



stamps the sepulchre was probably completed in 134. But it is a matter of controversy whether the sarcophagi were part of a unified conception and set up as soon as construction of the building was completed. Both mythological sarcophagi are usually dated to around two decades later, implying that they were installed subsequently. However, a subtle stylistic analysis has made an earlier date in the 130s probable, and has attempted to demonstrate that all three sarcophagi belong together and came from the same workshop (Herdejürgen). The Niobe sarcophagus at least may have been installed in a hurry,

Orestes

The myth from which the Vatican sarcophagus has taken several episodes is one of the most famous legends of antiquity: the Oresteia. All three great Attic tragedians wrote plays about the fate of the matricide Orestes. The most detailed account comes from Aeschylus in his trilogy *Agamemnon*, *The Libation-Bearers* (*Choephorai*), and *The Eumenides*. The versions of the myth as retold by these dramatists also form the basis of the treatment of the material in the visual tradition.

The complexity of the myth justifies a somewhat detailed presentation. In his *Agamemnon*

since in many places the final touches to the surface had not been made. The sharp-edged drapery of the daughters can to a large extent be attributed to this. The left side panel has not been finalized, perhaps also because in the cramped space available—the niche for each of the sarcophagi measured only about 2.5 metres—it would not have been very visible. The inscription that was supposed to go on the *tabula* on the lid was never added either (see above), and the lid was never interlocked with the casket by means of iron clamps. (The same was the case with the garland sarcophagus found in the same tomb.) It would thus have been easy to add further bodies later. In any case, the use of sarcophagi which had not been completed by the time they were put on display is by no means unusual. The sarcophagus is probably to be dated to the 130s or 140s.

Rome, Vatican Museums, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Inv. 10437. H 0.93, L 2.11, W 0.96: Robert, *ASR* III. 3 (1919), 381 ff., no. 315, plate 100; H. Sichtermann, *JdI* 83 (1968), 180 ff.; Sichtermann-Koch (1975), 49 f., no. 48, plates 124–8; Koch-Sichtermann (1982), 169, ill. 189; Brilliant (1984), 128 ff.; Fittschen (1992), *LIMC* VI. 1 (1992), 920, no. 32a, s.v. Niobidai (W. Geominy). The early dating mentioned here in Herdejürgen, *ASR* VI. 2, 1 (1996), 37–45, plate 112; Herdejürgen (2000), 214. On the find context, see doc 27. The quote from a funerary poem in Geist (1969), 163, no. 430.

Aeschylus describes how, on his return from Troy, the son of Atreus and commander of the Greek army was murdered in Argos along with Cassandra, by his wife Clytemnestra. She hated her husband chiefly because he had sacrificed their daughter Iphigeneia at Aulis, and during Agamemnon's absence Clytemnestra had found a lover in his cousin, Aegisthus.

In *The Libation-Bearers* Orestes, the son of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, enters the scene. At the tomb of his father he swears revenge, as Apollo has commanded him. He also meets his sister Electra there, who long

before had taken him to safety in Phocis, where he had grown up at the court of King Strophius. The king's son, Pylades, is Orestes' loyal friend and companion, in this scene and during the events that follow. Together the two friends slink into the palace at Argos under the pretext of delivering news of Orestes' death. Then they kill first Aegisthus and a little later Clytemnestra, who tries vainly in words of anguish to dissuade her son from his plan. With the murder of his mother, Orestes himself becomes the victim of different ancient laws with all their contradictory demands: although he has indeed avenged the death of his father, in so doing he has shed the blood of his own family, and thus brings fresh guilt upon himself. This guilt now pursues Orestes in the shape of the Furies who appear to him straight after his matricide. He flees distraught to Delphi, to the shrine of the very god who gave him the task of avenging the murder of his father, and thus bears part of the responsibility for his persecution by the Furies. At the beginning of the third drama, *The Eumenides*, Apollo sends Orestes to Athens, where his case is examined by the highest court, the Areopagus: it is only this institution of the proud city, which the goddess Athena herself presides over, that is able to break the baleful cycle of guilt and atonement. When Orestes has been acquitted Athena placates the goddesses of revenge, who are subsequently honoured in the city as the Eumenides (the 'kindly ones').

At this point the sarcophagus reliefs diverge from Aeschylus' version of the story, and follow an alternative version which also forms the basis for Euripides' *Iphigeneia in Tauris*: some of the Furies, who refuse to accept the verdict of the Areopagus, continue to pursue Orestes. He again flees to the sanctuary of Apollo, where he is given the task of bringing the sacred statue of Artemis from Tauris to Athens, in order to be released from his madness. After their arrival in the country of the barbarian Taurians, Orestes and Pylades are captured by Taurian shepherds when Orestes suffers a fit of madness. They are taken to the temple of Artemis, where traditionally all strangers are sacrificed to the

goddess. There Orestes meets his sister Iphigeneia, whom he believed dead and who, as priestess, performs the bloody rite of Artemis. Long before, the goddess had saved Iphigeneia's life when she was to be sacrificed by her father in Aulis, but Iphigeneia is very unhappy with her new role far away from her home. When she tells Pylades the contents of a letter which she wants him to take to her brother Orestes, whom she believes to be in Argos, the brother and sister recognize each other and think of a trick which enables them to flee, taking the statue with them: Iphigeneia pretends to Thoas, king of the Taurians, that she must cleanse in the sea the two strangers who are tainted with murder, and the Artemis statue which their touch has made impure. She removes the chains of the two prisoners, and after Orestes and Pylades have fought the Scythian guards (according to Euripides with their fists, but shown in the images as using swords), they escape—although the goddess Athena has to intervene again at the end in order to bring about the happy ending.

The twenty-nine or so surviving Orestes sarcophagi all come from the Antonine period. They can be divided into two basic groups, according to which episodes are depicted on the sarcophagus casket and thus emphasized. The first and larger group, with about sixteen examples, shows Orestes killing his mother; the sarcophagus in the Vatican described here belongs to this group. As a rule, the killing of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra is combined with other scenes: Orestes leaving the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi and the sleeping Furies, which could otherwise be replaced by the depiction of Orestes at his father's tomb. The lid, and to some extent also the side panels, flesh out the Orestes theme with illustrations of his adventures in Tauris.

But a second, slightly smaller group, with about thirteen examples, makes the episodes in Tauris the main theme of the casket (Ill. 208). In some cases the central scene places the focus on Pylades, showing him supporting Orestes after a severe attack of madness as if he had been badly wounded in battle (cf. a similar group in the

right half of the frieze on the Niobe sarcophagus in Munich, Doc. 25). Other examples take as their central scene the pair of friends in chains, being led before Iphigeneia by Taurians in barbarian dress. A final group features Orestes in the centre of the frieze, sunk down on a rock full of grief and the pain of parting; in Euripides' version this is the moment when Orestes believes he must die in the land of the Taurians, while Pylades will leave him and return home with Iphigeneia's letter—which is in fact addressed to Orestes himself. As the main image on the sarcophagus, the scene can only have been chosen for its connotations with parting and grief.

The two groups of Orestes sarcophagi thus focus on completely different episodes and aspects of the myth. The role of Orestes and Pylades thus changes too, paradoxical as this may appear. Whereas in the sarcophagi of the first group they act as bringers of death, possessed by *furor*, in the sarcophagi of the second group they demonstrate their exemplary friendship (*amicitia*) and courage (*virtus*). It is the particular emphasis placed on the myth by the images themselves that is decisive, going as they do in completely different directions on the sarcophagi of the two groups.

27. THE MURDER OF CLYTEMNESTRA AND AEGISTHUS BY ORESTES AND PYLADES

Sarcophagus in the Vatican, Museo Gregoriano Profano (Ill. 62)

The frieze on the front panel of the casket can be divided into three scenes. Its arrangement from left to right follows the sequence of events in the myth, although the direction of the movements of the actors, and the direction in which they are looking, suggest a reading going in the opposite direction. In any case, the attention of the viewer is captured by the macabre main scene in the centre of the sarcophagus: the double murder of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus which has just been committed by Orestes and Pylades. Even the minor figures who frame this central scene indi-

cate that something gruesome is happening: the old nurse on the left is turning aside full of revulsion and horror, while the servant sitting opposite her on the floor is trying to protect himself with a stool. As he collapses backwards onto the ground, Aegisthus has pulled the throne down with him. Head and limbs are strangely distorted; in his finely arranged hair he wears the band of the ruler. Over Aegisthus stands Pylades, with his left hand pulling away the cloak with which the king had doubtless wanted to protect himself. Opposite Pylades, Orestes, also nude, shown full-length and placed more strongly in the foreground, has struck the fatal blow against his mother who is lying on the ground, and is now turning away to look towards his left, raising his sword arm to protect himself from a goddess of vengeance who is pressing in from the right. While the Fury attacking Orestes in the foreground holds a snake coiled round her outstretched left arm, her sister in the background, largely hidden by a curtain, has a burning torch. The way the sculptor has characterized the Furies is different from that of the poet, who has blood dripping out of their eyes and describes them as 'black' and 'utterly revolting' (*Choeph.* 1058; *Eumenides* 52–6). Here they appear as young women who are in no way repulsive, but whose demonic nature is sufficiently conveyed by their wild and tangled hair and the attributes with which they torment their victim.

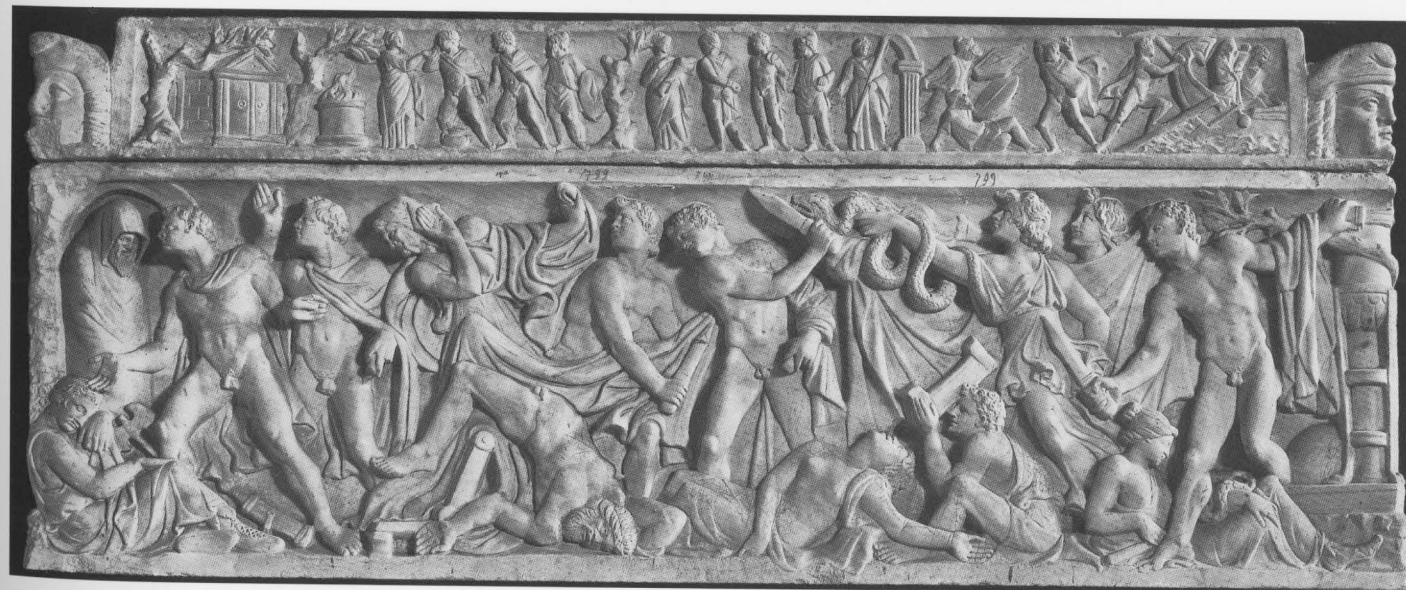
In accordance with the presentation of the matricide in Aeschylus' *Libation-Bearers*, the scene is usually regarded as the moment directly after the murder, when Orestes catches sight of the Furies who are henceforth to pursue him. But unlike the description in Aeschylus, the motif of sighting is not shown on the sarcophagi. The Furies, who are present in every depiction, seem rather to goad Orestes on to his bloody deed: they embody the *furor* which drives Orestes to a frenzy. He himself thus appears as a victim of demonic beings, and his actions as dictated by fate. This makes the scene more understandable for the antique observer as a symbol of the cruel rampage of death, even if it makes important motifs in the tragedy less clear.

Many interpreters have regarded the main scene, described above, as being in fact two different scenes, each of them featuring Orestes. But given the famous *amicitia* between the two friends and the fact that they appear together in the left-hand scene and on the lid, there is no reason to divide the main image into two consecutive episodes.

The two goddesses of vengeance lead the eye on to the scene on the right, which in a continuing narrative again includes Orestes. Hesitantly, with drawn sword, he climbs over a sleeping Fury, who holds in her right hand the shaft of a torch (or an axe) and has a snake lying on her left arm. The Fury lying under a tree on the adjoining side panel on the right, who is also provided with a snake and torch, can easily be seen as part of the same scene.

The tripod which divides the front and side panel sets the events in the sanctuary of Apollo in Delphi. Further pointers that this is the famous oracle where in Aeschylus' tragedy the matricide sought refuge are the Omphalos wound round with a ribbon next to the tripod, and the branch of a laurel tree winding round a cylindrical object on the three-footed vessel behind Orestes' left hand (with empty scabbard). In the context of the myth, the scene illustrated here is probably the moment described at the beginning of *The Eumenides* when Orestes, beleaguered by the

Furies, leaves the temple of Apollo and receives from the god himself the advice to go to seek expiation in Athens. However, Apollo is not shown on the relief, and the fact that Orestes is moving towards the left, which corresponds to the direction of movement of the entire frieze, creates the impression of an attacker creeping up from the right with drawn sword: it seems to be a symbol of approaching danger. Doubtless for this reason the scene has been interpreted by some (Andreae, Sichtermann) as Orestes leaving Delphi after being ordered by Apollo to kill the usurping couple—in other words, an episode that precedes the scene in the centre. The sleeping Fury would then not be easy to explain, but there is another one on the left-hand side, where she has just as little reason to be as far as the inner chronology of the myth is concerned. Probably the artist simply went back to a pattern showing Orestes in Delphi after he had killed his mother, and rearranged it. It is true that the resulting composition confuses the original sense, but it suggests impending doom and approaching death very convincingly. We see a similar phenomenon on Creusa sarcophagi of about the same time, where Medea, in a similarly threatening way, her dagger drawn, ponders the murder of her own children, and Creusa, all on fire, appears to be running straight on to the blade (cf. Doc. 20).



At the far left of the frieze is the chronologically earliest event within the mythological narrative. Orestes and Pylades have come to the tomb of Agamemnon, who appears in an archway with his head bowed and his cloak or shroud wrapped closely around him. A Fury sleeps at the feet of the dead man. Her hair resembles that of her sister, shown sleeping at the other end of the frieze, but unlike that of the two Furies when in action, here it is neatly dressed and tied back behind the head. The double axe that is visible behind her is probably not the instrument which Clytemnestra used to kill her husband on his return home (Robert, *ASR* II. 169), but the weapon of the Fury herself. The sight of his old father staring at him with dead eyes has made Orestes drop his sword and scabbard on the ground; Pylades, standing behind him, has raised his right hand in alarm. Orestes' empty hands express amazement first and foremost, but with regard to the way the tragedy unfolds in the myth they could also be intended to convey a prayer, with which Orestes summons up his father and vows revenge. (Aeschylus, *Choeph.* 1–21)

The rock that rounds off the relief on the left bridges the front and side panels of the sarcophagus. We have the impression that Agamemnon is standing at the entrance to the underworld, through which his murderers, themselves now executed, have just passed. On the side panel on the left the two shades of Aegisthus and Clytemnestra are being received by Charon, who will take them in his boat over the Acheron. (Theoretically, but less probably, the shades could also be intended to be those of Agamemnon and Cassandra.) The cliff behind the ferryman indicates the entrance to the underworld. The simple style, which is typical of sarcophagus side panels, makes the figures of the murdered couple aesthetically attractive, although probably it is only a modern viewer, with his different way of seeing, who will regard it in such a fashion.

The reliefs on the lid can be seen as a narrative appendix to the illustrations on the casket. In a sort of independent subsidiary mytholog-

ical narrative (*ekphrasis*) they depict the return of Iphigeneia from Tauris, the event which in Euripides' version of the myth frees Orestes from his madness. The scenes are, however, not really relevant to the main message conveyed in the relief on the casket; the artist also neglected some details that are rather important with regard to the underlying narrative. Thus, in the scene on the left, where Orestes recognizes his long-lost sister in front of the temple and sacrificial altar of Artemis, the tablet containing the letter which Iphigeneia is handing over can hardly be made out, although it plays a central role in the recognition scene (Euripides, *Iph.* 727 ff.). The similarly constructed central scene, separated off only by a tree, shows the subsequent descent to the sea in preparation for the escape: Iphigeneia, standing by the tree, is holding the sketchily carved statue of Artemis in her arms, and she is followed by the two friends in chains. As in the scene on the left, they are accompanied by a Scythian guard, identified by his pointed cap, his low-belted tunic, and long trousers as a non-Greek, i.e. as a barbarian. To his right stands Thoas, the king of the Taurians, whom they have deceived, holding a large sceptre in his left hand. He is dressed in a long robe, such as kings used to wear on stage in antiquity (cf. Docs. 22, 24). The archway next to him on the right marks the transition to the final scene, where one of the two heroes is pushing back two Scythian attackers, while the other is hurrying up the gangway to the ship. Iphigeneia, who in this scene is strangely enveloped in her cloak, is already on board ship and being supported by one of the seamen. In her arms she holds the statuette of the goddess.

The decorative masks at the corners of the lid also refer to the Iphigeneia myth: their caps, which are the same as those worn by the Scythian guards on the relief on the lid, show them to be Taurians. On the other hand, the torches on the narrow sides of the lid are a reference to the Furies, who torment Orestes on the relief of the casket. The sarcophagus stands on its original marble supports (found with it when it was discovered). Their support function



is conveyed symbolically through the use of Atlas figures to decorate the front sides.

The choice of scenes for the sarcophagus casket is clearly tailored to the context of tragic and inexplicable death (matricide), the cult of the tomb and 'apparition' of the dead (Orestes at the tomb of his father), and the descent into the underworld (left side panel). The Achilles sarcophagus in Ostia (Doc. 2) uses a very similar technique in the selection and combination of the scenes with regard to their reference to death. But while there the result is a new and more or less coherent image, the Orestes sarcophagi remain ambiguous. Although the connection with death is immediately obvious, the image is contradictory and confused as soon as we try to read a 'story' from the relief, or indeed wonder about the moral assessment of the individual characters and their actions. In the relief on the lid, the connotations of Orestes and Pylades in their exemplary *amicitia* are unquestionably positive ones, but in the main frieze on the casket they function as bringers of death, driven on by demons, and at the same time as pious visitors to the tomb. The supposition that an ancient observer could have equated the dead Aegisthus with the almost identical-looking shade of Agamemnon would certainly not help to solve the difficulties of interpretation. A similar multiplicity of meaning arises from the iconographical cross-references with other

myths, arising from the choice of figure types. The dying Aegisthus, with his distorted limbs, recalls Phaeton falling from the chariot (Doc. 31), the murdered Clytemnestra recalls the dead daughters of Niobe (Doc. 25), the frightened servant with the stool the suitors of Penelope surprised by Odysseus' arrows, and the shocked nurse is to be found in the context of many myths. The figure types used for the murderers do not in themselves bear negative connotations: if their opponents had been warriors and their equals, the schemes would have had an unreservedly positive significance (cf. Doc. 19). The result is a strangely ambivalent image of the dissolution and destruction of the family structure, which is apparently how the patron of the sarcophagus regarded death. In contrast to the Niobe sarcophagi, cruel death does not appear here as divine punishment or arbitrariness, but as the result of tragic entanglements within a family. The terrible events in the accursed house of Atreus serve as an allegory for the inexplicability of the indiscriminate rampages of death. Given this choice of focus, which the sarcophagus artists selected quite independently for themselves, it is more or less irrelevant whether the visit to Apollo's sanctuary, for example, took place before or after the matricide. It was basically not even necessary to be familiar with the tragedy in order to grasp the dramatic message of the relief.

The Vatican Orestes sarcophagus once stood in the same tomb chamber as the Niobe sarcophagus (Doc. 26). The juxtaposition of the slaughter of Niobe's children and the matricide of Orestes offered the ancient visitor to the chamber a panorama of horror: in the flickering light of the torches or oil lamps the dead bodies, drawn swords, and bloody wounds must have created an unsettling atmosphere. Just as different examples of terrible death could be recounted one after the other in funeral rhetoric (Lucian, *De Luctu* 20; see p. 103), here two particularly gruesome mythological episodes are placed side by side. They enable the viewer of the sarcophagus to step back from his own suffering by showing him the even more terrible events of the myth, whose tragedy could never be exceeded by any human fate.

The Orestes sarcophagus comes from the same workshop as the Niobe sarcophagus displayed opposite it, and the garland sarcophagus found in the same tomb, and like them was probably carved in the late Hadrianic or early Antonine period (i.e. the 130s or 140s).

Pelops

An oracle had foretold to Oenomaus, king of Elis and father of the beautiful Hippodamia, that he would fall at the hand of his son-in-law. The king therefore used to get rid of his daughter's suitors by challenging them to a chariot-race through Arcadia. Then, with his swift horses, he would overtake the unsuspecting youths, to whom he had promised Hippodamia's hand in case of victory, and kill them. He nailed their heads over the gateway to his palace. Only Pelops managed by a trick to defeat the blood-thirsty father. He bribed Myrtilus, the king's charioteer, by offering him half the dowry he would receive, which was the Peloponnesian kingdom of Elis (Hyginus, *Fables* 84). According to other versions, Pelops promised Myrtilus a night in Hippodamia's bed (Pausanias,

Rome, Vatican Museums, Museo Gregoriano Profano, Inv. 10450. H 1.24, L 2.13, W 0.80: Robert, *ASR* II (1890), 168–71, no. 155, plate 54; W. Scheel, 'Orest oder Pylades? Über zwei Fragmente von Orest-Sarkophagen', *Klio*, 21 (1927), 14–19; Helbig I (1963), no. 1127 (B. Andreae); K. Schefold, *Römische Kunst als religiöses Phänomen* (1964) 65ff. (interpretation of matricide as symbol of Orestes' virtue); Sichtermann–Koch (1975), 52f., no. 53, plates 133, 2; 135–40; Sichtermann–Koch (1982), 170f., ill. 192 (with incorrect figure for the number of surviving sarcophagi featuring Orestes in Tauris); *LIMC* VI (1992), 76f., no. 28a; 79, no. 47, s.v. Klytaimnestra (Morizot); I. Jucker in B. Zimmermann (ed.), *Euripides: Iphigenie bei den Taurern*, trans. Georg Finsler (1998), 114–17, ill. 13 a–e (on the lid); R. Bielfeldt, in *Römische Mitteilungen* (2003), 117–50 (on the find context); eadem, *Orestes auf römischen Sarkophagen* (2005) (with differing counts of Orestes sarcophagi in the two groups and interpretation of Orestes as example of Roman *virtus*). On the discussion of dating, cf. Herdejürgen, *ASR* VI, 2, 1 (1996), 37–45, plate 112; Herdejürgen (2000), 214. On a remotely comparable link between mythological scenes of violence and the experience of death as disintegration of the family in an Etruscan context, see F. de Angelis, 'Tragedie familiari. Miti greci nell'arte sepolcrale etrusca', in F. de Angelis and S. Muth (eds.), *Im Spiegel des Mythos. Bilderwelt und Lebenswelt*, Palilia, 6 (1999), 53–66.

Description of Greece 8.14.11); or even Hippodamia herself, who in one version of the myth had fallen in love with Pelops as soon as he arrived, had made the immoral proposition to Myrtilus, who lusted after her. Myrtilus agreed, and secretly prepared his master's chariot, either by omitting to insert the axle-pins or by replacing them with wax ones. In any case, the trick succeeded: one wheel of the chariot came loose, Oenomaus fell out and became entangled in the reins so that he was dragged along and killed. Despite a curse uttered by the dying king, Pelops lived for many years at the side of his wife Hippodamia as ruler of the kingdom. He even conquered the surrounding areas of the peninsula, which since then has borne his name: the Peloponnese.

Pelops later got rid of Myrtilus by pushing him over a cliff.

The main group consisting of about five Pelops sarcophagi was made in the second quarter of the third century. Each shows in three scenes from left to right Oenomaus' reception of Pelops, the chariot-race, and Pelops and Hippodamia as a couple. The main figure is always the victorious Pelops, who on the example discussed here bears the portrait features of the deceased. So it is not the fall of Oenomaus as an example of sudden death that is placed in the foreground, but the virtue and triumph of Pelops. The fact is here suppressed that in the underlying myth this outstanding hero is a very devious character who achieves victory by a trick, that he was cursed, and that he belonged to the house of Tantalus, which was pursued by misfortune. The subsidiary story of Myrtilus bribed by either Pelops or Hippodamia has no role on the sarcophagi, and his murder by Pelops is naturally not depicted either. It is true that on a few examples Myrtilus is shown driving the team following Pelops' chariot over the body of Oenomaus, who is lying on the ground, but this merely makes a yet stronger parallel to a race scene in a Roman circus.

But in a small group known only from two examples from the middle Antonine period it seems that it is not the triumph of Pelops which is the main theme, but the death of Oenomaus. Here the story is constructed in quite a different way from that on the third-century Pelops sarcophagi. One of the two examples, a lid in the Museo Nazionale Romano, contains two scenes showing Oenomaus' accident and the mourning for the dead king. For a Roman viewer the significance of the mourning scene was easy to grasp because of its similarity with other images of mourning the dead: the woman running up with outstretched arms, supported by two female servants or relatives, and who in the context of the myth is doubtless to be identified as Oenomaus' wife Sterope, is the exact counterpart of the figure of Althea (or one of Meleager's sisters, cf. Docs. 22, 24) in depictions of the mourning for Meleager, or of Andromache

mourning for Hector. In this example the question of course arises as to what episodes were shown on the casket: it can hardly have featured the chariot-race already illustrated on the lid.

The second example, a child's sarcophagus in the Sala della Biga in the Vatican, also shows Oenomaus' accident and the dismay of Sterope at his death, although here they are drawn together into one scene.

The dominance of death as a theme on these early examples reflects the general popularity of mythological metaphors for death in sarcophagus sculpture of the late Hadrianic and Antonine periods. The Pelops sarcophagi thus illustrate particularly well the flexibility and universal adaptability of the myths, which could convey very different messages according to the different emphases placed on them.

28. PELOPS AND OENOMAUS

Sarcophagus in Rome, Villa Albani

The entire scene in the left-hand third of the sarcophagus is, in the context of the narrative, a preparation for the chariot-race. Pelops, recognizable by his Phrygian cap, has entered the palace of Oenomaus, closely followed by a companion. The palace is represented by the architecture visible in the background. He is turning towards the skull of a slain suitor fastened above the gate, to which the king, sitting on his throne, is gesturing with his right hand (now lost). The king himself is surrounded by three companions; next to his throne stand shield and helmet, and between them the spokes of a wheel can still just be made out. The iconographical scheme is that of a Roman 'audience scene': the parallel meant that the Roman viewer would understand the depiction of Pelops appearing before Oenomaus as 'the reception of a stranger by a ruler'. But the fact that the eyes of all the figures are directed towards the nailed-up heads means that the audience scheme is also clearly related to the mythological context.