

ORPHEUS AND EURYDICE: THREE SPALLIERA PANELS BY JACOPO DEL SELLAIO

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*una nuova voce a sé gli trasse
da più dolci armonia legati e presi.
Pensai che Orfeo al mondo ritornasse*

LORENZO DE' MEDICI (IL MAGNIFICO)
*Altercazione (De summo bono), II, 2-4**

On 15 May 1898, Bernard Berenson wrote from Florence to Isabella Stewart Gardner in New York with the following recommendation:

I am sending you two photographs of two delightful *cassoni* pictures with the story of Orpheus, about the size of your Botticelli, by an elder fellowpupil of Botticelli's named Jacopo del Sellaio. They are delicious [in] colour, fascinating landscape, and perfectly well preserved. As I can get them for almost nothing, I strongly urge you to have them, and then actually put them as fronts to *cassoni*, along the walls, somewhere in your future museum. They would furnish gorgeously. The price will be between £ 500 at least, and £ 600 at the utmost for the two. Here is a chance for something good and cheap. If you want them cable: YESSELLAIO.¹

Mrs. Gardner apparently did not respond positively to the photographs or to the name of a then little-known artist, and the panels remained on the market for several years.² Berenson mentioned them

* LORENZO DE' MEDICI, *Tutte le opere*, ed. P. ORVIETO, 2 vols., Rome, 1992, II, p. 933.

¹ B. BERENSON, *The Letters of Bernard Berenson and Isabella Stewart Gardner 1887-1924, with Correspondence by Mary Berenson*, ed. R. N. HADLEY, Boston, 1987, p. 136. In saying "your Botticelli", Berenson meant the well-known *spalliera* panel depicting *The Tragedy of Lucretia*, which Gardener acquired on 19 December 1894 from Lord Ashburnham through Berenson. For this panel see R. LIGHTBOWN, *Sandro Botticelli*, 2 vols., London, 1978, I, plate 55, II, pp. 101-103, with bibliography; for Berenson as Isabella Stewart Gardner's adviser, see D. A. BROWN, *Berenson and the Connoisseurship of Italian Painting: A Handbook to the Exhibition*, Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1979.

² The owner is referred to as an unknown English collector in H. MACKOWSKY, "Jacopo

again on several occasions in subsequent letters to his patroness.³ On 2 November in the same year, he writes concerning the Bardini exhibition in London, "There are in addition one or two *cassoni* panels nothing like so nice as those by Sellaio which I recommended to you last spring".⁴ His next mention of them is in a letter dated 10 June 1900: "You will scarcely remember that two years ago I offered you two long *cassone*-panels with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, by a fellow-pupil of Botticelli's, Jacopo del Sellaio. They were ascribed to Botticelli, were in perfect condition and yet I could have them for you for 10,000 lire."⁵ Finally, in a letter dated New Year's Day 1913, Berenson wrote, "What funny purchases of Hitalians [*sic!*] they are making! That Cupid and Psyche *cassone* I hear they paid £ 40,000 for. Surely that can't be. When you and I worked together you refused to pay \$ 2,500 for a pair finer than this one alone, and by the same Master Jacopo del Sellaio."⁶

In 1899 Hans Mackowsky, provided with photographs by Berenson, made mention of that "pair ... by the same Master Jacopo del Sellaio" in his comprehensive article on the Florentine painter, describing their subjects as the *Death of Eurydice* and *Orpheus Playing for Pluto and Fighting for Eurydice* (Figs. 1, 2).⁷ Three years later, the Orpheus pictures were shown along with Piero di Cosimo's *Battle of Centaurs and Lapiths* at the Carfax Gallery in London, receiving favorable mention in reviews by Roger Fry and Claude Phillips.⁸ Over the next quarter century, the first panel (Fig. 1) became part of the Auspitz collection in Vienna, then entered the Bachstitz Gallery in The Hague, and finally ended up in the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam.⁹ The second (Fig. 2) was bought by a Ukrainian collector, Boh-

del Sellaio", *Jahrbuch der königlich preussischen Kunstsammlungen*, XX, 1899, pp. 199 and 278; the author expresses his gratitude to Berenson for the photographs of the panels. The owner may already have been Herbert Horne, who by 1902 was trying to sell the panels through the Carfax Gallery in London, without revealing his identity.

³ BERENSON, *op. cit.* (as at note 1), p. 136.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 500.

⁷ MACKOWSKY, *loc. cit.* (as at note 2), pp. 192-202: 199, and 271-284: 278.

⁸ R. FRY (unsigned) in the *Athenaeum*, 7 June 1902; C. PHILLIPS in the (London) *Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1902. The Piero di Cosimo material is discussed and the reviews are referred to in C. ELAM, "Piero di Cosimo and Centaurophilia in Edwardian London", *The Burlington Magazine*, CLI, no. 1278, 2009, pp. 607-615.

⁹ L. DE VRIES ROBBÉ, in H. W. VAN OS-M. PRAKKEN (eds.), *The Florentine Paintings in*

dan Khanenko, and is currently housed in the Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Art in Kiev.¹⁰

In the Fototeca at I Tatti, there is a further piece of evidence for Berenson's interest in the two panels, namely large nineteenth-century sepia-toned photographs of them, pasted on linen, which has caused shrinkage in one case. All the details of the paintings are clearly legible, despite the age of the photographs and their history of handling by their owners and by visiting scholars. Handwritten inscriptions by Berenson's wife, Mary, and others recording the present and past owners of the works, are to be found on the back. Mary indeed contributed to the research on Sellaio, publishing a review of Mackowsky's study in 1899. She was the first to mention a third panel from the set that depicts *Orpheus Charming Animals with His Music* (Fig. 3), describing it in the following terms: "Le comte Lanckoroński, de la même ville [Vienna], possède un Orphée, dans un paysage éminemment caractéristique, jouant de la lyre au milieu d'une amusante troupe de bêtes qui s'empresent autour de lui".¹¹

This third panel may already have been part of the celebrated collection of Count Karol Lanckoroński in the early 1880s, when he had begun to acquire numerous Italian Renaissance domestic paintings.¹² How Sellaio's picture was displayed in the count's Viennese palace at

Holland, 1300-1500, Amsterdam, 1974, pp. 63-64, cat. no. 3, with the suggestion that the *spalliere* might have been ordered for the wedding of Francesco Gonzaga with Isabella d'Este in 1490.

¹⁰ L. FAENSON, *Italian Cassoni from the Art Collections of Soviet Museums*, Leningrad, 1983, cat. nos. 23-27 (with earlier bibliography).

¹¹ M. LOGAN, review of Hans Mackowsky's article on Sellaio (as at note 2), *Revue archéologique*, I, 1899, pp. 478-481. A year later, she published another paper piece on Sellaio: *Id.*, "Deux tableaux de Jacopo del Sellaio au Musée du Louvre", *Revue archéologique*, II, 1900, pp. 300-303. Both Mary and Bernard were very much interested in the Lanckoroński collection, which included, among others, about two hundred fifty Italian paintings. See J. MIZIOLEK, "The Lanckoroński Collection in Poland", *Antichità viva*, XXXIV, no. 3, 1995, pp. 27-49.

¹² For Lanckoroński and his collection, see Karolina LANCKOROŃSKI, "Lanckoroński, Count Karol", in *The Dictionary of Art*, ed. J. TURNER, 34 vols., London, 1996, XVIII, p. 692; *Ausgewählte Kunstwerke der Sammlung Lanckoroński*, Vienna, 1918; MIZIOLEK, *loc. cit.* (as at note 11), pp. 27-49; *Id.*, *Miti, leggende, exempla: La pittura profana del rinascimento italiano dell' collezione Lanckoroński*, Warsaw, 2003 (with earlier bibliography). The count listed the panel in a small guide to his collection (see K. LANCKOROŃSKI, *Palais Lanckoroński, Jacquingasse 18*, Vienna, 1903, p. 16), and two years later he described and reproduced it in his *Einiges über italienische bemalte Truben*, Vienna, 1905, p. 20, and figure on p. 21. Lanckoroński refers to the opinion of Wilhelm von Bode as to the authorship of the panel and dates it circa 1480.

Jacquingasse 18 appears in a photograph taken around 1906 of the Italian Room, where it is displayed hanging beneath Dosso Dossi's famous canvas of *Jupiter Painting Butterflies* (Fig. 5).¹³ In 1994, together with eighty other Italian paintings, it was donated to the Wawel Royal Castle in Cracow and, after undergoing conservation work, it is now on permanent display in the royal bedchamber.

Paul Schubring, in his corpus of Italian Renaissance domestic paintings, was the first to link as a set the three panels that had once decorated the same interior.¹⁴ He also correctly defined them as *spalliere*, and not the fronts of *cassoni*, as they were described by Berenson, Mackowsky, and many others. As scholars of the Italian Renaissance nowadays know well, *spalliera* panels (from Italian *spalla*, or shoulder) are larger in height than *cassone* fronts; in order to be seen at eye level, they were usually installed at shoulder height or above.¹⁵ They are usually much better preserved than *cassone* fronts, which were easily damaged by children at play. Despite Schubring's long-published statement and the clear relationship of these paintings to other cycles of Florentine *spalliere*, the panels in question have until recently been referred to by several scholars as *cassone* panels, with the consequent speculation that a fourth painting had been lost, since *cassoni* were usually made in pairs.¹⁶

This magnificent cycle composed of three panels, now dispersed into three European collections, not only enchanted Berenson and his wife but also intrigued Aby (Abraham Moritz) Warburg and André

¹³ MIZIOLEK, *op. cit.* (as at note 11), fig. 10; ID., "The Odyssey Cassone Panels from the Lanckoroński Collection: On the Origins of Depicting Homer's Epic in the Art of the Italian Renaissance", *Artibus et Historiae*, LIII, 2006, p. 82, fig. 29. In 2000 Dosso Dossi's masterpiece, which since 1946 had hung in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, also arrived at the Royal Castle in Cracow, and is now on permanent display there.

¹⁴ P. SCHUBRING, *Cassoni: Truben und Trubenbilder der italienischen Frührenaissance*, Leipzig, 1923 (first ed. 1915), no. 357.

¹⁵ For *spalliera* panels, see A. BARRIAULT, *Spalliera Paintings of Renaissance Tuscany: Fables of Poets for Patrician Homes*, University Park, Penn., 1994 (with earlier bibliography). Three painted *spalliera* panels hung above three *forzieri* (*cassoni*) during the late 1480s in a *camera* of the Palazzo Tornabuoni, Florence; they were executed soon after the wedding of Lorenzo Tornabuoni and Giovanna degli Albizzi. All the panels are preserved; see S. KRESS, "Die *camera di Lorenzo, bella*, im Palazzo Tornabuoni: Rekonstruktion und künstlerische Ausstattung eines florentiner Hochzeitssimmers des späten Quattrocento", in M. ROHLMANN (ed.), *Domenico Ghirlandaio. Künstlerische Konstruktion von Identität im Florenz der Renaissance*, Weimar, 2003, pp. 245-285.

¹⁶ See DE VRIES ROBBÉ (as at note 9), pp. 63-64, cat. no. 31; E. C. KLEEMAN-S. G. WILLNER, *Museum Boymans-van Beuningen. Italian Paintings, 1300-1500*, Rotterdam, 1993, pp. 83-86.

Chastel, among others,¹⁷ although Warburg and Chastel referred only to the second panel; we shall return to their interesting remarks below. The paintings have been published several times but have not been studied in depth, even though they constitute the most elaborate, the most beautiful, and the most intriguing cycle depicting Orpheus in fifteenth-century Italian art.¹⁸ In this essay I shall attempt to investigate the context in which the panels were produced, as well as their visual and written sources.

Jacopo del Sellaio and his oeuvre

Jacopo del Sellaio (1441/1442-1493) was active at time when domestic painting in Florence reached its apogee. According to Vasari, Sellaio studied painting in the workshop of Fra Filippo Lippi along with the slightly younger Botticelli.¹⁹ It is now known that Sellaio joined the Compagnia di San Luca in 1472 and, with Biagio d'Antonio, executed for Lorenzo di Matteo Morelli's marriage to Vaggia di Tanai Nerli a pair of *cassoni* with *spalliere*, which depicted subjects from the history of the Roman Republic; these are preserved in the Courtauld

¹⁷ A. WARBURG, "Dürer and Italian Antiquity: Addenda", in ID., *The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance*, trans. D. BRITT, Los Angeles, 1999, p. 555, fig. 103 (see also Addendum on p. 730); A. CHASTEL, *Art et humanisme à Florence au temps de Laurent le Magnifique*, Paris, 1959, p. 273, pl. LXIVc. See also R. VAN MARLE, *The Development of the Italian Schools of Painting*, The Hague, 1931-1932, XII, p. 401; B. DEGENHART and A. SCHMITT, *Corpus der italienischen Zeichnungen 1300-1450*, Part I, 2, Berlin, 1968, p. 399 and fig. 534.

¹⁸ DE VRIES ROBBÉ, *loc. cit.* (as at note 9), cat. no. 31, pp. 63-64; G. SCAVIZZI, "The Myth of Orpheus in Italian Renaissance Art, 1400-1600", in J. WARDEN (ed.), *Orpheus: The Metamorphoses of a Myth*, Toronto, 1985, pp. 111-162: esp. 122ff. and fig. 6; R. M. SAN JUAN, "Mythology, Women and Renaissance Private Life: The Myth of Eurydice in Italian Furniture Painting", *Art History*, XV, 2, 1992, pp. 127-145, figs. 1-3; KLEEMAN-WILLNER, *op. cit.* (as at note 16), pp. 84-86 and fig. 22.1; H. SEMMELRATH, *Der Orpheus-Mythos in der Kunst der italienischen Renaissance: Eine Studie zur Interpretationsgeschichte und zur Ikonologie*, Cologne, 1994, pp. 74-81; BARRIAULT, *op. cit.* (as at note 15), p. 148 and fig. 8.1; E. CALLMANN, "Jacopo del Sellaio, the Orpheus Myth, and Painting for the Private Citizen", *Folia Historiae Artium*, IV, 1998, pp. 143-158.

¹⁹ G. VASARI, *Lives of the Most Eminent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, trans. by G. du C. DE VERE, 3 vols., New York, 1979, I, pp. 530-31. See also E. W. ROWLANDS, *Jacopo del Sellaio*, in *Dictionary of Art*, 1996, XVI, pp. 846-847 (with earlier bibliography). See also H. P. HORNE, "Jacopo del Sellaio", *The Burlington Magazine*, XIII, 1908, pp. 210-213; VAN MARLE, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), pp. 401-444; C. BASKINS, "Jacopo del Sellaio's *Pietà* at S. Frediano", *The Burlington Magazine*, CXXXI, 1989, pp. 475-479.

Institute Gallery, London.²⁰ Sellaio's early style is more clearly visible in the *Annunciation* in the Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie at San Giovanni Valdarno, dated the same year.²¹ In December 1477, he signed a contract to execute another altarpiece of the same subject for the church of Santa Lucia dei Magnoli, Florence, and in 1483 he undertook to paint for San Frediano a *Pietà* that was completed after the artist's death by his son Arcangelo.²² In 1486, Jacopo worked on the altarpiece for the Santa Maria del Carmine, Florence, fragments of which survive.²³

Berenson attributed to Sellaio more than sixty other works that are not mentioned in written sources. His list includes the beautiful painting now in Washington, D.C., depicting *Saint John the Baptist*, with a view of Florence in the background,²⁴ as well as numerous *cassoni* fronts and *spalliere* panels. Among the latter are four panels inspired by Petrarch's *Trionfi*, currently in the Museo Bandini in Fiesole, and a number of paintings, both *cassoni* or *spalliere*, depicting the story of Cupid and Psyche, now in various American and European collections.²⁵ Other *spalliere* by Sellaio, showing both secular and religious subjects, are housed in San Francisco (*The Story of Brutus and Portia*), Philadelphia (*Reconciliations of the Romans and the Sabines*), and Berlin (*The Lamentation over the Body of Christ, Scenes from the Lives of Saints*).²⁶ The dating of the majority of these very charming works is

²⁰ M. HAINES, "Il mondo dello Scheggia: Persone e luoghi di una carriera", in L. BELLOSI, *Lo Scheggia*, Florence and Siena, 1999, p. 60; P. L. RUBIN-A. WRIGHT, *Renaissance Florence: The Art of the 1470s*, exh. cat., National Gallery, London, and New Haven, Conn., 1999, pp. 316-317.

²¹ See A. PADOA RIZZO, "Proposte per l'attività giovanile di Iacopo del Sellaio", in *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Ugo Procacci*, 2 vols., Milan, 1977, I, pp. 278-83, fig. 272, with some suggestions as to the earliest panels by the painter.

²² BASKINS, *op. cit.* (as at note 19), pp. 474-478; N. PONS, "La pala del Sellaio per il Carmine: un ritrovamento", *Antichità viva: Rassegna d'arte*, XXIX, no. 2/3, 1990, pp. 5-10.

²³ See PONS, *loc. cit.* (as at note 22), pp. 5-10.

²⁴ B. BERENSON, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: A List of the Principal Artists and Their Works with an Index of Places: Florentine School*, London, 1963, pp. 195-199, fig. 1109.

²⁵ For the *spalliere* with the *Trionfi*, see SCHUBRING, *op. cit.* (as at note 14), nos. 372-375, plate LXXXVII; G. CARANDENTE, *I Trionfi nel primo Rinascimento*, Naples, 1963, pp. 69-71, figs. 64-66; for *cassoni* and *spalliere* with the story of Psyche, see F. M. PERKINS, "Un Quadro di Jacopo del Sellaio a Boston", *Rassegna d'Arte*, 13, 1913, p. 104; J. MIZIOLEK, "Alcune osservazioni sulla storia di Amore e Psiche nella pittura italiana del Tre e Quattrocento", *Fontes*, 5/6, 2000, pp. 133-153, plates 12-19, 24, 28-29.

²⁶ The San Francisco panel is reproduced and discussed by CALLMANN, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), p. 149, fig. 9; the Philadelphia panel by VAN MARLE, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), pp. 404-405,

difficult to establish because of their eclectic characters. The artist often looked for inspiration to his more inventive peers, such as Domenico Ghirlandaio and, above all, Sandro Botticelli.²⁷ In his late *cassoni* depicting the story of Cupid and Psyche (one of which is in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston – this panel being the one Berenson refers to in his letter of 1913, quoted above – and the other in the Abegg-Stiftung in Riggisberg, Switzerland), there are direct quotations from Botticelli's frescoes in the Sistine Chapel, and even an unusually ingenious adaptation of the most famous of all his mythological works, the *Primavera* and the *Birth of Venus*.²⁸ Furthermore, it has been noted that some of the costumes depicted in the *Triumph of Chastity* in Fiesole are almost the same as the white dress painted with blue cornflowers and worn by Hora in Botticelli's *Birth of Venus*.²⁹

One scholar has suggested that the three *spalliera* panels with Orpheus and Eurydice were produced in Botticelli's workshop.³⁰ However, there is no real doubt that they were painted by Sellaio himself, most probably in the mid-1480s; their style and coloring are decidedly different from his later works, which include, as well as the Cupid and Psyche panels, a small painting with the story of Esther in the Uffizi.³¹

fig. 269; the Berlin panels by H. NÜTZMANN, *Alltag und Feste. Florentinische Cassone- und Spallieramalerei aus der Zeit Botticellis*, Berlin, 2000, pp. 26-27, with illustrations. VAN MARLE, pp. 374-415, reproduces and discusses some other *spalliere* by Sellaio.

²⁷ According to BERENSON, *op. cit.* (as at note 24), p. 195, he was also "slightly influenced by Andrea del Castagno". PONS, *loc. cit.* (as at note 22), p. 7, argues that in the case of dispersed panels from the Carmine altarpiece, "il pittore guarda, più che al Botticelli ... al Pollaiuolo".

²⁸ For observations on the Boston *cassone*, see PERKINS, *op. cit.* (as at note 25), p. 104; L. B. KANTER, *Italian Paintings in the Museum of Fine Arts Boston*, Boston, 1994, p. 173; for the Abegg Stiftung panel and the fascinating adaptation of the *Primavera* see MIZIOLEK, *op. cit.* (as at note 25), pp. 133-154: 143-145; ID., *Botticelli's Masterpieces Reflected: Jacopo del Sellaio's Domestic Panels with the Fable of Cupid and Psyche*, Center 22: Record of Activities and Research Reports, June 2001-May 2002, Center for Advanced Study in the Visual Arts, Washington, 2002, pp. 128-132.

²⁹ C. DEMPSEY, "Portraits and Masks in the Art of Lorenzo de' Medici, Botticelli, and Politian's 'Stanze per la Giostra'", *Renaissance Quarterly*, LII, 1, 1999, pp. 17-18, figs. 9-10. See also VAN MARLE, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), p. 392.

³⁰ SAN JUAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), pp. 127-129.

³¹ For this panel, see M. GREGORI, *Uffizi e Pitti. I dipinti delle Gallerie Fiorentine*, Udine, 1994, p. 103, fig. 122; originally, together with other panels preserved in the Louvre and in the Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, it constituted the front of a *cassone*; for the Budapest panel, see M. BOSKOVITS, *Tuscan Paintings of the Early Renaissance*, New York, 1968, no. 44. BARRIAULT, *op. cit.* (as at note 15), p. 147, and N. PONS, "Jacopo del Sellaio", in M. GREGORI (ed.), *In the Light of Apollo: Italian Renaissance and Greece*, exh. cat., Athens, 2003-2004, I-II, pp. 291-292, dating the *spalliere* with Orpheus and Eurydice to circa 1490-1493.

The figures in the Orpheus and Eurydice series are quite close to those in one of the Carmine panels, dated 1486, featuring Saint Paul, the Archangel Raphael, and Tobias (Fig. 13): especially close are the faces of Raphael and Eurydice in the Kiev panel (Fig. 12), as well as those of Saint Paul and one of the demons carrying Eurydice to Hades (Fig. 7).

Written sources for the Orpheus and Eurydice panels

The carefully selected scenes begin with the death of Eurydice (Figs. 1, 4) and conclude with Orpheus playing music and singing hymns (Figs. 3, 17, 24), not with his death at the hands of Bacchic Maenads. What were Jacopo del Sellaio's, or his humanist advisor's, literary sources? According to Warburg and Schubring, the most important was Angelo Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo*; other scholars have suggested Boccaccio's *Genealogia deorum gentilium*,³² Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and its medieval, moralized version,³³ or Virgil's *Georgics*.³⁴ Chastel argued that the panels might have been a visual expression of the writings of the Florentine Platonists, who were fascinated by Orpheus and the Orphic hymns.³⁵ In order to answer these questions, we need to examine the various versions of the myth and then to confront them with Sellaio's narration.

Florentine patrons could indeed draw on a host of Latin and vernacular sources for the story of Orpheus. The most accessible was Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo*, which was written in 1480 for Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga, and is based on Virgil, Ovid, and Horace.³⁶ According

³² WARBURG, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), p. 447; SCHUBRING, *op. cit.* (as at note 14), II, p. 304 (who suggested also Ovid's *Metamorphoses*); SAN JUAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), pp. 128-130.

³³ SEMMELRATH, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), p. 74.

³⁴ BARRIAULT, *op. cit.* (as at note 15), pp. 117 and 147. Interesting observations on Virgil's and Ovid's versions of the myth, as well on the differences between them, are to be found in C. SEGAL, *Orpheus: The Myth of the Poet*, Baltimore and London, 1989, esp. pp. 73ff. See also W. S. ANDERSON, "The Orpheus of Virgil and Ovid: *fleBILE nescio quid*", in WARDEN (ed.), *op. cit.* (as at note 18), pp. 25-50. For the fate of this myth in the Middle Ages, see J. B. FRIEDMAN, *Orpheus in the Middle Ages*, Syracuse, N.Y., 2000 (first ed. 1970), pp. 133-135. In the age of the Renaissance it was one of the subjects of the *cantari*; see F. A. UGOLINI, *I cantari d'argomento classico*, Geneva and Florence, 1933, pp. 138-147.

³⁵ A. CHASTEL, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), pp. 271-274 and *passim*; ID., *Marsilio Ficino e l'arte*, trans. G. DE MAJO, Torino, 2001 (first French ed. 1954), pp. 315-325. See also PONS, *op. cit.* (as at note 31), p. 291.

³⁶ See A. POLIZIANO, *Poesie italiane*, ed. S. ORLANDO, Milan, 1985, pp. 109-128; "Polizia-

to Virgil's *Georgics* (Book IV, 453-526), Eurydice was a dryad who was importuned by the shepherd Aristaeus on the shores of the Thracian river.³⁷ Faithful to her husband, Orpheus, she fled, but in her escape trod on a viper and died. At first Orpheus sang his grief for his lost wife to all on earth throughout the day, until he finally plucked up the courage to enter the gorge of Taenarus and approached the "King of Terrors". Even in the underworld, the power of his music was such that Ixion's wheel stopped turning and the barking of Cerberus ceased. The gods of the underworld were also spellbound but, in returning Eurydice, Proserpine ordained that Orpheus would be permitted to take her away only on the condition that he would not turn round to look at her till they had reached the upper air. However, "He halts. Eurydice, his own, is now on the lip of Daylight. Alas! He forgot. His purpose broke. He looked back." The mastery of Virgil's poem is most beautifully shown in his account of Eurydice's grief and Orpheus's music-making when he returned alone from the abyss: "Month after month, they say, for seven months alone, he wept beneath a crag high up by the lonely waters of Strymon, and under the ice-cold stars poured out his dirge, that charmed the tigers, and made the oak trees follow him" (*Georgics* IV, 506-509). Even when being torn limb from limb by the Ciconian women, he called out the name of his beloved wife, and even his "cold tongue cried out Eurydice – poor Eurydice!" Ovid's version of the story makes no mention of the test of Eurydice's constancy to her husband. The name of Aristaeus does not appear at all; instead, the author introduces a theme of homosexual love.³⁸ In Horace's *De arte poetica* (491-506), Orpheus appears as a prophet and a founder of civilization.³⁹

no's Orfeo", trans. E. BASSET WELLES, reprinted from *La Fausta*, IV, 1-2 (Spring-Fall), 1979, pp. 106-116. For interesting observations on the *Favola*, see V. BRANCA, *Poliziano e l'umanesimo della parola*, Torino, 1983, pp. 56-72. Orpheus is also mentioned in other works of the poet, see G. BOCCUTO, "Il mito di Orfeo nei 'Nutricia' di Poliziano", in *Il mito nel Rinascimento*, atti del III Convegno Internazionale di Studi Umanistici, Chianciano-Montepulciano, 1991, Milan, Nuovi Orizzonti, 1993, pp. 217-240.

³⁷ VIRGIL, *The Georgics*, trans. C. DAY LEWIS, London, 1940, pp. 87-94.

³⁸ See OVID, *Metamorphoses*, with an English trans. by F. J. MILLER, 2 vols., London and New York, 1987, II, p. 227.

³⁹ HORACE, *Satires, Epistles, Ars poetica*, trans. H. R. FAIRCLOUGH, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1926, p. 483. See also SENECA, *Tragedies*, trans. J. G. FITCH, 2 vols., Cambridge, England, 2004, VIII, p. 425, *Hercules Oetaeus*, lines 1052-1060; for the myth of Orpheus in works of Seneca, see C. SEGAL, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), pp. 95-117.

In the Middle Ages, the myth took on an allegorical interpretation already to be found in late antiquity in Fulgentius's *Mythologies* (III, 10).⁴⁰ A more elaborate version of this work was written in the twelfth century by the so-called Third Vatican Mythographer (*Mythographus Tertius*).⁴¹ To this still-anonymous writer, as well as to Bernardus Silvestris, the twelfth-century commentator on the *Aeneid*, Orpheus is "the son of Apollo and Calliope"; his name means "wisdom and eloquence", and his harp is "rhetorical speech in which diverse colours as if diverse strings resound".⁴² In the fourteenth century, Giovanni del Virgilio reinterpreted the myth with a happy ending, since Eurydice is freed from Hades.⁴³ In this version, too, Orpheus is the son of Apollo. The name Eurydice is interpreted as "deep and thought-out judgment", the snake that bit her is, inevitably, the devil, and the Hell to which she is taken represents the temptation to sin. But the forces of Hell are overthrown and Eurydice returns to her former life forever after. A similarly happy ending is also described by Petrarch's friend Petrus Berchorius in his *Ovide moralisé*, a work that was read throughout Europe up until the mid-eighteenth century.⁴⁴ This reads,

Say allegorically that Orpheus, the son of the sun, is Christ, the son of God the Father, who wed Eurydice, that is the human soul, through charity and love, and through his own special choice joined her to himself. A serpent, the devil, bit this new – that is created anew – bride while she was collecting flowers – that is desiring the forbidden apple through temptation – killed her through sin, and finally sent her to hell. When Orpheus-Christ saw this, he wished to descend to hell personally and thus regained his wife – that is human nature – snatched her from the kingdom of darkness, and led her with him to the upper regions.⁴⁵

⁴⁰ Fulgentius the Mythographer, trans. L. G. WHITBREAD, Columbus, Ohio, 1971, pp. 96-99.

⁴¹ Mythographus tertius, III, 8, 20, see *Scriptores rerum mythicarum latini tres romae nuper reperti*, ed. G. H. BODE, Cellis, 1834 (reprinted 1968), pp. 211-213. This passage is quoted and commented in FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), pp. 133-135.

⁴² BERNARDUS SILVESTRIS, *Commentary on the First Six Books of Virgil's Aeneid*, trans. E. G. SCHREIBER-T. E. MARESCA, Lincoln, Neb., and London, 1979, pp. 51-53 (Book VI, lines 119-120).

⁴³ See F. GHISALBERTI, "L'Ovidius moralizatus di Pierre Bersuire", *Studi romanzi*, XXIII, 1933, pp. 5-136.

⁴⁴ F. GHISALBERTI, "Giovanni del Virgilio espositore delle *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio", *Giornale dantesco*, XXXIV, n.s. IV, 1933, pp. 3-110.

⁴⁵ "The Ovidius moralizatus of Petrus Berchorius", trans. W. R. REYNOLDS, Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, Urbana, 1972, p. 347.

Thus, the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice stands here for the fall of mankind and its happy redemption by Orpheus-Christ.⁴⁶ Early Christian writers such as Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius of Caesarea prepared an *interpretatio christiana* of the figure of Orpheus that found its reflection in catacomb paintings and the reliefs on sarcophagi.⁴⁷ Coluccio Salutati in *De laboribus Herculis* and Poliziano in his *Favola di Orfeo* returned to the tragic version of the myth, in which Orpheus comes back from the underworld alone.⁴⁸

It is worth remembering at this point that in 1484, shortly before the presumed time of the execution of the *spalliere* in question, Poliziano delivered lectures in the Studio Fiorentino on the *Georgics*, and that he also mentioned Orpheus and the power of his music in his *Nutricia*.⁴⁹ Orpheus appears throughout Marsilio Ficino's and Giovanni Pico della Mirandola's writings, especially in *El libro dell'amore* of 1469, a commentary on Plato's *Symposium*, which Ficino translated from Latin into Italian in the mid-1480s,⁵⁰ and in Pico's *De hominis dignitate* (1486).⁵¹ The poet-singer was also recalled by Naldo Naldi, as well as by some of the Medici themselves.⁵² Other important sources could have been Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophiae*, which was widely read in the fifteenth century,⁵³ and Book V of Lucian's *Astrology*, which testi-

⁴⁶ FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), pp. 127-128.

⁴⁷ S. ENSOLI-E. LA ROCCA (eds.), *Aurea Roma: Della città pagana alla città cristiana*, Rome, 2000, nos. 322-324. For early Christian interpretations of Orpheus and depictions of this hero in the catacombs, see FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), pp. 38-85.

⁴⁸ COLUCCIO SALUTATI, *De laboribus Herculis*, ed. B. L. ULLMAN, Turin, 1951, pp. 457-508 (IV, 5-7).

⁴⁹ A. POLIZIANO, *Commento inedito alle Georgiche di Virgilio*, ed. L. CASTANO MUSICÒ, Florence, 1990, *passim*; see also BOCCUTO, *op. cit.* (as at note 36), pp. 220ff.

⁵⁰ MARSILIO FICINO, *El libro dell'amore*, ed. S. NICCOLI, Florence, 1987, pp. 39-40, 53-54, 103-104. Ficino also translated the Orphic Hymns into Latin; see D. P. WALKER, "Orpheus the Theologian and Renaissance Platonists", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XVI, 1953, pp. 100-120; J. WARDEN, *Orpheus and Ficino*, in WARDEN (ed.), *op. cit.* (as at note 18), pp. 85-110.

⁵¹ PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *On the Dignity of Man, On Being and the One, Heptaplus*, trans. C. G. WALLIA, P. J. W. MILLER, and D. CARMICHAEL, Indianapolis and New York, 1965, pp. 32-33. The myth of Orpheus is also discussed in Pico's *Conclusiones orphicae*; see J. KLUTSTEIN, "Marsile Ficini et le 'Oracles Chaldaïques'", in G. GARFAGNINI (ed.), *Marsilio Ficino e il ritorno di Platone: Studi e documenti*, 2 vols., Florence, 1986, pp. 331-340.

⁵² See M. MARTELLI, "Il mito di Orfeo nell'età laurenziana", *Interpres*, VIII, 1988, pp. 7-40; 19-24; ID., *Letteratura fiorentina del Quattrocento: Il filtro degli anni Sessanta*, Firenze, 1996, pp. 66, 73-101, 117, 119, 165, 264-265.

⁵³ BOETHIUS, *The Theological Tractates and the Consolation of Philosophy*, eds. and trans.

fies to the great popularity of depictions of Orpheus in the visual arts of antiquity.⁵⁴

Finally, there are also versions of the myth written in early-Renaissance Italy stressing Orpheus's great devotion to Eurydice. Boccaccio, in *De genealogia deorum gentilium*, writes that Orpheus, after losing her, turned down the love of many women to lead a chaste life (*si dispose a menar la vita casta*).⁵⁵ A similar version is to be found in the *Historia e favola di Orpheo*, written by an anonymous Florentine soon after 1480.⁵⁶ Also known as *La storia d'Orfeo*, this was a popular version of Poliziano's *Favola* and belongs to the category of *cantari*, which were sung at wedding receptions. It includes these lines:

Molte donne di lui s'innamoraro
E gli mostravan sviscerato amore.
Orfeo sempre col cor crudo et amaro
Le discacciava via con gran furore;
Di questo il mio autor ne parla chiaro,
Lodando Orfeo di stabile gran cuore,
Che alla sua prima donna si mantiene,
E innanzi e dopo morte volle bene.⁵⁷

This *cantare*, which begins with the birth of Orpheus from Calliope and Apollo and concludes, like Poliziano's *Favola*, with Orpheus's death at the hands of Bacchic maenads, has not so far been taken into consideration in discussions of Sellaio's *spalliere*.

H. F. STEWART, E. K. RAND, and S. J. TESTER, Cambridge, Mass., and London, 1973, p. 295 (XII, 7-10). For the importance of this work in the Italian Renaissance, see MARTELLI, "Il mito" (as at note 52), pp. 27-30; R. BLACK-G. POMARO, "*La consolazione della filosofia nel Medioevo e nel Rinascimento*", Florence, 2000, *passim*. Already in 1332, Alberto Fiorentino had translated it into Italian as *La Consolazione*; however, there were also other translations.

⁵⁴ LUCIAN, *Astrology*, in LUCIAN, trans. A. M. HARMON *et al.*, Loeb Classical Library, 8 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1972, V, pp. 354-357. For ancient depictions of Orpheus, see M. X. GAREZOU, "Orpheus", 1994, in *Lexikon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, Zürich and Munich, 1981-, VII, 1, pp. 81-105; VII, 2, figs. 159-173a.

⁵⁵ GIOVANNI BOCCACCIO, *Della geneologia degli Dei di M. Giovanni Boccaccio libri quindecim*, trans. M. G. BETUSSI, Venice, 1606, pp. 66-87 (V, 12).

⁵⁶ For this *cantare*, see UGOLINI, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), pp. 138-147.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

The Rotterdam panel: Eurydice bitten by the snake

In the first panel of the cycle, which was most probably inspired by Virgil's *Georgics*, Book IV, and Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo*, as well as the *cantare* cited above, we see in the center the shepherd Aristaeus pursuing Eurydice (Figs. 1, 4). The painter has chosen the moment in which a large viper is biting her foot and, in her great pain, Eurydice arches her body and dramatically throws her head back to look at the snake. In the scene on the right, the dead Eurydice is being carried by two demons of the underworld to a rocky cave – the gates of Hades (Fig. 8). The inertness of her body is exquisitely rendered, her hands and head drooping toward the ground. The bearded and horned demons, who have just crossed a river with a spotted fish in it on their way to the underworld, have massive claws instead of human feet. There is another important scene in the background at left (Fig. 6). Behind a large herd of sheep belonging to Aristaeus is a gesticulating figure running with the tragic news toward a group of three men, one of whom is the young, beardless Orpheus playing his *lira da braccio*. Thus this tragic and somewhat “hidden” scene, described both in Poliziano's *Favola* and in the *Storia di Orfeo*, opens the painted narrative.

The scene depicting Eurydice being carried to Hades is not described in any literary source, nor does it have any precedent in early representations of the subject. Illustrations of the *Ovide moralisé* only depict the moment when she is bitten by the snake or dragon representing the devil.⁵⁸ It seems likely that Jacopo del Sellaio looked for models to Roman sarcophagi, which were so frequently used as sources of inspiration during the Renaissance period.⁵⁹ Two sarcophagi from the time of Hadrian, showing the rape of Leucippus's two daughters by the Dioscuri, are of particular interest to us.⁶⁰ Both were known and copied in Rome during the Renaissance. One is now in the Uffizi (Fig. 8). The second, now in the Vatican, was in the house of Fazio Santorio near the church of Santa Maria in via Lata, where it was copied by a late-fif-

⁵⁸ FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34).

⁵⁹ WARBURG, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), pp. 89-156.

⁶⁰ RUBIN and WRIGHT, *op. cit.* (as at note 20), London, 1999, fig. 107. See also G. A. MANSUELLI, *Galleria degli Uffizi: Le sculture*, 2 vols., Rome, 1958, I, no. 252, p. 234; P. P. BOBER-R. RUBINSTEIN, *Renaissance Artists and Antique Sculpture: A Handbook of Sources*, London, 1986, no. 126b.

teenth-century artist in a drawing now in the Uffizi.⁶¹ The scene shows each of the Dioscuri holding the girl he has chosen. The girls' horizontal position and their legs drooping downward appear to be reflected in the scene of Eurydice being carried into the underworld. The relief also provides an analogy to the pose of Eurydice bitten by the snake. In front of the Dioscuri, who are holding up the girls, is a woman running on the right, a bewildered witness to the event. Her pose, with her leg thrust forward and head thrown back, and also the way her garments are arranged, are close to those characteristics of the fleeing Eurydice.

For Eurydice being carried off to Hades, the painter could have taken as a model the *Rape of Proserpine* shown on another sarcophagus in the Uffizi, in which Proserpine is in a virtually horizontal pose, with her head thrown back.⁶² It is evident that such poses originating from sarcophagi were known in Florence at that time, for we see them in a *spalliera* with the *Rape of Proserpine*, which was painted by an enigmatic artist formerly known as the Maestro di Stratonice and recently identified as Michele Ciampanti (Fig. 9). Its pendant, in the same private collection in Tuscany, is an interesting *spalliera* depicting Orpheus and Eurydice that will be discussed later (Fig. 10).⁶³ The best analogy, however, to the pose of the dead Eurydice can be found in another sarcophagus in Rome showing Orestes's revenge on Clytemnestra. In the central part of the relief she is shown already dead, lying on the ground. In the first half of the fifteenth century, Gentile da Fabriano or Pisanello had executed a drawing of this figure, combining it with motifs from other sarcophagi (Fig. 11).⁶⁴ Thus, the motif of a dead woman with her head thrown back

⁶¹ L. FUSCO, "Antonio Pollaiuolo's Use of the Antique", *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, XLII, 1979, p. 261, fig. 56b; P. BAROCCHI (ed.), *Il Giardino di San Marco: Maestri e compagni del giovane Michelangelo*, exh. cat., Florence, Casa Buonarroti, 30 giugno-19 ottobre 1992, Milan, 1992 (entry by M. HIRST), no. 6, pp. 43-45.

⁶² MANSUELLI, *op. cit.* (as at note 60), no. 257, pp. 238-239.

⁶³ See B. BERENSON, *Italian Pictures of the Renaissance: A List of the Principal Artists and Their Works with an Index of Places: Central Italian and North Italian School*, London, 1968, I, p. 257, plates 834 and 836; L. BELLOSI (ed.), *Francesco di Giorgio e il Rinascimento a Siena, 1450-1500*, exh. cat., Milan, 1993, cat. no. 50b, p. 280, plate on p. 283, and pp. 524-525. As noted in the latter publication, the style of the panel depicting the *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice* differs considerably from the style of the panel with the *Rape of Proserpine*: the former must have been completed by another artist. For the identification of the Maestro di Stratonice with Michele Ciampanti, see Matteo Civitali e il suo tempo: *Pittori, scultori e orafi a Lucca nel tardo Quattrocento*, exh. cat., Museo Nazionale di Villa Guinigi, Lucca; Milan, 2004, pp. 364-371, with earlier bibliography.

⁶⁴ BOBER and RUBINSTEIN, *op. cit.* (as at note 60), nos. 25a and 106.

and hair cascading downward could have been studied in the last quarter of the fifteenth century not only in situ in Rome but also, and more easily, through drawings circulating within Italy.

The Kiev panel: Orpheus in Hades

The next two scenes of the drama, featuring Orpheus as an aged, bearded man marked by signs of much suffering, are shown in the Kiev *spalliera* (Figs. 2, 12, 14). The first represents Orpheus playing music for the god of the underworld and receiving permission to regain his beloved wife, who can be seen appearing from out of the underground grotto. The second, unusually dramatic, scene depicts the moment when Orpheus has broken the agreement not to look back: a white centaur is dragging Eurydice back to Hades by her hair, while Orpheus, holding his instrument with one hand, tries to pull her with the other. This is the episode that so intrigued Warburg, who tried to explain the presence in it of the mythic hybrid. However, the first scene is equally intriguing. Sellaio did not attempt to portray the gloom of the underworld with winged and horned devils, as did two almost contemporary bronze medallion makers.⁶⁵ Instead, the scene is shown in full daylight, with a paradisiacal landscape in the background, as if Pluto had come before the gate of his own kingdom – a niche-like structure overgrown with trees, which at the same time serves as a throne (Fig. 12). The king of the underworld is represented as a goat-footed, bearded old man with horns, white hair, and satyrlike ears. He is announcing his decision, thrusting forward a golden scepter in his right hand, while his left hand, with palm open, is held slightly upward. In a small, fire-belching entry to the abyss at Pluto's left, Eurydice appears. Her hands cannot be seen, and from the back she is apparently being held by an invisible power. Orpheus has stopped making music in order to listen to the words of Pluto. In Virgil's version, it is Persephone who lays down the conditions for Eurydice's return to the upper world. Only Boethius, Poliziano, and the author of the *Storia d'Orfeo* recount the version in which Pluto makes the decision. In Poliziano's *Favola*, the

⁶⁵ See J. POPE-HENNESSY, *Renaissance Bronzes from the Samuel H. Kress Collection: Reliefs, Plaquettes, Statuettes, Utensils and Mortars*, London, 1965, nos. 171-172, figs. 195 and 197.

god of the underworld says, "I'll give her to you, but on this condition" (*io te la rendo, ma con queste leggi ...*),⁶⁶ while Boethius puts it as follows:

We by his verses conquered are,
 Saith the great King whom spirits fear.
 'Let us not then from him debar
 His wife whom he with songs doth gain.
 Yet lest our gift should stretch too far,
 We will it with this law restrain,
 That when from hell he takes his flight,
 He shall from looking back refrain'.⁶⁷

The *spalliera* by Ciampanti, one of the most unusual Renaissance works of art depicting this subject, shows these events in a quite different fashion. It also depicts Orpheus before Pluto (Fig. 10), but here the underworld is separated from the world of the living by a high wall. Leading to it is a gate bearing an inscription from Dante: *PER ME [SI] VA NE. [LA] CITTÀ DOLENTE PER ME SI VA NELLETER D. P.* (*Divine Comedy, Inferno*, Canto III, 1-2: "through me a road through the city of affliction, through me a road to eternal torture"). The almost nude Pluto, depicted somewhat in the style of Luca Signorelli, sits under a canopy, surrounded by a large crowd that has assembled because of the music of Orpheus, who is still playing his instrument. The power of the music is such that Pluto, leaning his horned head on his right hand, seems to have totally succumbed to its enchantment. The woman standing next to Orpheus is probably not Eurydice but rather Persephone. We see Eurydice above, close to the gates of Hell, but still within its walls. Like Orpheus, who has come out into the light of day and who unfortunately turns to look back too soon, she holds up her right hand in despair, aware of her renewed death. An unusually interesting motif in the two panels is that of the centaur, which in the work of Ciampanti has a rather different role (Fig. 15).

⁶⁶ POLIZIANO, *op. cit.* (as at note 36), p. 123; see also A. TISSONI BENVENUTI, *L'Orfeo del Poliziano: Con il testo critico dell'originale e delle successive forme teatrali*, Padua, 1986, p. 158. The English version is in "Poliziano's Orfeo", *op. cit.* (as at note 36), p. 113 (line 294). However, in the *Nutricia* (v. 296) Poliziano makes Persephone responsible for the decision; see BOC-CUTO, *op. cit.* (as at note 36), p. 225. For the *Storia d'Orfeo* version, see UGOLINI, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), p. 144.

⁶⁷ BOETHIUS, *op. cit.* (as at note 53), p. 297. See also GIOVANNI BONSIGNORI's fourteenth-century translation, printed in a 1497 edition: c. LXXXIII (Book X, 1-4: *Canto d'Orpheo*), where Orpheus begs both Pluto and Proserpine to give him back Eurydice.

The right side of the Kiev *spalliera* contains a dramatic composition of the struggle for Eurydice (Fig. 14). Unlike the *spalliera* by Ciampanti, where Eurydice does not appear outside the confines of Hades, here the struggle for her takes place in a beautiful, sunlit landscape.⁶⁸ This was certainly meant to emphasize the drama of her return to death. Eurydice is pulled in opposite directions by a white centaur, who is dragging her by her long, golden hair, while Orpheus, on the opposite side, has grasped her by the right hand. Eurydice does everything in her power to cling to her husband; she holds him by one of the sleeves of his tunic, and has even grasped his *lira da braccio*. The instrument, whose sound had given her a chance to return to the upper world, no longer holds any magical powers. The scene is like an illustration of Eurydice's words to Orpheus in Virgil's *Georgics*, Book IV:

What madness beyond measure? Once more a cruel fate
 Drags me away, and my swimming eyes are drowned in darkness.
 Good-bye. I am borne away. A limitless night is about me
 And over the strengthless hands I stretch to you, yours no longer."⁶⁹

Ovid also speaks of Orpheus's hand stretched out to Eurydice and grasping only air.⁷⁰ Poliziano's *Favola* reads,

Ohimè che'l troppo amore
 n'ha disfatti ambedua
 Ecco ch'i ti son tolta a gran furore
 né sono ormai più tua;
 ben tendo a te le braccia, ma non vale
 che indrieto son tirata. Orfeo mio, vale!⁷¹

There is at least one representation that is to some degree similar to the scene in the Kiev *spalliera*. It appears on a plaquette attributed to

⁶⁸ Illustration in the *Ovide moralisé* are reproduced in FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), figs. 29, 30-34. The medal by Moderno is reproduced and discussed in POPE-HENNESSY, *op. cit.* (as at note 65), no. 173, fig. 198. Concerning the drawing in the *De deorum imaginibus libellus* (Reg. Lat. 1290, Bl. 5 r) in the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana see H. LIEBESCHUETZ, *Fulgentius metaforalis. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der antiken Mythologie im Mittelalter*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1926, p. 123, plate XXIV.

⁶⁹ VIRGIL, *op. cit.* (as at note 37), p. 93.

⁷⁰ OVID, *op. cit.* (as at note 38), p. 226: X, 57-60: "He turned his eyes – and straight she slipped away. / He stretched his arms to hold her – to be held – / And clasped, poor soul, naught but the yielding air. / And she, dying again, made no complaint."

⁷¹ POLIZIANO, *op. cit.* (as at note 36), p. 124.

Moderno (Fig. 16).⁷² The completely nude Eurydice, with wavy hair flowing down to her waist, is kneeling on one knee between her husband and a devil. Her pose is strongly reminiscent of the famous Hellenistic sculpture of *Crouching Venus* by Doidalsas of Bithynia, versions of which were known in the early Renaissance period.⁷³ Orpheus, here a young man and almost completely nude, is struggling for Eurydice with an only partially visible horned devil or centaur, who is emerging from the infernal depths. While the devil is grabbing Eurydice by the left ankle, Orpheus still holds his *lira da braccio* in his right hand. The scene takes place somewhere far from the banks of the Styx, at the borders of the world of the living and the dead.

We have seen that Warburg was intrigued by the presence of the centaur in Sellaio's dramatic and expressive scene. The representation of the struggle for Eurydice is indeed very original, virtually unique. In neither earlier nor later depictions of the myth is there such a scene, and certainly none in which a centaur takes part. Nor does this hybrid appear in any of the literary sources. Warburg suggested that the idea was based on Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo*, which was written in the late 1480s for performance in Mantua.⁷⁴ Although it is uncertain whether the play was actually put on, the text is luckily preserved. Centaurs are expressly mentioned: "Li Centauri ancora che l'intervengono vole-no spatio: faranno ogni loro sforzo" ("The centaurs that will intervene require appropriate space and they will do everything that is in their power").⁷⁵ Thus in the play, these hybrids were to take Eurydice back to Hades.

Strangely enough, no other writer on Sellaio's *spalliera* has taken up Warburg's interesting suggestion. Generally the centaur in the Kiev painting is seen as Pluto himself;⁷⁶ according to Ellen Callmann, it is the famous centaur Chiron or, as Barriault has suggested, either the satyr Minos or the centaur Mnesillos.⁷⁷ In fact, Mnesillos is mentioned in

⁷² POPE-HENNESSY, *op. cit.* (as at note 65), no. 173, fig. 198, p. 53.

⁷³ For this sculpture in the Renaissance period see P. P. BOBER-R. RUBINSTEIN, *op. cit.* (as at note 60), pp. 18-19, plates 18-19. See also G. AGOSTI and D. ISELLA (eds.), *Antiquarie Prospetive Romane*, Parma, 2004, pp. 63-64, fig. 28.

⁷⁴ Cf. WARBURG, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), p. 416 (addenda to p. 124).

⁷⁵ Quoted after P. D'ANCONA, *Origini del teatro italiano*, Turin, 1891, p. 363.

⁷⁶ See, for example, VAN MARLE, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), p. 404; DE VRIES ROBBÉ, *op. cit.* (as at note 9), p. 63.

⁷⁷ CALLMANN, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), p. 156; BARRIAULT, *op. cit.* (as at note 15), p. 148.

one of the versions of the *Favola di Orfeo*, but he is a satyr similar to Minos. It hardly seems likely that a Florentine artist in the second half of the fifteenth century would have confused a satyr with a centaur.⁷⁸

Centaur in Hades are already mentioned in Virgil's *Aeneid* (Book VI, 286-287) and again in Dante's *Divine Comedy*.⁷⁹ In Book XII of the *Inferno*, the poet speaks of the centaurs Nessus and Folus, known from various myths as guardians of Hell. The most important of these creatures was the wise Chiron, who appeared in Statius's *Achilleis*. Centaurs as guardians of Hell shooting arrows from their bows figure in fourteenth-century frescoes by the Orcagna brothers in the Strozzi Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence,⁸⁰ as well as in the illustrations that Botticelli executed for the *Divine Comedy*.⁸¹ Undoubtedly, the centaur shown in the *spalliera* by Ciampanti (Figs. 10, 15) derives from Dante. As already stated, in this panel there is a quotation from the *Inferno* inscribed on the gate of Hell. A centaur also appears in Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur* in the Uffizi.⁸² Already in his article on Sellaio published in 1899, Mackowsky correctly recognized that the centaur on the Kiev *spalliera* was in the style of Botticelli.⁸³ However, in the Uffizi panel, Botticelli's Pallas Athena holds the centaur by his hair.⁸⁴ One more difference between the two centaurs is that the one Botticelli portrays has no horns. Thus, drawing on the

⁷⁸ However, in the *Inventario* of 1498, published first by SHEARMAN, the famous Botticelli painting known as *Minerva and the Centaur* seems to be described as *Camilla and Satyr* [sic]; see J. SHEARMAN, "The Collections of the Younger Branch of the Medici", *Burlington Magazine*, 117, January 1975, pp. 12-27; cf. G. T. NOSZLOPY, "Botticelli's *Pallas and the Centaur*: An Aspect of the Revival of Late-Antique and Trecento Exegetic Allegory in the Medici Circle", *Acta Historiae Artium Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*, 37, 1994-1995, pp. 123ff.

⁷⁹ The *Aeneid* reads, "And many monstrous forms besides of various beasts are stalled at the doors, Centaurs and double-shaped Scyllas / And the Chimaera armed with flame, Gorgons and Harpies"; see VIRGIL, *Eclagues, Georgics, Aeneid*, trans. H. R. FAIRCLOUGH, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, Mass., London, II, 1974, pp. 226-235. See also the *Georgics*, II, 455-456: "It was he who maddened and killed Centaurs, Rhoetus, and Pholus, and made Hylaeus brawl and go for the Lapithae with a bowl": VIRGIL, *op. cit.* (as at note 37), p. 49. Cf. OVID's *Metamorphoses*, XII, 306.

⁸⁰ K. A. GILES, *The Strozzi Chapel in Santa Maria Novella: Florentine Painting and Patronage, 1340-1355*, Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1977, Ann Arbor, Mich., 1979, pp. 122-128.

⁸¹ Sandro Botticelli: *Der Bilderzyklus zu Dantes Göttlicher Komödie*, Berlin, 2000, pp. 38-39, 62-63.

⁸² LIGHTBOWN, *op. cit.* (as at note 1), I, pp. 82-85, pl. 1; II, pp. 57-58. See also C. ACIDINI LUCHINAT, *Botticelli: Allegorie mitologiche*, Milan, 2001, pp. 167-170, with excellent illustration.

⁸³ MACKOWSKY, *op. cit.* (as at note 2), p. 199.

⁸⁴ For this aspect of Botticelli's panel, see NOSZLOPY, *op. cit.* (as at note 78), pp. 113-133.

Virgilian/Dantean tradition, Sellaio executed a very interesting interpretation of the myth of Orpheus's descent into Hades. However, it is still impossible to determine whether, in the scene of the fight for Eurydice, the artist depicted one of the centaurs mentioned in the text of the drama based on Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo* or whether, instead, he portrayed a mythical hybrid that, for an educated Florentine of that time, obviously alluded to some brutal half-animal strength and, in accordance with the *Divine Comedy*, to the underworld.⁸⁵ Around 1490, Michelangelo, as a young sculptor under the protection of Lorenzo il Magnifico, executed the well-known relief of the *Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs*.⁸⁶ Ascanio Condivi states that the subject was suggested to him by Angelo Poliziano,⁸⁷ but could this humanist poet have also provided Sellaio with ideas on how to represent the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice on the three big panels that were likely destined for the bedroom of a newlywed couple?

The Lanckoroński panel in Cracow: Orpheus's concerts

The Lanckoroński *spalliera* is perhaps the most charming of the three because of the numerous, beautifully rendered animals and a mysterious scene in the upper right corner (Figs. 3, 17, and 24). Orpheus has irretrievably lost his beautiful and loyal wife and is now old, dressed in the same garments, and wearing the same Eastern turban as in the previous panel. He is making music on his *lira da braccio*, standing before a natural arch of rocks overgrown with bushes (Fig. 17).⁸⁸ He is sur-

⁸⁵ A group of sixteen drunken centaurs appears on one of Bertoldo di Giovanni's reliefs decorating the courtyard in the Palazzo Scala della Gherardesca in Florence. Here they symbolize *Ebrietas*; see J. D. DRAPER, *Bertoldo di Giovanni, Sculptor of the Medici Household: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné*, Columbia, Mo., 1992, cat. no. 21, pp. 227-231. According to *Physiologus*, centaurs, like the Sirens, symbolize the devil; see *Physiologus*, trans. M. J. CURLEY, Austin, Tex., and London, 1979, pp. 23-24.

⁸⁶ BAROCCHI (ed.), *op. cit.* (as at note 61), pp. 52-61; K. WEIL-GARRIS BRANDT (ed.), *Giovinetta di Michelangelo*, Geneva and Milan, 1999, no. 5, pp. 188-199, with earlier bibliography.

⁸⁷ ASCANIO CONDIVI, *The Life of Michelangelo*, ed. H. WOHL, trans., A. S. WOHL, London, 1976, pp. 14-15. See D. SUMMERS, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, Princeton, 1981, pp. 242-249 (Chapter XVI: "Poliziano e Michelangelo"). However, we know nothing of whether Sellaio or his patron was in touch with Poliziano.

⁸⁸ E. WINTERNITZ, "The *lira da braccio*", in *Id.*, *Musical Instruments and Their Symbolism in Western Art*, New Haven, London, 1979, pp. 86-97; A. BALDASSARE, "Die *lira da braccio* in humanistischen Kontext Italiens", *Music in Art*, XXIV, nos. 1-2, 1999, pp. 5-28.

rounded by a large number of enchanted animals and birds, including legendary beasts such as the griffin, unicorn, and dragon.⁸⁹ Among the four-footed animals are a lamb, a deer, a lion, a wolf, a leopard, a donkey, a bear, a monkey, and even an elephant. Thus it would seem that we have here an illustration of the words of Philostratus the Younger or Boethius. It is Philostratus who, in his *Imagines* (6), greatly enlarges the list of the animals enchanted by Orpheus, which includes a lion, a boar, a deer, a hare, and states that "all the wild creatures to whom the lion is a terror in the chase now herd with him", as well as all sorts of birds, such as a jackdaw, a raven, and an eagle.⁹⁰ Finally are mentioned also wolves and lambs, while likewise the pines, cypresses, alders, and poplars follow the poet-singer whenever he is making music. In the *Consolatio* we read,

[...] forced the woods to run along
When he his mournful tunes did play,
Whose powerful music was so strong
That it could make the rivers stay
The fearful hinds not daunted were,
But with the lions took their way
Nor did the hare behold with fear
The dog whom these sweet notes appease (III, 12, 7-14).⁹¹

Antique mosaics of *Orpheus's Concert* depict not only a lion, a boar, a bear, a horse, and various birds, but at times also an elephant.⁹² However, no imaginary animals such as griffins, unicorns, or dragons appear either in these or in any literary source concerning Orpheus.⁹³ The unicorn, because of its profound symbolism (including a Christological

⁸⁹ See also SENECA, *op. cit.* (as at note 39), pp. 424-425 (*Hercules on Oeta*, 1045-1060). SCHUBRING, *op. cit.* (as at note 14), p. 304, counted forty-five animals in the *spalliera*.

⁹⁰ PHILOSTRATUS THE YOUNGER, *Imagines*, in PHILOSTRATUS THE ELDER AND PHILOSTRATUS THE YOUNGER, *Imagines*, CALLISTRATUS, *Descriptions*, trans. A. FAIRBANKS, Cambridge, Mass., 1969, pp. 309-313.

⁹¹ BOETHIUS, *op. cit.* (as at note 53), p. 295.

⁹² See interesting material gathered in *Les métamorphoses d'Orphée*, exh. cat., Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tourcoing, Les Musées de la Ville de Strasbourg, Musée Communal d'Ixelles, Brussels, 1995, pp. 25-31, figs. 2, 4, 6-8; S. FERINO-PAGDEN (ed.), *Dipingere la musica: Strumenti in posa nell'arte del Cinque e Seicento*, Milan, 2001, pp. 43-45, 178-183.

⁹³ A griffin, together with Orpheus, appears among miniatures dating from 1475 to 1480, adorning the famous *Nozze di Pesaro*. This time, however, he is the only animal depicted in the scene and is not listening to Orpheus's music, since he is turned to a tree emanating rays of light; see E. B. WELLES, "Orpheus and Arion as Symbols of Music in Mantegna's Camera degli Sposi", *Studies in Iconography*, 13, 1989-1990, pp. 113-144; p. 122, fig. 13.

one), appears in the somewhat enigmatic portrayal of Orpheus, attributed to Francesco di Giorgio Martini, on the floor of the Chapel of St. Catherine of Siena in the church of San Domenico in Siena, dating from circa 1480 to 1490.⁹⁴ It is found next to a lion, too, in the panel by Ciampanti, who was also active in Siena (Fig. 10).⁹⁵ Among the many birds surrounding Orpheus are a peacock, which sits on the rocky cliff at the same height as the musician's lyre, while from the trunks of the trees smaller birds fly toward him, and at his feet stand an eagle or falcon, and a crane or heron. A colorful duck swims in the foreground. The peacock – so like the one depicted by Botticelli in two versions of the *Adoration of the Magi* – could, like the unicorn and several of the other animals, have symbolic meaning.⁹⁶ In antiquity, it was the bird of Juno; in Roman and early Christian art, it was a symbol of eternity, and in time it became linked with Marian and Christological symbolism.⁹⁷

Sellaio, like the artists of many other portrayals of *Orpheus's Concert*, may have modeled his scene on medieval visualizations of the *Creation of the Birds and Animals* or the *Earthly Paradise*. On an eleventh-century ivory plaque made in southern Italy depicting the *Creation* (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York), a bearded Christ, dressed somewhat like the Lanckoroński Orpheus, is creating several beasts, including the basilisk (dragon) and griffin.⁹⁸ On another ivory plaque featuring the *Earthly Paradise*, made two centuries earlier and now in the Louvre, a centaur, griffin, elephant, and unicorn are shown

⁹⁴ See CHASTEL, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), p. 274, plate LXV; SCAVIZZI, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), pp. 122-123, fig. 7.

⁹⁵ For the symbolism of the unicorn, see *Physiologus*, *op. cit.* (as at note 85), p. 51. See also F. McCULLOCH, *Medieval Latin and French Bestiaries*, Chapel Hill, 1962, pp. 179-183; the same author also discusses the symbolism of the eagle, dragon, and elephant, pp. 112-119. For local versions of *Physiologus* in Italy, see K. MCKENZIE-M. S. GRAVER, "Il bestiario toscano secondo la lezione dei codici di Parigi e di Londra", *Studj Romanzi*, VIII, 1912, pp. 1-100. See also J. L. SCHRADER, ed., "A Medieval Bestiary", *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, XLIV, 1, 1986, *passim*; *Bestiari Medievali*, ed. L. MORINI, Turin, 1996, *passim*.

⁹⁶ The tondo in the National Gallery of Art, London, and the panel from the chapel of Gaspare Zenobi del Lama are reproduced and discussed in LIGHTBOWN, *op. cit.* (as at note 1), I, pp. 33-34, figs. 13 and 19; II, pp. 25-26 and 35-37, with earlier bibliography.

⁹⁷ F. RAVERA, "Il simbolismo del pavone e i suoi sviluppi in epoca tardogotica", *Arte Cristiana*, LXXXVII, 735, 1989, pp. 427-450.

⁹⁸ F. KLINGENDER, *Animals in Art and Thought to the End of the Middle Ages*, Cambridge, Mass., 1971, fig. 156a; see also figs. 243-244 and pp. 412-413; SCHRADER, *op. cit.* (as at note 95), p. 10 and fig. on p. 11.

below Adam and Eve.⁹⁹ One scholar remarks that in Sellaio's panel "The presence of griffins, dragons, centaurs, and other mythical creatures appears to indicate that this counterpart of Christ lived at the dawn of history, in remote times and places which, for the painter, coincided with the classical world".¹⁰⁰

Images of *Orpheus Playing Music among Animals* have belonged to one of the most widespread subjects in the visual arts since the sixth century B.C.¹⁰¹ In the majority of them, Orpheus is portrayed as a young man, which is quite natural, given that the death of his wife was supposed to have taken place not long after they were married. He is shown as a young man in a woodcut made for the Florentine edition of Poliziano's *Favola di Orfeo*, published in 1496,¹⁰² and in the Venetian edition of *Strambotti* by the Modenese poet Pamphilo Sasso of 1522.¹⁰³ At times he is a youth, as in the canvas ascribed to Giovanni Bellini or Giorgione in the National Gallery in Washington, D.C.,¹⁰⁴ and in the *spalliera* by Michele Ciampanti (Fig. 10).

However, other depictions of an elderly and bearded Orpheus exist, some of them produced in early-Renaissance Florence. One, dating from the 1360s, decorates the manuscript of an Italian translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, produced by Arrigo Simintendi (Codice Panciatichi 63, in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Florence).¹⁰⁵ Another very prominent example is a sculpture by Luca della Robbia (c. 1440)

⁹⁹ P. SKUBISZEWSKI, *L'arte europea dal VI al IX secolo*, Turin, 1995, fig. on p. 258.

¹⁰⁰ SCAVIZZI, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), p. 124.

¹⁰¹ SCAVIZZI, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), *passim*, with bibliography; *Les métamorphoses d'Orphée*, *op. cit.* (as at note 92); W. S. SHEARD, "The Widener Orpheus: Attribution, Type, Invention", in *Collaboration in Italian Renaissance Art*, eds. W. S. SHEARD-J. T. PAOLETTI, New Haven and London, 1978, pp. 189-213; K. LANGEDIJK, "Baccio Bandinelli's Orpheus: a Political Message", *Mitteilungen des Kunsthistorischen Institutes in Florenz*, XX, 1976, pp. 33-51.

¹⁰² There is a reproduction in POLIZIANO, *op. cit.* (as at note 36), fig. on p. 110; BRANCA, *op. cit.* (as at note 36), fig. 9.

¹⁰³ V. MASSÉNA-PRINCE D'ESSLING, *Les livres à figures vénitiens de la fin du XV^e siècle et du commencement du XVI^e*, II, 2, Florence and Paris, 1909, p. 388, with illustration.

¹⁰⁴ M. L. SHAPIRO, "The Widener Orpheus", *Studies in the History of Art*, VI, 1974, pp. 23-36.

¹⁰⁵ A. M. FRANCINI CIARANFI, "Appunti su antichi disegni fiorentini per le *Metamorfosi* di Ovidio", in *Scritti di storia dell'arte in onore di Ugo Procacci*, I, Milan, 1977, p. 179, fig. 169; DEGENHART and SCHMITT, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), cat. 182b. For Arrigo's translation of the *Metamorphoses*, see B. GUTHMÜLLER, "Di nuovo sull'Orfeo di Poliziano", in *Poliziano nel suo tempo: Atti del Convegno (Cibianciano/Montepulciano, 18/21 luglio 1994)*, Florence, 1996, pp. 104-128.

for Giotto's Campanile (Fig. 18).¹⁰⁶ In both works the seated Orpheus, who is playing his instrument and singing, is surrounded by various mammals and birds. In each case, the birds are shown on the left side of the scene while the mammals are on the right.

According to Vasari, Orpheus in della Robbia's relief is a personification of music.¹⁰⁷ Fulgentius in his *Mythologiae* (III, 10), widely read in the Renaissance, says, "Now this legend is an allegory (*designatio*) of the art of music".¹⁰⁸ The Third Vatican Mythographer, who produced an expanded version of the work of Fulgentius, says, drawing on material from the Orphic hymns and Lucian, "Orpheus first discovered the tonal intervals [of the seven spheres] and their harmony".¹⁰⁹ Lorenzo il Magnifico in his *Altercazione* speaks of "the sweet harmony of Orpheus's music". Three verses from the *Altercazione* serve as the epigraph to this paper. Even though it is impossible to ascertain whether the lira da braccio on which the son of Apollo and Calliope is playing in the Lanckoroński *spalliera* has seven strings (the number apparently shown in Luca della Robbia's relief), it does seem feasible that the painting also relates to the music of the universe and the harmony of the cosmos.¹¹⁰ One should remember that in the Renaissance, the lira da braccio was considered to be an ancient invention and was also placed in the hands of Apollo (e.g. in Raphael's *Parnassus* in the Stanza della Segnatura) and of David.¹¹¹

One of the most interesting features of the Lanckoroński *spalliera* is that only those animals who can hear the enchanted music have stopped fighting; the others are still struggling to the death. Thus, Orpheus appears here as a civilizer, establishing order in the chaotic

¹⁰⁶ G. MOROLLI-C. ACIDINI LUCHINAT-L. MARCHETTI (eds.), *L'Architettura di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, Florence, 1992, fig. on p. 293.

¹⁰⁷ VASARI, *op. cit.* (as at note 19), pp. 329ff.

¹⁰⁸ *Fulgentius the Mythographer*, cit. (as at note 40), p. 96.

¹⁰⁹ *Scriptores rerum mythicarum*, cit. (as at note 41), p. 211 (III, 8, 19); FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), p. 133.

¹¹⁰ It is possible that there are only four strings, although the lira da braccio usually had seven; that is the number visible on the *spalliera* in Kiev; see FAENSON, *op. cit.* (as at note 10), fig. 26. The ancient Greeks believed that it was Orpheus who invented the seven-stringed lyre, which produced harmony. On the subject of the harmony of the planets and the music of the cosmos in the Renaissance see, *inter alia*, C. DE TOLNAY, "The Music of the Universe", *Journal of the Walters Art Gallery*, VI, 1943, pp. 83-104; S. K. HENINGER, *Touches of Sweet Harmony: Pythagorean Cosmology and Renaissance Poetics*, San Marino, Cal., 1974.

¹¹¹ See WINTERNITZ, *op. cit.* (as at note 88), pp. 86-98.

world. To the viewer's left, lions are battling with a dragon and a horse (Fig. 19); to the right, two beasts of prey are attacking a cow; and in the middle distance, a pair of lions are fighting a centaur. Sellaio's beautifully rendered dragon may have been inspired by the portrayal of this beast in Paolo Uccello's *St. George and the Dragon*, which was also at one time the property of Karol Lanckoroński. (Since 1953 it has belonged to the National Gallery, London.)¹¹² From the *Libro d'inventario dei beni di Lorenzo il Magnifico*,¹¹³ we know that Uccello also produced a painting including a battle of dragons with lions, described by Vasari thus: "But the scene among them all was one wherein a serpent, combating with a lion, was showing its ferocity with violent movements, with the venom spurting from its mouth and eyes [....]".¹¹⁴ A similar composition of Sellaio's, featuring a dragon fighting lions, is recorded in a tracing of part of the composition, perhaps also from an Orpheus scene that has not yet come to light.¹¹⁵

A Florentine engraving dating from circa 1460 may have provided further inspiration for Sellaio (Fig. 20).¹¹⁶ It shows fighting animals, both real and mythical, as well as beasts of prey attacking weaker creatures. In particular, the scenes depicting a dragon fighting a lion provide an unusual analogy to the Lanckoroński *spalliera*. The great popularity of this motif is attested by an engraving by "Z. A." (Zoan Andrea, also known as Giovanni Antonio da Brescia) that is sometimes said to be after a work by Leonardo or a lost Uccello painting (Fig. 21).¹¹⁷

In his attempt to show the wildness of life in those places untouched by Orpheus's music, Sellaio also used other motifs: a centaur

¹¹² For excellent photographs of this masterpiece, including the detail with the dragon, see D. GORDON, *National Gallery Catalogues: The Fifteenth Century Italian Paintings*, I, London, 2003, pp. 398-405, figs. on pp. 399 and 405.

¹¹³ *Libro d'inventario di beni di Lorenzo il Magnifico*, eds. M. SPALLANZANI and G. GAETA BERTELA, Florence, 1992, p. 11.

¹¹⁴ VASARI, *op. cit.* (as at note 19), p. 345.

¹¹⁵ This drawing was given to me by the late Ellen Callmann, who also reproduced it in one of her last papers; see CALLMANN, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), p. 156, fig. 5.

¹¹⁶ DEGENHART-SCHMITT, *op. cit.* (as at note 17), I, 2, p. 399 and figs. 532-533.

¹¹⁷ M. ZUCKER, *The Illustrated Bartsch: Early Italian Masters*, 25, New York, 1984, I, p. 163, and II, p. 268. For the identification of "Z. A." (Zoan Andrea) with Giovanni Antonio da Brescia, see D. LANDAU, "Mantegna as Printmaker", in *Andrea Mantegna*, exh. cat., Royal Academy, London, 17 January-5 April 1992, London, 1992, pp. 44-54. For Leonardo's drawing of a similar subject in the Gabinetto Disegni e Stampe degli Uffizi, see A. E. POPHAM, "The Dragon-Fight", in *Id.*, *Leonardo: Saggi e ricerche*, Rome, 1954, pp. 223-227: 225.

fighting with lions, and a horse attacked by the same beasts of prey (Fig. 22). The two scenes are shown in the middle distance, virtually symmetrically. The group on the left, where the lioness has jumped onto the back of a white horse trying to defend itself against her with its teeth, is partly inspired by the celebrated antique sculpture on the Capitoline Hill (Fig. 23).¹¹⁸ This time, it is a lion with a huge mane on the back of the horse, and the horse has already been knocked off its feet and is not biting its attacker. The earliest drawing of this sculpture dates back to the end of the fifteenth century.¹¹⁹

In the upper right corner of the *spalliera* there is a final scene with Orpheus, almost hidden behind a hill with trees and bushes. The small figure of the mythical poet and musician playing his instrument is shown in front of a round temple surrounded by slender cypresses (Fig. 24).¹²⁰ Lon de Vries Robbé has suggested that this *tempietto*, or shrinelike element, which is not mentioned in any texts, might come from a stage version of Poliziano's *Favola*, and could be interpreted as Eurydice's mausoleum.¹²¹ He supposes that above the urn standing inside, there is a flame symbolizing Orpheus's undying love for his lost Eurydice.¹²² However, it seems that Orpheus, now completely alone and far removed from the world he civilized, is not looking at the putative urn; instead he is gazing at the heavens while making music. This important scene, even though it is relegated to the background, confirms that the Lanckoroński panel is the last and not the first in the cycle under discussion. The two white dogs at the extreme left and right of the first and last panels confirm this. Thus, Jacopo del Sellaio's *spalliere* constitute an original and moving visualization of the myth in which there is no reference to the death of Orpheus himself. They

¹¹⁸ BOBER and RUBINSTEIN, *op. cit.* (as at note 60), p. 217, plate 185a; L. BARKAN, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture*, New Haven, Conn., and London, 1998, p. 51, fig. 1.18. See also AGOSTI and ISELLA, *op. cit.* (as at note 73), p. 92, figs. 68-69.

¹¹⁹ BOBER and RUBINSTEIN, *op. cit.* (as at note 60), p. 217, plate 185b.

¹²⁰ A similar *tempietto* appears on the *cassone* depicting the *Story of Cupid and Psyche* held in the Abegg-Stiftung, Riggisberg; see MIZIOLEK, *op. cit.* (as at note 25), pp. 143-145, plate 29.

¹²¹ DE VRIES ROBBÉ, *op. cit.* (as at note 9), p. 64. See also the interesting observations in E. POVOLEDO, "Origini e aspetti della scenografia in Italia: Dalla fine del Quattrocento agli intermezzi fiorentini del 1589", in N. PIRROTTA, *Li due Orfei: Da Poliziano a Monteverdi*, Turin, 1975, pp. 337-371.

¹²² Cf. G. DE TERVARENT, *Attributs et symboles dans l'art profane 1450-1600*, 2 vols., Geneva, 1958, II, p. 329.

are a beautifully painted hymn to love and fidelity, a fitting theme for what were surely paintings for a nuptial *camera*.

Surprisingly enough, cycles with the story of Orpheus and Eurydice on *cassoni* and *spalliere* appeared only sporadically in the Renaissance. Apart from the panels painted by Michele Ciampanti, one other such set of paintings is known – probably the fronts of *cassoni* or *spalliere*, by an anonymous artist, the Master of the Campana Cassoni, who was active at the beginning of the sixteenth century.¹²³ There is also a beautiful single painting by Titian, depicting the *Death of Eurydice* (Accademia Carrara in Bergamo).¹²⁴

The myth of Orpheus and prisca theologia

Finally, the question arises of the possible further meaning, apart from matrimonial or commemorative, of Jacopo del Sellaio's *spalliere*, in which there is an unusual representation of an old Orpheus with an oriental turban on his head. Chastel, as already noted, has suggested (although in passing) that Sellaio's *spalliere* might have been a visual expression of the ideas of Florentine Neoplatonists. Seeing all three panels as a whole, one may indeed have the impression that Sellaio's visualization of the myth, which includes scenes not described in any literary source, may have been based on an iconographical program produced by a learned person whose instruction the painter followed. It seems that the panels were not only intended to tell of great love and fidelity but to recall yet another idea concerning the Thracian poet-singer and his place in the history of civilization. His beard, his head-dress (stylized in oriental fashion), and the red coat and saffron- or gold-colored tunic turn him into a sage, magus, prophet, or hierophant. He can probably be seen in the guise of the last in the scene with the *tempietto* in the Lanckoroński *spalliera*, when raising his gaze to the heavens and playing his *lira da braccio* as if singing hymns (Fig. 24).

Apollonius of Rhodes tells us about Orpheus's priestly function during the expedition of the Argonauts, in which he initiates the heroes

¹²³ F. ZERI, "Una congiunzione tra Firenze e Francia: Il Maestro dei cassoni Campana", in *Id.*, *Giorno per giorno nella pittura, 1988-1998, Scritti sull'arte italiana del Cinquecento*, Milan, 1994, pp. 19-24, fig. 24-27.

¹²⁴ See SCAVIZZI, *op. cit.* (as at note 18), fig. 10.

into the sacred mysteries.¹²⁵ He is said to be the founder of the mystic cult of Orphism and is credited with the authorship of many poems and mystical books to which Plato refers in his *Republic* (364b-d).¹²⁶ Neoplatonic philosophers discerned deep theosophical knowledge in these poems and promoted Orpheus to the role of an important theological thinker. In the *Ars poetica*, Horace calls Orpheus "the holy prophet of the gods, [who] made them [men] shrink from bloodshed and brutal living".¹²⁷ He goes on to speak of the glorious history of poetry, which, as the stories of Orpheus and Amphion show, has from the very infancy of the race promoted the cause of civilization. From Homer onward, poetry inspired valor, taught wisdom, won the favor of princes, and afforded relief after toil. Seneca saw in Orpheus the creator of the Golden Age of Man, whereas Lucian viewed him as the first astronomer.¹²⁸ The Third Vatican Mythographer, as if referring to Apollonius of Rhodes, calls him a priest: "He [Orpheus] was called a priest because he was a theologian and first instituted the rites".¹²⁹

The real revival of interest in Orpheus came in the second half of the fifteenth century, when Ficino translated into Latin Plato's works and the Orphic hymns, and also produced his *Platonic Theology*.¹³⁰ According to

¹²⁵ APOLLONIUS OF RHODES, *The Voyage of Argo*, trans. E. V. RIEU, Harmondsworth, England [reprint 1986], pp. 60-61 (1.915-1.919).

¹²⁶ For Orpheus and Orphism in antiquity, see W. K. C. GUTHRIE, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*, Princeton, 1952. For Orphic hymns, see *The Mystical Hymns of Orpheus*, trans. T. TAYLOR, London, 1896, and the study by M. L. WEST, *The Orphic Poems*, Oxford, 1983. Plato also refers to Orpheus in *Laws*, 3.677d; *ibid.*, 6, 782c; *ibid.*, 8, 829e; *Protagoras*, 316d; *Ion*, 536b; and in *Symposium*, 179d, where there is a quite original version of Orpheus's descent to the underworld: "Thus heaven itself has a peculiar regard for ardor and resolution in the cause of Love. And yet the gods sent Orpheus away from Hades empty-handed, and showed him the mere shadow of the woman he had come to seek."

¹²⁷ HORACE, *op. cit.* (as at note 39), p. 325.

¹²⁸ LUCIAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 54), pp. 354-357 (*Astrology*, 10); SENECA, *op. cit.* (as at note 39), pp. 424-425. Both texts are discussed in J. WALKER, "Orpheus the Theologian", in *Id.*, *The Ancient Theology: Studies in Christian Platonism from the Fifteenth to the Eighteenth Century*, Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1972, pp. 22-41, and SEGAL, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), pp. 95-117.

¹²⁹ *Scriptores rerum mythicarum*, *op. cit.* (as at note 41), p. 211 (III, 8, 20); FRIEDMAN, *op. cit.* (as at note 34), p. 133.

¹³⁰ WALKER, *op. cit.* (as at note 50), pp. 100-120; *Id.*, "Ficino and Music", in *Id.*, *Spiritual and Demoniac Magic from Ficino to Campanella*, London, 1958, especially pp. 19-24; A. BUCK, *Der Orpheus-Mythos in der Italienischen Renaissance*, Krefeld, Germany, 1961; J. WARDEN, "Orpheus and Ficino", in *Id.* (ed.), *op. cit.* (as at note 18), pp. 85-110. See also M. J. B. ALLEN and V. REES (eds.), with M. DAVIES, *Marsilio Ficino: His Theology, His Philosophy, His Legacy*, Leiden, Boston, and Cologne, 2002, *passim*. Ficino had already translated the hymns in 1462, but he had not published them for fear that his readers would suspect him of trying to revive



Fig. 1. *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice: Death of Eurydice*, by JACOPO DEL SELLAIO, c. 1485. Tempera and oil on panel, 57 × 174 cm. Rotterdam, Museum Boymans van Beuningen.



Fig. 2. *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice in Hades*, by JACOPO DEL SELLAIO, c. 1485. Tempera and oil on panel, 59 × 179 cm. Kiev, Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Art.



Fig. 3. *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice: Orpheus Charming Animals with His Music*, by JACOPO DEL SELLAIO, c. 1485. Tempera and oil on panel, 59 × 175 cm. Cracow, Wawel Royal Castle.



Fig. 4. Detail of Fig. 1: Death of Eurydice.



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Fig. 5. The Italian Room in the Lanckoroński Palace in Vienna (postcard ca. 1902).
Warsaw, Royal Castle.

Fig. 6. Detail of Fig. 1: Orpheus among shepherds.



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Fig. 7. Detail of Fig. 1: Eurydice carried to Hades.

Fig. 8. *Rape of the Daughters of Leucippus*, Hadrianic sarcophagus relief, marble. Vatican City, Musei Vaticani.



Fig. 9. *Rape of Proserpina*, by MICHELE CIAMPANTI, c. 1475. Tempera on panel, 110 × 137.5 cm. Italy, Private collection.



Fig. 10. Story of Orpheus and Eurydice, by MICHELE CIAMPANTI, c. 1475. Tempera on panel, 110.5 × 138.5 cm. Italy, Private collection.



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Fig. 11. *Dead Clytemnestra*, by GENTILE DA FABRIANO (after a Roman sarcophagus of the second century), c. 1425. Drawing, 193 × 272 mm. Milan, Biblioteca Ambrosiana, F. 214, inf. 13r.

Fig. 12. Detail of Fig. 2: *Orpheus and Eurydice in Hades*.



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Fig. 13. *St. Paul and Archangel Raphael*, by JACOPO DEL SELLAIO (detail of the altarpiece from Santa Maria del Carmine), 1486. Tempera on panel, overall dimensions of altarpiece unknown. Present whereabouts unknown.

Fig. 14. Detail of Fig. 2: The fight for Eurydice.

Fig. 15. Detail of Fig. 10: The fight for Eurydice.

Fig. 16. *Story of Orpheus and Eurydice*, by MODERNO, c. 1490. Bronze plaquette, 105 mm. Washington DC, National Gallery of Art, Kress Collection.





Fig. 17. Detail of Fig. 3: Orpheus making music among the animals.

Fig. 18. *Orpheus Making Music among the Animals*, by LUCA DELLA ROBBIA, from the Campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore, c. 1440. Marble relief, 81.5 × 69 cm. Florence, Museo dell'Opera di Santa Maria del Fiore.



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Fig. 20. *Fighting Animals*, by BACCIO BALDINI, 1460. Engraving, 259 × 378 mm. London, British Museum.



Fig. 21. *Dragon Fighting with a Lion*, by GIOVANNI ANTONIO DA BRESCIA (signed Z.A. [Zean Andrea]), ca. 1490. Engraving, 171 × 238 mm. Print Room, University of Warsaw Library, Stanisław Kostka Potocki Collection.



Fig. 22. Detail of Fig. 3: Horse attacked by lions.



Fig. 23. *Horse Attacked by a Lion* (after a Hellenistic sculpture of the second century), by AMICO ASPERTINI (?), c. 1495. Pen and ink. Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Kupferstichkabinett, inv. KdZ 25020.



Fig. 24. Detail of Fig. 3: Orpheus making music alone.

Pico della Mirandola, Orpheus was the “father and founder of ancient wisdom”.¹³¹ Like Moses, Hermes Trismegistus, and Zoroaster, he was one of the creators of the *prisca theologia* – the concept of an existence of a single true, cross-cultural, transdenominational theology – and part of the succession of ancient philosophers culminating in Plato. Indeed it was Orpheus who, led by his love, went as far as Hades and, scarred by suffering, came to know the mysteries of the underworld; he also prepared the ground for the coming of Christ and the spread of Christianity. Thus Orpheus was in a very special way “inscribed” in the context of Renaissance Florence. “This century, like a golden age”, writes Ficino in his letter to Paul of Middelburg, “has restored to light the liberal arts that were almost extinct: grammar, poetry, oratory, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, the ancient singing of songs to the Orphic lyre, and all this in Florence”.¹³² Likewise, Lorenzo il Magnifico could say in his *Altercazione*, “Pensai che Orfeo al mondo ritornasse”.

How far thoughts of Orpheus penetrated the minds of educated people of those times can be seen, on the one hand, in the words of Lorenzo, comparing the sacrifice and courage of Orpheus to the figure of Alcestis, and on the other hand, in the identification of Ficino with Orpheus.¹³³ As Cristoforo Landino put it, “his [Ficino’s] lyre [...], far more successful than the lyre of Thracian Orpheus, has brought back from the underworld what is, if I am not mistaken, the true Eurydice, that is Platonic wisdom with its broad judgment [...]”.¹³⁴ Naldo Naldi, in a poem, as if following Horace, traces the fate of Orpheus’s soul from Homer to Ficino, in whom Orpheus “truly lives again”.¹³⁵ The fact that Ficino had “his singing and his lyre”, i.e. that he used to sing the Orphic hymns “to the lyre in the ancient manner”, is well attested, not only by Poliziano but also by Cosimo

the cult of ancient gods. His translation does not survive; however, excerpts from them can be found in his *Theologia Platonica*; see A. VOSS, “Marsilio Ficino, the Second Orpheus”, in P. HORDEN (ed.), *Music as Medicine: The History of Music Therapy since Antiquity*, Aldershot, England, 2002, pp. 155-172.

¹³¹ PICO DELLA MIRANDOLA, *op. cit.* (as at note 51), p. 32.

¹³² MARSILIO FICINO, *Opera omnia*, 2 vols., Basel, 1576, p. 944; English translation available at the following website: <http://www.idehist.uu.se/distans/ilmh/Ren/ren-revival-ficino.htm>.

¹³³ For Lorenzo il Magnifico’s writings, see MARTELLI, *op. cit.* (as at note 52), pp. 23-27. In one of his *sonetti*, Lorenzo refers to Lot’s wife and to Orpheus losing Eurydice; see LORENZO DE’ MEDICI, *Tutte le opere*, ed. P. ORVIETO, 2 vols., Rome, 1992, II, p. 1100.

¹³⁴ ANGELO POLIZIANO, *Opera omnia*, Basel, 1553, p. 310; WARDEN, *Orpheus, op. cit.* (as at note 130), p. 86.

¹³⁵ See P. O. KRISTELLER, *Supplementum Ficinianum*, 2 vols., Florence, 1937, II, p. 262.

de' Medici, Giovanni Corsi, and Janus Pannonius (John of Hungary).¹³⁶ Cosimo finishes a letter to Ficino with the following words: "Farewell. And do not forget your Orphic lyre when you come".¹³⁷ Corsi (*Vita Marsilii Ficini*, 6) recounts: "[...] he [Ficino] expounded the hymns of Orpheus, and it is said that he sang them to the lyre in the ancient style with remarkable sweetness".¹³⁸ It is also known that Ficino's lyre was adorned with the image of Orpheus, and that Naldi wrote a couplet to it: "I am Orpheus, who moved the woods with his songs".¹³⁹

In the *Theologia Platonica*, which, like *El libro dell'Amore*, refers to Orpheus and the Orphic Hymns many times, there is the following passage: "The seventh and most outstanding of all the soul's alienations is that which results from the chastity of a mind devoted to God, as Orpheus teaches Musaeus in the hymn to all the gods. Not just for a time, as is the case with other minds, but well-nigh for ever such a mind is the irenic temple of God, upon whose door, as St. John declares, God first knocks, and which He will enter directly once it is opened; it is the temple where God will eagerly dwell and where He will feast man on ambrosia" (Book XIII, 2, 36).¹⁴⁰ This is one example of the notion that Orpheus is linked to divine contemplation. As already noted, the poet-singer shown in the upper right corner the Lanckoroński *spalliera* is completely alone in front of the *tempietto*, playing his *lira da braccio* while gazing tenderly toward the sky and reaching "the chastity of a mind". He appears to be in the act of contemplating the supravisible sphere and a spiritual union with god.

¹³⁶ In a letter to Ficino, John of Hungary wrote, "at the appointed time you had restored to light the ancient sound of the lyre, as well as the ancient style of singing and the Orphic hymns which had previously been consigned to oblivion"; see *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, London, 2003, VII, p. 21, letter 18.

¹³⁷ Quotation after WARDEN, "Orpheus" (as at note 130), p. 87.

¹³⁸ GIOVANNI CORSI, "The Life of Marsilio Ficino", in *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, 7 vols., London, 1981, III, p. 138. For an English translation of the hymns, see *The Orphic Hymns: Text, Translation and Notes*, trans. A. N. ATHANASSAKIS, Missoula, Mont., 1977.

¹³⁹ NALDO NALDI, "Ad Marsilium Ficinum de Orpheo in eius cythara picto", in KRISTELLER, *op. cit.* (as at note 135), II, 37.

¹⁴⁰ MARSILIO FICINO, *Platonic Theology*, trans. M. J. B. ALLEN with J. WARDEN, 5 vols., Cambridge, Mass., London, 2004, IV, pp. 166-167; see also I, pp. 117, 125, 155-157, 20, 207 (Book II, 5, 6, 9, 13); pp. 273, 293-295, 303; (Book IV, 1, 2); II, p. 125 (Book VI, 1); p. 343 (Book VIII, 13); III, pp. 263, 295 (Book XI, 4, 5); IV, pp. 25, 127, 165, 185, 323 (Orphic hymns, Book XIII, 1, 2, 4, 10).

Conclusion

The original patron of the three panels with this unique visualization of one of the most moving and beautiful ancient myths remains to be discovered. Certainly it is impossible to believe that, as one scholar has suggested, they were commissioned for Isabella d'Este on the occasion of her wedding to Francesco Gonzaga in 1490.¹⁴¹ As we know from Berenson, two of the panels from the set appeared on the art market in Florence in 1898, and may have been produced for an educated and Florentine patron. They seem to be a reflection of this unusual and short-lived Florentine revival of a kind of cult of Orpheus, which had Christological qualities and is most beautifully expressed in Ficino's writings and his singing of the Orphic hymns, particularly those referring to "the chastity of a mind devoted to God". Today, when it is quite difficult even to find a good edition of the Orphic hymns let alone anybody singing them, Sellaio's *spalliere*, despite their dispersal, can play an important role in our understanding of aspects of this phenomenon, which flourished in Florence in the times of Cosimo and Lorenzo de' Medici.

It is also worth noting that Filippo Buonaccorsi, known as Callimachus, who was born at San Gimignano and spent the last twenty-six years of his life in Crakow, and who was a close friend of several Florentine Neoplatonists, wrote to Ficino in the mid-1480s, when sending him a heavy coat, with these words: "This foreign costume will make you a true Orpheus, since you already have his singing and his lyre".¹⁴² Thus, the *spalliera* from the Karol Lanckoroński's collection depicting Orpheus' two concerts – to the world and to the heavens – seems very much in place on the walls of the Wawel Royal Castle of Cracow, for this structure was built by Italian architects for King Sigismund I, who was one of the pupils of Callimachus at the very time when Sellaio was in Florence, painting his fascinating narrative panels.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ DE VRIES ROBBÉ, *loc. cit.* (as at note 9), p. 64.

¹⁴² PHILIPPI CALLIMACHI, *Epistulae selectae*, I. LICHONSKA-G. PIANKO (eds.), Wratislavia, Poland, 1967, p. 6; for an English translation, see *The Letters of Marsilio Ficino*, VII, *op. cit.* (as at note 136), p. 94.

¹⁴³ For Callimachus in Cracow, see H. B. SEGEL, *Renaissance Culture in Poland: The Rise of the Humanism, 1470-1543*, Ithaca, N.Y., and London, 1989, pp. 36-82; for Italian artists of the Renaissance represented in Cracow and the Royal Castle, see J. MIZIOLEK, "Italia in partibus: La cultura artistica polacca del '500 nella luce delle ricerche dell'ultimo ventennio", *Eadem utraque Europa*, II, 2006, pp. 15-60.

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