

nel 1480, testimonia che dal Salone si accedeva ad ovest verso la cappella del Palazzo, e ad est alla Sala degli Stucchi. È credibile che la decorazione continuasse sulla porta, come avveniva per le finestre. Alla fine dell'Ottocento questo dato era ben noto, come prova il rilievo di Mazzolani che illustra proprio questa specificità dell'Aprile (Ferrara, Musei Civici d'Arte Antica, inv. S/163).

English version by Elizabeth Thomson

Schifanoia. Month by Month: April-Taurus.

The sky by Marco Bertozzi

The sky of April is under the guardianship of Aphrodite (Venus). The goddess of love celebrates her triumph on a vehicle drawn down the waters of a river by two white swans. The vessel is adorned with curtains stirred by a lively spring breeze. Mars with his hands tied up in chains kneels before her. To him is assigned the sign which is the diametrical opposite of Taurus – Scorpio.

The goddess's long hair is held back by a colourful garland of flowers and a youthful Eros (Cupid) is portrayed on her belt shooting arrows at the two lovers. To the right and left of the scene there are two splendid gardens where the loves of the children of the goddess are blossoming: they are the young men and women of the court depicted by the artist with unusual realism caught in daring, sensuous embraces. To the left of Venus, the three naked Graces preside over the scene where at the feet of the young courtiers numerous rabbits and large hares, symbols of love, run around, further highlighting the nature of the whole scene.

Central register: three decans accompanied by the Zodiac sign of Taurus

First decan (Taurus I)

A woman standing, with long blonde, curly hair hanging loosely around her shoulders held back by a ribbon; she is wearing a red dress which seems partly burned, and she gazes at a child (her son) who, standing before her, is wearing a dress of the same colour.

This description comes from the Indian sphere of Albumasar (Bertozzi 1999, 47-49); Jaffé [1932] 1999, 115). The image of mother and son goes back to the stellar configuration of the Pleiades who appear in this decan. From the union of Maia, one of the Pleiades, with Zeus, Hermes (Mercury) was born. The attribute of red dress, partly scorched, is connected with the loss of the brightness of the Pleiades: one of the seven stars was already burned up and no

longer visible at the time of Aratus (3rd Century BC), (Aratus, *Phaenomena*, 257; see Bertozzi 1999, 47).

Second decan (Taurus II)

A naked man, wearing something resembling a turban on his head, and short ankle boots on his feet. In his right hand he is holding a large key. Similar descriptions can be found in the compendia of Leopold of Austria and Ludovico the Angle (Bertozzi 1999, 49; Jaffé [1932] 1999, 115).

In Albumasar's treatise, there is mention of a naked man with a head similar to that of a dog holding a key. This attribute suggests to us that this is Sirius, the bright star in the constellation of Ursa Major. The bull, Taurus, according to the astral myth cited by Hyginus (2-3rd AD), was placed in the heavens to carry Europa to Crete intact, and Jove had assigned to the dog, Canis, the duty of protecting Europa (Hyginus, *De astr.*, II, 21, 1; II, 45, 1; see Bertozzi 1999, 49).

Third decan (Taurus III)

A man with dark skin, naked, with canine teeth similar to those of a boar; in his right hand he holds a winged snake encircling itself. In his left hand he has an arrow; behind him there is an image of a horse, and at his feet that of a dog.

The horse of this "Vir niger" is a reference to Pegasus, the horse that could fly as fast as the northern wind, Boreas. However, the rest of this figure is a complex blend of Albumasar's Indian and Persian spheres, and Leopold of Austria's compendium, as well as the texts on astrological and talismanic magic by Picatrix (Bertozzi 1999, 47-51; Jaffé [1932] 1999, 115). A point of reference for the stars is Aldebaran (an Arab term that refers to the fiery eye of the Bull), belonging to the seven stars that form the rainy Hyades. The term Hyades was translated into Latin with the term *Suculae* (the piglets), in accordance with the interpretation also accepted by Manilius (*Astr.* V, 126 ss.). The Latin translation originates from the Greek term meaning "boar", alluding to the teeth that are a characteristic feature of the figure for this decan (Bertozzi 1999, 50).