

Orpheus the ideal poet: Notes on the interpretation of the mythological and biblical representations of the Orpheus casket mounts from Intercisa, southeastern cemetery, grave 1023

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ABSTRACT

The study analyses of the bronze mounts of the Orpheus casket with biblical and mythological representations. The casket was recovered in two stages, in 1903 and 1967 in the disturbed late Roman grave 1023 of the southeastern cemetery of Intercisa (Dunaújváros). After a brief iconographical analysis of the depictions of the casket, the contribution continues with the analysis of the earlier hypotheses concerning the interpretation of the Orpheus figure in early Christian art and in the *Protrepticus* of Clemens Alexandrinus from the point of view of the early Christian reception history of the Orpheus myth.

KEYWORDS

casket mounts, early Christian iconography, mythological representations, Clement of Alexandria, Orpheus singing to the animals

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The grave robberies on the Roman archaeological site Öreg-hegy (Old Hill) in Dunaújváros (Roman Intercisa),¹ recorded from the beginning of the 20th century, and the systematic excavations carried out in the early years of the same century,² which led to the Intercisa casket finds being deposited partly in museums in Germany³ and partly in the Hungarian National Museum, soon attracted the attention of domestic and international researchers.⁴

Even more striking was the discovery of the so called Orpheus casket mounts from the completely disturbed brick tomb No. 1023 of the south-east cemetery in 1903 with the representations of Pagan god as mythological figures, Orpheus with Christogram and six biblical scenes.⁵ The same grave was documented again in 1960 during the excavation of Eszter B. Vágó. One of the casket mount fragments of the previously disturbed and looted grave with the singing Orpheus was unearthed *in situ* during the excavation and matched well with the medallion fragment found in 1903 (Fig. 1).⁶ Apart from the bronze mount fragments of a wooden casket, the only other remains in the looted grave were small fragments of glass that could not be dated.⁷

The reconstructed size of the wooden casket with bronze mounts was 27.5 × 30.9 cm, including a double medallion of Orpheus playing music for the animals, and larger rectangular panels with four ancient gods' depictions. The six biblical scenes depicted in smaller rectangular panels were located on the casket directly below one of the Orpheus medallions: Moses untying his sandals, Moses making water from the rock, Jonah under the gourd plant, the Good Shepherd, the healing of the blind man, and the resurrection of Lazarus.

Since their first publications, many researchers tried to interpret the special “Pagan” and “Christian” depictions, including Aladár Radnóti, Lajos Nagy, Zoltán Kádár, István Bóna, Eszter B. Vágó, Helmut Buschhausen, Dorottya Gáspár, Krisztina Hudák, Tamás Szabadváry.⁸ The pictorial programme of the Orpheus casket can be dated more or less consensually to the middle third of the fourth century AD, based on the images and analogies of the gods depicted on the

¹This publication is an extended and revised English version of my lecture at the annual conference of the Hungarian Patristic Society in 2015, which was published in Hungarian in the acts of the conference in 2021: NAGY (2021) 147–163, 275–286. I have not changed the basic results of the analysis presented in 2015 in recent years, as any relevant changes were not justified, but in the footnotes I took into account the results of the more recent scholarly literature published after 2015. In order to enhance my initial arguments of the first conference paper version, I made several minor revisions in the text including recent scholarly literature in 2024, due to the courtesy of the library of the Archaeological Institute of the Austrian Academy of Science. I thank to Davide Bianchi and to my anonymous reviewers for the revision of my manuscript.

²SZABADVÁRY (2018) 89–116.

³TEICHNER (2011) 135–145.

⁴ENGELMANN (1908) 349–367; SUPKA (1913) 162–191.

⁵First publication: SUPKA (1913) 178–179, 182.

⁶BONA-VÁGÓ (1976) 57, 126, 186–187.

⁷BONA-VÁGÓ (1976) 57.

⁸NAGY (1938) 55–56, Fig. 19; KÁDÁR (1939) 23–24, 30, 32–33, 37; RADNÓTI (1957) 268–270, 324–326, Pl. 63/5, 67/2; BUSCHHAUSEN (1971) 132–136, Cat. Nr. A 65, A Pl. 79–82; BONA-VÁGÓ (1976) 57, 126, 186–187, 207, Pl. 14, 22, 1; GÁSPÁR (1971) Cat. Nr. 6, Pl. 47; GÁSPÁR (1986) 152, Cat. Nr. 382, Pl. 52–53; GÁSPÁR (2002) 38, Cat. Nr. 12.I.a, Fig. 76.a–c; HUDÁK (2003) 9–10, 40–42; GÁSPÁR (2008) 96, Fig. 81a–c; TÓTH-VIDA-TAKÁCS (2016) Cat. Nr. III. 66; SZABADVÁRY (2018) 95–102, 403, 406–408, 410, 413–416, 421.





Fig. 1. Bronze mounts of the Orpheus casket of Intercisa, Grave 1023 (Inv. Nr.: MNM 64.1903.19–24; IM 70.1023.2; Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

Roman coinage and on the mythological scenes on other casket mounts.⁹ A full iconographic analysis of the individual figures including the collection and analysis of the late Antique-

⁹[RADNÓTI \(1957\)](#) 268–270; [BÓNA-VAGÓ \(1976\)](#) 186–187; [HUDÁK \(2003\)](#) 40–42; [HUDÁK \(2018\)](#). The chronological analysis of this conference paper is planned to be published in English. Verena Fugger dated in her new monograph about Roman catacomb paintings the first appearance of the images depicting Moses taking off his sandals to the middle of the fourth century AD: [FUGGER \(2023\)](#) 107. This chronology would modify the dating of the Orpheus casket into the second half, rather into the third quarter of the fourth century, but as the *cubiculum* C of the Via Latina catacomb with a Moses image untying his sandals was dated earlier, to the period of the Constantinian dynasty ([FERRUA \[1991\]](#) 153–154; [ZIMMERMANN \[2002\]](#), 256–257), the dating of the earliest images of Moses untying his sandals can be also earlier than the middle of the fourth century. So the dating of the Orpheus casket to the middle of the fourth century can be maintained.

Christian analogies has not been undertaken since the laudable attempts of the 1970s. In this short contribution I would like to make further iconographic comments.

In the rectangular panels are repeated representations of four gods and goddesses: a standing Iuppiter figure facing left with a sceptre, a thunderbolt and an eagle at his feet, a standing Mars Ultor figure facing left with a spear and a shield on the ground, a seated goddess holding a Nike in her hand, and a standing Sol Invictus holding a whip and a globe.

The Iuppiter, facing left, wears a long chlamys on his left shoulder, holds a sceptre in his left hand and a thunderbolt in his right. The eagle at his feet looking back at him with its head turned backwards (Fig. 2). The direct predecessors and analogies of the Iuppiter figure can be found, in agreement with the opinions of Aladár Radnóti¹⁰ and Krisztina Hudák,¹¹ above all on



Fig. 2: Iuppiter Tonans, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

¹⁰RADNÓTI (1957) 268–269.

¹¹HUDÁK (2003) 41, she refers to the coins published in BRUUN (1966) 245–248, 250–251, 307, 309, 312, 317, 392–393, Pl. 12/20, 425–426, Pl. 12/22.



the coins of the Tetrarchy and of Constantine the Great and Licinius, with the inscription *Iovi Conservatori Augusto*. The dies used to make the figure of Iuppiter can therefore be indirectly linked to these or similar designs minted no later than the 310s.

The iconographic predecessors of the gods of the Orpheus casket, however, date back to even earlier centuries: the Iuppiter figure is close to the classical Greek Zeus Brontaios and the Roman imperial period Iuppiter Tonans type: he holds a thunderbolt in his right hand, his left hand is raised and he leans on his spear, and at his left foot is an eagle.¹² This composition is also found on gems and coins from the first and third centuries AD, where the god always holds the spear or sceptre in his raised left hand and the thunderbolt in his extended right.¹³

The predecessor of the Mars image with spear and shield (Fig. 3) is also indirectly linked, like Iuppiter, to the coins of Constantine the Great with *Marti Conservatori* inscription, at the latest



Fig. 3. Mars Ultor, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

¹²The forerunner depiction, a statue of Zeus Brontaios was probably the work of Leochares: [CANCIANI \(1997\)](#) Cat. Nr. 195.

¹³Similar, albeit inverted, reverse compositions occur on second-century gems, for example on a carnelian gem in Hanover and on a jasper gem in Vienna: [CANCIANI \(1997\)](#) Cat. Nr. 351, 355. Similar compositions of the Zeus-figure can be found on reliefs of altars from Germania (for example from Xanten and Mainz): CIL XIII 8619; CIL XIII 6751; [CANCIANI \(1997\)](#) Cat. Nr. per occ. 6, 51.



in the 310s.¹⁴ However, the iconographic antecedents of Mars also date back to the time of Augustus: the left-facing, armed Mars, armed with armour, helmet, spear and shield, is the image of Mars Ultor whose cult statue was venerated in the temple of Mars Ultor in the Forum of Augustus. This type is also found on early Imperial period coins such as on coins from Alexandria and reliefs from Germania.¹⁵ On an early Christian casket mount from a late Roman grave (grave Nr. 1.) near the village of Császáz in northern Transdanubia, Mars as the patron god (or personification) of Wednesday appears in a similar composition.¹⁶

The seated goddess, identified by previous researchers as Minerva, but also often depicted on Roman coins as Dea Roma, is facing left, armed with armour and a helmet (Fig. 4). In her right hand she holds a small Victoria standing on a globe, holding out a wreath to her.¹⁷ The iconographic model may indeed have been a seated Athena Nicephorus, but a very close analogy in posture and composition also occurs on tetradrachms of seated Ares Nicephorus minted in Alexandria.¹⁸

The standing figure identified by previous research as Mercurius is in fact a Sol with a whip and globe, wearing a halo of rays on his head (Fig. 5). He is standing in front view, facing right, with a cape hanging on his back. He holds a globe and whip in his left hand, his right hand is raised as if to give a speech. The well-developed analogy of this composition is known from a pilaster found in Cologne.¹⁹ The naked figure of Sol is holding a whip and a globe in his hands in some depictions, notably on gems and a wall painting in Pompeii (Casa dell' Argenteria).²⁰ However, the whip and the globe in the same hand are less common in ancient Sol iconography: on the coins of Constantine the Great and on the casket mount from Császáz in Sol's raised right hand is there also a globe without a whip.²¹

¹⁴HUDÁK (2003) 41, she refers to coins published in BRUUN (1966) 167–168, Pl. 3/52; RADNÓTI (1957) 269, who also drew attention to dagger sheets with depictions of Mars (Siscia, Lauriacum).

¹⁵Similar clothing and composition can be seen on the reliefs from Germania depicting the gods of the weekdays in half-profile (Sol, Saturnus, Luna, Mars, Mercurius, Iuppiter, Venus), before all on the stone basis from Dieburg: SIMON (1984) Cat. Nr. 467. Similar posture and composition occurs on a *sestertius* minted during the rule of Antoninus Pius (140–141 AD) with a Mars Ultor inscription, and on a *drachma* minted in Alexandria (between 126 and 146 AD): SIMON (1984) Cat. Nr. 18, 233.

¹⁶NAGY (2012a) 85–86.

¹⁷As in the case of the depiction of Iuppiter and Mars, the direct forerunners are found partly on coins bearing the inscription *Gloria Romanorum* of the Constantine era, partly on Pannonian casket mounts decorated with mythological figures.: HUDÁK (2003) 41, she refers to an example published in BRUUN (1966) Pl. XIX/101; RADNÓTI (1957) 268 looked for the closest analogies of the Dea Roma figure on the casket mounts of grave 2 in Császáz and grave 174 (old numbering) in Ságvár, as well as on the casket mount from Pécs decorated with a seated Roma figure among other city personifications, he rejected the Minerva identification of Géza Supka and Lajos Nagy. The seated goddess was most recently associated by Tamás Szabadváry with Roma Invicta depicted on the casket mount of a late Roman grave found in Arany János Street, Esztergom: SZABADVÁRY (2018) 101, note 434.

¹⁸CANCIANI (1984) Cat. Nr. 39; SIMON (1984) Cat. Nr. 22.

¹⁹Similar composition can be seen on a pilaster in Köln: LETTA (1988) Cat. Nr. 258.

²⁰LETTA (1988) 599–600, Cat. Nr. 90, 101, 103.

²¹HANNESSTAD (1986) Abb. 199; BRUUN (1966) Pl. I, 17; II, 22; III, 153–154; VI, 104, 184, 110; VII, 2, 33, 40, 45, 49, 52; IX, 45; X, 61; XI, 4; XII, 24, 37; XV, 4, 8; NAGY (2012a) 85. The figure of Sol on the Orpheus casket was correctly recognized by Aladár Radnóti, noting that similar depictions of Sol Invictus are already present in the coinage of the Emperor Elagabalus, but became regular from Aurelian onwards: RADNÓTI (1957) 268.





Fig. 4. Dea Roma, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

On the examined Intercisa casket mount, below the Orpheus medallion, small rectangular panels depict six biblical scenes. They are listed here in biblical chronological order: Moses untying his sandals, Moses making water from the rock, Jonah under the gourd plant, the Good Shepherd, the healing of the blind man, and the resurrection of Lazarus.

The figure of Moses places his right foot on a rock (?) and bends down to remove his sandal. As he does so, he turns his head to the left, where the hand of God is visible in the upper left corner of the image field (Fig. 6). This image type is rare in the Roman catacomb painting, Verena Fugger collected 9 examples from Roman catacombs.²² The two closest fourth-century analogies of this composition of Moses are found in the *cubiculum* C of the Via Latina catacomb in Rome,²³ and further in the burial chamber Nr. I at 7, Demosthenes Street in Thessaloniki, not

²²FUGGER (2023) 316.

²³FERRUA (1991) 130, Fig. 121.





Fig. 5. Sol Invictus, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

unaffected by the early Christian art of Rome.²⁴ The burning Joshua tree is not visible on the casket mount, but on the basis of the analogy from Thessaloniki the semicircular line above the prophet's head is a schematic garment drape enveloping the arm of God, from which the divine hand extends.²⁵ This type of representation is unique in Pannonia.

From an iconographic point of view, the scene of the water making of Moses on the Orpheus-casket is particularly rare (Fig. 7), the painted parallels of the semicircular rock are mainly known from catacombs of Rome: a similar shape of rock is clearly visible in the scene of the water making of Moses in the catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino, *cubiculum* 67.²⁶

²⁴MAPKH (2006) Fig. 11a; BREYTENBACH-BEHRMANN (2007) Fig. 69a–b; SÖRRIES (2011) 160. Recent overviews of the early Christian paintings of Thessaloniki in comparison with Roman catacomb painting: DRESKEN-WEILAND (2010) 314–316; BONNEKOH (2014) 711–715; V. FUGGER (2023) 267–272. Against earlier scholarly literature, both Bonnekoh and Fugger date the burial chamber into the second half of the fourth century.

²⁵For the image type of the hand of God see UTRO (2000) 211–212.

²⁶DECKERS–SEELIGER–MIETKE (1987) Text volume, 350, Colour Plate 50, Nr. 67.





Fig. 6. Moses untying his sandals, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

Rare among the early Christian Jonah paintings is the composition where the naked Jonah is not lying down, but sitting under the gourd plant with his legs extended and his body sits in an inclined posture (Fig. 8).²⁷ This type of image, also known in early Christian iconography as the angry or sad Jonah, is recorded in Roman catacomb painting (Via Latina catacomb, *cubiculum* M), in the Balkans and further in the eastern provinces, for example on a glass bowl from Podgorica and on a gemstone, probably from Syria.²⁸ Unfortunately, Jonah's facial features are no longer visible on the mount of the examined Orpheus casket, so it is difficult to determine whether he is really angry about the delay in destroying Nineveh.

The compositional scheme of the Good Shepherd, represented by two schematic trees flanking the main figure and two lambs at his feet, is common throughout the early Christian *oikumene* (Fig. 9). In the coherent group of five other early Christian scenes on the Orpheus

²⁷V. FUGGER (2023) 340–342, with the list of 15 examples.

²⁸STEFFEN (1994) 68–69; DRESKEN-WEILAND (2010) 99; FERRUA (1991), 130, Fig. 121; SPIER (2007) 188, Cat. Nr. 18.





Fig. 7. Moses making water from the rock, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

casket, this Good Shepherd is probably identified with Christ, rather than a neutral, bucolic shepherd figure.²⁹

The healing of the blind man is also a type of image of Roman origin (Fig. 10), the best analogies of the scene from the Intercisa casket mount occur mainly on early Christian sarcophagi from the city of Rome, such as the Sabinus sarcophagus, the so-called Two Brothers sarcophagus and a Bethesda sarcophagus from the Vatican Museum (Museo Pio Clementino).³⁰

In the scene depicting the resurrection of Lazarus the *aedicula* of Lazarus is semicircular, instead of the shape of the *aedicula* closed with *tympanon* which is dominant in Roman

²⁹For a summary of the scholarly debate around the bucolic (neutral) and Christian interpretation of the depictions of the Good Shepherd since the 1970s, see KOCH (2000) 15–20; DRESKEN-WEILAND (2010) 77–95; NAGY (2012a) 64–65, with further literature.

³⁰DRESKEN-WEILAND (2010) 247–258; KOCH (2000) 172–173; BURANELLI (2005) 32, 80. The image type is rare in the Roman catacomb painting, V. FUGGER (2023) 323. listed eight examples.





Fig. 8. Jonah under the gourd plant, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

catacomb painting and sarcophagus sculpture (Fig. 11). This *aedicula* shape is also found in Gaul (on a casket mound from Vermand and on the sarcophagus of Bishop Paulinus of Trier, who died in 358 AD),³¹ but above all in Pannonia (on the casket mounts found at the northern gate of the Keszthely-Fenékpuszta inner fortress, at the fort of Tokod, or in the cemetery of the Ságvár inner fortress, grave 54.),³² further in the Rhineland (on the casket mounts from Bonn and Cologne),³³ although it also appears in the catacomb of Domitilla.

The Orpheus medallion on the investigated Orpheus casket is of international importance, although it is omitted from almost all *corpora* and collections of late Antique – early Christian

³¹BUSCHHAUSEN (1971) Cat. Nr. A 59, A Pl. 69 (Trier), Cat. Nr. A 66, A Pl. 83–84 (Vermand); RISTOW (2007) Pl. 56 (Trier).

³²GÁSPÁR (1986) Pl. LVI–LVII; GÁSPÁR (2002) Figs. 135, 276, 382.

³³BUSCHHAUSEN (1971) Cat. Nr. A 54, A Pl. 62–64 (Bonn), Cat. Nr. A 63, A Pl. 78 (Köln); RISTOW (2007) Pl. 38c (Köln); Pl. 67d (Bonn). The similarities between the early Christian depictions of the Orpheus casket and the biblical scenes on the casket mounts from the Rheinisches Landesmuseum in Bonn are also emphasised by RADNÓTI (1957), 269–270.





Fig. 9: Good Shepherd, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

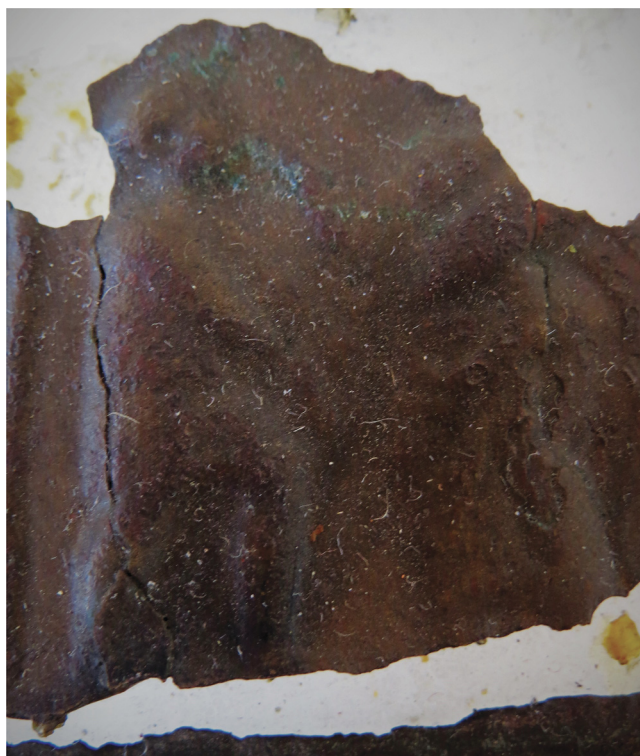


Fig. 10. The healing of the blind man, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)





Fig. 11. Resurrection of Lazarus, detail (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

Orpheus depictions, including the most recent ones (Fig. 12). The composition belongs to the so-called Phrygian type of Orpheus depictions of the Imperial period.³⁴ According to Henry Stern's typology, the image of Orpheus playing music for the animals belongs to his type III.³⁵

Another Orpheus representation from Intercisa of the same type can be seen on a funerary plate, but dating from the Antoninus-Severus period.³⁶ This representation has interestingly found its way into the international scholarly literature: it is mentioned in most contributions of ancient Orpheus representations, but has no closer iconographic connection with the examined

³⁴VIEILLEFON (2003) 49–79, 101–108, 160–194.

³⁵STERN (1955) 41–77.

³⁶NAGY (2007) 90.



Fig. 12. Medaillon depicting Orpheus playing music for the animals (Photo: Renate Pillinger, ©Hungarian National Museum)

casket mount.³⁷ On the Orpheus-medaillon of the Intercisa casket, nine animals, now worn out, surround the hero playing on the kithara, presumably a bird, a stag, two bovids, a raven, a snake, a hare, a bear and a bull. The horn-blowing figure at the singer's head, identified by Helmut Buschhausen as another man blowing a horn, is not a man listening to Orpheus' singing, but a monkey, based on the third-fourth century reliefs of Orpheus from Leptis Magna, Byblos, Aigina, which served probably as table legs.³⁸

Above the head of Orpheus, a small oval medallion depicts a *dextrarum iunctio* motif,³⁹ while the upper right and left edges of the casket mount plate with the Orpheus medallion show

³⁷VIEILLEFON (2003) 185; NAGY (2007) 89–90.

³⁸BUSCHHAUSEN (1971) 135; VIEILLEFON (2003) 183–184; Aigina: SÖRRIES (2011) Abb. 123.

³⁹The *dextrarum iunctio* in a small medallion could be a reference to cooperation between co-emperors in the political propaganda (*concordia caesarum*), but this motif was part of the symbolism of marriage in the private sphere, see NAGY (2012a) 77–78, with further literature. In the monograph of the south-eastern cemetery of Intercisa, the Orpheus casket itself was interpreted by the excavators as a wedding present for a groom: BONA-VAGÓ (1976) 186.

two another small medallions with decorative Sun and Moon depictions (Sol and Luna).⁴⁰ In the lower left and right corners of the plate of the Orpheus medallion, there are two small medallions on the right side depicting a bird with a long neck, and on the left side a Christogram can be seen.

A recent study of the decorative busts, often seen in side views in the medallions of casket mounts, has shown that their exact identification with a specific historical figure, or even a member of the imperial family within the fourth century is not clear: all that can be said is that they most closely resemble the images of the members of the Constantinian dynasty known from coinage.⁴¹ These decorative heads may play a role in the dating of the examined casket mount to the age of the Constantinian dynasty, but they are less relevant for the interpretation of the Orpheus scene. One may assume on the basis of the sun and moon images on the left and right of the central Orpheus medallion, that the Song of Orpheus, should have some cosmic significance. The Christogram, on the other hand, points to the possibility of a Christian interpretation of the mythological scene (see my analysis of the Orpheus image below).

In 2003, Laurence Vieillefon collected some 118 late Antique Orpheus depictions,⁴² eleven of them have possible Christian interpretation: six paintings in catacombs of Rome, two sarcophagi from Ostia and Sardinia, the before mentioned table leg from Aigina, a *terra sigillata* vessel from North Africa and an early Christian seal from the British Museum.⁴³

The Christian interpretation of the seal (a suspected forgery) and the table leg of Aigina is uncertain, partly because of their early date (second half of the third century), the inscriptions on the sarcophagi are not exclusively Christian (*Fyrmi dulcis anima sancta; Hic Quiriacus dormit in pace*).⁴⁴ Nor can it be confirmed that Quiriacus, buried in the sarcophagus with the Orpheus depiction, is the same as the bishop of Ostia who was martyred in 269. A North African *terra sigillata* bowl from the collection of the Römisch-Germanisches Zentralmuseum in Mainz, Germany, depicting Jonah alongside Orpheus, could be, however, sold to a Christian client.⁴⁵

The six catacomb paintings of Orpheus in tombs with predominantly biblical scenes, shown in the table below, have almost certainly an early Christian context.⁴⁶ It is therefore quite understandable that previous attempts to interpret Christian Orpheus depictions have been based on the catacomb depictions in addition to the early Christian texts.

⁴⁰Luna's hairstyle was associated by earlier research with that of Iulia Soaemias and Iulia Paula, while the decorative heads in the other small medallion were associated with the depictions of Crispus, executed in 326, and the no less unfortunate Fausta. One of the decorative busts in a small medallion above the Orpheus medallion has reminded several researchers of Constantius Gallus, executed in 354: BUSCHHAUSEN (1971) 133; RADNÓTI (1957) 269.

⁴¹NAGY (2022) 106–107.

⁴²The monograph of VIEILLEFON (2003) collected 118 representations, but the Orpheus-casket of Intercisa was not among them.

⁴³STERN (1974) 3–7, Figs. 1–9; WEIDEMANN (1990) 164, Cat. Nr. 191; VIEILLEFON (2003) 187, 191–194, Figs. XIIIb, XV, XVI; SÖRRIES (2011) 179, Fig. 123.

⁴⁴KOCH (2000) 23–24.

⁴⁵WEIDEMANN (1990) 164, Cat. Nr. 191.

⁴⁶DECKERS–SEELIGER–MIETKE (1987) text volume 48–50; BISCONTI (2000) 236–237; KOCH (2000) 23–24; ROESSLI (2008) 179–226, in particular 210–213, Fig. 16 (Domitilla *cubiculum* 31), Fig. 9. (Callixtus *cubiculum* 9); JOURDAN (2010) I, 381–390; JOURDAN (2014) 118–122; V. FUGGER (2023) 331–332.



Cubiculum	Biblical scenes in catacomb paintings containing Orpheus representations										
Callixtus 9										lambs	
Domitilla 31	Noah	Moses	David	Daniel	Susan	Job	Jonah Three youths	Tobias	Lazarus	Christ, Samaritan woman, bread miracle	
Domitilla 45			Elijah	Daniel		Job				Christ's bust	Paul, Thecla
SS. Pietro e Marcellino 64	Noah	Moses					Jonah		Good Shepherd	healing scenes of Christ (paralytic, haemorrhaging woman)	orants, seasons
SS. Pietro e Marcellino 79		Moses		Daniel					Lazarus		
Priscilla 29											Traditio legis



Before examining the various interpretations and their critiques in detail, it is worth first mentioning a chronologically important observation, that the earliest third century paintings of Orpheus from the catacombs of Callixtus and Priscilla (and the Ostian sarcophagus of Quiriacus just mentioned) show only lambs around Orpheus, suggesting an association with Christ as the Good Shepherd. From the fourth century onwards, at the latest from the time of Constantine the Great, the catacombs also show animals around Orpheus, who are not only wild but also domesticated.⁴⁷

Antonio Bosio, who was well versed in early Christian texts, interpreted the images of Orpheus discovered in the catacomb of Domitilla in his imposing *Roma Sotterranea*, on the basis of the so-called Orphic Testament, a poem attributed to Orpheus in several versions, actually written in the second century BC by a Hellenistic Jewish author from Alexandria.⁴⁸ The Testament was quoted in the *Protrepticus* of Clement of Alexandria (VII, 74). The Orphic Testament introduced Orpheus as a pagan poet who realized that there is only one god that he becomes the only one he praised. Since the Orphic Testament was known and referred to by several early Christian authors: Theophilus, Tatianus, Origen, Pseudo-Justinus, Clement of Alexandria, Lactantius and Augustine,⁴⁹ it was obvious to Bosio that it was a story well known to Christians, and this theological interpretation could be of high importance for the Orpheus-iconography of early Christian visual arts.⁵⁰

In the chapters I, 4, 5 and 6 of the *Protrepticus* Clement of Alexandria compared Orpheus and Orpheus' song with Christ the *Logos*. According to Clement, Orpheus, like other pagan singers Amphion, Arion and Eunomus, is an idolatrous swindler, the true song that bears the name of God, the *Logos*, the song of eternal harmony, comes from Zion. In contrast to Orpheus, the true, from the Beginning existing *Logos* itself is the song of King David who was filled with the Holy Spirit and was the forerunner of Christ. Clement's real singer, however, is Christ, the *Logos* himself, who attracts and tames humanity, burdened with sins compared to various animal qualities, as Orpheus attracts the animals.⁵¹

In 2010, Fabienne Jourdan wrote a two-volume monograph on the reception of Orpheus in early Christianity, and in the first volume, which analyses the *Protrepticus*' Orpheus in detail over 500 pages, she outlines the following process: Clement, using clever rhetoric and allegorical interpretation of images from Pagan myth, Christianizes Orpheus, who is transformed from a despicable pagan singer, swindler, and servant of demons into a forerunner of Christ, because David and then Christ, the *Logos* sings the new song taming wild animals. Finally, with reference to the Orphic Testament just quoted, Clement also shows that Orpheus himself, the founder and singer of the Pagan mysteries, was converted to the true faith.⁵²

⁴⁷JOURDAN (2014) 118–122.

⁴⁸The fragments were numbered 245–248 in KERN (1922).

⁴⁹JOURDAN (2010) I, 15–466; II, 13–212, with extended evaluation of the patristic sources and scholarly literature.

⁵⁰BOSIO (1632) 627–631.

⁵¹Clem. Alex. *Protr.* I, 4–6 (*Opera* I, ed. by DINDORF [1869] 4–9.). The most recent editions are used by JOURDAN (2010) I, 345.

⁵²JOURDAN (2010) I, 15–466.



It was Antonio Bosio who drew the attention of later generations of archaeologists to the 14th chapter of the *Panegyric* of Constantine written by Eusebius of Caesarea. Eusebius, who was attracted to Alexandrian theology and its images and symbols, also adopted Clement's Orpheus-Christ analogy: the teaching of Christ is the song of truth, the new song of the preexistent Logos, but even David, the forerunner of Christ, is a singer of higher rank than Orpheus himself, who is considered in this regard an unserious rival of Christ.⁵³

Since the publication of *Roma Sotterranea*, the interpretation of the early Christian Orpheus depictions has been a matter of debate in scholarship, and the interpretations which I will present below can be seen as instructive examples of the *Zeitgeist*, which changed a lot between the 17th and 21st centuries. Some scholars are convulsively seeking to disassociate their interpretations from the texts of the early Christian authors, above all Clement, while others cannot tear themselves away from the close reading of the *Protrepticus*, sometimes misunderstanding Clement's Orpheus-Christ analogy.

Critical opinions on Bosio's highly influential interpretation may suggest that the commissioners of the catacomb paintings could not have been familiar with the Christian texts referring to the Orphic Testament, which were not widely used in the West. Orpheus in the pictures is not reading poetry, he is not depicted together with Muses. The reference to the Testament in the early Christian texts is an exhortation for Pagans to conversion, but the images in the catacombs are not for Pagans but for Christians. To this last argument, one could make a counterargument: the texts of early Christian apologetic literature are also addressed to Christians, and not only to pagans.

Following Giovanni Battista de Rossi, Carl Maria Kaufmann identified Orpheus in his Christian archaeological handbook with Christ, the Good Shepherd who tames and thus herds the wild animals and protects the sheep: early Orpheus depictions (Callixtus catacombs, sarcophagi) indeed show sheep, and early Christian paintings also show domestic animals as well as beasts.⁵⁴ However, critics of the theory argue that Orpheus is not a shepherd in the images, and that in the *cubiculum* Nr. 64. of the catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino, Orpheus and the Good Shepherd are shown within the same tomb.⁵⁵ So that if the commissioners wanted depictions of the shepherd aspect of Christ, they could choose the more common iconography of the Good Shepherd image.

Henry Leclercq in 1936,⁵⁶ and John Block Friedman in 1970, who consistently wrote about Orpheus-Christ, confusing Orphic, Gnostic, (neo)Platonist, Mithraic teachings and the pictorial messages of magical gems in his interpretation of early Christian imagery with confused arguments, saw Orpheus as a soul guide and symbol of immortality, who could be a substitute for the Good Shepherd figure in the still nascent early Christian iconography.⁵⁷

⁵³Euseb. *Paneg. Const.* 14 (MIGNE [1857] PG 24 1410–1412). The allusion of the Orpheus image to Christ, the Logos was stressed more recently by Fabrizio Bisconti, too: BISCONTI (2019) 210.

⁵⁴De ROSSI (1887) 29–35, Pl. VI; KAUFMANN (1905) 307–308. New interpretation of the Orpheus image in the Callixtus catacomb: CASCIANELLI (2015) 143–157, who shares the general opinion, that Orpheus alludes to the Logos, and – following Bosio – the Orphic Testament provided the spread of the Orpheus images in Christian contexts.

⁵⁵STERN (1974) 12.

⁵⁶LECLERCQ (1936) 2738.

⁵⁷FRIEDMAN (1970) 38–85.



However, already in the 1970s, counter-arguments were voiced: there are no signs or iconographic elements suggesting such functions or associations in the examined Orpheus-images, and it is not clear why another shepherd in a Phrygian cap should have been introduced into the repertoire of early Christian iconography instead of the well known cryophoric Good Shepherd figure.⁵⁸ Considering this repertoire, it can be strongly suggested that Christian commissioners of shepherd images were not concerned with this symbolism which is rather typical of Hermes' depictions.⁵⁹

In 1974, under the influence of the musical depictions of David in the synagogues of Dura Europos and Gaza, which resemble Orpheus' iconography, Henry Stern emphasized the theory, which had been latent in the scholarly literature since the 1950s, that the early Christian Orpheus type is of Jewish origin, Orpheus may be identified with David: both are the forerunners of Christ, the Logos, as Clement put it in the *Protrepticus*.⁶⁰ In Hungarian research, Géza Xeravits, in his excellent analysis of the surviving wall paintings of the synagogue at the western wall of Dura Europos, also identified the figure playing the lyre in the central panel with Orpheus-David.⁶¹

Since neither the synagogues in Dura nor in Gaza depict syncretistic David-Orpheus figures, only David with Old Testament symbols, the Orpheus iconography can be considered only a precursor of the depictions of David, the musician. The depiction of David in the latest painting layer in the Dura synagogue is part of a well-constructed iconographic programme in which the vine and the lion, representing the renewal of Israel, and the figure of Jacob, depicted with his 12 sons, symbolise the fulfilment of Jacob's blessing, the reign of King David (not Orpheus) over the 12 tribes.⁶² Contrary to earlier attempts, the results of a growing number of studies have led to the conclusion that the Orpheus-David association is an invention of Clement of Alexandria, and that there is no verifiable trace of the identification of David and Orpheus in Jewish literature before Clement's time.⁶³

In 1977, in a critique of Henry Stern's concept, Sister Charles Murray formulated in the most detailed way the view, which is widespread in both archaeological and theological literature, that Orpheus is none other than the Christ of salvation, the new Orpheus, who is also the Logos and the Wisdom in the images of the catacombs. The basis for this identification is the just mentioned evidence in early Christian literature, the examined *Protrepticus* passages themselves, and the already mentioned chapter 14 of the *Panegyric* of Constantine by Eusebius.⁶⁴ The main iconographic argument for this interpretation is that Orpheus is centrally depicted in the catacombs among the biblical scenes as a symbol of redemption. The sub-scenes often feature

⁵⁸HUSKINSON (1974) 71.

⁵⁹HUSKINSON (1974) 83–84 raised the possibility, that the early Orpheus depictions may have been references to Christ as a spiritual guide and guardian of a kind of pastoral Paradise. But the concept of a widespread use of Orpheus, Ulysses and Sol interpretations of the early Christian literature in the iconography is at most speculative.

⁶⁰STERN (1974) 12–15.

⁶¹XERAVITS (2012) 263, 266.

⁶²XERAVITS (2012) 266.

⁶³MURRAY (1977) 19–26.

⁶⁴MURRAY (1977) 20.



miracles of God or Christ, which underline the importance of the main scene, Christ and Orpheus, for the commissioners of the paintings.⁶⁵

The counterarguments are obvious: the proponents of the Orpheus-Christ identification assume too abstract associations with the images, the examined texts only compare Orpheus with Christ, but do not identify him.⁶⁶ *Cubiculum* Nr. 79, discovered in 1957 in the catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino, has also attracted much attention, showing Orpheus and two birds listening to him. In the monograph of the paintings of the SS. Pietro e Marcellino catacomb, the identification of the eagle on the left with the phoenix bird representing the resurrection has also been suggested.⁶⁷ The bird, however, has no nimbus, or ray wreath, and therefore does not confirm Orpheus' identity with Christ, who raises the dead.

As for the compositional argument: the chart of the catacomb paintings of Orpheus in their contexts ("Biblical scenes in catacomb paintings containing Orpheus representations", see above in this paper) shows that Orpheus is not always centrally depicted in the tombs, nor are the secondary scenes all miraculous. From a compositional point of view, the scene of Orpheus playing music for the animals surrounding the hero is perfectly suited to be composed in a central place of a painted room, either in the ceiling or in an *arcosolium*. This alone cannot be an iconographic argument for the identity of Orpheus and Christ.

One of the most convincing interpretations is that of Janet Huskinson from 1974, who was exceptionally familiar with the Orpheus-casket of Intercisa and the earlier Hungarian literature on it.⁶⁸ Referring to the fact that catacomb art seldom adopts decorations from ancient art that are meaningless to it, Huskinson argues that Orpheus should be interpreted in a funerary context: an allegory of Christ, a symbol of the conquest of death with domestic, wild and mythical animals and messianic-bucolic paradisiacal allusions (in case of the investigated Orpheus-casket of Intercisa: the Christogram warded off evil spirits, referring to the Messiah-King).⁶⁹

Her interpretation of Orpheus with associations of redemption and resurrection may be correct for Orpheus images in general, but Huskinson did not note that Orpheus figures also appear on objects used in everyday life,⁷⁰ and the Intercisa casket was not intended for funerary use. Therefore, the interpretation of the early Christian Orpheus depictions in the context of the casket mount of Intercisa needs not be limited to associations with the conquest of death and the paradisiacal state, even if it is otherwise reasonable to assume that fourth century Pannonian Christians were already preparing for death, resurrection and eternal life in their own lives.

⁶⁵For this argument, see the iconographic programs of the catacomb paintings with Orpheus-representations in my chart „Biblical scenes in catacomb paintings containing Orpheus representations” shown above.

⁶⁶See also OLSZEWSKI (2011) 659.

⁶⁷DECKERS-SEELIGER-MIETKE (1987) Text volume 323, Colour Pl. 64–65, Nr. 79.

⁶⁸HUSKINSON (1974) 89, Kat. Nr. 25, dated to the second half of the fourth century.

⁶⁹HUSKINSON (1974) 70–72.

⁷⁰CASCIANELLI (2015) 146, 149 (with further literature) refers for example to local Roman imperial coin images from Alexandria, Philippopolis and Traianopolis with the representation of Orpheus singing to the animals as a symbol of imperial virtues (ability to make peace, piety, *concordia* and philanthropy). The coins from Alexandria were struck in the age of Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, the issues from Philippopolis and Traianopolis are coins of Geta and Iulia Domna.



Another interpretations see Orpheus as a symbol of the apocalyptic-messianic Golden Age,⁷¹ in which Christ, the new and better Orpheus, the Word, is the messenger of the new Golden Age, inspired by the images of the Golden Age in ancient poetry and the messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.⁷² Here again, the problem is that the *aurea aetas*-interpretation of the Orpheus images assumes too abstract associations with early Christian imagery, which does not, or not necessarily exclusively, represent abstract concepts. Moreover, the Christogram on the Orpheus-casket of Intercisa clearly implies an association with Christ, and interpretations that move towards impersonal symbols thus threaten to lead to a dead end, at least in the case of the interpretation possibilities of the Orpheus-casket from Intercisa.

The late antique concepts of holy men that came to the fore in the literature of the last third of the 20th century may have influenced the interpretation of Laurence Vieillefon in 2003, who argued that Orpheus is not Christ either, but a kind of holy man (*theios aner*). A mediator between the divine and the human world, a singer with magical apotropaic powers and at the same time a founder of mystery religions, a good judge of divine harmony for pagans and Christians alike.⁷³ Here again, the counterargument is obvious: there is only a superficial similarity between the mythical life of Orpheus (his solitary, teaching lifestyle) and the lives of the holy men of late Antiquity. In this case, too, there is a danger that the associations with mythical Orpheus figures in late Antique Christian authors are ultimately over-interpreted in the early Christian images.

The arguments and counterarguments presented so far are illustrated in the chart below:

Interpretations of early Christian Orpheus images	Counterarguments
BOSIO (1632): A poet who converted to monotheism and glorified the only God, based on the texts of the so-called Orphic Testament (<i>Orph. Fragm.</i> 245–247). This poem is known to Theophilus, Tatian, Origen, Pseudo-Justinus, Clement, Lactantius, Augustine.	The commissioners of the catacomb paintings may not have been familiar with Christian texts referring to the Orphic Testament. Orpheus does not read poetry in the paintings, nor is he together with the Muses.
DE ROSSI (1887): The Good Shepherd who shepherds the beasts, can be identified with Orpheus-Christ in the early Orpheus representations (Callixtus catacomb, sarcophagi) showing sheep.	Orpheus is not the shepherd in the pictures, in the catacomb of SS. Pietro e Marcellino Orpheus and the Good Shepherd are depicted inside the same tomb, the iconography of the Good Shepherd is more common.
LECLERCQ (1936); FRIEDMAN (1970): Christ is the souls' guide and symbol of immortality	There is no indication of such functions or associations in the paintings, and the Christian commissioners were not concerned with this symbolism which is typical of Hermes' depictions.

(continued)

⁷¹LIEBERG (1984) 139–155.
⁷²JOURDAN (2014) 126–127.
⁷³VIEILLEFON (2003) 146–154.



Continued

Interpretations of early Christian Orpheus images	Counterarguments
STERN (1974): The image type is of Jewish origin, identified with Orpheus-David: both are forerunners of Christ the Logos, following the depiction of Orpheus-David in the <i>Protrepticus</i> and the synagogue of Dura Europos.	The synagogue at Dura only depicts David with Old Testament symbols. Before Clement of Alexandria, there is no verifiable trace of the identification of David and Orpheus in Jewish literature.
MURRAY (1977); ROESSLI (2008): The Christ of Salvation is the new Orpheus, the Logos, and Wisdom, after the <i>Protrepticus</i> and Eusebius. In the catacombs, he is depicted in central position among the biblical scenes as a symbol of salvation, together with the miracles of God and Christ in the side scenes.	The interpretation assumes too abstract associations with the images, the examined patristic texts only compare Orpheus to Christ, but do not identify him as Christ. In the <i>cubicula</i> of the catacombs, he is not always depicted in a central position, nor do the side scenes always depict only miracles.
HUSKINSON (1974): The Orpheus image has to be interpreted in a funerary context as allegory of Christ, symbol of the conquest of death, with Messianic-Bucolic Paradisiacal allusions, and with domestic, wild and mythical animals.	Orpheus images are also found on objects used in everyday life (e.g. the Orpheus casket of Intercisa), and their interpretations need not be limited to the conquest of death and Paradisiacal associations.
LIEBERG (1984); JOURDAN (2010): Orpheus is a symbol of an Apocalyptic-Messianic Golden Age.	The interpretation assumes too abstract associations with the images, the Christogram on the Intercisa casket clearly suggests an association with Christ.
VEILLEFON (2003): Orpheus is not Christ, but a kind of holy man (<i>theios aner</i>), mediator between the divine and the human world with magical apotropaic power, a connoisseur of harmony for pagans and Christians alike.	There are only superficial similarities between the life stories of Orpheus (about his solitary, teacher-lifestyle) and the lives of the holy men of late Antiquity.

My chart summarizing the interpretations and their counter-arguments so far shows that the weakest counter-arguments can be formulated against the arguments of Antonio Bosio in 1632 and Janet Huskinson in 1974.⁷⁴ It is possible that the wealthy, perhaps literate, Christians who commissioned the Orpheus representations in the catacombs were aware of some Greek works and texts, such as the Orphic Testament, mentioned by both Latin and Greek early Christian authors.⁷⁵

The second volume of Fabienne Jourdan’s monumental work examines the reception history of the Orpheus myth, above all the Orphic cosmogony, in the oeuvre of the following Christian authors, in the following works: the Pseudo-Clementines; Origen: *Contra Celsum*. Orpheus, as barbarian and/or pagan, inventor of heresies and idolatrous mysteries, appears in Jourdan’s

⁷⁴BOSIO (1632) 627–631; HUSKINSON (1974) 68–73; CASCIANELLI (2015) 152. These theories are also presented from a different perspective, along different lines of thought in the book of JOURDAN (2010) I, 389–399.

⁷⁵A detailed analysis of the early Christian reception of the Orpheus myth in the first-fifth centuries AD: JOURDAN (2010) II, 13–212.



collection in the following authors and works: the *Refutatio omnium haeresium*, previously wrongly attributed to Hippolytus; Epiphanius: *Panarion*; Clement of Alexandria: *Stromata*; Tatian; Theophilus: *Autolykos*. The reception-historical evaluation continues with an analysis of the image of Orpheus by other late Antique authors: Eusebius, Cyril of Alexandria, Didymus the Blind, Theodoretus and the author of the Theosophy of Tübingen. An explicitly monotheistic image of Orpheus, familiar with the teachings of Moses, but predating Homer and the spread of pagan Greek culture, is established in the *De Monarchia* of an unknown author from the first century BC with Jewish background, in the *Cohortatio ad Graecos* attributed to Marcellus of Ancyra, further in the work of Cyril of Alexandria against Iulianus, Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, and the *De trinitate* of Didymus the Blind.⁷⁶

According to my opinion, the schematic Orpheus-Christ identification that has been prevalent in previous research, especially among Christian archaeologists can be abandoned by now. If Orpheus is only similar to the Son of God, but not identical with him, consequently he remains a mythological figure, a hero who becomes a believer and then sings of God's glory to the animals, the mythological scene offers two possible associations for the Christian viewer. The song of Orpheus, the converted poet, in Clement's metaphor, leads people towards God in the same way that he had previously enchanted the forces of nature and the animal world. The poet's song, however, is not only about God and conversion, but also about the eternal life offered to man by God (and accepted by the converted man), and the resurrection of the dead.

Among the late Roman Orpheus representations, the composition of the Domitilla catacomb in the so-called Orpheus *arcosolium* (*cubiculum* Nr. 45) in the Domitilla catacomb is the closest analogy to the scene on the investigated Orpheus-casket from Intercisa.⁷⁷

The iconographic program of the entire *arcosolium* painting was reinterpreted in 2009 by Norbert Zimmermann and Vasiliki Tsamakda, participants in the EU project on the Domitilla catacomb, after the 3D laser scanning of the paintings: instead of the identification with Old Testament prophets who had previously foretold the birth of Christ, they saw on the *arcosolium* wall above the Orpheus figure the Apostle St Paul and Thecla, standing in her window, listening to the apostle.⁷⁸ Both interpretations, which are about the conversion of Jews and Gentiles to the teachings of Christ and the hope of the converted man in resurrection and eternal life, fit logically with the interpretation of Orpheus as a Pagan poet in the given funerary context.⁷⁹

In the fourth century, Christian and non-Christian pupils alike, who lived a higher standard of living, were exposed to the ancient culture of the classical authors in schools according to the concept of *paideia*.⁸⁰ Unlike in Egypt, where school essays are known with both mythological

⁷⁶JOURDAN (2010) II, 119–143, 171–186.

⁷⁷ZIMMERMANN–TSAKAKDA (2009); FUGGER (2023) 39, 107, 110, 205, Figs. 118–119, these authors dated the paintings of the *cubiculum* to the second half of the fourth century.

⁷⁸ZIMMERMANN–TSAKAKDA (2009) 629–632, Figs. 11a–b.

⁷⁹According to the most recent interpretation (FUGGER [2023]) 205), the images in the *cubiculum* refer to the dead, who praises the God and gave up all things in his life for God's sake. This interpretation fits also logically with the identification of Orpheus as a Pagan poet in this funerary context.

⁸⁰SALZMAN (1990) 199–231; SALZMAN (2002) 209–211; CAMERON (2004) 220–224, 237–238; CRIBIORE (2005); GEMEINHARD (2007); LEPPIN (2015); CRIBIORE (2007), especially 44–47, 85, 107, 159, 225, Orpheus as an ideal rhetor: CRIBIORE (2007) 155–156; NAGY (2016) 130–132, with further literature.



and biblical themes,⁸¹ in Pannonia, the large number of casket mounts decorated with mythological scenes may be an indication of this.

Since the Christian observer may associate Christian associations with the mythological scenes he sees, since mythology was part of general literacy and education in the late Antique period⁸² (as it is in better places today), I would not think of some sort of Orpheus-Christ hybrid figures, and therefore I would not think that the iconographic programmes on the late Roman casket mounts in Pannonia, which combine pagan god-figures and biblical themes, are syncretistic.⁸³

In fourth-century Pannonia, *paideia*⁸⁴ and *pistis*, *mythos* and *Logos*, the word of God, seem to have coexisted. For the Christian observer, the Song of Orpheus can speak of the one God, the coming of Christ and the resurrection of the dead, whether or not he has read Clement of Alexandria directly.

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⁸¹FROSCHAUER (2005) 87–102.

⁸²See the references in n. 79.

⁸³Similar opinion, stressing rather the relevance of Christian metaphorical Orpheus-interpretation and continuity of ancient symbols than religious syncretism: JENSEN (2000) 41–44. The syncretistic interpretation spread in the Hungarian literature before the Second World War: NAGY (1938) 138–139; KÁDÁR (1939) 3; KÁDÁR (1968) 90–92. Recent detailed discussions of the topic, more nuanced than previous opinions, with the possibilities of interpreting pagan gods, including Sol, Iuppiter, Mars in a Christian context: NAGY (2012a) 79–89; NAGY (2016) 125, 130–132, with further literature. This paper does not deal with the multifaceted but mysterious relationship between the mysteries of Sol Invictus Mithras and the Orphic mysteries, because this relationship is not relevant to the interpretation of the images of the examined casket mount. The subject has been dealt with in detail in NAGY (2012b) 43–46.

⁸⁴Definitions of *Paideia* as agency and necessary knowledge: RÜPKE (2013) 263; CRIBIÖRE (2007) 85, 107, 225.



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