

Dino Milinović

ΟΥΔΕΙΣ ΑΘΑΝΑΤΟΣ : Images Surrounding the Dead in Late Antiquity (Some Examples from Salona in Dalmatia)

The Iconography of death or, as Paul-Albert Février would have put it: *le décor entourant la mort*, gains in importance towards the end of classical antiquity. The evolution is due not only to the rise of Christianity but also to a shift in burial customs which has brought about the changing aspect of tomb decoration. The sarcophagi, since Hadrianic times, have provided artists with a new support for their skill, but a growing sense of the need for an image expressing religious and otherworldly beliefs is present in various wall decoration techniques as well. In this article, I intend to go back to a couple of well known marble sarcophagi from Salona, capital of the Roman province of Dalmatia. The two sarcophagi were originally put up in the same family tomb (*memoria*) in a pre-Christian cemetery north of the city. Later they were moved to a small corridor in front of the *memoria* and buried underneath the new cemetery basilica, erected on the spot in the first third of the 5th century. Both sarcophagi are dated to the beginning of the 4th century and probably pre-date the crucial period of Constantine. One of them is known as the “Good Shepherd” sarcophagus and is associated with the newly converted elite of the province capital, the other one bears a frieze with the theme of Phaedra and Hippolytus, one of the favorite subjects on mythological sarcophagi. As different as they are in iconography and religious outlook, they both are representative of what it meant to be Roman in this *very fine and private place*.