the experience that the initiates went through. The experience and knowledge shared during the ritual is the most important factor in the case of inner othering, since this is the source of the differing identities. Bremmer’s reconstruction is an excellent assessment of the existing literary sources on the Eleusinian initiation ritual, but due to the omission of ancient evidence, should be taken with a grain of salt. The value of Bremmer’s work lies less in the adequate description of the effects of the initiation ritual, but rather on the view people in different time periods had concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries.

Aside from Bowden’s analysis including cognitive theory, the added note of Clinton’s research concerning the hierarchy within the Eleusinian sanctuary and the rites serves as an additon to the description and analysis of the experience of the Eleusinian ritual. Due to the clear boundaries between the initiates, initiated and structure of power the initiates must have been intimidated. I believe this means that the participants would have been aware of their place within the ritual, so this aspect of the experience added a layer of importance, impact and piety. This aspect can be added to Bowden’s approach, providing an example of the impact the identity shaping experience of the initiation ritual had on its participants. Both Bowden’s and Clinton’s analyses of the Eleusinian mysteries illustrate the divide between the initiated and uninitiated. The divide and inclusion of the experience Eleusinian ritual cannot be explained in

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a satisfactory manner by Gruen’s theory since a more complicated view of othering is better equipped to explain this phenomenon. Saïd’s orientalism is not of relevance here since the participants were of a relatively similar culture.
CHAPTER 7

ORIENTALISM, OTHERING, INNER OTHERING, THE ELEUSINIAN RITUALS AND ITS SANCTUARY

After examining the scholarship surrounding the term othering and the ancient evidence concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries, this chapter will be used to apply Said’s orientalism, Gruen’s othering and inner othering to the analysed and discussed evidence. Different aspects of the Eleusinian Mysteries and the corresponding evidence will be discussed to determine the form of identity shaping and othering that can be attributed to the different pieces of evidence and if inner othering would be a relevant explanation of the divide the evidence suggests.

1A. Secrecy and architecture

The initiation ritual was a very secretive event, but the activities, celebrations and rituals beforehand were not. One could say it was a performance meant to show how important this event was.\(^{188}\) The secrecy surrounding the ceremonies that took place in the Telesterion was enforced by the city state.\(^{189}\) Initiates were not allowed to share their knowledge of the ritual with others. There are a few ancient sources that tell us of the consequences of breaking this rule.\(^{190}\) For example, the poet Aeschylus almost lost his life when the people of Athens believed he divulged some of the secrets of the ritual in his tragedies.\(^ {191}\) The secrecy surrounding the Eleusinian initiation ritual illustrates the importance of the privacy of the ceremony. This privacy ensured a divide between the initiated and uninitiated. Archaeological evidence illustrates the secrecy of the Eleusinian sanctuary as well. An example of this is the Peisistratan Peribolos wall that kept the uninitiated out of the precinct of Eleusis. Surrounding the court of the sanctuary a wall was built to ensure privacy and the exclusion of those that were not participating.\(^ {192}\) This enforced secrecy emphasizes the importance of the distinct line between those that were initiated and those that were not. The Eleusinian ritual does not fall in the category of regular harvest festivals that seem to have occurred in a more inclusive space, not restricted to anyone.\(^ {193}\) In the Peisistratan period the Peribolos wall was destroyed by the Persian invaders and rebuild again in a larger format. This suggests that the wall surrounding

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\(^{189}\) Mylonas, *Eleusis and the Eleusinian Mysteries*, 224-228.

\(^{190}\) Ibidem, 224-228.

\(^{191}\) Ibidem, 228.

\(^{192}\) Ibidem, 47.

the sanctuary was a part of the Periclean building programme as well. The enlargement of this wall underlines the restrictive character of the sanctuary.  

1B. Telesterion

Within this guarded precinct stood the Telesterion of the Eleusinian sanctuary. This monument is another example of the importance of secrecy and the practice of emphasizing the divide between the initiated and uninitiated. Compared to “regular” temples in the Classical period, the Telesterion was surrounded by a wall that closed of its sanctuary, so it was impossible to know what went on inside the temple for those that were not present. This monument did not only physically emphasize the divide between the participating initiates and uninitiated by being entirely enclosed by a large wall and roof, it was also part of the Periclean building programme. As discussed, the Periclean building programme managed to create a divide between the Athenians and the barbarian Persians. Continuing the same line of argumentation as Kousser’s article *Destruction and Memory on the Athenian Acropolis*, which features the Parthenon as a victory monument, the Telesterion that was renovated under the same building program of Pericles is another example of such a monument.  

There is no iconography discovered on the Telesterion comparable to the Orientalist images inside and surrounding the Parthenon. However, the combination of the reparatory construction that occurred in the Classical era and the epigraphical source of the First Fruits Decree do show that the Telesterion and the Eleusinian Mysteries were a tool in the pattern of Athenian pride and self-aggrandizement. Theodore Leslie Shear discusses the Eleusinian Telesterion as a part of the Periclean building programme in his book *Trophies of Victory*. After the Persian wars, the Telesterion had suffered in a comparable manner to the Parthenon. In the midst of renovation, the Persians destroyed the building and set it ablaze. This meant that the decades between the end of the Persian Wars and the start of the Periclean building program left the Eleusinian Telesterion unfinished, much like the Parthenon on the Athenian acropolis. The Periclean building programme repaired and expanded the Telesterion and the peribolos wall to underline the grandness of the Athenian city state and emphasize the secrecy of the initiation ritual. These constructions were tools in the shaping of the collective identity of both the Athenians, as victors over the Persians, as well as the shaping of the identity of the initiates and their enforced secrecy.

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196 Ibidem, 161.
2. Eleusinian artefacts

Kevin Clinton writes in his book *Myth and cult: the iconography of the Eleusinian mysteries* on some of the iconography that can be found in the archaeological evidence depicting the Eleusinian mysteries. He argues that scenes on some specific artefacts found in graves of initiated Greeks could have referenced the initiation ritual that took place.197 The iconography on these artefacts seem to depict rather mundane ritual practices or mythical gods and heroes that were known to the uninstructed Athenians as well. Clinton theorizes that this might mean that the iconography found on these artefacts might have had a different meaning to those that were initiated in comparison to those that were not.198 In this manner, the initiated were able to construct their own identity by othering those that were not initiated on the basis of religious knowledge and experience. The ability to interpret these vases in a different manner than “the other” becomes a foundation of othering. This manner of othering fits with Gruen’s theory that othering is complex and could have the goal of inclusion or appropriation of culture but is not necessarily explained sufficiently. In this case, inner othering would be a more adequate description, since the divide is based on having experienced a specific event. A divide based on the inability to communicate knowledge does not necessarily serve a goal as described by Saïd’s and Gruen’s explanations of othering.

3. Literary evidence

Many of the literary pieces discussed include an assumption that some sort of knowledge would be imparted on those that decide to undergo the Eleusinian ritual and that there is a clear difference between those that had and those that had not. For example, the *Hymn to Demeter* ends with an implication that the writer feels sorry for those that do not know the Eleusinian secrets and labels them as less fortunate and Plutarch’s text shows an attitude that pities the uninstructed. In these cases, othering in the form of self-aggrandizement and exclusion seems to be present, which fits Saïd’s theory on orientalism. The literary texts actively other those that are not privy to the secrets by making such a distinction. In this case, the created divide is outspoken and not based on experience but rather on opinions that are made public in the form of written text. The sentiments expressed in these literary texts do seem to point to a divide based on experience, which means this divide existed on a different level than “regular” othering.

198 Ibidem, 82-84.
4. Cognition

One of the most important points Bowden makes is based on Whitehouse’s explanation of the differences between imagistic and doctrinal religion. Initiation rituals are a part of imagistic religions because these rituals are based on experiences instead of teachings and rituals based on a written book, which is the primary mode of worship in doctrinal religions. The nature of the initiation ritual includes the aspect that such an experience had such an impact on an individual that it was identity shaping, both individually and collectively.\(^{199}\) This would create a divide based on experience between participants and non-participants. Aside from that, it is impossible to articulate the experience one went through to someone that did not partake in the ritual. This creates another divide, namely one of understanding. It seems varying experiences can cause a divide between a collective identity and those that are not part of said identity. This is a form of othering that could be described as inner othering, since the divide existed between people of a very similar background and the only relevant difference is based on the experience of an event, in this case the Eleusinian Mysteries. Another aspect of this kind of othering is that the existence of the described divide may have been enforced, which is visible in the discussed archaeological, literary and iconographical evidence, the divide was not consciously created.

**Conclusions**

The divide that existed between the collective identity of the initiates and the others was not based on social or cultural aspects, since participants in the 5th century had to be able to speak Greek, possess relative wealth, freedom and time which limits the number of eligible participants and potential cultural and societal differences. The theoretical openness of the initiation ritual to all Greek speaking people is also not a sign towards orientalism or othering. Inner othering is a term to point out a divide between participating individuals and those that were eligible but did not participate. Both orientalism and othering do play a role in creating divides between peoples in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries, but these divides exist on a different level. Inner othering describes a divide on the level of varying experiences and the background of people does not matter as much in comparison to cases of “regular” othering, even though “regular” othering is visible as well in the discussed evidence. These forms of othering can interplay, as is the case of the literary evidence. It seems that the emphasized superiority and self-aggrandizement in the literary evidence is partly a result of inner othering.

It seems that multiple divides are detectable, existing on different levels of identity. I believe a collective identity existed in the context of the Eleusinian Mysteries and the initiated individuals on the basis of experience, aside from the idea that archaeological and literary evidence show another divide in the context of othering and orientalism as well. The literary texts are biased against those that have participated and the archaeological evidence points to enforced exclusivity, self-aggrandizement and an emphasis on superiority which points to othering and orientalism. Iconographical evidence is trickier, since the divide is only seen and felt by the collective identity and not the others. The psychological theories underline the importance of identity changing experiences and the value people associate with such events but points to inner othering and has little to do with orientalism and “regular” othering. Another difference concerning the theoretical framework between these two divides is that “regular” othering needs an assumed, though well argued, intention, whereas inner othering subconsciously forms on the basis of varying experiences. The divides described by othering and inner othering did interplay and emphasized each other but are distinctly different phenomena.
CONCLUSION

After studying the fashioning of various levels and forms of collective Classical Athenian identities, anthropological theory, othering, historical context and archaeological evidence of the Eleusinian sanctuary, rituals and mysteries, it will become possible to ascertain the nature of the divide that existed between the initiated and the uninitiated.

The second chapter analyses the complicated scholarly debate on the use of the term othering to describe the phenomenon of excluding and labelling a group that is different from one’s own collective identity. A problem I encountered during the discussion of the existing scholarship on othering, was the assumption of intention behind many of the studies which facilitates a layer of subjectivity. This is hard to avoid in the humanities but striving for objectivity is important in order to reconstruct the past as accurately as possible. Theories that are too subjective are relatively less helpful. Even though the theories of othering and orientalism assume intentions, these studies use interesting and sound arguments. However, it makes the use of terms like othering in historical research a bit problematic and perhaps more subjective than necessary. A step towards the objectivity of a term such as othering would be to research othering in an alternative manner, as I have done with inner othering. Inner othering is not the same as othering and orientalism explained by Saïd’s and Gruen’s theories. This type of othering takes place on a smaller level and concerns the fashioning of a collective identity on the basis of an experience, excluding those that were not a part of the collective identity. Because a divide like that arises subconsciously, intention is not of relevance and thus not assumed. The othering that follows out of such a divide, is not part of a supposed plan to exclude or self-aggrandize. It may be used as a source to further other people that are not included in the same collective identity, but the basic othering does not have a conscious intention. Instead of creating a divide as explained by Saïd and Gruen, inner othering is a result of a divide that is created due to profound personal experiences, impossible to communicate to others. I believe that the ancient evidence combined with the cognitive
theory of Harvey Whitehouse and Hugh Bowden concerning the Eleusinian Mysteries and their initiation ritual illustrates a case of inner othering.

Before studying inner othering, Said’s and Gruen’s theories were used to analyse the existing archaeological evidence and its ties to othering in order to understand this term in the context of 5th century Athens and the Eleusinian Mysteries. Rachel Kousser’s archaeological examples show that the Athenians othered “barbarians” and uses Said’s orientalism to explain this phenomenon. In the case of the Parthenon, this can be seen by the decorations that depict the Persian invaders as mythical beasts, slain by superior Athenian deities and soldiers. Again, religion is used as a tool in the othering of those that were deemed different and inferior. It seems that religion has been an important tool to the Athenians in the Classical era when they enjoyed their heyday of power. Another example of the Athenians and their self-aggrandizing tendencies is the Eleusinian First Fruits Decree, which explicitly orders the Panhellenic world (and those that believe in their gods) to pay them because of this superiority in the form of the Eleusinian Sanctuary dedicated to Demeter. The manner in which the Eleusinian Mysteries grant “divine knowledge” to its initiates seems to be in the same lane as the Athenians who set themselves apart on a basis of knowledge. In this case, the knowledge referred to is experience, since the mysteries probably did not provide their initiates with dogmatic secret knowledge. Therefore, the experience shared between the initiates seem to be the contents of this divinely granted, heavily guarded, religious knowledge that very clearly set them apart from those that were not initiated.

Aside from the othering that occurred in Classical Athens on such a large scale, I believe the phenomenon could be found on a smaller scale as well, for instance in the form of shared or unknown religious knowledge, or in the case of the Eleusinian Mysteries, knowledge of an experience. Since these experiences are rather individual and not shared by a specific group in this case, I believe similar tactics as mentioned above were used on an individual level. Many ancient texts and modern scholarship describe the knowledge of the Eleusinian Mysteries as something to be envied. The quote used at the start of this thesis, “Happy is he among mortal men who has seen these rituals; but he who has not been initiated and who has no part in them, will never share such things after he disappears under the murky darkness” clearly shares a similar sentiment. A divide between those that possessed the Eleusinian divine knowledge,

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201 Cosmopoulos, *Bronze Age Eleusis and the Origins of the Eleusinian Mysteries*, Translation of the Homeric Hymn to Demeter, 480-482.
or more accurately the experience of the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and those that did not is described. The uninitiated were pitied, thus returning to the Athenian tendency to pity those that were not the same as them. This is a superiority claim of those that were initiated, labelling the uninitiated as lesser. This seems to be consequence of the already existing divide. This leads me to conclude that multiple divides existed, one in the realm of othering and orientalism and the other in the form of inner othering.

In the discussed cases of othering, intention seems to be an important part of the analysis. After discussing othering as a tool to either emphasize the superiority of one’s own identity or appropriate the tradition of another, it is hard to separate intention from the phenomenon. Perhaps intention is inherent to othering, which would mean inner othering would have no place in the academic debate on the theoretical concept and framework of identity and othering. Inner othering might not be as objective as the aim of this thesis would want it to be. However, it is still an interesting avenue of research because it shows othering on a smaller level by focussing on a divide between groups that are of an almost identical cultural background and adhere to the same societal norms. I chose the word othering because I recognized a similar divide as explained by studies on orientalism and othering, though on a different level. The phenomenon had similar results, namely excluding uninitiated and even pitying them, but was rooted in other aspects than “regular” orientalism and othering. Maybe the divide that this thesis focusses on would benefit from a different term to describe the studied phenomenon that does not include the word othering due to its association with intentionality. It seems that my problem regarding subjectivity due to assumption with the existing theories surrounding othering have not been solved in a satisfactory manner, but an important step has been taken. The phenomenon and the corresponding divide are still interesting topics to research. Its place within (or outside of) othering has been analysed as well and the results do allow the research question to be answered. The appropriate term might still be a topic of debate, but the alternative divide between collective identities is still an interesting topic.

The answer to the question: “In what manner did the Eleusinian initiation ritual create a divide between the initiated and uninitiated in the 5th century?” is that, due to the inexplicable nature of the experience of the initiation ritual, a collective identity originated subconsciously as did a divide that was more subtle than other discussed divides described as othering. The divide between the collective identity of the initiated and others was not intentionally created to facilitate and emphasize differences between groups or superiority in the same manner that was common practice in the 5th century. An example of conscious othering is the Periclean building
programme. Studies on the building programme assumed that the creation and emphasis on a divide was a goal, which was realized by creating a narrative underlining the superiority of one’s own collective identity and excluding those that were not part of it. This adheres to Saïd’s orientalism theory of exclusion and self-aggrandizement. Inner othering is a consequence of the divide that existed due to the experience of an identity shaping event instead of being a tool to gain power or prestige.

**Similar experiences in the modern world and some interesting modern interpretations of initiation rituals of mystery cults**

Another interesting topic in the last chapter of Bowden’s *Mystery Cults of the Ancient World* is one that delves into the question on whether or not the experience received when attending the initiation ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries is possible in the modern world, since Bowden explains that the different contemporary mysteries probably did not differ much when it came to the experience that would set the initiated apart from the uninitiated. An example he discusses is the modern-day rave culture. Due to the shared experience of a euphoric and exhausting party, perhaps enhanced by the use of drugs, a bond exists between these people. A collective identity emerges, and a divide is felt between themselves and people that do not take part in their shared interest. Perhaps there is intent behind the creation of such a divide, but it does not necessarily need to have one to accurately notice such a divide.

The principle of inner othering can be seen in a work of modern literature dealing with initiation rituals. An example of such a topic in fiction can be found in Donna Tartt’s *The secret history* which tells the story of a group of American college students studying classics and their attempt to recreate their own mystery ritual. This ritual goes awry and results in the death of one of their group, even though he was not present at the ritual itself. This book does describe a group of young adults that are incredibly close to each other, and who despise anyone that is not part of their little social circle. In one instance, the protagonist even refers to his “normal” peers as *hoi polloi* and *barbaroi*. The small social group that is bound together by an imagistic experience and shapes its identity partly by using this shared experience, and other those that are not part of the inner circle. Even though this book is entirely fictional, these social dynamics do fit with both existing studies and this thesis, especially Bowden’s theory on imagistic religiosity and the Eleusinian initiation ritual.

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In Tartt’s novel there is an interesting approach to the effects that this ritual had on the characters, especially on the level of their social experiences before and after they performed their ritual. The author manages to create particularly unsympathetic characters, as evidenced by the murder of their own friend and their disdain for their peers but manages to make them relatable to her audience. This shows that the situation of the protagonists rings true to many people, otherwise Tartt’s book would not have been as popular as it is. Personally, I find this a clear sign of the thought that if one experiences such a ritual, something binds these people together and manages to alienate them from, in this case, their social and academic peers. Even though this literature is obviously fictional and is not a scientific piece on social relations, identity or even othering, I do believe that after researching the phenomenon of othering, this idea of othering could be applied to Tartt’s protagonists.

It is perhaps a bit hard to discover and research imagistic religions because their experiences and rituals are so individual in their nature, especially in comparison to their doctrinal counterparts that are much more popular and well researched. It seems that even in modern literature, this very human method of creating one’s own identity seems to translate in such a manner that its audience is able to sympathise. Even though this is not scientific evidence, I do find it a very interesting phenomenon that the secrecy and brotherhood of a group of people seems to resonate with so many people as the book was such an acclaimed success and that a divide similar to one between the initiated and uninitiated of the Eleusinian Mysteries is understood by the readers of Tartt’s work.

**Further research**

An interesting endeavour in the continuation of this research would be to expand the theoretical framework used in this thesis by adding more anthropological theories, theories from different social studies, such as psychology and sociology, and using these to investigate a larger amount of case studies to explain the phenomenon that I have referred to as “inner othering”. I have mentioned a few mystery cults that were contemporaries of the Eleusinian Mysteries and provided similar conclusions, but further research is needed, especially concerning archaeological evidence relating to the shaping of identity in a comparable manner to the Eleusinian Mysteries, if such evidence exists at all.

If inner othering would be an acceptable addition to the historiographic debate on the shaping of collective identities and the divides between them in the Ancient World, it would stand to reason to study whether this phenomenon is also present in other aspects of ancient life aside
from the very specific case of the Eleusinian initiation ritual. Perhaps similar phenomena could be discovered and studied that have a similar effect on the shaping of an individual or collective identity. There are many avenues this theory might take since identity is such a multifaceted concept. Another interesting avenue of research could be to see if othering can be explained without the assumption of intent to create a more objective view of this phenomenon. In other words, to study why and how othering happened on a more objective level, treating othering as a phenomenon instead of a tool. Experience itself would also be an interesting topic of study in the theoretical framework of othering itself. Perhaps it is possible to research the role varying experiences might have played in studies concerning the fashioning of collective identities.
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Figures

1 and 10. Personal photos taken by author during a visit to the Acropolis museum in Athens in May 2018.


4 – 8 and 11. Personal photos taken by author during a visit to the Eleusinian sanctuary in May 2018.