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Chapter 1 : Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi by Michael Koortbojian

*Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi [Michael Koortbojian] on racedaydvl.com *FREE* shipping on qualifying offers. Michael Koortbojian brings a novel approach to his study of the role of Greek mythology in Roman funerary art.*

Before sarcophagi[edit] Inhumation burial practices and the use of sarcophagi were not always the favored Roman funerary custom. The Etruscans and Greeks used sarcophagi for centuries before the Romans finally adopted the practice in the second century. Despite being the main funerary custom during the Roman Republic, ash chests and grave altars virtually disappeared from the market only a century after the advent of the sarcophagus. Surviving evidence does indicate that a great majority of early sarcophagi were used for children. This suggests that the change in burial practice may not have simply stemmed from a change in fashion, but perhaps from altered burial attitudes. It is possible that the decision to begin inhuming bodies occurred because families believed that inhumation was a kinder, and less disturbing burial rite than cremation, thus necessitating a shift in burial monument. The largest stylistic group of early sarcophagi in the second century is garland sarcophagi, a custom of decoration that was previously used on ash chests and grave altars. Though the premise of the decoration is the same, there are some differences. The garland supports are often human figures instead of the animal heads used previously. In addition, specific mythological scenes fill the field, rather than small birds or other minor scenes. The inscription panel on garland ash altars and chests is also missing on garland sarcophagi. When a sarcophagus did have an inscription, it seemed to be an extra addition and usually ran along the top edge of the chest or between the decorations. Both monuments employed a similar collection of stylistic motifs with only subtle shifts in iconography. Sarcophagi production of the ancient Roman Empire involved three main parties: The distance between these parties was highly variable due to the extensive size of the Empire. For example, Attic workshops were close to Mount Pentelikon , the source of their materials, but were usually very far from their client. The opposite was true for the workshops of Metropolitan Rome, who tended to import large, roughed out sarcophagi from distant quarries in order to complete their commissions. Depending on distance and customer request some customers might choose to have elements of their sarcophagi left unfinished until a future date, introducing the possibility of further work after the main commission , sarcophagi were in many different stages of production during transport. As a result, it is difficult to develop a standardized model of production. A Metropolitan Roman sarcophagus often took the shape of a low rectangular box with a flat lid. As the sarcophagus was usually placed in a niche or against a wall in a mausoleum, they were usually only decorated on the front and two shorter sides. Many were decorated with carvings of garlands and fruits and leaves, as well as narrative scenes from Greek mythology. Battle and hunting scenes, biographical events from the life of the deceased, portrait busts, the profession of the deceased and abstract designs were also popular. The gable-roof lid exemplifies the garland tradition common on ash altars and chests. It also has several incomplete parts on its four sides, suggesting the work was interrupted or it was needed on short notice. Athens was the main production center for Attic style sarcophagi. These workshops mainly produced sarcophagi for export. They were rectangular in shape and were often decorated on all four sides, unlike the Metropolitan Roman style, with ornamental carvings along the bottom and upper edge of the monument. The lids were also different from the flat metropolitan Roman style and featured a pitched gable roof, [9] or a kline lid, which is carved in the style of couch cushions on which the form of the deceased reclines. Many featured a series of columns joined together by an entablature on all four sides with human figures in the area between the columns. The lids were often made in the gabled-roof design in order to complete the architectural-style sarcophagi so the coffin formed a sort of house or temple for the deceased. Other cities in Asia Minor produced sarcophagi of the garland tradition as well. In general, the sarcophagi were decorated on either three or four sides, depending on whether they were to be displayed on a pedestal in an open-air setting or against the walls inside tombs. The

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most popular mythological scenes on Roman sarcophagi functioned as aids to mourning, visions of life and happiness, and opportunities for self-portrayal for Roman citizens. Images of Meleager, the hero who slew the Calydonian Boar, being mourned by his lover and hunting companion Atlanta, as well as images of Achilles mourning Patroclus were very common on sarcophagi that acted as grieving aids. In both cases, the mythological scenes were akin to mourning practices of ordinary Roman citizens in an effort to reflect their grief and comfort them when they visited the tomb. There were several different ways Roman citizens approached self-representation on sarcophagi. Some sarcophagi had actual representations of the face or full figure of the deceased. In other cases, mythological portraits were used to connect characteristics of the deceased with traits of the hero or heroine portrayed. For example, common mythological portraits of deceased women identified them with women of lauded traits in myth, such as the devoted Selene or loyal Alcestis. Scholars argue that these biographical scenes as well as the comparisons to mythological characters suggest that self-portrayal on Roman sarcophagi did not exist to celebrate the traits of the deceased, but rather to emphasize favored Roman cultural values [24] and demonstrate that the family of the deceased were educated members of the elite that could understand difficult mythological allegories. The proportion of figures on the reliefs also became increasingly unbalanced, with the main figures taking up the greatest area with smaller figures crowded in the small pockets of empty space. With the advent of Christianity in the third century, traditional motifs, like the seasons, remained, and images representing a belief in the afterlife appeared. The change in style brought by Christianity is perhaps most significant, as it signals a change in emphasis on images of retrospection, and introduced images of an afterlife.

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But in the context of the ancient traditions and customs the sarcophagi reprised, the reciprocity between art and life, between myth and reality, suggests a grander significance.

Download this Research Paper in word format. During the second and 3rd centuries, inhumation became more and more used than cremation, and this created a push for a greater need for sarcophagi, as the departed were placed inside these vessels. A life in the beyond may be looked forward to with joy and anticipation, whether clothed in myth or symbolic allegory" McCann, This is precisely the overall meaning that The Indian Triumph of Dionysus represents. This Roman sarcophagus is covered with a certain amount of sculptural relief such as via scenes and references from imperial ceremony and triumphal processions. This sarcophagus features not just religious themes, but also fantastical ones as a means of exciting the spectator about the idea of life after death. The Indian Triumph of Dionysus is another example of funerary art which focuses on mythology in a positive and almost celebratory manner: This piece is indeed a masterpiece and it would have taken the place in the front of a sarcophagus, creating a sense of centerpiece for the final resting place of the departed. The white marble panel features Dionysus, wearing a headdress of grapes and grape leaves in the center of the piece. He takes a very languorous position and he is in a gentle state of undress which makes him appear extremely alluring and sensual. There are graceful female celebrants all around him, such as Satyrs who are followers with both human and animal characteristics, who attempt to push for the interest of the maenads. There are also captives taken in India who ride a striking elephant at the very back of this procession. Fundamentally, all the movement and life within this museum piece make it an incredibly dynamic image. This god assists in portraying a sense of revelry and exoticism, representing an overall triumph of India and the Indian celebration. There is a strong sense of triumph and an allusion to the fact that Dionysus has been spreading a cult of joyous physical abandon. All of the people portrayed on this piece of marble are in charge of merry-making in some manner. There is a strong sense of the variety and vitality of the afterlife, and the sense of celebration with which the afterlife is presented: As one critic explains, while there is fantasy within the block, there is also a strong sense of realism along with a reveling of the physical beauty of both animal and human forms. It used to be his panthers that proudly drew his chariot. For this demotion Alexander the Great is to blame. For it was Alexander who brought the cult of Dionysus with him when he crossed over into ancient Bactria, modern Afghanistan and on into India. And though Alexander and his armies were dehydrated and decimated by their ordeal, it is Dionysus who returns here with his retinue in almost a parody of a victory parade, a Roman Triumph. The elephants and panthers are preceded by a lion and a camel" AW Staff, One of the most striking aspects of this sarcophagus is that there is a high level of accuracy among the animal figures, particularly when one considers that many renaissance artists had a great deal of ignorance about them. In order to better understand these sarcophagi, one also needs to understand that god Dionysus. Dionysus is generally considered to be the god of vegetation in general: But in the most fundamental manner, his personage actually turns out to represent a great deal more. As some scholars have illuminated, there is an aspect of Dionysus who has come to represent the inescapable and the times Morford, In this manner, it makes plenty of sense that Dionysus would thus be selected as an image for a sarcophagus, because he has come to represent so much more than just merriment. A funerary item such as a sarcophagus is one which all too importantly connotes the passage of time and the sense of all that is fleeting and all that is inescapable. Thus, it makes plenty of sense that Dionysus be selected to portray such aspects of the sarcophagus and the rite of funerals in general. Another element which is so strongly present within this sarcophagus is the profound and concerted element of dynamism. In this sense the sarcophagus is able to represent the dynamic within the funeral procession which is participating and witnessing the funeral. Each of the families, friends and individuals has their own collective and personal meaning to ascribe to the one who has departed. There is both a highly individual and highly communal component of the funeral procession.

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The images depicted on this sarcophagus are able to mirror this back: The rite of passage thus becomes marked by an element of the individual and the tribal. Finally, this sarcophagus is a highly representative of a new way of viewing death and the afterlife at a particular period in Roman culture. Some scholars think the images are highly symbolic of Roman religious beliefs and conceptions about death and the afterlife, while others argue that the images reflect a love of classical culture and served to elevate the status of the deceased, or that they were simply conventional motifs without deeper significance" Awan. For example, in the myths of Eros and Psyche represent tales of mortals who are loved by divinities and given immortality: Dionysian scenes like the one portrayed on this sarcophagus are generally viewed as a desire for happy afterlife in the heavens with a sense of celebration, a release from the cares of this world and an afterlife which is riddled with pleasure Awan. In a similar fashion, the sarcophagus which depicts a battle between soldiers and amazons is one which also treats the afterlife in a somewhat celebratory fashion,â€.

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Thematic Module 12 December Myth in Sarcophagi: It is through the analysis and examination of sarcophagi that the modern scholar can piece together a tumultuous period of religious identity, and manifestations of social-cultural autonomy. Jas Elsner touched on the religious separation of ideas existing in the fields of art history, and ancient history, due to the biases evident of early 19thth century researchers, and posited a necessity for researchers in the study of sarcophagi today to acknowledge the divide and strive to interpret the visual culture in conjunction with the social culture. With this method in mind, I will begin by clearly detailing two specific sarcophagi, one from the 2nd century CE and one from the 3rd century CE, which represent the Ariadne and Endymion models. Through the depictions of such images myths on funerary encasements, I hope to illuminate various expressions of religious and social identity. The following sarcophagus lenos number , Ariadne changed into the sleeping Endymion, has made its home at the British Museum. Two are playing musical instruments, while another one carries a garland. Under the three cupids, in the bottom left of the relief is a kneeling fourth cupid presenting the 2 Ibid. The primary figure lies reclined upon the ground with its right arm flung over his head, and the left arm and hand supporting it. Above the figure on either side there are two cupids flying with torches, perhaps to point the original Ariadne out to her husband Bacchus. A standing cupid is on the left edge of the relief, next to the tree, and supports above him a drunken Pan. He is the center of the image. Pan appears incoherent while another standing cupid strains to support his legs, and a strong man in the background aides in the carrying of Pan by his waist and ankles – Pan has his arm flung over the strong man. Walker defines the strong man as a satyr, but his legs, face, arms, and head show no signs of animal representation. First column 17 Ibid. Second column Figure 2: Sarcophagus 18, Left Panel. The front of the sarcophagus, reading from left to right, shows a chariot of Ariadne and Bacchus being led by two centaurs – one is playing a lyre and the other is playing pipes, while a cupid on the back of the lyre playing centaur points the way. In the chariot the God Bacchus is lounging under an umbrella and pours wine into a bowl held by a satyr standing in the left most corner of the scene. Ending of first column, beginning of second column. Second column 23 Ibid. The right-side paneling relief shows a scene from left to right with a satyr leaning into the left side of the image – right leg bent at the knee and left leg straight and seeming to walk away from the scene and into the front panel. His face is turned toward the center figure of the relief, Pan. The leaning satyr grasps the tail of Pan who is being carried by another satyr. We might assume Pan is drunk from the previous panels and can no longer stand on his own. His face is smiling slightly and his body is completely relaxed atop the other satyr. The satyr carrying Pan is straining under the weight. The right edge of the panel mirrors the left panel: Between the bearded satyr and tree is a basket filled with fruit, and a garland slung over the top. A few other examples of the Ariadne being turned into the sleeping Endymion exist in separate collections and definitely point to a trade of craftsmen carving this for the public to buy in preparation for a death. The overall question to be asked is what these images might have represented to the viewer, according to their socio-cultural constructions? While gazing upon the Ariadne turned Endymion lenos, a story unfolds to the viewers – most clearly the story of Ariadne or Endymion, both of whom find an eternal sleep. Koortbojian associates the rhetorical use of ars memorativa within oration in the ancient world to that of mythical representations on sarcophagi reliefs. Ars memorativa demanded memory be a fundamental tool to use while projecting a tale to an audience, and that the audience as a social- whole would be able to associate well enough to what he is describing in order to understand the meaning of the oration. I will add, that individuals choosing a funerary motif can be both the deceased or a family member of the deceased; to which are modern scholars meant to attribute the decision? Without written confirmation, I believe we must work off the assumption that both had a say. Therefore, the idea erasure of Ariadne to Endymion in lenos 43 is an

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opportunity to examine the socio-cultural manifestation it provides. Here, clearly, an individual is expressing an aspect most important to them through the visuals provided on the sarcophagus. Conversely to this idea is the unimportance of the mythological scene to the context of the deceased, due primarily to the stock representation on the sarcophagi. Walker points out in her narration of the Endymion lenos 43, that Fittschen observed the cupids in the relief to be unimportant compared to the obvious use of myth as a form of deification for the deceased, which might have been seen through the eyes of the viewers in 3rd CE. In a simplistic form, deification was not unheard of in the ancient world "but these honors were reserved for the ruling elite and, later, imperial members. I cannot imagine any Average Joe being bestowed, or attempting to receive, the honor of deification after death. In this instance, I cannot say that the deification was not impossible, but I do argue it was highly unlikely. What strikes me as socially important are the gender representations within the reliefs, which generally showcase deities expressing beauty in order to emphasize the femininity of the dead. Why, then, 38 Walker, Catalogue of Sarcophagi, p. It must have been a conscious choice, and perhaps the choice provides the ancient viewers with a dead man who was effeminate? Or wished to be remembered for his beauty? These questions are more of thought provoking attempt on my end to think of the person behind the image rather than just the image. The various types of lovers, workers, and classes of men and women should justify the importance of thinking about the sexuality of the dead. He is clearly a man, but what kind of man was he? A lover of an elite aristocrat? Desirous of Bacchus in the Ariadne form? These are all plausible socio-cultural and religious archetypes of what, exactly, the effeminate man represented on the lenos. Perhaps the display of a wedding procession is also emblematic to a funerary procession for the deceased? Bellicus 41 Gravies, p. Tebanianus, in Camposanto at 43, which could express a hope for the Pisa viewer to recall a memory *ars memorativa* of a specific connection the deceased which is shared with the mythical scene on display. This is certainly a possibility I lean towards. The scene provided is so significant to the dead it is front and center for the viewer to interact with. Koortbojian provided some tantalizing examples to this belief, but if the wedding procession is a cycle of life, it does not seem evident on this sarcophagus. The motif of being laid to rest is a popular visual of reliefs, as we see from the lenos 43 above, but can also be seen in the paneling of sarcophagus. Switch the scene from wedding to funerary, and the viewer is stricken by the similarities in representation. Perhaps, Ariadne is on her way to Bacchus in death—perhaps Pan is celebrating a union in death between the deceased and the god? The right panel showing Pan carried by his satyr to a tree might also be emblematic of him being on his way to be put to bed "sleep. III Through the lenos 43 chest modern viewers are made plainly aware of the switch in identity from female to male, which might be characteristic of a normalized effeminate male within society, as well as the clear market of sarcophagi from an original stock holding. The scene is a prime example for the importance of *ars memorativa*, so that viewers are provided an opportunity to reflect on the story of Endymion, yet the deceased is most likely not making efforts to deify himself "though there is debate on this issue. One might wonder then, why choose the sleeping Endymion? Are the social or the religious implications greater? Here, we might stress that the social customs and strive for the dead to identify himself was the focal issue. Conversely, the relief images of the sarcophagus 18 represent myth and religion to a higher degree. Of course there are still some underlying tones of society and individuality, but the stress of the image lies in its wedding procession. Perhaps the wedding procession is in fact a funerary procession? And the drunken Pan is celebrating the dead as well as going to sleep? Certainly the garlands and the Bacchants give credence to this ideal. There is, of course, a "rhetoric" and self-fashioning: No one wants to be remembered as having had an unhappy life. The importance of interpretation, however, shall be the key to further debate on the socio-religious culture of the dead and their families in ancient Rome, as was the aim of this commentary to provide an opportunity of just that. Works Cited Birk, Stine. *Writing Life Histories of Roman Sarcophagi. Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi*. University of California Press, *Portrait Heads on Roman Mythological Sarcophagi*. *Catalogue of Roman Sarcophagi in the British Museum*. British Museum Publications, *Sarcophago di Caius Bellicus Natalis Tebanianus*.

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Chapter 5 : Meaning And Myth In The Study Of Lives | Download eBook PDF/EPUB

Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi has 2 ratings and 0 reviews. Michael Koortbojian brings a novel approach to his study of the role of Greek.

The sculpted relief represented the death of Adonis, and Ligorio reasoned that it commemorated one who not only had shown undaunted courage in the face of dangers but had indeed done so in the prime of youth, only to be struck down by a sudden, violent death: The examples for our life are found in contemplation of the dangers that befall others. Whoever it was who exhibited the death of Adonis on his sarcophagusâ€”which was found in the Via Latina, and on which was depicted that young man who, having thrown aside his quiver and bow, was killed by the boarâ€”clearly advises us that a man who would be young and bold in the face of dangers could die as Adonis, the son of King Cinyras, died. Perhaps whoever was buried here died in this fashion. Whatever befell him on account of his great spirit is thus excused, as is his unexpected death, by the example of the loss of that hero who did not know how to take advice from Venus, who loved him so much and who desired that he not set himself to so dangerous a deed for the sake of so brief a pleasure. Several others have put chariots on their monuments with undoubted significance, to demonstrate that they died unfortunately, having been thrown headlong when driving: Whence they compared their death with that of the ancient heroesâ€”who, although they were considered like gods because of their virtue, nevertheless had inadvertently lost their lives. Those to whom such events occurred distinguish their tombs by similar examples, thus demonstrating the certainty of death and the variety of its occurrence, as well as both the vices and the virtues of those of long ago, by a certain kind of parallel. The correspondence between the dead and the imagery with which they were celebrated was seldom neat, and the analogy between the two rarely simple. In the absence of an explanatory inscription or portrait, there is nothing to inform the beholder that the deceased, identified with the heroic Adonis by Pirro Ligorio, had died young. This book is about the meaning of these monuments and, in particular, about the significance of their visualization of narrative. First, that mythology is to be regarded, not merely as a repertory of stories, but as an evocative force in ancient life and ancient imagery. The appeal to myth was fundamental to an ongoing process of cultural self-identity, a process in which the myths evolved along with the people who had recourse to them. As ancient heroes were regarded as exempla for the present, their exemplary character was subject to continuing elaboration in light of present needs. The mythological tradition was, in fact, a powerful means by which the complicity between the past and the present was manifestâ€”a complicity fundamental to the very notion of tradition. This representational mode was rooted in the use of conventionalized visual forms, or motifs, for the depiction of particular stories. For example, a reclining man is a motif, whereas a man who reclines in the pose devised specifically for Endymion is a type. In this manner, typology provided ancient artists with the visual correlative to verbal analogy and thus greatly expanded their powers of allusion. Remembrance was an important factor in ancient social life and fueled the need for such monuments and memorials. It was central as well to the visual structures employed in the creation of these monuments; the representational modes of analogy and typology depended on it. Since, as we shall see, Roman religious practices did not demand such caskets for the inhumation of the dead, the perpetuation of memory not only played a role in the creation of the mythological sarcophagi but was ultimately the most significant of their functions. And when the ideas that gave rise to the imagery of such memorials eventually faded, the most crucial and compelling aspect of that imagery vanished as well. The first two of these themes, those concerning mythology and analogy, have had a long life and still play a fundamental role in the visual arts. The position of typology in the history of visual narration has been less secure. A more complex mode of allusion, typology made larger demands of its audience, as shall become clear, and it would seem that the greater requirements for its success diminished the possibilities of its employment. These are the topics, then, that are examined in the pages that follow. This study concludes with some brief observations on the disappearance of the typological mode so central to the visualization of the

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myths on Roman sarcophagi and, by so doing, suggests the historical boundaries of this particular aspect of ancient aesthetics. His *Parallel Lives* provides not only abundant evidence of this propensity, but a vivid account of the purpose of such a comparative mode of thought. In the proem to his *Pericles*, he sets out the function of his undertaking as "as was only fitting" by a broad comparison: Our outward sense cannot avoid apprehending the various objects it encounters, merely by virtue of their impact and regardless of whether they are useful or not: For this reason we ought to seek out virtue not merely to contemplate it, but to derive benefit from doing so. A colour, for example, is well suited to the eye if its bright and agreeable tones stimulate and refresh the vision, and in the same way we ought to apply our intellectual vision to those models which can inspire it to attain its own proper virtue through the sense of delight they arouse. We find these examples in the actions of good men, which implant an eager rivalry and a keen desire to imitate them in the minds of those who have sought them out. The mind was by nature an organ of discrimination predisposed to imitation. They were heroes of many different kinds. These conceptions appear perhaps most clearly on sarcophagi of the *vita humana* type that were adapted to the life of those who died young. On these reliefs, scenes of childbirth and education necessarily replaced those symbols of adult accomplishment that death had denied, such as marriage, the cultivation of the Muses, or the performance of religious rites and sacrifices. Similarly clear visual references are made to a *mors immatura* on other reliefs, where putti enact the roles of mythological heroes "Meleager or Cupid and Psyche, for example. In such instances the young dead are endowed, as if by proxy, with the virtue that death has refused them the opportunity to acquire in life. While old age, with the infelicities of physical appearance it brings, might seem to render identification with a youthful hero less apt, a youthful theme might nevertheless be chosen even in later years, as can be seen on certain sarcophagi whose mythological protagonists bear portraits of gods. Indeed, one might complain that death at any age is *immatura*. For as Ligorio himself realized, the myths functioned on the sarcophagi as conventional symbols of virtue and as conventional symbols they were available to be appropriated by one and all. An old man might portray himself as the young Dionysos. The problem of interpretation becomes more complex in the case of myths that present no obvious basis for analogy. The tragic figures of Medea and Phaedra at times bearing the portrait features of the deceased or a spouse scarcely suggest a sympathetic parallel between the plots of their stories and the lives of those Romans who appropriated these myths to commemorate themselves. For the sarcophagi present analogies, not identifications: Following Euripides, one sees in Medea a woman torn by conflicting claims of jealousy, desire for revenge, and love of her children who acts, despite her judgment, compelled by passion *thumos*. For the heroines of both myths, the realization of their nature and the fulfillment of its claims on their character is inextricably bound to the omnipotence of Fate. Neither our knowledge about these objects nor the establishment of these criteria is derived, however, from ancient commentaries devoted to these monuments. The study of the sarcophagi has been forced to proceed in a different fashion. The myths were once basic to the fabric of life itself, linked to ancient religion and its vision of the cosmos. For Romans of the Imperial era, these myths were given a highly accessible form by Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*, whose wide dissemination, at least among the upper classes, may be assumed. In the visual arts the myths were codified in standardized designs, and repertoires for each myth were established. The practice could function at the level of details, such as attributes, as a passage from Cicero makes clear: The similarity of the surviving representations of the myths in a wide variety of media demonstrates a consistent selection and depiction of story elements, and the repetition of these images led to their familiarity throughout the ancient world. This long-standing practice, along with the striking quality of immediacy it conveyed, was acknowledged in late antiquity by St. As a plot device, *anagnorisis* served not only as a fundamental structure for narration but as a reminder of the power inherent in the dramatic apprehension of identity and ethos. They may have derived from monumental works of painting or sculpture whose fame led to their replication, or from early illustrated codices and papyri that presented the great narrative cycles and the most prominent myths in epitomizing form. Yet in every instance, artists and patrons made choices, whether they employed standard designs or completely reworked them. Discrimination and

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judgment were always involved, whether the goal was conformity with established traditions or their rejection for the sake of innovation. Some decisions led to more striking visible results than others. For as artists and patrons exploited certain visual characteristics that resulted from the standardization of mythological imagery, they transfigured the manner in which the fables were told with images. The standardized iconographies encouraged viewers to regard the sculpted images as illustrations to be recognized and thus accorded an implicit primacy to those specific redactions of the myths from which the images were generated. By contrast, those sarcophagus reliefs that deviated from both the established models and the canonical texts asserted the primacy of their images, as they impelled their beholders to decipher the language and meaning of their sculptural forms. These were works of art to be viewed under circumstances always the same: Their imagery was to be understood in connection with two distinct sets of practices whose relationship remains something of a mystery: The precise religious significance of the sarcophagi and their imagery has remained elusive on account of the tremendous variation in beliefs held by the Romans, variation that increased during the Imperial period. It has long been held that sarcophagi, which were transported to Italy quite possibly from workshops in Asia Minor, were purchases of considerable expense in the Roman world. The purchase of elaborate sarcophagi was also a conspicuous expression of middle-class striving to emulate the cultivated taste and material signs of affluence associated with the Roman aristocracy. Less expensive forms, with decidedly inferior carving that featured less elevated and complex iconography, were manufactured for the popular tastes of the middle class. The power of tradition and the strictures of religious practice required their presence on days prescribed for feasts in celebration of the deceased. Funds for such ceremonies had often been provided in bequests by the dead themselves. The family and close friends came on the ninth day after burial for the *cena novendialis*, and every year for the *dies natalis* as well as for the *Parentalia*, celebrated during the latter part of February. For as these visitors came and contemplated the imagery of the sarcophagus reliefs, the legacy that the dead wished forâ€”to be remembered in the guise of the protagonists of mythâ€”was brought finally to fruition. But it was a change in social practice, from a preference for cremation to one for inhumation, that gave rise to the production of these monuments on a large scale. Inhumation was not a new phenomenon but the re-emergence of a long standing practice among both the Etruscans and the peoples of Asia Minor. In this way they were transformed to express new Roman ideas in the fulfillment of new Roman needs. An understanding of the characteristic process by which the Greek myths were adapted for representation on the funerary reliefs is crucial to a full comprehension of these monuments. The choice of myths, the selection and combination of scenes, their composition, alteration, deliberate omission, and even replacement are among the decisive artistic considerations that distinguished these reliefs as mythological representations of a most singular kind. All of these aspects have been the subject of scholarly research. The pairing of the Adonis and Endymion sarcophagi that is the focus of these chapters presents many, if not all, of the interpretive issues raised by study of the entire range of mythological sarcophagi. The analysis of these two myths and their visual representations should be considered an attempt to provide a foundation for further study, and the method of investigation proposed here regarded as germane to the examination of other monuments as well. This investigation, based on principles that can profitably be applied in the analysis of other myths and their imagery, is thus offered as a model for the study of mythological sarcophagi in general. The following paragraphs suggest this broader scope of inquiry and establish the interpretive parameters of the chapters that ensue. It is only by contrast with such conventions that the full force of the variant compositions emerges. The employment on the sarcophagi of stock types and the invention of variants, must be recognized, and analyzed, as complementary forms of decision making that reflect a relationship between visual and verbal thinking. On the sarcophagi, the myths have been refashioned as visual images, and the interpretation of their force and clarity depends on the pictorial and sculptural qualities of their medium as well as on the texts from which their stories derive. Analysis of the individual motifs with which these stories are visualized may be pursued in new directions. The study of these motifs, so elaborately charted in many publications of sarcophagi of diverse iconographies, may be augmented and amplified by an examination of the typological

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relationships established in the representation of different myths. The use of visually related motifs, whose significances complement and fulfill one another, provided the artists with one means to expand the connotations of their images. The use of motifs in the frozen tableaux of the sarcophagus reliefs may also be compared with their role in other genres, such as contemporary theatrical productions. The exemplary nature of the visual imagery for the myths may be linked to corresponding literary traditions, and the appearance and function of common topoi elucidated. The role of the mythological themes appropriated and personalized on the sarcophagi should be compared to the part played by these same themes in the purportedly autobiographical poetry of such first-century authors as Propertius or Tibullus. Finally, it is necessary to inquire further into the purpose of portraiture on the mythological sarcophagi. Investigation must not only elaborate this phenomenon from a conventional archaeological perspective, collecting and cataloguing examples, but attempt to reconstruct that cultural imagination of which the reliefs form a most poignant expression. The initial stage of such a project has been accomplished admirably by Wrede. We witness not only the power of images to preserve something essential of the dead, but the role of myth in both the formulation of those memories and the creation of a significant and enduring monument. *I quali quantunque fussero stimati come Dei per la virtu loro, nondimeno hanno sbadatamente perduta la loro vita.* For a historical overview of the study of the sarcophagi, see G.

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Chapter 6 : Myth, meaning, and memory on Roman sarcophagi - University of Manitoba Libraries

Get this from a library! Myth, meaning, and memory on Roman sarcophagi. [Michael Koortbojian] -- In this study of Roman mythological sarcophagi, Michael Koortbojian unravels the meaning of these ancient funerary monuments and assesses their significance in the broader context of Roman life.

Why would someone decorate his or her tomb with imagery? More importantly perhaps, why would someone ask these seemingly arbitrary questions? I ask them because they may not be as estranged from one another as may seem. I would like to argue that, though admittedly speaking of an entirely different context, the use of imagery on a tomb has a great deal to do with remembrance, as well. To illustrate this, I will address a part of the Roman funerary culture: By looking at the mythological narratives on the Roman coffins and investigating the reason as to why these scenes disappear, I hope to show that the reason to use imagery in a funerary context and the ways of dealing with death in ancient times do not differ as much from our modern conceptions about death. The Roman Sarcophagus In the second century AD sarcophagi became used on a large scale and this advent of the widespread use was closely related to the mythological references on these sarcophagi: It has been argued that the mythological scenes are important when it comes to expressing thoughts and ideas to their audience Zanker, This idea implies that the mythological imagery must have been important in some way or the other. Why is it, then, that this seemingly important mythological decoration seems to disappear in the third century, a century after the advent? To answer this question I will briefly discuss the debate about the function of the mythological narratives before the disappearance before going into the process of the demythologization. The Function of Myth The myths on the sarcophagi have been of scholarly interest for a long period of time and regarding the functions two groups with different ideas can be distinguished. Selene, the moon, visits Endymion every night. It is not difficult to see the problems scholars have encountered with interpreting the decoration. Zanker proposes that this particular mythological narrative could be interpreted as the expression of the idea that death is like an eternal sleep thereby comforting the family , as an expression of everlasting love, or as the expression of visiting the dead Zanker, The Demythologization Proceeding from the debate about the functions I will now turn to the demythologization. But is it an interval? Many would like to disagree. What exactly happens to the sarcophagi in this period? Self-representation through the use of portraiture became more important in the third century while the mythological allusions seemed to lose ground Zanker, ; Allen, The Reason for the Demythologization Several reasons have been given so far and I will provide a view to give an insight in the discussion. The rise in popularity of Christianity as a replacement of Roman myth is a popular explanation for the neutral, non-pagan imagery, but Christian and Roman and Greek imagery could co-exist next to one another without problems and Christian and Roman sarcophagi were even produced in the same workshops alongside one another Allen, That there would be less interest in myth or an increasing incompetence to understand myths is countered by the fact that myth was still an important part of everyday Roman life: A Painful Memory What, then, could be an explanation for the demythologization? Allen suggests an explanation for the demythologization that is different from the explanations offered so far. He takes an approach that focuses on mentality towards death rather than ascribing the phenomenon to societal changes. He argues that the demythologization takes place because of the past tense that the mythological narratives imply Allen, The precise fact that mythological stories belonged to the past put the deceased into the past as well and this started to become a problem in the third century; hence demythologization Allen, Allen summarizes his work in the following sentence: In other words, the Romans wished to remember their deceased and they wished to remember their deeds and the relationship they had with the dead, but they did not want to be reminded of the fact that the deceased belonged to past, let alone a distant past, any longer. Critique given by Allen on most explanations for the demythologization focus on their specificity: This sarcophagus shows the event of becoming part of public life for the young man to the left of the image Allen, The reason as to why I believe there may be a combination of

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reasons at stake is influenced by the funerary context of the sarcophagi. Sarcophagi were placed inside of tombs that were probably richly decorated and walled off, thereby hidden from view Zanker, The only time when the sarcophagus was seen was in the context of the tomb: Koortbojian, ; Zanker, Important in this regard is that the family members were the ones to see the imagery so they must be the ones who the imagery spoke to. Each family may have had different views on death and proper ways of remembering, therefore making one idea to explain the entire demythologization process a little dangerous. Different ideas could have co-existed next to one another, as we have seen with mythological and non-mythological scenes or Christian and pagan imagery. I believe this to be the same today still. Each individual group holds different beliefs as to how to remember a deceased loved one. To come back to the refrigerator: I may have put a whiteboard with donkeys on mine as a reminder of a trip, you may have a picture of yourself in front of a building or a magnetic card with a scenery: The Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi. University of California, Myth, Meaning and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi. University of California Press, The Imagery of Roman Sarcophagi. Oxford University Press,

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Chapter 7 : Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi

A study of Roman sarcophagi focusing on the mythological narratives of Adonis, Aphrodite, Endymion, and Selene. Koortbojian (fine arts, U. of Toronto) speculates on the interrelationship between myth and cultural identity, evoking from the sarcophagi representations a history of Roman preponderance for analogy and allusion characterizing the.

The cameo gem known as the "Great Cameo of France", c. Marble table support adorned by a group including Dionysos, Pan and a Satyr; Dionysos holds a rhyton in the shape of a panther; traces of red and yellow colour are preserved on the hair of the figures and the branches; from an Asia Minor workshop, AD, National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece The Farnese Hercules, probably an enlarged copy made in the early 3rd century AD and signed by a certain Glykon, from an original by Lysippos or one of his circle that would have been made in the 4th century BC; The copy was made for the Baths of Caracalla in Rome dedicated in AD, where it was recovered in Ancient Roman statue of emperor Balbinus, dating from AD, on display in the Archaeological Museum of Piraeus Athens Bronze of Trebonianus Gallus dating from the time of his reign as Roman Emperor, the only surviving near-complete full-size 3rd-century Roman bronze Metropolitan Museum of Art [20] The Four Tetrarchs, c. Petersburg Detail of a sarcophagus depicting the Christian belief in the multiplication of bread loaves and fish by Jesus Christ, c. Roman portraiture Portraiture is a dominant genre of Roman sculpture, growing perhaps from the traditional Roman emphasis on family and ancestors; the entrance hall atrium of a Roman elite house displayed ancestral portrait busts. During the Roman Republic, it was considered a sign of character not to gloss over physical imperfections, and to depict men in particular as rugged and unconcerned with vanity: During the Imperial era, more idealized statues of Roman emperors became ubiquitous, particularly in connection with the state religion of Rome. Tombstones of even the modestly rich middle class sometimes exhibit portraits of the otherwise unknown deceased carved in relief. Among the many museums with examples of Roman portrait sculpture, the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the British Museum in London are especially noteworthy. Religious and funerary art[edit] Further information: Early Christian sarcophagi Religious art was also a major form of Roman sculpture. A central feature of a Roman temple was the cult statue of the deity, who was regarded as "housed" there see aedes. Although images of deities were also displayed in private gardens and parks, the most magnificent of the surviving statues appear to have been cult images. Roman altars were usually rather modest and plain, but some Imperial examples are modeled after Greek practice with elaborate reliefs, most famously the Ara Pacis, which has been called "the most representative work of Augustan art. These typically show more regional variation in style than large and more official works, and also stylistic preferences between different classes. Elsewhere the stela gravestone remained more common. They were always a very expensive form reserved for the elite, and especially so in the relatively few very elaborately carved examples; most were always relatively plain, with inscriptions, or symbols such as garlands. Sarcophagi divide into a number of styles, by the producing area. The sarcophagi offer examples of intricate reliefs that depict scenes often based on Greek and Roman mythology or mystery religions that offered personal salvation, and allegorical representations. Roman funerary art also offers a variety of scenes from everyday life, such as game-playing, hunting, and military endeavors. The Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus c. The huge porphyry Sarcophagi of Helena and Constantina are grand Imperial examples. Scenes from Roman sarcophagi.

Chapter 8 : Ancient Roman sarcophagi - Wikipedia

Myth, Meaning, and Memory on Roman Sarcophagi Michael Koortbojian University of California Press, Michael Koortbojian brings a novel approach to his study of the role of Greek mythology in Roman funerary art.

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Chapter 9 : Works Cited “ Images of Paradise

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