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Divine Love and Veronese's Frescoes at the Villa Barbaro

Inge Jackson Reist

The theme of harmony has long been recognized as underlying both the consonant proportions of Palladio's architecture and the invenzione for Veronese's decorations in the Villa Barbaro at Maser. The images that constitute the principal composition on the vault of the Salone visualize cosmological harmony as defined by the Pythagorean philosophers and the writings of the villa's primary patron, Daniele Barbaro, and his Renaissance contemporaries. A more precise definition of the Empedoclean component of the philosophical foundation of this program can establish that the single most important figure of the decorative ensemble personifies Divine Love. She, and she alone, is capable of unifying the potentially discordant forces in nature and the heavens and can thus allude to the harmony that governs the world in which the Barbaro live in both a microcosmic and a macrocosmic sense.¹

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ideal, they consulted modern authors such as Marsilio Ficino, Pietro Bembo, Anton Francesco Doni, and Alberto Lollio.⁴ In keeping with this newly revitalized architectural topos, Andrea Palladio designed and Paolo Veronese decorated the Villa Barbaro at Maser as a *locus amoenus* for one of the most erudite of Venetian patrician families.⁵ Palladio's plan expressed his and his patron's Vitruvian bias,

¹ The material presented here was first gathered in 1976 as part of a research paper for the degree of Master of Philosophy at Columbia University. It has since been amplified and presented at the 1982 annual meeting of the College Art Association. I am grateful to David Rosand and Wendy Stedman Sheard for the helpful suggestions they gave me at that time and to Teodolinda Barolini, Douglas Caverly, and Sandra Munoz for their assistance with the translations. I am equally thankful for the generosity of the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, the Kress Foundation, and The Frick Collection, which made my research in Venice possible. Finally I would like to thank Creighton Gilbert for his patient editorial assistance.

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and Veronese's fresco cycle followed much of the counsel of Pliny the Elder and Vitruvius for the forms and motifs appropriate for painted ornament in private houses.⁶

At Maser, thematic unity responds to and complements formal unity: the scenographic treatment of space and the consistency of painted and architectural schema render iconographic inconsistency unacceptable. Indeed, behind the spatial and decorative forms of this villa lies an *invenzione* that bears directly on the antiquarian bias of Venetian mid-century *letterati* and expresses as well the reconciliation that the patrons and their humanist colleagues sought between Greco-Roman and Christian precepts as they applied to their Renaissance milieu.

Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro followed the examples of earlier generations of their family in supporting the humanist interests of the Venetian intelligentsia.⁷ Daniele in particular adopted the dedication of his great-uncle Ermolao to the exegesis of classical texts, first as he completed the translations and commentaries of Aristotelian works that Ermolao had begun, and later as he embarked on his own monumental publication of 1556: the translation and commentaries of Vitruvius' *De architectura*. Thus, by the time Daniele Barbaro saw his country house taking final form, he was justifiably lauded by contemporaries — Pietro Aretino, as well as other, perhaps more honest chroniclers of his time — as one of the most educated men of the Republic: "un gentilhuomo magnifico e dottore di filosofia clarissimo."⁸

No one has ever questioned that Daniele Barbaro was

the author of the program at Maser. Conclusive documentation of his role or the specifics of his instructions to Veronese have never come to light, but the secular subject matter, the interdependence of themes that refer metaphorically to family, State, and Church, as well as the particular literary bias expressed in the fresco complex of the villa, leave little room for challenge of the position traditionally given to Daniele.⁹

The Salone: The Macrocosm and Divine Love

As the plan of the Villa Barbaro (Fig. 1) establishes a spatial hierarchy in the *casa del padrone*, imparting to it a bilateral symmetry dominated by the cruciform hall (B in Fig. 1) and crowned by the *Salone* (A in Fig. 1) at the northern end, so too does the *Salone* establish its own hierarchy of images. In this so-called Sala dell'Olimpo, Palladio's centralized plan and Veronese's arrangement of the component images of his decorative scheme confirm the importance of the room and particularize the key to the *invenzione*. In the vault of the square space (Fig. 2), Veronese arranged the components of his composition in accordance with ancient, centripetal formulae, such as could be seen in the Domus Aurea and in modern solutions *all'antica* exemplified by the Stanza della Segnatura.¹⁰ In the Villa Barbaro, a single figure (Fig. 3) appears at the apex of a progression of images that moves from idealized landscape views on the walls (Fig. 4) through images of the Barbaro family above into the realm of pagan allegory. That central figure, clad in white, sits with open arms atop a dragon encircled

⁶ On the general and specific antique sources of inspiration that underlie the design of the Villa Barbaro — the temple of Fortuna Virilis and the ground plans of Roman *terme* — see, *inter alia*, T. Temanza, *Vita di Andrea Palladio vicentino egregio architetto*, Venice, 1762, fol. xi; Zorzi (as in n. 5), 177; Lord Burlington [Richard Boyle, 4th Earl of Cork], *Fabbriche antiche disegnate da Andrea Palladio* . . . , London, 1730; R. Wittkower, *Architectural Principles in the Age of Humanism*, London, 1952, 66ff.; D. Lewis, *The Drawings of Andrea Palladio*, exh. cat., National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., 1981, 138; and Reist (as in n. 2), chap. 3.

For passages by Vitruvius and Pliny the Elder that probably influenced the formulation of Veronese's decorative aesthetic *all'antica*, see *De architectura*, vii, v (trans. F. Granger, Loeb Library ed., London and Cambridge, Mass., 1970, II, 102) and the *Historiae naturalis*, xxxv, xxxvii (trans. H. Rackham, Loeb Library ed., London and Cambridge, Mass., ix, 1952, 346-48). The revival and reinterpretation of ancient wall painting styles in Renaissance villa decoration has been examined by J.S. Ackerman, "The Belvedere as a Classical Villa," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xiv, 1951, 70-79; J. Schulz, "Pinturicchio and the Revival of Antiquity," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, xxv, 1962, 35-55; and, with respect to the Villa Barbaro, A.R. Turner, *The Vision of Landscape in Renaissance Italy*, Princeton, 1966, 207.

⁷ For a complete outline of the government appointments held by Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro, see contributions by G. Albergio and F. Gaeta in the *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, vi, Rome, 1964, 89-95 and 110-12. Daniele's activities among the *letterati* of his generation were most pronounced during his years in Padua, first at the University and later as a founding member of the Accademia degli Infiammati (see M. Maylender, *Storia delle accademie d'Italia*, III, Bologna, 1929, 266ff.). During the same years, the 1540's, Barbaro wrote a *Dialogo della eloquenza* (published in Venice, 1557); completed translations and commentaries on works by Aristotle begun by his great-uncle Ermolao; produced his own commentary on Porphyry (*Exquisitae in Porphyrium commentationes*, Venice, 1542);

and began working on his translation and commentary of Vitruvius (*I dieci libri dell'architettura di M. Vitruvio*. . . , Venice, 1556). For accurate listings of Barbaro's unpublished writings, see G.M. Mazzuchelli, *Gli scrittori d'Italia*, II, Pt. 1, Brescia, 1758, 247-253; J. Morelli, *I codici manoscritti volgari della libreria Naniana*, Venice, 1776, 12ff.; *Lettere di Daniel Barbaro*, ed. S. Soldati, Padua, 1829; Laven (as in n. 5), bibliography. Additional citations of Barbaro's works may be found in Reist (as in n. 2), chap. 2. The most complete discussion of Marcantonio's career as a diplomat and humanist remains C. Yriarte, *La vie d'un patricien de Venise au seizième siècle*, Paris, 1874, despite inaccuracies in chronological data.

⁸ *Lettere sull'arte di Pietro Aretino*, ed. E. Camesasca, Milan, n.d., CCLXXXVI, II, 193.

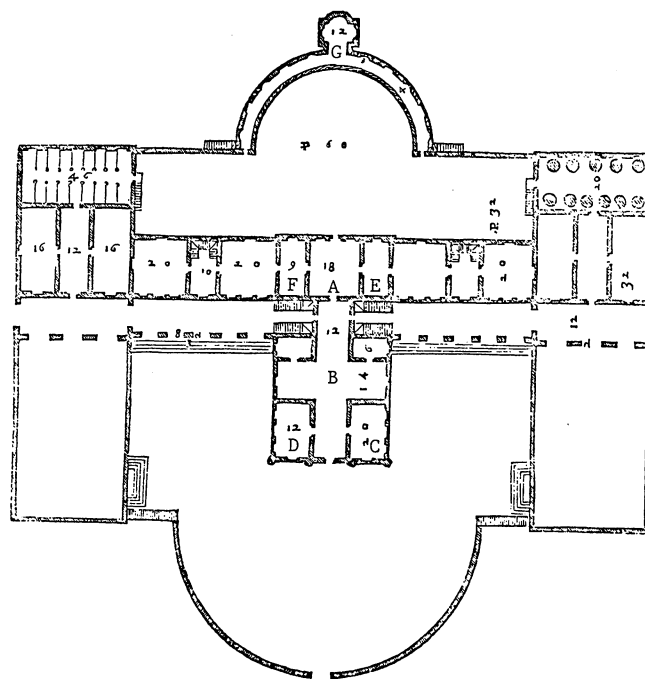
⁹ Among modern scholars who propose that Barbaro was responsible for the program at Maser are Cocke, 226, and T. Pignatti, *Veronese*, Venice, 1976.

¹⁰ Ridolfi (I, 310) states that "Paolo se ne passò à Roma col Signor Girolamo Grimano, Procuratore di S. Marco, di cui era familiare, destinato oratore al Pontefice, non tanto per veder secondo il comune costume le grandezze della corte, ma come Pittore le magnificenze degli edificij, le Pitture di Raffaello, le sculture di Michel-Angelo e le celebri statue in particolare, pretiose reliquie della Romana grandezza, sopra le quali pose alcuna osservazione, ammirando quell'eccellente forma, che fù sempre seguita & apprezzata dagli intendenti, e la venustà delle Imagini degli Heroi, da che trasse novelle impressioni, come poi dimostrò nelle opere, che appresso descriveremo, poiche le cose rare da lui vedute & osservate più si affinavano e acquistavano gradi di maggior perfettione nell'ingegno suo." Since the decorations of 1555-56 by Veronese in the Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci of the Ducal Palace are among the works "che appresso descriveremo [Ridolfi]," one may surmise that Veronese's Roman journey took place in 1555, when the notable Venetian antiquarian, prelate, and collector was known to have traveled to the papal city. On this matter, see further Cocke, 245.

by the planetary gods within a larger allegorical structure of the four elements (Figs. 5-8) and the four seasons (Figs. 9, 10), all in their Olympian guises. In her, the themes of the images painted on the walls and around her in the vault — both terrestrial and superterrestrial — coalesce. That she lies at the heart of any comprehensive reading of the program of the fresco complex in the Villa Barbaro has never been questioned, but her identity has remained elusive, despite our considerable knowledge of Daniele Barbaro's and Veronese's literary and iconographic points of view. Described variously as Earth, Eternity, Divine Wisdom, Thalia, the Muse of transcendent grace, and Aristodama, *Donna di bontà*, she personifies none of them.¹¹

As the tetrad formulations of the ceiling fresco suggest, this is a program founded on a Pythagorean-Platonic rationalization of universal harmony by means of four-part allegories. The deceptively clear arrangement of large figures inhabiting a spacious celestial setting depicts the natural world of the four seasons: winter with spring (Venus and Vulcan, Proserpina and Ceres), summer with autumn (Ceres with Bacchus). They appear behind the fictive balustrade in the same pictorial realm as that occupied by members of the Barbaro family. The personifications in the lunettes nevertheless stand apart from the Barbaro because of their heavenly setting. In keeping with the progression of tetrad relationships outlined by the ancient philosophers, Veronese portrayed the four elements: air as Juno, water as Neptune, earth as Cybele, and fire as Vulcan. Their position in the corners of the vault indicates their support of the cosmological system, while their placement in an intermediary register, between the earthly and celestial realms of the decorative system, conforms to the Pythagorean notion that the elements are the fundamental stuff of all harmonic systems, whether terrestrial or planetary.¹²

Beyond this happy mediation between Heaven and earth, the four elements convey a sense of the cosmos in its most desirable, yet most rarefied state: one of cohesive and absolute equilibrium. The disposition of the elements in the vault of the *Salone* corresponds exactly to the prescriptions for cosmic and terrestrial harmony outlined by every Pythagorean philosopher and sustained by later medieval and Renaissance authors, a scheme epitomized by woodcut illustrations for the *editio princeps* of Isidore of Seville's *De*



1 Andrea Palladio, plan of the Villa Barbaro (*I quattro libri dell'architettura*, Venice, 1570, II, xiii, 51)

rerum natura (1472) (Fig. 11) and Oronce Finé's *Protomathesis* (1532) (Fig. 12): earth lies opposite air, fire opposite water.¹³ The system incorporates as well other successful pairings that may be deduced from, and that in their turn contribute to, the harmonic structure of the universe: heat opposite cold, for example, dryness opposite moisture. The scheme expresses in visual terms just what Sperone Speroni, among countless others, observed in his *Dia-logo della discordia*:

Water may be described as the companion of fire, and air of earth, which are opposites. . . . The elements are discordant not only because this one might be heavy, that one light, some opaque, others diaphanous and transparent; but likewise opposite are hot and dry fire, hot and moist air, cold and moist water, cold and dry earth. This diversity is the reason that they constantly

¹¹ The identification of this figure as "Eternity," first asserted by L. Crico (*Lettere sulle belle arti Trivigiane*, Treviso, 1838, 94), persisted in much of the literature on the villa even until 1960, when A. Medea published her essay on the frescoes in *Palladio, Veronese e Vittoria a Maser*, Milan, 1960, 91. The identification of the figure as "Earth" was proposed, but never supported by another scholar, in P. Ormond, *Paolo Veronese: His Career and Work*, London, 1927, 49. Divine Wisdom is the identification given the figure by Ivanoff (1961, 99ff.), whereas Cocke (p. 231ff.) has suggested that the figure be read as Thalia. More recently, in an as yet unpublished paper, "Il significato della decorazione plastica e pittorica a Maser," presented in 1980 at the Centro Internazionale di Studi dell'Architettura Andrea Palladio, Vicenza, Douglas Lewis proposed that the figure be identified as Aristodama, in accordance with his reading of

Pausanias (*Description of Greece*, ed. W.H.S. Jones, London, 1935, II, x, 3, 298ff.). For further discussion of these interpretations, see below.

¹² On this aspect of Pythagorean thought, see, *inter alia*, Kirk and Raven, 119ff., 240ff., 326ff.; S.K. Heninger, Jr., "Some Renaissance Versions of the Pythagorean Tetrad," *Studies in the Renaissance*, VIII, 1961, 7-35; *idem*, *Touches of Sweet Harmony*, San Marino, 1974; and *idem*, *The Cosmographical Glass: Renaissance Diagrams of the Universe*, San Marino, 1977, 81-143.

¹³ The constructions for cosmic systems devised by Isidore of Seville (*De rerum natura*, Augsburg, 1472) and Oronce Finé (*Protomathesis*, Paris, 1532), as well as other medieval and Renaissance constructions based on the Pythagorean wheel, are discussed by Heninger (as in n. 12), 1961, 7ff.; and 1977, 32-33, 106-08.



2 Paolo Veronese, vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (photo: Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio [CISAAP])

combat and destroy one another.¹⁴

These elements, then, establish a tension that can control, and in Veronese's pictorial imagination, *contain* the planetary, cosmological allegory within the octagon of the *Salone* vault. From this foundation, moreover, the notion of striking a balance between opposing forces could extend to evaluations and juxtapositions of the planets and other celestial bodies. Pico della Mirandola explains, for instance, that Jupiter lies next to Saturn to abate the malignancy of the latter.¹⁵

Time and again Daniele Barbaro read about this system, saw diagrams of it, and incorporated it into his thought, finally to reevaluate it in accordance with his own understanding of natural and cosmological phenomena. In a letter dated 1550, Barbaro wrote:

Elemental nature is divided into four spheres, into fire, air, water and earth, and this is the constitution of the entire machine of the world with differentiated and perfect order. . . . The nature of the four elements needed to be reconciled and moved by a superior virtue, and therefore celestial nature was introduced, worthy, noble, and far from contrarities . . . and thus the Empyrean Heaven is all luminous; while the firmament, or starry Heaven, is mobile and multiformed, partly luminous and partly transparent, and the crystalline Heaven is mobile and uniform, and transparent throughout. I say, then, that the influences of Heaven can bring about the differentiated meaning of the years, the months, and the days, as they influence the production of things such as minerals, plants, animals . . . , as the Scriptures say. . . .¹⁶

Furthermore, in the final draft of his commentaries on Vitruvius, Barbaro incorporated an illustration (Fig. 13), apparently copied from Finé's *Protomathesis*, to accompany



3 Detail of Fig. 2



4 Paolo Veronese, frescoes of the walls and vault cove. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (from L. Crosato, *Gli affreschi nelle ville venete del cinquecento*, Treviso, 1962, pl. 11)

¹⁴ *Dialogi di M.S. Speroni nuovamente ristampati, & con molta diligenza riveduti & corretti*, Venice, 1543, fol. 88r ("Della Discordia"): "L'acqua si puo dir compagna al fuoco; & l'aere della terra, che sono contrarii. . . . Gli elementi sono discordi non solamente perche quello sia grave, questo leggiero, alcuni opaci, altri diaphani, & trasparenti; ma sono anchora contrarii il fuoco caldo & secco; l'aere caldo & humido; l'acqua fredda & humida; la terra fredda & secco. La qual diversità e cagione che di continuo combattano & distruggono insieme." It is important to note that this first edition of Speroni's dialogues was published at the insistence of Daniele Barbaro (see D. Rosand, *Painting in Cinquecento Venice: Titian, Veronese, and Tintoretto*, New Haven, 1982, 294, n. 103).

¹⁵ Pico, II, vi, fols. 17v-18r: "Venere fu posta in mezzo del cielo appresso ad Marte ad cioche havessi ad domare limpeto di quello il quale e di sua natura corruptivo & distruttivo cosi come anchora Giove, la malattia di Saturno. . . . Cioe la contrarieta de principij componenti a loro debiti temperamenti nessuna cosa mai si corromperebbe."

¹⁶ Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, mss Ital., I, 33, 4846 ("Lettere Teologiche di Daniele Barbaro"), reprinted in *Lettere di Daniele Barbaro* (as in n. 7), n.p.: "La natura elementare è divisa in quattro sfere, nel fuoco, nell'aere, nell'acqua, e nella terra, e quest'è la costituzione di tutta la macchina del mondo con ordine distinta e perfetta. . . . La natura de' quattro elementi la quale bisognava che fosse conciliata e mossa da virtù superiore, e pero è stata introdotta la natura celeste degna nobile lontana da contrarietà"

. . . e così è il cielo empireo tutto luminoso; ovvero mobile e multiforme, e così e il firmamento, cioè il cielo stellato, parte luminosa, parte trasparente, ovvero mobile ed uniforme ch'è il cielo cristallino trasparente per tutto. . . . Dico adunque che gli influssi del cielo possono fare distinta significazione degli anni, dei mesi e dei giorni, come dice la Scrittura. Influiscono anche alla produzione delle cose, come sono miniere, piante, animali. . . ."



5 Paolo Veronese, *Water-Neptune*, detail of vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (photo: CISAAP)



7 Paolo Veronese, *Earth-Cybele*, detail of vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (photo: CISAAP)



6 Paolo Veronese, *Air-Juno*, detail of vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (photo: CISAAP)

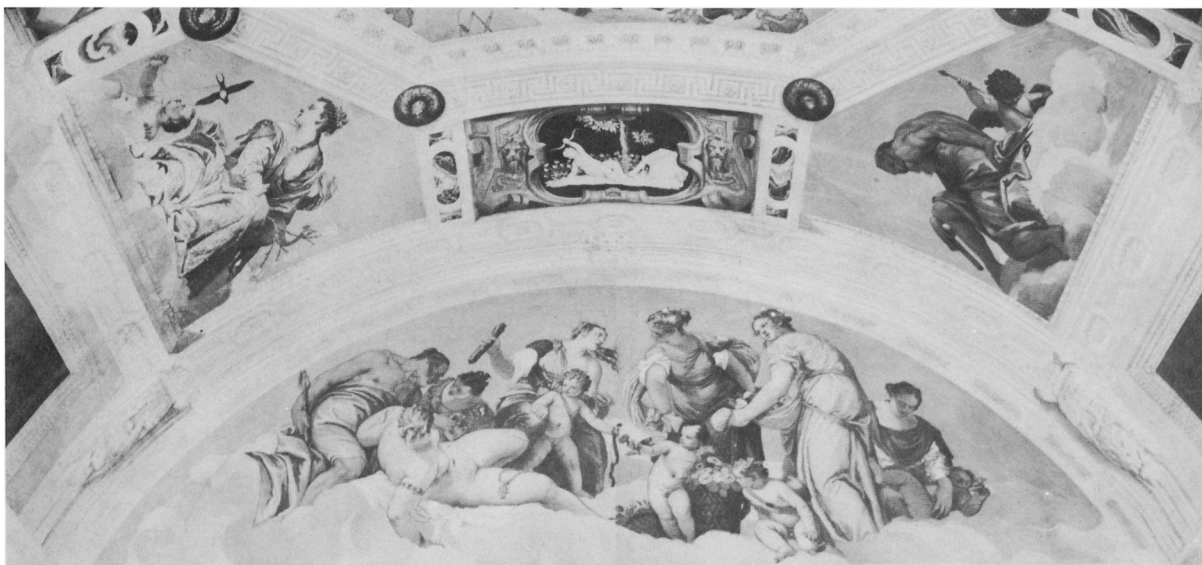


8 Paolo Veronese, *Fire-Vulcan*, detail of vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (photo: CISAAP)

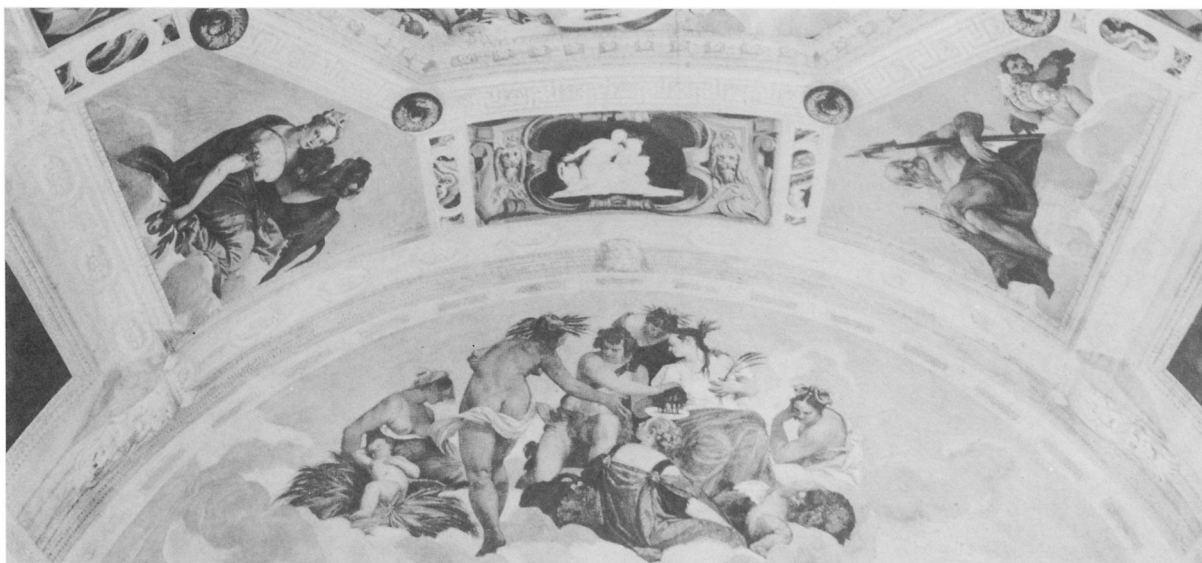
his and Vitruvius' remarks on the elements as the foundation of pre-Socratic cosmologies, the elements from whose "correspondence all things are born."¹⁷

¹⁷ Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, mss Ital., iv, 150, 5106, fols. 58r-v. In this manuscript draft of his remarks on the second book of Vitruvius, *De architectura*, Barbaro states that "Gl'elementi adunque sono l'uno nell'altro tramontabili, et di queglii ogni cosa corporea composta: Quattro sono, et si chiamano corpi semplici, e primi. Fanno questi una figura quadrangolare della quale si fa' poi piu d'una figura triangulare considerando in che discordino, et in che convenghino tra loro; ecco dal fuoco, dal aere, et dalla terra si fa' un triangolo per la convenienza, et contrarietà che si trova in essi il fuoco, et la terra convengono nella siccità, il fuoco, et l'aera nella caldità, l'aere et la terra sono contrarii per l'humore, et al siccità;

Similmente il fuoco, l'aere, et l'acqua fanno un triangolo co'cordano, il calore, et l'humidità, et discordano nel calore, et nella frigidità il fuoco, l'acqua, et la terra sanno il terzo triangolo, per la concordanza, et per la contrarietà del secco, et del caldo, et del freddo, et si come il fuoco ha fatto tre triangoli essendo comparato a'gli altri elementi, cosi parimente ciascuno de gl'altri elementi fara in tre triangoli. . . . Vedendosi adunque, che dal concorso di que' corpi nascono tutte le cose, e essendo quelli in infinite maniere di cose per natura distinti io ho pensato, che bisogno sia trattare della varietà, et differenza dell'uso loro, et che qualità habbino nel fabricare, accioche essendo conosciute erri: non quelli che di fabricare intendono." In his illustration, Barbaro omitted Finé's center image, the crowned dolphin, apparently recognizing what Heninger observes (1977, as in n. 12, 107), that Finé's dolphin was only to denote the author's pride in his appointment as Regius Professor in the Collège de France and in his birthplace, Le Dauphiné.



9 Paolo Veronese, *Winter-Spring*, lunette fresco. Villa Barbaro, Salone (photo: CISAAP)



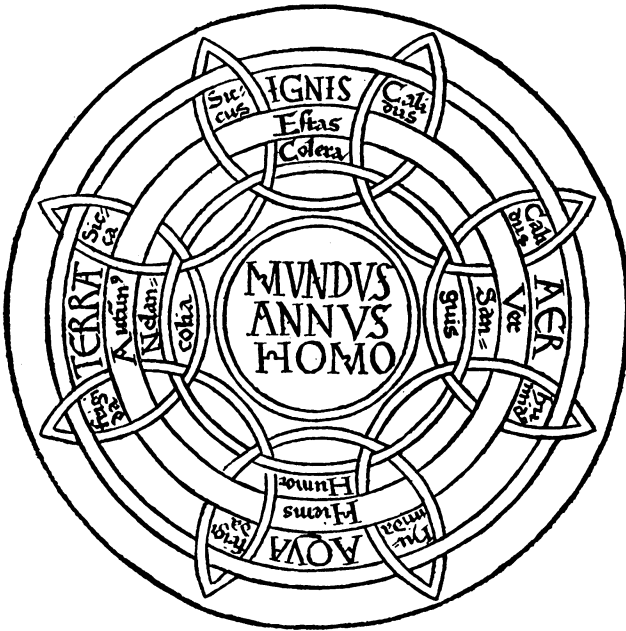
10 Paolo Veronese, *Summer-Autumn*, lunette fresco. Villa Barbaro, Salone (photo: CISAAP)

With only one exception, the Pythagorean philosophers of antiquity never mention a single "superior virtue" or deity that might be responsible for unifying the cosmos, for bringing these pairs of opposing forces into a state of perfect and harmonic equilibrium. Nor do early humanist philosophers such as Isidore provide central foci that can transcend the "world of man" to unify the planetary spheres and forces governed by the Zodiac. These philosophers thus offer no assistance in a search for the identity of the lady on the dragon in the vault of the Sala dell'Olimpo at Maser.

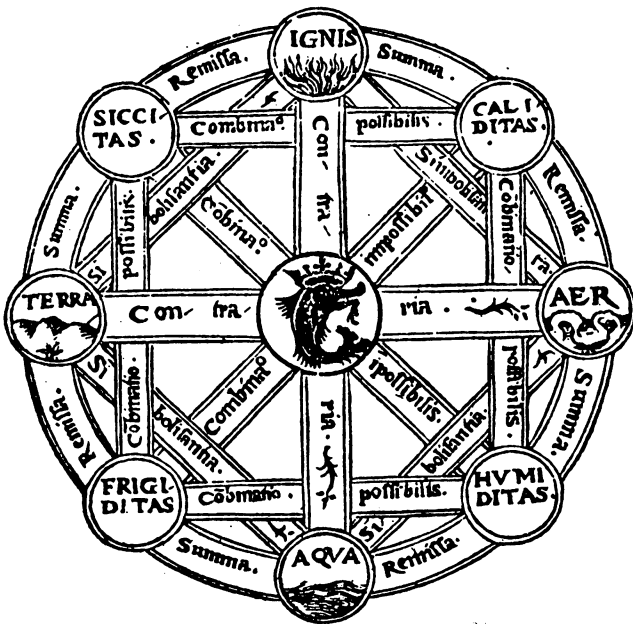
To identify the central figure of the fresco as a symbol of Eternity not only contradicts the fluctuations of the Pythagorean structure over which she presides, a structure in which Eternity has no place, but also contradicts traditional personifications of Eternity as a man with a snake.¹⁸ That she might be Thalia was postulated by Richard Cocke: it was his assumption that the eight *suonatrici* (Figs. 14-21) in the cruciform hall of the villa are Muses, as Carlo Ridolfi had proposed, and that to complete their number, the ninth must be she who reigns in the celestial realm of the ad-

¹⁸ This identification of the figure as Eternity, upheld in the critical literature on the villa until 1960 (see n. 11), did not apparently take into account images and descriptions of emblem books and their authors, such as Vincenzo Cartari, who described "Eternity" as a male figure or, alternatively, as a snake grasping its tail in its mouth (*Le imagini con*

la spositione de i dei de gli' antichi, Venice, 1556, fols. 8v-10r); in his later illustrated edition of the same book, Cartari again visualized this abstract quality as male, now of advanced age and seated on a cloud, encircled by a serpent biting its tail (*Imagini delli dei de gli' antichi*, Venice, 1647, 11).



11 Isidore of Seville, diagram of Tetrad Harmonies, from *De rerum natura*, Augsburg, 1472 (from S.K. Heninger, as in n. 12, fig. 66)



12 Oronce Finé, diagram of Pythagorean Tetrad, from *Protophesis*, Paris, 1532 (from Heninger, fig. 64)

joining room.¹⁹ This argument, like the casual observation by the seventeenth-century author on which it is based, ignores the lack of correspondence between the instruments held by the *suonatrici* and the traditional attributes of the Muses. Its chief flaw is, however, that Thalia has no role to play in that arena conceived and conjoined by paired opposites. Neither do iconographic components of the scheme of the decoration of one room logically "spill over" into entirely different iconographic contexts elsewhere in this villa. Moreover, Apollo's role in the vault composition, no different from that played by the other planetary gods, rules out the possibility that Veronese is here depicting Parnassus or Mt. Helicon. Later scholars have tried to identify a ninth Muse elsewhere in the villa, in the vault of the Stanza del Bacco, but there again the acceptability of the reading is jeopardized by the situation of Apollo in a separate composition, a different decorative level, and an ancillary role superficially unrelated to that of the "Muse."²⁰

For the past twenty years, the figure of the *Salone* vault has most often been identified as a personification of Divine Wisdom. The association derives principally from the resemblance between the figure in the Villa Barbaro and those painted by Anselmo Canera in the Palazzo Thiene in Vicenza (Fig. 22) and by Titian in the vestibule of the Libreria Marciana (Fig. 23).²¹ Canera's figure, however, appears in the sky with her traditional attribute, a snake, not a dragon, and she functions there not as part of a Pythagorean system, but rather as the central component of a purely astrological scheme. In fact, in the context of a Pythagorean program, based on balancing opposing qualities, *Divina Sapienza* plays no role: she has no clearly defined opposite, such as "universal ignorance," which might disrupt cosmic unity as *Sapienza* unites it.

¹⁹ The search for a complete, recognizable group of the nine Muses is founded on Ridolfi's assertion that the figures in the Sala della Crociera are Muses. Their instruments do not, however, correspond to those identified with the Muses, their number is too few, and their lack of leadership — the absence of Apollo — undermines Ridolfi's identification (I, 310). Cocke (pp. 231ff.) reasons that the presence of eight "Muses," as they are described by Ridolfi, in the cruciform hall of the villa demands and receives fulfillment by the principal figure of the *Salone* vault. To support his argument, Cocke refers to the woodcut illustration that first appears in Gafurius, *Practica musice*, Venice, 1518, fol. 94v; the illustration singles out Thalia at the base of the gathering at the three heads of a serpent. No dragon is in evidence, however, nor are the elemental and planetary components of the Pythagorean system portrayed in the comprehensive manner of the vault fresco in the Barbaro villa. Only Apollo and a semi-circular scheme of the four elements mark the extremes of the snake's form.

²⁰ For the most recent attempt to find the ninth Muse, see Puttfarken, 7-11.

²¹ Ivanoff (1961, 10) first asserted Divine Wisdom as the most logical identification for the figure in the *Salone* vault, and drew the comparison between the figure at the Villa Barbaro and that in a print published by Achille Bocchi (*Simbolicarum questionum*, Bologna, 1555), in which the female personification of *Sapienza* holds a mirror and is accompanied by a serpent (fig. 24). Later, Ivanoff (1970, 210ff., and 1976, 28ff.) argued that an even closer prototype for Veronese's figure at Maser exists in the image of *Sapienza* by Anselmo Canera in the Palazzo Thiene, Vicenza.

of this group, which manifests what the Empedoclean system prescribes: that she, Love, has conquered Hate or Strife which, if not disarmed by its opposite, would produce disorder and commit the cosmos to chaos. In early cosmologies — Hesiod's *Theogony*, for example — the dragon symbolized primordial chaos.²⁷ By the Middle Ages, the image developed a tradition both in a philosophical and Christian context: the one associating it with the embodiment of evil, the other with Satan.

The fact that this image of the all-conquering, all-unifying figure of Love offered a balance between classical and Christian metaphysics deepened its appeal to Renaissance humanists. Indeed, Empedocles' system was unusually compatible with Christianity by virtue of its commitment to the singular unifying power of Love, and Empedoclean ideas formed the cornerstone of the personal philosophies of numerous Renaissance thinkers and even music theorists. Therefore, men whose interests extended far beyond classical philology wove the Empedoclean cosmology into both their original and exegetical writings.²⁸

Giovanni Pico della Mirandola, in his commentary of 1486 on Girolamo Benivieni's *Canzona d'amore* . . . , provides an early example of this tendency to adapt an Empedoclean view to Renaissance thought:

Contrariety begins, without which nothing could be created, nor is contrariety and the discord of diverse natures sufficient to constitute the creature if (according to its established temperament) the contrariety does not become united and the discord concordant, which [process] one can with a true definition assign to Beauty itself, which is nothing other than an amicable inamicability

²⁷ On this aspect of Hesiod's thought and an analysis of Zeus' battle with the dragon Typhoeus as symbolic of the gods' attempts to establish order out of chaos, to define good and evil once and for all, see F.M. Cornford, "A Ritual Basis for Hesiod's *Theogony*," in *The Unwritten Philosophy and Other Essays*, Cambridge, 1950, 105-115.

²⁸ In addition, Empedocles stood as a champion of disciplines held as essential to a humanist education and he appealed to Renaissance *letterati* on that basis as well: Aristotle called Empedocles the inventor of Rhetoric, for example, and Galen had claimed him to be the founder of Italian medicine — the 16th-century capital of which was the University of Padua, where Daniele Barbaro had studied and designed the garden of medicinal plants.

²⁹ Pico, II, vi, fol. 17r-17v, and xii, fol. 22r: "Comincia la contrarietà senza laquale non può essere alcuna cosa creata . . . ne basta contrarietà, e discordia di diverse nature ad costituire la creatura se per debito temperamento non diventà & la contrarietà unita & la discordia concorde, il che si può per vera definizione assegnare di epsa Bellezza, cioè è che non sia altro, che una amica inimicizia & una concorde discordia. . . . Ma più perfettamente parla Empedocle ponendo non la discordia per se, ma insieme con la concordia essere principio delle cose, intendendo per la discordia la varietà della nature, diche loro si compongono; & per la concordia l'unione di quelle. . . . Per cose di sopra dichiarate e manifesto, perche da Orpheo e posto Amore nel seno del Chaos innanzi a tutti gli altri Dij; perche Chaos non significa altro che la materia piena di tutte le forme ma confuse ed imperfecta . . . e quasi indistincte . . . nel quale [chaos] nacque Amore, cioè desiderio della perfectione. . . ."

³⁰ As some of their polemical letters attest, Ermolao Barbaro and Pico were not always in agreement on philosophical matters; nonetheless, their correspondence was regular and their friendship was apparently unaf-

fect and a concordant discord. But Empedocles spoke more perfectly, positing as the beginning [the foundation] of all things not discord by itself, but discord together with concord, and intending by discord the variety of natures, of which [variety] they [the natures] are composed, and intending by concord the union of those natures. From what has been said above it is clear why Love is placed by Orpheus in the breast of Chaos before all the other gods: because Chaos is nothing but matter full of all the forms, but in a confused, imperfect, and undifferentiated state . . . in which Chaos Love was born, that is the desire for perfection.²⁹

Pico constituted an especially valuable source for the formation of Daniele Barbaro's personal philosophy for several reasons. Not only was this Tuscan philosopher a great friend and faithful correspondent of Barbaro's revered great-uncle Ermolao, but he had also demonstrated a lifelong interest in the Venetian strain of Christianized Aristotelianism.³⁰ Pico's independence from his sources, his ability purposefully to select elements of the thoughts of others to construct a personal philosophical manifesto, is just where he may have struck his most harmonious chord with Daniele Barbaro. Both sought a synthetic approach to their sources and both tended to use classical, pagan allegory to express universal, even Christian truths.³¹ In Barbaro's case, one can cite Aretino's praising remarks, penned to Daniele himself: "If the wisdom of your learned judgment concludes that beautiful and ancient spirits are renewed in Daniele's compositions, I hold it as dear as if such a praise were in honor of my own works. Thus you have contracted a great debt to nature, since your schol-

ected by occasional theoretical disputes. They shared an understanding of the new Aristotelianism, whose greatest exponents congregated in Padua and whom Pico no doubt met during his stay there from 1480 to 1482, and they both sought to reconcile Platonic and Aristotelian thought by studying the original texts. See, for example, Pico's letter to Ermolao in which he quotes Seneca to declare that "Diverti nuper ab Aristotele in Academiam, sed non transfuga ut inquit ille, verum explorator" (Picus, *Opera omnia*, Basel, 1572, 368). Moreover, Pico and Ermolao appear to have shared a profound interest in the work of Pliny the Elder: Pico commissioned a manuscript of the *Historia naturalis* for his personal library (Venice, Biblioteca Marciana, mss Lat., VI, 245, 2976, inscribed at its conclusion: "Hoc opus scripsit Nicolaus de Mascharinis de Ferraria ad instantiam magnifici comitis Johannis de la Mirandula anno MCCCCCLXXXI . . .") and Barbaro produced his own extensive *Castigationes Plinianae*, published in Rome, 1493. Ermolao's letters to Pico have been published by V. Branca in Ermolao Barbaro, *Epistolae, orationes et carmina*, Florence, 1943, I: xxiii, 35; xxiv, 38; lxviii, 84; lxxx, 100; lxxxi, 101ff.; and II: cxxxix, 60; cxli, 61, undated and unnumbered letters: 85, 91. Interesting analyses of the polemical correspondence of Barbaro and Pico may be found in Eugenio Garin, "Le interpretazioni del pensiero di Giovanni Pico," and P.O. Kristeller, "Giovanni Pico della Mirandola and His Sources," both in *L'opera e il pensiero di Giovanni Pico della Mirandola nella storia dell'umanesimo*, Florence, 1965, I, 3-33 and 35-142 respectively. See also B. Nardi, *Saggi sull'Aristotelismo padovano dal secolo XIV al XVI*, Florence, 1958; V. Branca, "Ermolao Barbaro and Late Quattrocento Venetian Humanism," in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. J.R. Hale, Totowa, N.J., 1973, 218-43.

³¹ For an analysis of the varied and often superficially incompatible source material used by Pico in formulating his own philosophical tenets, see Kristeller (as in n. 30), *passim*.



14-21 Paolo Veronese, *Suonatrici*, Villa Barbaro, Sala della Crociera (photos: CISAAP)



15

arship shines with your own works and not with those of others."³²

Renaissance writers who also accorded special importance to Empedocles and who developed this view of Divine Love as the essential unifier of the cosmos include, in addition to Pico, contemporaries of the Barbaro: Benedetto Varchi, Gioseffo Zarlino, and Natale Conti. In poetry, Varchi — Daniele's colleague in the *Accademia degli Infiammati* — demonstrated how the cosmology of Empedocles could be adapted to modern thought. One of his *Rime* that accompanies his translation (1551) of Boethius' *De consolatione philosophiae* is typical:

Only Love binds and holds united Heaven and earth, so that — if but for a second he loosens one rein — where now there is love and peace, there would be war, and the loss of that faith, which now the heavens and the elements direct onto the people, would be the cause of sudden ruin and destruction. Love still binds with firm friendships the villas and cities; it governs the marital

knot and dictates its laws to faithful friends, where all good resides. O happy mortal race, if it turn its heart in friendship to that sainted and divine love that turns the heavens.³³

In the context of mid-sixteenth-century music theory, Gioseffo Zarlino singled out the importance of Empedoclean thought when he wrote, "Music taken in its analogy, or proportion, is not other than Harmony; and we can say that it is that Strife and Love posited by Empedocles, from which according to him all things were generated, that is a discordant concord, or one might say a concord of various things all of which may be joined together."³⁴

Finally, in the *Mythologiae* by Natale Conti, a handbook useful to artists and authors of programs of the period, Empedocles again receives special mention and Divine Love claims her place at the top of the cosmic hierarchy:

Empedocles of Agrigentum introduced amity, the worker

³² Aretino (as in n. 8), CDLXVII, II, 254.

³³ Boezio Severino della consolatione della filosofia tradotto di lingua Latina in volgare fiorentino da Benedetto Varchi, Florence, 1551, 64-65: "Solo Amor lega, & tiene / Uniti & Cielo, & Terra / Onde (s'ei pur un punto il fren rallenti) / Quanto hor s'ama & mantiene / Pace, moveria guerra, / Et quella fede amici, ch'alle genti Il Cielo & gl'Elementi / Muove hor, venuta meno, / Saria cagion, che'ncontanente il tutto / Guasto fora, & distrutto: / Congiunge ancora Amor con amistadi / Ferme, ville, & Cit-

tadi, / E'al nodo marital pon costo freno / Detta ei sue leggi agnhora / A fidi Amici, ove ogni ben dimora. / O felice mortal gente, s'a quello / Santo, & divino Amore / che volge il Ciel, volgesse amica il core."

³⁴ Zarlino, 10: "Musica pigliata nella sua Analogia, ò proportionione, non è altro, che Harmonia; & potemo dire ch'ella sia quella Lite & Amicitia, che poneva Empedocle, dal la quale voleva, che si generassero tutte le cose cioè, una Discordante concordia, come sarebe [sic] dire, Concordia di varie cose, lequali si possono congiungere insieme."



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22 Anselmo Canera, *Sapientia*, ceiling fresco. Vicenza, Palazzo Thiene (from N. Ivanoff, "La Libreria Marciana," *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte*, vi, 1968, fig. 83)



23 Titian, *Sapientia*. Venice, Libreria Marciana (from Ivanoff, fig. 80)



24 Achille Bocchi, *Sapientia*, engraving from *Symbolicarum quaestionum de universo . . .*, Bologna, 1555 (from Ivanoff, fig. 82)

promoter, and dissension [strife] after the four elements, which he saw simply as the generation of matter, unproductive and useless in themselves. He thought strife the cause of corruption. However, Empedocles perceived amity and strife to be the two most powerful of the natural [first] principles. There can be no doubt, but suddenly indeed was Heaven made by God the Creator, set apart from other inferior bodies, so that the wise could contemplate; [all] at once were born amity and strife, which were believed to hide in that formless matter.³⁵

Empedoclean rationalizations of terrestrial and cosmic harmony thus may be understood as received philosophical knowledge in the mid-sixteenth century as they became assimilated into the conventions of Renaissance Christianized

³⁵ Comes, II, 52, 72: "Empedocles Agrigentinus post elementa quattuor, quae tanquam generationis materiam introduxit, quod viderat ea esse per se segnia & inutilia, amicitiam opificem & conciliatricem, dissidium corruptionis causam putavit. . . Nisi id quod sensit Empedocles Agrigentinus amicitiam & idssidium esse potentissima duo rerum naturalium principia.

Neque ulli dubium est, quin subito atque coelum fait ab opifice Deo creatum, & ab aliis corporibus inferioribus seiunctum, ut putarunt sapientes, statim nata sit lis & amicitia, quae intra illam informem materiam delitescere credebantur."

Pythagoreanism. The appearance in the Villa Barbaro of an *invenzione* based on an Empedoclean system is, therefore, entirely consistent with the mainstream of humanist thought of Barbaro's generation.

Supporting Themes: *Theatrum mundi*, *La Musica*, *Caritas*, *Pace*, *Concordia Barbaro*

Once the meaning of the vault fresco has been established, other aspects of the program of the Villa Barbaro can be interpreted in a new light. Naturally, the complexity of the imagery of each of the other five rooms of the *casa del padrone* suggests that the artist and the author of the program sought inspiration in more than Pythagorean philosophy *per se*. Nevertheless, as Empedoclean Love serves to bind together superficially unrelated forces in nature and the heavens, so, too, may it be regarded as the unifying component of the program at Maser.

In the fresco cycle of the Villa Barbaro, supporting themes intermingle as the program elucidates the progression from the Barbaro microcosm to the macrocosm of Love. Veronese designates specific strata of his decorative scheme as belonging to each level of this progression. He decorates the walls with fictive statuary and idealized landscapes, while he reserves the sectors on or above the entablature for allegorical figures relating to the Barbaro and to specifically human endeavors and emotions. Only in the vaults does Veronese elaborate the metaphysical, purely conceptual levels of the meaning of Divine Love. And in those vault decorations he takes full advantage of the protean nature of Empedoclean Love as it metamorphoses to saturate the Barbaro, Venetian, and Christian imagery in this domestic setting.

The central position of the figure in the *Salone* vault, among the planetary gods, recalls that she performs her role as unifier in the *Theatrum mundi*. Once again, Renaissance thinkers elaborate upon philosophical constructions analogous to what Veronese visualizes above us: Pico reminds his reader that Love was born when the gods assembled to celebrate Venus' birthday ("Amore essere nato nel li orti di Giove ne natali di Venere . . . & essendo tucti li Dij nel convito posti ad mensa. . .").³⁶ At Maser, Ve-

ronese also depicts Love surrounded by the Olympian planetary gathering, though in his interpretation Love appears as the pagan goddess herself, not as her son. In this image Divine Love rationalizes planetary harmony and the cohesion of the dome of Heaven that traditionally encloses the *Theatrum mundi*.³⁷

As an interlocutor in one of Sperone Speroni's *Dialoghi*, Daniele Barbaro described how each man plays his part in the cosmic theater: "Finally, we mortal men and women stand on earth, rather in the center of a kind of theater; and all around and on every side of the heavens sit the gods, all intent on observing the tragedy of our existence."³⁸ Thus the inhabitant of the villa — the Barbaro and any visitor — enacts his "tragedy" upon the Palladian stage, observed by the gods "on every side of the heavens." In keeping with this theatrical metaphor, then, Veronese portrayed members of the Barbaro family (Fig. 25) in the gallery above the stage of their villa-theater, themselves positioned under the observant eyes of the Olympian gods.

Decorating the walls of that stage are idealized landscape views, one of which incorporates the Barbaro villa itself (Fig. 26). These views enhance the metaphor of the patrician villa as a paradise on earth.³⁹ Divine Love was purportedly born in Paradise, in the very arena that Renaissance villa iconographers wished to recreate.⁴⁰ The earthly paradises that Veronese visualizes, which are bound to no particularized framework of time or place, correspond to general prescriptions for landscape decoration by Pliny the Elder and Vitruvius.⁴¹ They recall in addition the Empedoclean image of the world of harmony and the realm of Divine Love where nature "streams forth the green and firm . . . each through Love draws near and yearns for each. For from these elements hath budded all that was or is or evermore shall be — trees, and men and women, beasts and birds, and fishes nourished in deep waters. . . ."⁴²

By its very nature, the Empedoclean basis of the program of the Sala dell'Olimpo calls for the consideration of many branches of mathematics and philosophy that the pre-Socratics and Barbaro's circle viewed as being interdependent. Included and perhaps most important among these is music. In fact, musical harmony, meaning both the harmony

³⁶ Pico, II, xi, fol. 20r.

³⁷ Of special note among the numerous modern studies on ancient and Renaissance opinions of the dome of Heaven and the *Theatrum mundi* are K. Lehmann, "The Dome of Heaven," *Art Bulletin*, xxvii, 1945, 1-27; F. Yates, *Theater of the World*, Chicago, 1969; L. Puppi: "Gli spettacoli all'Olimpico di Vicenza dal 1685 all'inizio dell' '600," in *Studi sul teatro veneto fra Rinascimento ed età barocca*, ed. M. T. Muraro, Florence, 1971, 73-96; "Le esperienze sceneografiche palladiane prima dell'Olimpico," *Bollettino del Centro Internazionale di Studi d'Architettura Andrea Palladio*, xvi, 1974, 287-299; and "La copertura e la fracciata del Teatro Olimpico," *Commentari*, xxvi, Nos. 3-4, 1975, 310-332.

³⁸ Speroni (as in n. 14), fol. 46v: "Finalmente . . . noi siamo in terra huomini, & donne, quasi in mezo di qualche theatro; e d'ogn'intorno per ogni parte del cielo siedono li Dei, tutti intenti a guardare la tragedia dell'esser nostro."

³⁹ See, for example, L. B. Alberti, *I libri della famiglia*, III, ed. C. Grayson, Bari, 1960, 220.

⁴⁰ This assertion appears in Pico, fols. 20r-21v: "Amore essere nato nel li orti di Giove . . . quella luogho è chiamata Orti di Giove, cioè perche in quella sono piantata le Idee non altrimenti che li arbori in uno orto & diqui nasce che epsa mente angelica adornata già di epse Idee dalli antichi fu chiamata Paradiso che è vocabulo graeco & significa quel che appersso di noi giardino, et coloro che tucti sono nella vita intelletuale et elevati già sopra la natura humana simili facti alli angeli, sinutriscono del contemplare, furono decti essere in Paradiso, alla qual vita contemplativa & felicità eterna exortandoci Zoroastre esclama, cerca, cerca el paradiso. . . . Sono adunque li orti di Giove quella essentia informe & in epsa della perfectione delle Idee che è epso forò mixta con la imperfectione di epse, & indigentia dello essere perfecte, laqual nasce dalle imperfecta natura di quella essentia, nacque Amore cioe desiderio della perfectione di quellà, ne prima nacque amore che ne natali di Venere. . . ."

⁴¹ See above, n. 6.

⁴² Empedocles (fragment 21), 24ff.



25 Paolo Veronese, *Guistiniana Giustiniani and Attendant*, detail of *Salone* vault, Villa Barbaro (photo: CIAASP)



26 Paolo Veronese, landscape fresco. Villa Barbaro, *Salone* (photo: CISAAP)

of the spheres and the harmony of the instruments that mortals play, holds a position of great importance in the iconography of the Villa Barbaro. It is known that Daniele Barbaro was aware of the philosophical implications of the nature of music, because in his edition of Vitruvius he commented on the relationship between the Pythagorean elements and the audible fundamentals of the tetrachord, between their conceptual weight and musical tempo, between notional and sensory concordance.⁴³ Palladio's illustration of the Villa Barbaro in the *Quattro libri* encourages one to deduce that every space in the villa was determined in accordance with the laws of harmony and proportion formulated by the Pythagoreans and reevaluated in the sixteenth century in Barbaro's Vitruvius and Zarlino's *Istitutioni harmoniche*.⁴⁴ Such concern over proportion as Palladio, Barbaro, and contemporary architectural and music theoreticians expressed suggests that they attached cosmic, or at least metaphysical import to such proportionate relationships. As Barbaro phrased it: "Le regole adunque dell'Arithmetica che fanno la Musica con l'Astrologia congiunte, perche la proportion e commune, & universale in tutte le cose atte a esser numerate. . . ."⁴⁵ Francesco Giorgi, in *De harmonia mundi totius*, specifically ex-

⁴³ Barbaro, v, iiiii, 144: "Certo è che ogni ordinanza di Musica e composta de suoni, Suono e cadimento, ò qualità indivisibile delle voce, la cui quantità ò grandezza è certa, è determinata, e principio della melodia, & in quello come in proprio elemento ogni concerto si rivolge. De i suoni altri sono estremi, altri di mezzo nelle ordinanze. De gli estremi altri sono gravissimi, sotto i quali piu basso non si va, altri acutissimi, sopra i quali piu alto non si va nelle perfette ordinanze. Di quelli di mezzo altri sono gravi, & acuti rispetto a gli altri, gravi se riguardano à i piu alti, acuti se riguardano à i piu bassi, chiamansi adunque alti, & bassi per comparatione, come tra gli elementi l'acqua rispetta alla terra è lieve, rispetto al fuoco è grave, & cosi l'aere comparato à l'acqua è leggieri, al fuoco è grave, ma la terre è gravissima, il fuoco leggerissimo, perche sotto quella niuna cosa soggiace, sopra questo niente sopra stà, & forse da questa simiglianza sono state ritrovate le prime quattro voce ò suoni, che fanno un Tetracordo. I suoni acuti nascono da veloci e spessi, i gravi da tardi, è rari movimenti, come si prova sperimentando che una corda piu tirata è piu veloce, & una piu rimessa, è piu tarda."

⁴⁴ Wittkower (as in n. 6), 118ff. The most recent and most rigorous analysis of Palladio's theory and practice in the use of harmonic proportion is D. Howard and M. Longair, "Harmonic Proportion and Palladio's *Quattro libri*," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, xli, 1982, No. 2, 116-43. In his published measurements for the Villa Barbaro (*I quattro libri dell'architettura*, II, xiii, 51), Palladio defines a variety of ideal musical proportions, some of which have been outlined by Wittkower. These include not only ratios recommended by ancient music theorists — the octave, fifth, and fourth — but also the major and minor tones and intervals such as the major and minor third, which became acceptable only during the mid-16th century. That the villa may be regarded as a successful harmonic balance of the fifth and third, that is of the principal components of *l'harmonia perfetta* as it was defined by Zarlino (III, lix), and that Daniele Barbaro's comments in the Vitruvius (v, iiiii, 142) emphasize harmonic characteristics evident in Palladio's plan, are discussed by Reist (as in n. 2), chap. 3. This posits readings of the harmonic ratios of the room suites of the villa which, though different from Wittkower's in their concentration on correlations between Palladio, Barbaro, and Zarlino, do not challenge the fundamental conclusions of Wittkower's analysis.

⁴⁵ Barbaro, 17.

plains how each element relates to a musical interval and concludes,

However, the proportion of fire to water and of air to earth is full of certain qualities of contrariety and consonance is somewhat lacking. Regarding this proportion, the elements are arranged in their own order; where two always come together by means of an intermediary; to the extent that it [each] shares from both sides in such a way that experts can measure.⁴⁶

And later Zarlino wrote, "Music, therefore, has been much celebrated and held as something sacred . . . the world is composed musically and the heavens in their turning are the cause of harmony, and our soul — formed by the same force — is awakened by songs and sounds that impart virtue to it . . . and thus music embraces all the disciplines."⁴⁷

Veronese also expounds upon this theme of harmony in several of the rooms of the *casa del padrone* of the villa and exploits the fluidity of Palladio's spaces to unify and direct the reading of his imagery. As the ground plan urges one to move southward from the *Salone*, so, too, do Veronese's pictorial rejoinders. For example, once one has accepted the visualizations of notional harmony in the Pythagorean imagery of the *Salone*, one naturally turns and moves toward sensory, earthbound evocations of musical harmony embodied in the eight life-sized *suonatrici* of the cruciform hall (Figs. 14-21). Moving farther south, one encounters more variations on the harmonic theme and the theme of Divine Love. In the so-called Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore or Stanza degli Sposi (C in Fig. 1), Veronese uses adjacent compositions (Figs. 27 and 28) to illustrate a no-

tion recorded by Natale Conti, that *Harmonia* is the daughter of Venus and Mars and that every facet of the micro- and macrocosm depends on Harmony for movement, peace, and the perpetuation of the Ideal of Paradise, of Elysium:

Harmony is called the daughter of Venus and Mars, because the power of music will not only raise dejected spirits and pervade with sweetness the failure and wretchedness of oppressed humanity, but [will] also inflame the spirit of the valiant to war. . . . They considered Harmony to be that which the Pythagoreans believed to be made of [the] celestial bodies in the movement of the spheres. Now it extends to morals as well. The ancients indicated that it is proper to use fortitude and prudence since in this miserable life we are full of annoyances and travail; [and] as the aim of all human activity is fixed, never is God likely to fail stalwart men; [consider], for example how after every trouble Jupiter sent old Cadmus and Harmony to the Elysian fields.⁴⁸

Thus Venus, or Beauty, from which Divine Love generates, is, now citing Pico, "The same as Harmony"⁴⁹ and ensures the stability of the cosmos against the discordant forces of strife. In fact, beyond these associations between Divine Love and Harmony, recent analyses of the iconography of this room have established that the harmony here alludes as well to terrestrial love and concord, expressed in the nuptial rites of men and, more particularly, in Marcantonio's marriage to Giustiniana.⁵⁰

Across the room, also above the entablature, and facing

⁴⁶ F. Giorgi, *De harmonia mundi totius*, Venice, 1525, III, xvii, fol. xlvi: "Deficit tamen aliquantulum consonantia & proportio ignis ad aquam; & aeris ad terram, quibus inest plena in qualitatibus contrarietas, ab ea proportionem, qua habent elementa suo ordine collocata: & ubi duo semper conveniunt per intermedium: quod de utroque participat ut supputare possunt experti."

⁴⁷ Zarlino, II, ii, 4: "La Musica adunque quanto sia stata celebrata & tenuta per cosa sacra . . . il mondo esser composto musicalmente, e i Cieli nel girarsi esser cagione di armonia & l'anima nostra con la medesima ragione formate, per i Canti & Suoni destarsi & quasi ivi ficar le sue virtue . . . conciosia che la Musica abbraccia tutte le Discipline. . . ."

⁴⁸ Comes, I, 661: "Harmonia dicta est Veneris & Martis filia, quoniam vis musicae non solum erigit animos iacentes, & calamitatum miseriarumque humanarum cumulis oppressos, suavitateque quadam persundet, sed etiam ad bellum viriles animos inflammat. . . . Harmoniam esse putarunt eam, quam Pythagorici in motibus sphaerarum, corporumque coelestium fieri crediderunt. Quod autem ad mores pertinet significabant antiqui, dum sumus in hac miserrima vita omnium laborum ac molestiarum plenissima, fortitudine & prudentia uti oportere, quod omnium humanarum actionum statutus est finis, neque unquam Deus viris bonis & fortibus solet deesse, cum senem Cadmum & Harmoniam Iupitur post omnes molestias ad Elysios campos demiserit."

⁴⁹ Pico, II, vi, fol. 17r: "quel decoro, & quel l'armonia, & quella temperanza, che risulta de quella proportionata commitione, si chiama Bellezza. E concio sia che ogni cosa creata sia composta, & sia con tanta debita ragione, & proportionem composta quanto possibil sia alla natura

di quella cosa, puessi secondo il modo predecto chiamare bella ciascuna cosa creata, non essendo epsa bellezza altro che quel temperamento, il quale è causa, che quelle nature benche diverse, & varie, pur convengano, e concordano insieme ad comporre una natura."

⁵⁰ Puttfarken (pp. 2-7) proposes that this fresco, in his view a representation of, from left to right, Juno, Hymenaeus, Venus, a bridal couple with the father of the bride, should be read as a celebration of the marriage of Marcantonio Barbaro and Giustiniana Giustiniani. Problems with this interpretation arise, however, first in the apparent equality of age among the group on the right (this Puttfarken dismisses with the alternative proposal that Daniele is here acting as proxy for the bride's father, even though his own and Giustiniana's fathers were still living at the time of the marriage); secondly, in the superficial equivalence of dress and bearing of mortals and Olympians; thirdly, in Juno's lack of identifying attributes and her secondary role in a composition depicting marriage, the institution of which she is the principal patron; and lastly, in Veronese's assumed departure from the decorative scheme established elsewhere in the villa, which confines images of identifiable mortals to areas below the cornice or, in the case of the *Salone*, to a separate realm altogether. It therefore seems likely that if these figures refer to mortals, as for example the Lares establish an analogy to vintners learning their craft, they do so in a general way with no specific reference to Barbaro personalities. It is, after all, unlikely that a breach in formal and iconographic decorum would permit a portrayal, however metaphorical, of a specific event in Barbaro history. Some of the contradictions in Puttfarken's reading are discussed by Crosato, 210-230.



27 Paolo Veronese, vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore or degli Sposi (photo: CISAAP)

the image of *Harmonia*, or *La Musica*, Veronese painted a personification of *Caritas* (Fig. 29) offering vessels emblazoned with Barbaro *stemmi*. This figure signifies the concord of the Barbaro household even more directly than the allegory above and, at the same time, recalls the compatibility of pagan and Christian concepts of Love or Charity.⁵¹

In the Stanza del Bacco (D in Fig. 1), opposite, one again encounters references to the Barbaro and their estate, which are associable with the metaphysics of the *invenzione* of the *Salone*. There, the Lares, the gods charged with maintaining the well-being of the house, participate in an allegory of the cultivation of the grape (Fig. 30).⁵² On one level, the scene refers to Maser's wine production, but its location in the center of the vault and its Olympian vocabulary suggest a broader reading. It has been posited that the ancillary figures, the slumbering man and youthful music-making female descending toward him with a triumvirate of *amorini*, might be identified as the ninth Muse serenading *Sonno*.⁵³ Given Veronese's conscious allocation of human and divine space for his decorative scheme, it is implausible to suggest that this Muse, who plays the same instrument as one of the *suonatrici* (Fig. 14), has strayed from the wall niches of the *crociera* to the vault of an adjacent room.

⁵¹ See, for example, the well-known passage from Saint Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, 13: 1-13. This figure is not identified as *Caritas* by Crosato (p. 220), who prefers to read the image in association with numismatic representations of *Felicitas*. In Roman coinage, however, *Felicitas* is not traditionally pictured with a bare breast; moreover, she holds children in her arms. The figure at Maser, by contrast, is surrounded by children, none of whom she holds, and she obviously prepares to give them nourishment, not from a cornucopia, but from her bared breast. For Crosato (pp. 230-32), this reading of *Felicitas* is important to furthering her argument that the program of the Villa Barbaro is essentially dependent on Renaissance sources — principally Francesco Barbaro's *De re uxoria*, Boccaccio, and, above all, the *Tabula Cebetis*.

⁵² These figures were first identified as the Lares or household gods by Ivanoff (1976, 29ff.). Veronese's representations respond, as Ivanoff observes, to the inscription on the door lintel of the Stanza del Bacco, "GENIO ET LARIBUS," and corresponds as well to the description of the dogskin-clad Lares in Cartari's 1556 publication: "Per lo più erano stimati



28 Paolo Veronese, *Harmonia* or *La Musica*, fresco of vault cove. Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore or degli Sposi (photo: CISAAP)

Moreover, logical as the identification of *Sonno* in the context of a Bacchic tableau might be, the placement of Apollo in a separate, secondary composition at the cornice level of the room (Fig. 31) militates against the supposition that the musical follower of Bacchus is here figured as a Muse.

If one returns to the private, northern end of the villa to look again at the lunette representing summer and autumn, one discovers that, in contrast to the secular iconography of the Stanza del Bacco, the grape and grain held by Bacchus and Ceres may here transmit a potentially more spiritual message through their Eucharistic associations. Thus the vineyards of the Barbaro estate, or at least the wines they produce, may take their place in the progression from the microcosm of this villa to the macrocosm of Divine Love, now in a Christian as well as classical context. Similarly, the fictive cameos set between the four elements in the vault composition and traditionally identified as personifications of Abundance, Fertility, Profane Love, and Fortune, establish a bond between the regenerative power made possible by the cosmos governed by Love and that which has resulted from the union of Marcantonio and Giustiniana and the abundance of the Barbaro estate.

Daniele Barbaro's vocation as a cleric and Patriarch Elect

i Lari custodi privati delle case et erano perciò fatti in forma di giovanetti vestiti con pelle di cane che habbino a piedi pur anco il cane." Natale Comes also describes the Lares in connection with their dogs and includes references to their association with wine and flowers (p. 196: "Erat praeterea consuetudo, uti Laribus vinum & thuris odor offerretur, ex ornarenturque; varijs florum coronis: quibus dijs eitam aliquando offerebantur soluti flores & primatiae frugum.") For a most thorough treatment of the Lares and Genii in ancient Roman literature and religious practice, see G. Wissowa, *Religion und Kultus der Römer*, Munich, 1971, 173-79. The identification of the Lares has not been challenged by recent authors on the villa, notably Puttfarken and Crosato. The latter has, however, linked the Lares to Fortuna and thus to a more explicitly Christianized interpretation of the allegories at Maser based on the *Tabula Cebetis* (Crosato, 230-34). Puttfarken ignores the issue, offering no specific identification of these figures at all.

⁵³ Puttfarken, 7-11.



29 Paolo Veronese, *Caritas*, fresco of vault cove. Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Tribunale d'Amore or degli Sposi (photo: CISAAP)



30 Paolo Veronese, vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Bacco (photo: CISAAP)

of Aquileia encourages the viewer of these frescoes to search for a Christian interpretation of their essentially pagan program. Divine Love, born in Paradise, may evoke the new Eve or, more precisely, the Marian image of the Apocalyptic woman of Revelation who "appeared in heaven . . . clothed with the sun."⁵⁴ Her dragon, the symbol of the primordial chaos engendered by Empedocles' Strife, can thus be viewed as a metaphor for the Devil himself, described in Revelation as "the great dragon . . . that old serpent called the Devil and Satan which deceiveth the whole world."⁵⁵

The image of the Satanic dragon vanquished by Christian Love had appeared as part of Marian imagery and the iconography of the Christian virtue Amity well before Veronese devised his decorative solution at Maser. Although proximate examples from sixteenth-century Italian villas are not known, an analogous association of Christian Love and demonic serpents may be cited in a drawing in the British Museum by Adrian Janssens depicting a Triumph of Divine Love as a female personification holding a lamb and riding over a dragon (Fig. 32).⁵⁶

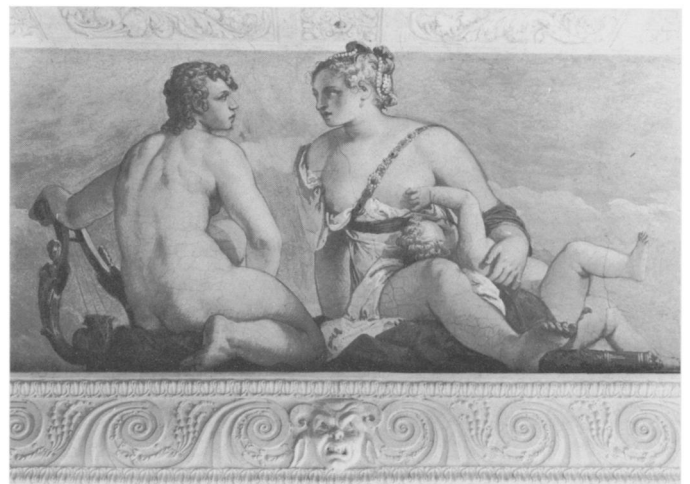
For literary support of a Christianized view of Divine Love, one may consult so revered a work of Italian poetry as Dante's *Paradiso*, in which the poet describes his image of Love, the organizing, ruling force of the *Primum mobile*:

The nature of the universe which still
The center and revolves all else, from here,
As from its starting-point, all movement wills.

This heaven it is which has no other 'where'
Than the Divine Mind: 'tis but in that Mind
That love, its spur, and the power it rains inhere.

The light and love which round this circle wind,
As it enfolds the rest, He comprehends
By Whom alone such girdle is confined.

This circle's motion takes no measurements
From other spheres beneath, but theirs computes. . . .⁵⁷



31 Paolo Veronese, *Apollo and Venus*, fresco of vault cove. Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Bacco (photo: CISAAP)

Pico, too, emphasizes the association between Divine Love and the Christian Godhead in comments such as this:

Having explained that which was to be understood about celestial and angelic love, we shall move on to declare the nature of that love which is properly an image of this one, thus: as the ideas descend into the angelic mind from heaven, that is from God, and thereby is born in it [the angelic mind] the love of intellectual beauty, so the same ideas descend from the angelic mind into the rational soul. These ideas are as much more imperfect than those that are in the angelic mind as the [mortal] soul and ra-

⁵⁴ "The Revelation of Saint John the Divine" (King James version), 12:1.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 12:9.

⁵⁶ A.M. Hind, *Catalogue of Drawings of Dutch and Flemish Artists . . . in the British Museum*, London, v, 1932, 144.

⁵⁷ *La divina commedia, Paradiso* xxvii, 106-116, trans. D. Sayers and B. Reynolds, Harmondsworth, 1962, 294.



32 Adrian Janssens, *Triumph of Divine Love* (photo: British Museum)

tional nature [of men] are more imperfect than the angel and intellectual nature, from which both nature and name change, as was declared in the first book.⁵⁸

In Christian imagery, Mary serves as the parallel of Empedocles' Divine Love. Like the secular personification, Mary, in her role as the new Eve, overpowers the serpent and becomes the vehicle for imparting order to the world through Christ's initiation of the era of grace, of Love.

It has already been noted that Veronese recapitulates different aspects of Divine Love in other rooms of the villa. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that the evocation of the power of Christian Love by an essentially pagan image should be reinforced by the appearance of Mary herself in the Holy Family compositions (Figs. 33 and 34) in the chambers adjoining the *Salone*. These images serve both

as objects of devotion and as models for emulation by the villa residents. The humanity manifest in the Holy Family groups, together with their location at the lunette level of the decorative scheme, a level equivalent to the realm of the Barbaro in the *Salone*, suggest that they provide an important iconographic link between the figure of Divine Love in the vault and the human and Christian Love of the Barbaro family members below. In the case of the eastern room, the so-called Stanza della Lucerna (E in Fig. 1), Christian devotion is even more explicitly visualized in the ceiling allegory of Faith (Fig. 35).

For Venetian patricians, multiple references to the Virgin Mary and Venus could not but conjure up the image of *Venetia*. Those facets of Divine Love presented elsewhere in the villa thus prepare the viewer for the frescoed correlative of the allegory of Faith. That composition (Fig. 36), in the so-called Stanza del Cane (F in Fig. 1), west of the *Salone*, depicts *Venetia* as Veronese and his contemporaries most often portrayed her, atop the globe accompanied by her faithful lion.⁵⁹ Viewed together, the images of Faith and *Venetia* may allude in general terms to the compatibility of Church and State functions in Venice and more specifically to Daniele and Marcantonio Barbaro's twofold contribution to Church and State as diplomats and, in Daniele's case, as Patriarch Elect of Aquileia. Moreover, as Love was, according to Pico, born on Venus' birthday and Venice — like Venus born from the sea — was founded on a day of comparable conceptual importance in the Christian calendar, Annunciation Day, Veronese's imagery logically suggests an association between Love and the domain of *Venetia*.⁶⁰

As Love is the mediator of Peace in a Strife-ridden cosmos, *Venetia* acts as the agent of Peace on earth. Daniele Barbaro is himself documented as having contributed to Ducal Palace decoration an iconographic program in which the image of Venice is associated with pagan personifications of Peace. In the Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci, the paint-

⁵⁸ Pico, II, xxii, fol. 30r: "... expedito quello che dello amore celeste et angelico era da intendere passareno ad dichiarare la natura di quello amore che e propriamente una imagine di questo, cosi adunque; come dal cielo cioe da Dio descendono nella mente angelica la idea, & per questo nasce in epsa amore di bellezza intellettuale, cosi della mente angelica descendono nell' anima rationale le medesime idee, le quali sono tanto piu imperfette di quelle che sono nella mente angelica quanto l'anima & la natura rationale e piu imperfecta dello angelo & della natura intellettuale, di che mutano & natura & nome come fu nel primo libro dichiarato." Pico's reference to his first book of the *Commento* is to his discussion of divine and human love in I, ii, fols. 14ff.

⁵⁹ There is some disagreement as to whether or not this figure should be identified as *Venetia*: Medea describes her as *Abbondanza*, defending her riches from *Fortezza* and *Invidia*. Douglas Lewis has more recently asserted that this figure should be identified with the Pausanian goddesses of Fortune, *Agathos Daimon* and *Agatha Tyche*, as she stands here for good fortune withheld from the grasp of men. (This interpretation was proposed on March 6, 1982 in a paper on the iconography of the Villa Barbaro presented to the Art History Student Union of Columbia University, a paper that develops a primarily Pausanian interpretation of the villa's fresco and nymphaeum sculpture programs and proposes that the principal figure in the vault of the *Salone* be identified as Aristodama.) A prototype for *Fortuna* pictured nude atop the globe was known to Ve-

ronese in the tondo of the Libreria by Giuseppe Porta, but there the personification appears blindfolded with no lion at her side. The visual evidence of Veronese's fresco in the Stanza del Cane at Maser is perhaps more easily associated with the precedent set at the Ducal Palace in the Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci by Zelotti's image of *Venetia*. Moreover, the surrounding personifications in the Stanza del Cane — Time with History and Merit with Truth — refer more logically to Daniele and Marcantonio's service to the Republic as Historian and Senator respectively than to the notion of deprivation by *Fortuna*, as Lewis has suggested.

⁶⁰ The multifaceted interpretations of the personification of *Venetia* have only recently been examined with respect to State iconography: S. Sindig-Larsen discusses the iconography of *Venetia* in relation to the Christian imagery of the Ducal Palace decorations produced after the fires of 1574 and 1577; *Christ in the Council Hall: Studies in the Religious Iconography of the Venetian Republic* (*Acta ad archaeologiam et artium historiam pertinentia* [Institutum Romanum Norvegiae] v), Rome, 1974. The image of State is analyzed in relation to traditional depictions of Venus, Mary, Justice, and *Dea Roma* by D. Rosand, "Venetia Figurata: The Iconography of a Myth," in *Interpretazioni veneziane: studi di storia dell'arte in onore di Michelangelo Muraro*, ed. D. Rosand, Venice, 1984, to whom I am grateful for lending me the manuscript before publication. For a discussion of the pagan aspects of the development of the image of State during the 1550's and specifically to the program for the chamber of the Council of Ten, see Reist (as in n. 2), chap. 2.



33 Paolo Veronese, *The Holy Family with Saint Catherine*, Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Cane (photo: CISAAP)

ings by Veronese, Zelotti, and Ponchino display Barbaro's conception of Venetian trade and good fortune (presented as Mercury) receiving the olive branch of peace proffered by Minerva.⁶¹ The *Salone* figure of Divine Love at Maser and the personification of the State in the Stanza del Cane thus prepare the viewer for the iconography of Peace expounded in the statuary and vault fresco of the garden nymphaeum (Fig. 37) and its grotto (G in Fig. 1).⁶² But even more significantly, the artistic and spatial relationship of these vault compositions, with personifications of Church and State flanking an axis established by Divine Love and Peace, encourages a reading of Divine Love as Divine and Christian, as well as Divine and Venetian. In either case, she is the guarantor of Peace.

Whether one reads this figure of Divine Love in her purest Empedoclean form, conquering Strife, or whether one sees in her the new Eve reincarnated in the Virgin Mary vanquishing the Satanic monster, this figure of Love expresses the values of the Barbaro and does so in Daniele Barbaro's preferred language, that of classical antiquity. In the city of Venice, Barbaro had himself participated in the



34 Paolo Veronese, *The Holy Family with Saint John*. Villa Barbaro, Stanza della Lucerna (photo: CISAAP)

development and brief flowering of a classical, strictly allegorical approach to State iconography when, in 1553, he had devised the *invenzione* for the ceiling decorations of the Sala del Consiglio dei Dieci.⁶³ There, as in other programs of the middle decades of the century, ranging in date from 1537 to 1558, for the Loggetta, Libreria, and Scala d'Oro, exclusively pagan forms allude to the powers of the State.⁶⁴ At the Palazzo Trevisan in Murano, Veronese, most probably in collaboration with Daniele Barbaro, visualized a decorative program that, now in a private setting, restates the same predilection for pagan forms.⁶⁵

The program at Maser provides the next link in that chain of Venetian *invenzioni*. The cohesion of the program, as centered upon the macrocosmic and microcosmic manifestations of Divine Love, underscores the fact that Daniele Barbaro and Veronese here sought to express the strength and endurance of the Barbaro family, the Republic, and the Church in such a way that they could proclaim with

⁶¹ The identification of Daniele Barbaro as the author of the decorative program for this room was first made by F. Sansovino, *Venetia città nobilissima et singolare* . . . , Venice, 1581, fol. 123v: ". . . si passa al le sale dell'Eccelso Consiglio de Dieci, illustri per pitture notabili & delicate . . . & l'invenzione fu di Daniele Barbaro eletto d'Aquilea dottiss. gentilhuomo di questa età."

⁶² Carolyn Kolb provided a persuasive analysis of the program of the nymphaeum statuary in a paper first presented to the Dumbarton Oaks Center for Studies in Landscape Architecture in May, 1974: "The Nymphaeum of the Villa Barbaro at Maser."

⁶³ See above, n. 61.

⁶⁴ The iconographic programs for the decorations of the Libreria and Scala d'Oro have been elucidated by N. Ivanoff: "La Scala d'Oro del Palazzo Ducale di Venezia," *Critica d'arte*, VIII, 1961, 27-41; "Il ciclo allegorico della Libreria Sansoviniana," *Arte antica e moderna*, XIII-XVI, 1961, 248-258; "I cicli Allegorici della Libreria e del Palazzo Ducale a Venezia,"

in *Rinascimento europeo, Rinascimento veneziano (III Corso Internazionale, Fondazione Cini, Venice, 1961)*, Venice, 1967, 281-297; and "La Libreria Marciana," *Saggi e memorie di storia dell'arte*, VI, 1968, 35-78. The iconography of the statues of Jacopo Sansovino's Loggetta has been explained in detail by F. Sansovino, first in his 1562 publication *Delle cose notabili della città di Venetia*, II, fol. 22v, and later with no substantive changes in *Venetia città* . . . (as in n. 61), fols. 111r-v.

⁶⁵ The identifications of the subjects of Veronese's and Zelotti's frescoes in the Palazzo Trevisan were published without comment or analysis by Ridolfi (I, 322ff. and 367). The compositions in the palace were engraved in the 18th century and published by A.M. Zanetti, *Varie pitture a fresco dai principali maestri veneziani*, Venice, 1760. See also G.M. Urbani de Gheltof, *Il Palazzo di Camillo Trevisan a Murano*, Venice, 1890; W. Wolters, "Una villa cinquecentesca in pericolo a Murano," *Antichità viva*, V, 1966, 27ff.; A. Caiani, "Un palazzo veronese a Murano: note e aggiunte," *Arte veneta*, XXII, 1968, 47-59; E. Bassi, *Palazzi di Venezia*, Venice, 1976, 529ff.



35 Paolo Veronese, *Allegory of Faith*, vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, Stanza della Lucerna (photo: CISAAP)



36 Paolo Veronese, *Allegory of the State*, vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, Stanza del Cane (photo: CISAAP)

equal vigor their confidence in the universality of ancient forms and ideas.

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37 Paolo Veronese, *Peace*, vault fresco. Villa Barbaro, nymphaeum grotto (photo: CISAAP)

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