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The Triptolemos Sarcophagus of Aurelius Epaphroditus at Wilton House

Discovery, loss, neglect, rediscovery, change of ownership, display and interpretation: these processes weave themselves in and out of the history of ancient marbles, and the remarkable sarcophagus of Aurelius Epaphroditus, decorated with the myth of Triptolemos, has endured just such a complex story (fig. 3–9).

Down the centuries, this work has been examined and documented by several notable antiquarians and archaeologists, including the renowned nineteenth century authority, Adolf Michaelis. This master of brevity was so intrigued by its peculiarities, that he devoted more than the usual number of pages to it in »Ancient Marbles in Great Britain« (1882). Today, this exquisite work of art resides at Wilton House near Salisbury, in Wiltshire, as it has since the early eighteenth century, when it was purchased by Thomas Herbert, Eighth Earl of Pembroke (1656–1733).

The Eighth Earl of Pembroke

In mid-seventeenth century Britain, the chaos of the Civil Wars brutally dispersed the few large collections of ancient sculptures, amassed earlier that century by King Charles I (1625–1649) and a handful of his inner circle¹. Such destructiveness and the Puritan austerity of Cromwell's Commonwealth discouraged similar endeavours². Following the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660, the political situation stabilized, security of personal property returned and interest in the antique world slowly revived³. With the advent of William and Mary of Orange in 1688, and continuing into Hanoverian times, artistic patronage and collecting – including antiquities – shifted away from the clique of the Royal Court to the houses of the great landowners. Moreover, Grand Tourists flocked to Italy, and admiration of ancient monuments sparked their desire to take antiquities home as evidence of their refinement.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, only the very rich and powerful collected ancient marbles. Unrivalled amongst such collectors was Thomas Herbert, who whetted the allure and

I would like to thank Amanda Claridge for her wise observations on the marble, which have definitely improved the quality of this article.

¹ See Scott, *Pleasures* 9–30; E. Chaney in: id. (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting. The Reception of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, *Stud. British Art* 12 (New Haven and London 2003) 40–64.

² For the English interest in the classical world throughout the traumatic middle years of the century see E. Chaney,

The Grand Tour and the Great Rebellion. Richard Lassels and 'The Voyage of Italy' in the Seventeenth Century (London and Portland, Oregon 1985).

³ For the cultural climate of the period and patterns of collecting see M. Foss, *The Age of Patronage. The Arts in Society 1660–1750* (London 1971) 19–50; J. Hook, *The Baroque Age in England* (London 1976); Scott, *Pleasures* 31–38; Chaney, *Evolution* (note 1) 64–78.



Wilton House

1 (left) The Internal Cloisters. The Triptolemos Sarcophagus is first at right.

2 (opposite page) The Southern Facade with the Palladian Bridge.

status of ancient objects by establishing one of Britain's largest private collections of sculptures (well over two hundred pieces) at his family seat⁴ (fig. 1 and 2). Here, the Earl displayed scores of sculptures as prominent, decorative features both within his country house and around its gardens. This vast undertaking set a standard which other aristocrats soon sought to imitate. Remarkably, in spite of the ebb and flow of family fortunes, this assemblage survived until sales of a large portion of the marbles in the Nineteen Sixties⁵.

The Earl collected sculptures with such zeal that Alexander Pope gently teased him in his fourth epistle of the ›Moral Essays‹ (1731–1735), by referring to crafty art dealers, who bought ›For Pembroke, statues, dirty gods and coins‹. Certainly, the Earl succeeded in amassing some interesting marbles, including a large collection of impressive sarcophagi.

The provenance of the sarcophagus

The sarcophagus of Aurelius Epaphroditus was well known by early eighteenth century French antiquarians and scholars. It had arrived in France as a gift to Cardinal Richelieu, who, unfortunately, had died in 1642 before its arrival. Subsequently, the piece passed through the hands of an individual in the household of the de Rostaing family and was afterwards acquired by the polymath lawyer, administrator, early bibliophile and archaeologist, Nicolas-Joseph Foucault, First Marquis de Magny⁶ (1643–1721). In 1716, Claude Gros de Boze, the erudite numismatist

⁴ Michaelis, *Marbles* 665–715, gives a full description of this collection. See also Scott, *Pleasures* 39–49; 289 n. 22 with further bibliography concerning other Pembroke works of art. An informative guide book to the house and its collections has just been issued. Peter Stewart is composing a catalogue of the marbles. The Earl himself first catalogued his possessions in ›A Copy of ye Book of Antiquities At Wilton‹ (British Library, Stowe Mscr. 1018). Engravings of a few of the statues were published by Carey Creed in 1730. In 1751, Richard Cowdry issued ›A Description of the Pictures, Statues, & c., at Wilton House‹. In 1769, the work was reprinted, an introduction added and the name James Kennedy substituted. Both works are elaborations on Pembroke's Manuscript, see Scott, *Pleasures* 292 n. 38.

⁵ The main sales were held at Christie's Auction House, see sale catalogues from July 3, 1961; April 28 and June 2, 1964.

⁶ For Foucault see P. Tallemant / C. Gros de Boze, *Histoire de l'Académie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres depuis son établissement jusqu'à présent II* (Paris 1740) 223–247 (p. 239 for his library, cabinet of medallions and ancient statuary, which were accessible to scholars); L. G. Michaud (ed.), *Biographie universelle ancienne et moderne XIV* (Paris 1856) 456 f. s.v. N.-J. Foucault. For his collection see M.-C. Hellmann, *Lampes antiques de la Bibliothèque Nationale II* (Paris 1987) VII. For another marble from Foucault's collection see I. Jenkins, *Burlington Mag.* 131, Aug. 1989, 543–549.



and keeper of the Cabinet des Médailles et Antiquités in Paris, gave a full description of the marble⁷. Three years later, the monk and archaeologist, Bernard de Montfaucon, published its illustration and description in his *Antiquité expliquée*⁸; another drawing of the sculpture was commissioned in the early eighteenth century by Richard Topham⁹ (fig. 9).

The story of the sarcophagus' presumed discovery in Greece is a complex and confused one, laced with suppositions, rumours and errors. According to the first, misleading, account of the work by de Boze, travellers discovered the sarcophagus in ruins near Athens, from where they transported it to France.

Furthermore, the French orientalist and archaeologist, Antoine Galland (1646–1715), allegedly saw the sarcophagus in Athens¹⁰. A simple spelling mistake is to blame for this erroneous assertion. Galland encountered the sarcophagus not in Athens, but in Athies near Paris during his stay at Foucault's home, which contained a portion of his collections¹¹. Considering the long time lapse – seventy-four years – between Richilieu's death and de Boze's description of 1716 (during which the whereabouts of the Wilton sarcophagus remained virtually unknown), we can dismiss an Attic origin on this evidence as extremely unlikely.

The Earl of Pembroke probably purchased the work soon after Foucault's death¹². British collectors of antiquities never favoured sarcophagi, although they were readily available. Ponderous sarcophagi were expensive to ship and difficult to display. Moreover, their complex, sometimes arcane imagery posed intellectual and aesthetic challenges. The average collector preferred the straightforward identifications and meanings, conveyed by statuary and portraits.

Typically, a gentleman's collection might include a single token example. Pembroke was unique in finding such sculptures of appeal. No doubt, he was struck by its intriguing representation, as

⁷ Mem. de lit. de l'Acad. des inscript. 4, 1723, 648. Michaelis, *Marbles* 701, transcribes the account.

⁸ Bernard de Montfaucon, *Antiquité expliquée et représentée en figures* I 1 (Paris 1719) 86–92 pl. 45 opp. 94.

⁹ Topham *Album Bn* 15, 93. The drawing states: »ex Museo Nicolai Josephi Foucault comitis Consistoriani«. For Topham's paper museum, housed in the Eton College Library, Windsor, Berkshire see Scott, *Pleasures* 59–61.

¹⁰ Galland's account was contained in an unprinted letter to Johann Georg Graevius, see A. Boeckh (ed.), *Corpus*

Inscriptionum Graecarum I (Berlin 1828, repr. Hildesheim and New York 1977) no. 926. For the gentleman see M. Abdel-Halim, *Antoine Galland. Sa vie et son œuvre* (Paris 1964).

¹¹ Montfaucon (note 8) xix; Michaelis, *Marbles* 701.

¹² It is not possible to establish the precise dates for any of Pembroke's acquisitions, the prices he paid or the agents he used, simply because no papers or accounts have been preserved in the family archives.

well as its prestigious provenance and illustration in Montfaucon's famous compilation, which amounted to a blatant advertisement of the work's singular importance to a broad European audience¹³. But what Pembroke also appreciated was the sarcophagus' »remarkable« and »fine« quality of carving¹⁴.

After a fire in 1704 on the northern side of Wilton, the Earl rebuilt some of its rooms to display his hoard of works of art. The Stone Hall contained the largest pieces, including the coffin, bearing the myth of Triptolemos, and like many of his other sarcophagi, there it served as an eye-catching pedestal for statuary or portraits.

While the scholarly volumes, published by the German Sarcophagus Corpus, have examined most of the Wilton pieces, the Triptolemos sarcophagus, dedicated to Aurelius Epaphroditus, has never received the attention that it truly warrants¹⁵. The rediscovery of the marble's lid in 2008 in Wilton House Park, combined with copious, recent bibliography and excellent, detailed photographs, taken by the Forschungsarchiv für Antike Plastik of Cologne University during the Nineteen Seventies, allow a fresh examination of this intriguing marble.

¹³ In the Stowe Mscr. 113 (see note 4), Pembroke proudly records its engraving in Montfaucon's volume, »where may be read 2 fine dissertations upon it.«

¹⁴ Pembroke remarked that inscriptions were of little interest, save if »they are on things otherwise remarkable. As on the fine sarcophagus where Ceres is teaching [Triptolemos] how to sow Corn«, see Stowe Mscr. 19.

¹⁵ The most important literature concerning the piece is Michaelis, *Marbles 697–702* nos. 137; 138; Robert, *Einzelmythen 509–514* no. 432 pl. 136; Koch/Sichter mann, *Sarkophage 187 f.* fig. 210; Baratte, *Triptolème*; Schwarz, *Triptolemos 68*; 204 f. R17; LIMC *Triptolemos 59* no. 35.

¹⁶ Coffin: H. 65 cm, L. 203 cm, D. 65 cm. Lid: H. 27 cm, L. 2.03 cm, D. 65 cm.

¹⁷ The early twentieth century image, fig. 12, clearly shows its condition is a recent phenomenon. For this old photograph of the lid (reproduced only after the printed publication by German Archaeological Institute Rome Neg. 69.572) see Robert, *Einzelmythen 513* fig. 433; Kranz, *Jahreszeiten* pl. 98, 5.

¹⁸ Cf. the interior of a sarcophagus, see S. Walker, *Catalogue of Roman Sarcophagi in the British Museum. CSIR II 2* (London 1990) 22 no. 2.2.3 fig. 15 e.

¹⁹ For the end reliefs see Koch/Sichter mann, *Sarkophage 64 f.*; Koch, *Sarkophage 17*.

²⁰ There are selections of examples of the mission of Triptolemos in LIMC *Demeter 872–875* nos. 333–384; 890–891; LIMC *Triptolemos*. For examples of Persephone with Triptolemos see LIMC *VIII* (1997) 961 f. nos. 84–102 s.v. Persephone (G. Günthner). For the literary sources see Schwarz, *Triptolemos 7–27* SQ 1–67. For references to statues of the hero see LIMC *Triptolemos 57* nos. 1–4. There are a number of reliefs dedicated to the hero, see Schwarz, *Triptolemos 65–68* R1–16. For the Mondragone relief (Schwarz, *Triptolemos 199 f.* R8) see recently Leventi, *Mondragone. Triptolemos' mission* occurs on over 150 vases from mid-6th century to ca. 425 B.C., see Hayashi, *Triptolemosbild 126–174*; Matheson, *Mission 363* fig. 1. A temple, dedicated to Triptolemos, was located in Eleusis outside the sanctuary, see Clinton, *Myth 49*; Micheli, *Triade 68* fig. 1. For the cult statue of

the hero in the city of Eleusinion see M. Miles, *The City Eleusinion. The Athenian Agora XXI* (Princeton 1998) 52. On the development of Triptolemos and his mission see Raubitschek, *Mission*; Matheson, *Mission 345–362*; Schwarz, *Triptolemos 236–252*; LIMC *Triptolemos 66–68*. Clinton argues that Triptolemos was not exclusively linked with the Eleusinian mysteries, but received cult status in other places and appeared in representations of other festivals of Demeter at Eleusis, see Clinton, *Myth 58 n. 168*; 137 n. 7; id. in: W. Coulson et al. (edd.), *The Archaeology of Athens and Attica under the Democracy. Proceedings of an International Conference Celebrating 2500 years since the birth of Democracy held at The American School of Classical Studies 1992* (Exeter 1994) 163–168.

²¹ For the most complete treatment of the cult see P.F. Foucart, *Les mystères d'Éleusis* (Paris 1914); W. Burkert, *Homo necans. Interpretations of ancient Greek sacrificial ritual and myth* (Berkeley 1983). See further Clinton, *Myth*; id. in: N. Marinatos / R. Hägg (edd.), *Greek Sanctuaries, new approaches* (London and New York 1993) 110–124; id. in: M. B. Cosmopoulos (ed.), *Greek Mysteries. The archaeology and ritual of ancient Greek secret cults* (London and New York 2003) 51–60.

²² The major grain crops of the classical world were wheat, barley and emmer. Wheat was the preferred staple. See N. Jasny, *The Wheats of Classical Antiquity* (Baltimore 1944) and also the relevant entries in A. Dalby, *Food in the Ancient World from A to Z* (London and New York 2003).

²³ Both the Lovatelli urn, Museo Nazionale Romano, and the sarcophagus from Torre Nova in the Palazzo Borghese have been interpreted as depictions of the Eleusinian rites. However, these two examples in Rome represent purification rites, probably featuring Herakles, see G. Mylonas, *Eleusis and Eleusinian Mysteries* (Princeton 1961) 205–208; 242 figs. 83; 84; Schwarz, *Triptolemos 180*. For the Lovatelli urn see F. Sinn, *Stadrömische Marmorurnen* (Mayence 1987) 88–90 no. 1 pl. 1; LIMC *Demeter 903* no. 145; Micheli, *Triade 105*. For the sarcophagus from Torre Nova see Koch/Sichter mann, *Sarkophage 500 f.* fig. 484; LIMC *Demeter 903* no. 146; Clinton, *Myth 137 f.* no. 6.

The condition and workmanship of the sarcophagus

The measurements of the piece correspond to a normal sarcophagus for an adult¹⁶. The opaque, blue-grey grain of the marble, transversed by blackish streaks, of both the lid and the coffin is Carrara. There are no signs of restoration. Sadly, the sarcophagus, placed in the inner courtyard of the house, has suffered from lengthy exposure to the elements, although the surrounding edifice offered some measure of protection. Today, the piece is displayed in the two-storey, neo-Gothic cloisters, designed in the early nineteenth century by James Wyatt, where sarcophagi serve as supports for other sculptures, just as the original exhibit (fig. 2).

Erosion must have occurred mainly during the twentieth century, since Michaelis, who visited the house in the Eighteen Seventies, does not mention its dilapidated condition. Photographs by the Forschungsarchiv show the sarcophagus serving as a humble plant trough. The sculpture's high relief has suffered many minor losses; the edges are badly chipped and there are numerous cracks. The lid, left outdoors for an even greater period of time, is consequently more weather-beaten¹⁷.

The stone carver carefully finished the interior with a point¹⁸. Two dowel holes at either side of both the coffin and lid originally held clamps for securing them together (fig. 3). The end panels show a simple, heraldic design: pairs of eagle-headed griffins flank a tripod. Such embellishments were ubiquitous in the vocabulary of Roman funerary art¹⁹.



3 Wilton House, Triptolemos Sarcophagus.

The mission of Triptolemos

Triptolemos was an agrarian demi-god of obscure parentage. The origins of his myth are also unknown; yet, without exception, he is connected with the cult of Eleusis²⁰. In celebration of the reunion of Demeter and Persephone (Kore) after her abduction by Hades, the great mysteries at Eleusis were established. In this cult, death was understood to be part of the eternal cycle of life. Just as Persephone's retreat to the underworld signalled bleak winter, so her re-emergence brought spring and rebirth. As a thanks blessing for his family's kindness during her search for her lost child, Demeter presented Triptolemos with the gift of grain, and instructed him in the art of agriculture²¹. She then charged him with the task of sharing this knowledge and spreading life-sustaining seed far and wide²². Apart from the episode of his mission, Triptolemos does not feature significantly in classical mythology.

The sarcophagus

References to the Eleusinian mysteries are extremely rare in Roman sepulchral art²³. On the Wilton sarcophagus, the Persephone saga, a perennial favourite in funerary art, occupies about half of the relief, but with the addition of Triptolemos' mission, the panel assumes a very different emphasis. In the past, the interpretation of the marble's unique iconography provoked controversy



when, in the »Corpus der antiken Sarkophagreliefs«, the prominent archaeologist, Carl Robert, disputed its identification and categorized the relief carving as the myth of Persephone.

However, in 1974, François Baratte published the first full account of another sarcophagus with a very similar representation in the Louvre Museum (fig. 10), drawing clear parallels between the two monuments²⁴. Their conspicuous iconographic resemblance demonstrates that the pair of stone cutters, who fashioned them, had recourse to the same pattern books. Nevertheless, there are variations in the actions, dresses and hairstyles of the protagonists, some attributes and accoutrements differ, and minor figures show inconsistencies.

The Wilton legend (figs. 4–7) begins on the left with Persephone's return (anodos) to earth from Hades (fig. 5). The goddess stands in her biga with slightly flexed legs, both hands firmly grasping the reins of her rearing horses. She wears a long, sleeveless chiton with a cloak, which is wrapped around her left arm, fanning out in a decorative flourish against the relief ground; the mantle then billows out to encircle and frame her upper body. Persephone's wavy hair, adorned with a simple fillet, is pulled back into a chignon at the nape. Below the horses' hooves reclines Tellus, the personification of earth and a frequent figure on mythological sarcophagi²⁵. She is

²⁴ Ma 3571 see Baratte, *Triptolème*; Baratte/Metzger, *Louvre* 118–121 no. 48; Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 68; 205–207 R18.

²⁵ See examples listed in LIMC VII (1994) 885–887 nos. 73–89 s. v. Tellus (E. Ghisellini). The Wilton work is p. 886 no. 88.

²⁶ For the identification of the figure as Aura/Aurora see Baratte, *Triptolème* 275; Baratte/Metzger, *Louvre* 119. For the title Hekate see Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 206 f. The torch-bearing Hekate first appears in art at the beginning of the 5th c. B. C. For examples of Hekate dadophoros see LIMC VI (1992) 989–996 nos. 1–92 s. v. Hekate (H. Sarian). Although Hekate had no role in the Eleusinian mysteries, she is associated with Eleusinian scenes, see Clinton, *Myth* 116–120 App. 5. On Greek vases with Eleusinian iconography the deity often appears as a torch-bearer with Demeter, when she sends Triptolemos on his mission. See e.g. a red-figured calyx crater by Polygnotos in the Duke University Museum of Art showing Hekate (name inscribed) with a torch, standing behind Triptolemos: Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 131 V104 fig. 24; Clinton, *Myth* 118; Hayashi, *Triptolemosbild* 156 no. 109; Matheson, *Mission* 346; 359–360 pl. 1.

²⁷ In the Homeric Hymn to Demeter (the canonical paean of the Eleusinian mysteries, relating Persephone's abduction and return), Hekate helps Demeter in the search for her daughter, greets Persephone on her return and joins in the celebrations. For this work see H. P. Foley, *The*

Homeric Hymn to Demeter (Princeton 1994); D. Rayor, *The Homeric Hymns. A Translation, with Introduction and Notes* (Berkeley 2004). A red-figured bell crater by the Persephone Painter in The Metropolitan Museum (Inv. 28.57.23) illustrates Persephone emerging from the earth, accompanied by Hermes and greeted by Hekate (name inscribed) with her two torches, see H. Metzger, *Recherches sur l'imagerie athénienne* (Paris 1965) 11 no. 7; Clinton, *Myth* 33; Matheson, *Mission* 359 f.

²⁸ The god's pose is a variant on the resting Dionysos formula. A selection of examples is given in LIMC III (1986) 434–437 nos. 119–128 s. v. Dionysos (C. Gasparri).

²⁹ Clinton, *Myth* 26; 81; 123–125 App. 6, argues for an independent cult of Dionysos through his association with the theatre, located outside the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, and also discusses Dionysos' portrayal as an initiate in Eleusinian scenes. On a volute crater by the Kleophon Painter in the Stanford Museum of Art (70.12), side A depicts the mission of Triptolemos, and side B shows Dionysos and his retinue, see Raubitschek, *Mission* 116 f. pl. 15; Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 135–138 V111; Hayashi, *Triptolemosbild* 154 no. 102; Clinton, *Myth* 26 figs. 11; 12. For Dionysos among the Eleusinian deities see Raubitschek, *Mission* 110 f.; LIMC III (1986) 510 s. v. Dionysos (C. Gasparri); Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 76 f. 137 f. 151–155; H. Metzger, *Rev. Arch.* 1995, 3–22.



4 and 5 Wilton House, Triptolemos Sarcophagus.

dressed in a sleeveless chiton, girt beneath her breasts, and a cloak. Her head is wreathed in vine leaves and grape clusters.

A sturdy female figure – whip in her left hand – stands facing the chariot, gripping a bridle with her right hand to restrain one rampant horse. She wears a short peplos, fastened at the shoulders and girt under her chest, with an apotygmata or overfold at her hips; her feet are shod in high boots decorated with animal skins. Behind her, a cloak streams in an arc above her head. Her abundant, crimped locks are pulled back and gathered into a bun at the nape; the tresses are swept upward from her forehead into a korymbos (topknot). The forceful movement, muscular body and garb of this figure endow her with an Amazonian appearance.

The figure is Hekate, queen of ghosts, because the corresponding female on the Louvre sarcophagus holds a torch (fig. 10), the key attribute of the deity²⁶. Precedents exist in both Greek art and literature for Hekate greeting Persephone on her return to earth²⁷.

Behind Hekate, a thick, twisted vine stock, laden with two clusters of leaves and grapes, extends through the entire height of the pictorial field. Dionysos – in a version of a well-known figural scheme – stands at ease with his weight firmly on his right leg; his left is relaxed, poised behind him, slightly raised onto the ball of the foot²⁸ (fig. 6). He outstretches his right arm before the rugged vine. The deity's androgynous physique is accentuated by its juxtaposition with masculine Hekate. A mantle covers his right thigh and is thrown over his left arm, leaving his entire torso exposed to the abdomen. His déhanché pose creates an S-curve through his body, artfully reinforced by sinuous drapery. Dionysos' luxuriant locks are gathered into a knot at the back of his head; two long curls snake down his shoulders, while vine leaves and grape clusters crown him. The god of wine is a familiar figure in Eleusinian iconography, since he was an initiate of the mysteries. His sustaining gift of wine also offers a direct parallel with Triptolemos, the bringer of grain for bread²⁹.



The deity gazes toward Demeter, placing his left hand on her shoulder. The goddess, rendered in profile, sits atop a rock, over which a snake slithers. Demeter is depicted according to a canonical formula, whose pose, dress and attributes all contribute to her regal, dignified appearance³⁰. She wears a full-length chiton, shoes, and is crowned with a diadem; a cloak envelops her body and the back of her head. Her left arm cradles a short sceptre, whose lower end rests in her hand. Demeter's throne can be identified as the mirthless rock (ἀγέλαστος πέτρα), an important feature of the Eleusinian landscape³¹. Here Demeter sat weeping, when she was weary from searching for her daughter³². Snakes – primordial fertility symbols – are a fixed attribute to the goddess³³.

The dramatis personae occupy the middle of the relief³⁴ (fig. 6). Persephone is shown frontally; her weight rests on her left leg, while the right is bent at the knee and drawn back. She turns her head and inclines slightly toward Demeter, as though reluctant to leave her mother. Her attire consists of shoes, a full-length chiton, which has slipped down her right shoulder, and a cloak. In her left hand she carries a bundle of wheat. Mother and daughter clasp hands in a well-known gesture of concordia or harmony³⁵.

In the background, between mother and daughter, a female appears, gazing at Persephone. Her attire consists of a peplos, pinned at the shoulders and with an overfold, and her hair is long and wavy. She cradles sheaves of grain in the crook of her left arm. Probably she represents a minor harvest goddess; Messis or Tutilina have been suggested³⁶.

³⁰ This depiction of the deity, frequently used in representations of the Eleusinian triad, had great success in imperial times in various media, see LIMC IV (1988) 907 s.v. Demeter/Ceres (S. De Angeli). The Wilton and Louvre works are p. 902 nos. 143; 144.

³¹ See Clinton, *Myth* 14–27 and ill. 1, indicating the rock in the goddess' sanctuary. A volute crater in the Stanford University Museum of Art (Inv. 70.12) shows Demeter (name inscribed), perched atop the stone, see Raubitschek, *Mission* 115 pl. 15b; Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 135–138 V 111; Hayashi, *Triptolemosbild* 154 no. 102; Matheson, *Mission* 358 f.; Clinton, *Myth* 14 f. On a votive relief from Epidauros, National Museum, Athens (Inv. 1426), Demeter sits on the rock, see Leventi, *Mondragone* 117 fig. 7 n. 42 with other examples. On the Louvre relief Demeter's seat is a cista mystica, containing the hiera or sacred instruments of the Eleusinian cult, with a corresponding snake. For other

examples see D. Bonanome, *Il rilievo da Mondragone nel Museo Nazionale di Napoli* (Naples 1995) 73–76.

³² The volute crater in the Stanford University Museum of Art (note 29) combines the scene of Demeter, atop the 'mirthless rock', with Triptolemos' mission.

³³ Snakes frequently appear in images of the goddess, see LIMC Demeter 846. Whether the reptiles were used in the Eleusinian mysteries has been debated. Clinton in: Marinatos/Hägg (note 21) 167 n. 57 argues against their use in the mysteries. In opposition Hayashi, *Triptolemosbild* 57 f.

³⁴ Cf. the group of Demeter, Kore and Triptolemos on a Pompeian wall painting, where Triptolemos stands in his serpent-drawn chariot; on the left Demeter sits and Persephone stands, see Robert, *Einzelmythen* 511 fig.; Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 69 W 1; LIMC *Triptolemos* 59 no. 34.

6 and 7 Wilton House, Triptolemos Sarcophagus.



To Persephone's right we see a male carved in low relief, a curly-haired attendant with beard and moustache. He is dressed in a girded exomis and glances to the right, while supporting a tall wicker basket on his left shoulder. Scholars have suggested that he represents Aristaeus, a Roman deity of herdsmen and beekeepers, but no image of this god can be unequivocally identified³⁷. As with the other background figure, this peasant simply accentuates earthly fruitfulness³⁸.

Triptolemos concludes the scene. The hero – nude save for a chlamys – has just mounted his chariot, and is on the point of being borne into the air by his chargers: two large, scaly serpents (the lower body of the front snake is missing), that have been yoked and harnessed. By shortening perspective, the sculptor has made the yoke fully visible. With his left hand, Triptolemos loops his cloak to form a deep pocket for a huge heap of grain – just as a real sower would carry his seed. Looking backward toward the goddesses, he lays his right hand on Persephone's arm in a gesture of possession³⁹. Behind the chariot stands an olive tree with some berries in its leafy head.

Five figures conclude the panel. All stand frontally, though their supporting legs vary, and incline their heads toward the preceding scene. The first, a female, wears shoes, and a chiton, girded under her breasts, is slipping from her right shoulder; a cloak covers her lower body. Before the serpents' arching heads, she raises her right hand with an open, out-turned palm in a gesture of welcome⁴⁰. A long staff (broken at the lower end) rests against her left arm. To her

³⁵ For the gesture see Neumann, *Gesten* 49–58. It is a frequent motif on biographical sarcophagi. Cf. a married couple, represented holding hands (*dextrarum iunctio*) in the far right scene on a wedding sarcophagus in San Lorenzo fuori le mura, see Koch, *Sarkophage* 67 f. fig. 39.

³⁶ Robert, *Einzelmythen* 511, suggests *Messis*, *Messia* or *Tutilina* – all primeval, Roman agricultural deities. Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 204 R17, proposes *Messis* or *Tutilina*. For *Messia* and her companion *Tutilina* see LIMC VII (1994) 705 s. v. *Segesta I = Segetia* (E. Simon). On the Louvre sarcophagus, the figure behind mother and daughter is a youth, dressed in a goat skin with a crown of grain. Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 205, names the figure as *Eubouleus*, an important figure in the Eleusinian mysteries, but his garb badly accords with the standard iconography of this personality; he usually wears a chiton, and a wheat wreath is none of his attributes. Subsequently, Schwarz identifies him as a harvest deity, see LIMC IV (1988) 45 no. 19; 46 s. v. *Eubouleus* (G. Schwarz).

³⁷ Robert, *Einzelmythen* 511 and Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 205, identify the figure as *Aristaeus*. All iconographic types of the deity remain conjectural, see LIMC II (1984) 603–607 s. v. *Aristaios I* (B. F. Cook).

³⁸ Comparable are the rural scenes on both ends of the Louvre coffin, see Baratte, *Triptolème* 279 f. figs. 6; 7.

³⁹ Neumann, *Gesten* 59–66. Cf. the ends of a sarcophagus in the Uffizi, Florence (Inv. no. 104), with the rape of the *Leukippides*, where the *Dioskouroi* lead their intended brides by the arms, see H. Sichtermann / G. Koch, *Griechische Mythen auf römischen Sarkophagen* (Tübingen 1975) 39 no. 34 pl. 81.

⁴⁰ For this gesture see Neumann, *Gesten* 41–48. Numerous funerary monuments of Roman knights employ the gesture, common in *Adventus* scenes. So, e.g., the sarcophagus of Marcus Munius Lollianus in the Louvre Ma1498 shows a servant behind Lollianus, raising his open hand, see Baratte/Metzger, Louvre 244 f. no. 158.

right, a youth embraces her and his female companion on the other side. He is dressed in a loose chlamys, pinned at his right shoulder, which covers his body at the front, left side and back, but leaves his whole right side exposed⁴¹. A fillet encircles his curly hair.

The second female is attired like the first; she also sports a fillet, decorated at the forehead with a small palmetto-like ornament, consisting of four small leaves. She holds aloft a long, thin double torch⁴². The final adult dresses much like the other females, but she holds a sickle in her left hand. Her right hand touches the head of a small, nude boy; with both hands he grips a tall sheaf of grain, resting on the ground.

In mythology Demeter and Persephone were intimately associated with the four seasons or Horae, which tallies with the number of adults. However, the lack of clearly distinguishable attributes, plus a mixture of genders, nullifies this thesis⁴³.

The Wilton scene can be clarified by comparison with the Louvre panel (fig. 10). On the latter sarcophagus, the figures generally correspond in dress, attributes and actions to the first three adults of the Wilton marble. They are respectively: Demeter, Triptolemos, and Persephone⁴⁴. This trio emulates a statuary group by Praxiteles, brought to Rome to decorate the Horti Serviliani, as mentioned by Pliny the Elder⁴⁵. Eleusinian theology was based on mythological stories in which the main deities appear, disappear and reappear in connection with the events of Persephone's abduction and return. As a result, the double appearances of its protagonists within the same composition is a conventional device in its imagery⁴⁶.

The corner female of the Wilton sarcophagus may have been added simply because the panel is marginally longer than the Louvre marble, so that there was space to fill⁴⁷. Her dress and sickle are modelled on the figure of Summer, which is the first figure on the left on the lid of the Wilton coffin (fig. 8). The child is Ploutos, who in Eleusinian iconography is always a boy, usually depicted naked and holding either a cornucopia or a bunch of grain stalks, symbolizing agrarian abundance⁴⁸.

The Wilton relief is divided into three self-contained units. Its first two scenes are clearly intelligible and interrelated: Persephone's anodos results in Triptolemos' agrarian mission. Each episode is full of animation: steeds and serpents rearing; garments billowing; and figures rushing

⁴¹ The Thessalian chlamys, which is usually combined with a chiton. For examples and bibliography see J. Raeder, *Die antiken Skulpturen in Petworth House (West Sussex) Monumenta Artis Romanae 28* (Mayence 2000) 100 no. 26 pl. 37.

⁴² Baratte, *Triptolème 278* n. 1.

⁴³ Robert, *Einzelmythen 511* f., attempts to identify the seasons. Hanfmann, *Season I 130; 136; 256; 259* no. 392; II 67 f. n. 176, notes the difficulties with Robert's interpretation, but still endeavours to name the Horae.

⁴⁴ Identified by Baratte, *Triptolème 277* f. and followed by Schwarz, *Triptolemos 206*.

⁴⁵ *Plin. nat. 36, 4, 23*. For the Praxitelean group see LIMC Demeter 875 no. 383; LIMC Triptolemos 57 no. 3; A. Corso, *The Art of Praxiteles (Rome 2004) 207–229* no. 13. Baratte/Metzger, *Louvre 120*, identifies the youth as Iacchos. The introduction of another Eleusinian personality into the Triptolemos theme unnecessarily confuses the issue. For the Horti Serviliani see E. M. Steinby (ed.), *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romanae III (Rome 1996) 94* s. v. Horti Serviliani (L. Chioffi).

⁴⁶ Demeter and Kore often appear twice on reliefs and vase paintings, see Clinton, *Myth 73–75; 78–82*; Leventi, *Mondragone 126–128*.

⁴⁷ The measurements of the Louvre example: L. 183 cm, H. 75 cm.

⁴⁸ For the Eleusinian Ploutos see LIMC VII (1994) 416–18 nos. 5–16 s. v. Ploutos (K. Clinton). The Louvre work transmogrifies his depiction into an anecdotal incident: the little lad shrinks back in fright at the sight of terrifying snakes.

⁴⁹ Koch/Sichtermann, *Sarkophage 188*. For the stylistic traits of mid-Antonine times see *ibid.* 176 n. 19; 263. In both his studies Baratte dates the Louvre work to ca. 160 A. D., based on the more widely spaced composition and the lack of incised eyes.

⁵⁰ For sarcophagi lids and acroteria see Koch/Sichtermann, *Sarkophage 66–72*; Koch, *Sarkophage 18* f. The heads have been identified as Attis, see Sinn (note 23) 59 f. Since mid-Antonine times, acroteria have motifs independent of the representation of the fronts of the lids, see Kranz, *Jahreszeiten 75* n. 442.

⁵¹ The seasons usually carry baskets and not cornucopias. For the lid see Michaelis, *Marbles 699* f.; Robert, *Einzelmythen 512* f. no. 432; Hanfmann, *Season I 233* no. 392; Kranz, *Jahreszeiten 78; 81; 261* no. 411 pl. 98, 5. See also LIMC V (1990) 521 f. nos. 88–94; 536 s. v. Horae (L. A. Casali).



8 Wilton House, Triptolemos Sarcophagus. Early twentieth century photograph of the Lid.

about. The chariots act as visually binding elements, as do the flowing curves of the vines, snakes and drapery. The third scene – a static line-up – has no real narrative function. But by members of the Eleusinian cult, their identities, and the reference to the Praxitelean statuary group, would have been recognized immediately.

Compositional devices – the strong, vertical accents of the vine stalk on the left and the reptiles on the right – clearly separate the central trio of Demeter, Persephone and Triptolemos from adjacent episodes. There is a further division: the mirror symmetry in poses, head tilts, and left hand gestures of Persephone and Dionysos, together with those of the background female, produce a pyramidal group, which focuses on Persephone taking leave of her mother.

The modest heights of both the Wilton and the Louvre coffin and their distinctive stylistic traits securely assign them to sculptors, trained in metropolitan Rome; the Louvre work dates to 160 A. D., whereas the Wilton marble was crafted around a decade later⁴⁹. The background is treated as a flat, neutral surface, against which the well-proportioned, spirited figures move with convincing vigour. Vegetation and supplementary figures help focussing attention on key characters and create an impression of depth. Overall, the composition is well executed – in many places excellently, and in such high relief that some parts of the figures, for example the horses' reins, are completely detached from the field, producing the effect of a pierced ivory box. When crisp and newly-crafted, the effect must have been stunning.

Michaelis remarks on the expressive, portrait-like carving of the faces, and despite the Wilton marble's weathered condition, one can still discern the sculptor's conscientious treatment of both hair and visages. Attention to detail shows in the tiny bores indicating the pupils of the eyes. The drill was used with discretion. Though hardly noticeable in the coiffures, it is evident in the deep, groove-like folds of the drapery, in which the carver achieved rich contrasts of light and shade. Another nice touch is the fissured bark at the bottom of Dionysos' vine stalk.

The lid

The acroteria show identical youthful barbarians with long, wavy hair and Phrygian caps – common trimmings for lids⁵⁰. Either end of the cover is a torch, a paraphernalia perhaps alluding to the Eleusinian rites, in which light played a prominent part.

On the long field of the lid we see the four seasons, represented according to the canonical scheme, preferred in Antonine and later times⁵¹. Appearing in the guise of recumbent females with attendant Erotes, the seasons are paired off, rather than arranged according to the yearly cycle. The principal Horae – Summer and Winter – stand at either end; the seasons of transition – Autumn and Spring – occupy the middle. Strict symmetry operates; each Hora reclines, supported by one arm, while the other hand reaches out to touch a cornucopia, chock full of apples, grapes and wheat. All wear billowing cloaks, that encircle their heads, echoing the drapery of the deities on the coffin. The Erotes on the left hover around the cornucopiae, while those at right stand; three lay their hands on the horns of plenty.

Summer and Winter are clearly recognizable by their dress and attendants' attributes. Only their wreaths distinguish Autumn and Spring. Summer is nude, save for a cloak swathed around



her lower body, and wears a crown of grain. Her winged, naked Eros offers her a sickle (the handle has been broken off). Next comes Autumn, wreathed with vine leaves and grapes, and clad in a chiton, that exposes her right breast. She turns her gaze back toward Spring, who faces her companion and is identically garbed, except for her floral wreath.

Winter is warmly wrapped up in a sleeved chiton and cloak; her cornucopia, unlike those of her companions, brims with apples and carob beans. A wingless Eros, clothed in chiton, cloak, hose and boots presents his mistress with a dead hare. The expert arrangement of the figures into undulating curves, together with the swirling drapery and the twists of cornucopiae, animate a potentially monotonous series. Sarcophagus lids often contained scenes or motifs intended to elucidate the coffin iconography, and the seasons are especially appropriate for the agrarian myth of Triptolemos⁵².

The inscription

A Greek inscription, centred exactly above the two protagonists, Perspephone and Triptolemos, has been engraved on the mouldings of the lid and coffin so that its two lines marry. The epitaph, followed by an ivy leaf, reads:

Θ [---] Κ · ΑΥΡΗ·ΛΙΩ Ε·ΠΑ·ΦΡΟ·ΔΕΙ·Τ Ω / CYM·ΒΙ·Ω · ΑΝ·ΤΩ·ΝΙ·Α · ΒΑ·ΛΕ·ΡΙΑ · Ε·ΘΗ·Κ

This has to be transcribed as:

Θ(εοῖς) κ(αταχθονίοις). Αὐρηλίω Ἐπαφροδείτῳ / συμβίῳ Ἀντωνία Βαλερία ἔθηκε.

»To the shades of Aurelius Epaphroditus. Aurelia Valeria made this (tomb) for her husband.«⁵³ From this formulaic inscription, it is not easy to deduce the status of Aurelius Epaphroditus. Two given names indicate that the deceased must have been either freeborn or a freedman; the Greek cognomen might indicate freedman descent within two or three generations⁵⁴. The name Aurelius Epaphroditus is known from other inscriptions, but it is impossible to link any of these with the occupant of the Wilton sarcophagus⁵⁵.

The inscription bears all the hallmarks of Roman imperial practice. Many epitaphs, carved under Roman influence, consign the dead to the care of the chthonic gods with the formula Θεοῖς καταχθονίοις, often abbreviated ΘΗΚ, which corresponds to the Latin expression Dis Manibus⁵⁶. The aorist form of ἔθηκε was also common during Roman times⁵⁷.



9 (opposite) Eton College, Richard Topham Album 15, 93, engraving of the Wilton Triptolemos Sarcophagus.
10 (above) Paris, Louvre, Triptolemos Sarcophagus.

In the first and second century A. D. there was a growing fondness for elongated forms of alpha and lambda, as on this dedication; also indicative of the imperial period are the lunate sigma and epsilon and the cursive mu and omega⁵⁸. Distinctive carving conventions of this period include: the extraordinary and time consuming punctuation, placed after almost every syllable; division marks between words; and the termination of the epitaph with an ivy leaf embellishment⁵⁹. Another telling sign of Roman imperial practice is the recording of the dedicator⁶⁰.

The lack of an inscription panel and the epitaph's improvised placement clearly prove that the sarcophagus was not originally designed for the inclusion of an inscription. Its addition, therefore, demonstrates a re-use of the marble. The nomen gentilicium or family name of Aurelius could suggest that the deceased was either a freedman of the imperial household of the Aurelii, or descended from a person of this lineage, or else set free by such a person⁶¹. But there is a more likely explanation. After Caracalla's ›Constitutio Antoniniana‹ of 212 A. D. extended the right of

⁵² Koch/Sichtermann, *Sarkophage* 217–223. For examples of the frequent appearance of the Horae with Triptolemos, see LIMC Horae (note before) 520 f. nos. 83–86; 536. The bringing of gifts by Erotes to their respective seasons (Summer and Winter) could relate to the coffin's main myth of Demeter's present to Triptolemos, see Hanfmann, *Season I* 233.

⁵³ Boeckh (note 10); L. Moretti, *Inscriptiones graecae urbis romae II 1* (Rome 1972) 75 f. no. 401. For inscriptions on sarcophagi see Koch/Sichtermann, *Sarkophage* 25–27; Koch, *Sarkophage* 47–49.

⁵⁴ P. R. C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris. A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge 1972) 84; 87. Epaphroditus (originally from the noun *ἐπαφροδίσις* or eloquence) was a popular name throughout the Greek world, to judge by its many listings in M. J. Osborne / S. G. Byrne (edd.), *A lexicon of Greek personal names I–IV* (Oxford 1987–2005).

⁵⁵ The inscriptions are in Boeckh (note 10) I 1224; II 3665 l. 33; III add. 4303 h7; SEG XXXV (1988) 46 no. 145.

⁵⁶ McLean, *Epigraphy* 268 f.

⁵⁷ L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions. Morphology II* (Berlin and New York 1996) 618 f. For examples see I. Kajanto, *Acta Inst. Romani Finlandiae* 2, 1963, 28; Moretti (note 53) II 1, 164 no. 566; 220 no. 673; II 2, 375 no. 958; P. Tuomisto in: A. Helttula et al. (edd.), *Le iscrizioni sepolcrali latine nell'Isola Sacra. Acta Inst. Romani Finlandiae* 30, 2007, xxv no. 1 GR; xxvii no. 12 GR.

⁵⁸ A. G. Woodhouse, *The Study of Greek Inscriptions?* (Cambridge 1981) 64 f.; McLean, *Epigraphy* 41 f.

⁵⁹ McLean, *Epigraphy* 48 f.; Threatte (note 57) *Phonology I* 88 f. 91.

⁶⁰ Roman funerary inscriptions name both the deceased and the commemorator, see Kajanto (note 57) 21; E. Meyer, *Journal Roman Stud.* 80, 1990, 75–78.

⁶¹ For the name Aurelius see Weaver, *Familia Caesaris* (note 54) 42–86; McLean, *Epigraphy* 112–148.

citizenship to all free subjects in the empire, the name of the imperial benefactor, Aurelius – or Aurelia –, became a popular nomen. Hence, the tomb's re-dedication most probably occurred in the aftermath of the Emperor's edict, dating the inscription to the third century. The epigraphy is of high quality, and its clever placement – just above the central characters – physically links and thereby equates the mortal couple with the mythic.

The model

The first two episodes of the Wilton marble were based on the ever-popular theme of Persephone's story; a coffin in the Uffizi offers a good idea of the basic pattern⁶² (fig. 11). Sculptors adjusted this narrative by adding new figures, interactions and embellishments. Many details of the Wilton sarcophagus, such as Demeter's rocky throne, show that the atelier was very aware of the imagery of the Eleusinian mysteries. Models were probably culled from copy books or examples on votive reliefs dedicated to its deities. By including Triptolemos' mission – a theme exclusive to the cult – the sculptor transformed a standard mythological representation into a customized religious scene and created a distinctive work of art.

On extant Persephone coffins, the goddess' arrival on terra firma is never represented; however, this episode was central to Eleusinian beliefs, thus explaining its illustration on the Wilton marble⁶³. Here, too, we see the maiden instead of her mother in the biga, yet the usual horses of Hades' vehicle have been retained. On the Uffizi sarcophagus, Demeter stands in her chariot with majestic dignity, erect and bearing a torch (fig. 11). But on the Wilton frieze Persephone actively drives the chariot. Her dynamic pose is found on some Endymion sarcophagi, which show the departure of the moon goddess, Selene⁶⁴. Hekate comes from the same legend; she is modelled on the figure of Aura or Aurora, who reins in Selene's horses, as she arrives on earth⁶⁵.

Persephone's abduction scene frequently includes the maiden's frightened companions and deities such as Athena, who often fill the space between the chariots (fig. 11). On the Wilton sarcophagus, one sees Dionysos instead, an important deity of the Eleusinian religion, and the poignant separation of Demeter and Persephone, to which an implied promise of reunion is added.

⁶² For Persephone sarcophagi see Robert, *Einzelmythen* 450–495; R. Lindner, *Der Raub der Persephone in der antiken Kunst* (1984) 64–86; Koch/Sichtermann, *Sarkophagie* 175–79; Koch, *Sarkophagie* 79. – The Uffizi marble Inv. 86 see Robert, *Einzelmythen* 464f. no. 372 pl. 201; Sichtermann/Koch, *Mythen* (note 39) 57 no. 60 pls. 147–149; P. Zanker / B. C. Ewald, *Mit Mythen leben. Die Bildwelt der römischen Sarkophagie* (Munich 2004) 92 fig. 74.

⁶³ For this very rare scene in art see LIMC VIII (1997) 970f. nos. 249–253; 977 s. v. Persephone (G. Güntner).

⁶⁴ Baratte, *Triptolème* 278f., and Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 205, compare the figure of Persephone with that of Selene's departure on an Endymion sarcophagus in the Louvre Ma 362, see Baratte/Metzger, *Louvre* 67–69 no. 23; H. Sichtermann, *Die mythologischen Sarkophagie*. ASR XII 2 (Berlin 1992) 117f. no. 55 pl. 51, 1.

⁶⁵ Reverse the Aura/Aurora figure on a sarcophagus in the Villa Doria Pamphilj, see *ibid.* 120 no. 60 pl. 53, 4.

⁶⁶ On the Louvre relief Triptolemos' mission is interpreted literally: Triptolemos grabs grain from Persephone's mantle to sow during his mission. In red-figure vase painting the

delivery of the corn by Demeter or Kore to Triptolemos pre-dates his departure. Cf. a volute crater of the Berlin painter with this scene in the Badisches Landesmuseum, Karlsruhe, see Schwarz, *Triptolemos* 35 V 39; 87f. fig. 3. See also examples listed in LIMC VIII (1997) 962 nos. 88–97 s. v. Persephone (G. Güntner). The delivery scene is rare after the Hellenistic period.

⁶⁷ See Koch/Sichtermann, *Sarkophagie* 270–272 and fig. 4 with a map, showing the sarcophagi finds within the Empire and citation of the rare examples.

⁶⁸ For the Eleusinian mysteries and the development of the sanctuary during Roman imperial times see Mylonas, *Eleusis* (note 23) 155–186, as well as the articles by L. J. Alderink and K. Clinton in: ANRW II 18, 2 (1989) 1457–1498 and 1499–1539. For the city of Eleusinion in the Hellenistic and Roman times see Miles (note 20) 71–93. Roman copies of the great Eleusinian relief, found in Corinth, Marino and Rome, further attest to the cult's popularity, see Micheli, *Triade* 92–109.

⁶⁹ See P. Stewart, *The Social History of Roman Art* (Cambridge 2008) 37.



11 Florence, Uffizi, Persephone Sarcophagus.

Examination of Persephone coffins (fig. 11) proves that Hades provided the model for Triptolemos' appearance on the Wilton work: although the deity is bearded, while Triptolemos is not, their stances and physiques are alike. Triptolemos adopts Demeter's serpent-drawn chariot and assumes the role of the underworld's ruler in bearing the maiden away, but no coercion is involved. Hades and his crushed captive are harbingers of death, whereas the demi-god of the Wilton piece brings vitality and growth⁶⁶. On the Wilton sculpture, Triptolemos lays his hand on Persephone's arm, gently urging her to make haste (fig. 6). Both now embark on a joint mission to cultivate the world. By this single gesture, the sculptor has eloquently reinforced the core belief of the Eleusinian mysteries: just as Persephone and nature regenerate, so does human life.

The Eleusinian mysteries in Roman Imperial times

The carving styles of the Wilton and Louvre sarcophagi and the conventions of the Wilton epitaph convincingly argue for a provenance from the Roman Urbs itself for both. Most significantly, geographical data from archaeological finds of sarcophagi demonstrate that Roman ateliers rarely exported their wares to Greece⁶⁷. The dating of the memorials to mid-Antonine times is yet more proof that the cult continued to be celebrated in the metropolis during imperial times⁶⁸. Countless Roman citizens, including emperors, became initiates of the most potent mystery-cult in the Empire; their devotion was expressed through considerable building activity at the sanctuary and a large number of dedicatory offerings. In particular, Emperor Hadrian, the first ruler after Augustus to be initiated into the mysteries, lavished attention and funds on Eleusis and promoted the rites in Rome. Marcus Aurelius, initiated in 176 A. D., was also an energetic benefactor of the sanctuary, and throughout Antonine times, extensive development of the sacred site continued.

Conclusion

Marble sarcophagi with richly carved decoration were an expensive status symbol for Romans. Yet, they not only proclaimed the social ambitions, but also expressed the values and virtues, for which the dead were commemorated. Sarcophagi were rarely executed to order, but rather kept in stock to be purchased as needed⁶⁹. The Wilton and Louvre coffins stand apart from most other memorials, because their distinctive iconography has been customized, revealing that Roman workshops could carve special commissions for clients, who desired to express their particular, eschatological beliefs.

Of special interest is the geographical link between the Wilton and Louvre works. The whereabouts of the Louvre sarcophagus were unknown before, in 1950, it entered the museum's collection⁷⁰. However, it is unlikely to be a coincidence that two sarcophagi of approximately the same date share so much highly distinctive iconography and display similar stylistic treatments.

It is highly probable that both the Wilton and Louvre coffins were near-contemporary products of the same workshop, placed within the chamber of a funerary structure in Rome⁷¹. When the Wilton sarcophagus was re-used for the remains of Aurelius Epaphroditus in the early third century, the grave site was disturbed, perhaps by a fellow Eleusinian cult member, the inscription added and the coffin then replaced. Eventually, in the seventeenth century, both marbles were plundered and transported to France. Once there, the vicissitudes of fate led to their separation and different histories.

The Louvre work is superior in craftsmanship to the Wilton piece, and its iconography is more precise. It is also slightly earlier in date, and given the likelihood that both coffins were made by one atelier, it may have even served as the model for the Wilton marble. But whereas the Louvre work vanished from sight until the middle of the twentieth century, the Wilton sarcophagus has been known, highly publicized and appreciated starting from the early eighteenth century until the present day. For archaeologists and connoisseurs alike, neither time nor the ravages of the English weather have diminished the power and poignancy of the Triptolemos sarcophagus of Aurelius Epaphroditus.

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Abbreviations

ASR	Die antiken Sarkophagreliefs (resp. Sarkophag-Reliefs).
Baratte, Triptolème	F. Baratte, <i>Le sarcophage de Triptolème au musée du Louvre</i> . <i>Rev. Arch.</i> 1974, 271–290.
Baratte/Metzger, Louvre	F. Baratte / C. Metzger, <i>Musée du Louvre. Catalogue des sarcophages en pierre d'époques romaine et paléochrétienne</i> (Paris 1985).
Clinton, Myth	K. Clinton, <i>Myth and Cult. The Iconography of the Eleusinian Mysteries</i> . The Martin P. Nilsson Lectures on Greek Religion, delivered 19–21 November 1990 at the Swedish Institute at Athens (Stockholm 1992).
Hanfmann, Season	G. Hanfmann, <i>The Season Sarcophagus in Dumbarton Oaks</i> (Cambridge, Mass. 1951) I and II.
Hayashi, Triptolemosbild	T. Hayashi, <i>Bedeutung und Wandel des Triptolemosbildes vom 6.–4. Jh. v. Chr.</i> (Würzburg 1992).

⁷⁰ Baratte/Metzger, Louvre 118 no.48. It was obviously housed indoors, as its excellent state of preservation shows.

⁷¹ On the original forms of Roman mausolea see the discussion in Zanker/ Ewald (note 62) 28–33.

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Picture credits. Fig. 1 and 2 Will Pryce. By permission of the Eighteenth Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery and the Trustees of Wilton House Trust, Wilton House, Salisbury, Wiltshire. – Fig 3–7; 11 Forschungsarchiv für Antike Plastik am Archäologischen Institut der Universität zu Köln. – Fig. 8 after Robert, *Einzelmythen* pl. 136. – Fig. 9 Reproduced by permission of the Provost and Fellows of Eton College. – Fig. 10 The Louvre Museum.

Summary. Thomas Herbert, eighth Earl of Pembroke (1656–1733), was virtually alone among English collectors of antiquities in finding sarcophagi fascinating and of aesthetic value. Among his treasures was a high quality Roman coffin, depicting the myth of the agrarian demi-god, Triptolemos, an important personality of the Eleusinian mysteries. References to the Eleusinian cult are extremely rare in funerary art. The marble dates, on stylistic grounds, to late Antonine times, confirming that the popularity of this mystery sect continued well into Roman times. Its epitaph is also of interest, though probably of later date, providing clues about the deceased of the re-use phase, his social class, Greek origins and marital status. Sarcophagi were seldom executed to order, but kept in stock to be purchased as needed; however, the Wilton work was clearly a special commission. It features scenes excerpted from a pattern books of the Persephone legend, but by including Triptolemos' mission – a theme exclusive to the Eleusinian cult –, the sarcophagus not only emphasizes the religion's core belief in life after death, but also transforms a standard mythological representation into a customized work of art.

Ergebnis. Thomas Herbert, der achte Earl of Pembroke (1656–1733), sah in römischen Sarkophagen faszinierende und ästhetisch wertvolle Kunstwerke und stand mit dieser Einschätzung im Kreise englischer Sammler seiner Zeit allein da. Zu seinen Schätzen gehörte ein sehr qualitativvoller Sarkophag mit dem Mythos des Triptolemos. Das Werk kann aus stilistischen Gründen in spätantoinische Zeit datiert werden und bildet einen der zahlreichen Belege für die Fortdauer des eleusinischen Kultes in der Kaiserzeit. Die gut erhaltene, wohl spätere Inschrift, vermutlich aus der Zeit nach der Constitutio Antoniniana, enthält Hinweise auf den sozialen Status des Bestatteten der zweiten Nutzungsphase, seine griechische Herkunft sowie seinen Familienstand als verheirateter Mann. Sarkophage wurden zumeist auf Vorrat gearbeitet und anschließend je nach Bedarf verkauft. Die Bezüge zum eleusinischen Kult sind freilich in der römischen Grabkunst so rar, dass in diesem Fall vermutlich ein besonderer Auftrag zugrunde lag. Die Szenen stammen aus dem Zyklus der Persephonelegende, der auch auf Sarkophagen belegt ist, sind aber durch das sonst nur im Zusammenhang des eleusinischen Kultes vorkommende Motiv der Aussendung des Triptolemos in spezifischer Weise bereichert. Dadurch wird die aus dem Gedankenkreis der eleusinischen Mysterien stammende, religiös begründete Anschauung vom Leben nach dem Tode in den Vordergrund gestellt.

Résumé. Thomas Herbert, le huitième duc de Pembroke (1656–1733), était le seul collectionneur anglais d'antiquités qui trouvait les sarcophages fascinants et esthétiques. Entre ses nombreuses richesses, se trouvait un sarcophage de très grande qualité, représentant le mythe de Triptolemos, héros et personnage important des mystères Élyséens. Les indications au culte Élyséen sont très rares dans l'art funéraire. En raison de son style on peut dater le marbre de la période antonienne tardive. La date confirme, que ce culte était encore bien populaire aux temps romains. L'épithaphe, de l'époque après la «constitutio Antoniniana», est aussi intéressante, parce qu'elle donne des informations sur la classe sociale du défunt, son origine grec et sa vie conjugale. Dans l'antiquité, on a très rarement commandé des sarcophages. Par contre ils étaient produits en réserve pour l'achat à la demande, mais le marbre de Wilton était sans doute une demande spéciale. Il montre des scènes de la légende du Perséphone. En même temps il intègre la mission de Triptolème – un thème exclusif du culte Élyséen. Le sarcophage souligne non seulement la foi fondamentale de cette religion de la vie après la mort, mais transforme aussi une représentation mythologique standard en oeuvre d'art commune.