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'L celeste e 'l vulgare Amore instituiti da Platone:' Bellori's Interpretation of Annibale Carracci's Theme of Love in the Farnese Gallery

*By Esthy Kravitz-Lurie**

In 1672 Giovanni Pietro Bellori, Annibale Carracci's biographer, published a comprehensive study of the Carracci's paintings in the Farnese Gallery, interpreting Annibale's ceiling as expressing a conception of "heavenly and common love formulated by Plato." Charles Dempsey, a pivotal twentieth-century scholar disagrees with Bellori's interpretation and replaces it with Virgil's verse "omnia vincit Amor," suggesting that idea of "Love conquers all" expresses the spirit of the ceiling. In this paper, I follow Bellori's interpretation and argue that he understood Annibale's depictions of same-sex love, pederasty, marriage, and sexual gratification as allusions to Pausanias's heavenly and common Aphrodite in Plato's Symposium.

Introduction

The ceiling of the Farnese Gallery is a masterwork depicting classical love, rendered with images of gods, goddesses, heroes, and mythological creatures engaged in acts of love, lust, and desire (Figure 1).[1] It was created between 1597 and 1601 by the Bolognese painter Annibale Carracci (1560–1609), who was assisted by his brother, the painter and engraver Agostino Carracci (1557–1602).[2] They executed an illusionistic ceiling with overlapping images of fictive statues, framed pictures, and antique medallions, all done in fresco. The work includes thirteen paintings set in quadrature and framed "as pictures," with silver or gold

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1. This article developed out of the first chapter of my Ph.D. Dissertation. I thank my adviser, Prof. Daniel M. Unger, for his comments and discussions.

2. According to Bellori, Agostino rendered two paintings on the ceiling: *Aurora and Cephalus* and *Venus and Triton*. In Giovan Pietro Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters, Sculptors and Architects* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 88-89. Robertson suggested that Agostino was more involved in the planning and painting of the ceiling. Clare Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2008), 172-173. The paintings on the walls were executed separately from the ceiling by Domenichino and Lanfranco, who were guided by Annibale. Dempsey dates the walls to 1603-1604. Charles Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci: The Farnese Gallery Rome* (New York: George Braziller, 1995), 81-84. According to Martin, this work was not finished until 1608: John Rupert Martin, *The Farnese Gallery* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1965), 138.

painted frames; images of *ignudi*, naked figures of men and satyrs seated at both sides of the paintings; and eight bronze-like medallions, their surfaces seemingly cracked, and their margins damaged to make them look like reliefs from antiquity. These medallions are set among the paintings, some of them overlapped by the painted frames. Annibale also painted pairs of fictive herms and statues, nude and semi-nude male figures of male lovers, which resemble sculptures from ancient Greece. These pairs of lovers are seen all over the ceiling: undressing against the painted frames and embracing at its four corners.[3] This celebration of erotic love and desire was rendered at the Palazzo Farnese in Rome, the home of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese (1573–1626), around the same time that his brother, Ranuccio Farnese (1569–1622), the Duke of Parma and Piacenza, married Margherita Aldobrandini, the niece of Pope Clement VIII, celebrated in Parma in 1600.[4]

Figure 1. *Annibale Carracci, Ceiling of the Farnese Gallery (1597-1601), Farnese Palace, Rome, Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

3. This display of sculptures, paintings, and reliefs, all produced in fresco, has been interpreted as an allusion to the Renaissance *paragone*, one that suggests the superiority of painting over sculpture. Robert Baldwin, "Annibale Carracci and the Farnese Ceiling," (1997), 2-21 in https://www.socialhistoryofart.com/essaysbyperiod.htm, 8, 15-16; Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 158, 170-171, 174; Julian Kliemann and Michael Rohlmann, *Italian Frescoes: High Renaissance and Mannerism, 1510–1600* (New York: Abbeville Press, 2004), 457.

4. On the marriage, see Charles Dempsey, '"*Et nos cedamus amori*:' Observations on the Farnese Gallery," *Art Bulletin* 50, no. 4 (1968): 363-374, 366-367, 374; Donald Posner, *Annibale Carracci: A Study in the Reform of Italian Painting Around 1590*, II vols. (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 1971) I, 94. Roberto Zapperi, *Eros e Controriforma: preistoria della Galleria Farnese* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 1994), 116: Baldwin suggests that, owing to his high position as prince of the Church, the cardinal, who avoided sexual imagery in the Christian art he commissioned, "was free to display a more libertine courtly taste" in his family palace. Baldwin, "Annibale Carracci and the Farnese Ceiling," 5.

In his *Vite de' Pittori, Scultori e Architteti Moderni*, published in 1672, the Carracci's biographer, Giovanni Pietro Bellori (1613–1696), gave the most detailed account of Annibale's work in the Farnese Gallery, which he published sixty-one years after Annibale's death. He was most qualified for this study, which he accomplished with the help of the Carracci's acquaintances, who were familiar with their work. The most influential were: Bellori's protector and educator, Francesco Angeloni (c.1559–1652), a writer, a historian, and an antiquarian, who had around six hundreds of Annibale's drawings in his collection;[5] the Bolognese Monsignor Giovanni Battista Agucchi (1570–1632), who followed Annibale's career from Bologna to Rome, and wrote the first account of the latter's work in his treatise on art, of which only fragments have survived;[6] and Annibale's Bolognese students Francesco Albani and Domenichino Zampieri, who joined him in Rome for the final stages of his work on the ceiling.[7]

In his essay, Bellori explained Annibale's conception of love on the Farnese Gallery ceiling by referring to its four corners, where herms depicted as classical lovers are embracing right above pairs of Cupids wrestling as in a Greek *gymnasium* (Figures 2–5). He understood the embracing herms and the wrestlers as a whole and interpreted them as symbols that reflect Plato's conception of love: "The painter wished to represent with various symbols the war and peace between heavenly and common love formulated by Plato."[8] Hellmut Wohl noted that Bellori's terminology corresponds with Pausanias's "Heavenly and Common Aphrodite (Love)," from his speech in Plato's *Symposium* (181b–c), and mentioned it in a note in Alice Sedgwick Wohl's English translation of Bellori's *Lives*.[9]

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5. See Montanari's introduction in Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 4-5; Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 196; On Angeloni's collection, see Donatella L. Sparti, "Il Museum Romanum di Francesco Angeloni. La Quadreria," *Paragone* 49, no. 17 (1998): 46-79; Donatella L. Sparti, "Il Museum Romanum di Francesco Angeloni: formazione e dispersion," Paragone 49, no. 22 (1998): 47-80.

6. Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 196; Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice: Vite de' Pittori Bolognesi,* III volumes (ed.) Giampietro P. Zanotti (Bologna: Tip Guidi all'Ancora, 1841), II, 162; Silvia Ginzburg–Carignani "Domenichino e Giovanni Battista Agucchi," in *Domenichino 1581-1641* (eds.) Claudio Strinati and Almamaria Tantillo (Milano: Electa, 1996), 121-137, 121-138.

7. On the correspondence between Albani and Bellori, see Evelina Borea, "Bellori 1645. Una lettera a Francesco Albani e la biografia di Caravaggio," *Prospettiva* 100 (2001): 57-69. On Domenichino and Bellori, see Montanari's introduction in Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 4-5.

8. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 84; *"Volle figurare il pittore con varii emblemi la guerra e la pace tra 'l celeste e 'l vulgare Amore instituiti da Platone*." Giovan Pietro Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori, Scultori e Architteti Moderni* (ed.) Evelina Borea (Turin: Giulio Einaundi Editori, 1976), 60.

9. For the note, see Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 111, no. 75.

Figure 2. *Annibale Carracci, The Herm Lovers with Cupids Wrestling for the Wreath and the Medallion Europa and The Bull (south-west corner, detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

Figure 3. *Annibale Carracci, The Herm Lovers with Cupids Wrestling for the Torch and the Medallion Hero and Leander (south-east corner, detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

Figure 4. *Annibale Carracci, The Herm Lovers with Cupids Embrace and the Medallion Cupid and Pan, (north-east corner, detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

Figure 5. *Annibale Carracci, The Herm Lovers with Cupids Wrestling for the Palm and the Medallion Apollo Flying Marsyas. (north-west corner, detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

In his 1968 article, *'Et nos cedamus amori*,' Charles Dempsey rejected Bellori's concept of love regarding the Farnese Gallery ceiling. Rather, he linked *Cupid and Pan*, one of the eight medallions on the ceiling, to Virgil's allegorical characters implied in his verse *"omnia vincit Amor"* (*Ecl.* X: 69), suggesting the verse's literary meaning, "Love conquers all," as the overriding theme (Figure 4).[10]

I disagree with Dempsey's suggestion on the grounds that the idea of love on the Farnese Gallery ceiling cannot be delineated based on a random medallion, which is not special in shape nor in size, but similar to the other seven. As flexible as *"omnia vincit amor"* may be, the idea that "Love conquers all" cannot project the complexity of this work, which I believe, illustrates tales that seem to have been carefully chosen from classical and contemporary poems to evoke Plato's conception of love. In the present essay, I discuss Bellori's interpretation for Annibale's ceiling as based on the conception of love related in the *Symposium*. I take into account that at the time that the Carracci worked on the Farnese ceiling, Plato's *Symposium* was no longer overshadowed by Marsilio Ficino's (1433–1499) *Commentary on Plato's Symposium* (1484).[11] Although it was still considered an outrageous text, its content was being circulated in both Greek and Latin and it was known to classical scholars, poets, and humanist, some of whom were acquainted with the Carracci.

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Plato's *Symposium* was available throughout Europe when the Carracci frescoed the Farnese Gallery ceiling. Janus Cornarius (Johann Hainpol, 1500–1558), a Protestant physician who lectured on Greek medicine, had translated Plato's complete works into Latin. His *Platonis Atheniensis philosophi summi* was published in Basel in 1561.[12] This translation was followed by Joanes Serranus's (Jean de Serres, 1540–1598) Latin translation of *Platonis opera quae extant omnia*, published by Henri II Estienne the son (Henricus Stephanus, 1528–1598) in Basel in 1578, which remained the standard version until the early nineteenth century. This text includes an *ad verbum* translation of Plato's *Symposium*, printed in

10. Dempsey, "*Et nos cedamus amori*," 370-371.

11. For other scholars that relate to Bellori's theme of love, see, Silvia Ginzburg–Carignani, *Annibale Carracci a Roma: Gli affreschi di Palazzo Farnese* (Roma: Donzelli Editore, 2000), chap. 3; John Gash, "Hannibal Carrats: The Fair Fraud Revealed," *Art History* 13, no. 2 (1990): 240-248, 247.

12. On this translation, see Todd W. Reeser, *Setting Plato Straight: Translating Ancient Sexuality in the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 11-12, 50, 315. Reeser also mentions *De Conviviorum veterum Graecorum*, an earlier text published by Cornarius, "on the rites customs and speeches of the banquets of the ancient Greeks and of the Germans of our time: and on the difference of opinion between Plato and Xenophon." This text, which includes translations of Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's *Symposium*, was published in 1546. See Reeser, *Setting Plato Straight*, 12.

parallel columns along with Plato's Greek text and arranged according to the Stephanus system of pagination – the same system that is still used in modern editions.

According to James Hankins, Serranus intended for his translation of the *Symposium* to replace Ficino's *Commentary*, as Ficino had omitted Alcibiades's tale of seduction in order to avoid any reference to homosexual love.[13] By the end of the Cinquecento, both Cornarius's and Serranus's translations were being circulated in Italy. Starting in 1570, Plato's writings were studied in the universities of Pavia, Turin, Pisa, Ferrara, and Rome, which gradually established cathedrae of Plato's philosophy.[14] In 1601 Dardi Bembo (1560–1640), an Italian scholar of Hellenistic studies, published *Tutte l'opere di Platone*, the first complete translation of Plato's works into Italian.[15] Despite the growing popularity of Plato's ideas, the *Symposium* was treated with caution. Todd W. Reeser notes that Cornarius's translation includes an addition in which Cornarius expresses his disapproval of homosexuality and that Serranus's translation carries a note at the beginning of the dialogue that talks about the evils of pederasty.[16]

Annibale and Agostino Carracci executed a complex work on the Farnese Gallery ceiling: portraying subjects from contemporary and classical literature, which reflects Plato's conception of love in the *Symposium*. The Carracci were

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13. James Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, II vols., (Leiden, New York: Brill, 1991), II, 804, 807. Ficino replaced Alcibiades's speech with material that was taken partly from Diogenes Laertius, from Plato's *Apology*, and from Proclus's *Commentary on Alcibiades,* where Socrates is celebrated as a teacher. See Sears introduction in Marsilio Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium on Love,* trans. Jayne Sears (Dallas, TX: Spring Publications, 1985), 9; before Ficino's *Commentary*, Alcibiades's speech was translated by Leonardo Bruni, who left out portions of the text to avoid any reference to homosexuality. See Todd W. Reeser, "Translation and the Antitheses of Same-Sex Sexuality in Leonardo Bruni," *Exemplaria* 18 (2006): 31-66, 60-63. Bruni's text was sent in the form of a letter to Cosimo de' Medici in 1435 to contradict the opinion of Ambriogio Traversari, the Latin poet, who was trying to undermine Plato's authority by stressing the homosexual content of his writings. In Hankins, *Plato in the Italian Renaissance*, I, 80-81. For Bruni's version, see also 399-400.

14. James Hankins, "Platonism, Renaissance," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London and New York: Routledge, 1998) 439-447, 440-441, 445-446. I am grateful to Prof. James Hankins, who confirms that Serranus's and Cornarius's prints were not prohibited in Catholic Europe and that religious prohibitions hardly affected scholarly literature.

15. See Sears (intro.) In Ficino, *Commentary on Plato's Symposium*, 23; Hankins, "Platonism, Renaissance," 1998, 440.

16. On Cornarius's disapproval in *De conviviorum veterum Craecorum*, 44-47, and on Serranus's disapproval note: "A blemish in this debate that must be despised" ("Naevus in hac disputatione detestandus") in Serranus, *Platonis Opera Quae Extant Omnia*, 3: 171, see Reeser, "Translation and the Antitheses of Same-Sex Sexuality in Leonardo Bruni," 59-60, no. 40.

learned artists who called upon their Latin formal education, gained in *La Scuola di Grammatica*, which they attended in Bologna.[17] Agostino in particular, was known for his mastery of Latin, for his erotic prints, and for his associations with the most prominent scholars of the time.[18]

The three Carracci – Annibale, Agostino, and their older cousin Ludovico, who introduced the brothers to the practice of painting – were known for their collaborated projects in the Palaces of Bologna, which reflects their interest in Latin literature, as well as their training in fresco painting: In *La Sala dell'Eneide* in Palazzo Fava (1584–1586), they painted images from Virgil's *Aeneid* accompanied with Latin inscriptions.[19] In Palazzo Magnani, at the *piano nobile* (the first floor), the Carracci depicted stories from Rome's foundation, which were accompany by inscriptions from Plutarch *Parallel Lives*.[20] Their interest in classical myths is reflected in their consulting on Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, an approach which they passed to their students in *La Accademia degli Incamminati*, which they established in Bologna.[21]

The upbringing of these two artists, seems to have prepared Annibale and Agostino for the complicated task on the ceiling of the Farnese Gallery: where they disguise the controversial conception of love from the *Symposium* with images of love affairs taken from the literature of their period. However, the delicate balance probably required the involvement of a Greek scholar, an iconographer who would have been able to relate to the *Symposium* conception of same-sex love in a refined manner. Apparently, that scholar was Fulvio Orsini

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17. On Annibale and Agostino's education, see Charles Dempsey, "Some Observations on the Education of Artists in Florence and Bologna during the Later Sixteenth Century," *Art Bulletin* 62, no. 4 (1980): 552-569, 561-562.

18. On Agostino's knowledge of Latin, see Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, I: 265-266; Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 118. For his verses, see Giovanni Antonio and Giovanna Perini, *Gli scritti dei Carracci: Ludovico, Annibale, Agostino* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editorale, 1990), 55-58. On his range of disciplines, which, apart from art and poetry, included music, philosophy, mathematics astronomy, geography, cartography, anthropology, and natural history, see Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 118. For Lucio Faberio's funeral oratory see Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, I: 299-312; Carlo Cesare Malvasia, *Malvasia's Life of the Carracci,* trans. Anne Summerscale (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2000), 180-209. On his *Lascivie*, see Sara F. Matthews–Grieco, *Erotic Cultures of Renaissance Italy* (Farnham, UK: Ashgate, 2010), 31-33.

19. Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 69. Andrea Emiliani, *Bologna 1584: Gli esordi dei Carracci e gli affreschi di Palazzo Fava* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa editoriale, 1984) 188-189.

20. Andrea Emiliani and Stanzani Anna, *Le storie di Romolo e Remo di Ludovico Agostino e Annibale Carracci in Palazzo Magnani a Bologna* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa editoriale, 1989), 180-181.

21. Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 160; Clare Robertson, *I Carracci e l'invenzione: osservazioni sull'origine dei cicli affrescati di Palazzo Fava* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1993), 275.

(1529–1600), the loyal secretary and librarian of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese (1520–1589) and Cardinal Odoardo Farnese, who resided in the Farnese Palace for most of the time that the Carracci worked on the ceiling.[22]

Owing to his outstanding scholarship, Orsini's was chosen as the Greek language proofreader of the Vatican Library in 1591, and in all likelihood, he was familiar with the *Symposium* through his associations with scholars who were involved in translations of Plato's writings. Orsini shared his passionate interest in Greek manuscripts with Robert I, Estienne (Robertus Stephanus 1503–1559), a French printer and publisher, the father of Henri II Estienne, who published Plato's complete works in 1578. Orsini and Estienne were considered the most competent copyists of Greek manuscripts in the Cinquecento.[23] The latter visited Italy on three occasion between 1547 and 1555 in search of manuscripts of Greek novels for publication. It seems reasonable to assume that Orsini knew this family of printers and was aware of their business enterprises in both Paris and Basel. Estienne became a Protestant and moved his business to Geneva around 1556, where he was able to publish Greek manuscripts uncensored.

Orsini also maintained a correspondence with Francesco Patrizi da Cherso (1529–1597), a Cres philosopher, who continued his education in Venice and Ingolstadt, before joining the University of Padua in 1547. His goal was to eliminate Aristotle's influence in Italian universities and replace it with the study of Plato's philosophy. He established the first cathedra of Plato's philosophy in 1577 in Ferrara. In 1592 he moved to Rome, invited by Pope Clement VIII to occupy a chair of Platonic philosophy at *La Sapienza*, where he remained until his death in 1597.[24] In 1577–1578, Patrizi wrote *L'Amorosa Filosofia* based in Aristophanes's theory of the Hermaphroditus (*Symp.*189e–194e), and in that connection, he corresponded with Orsini regarding his pupil, the female philosopher Tarquinia Molza (1542–1617), who was under the protection of Cardinal Allesandro Farnese and to whom he dedicated the work.[25]

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22. Giuseppina Alessandra Cellini, *Fulvio Orsini in Palazzo Farnese* (Firenze: Giunti, 2010), 249-253.

23. Gareth L. Schmeling, *The Novel in the Ancient World* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 393; Tim Whitmarsh, *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 288.

24. Jill Kraye, "The legacy of ancient philosophy," in *Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy (*ed.) David Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 323-354, 334-335; Orsini was also acquainted with Marcus Antonius Muretus, a French classical scholar, who taught Plato's philosophy in Rome in 1576. Both Orsini and Muretus were invited to teach in Krakow University, but rejected the offer. Gabor Almási, *The Uses of Humanism: Johannes Sambucus (1531-1584), Andreas Dudith (1533- -1589), and the Republic of Letters in East Central Europe*, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 74, see also note 16.

25. On this correspondence, see Sandra Plastina, "Is Francesco Patrizi's L'Amorosa Filosofia a heterodox reading of the Symposium?" *Intellectual History Review* 29, no 4 (2019): 631-648, 631; Pablo Maurette, "Plato's Hermaphrodite and a Vindication of the

Orsini was interested in Greek iconography. His *Imagines et elogia virorum illustrium*, published in 1570, includes illustrations of herms of Greek philosophers (headless and with heads) with their Greek names.[26] There are illustrations of Socrates resembling Alcibiades's satyr from the *Symposium* (Figure 6), based on a bust and a herm of Socrates in the Farnese collection (Figures 7, 8).[27]

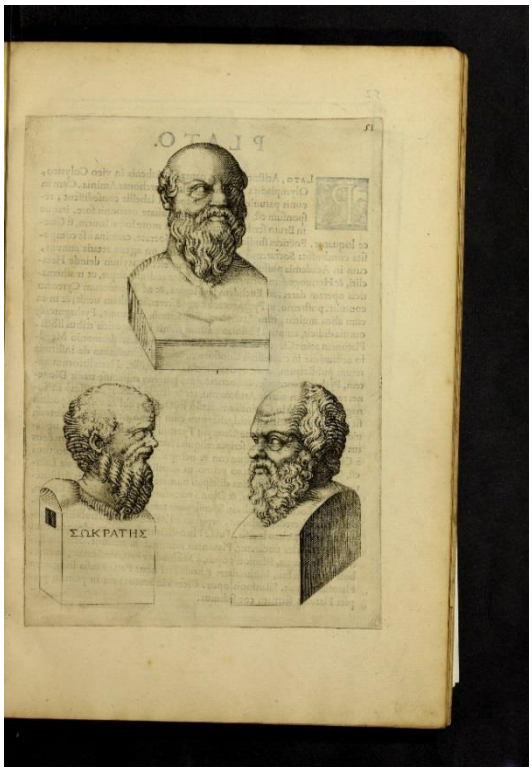

Figure 6. *Busts of Socrates, from Fulvio Orsini, Imagines Et Elogia Virorvm Illvstrium (Rome 1570), Https://Digital.Clarkart.Edu/Digital/Collection/P16245coll5/Id/65012*

Sense of Touch in the Sixteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly* 68, no 3 (2015): 872-898, 873.

26. The headless herms were inspired by those drawn by Pierro Ligorio found in Tivoli in 1488 in the collection of Julius III in Rome. Nancy Thomson de Grummond, *Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2005), 942, 1108-1109.

27. Fulvio Orsini, *Imagines et Elogia Virorum Illustrium et ervditor ex antiqvis lapidibvs et nomismatib. expressa cum annotationib. ex Bibliotheca Fvlvi Vrsini* (Rome: Antoine Lafery, 1570), 50-51. The image of Socrates as the Silenus of Alcibiades, as describe in Plato's Symposium, was known in the Cinquecento. It appears in Erasmus's *Enchiridion* (1503), *The Praise of Folly* (1509), the adage to *The Sileni Alcibiades* (1515), and *The Godly Feast* (1522). See Christian Linda Gregorian, "The Figure of Socrates in Erasmus' Work." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 3, no. 2 (1972): 1-10. On Aretino's comedies: *Lo ipocrito* (1542), *La Talanta* (1542), and *Il filosofo* (1546), see Raymond B. Waddington, *Aretino's Satyr, Sexuality, Satire, and Self-Projection in Sixteenth-Century Literature and Art* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 124-132.

Figure 7. *Herm of Socrates, A 2nd Century CE Copy of the 4th Century BC Original (Inv. No. 6415). Farnese Collection National Archaeological Museum, Naples. Berthold Werner, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons*

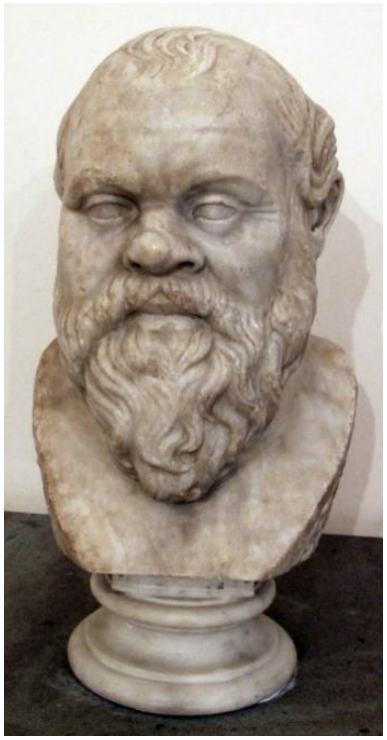

Figure 8. *Bust of Socrates, A 380 AC Copy of the Greek Original (Inv. No. 6129). Farnese Collection National Archaeological Museum, Naples. Sailko, CC BY 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons*

Modern scholars suggest that Orsini was the iconographer of the *Camerino*, Odoardo's personal chambers in the Farnese Palace, which Annibale decorated between 1595 and 1597, just before he began work on the gallery.[28] In her article "*Ars Vincit Omnia*," published in 1990, Robertson suggests that Orsini might have been Annibale's adviser for the Farnese Gallery.[29] In "Annibale in the Farnese Palace: A Classical Education," published in 1999, Gail Feigenbaum strengthens this suggestion, by proposing that Orsini had introduced Annibale to the "methodology of the humanist, philologist, archaeologist, and antiquarian," and that Annibale, whom she believes to be the iconographer of the ceiling, seeks out his advice when needed.[30]

Orsini's interest in herms, noted above, seems to have reinforced his involvement in the iconography of the ceiling, where the pairs of herms resembling Greek philosophers strongly suggest the influence of Orsini's scholarship.

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Bellori referred to the importance of these herms in his description of the Farnese Gallery. At the beginning of the second section "The Argument of the Images," he specifically pointed out the embracing herms in the corners, which he described as "the Loves painted as fictive figures," linking them to Plato's conception of love:

> Before describing the fables [the paintings] it is appropriate that we present the Loves painted as fictive figures above the cornice on the four sides of the gallery, upon which the entire conceit and the allegory of the work depends. The painter wished to represent with various symbols the war and peace between heavenly and common love formulated by Plato.[31]

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28. Martin, *The Farnese Gallery* 180-183; Charles Dempsey, 'Annibale Carrache au Palais Farnese', Le Palais Farnèse, Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 1981, vol. 1, 269-311, 227; Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 109.

29. Clare Robertson, "*Ars Vincit Omnia*: The Farnese Gallery and Cinquecento Ideas about Art," *Mèlanges de l'Ecole francaise de Rome: Italie et Mèditerranèe* 102, no. 1 (1990): 7-41, 21-22. On other scholars' suggestions of either Orsini or Agucchi, see Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 171; Denis Mahon, *Studies in the Seicento Art and Theory* (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1947), 115-116; Martin, *The Farnese Gallery* 38f, 144f.; Dempsey, "*Et nos cedamus amori*," 365 no. 18

30. Gail Feigenbaum, "Annibale in the Farnese Palace: A Classical Education," in Daniele Benati et al., *The Drawings of Annibale Carracci,* exh, cat. (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1999), 117-221.

31. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 84. *Avanti descrivere le favole conviene che proponiamo gli Amori dipinti ne' quattro lati della Galleria finti reali sopra il cornicione, da cui dipende tutto il concetto ed allegoria dell'opera.Volle figurare il pittore con varii emblemi la guerra e la pace tra 'l celeste e 'l vulgare Amore instituiti da Platone*. Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori,* 60.

Bellori began to describe these herms before he got to "The Argument of the Images," noting their prominence on the ceiling and their resemblance to classical sculptures:

> But between the *quadri* and the medallions very beautiful figures of terms in fictive stucco are interposed, which from the middle up imitate human form and bellow taper into a rectangular form in the antique manner.[32]

He noted that they were designed as typical classical lovers – the beardless young pupil and his bearded master:

> The figures of the terms are robust beardless youths and bearded ones of manly age, expressing strength: some entirely nude, some partially covered […].[33]

He mentioned their gestures of love, which were enhanced by the painter's illusionistic effects on the corners of the ceiling (Figures 2–5):

> Among other remarkable effects of the perspective to be found in this artful work is the one in the four corners of the Gallery, where the figures of the terms meet and embrace from one wall to another with admirable visual sense […].[34]

Bellori explained that a similar effect was achieved by other pairs of 'Loves' (this time referring to the four pairs of Cupids at the four corners of the ceiling), painted in the triangular spaces created between the two herms, embracing at the level of their shoulders while their torsos and their pillar legs are splitting off to the sides. Bellori promised his readers that he would soon return to these 'Loves.'[35] Yet, when he got to "The Argument of the Images," were he revealed Plato's conception of love as the theme of love for the ceiling, he first addressed the embracing pairs of herms as the bearers of this love, calling them "the Loves painted as fictive figures […] upon which the entire conceit and the allegory

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32. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 83. *Ma tanto fra i quadri quanto fra le medaglie, s'interpongono bellissime figure di termini di stucco finto, li quali dal mezzo in su imitano la forma umana, e sotto diminuiscono in quadro all'uso antico.* Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 57.

33. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 83. *Le figure de' termini sono giovani robusti senza barba ed in età virile con la barba, in espressione di fortezza: chi tutto ignudo, chi alquanto ricoperto, chi la testa avvolta di panno […].* Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 58.

34. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 84. *Fra gli altri riguardevoli effetti di prospettiva che si ritrovano in quest'opera artificioso è quello ne' quattro canti della Galeria, dove le figure de' termini da un muro all'altro s'incontrano e si abbracciano insieme con mirabil senso dell'occhio […].* Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 59.

35. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 84; *"[…] e simile effetto rendono ancora gli Amori coloriti nel mezzo e ne' vani infraposti fra' medesimi angoli, de' quali appreso diremo*." Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 59.

depends."[36] Only after that did he move on to described the pairs of Cupids that are wrestling within their embrace.

Bellori described the pairs of Cupids by using opposing names to emphasize their rivalry over the virtues. The first pair is "Heavenly Love and Common Love," wrestling for the crown of laurel and representing "the victory over the irrational appetite." The second pair is "Divine Love and Impure Love," wrestling for the torch. The third is "Supreme Love and Earthly Love," embracing to represent "the passion uniting with reason." The fourth pair is described as "Eros and Anteros," fighting over the palm, as in the statues that the Eleans placed in the *gymnasium*.[37]

Dempsey understands these pairs of Cupids as Bellori's interpretation of the ceiling's theme of love. He disassociates them from the embracing herms and interprets them separately by following a Renaissance Neoplatonist conception of love:

> We must thus understand that the *concetto* of the ceiling is based upon a Renaissance Neoplatonic scheme illustrating the perpetual struggle of Celestial Love (aided by Reason) against the baser affections (which are irrational) governed by Amor vulgare, with Victory awarding the palm to the former. The twin Venuses of Renaissance Neoplatonism, through their respective offspring, are once again opposed in the eternal campaign waged between Sacred and Profane Love for dominance over the human soul.[38]

This understanding of Bellori's theme of love has proven inadequate to interpret the erotic celebration of love depicted on the paintings of the ceiling, and Dempsey replaces it with Virgil's idea of "Love conquers all." In *The Invention of Annibale Carracci* (2008), Robertson questions Dempsey's theme of love, noting the flexibility of Virgil's verse, easily bent to interpret almost any image of love. She wonders at what stage of the work it was introduced and questions Bellori's complete misunderstanding of Annibale's theme of love, asking, "if Bellori is wrong, how did he go so wrong?"[39]

Yet, Bellori was not wrong. He was following a classical Platonic conception of love taken from Pausanias's speech in Plato's *Symposium* (*Symp.* 181b–c), rather than a Renaissance Neoplatonist perception. In that speech, Pausanias speaks of two kinds of Love, which he presents as Common and Heavenly Aphrodite: "Common Love" is a man's desire for a woman or a boy, a vulgar kind of love, designed for sexual gratification or procreation. Whereas "Heavenly Love" is an attraction between two males, a purer and higher kind of love, which creates great ideas, laws, and heroic deeds. This is the love of the philosophers, the

36. See the full quotes on p. 10. For the Italian see note 30.

37. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 84.

38. Dempsey, "*Et nos cedamus amori*," 363.

39. Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 170, 147,

pederastic relationship between the master, Erastēs, and his young pupil, Erōmenos, which is destined for greatness.[40]

Bellori identified Pausanias's heavenly love in the four corners of the Farnese Gallery ceiling, where, as I noted above, fictive pairs of herm lovers, a beardless youngster and a bearded mature man, are embracing, while pairs of Cupids are wrestling within their own embrace (Figures 2–5). Bellori considered this disposition of wrestlers and herms as a single image, referring to both the herms and the wrestlers as "Loves" and hinting at the conception of same-sex love, described in the *Symposium*, which was rooted in the Greek system of education:[41] The master-pupil relationship, which often started at the *palaestra*, where young boys were introduced to the virtues by wrestling and where they were seen by the masters, who selected the most promising youngsters to continue their education.[42] Bellori's description of the Loves, wrestling for the virtues, and of the herm lovers embracing above them seems to reflect the classical love of the Greeks that Plato dealt with in his writings.[43]

In the *Symposium*, Pausanias's conception of heavenly love is emphasized using the example of Harmodius and Aristogeiton, the male lovers whose union resulted in their attempt to overthrow the tyrant Hippias in 514 BCE (*Symp*. 182c).[44] The Farnese collection of sculptures included a two-piece Roman marble copy of Harmodius and Aristogeiton by Kritios and Nesiotes (477–476 BCE), which replaced Antenor's original bronze statues. These statues were moved from the Medici's collection to the Farnese family estate in 1538 upon the marriage of Cardinal Odoardo Farnese's grandparents – Margaret of Austria (widow of Alessandro de Medici) and Ottavio Farnese (1525–1586), the second Duke of Parma.[45] They are shown standing naked and holding their swords of

40. See Nehamas's introduction in Plato, *Symposium*, trans., Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Cambridge, UK: Hackett, 1989), xvi.

41. On the Greek system of education, see Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1978), 16-17, 42-44; Nehamas's introduction in Plato, *Symposium*, xiv-xv.

42. Plato's school was established in the Athenian *gymnasium*, and it was thee that the philosophers recruited young pupils. See Mike McNamee and Jim Parry, *Olympic Ethics and Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 2012), 12-13.

43. The connection between love and wrestling is well established in Plato's dialogues (see Thomas. F. Scanlon, *Eros and Greek Athletics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 216-218): In the *Symposium*, 217b-c, Alcibiades tries to seduce Socrates by wrestling. In *Lysis*, 204b, 206e–207a, Socrates visits a *palaestra* in Athens, inquiring who is the favorite beauty (*kalos*) among the boys. In *Charmides*, 153d-154a, Socrates visits the *palaestra* of Taureas, inquiring if any one of the wrestlers "happens to be distinguished in wisdom or in beauty or both."

44. Despite their failure, they were celebrated as the tyrannicides and seen as symbols of the Greek democracy. See Plato, *Symposium*, 15 note 20.

45. Barbara A. Barletta, "Medici family," in *Encyclopedia of the History of Classical Archaeology* (ed.) Nancy Thomson de Grummond (New York: Routledge, 1996), 737-743,

which only the hilts remain (Figure 9). The beardless young Harmodius is raising his right hand, thrusting his sword forward, holding a second sword in his left hand. The bearded Aristogeiton is extending his left arm, which is covered by a cape, directing his sword forward.[46]

Figure 9. *Harmodius And Aristogeiton, Statuary Group of the Tyrannicides. Roman Copy of the 2nd Century CE After a Kritios and Nesiotes Model of 477—476 BCE. (Inv. Nos. 6009, 6010). Farnese Collection, National Archaeological Museum Naples. Miguel Hermoso Cuesta, CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons*

The story of these lovers and their statues was well documented by classical authors and was probably known to the classical scholars of the Carracci's period. In his "Descriptions of Greece" (1.8.5), the second- century the Greek geographer,

738-739; Hippolyte Taine, *Lectures on Art.*, trans. John Durand (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1875), 135.

46. The Farnese collection also included two classical busts of the bearded Roman Emperor Hadrian (Inv. 6067, 6069) and two statues of his young beardless beloved, Antinous (Inv. 6030, 6314), as well as a significant number of classical busts of Greek philosophers, among them a herm of Socrates (see Figure 7). Its matching companion, a herm of a curled young Alcibiades, is displayed in the Musei Capitolini (MC1160).

traveler, and writer Pausanias noted that their statues were erected in the agora to mark their efforts to sustain Athenian democracy by killing Hipparchus, the brother of the tyrant Hippias, and that they were stolen during the Persian wars.[47] In *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (VI.54–59), Thucydides contended that the couple's motivation was not the liberation of Athens, but rather jealousy.[48] Aristotle discussed this matter in his *Athenian Constitution* (XVIII), where he recounted that Hipparchus took a fancy to the young Harmodius and that Aristogeiton's jealousy led him to conspire with Harmodius to overthrow the tyrant.[49] The statues of Harmodius and Aristogeiton in the Farnese collection might well have influenced the artists' decision to display pairs of male lovers repeatedly depicted as a bearded old lover and a beardless young beloved, evoking Pausanias's idea of heavenly love.

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Bellori contended that except for the herms embracing in the four corners, the rest of the paintings evoke the conception of common love. He began with *The Chorus of Bacchus and Ariadne*, the central piece on the ceiling:

> […] coming now to the descriptions of the fables (paintings), we shall commence first with those of profane love and with the great Bacchanal, the most copious one, set lengthwise in the middle of the vault as the principal object of the eye.[50]

In this painting, Annibale depicted the wedding procession of Bacchus and Ariadne, a celebration of drunken fauns, satyrs, and maenads, playing instruments and dancing to exhaustion (Figure 10).[51]

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47. Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece*, VI vols. (London: Macmillan, 1898), I, 41.

48. This text was translated into Latin in 1452, and in the sixteenth century it entered into the discussion of European politics and political theory. Mark Fisher, *The History of the Peloponnesian War* (London: Macat Library, 2017), 9.

49. On Harmodius and Aristogeiton in classical literature see Mark D. Schachter, *Voluntary Servitude and the Erotics of Friendship: From Classical Antiquity to Early Modern France* (Hampshire, Burlington: Ashgate, 2008), 32-33.

50. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 84. *[…] e per venire alla descrizzione di esse favole, comincieremo prima da quelle dell'Amor profane e dalla gran Baccanale, la piú copiosa collocata per lungo nel mezzo la volta, come principale oggetto dell'occhio*. Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 57.

51. Dionysus approach to love and marriage is evoked in the closing scene in Xenophon's *Symposium* (IX: 5-7). See Fiona Hobden, *The Symposion in Ancient Greek Society and Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 221. Further, in Plato's *Symposium,* where Alcibiades, crowned with ivy and as drunk as Dionysus, appears uninvited at Agathon's party, followed by a girl playing a flute and a drunken crowd and forcing the participants (who had agreed to remain sober) to continue their discourse on love under the influence of wine (*Symp.*212d-215a). See William Mure, *A Critical History of*

Figure 10. *Annibale Carracci, The Chorus of Bacchus and Ariadne (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

Robert Baldwin suggests that this image alludes to Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (I, 527-556), adapted by Angelo Poliziano (1454–1494) for his *Stanze* (I: 110-112), which he started in the vernacular in 1478 but left unfinished.[52] The two parts of this painting emphasize the contrast between the graceful figures of Bacchus and his bride, riding in their carriages on the left, and the grotesque figures of Silenus and the common Venus on the right. Silenus is depicted drunk and falling off his donkey, and the common Venus is lying half-naked at his feet.

Bellori made certain that his readers understood the representation of Ariadne and the common Venus as an allusion to Pausanias's common Aphrodite, emphasizing her dual functions: marriage and sexual gratification (*Symp.*180e). He described Ariadne as meant for marriage, "no longer tearful and sad over the infidelity of Theseus,"[53] who abandoned her on the Island of Naxos, but grateful to Bacchus, who had found her upon his return from India "and smitten by her beauty, he chose her to be his bride."[54] He described the common Venus, half-naked and exposed to Silenus's gaze, emphasizing the notion of carnal desire:

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the Language and Literature of Antient Greece, V vols. (London: Brown, Green & Longmans, 1857), V, 499-460.

52. Baldwin argues that five images on the Farnese ceiling– *The Chorus of Bacchus and Ariadne*, *Polyphemus Seducing Galatea*, *Europa Abducted by the Bull*, *Hercules and Iole*, and *Jupiter and Ganymede* allude to *Le Stanze* (I, 97-119), where Poliziano adapted passages from the Claudian *Epithalamium* and Ovid, *Ars Amatorial* to describe the scenes of love that Vulcan carved in the doors of Venus's garden. Baldwin also proposes that the allusion to the Claudian *Epithalamium*, written in the fourth century for the marriage of Emperor Honorius and Maria, empowered the Farnese's alliance with the Aldobrandini. Baldwin, "Annibale Carracci and the Farnese Ceiling," 3-5.

53. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 85.

54. Ibid, 84.

> But on the first plain further on the foreground a half-nude woman lies on the ground, raised up by her right arm bent on a hammock, supporting her head on her hand; and as if startled out of her sleep by the clamor, […]. This is common and earthly Venus, with impure love at her side, who folds his arms and leans on her shoulders. She has her breast and loins uncovered, and she puts out her left hand, plucking from the ground the mantle that covers the rest of her body.[55]

Bellori's description of this Venus is reminiscent of the description of Ariadne in Ovid's *Ars Amatoria* (I: 527-556) and the one in Catullus's poem (LXIV: 36–50), where she (once abandoned by Theseus) awakens on the island, naked and alone.[56] Bellori's analogy suggests that he interpreted the two female figures in *The Chorus of Bacchus and Ariadne* by following the duality of Pausanias's common Aphrodite who was meant for either marriage or for sexual desire.[57] This reading explains Bellori's interpretation of this painting as a depiction of "profane love."

Pausanias's definition of common love also includes the love of boys, when pursued only for the pleasures of the flesh and not for educational reasons (181b).[58] Images of such love are evoked in Annibale's *Jupiter and Ganymede* and *Apollo and Hyacinth*. These paintings show the gods carrying their young prey to heaven to satisfy their passions (Figures 11, 12). Their subjects follow passages from Orpheus's lamentation in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (X: 143-219), where Orpheus (after failing to rescue Eurydice) recounts the advantages of loving young boys over women, which he justifies by recalling the love Jupiter and Apollo had for them.[59]

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55. Ibid, 85. *Ma nel primo piano piú avanti giace in terra una donna seminude sollevato col destroy braccio piegato ad un poggiuolo, reggendo il capo su la mano; e quasi per lo strepito scossa dal sonno, […] Questa è Venere vulgare e terrena, standole a fianco l'Amore impuro, che raccolte le bracia, si sppoggia sopra la sua spalla; ha ella disvelato il petto e 'l seno, e stende la sinistra pigliando in terra il mano che ricuopre il resto del corpo.* Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 62.

56. See Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1916), VIII: 176-82.

57. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 85. On Annibale's reference to an ancient sarcophagus that describes Ariadne discovered by Bacchus in Naxos, see Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 44.

58. Pederasty is also discussed in the speeches of Phaedrus and Eryximachus, as a legitimate kind of love that describes the relationship between the old lover (the master) and the young beloved (his pupil) and it is explained as the noblest form of education. On pederasty and homosexual love in the speeches of the *Symposium*, see Nehamas's (intro.) in Plato, *Symposium*, xv-xvi.

59. On *paiderastia* in portrayals of Ganymede by Michelangelo, Correggio, Cellini, and Romano, which project the tensions between Neoplatonism and Christianity, see James M. Saslow, *Ganymede in the Renaissance: Homosexuality in Art and Society* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1986), chap. I-III; on homoerotic depictions in the Renaissance, see Bette Talvacchia, *Taking Positions: On the Erotic in Renaissance Culture* (Princeton; Princeton University Press, 1999), chap.7; Ann Haughton, "Myths of Same Sex

Figure 11. *Annibale Carracci, Jupiter and Ganymede (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

Figure 12. *Annibale Carracci, Apollo And Hyacinth (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

To highlight the idea of pederasty, which is suggested on both sides of *Jupiter and Ganymede* and *Apollo and Hyacinth*, Annibale replaced the human *ignudi* with pairs of satyrs, hinting at the characterization of these creatures as seducers of young boys as evoked in the group statue *Pan and Daphnis* (or *Olympus*), a Roman copy by Heliodoros in the Farnese collection in which an old and ugly satyr is seducing his young pupil with his reed pipe (Figure 13).[60]

Love in the Art of the Italian Renaissance," *Exchanges: The Warwick Research Journal* 3, no. 1 (2015): 65-95.Haughton, 65-95; Dall'Orto, Giovanni, "Socratic Love as a Disguise for Same-Sex Love in the Italian Renaissance," *Journal of Homosexuality* 16, no. 1-2 (1989): 33-66.

60. This statue inspired two other paintings rendered by Annibale and his studio in the same years that he worked on the Farnese Gallery ceiling. *Silenus with a Boy* (now in the National Gallery in London) was produced around 1597–1600, probably under the guidance of the humanist Fulvio Orsini (https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/annibale-carracci-marsyas-and-olympus). *Marsyas and Olympus*, where a vicious satyr is seducing a young boy with his reed pipe, is dated to 1600 and is in the Doria Pamphilj collection. On the statue, see Robertson, *The Invention of Annibale Carracci*, 157-158.

Figure 13. *Pan and Daphnis (or Olympus), A Roman Copy (3rd–2nd BCE), by Heliodoros, (Inv. No.6329). Farnese Collection, National Archaeological Museum Naples. Virtusincertus, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons*

This idea is also evoked in Alcibiades's speech in the *Symposium* in which he compares Socrates to the satyr Marsyas or to Silenus (*Symp*. 215b–215d), accusing him of being "crazy about beautiful boys; he constantly follows them around in a perpetual daze" (*Symp*. 216d).

Following Pausanias's definition, Bellori could have identified the heterosexual love affairs depicted on the paintings and the medallions of Farnese Gallery ceiling, as images of common love. Despite their allusion to the Latin literature and to the literature of the period, their conception of love corresponds to examples of love referred to in the speeches featured in the *Symposium*.

Annibale's *Paris and Mercury* and *Pan and Diana*, depict two improper propositions of love, representing infatuation with material beauty, illustrated in these paintings by beautiful things, which exposes the moral weakness of the receivers. In *Paris and Mercury*, Paris is tempted by the apple of discord handed to him by Mercury (Figure 14). This image alludes to Homer's *Iliad*, where Paris declared that Venus was the most beautiful goddess in the contest, and she

promised to reward him with the beautiful Queen of Sparta, Helen, wife of Menelaus, an incident that eventually led to the Trojan War. In *Pan and Diana*, a distorted Pan is seducing the chaste goddess with a beautiful offering of white wool (Figure 15), an image taken from Virgil's *Georgics* (III: 391-393).[61]

Figure 14. *Annibale Carracci, Paris and Mercury (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

61. Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 54.

Figure 15. *Annibale Carracci, Pan and Diana (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

The desire to possess beautiful things as evoked in these two paintings is addressed by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*, where she struggles with the question of the lover's desire for beauty. Her ideas on love are expressed by Socrates, who presents her ladder of love which evolves from the loving of a particular beautiful body to the loving of all bodies, from the loving of beautiful souls to the higher stage of loving of knowledge – the laws, public activity, and philosophy. She tells Socrates that if he reaches the highest step on this ladder, he will never desire the possession of physical beauty. As expressed in the

Symposium, "If you once see that, it won't occur to you to measure beauty by gold or clothing or beautiful boys and youth" (*Symp*. 211d).[62] Her reference to beautiful clothing or beautiful bodies seems to match Diana's infatuation with the white wool and Paris's attraction to the most beautiful woman, both of which represent the lowest step on Diotima's ladder of love and can be classified as a common kind of love.

The idea of unrequited love and rejected love, two sides of the same coin, is depicted in Agostino's *Aurora and Cephalus*, which portrays the goddesses abducting the mortal young hunter Cephalus, who is rejecting her attempt to embrace him (Figure 16).

Figure 16. *Agostino Carracci, Aurora and Chephalus (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

The subject of the painting is based on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (VII) as well as on Gabriello Chiabrera's contemporary musical drama *Il Rapimento di Cefalo*, which was performed in 1600 for Maria de'Medici's wedding.[63] The idea of unrequited love can be traced back to Alcibiades's tale in the *Symposium*, where he describes himself passionately in love with Socrates and suffering (physically and emotionally) first from Socrates's lack of interest and later from his total rejection (*Symp.* 219d).[64]

The painting of *Galatea* on the western side of the ceiling depicts a scene from the Claudian *Epithalamium for Honorius and Maria*, where Cupid summons Triton to carry Venus over the sea to the Emperor's wedding (*Epith*. 215–270). It is unclear why Bellori confused Venus and Galatea, but one of the three Nereids

62. See Nahamas's interpretation of Diotima's speech in Plato, *Symposium*, xix.

63. Dempsey, "*Et nos cedamus amori*," 368 ; Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 58.

64. On Alcibiades suffering of unrequited love, compared to Gallus (In Virgil, Ecl. X) and to other classical protagonists, see Carol U. Merriam, "Clinical Cures for Love in Propertius 'Elegis,'" *Scholia: Studies in Classical Antiquity*, 10 (2001): 69-76, 69-70.

portrayed in this painting is certainly Galatea, who appears in Claudian's poem. In the poem, Cupid finds the savage sea creature Triton, half-man and half-fish, pursuing the beautiful Nereid Cymothoë, who eludes him and faints from fear (*Epith*. 215). He promises Triton that if he carries Venus to the wedding, he will reward him by overcoming Cymothoë's resistance (*Epith*. 220-228). Agostino painted Triton transporting Venus over the water (Figure 17), accompanied by Galatea, Psamathe (Dodo), and Cymothoë, who are astride sea beasts, as mentioned in the poem (Epith. 260-265).

Figure 17. *Agostino Carracci, Galatea (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

Agostino depicted one of the Nereids (who seems to be Galatea) looking straight at the viewers and pointing at Cymothoë, who seems to be the fearful Nereid, half hidden behind Venus. Galatea's pointing gesture suggests that Triton is fulfilling his part of the deal and that Cupid, who is depicted flying above the images, arching his bow to launch his arrow, is about to resolve Triton's unrequited love.[65]

The subject of unrequited love is also featured in Annibale's two paintings of Polyphemus's failed attempt to seduce Galatea. *Polyphemus and Galatea* portrays the cyclops trying to seduce the Nereid, while she, enchanted by the soft tunes of his reed pipe, is attending to him unaware of his repulsive looks (Figure 18).

65. The female figure in this painting was described as Galatea by Bellori (see Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 87-88), as "Marine Venus" by Malvasia (see Malvasia, *Felsina Pittrice*, I: 316), as Thetis by Dempsey (in Charles Dempsey "Two 'Galateas' by Agostino Carracci Re- Identified," Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte, 39 (1966): 67-70; and also as Venus (in Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 56). See also Claudius Claudianus, *The Works of Claudian*, (London: J. Porter and Langdon and Son, 1817), 144ff.

Figure 18. *Annibale Carracci, Polyphemus and Galetea (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

This story, which is told in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XIII750–897), ends with Polyphemus's savage attack on Acis, Galatea's lover and rescuer, who metamorphoses into a river of blood. In his description, Bellori noted that love softened Polyphemus, who tried a gentle approach to attract the beautiful Galatea:

> The most savage beasts feel sentiments of love: behold, rough Polyphemus, Neptune's son, largest of the Cyclops, sits on a crag in the Sicilian sea, enamored of Galatea: and there he sooths his pangs, singing hoarsely to the sounds of his shepherds' pipes." [66]

Polyphemus's approach to beauty, as described by Bellori, reflects Diotima's argument on the need of all creatures to reproduce and give birth in beauty:

66. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 89. *Sentono affetti d'amore I piú ferini petti: ecco il crudo Polifemo figliuolo di Nettunno il maggiore de' Ciclopi siede sopra uno scoglio del mare siciliano, fatto amante di Galatea; e quivi disacerba I suoi affanni, rauco cantando al suono di pastorali canne*. Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 70. Dempsey associated this painting to Philostratus's *Imagines* (II: 18). See Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 60-61.

[…] whenever animals or persons draw near to beauty, they become gentle and joyfully disposed and give birth and reproduce; but near ugliness they are foul-faced and draw back in pain" (*Symp*. 206d).

As if following this idea, in *The Wrath of Polyphemus*, Annibale portrayed the beautiful Galatea escaping the ugly cyclops, whom she encountered on the shore (Figure 19). The rejected Polyphemus is expressing his unrequited love in an explosion of fury, violently uprooting a rock from the ground with which to chase Galatea and her rescuer back into the sea.[67]

Figure 19. *Annibale Carracci, The Wrath of Polyphemus (1597-1601), Farnese Gallery, Rome. Public Domain, via Wikimedia Commons*

Annibale's four *quadri riportati minori* portray passive male protagonists subjugated to their active female companions, who exhibit their power and authority.[68] These four paintings are Baroque heterosexual versions of the reversal of the traditional roles of the lover and the beloved from antiquity. This idea of love was expressed by Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*, where he tells how as a

67. Dempsey compared the uncontrolled fury of the Christian night Orlando in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (XXIV: 15) with Polyphemus fury. See Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 64-65.

68. On the reversed roles of the lover and the beloved, see Esthy Kravitz–Lurie, "Hercules and Rinaldo: Annibale Carracci's Invenzione of Tasso's Epic Hero," *Athens Journal of Humanities & Arts* 3, no. 2 (2016): 123-142, 134-139; on the passivity of the male figures, see Baldwin, "Annibale Carracci and the Farnese Ceiling," 3.

young boy, he went against the norms of his society by trying to seduce the old master Socrates, "as if I were his lover and he my young prey!" (*Symp.* 217c).[69]

In *Hercules and Iole*, the reversed roles are symbolized by having the protagonists exchange clothes and attributes: Hercules is wrapped in Iole's mantle and is holding her tambourine (Figure 20). Iole has his club and lion skin and is extending her arm across his broad shoulders in a patronizing gesture. Bellori linked this painting to Tasso, and Dempsey notes that it describes a relief of Hercules and Iole engraved on the entrance to Armida's palace, where Cupid appears as in *Hercules and Iole*, laughing at Hercules's effeminate state (*La Gerusalemme liberata*, XVI: 3).[70]

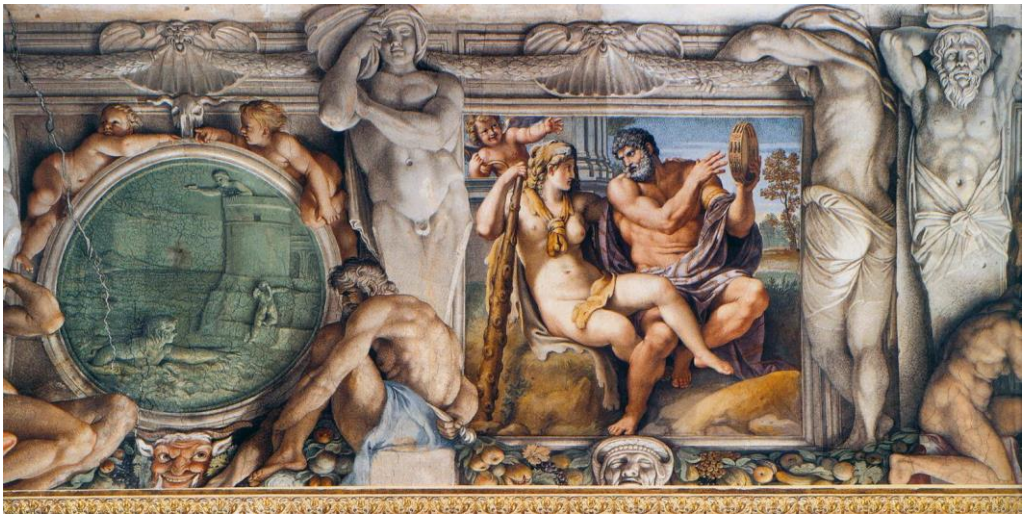

Figure 20. *Annibale Carracci, Hercules and Iole, with a Threesome of Herms and the Medallion Hero and Leander (detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

In *Venus and Anchises*, the Trojan warrior is portrayed as a chambermaid, shown removing Venus's sandals, the goddess's robes and necklaces already having been piled on a nearby chair (Figure 21). In this painting, Anchises's subjugation is compared to Hercules's by the image of the latter's lion skin on the floor at Anchises's feet, as well as his club, which is held by one of the herms who

69. See Nahamas's introduction in Plato, *Symposium*, xxiii; Mateo Duque, "Two Passions in Plato's Symposium: Diotima's To Kalon as a Reorientation of Imperialistic Erōs," in *Looking at Beauty to Kalon in Western Greece: Selected Essays from the 2018 Symposium on the Heritage of Western Greece* (eds.) Heather L. Reid and Tony Leyh (Iowa: Parnassos Press – Fonte Aretusa, 2019), 95-110, 95.

70. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 89; Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 68. On this tale, see also Ovid, *Heroides and Amores* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914), IX: 73-134; Ovid, *The Fasti, Tristia, Pontic Epistles, Ibis, and Halieuticon of Ovid* (London; New York: G. Bell, 1899), II: 303-358; and Angelo Poliziano, *The Stanze of Angelo Poliziano* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), I: 114.

is leaning against the picture's frame. This painting includes the Latin inscription, "*Genvs vnde Lativm*," taken from Virgil's *Aeneid* (I: 6).[71] It further highlights Annibale's humorous depiction of the reversed roles of these lovers: a masculine-appearing, breast-less goddess, and a warrior-chambermaid, who are declared (in the inscription) as the founders of the Latin race.

Figure 21. *Annibale Carracci, Venus and Anchises with a Threesome of Herms and the Medallion Cupid and Pan (detail of Figure 1) 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

In *Jupiter and Juno*, Annibale presented Jupiter disarmed by Juno's beauty. This painting follows Homer's *Iliad*, (XIV: 197ff), where Venus lent her enchanted belt to Juno in order to distract Jupiter from supporting the Trojans in the Trojan war, in which the two deities favored opposing sides.[72] Annibale depicted Jupiter ignoring his weapon, the lightning bolt (which is forgotten under the marital bed) at the sight of the seductive belt that Juno is wearing under her bare breasts (Figure 22).

71. Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 70; Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, I, 93, 103: Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 88.

72. Dempsey, *Annibale Carracci*, 74; Posner, *Annibale Carracci*, I: 103, 107: Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 87.

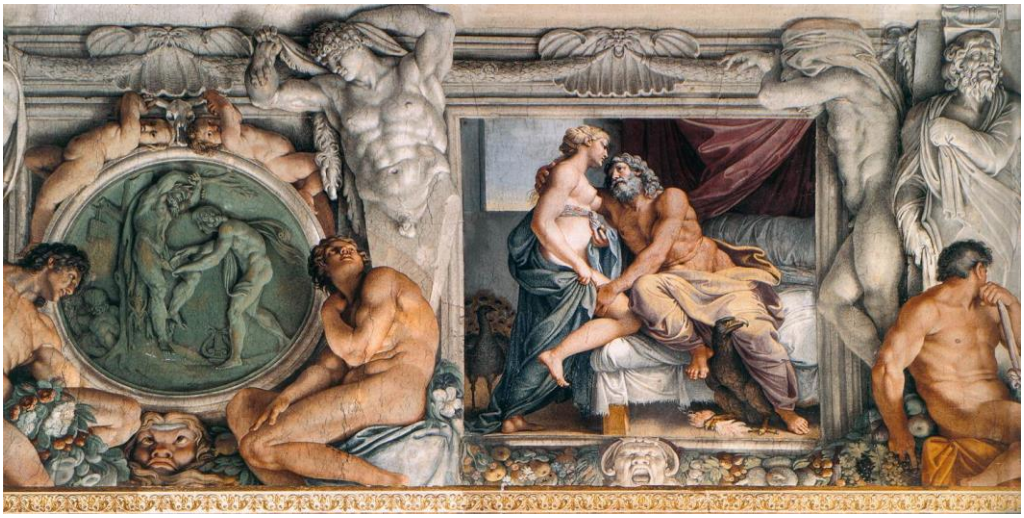

Figure 22. *Annibale Carracci, Jupiter and Juno, with a Threesome of Herms, and the Medallion Apollo Flight Marsyas (detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

The reversed role of lovers appears once again in *Diana and Endymion*, where Annibale depicted the mortal shepherd in an eternal sleep, surrendering to Diana, the chaste goddess, who appears at nightfall to take advantage of his unconscious state (Figure 23).[73]

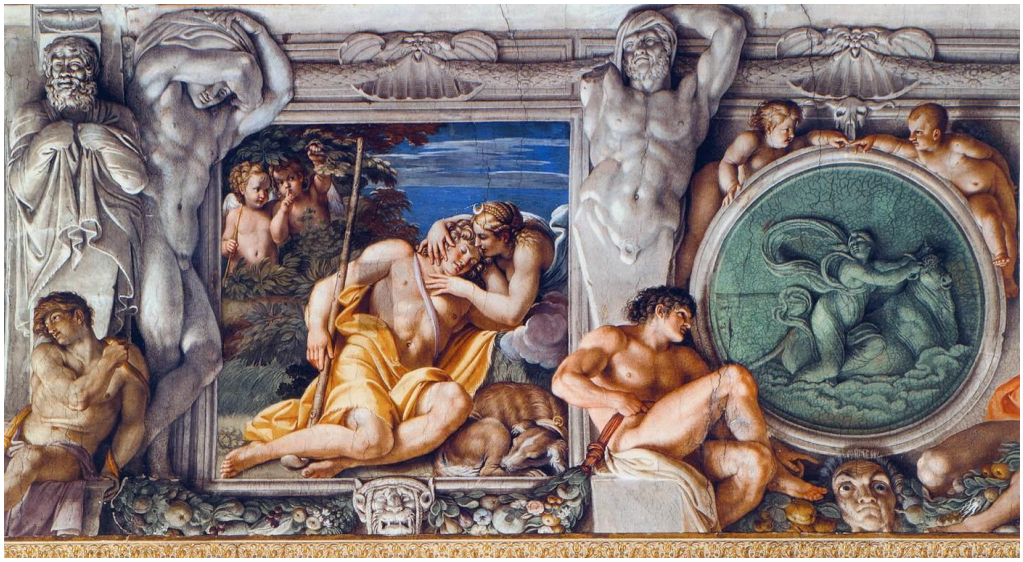

Figure 23. *Annibale Carracci, Diana and Endymion with a Threesome of Herms, and the Medallion Europe and the Bull (detail of Figure 1), 1597-1601, Farnese Gallery, Rome*

Grouped around these four paintings, Annibale repeatedly figured trios of herms and statues, which included: a couple undressing against the painting's frame while peeking at the scenes of love inside, and a third figure of an older master standing by their side (Figures 20–23). The painter seems to have shaped

73. Ibid, 88.

them as classical images of an old philosopher in the company of two younger fellows. They seem to correspond to the playful atmosphere described in the introductory dialogue of the *Symposium*, where the older Apollodorus is asked by the young Glaucon and his friend to tell them what was said about love at Agathon's drinking party (*Symp*. 172b).

The classical philologist Diskin Clay noted that as the speeches in the *Symposium* evolve, the reader is under the impression that Apollodorus is guiding Glaucon and his friend from one speech to another.[74] Such is the viewer's impression when observing the herm lovers grouped in threes around these scenes of love on the Farnese ceiling (Figures 20–23). The enthusiastic gestures of the pairs peeking at these scenes seem to suggest that they are expressing the same kind of curiosity as Glaucon and his friend in the *Symposium*, whereas the older figure seems to resemble Apollodorus, standing aside and tolerating the youngsters' excitement.

After describing the paintings and the bronze-like medallions, Bellori moves on to "The Allegory of the Fables," where he classifies the medallions, listing only seven out of the eight, and naming six of them as depictions of profane love:

> The medallions follow, Boreas abducting Orithyia, Salmacis with Hemaphroditus, the god Pan embracing Syrinx, Europa carried off by the bull, Leander drowning, Eurydice returned to Hades: these represent the vices and injuries of profane love, which are overcome by Apollo flaying Marsyas, standing for the light of wisdom that strips the soul of its ferine skin.[75]

Bellori excluded *Apollo Flying Marsyas* from the category of common love (Figure 5), but marked the other medallions as depictions of heterosexual desire: abduction, persuasion, copulation, and the reckless loss of the beloved, which make them appropriate to the category of common love.[76]

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74. In the *Symposium*, Apollodorus is repeating what Aristodemus (who was present at Agathon's party) had told him about the event. See Diskin Clay, "The Tragic and Comic Poet of the Symposium," *Arion* 2 (1975): 238-261, 240.

75. Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters*, 92. *Seguono le medaglie, Borea che rapisce Orizia, Salmace con Ermafrodito, il dio Pane che abbraccia Siringa, Europa rapita dal toro, Leandro sommerso, Euridice di nuovo rapita all'inferno: sono li vizii e li danni dell'amor profano; a cui soprasta Apolline che socortica Marsia, inteso per la luce della sapienza che toglie all'anima la ferina spoglia.* Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 77.

76. The last issue has to do with the medallion *Orpheus and Eurydice*, which describes Orpheus's loss of his wife at the gate of the underworld. In the *Symposium*, Phaedrus expresses his low opinion of Orpheus: "Orpheus, however, they (the gods) sent unsatisfied from Hades, after showing him only an image of the woman he came for. They did not give him the woman herself, because they thought he was soft (he was, after all, a cithara-player) and did not dare to die like Alcestis for Love's sake, but contrived to enter living into Hades. So they punished him for that, and made him die at the hands of women." Plato, *Symposium*, 179d. See Michael J.B. Allen, "Eurydice in Hades: Florentine Platonism

The tale of Marsyas, the arrogant satyr who tempted Apollo to a music contest, appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (XI: 146-193). Alcibiades's relates to Marsyas in the *Symposium*, where he compares the luring of Socrates's words to the satyr's music, both utilized as tools of temptation, which infuriates the gods (*Symp.* 215b-d).[77] Unlike Socrates, Marsyas is vanquished by Apollo, who puts an end to his alluring tunes. This reading of the tale, which shines on Marsyas, presenting him as less arrogant than Socrates, could be what led Bellori to distinguish *Apollo Flying Marsyas* from the other medallions and to interpret his affairs with Apollo, as an example of heavenly love.

Interestingly, Bellori paid very little attention to *Cupid and Pan*, which he omitted from his list of medallions and failed to classify it. He described it wrongly when he reviewed the paintings on the northeastern side, as Amor, who is tying the satyr (Pan) to a tree trunk: "*Amore che doma e lega il satiro al tronco*."[78] His notion regarding the bound satyr does not fit with the image in this medallion, where the satyr is supporting himself with one arm braced against the protruding roots of the tree behind him, while a child-Cupid (mimicking the gesture of conquering) has his foot on his hairy thigh (Figure 4). Bellori's erroneous description of the bound satyr is, rather, one associated with the tale of Marsyas tied to the tree in *Apollo Flying Marsyas*, which faces *Cupid and Pan* on the northwestern side of the ceiling.

Bellori's list of medallions completes his description of the ceiling. His readers cannot but notice his persistence in maintaining the theme of "common and heavenly love" throughout the description of the entire ceiling: the corners, the paintings, and the medallions, including references to classical and contemporary literature when describing the subjects of the paintings. His failure to described or even classify *Cupid and Pan* raises some questions: Was Bellori avoiding this young Eros in his ridiculous attempt to conquer an old satyr? If so, why? In "Reevaluating Cupid and Pan" published in 2022, I argue that the subject of this medallion was based on Alcibiades's tale of seduction in Plato's *Symposium*, where Plato describes Alcibiades and Socrates, as a young Eros and an old satyr, whom Alcibiades's tries to seduce, as they wrestle in the *gymnasium* (*Symp.* 215b-216d, 219b).[79] This image matches those in *Cupid and Pan*, where a

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and an Orphic Mystery," in *Nuovi Maestri e antichi testi. Umanesimo e Rinascimento alle origini del pensiero moderno*, (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2012), 19-40. 31, 33 note 55.

77. On Apollo and Marsyas, see also Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, XI: 146-193.

78. Bellori, *Le Vite de' Pittori*, 68. "Beginning again at the opposite side, in the same order, between the two medallions of Cupid taming the satyr and tying him to a tree and Salmacis embracing Hemaphroditus, we come to the image of Venus and Anchises." Bellori, *The Lives of the Modern Painters,* 88.

79. Esthy Kravitz-Lurie, "Reevaluating Cupid and Pan: The Story of Eros and the Satyr in the Farnese Gallery", in *Journal of Baroque Studies*, no. 3: 2 (2022), 159-182.; On Socrates's and Alcibiades's allegorical characters, see Mark David Usher, "Satyr Play in Plato's Symposium," *The American Journal of Philology* 123, no. 2 (2002): 205-228, 214-215.

child Eros tries to seduce a resisting old satyr. I believe that the correct description of this medallion would have ruined Bellori's puzzle of references and hints, which led his readers to Plato's *Symposium*. It would have clearly revealed the unconventional literary source responsible for the conception of love depicted on the Farnese Gallery ceiling.

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In this essay I followed Bellori's interpretation of the theme of love depicted on the Farnese Gallery ceiling. His references to Plato's *Symposium* seem to unwrap the complexity of Annibale's work: representations of mythological love affairs based on classical and contemporary literature, which are consistent with the conception of love in the *Symposium*. The Carracci's representations of same-sex love, love of boys, marriage and sexual gratification, the reversed roles of lovers, rejected love and unrequited love, and infatuation with material beauty, all of which are evoked in the paintings on the ceiling, created what Bellori understood to be a conception of love formulated by Plato. Bellori hinted at the *Symposium* by referring to Pausanias's heavenly and common love, which he used to classify the paintings. With the exception of the medallion *Apollo Flying Marsyas*, he interpreted all the paintings on the ceiling as depictions of common love. Yet, he found an expression of Pausanias's heavenly love by observing the pairs of herms embracing over the wrestlers in the four corners of the ceiling.

Referring to the contemporary literature as sources for the subjects of the paintings while addressing Plato's unconventional conception of love, hints at the involvement of a classical scholar such as Orsini, who could deal with this issue with delicacy. It required the inventiveness of well-read painters, such as Annibale and Agostino, who could see the advantage of following the outrageous conception of same-sex love with the images of the herm lovers, which they used as illusionistic devices, architecturally designed to embrace above the images of the wrestlers and to act as separations between the ceiling's paintings. The Carracci created an ingenious masterwork, a puzzle of texts and images, whose elucidation required Bellori's expertise. He managed to provide that insight with discretion, following the enigma in the Carracci's work, offering hints based on literary references, and trusting his readers to follow his clues.

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