

Hermeneutics and the Early Modern Garden: Ingenuity, Sociability, Education

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1 Historiography

The question of meaning in landscape architecture and gardens has benefited considerably from the iconological approach developed for art history by Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky. The most important contributions were produced by students of Panofsky, notably David Coffin, who published his monograph on the Villa d'Este at Tivoli in 1960, and Elizabeth Blair McDougall, who wrote her dissertation on the Villa Mattei in Rome. Coffin taught and inspired a new generation of scholars such as Claudia Lazzaro for Italian Renaissance gardens and Jan de Jongh for early modern Dutch gardens. Italian and German scholars (Eugenio Battisti, Marcello Fagiolo, Maria Luisa Madonna, Detlef Heikamp, Karl Schwager, among others) also embraced the iconological approach, studying the garden within a broader cultural and literary context bringing to the fore the question of its meaning.¹ The idea that the garden was designed with a specific programme became a central idea. David Coffin showed convincingly that the design of the Villa d'Este gardens rested on the figure of Hercules and his *Choice at the Crossroads*: ‘The gardens [...] present the theme of the choice of Hercules between Voluptas, represented by the Grotto of Venus, and Virtue, exemplified by the Grotto of Diana. It is possible even that the general layout of the gardens may have been conditioned by this subject. Hercules’s choice was symbolized by the Pythagorean Y, since, after pursuing a straight uneventful path of life, a youth when he came of age had to choose between

1 On the historiography of gardens, especially early modern Italian gardens, see Coffin D.R., ‘The Study of the History of the Italian Garden until the First Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium’, in Conan M. (ed.), *Perspectives on Garden Histories* (Washington, D.C.: 1999) 27–36; Beneš M., ‘Recent Developments and Perspectives in the Historiography of Italian Gardens’, in *ibid.* 37–76; *ibidem*, ‘Methodological Changes in the Study of Italian Gardens from the 1970s to the 1990s: A Personal Itinerary’, in Beneš M. – Lee M.G. (eds.), *Clio in the Italian Garden. Twenty-First-Century Studies in Historical Methods and Theoretical Perspectives* (Washington, D.C.: 2011) 17–54.

the diverging paths of Virtue or Vice as Hercules did.² This narrative culminated in the fresco decoration of the villa, with the *Banquet of the Gods* and the *Apotheosis of Hercules* painted on the ceilings of the main reception rooms.³ Such narratives were, so to speak, ‘activated’ by the visitors’ own movements within the garden. For MacDougall, ‘The gardens after the 1520’s consisted of a series of successive spaces, isolated from each other physically and visually. They could only be experienced through movement, and the relationship between spectator and garden became active rather than passive. [...] it might be termed a form of narrative with continuity provided by the spectator confronting different experiences in time succession.’⁴ In the same vein, Claudia Lazzaro provided a reading of the gardens of Villa Lante at Bagnaia based on the mythical history of the relationship between nature and art. The visitor, moving through a specific itinerary, metaphorically travels from the informal landscape of the Golden Age evoked in the *barco* to the landscape of the Age of Jupiter suggested by the formal parterres in front of the main *palazzina*. But the order of progression could be reversed, she argues, ‘from park to garden, nature is transformed into art; from garden to park, art with greater subtlety counterfeits her competitor, nature.’⁵

These interpretations are not without problems, however, and alternative readings have been proposed that are legitimate, too. Marcello Fagiolo and Maria Luisa Madonna disagree with Coffin’s moral reading of the garden at Tivoli, stressing the fact that the Pythagorean Y he identifies as the defining ‘moment’ in the garden’s narrative leads to several other grottoes. Furthermore, they argue that Diana and Venus here are both positive deities, thus undermining the oppositional nature of the Herculean landscape metaphor.⁶ In contrast with Lazzaro’s argument, Carla Benocci provided a religious interpretation

2 Coffin D., *The Villa d’Este at Tivoli* (Princeton: 1960) 82.

3 Following Coffin, *Villa d’Este*; see Conan M., “Landscape Metaphors and Metamorphosis of Time”, in idem (ed.), *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington, D.C.: 2003) 287–317; Ribouillault D., “Le *Salone* de la Villa d’Este à Tivoli: un théâtre des jardins et du territoire”, *Studiolo* 3 (2005) 65–94; and idem, “Toward an Archaeology of the Gaze: The Perception and Function of Garden Views in Italian Renaissance Villas”, in Beneš – Lee (eds.), *Clío in the Italian Garden* 203–232, esp. 213–217.

4 MacDougall E.B., “Ars Hortulorum: Sixteenth Century Garden Iconography and Literary Theory in Italy”, in Coffin D. (ed.), *The Italian Garden* (Washington D.C.: 1972) 37–59, here 46.

5 Lazzaro-Bruno C., “The Villa Lante at Bagnaia: An Allegory of Art and Nature”, *The Art Bulletin* 59.4 (1977) 553–560, here 560.

6 Barisi I. – Fagiolo M. – Madonna M.L., *Villa d’Este* (Rome: 2003) 86–90.

of the garden of Bagnaia, based on the image of the gridiron of San Lorenzo evoked by the design of the main lower parterre of the formal *giardino*.⁷

Thus, some gardens have become interpretative playgrounds or perhaps battlegrounds for garden iconologists. For instance, more than any other, the now famous Sacro Bosco at Bomarzo has been the subject of countless interpretations. Many of them are extremely valuable and have helped clarified one or several specific aspects of this fascinating place, but none is regarded as the definite answer to its many puzzles. Scholars have posited that its main interest lies precisely in the indeterminate nature of its meaning, calling for an hermeneutical effort on the part of the visitor. Marcello Fagiolo called Bomarzo ‘La villa delle contraddizioni’ and Anne Bélanger wrote a whole book on this interpretative challenge, entitled *Les incertitudes de la lecture*.⁸ Luke Morgan’s recent study of the garden stresses quite rightly in conclusion that ‘the inherent openness of the garden precludes the possibility of interpretative closure or definitiveness’. Invoking Umberto Eco’s idea of the open work of art, gardens, he writes, ‘enable multiple and varying (even contradictory) experiences and interpretations. [...] the search for a text that explains the sequence and meaning of the wood in detail may be futile. Rather, meaning should probably be conceived as constantly reconstructed by the individual visitor who is a collaborator in the wood’s signification’.⁹ We have here, I believe, a good example of the ‘hermeneutic circle’ dear to Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur.¹⁰

Whereas this kind of statement has the important virtue of recalling the sensual and playful dimension of the garden versus its intellectual side – certainly overemphasized by the iconological approach¹¹ – the fact remains that such

7 Benocci C., *Villa Lante a Bagnaia: tra Cinquecento e Seicento; la chiesa in forma di villa* (Viterbo: 2010).

8 Fagiolo M., “Bomarzo, la villa delle contraddizioni”, in Vezzosi A. (ed.), *Il Giardino d’Europa: Pratolino come modello nella cultura europea* (Milan: 1986) 69–70; and Bélanger A., *Bomarzo ou les incertitudes de la lecture: figure de la meraviglia dans un jardin maniériste du XVI^e siècle* (Paris: 2007), esp. 107–111.

9 Morgan L., “Living Rocks and Petrified Giants in Vicino Orsini’s Sacro Bosco”, *Architectural Theory Review* 20.1 (2015) 7–29, esp. 21–22; and Eco U., *The Open Work*, trans. A. Cangogni (Cambridge, MA: 1989).

10 Grondin J., “The Hermeneutical Circle”, in Keane N. – Lawn C. (eds.), *The Blackwell Companion to Hermeneutics* (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118529812.ch34> [accessed 5 March 2019].

11 See, for instance, Treib M. (ed.), *Meaning in Landscape Architecture & Gardens: Four Essays, Four Commentaries* (London – New York: 2011), essays by Jane Gillette, Laurie Olin, Marc Treib and Susan Herrington; also see my review of the book in *Les Carnets du paysage* 23 (automne 2012) 231–233.

a conclusion can be disappointing to garden historians. In short, should we stop interpreting?¹² Have all interpretations the same value? Evidently not, lest we risk licensing the one I recently encountered, which asks with apparent seriousness why the gardens of Versailles were designed as a secret portrait of Mickey Mouse [Fig. 10.1].¹³ How then should we enter the ‘hermeneutic circle’ in the right way, to borrow Heidegger’s famous phrase? How can we develop ‘authentic’ and more accurate projects of understanding? I will here insist, albeit very briefly, on three points which form the subtitle of this essay: ingenuity, sociability and education. Each seems to me to represent a fruitful direction for future research.

2 Ingenuity

First, one should look more broadly at *how* understanding, discourse and interpretation were *produced* or *performed* during the early modern period. The strength of Anne Bélanger’s book, for instance, is to introduce within the equation the concept of *meraviglia* as defined by the Renaissance philosopher Francesco Patrizi in his *Della poetica* (1586), where Longinus’s *On the Sublime* is discussed extensively.¹⁴ According to Patrizi, *meraviglia* is obtained by means of a combination of words and images that are logically incompatible with each other, and by presenting the impossible under an appearance of verisimilitude and coherence. The dialectic tension by such a combination of opposites provokes the beholder’s astonishment and marvel. Bélanger indicates that the small leaning house found within the garden is a typical example of

12 Contributions to the subject of garden hermeneutics in English and French include Francis M. – Hester R.T. (eds.), *The Meaning of Gardens. Idea, Place and Action* (Cambridge, MA – London: 1990); Ross S., *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago: 1998); Nys P., *Le jardin exploré: une herméneutique du lieu* (Besançon: 1999); Hunt J.D., *Greater Perfections. The Practice of Garden Theory* (London – Philadelphia: 2000); idem, *The Afterlife of Gardens* (London – Philadelphia: 2004); idem, “Stourhead Revisited and the Pursuit of Meaning in Gardens”, *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 26.4 (2006) 328–341; and Chomarat-Ruiz C., “Le sens des jardins: une question embarrassante”, *Projets de paysage* 6 (2011), https://www.projetsdepaysage.fr/_le_sens_des_jardins_une_question_embarrassante_ [accessed 12 June 2019].

13 Mortimer L., *Miqué ou les oreilles de Dieu* (Montorgueil: 1993); and idem, “Les jardins du château de Versailles. Un paysage”, *Inter* 70 (1998) 12–15. Although one can detect a measure of irony à la Duchamp concerning this artist’s ‘discovery’, such sensational piece of news has, of course, been largely diffused on the internet; see <https://youtu.be/7QhD4aBiZno> [accessed 28 June 2019].

14 Patrizi Francesco, *Della poetica* (Ferrara, V. Baldini: 1586).

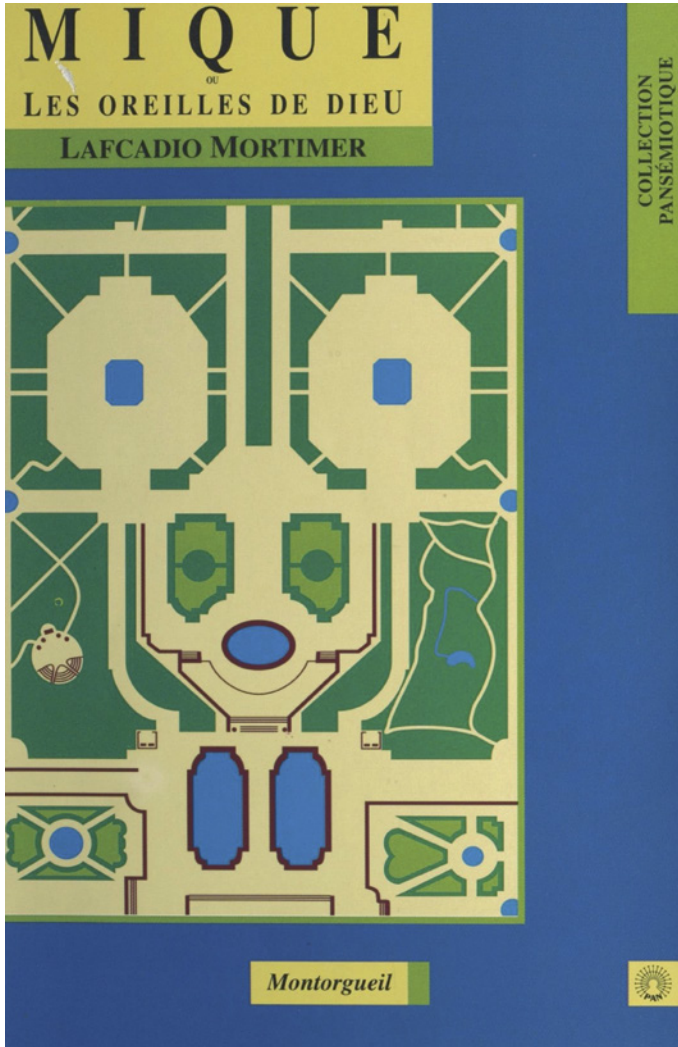


FIGURE 10.1 Plan of the gardens of Versailles revealing the face of Mickey Mouse. Front cover of Lafcadio Mortimer, *Miqué ou les oreilles de Dieu*, Montorgueil, Collection Pansémiotique, 1993
PHOTO: BNF/GALLICA



FIGURE 10.2 Sphinx, *Sacro Bosco*, Bomarzo, ca. 1560–1584
PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

this. ‘On its external wall the visitor reads the inscription ‘while resting, the soul grows wiser’, but the house is visibly tilted and provokes the visitor’s vertigo more than allowing him to rest’.¹⁵

At Bomarzo, the figure of the sphinx is another telling example of the hermeneutic game to which the garden visitor was invited to participate [Fig. 10.2]. Originally placed as a pair near the *casa pendente* or leaning house, one of the sphinxes is associated with an inscription that addresses the visitor directly: ‘You who enter here, put your mind to it part by part, and tell me if these many wonders were made by trickery or by art [“tu ch’entri qua pon mente / parte a parte / et dimmi poi se tante / maraviglie / sien fatte per inganno / o pur per arte”]. For Pierio Valeriano writing in his *Hieroglyphica* (1556), the Sphinx is a symbol of the secret. It recalls that higher truths should be made enigmatic in order to preserve them from being understood by the vulgar. It also stands for acuteness and subtlety of mind, since nothing secret or hidden cannot be

15 I quote from the review of the book by Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto, “*Bomarzo ou les incertitudes de la lecture: Figure de la meraviglia dans un jardin maniériste du XVI^e siècle* (review)”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 61.4 (2008) 1261–1262.

discovered by human ingenuity.¹⁶ Before the Council of Trent, such ideas were particularly important for princes, who indulged in the emblematic and esoteric games so crucial for understanding the garden of Bomarzo. The capacity to unveil the true meaning of an image, an object or a place was seen as a clear manifestation of power. This is expressed, for instance, by Giambattista della Porta in his treatise on natural magic: ‘very high things, worthy of great princes, we had it veiled with some light artifice, for instance reporting the words, we have deleted some, especially those that could hurt and bring a curse to someone, but not so much obscured that an ingenious mind cannot discover them and use them, nor so clearly that every ignorant and vulgar person could understand them.’¹⁷

Closely associated with the idea of *meraviglia* or wonder, the notion of ingenuity or *ingegno*, also defined in English as ‘wit’, is thus especially useful when trying to uncover the social dimension of the participatory hermeneutic practice that took place in early modern gardens.¹⁸ Besides enigmatic images, the depiction of ingenious hydraulic devices and other curiosities in the garden room of a villa was also considered appropriate. Paolo Cortesi wrote in his *De cardinalatu* that they ‘sharpen[ed] the intelligence and [...] foster[ed] the cultivation of the mind’. He writes: ‘[...] the more subtle the mathematical principle with which a picture accords, the more learned [that picture] must be thought to be, as in the case of something pictured in the manner of a hydraulic or cthesibian machine, in which is found a more subtle method of reasoning [...]’.¹⁹ A century later, a letter by the diplomat and poet Fulvio Testi

16 Valeriano Giovan Pietro Pierio, *Les hiéroglyphiques de Ian-Pierre Valerian* (Lyon, Paul Frelon: 1615) 75. The book, already finished in the 1520s, was first published in 1556.

17 Porta Giambattista della, *Della magia naturale libri XX* (Naples, Gio. Iacomo Carlino – Costantino Vitale: 1611 [lat. ed. 1589]), preface: ‘[...] le cose altissime, e degne di grandissimi Principi, l’habbiam velate con qualche leggiero artificio, come trasponendo le parole, togliendone alcune, e massime in quelle cose che potevano portar danno, e maleficio al prossimo, ma non talmente oscurata, ch’un ingegnoso non la possa scoprire, e servirsene, ne tanto chiaramente, ch’ogni ignorante, e vil huomo le possa intendere’. On secrecy and power, see further Morel P., “Secret, hermétisme et pouvoir d’État dans l’art médicéen de la fin du XVI^e siècle”, in Dujardin P. (ed.), *Le secret* (Lyon: 1987) 31–62.

18 I have developed some of the ideas in this section in “Ingenuity in the Garden. From the Poetics of Grafting to Divine Mathematics”, in Oosterhoff R. – Marcaida J.R. – Marr A. (eds.) *Ingenuity in the Making: Matter and Technique in Early Modern Europe* (Pittsburgh: forthcoming).

19 For the full passage from which this excerpt comes, see D’Amico J.F. – Weil-Garris K., “The Renaissance Cardinal’s Ideal Palace: A Chapter from Paolo Cortesi’s *De Cardinalatu*”, *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome* 35 (1980) 95–96: ‘Atque idem fere est aestiuorum tricliniorum describendorum modus, in quo genere eo est pictura putanda litteratior quo subtiliori mathematica ratione constat, ut siquid modo spectetur hydraulica aut

describing the experience of his visit to the Medici gardens at Pratolino shows that the display of wit had become a tool of magnificence:

The number of marvels confuses the intellect and the abundance of subjects deprives the mind of concepts and speech. The entrance [at the bottom of the garden] is open on one plane, but instantly the perspective of the palace presents itself to the eyes, [this palace] being so high that it seems that it has its foundation in the sky. One climbs to it through alleys shaded by very old trees, and there are four platforms to catch one's breath. But even during these successive breaks, the eye cannot stay idle, because the quantity of statues, fountains, and objects always new drain the eyes and exhaust the spirit ('affaticano lo sguardo e stancano l'ingegno').²⁰

For Testi, the overabundance of ingenious devices and works of art displayed in the garden provokes a kind of vertigo, both physical and intellectual. For a professional courtier like him, such hyperbolic insistence on the limitations of body, sight and mind of the garden visitor also functions as a way of praising the garden's owner, whose privileged vision from above, in the almost 'heavenly' palace, is akin to that of an omniscient god. We are not far here from the ecstatic experience of a Longinian sublime evoked by the philosopher Francesco de' Vieri in his rich and complex exegesis of the garden, the *Discorsi delle maravigliose opere di Pratolino, & d'Amore*, published in 1586: 'in Pratolino [...] there are so many stupendous artifices in occult places that he who would see them all together would enter into a state of ecstasy'.²¹

cthesibica machinatione pictum in quo ratio subtilior considerandi sit. [...] Eodemque modo in hoc genere aenigmatum apologorumque descriptio probatur qua ingenium interpretando acuitur fitque mens litterata descriptio eruditior'. The question of the interpretation of pictures is again addressed in a passage regarding chapel decoration; see *ibid.* 92–93 and 113.

20 Letter to Cesare d'Este, 17 October 1620, in Testi Fulvio, *Lettere (1609–1633)*, ed. M.L. Doglio (Bari: 1967) letter 28, 22: 'Il numero delle maraviglie confonde l'intelletto e l'abbondanza de' soggetti fa sterile la mente di concetti e di parole. L'entrata di lui è posta in piano, ma di subito si rappresenta all'occhio la prospettiva del palagio il quale sta così in alto che par quasi ch'egli abbia i fondamenti nell'aria. A questo si sale per alcune strade ombrose d'antichissime piante e quattro sono i piani ove si può trar fiato. Ma né in questi alternati riposi l'occhio sa stare ozioso imperocché la quantità delle statue e delle fontane con oggetti sempre nuovi affaticano lo sguardo e stancano l'ingegno'.

21 Vieri Francesco de', *Discorsi delle Maravigliose Opere di Pratolino e d'Amore* (Florence, Giorgio Marescotti: 1586) 64: 'In Pratolino ... sono tanti e tanti artificii stupendi in luoghi occulti, che chi gli vedessi tutti insieme se n'andrebbe in estasi'.

3 Sociability

The process of giving meaning to and in a garden is generally addressed in the literature as if the garden visitor were alone, a sort of *promeneur solitaire* 'à la Rousseau'. But, contrary to the almost narcissistic introspection characteristic of the *Rêveries*, we know that early modern gardens were more often than not visited by groups of people, exchanging views, sharing knowledge, discussing and debating. For instance, Agostino Del Riccio recalls that the complex hydraulic devices and automata in the great aristocratic gardens of Florence, Bagnaia, Caprarola and Rome attracted 'many virtuous men, youths as well as women and young girls', who, when leaving the gardens, often discussed among themselves the wonders they had seen ('[...] et quando escono de' giardini di quelli, sovente ragionano fra loro').²² *Ragionare* here means 'reasoning', producing a discourse that is not closed and predetermined. It indicates a process, a dialogue – where, one should insist, women and girls play their full part – that also defines the whole tradition of villa literature. Cicero initiated this tradition of so-called *villa dialogues* (the Renaissance equivalent would be *Ragionamenti*) whereby the villa and its garden are essentially places for the cultivation of the mind, beneficial to theoretical debates and especially important for politicians in charge of the affairs of the State.²³ For Cicero, looking back at the Greek Academies and their gardens, villas were places to stimulate philosophical thinking and poetic imagination. This idea will continue to inform garden culture well beyond the Renaissance.²⁴

Looking at sociability and mobilizing the central concept of *conversazione* thus complicate the picture David Coffin drew some decades ago regarding the accessibility of gardens in the Italian Renaissance.²⁵ Coffin studied inscribed plaques addressed to a general audience welcoming visitors and prescribing

22 Detlef Heikamp, "Agostino del Riccio, *Del giardino di un re*", in Ragionieri G. (ed.), *Il giardino storico italiano: Problemi di indagine, fonti letterarie e storiche* (Florence, Leo S. Olschki: 1981) 94–95: 'Io son ito più volte considerando che molti virtuosi huomini e giovani, altre[sì] donne attempate et donzelle che vanno a vedere i giardini de' signori Duchi, Regi et tutti, purché si diletino di certe piacevolezze e strumenti [...] là dove vanno tutti i popoli a vederli et con gran maraviglia son considerati, et quando escono de' giardini di quelli, sovente ragionano fra loro [...]']

23 Agache S., "La villa comme image de soi", in Galand-Hallyn P. – Lévy C. (eds.), *La villa et l'univers familial dans l'antiquité et à la Renaissance* (Paris: 2008) 15–44, here 36–38.

24 See further Ribouillault D., "Hortus academicus: les académies de la Renaissance et le jardin", in Jakob M. (ed.), *Des jardins et des livres*, exh. cat., Bodmer Foundation (Geneva: 2018) 23–34.

25 See Coffin D., "The 'Lex Hortorum' and Access to Gardens of Latium during the Renaissance", *The Journal of Garden History* 2.3 (1982) 201–232; also in his *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton: 1990), chap. 14, 244–257.

behavior in some important Roman gardens such as the Villa Giulia or Villa Medici. Although visitors could visit the gardens freely on occasion, these *leges hortorum*, literally ‘laws of the gardens’, should not be taken at face value, however. Not everybody could enter aristocratic gardens, and recent research indicates that, often, the owners of the gardens themselves or specific members of the households – generally a secretary or *majordomo* – were in charge of guiding visits through the gardens. In this light, the romantic idea of a free subject giving meaning to the garden without any guidance appears more and more anachronistic.

At the end of his description of the Villa Giulia in Rome, addressed to the humanist Marco Benavides, Bartolomeo Ammannati reveals that guides were paid by the owner: ‘the great good nature and generosity of the most distinguished signore Baldovino, brother and heir [of Julius III] [...] makes any thing of beauty that I have described to you possible, and draws one’s attention to it, by means of men there whom he pays.’²⁶ The presence of guides is also attested for the famous gardens of Cardinal Rodolfo Pio da Carpi, who possessed one of the most impressive collections of ancient statues in Renaissance Rome. The description by two French travelers to the gardens at Pratolino in 1588, *Discours viatiques qui décrivent une visite à Pratolino*, also mentions the presence of a guide, quite likely the custodian of the villa, although the description mentions him as the *châtelain*. Clearly, he was not intellectually equipped to reveal to the two foreigners the meaning of all the marvels in the gardens. Several passages reveal the difficulty they experienced in orientating themselves or identifying the subjects of the fountains. The famous *Apenine* by Giambologna is described as a great and big savage (‘un grand et gros sauvage’), and the Syrx in the Grotto of Pan is wrongly identified as Daphne.²⁷ In baroque Rome, we see the professionalization of this activity progressively taking place. The *majordomo* and court poet of Cardinal Scipione Borghese, Lelio Guidiccioni, reportedly guided visitors through the indoor and outdoor spaces of the Villa Borghese, whose collections he helped substantially to assemble and which

26 Stenhouse W., “Visitors, Display, and Reception in the Antiquity Collections of Late-Renaissance Rome”, *Renaissance Quarterly* 58.2 (2005) 397–434: 409; quoted in Falk T., “Studien zur Topographie und Geschichte der Villa Giulia in Rom”, *Römisches Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 13 (1971) 102–178, here 173: ‘[...] la somma cortesia e bontà dell’ Ill.mo signor Baldovino fratello et erede [...] fa fare, e monstrare, da gli huomini, che per questo vi sono salariati, quanto di bello vi ho descritto’.

27 *Discours viatiques de Paris à Rome et de Rome à Naples et Sicile* (1588–1589), ms. Aix-en-Provence, Bibliothèque Méjanes, Ms. 222 R 424, fols. 31v–35v; edited and annotated in Brunon H., *Pratolino: art des jardins et imaginaire de la nature dans l’Italie de la seconde moitié du XVI^e siècle*, PhD diss., Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne, 2001 [digital edition accessible online (2008)] 798–803.

he compares to the Hesperides.²⁸ Because of his poetic skill and talent as an orator, he was invited in March 1628 to welcome Grand duke Ferdinando II de' Medici and his brother Carlo, and to illustrate 'signas ac tabulas pictas, quibus ea villa referta est'.²⁹ Guidiccioni belonged to a time when the display of wit and connoisseurship had become increasingly significant within society, all the more in the gardens of powerful aristocrats and cardinals. *Gusto*, an appreciation of proper beauty conducive to a harmonious relationship with God, became a new token of nobility, as Marc Fumaroli and others have shown.³⁰ A real competition ensued, which was already palpable in elite circles during the second half of the sixteenth century. In a letter of 1563, written by Annibal Caro to the nobleman Torquato Conti, concerning the design of the gardens of the Villa Catena at Poli, the humanist clearly states that his inventions (*stravaganze*) were intended to outwit those of the Sacro Bosco at Bomarzo.³¹

Patrons themselves were eager to display their wit within an appropriate circle of powerful friends and *letterati*. In 1624, Cardinal Del Monte received Cardinal de' Medici and other Florentine noblemen in his Roman garden on the banks of the Tiber: 'Cardinal Del Monte held a banquet yesterday morning in his garden near Ripetta, [...] with great splendor, and copious delicate seasonal food, courses with ice [statues?], celebratory ornaments, and most exquisite statues; and besides entertaining them with music and song by the foremost *virtuosi* in Rome, provided them with great *gusto* by showing them his distilleries, geometric devices, and many other curiosities in which His Lordship delights greatly'.³² Fulvio Testi, whom we already met in the gardens at Pratolino, described the various activities that took place during a sojourn at Tivoli hosted by Cardinal Alessandro d'Este in 1620. They included prayers, discourses, study, reading, games, poetic invention, musical concerts and of course walks through the gardens. During his stay, Testi seems to have appreciated in particular the ingenuity of the hydraulic fountains and the floral sundial that once occupied a parterre in the lower part of the garden.³³

28 Ehrlich T., *Landscape and Identity in Early Modern Rome* (Cambridge: 2002) 41–42; see Guidiccioni Lelio, *Rime* (Rome, Manelfo Manelfi: 1637) 244.

29 De Rossi Gian Vittorio [I.N. Erythreus], *Pinacotheca altera* (Cologne, Jodocus Kalkovius: 1645) 127–130, here 128.

30 Fumaroli M., *L'âge de l'éloquence, rhétorique et "res literaria" de la Renaissance au seuil de l'époque classique* (Geneva: 1980; reprint ed. 2002).

31 Ribouillault, *Ingenuity in the Garden*.

32 For this passage and other examples, see Dell'Antonio A., *Listening as Spiritual Practice in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London: 2011) 38–44.

33 Testi Fulvio, *L'Arsinda overo La descendenza de' Ser.^{mi} Principi d'Este* (Venice, Francesco Baba: 1652) 5. See also Pacifici V., "Luigi d'Este, chap. VIII. *Villa d'Este*", *Atti e memorie della Società tiburtina di storia e d'arte* 17 (1937) 154–180, here 159.

Thus, the hermeneutic activity that took place in the garden under the aegis of the patron very likely consisted of intellectual interaction and ‘shared experience’, strongly influenced by the Platonic and Ciceronian ideals of the ancient academies.

4 Education

Alessandro d’Este, by promoting this ideal, only continued the tradition established there by his predecessor, Cardinal Ippolito. Upon the death of Cardinal Ippolito d’Este, in 1572, the Tiburtine villa was appropriately described as ‘an accademia, a cenacolo, a teatro del mondo’.³⁴ Yet it is not easy to imagine the precise nature of the interactions that took place in the gardens, and very little historical documentation seems to have survived. In 1569, Pirro Ligorio, the architect of the gardens, sent a series of sixteen drawings to Cardinal Ippolito on the life of the eponymous hero Hippolytus. The drawings were to be used to create a cycle of tapestries to adorn the walls of Villa d’Este. One of the scenes is relevant for our purpose: the education of Hippolytus [Fig. 10.3]. Pittheus shows his grandson Hippolytus two statues representing Diana and Pallas, clearly with an educational and moral purpose. Ligorio writes: ‘The painting depicts Pittheus explaining the significance of the image of Pallas and Diana, and showing [to Hippolytus] how virtue and the liberal arts are of great use to man, especially when they are accompanied by the attributes of Diana, hunting, chastity and honest repute, which were very dear to Hippolytus; and this is the sum of the morality of the painting’.³⁵ The image, though not set in the gardens, offers a plausible framework for imagining how statues and objects were understood within a garden setting, that is, with reference to a strong pedagogical and moral framework in praise of the patron’s virtue. Like the images that anchored the *ars praedicandi*, images in the villa functioned as *exempla* that called up topical issues, imprinting them forcefully in the memory, as Lina Bolzoni has demonstrated in her analysis of Ligorio’s drawing.³⁶

34 Ribouillault, *Le Salone de la Villa d’Este*.

35 Quoted in Koering J., “La visite programmée. Le rôle de l’orateur dans la réception des grands décors”, in Hochmann M. et al. (eds.), *Programme et invention dans l’art de la Renaissance* (Paris – Rome: 2008) 353–370, here 354: ‘Or dunque il presente quadro mostra come Pytheo dichiarò che cosa sia la imagine di Pallade e Diana, et l’aperse come la virtù, le arti liberali sono che grandemente giovano al huomo: et massimamente quando sono accompagnate con le cose di Diana che sono la caccia et la castità et la honesta fama la quale fu a Hippolyto di supremo giovamento, et questa è la somma de la moralità de la pittura [...]’. On the series, see Coffin, *The Villa d’Este*, 72–75.

36 Koering, *La visite programmée*, 354; see Bolzoni L., *La Stanza della memoria. Modelli letterari e iconografici nell’età della stampa* (Turin: 1995) 235. On the *ars praedicandi*, about



FIGURE 10.3 Pirro Ligorio, *The Education of Hippolytus*, in *Life of Hippolytus / Virbius*, fol. 6r, ca. 1568. Pen and brown ink, with brown and gray wash, over black chalk, on paper, 32.4 × 22.2 cm, New York, The Morgan Library and Museum, inv. 2006.22 PHOTO: THE MORGAN LIBRARY AND MUSEUM

The pedagogical and moralistic function of images seems to have gained strength after the Council of Trent. By the mid-sixteenth century, writers on art were becoming increasingly critical of complex meanings in works of art. In 1550, Vasari lamented that no one was capable of understanding Giorgione's fresco on the façade of the Fondaco dei Tedeschi in Venice: 'Giorgione thought of nothing else than painting figures after his own fantasy in order to exhibit his talent; and, in truth, there are no historical scenes which have any special order or which represent the deeds of any distinguished person, either ancient or modern; and, as for me, I have never understood his figures, nor have I ever, in spite of all my questions, found anyone who did [...]':³⁷ Perhaps as a result of the Venice-Florence rivalry, the Venetian Lodovico Dolce would go on to say the same thing about Michelangelo's inventions,³⁸ whilst Gabriele Paleotti wrote an entire chapter on the subject of 'obscure paintings' in his treatise on sacred art.³⁹ This is true for gardens, too. After the Council of Trent, highly complex and enigmatic subjects generally based on the exegesis of ancient mythology were progressively replaced by more didactic programmes with strict moral intentions. A good example of this is the Casino of Pius IV in the Vatican Garden, where the hieroglyphic programme devised by Pirro Ligorio for the outer walls, the courtyard and the fountains of the Casino, based on the exegesis of ancient texts, gave way to the Christian programme of the inner rooms. This shift followed a similar one in the intellectual activities of the *Accademia delle notti vaticane*, which held their meetings on the premises under the aegis of Carlo Borromeo. As Marc Fumaroli states: 'After 1563, his [Carlo Borromeo's] ordination, and the closing of the Council of Trent, the Academy's themes changed: discourses did not have Cicero, Livy or Lucretius as their subjects anymore, but rather, the Beatitudes and the Theological Virtues.'⁴⁰

which there is an immense bibliography, see, for instance, Howard P., "Painters and the Visual Arts of Preaching: the 'exemplum' of the Fifteenth Century Frescoes in the Sistine Chapel", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 13 (2010) 33–77.

- 37 Vasari G., *Le Vite de' più eccellenti pittori, scultori ed architettori. Le Opere di Giorgio Vasari [Florence, 1568], vol. IV*, ed. G. Milanesi (Florence, 1906). 96: '[...] non pensò se non a farvi figure a sua fantasia per mostrar l'arte; chè nel vero non si ritrova storie che abbino ordine o che rappresentino I fatti di nessuna persona segnalata o antica o moderna; ed io per me non l'ho mai intese, nè anche, per dimanda che si sia fatta, ho trovato chi l'intenda'. Also see Koering, *La visite programmée*, as cited in note 35 *supra*.
- 38 Ibidem; see Dolce L., *Dialogo della pittura, intitolato l'Aretino [Venezia: 1557]*, in Barocchi P. (ed.), *Trattati d'arte del Cinquecento* (Rome – Bari: 1960) 1 191.
- 39 See book II, chap. 33 of Paleotti G., *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images (1582)*, trans. W. McCuaig (Los Angeles: 2012) 251–254.
- 40 Fumaroli, *L'âge de l'éloquence* 136 (my translation).

In the garden of the Jesuit noviciate of Sant'Andrea del Quirinale, novices took pilgrims around the garden and the Church of San Vitale to teach them the principles of the faith [Fig. 10.4]. Everything within the garden – statues, monuments, wall paintings, flowers and trees, even a sundial – could be used for exegetical lessons, in precise application of the four levels of Scriptural Exegesis: literal, tropological, allegorical and anagogical.⁴¹ Louis Richeome makes this abundantly clear in *La peinture spirituelle*, a work that has rightly been described as a 'virtual guided tour' of the garden and the buildings surrounding it. Richeome writes:

I called it *Spiritual Painting*, as she is prince of various spiritual images (*Tableaux*) of Grace and nature, which are to be seen in this house; those, and by means of those, speaking to the novices, I try to help all these to be useful to their eyes and simple hearts, and to become gloriously great in the face of God, and wise in a Christian manner in their youth, teaching them through my small industry the way to philosophise well without great difficulty, and the art to recognise and admire God in all His works [...].⁴²

A similar pattern can be observed for non-religious gardens. The erudite Jesuit Emmanuele Tesauro, who became the preceptor to the young princes of the Savoy family, devised an ambitious programme for the garden of the Castel of Racconigi near Turin, remodelled around 1649–1650 by the architect Carlo Morello. The programme is presented in Tesauro's most famous work *Il Cannocchiale aristotelico*, undeniably one if not *the* most important work on the concept of ingenuity and metaphor produced in baroque Italy.⁴³ Tesauro explains that prince Tommaso wanted every corner of the rectangular parterres of the garden to be ornamented by some 'mysterious statues' set on their pedestals, for a total of 61. Tesauro's idea for the programme derives from his observation that the garden, blooming with springtime flowers, looks like the

41 Richeome clearly applies this exegetical method for paintings in *Tableaux sacrez des figures mystiques du tres-auguste sacrifice et sacrement de l'Eucharistie* (Paris, Laurent Sonniius: 1609 [1st ed. 1601]). See further Lestringant F., "La promenade au jardin ou la peinture spirituelle du Père Richeome", in Guillermin J.P. (ed.), *Récits / tableaux* (Lille: 1994) 81–102, here 85.

42 Richeome Louis, S.J., *La peinture spirituelle ou L'art d'admirer aimer et louer Dieu en toutes ses œuvres, et tirer de toutes profit salutere* (Lyon, P. Rigaud: 1611); translated in Witte A.A., *The Artful Hermitage: The Palazzetto Farnese as a Counter-Reformation Diaeta* (Rome: 2008) 102 et sq.

43 On Tesauro, ingenuity and metaphor, see especially Hersant Y. (trans. – ed.), *La Métaphore baroque: d'Aristote à Tesauro. Extraits du 'Cannocchiale aristotelico' et autres textes* (Paris: 2001).

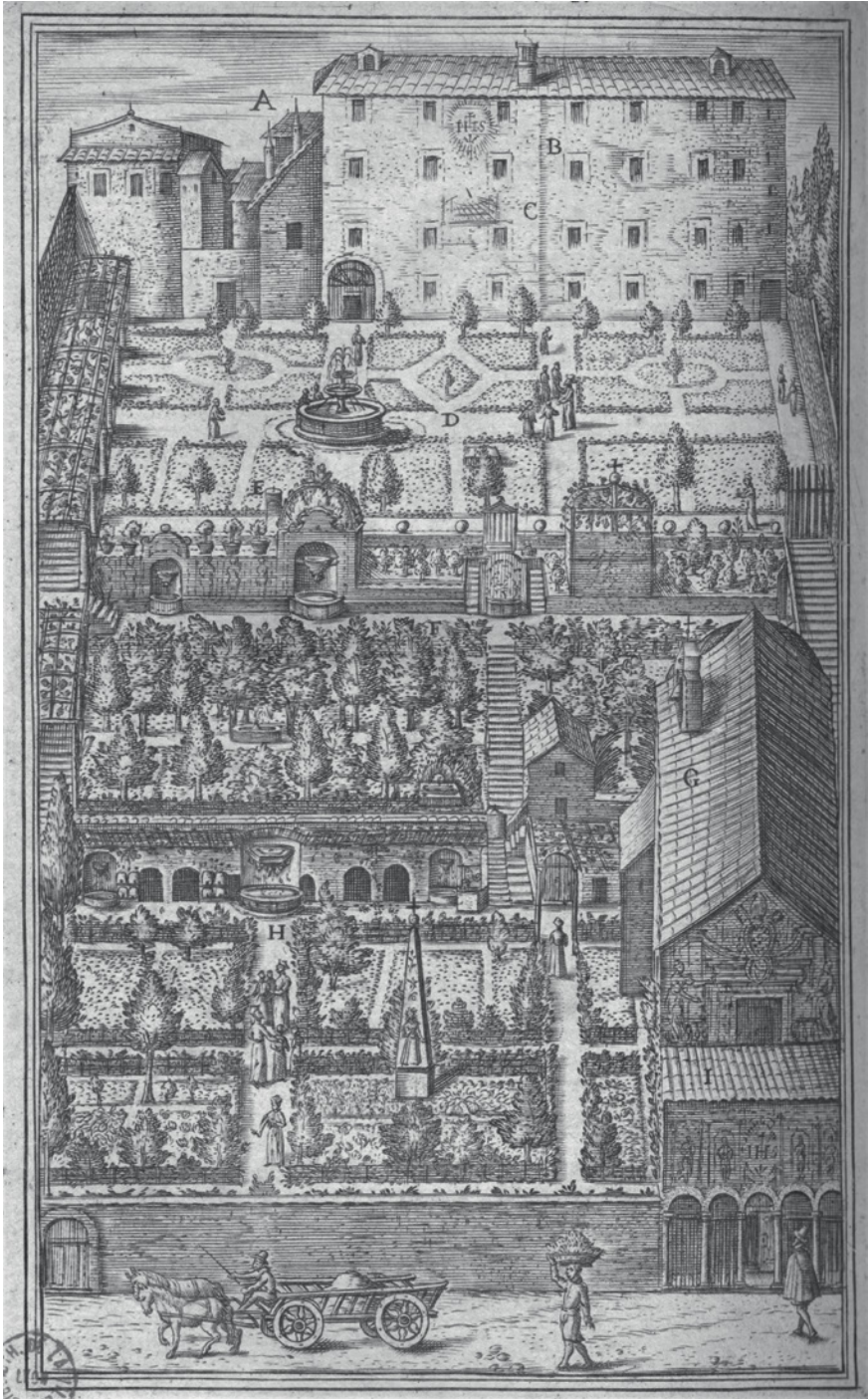


FIGURE 10.4 Attributed to Matthias Greuter, *The Garden of the Jesuit Noviciate of Sant'Andrea al Quirinale, Rome*, in Louis Richeome, *Peinture spirituelle* [...], (Lyon, Pierre Rigaud: 1611)

sky bright with stars. His programme was intended to give form (*forma*) to this simple metaphor in a grandiose scheme. The statues represented the seven planets, the twelve signs of the zodiac, 21 stars of the boreal hemisphere and 21 stars of the austral hemisphere. Each of the 61 statues was thus incorporated into an emblem, with an accompanying epigram that explains the mythological story of said planet or star and, finally, provides a moral reading as a useful tool for the conduct of a man's life.⁴⁴ The entire catalogue of 61 statues follows, with their respective mottos and moralistic poems. Tesauro concludes, 'whoever walked in the garden could see heaven on earth ('chiunque passeggiasse per il Giardino, potesse vedere il Cielo in terra')'. In another book he stressed the educational purpose of such a programme: 'By walking along in the garden the princes contemplate celestial astronomy and human philosophy and they do not so much pick flowers as philosophical and moral lessons ('documenta')'.⁴⁵ Tesauro's use of the word *forma* in the *Cannocchiale* is important here and is rooted in the Aristotelian concept of form (also designated as the Soul), the essential and universal idea of a thing, as opposed to *materia* (or Body), which is its physical manifestation. For Tesauro, as for Richeome, statues in the gardens are the material, visible images necessary to gain sensory access to the invisible and immaterial forms which they serve to represent.⁴⁶

A possible source of influence for Tesauro's programme is the famous treatise *Flora overo cultura dei fiori*, published in 1638 by a fellow Jesuit scholar, Giovan Battista Ferrari, in which elaborate geometrical compartments are repeatedly compared to celestial paradises.⁴⁷ Whereas for Ferrari this metaphor exemplified the deep connection between macrocosm and microcosm and the influence of astral bodies on the natural world, Tesauro insists on the educational and moral dimension of his astronomical garden, which provided the princes with an occasion not only for delight but also for learning and thinking,

44 Tesauro Emanuele, S.J., *Il cannocchiale aristotelico* (Turin, Zavatta: 1670) 710–711.

45 The programme with the inscriptions is also reported in Tesauro Emanuele, *Inscriptiones* (Turin, Typis Bartholomæi Zapatae: 1670) 585–605, here 585: '[...] ut in uno Viridario Caelestem simul Astronomiam, & humanam Philosophiam, deambulantes Principes contemplantur, nec tam flores legant, quàm documenta'.

46 Loach J.D., "Le jardin céleste de Racconigi. La conception et l'usage d'un jardin d'apparence laïque de la Contre-Réforme", in *Flore au paradis. Emblématique et vie religieuse aux XVI^e et XVII^e siècles*, Glasgow Emblem Studies 9 (Geneva: 2004) 37–48, esp. 47; and eadem, "Body and Soul. A Transfer of Theological Terminology into the Aesthetic Realm", *Emblematica* 12 (2002) 31–60.

47 Ferrari Giovan Battista, S.J., *Flora overo cultura dei Fiori* (Rome, Antonio Facciotti: 1638). See Kuwakino K., *L'architetto sapiente. Giardino, teatro, città come schemi mnemonici tra il XVI e il XVII secolo* (Florence: 2011), chap. 4, "Il 'paradiso celeste' nel giardino italiano", 131–164.

delectare et docere. The promenade in the garden became a lesson for the conduct of human affairs.⁴⁸

This moral dimension, which is essentially a political one, was also present in the labyrinth of Versailles, built only a few years later by Le Nôtre after an idea by Charles Perrault (1664–1677) [Fig. 10.5]. Painted statues based on Aesop's fables were illustrated by moral poems by Isaac de Benserade and were to serve for the education of the young dauphin. Taken as a whole, the labyrinth constituted a map of morality divided into different provinces.⁴⁹ As Gérard Sabatier has noted, the whole garden at Versailles and not just the labyrinth was conceived as a pedagogical tool: "The garden of Versailles became a pretext and support for a lesson in classical culture (mythology and ancient history), but also a lesson in Stoic and heroic morale in front of the statues. Now it is the park as a whole that fulfils the function of applied pedagogy, previously only assumed by the labyrinth."⁵⁰ Scholars have argued that Jean de la Fontaine's famous *Fables*, also based on Aesop and conceived as an educational manual for the young Dauphin, had their origins in the garden of Vaux-le-Vicomte. Its entire poetic structure is based on garden aesthetics, that is, on a design that stimulates conversation, wherein, as one promenades, the relation between order and chance is articulated.⁵¹ Built in 1679, the labyrinth in the gardens of Chantilly, attributed to Pierre Desgots, contained inscriptions with riddles in Latin and French to test the intelligence of visitors.⁵²

Aesop's fables was a standard text for teaching Latin in grammar schools. It was appreciated as a teaching tool for children but also for adults. Preachers often used them as ethical *exempla* in sermons; humanists drew inspiration

48 On princely education during the baroque period, see especially Mormiche P., *Devenir prince: l'école du pouvoir en France, XVII^e–XVIII^e siècles* (Paris: 2013); and Edouard S., *Les devoirs du prince. L'éducation princière à la Renaissance* (Paris: 2014).

49 See Conan M. (ed.), *Le labyrinthe de Versailles (1677), présenté par Charles Perrault, avec des gravures de Sébastien Le Clerc* (Paris: 1981); Conan M., "The Conundrum of Le Nôtre's *Labyrinthe*", in Hunt J.D. (ed.), *Garden History: Issues, Approaches, Methods* (Washington, D.C.: 1992) 119–150; idem, "Landscape Metaphors and Metamorphosis of Time" 295–297; and Maisonnier E. (ed.), *Le labyrinthe de Versailles: du mythe au jeu* (Paris: 2013).

50 Sabatier G., *Versailles ou la figure du roi* (Paris: 1999) 531 (my translation). On garden labyrinths, in particular see Brunon H., *Le jardin comme labyrinthe du monde: métamorphoses d'un imaginaire de la Renaissance à nos jours* (Paris: 2008), esp. 81–85.

51 See the fundamental essay by Alain-Marie Bassy, "Les *Fables* de La Fontaine et le labyrinthe de Versailles", *Revue française d'histoire du livre* 12 (juillet–septembre 1976) 367–426; and Dandrey P., "Un jardin de mémoire. Modèles et structures du recueil des *Fables*", *Le Fablier* 9 (1997) 57–65.

52 Garnier-Pelle N., *André Le Nôtre and the Gardens at Chantilly in the 17th and 18th Centuries* (Paris: 2013) 126–137.

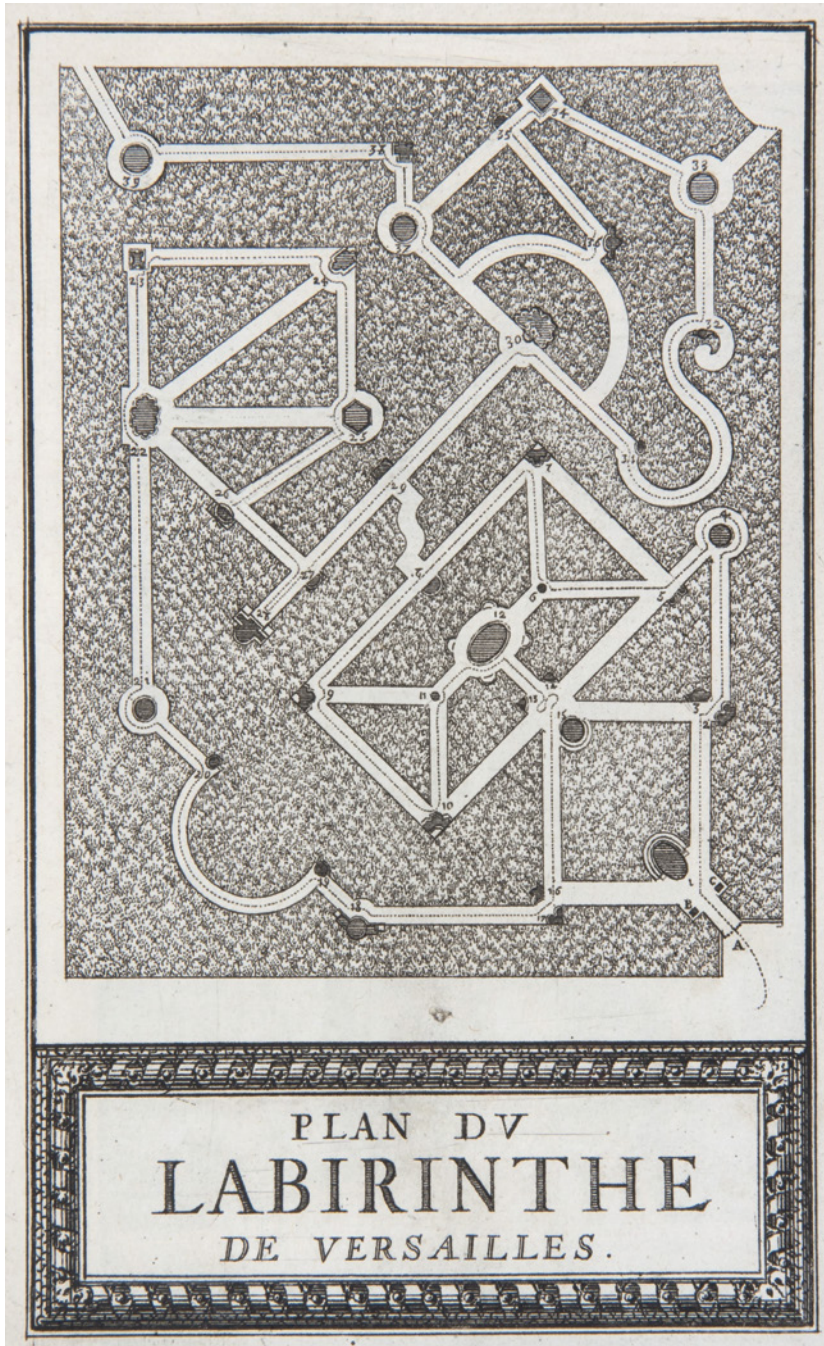


FIGURE 10.5 Sébastien Leclerc, *Plan of the Labyrinth of Versailles*, from Charles Perrault and Isaac de Benserade, *Labyrinthe de Versailles* (Paris, L'Imprimerie Royale: 1677). Etching, 21.5 × 14.7 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 31.77.30

PHOTO: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

from them 'to stimulate introspection about the self, the laws of nature, the politics of power, or the rule of law'; and simple folks surely appreciated their simplicity, whereas princes viewed them 'as repositories of ancient philosophy in more palatable form – a *speculum principis* that could help them rule wisely'.⁵³ In his *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images*, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti praised Aesop's *Fables* as 'charming, honest, and highly effective at making an impression on minds with delight, especially those of young people, by applying the modes and manners of animals to the custom and natures of humans'.⁵⁴ In sixteenth-century Italy, several iconographic cycles were based on Aesop's fables and were appreciated because they stimulated intellectual conversation and represented a new ideal of Christian rulership. Giuliano da Sangallo decorated the step-ends of the staircase of Palazzo Gondi in Florence (ca. 1490–1501) with illustrations of the *Fables*.⁵⁵ In 1531, for the dining room of the Palace of Trent, Dosso Dossi painted ten lunettes representing the *Fables* in expansive landscapes.⁵⁶ In the *giardino segreto* of the Palazzo del Te in Mantua, a stucco and fresco ensemble of Aesop's fables (ca. 1531–1534) was conceived by Giulio Romano for Federico II Gonzaga.⁵⁷ The depiction of Aesop's fables in the frescoes by Jacopo Zucchi of the so-called *studiolo* of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici in his garden at the Villa Medici in Rome (1577) can give us a clue of the ways in which his garden was similarly envisioned, i.e., as a place for intellectual curiosity and moral enlightenment [Fig. 10.6]. The ceiling of the adjacent room is painted with a trompe l'œil pergola with the most extraordinary collection of birds and animals.⁵⁸ We may surmise that the discrete episodes of Aesop's *Fables* in the *studiolo*'s grotesques added a moral and historical layer to this collection of natural history, and a conceptual framework to experience

53 I cite excerpts from Pellecchia L., "From Aesop's Fables to the *Kalila Wa-Dimna*: Giuliano da Sangallo's Staircase in the Gondi Palace in Florence", *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 14/15 (2011) 137–207, here 151–152 (with further bibliography).

54 Paleotti, *Discourse on Sacred and Profane Images* 288. He then refers to the emblematic literature inspired by Aesop: 'Others, in imitation of Aesop, have composed and imagined fables and discourses of animals for themselves, all of them directed, however, to virtuous living, which are still read, not without profit and delight'.

55 Pellecchia, *From Aesop's Fables to the Kalila Wa-Dimna*.

56 Fiorenza G., "Fables, Ruins, and the 'bell'imperfetto' in the Art of Dossi Dossi", *MLN* 119.1 (2004) 271–298.

57 Signorini R., *L'appartamento della Grotta nella villa del Te* (Mantua: 2013); and idem, "Le favole di Esopo nel 'giardino segreto' della villa del Te", *Quaderni di Palazzo Te* 8 (1988) 21–36.

58 Morel P., *Le Parnasse astrologique: les décors peints pour le cardinal Ferdinand de Médicis*, in *La Villa Médicis*, vol. III (Rome: 1991) 45–88.



FIGURE 10.6 Jacopo Zucchi, *The Fox and the Crow* (Aesop's Fables), detail from the *Studiolo* of Cardinal Ferdinando de' Medici in the gardens of the Villa Medici, Rome, 1577, fresco
PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

the garden as a whole. Behind these programmes lies a courtly culture of conversation and interpretation and the fundamental rhetorical tradition of the 'art of memory', based on the disposition of *imagines* and *loci*.⁵⁹

The educational dimension of early modern gardens also largely explains their military iconography, as well as the presence of forms and techniques that were immediately relevant for soldiers and future military leaders.⁶⁰ In the Villa Manin at Passariano, in Northern Italy, an eighteenth-century estate clearly inspired by French models, the central axis of the villa and its garden,

59 Kuwakino, *L'architetto sapiente*, *op. cit.*; Mosser M. – Nys P. (eds.), *Le jardin, art et lieu de mémoire* (Besançon: 1995).

60 Among an increasingly large bibliography, see Prost P., "Jardin et fortification, un art partagé du terrain", in Farhat G. (ed.), *André Le Nôtre. Fragments d'un paysage culturel. Institutions, arts, sciences et techniques* (Sceaux: 2006) 214–219. See also Mariage T., *L'Univers de Le Nôtre* (Sprimont: 1990) 51–54; and Mukerji C., *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: 1997).

projecting far into the territory, was bordered by a series of fascinating works of art [Fig. 10.7]. Two towers, in which the cosmological systems of Copernicus and Tycho Brahe were represented, opened the sequence.⁶¹ In the garden, visitors would then encounter two models of fortresses, four floral sundials as well as artificial hills, a theatre, a labyrinth, a menagerie, a bird's cage and many other marvels whose function was both to delight and instruct.⁶² Such grandiose programmes had a clearly didactic purpose. In Rome, similar floral fortresses were built in the garden of the Palazzo Spada: 'flowers with sections representing the six fortresses to be found in Italy: Casale, Palmanova, Ferrara, Forte Urbano, Parma, and Castel Sant'Angelo'.⁶³ They recalled the keen interest of the Spada family in mathematics and military architecture. A much larger mock-fortress had been built in 1650 in the gardens of the Palais Cardinal (later Palais Royal) in Paris for the edification of the young king Louis XIV. It figures in an engraving by Israël Sylvestre and impressed John Evelyn upon his visit to the garden on September 15th, 1651: 'I took a walk in the King's gardens [...]. In another part is a complete fort, made with bastions, graft, half-moons, ravelins, and furnished with great guns cast on purpose to instruct the King in fortification'.⁶⁴ In one of the most popular treatises on princely education of the seventeenth century, *Idea de un principe politico christiano: rapresentada en cien empresas* by Diego de Saavedra Fajardo (1640), an emblem dedicated to the art of war shows a garden shaped like a pentagonal fortress, with the motto 'Deleitando ensena' [It delights and instructs] [Fig. 10.8]. The text explains:

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- 61 The model here is probably the Château of Marly in France, where Louis XIV had the famous Globes of Coronelli installed in two pavilions of the garden in 1704. The three systems of Ptolemy, Copernic, and Tycho Brahe were also exposed. See Paris L., *Essai historique sur la Bibliothèque du Roi: aujourd'hui bibliothèque impériale* (Paris: 1856) 117. On the astronomical aspect of this programme, see further Cevolín M.V., "Astronomia e astrologia nell'Olimpo dei Manin", *Quaderni dell'Accademia* 4 (2000) 17–25.
- 62 Puppi L., "Fortunam virtus vincere sola potes!": l'Olimpo dei Manin a Passariano", in *La letteratura e i giardini* (Florence: 1987), *Archivum Romanicum* 1–207, 395–409; Frank M., *Virtù e fortuna. Il mecenatismo e le committenze artistiche della famiglia Manin tra Friuli e Venezia nel XVII e XVIII secolo* (Venice: 1996); Venuto F., *La villa di Passariano. Dimora e destino dei nobili Manin* (Passariano di Codroipo [Udine]: 2001) 167–259; and Frank M., "Appunti sulla questione del giardiniere francese di villa Manin a Passariano", in Frattolin M.P. (ed.), *Artisti in viaggio 1600–1750. Presenze foreste in Friuli Venezia Giulia* (Venice: 2005) 335–352. I thank Martina Frank for drawing my attention to this garden.
- 63 Neppi L., *Palazzo Spada* (Rome: 1975) 136–137. The description of the garden is by Bernardino's brother, Virgilio Spada.
- 64 Sylvestre Israël, *Veüe du fort Royal fait en l'année 1650 dans le Jardin du Palais Cardinal pour le divertissement du Roy*, 1651, engraving, 250 × 131 mm, BNF, Paris, <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8404210c>. The image is also reprinted in Zeiller M., *Topographia Galliae* (Frankfurt am Main: 1655) 133. See *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. W. Bray, 2 vols. (New York – London: [c. 1901]) I 266.

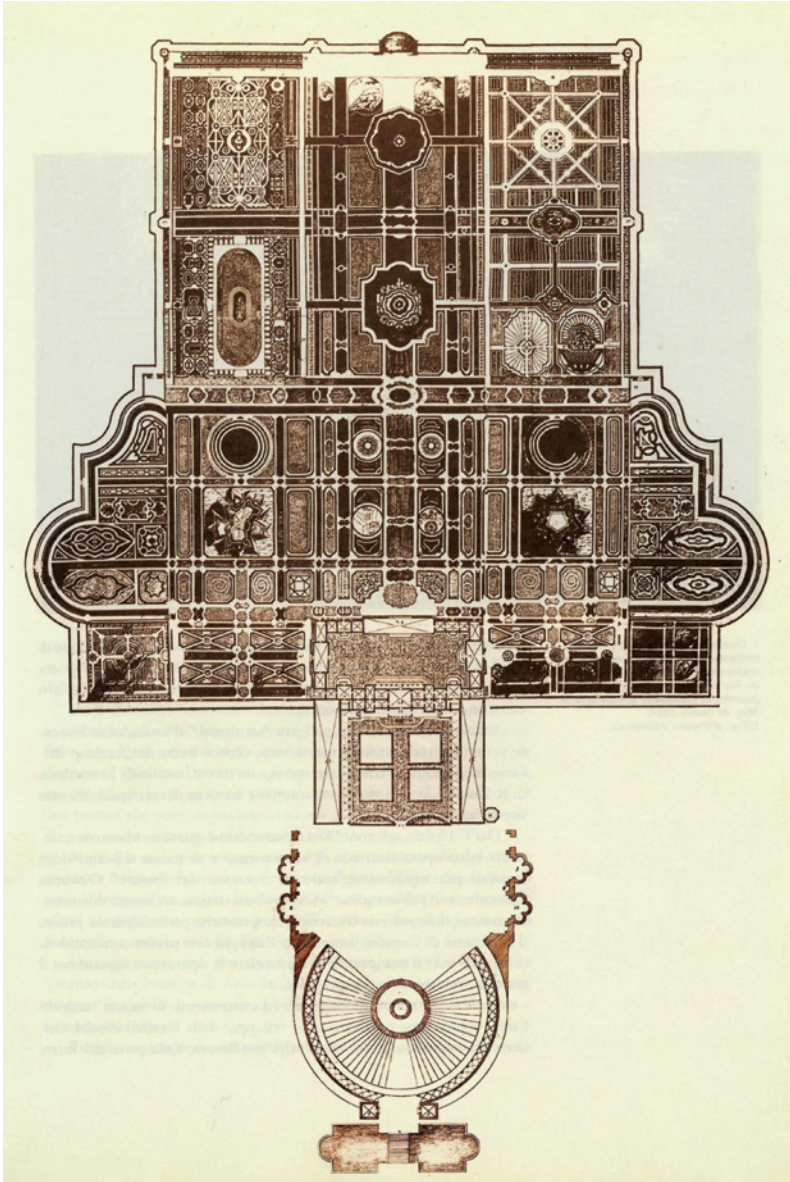


FIGURE 10.7 Plan of the Gardens of the Villa Manin at Passariano, ca. 1720–1730 (photomontage after *Palazzo degli Ecc[ellentissimi]mi N.N. H.H. Conti Manini, nel Locco di Perseriano nel Friuli*, Eighteenth century, Udine, Biblioteca Civica, Fondo Manin). Photo: After Francesca Venuto, *La villa di Passariano. Dimora e destino dei nobili Manin*, Passariano di Codroipo (Udine), Associazione fra le pro loco del Friuli Venezia Giulia, 2001

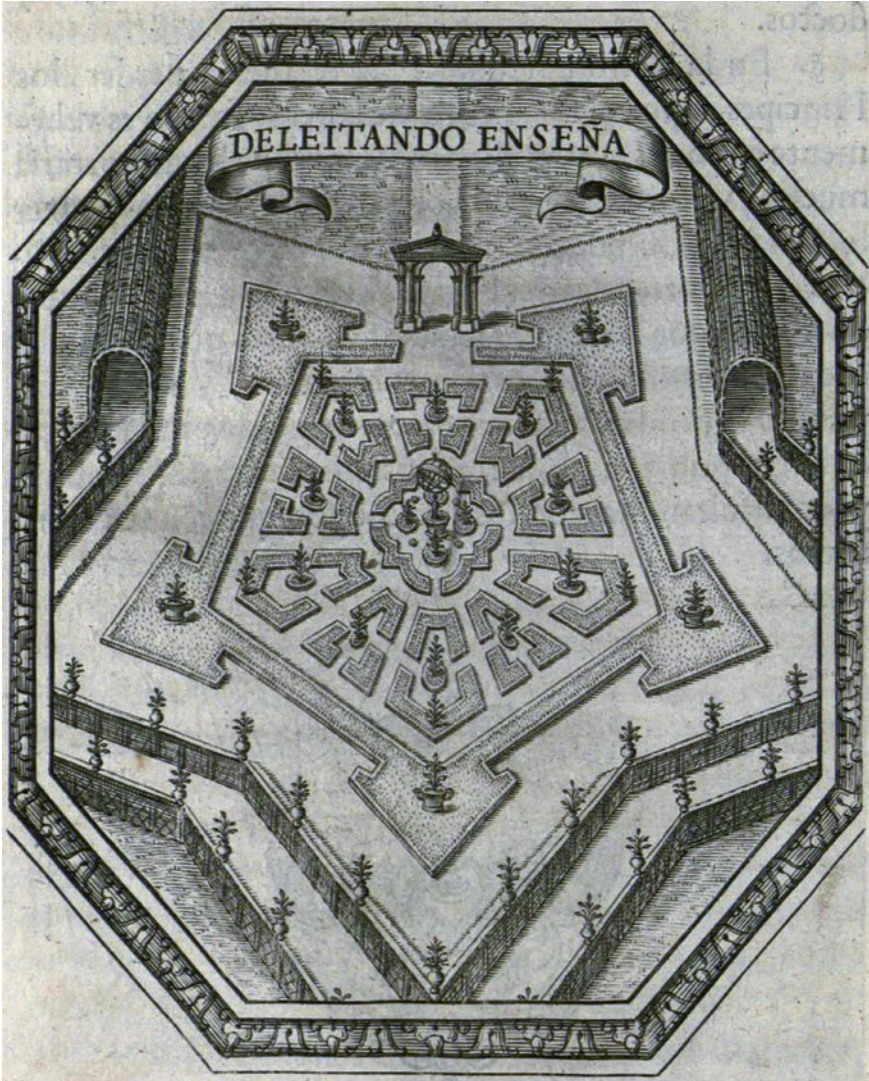


FIGURE 10.8 *Deleitando ensena* [it delights and instructs], emblem in Diego de Saavedra Fajardo, *Idea principis christiano, politici, centum symbolis expressa* (Bruxelles, Ioannes Mommartius, suis et Francisci Vivieni sumptibus: 1649) 31, *symbola politica, symbolum v*

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

'Tis withal necessary that he learn Fortification, and accordingly for Instructions sake may raise Forts of Clay, or some such material, with all sorts of Trenches, Breast-works, Pallisadoes [sic.], Bastions, Half Moons, and other things necessary for the Defence of them; then he may Assault and play upon them with little Artillery made for that purpose. But to fix those Figures of Fortification more firmly in his Memory, 't would be for his advantage to have the like artificially contrived in Gardens, cut in Myrtle, or any other Greens, as you see in the present Emblem.⁶⁵

Mathematics (especially Euclidian geometry with applications in ballistics and fortification) were essential for the military leader, and gardens were frequently used as teaching laboratories to learn its main principles. As Volker Remmert has recently observed, 'music and acoustical effects, fountains and sundials, geometrical forms, automata and many other things derived from the mathematical sciences that could be found in early modern gardens would naturally be treated in a thorough and encyclopaedic course of the mathematical sciences'.⁶⁶ The frontispieces of several baroque treatises on mathematical curiosities show an ideal *hortus mathematicus*, often with the shape of a military fortress [Fig. 10.9].

Botany of course could be taught in gardens. The botanical gardens that developed from the sixteenth century onwards, many of which were directly attached to universities, were used to teach students of medicine about plants.⁶⁷

Geography, which was also bound up with war, could likewise be studied within gardens developed with the same pedagogical and political intentions. Already in the sixteenth century, the Villa d'Este at Tivoli was conceived as a representation of the surrounding Tiburtine territory.⁶⁸ Extraordinary projects took this idea further: a plan for the Tuileries garden in Paris, offered to the Queen of France in 1616, suggested that the whole world could be mapped

65 The book was first published in Spanish in 1640 and was reedited and translated many times. Here I quote the English edition *The Royal Politician Represented in One Hundred Emblems*, ed. – trans. J. Astry (London, M. Gylliflower – L. Meredith: 1700) 36.

66 Remmert V., "The Art of Garden and Landscape Design and the Mathematical Sciences in the Early Modern Period", in Fischer H. et al. (eds.), *Gardens, Knowledge and the Sciences in the Early Modern Period* (Basel: 2016) 9–28 (here 20).

67 Capeletti E.M. – Ubrizsy A., "Didactics in a Botanic Garden. Garden Plans and Botanical Education in the 'horto medicinale' of Padua in the 16th Century", in Anagnostou S. (ed.), *A Passion for Plants. Materia Medica and Botany in Scientific Networks from the 16th to the 18th Centuries*, Quellen und Studien zur Geschichte der Pharmazie 95 (Stuttgart: 2011) 79–92.

68 Ribouillault, *Le Salone de la Villa d'Este*.



FIGURE 10.9 Mario Bettini, *Apiariorum philosophiae mathematicae [...]* (Venetiis, Baleonius: 1655). Augsburg, Staats- und Stadtbibliothek, call number 2 Math 12
 PHOTO: BAYERISCHE STAATSBIBLIOTHEK



FIGURE 10.10 Franc-Antoine de la Porte, *Jardinage de façon nouvelle dédié à très haute et très illustre princesse Marie de Médicis* (Paris: 1616). Engraving, 41 × 35 cm, BNF, Paris
 PHOTO: BNF

within its enclosure [Fig. 10.10]. A somewhat similar concept was developed in Jean François, S.J.'s *Science de la géographie*, published in 1652, and again a century later, in 1753, in the Baron de Bouis's *Le parterre géographique et historique ou nouvelle méthode d'enseigner la géographie et l'histoire*, addressed to the Dauphin and other noble youths. In these works, too, it is suggested that parterres and entire gardens could be designed as maps to facilitate the memorization of geographical and historical knowledge.⁶⁹

69 See further Besse J.-M., *Face au monde: Atlas, jardins, géoramas* (Paris: 2003).

The garden thus appears not only as a marvellous spectacle but also as a key pedagogical support for the young aristocracy, a place where learning was made easier and more delightful. Its form and content were intimately linked to the scholarly curriculum considered necessary for princely education, including mathematics, geography, astronomy, rhetoric, poetry, ancient history and heraldry. When the English *virtuoso* John Evelyn recommended, in agreement with Francis Bacon, that ‘Every one [is] to cultivate his own garden’, he was clearly referring to the promotion of knowledge.⁷⁰ Even drawing – useful to military leaders in times of war but whose chief purpose was to shape the aesthetic taste of the aristocracy and teach future leaders how best to use their eyes – could take place in the garden. The beautiful etching of the young Prince Cosimo III de’ Medici drawing in the garden of Villa Medici, under the tutelage of his drawing master, Stefano della Bella, is a good illustration of this [Fig. 10.11].⁷¹ At Racconigi, the young prince Emanuele Filiberto also drew several ornamental parterres for the garden dated around 1650, that is, exactly during the period when Tesaurò must have been consulted regarding its iconographical programme.⁷² Under the guidance of the painter Hubert Robert, Louis XIV himself enjoyed producing designs for his garden at Rambouillet, as we learn from a note dated November 17th, 1784: ‘The King is increasingly satisfied by his acquisition; he oversees and leads the improvements and embellishment of his domain himself. I have seen the plan prepared and drawn by His Majesty very diligently; to execute his plan, He entrusted Mr Robert, the painter, who has just been nominated *Draftsman of the King’s Gardens*’.⁷³

70 Remmert, “The Art of Garden and Landscape Design and the Mathematical Sciences” 20; and Ribouillault, “Hortus academicus”.

71 Le Corné A., *Stefano della Bella et Le Vase Médicis: dessin et éducation artistique au XVII^e siècle*, M.A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 2018.

72 Gabrieli N., *Racconigi* (Turin: 1972) 236: “Disegni diversi fatti dal Ser.mo sig. e Principe [Emanuele Filiberto, Principe di Carignano] mentre era giovine”, ca. 1650.

73 Petit de Bachaumont Louis, *Mémoires secrets pour servir à l’histoire de la république des lettres en France depuis 1762 jusqu’à nos jours [...]*, t. 27 (London, John Adamson: 1786) 37–38: ‘Le roi est satisfait de plus en plus de son acquisition; il s’occupe des améliorations & embellissements de ce château, il suit & dirige lui-même le travail. [...] J’en ai vu le plan dressé & levé par Sa Majesté très-promptement; elle l’a confié pour l’exécution à M. Robert, le peintre, qui vient d’être nommé *dessinateur des jardins du roi*’. See further, Wick G. – Catala S., *Hubert Robert et la fabrique des jardins*, exh. cat., Château de la Roche-Guyon (Paris: 2017), esp. 13–23, 72–73.



FIGURE 10.11 Stefano della Bella, *The Young Duke Cosimo III drawing in the Garden of Villa Medici*, 1656, etching from *Six grandes vues, dont quatre de Rome et deux de la Campagne romaine*, 31.1 × 27.7 cm. New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 2012.136.535.1
 PHOTO: THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

5 Conclusion

Rather than calling the search for meaning in gardens an exercise in futility, as some recent scholarship has done, claiming that ‘what passes for meaning [...] is really just one pleasant distraction after another’,⁷⁴ a fruitful hermeneutic approach requires a broader interdisciplinary methodology that more precisely contextualises the construction of a garden within its appropriate intellectual culture. As John Dixon Hunt has reminded us, garden experience depends on ‘habits of mind’: the more we know about these habits, the more we will be able to avoid anachronism in our attempts to understand the functions of early modern gardens.⁷⁵ In this essay, I have singled out three elements that I believe played a central role in the culture of such gardens: ingenuity, which presupposes a hermeneutic performance on the part of the garden’s designer and visitors; sociability, because gardens were a site of exchange and *conversazione*, and, finally, education. Exploration of these topics will not lead to the discovery of one single meaning for any of the gardens under discussion, nor does it preclude the possibility that meaning changes with time.⁷⁶ Rather, it helps us realize that, in early modern gardens, interpretation was expected and encouraged. It formed an essential part of garden culture and strongly impacted garden design. Although the historical hermeneutics of gardens is paved with difficulties for the historian, to forget this fact may have dire consequences for the ways in which historical gardens are reconstructed, restored and understood today.⁷⁷

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74 Gillette J., “Can Gardens Mean? (2005)”, in *Meaning in Landscape Architecture & Gardens* 134–165 (161).

75 Hunt, “Stourhead Revisited & the Pursuit of Meaning in Gardens” 338.

76 See the essential contribution of John Dixon Hunt on this topic in *The Afterlife of Gardens*.

77 I refer to my review of *Meaning in Landscape Architecture & Gardens*, in *Les Carnets du paysage* 23 (automne 2012) 228–229.

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