

MAAR 43/44 (1998/9), 27–48). This raises important questions about the intersection of high culture and low life, and the common ground between socially differentiated artistic traditions.

Even on the basis of the selection of examples here (highly selective within the categories of monuments examined and largely ignoring things like graffiti-art, bone hairpins, cheap gems, and so on), there is surely scope for further questions of this kind that explore the wider, social implications of the art. Nevertheless, C. has brought a wealth of neglected material into the mainstream English literature of Roman art, and no doubt this handsome and engaging book will inspire a new generation of scholars to probe deeper.

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P. ZANKER and B. C. EWALD, *MIT MYTHEN LEBEN: DIE BILDERWELT DER RÖMISCHEN SARKOPHAGE*. München: Hirmer, 2004. Pp. 389, numerous illus. ISBN 3-7774-9650-2. €75.00.

‘To live with myths’: its title immediately signals the book’s approach to interpreting the use of mythological scenes on Roman sarcophagi. Like many recent studies of Roman funerary imagery (including works by Zanker and Ewald themselves) it contextualizes the scenes not so much in some afterlife but primarily in the culture and social experiences of the living; unlike many previous volumes on sarcophagi it is a discussion, not a catalogue. Altogether it is a life-enhancing book. The authors set out to produce a study which would make the subject more accessible, especially to non-specialist archaeological readers, and increase awareness of the wide range of contributions sarcophagi can make to our understanding of Roman culture. This explicit aim (5–6) is sustained throughout the book: arguments are well-paced, discursive discussion is carefully balanced with iconographical analysis of individual examples, and the illustration is commendably generous. Many photographs were taken especially for the book: abundant colour pictures show the beauty of many sarcophagi, with details of marbling (e.g. fig. 44) or surviving colour (fig. 34), and many images are enlarged or repeated to highlight significant features (figs 81 and 95).

The text comprises a longer, thematic discussion by Z. (8–276), followed by a ‘Dokumentation zu Mythos und Ikonographie’ by E. (277–381), which looks at individual sarcophagi and their iconography in closer detail. The book starts (8–61) by providing a context for modern viewing of these sarcophagi, charting their reception since the Middle Ages and introducing aspects of Roman funerary practice and the reading of myths. Following this the three central sections of Z.’s discussion each deal with a particular function that myths perform within different allegorical discourses to do with death and the dead: mourning and consolation, visions of happiness, and the expression of inner values and self-worth. In each he draws on a variety of myths to show how they can be read as representing aspects of that function, related to the needs and interests of the people who chose or used them. This intimate connection between visual images and society is of course a subject that Z. has explored in other studies of Roman art: here his central concerns are the relationship of the mythological scenes ‘als eine spezifische Form der Grabrhetorik’ (247) to the ideals of the living, and the various questions associated with this about reading images as representations of social values. His view of the factors governing the use of mythological scenes on sarcophagi is broad and inclusive. A good example of how he combines this with an evaluation of individual details is his concluding section (247–66) on changes that occurred from around the mid-third century A.D.: in accounting for these — and especially the declining interest in mythological allegory for self-representation — he carefully unpicks the evidence to distinguish just how far changes lay in the values themselves and how much in the subjects and imagery used to represent them. It is good to find Christian sarcophagi treated inclusively with the rest.

E.’s section was envisaged (6) as an opportunity (potentially independent of the rest of the book) for readers unfamiliar with mythological sarcophagi to acquaint themselves in detail with some individual examples and aspects of iconographical research. A sample of twenty different mythological subjects is discussed: for each, analyses of specific sarcophagi follow a section introducing relevant aspects of the myth, its allegorical value, and its representation on sarcophagi.

In sum, text and presentation are of a very high quality (although an overall index would have been a useful addition). It is an important book because it shows how these sarcophagi and their

iconography can be brought into today's discussions about social aspects of Roman art. If two German scholars can describe them as still little known outside a small group of specialists (6), the situation in British scholarship is probably even more restricted. An English translation of this excellent book could help relieve this and realize the potential contribution of this large group of monuments to our understanding of Roman culture and society.

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R. E. LEADER-NEWBY, *SILVER AND SOCIETY IN LATE ANTIQUITY: FUNCTIONS AND MEANINGS OF SILVER PLATE IN THE FOURTH TO SEVENTH CENTURIES*.

Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004. Pp. xii + 240, 11 pls. ISBN 0-7546-0728-3. £50.00.

Leader-Newby seeks to offer an approach to the field of late antique silver which is neither the 'strictly archaeological' nor the 'traditional stylistic', but draws on cultural and social history. Close readings of individual artefacts (from prestigious vessels weighing up to fifty Roman pounds, down to small and obscure items such as spoons) are woven in to broader discussions of their context. The aim is a history of objects 'which seeks to determine their role in the wider sphere of visual culture' (5) and the result is an often enlightening perspective on an interesting corpus. As L.-N. notes (218) the pejoratively labelled 'minor' arts have been stigmatized for too long, while the potential of objects such as silver plates to stimulate readings in the cultures which gave them birth has been underestimated. The value of the corpus of silver plate in the late antique world is, the book shows us, particularly important: as a point of entry into the considerable cultural transformations of the period, from Antiquity to the Byzantine world in the East and the early medieval world in the West.

The book is divided into four chapters, focusing on different 'key functions' of silverware: as imperial gifts, as ecclesiastical adornment, and as domestic objects. L.-N. herself admits (6) that there are few 'explicit links' between these sections, which is slightly disconcerting, if perhaps an inevitable result of the book's genesis as a PhD thesis. Ch. 1, 'The Emperor's Gifts', starts off with a well-known object, the Theodosian missal, and places it firmly in its various contexts, examining its iconography, its economic significance, and its political importance. For L.-N. the function of the *largitio* plate in bringing the image of the emperor into the home of his subjects is key, and this domestic aspect of silverware remains a crucial focus of the next chapter. Ch. 2, on ecclesiastical silver, argues that it was the domestic rather than pagan cultic origin of liturgical silver which was significant. L.-N. reads a selection of hagiographical texts in order to highlight a late antique concern with the use of precious metals in an ecclesiastical context. The resolution of this anxiety she finds therein, a sharp differentiation between 'sacred' and 'secular', is perhaps not entirely convincing: some readers would prefer to see it as a rhetorical construct rather than an actuality. Chs 3 and 4 move to domestic silverware, with close readings of both mythical and biblical scenes. The unifying theme here is *paideia*, which for L.-N. is a crucial concept for understanding these objects in context. For L.-N. this unifying cultural bond helps explain the focus of some apparently distinct iconography (including the education of Achilles on the Kaiseraugst Achilles plate, and the early life of David on the 'David Plates'). Positing *paideia* as a catch-all historical explanation, or cultural description, is increasingly common in current scholarship, but, in this reader's view, it is also rather unsatisfactory. (The canonicity of *paideia* as keynote to Late Antiquity is such that there is often little attempt made to explain clearly why this concept is more than a favoured buzzword of current scholars.) The discussion is more interesting and more challenging when L.-N. focuses on the classicizing imagery of the David Plates, which date from the seventh century, to problematize, persuasively, the pervasive picture of Byzantine society as rigidly Christianized. The range of objects studied throughout the book points to clear areas of continuity, as well as change, and also suggests areas of study for future students. As L.-N. herself points out, there are many other 'minor arts' which could be profitably examined to provide further light on Late Antiquity. In all, this is an engaging and often persuasive book, which hopefully will achieve its aim to introduce its subject material to a far broader range of scholars.

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