STINE BIRK

DEPICTING THE DEAD

Self-Representation and Commemoration on Roman Sarcophagi with Portraits

In memoriam
Lissi Astrup

Depicting the Dead

Aarhus Studies in Mediterranean Antiquity (ASMA)

XI

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Self-Representation and Commemoration on Roman Sarcophagi with Portraits

Stine Birk

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Depicting the Dead

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The present monograph is the outcome of years of fascination with sarcophagus reliefs. In 2009 I defended my PhD on third-century Roman sarcophagi at Aarhus University, supervised by Dr. Björn Christian Ewald and Professor Emeritus Niels Hannestad, and this monograph reflects that work in some aspects. The groundwork for the catalogue had at that time been completed, but it has been revised and substantially expanded in the present version. The entire corpus of sarcophagi with portrait figures has been included here, including those from the second and fourth centuries as well as the third. In writing this book a greater focus was put on the portrait figure and issues of the commemoration and representation of individuals. First and foremost, I am grateful to the Carlsberg Foundation for funding my postdoctoral work. It is their financial support that has allowed this study to come to completion. I would like to acknowledge the further financial support towards the cost of this publication that was provided by the Aarhus University Research Foundation and the Elisabeth Munksgaard Foundation.

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I have dedicated this book to my beloved grandmother, since a book focusing on commemoration and role models appears to me to be an appropriate dedication to the memory of a woman with admirable virtues. She was my own role model.

Negotiating Identity on Sarcophagi

Best of all seems the Roman custom, which publicly renders to women,
as to men, a fitting commemoration after the end of their life.

Plutarch, *On the Bravery of Women*[1]

To be remembered after death was important in Roman society; Roman funerary arts bear witness to the efforts that were made to ensure that the memory of individuals survived.[2] According to Ulpian, monuments (*monumenta*) were erected to preserve memory.[3] In line with this tradition of using monuments to keep the memory of a specific event or person alive, funerary monuments of various kinds were erected all over the Roman Empire.[4] Many still stand today as expressions of the hope for a persisting memory, particularly those made of durable materials, such as brick buildings or marble altars, *stelae*, and sarcophagi.[5] The Roman view was that as long as the monument existed, the memory of the person was maintained, and through the memory the *anima* of the deceased lived on. Passing into oblivion was the worst possible scenario. As such, acts that erased the memory of a person were seen as a disgrace, and inscriptions warn or condemn those who dared to desecrate or reuse a tomb.[6]

Sarcophagi, made for one or at most two individuals, have been preserved in large numbers. Some 15,000 in total survive from the Roman Imperial period, of which it has been estimated that around 6,000 were produced in the city of Rome.[7] The production of sarcophagi emerged at approximately the same time in many parts of the Empire, from Turkey in the East through Athens to Rome in the West.[8] Their popularity was probably to some extent a matter of fashion as inhumation gradually gained ground in funerary traditions otherwise dominated by cremation burial.[9] In Rome, the first relief-adorned sarcophagi date to the Trajanic period,[10] but they were not produced on a major scale before the reign of Hadrian.[11] In the third century, a period in which sarcophagi were almost mass-produced, the types varied from large high-quality sarcophagi to smaller, less ambitious works with an iconographic repertoire that ranged from elaborate mythological scenes to small images of daily life (so-called *vita romana* scenes) or simple decorative schemes.[12] The quality of the production (some mediocre and without full figural decoration, and others of impressive workmanship) indicates that at this time sarcophagi were available to people from different strata of society. Only with difficulty, however, can the social status of the patrons be identified, but in all probability they were situated on a spectrum that ranged from the highest social classes (cat. no. 671 has been interpreted as the sarcophagus of the emperor Balbinus and his wife) to a whole variety of social groups in well-to-do Roman society.[13] In spite of the sometime mediocer quality, a marble sarcophagus must have been costly and therefore would not have been available to the lower social classes.[14]

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[1] Plutarch, *Moralia* III, *On the Bravery of Women* (introduction), trans. Babbitt; Pantell 1992.

[2] For the importance of constructing a memory, see Hope 1997; 2003; 2011. On Roman funerary culture in general, see Andreae 1963; Hesberg & Zanker 1987; Hesberg 1992; Koch 1993a; Hope 1997a; Bodel 2008.

[3] Ulpian, *Digest,* 11.7.2.6. Though the word *monumentum* is sometimes used to denote funerary monuments (Carroll 2006, 30; 2011, 66), it most likely also refers to other kinds of monuments such as statues erected to commemorate something or someone, and to pieces or collections of writing (Hope 2007, 71).

[4] It has been estimated that from the period between Augustus and Constantine only 1.5 % of all burials from Rome have been preserved to the present day (Bodel 2008, 179), which says something about how extensive the production must have been. The idea that the strongest hope for survival was found in fame, and not in the hope for an afterlife, is also expressed in Greek culture, see Nortwick 2008, xiii.

[5] As, for example, evident from the phrasing *memoriam perpetuam* on a funerary inscription from Tarragona (*CIL* II 4332).

[6] See Carroll 2006, 79-83; 2011. In one instance from Rome, a person named Gaius Annidienus Frequens tried to prevent his tomb from being defiled by passers-by (*ne quis hic urina*), *CIL* VI 3413. Inscriptions that aim to protect the tomb and keep it within the family are frequent in the Eastern Empire, especially on sarcophagi from Asia Minor (see, for example, Reynolds & Roueché in Işik 2007, cat. 178, 179, and 196). Such inscriptions bear evidence of the importance of the tomb in society but also of the fact that despite legislation against it, tombs were neglected or reused by later generations. For phrases threatening any violater of a tomb, see Meinecke 2010, 100 with further literature in note 74.

[7] Koch 1993, 59; Rogge, *ASR* IX, 1, 1 (1995) 15. The word sarcophagus is of Greek origin: *sarx*, meaning "flesh", and *phagein*, meaning "to eat". The stone from which the sarcophagus was carved was said to contain enough lime to hasten the decomposition of the body. Pliny in *Natural History* (36.131) writes about sarcophagi as flesh-eaters that consumed every part of the corpse except the teeth. Pliny is, however, talking about a certain type of stone that is only quarried in Assos in Asia Minor (Koch & Sichtermann 1982, 23-5). According to Ward-Perkins the *lapis sarcophagus* from Assos has now been located (1992, 55-60).

Sarcophagi use a formulaic language in the scenes that adorn them, and they have often been organised into categories according to the type of motif shown. Apart from the choice of motif, Rome shows two characteristics of sarcophagus production that make the coffins unique as a source of evidence for exploring social change. First, it is continuous from the second to the beginning of the fourth century, whereby the iconography illustrates changes in mentality and the complex interplay between pagan and Christian cultures.[15] Second, it includes a large number of pieces in which a figure was individualised through the application of a portrait.[16] In the other parts of the empire, portraits were rarely carved on sarcophagus reliefs.[17] The very earliest of these

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[8] For the production outside Rome, see, for example, for Asia Minor: Wiegartz 1965; Heinz 2001; Reynolds & Rouché in Işik 2007; Koch 2010. Dalmatia: Cambi 1998. Attic sarcophagi: Rogge, *ASR* IX, 1, 1 (1995); Ewald 2004; 2011; Oakley, *ASR* IX 1, 3 (2011).

[9] The reason for this change in burial fashion is obscure; see Nock 1932; Toynbee 1971, especially 39-42; Brandenburg 1978, 324-26; Morris 1992, 31-69; Bodel 2008; Davies 2011.

[10] Brandenburg 1978, 327.

[11] Froning 1980, 322-23. Koch (1993, 58, 66) is more specific and estimated the beginning of the major production to be around 110-120 AD. The production of prevailingly Christian sarcophagi continued, evidenced by a few pieces, into the fifth century. For the early sarcophagi and their development, see Junker 2005/6, 164 with further literature. All dates given in this book are AD, unless otherwise stated.

[12] This category was established by C. Robert, the founder of the corpus *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs* (*ASR*), but it is rather problematic. Despite the name, it does not show scenes from real life and should be read metaphorically, like other categories of sarcophagus reliefs. Often non-mythological scenes are depicted that imitate situations that could have taken place in real life, such as people driving in a wagon, hunts, or marriage scenes. For a re-evaluation of the categorisation of mythological images in opposition to genre images, see Giuliani 2003.

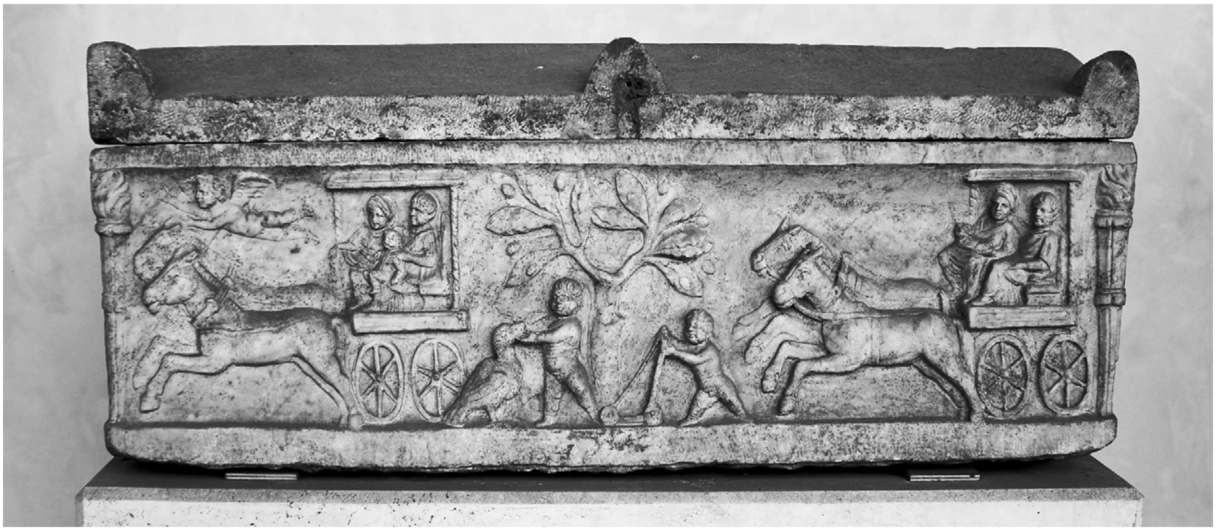
[13] Huskinson 2002, 12. Ewald suggests that sarcophagi made in Rome had spread to social strata other than the elite (2004, 234). In his earlier book on philosopher sarcophagi, Ewald discusses the social strata of the deceased based on the scarce evidence provided by inscriptions (1999, 116-17). The conclusion finds an inhomogeneous group centred on the higher middle classes, such as, for example, knights, which in the third century was a title achieved either through a military career or through birth. Also Denzey makes a good effort to localise and describe the social class of a girl whose undisturbed sarcophagus with skeleton and grave goods were unearthed in Rome and opened by Lanciani in 1894. The girl was probably of a wealthy freeborn family and Denzey uses the term "middle class" to describe her status (Denzey 2007, 4). See also Fittschen 1975, 15-8 and Bielefeld, *ASR* V 2, 2 (1997) 86-8. Fittschen dismisses the identification of the so-called Balbinus sarcophagus as that of the emperor (1979).

[14] On production and costs, see most recently Russell 2011.

[15] After the middle of the fourth century they were only carved on a minor scale.

[16] The catalogue of this monograph contains 677 entries, which, despite of years of collecting, is not a complete collection but a representative corpus of what I would estimate to be around 90 % of the preserved material. For the catalogue and its premises, see p. 203.

[17] There are examples of sarcophagi with portraits from other places as, for example, those found in the production from Aphrodisias, cf. Işik 2007, cat. 6, 101, 103-107, 109-111, 113,



Child sarcophagus (cat. no. 621). Rome, Museo Nazionale Romano, inv. 65199. Photo: Author, courtesy of Soprintendenza Speciale per i Beni Archeologici di Roma.

Fig. 1

individualised sarcophagi, as far as I know, is a sarcophagus showing parents and a child driving wagons dated around 100 (**Fig. 1**; cat. no. 621).[18] This is an example of the so-called interacting type, in which the portrait figures act in the scene. Another type which was to become very popular is the sarcophagus with a bust portrait, the first example of which is dated to the Trajanic period (cat. no. 257). It shows a bust of a boy carried by cupids and flanked on each side by a griffin and another cupid. The fashion of applying a portrait to the relief decoration did not become widespread before the third century. The continuous production and the fashion for portraits, together with the quantity in which they are preserved, make sarcophagi a valuable source of historical and cultural inquiry, and indeed complementary to the testimony of the literary sources of the period.

Sarcophagus reliefs have been intensively studied since C. Robert founded the corpus *Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs* in 1890, and since then changing approaches have been applied to the material, varying from stylistic analysis and chronology to studies of identity constructions and personal commemoration.[19] Crudely, it can be stated that chronological issues and the problem of identifying myths dominated scholarly discussions of sarcophagi into the 1980s.[20] However, religion and afterlife beliefs symbolised through sarcophagus images and not least the symbolic value of the image were prominent topics of discussion since 1942, when F. Cumont presented his *Recherches sur le symbolisme funéraire des Romains* and D. Nock reviewed this important work.[21] Gradually, an social historical approach gained ground in the studies of sarcophagi with contributions such as P. Blome's *Zur Umgestaltung griechischer Mythen in der römischen Sepulkralkunst* (1978) and *Funerärsymbolische Collagen auf mythologischen Sarkophagreliefs* (1992), K. Fittschen's article on how to interpret Greek myths on Roman sar-

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117, 119, 120, 121a, 130, 133, 135, 137, 139, 171, 177-180, and 182. Also Koch & Sichtermann 1982 mention more sarcophagi made outside of Rome often as an imitation of the Roman production: cf. 312, figs. 337-38, 340-42 (North Africa), 317, figs. 350-51 (Dalmatia), and the more characteristic sarcophagi with what could be termed family galleries from Macedonia, cf. 347, 352, figs. 374-75, just to mention a few examples.

[18] Amedick, *ASR* I 4 (1991) cat. 190

[19] For a review of the earlier scholarship, see the section on chronology below.

[20] See, for example, Bovini 1949; Himmelmann-Wildschütz 1974; Andreae 1984. The approach continues to be reflected in the series *Sarkophag-Studien*, edited by G. Koch (see, for example, Amedick & Koch 1998 and Kirchhainer & Koch 2002). For a review of the approach to sarcophagi, see Birk 2010/11.

[21] Nock 1946.

cophagi (1992), F. Müller's monograph on the so-called Peleus and Thetis sarcophagus in Villa Albani (1994), D. Grassinger on the meaning of myths on sarcophagi (1994), and finally M. Koortbojian's *Myth, Meaning and Memory on Roman sarcophagi* (1995). In the latter monograph, it was ascertained that sarcophagus imagery should not be interpreted in one way only, as a static visual expression of a specific idea. Instead, it is convincingly argued that they were meaningful on multiple levels.

The present monograph takes its place in this now well-established tradition of seeing sarcophagi as visual statements of deceased individuals that used allegories to plot lives and personal memories against mythological and other idealised narratives.[22] It focuses on the portrait figure of relief-adorned marble sarcophagi made in or in the near vicinity of Rome in the imperial period. This group is often referred to as *stadtrömisch*, which reflects the fact that the field has traditionally been dominated by German scholars.

The aim of this book is twofold: Firstly, it is an exploration of how to *read* Roman sarcophagi, which starts from those with portraits, but which can contribute more broadly to the study of sarcophagi in general. Scholars familiar with the main issues of reading sarcophagi can skip chapter 1's introduction to self-representation and the funerary context since it deals with the some of the basic premises for working with sarcophagi. Secondly, this book investigates gender values as represented through images and how to locate the individual in standardised iconography. Chapter 2, therefore, takes as its point of departure some of the main themes represented on sarcophagi and offers a sociological analysis of them. The importance of social status has played a seminal role in the way the sarcophagi have been interpreted. However, it will be argued that what they express about self-representation, is much more than a statement of status. They give us insights into the formation of an elite culture that expressed itself through new burial forms and are informative about the social experiences of individuals as well as their emotions at times of bereavement and in confronting death. An increased focus on the self and an awareness of the value of remembrance means that sarcophagi were generally made as personal monuments, an aspect of Roman funerary culture that is revelatory of the importance of individuals, as they negotiated their roles and identities in life and death.[23] In the discussion of ideals and self-understanding among Roman citizens, learnedness and the concept of *paideia* has been brought to the fore.[24] In chapter 2, I will explore this topic further through an assessment og the learned figure, together with a discussion of the individualised mythological figure and figures performing rituals.

Although sarcophagi were made for private commemoration, they possessed an aspect of self-representation that was directed outwards. The book is therefore also concerned with the problem of how to understand the relationship between the private and the social aspects of sarcophagus images. As such, I take one sarcophagus to be a manifestation of an individual or singular unity such as a marital couple, whereas a larger sample of sarcophagi reflects the norms and virtues that are prevalent in society. The combination of the micro level (one individual sarcophagus) with the macro level (a larger sample of sarcophagi) allows us to construct a narrative that includes personal as well as social history. It is, unfortunately, mostly impossible for us to address personal aspects or experiences such as profession or ethnicity, but we can discuss what the portrait figure expresses in terms of values, ideals, and morals. Chapter 3 is concerned with this aspect, mostly from the perspective of gender. Here it will be emphasised how the idealised portraits of men and women conformed to societal norms, and how scenes did not present the world as it was: in the choice of motifs used to represent the deceased, some virtues were accentuated and others were left out. It will be argued, building on important scholarship on sarcophagi by authors such as Koortbojian and P. Zanker, that individualised figures on sarcophagi function as analogies to roles, values, and ideals that were generally accepted in society, and that they allow us to understand the desired virtues and qualities of the deceased.[25] Though the figure types were mostly represented in realistic roles, there are some roles that did conform to the ideal of a living role model and which therefore could only be taken on iconographically, such as, for example, the naked woman so frequently seen in mythological scenes.[26]

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[22] Just to mention some of the most important works to which I will return during my discussions: Blome 1978; 1992; Fittschen 1975a; 1979; 1984; 1992a; Giuliani 1989; Ewald 1998; 1999; 2003; 2004; 2005; Zanker 1999; 2000; 2005; Wrede 2001; Zanker & Ewald 2004; Bielfeldt 2005a; Elsner & Huskinson 2011.

[23] Ewald plausibly sees the sarcophagi as a mechanism that "becomes a redemption for death and decay, and a principal means in the fight against the threat of oblivion." (2011, 261). Furthermore, he explains the emergence of sarcophagi during the second century as a consequence of discourses about the self (2011, 261-63). Ewald is in this article mostly concerned with the iconography of Attic sarcophagi, but refers in his general discussion to the "male urban elite of the empire". In the context of studying the use of funerary monuments to negotiate the identity of the deceased, V. Hope's works on Roman funerary art are also important: Hope 1997; 1998; 2000; 2003.

[24] See, for example, Ewald 1998; 1998a; 1999 (reviewed by D'Ambra 2001; Kranz 2001; Raeck 2002; Trimble 2002; Balty 2005); 1999a; 1999b; 2003; 2004; 2005; 2011.

As studies of identity and gender have multiplied in the last decade, so have studies of funerary art in a social context. In the repercussions of this, the social significance of sarcophagi has increasingly come into focus, and questions of the relationships between iconography, age, gender, and identity construction have been given particular attention (here especially in chapters 3 and 4). One scholar who has contributed substantially to this field is J. Huskinson, who sees sarcophagi as both mediating certain aspects of human life, and reflecting different roles through which people could negotiate their identity.[27]

The relationship between actual lived experiences and the image represented on sarcophagi has been explored in several studies. In some earlier scholarship scenes imitating everyday life situations were interpreted as symbolising the profession of the deceased, as for example, a bucolic scene on cat. no. 430 (**Fig. 2**) showing a man who cultivates his land with an ox-drawn plough.[28] More recently, however, several scholars have emphasised the difficulty of approaching individual lives through sarcophagus reliefs and argued that images of everyday life are expressions of societal values and expectations, similar to the function of mythological scenes.[29] Therefore, sarcophagus reliefs tend to say more about the society in which they were produced than about the lives of the men, women, and children they depict. Seen in this light, the reliefs allow us to analyse the *Mentalitätsgeschichte* of a stratum of Roman society in a specific period, since the idealised method of self-representation reflects the value systems and cultural standards of the period in which the reliefs were produced.[30]

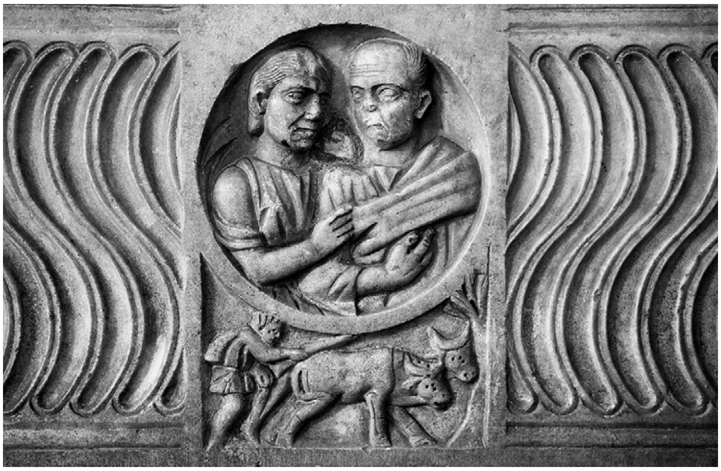

Fig. 2

Strigillated sarcophagus with a portrait of a woman and a man (cat. no. 430). Cefalù, S Chiesa di S. Francesco. Photo: Paul Hammann.

The reading of sarcophagus images should take the expectations of the viewer as its starting point, and look at how the images function in relation to acts of commemoration.[31] Still, even the Romans did not believe that memory was simply stored in material objects. Memory and remembrance are rather less stable entities evoked by, for example, social practice, rituals, and customs.[32] In recent years agency theory, with a focus on the individual, has influenced the way funerary culture is studied and the wishes, actions, and demands of individuals have gained more importance in the social analysis of sarcophagi.[33] The approach taken here oscillates between the traditional approach that assumes funerary culture can be indicative, though not a direct reflection, of the norms and values of the society in which they were produced, and the acknowledgement of the agency of the individual. The sarcophagus is therefore seen as a monument that creates a space for acts of mourning, as it is a means of self-representation. The viewer-centric approach to the visual decoration of sarcophagi reflects a wish to understand them beyond their expressions of social status. A consequence is that sarcophagus images become multi-layered, meaning that they were able to fulfil the diverse needs of people by offering interpretations that could be adapted according to the individual visiting the tomb.[34] This flexibility in the reading of scenes is one of the great advantages of sarcophagi, and it may help to explain why they became such a popular medium for *post-mortem* self-representation. On the other hand, there may have been a limit to this degree of readability and a general consensus as to what qualities specific images conveyed; a total fluidity in the meaning of the scenes would have obstructed the possibility of constructing an ideal identity, which was after all one of the main purposes in erecting a commemorative monument.

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[25] The idea of analogies in sarcophagus imagery was developed by Koortbojian (1995), who discusses the importance of analogies on sarcophagi and the complexity implied in the relationship between the imagery and the dead (see especially pp. 1-9; reviewed by Elsner 1996); Zanker in Zanker & Ewald 2004.

[26] Olson writes that "female nudity or undress was associated with prostitution and sexual license; the lowest women were those whose display of their bodies marked them as sexually available" (2008, 95).

[27] Huskinson 1993; 1996, especially 104 (reviewed by Ghilardi 1996; Koch 1997; Bartman 1999; Koortbojian 1999; Ewald 1999c) 1999; 2002, particularly 29; 2005; 2007; 2007a; 2008.

[28] Tusa 1995 [1957], 27-8. Also Whitehead (1984) approached the profession of the deceased through sarcophagus images, but as already Marrou (1938, 197-207) and later Ewald (1999, 111) acknowledge iconography on sarcophagi seldom addresses profession.

[29] Huskinson 2002, 11-2; Bielefelt 2005a and latest Lorenz 2011.

[30] Ewald 2004, 230.

[31] Zanker 1999; 2000; Huskinson 2002, 21-2.

When discussing these issues, the third century will often stand as a focal point of reference, since in this period one may speak of a 'portrait boom' on sarcophagi. The portrait figure helps us to read the images, since it focuses the viewer's attention on a particular figure or episode.[35] The figure makes it explicit which virtues and qualities the patron wanted to be remembered for. Many of these constructions of personal identity and social ideals are particularly clear in the third century, but the methodology involved in reading sarcophagus images also holds lessons for the study of both the earlier and later production.

Portraits on Sarcophagi

A characteristic feature of the production undertaken in Rome is, as previously mentioned, the great number of sarcophagi on which one or more of the figures were individualised through the application of a portrait. This means that a variety of idealised and mythological figures were given an individual value by means of portrait features.[36] In the context of using sarcophagus images as expressions of identity, the portrait added an extra dimension to this mode of self-representation, an idea evolved and unravelled by several leading scholars and most recently by Zanker, B.C. Ewald, and Z. Newby.[37] By combining a portrait with the body of an ideal figure, the virtues and qualities of that figure were transferred to the identity of the deceased.

The use of portraits on sarcophagi should be understood as a continuation of the Roman tradition of using portraits to represent individuals in diverse social contexts. Portraits could be used for public and political purposes, in sanctuaries, to show patronage, or in honorific contexts which include tombs. Whereas the public display focused on status and career, the private use is about defining oneself in relation to the family and to preserve memory. Carving portrait on funerary monuments in Rome was a continuing phenomenon from the first century BC into the fourth century.[38] The use of portraits in the funerary sphere were not limited to sarcophagi; funerary altars, marble couches with reclining figures, statues, urns, and reliefs could all include depictions of the person they were meant to

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[32] Robinson 2010, especially 92.

[33] For example, Dobres & Robb 2000.

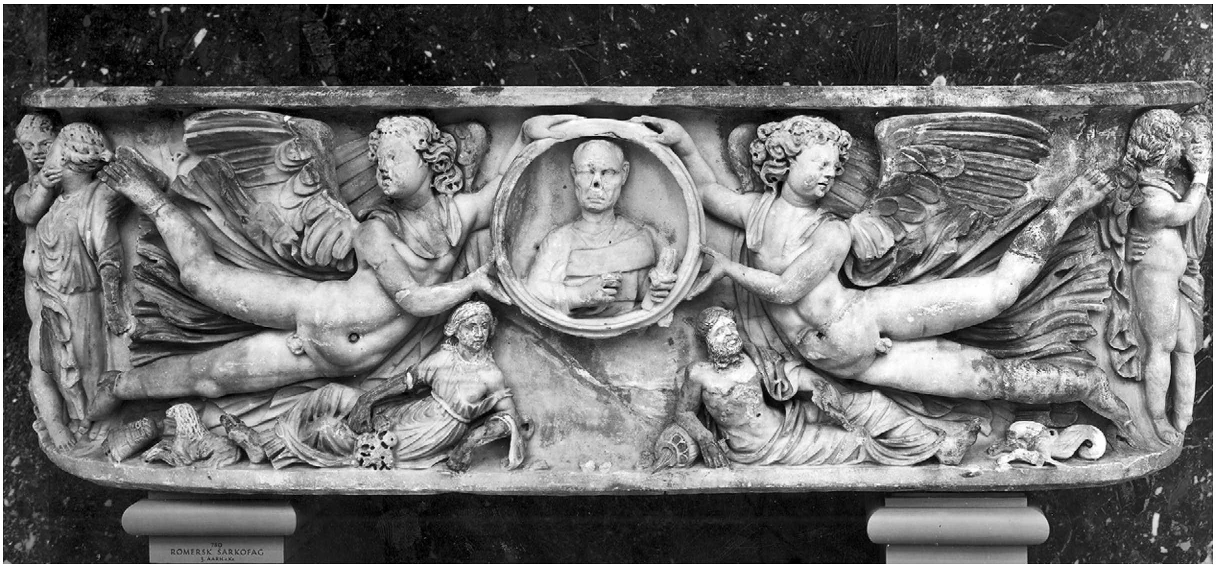
[34] An approach, for example, taken by Zanker & Ewald 2004 (reviewed by Hallett 2005; Huskinson 2005a).

[35] Newby 2011, 224.

[36] For this phenomenon within Roman mythological sculpture in general, see Wrede 1981.

[37] Zanker & Ewald 2004, especially 179, 185-88; Newby 2011. Furthermore the issue is briefly summarised in Stewart 2008, 70-6. For earlier studies of the same tradition some of the most important contributions are Brandenburg 1967; Fittschen 1970a; 1979; Schauenburg 1980; Wrede 1981, though he is not only concerned with sarcophagi; Koch & Sichtermann 1982, 607-14. See also chapter 1.

[38] Stewart 2003, 92. The role of ancestor masks is likely to be rather small in second- and third-century funerary culture (Stewart 2003, 83). On ancestors masks, see Flower 1996 (reviewed by Saller 1998).



Detail of clipeus *sarcophagus with two flying cupids. Eros and Psyche are shown on the short ends, and Tellus and Oceanus are depicted beneath the cupids (cat. no. 68). Copenhagen, Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, inv. 1890. Photo: Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek.*

Fig. 3

commemorate.[39] While altars, statues, and reliefs with portraits were also produced in the previous centuries, the third century is characterised by the new fashion of having a sarcophagus with a portrait.

In contrast to the modern portrait, Roman portrait seldom express emotions, moods, or psychological states. Rather than being an actual likeness, they were self-representational statements of the deceased that symbolise the person in order to preserve his or her memory. That the portrait symbolises the deceased, instead of imitating his or her facial features, means that it becomes 'an image of a portrait'.[40] The fact that sarcophagus portraits were not true likenesses of individual people, intended to express the inner self of that person, means that we find sarcophagi that have been reused without alteration of the portrait features. Such a symbolic representation of the person seems to have been sufficient to individualise the portrait figure in order to preserve the memory of a person. When portraits use standard expressions, more influenced by the style of the period in which they were carved (the period face) than by the personality of the portrait subject, they cannot be read in order to understand the personalities of those they represent. Instead identity markers such as age and sex can be recognised, and a fairly large number of portraits on sarcophagi shows signs of age.[41] However, more specific determination of age is difficult, except for in those cases where it is mentioned in the inscription, because the portraits are idealised and thus used the appearance of the face, including signs of age, to negotiate an ideal identity.

The repertory of idealised and allegorical figures that could be carved on sarcophagi is extensive but, as we will see, only a small proportion of them were used by the deceased for self-representation through the application of a portrait. Portraits can be distinguished from idealised heads by the time-specific hairstyle, expressions of realism (**Fig. 3**; cat. no. 68), and by non-idealised facial features approaching the style of the current period face (**Fig. 4**; detail of cat. no. 641). Furthermore, traces

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[39] For *kline*-monuments see Wrede 1977, 395-431. For funerary altars, see Boschung 1987; Kleiner 1987. For the significance of the portrait on diverse types of Roman monuments, including funerary sculpture, see Stewart 2003, 83-90. For the different uses of portraits in Roman statuary and reliefs, see Fejfer 2008.

[40] On the discussion of the portrait as an expression of an ideal or a likeness, see Massner 1982, 1-5 with further references; Huskinson 1998, 130-34. However, some believe that Roman portraits by their very nature seek to convey information about the personality of a human being, Wood 1986, ix.

[41] Examples are cat. nos. 7, 71, 130, 142, 364, and 430.