

The Grotesque in the Garden:  
Fear, Anxiety, and Delight in the Italian Renaissance Villa Landscape

by

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## **Abstract**

Many of the sculptures and structures that ornament the villa gardens of the Renaissance reflect the fears and anxieties prevalent in sixteenth-century Italy. Monsters, alarming waterworks, and unsettling abject imagery abound in this space that is primarily dedicated to pleasure and relaxation. Like the terrors that fill contemporary horror films and amusement parks, these artworks add to the pleasure experienced by the visitor by providing them with an opportunity to confront, explore, and master their anxieties. This project will look at the cultural history of the period to identify the specific anxieties that these artworks evoked, as well as how the subversion of those fears elicited the delight, curiosity, and admiration of the sixteenth-century visitor.

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**Introduction:**  
*The Garden of Earthly Delights, and Playful Horrors*

Until recently, most explorations of the horror genre have focused on the literature, film, and art produced since the appearance of the eighteenth-century gothic novel.<sup>1</sup> Although often accompanied by a brief acknowledgement of earlier works, such as Dante's *Inferno* (1314), that similarly evoke a sense of horror in the reader or spectator,<sup>2</sup> pre-eighteenth-century works have rarely been given significant attention within this context. Lately, this trend has changed, as scholars have begun to explore gruesome subject matter and destabilizing visual techniques (like those used in contemporary horror films) in early modern art.<sup>3</sup> Many artworks in the sixteenth-century villa gardens of Italy can be classed within this category of early modern horror, where visitors playfully interact with sculptures, fountains, grottos, and even buildings that elicit reactions ranging from sudden alarm and fear to a more subtle uneasiness and anxiety. This study aims to explore the horrific and repulsive representations in these gardens by relating their iconography and design to prevalent fears and anxieties in the sixteenth century.

Although the Renaissance garden is filled with frightful objects, it was actually a unique setting intended to meet the need for pleasure and relaxation outside the stresses of the city. This was distinctly different from its medieval predecessor. The *hortus conclusus*<sup>4</sup> of the Middle Ages was primarily cultivated for food and was most frequently

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<sup>1</sup> Wells, *The Horror Genre*, 3; Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 13.

<sup>3</sup> A series of papers on early modern horror were presented during two sessions, "Early Modern Horror I" and "Early Modern Horror II," on April 3, 2008 in Chicago at the Annual Meeting of the Renaissance Society of America.

<sup>4</sup> This is the Latin term for "enclosed garden."

incorporated into monastic settings. It was generally a relatively modest centrally-planned garden with a *fons salutis*, a well or fountain, symbolizing the springs in the centre of the Christian earthly paradise, the garden of Eden.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the whole of monastic life was understood to be a “provisional paradise,” a retreat from the concerns of the world.<sup>6</sup> Within this Edenic setting, the gardens became a location for study and contemplation that nurtured the mind and the soul.<sup>7</sup>

Rural villas became the primary site for the grand gardens of the Renaissance. While in the fourteenth century these country residences of the aristocracy were functioning farms, by the fifteenth century they gradually became more concerned with embodying *villeggiatura*, the ideal of leisurely country living.<sup>8</sup> At this point, productivity became less important and they instead functioned as a rejuvenating retreat from the stresses of urban life,<sup>9</sup> often providing a place for solitude and contemplation.<sup>10</sup>

References to an earthly paradise persisted, although often in classical forms. In the Villa d'Este in Tivoli, a former monastery that Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este began converting into a villa when he acquired it in 1550, there are allusions to the Garden of Hesperides, the goddess Hera's garden in the far corner of the world to which Heracles needed to gain access in order to collect a golden apple to complete his eleventh labour for Eurystheus.<sup>11</sup> Throughout the villa, there are depictions of golden apples

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<sup>5</sup> Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 9. See also Ree, Smienk, and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 10.

<sup>6</sup> Terry Comito, *The Idea of the Garden in the Renaissance*, 41.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>8</sup> There was still, however, an ambivalence at this time between seeing a villa for its productivity or as a retreat. See Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 11.

<sup>9</sup> Ree, Smienk, and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 10.

<sup>10</sup> Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Coffin, *The Villa D'Este at Tivoli*, 79.

ornamenting various architectural elements such as on the floor and vaults of the *Grotto of Diana* (c. 1572) (Fig. 0.1-0.2) and the columns and entablature of the *Fountain of the Owl* (c. 1566-1568) (Fig. 0.3). Similarly, many other gardens contain iconography relating to the ideal of the Golden Age, a time described by ancient poets as an era when there was no strife and everyone lived peacefully.<sup>12</sup> People who lived during the Golden Age largely survived on a diet of acorns, which are represented in large sculptures in the Sacro Bosco<sup>13</sup> in Bomarzo (Fig. 0.4),<sup>14</sup> a park patronized by Vicino Orsini between approximately 1550 until his death in 1584,<sup>15</sup> and in the *Fountain of the Acorns* in the garden of a friend of Vicino's, Cardinal Gambara,<sup>16</sup> at the Villa Lante (begun in 1568).<sup>17</sup> The ideal landscape of Mount Helicon is also alluded to in nearly all of the grand villa gardens through fountains which reference the mythic horse Pegasus stomping his hoof on the ground thereby making a stream erupt from the rocks (Fig. 0.5-0.7).

The use of classical models of paradise demonstrates that the patrons' preoccupation was not as much with the cultivation of Christian spirituality, but rather with the earthly delights and pleasures that are promised in these accounts. Recalling the charms of Pliny's ancient villas in Laurentium and Tuscany,<sup>18</sup> authors such as Leon Battista Alberti describe the ideal villa, of which the gardens are an integral part of the

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<sup>12</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 129-147; Virgil, *Georgics*, 2.535-539; Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.88-111.

<sup>13</sup> "Bosco" is the Italian term for a wooded park, which was often ornamented in the same way as other types of gardens in the Renaissance.

<sup>14</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 128-29. See also Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, 67.

<sup>15</sup> Dotson, "Shapes of Earth and Time," 211.

<sup>16</sup> Ree, Smienk and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 187.

<sup>17</sup> Lazzaro, "The Villa Lante at Bagnaia," 553.

<sup>18</sup> See Pliny the Younger, *Letters*, 2.17; 5.6.

overall design,<sup>19</sup> as a location that should aim to provide pleasure and relaxation for the visitor. Alberti writes that:

in a villa, the allures of license and delight are allowed. . . . It will receive much light from the joyous sky, much sun, and healthy breezes. I would not have it overlooked by anything whose gloomy shade would cause offense. Let everything smile at the visitor and greet him as he arrives. And once he has entered, let him be unsure whether it would be more pleasurable to stay where he is or to venture further, enticed by its gaiety and splendour.<sup>20</sup>

Alberti makes it clear that his ideal country villa is one primarily of beauty and pleasure.

While Alberti's ideals likely inspired many of the villa designs of the Renaissance, many fictional sources also had a large influence on the creation of these gardens.

Boccaccio's fourteenth-century book *The Decameron*, a text still immensely popular in the sixteenth century,<sup>21</sup> similarly portrays the garden as a place where people can leave behind their worries for a time and escape the dismal realities that their lives may hold.

The protagonists of the story retreat from the city of Florence, devastated by the Black Death, to hide away in country villas and tell stories to each other in the gardens.<sup>22</sup> It has also been widely recognized that the ideal landscapes in Francesco Colonna's

*Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499) filled with erotic nymphs, amazing monuments and breathtaking temples, were also extremely influential on the construction of Renaissance

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<sup>19</sup> Ree, Smienk and Steenbergen explain that the casino (the main building), garden, and surrounding landscape are all integrated into a unified design that forms the villa. See *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Alberti, *On the Art of Building*, 294-296. Note that this quote is found in his discussion of the suburban *hortus*, a location that he describes as combining the practicality of the city house with the delights of the country villa. It is taken from his discussion of the elements that should be like the country villa, and therefore apply to both the suburban and villa residences.

<sup>21</sup> The seventy-seven editions of the book that were printed throughout the sixteenth century attest to *The Decameron's* popularity in the late Renaissance. Hutton, "Introduction," in *The Decameron* by Boccaccio, xix.

<sup>22</sup> Boccaccio, *Decameron*, 10-14.

villa gardens.<sup>23</sup> In this fiction about a young man named Poliphilo, who dreams about a journey through a divine land while he searches for his lover Polia, delight is once again emphasized, particularly erotic pleasure as well as the joy that accompanies the discovery of awe-inspiring artworks.<sup>24</sup>

Just like in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, in Sannazaro's *Arcadia* (1504) there is again a distinct stress on the pleasurable quality of the pastoral landscape and lifestyle, although this pleasure is characterized somewhat differently. The narrator Sincero/Sannazaro tells the reader of the delight and pleasure experienced by him as a result of the slow-paced lifestyle, camaraderie, beautiful music and stories of the shepherds, as well as the friendly physical competition and games.<sup>25</sup> *Arcadia* begins by extolling the pleasurable character of uncultivated nature over the carefully groomed landscapes of ornamental gardens,<sup>26</sup> and the design of many of the villa gardens created after the publication of his text appear to have been inspired by these pastoral ideals;<sup>27</sup> the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo even warranted mention in Sansovino's preface to a later edition of Sannazaro's book.<sup>28</sup>

The horrific elements of the garden initially seem to be contrary to this pleasurable ideal. The banisters, urns, fountains, grottos, and woods abound in monsters and grotesque faces, whose dreadfulness is in sharp contrast to the idealized forms of

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<sup>23</sup> Godwin, "Introduction" in *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* by Colonna, xvi. See also Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 38; Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 11; Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 10; Miller, *Heavenly Caves*, 35.

<sup>24</sup> See Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.

<sup>25</sup> See Sannazaro, *Arcadia*.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>27</sup> Virgil's *Eclogues* were probably also a large influence on the use of Arcadian imagery, as they certainly were on Sannazaro himself. See Nash's introduction to Sannazaro, *Arcadia*, 11.

<sup>28</sup> Sansovino wrote, "Reading the present volume, I have found some descriptions of hills and valleys which, recalling the site of Bomarzo, have awakened in me the greatest longing for it." As quoted in Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 121.

many of the other statues. Moreover, references to frightening natural disasters, most commonly the Deluge, excite fear and surprise in unsuspecting visitors. Other structures are built to appear unstable, and the natural order and the boundaries of the self are frequently challenged, thereby producing uneasiness. All of these elements of the garden would have inspired different levels of fear, nervousness, repulsion, or discomfort in the viewers.

In other Renaissance sources, one can find this same odd inclusion of frightening or repulsive subject matter within an otherwise delightful context. In Poggio Bracciolini's *Facetiae* (1470), the first of numerous books to be published in the Renaissance containing collections of jokes, riddles, and tales,<sup>29</sup> there exist a number of sections describing frightening prodigies and monsters. One of these unsettling stories describes how a woman doing laundry on a riverbank is hungrily bitten by a sea creature that looks like a man from the waist up, but with the lower body of a fish that is divided into two tails. In addition, the creature has horns, fins, a large mouth and breasts, and it only has four long fingers that extend all the way to its armpits. As the woman screams for help, her five friends rush over, and using sticks and rocks, the group is able to kill the monster and drag it onto shore, where it becomes clear that the beast was even larger than an ordinary man. The tale ends with the speculation that this monster was in fact responsible for the disappearance of numerous children who went to bathe in the river and never returned.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For more information about these "facetiae" collections, see Bowen, "Introduction," in *One Hundred Renaissance Jokes*, xiii-xviii.

<sup>30</sup> Poggio, *Les Faceties*, XXXIV.

In this story, there is clearly no punch line or any other obvious cause that would invoke laughter. Significantly, Poggio's tales move without comment between frightful stories to humorous jokes, as if there is no reason to classify one as any different from the other. For example, after the tale described above, the following story is a brief and humorous anecdote involving a pun about the last name of Pope Boniface IX, "Tomacelli," which is also the name of a kind of tripe.<sup>31</sup> These two stories seem to be placed together in the collection without regard for the apparent difference in their levels of seriousness.<sup>32</sup> This oddity deserves attention within a playful collection such as this. Certainly, the simplest explanation is that these frightening elements, in both Poggio's text and in the Renaissance gardens, are in fact enjoyable in some way. This seems analogous to how in contemporary society many people relish ghost stories or horror films and are in fact disappointed if they fails to scare them.

The horror genre has attracted a lot of attention devoted to understanding what precisely creates a sense of pleasure from frightening tales and representations. Although theories vary in the subtleties of their arguments, the majority attribute the resulting delight to a sense of relief from or victory over the anxieties that are evoked. One of the first attempts to deal with this is Aristotle's *Poetics*. He argues that people instinctually take pleasure in mimetic representations,<sup>33</sup> and that art is furthermore pleasurable and valuable because it is able to teach the viewers universal lessons.<sup>34</sup> The genre of tragedy initially appears to be a problematic case within this understanding of art, as it seems contradictory to derive pleasure from experiencing negative emotions

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., XXXV.

<sup>32</sup> Bowen, *One Hundred Renaissance Jokes*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1448b9-13.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 1448b13-19.

such as pity and fear.<sup>35</sup> Yet Aristotle explains that it too is a positive experience because tragedy affects “through pity and fear the *catharsis* of such emotions.”<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the exact meaning of *catharsis* is not entirely clear, as it can be translated as either a religious term, “purification,” or a medical term, “purgation”<sup>37</sup> and there is therefore a great deal of debate over what precisely Aristotle intended to communicate by using this word.

Essential to this enjoyment of horror is a knowledge of safety, a prerequisite identified in Edmund Burke’s theorization of the aesthetic experience of the sublime in the middle of the eighteenth century. He argues that “if pain and terror are so modified as not to be actually noxious; if the pain is not carried to violence, and the terror is not conversant about the present destruction of the person, as these emotions clear the parts, whether fine or gross, of a dangerous and troublesome encumbrance, they are capable of producing delight.”<sup>38</sup> Burke believed that as long as there is no real threat, one enjoys exercising the “finer parts” of oneself.<sup>39</sup>

This necessary feeling of safety is elaborated on in more recent times by Pierre Grippari in his book *Du Rire et de l’Horreur*. Grippari identifies two primary ways that people deal with horror, suffering and fear. They either shroud their suffering with ritual or beauty, such as through funerals or monuments, or conversely they transform these negative events or emotions into ridicule and laughter.<sup>40</sup> Grippari concludes that the

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<sup>35</sup> Worth, “Aristotle, Thought and Mimesis,” 333.

<sup>36</sup> Arist. *Poet.* 1449b28-29.

<sup>37</sup> Schaper, “Aristotle’s Catharsis and Aesthetic Pleasure,” 132. Schaper further suggests that the purged emotions are pleurably transformed into an understanding of meaningful concepts.

<sup>38</sup> Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry*, 136.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Grippari, *Du rire et de l’horreur*, 15.

essential element of humour is an encounter with horror accompanied by the knowledge that the danger is either not in fact real or can be overcome.<sup>41</sup> He explains that “Le rire, ou le sourire, c’est l’horreur surmontée.”<sup>42</sup>

Gripari draws from the zoological writings of Desmond Morris, who explains in his examination of human development and behaviour that infants first begin to laugh at the age of about three to four months, when they recognize their mother as their protector. Once they have developed this awareness, if the child is startled by the mother, they have the initial reaction of fear, but also the knowledge that there is no real danger due to her protective presence. Morris claims that this tension between a knowledge of safety and a feeling of fear delights the child and causes laughter.<sup>43</sup>

Gripari also looks to the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud to explain the connection between laughter and fear. Freud argues that anxiety-causing sexual and hostile impulses that have been repressed due to their unpleasant consequences frequently find an outlet through pleasurable means such as jokes.<sup>44</sup> This sort of “safe” wish fulfillment and its connection to terrors has been elaborated upon by Ernest Jones, who argues that horrific creatures in nightmares act out desires that have been repressed, explaining both their attractiveness and their repulsiveness; the feeling of repulsion is necessary for the ego to allow the vicarious experience of the taboo wish fulfillment.<sup>45</sup>

In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud also claims that what is unpleasant sometimes becomes the object of play, as it provides a sense of control over things that

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>42</sup> “Laughter, or the smile, is horror overcome.” Ibid., 13.

<sup>43</sup> Morris, *The Naked Ape*, 116-117.

<sup>44</sup> For more information about Freud’s views regarding the role of jokes and anxiety, see Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious*, 90-116.

<sup>45</sup> Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 169-70.

cause fear, repulsion, or anger. A game can displace a person from a passive position in a distressing real life situation to an active role within an artificial scenario, as well as provide one with the opportunity to avenge oneself on a substitute for the object or person causing anxiety.<sup>46</sup> He cites the example of a young boy who only played with his toys by throwing them away while making an “o-o-o-o” sound, which was interpreted as “fort” in German, meaning “gone.” Sometimes this act was accompanied by a second phase of the game, where he would gleefully retrieve the toy while exclaiming “da,” meaning “there!”<sup>47</sup> Freud interpreted this game as a way for the boy to deal with the anxiety he felt when his mother would leave him for a few hours, as it put him in an active position over the pattern of “disappearance and return.”<sup>48</sup> Some scholars have taken up this idea and applied it to horror films, citing the desire to control anxieties such as castration, being devoured, abandonment, and aggression.<sup>49</sup> Others have focused more on the societal fears of a particular time period, such as the fear of invasions represented in films produced during the Cold War in the United States.<sup>50</sup> Just like in horror films, the imagery in the Renaissance gardens reflects very time-specific cultural anxieties as well as more universal concerns, providing one with a chance to assert mastery over one’s fears.

Another theory is that in horror books or films, the pleasurable relief of anxiety often happens through a narrative conquering of fearful forces and a return to a safe and

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<sup>46</sup> Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 35-37.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 32-33.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>49</sup> Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 172.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 207-8.

comfortable sense of order in the end.<sup>51</sup> This too seems applicable to the experience of the Renaissance garden. Whether emerging into an Arcadian setting after an enactment of the Deluge or entering the Sacro Bosco's *Hell Mouth* (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 0.8) to find a cool retreat from the sun, the "ending" to the visitor's confrontation with the threat is one that highlights the pleasure of their existing circumstance in contrast to the fright or repulsion that they just encountered.

In the Renaissance, Laurent Joubert briefly addressed another interesting mode of deriving pleasure from frightful encounters in his book *Traité du Ris* (1579), where he remarks upon the hilarity of watching the unwarranted fear of others. He says, "seeing these bearings, we laugh at the cowardice (an inappropriate thing unworthy of pity) when there is no justification for real fear."<sup>52</sup> It is easy to see how this sort of malicious enjoyment could be supplied in the gardens, particularly in the numerous water tricks. Witnesses to the prank have the pleasure of watching the alarm and panic of others as they are unexpectedly drenched. On the other hand, those who fall for the trick have their fears exposed as foolishness, and they can therefore overcome their own anxieties by laughing at them.

Mikhail Bakhtin also reflects on the power and pleasure of using laughter to conquer fear. He argues that the subjects of folk culture of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance tend to be inversions of the most sacred and serious subjects of official culture.<sup>53</sup> Bakhtin claims that laughter has the power to liberate one from oppression,

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<sup>51</sup> As suggested by writer Stephen King and scholar Steven Neale. *Ibid.*, 199-201; n. 64.

<sup>52</sup> As quoted in Rocher, *Rabelais's Laughters*, 44.

<sup>53</sup> Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 84.

fanaticism, intolerance, and fear.<sup>54</sup> He explains that, “The serious aspects of class culture are official and authoritarian; they are combined with violence, prohibitions, limitations, and always contain an element of fear and of intimidation. . . . Laughter, on the contrary, overcomes fear, for it knows no inhibitions, no limitations.” Things that are normally horrifying, such as devils, are portrayed as gay figures who do not terrify in the least.<sup>55</sup> Apprehension concerning one’s physical and spiritual safety is overcome through playful recreations of the frightening circumstances.

According to Bakhtin, the aesthetic strategy of overcoming fear during this period was through “grotesque realism.” He explains that this is characterized by anything that relates to the material body, particularly involving the lower bodily stratum. The grotesque involves debasement and abjection, which usually manifests itself in protruding body parts, deformity, exaggeration, defecation, and copulation. The body is not portrayed as an individualized and isolated unit, but rather as an ancestral body, so that returning to low, earthly and abject elements ultimately points to the promise of communal regeneration.<sup>56</sup> The grotesque body can be exemplified in the image of the Kerch terra cotta “senile pregnant hags;” their bodies are in the process of decaying, yet they have new life germinating within their bellies.<sup>57</sup>

Some of the imagery in the sixteenth-century gardens fits into Bakhtin’s model of Renaissance grotesque realism: there are cases of deformed and terrifying elements that are accompanied by signs of fecundity and new life. Yet as Bakhtin notes, the sixteenth century was a period of transition for the cultural understanding of grotesque laughter,

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 18-28. See also Chapter Five, “The Grotesque Body and Its Sources,” 303-367.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 25-26.

which by the seventeenth century was used as a strategy of asserting dominance over the object being mocked rather than as a communal renewal of life.<sup>58</sup> As the late Renaissance gardens fall into this period of transition, one finds that they contain artworks that in some cases fit with Bakhtin's model of the Renaissance grotesque while at other times they have more in common with his conception of the Baroque grotesque. These more "Baroque" artworks make no promise of new life; in fact quite the opposite in some cases, where erotic female bodies function as a false promise of pleasure and procreation that is only used to ensnare their prey. In these cases, fear is instead overcome by generating a sense of mastery and dominance in the viewer.

All of these explanations of the pleasure derived from horror have one thing in common: the viewer's desirable and pleasurable release from anxiety. As Cosimo Urbano explains in his discussion of horror films, "One submits to the horror experience in order to get rid of the monster(s). The pain and discomfort experienced during the watching of the films is considered something necessary and inevitable in order to achieve the (presumably pleasurable) final victory."<sup>59</sup> Rather than cling to one particular theory of the horror genre and try to plug Renaissance examples into it, I will instead work with this underlying assumption. The anxieties exhibited in the artwork of the Renaissance gardens will be explored with the understanding that it is through an encounter with our fears and anxieties that we overcome them, a victory that provides pleasure for the viewer.

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 12; 63.

<sup>59</sup> Urbano, "What's the Matter with Melanie," 30.

Noël Carroll, in his book *The Philosophy of Horror*, proposes another source of pleasure to be enjoyed by consuming horrifying material. His theory is based on Mary Douglas' *Purity and Danger* (1966), an anthropological study that examines the connection between ideas of purity and the maintenance of order. She argues that dirt or impurity can be defined as something outside of, or menacing to, a society's established boundaries and structures, and rituals of purification are a way to regulate one's environment and create "a unity of experience."<sup>60</sup> Anomalies or ambiguities within this order are dealt with through various means, one of which is to identify them as dangerous;<sup>61</sup> individuals strive to maintain order because of the perception that there are perilous consequences for any transgressions.<sup>62</sup> Along the same lines, Carroll also draws from Julia Kristeva's discussion of abjection in *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (1982), a text with many of the same principles. Working instead from a psychoanalytic perspective, she argues that the abject is something that is repulsed by the subject because it threatens to disrupt the symbolic order. The abject evokes a sense of horror as it challenges what one perceives as the boundaries of oneself or the world, obfuscating or endangering the distinctions between inside and outside, self and other, subject and object.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Douglas, *Purity and Danger*, 2.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>63</sup> See Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 1-31.

Like the displays of abjection in the Renaissance described by Bakhtin, which promise regeneration and new life, Douglas also notes that in some cultures defilement is associated with the sacred. In these cases, complete disintegration intersects with the foundational formlessness from which life first emerges, symbolizing in essence a new dawn (See Chapter 10, "The System Shattered and Renewed," 159-179). Kristeva, on the other hand, does not have the optimism evident in Renaissance representations of the abject or in Douglas' accounts of dirt-affirming sacred rituals. Although she also acknowledges that the abject evokes the boundlessness of primal repression, the pre-symbolic beginnings of life (18), she says that "the hope for rebirth is short-circuited" (54). While she recognizes the discourse of rebirth from a

Like Douglas' impurity and Kristeva's abjection, Carroll claims that monsters are repulsive precisely because they do not fit into our established systems and are therefore perceived as impure and aberrations. They disturb our understanding of the cosmic or natural order, and therefore inspire fear and revulsion.<sup>64</sup> He takes this model of monstrosity further to account for the relationship between repulsion<sup>65</sup> and pleasure that is evoked by art-horror. Carroll claims that because monsters do not fit within our systems of knowledge, they are particularly prone to exciting one's curiosity, as they bring up questions regarding the nature of the monster's very existence and characteristics. The resulting fascination provides the cognitive pleasure that supersedes any unpleasant sensation of fear and disgust.<sup>66</sup>

Although Carroll focuses on monsters as causes of horror, and considers other frightening subjects to be of a different class of subject matter,<sup>67</sup> one can imagine how other kinds of danger could also inspire curiosity. Threatening non-monstrous objects may not be outside of one's system of knowledge, but chances are high that they are outside of one's personal experience. Encountering representations of dangerous phenomenon, one is able to examine them in a way that would be impossible in a real-life situation; some kinds of events can rarely be experienced or known without the destruction and death of the self. Therefore, recalling Burke's discussion of the sublime, artistic representations of anything dangerous are particularly fascinating because they

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state of abjection in other cultures and even says that she envies the delight of Rabelais in the face of abjection (205), it is not an attitude that she shares.

<sup>64</sup> Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 31-35.

<sup>65</sup> Carroll treats disgust, instead of fear, as the defining emotion evoked by horror films.

<sup>66</sup> Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*, 188.

<sup>67</sup> Carroll cites monsters as a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for defining the horror genre (15-16). See also page 186, where Carroll compares the horror narratives to disaster movies, arguing that the two types of dangers do not incite the same type of curiosity.

provide an opportunity for the examination and contemplation of the feared subject, a kind of forbidden knowledge, accompanied by the assurance and safety that is necessary to do so.

Carroll's connection between monstrosity and abjection is not entirely new; there is in fact evidence that various writers in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance recognized this same quality as the defining characteristic of monsters. St. Isidore of Seville (c. 560-636) reaffirms St. Augustine's opinion that monsters are the product of the will of God and he denies popular claims about the demonic origins of monstrous peoples. Instead, he argues, monstrous races and creatures are simply outside of people's knowledge of nature.<sup>68</sup> Therefore, for St. Isidore, monsters are defined as creatures that do not fit into one's preconceived idea of what is good, proper and natural.<sup>69</sup>

Similarly, an analysis of Renaissance literature on monsters suggests a comparable understanding of monstrosity and the prodigious. Unfortunately, writers such as Ambroise Paré and Pierre Boaistuau do not spend time explicitly defining the category of monsters;<sup>70</sup> they are instead preoccupied with their various origins. However, if one looks at the remarkably varied group of objects that they class as monsters, they appear to be creatures, whether humanoid, animal, plant, or even celestial, that do not fit into their normative understanding of the natural world and are

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<sup>68</sup> Isidore of Seville, *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville*, 11.3.1-2.

<sup>69</sup> However, he does make a distinction between monstrous races or other creatures that he believed actually exist and the fictional hybrids produced by artists, an artistic practice which he condemned, much like St. Bernard de Clairvaux. See Moffitt, "An Exemplary Humanist Hybrid," 320-321.

<sup>70</sup> In Ulisse Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia* there is a clearer definition of monstrosity, which is defined as that which is an error of nature. However, as Jean Céard points out in his introduction to Aldrovandi's book, this work was not published until the middle of the seventeenth century and was heavily modified by Bartolomeo Ambrosini. This pupil made use of Aldrovandi's material as well as more recent accounts of monsters, such as those of Liceti, who had moved away from the more common sixteenth-century view of monsters as prodigies. See page xi-xxv.

therefore interpreted as prodigious signs. This implied definition accounts for a varied group of examples that range from existing creatures living in foreign lands, such as giraffes and elephants, fictive creatures that are derived from classical mythology, reported instances of monstrous births, and strange comets and apparitions in the sky.

This view of monstrosity as something that lies outside of established classifications is closely aligned with the contemporary interest in *meraviglie*, a category of natural and artificial objects ranging from scientific discoveries to religious phenomenon to cultural novelties that inspired wonder and awe in the viewer.<sup>71</sup> Vincenzo Borghini highlights the ability of these objects to move the viewer emotionally when he explains that “There is no doubt that extravagant things, never before seen or heard, or that have in themselves such a rare excellence, delight extraordinarily, and this extraordinary delight is called *meraviglia*.” These rare or unusual objects that produce such delight rest outside of conventional classifications that were established before the existence of such a thing was discovered and examined. It is the object’s dissimilitude to the norm that inspires one’s interest and awe.

Although to the curious mind these *meraviglie* can produce a thrilling delight, it is precisely this discord with one’s existing system of knowledge that can make anomalous or monstrous things seem threatening. The Renaissance treatises on monsters demonstrate both a fascination with strange beings as well anxiety about the disorder that they can cause. These works are not simply compilations of stories or information; the monsters in these texts undergo a set of categorizations and classifications according

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<sup>71</sup> Barolsky, “Marvels of Malady,” 41-42.

to their type and origin, suggesting a desire of the authors to impose a new sense of order upon these misfits. Similarly, large collections of these *meraviglie* were collected and organized into cabinets of curiosities, an attempt to create a comprehensive collection of all types of rarities, thereby creating a microcosm of the universe within the knowledge and control of the collector.<sup>72</sup>

The relevance of the concept of *meraviglie* to this discussion of horrendous garden sculptures is affirmed by an inscription in the Sacro Bosco. On the wall behind a bench that is crookedly sunken into the ground, it says “You who wander the world longing to see great and amazing marvels, come here, where there are terrifying faces, elephants, lions, bears, orcs, and dragons.”<sup>73</sup> This tells us that the sculptures in the gardens are intended to be viewed with curiosity as *meraviglie*, as well as indicate that their frightening quality is a key part of that experience of wonder and awe.

In this study, I will primarily focus on these experiences of fear, anxiety, wonder, and delight; I will emphasize the visitors’ interaction with the artworks in the gardens rather than search for a definitive meaning of the objects or the overall programs. As Joseph Koerner explains, “abjection exists in its effects, as a response elicited in the subject.”<sup>74</sup> Works such as the *Leaning House* in the Sacro Bosco (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 0.9) will be addressed for its creation of a sense of instability and uneasiness in the viewers as they enter the lop-sided structure, rather than my placing emphasis on its possible function as a symbol for the fidelity of Vicino Orsini’s wife, Giulia, as other scholars

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<sup>72</sup> John Dixon Hunt, “Curiosities to Adorn Cabinets and Gardens,” 273.

<sup>73</sup> As translated by Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 88.

<sup>74</sup> Koerner, “The Abject of Art History,” 5.

have.<sup>75</sup> While this symbolism likely played a role in Orsini's choice of erecting the structure, it ignores the actual experience of the visitor. While I am not challenging the correctness or importance of the symbolism, it needs to be acknowledged that this work is not simply a two-dimensional icon that one passes by, but an environment that one enters and which has a distinct effect upon one's body and emotions.

To clarify, while my emphasis is on the effects of these works, I certainly do not intend to ignore the iconography of the objects. The exploration of iconography and cultural history is crucial for my discussion, especially when identifying how a motif evokes anxiety in the visitor. Certainly, the subject of the artworks and the experiences of the viewers go hand-in-hand. In fact, if one looks at the Neoplatonic and Cabbalist thought (advocated respectively by Marsilio Ficino and Pico della Mirandola) that was popular in the Renaissance, the importance of the sinister iconography increases. Signs (both words and images) were considered to be connected to what was signified, not by cultural consensus but rather in a natural way.<sup>76</sup> This means that "when Ficino accepted the serpent as the symbol of time this was not by convention; for him, the essence of time was somehow embodied in the serpent's form."<sup>77</sup> Therefore, by confronting and overcoming a visual symbol of danger, the Renaissance visitors would have felt as though they were overcoming some essential part of threat itself.

There are, however, challenges to understanding the sixteenth-century experience of the garden sculptures and structures. Gardens are places that are always in a state of flux as the plants grow or decay and the weather takes its toll on the artworks. They

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<sup>75</sup> Bosch, "Bomarzo: A Study in Personal Imagery," 103.

<sup>76</sup> Mitrović, "Paduan Aristotelianism," 677.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 678.

must be maintained to survive, and different ideas of the ideal garden can overshadow the original intentions of the original designers or patrons. This is not limited to changes in the planting schemes and vegetation, but also to the location or preservation of sculptures. In this study, an effort will be made to keep in mind how fountains and sculptures were likely to have been originally placed and viewed, indicated through known written accounts and Renaissance prints or paintings of the gardens. However, these complementary sources are not always mimetic and often make judicious adjustments to what was physically present. I will try to explore the relationship between fear and delight in the gardens keeping these difficulties in mind; the aim of this project is to evoke a general picture of how these sculptural and architectural elements could have functioned based on the evidence that exists, however uncertain it may be at times.

Furthermore, not all of the gardens I will discuss are equally saturated with grotesque or frightening objects. While the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo is certainly the most densely populated with horrific figures, in the Villa Caprarola, the nearby residence of Cardinal Alessandro Farnese built between 1557 and 1586,<sup>78</sup> the unsettling imagery is much more marginal. Between these two extremes are the Villa d'Este in Tivoli and the Villa Lante in Bagnaia, as well as some of the gardens patronized by the Medici family, such as the villa in Pratolino built under the direction of Francesco I from c. 1569-1581<sup>79</sup> and the Boboli Gardens behind the Palazzo Pitti in Florence, where planning commenced after it was purchased by Cosimo I in 1550.<sup>80</sup> Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini's villa in Frascati, though developed slightly later at the beginning of the

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<sup>78</sup> Partridge, "Caprarola, Villa Farnese."

<sup>79</sup> Ree, Smienk, and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 75.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

seventeenth century, will be looked at as well; one can clearly see that the influence of sixteenth-century villa gardens and the delight in artificial terrors remains strong. Other villas or gardens outside of the areas around Florence and Rome will be also be discussed when applicable; however, this trend of delighting in horror seems to be less strong in other areas of Italy. Perhaps this is due to the fact that many of the patrons in these areas were actively trying to out-do each other, therefore exhibiting comparable concerns and programs.<sup>81</sup>

My first chapter will deal with the quintessential topic of horror: monsters. The Renaissance inherited from the previous centuries a strong tendency to see physical hybridity and deformity as a sign of depravity. This chapter explores the discourse around monsters found in the writings of elite philosophical texts, scholarly treatises, as well as stories and images in more broadly disseminated broadsheets. After a general overview of this cultural attitude, individual types of monsters that are visually represented in the gardens are discussed in order to give a more specific understanding of their connotations for a sixteenth-century visitor. This chapter in particular draws heavily from the sculptures of the Sacro Bosco not surprisingly, considering its modern name “Parco dei Monstri” although many other gardens are also inhabited by representations of monstrous creatures and will be discussed accordingly.

Chapter two addresses a source of anxiety that is somewhat less obvious. An ambivalent attitude towards water is manifested in the gardens; while the abundance of water allows the garden to flourish into a lush and vital environment, its destructive potential is also addressed through frightening waterworks. The grottos and fountains

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 126; 147.

abound in watery tricks that reference the terrifying discourse about floods and tempests. The cycle of destruction and regeneration is most obvious in these works, as the promise of new life is often directly referenced in the iconography. Additionally, anxieties about sea navigation and the creatures that dwell in the depths of the ocean are also exhibited in sinister but playful ways.

The last chapter looks at abjection in its broadest sense, as the unsettling disruption of boundaries and order. The disturbance of the natural order, often referenced in texts concerned with grotesque ornamentation and invention, is a trend that often creeps out of the margins and into principal works in the gardens. Architectural order is also disturbed in the design of the grottos and other structures by creating the illusion that the buildings are on the verge of collapse or disintegration. The physical boundaries of the self are similarly unsettled through displays of fluid passing across the borders of fictive bodies, and even the psychological and spiritual borders of the self are challenged.

In essence, this project aims to elucidate the delightful, playful, and liberating qualities of the seemingly unpleasant artworks within the Renaissance garden, ranging from the slightly unsettling elements to the frightfully surprising and momentarily alarming theme-park-like pranks. As the chapters develop, it will become clear how both threads of art-horror theory are reflected in these Renaissance works. There is a clear manifestation of prevalent cultural anxieties, leading to a cathartic response in the viewer. As well, a consistent interest in the in-between, the ambiguous and the abject seems both to repulse the viewers and to arouse curiosity in them. While the stress in both theories is different, they certainly come together on many points: abjection evokes anxiety that

needs to be overcome, and the interest in *meraviglie* could perhaps be understood as one more way of coping with uneasiness by seeking out knowledge of the menacing monsters and marvels.

**Chapter 1:**  
***Monstrosity: A Sign of Corruption and Danger***

In his fourth-century book *The City of God*, St. Augustine briefly discusses the phenomenon of monsters and marvels in relation to their place within God's creation. He explains that the etymology of the word "monster" comes from "monstrare," meaning "to show," because they function as signs from God regarding His awesome creative power.<sup>82</sup> St. Augustine affirms that even monstrous peoples, such as Skiopodes (people with two feet but only one leg) or Cynocephali (barking people with dog-like heads) have the dignity of being descendents from Adam. St. Augustine clarifies that "God, the Creator of all, knows where and when each thing ought to be, or to have been created, because He sees the similarities and diversities which can contribute to the beauty of the whole. But He who cannot see the whole is offended by the deformity of the part, because he is blind to that which balances it."<sup>83</sup>

Although this positive understanding of monsters remained influential throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, monstrosity, in the form of either hybridity or deformity, was more often considered an outward sign of moral and spiritual corruption. Sometimes it was believed that God had created the monster as a portent of His wrath towards the sins of its parents, the community or humanity as a whole; other times, its deformities were believed to be the result of the evil nature or actions of the monster itself. These sentiments can be found in various arenas of discourse, such as popular broadsheets, treatises on prodigies, and iconological resources. The frightening creatures that filled the sixteenth-century imagination

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<sup>82</sup> Augustine, *The City of God*, 778.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 530-1.

proliferate within the Renaissance gardens, particularly in the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo, drawing upon the visitors' anxieties about the deceitful, violent and otherwise threatening traits of a variety of types of monsters.

Many medieval spiritual leaders supported their ominous characterization of monsters by drawing from biblical authority. They preached that the body and the soul were integrally connected, and therefore corporeal disfigurement was a sign of internal corruption.<sup>84</sup> Hugh of St. Victor explained that the physical body was beautiful insofar as it was originally created in the image of God, although original sin had deformed it.<sup>85</sup> This connection between sinful actions and the physical corruption of the body is clear in the Book of Genesis. There is no doubt that the consequences of eating the forbidden fruit were spiritual ones, but the sin also marked itself on the bodies of Adam and Eve, and subsequently on the rest of humanity, through the introduction of suffering and death.<sup>86</sup>

St. Gregory the Great similarly linked corporeal qualities to inner morality when he distinguished “upright men,” whose appearance reflected a rational character, from those who were deformed, and therefore linked with a more bestial disposition.<sup>87</sup> This attitude was reflected in the “wild man” images of the period, a figure that represented a “spiritual exile.”<sup>88</sup> In medieval *exempla*, collections of moralizing stories used by preachers, one frequently finds a story about a hermit who is curious about the experience of sin, and is therefore tempted and tricked by a demon. After he commits

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<sup>84</sup> Dale, “Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms,” 407-8.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>86</sup> Gen. 2: 16-17; Gen. 3: 16-17 (New American Bible).

<sup>87</sup> Dale, “Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms,” 408.

<sup>88</sup> Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*, 56-7.

the sins of drunkenness, fornication, and murder, he is tortured by his transgressions and is transformed into a wild man.<sup>89</sup> In the Smithfield Decretals' illustration of this story (c. 1340), the illuminator initially depicts the hermit in an upright and dignified fashion (Fig. 1.1); however, after his sin, he is shown on his hands and knees, and covered with beastly hair (Fig. 1.2). As Alixe Bovey points out, "Both the demon and the wild man are presented as spiritual monsters, their alienation from God's grace represented by their bodily disfigurement."<sup>90</sup> Similar stories and images of wild men continue to appear in the Renaissance, such as the biblical account of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who is bestialized and exiled into the desert for his sin, found in Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires Prodigieuses* (Fig. 1.3).<sup>91</sup>

The popular bestiaries produced during the Middle Ages also reinforced the connection between outward physical characteristics and inner character by assigning a moral significance to both existing and imaginary creatures.<sup>92</sup> In Pierre de Beauvais' *Bestiary*, one finds the typical formulaic entry for each animal: a brief description of some of the beast's physical characteristics or behaviour, followed by a moral interpretation of these qualities, and often incorporating a supporting verse from the Bible.<sup>93</sup> In the case of the Ass-Centaur, the author begins by explaining the dual nature of its body as half-donkey and half-man, and then compares it to the hypocritical and deceitful qualities of people who "speak the good from the front and evil from behind."<sup>94</sup> Clearly, the dual

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 56-7.

<sup>91</sup> Boaistuau, *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, f. 9v-11v. This is an early English translation of the first volume of *Histoires Prodigieuses* published nine years after the original French edition.

<sup>92</sup> Dale, "Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms," 409.

<sup>93</sup> Mermier, "Introduction," in *A Medieval Book of Beasts: Pierre de Beauvais' Bestiary*, xiv.

<sup>94</sup> Beauvais, *A Medieval Book of Beasts*, 69.

nature of the body is linked to an internal moral division. The corporeal characteristics of the centaur, like many of the other creatures within the bestiary, are explicitly linked with moral and spiritual values.

In Renaissance humanist circles, monstrosity continued to be regarded as an indication of corruption. In a similar way to many of the medieval writers and illustrators discussed above, Neo-Platonic philosophers suggest that monstrosity is a sign of degeneracy, except their arguments are based on the Platonic notion of Ideal forms rather than biblical passages or moralizing tales. In his commentary on Plato's *Phaedrus*, Marsilio Ficino expounds that "divine beauty, in that it is the splendour of the good sparkling in the series of the ideas, clearly propagates its images not only to souls but even to sensible forms."<sup>95</sup> In this text, Ficino makes it clear that corporeal beauty is a manifestation of goodness in the material world and has the ability to raise the soul of those who contemplate it towards goodness. Moreover, he does not only consider beauty the splendour of goodness, but elsewhere also associates it with order, truth, wisdom, love and divinity.<sup>96</sup> It is clear that if he believes that beauty is the product of goodness, then a lack of beauty would suggest a lack of goodness, and therefore an indication of degeneracy and corruption.

Throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this association between spiritual corruption and physical monstrosity was evident not only in courtly philosophical discourse, but across all levels of society. Monstrous births throughout Europe were considered particularly sinister and frightening, as they were understood as

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<sup>95</sup> Ficino, *The Phaedra Charioteer*, 176.

<sup>96</sup> See *ibid.*, 80, 82, 108, 140, 154, and 202.

prophetic signs of divine wrath and of God's ensuing judgment and destruction.<sup>97</sup> Many Renaissance writers are quite clear about this belief, such as Niccolò Machiavelli, who claims that prodigies are always followed by some form of catastrophe.<sup>98</sup>

In one of the most well known cases of these portents, Luca Landucci wrote that the monster of Ravenna was a warning of the sack of the city that took place only eighteen days after it was reportedly born in early March of 1512 (Fig. 1.4).<sup>99</sup> One image of this monster in particular connects the creature's bodily deformities to the sins of the community by depicting the portent in the form of traditional *Frau Welt* images, which are pictures of a monstrous allegorical figure whose various body parts correspond to each of the seven deadly sins (Fig. 1.5).<sup>100</sup> By visually connecting this creature to the conventional iconography of sin, this creature's body became a sign for the corruption of the city of Ravenna and an omen of its impending punishment.

Just as the monster of Ravenna was associated with sinfulness pictorially, monstrous bodily characteristics were often interpreted in very specific moral and political ways in written accounts of the figure. The initial story that circulated about the monster stated that the creature was born of a nun and a friar, and included a description of one of the creature's legs as a "zampa del diavolo."<sup>101</sup> This had a pointedly anti-clerical tone, as it suggested that the lustful activity of the clergy had a demonic outcome that

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<sup>97</sup> Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 32.

<sup>98</sup> Maggi, *In the Company of Demons*, vii.

<sup>99</sup> Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 177. The earliest birth date accorded to this monster is March 6, although it seems that in popular discourse it was conflated with a monster born in Florence years earlier in 1506. Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 35, 41.

<sup>100</sup> Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 42-3.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

was manifested corporeally in the newborn creature.<sup>102</sup> In another account, Johannes Multivallis provided interpretations for the members of the monster's body, concluding with the significance of the creature as a whole:

The horn [indicates] pride; the wings, mental frivolity and inconstancy; the lack of arms, a lack of good works; the raptor's foot, rapaciousness, usury and every sort of avarice; the eye on the knee, a mental orientation solely toward earthly things; the double sex, sodomy. And on account of these vices, Italy is shattered by the sufferings of war, which the king of France has not accomplished by his own power, but only as a scourge of God.<sup>103</sup>

These written interpretations of the monster of Ravenna indicate that the body of this child was understood to bear the marks of ecclesiastical vice and the sins of the country as a whole, providing a merciful warning from God so that sinners might have an opportunity to repent before His wrath gives way to destruction.

This idea that God produces monsters as a sign of His anger is also discussed in treatises about monsters and marvels such as Konrad Lykosthenes' *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon* (1557), which chronicles the history of portents from the origins of the world to the sixteenth century. He makes it very clear on his title page that the prodigies he discusses are signs of God's wrath towards the sins of humanity, because as he insists in his dedication, everything is filled with the presence of God and is under His control.<sup>104</sup> Although he acknowledges that some monsters may be caused naturally, he

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

<sup>103</sup> As quoted in Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 181-2. The pro-French message of this interpretation is implicit, as it suggests that the actions of the French army are holy and sanctioned by the will of God. This same monster was also given an anti-French interpretation: the Latin poet Giovan Francesco Vitale claimed that monsters were produced wherever the French traversed because they were the cause of the divided state of the Church, which was signified in the two-headed body of the monster of Ravenna (as it was sometimes depicted).<sup>103</sup> Portents were consistently used as a propagandistic tool, suggesting the seriousness with which people took the appearance and interpretations of these monsters. See Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 48-51.

<sup>104</sup> Lykosthenes, *The Doome*, ii. See also Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 183.

argues that even these do not escape their function as divine signs.<sup>105</sup> Certainly, exploring alternate causes is not the focus of his treatise, as highlighted by the title of the English translation *The Doome: warning all men to the Iudgmente*.<sup>106</sup>

Pierre Boaistuau, in his *Histoires Prodigieuses* (1560), also considers divine anger one of the principal causes of monsters. He declares that “these monstrous creatures, for the most part do proceede of the judgement, justice, chastisement and curse of God”<sup>107</sup> and he cites the sins of the parents as the source of God’s wrath. He does, however, explore other causes as well: he briefly refers to the biblical story of the blind man whose deformity, Jesus says, is not due to his sins or those of his parents but rather for the sake of God’s glory (see John 9). He also provides various somatic causes for deformities, such as the phenomenon of maternal impressions on the foetus. This variety attests to the complex and diverse attitudes towards monsters that co-existed during the Renaissance.<sup>108</sup> Yet many of the alternative causes he identifies also have evil roots, such as women’s cannibalistic cravings that are “hurtfull to their fruite” and the meddling of devils, indicating a consistent link between monstrosity and sin.<sup>109</sup> The French barber-surgeon Ambroise Paré’s *Des Monstres et Des Prodiges* (1573) follows suit with Boaistuau; he explores numerous causes, with a significant degree of attention to natural ones, although he also continues to support the view that monsters are frequently a sign of evil

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<sup>105</sup> Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 183.

<sup>106</sup> Lykosthenes, *The Doome*; Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 183.

<sup>107</sup> Boaistuau, *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, f. 12v.

<sup>108</sup> See Daston and Park, “Chapter Five: Monsters: A Case Study” in *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 173-214, for a discussion of the three general attitudes towards monsters during the early modern period: horror, pleasure, and repugnance.

<sup>109</sup> Boaistuau, *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, f. 11v-16r.

and corruption. Paré discusses monsters caused by divine wrath in his second chapter and devotes nine chapters, from chapter 26 to 34, to the interference of demons.

In Paré's introduction to his second chapter, he makes an important distinction between the God-glorifying blind man, which he borrows from Boaistuaou, and the strange hybrid creatures that are about to be discussed in the text. He explains that unnatural hybridity "rendent la creature non seulement monstreuse, mais prodigieuse"<sup>110</sup> and is most often a sign of the judgment of God.<sup>111</sup> It is not surprising then that in sixteenth and seventeenth-century texts on iconology, representations of hybrid monsters were often reported to function as extremely negative allegories like Fraud or Deceit.<sup>112</sup>

Allegorical figures of Fraud are frequently described as having beautiful upper bodies accompanied by monstrous lower halves. Similar to the ass-centaurs in the medieval bestiaries, these hybrids signify a malevolent nature revealed in their lower body while their beautiful upper physique is merely a deceptive mask.<sup>113</sup> Cesare Ripa explains in his *Iconologia* that this tradition of associating certain hybrids with deceptiveness goes back to Dante's *Inferno*, which describes Fraud as a human-snake-scorpion hybrid. This figure appears benevolent in his face, dress, and demeanour, while his lower scaly body and deadly stinger indicate his true character.<sup>114</sup> Dante's account of the figure of Fraud established a pattern of depicting deceptiveness through a display of

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<sup>110</sup> "...renders the creature not only monstrous, but prodigious." Paré, *Des Monstres et Prodiges*, 6.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. Daston and Park also note that this specific connection between hybrids and evil is exhibited through the frequent visual representations of demons as hybrid creatures (*Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 182).

<sup>112</sup> Moffitt, "An Exemplary Humanist Hybrid," 307.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 307-309.

<sup>114</sup> Ripa, *Iconologia*, 186-7.

hybridity, which simultaneously attracts the viewer through a false goodness and repels the viewer through a sign of the being's evil disposition in the bestial and dangerous lower limbs.

Although Dante's characterization of Fraud is male, Vincenzo Cartari describes female creatures that are similarly dangerous hybrids, with an attractive face and torso accompanied by a truly venomous lower body. Cartari explains that the cannibalistic lamias:

...have the face and breast of a girl who could not be painted prettier; their character is seen in their appearance: in their eyes, so full of grace or mercy and longing that whomever might look upon them would judge them to be quite tame and peaceful. The rest of their body is, however, covered with the hardest scales, so that it gradually turns into a serpent, finally ending up as a terrible and horrifying snake.... Baring their beautiful bosoms...the Lamias have uncovered their white breasts. To any man who sees them, he then becomes stunned for they become so beautiful that he at once wants to be with them.... These creatures don't move a bit; instead, they fix their eyes upon the ground as though from modesty, and they never reveal their sharpened talons – except when one comes right next to them, and that is the moment when they seize him with those claws, and they don't let him go until the Serpent, which grows at their other end like a tail, has killed him with venomous bites. And now is when they devour him.<sup>115</sup>

The female hybrid not only deceives the male viewer with modest downcast eyes that suggest a false goodness, but also seduces him with her beauty in order to destroy him.

Anyone who is not wary of the lamias' monstrosity will pay for it with their lives.

A similar creature found in the *Sacro Bosco* is a hybrid of a woman and a snake (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 1.6). Like the silently provocative lamias, she has a pretty face and bared breasts, although instead of her body ending in one long serpent, her legs remain separate and are each covered in snake scales. This adjustment to the typical lamian

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<sup>115</sup> Cartari, *Le Imagini*, 57. As translated by Moffitt in "A Hidden Sphinx," 285-6.

iconography makes the creature even more overtly sexual, with her legs spread wide open and hair between them that both covers and emphasizes her genitalia.<sup>116</sup> In fact, her two legs are about the right height and depth for a bench, inviting the tired visitor to come closer and rest on her lap. Upon seeing this monster, the sixteenth-century male visitor would no doubt recall the threat of the lamias and other provocative hybrids that were said to entrap men with their sexuality. He would at once be filled with scopophilic pleasure, which would simultaneously fill him with terror at the danger of his attraction. On the other hand, if the visitor chooses to indulge his desires and go sit on her lap, he is not destroyed as the legends say, but rather enjoys a moment of triumph over the threat as the artifice of the scene protects him from the actualization of his fears.

Alternatively, this provocative figure has sometimes been identified as Echidna, the half-serpent goddess described by Hesiod who eats “raw flesh beneath the secret parts of the holy earth” and who gave birth to many of the most frightening monsters in classical mythology.<sup>117</sup> If one considers this creature to be Echidna rather than a lamia, then the dangers of her attractiveness are just as severe, since such a union can only bring forth more disastrous and destructive monsters. Yet, the scales on this sculpture’s legs are ambiguous enough that she has warranted a third identification as a deadly creature of the sea, a siren. The sirens, with their enchanting and alluring songs that entrap sailors who pass them by,<sup>118</sup> are often depicted as this type of hybrid, half-seductively beautiful maidens and half-sea monsters (Fig.1.7).<sup>119</sup> This ambiguous figure,

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<sup>116</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 106.

<sup>117</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, 300.

<sup>118</sup> Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology, Epit.* 7.18; Homer, *Odyssey*, 12.39-54, 12.181-200.

<sup>119</sup> Although sirens are often described as half-bird and half-woman, such as in Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology, Epit.* 7.18, they are sometimes instead shown as mermaid-like creatures with fish scales on

in all of its interpretations, is one that lures men into her arms only in order to destroy them.

The harpy across from the lamia (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 1.8), a pairing of creatures that also happens to be present in Bolognino Zaltieri's *Lamias and Harpies* in Cartari's *Le Immagini degli Dei* (1571 edition) (Fig. 1.9), appears to function in a very similar way to her partner. She has the same sensual breasts and pretty face with a bestial lower body. This figure is depicted with large bat wings, sharp and clenched talons, and a serpentine scaly tail. Like the lamia's legs, the tail also functions as a bench, offering a place of comfort to the visitor. Harpies, however, are known primarily as tormenters. In mythology, these women-birds were sent by the gods to plague Phineus, so that when food was placed before him, the harpies would snatch it away before he could satisfy his hunger. They would also corrupt whatever morsels they left behind, so that they could no longer be eaten.<sup>120</sup> With knowledge of the wretched mythical qualities of these hybrids, the visitor would frighteningly be trapped between two looming monstrous creatures that signalled torment, misery, trickery and death. Considering the third sculptural group in this triad, composed of two lions protectively guarding their cub (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 1.10), the visitor who walks into the middle of this sculptural group would be confronted on nearly every side by threatening and dangerous creatures.

In fact, both harpies and Echidna are known as "snatchers." In *The Odyssey*, Telemachus tells Athena (disguised as Mentos) that it seems as though the harpies have

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their lower bodies. Sheeler identifies the hybrid sculpture in the Sacro Bosco as a siren (*The Garden at Bomarzo*, 106).

<sup>120</sup> Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology*, Bibl. 1.9.21.

carried away his father, as he has disappeared without a trace.<sup>121</sup> Similarly, Apollodorus states that Echidna was killed by Argos because she used to “snatch away passersby.”<sup>122</sup> Indeed, Pilar Pedraza notes that in Greek mythology “the majority of winged female monsters are raptor funerary spirits, thieves of souls, which they rip from the dead in order to carry them to the other world.”<sup>123</sup> The sixteenth-century visitor to the Sacro Bosco surrounded by these two threatening creatures perhaps would have felt that he or she would be imminently carried off by one of them.

Cartari explains that the sphinx is quite similar to the lamia in her dangerous hybridity, except that she is half-lion instead of half-snake.<sup>124</sup> One of the monstrous offspring of Echidna,<sup>125</sup> she has the same provocatively bare breasts and is equally threatening to all but the cleverest men. In the ancient Oedipus legend, the Sphinx, literally translated as the “the choker or throttler,”<sup>126</sup> is said to have plagued the town of Thebes, killing those who could not answer her riddle: “What animal goes on four feet in the morning, two feet at noon, and three feet in the evening?”<sup>127</sup> Oedipus alone was able to answer this enigmatic question, saying that man is four-legged in the morning of his life when he crawls, two-legged in his middle age as he walks upright, and three legged in

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<sup>121</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, 1.241-2.

<sup>122</sup> Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology, Bibli.* 2.1.2.

<sup>123</sup> As quoted in Moffitt, “A Hidden Sphinx,” n. 19.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 287. Moffitt also discusses the vilifying characterizations of the Sphinx given by other sixteenth and seventeenth century writers, such as Natale Conti, Filippo Picinelli, Andrea Alciati, and Claude Mignault.

<sup>125</sup> Hesiod, *Theogony*, 326.

<sup>126</sup> Suhr, “The Sphinx,” 100.

<sup>127</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 41.

the evening or old age, when he requires a cane to walk.<sup>128</sup> In the legend, after he answers the riddle the furious sphinx throws herself from a cliff and perishes.

One can find sculptures of sphinxes today at the present entrance to the Sacro Bosco (c. 1551) (Fig. 1.11), where the statues were moved from their original placement at the prior entrance to the park near the *Leaning House*.<sup>129</sup> Perched along the path, the Greek myth of the sphinx is in a sense recreated, putting the visitor in the position of the Thebans or Oedipus who must solve the monster's riddle in order to survive and pass by. Appropriately, one of the inscriptions on the bases of the sculptures provides such a riddle: "you who enter here put your mind to it part by part and tell me then if so many wonders were made as trickery or as art."<sup>130</sup> The viewer is asked to be discerning in what he finds in the garden, while he or she keeps in mind the dreadful consequences of answering the Theban stranger incorrectly. Perhaps, though, the incestuous fate of the Sphinx's conqueror, Oedipus, is no more desirable than that of the fools who could not answer the riddle.

Similar to the Sacro Bosco's sphinxes are a pair of sculptures along the path of the Villa d'Este gardens (c. 1560s); two voluptuous female hybrids are calmly seated on the balustrade, confronting the visitors that walk by (Fig. 1.12). Their bodies are composites of winged horses with the characteristic serpentine tails of other malevolent

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<sup>128</sup> Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology*, Bibli. 3.5.8.

<sup>129</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 41. The second inscription is "Whoever without raised eyebrows and pursed lips goes through this place will fail to admire the famous Seven Wonders of the World." Although the two sphinxes are specifically depicted like the dangerous Greek female creature instead of the Egyptian male hybrid, this inscription suggests that the statues could perhaps signify both sphinx types since it mentions the Seven Wonders of the World, one of which is the pyramids of Giza guarded by the immense ancient sphinx sculpture. Like the other ambiguous images in the garden, these sphinxes too could have another level of meaning as guardians, rather than simply terrorists, of the gardens. See *ibid.*, 42.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

hybrids like Echidna and the lamias. Making the contrast between their alluring features and their monstrous lower halves even more striking is the fact that their breasts squirt water like milk. The imagery at once suggests ideas of motherhood, generation and a nurturing nature, perhaps the safest and most comforting of archetypal figures, while paradoxically indicating malevolence through their hybridity. The visitor, upon recognizing the dangerous iconography, immediately senses that they are in the deceitful trap of a pair of dangerous creatures.

While it is clear that hybridity recurrently signals degeneracy and violence, other physical deformities such as gigantism have similar cultural associations. In the Christian tradition, there is a significant connection between giants and extreme sinfulness. Chapter six of the Book of Genesis recounts that during the antediluvian period the sons of God lay with the daughters of man and produced these monsters. The Bible says that God regretted creating humankind upon seeing this depravity and planned to send a flood to purify the earth. Theologians therefore suggest that the giants were a sign of the corruption that warranted God's catastrophic wrath.<sup>131</sup> There was a tradition that believed that the "sons of God" were demons who copulated with women in order to produce this monstrous race.<sup>132</sup> This in fact makes their monstrous size a sign of a particularly sinister type of hybrid: a being that is half-human and half-demon. Others, such as St. Augustine, who rejected this demonic interpretation, still maintained that the

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<sup>131</sup> Gen. 6: 4-7 (NAB); Maggi, 157.

<sup>132</sup> Wuhmann, "Les amours des filles des hommes," 87; Maggi, 156-157.

giants signified extreme sinfulness and an unholy nature through a rejection of the Holy Spirit.<sup>133</sup>

The violent and destructive nature of giants is elaborated upon in apocryphal texts, such as the Book of Enoch, which expands upon the antediluvian period of history. This text was only declared canonical in the Ethiopian church; however, it was very influential on the writings of the early Church Fathers and sections of it were published in the ninth-century history written by George Syncellus.<sup>134</sup> It describes the giants as creatures that “consumed all the acquisitions of men till men could no longer sustain them. Then the giants turned them against humanity in order to devour them. And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another’s flesh, and drink the blood thereof. Then the earth complained of the unrighteous ones.”<sup>135</sup> It is clear that these giants were understood as cruel, destructive, and cannibalistic creatures that were to be greatly feared.

Though perhaps not quite as evil, the Gigantes of classical mythology were terrifyingly fierce and, like the demons in Christian angelology, rebelled against the gods. Ovid explains that they stacked the mountains in order to reach the heavens, although they were then defeated in their fight by Zeus’ thunderbolts.<sup>136</sup> Apollodorus recounts that they “hurled rocks and flaming oak trees at the heavens” and were eventually conquered when the gods teamed up with Heracles, as they were incapable of killing the

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<sup>133</sup> Maggi, 158.

<sup>134</sup> Wuhrmann, “Les amours des filles des hommes,” 87-88. See also R. H. Charles’s Introduction to the *Book of Enoch*, 38-40.

<sup>135</sup> *Book of Enoch* VII: 3-6.

<sup>136</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1. 151-156.

giants without the help of a mortal.<sup>137</sup> These classical stories of the impious and violent Gigantes would have reinforced the Christian understanding of giants as monsters whose violence, brutality, and rebelliousness helped to incur God's wrath.

This violent nature is surely evident in the *Fighting Giants* of the Sacro Bosco (c. 1557-1584). As the visitors descend one of the staircases between two levels of the terrain, they are confronted with this sculptural group of two struggling colossi as tall as the staircase itself (Fig. 1.13). The figures are intensely involved in their conflict; one giant is holding the other upside down by the legs and appears to be trying to rip him in two, while the victim's face is terribly contorted with pain.

In one interpretation, these figures have been identified as Hercules fighting the robber Cacus, a personification of evil,<sup>138</sup> as the sculpture recalls their brutal struggle. Cacus, however, is described by Virgil as a half-man fire-breathing monster living in the depths of a mountain,<sup>139</sup> a characterization that does not fit the inverted figure in the Sacro Bosco sculpture. Although admittedly Cacus is represented in Baccio Bandinelli's *Hercules and Cacus* (1527-34) as fully human, it seems unlikely to find his monstrosity downplayed in a park that revels in such marvels. Furthermore, another incongruity between the story of Hercules overcoming Cacus and this sculptural group is the fact that Hercules killed Cacus by strangling him rather than tearing him apart.<sup>140</sup>

A different identification of these figures is as Orlando, Duke of Anglante, and the woodcutter from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1516). In Canto XXIX, Orlando, while in a fit of madness over his unfulfilled desire for the princess Angelica, brutally grabs the

<sup>137</sup> Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology, Bibli.* 1.6, 1-2.

<sup>138</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 45. See Ariosto, *Orlando Furioso*, 29.52-56.

<sup>139</sup> Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.194-199.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.256-261.

legs of an unfortunate woodsman and rips him in two.<sup>141</sup> This interpretation is decidedly more convincing, as the word “Anglante” is found in the fragment of a nearby inscription.<sup>142</sup> However, there is still incongruity between the sculptures and this story, as the facial expression of the statue is disturbingly calm and stoic considering Orlando’s state of madness at the time of his murderous actions.

Like many of the other sculptures within the bosco, the iconographic ambiguity of these works allows for multiple layers of meaning. As important as the specific story, the gigantism of the figures, which is unwarranted by either story, signifies in a number of ways. There is a reference to the colossus of Rhodes in another inscription, “if Rhodes of old was elevated by its colossus, so by this one my wood is made glorious too and more I cannot do. I do as much as I am able to.”<sup>143</sup> Not only does this redound well upon the patron, but the inscription highlights the enormous size of the figures. The traditional association of gigantism with aggression and brutality enhances the violent moment depicted, adding to the frightful and threatening nature of the depiction.

Indeed, these sculptures have a distinctly unsettling effect on the viewer. Approaching the work, the visitors feel diminished and helpless, as they look up at the face of the upright giant staring back down at them, returning their gaze (Fig. 1.14). This figure’s display of violence and strength in overcoming the other giant is humbling and horrifying. Furthermore, the upturned screaming face of the victimized giant confronts the viewer at eye-level with its gruesome expression (Fig. 1.15); this inversion produces a

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<sup>141</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 45-47.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>143</sup> As translated in *ibid.*, 45.

somewhat disorienting and destabilizing effect, one that is often employed in contemporary horror films.<sup>144</sup>

The colossus in Pratolino that personifies the Apennine mountain range (c. 1579) is equally humbling in size and strength (Fig. 1.16). This statue, a figure covered in lime mortar and stalactites,<sup>145</sup> is violently pushing down on the head of a monster that vomits water over the entrance to a grotto into the basin below, displaying the giant's immense physical power. Detlef Heikamp notes that "Almost all the visitors to Pratolino recalled that had the statue been standing, not seated, it would have been at least twenty-three metres high, indeed thirty-five according to some."<sup>146</sup> The crouched position of the giant not only makes him a feasible project to complete, but also invites the imagination to envision an alarmingly massive and powerful figure.

The unsettling quality of these sculptures is striking when one contrasts them with other imagery of giants. The statue of Enceladus sinking into a basin of rocks and water at Versailles (1676) is a representation of a giant knocked down, buried and rendered helpless (Fig. 1.17). Although he lifts one arm up as if to throw a stone, he is essentially already defeated. Recalling the classical legend, this is a symbol of an uprising that has been quashed, and therefore of established power reaffirmed. The colossus' arm appears heavy beneath the load of rubble on top of it, and the mouth is open in a

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<sup>144</sup> James D. Clifton, "The Exorcist: Prequel 3," paper presented at Renaissance Society of America Annual Meeting, 3 April 2008.

<sup>145</sup> Heikamp, "The Green Giant," 84.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*, 84-86.

howl. The Italian representations at Pratolino and the Sacro Bosco, on the other hand, loom over the visitor and both make displays of their strength.<sup>147</sup>

The two sculptures of colossal heads found in the Sacro Bosco, the *Orsini Mask* (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 1.18) and the *Hell Mouth* (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 0.8), perhaps hint at their defeat since they are disembodied, yet they leave the viewers hesitant to put their trust in appearances. While one could imagine that these giants have been decapitated, these heads show no wounds and are comfortably upright on the ground, leaving the visitor to wonder if perhaps their bodies are simply hidden beneath the surface of the earth. Furthermore, the eyes of these two creatures seem to be alert, particularly in the case of the *Hell Mouth*, where the eyes function as windows which would have flickered vividly with the light of lanterns at night. Their mouths filled with teeth also remain threatening, as they are the perfect size for devouring a person and are wide open in anticipation of this. As the *Hell Mouth* also functions as an echo chamber, if someone sits inside its dark cavern and laughs, from the exterior of the cave it sounds as if the giant is alive and is maniacally laughing himself.<sup>148</sup> These disembodied heads appear to be creatures akin to the monsters of horror films such as Freddy Kruger, whose death or defeat is never certain. There is the suggestion of their demise yet at the same time an anxious uncertainty about it.

This uncertainty provokes the imagination. Just as the sixteenth-century viewers often visualized the enormity of the *Appennino* in an upright position, the disembodied

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<sup>147</sup> One of the exceptions to this is the Sala dei Giganti in the Palazzo del Te, where the frescoed giants are in the process of being defeated. However, this painting still inspires fear through the illusion that everything around the viewer is crashing down (see discussion in chapter three). Also, the statue of *Hercules and Antaeus* in the Villa Medici in Castello shows the giant struggling in vain against the victorious Hercules as he is lifted off the ground.

<sup>148</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 142.

faces encourage the viewers to complete in their imagination the gigantic figures that are either fatally detached from their heads, deceptively buried beneath the earth, or perhaps even autochthonously being born.<sup>149</sup> In any of these cases, one must tremble at the thought of how immense the body must be for it to belong to a head of such an enormous size. The large scale of the *Hell Mouth* in the Sacro Bosco is further highlighted through its juxtaposition with the nearby elephant (Fig. 1.19), a massive animal that is rarely dwarfed by any beast, let alone only a fragment of a creature's overall stature.

These gaping faces are large enough to devour multiple people, recalling the cannibalism that is associated with giants. The jaws of the *Hell Mouth* sculpture function as a doorway, through which the dark inside chamber is barely visible from the outside. Any visitor who desires to explore the inside of the cave will seem to be devoured by the ogre, an unsettling prospect. Inside, however, is a playful reversal of fortune: there is a dining table in the centre of the cave like a tongue and a bench along the outside wall, offering a place to dine, rather than a place to be eaten, and the shelter provides a cool, rather than infernal, place to rest.

The *Orsini Mask*, so called after the family emblem of the Orsini da Castello that is balanced on a globe on top of its head,<sup>150</sup> also plays with the idea of being ingested by a colossus. It has a flat, upturned nose and the creature's eyes are wide and stare ahead at the visitor who approaches from the front. Its mouth is agape so as to show its large teeth, which threaten to close upon anyone who ventures too close. The interior of its mouth, however, functions as a pleasant resting spot, which is not a full cave but is big

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<sup>149</sup> In classical mythology, the race of giants was born directly from the earth (Gaia), and from the spilt blood of Ouranos' castration. See Hesiod, *Theogony*, 178-187.

<sup>150</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 48.

enough for one or two people to sit in comfortably, as is evident from Giovanni Guerra's drawing of the statue (1604) (Fig. 1.20). Interestingly, scholars have noted the stylistic affinities between this sculpture and the art of some of the indigenous peoples of South and Central America.<sup>151</sup> In an ancient north Peruvian low relief carving from the west wall of the New Temple in Chavín de Huántar, one finds an example of these similarities (Fig. 1.21). This disembodied head has the same bulging eyes and round pudgy nose as the Orsini Mask. Furthermore, the strong linearity and clear outlines of the *Orsini Mask's* facial features is common to many indigenous north, central, and South American art forms. In another image lower down on the temple wall (Fig. 1.22), there is a figure that also has stylized waves for hair, very similar to the wave forms that make up the eyebrows and lips of the Bomarzo head.<sup>152</sup>

This adds a new dimension to the anxiety over being eaten; cannibalism abounds in reports of the New World, such as those by Christopher Columbus, Peter Martyr of Anghiera, Jean de Léry and André Thevet (Fig. 1.23).<sup>153</sup> The account given by Hans Stade, a German traveler arriving in Brazil with the Portuguese who had taken him aboard after he was shipwrecked, is particularly interesting as he had the terrifying experience of being captured by the Tupinamba tribe.<sup>154</sup> Stade described in horror the constant threat of being a victim of their anthropophagy after he had been captured:

The king, who desired to keep me, began and said they would take me living homewards, so that their wives might also see me alive, and make their feast upon me. For they purposed killing me '*Kawei Pepicke,*' that is, they would brew drinks and assemble together, to make a feast, and then they would eat me

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Hébert-Stevens, *L'Art ancien de l'Amérique du sud*, 54; Stone-Miller, *Art of the Andes*, 39-40.

<sup>153</sup> For a thorough discussion of the European stories and imagery that dealt with cannibalism in the New World, including the ones mentioned above, see Lestringant, *Cannibals*.

<sup>154</sup> Stade, "The Captivity," 261-2.

among them. . . . In this said plantation walked many of their women pulling up the roots: to these I was made to call out in their language: '*A junesche been ermi vramme,*' that is: 'I, your food, have come.'<sup>155</sup>

This frightful discourse of cannibalism would have likely been called to mind upon recognizing the foreign character of the style. In fact, even the headdress of the *Orsini Mask*, with its short feathers circling the face, recalls familiar cannibal imagery of period (Fig. 1.24 and 1.25). Entering the mouth of this colossus dressed as a cannibal would have stimulated the visitor's anxiety about the "savages" of the Americas, and subsequently undermined these fears as the visitor accepted the obvious artifice, and was therefore able to take delight in the frightful image.

Perhaps even the placement of this work within the plan of the garden strengthens its association with the cannibals of America. The *Orsini Mask* seems to have been originally beside an artificial lake representing the Ocean, although the dam was destroyed during a heavy storm in 1573.<sup>156</sup> If this creature was originally intended to lie on the margins of the lake, then it seems like quite an appropriate location to erect a looming representation of an exotic people that are located at the other side of the ocean.

While the prospect of being dismembered and eaten by a cannibal is chilling, the design of the *Hell Mouth* belongs to the medieval iconographic tradition after which it is named. This disturbing motif, which originated in tenth-century England and quickly spread throughout Europe, was primarily characterized by a large monstrous head with a

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<sup>155</sup> Ibid., 258-259.

<sup>156</sup> Ree, Smienk, and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 193; Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 48.

prominent and gaping mouth containing souls being tormented inside.<sup>157</sup> These fearsome scenes, which by the Renaissance were no longer just in churches or religious manuscripts but were even incorporated into theatrical set decorations,<sup>158</sup> were intended to provoke Christians to meditate on the state of their souls and the eternal consequences of their sinful ways.

Therefore, entering the mouth of this ogre would not only have evoked a fear of death, but also the kinds of spiritual and physical torments that one would expect in the infernal pit. In the *Winchester Psalter* (mid-twelfth century), one finds a giant hell mouth claustrophobically filled with demons who are stabbing or grabbing various human figures (Fig 1.26-28). In the bottom left corner, one can see a demon clutching the genitals of a man with his sharp talons, likely as a consequence for his lustful sins; again on the right side of the image, there is a demon holding a pitchfork at a king's throat, and another man with a pitchfork in his thigh. Yet, once again these fears are subverted at Bomarzo through playful inversions. The visitor must ascend the small staircase in order to “descend” into hell and at the portal the visitor is greeted with an inscription that says, “Abandon all thought, you who enter here,” a play on Dante’s description of hell’s gates, which direct the visitors to abandon their hope.<sup>159</sup>

Bomarzo’s monstrous *Hell Mouth* is not the only one to be found lurking in the Italian Renaissance villas. In the Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati, an early seventeenth-century cave in the rocks has a façade carved into the form of a very similar screaming head with large empty eyes for windows and a stylized beard surrounding its mouth (Fig.

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<sup>157</sup> Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell*, 13-14.

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid*, 14.

<sup>159</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 98.

1.29). Near Verona in the little town of Fumane, Giulio della Torre's villa, completed by 1559,<sup>160</sup> also has a *Hell Mouth* grotto built into the retaining wall of the bottom terrace of the garden.<sup>161</sup> However, unlike the cool interior of the Bomarzo *Hell Mouth*, the Fumane *Hell Mouth* had built in alcoves where fires were lit, making the grotto an intensely hot environment.<sup>162</sup> The portal itself would have been frightful enough, with its eyes glowing from the fiery light of the torches<sup>163</sup> and its gaping mouth stretched to devour the visitor; walking into the infernal heat of the cave would have heightened the frightening experience even more, rather than providing a sense of immediate relief.

There is a similar use of hell mouth iconography elsewhere in the Villa della Torre. Inside the main building in the mid-1550s, Bartolommeo Ridolfi designed a series of fireplaces each with a façade consisting of a large leonine head with a cavernous mouth as the pit for the fire (Fig. 1.30).<sup>164</sup> Although these fireplaces would not have had the same experiential quality as actually being able to enter through the doorway of the Hell Mouth, they still cleverly used the flames of the fire to make this symbolic gateway to damnation appear real and tangible. Once again, fear and delight intermingle as one feels the fire's heat, sees the flames, and imagines entering through that gateway. It is also pleasantly subversive, as something sinister is transformed into a means of warming up and getting cozy.

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<sup>160</sup> Attlee, *Italian Gardens*, 75.

<sup>161</sup> A photograph of the Fumane *Hell Mouth* has been impossible to find; although Bury suggests that it was only recently discovered ("Bomarzo Revisited," 217), and Attlee discusses it at length, I have not been able to find a source that provides an image of it.

<sup>162</sup> Attlee, *Italian Gardens*, 80.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Leonine features are one of the common motifs used in Hell Mouth imagery, inspired by biblical verses such as "Save me from the mouth of the lion," in Psalm 22:21 and "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" from I Peter 5:8. See Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell*, 35-37.

The horror inspired by monstrous visualizations of hell and damnation is also reflected in the appearance of the dragon in numerous villa gardens. The traditional Christian discourse about these monsters attributed demonic origins to dragons.<sup>165</sup> The Book of Revelation, describing the battle in Heaven at the end of time, makes this explicit in its description of St. Michael fighting the seven-headed dragon. The Bible says that “The huge dragon, the ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceived the whole world, was thrown down to earth, and its angels were thrown down with it.”<sup>166</sup> The dragon in this case is not only an evil creature, but is specifically an embodiment of Satan himself and is identified as the same serpent, the ancient deceiver, which tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. In fact, the representation of the serpent in Eden is frequently depicted as a fierce dragon,<sup>167</sup> making the images of dragons in the Renaissance gardens a particularly sinister and threatening presence.

Outside of the Bible, the dragon reappears in many of the lives of the Christian saints, where its reputation does not fare any better. St. George, in third-century Libya, killed a dragon to which villagers were offering human sacrifice, a conquest that ended with the conversion of the entire town to Christianity.<sup>168</sup> The fourth-century pope St. Sylvester was similarly victorious over a dragon that had killed hundreds of men since the recent conversion of Constantine when he was able to bind the monster to the astonishment of the Roman pagans.<sup>169</sup> In yet another story, St. Margaret is able to overcome a dragon simply with the sign of the cross or, in another popular version, by

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<sup>165</sup> Lippincott, “The Unnatural History of Dragons,” 4.

<sup>166</sup> Rev. 12: 9 (NAB).

<sup>167</sup> Lippincott, “The Unnatural History of Dragons,” 11.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-10.

slicing through its side after it swallows her.<sup>170</sup> In all of these cases, the dragon represents an evil threat, and its destruction results in the triumph of the Christian faith.

Although this Christian view of dragons as corrupt and evil creatures persisted in the Renaissance, the classical interpretation of these serpentine creatures also became popular thanks to writers such as Pierre Dinet and Andrea Aliciati, who described them as “guardians,” most often protecting gardens or springs.<sup>171</sup> In this view, the dragon was known as a creature that protected sacred places *against* corruption. With this change in attitude, many coats of arms were created with dragons on them in order to characterize families as guardians or protectors themselves.<sup>172</sup> However, even with this more positive characterization of the dragon, it was still regarded as a vicious and deadly creature that would be dangerous and terrifying to encounter.

One can see an adaptation of the classical dragon in Francesco Colonna’s *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1499). In Poliphilo’s dream, he finds a magnificent portal; however, as he is admiring and exploring it, suddenly he hears a large, hissing creature approaching. Poliphilo sees a huge terrifying dragon slithering towards him with a mouth full of sharp teeth, leaving him no choice but to flee the beast by entering into the dark tunnels of the portal (Fig. 1.31).<sup>173</sup> Eventually, Poliphilo emerges from the tunnels in Eleutherylida’s realm.<sup>174</sup> This nymph-filled idyllic land was presumably what the dragon was protecting from trespassers, which is suggested by everyone’s reaction upon seeing

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, 61-62.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., 65-67.

that a mortal being had successfully managed to enter it.<sup>175</sup> Colonna incorporates the dragon into his text in the way that it would have been understood in antiquity, as a protector of a sacred realm that was nonetheless the enemy of the hero of the story.

One of the popular antique sources that would have inspired this renewed characterization of the fierce serpents is the story of Heracles' eleventh labour, for which he was required to retrieve a golden apple from the Garden of Hesperides. When Atlas' daughters were caught stealing apples, the dragon Ladon was introduced into the garden to guard the tree. Heracles, however, managed to overcome this vigilant beast by shooting it with an arrow from the other side of the garden walls.<sup>176</sup>

In the Villa d'Este, there is a dragon fountain that seems to work in both the classical and the Christian interpretations. The *Fountain of the Dragons* (1572) in the centre of the villa's garden is enclosed in a circular space by two staircases, where four sculpted dragons face outwards and eject a violent flow of water from their mouths into a basin (Fig. 1.32-33). The original plan of this work shows that Pirro Ligorio, the designer of Cardinal Ippolito II d'Este's gardens, initially intended to show the hundred-headed dragon protecting the Garden of Hesperides.<sup>177</sup> Although today the niche behind the dragon no longer contains any statuary, in an engraving by the seventeenth-century printmaker Giovanni Francesco Venturini, one can make out a statue of Heracles holding what appears to be a bow (Fig. 1.34).<sup>178</sup> The *Fountain of the Dragons* maintained a reference to Ladon by association with the nearby statue, even though the original design

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid., 76-78, 94, 100-101.

<sup>176</sup> Graves, *The Greek Myths*, 462-63.

<sup>177</sup> Madonna, *Villa d'Este*, 52.

<sup>178</sup> Coffin, *Villa d'Este*, 80.

was somewhat altered to commemorate and honour Pope Gregory XIII for his visit to the villa in 1572, whose coat of arms also contains dragons.

On a different level, visitors would have possibly also considered the dragons in light of their association with Satan found within the prophecies of the Last Judgment. The violent flow of water that emerges from the mouths of the dragons connects the beasts to a passage in Revelation. In Chapter 12, St. John explains that:

When the dragon saw that it had been thrown down to the earth, it pursued the woman who had given birth to the male child. But the woman was given the two wings of the great eagle, so that she could fly to her place in the desert, where, far from the serpent, she was taken care of for a year, two years, and a half-year. The serpent however, spewed a torrent of water out of its mouth after the woman to sweep her away with the current. But the earth helped the woman and opened its mouth and swallowed the flood that the dragon spewed out of its mouth. Then the dragon became angry with the woman and went off to wage war against the rest of her offspring, those who keep God's commandments and bear witness to Jesus.<sup>179</sup>

The biblical imagery of the dragon “spewing a torrent of water” and then angrily waging war is embodied in the force of the water that gushes forth from the mouths of the creatures in the Villa d'Este fountain as well as in the hydraulic sound effects of thundering canon shots that rang out as the water hit the basin.<sup>180</sup> The water jets could also be controlled so that they could resemble either heavy rain or erupt like little explosions.<sup>181</sup> With torrents of water raining down and the sound of weapons going off, it would have provided the visitor with a frightening experience that has nothing to do with the story of Heracles and much more in common with apocalyptic literature.

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<sup>179</sup> Rev. 12: 13-17 (NAB).

<sup>180</sup> These sound effects are no longer in operation. Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 139.

<sup>181</sup> Coffin, *Villa d'Este*, 22.

The dragon sculpture in the Sacro Bosco (c. 1557-1584), in contrast, initially appears much less frightening than the spewing dragons in the Villa d'Este (Fig. 1.35). Its wide-eyed and almost smiling face makes it appear playful, and it has therefore been likened to the benevolent Asian dragon;<sup>182</sup> as the Sacro Bosco's guidebook so aptly comments, "He seems like a nice fellow when you look at him closer [*sic*]: he puckers his lips, but no one believes him."<sup>183</sup> Further suggesting a positive interpretation of this creature is the convincing argument that the inspiration for this sculptural group is a heraldic drawing by Leonardo that was disseminated in an early sixteenth-century print by Lucantonio degli Uberti (Fig. 1.36).<sup>184</sup> This drawing contains similar (though much fiercer) creatures that Leonardo elsewhere labels as allegories of Prudence and Strength, suggesting that the altercation between them has the moralizing message that prudence cannot be overcome by strength.<sup>185</sup>

However, like all of the other sculptures in the Sacro Bosco, this one too seems to have different levels of meaning. The lion, the dragon's adversary in the sculptural group, is an animal commonly identified with Christ,<sup>186</sup> who is referred to in Revelation as "the Lion of Judah."<sup>187</sup> This biblical book, as mentioned above, is the same place where Satan's characterization as a dragon is found. The dragon's association with the Devil would have been highlighted by juxtaposing the sculpture with the *Hell Mouth*, a motif that is not only demonic but also has a tradition of sometimes being depicted with

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<sup>182</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 89-92.

<sup>183</sup> Soc. Giardino di Bomarzo, *A Guide to the Park of Monsters*, 26. This appears to be a translation from Theurillat's *Les Mystères de Bomarzo*, 109: "Le dragon qui se dresse un peu plus loin, assez bon enfant quand on le regarde d'un peu plus près, retousse ses babines, mais on n'y croit pas."

<sup>184</sup> Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 215.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

<sup>186</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 92.

<sup>187</sup> Rev. 5: 5 (NAB).

face of a dragon itself.<sup>188</sup> This is the case in the enamel plaque by Nicholas of Verdun (1181), where the sharp-toothed monster ejects hell's flames out of its nostrils and mouth (Fig. 1.37).<sup>189</sup> Again, in the fifteenth-century relief sculpture in the south-central portal of the Church of Our Lady in Esslingen, there is a devil propping open a dragon's mouth to reveal three souls burning in a fire (Fig. 1.38).<sup>190</sup> In addition, a dragon biting or devouring a person has been widely used in literature as early as the third century as a metaphor for damnation.<sup>191</sup> Therefore, the fairly friendly and tame appearance of the dragon would have been called into question, suggesting a fraudulent exterior of the "great deceiver" as it battles against two lions and has its jaws wide open and ready to devour like the nearby hell-mouth.

It is clear that the terrifying themes of hell and damnation are manifested physically in the form of monstrous ogres' heads and dragons, just as the physical condition of hybrids and giants represent corruption and danger. Coming across these monsters in the gardens was an unsettling experience in the sixteenth century, and in many cases still is today. Some of these portents are subverted in subtle and witty ways, such as Bomarzo's *Hell Mouth*; ultimately, the threat of all of them is in fact undermined through one's perception of their artifice. This sense of safety does not neutralize the feeling of fear; instead, the tension between these two opposing emotions produces the thrilling sense of delight.

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<sup>188</sup> Note that in the view of the dragon sculpture towards the *Hell Mouth* (Fig. 1.35), both have the same wide eyes and gaping mouths.

<sup>189</sup> Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell*, 136.

<sup>190</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, 42-44.

**Chapter 2:**  
***Rough Waters: Floods, Tempests, and the Sea***

This tension of opposites is also manifested in the gardens through an ambivalent attitude towards the power of water, which was known in the Renaissance for both its life-giving capacity as well as for its destructive potential. Within the garden, water is celebrated for its generative qualities, as many scholars have noted; however, the other side of this dichotomy is also present, although often overlooked or only discussed marginally. In garden programs water as a theme is explored in all of its forms, including the frightening ones. Many of the garden's sculptures, structures, and *giochi d'acqua*<sup>192</sup> bring these anxieties about the threatening manifestations of water to the surface, often in playful and humorous ways.

The life-giving qualities of water are prominently demonstrated in the gardens through the thriving vegetation that results from extensive irrigation, as well as emphasized iconographically through depictions of river gods holding overflowing cornucopia, such as in the gardens of the Villa Lante and the Villa Farnese at Caprarola (Fig. 2.1 and 2.2).<sup>193</sup> Water not only affects the vegetation, but also reinvigorates people wandering through the garden; in Pratolino, as John Evelyn describes with wonder, streams of water shot into the air and formed an arch over the visitor's path, who remained dry beneath it while it provided a cooling canopy for them to enjoy.<sup>194</sup>

Water's wonderful potential is also suggested as it animates various forms of automata. In the *Fountain of the Owl* in the Villa d'Este (Fig. 0.3) one could find

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<sup>192</sup> Literally, "water games."

<sup>193</sup> MacDougall, "Introduction" in *Fons Sapientiae*, 4-5.

<sup>194</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, 215.

marvellous bronze birds, first used in antiquity, that “sing merrily until the baleful appearance of an owl frightened them into silence”, as well as a delightful water organ in the *Fountain of Nature* begun in 1568 (Fig. 2.3).<sup>195</sup> Evelyn’s diary of his visit to Pratolino also describes the automata in this garden, where water was used to give life to a figure of Pan who played his pipes and feeds his herd, and where the hunted animals in the grotto of Vulcan move by its force.<sup>196</sup> Water, when it is ingeniously controlled and manipulated, is displayed as life-giving and delightful by playing music, providing refreshment from the heat of the day, and even seemingly bringing life to artificial creations.

The presence and abundance of water are specifically linked to the magnanimity of the patron. Montaigne suggests that Francesco I de’ Medici specifically choose a dry and harsh area to cultivate his villa at Pratolino in order to be credited with bringing water from miles away.<sup>197</sup> In the distinctly unambiguous case of the Villa Aldobrandini, the water theatre (1601-1606), which also contains all sorts of hydraulic automata, even carries an inscription above it that highlights Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini’s role of bringing water to the villa and the larger region of Frascati (Fig. 2.4). On the frieze, it is written:

CARDINAL PIETRO ALDOBRANDINI, S.R.E.CAM., NEPHEW OF  
CLEMENT VIII, AFTER RESTORING PEACE TO CHRISTENDOM AND  
REACQUIRING THE DUCHY OF FERRAR FOR THE PAPAL STATES,  
ERECTED THIS VILLA AS A PLACE OF REPOSE AFTER HIS WORK IN  
THE CITY, AND BROUGHT THE WATER FROM MOUNT ALGIDO.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 424.

<sup>196</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, 214.

<sup>197</sup> Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, 1131.

<sup>198</sup> Steinberg, "The Iconography of the Teatro Dell'acqua," 453.

In the Aldobrandini documents, this celebrated water was meant to signify in the iconographical program of the theatre “the bliss, happiness, and wisdom that God sends down to earth.”<sup>199</sup> The Cardinal’s control over the supply of water to the region and its symbolic life-giving qualities are particularly relevant in an area where there was a consistent shortage of water until he remedied the situation after his uncle, Pope Clement VIII, gave him the villa.<sup>200</sup>

Bringing water to communities was a way to establish the ruling class’s authority through beneficent care for the public, a practice which occurred in urban environments by re-establishing old Roman aqueducts. In Rome, the termini of the aqueducts were marked by a fountain or nymphaeum which honoured the Pope who restored the particular water supply, much like the emperors in ancient Rome.<sup>201</sup> When Pope Nicholas V restored the *Acqua Vergine Antica* (the old *Aqua Virgo*),<sup>202</sup> he commissioned Leon Battista Alberti to construct the Trevi fountain in the *Piazza dei Crociferi*.<sup>203</sup> The fountain incorporated the papal insignia and an inscription naming the aqueduct’s patron to highlight the magnanimity of the patron.<sup>204</sup>

In spite of this, water was not always viewed as a benign element; Leonardo da Vinci’s obsession with water in both its positive and negative forms is paradigmatic. He demonstrates in his drawings water’s life-giving properties. In his botanical study *A Star*

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<sup>199</sup> *Ibid.*, 460.

<sup>200</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 46-47.

<sup>201</sup> Morton, *The Fountains of Rome*, 70.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>203</sup> This fountain was to the left of the Trevi Fountain that is in the piazza today, which was built later in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. See *ibid.*, 75.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-78.

of *Bethlehem and Other Plants* from c. 1505-08 (Fig. 2.5),<sup>205</sup> the spiralling forms of the thriving plant mimic the swirling motion that is present in his water studies, such as *Studies of Water Formations*, from c. 1507-09 (Fig. 2.6).<sup>206</sup> Comparing these two images, one can see how the energy displayed in the motion of the water is also used in the depiction of the plant, as though the water flowing within it is animating the vegetation with the same fluid movements. In addition to these explorations of water's generative qualities, he was also obsessed with diluvial themes. He created numerous sketches that demonstrate its particularly violent potential. In *A Deluge* (c. 1515) (Fig. 2.7), the whirling movement of the water overwhelms the boundaries between the sky, earth and sea; all that is discernible within the chaotic swirls of water are some rocky crags and a few inverted trees being ripped out of the ground by the power of the storm.<sup>207</sup>

In Leonardo's *Notebooks*, he also provides a disturbing written description of what should appear in a scene of the Deluge:

Some groups of men you might have seen with weapons in their hands defending the tiny footholds that remained to them from the lions and wolves and beasts of prey which sought safety there.... Others were not content to shut their eyes, but placing their hands over them, one above the other, would cover them more tightly in order not to see the pitiless slaughter made of the human race by the wrath of God. Ah me, how many lamentations! How many in their terror flung themselves down from the rocks!...How many mothers were bewailing their drowned sons, holding them upon their knees, lifting up open arms to heaven, and with divers cries and shrieks declaiming against the anger of the gods! Others with hands clenched and fingers locked together gnawed and devoured them with bites that ran blood, crouching down so that their breasts touched their knees in their intense and intolerable agony.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>205</sup> Costantino, *Leonardo*, 100.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, 64-65.

<sup>208</sup> Leonardo, *Notebooks*, 288-289.

Clearly, Leonardo dwells on the terror and destruction that result from the Deluge, offering the reader a horrifying account of the suffering that such a flood would have caused. His imagination is not unique in this respect; this emphasis on the devastating annihilation of humanity pervades diluvial representations in the Renaissance.

As in Leonardo's notebooks, many scenes of the Deluge can be found in the villa gardens. In the classical story, a catastrophic flood results from Jupiter's wrath towards the iniquitous human race of the Iron Age. As Ovid explains, "Straightaway all evil burst forth into this age of baser vein: modesty and truth and faith fled the earth, and in their place came tricks and plots and snares, violence and cursed love of gain."<sup>209</sup> Their destruction is sealed when Jupiter decides to investigate the reports he had heard of humanity's evil. Because he is disguised in human form, the Arcadian king Lycaon does not believe him to truly be a god, and so in order to test the stranger he first attempts to have him murdered, and when that fails he presents Jupiter with a cooked dish of human flesh.<sup>210</sup>

The god is so irate that he overthrows the house with his lightning bolt and transforms Lycaon into a wolf. Not content with his vengeance on the king, he sets out to destroy the whole human race with a great flood; Jupiter pours torrents of rain from the heavens, sends forth the rivers, and then recruits his brother Neptune to stir up the seas. Only one innocent and pious couple, Deucalion and Pyrrha, escapes the fate of the rest as they land their skiff on Mount Parnassus. Once the land is restored and they see that they are the only two remaining people, they go to the temple of Themis and inquire

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<sup>209</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.127-131.

<sup>210</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.163-230.

as to how they can possibly re-establish the human race. They are told to throw stones over their shoulders, a command that they doubtfully though faithfully obey, and these rocks slowly change into the present race of living people.<sup>211</sup>

In the Villa Lante in Bagnaia, there is a fountain at the summit of the garden engineered by Tomaso Ghinucci that is identified as *Il Diluvio* in a 1596 engraving by Tarquinio Ligustri (Fig. 2.8).<sup>212</sup> In this fountain, the Deluge is recalled in a series of small, rough, and natural-looking artificial grottos with their jets of water pouring down into a basin below that contains two half submerged dolphins. In the top central niche is a grotesque head that also spits water into the pool, with some other sort of monster lurking in the shadows in the cave below. Contributing to the sense of a downpour, the walls on either side of this structure contain hidden water spouts that at one time pelted the visitors so that it appeared to be raining.<sup>213</sup> This is an immediate, participatory event to which the visitors were forced to react as they recalled the devastating outcome in the myth, both frightening them with the shock of the downpour as well as delighting them with the artifice of the situation.

Although the fountain itself contains very little imagery that references the classical story, its relationship with the surrounding structures makes its association with Ovid's story clear. Claudia Lazzaro's iconographical interpretation of the Villa Lante shows how this fountain fits within the overall program of the garden. The *Fountain of the*

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<sup>211</sup> Ibid., 1.231-417. There are other classical sources that tell a similar story, although sometimes with minor details changed, such as Deucalion and Pyrrha worshipping Zeus instead of Themis, or the destruction of the race of bronze rather than the race of iron. See Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology, Bibli.* 1.7.2; Nonnos, *Dionysiaca*, 3.211-214, 6.367-370.

<sup>212</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 52, 93.

<sup>213</sup> Lazzaro, "The Villa Lante at Bagnaia," 557.

*Deluge*<sup>214</sup> is precisely at the point of intersection between the thematic elements of the Golden Age in the bosco and the Age of Jupiter in the formal gardens; in classical mythology, it is the great flood that provided the transition between these two ages.<sup>215</sup> Additionally, the fountain is situated between the two *Loggie delle Muse* (c. 1568-1578) (Fig. 2.9-10) representing the twin peaks of Mount Parnassus, the home of the muses, where the sole remaining survivors of the flood landed and began their new race.<sup>216</sup> Furthermore, in front of the *Fountain of the Deluge* is the *Fountain of the Dolphins* (c. 1568-1578) (Fig. 2.11), perhaps again making reference to Ovid's account, which describes dolphins swimming among the trees.<sup>217</sup>

Also identified as *Il Diluvio* by Sgrilli in his plan of Pratolino is one of the several grottos beneath the villa palace.<sup>218</sup> Although this grotto no longer survives, as the palace was destroyed in the nineteenth century,<sup>219</sup> there are various written accounts by travelers who visited it. In 1580, Montaigne explained that, "At one single movement the whole grotto is full of water, and all the seats squirt water on your bottom; and, as you flee from the grotto and climb the castle stairs and anyone takes pleasure in this sport, there come out of every other step of the stairs, right up to the top of the house, a thousand jets of water that give you a bath."<sup>220</sup> More briefly, after John Evelyn passed through these grottos in 1645, he wrote in his diary that he and his companions were "well

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<sup>214</sup> Lazzaro refers to this grotto using the similar name the *Grotto of the Flood*.

<sup>215</sup> Lazzaro, "The Villa Lante at Bagnaia," 556-57.

<sup>216</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 93.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> See plan in Smith, "Pratolino," 161.

<sup>219</sup> Lazzaro, "From the Rain to the Wash Water," 318.

<sup>220</sup> Montaigne, *The Complete Works*, 1132.

wash'd for our Curiosity,"<sup>221</sup> and Fynes Moryson describes that "with the turning of a Cocke, the unseene waters cause a noise like thunder, and presently a great shower of raine fals."<sup>222</sup> It is clear that the *fontanieri*, the people who had the job of surprising guests within the garden with the hidden waterworks, were kept extremely busy within this grotto.<sup>223</sup>

Bernardo Buontalenti begun another deluge-themed Medici grotto in 1583; the *Grotta Grande* in the Boboli Gardens (Fig. 2.12) was described by contemporary visitors as a reference to the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha.<sup>224</sup> As Detlef Heikamp has declared, "Il mondo che ci circonda in questa Grotta è sospeso fra la fine del mondo e la nuova creazione."<sup>225</sup> This sense that one is in the midst of the "end of the world" was experienced by sixteenth-century visitors through a pervasive experience of being engulfed in a watery upheaval, which is unfortunately an experience difficult to grasp today as many of the grotto's elements are no longer in place or active. Again, waterworks originally shot out of the floor to soak the entire room and then fell onto the visitors as a downpour of rain.<sup>226</sup> The water would have dripped down the spugne<sup>227</sup> and seashells from hidden tubes<sup>228</sup> (Fig. 2.13) into the basins along the walls, which were

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<sup>221</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, 214.

<sup>222</sup> As quoted in Smith, "Pratolino," 158.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>224</sup> Heikamp, "La Grotta Grande," 30.

<sup>225</sup> "The world that surrounds us in this grotto is suspended between the end of the world and the new creation." *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>227</sup> This is a kind of porous stone found in Tuscany, which Alberti recommended should be used to cover the interior of grottos. See Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 39.

<sup>228</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 201.

already filled with water and fish<sup>229</sup> as well as tiled with a blue, green and white wave-like pattern (Fig. 2.14).

Furthermore, the design of the ceiling heightens the frightening experience (Fig. 2.15). There is an oculus in the centre that at one time contained an aquarium that would have filtered the light coming into the cave. As the light passed through the rippling water, filled with moving fish, the room would have almost appeared to be underwater already.<sup>230</sup> Additionally, the effect of the frescoed animals and satyrs painted by Bernardino Poccetti, peering nervously and intensely down at the visitor, is unsettling, creating a sense of tension immediately upon entering the space. Furthermore, the trompe l'oeil vaults appear on the verge of collapse as there are plants growing through the visible cracks in the illusionistic structure (Fig. 2.16).<sup>231</sup> One can imagine how horrifying the experience would have been once the waterworks were activated, as the visitors stood observing the supposed fragility of the structure above them. It certainly does not appear to be able to withstand a torrent of water hitting it, which is exactly what happened when the central water jet was set to shoot as high as the ceiling.<sup>232</sup>

With water shooting up from the ground and falling from above, and with the images of the sea and sky side by side in the ceiling, one's sense of up and down and high and low would have been blurred and confused, leaving the visitor frightened, disoriented and drenched. This blurring of boundaries seems to be a reversal of the second day of the creation narrative in Genesis, which describes God separating the sea

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<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Heikamp, "La Grotta Grande," 37.

<sup>231</sup> Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 39.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

and the sky, establishing order in the world out of the chaos that preceded it.<sup>233</sup> In contrast, the Deluge, and the *Grotta Grande's* representation of it, has an entropic effect, sublimating all order and distinction between the elements. Like in Leonardo's drawings, a return towards a primordial chaos is represented.<sup>234</sup>

Out of this return to chaos, a new world order emerges as the grotto also references the aftermath of the flood. The *Grotta Grande* was built mainly to house the four unfinished slaves that Michelangelo had begun to adorn the tomb of Julius II,<sup>235</sup> which were given to Duke Cosimo I in 1563 by Michelangelo's nephew.<sup>236</sup> These tension-filled figures appear to be fighting to emerge from the stones from which they are carved (Fig. 2.17), just like the new race of men and women that emerged out of the stones that Pyrrha and Deucalion threw over their shoulders. Both Bocchi's guide to Florence and Buontalenti's letters indicate that these sculptures were indeed understood by contemporaries as a reference to this story.<sup>237</sup> Similarly, there is fluidity between the relief figures sculpted by Piero Matti and the stone walls of the *Grotta Grande*, also suggesting that these figures have grown out of the rocks. Through this reference to the new race of humanity born from stones, this grotto not only references the destruction of the Deluge, but also the potential for new life that comes from water after the chaos, thereby overcoming anxiety through a return to order.

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<sup>233</sup> Gen. 1: 6-7 (NAB).

<sup>234</sup> Interestingly, the importance of the fundamental distinction among earth, sea and sky as described in the biblical creation narrative for a sense of order in the world is emphasized by Mary Douglas in her discussion of the dietary laws laid out in Leviticus; she explains that any departures from this order were considered abominations. See "The Abominations of Leviticus," in *Purity and Danger*, 41-57.

<sup>235</sup> Miller, *Heavenly Caves*, 37.

<sup>236</sup> Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 38-39.

<sup>237</sup> Heikamp, "La Grotta Grande," 33.

It is clear that the *Grotta Grande* in the Boboli gardens and the *Fountain of the Deluge* at the Villa Lante are related to the classical story of the Deluge. Although there are no visual records of the iconography of the *Grotto of the Deluge* beneath the palace of Pratolino,<sup>238</sup> it is likely in this grotto that a seventeenth-century visitor to the garden, Robert Dallington, saw an image of Noah's ark and his animals among the "many sights yeelding [*sic*] very great content."<sup>239</sup> In this Old Testament version, the faith of Noah elicits mercy from God who plans to destroy every living person and land animal in order to purge the earth of the intolerable corruption of humanity. God tells Noah to build an ark for himself, his family, and two of each animal to prepare for the flood. Noah's obedience to this warning and command is rewarded when "all the fountains of the great abyss burst forth, and the floodgates of the sky were opened,"<sup>240</sup> and the flooding becomes so severe that even the tips of the mountains are deeply submerged in water. Several months later, Noah sends out a dove to look for dry land, and it brings him back an olive branch, signalling the recession of the waters. After this frightful purification of the earth, God makes a rainbow in the sky as a sign of His covenant with Noah and as a promise to never again destroy all of humanity with another great flood.<sup>241</sup>

Regardless of whether or not this was the imagery found in Pratolino's *Grotto of the Deluge*, the biblical story was the common ground from which the classical account was understood. This syncretic understanding of the story was likely encouraged by classical authors who manifest a rapprochement between Ovid's story and the version in the Book of Genesis. Lucian's *De Dea Syria* (second century CE) recounts that a great

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<sup>238</sup> There are however prints by Stefano della Bella of some of the adjacent grottos beneath the palace.

<sup>239</sup> As quoted in John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 93.

<sup>240</sup> Gen. 7: 11 (NAB).

<sup>241</sup> Gen. 6-9 (NAB).

flood was sent to wipe out the previous race of people because of their violence and corruption. Deucalion and his family were the only ones to survive by staying aboard their ark, which they filled with two of each animal, miraculously living together in harmony until the waters receded.<sup>242</sup> It is clear that elements from both versions are contained within Lucian's account, creating a precedent for a syncretic understanding of the story.

In fact, it would have been natural to view these two stories as alternate accounts of the same event. During the Renaissance the ancient stories of the Deluge were understood as a historical reality, not merely a symbolic or metaphorical story as it is often regarded today.<sup>243</sup> The discovery of shells and fossils in unlikely places, which are so frequently prominent in the ornamentation of the garden grottos, were understood as empirical proof that water did indeed at one time cover the entire land.

For Renaissance artists, Ovid's account supplies the setting and the pathos that the laconic biblical narrative does not.<sup>244</sup> In the biblical text, the reader relates to the protagonist of the account and one hears nothing of the violent and miserable deaths of the rest of humanity; the doomed sinners are not mentioned apart from a brief account of their wicked behaviour and their annihilation.<sup>245</sup> In contrast, the account of the flood given by Ovid highlights the plight of individuals as they struggle, and fail, to survive the catastrophe. He states that, "Here one man seeks a hill-top in his flight; another sits in

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<sup>242</sup> The story also appears with much more in common with the biblical version of the story (discussed below) in Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, sec. 12.

<sup>243</sup> Seguin, "Le Déluge Universel," 15-16.

<sup>244</sup> Wuhmann and Cariel note this shift in iconography and emphasis, but attribute it instead to an interest in exploring all of the artistic possibilities of the theme. See "Diluvio e sua Dimonstrazione in Pittura," 10-11.

<sup>245</sup> See Gen. 7: 21-23 (NAB).

his curved skiff, plying the oars where lately he has plowed; one sails over his fields of grain or the roof of his buried farmhouse. . . . Most living things are drowned outright. Those who have escaped the water slow starvation at last overcomes through lack of food.”<sup>246</sup> This version gives more attention to the individual suffering of the people as it emphasizes what they have lost, such as their homes and hard-worked fields, as well as their violent or slow physical deaths.

One can see this conflation in Jost Ammon’s sixteenth-century print of the Deluge, where details of the biblical flood are shown, such as Noah’s ark floating in the distance, while the foreground is filled with distressed figures, placing the emphasis of the image on their plight (Fig. 2.18). Writhing and frantic waves engulf the doomed people and seem to reflect their inner turmoil and anxiety as they desperately try to escape their imminent death. The peaks of land, where Ovid tells us that those who have survived the tempest will eventually starve, are visible with people clinging to violently blowing trees. Similarly, in Michelangelo’s Sistine Chapel fresco of the universal flood (1508-12), the prominent woman in the foreground even clings to her stomach as if she is experiencing hunger pains (Fig. 2.19). Here too the foreground is filled with miserable figures; in the distance, numerous people are clambering onto the ledge of the ark, with one person on the far right who looks like he is desperately and violently trying to fend off those who are attempting to squeeze onto the bit of safe space that he has gained for himself (Fig. 2.20). These are images of the consequences of God’s wrath and His potential for destruction through nature rather than positive scenes of escaping harm

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<sup>246</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.293-313.

through faithfulness, and they seem to point to the contemporary atmosphere of fear of divine punishment.

If one is to read the gardens' scenes of the Deluge as an instance of divine chastisement understood within a Christian moral code, there is a playful inversion taking place as one emerges from the artifice free from harm, though a little damper than before, into the idyllic setting of the garden. On the one hand, this appropriately affirms that the patron and guests are among the pious elect who have been chosen by God to endure the tribulations He sent to cleanse the earth. On the other hand, the gardens were hardly serious and spiritually solemn places, but rather were sensual and luxurious; therefore, subversively, in the circumstances within the garden, it is not the devout and austere who are saved from destruction, but rather the aristocrats indulging in worldly pleasures.

These subversions must have provided a pleasurable release from anxieties, as the terror of the Deluge was not something that people believed rested safely in the past. Anxieties about another disastrous deluge spread quickly in 1499 when Johann Stöffler's astrological interpretations forecast numerous catastrophes expected in 1524. Quickly stories and prophecies about a great flood, which would be the first of many disasters, spread fear throughout Italy.<sup>247</sup> As the deforestation of the past few centuries began to take its toll on the landscape by leading to a dramatic increase in local floods,<sup>248</sup> the terror and anxiety of many became so extreme that people began building houses in the

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<sup>247</sup> Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 140.

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

mountains or buying boats in order to prepare for the deluge.<sup>249</sup> Tommasino Lancelloti, who took pains to keep track of astrological occurrences, even commented that due to the predictions of a great flood, in Modena “there has been great terror in people and perhaps some have died of fear.”<sup>250</sup> Although there is certainly evidence that not everyone took the prophecies this seriously, it was so pervasive a concern that Machiavelli listed the deluge among commonplace subjects of conversation.<sup>251</sup>

The anxiety about the deluge must have been heightened by the monstrous births that were being broadcast throughout Europe. The Bible indicates that just before the judgment and punishment of the Deluge, the corruption that took place engendered a monstrous race of giants (Nephilim).<sup>252</sup> Before the flood, there was murder, rape, and other abominable sins, but it was a special form of sin and corruption that brought monsters into the world and that brought God’s wrath to such a pitch that He decided to annihilate the majority of the human race. It was understood that the giants’ monstrosity was due to their parents’ debauchery, and there was a long-established tradition in Christian literature to interpret this unprecedented sin as the copulation of women with demons.<sup>253</sup> If the result of their illicit unions brought forth a breed of monsters before, then the wave of monstrous births in the Renaissance must have surely been observed as parallel to the signs preceding the previous judgment.

In light of these frightful prophecies, the presence of the monstrous head in the *Grotto of the Deluge* in the Villa Lante is quite significant. In this fountain, the portentous

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<sup>249</sup> Ibid., 145-46.

<sup>250</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*, 141.

<sup>251</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>252</sup> Gen. 6: 4 (NAB).

<sup>253</sup> Wuhrmann, “Les amours des filles des hommes,” 87.

form of the monster is placed within an enactment of a prophecy fulfilled; the monster seems to be literally spewing forth the floodwaters that resulted from the divine wrath that the creature's very existence forewarned.

Although the anxiety decreased after the predicted flood did not occur in 1524, these worries did not die out. Floods and tempests continued to be included alongside monsters in treatises on portents. In the *Histoires Prodigieuses*, Boaistuau writes of violent storms caused by God's wrath that destroyed entire cities to bring "speedy remorse of conscience, with a more dutiful regard and feare of the marvellous effects of the infallible iustice of god."<sup>254</sup> He describes one tempest that blew up a whole storehouse of weapons and gunpowder when it was sparked by lightning, and the explosion razed the entire town.<sup>255</sup> Other storms, he explains, are caused by devils when they "stirre up and breede such monstrous motions" in the air when God allows it.<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, he discusses the biblical Deluge as the result of the sins of humanity and in the same chapter goes on to describe sixteenth-century floods in Italy and Northern Europe; although he distinguishes the biblical event as "the first and most worthie of memorie," he gives contemporary accounts the same amount of attention.<sup>257</sup> It is clear that even decades after the hysteria about another deluge had passed, there was still an intense dread of storms and floods, which, like other portents such as monsters, were explicitly attributed to God's wrath and demonic forces.

To add yet another level to these anxieties, the Deluge paralleled the Last Judgment in Christian typological thought, as both relate to the divine judgment of

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<sup>254</sup> Boaistuau, *Certaine Secrete Wonders of Nature*, f. 19v.

<sup>255</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 19r-19v.

<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 21r.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 29r-29v.

humanity. In a late sixteenth-century engraving by Jan Sadeler (after Dirck Barendsz) (Fig. 2.21), one can see nude figures flirting, feasting, and carousing at a dining table, with diluvial rains pouring down in the background and Noah's ark floating in the water. A second print with an identical, but reversed, composition has another scene of feasting (Fig. 2.22), music and amorous couples in contemporary Renaissance attire, while the apocalypse has begun in the background with a sea of flames and Christ in the sky presiding over the predominantly disastrous scene. This same mirroring can be seen in the original placement of Pontormo's large *Deluge* fresco in San Lorenzo, a work completed by Bronzino and now destroyed.<sup>258</sup> It was in a prominent position directly across from the scene of the *Resurrection of the Dead*, as can be seen in Janet Cox-Rearick's diagram of the choir's iconographic program (Fig. 2.23). Therefore scenes of the Deluge would not only have recalled contemporary anxieties over predicted floods, but would have also evoked fears about its historical parallel, the Last Judgment, whose narrative in Revelation, as we have already discussed, also includes a flood sent by a satanic dragon that seems to be referenced in the Villa d'Este.

Apart from this possible reference to the apocalyptic flood in the *Fountain of the Dragons*, the *Fountain of Nature* in the Villa d'Este was often called the *Fountain of the Deluge*. This, however, did not have any iconography relating to the universal flood (much of the ornamentation that is currently on the façade was added in the seventeenth century),<sup>259</sup> but was due to the violence of its surprise waterworks, which surged forth from the fountain when the music finished and "rained down as in a terrible tempest,

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<sup>258</sup> Cox-Rearick, "The Lost 'Deluge' at S. Lorenzo," 240.

<sup>259</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 226.

crashed on the ground and flew up into the air again.”<sup>260</sup> In front of the organ, however, originally stood the multi-breasted *Goddess of Nature* signifying rebirth and new life; though the cascade of water demonstrating the devastating power of nature would have still terrified whoever was caught off guard, the catastrophe is accompanied by the promise of abundant regeneration.

There are many other similarly shocking waterworks throughout the gardens that were not necessarily named after the Deluge but were still simulations of violent storms.

After his visit to the Villa Aldobrandini, John Evelyn described:

many other devices to wett the unwary spectators, so as one can hardly [step] without wetting to the skin: In one of these Theatres of Water, is an Atlas spouting up the streame to an incredible height, & another monster which makes a terrible roaring with an horn; but above all the representation of a storme is most naturall, with such fury of rain, wind and Thunder as one would imagine ones selfe in some extreme Tempest.<sup>261</sup>

While not as cataclysmic as the ancient Deluge or the flood spewed by the dragon in Revelation, the representation of a tempest still highlights the unsettling and violent forms of water that nature produces.

Other surprise waterworks throughout the villas do not relate to either floods or tempests, but still have a playfully alarming effect. As visitors stepped on the stairs to enter the *Grotto of Cupid* in Pratolino (Fig. 2.24), they triggered water jets to squirt them, and once they were inside the grotto various other automata and waterworks were set off when they stood on certain parts of the sun mosaic on the floor.<sup>262</sup> In the Boboli gardens, there were also impressive waterworks at the Isolotto, created in the 1630s (Fig.

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid., 228-9.

<sup>261</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, 201.

<sup>262</sup> Heikamp, “The Green Giant,” 90.

2.25);<sup>263</sup> visitors attempting to cross the bridge when these were activated would have been trapped. There were jets of water that squirted from holes in the mosaic on the floor, as well as from the gates behind the visitors and around the central fountain in front of them, leaving no place to flee short of jumping into the pond.

Some of the seventeenth-century prints of the Villa d'Este by Giovanni Francesco Venturini show people's reactions to these kinds of water tricks. In front of the *Fountain of the Owl*, the artist depicts the waterworks that shot out of the pavement (Fig. 2.26). People are shown fleeing in every direction, with one couple even climbing up into a niche to escape getting drenched (Fig. 2.27). Similarly, in an image of the *Rometta Fountain* (Fig. 2.28) one can see a visitor being drenched by a torrent of water beside another man who has already fallen over from the force of it, while everyone else in the image turns towards the pair and points (Fig. 2.29). This print demonstrates the immediate reaction of the startled and stumbling pair as they flee from the trick gate, the initial prick of fright before the laughter at the amusing prank.

It is possible that waterworks such as these drew inspiration from accounts of similar features in Islamic gardens. In 1526 Andrea Navagero, a Venetian friend of influential humanists such as Raphael, Pietro Bembo, Baldassare Castiglione, and Andrea Poliziano,<sup>264</sup> visited the Alhambra in Granada as part of an envoy to the Spanish court.<sup>265</sup> In his letters, he enthusiastically describes this garden, emphasizing elements such as the

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<sup>263</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 212.

<sup>264</sup> Brothers, "The Renaissance Reception of the Alhambra," 80.

<sup>265</sup> MacDougall, "Introduction," in *Fons Sapientiae*, 10.

ambiguous boundaries between inside and outside the palace, the attention to views of the surrounding area, as well as the abundant waterworks.<sup>266</sup> In particular, he notes that:

At the highest part of the site in a garden, there is a lovely wide staircase. . . The stair is made of masonry and every few steps has a landing with a hollow to hold water. The parapets on each side of the stair have hollowed stones on the top, like channels. The valves at the top of the stairs are arranged so that water can run either in the channels or in the landing hollows or both. The volume can be increased so that the water overflows and inundates the steps and drenches anyone there.<sup>267</sup>

Elisabeth B. MacDougall notes that in the Villa d'Este one can find the same arrangement of water flowing on the sides of the staircases in the garden (Fig. 2.30 and Fig. 2.31), and in the Villa Lante and Villa Farnese at Caprarola similar but autonomous water cascades have been incorporated (Fig. 2.32 and 2.33).<sup>268</sup> Even more significant though is the playful spirit of these Islamic steps that soak the trapped and unsuspecting visitors, a mischievous and alarming quality that is found throughout the waterworks of the Italian gardens.

Though these water tricks are abundant, the villa gardens also contain fountains and sculptures that evoke anxieties about water without actually soaking the visitor. Looking back to the *Rometta Fountain*, right beside the trick gate one can see a somewhat unsettling reference to the dangers of the sea and shipwrecks. The boat in the *Rometta Fountain* (c. 1567-1568) has spouts ejecting water straight up into the air and landing in the ship itself, as if the hull has sprung two very large leaks which have filled the entire boat with water (Fig. 2.34). The boat appears to be about to sink with the influx of this liquid, which leaks through the oar holes in the hull into the basin below, suggesting that

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<sup>266</sup> Brothers, "The Renaissance Reception of the Alhambra," 92.

<sup>267</sup> MacDougall, "Introduction," in *Fons Sapientiae*, 10.

<sup>268</sup> *Ibid.*

the boat is beginning to burst under the pressure of the water inside it. Probably influenced by this boat at the Villa d'Este, a similar fountain was erected in the early seventeenth century at the Villa Aldobrandini by Carlo Maderno,<sup>269</sup> where tritons squirt jets of water into a ship that is filled to the brim and shooting water into the air from the center of its hull (Fig. 2.35). Quite unlike the naval imagery in the Villa Lante, where the small sculpted ships rest on the surface without any water inside them (Fig. 2.36), here there is a distinct tension between floating and drowning, as one gets the sense that the boat can surely not withstand any further inundation before it reaches full capacity and sinks.

Anxiety about sailing during the age of discovery is certainly not surprising, as alongside the excitement of encountering new people, animals, riches and lands around the globe, there was also a great deal of danger in such voyages across the rough Atlantic waters. This is clear in the reports given by explorers such as the Italian Amerigo Vespucci, who wrote an account of his journey to Brazil. He describes the fierceness of the waters that challenged the crew's safe arrival. He complains that:

what we suffered on that vast expanse of sea, what perils of shipwreck, what discomforts of the body we endured, with what anxiety of mind we well learned what it is to seek the uncertain and to attempt discoveries even though ignorant. And that in a word I may briefly narrate all, you must know that of the sixty-seven days of our sailing we had forty-four of constant rain, thunder and lightening so dark that never did we see sun by day nor fair sky by night. By reason of this such fear invaded us that we soon abandoned almost all hope of life. But during these tempests of sea and sky, so numerous and so violent, the

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<sup>269</sup> Coffin, *Villa d'Este*, 133; Hibbard and Jaffe, "Bernini's Barcaccia," 163. These works are very much like the bursting boat in a rustic grotto of the Vatican gardens (1613-14) and the Baroque public fountain *La Barcaccia* (The Old Boat) in the Piazza di Spagna, (1627); H.V. Morton's comment that *La Barcaccia* "leaks Acqua Vergine at every joint" seems to apply equally to the Rometta boat and the water brought to the Villa via conduits from the Monte Sant' Angelo and the river Anio. H.V. Morton, *The Fountains of Rome*, 110.

Most High was pleased to display before us a continent, new lands, and an unknown world.<sup>270</sup>

Vespucci describes the journey as one of almost relentless peril as the stormy waters daily threatened the ship and the passengers' safety. Surely, he would have had good reason to fear the worst, as throughout the sixteenth century thousands of people died on similar expeditions.<sup>271</sup>

The same tension between drowning and staying afloat imaged in the *Rometta Fountain* is also found in the *Boat Fountain* in the Sacro Bosco (c. 1557-1584) where there is a playful spatial reversal of wet and dry (Fig. 2.37). This vessel is not floating on top of a pool of water, but instead the ship rests on top of dry land while dolphins hang over the front of the boat to squirt water into it.<sup>272</sup> Like the boat in the *Rometta Fountain*, this vessel is designed to fill with water, creating the impression that it is on the verge of sinking and being destroyed. In a playful way, its position on dry land subverts the threat of drowning since there cannot be any danger of sinking if the ship is securely on shore. On the other hand, it also undermines the sensation of being securely on dry land, as if the path has led to a place in the open sea and is ready to swallow up the visitor as well.

This uncertainty about the stability of dry land is heightened by another sculpture in the Sacro Bosco situated on the terrace above the *Boat Fountain*. A sea creature beside the *Neptune Fountain* (c. 1557-1584) is placed on the ground but looks as if it is sticking its head out of water with the rest of its body still submerged (Fig. 2.38). As Jessie Sheeler notes, the “whale-like beast is pushing up from the ground, uncomfortably suggesting

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<sup>270</sup> Vespucci, “Mondus Novus (1504),” 218.

<sup>271</sup> Mancall, “Introduction” in *Travel Narratives*, 393.

<sup>272</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 65.

that the apparent solidity of the earth may melt away into the fluidity of the ocean.”<sup>273</sup>

This ambiguity between water and solid ground at once unsettles the viewer’s sense of safety and creates a sense of delight at the clever artifice of making dry land appear as fluid as water.

The Sacro Bosco in fact contains two monstrous sea creatures, each with their heads above the ground as if emerging from the depths of the sea; the enormous size of these heads plays upon the imagination of the viewer, who can only guess at the size and form of the body that implicitly lies beneath the surface. The one mentioned above appears to be a hairy creature with a huge cavernous mouth. It is carved in a position of upward movement with its eyes looking to the sky and its head tilted slightly back as if it has just broken through the surface. Its large size is emphasized by its juxtaposition with Neptune. The sea god is characterized by his control of the waters, yet appears to be dwarfed beside this monster.

The second sea monster (c. 1557-1584), which is located in the crevice beside the enormous *Turtle and Fame* sculptural group (Fig. 2.39), has the same open jaws and sense of upward motion. This creature has even more pointy teeth in its mouth, which is open wide as if to attack the enormous turtle that advances towards it. In this case, however, the base of the sea creature could have at one time actually been submerged in the water in the nearby stream.<sup>274</sup> While this means that there is no ambivalence about the boundaries of earth and water, the sculpture of the monster would have played with spatial limits instead, as the size of its head suggests a body that could not possibly

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<sup>273</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>274</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 110.

survive in a little stream, even one that could have been somewhat bigger in the sixteenth century.

Sea creatures such as these were the cause of a great deal of anxiety and curiosity in the sixteenth century, as they were regarded as being particularly formidable. One can find a marine bestiary in Sebastian Münster's 1550 *Cosmographia* that depicts a series of similar sea monsters accompanied by a legend identifying and describing them (Fig. 2.40). Most of the creatures, with their enormous size, menacing teeth and horns, and violent actions look terrifying; truly, the legend adds to the frightfulness of their appearance, since their most threatening qualities are highlighted in the brief description. For the creature listed "M," for example, it is explained that "There are crabs so large and strong that they can kill a swimmer who is caught in their claws."<sup>275</sup> The image, correspondingly, shows a gigantic crab approximately three times the size of a limp man caught in its left claw and speared through the head with one of its tentacles. No comfort is offered the reader with the next monster, marked "N." Münster explains, "A creature resembling a rhinoceros is able to devour a crab twelve feet long."<sup>276</sup> The print shows a humped and sharp-toothed creature devouring a crab the size of the one devouring a man, amplifying the level of threat that one could expect to encounter in the sea.

There are only two organisms in the marine bestiary that do not appear to be a danger to humans. In the bottom left corner of the picture is a tree labelled "I." Although it initially appears to be a normal tree with birds in its branches, the legend

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<sup>275</sup> MacLeish, "Mysterious Creatures," 284.

<sup>276</sup> Ibid.

indicates that this is not so. Instead, it is literally a duck tree; the fruit of the tree are the ducks in the branches and swimming in the water below. While it is not a directly threatening example of monstrosity, it is certainly unusual in its strange hybridity between a vegetable and animal organism, and therefore unsettling in its disturbance of the contemporary system of knowledge.

The second, marked “S”, seems to be the exception that proves the rule: it is described as a benevolent creature that protects swimmers from being eaten by other marine predators.<sup>277</sup> However, the image shows that this is a relatively small creature compared to the beasts that surround it, and it is not much larger than the man that it is trying to protect. The creature is composed of a delicate and flexible spine which is only surrounded by what appears to be a flimsy fin. In other words, not only is it missing any visible defensive or offensive attributes, such as horns or teeth, that would suggest that it would be capable of fighting off one of the larger beasts, but also its fragile composition and relatively small size offer the terrified viewer no comfort at all.

Similarly, in Sadeler’s engraving *Bodies Carried Away by the Deluge* (c. 1586) (Fig. 2.41), the sea is populated by vicious-looking monsters among the corpses of the flood’s victims. The sea creatures in the waves, many of whom look like the sculptures in the Sacro Bosco with their gaping mouths and sharp teeth, look just as threatening as the ominously turbulent water itself (Fig. 2.42). This print suggests that the depths of the sea are an environment that breeds and nurtures beasts as vicious and deadly as the tumultuous water, demonstrated by the cadavers floating across its surface.

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

Neptune is often depicted in the Renaissance as a figure who is confidently in control of the threatening sea, such as in Ammannati's fountain in the Piazza della Signoria (Fig. 2.43). Though powerful, he is generally depicted as a benevolent figure, drawing upon the theme of "Neptune calming the troubled waters" from Virgil's *Aeneid* (1.131-56).<sup>278</sup> An interesting and unusual example, however, is the Boboli Garden's *Fountain of Neptune* by Stoldo Lorenzi from c. 1565-1568 (Fig. 2.44).<sup>279</sup> It can be found today in the pond right above the amphitheatre, just to the left of where it originally stood, identically arranged in a fountain, though not on the same rocky base.<sup>280</sup> The bronze god is depicted in mid-action as he forcefully thrusts forward his trident that shoots forth water during wet seasons.<sup>281</sup> Stoldo has chosen to portray the god in an aggressive pose that suggests he is about to disturb the peaceful water below him.<sup>282</sup> The dynamic stance of the figure creates a sense of anticipation, tension and anxiety; the naiads and tritons that cower under the protection of the rocks below enhance the mood of apprehension. The threat of Neptune's frozen action, however, is never realized and the waters remain calm, subverting the viewer's sense of imminent calamity. In a Renaissance garden, where water tricks related to floods and tempests abound, this fountain is a tease; it is one that threatens to surprise the visitors with some spurting prank but leaves the viewers simply holding their breath.

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<sup>278</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 99.

<sup>279</sup> Coffin seems to suggest that this depiction of Neptune follows the convention of showing him calming the waters (see *ibid*). However, with the statue surrounded by water that is already calm, and his arm tense as he assertively drives his trident downwards, he appears more likely to be upsetting the water rather than calming it.

<sup>280</sup> Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 48. Gurrieri and Chatfield suggest this original placement based on the Utens lunette of the Pitti Palace, however contemporaries noted its current placement above the U-shaped hill as early as 1570. (See Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 198).

<sup>281</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 198.

<sup>282</sup> Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 47-48; Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 198.

There are many possible narrative sources for this motif. In the story of the Deluge recounted above, Ovid explains that Neptune helped his brother Jupiter by upsetting the waters and flooding the earth.<sup>283</sup> In another story, Neptune sends floods and a sea monster to the Ethiopians when Cassiopeia offends him by boasting that her beauty could compete with that of the Nereids.<sup>284</sup> One of the most well known cases of the sea god's malevolence is when he sought vengeance upon Odysseus for blinding Polyphemus; the resentment of Poseidon is a force that drives the plot of *The Odyssey*. In book five, when Odysseus leaves Calypso's island, the sea god's anger is portrayed particularly violently, as Poseidon "drove the clouds together in a heap, and trident in hand, tossed together the desolate waters." Odysseus is forced to swim a long distance to shore after his raft is not only overturned but completely obliterated as the turbulent waves target the traveler.<sup>285</sup>

That both the terrifying potential of Neptune and the fear of sea monsters were typical of sixteenth-century garden design is clear in Descartes' *Treatise on Man* (1633), where he gives a hypothetical account of automata found in garden grottos. Drawing his inspiration from the French grottos built by the Italian Tommaso Francini, who also designed the chambers inside the *Appennino* sculpture at Pratolino,<sup>286</sup> he explains that:

if for instance they approach Diana bathing, they will cause her to be hidden among the reeds, and if they proceed further to pursue her, they will bring forward a Neptune who threatens them with his trident; or, if they turn in another direction, they will bring out a sea monster who will vomit forth water into their

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<sup>283</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.277-292.

<sup>284</sup> Apollodorus, *Library of Greek Mythology, Bibli.* 2.4.3.

<sup>285</sup> Homer, *Odyssey*, 5.282-379.

<sup>286</sup> Heikamp, "The Green Giant," 86-88.

faces, or other such things, according to the whim of the craftsman who has made them.<sup>287</sup>

Although he is not describing a specific grotto, he gives a good impression of the playfully frightful designs that were typically employed by Italian artists within the garden, particularly invoking terrors of sea.

Clearly, frightful sea imagery, as well as references to storms and floods, is pervasive in the Italian Renaissance gardens. Various degrees of fear and anxiety are playfully evoked in the viewer, from chaotic drenchings to more subtle plays with floating and sinking. Within this variety of approaches, water as a theme is dealt with in all of its forms and the confrontation of the visitors' fears becomes one of the many delights that the gardens have to offer.

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<sup>287</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*, 88.

### Chapter 3: *Instability and Disorder*

As we have seen, monsters are threatening because they are signs that God's laws have been transgressed, producing dangerous and unholy results. Water is most unsettling when it flows over its normal boundaries or when it threatens to upset one's sense of order. Though they make us uneasy, these things fit perfectly within the space of the garden, which is one that is characteristically unstable, with disorder always encroaching upon it. Gardens are constantly changing as the plants and trees grow or wither, the flowers bloom or fade, and the growth hides or is stripped away from the sculptural and architectural elements. The entire mood of the place and the effect of the statues are altered according to the time of day, the lighting and the weather.<sup>288</sup> Even the way the paths are connected in the Renaissance gardens suggest multiple itineraries for traveling within the space,<sup>289</sup> and therefore the relationships between the sculptures and spaces shift depending on one's route. Due to the constantly changing forms and effects, the visitor's experience of the garden is never quite the same and the gardener must work hard to maintain the boundaries and order of the garden's vegetation that constantly threatens to outgrow or wither away from its ordered plan.

Just as the limits and qualities of the space seem to be constantly challenged, the Renaissance gardens abound with ornamentation that exhibits qualities that appear to disturb and destabilize the order and boundaries of nature, architectural structures, the body, the mind, and even the soul. Kristeva's definition of abjection as "what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between,

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<sup>288</sup>Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, 127.

<sup>289</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

the ambiguous, the composite<sup>290</sup> characterizes a large number of the artworks within the sixteenth-century Italian gardens, where the disruption of order and stability is both unsettling and delightful.

To a certain degree, the subject matter of this chapter overlaps with the content of the previous two chapters. Both of them dealt with anxiety over creatures, monsters, torrents and storms that threaten to violate the integrity of the body, creating a sense of horror at the prospect of the borders of the self being pierced or destroyed. The threat of death and spiritual corruption are the most extreme forms of abjection,<sup>291</sup> as one is faced with the complete dissolution of the self.<sup>292</sup> Hybrid monsters threaten to prey upon the visitors and references to cannibalism evoke anxiety about being devoured; by being ingested into the body of the ‘other,’ the boundaries between oneself and ‘other’ become indistinguishable. Furthermore, storms as violent as the Deluge threaten a complete upset of natural order, as entropy overtakes the world. Therefore, the topics already discussed could be considered an extension of the overall theme of this chapter, as they also invoke a sense of instability and fragility of order, boundaries, and forms.

The monstrous hybrid creatures discussed in the first chapter, as well as other composite statues like those found in the Villa Farnese in Caprarola (Fig. 3.1), are analogous to the strange and unnatural composite figures found in grotesque designs (Fig. 3.2). This ornamentation became extremely popular after Nero’s Domus Aurea (64-68 CE) was rediscovered around the year 1480 and the fanciful designs that covered

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<sup>290</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 4.

<sup>291</sup> See discussion below about how within a Christian mindset, the destruction of the soul is a more terrifying prospect than the dissolution of the body, which will be raised again at the Last Judgment.

<sup>292</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 3-4.

its walls were brought to light.<sup>293</sup> Wolfgang Kayser points out that these designs can be seen as sinister and subversive insofar as they undermine the natural order through impossible hybrid figures, a disregard of gravitational constraints, as well as exaggeration and deformity.<sup>294</sup>

In antiquity, it is clear that this sentiment provided grounds for opposition to grotesque ornamentation. In Vitruvius' famous criticism of these designs, he says:

A picture is, in fact, a representation of a thing which really exists or which can exist. . . . But those subjects which were copied from actual realities are scorned in these days of bad taste. We now have fresco paintings of monstrosities, rather than truthful representations of definite things. For instance, reeds are put in the place of columns, fluted appendages with curly leaves and volutes, instead of pediments, candelabra supporting representations of shrines, and on top of their pediments numerous tender stalks and volutes growing up from the roots and having human figures senselessly seated upon them; sometimes stalks having only half-length figures, some with human heads, others with the heads of animals. Such things do not exist and cannot exist and never have existed. Hence, it is the new taste that has caused bad judges of poor art to prevail over true artistic excellence. For how is it possible that a reed should really support a roof, or a candelabrum a pediment with its ornaments, or that such a slender, flexible thing as a stalk should support a figure perched upon it, or that roots and stalks should produce now flowers and now half-length figures? . . . The fact is that pictures which are unlike reality ought not to be approved.<sup>295</sup>

Vitruvius applies "the yardstick of verisimilitude"<sup>296</sup> and thereby finds fault with this style as it subverts natural laws and deceptively portrays things that are impossible in real life.

Another ancient source that addresses these designs is Horace, who explains in his *Ars Poetica* that artists are like poets in that they can be inventive with their representations of the world. While he considers this artistic license praiseworthy, he makes it clear that this is a positive thing only insofar as the representation remains

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<sup>293</sup> Gruber, "Grotesques," 195.

<sup>294</sup> Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, 19.

<sup>295</sup> Vitruvius, *Ten Books on Architecture*, 7.5.1-4.

<sup>296</sup> Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, 20.

within the realm of the plausible.<sup>297</sup> Horace considers imagination worthy of praise as long as it does not disrupt the natural order, although the popularity of this ornamentation suggests that others took delight in these inventive subversions.

In the Renaissance, Vasari acknowledges the renewed popularity of this imaginative decoration, which was sometimes referred to during the period as “the dreams of painters.”<sup>298</sup> In his technical introduction to the art of painting, Vasari describes grotesque ornamentation as:

...a kind of free and humorous picture produced by the ancients for the decoration of vacant spaces in some position where only things placed high up are suitable. For this purpose they fashioned monsters deformed by a freak of nature or by the whim and fancy of the workers, who in these grotesque pictures make things outside of any rule, attaching to the finest thread a weight that it cannot support, to a horse legs of leaves, to a man the legs of a crane, and similar follies and nonsense without end. He whose imagination ran the most oddly, was held to be the most able. Afterwards the grotesques were reduced to rule and for friezes and compartments had a most admirable effect.<sup>299</sup>

Vasari regards the ancients’ designs with contempt, as he explains that they were executed without attention to rule, though he defends the grotesques of his contemporaries by remarking upon how they have imposed order upon their fantastic designs. He seems to approve of artistic license and grotesque ornamentation as long as it is executed with decorum.

This sentiment is echoed in Francisco de Hollanda’s dialogue with Michelangelo and Don Diego Zapata, who had reservations about these grotesques.<sup>300</sup> Michelangelo affirms the merit of depicting marvellous and non-existent creatures, which particularly

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<sup>297</sup> Horace, *The Art of Poetry*, 1-44.

<sup>298</sup> Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, 21-22.

<sup>299</sup> Vasari, *Vasari on Technique*, 246.

<sup>300</sup> Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 135.

bring delight when they are painted as if they could actually be real.<sup>301</sup> He explains, “sometimes it is more in accordance with reason to paint a monstrosity (for the variation and relaxation of the senses and in respect of mortal eyes, that sometimes desire to see that which they never see and think cannot exist) rather than the accustomed figure.”<sup>302</sup> Decorum is a central issue for de Hollanda in his approval of these delightful grotesques: while images of monks or penitents are appropriate for chapels, it is more appropriate to put fantastic images in places like villas.<sup>303</sup>

The disapproval of grotesques from Vitruvius and Horace, as well as Christian writers such as St. Isidore of Seville who detested artistic inventions of this sort for their departure from truth,<sup>304</sup> is transformed into artistic delight as their ingenious artifice and the creativity of the artist are acknowledged. As John F. Moffitt explains, “to the devout Christian such licentious practice could often then (as now) be viewed as a potential threat to good order and right thinking. As we have seen, Renaissance art theory ... actually came to celebrate the very same perceived threat.”<sup>305</sup> There was an ambivalent attitude towards this imagery in the Renaissance, when there was an attraction to the creative possibilities and inventiveness of artists alongside a more orthodox sense of what is proper and natural.

Within the sixteenth-century gardens, there is an abundance of imagery from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, a text where the stability of the natural order is challenged and the

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<sup>301</sup> Moffitt, “An Exemplary Humanist Hybrid,” 316-317.

<sup>302</sup> As quoted in Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 136.

<sup>303</sup> Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art*, 136.

<sup>304</sup> Moffitt, “An Exemplary Humanist Hybrid,” 320.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

entire world that is imagined is one in a continuous state of flux.<sup>306</sup> The book's unifying theme of change and transformation "induces a feeling of uneasiness about a natural world in which nothing is what it seems."<sup>307</sup> In words that strikingly recall the hybrids found amid the grotesque ornamental designs, Michel Jeanneret notes that Ovid "dwells on the transitory phase when a creature suspended between two identities, combining two species, temporarily resembles a monster."<sup>308</sup> The same is true in the gardens, where the artists most often chose to represent Ovid's characters in their temporary hybrid states.<sup>309</sup>

This can be seen in the *Grotto of Diana* in the Villa d'Este, built in 1572, where various scenes from *Metamorphoses* are depicted in relief sculpture on the walls, such as a moment from the story of Apollo and Daphne (Fig. 3.3). In Ovid's tale, Cupid spitefully shoots Apollo with a golden arrow, causing him to fall passionately in love with Daphne, a nymph who desires to live a life of chastity. Cupid similarly strikes her with one of his arrows; however, this one is made of lead, causing her to be repulsed by, instead of enamoured with, Apollo. While the sun god chases the poor nymph, she cries out to her father for help, and is subsequently transformed into a laurel tree.<sup>310</sup> In the image found in the *Grotto of Diana*, Daphne is on the riverbank beside her father where she is depicted with her arms outstretched like branches with leaves sprouting from them. In a paradoxically frozen and unchanging depiction that tries to represent a world

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<sup>306</sup> Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, 105.

<sup>307</sup> Bowen, *The Age of Bluff*, 10.

<sup>308</sup> Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, 106.

<sup>309</sup> This focus on the moment of transformation is not unique to the garden setting. The instability of form is precisely what is most intriguing and unique about Ovid's tales, and therefore for those who portray scenes from *Metamorphoses*, these moments are generally the ones that are depicted.

<sup>310</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 2.450-567.

characterized by instability and change, she is shown in mid-transformation, a strange hybrid of girl and tree.

In addition to the hybrid figures found throughout the gardens, the subversion of the natural order also appears in the Sacro Bosco through strange juxtapositions of size. The sculptural group of the *Turtle and Fame* from 1557-1584 (Fig. 3.4) distorts natural proportions: the turtle, an animal that is usually slow, small, and harmless is transformed into a massive and looming figure that overshadows the nearby visitor. The figure of Fame blowing her trumpet, an instrument now lost but visible in contemporary drawings of this work (Fig. 3.5),<sup>311</sup> is dwarfed in comparison, creating a reversal of the usual size relationship between a human figure and a turtle.

A similar juxtaposition can be seen in the *Orsini Mask* (Fig. 1.18), whose giant head balances a ball topped with a miniature castle. The diminutive stature of the castle looks odd in relation to the head and emphasizes the enormity of the figure. Like the *Turtle and Fame* where there is a reversal in the relationship in size between the figures, the giant and the castle have literally switched roles; the castle, which should function as a shelter, is too small to be inhabitable, while the giant's mouth disturbingly takes on the role of a refuge.

The stacked objects of the *Orsini Mask* recall the vertical and gravity-defying figures in grotesque ornamental designs and candelabra, though it gives the impression that the smallest movement of the giant could send the ball and the castle tumbling down. In the Villa Aldobrandini, there was a creation that flouted gravity in a more spectacular and eerie way. In his diary, John Evelyn recalls that one of the grottos had a

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<sup>311</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 54.

ball that floated three feet above the floor, which was secretly held in place by the force of several jets of wind.<sup>312</sup> Unknowing visitors happening upon such a sight would surely feel both unsettled and fascinated as they saw the ball floating as if by magic in mid-air, a physical denial of natural order directly in front of them.

Again defying natural order, inside the chambers of Pratolino's *Appennino* the boundaries of space were challenged as the dichotomy of inside and outside was subverted. The walls were frescoed with seascapes creating the impression of an open-aired vista. Heikamp suggests that paradoxically "The sixteenth-century traveler who felt himself imprisoned within the belly of the mountain god, thus had the illusion of looking out upon the endless spaces of the sea."<sup>313</sup> What was perhaps expected to be a fearsome and claustrophobic space instead was one that suggested a liberating outdoor expanse. The limits and boundaries of the grotto, and therefore also the body of the giant, seem to be challenged through this illusionistic artifice.

Within the body of this giant were also automata created by Tommaso Francini, much like those that filled the chambers and grottos of many of the sixteenth-century gardens, such as moving statues of Pan playing his pipes and of Heracles beating the monstrous Hydra.<sup>314</sup> Moving figures had an unsettling effect even when their subject matter was not monstrous. For although devising automata is an intuitive step to take within a discourse of art that places a high value on the ability to imitate life,<sup>315</sup> they disturb long-established categorical boundaries between natural living beings and lifeless

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<sup>312</sup> Evelyn, *Diary*, 200.

<sup>313</sup> Heikamp, "The Green Giant," 86.

<sup>314</sup> Ibid.

<sup>315</sup> Bredekamp, *The Lure of Antiquity*, 48.

artificial objects.<sup>316</sup> According to Aristotle everything “has within itself a principle of motion and stationariness,”<sup>317</sup> and therefore the definitive way of discerning what is a natural figure and what is artificial is based on whether an object is able to move of its own accord or is inanimate.<sup>318</sup>

Zakiya Hanafi explains, “That is why , in early modern Italy, when Aristotelian formulations of matter, form, and spirit were quite intact, moving statues could only be seen as somehow participating in demonic forces.”<sup>319</sup> There is such a strong connection between automata and demons that Eugenio Battisti claims that the accounts associating the two are “endless.”<sup>320</sup> In the thirteenth century, St. Thomas of Aquinas destroyed an automaton created by Albert the Great because he believed it to be evil.<sup>321</sup> Centuries later, Athanasius Kircher maintained that this attitude was still extremely common.<sup>322</sup>

Not only natural order is subverted in these gardens, but architectural order and stability is challenged as well. The frescoed vault in the *Grotta Grande*, discussed earlier, gives the illusion that it may crumble and fall upon the visitor at any moment. This was noted in 1591<sup>323</sup> by Francesco Bocchi when he explained that this ceiling “aroused delight, but not without terror, because the building seemed about to collapse to the ground.”<sup>324</sup> Bernardino Poccetti painted plants emerging from the trompe l’oeil cracks in the structure, suggesting an instability that would have given the viewer standing below it

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<sup>316</sup> Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine*, 88.

<sup>317</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>318</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>320</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>322</sup> *Ibid.*, 87-88.

<sup>323</sup> Carabell, “Breaking the Frame,” 89.

<sup>324</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*

particular alarm when the waterworks shot up from the floor and hit the ceiling.<sup>325</sup> Similarly, the English traveler Fynes Moryson described a grotto in Pratolino that was “a cave strongly built, yet by art so made, as you fear to enter it, lest great stones should fall upon your head.”<sup>326</sup> Although the *Grotta Grande* and this Pratolino grotto were strongly built, they both illusionistically tried to deceive the viewer into feeling that the structures would imminently collapse upon them.

One of the most striking of examples of a seemingly unstable structure is the *Leaning House* in the Sacro Bosco, a two-level building that is dedicated to Cardinal Madruzzo in Trent (Fig. 0.9). Its deliberate north-western tilt creates a strong impression of unsteadiness.<sup>327</sup> There are two entrances to this house, one on the bottom floor and one that can be reached from the upper terrace, which is connected to the building by a small bridge. As this tower functions partly as a viewing platform of the garden and the countryside,<sup>328</sup> the visitor is tempted to enter the structure in spite of its apparent instability. Once inside, the tilt of the floors and the walls is disorienting and disconcerting as one tries to keep one’s balance. Interestingly, if one is able to align one’s vision with the skewed angle of the structure, then when one turns to the window, it is not the structure that appears off-balance, but rather the entire surrounding world.<sup>329</sup>

Apart from the dedication of the *Leaning House* to Cardinal Madruzzo, another inscription on this building reads “The mind becoming quiet becomes wiser thereby,”<sup>330</sup> a quote that originates from Annibale Caro’s “Dream of Aristotle,” found in the Farnese

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<sup>325</sup> Gurrieri and Chatfield, *Boboli Gardens*, 39.

<sup>326</sup> As quoted in Hunt, *Garden and Grove*, 92.

<sup>327</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening*, 108.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>329</sup> Ree, Smienk, and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 192-3.

<sup>330</sup> As translated by Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 111.

Palace at Caprarola.<sup>331</sup> As Sheeler notes, “the advice is typically paradoxical, set as it is on a structure designed to unsettle and puzzle.”<sup>332</sup> It could be that the cathartic effect of the tilted building is what is supposed to bring “quiet” to the mind, although perhaps the inscription also pokes fun at the visitor’s distinct lack of calm that is produced by the unbalance of a structure that is in actual fact entirely safe.

One could also take the inscription at face value; the unsettling quality of the *Leaning House* could be viewed as a sort of training ground for wisdom. In his essay “The inconsistency of our actions,” Montaigne explains how external circumstances control our attitude and behaviour, quoting Horace who said, “Like puppets we are moved by outside strings.”<sup>333</sup> In contrast, true wisdom is characterized by consistent behaviour and self-control.<sup>334</sup> If one is able to master the anxiety brought on by external circumstances, such as by wilfully summoning courage and calmness while in an unbalanced structure, then one has gained the wisdom to function with better knowledge and control of oneself in the midst of the drastically unstable world of the sixteenth century. If this interpretation is correct, then it is likely that this attitude applies to more than just the *Leaning House*, but is also relevant to the numerous unsettling encounters throughout the Renaissance gardens.

Like the *Leaning House*, a couple of the garden fountains also give the viewer a subtle sense of unbalance and instability. In the Villa Castello, Bartolomeo Ammanati’s *Appennino Fountain* of 1563-1565 (Fig. 3.6) is built into the slope of the hill, and therefore

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<sup>331</sup> Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 107.

<sup>332</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 111.

<sup>333</sup> Montaigne, *Complete Works*, 291.

<sup>334</sup> *Ibid.*

the water in the basin “seems to lean backwards.”<sup>335</sup> The *Pegasus Fountain* in the Sacro Bosco is similarly created on a slant (Fig. 0.5 and 3.7), and the completely vertical support beneath the winged-horse suggests that like the *Leaning House*, the tilt is entirely intentional.<sup>336</sup> Although no water flows through it today, one can imagine that the effect would be the same, with the water leaning to one side of the basin, perhaps also threatening to spill over. Because of water’s fluidity, its surface is always completely horizontal unless it is agitated. For this reason, the appearance of “slanted” water intuitively gives an unsettlingly “off-balance” feeling. Adding to this sense of unbalance is a tilted disc nearby that leans in the opposite direction (Fig. 3.8), which along with the fountain is in contrast to the perfectly horizontal platform of the turtle. With each work in this area of the park set at a contrasting angle to the next one, the visitor possibly would have felt that there has been some sort of natural upheaval upsetting the equilibrium of the artificial structures.<sup>337</sup>

In the Palazzo del Te, Federigo II Gonzaga’s villa just outside of Mantua (completed by the mid-1530s),<sup>338</sup> the main casino of the villa also incorporates elements that play with the perceived stability of the building. On the east and west facades of the courtyard, Giulio Romano creates an unsettling impression by lowering the triglyphs to make them appear as if they are slipping (Fig. 3.9).<sup>339</sup> Additionally, the keystones above the windows are intentionally too wide, which keeps the pediment from properly

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<sup>335</sup> Ree, Smienk, and Steenbergen, *Italian Villas and Gardens*, 47.

<sup>336</sup> Dotson, “Shapes of Earth and Time,” 213.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Verheyen, *The Palazzo del Te*, 1.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 48.

meeting in the middle.<sup>340</sup> These intentional “problems” with the façade give the impression of structural instability, an unsettling joke for the viewer.<sup>341</sup>

Inside the Palazzo del Te, the painting that depicts the gigantomachy in the Sala dei Giganti creates an even greater sensation of instability, danger and imminent collapse (Fig. 3.10). Giulio’s fresco, which was completed between 1530 and 1532, creates a convincing illusion of a continuous space between the viewer and the image through various techniques. The absence of any type of framing or boundaries to separate what is real and what is fictive is accomplished by including a continuation of the floor design illusionistically into the painting, and using rusticated and seemingly unstable stones to construct the fireplace, doors and windows in the room.<sup>342</sup> The viewer is thus surrounded and overwhelmed with a scene of defeated and frightened giants, columns breaking and crashing down, and stones crushing the figures; the viewer is caught in the “precise catastrophic instant” of destruction.<sup>343</sup> Vasari notes the fear that this work inspired in visitors in his *Lives of the Artists*,<sup>344</sup> and a print depicting this room in its original state by Pietro Santi Bartoli (c. 1680) significantly included a dwarfed figure shrinking in fear at the door (Fig. 3.11).<sup>345</sup> The fear turns to laughter and admiration as the viewer realizes that it is only a witty and extremely well executed artifice. At the Palazzo del Te, there is a clear tendency to delight in this kind of unsettling trope;

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid.

<sup>341</sup> Ibid.

<sup>342</sup> This illusion, however, is no longer as complete as it was originally in the sixteenth century; the floors were replaced with a different pattern in the eighteenth century. Carabell, “Breaking the Frame,” 89-90.

<sup>343</sup> Zucker, *Fascination of Decay*, 237.

<sup>344</sup> This print is probably one with which Vasari was familiar. Verheyen, *The Palazzo del Te*, 53.

<sup>345</sup> Carabell, “Breaking the Frame,” 96. This print also gives a good sense of the scale of these paintings.

unfortunately, there is very little evidence of the design of the adjacent garden to the east of the palazzo,<sup>346</sup> although it would not be surprising if there was the same kind of playfulness within it.

In other architectural settings in the villas, instead of suggesting that the structure is on the verge of collapse, there is a sense of slow dissolution and decay. In the Sacro Bosco, there is a severely deteriorated fragment of the façade of an Etruscan tomb (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 3.12), identified as such by its architectural similarities to the ancient tombs such as those nearby in Sovana.<sup>347</sup> This ruin is in fact artificial,<sup>348</sup> indicating that this object was not only trying to copy Etruscan architecture, but was also interested in the ruinous condition itself, that liminal state between art and nature.<sup>349</sup> An object that was once created by art from the materials of nature is now shown as the raw material for nature's own manipulation.<sup>350</sup> This ambiguity of an object's status as art or nature, its decaying form, and its allusion to the human corpse challenges a sense of stable physical boundaries.

Many of the gardens' grottos also suggest a sense of dissolution, as if nature is encroaching upon the structure and eating away at it. Caves such as the *Grotticina* in the Boboli garden (c. 1553-1554) (Fig. 3.13-14), the *Grotto of the Animals* in the Villa Medici at Castello (1565-1572) (Fig. 3.15), and the *Grotto of Cupid* in the Pratolino gardens (late sixteenth century) are covered with porous rocks and stalactites (Fig. 2.24).<sup>351</sup> This rough

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<sup>346</sup> Verheyen, *The Palazzo del Te*, 109.

<sup>347</sup> Oleson, "A Reproduction of an Etruscan Tomb," 413. See the full article for a thorough account of the tomb's design and its relationship to nearby Etruscan ruins.

<sup>348</sup> Ibid.

<sup>349</sup> Zucker, *Fascination of Decay*, 3.

<sup>350</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>351</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 200; Heikamp, "The Green Giant," 90.

and irregular coating transforms the caves into something abject, as they appear to ooze and drip the very material of their construction. A sense of formlessness and impermanence results.

The Boboli garden's *Grotta Grande* is also covered with stalactites, which drip from the arch at the entrance. Any formal geometry apparent in the grotto's façade (Fig. 3.16) appears to dissolve once inside the first room, where the rough and shell-encrusted surface covers the doorways to subsequent rooms. This porous rock also hangs from the relief sculptures on the walls executed between 1583 and 1585 by Piero Matti (Fig. 3.17-18). These encrusted sculptural bodies are abject, as their boundaries appear incontinent and obscured. The outlines of their form are blurred and it appears uncertain where the bodies begin and end. They are covered in stone in a way that suggests there is either a bodily excess that is being excreted or there is an encroachment upon the bodies that is enveloping and consuming them.

This abject sculptural style is also found in the *Appennino* sculpture in Pratolino (Fig. 1.16). This colossus is covered in a layer of lime mortar and is dripping with stalactites that resemble frost. The stalactites especially cover the *Appennino*'s head and beard, although the giant's skin also seems to excrete them. It was originally placed in a niche within a larger mountain, although this mountain gradually decayed and was completely dismantled in the nineteenth-century restoration of the sculpture.<sup>352</sup> Within the original cavernous and shadowy setting, the boundaries of the god's body would have seemed indistinct and blurred with the (seemingly) natural mountain behind it.<sup>353</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> Heikamp, "The Green Giant," 84-86.

<sup>353</sup> *Ibid.*

In addition to the blurring of the boundaries between the fictive body of the giant and the mountain, the boundaries between art and nature are also obscured, a prominent trend throughout the Renaissance gardens. Artists not only tried to imitate nature, but often tried to obfuscate any clear distinction between human craftsmanship and natural objects.<sup>354</sup> In his discussion of fountains, Claudio Tolomei praised artists who are able to achieve this effect:

The ingenious skill newly rediscovered to make fountains, in which mixing art with nature, one can't judge if [a fountain] is the work of the former or of the latter; thus one appears a natural artefact and another, man-made nature. Thus they strive nowadays to assemble a fountain that appears to be made by nature, not by accident but with masterful craft.<sup>355</sup>

The garden itself was ambiguously the product of both art and nature. Eventually it acquired a unique distinction as a “third nature,” a term first used by Jacopo Bonfadio in 1541 and by Bartolomeo Taegio in 1559,<sup>356</sup> since the product of these two dichotomous elements created something distinct as they came together.<sup>357</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that works which blur the boundaries between art and nature like the *Appennino* abound within the liminal space of the garden.

Blurring the boundaries between art and nature adds an additional level of alarm as a visitor encounters the monsters of the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo. As a wooded landscape, the sculptures in the park are often obscured or concealed from view until the visitor is immediately next to them. The use of onsite peperino stones for creating the sculptures adds to this delightful effect; when seeing the sculptures from a distance, or coming up on them from behind, sometimes it is difficult to tell whether it is a natural

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<sup>354</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 9.

<sup>355</sup> As quoted in Dotson, “Shapes of Earth and Time,” 211.

<sup>356</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 9.

<sup>357</sup> Lazzaro, “Gendered Nature,” 247.

rock or a sculpture. In other words, what appears to be simply one of many large stones suddenly surprises the visitors as they recognize that it is in fact a monster.<sup>358</sup> A sense of shock accompanies one's first comprehending glimpse of the images, which is followed by the certainty that the creature is, of course, only made of stone.

Many artworks with a smooth surface, a clearly defined form, and unambiguous boundaries evoke the abject in other ways. Valerio Cioli's *Dwarf Morgante* sculpture in the Boboli gardens (1560), named after Luigi Pulci's giant in *Il Morgante Maggiore* (1481),<sup>359</sup> depicts a figure that was considered at the time to be a monstrous marvel (Fig. 3.19).<sup>360</sup> The figure's short stature and excessive layers of fat are in sharp opposition to restrained and well-proportioned classical figures. It has been argued that the largeness of the dwarf is part of a witty play with the motto "Make haste slowly" that was adopted by Cosimo I de' Medici, and which is usually represented with a sail on top of a tortoise. With the sail replaced by this bulging figure resembling Bacchus, who is usually depicted astride a barrel of wine, any possibility of the tortoise going anywhere quickly is subverted.<sup>361</sup> The repulsion and wonder one feels at the dwarf's excessive fat and strange proportions are accompanied by laughter at the clever subversion of the motto.

Throughout the gardens, there are also grotesque faces and creatures that challenge the boundaries of the body. These creatures are all over the fountains, banisters, and walls usually vomiting, but sometimes also ingesting large quantities of water. In front of the *Fountain of the Dragons* in the Villa d'Este, the banister at the top of

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<sup>358</sup> Jeanneret, *Perpetual Motion*, 126.

<sup>359</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 201.

<sup>360</sup> In regards to a painting of *Dwarf Morgante* by Bronzino, Vasari commented that its "monstrous and bizarre members" were beautifully painted by the artist, and seems to suggest that this work was judged based on its status as a *meraviglia*. See Jacobs, *Living Image*, 158-159.

<sup>361</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 201.

the ramp has sculptures of sea monsters who spit out the water that flows through the water stairs to the grotesques at the bottom who swallow it, only to be spewed out again on the adjacent side of the post by another grotesque (Fig. 3.20-3.22). The garden's *Avenue of the Hundred Fountains* (c. 1569) (Fig. 3.23-24) a path stretching all the way from the *Rometta Fountain* to the *Tivoli Fountain*, also has a long row of grotesque heads which spurt water from their mouths into a trough that terminates on either end with monstrous faces swallowing the liquid (Fig. 3.25). The same proliferation of spewing faces is seen at the Villa Lante throughout the garden, where it seems that almost every surface is covered with little grotesque heads (Fig. 3.26).

Some of these spewing grotesques are even playfully connected with the visitors' own meals; as the visitors sit down to partake in a banquet at the outdoor dining table in the Villa Lante (c. 1568-1578), the grotesque heads on either end of the table vomit up their own contents into basins below (Fig. 3.27-28).<sup>362</sup> In the Sacro Bosco's *Hell Mouth*, the play with digestive themes is more intense, as the visitors themselves are the substance being devoured by the giant head. In a playful reversal, the guests are able to enjoy their own meal once inside, using the creature's own tongue as a table. The other "hell mouths" at the Villa della Torre and the Villa Aldobrandini function the same way, as visitors can enter into the grottos through the gaping mouths, symbolically being swallowed by the monsters. Bomarzo's *Orsini Mask* is similar; a visitor may choose to venture into the mouth of the cannibal to find shelter from the rain or sun. In each case, the being that threatens to devour and destroy the visitor instead turns out to be a

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<sup>362</sup> Lazzaro, "The Villa Lante at Bagnaia," 558.

pleasant shelter. These heads seem to engage in both ingestion as people enter into their mouths as well as emesis as they exit the grottos through the same door.

Apart from these giant heads, many of the grotesques pass excessive fluids across the borders of their bodies and thereby disrupt one's notion of the contained and stable self. However, the fluid that is used to represent disgusting liquids such as vomit is actually water, one of the primary means of purifying and cleansing from both secular and spiritual defilement. This is the case within Christianity, where baptismal water cleanses the initiate of his or her sins. This paradox renders what is initially perceived as disgusting as instead purifying. It is this tension that provides the visitor with a sense of pleasure with the trope; just as dangerous creatures are rendered delightful when the visitor feels safe, the visitor also feels delighted when what appears abject is in fact composed of what is pure.

This play between purity and defilement is also found in Cioli's *Fountain of the Washerwoman* in Pratolino, visible in Giusto Utens' 1599 lunette of the garden (Fig. 3.29). Originally at the edge of a large basin at the bottom end of the garden's incline was a tub filled with bubbling water that looked as though it was boiling for the laundress performing her chores,<sup>363</sup> an example of the daily, practical cleansing properties of water.<sup>364</sup> This work creates tension, however, between what is considered dirty and clean as there is a little boy urinating in the washing water, therefore symbolically defiling it. Once again however, the discharged "urine" of the fountain is actually only cleansing water, preventing it from actually being defiling and disgusting.

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<sup>363</sup> Lazzaro, "From the Rain to the Wash Water," 321.

<sup>364</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

In addition to these gross digestive and urinary discharges, the ejection of other bodily fluids takes a specifically maternal form. The Venus sculpture in the Villa Lante's *Grotto of Venus* (c. 1568-1578) (Fig. 3.30) and Bartolomeo Ammanati's figure of Ceres from the *Juno fountain* (c. 1555), which was located first in the Pratolino gardens and then moved to the Boboli gardens in 1588<sup>365</sup> (Fig. 3.31), are depicted with smooth and ideally proportioned bodies; these classical figures at first appear to be the opposite of the abject. Yet, piercing these perfect boundaries is fluid that shoots forth from their breasts, disrupting the sense of containment. The sphinx-like hybrids in the Villa d'Este similarly squirt water from their breasts, creatures that already disrupt natural boundaries through their hybridity. As the breasts of these females overflow with their bodily fluid, they become figures of excess and abjection, qualities already closely associated with women during the Renaissance.<sup>366</sup>

This trope of the lactating woman is amplified in the *Goddess of Nature* statue by Gillis van den Vliete in the Villa d'Este (c. 1560s), a work that was originally placed in front of the water organ,<sup>367</sup> but is now found in a niche in the back wall of the bottom terrace (Fig. 3.32). This figure has the upper body of a woman, except with monstrously multiplied breasts, and an architectonic shaft covered in relief carvings of animals in place of her lower body.<sup>368</sup> She is abject in her excess of female attributes and seemingly

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<sup>365</sup> Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 198.

<sup>366</sup> Lazzaro, "Gendered Nature," 251.

<sup>367</sup> Coffin, *Villa d'Este*, 19.

<sup>368</sup> Lazzaro points out the close alignment between the squirting women and animals, such as the creatures on the Goddess of Nature's shaft and those resting on her arms and shoulders. She explains that both animals and women were characterized as wild and unrestrained in the Renaissance. Lazzaro, "Gendered Nature," 252-253. Unfortunately, the animals on the figure's lower shaft are difficult to see in fig. 3.32 due to the heavy overgrowth.

uncontrollable multiplicity, as well as the abundance of fluid that is secreted from each breast.

Based on the classical prototype of Diana of Ephesus, this figure signifies, according to Cesare Ripa, the earth and her generative power.<sup>369</sup> By aligning the female body with the fecundity of nature, the whole space of the garden becomes one characterized as feminine.<sup>370</sup> In fact, the garden was already a common metaphor for the virginal womb of the Madonna, inspired by the Song of Songs which says “You are an enclosed garden, my sister, my bride, an enclosed garden, a fountain sealed.”<sup>371</sup>

The *Goddess of Nature* is not, however, “a fountain sealed” and in the midst of the vegetation of these gardens is an abundance of grotesques and monsters instead of the Virgin’s Holy Child. According to Bakhtin’s theory of the grotesque, combining abjection and death with generative imagery has a positive message that signifies the promise of life within the ancestral body. Indeed, the large horrific monsters emerge head-first from the earth as if being born, and the little grotesque faces that pop out of the architecture at every turn are disembodied as if they are in the process of coming into being. This allusion to parturition deals with a liminal moment, where the mother/earth and baby/monster remain unseparated and indistinct from each other as they are still physically attached and in the process of becoming separate beings. Yet, this generative principle is not comforting, but rather unsettling in its production of monsters; it is possible that this womb-like space would have called to mind the contemporary discourse surrounding monstrous births.

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<sup>369</sup> Lazzaro, “Gendered Nature,” 252.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>371</sup> Daley, “The Closed Garden,” 258; Song of Sol. 4:12 (NAB).

Facing abject imagery that deals with the trespassing of bodily fluids across the boundaries of the body disrupts one's sense of a secure physical self. In addition to these physical boundaries, the psychological distinction between self and 'other' is also disturbed throughout the garden as one identifies with various repulsive figures. Culturally, the idea of the stable self was already being challenged; in Montaigne's essays, he presents a fluid understanding of the self, where one is not always familiar with oneself but actually at times becomes 'other.' This self recognizes that it is 'other' to those around him, and even 'other' to itself from moment to moment.<sup>372</sup> He describes a self that is mutable and unstable when he explains that "We are all patchwork, and so shapeless and diverse in composition that each bit, each moment, plays its own game. And there is as much difference between us and ourselves as between us and others."<sup>373</sup> For Montaigne, the characteristics of the self are inconsistent and ever-shifting.

Within the garden, the boundaries of the self are disturbed through the visitor's self-identification with lecherous and repulsive figures who are generally conceived of as 'other.' In the third chamber of the *Grotta Grande* in the Boboli gardens, there is a fountain of *Venus Emerging from her Bath* by Giambologna (c. 1572). This beautifully proportioned and graceful female figure is uncomfortably surrounded by a group of four leering creatures who aggressively pull themselves toward her as they crudely spit water onto her body (Fig. 3.33). The faces and predatory dispositions of these creatures are repulsive. This scene of unsettling sexual aggression provides an excuse for the viewer to gaze upon the nude figure, thereby providing him with the same scopophilic pleasure as

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<sup>372</sup> Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, 120.

<sup>373</sup> Montaigne, *Complete Works*, 296.

the leering monsters. As one aligns one's transgressive gaze with those of the monsters who emerge out of the base of the fountain, the viewer identifies with the hideous and illicit 'other.'

In another disturbing situation, the visitor is invited to identify with the corpse clutched in the trunk of the elephant sculpture in the Sacro Bosco (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 3.34), a statue perhaps making reference to Hannibal's terrifying military campaign that marched through Italy not far from Bomarzo and whose army was represented using this same trope in the 1514 edition of Livy's history of the second Punic war published in Mainz (Fig. 3.35).<sup>374</sup> As one first encounters this sculptural group, one must approach it at ground level, where the enormous elephant frighteningly looms over the visitor. Not only would the visitor be faced with this dangerous beast, but one would also identify with the life-size limp figure in its trunk with which one is face to face. To identify with the corpse is to identify with total bodily abjection, where the physical self is completely outside its own limits of earthly existence, the self that is completely 'other.'<sup>375</sup> With no nearby accompanying promise of rebirth, this sculpture presents death in its finality.

By repositioning one's body, the visitor is able to overcome this unsettling identification with the cadaver. As J.B. Bury has noted, the tower on the elephant's back is never empty within the traditional iconography of war elephants, and it appears that there is an entrance into the tower from behind which could be easily accessed with a ladder (Fig. 3.36).<sup>376</sup> Not only could this be used as a viewing platform,<sup>377</sup> but it also imaginatively engages the visitor differently within the work. The position of the self

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<sup>374</sup> Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 215.

<sup>375</sup> Kristeva, *Powers of Horror*, 3-4.

<sup>376</sup> Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 215.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

within an imaginary conflict has shifted; instead of identifying with the victim, one now identifies with the victor, as one stands in the place of control, honour,<sup>378</sup> and victory as one looks down upon a defeated enemy. Through this change in position, one overcomes one's discomfort in identifying with the victim.

Within a Christian framework, however, this abjection of the corpse is not so utterly complete; the body will rise again and spend eternity in either heaven or hell. Eternal damnation, then, is the ultimate abjection for the Christian; it is the eternal torment of both the body and the soul through one's separation from God. This separation from God is not separation from an 'other,' but rather from the body of Christ, of whom Jesus is the Head and the Church is its members.<sup>379</sup> Damnation is therefore the eternal separation from the spiritual body of which the soul is a part. It is the larger self for which the soul was first created, a self whose 'othering' is the ultimate torment.

Even this most extreme torment must be faced by the visitors to the Sacro Bosco. Just past the *Elephant and the Soldier* is an open empty grave<sup>380</sup> across from the *Hell Mouth* (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 3.37). Upon turning one's back to this grave (as if one has perhaps risen from the dead for the Last Judgment), one is confronted with the gateway to the underworld and is suddenly in the place of a soul faced with eternal damnation. Of course, as has already been discussed, the fearsomeness of the *Hell Mouth* is

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<sup>378</sup> Among the aristocracy, violence and warfare were considered to be among the most significant ways in which one's honour and status were determined. See Black, *European Warfare*, 4-12.

<sup>379</sup> This is a characterization of the Church that is used extensively throughout the letters of Paul. See especially Rom 12: 4-5; 1 Cor 2: 27; 1 Cor 6: 15; 1 Cor 11: 3; 1 Cor 12: 12-13; Eph 4: 15-16; Eph 5: 23.

<sup>380</sup> During my visit to the Sacro Bosco, there were children actually climbing into the tomb, and jumping out to scare their siblings. If during Orsini's time children, (or perhaps adults as well!) had such an inclination, this tomb would have provided hidiers with the similar pleasure of frightening others.

subverted: one must ascend (rather than descend) into hell, the inscription says to abandon your thoughts, and the interior is a cool and refreshing place for a picnic. These references to the underworld continue a little way off near the temple, where there is a statue of Cerberus, the terrifying three-headed canine guardian of Hades (c. 1557-1584) (Fig. 3.38).<sup>381</sup> If one considers the *Hell Mouth* to function as the entrance to the underworld, which the visitor symbolically passes through, then the later encounter with Cerberus would suggest that he is there to prevent the visitor from leaving the realm of the dead.<sup>382</sup>

Dealing with spiritual anxiety and the horrifying theme of damnation is also evident in an account given of the Orti Oricellai in Florence in 1578, where Francesco de' Medici orchestrated a shocking sort of amusement for his late night guests. A necromancer mockingly communicated with devils and produced a revolting sulphuric stench while fireworks exploded around them in the garden. Disturbing sounds such as rattling chains, gnashing of teeth, and upsetting howls surrounded them so that they appeared to have been ushered into a scene from hell. When “the earth literally dropped away,” the guests were almost convinced that they were actually there.<sup>383</sup> Following this terrifying event, however, the guests were soon comforted with a vision of paradise where several stunning girls led the group “out of the stench toward the sweetly perfumed terrace of the garden, where angelic voices piped out a marvellous concert of

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<sup>381</sup> Cartari, *Le Imagini*, f. 53r.

<sup>382</sup> However, Bury suggests that under the temple may actually be the tomb of Vicino and Giulia Orsini, which would place Cerberus in front of their grave, guarding it. See Bury, “Bomarzo Revisited,” 219 for a more detailed account of his theory.

<sup>383</sup> Hanafi, *The Monster in the Machine*, 17.

madrigals.”<sup>384</sup> This process of creating a fearful reaction succeeded by an assurance of pleasure and safety was clearly intended to be a thrilling and entertaining experience for the Duke’s guests. The visitors were faced with the destruction, and then the salvation, of their souls.

This dramatic entertainment exemplifies the instability of the space of the garden: the guests entered an earthly space, which was transformed into an infernal region, and then shifted to a paradise. This mutability is characteristic of the garden and its artwork, for as we have seen, forms, boundaries and order are called into question repeatedly. This passage from earth to hell to paradise can also be seen as a metaphor for the experience of encountering the unsettling and horrific artworks as a whole: wandering through the garden, one finds unsettling objects that are transformed into delight upon recognizing their witty subversions and artifice

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<sup>384</sup> Ibid.

## Conclusion

We have seen that the fears evoked in the sixteenth-century garden are quite diverse in nature. The monstrous figures create anxiety by defying established epistemological frameworks. Their outward deformity or difference also inspires fear, as it was often believed to be a sign of corruption and sin. The specific kind of sin varies in different cases, pointing to more specific fears such as divine anger, deceptiveness, and demonic intervention in human affairs. Additionally, it is also clear that there was a great deal of anxiety about the destructive power of nature. The possibility of catastrophic floods and tempests seems to have been a heavy concern, as well as the dangers involved in sea navigation, from shipwrecks to sinister underwater creatures. Various objects that upset order and boundaries, from the natural world to the borders of the self are also discomfortingly found throughout the gardens.

In the Sacro Bosco, the garden with the most disquieting imagery, several of the inscriptions suggest that one of the primary purposes of the woods is to purge these anxieties from the visitor's mind.<sup>385</sup> On one of the obelisks, it is written "Only to unburden the heart"<sup>386</sup> and a similar message is inscribed at the Nymphaeum, which reads "The cave and the fountain free one from all dark thought."<sup>387</sup> Again, the entrance to the *Hell Mouth* similarly says, "Abandon all thought, you who enter here."<sup>388</sup> Though it seems paradoxical for Vicino to fill the garden with dark and sinister artwork, one can see how facing terrifying creatures and disturbing architecture defuses one's fears

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<sup>385</sup> Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 214.

<sup>386</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 115; Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 214.

<sup>387</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 98; Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 214.

<sup>388</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 98.

through the playful subversions of the objects' threat. It is not by repressing or ignoring one's anxieties that the burdens of fear and horror are lifted, but rather by bringing them to the surface of one's consciousness in order to confront and overcome them.

In fact, if one recalls Aristotle's explanation of tragedy as an enjoyable purging of negative emotions, it seems that the Sacro Bosco's inscriptions indicate a conscious use of frightening imagery to purge the anxieties of its visitors. Although, as noted in the introduction, there is debate today over exactly how to interpret the term *catharsis*, in the Renaissance there is evidence that it was understood to mean "purgation." A.S. Minturno wrote in his *De Poeta* in 1559 that the purification of the mind is akin to that of homeopathic medicine, where a disease is purged by administering something akin to that which is causing it harm.<sup>389</sup> Moreover in 1563, he directly connects the purgative function of tragedy to medical treatment.<sup>390</sup> The same "treatment" is given to guests in the gardens: their anxieties are "cured" by administering small and safe doses of the underlying cause. It is clear that the gardens did succeed in bringing prevalent fears to the surface of their minds and providing an opportunity to overcome them, thus purging these emotions.

The fearful imagery, as we have seen, incorporates playful strategies for overcoming these negative emotions. References to, or evocations of, common anxieties are generally accompanied by elements that seem to oppose their threatening nature. One finds references to danger, both physical and spiritual, that are experienced alongside a knowledge of their artifice, and therefore also a knowledge of the visitor's

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<sup>389</sup> Golden, "Purgation Theory," 473.

<sup>390</sup> Ibid.

safety. The positive life-giving and purifying qualities of water were not represented in isolation, but were accompanied by the powerfully destructive forms that water can take. Even some of the most unstable imagery, such as images of metamorphoses, are frozen and made static. Likewise, the boundaries of the body and the self are destabilized, yet often the fluids that represent what is abject are actually water, a substance associated with purification and generation when it is not out of control.

Often, the poetic and rhetorical strategy of “antithesis,” the juxtaposition of opposites with the intention of heightening their effect, provides a convincing explanation for such contrasting elements in poetry.<sup>391</sup> For example, the poet Visconti writes, “The wise merchant who wishes to sell / A beautiful white pearl of the Orient, / Contrives to show it in a black sandal.”<sup>392</sup> This technique’s crossover into the visual arts is explicitly expressed by Gregorio Comanini, who explained that:

Just as the poet plays with antitheses – one of the major ornaments of diction – or with counterpoise, so likewise, within a single composition, the figures of men and women are counterpoised by the painter, contrasting the figures of ladies to men, of infants to old men, the sea to the land, valleys to mountains, and so other similar counterpositions are fabricated, from which effects there arises no less grace in painting than which, by contrary means, we may see being born in the best poetry.

In the visual arts its use was first advocated by Alberti and antithesis was generally referred to as *contrapposto* (translated above as “counterpoise”), a term most often used to mean a figure with an “S” curve pose,<sup>393</sup> although it also refers more broadly to any contrasting pictorial or thematic elements used to embellish a work.<sup>394</sup> In some cases, this strategy seems to explain the dichotomous elements in garden sculpture, such as in

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<sup>391</sup> Kemp, “Leonardo da Vinci,” 200.

<sup>392</sup> As quoted in *ibid.*

<sup>393</sup> Summers, “Contrapposto,” 339.

<sup>394</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

Giambologna's *Venus Emerging From Her Bath* where it could be argued that the ugliness of the glaring imps by contrast heightens the beauty of the figure of Venus.

Indeed, Leonardo himself believed that "opposites always appear to intensify one another."<sup>395</sup> Yet, antithesis or *contrapposto* could also function as a paradox,<sup>396</sup> as in the case of most of the garden artworks, where the contrasts do not serve to reinforce either dichotomous element. Dangerous subjects do not function to raise one's feeling of safety, nor does the sense of safety heighten the experience of danger. These opposing forces result instead in laughter and pleasure by creating a tension between the opposing forces. The tension between knowing that one is safe yet facing something that should be dangerous produces a thrill of delight.

As these opposites paradoxically seem to co-exist in a single object, such as the abject grotesques vomiting pure water, the viewer consciously or unconsciously becomes aware of an internal incongruity. In *The Book of the Courtier*, Castiglione tries to express this jovial effect:

Now the location and, as it were, the source of the ridiculous is to be found in a kind of deformity; for we laugh only at things that contain some elements of incongruity and seem disagreeable though they are not really so. I know no way of explaining it otherwise; but if you think about it, you will realize that invariably what causes laughter is something that is incongruous and yet not really unpleasing.<sup>397</sup>

The formula for laughter and delight found in this courtly manual is precisely what is used in the Renaissance villa gardens: a leaning house looks like it has shifted off its base, yet nothing is actually amiss because it was built that way. Likewise, the waterworks

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<sup>395</sup> As quoted *ibid.*, 348.

<sup>396</sup> *Ibid.*, 350.

<sup>397</sup> Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, 155-156.

startle and frighten the visitor, who after the initial surprise is aware that there is no actual catastrophe or storm taking place. These works provoke alarming perceptions that are incongruous with their reality.

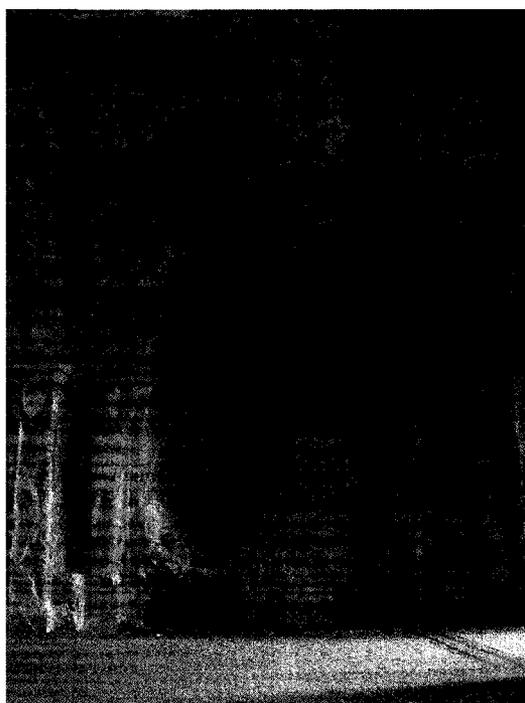
The strange delights of the Renaissance gardens are of a distinct kind. The best comparison of the encounter with frightful representations in these villas to a modern experience is the “fun house” in an amusement park. The visitors have the foreknowledge that the automata and scary images inside are artificial and that they are safe, yet the encounter with dangerous objects creates a thrill. However, in the fun house, there is no choice but to follow the designated path and come out at the approved exit. The Renaissance garden, in contrast, is a place of discovery; armed with the knowledge that they are ultimately safe, the visitors embark to explore the landscapes of the villas, follow the paths that they choose, and encounter new wonders around each corner. Like Poliphilo’s journey in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* where he wanders through unfamiliar landscapes filled with marvels, the visitors to the Renaissance gardens explore the landscape to discover delights and overcome fears. To a certain extent, it is a journey of their own making, where they can indulge their curiosity as long as they want, or even run away if they please.

**Figures**<sup>398</sup>

Fig. 0.1. Bernardino de' Gentili di Aversa. Majolica floor tiles in the *Grotto of Diana*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. 1572.<sup>399</sup>



Fig. 0.2. Paolo Calandrino. *Grotto of Diana*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. 1572.



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<sup>398</sup> All photographs are by the author unless otherwise noted.

<sup>399</sup> Madonna, *Villa d'Este*, 38.

Fig. 0.3. Giovanni del Duca, Raffaello Sangallo, and Ulisse Macciolini. *Fountain of the Owl*.  
Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1566-1568.

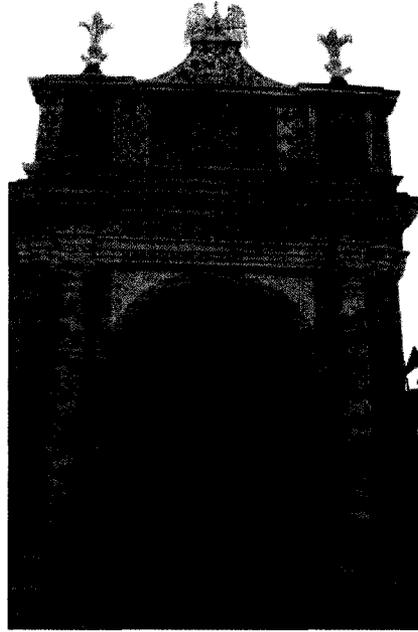


Fig. 0.4. *Acorns and Pinecones*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 0.5. *Fountain of Pegasus*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 0.6. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Fountain of Pegasus*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 0.7. *Fountain of Pegasus*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 0.8. *Hell Mouth*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 0.9. *Leaning House*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.

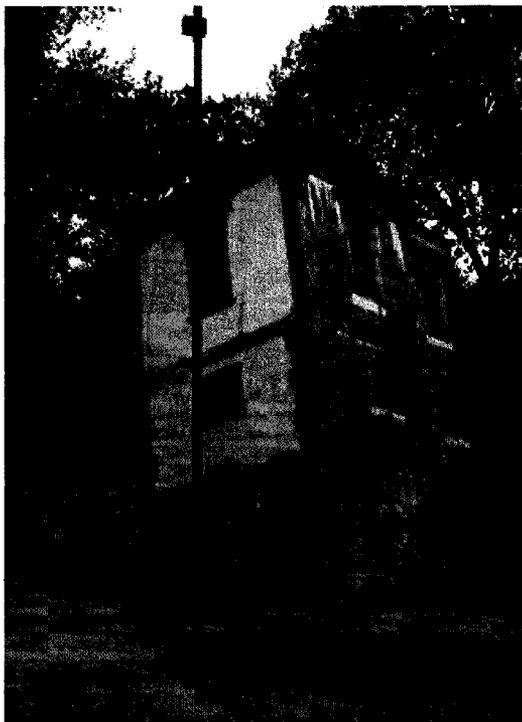
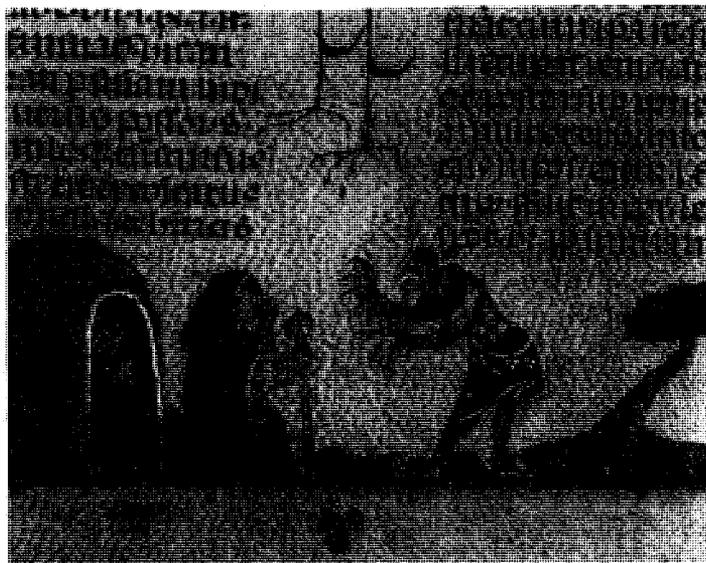


Fig. 1.1. *Hermit tempted by a demon*. In the Smithfield Decretals. c. 1340.<sup>400</sup>



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<sup>400</sup> Bovey, *Monsters and Grotesques in Medieval Manuscripts*, 56, fig. 48.

Fig. 1.2. *Hermit transformed into a wild man*. In the Smithfield Decretals. c. 1340.<sup>401</sup>



Fig. 1.3. *Nebuchadnezzar*. In Pierre Boaistuau's *Histoires Prodigieuses*. From the English translation, *Certaine secrete wonders of nature*, f. 10r. Published in 1569.



<sup>401</sup> Ibid, 57, fig. 49.

Fig. 1.4. *Monster of Ravenna*. In Conrad Wolffhart's *Prodigiorum ac ostentorum chronicon*.  
Published in 1557.<sup>402</sup>



Fig. 1.5. Alsatian or Swiss engraving. *Frau Welt*. Late 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>403</sup>



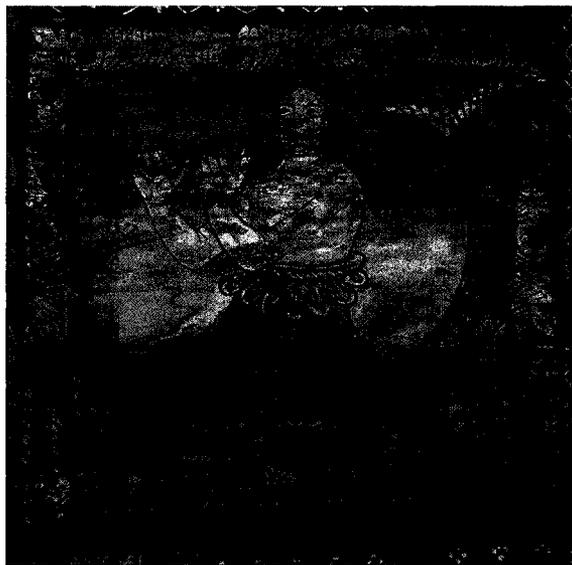
<sup>402</sup> Niccoli, *Prophecy and People*, 41, fig. 4.

<sup>403</sup> *Ibid*, 44, fig. 7.

Fig. 1.6. *Lamia/Echidna/Siren*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 1.7. *Siren ceiling tile*. St. Martins College. Zillis, Switzerland. 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>404</sup>



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<sup>404</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: ARTSTOR\_103\_41822000674679.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3ktfF5%2BcCg%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 1.8. *Harpy*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 1.9. Bolognino Zaltieri. *Lamias and Harpies*. In Cartari's *Le Immagini degli Dei*. Published in 1571.<sup>405</sup>



<sup>405</sup> Moffitt, "A Hidden Sphinx," 284, fig. 3.

Fig. 1.10. *Lions with Cub.* Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 1.11. *Sphinx.* Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1551.



Fig. 1.12. Hybrid Fountain. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. 1560s.

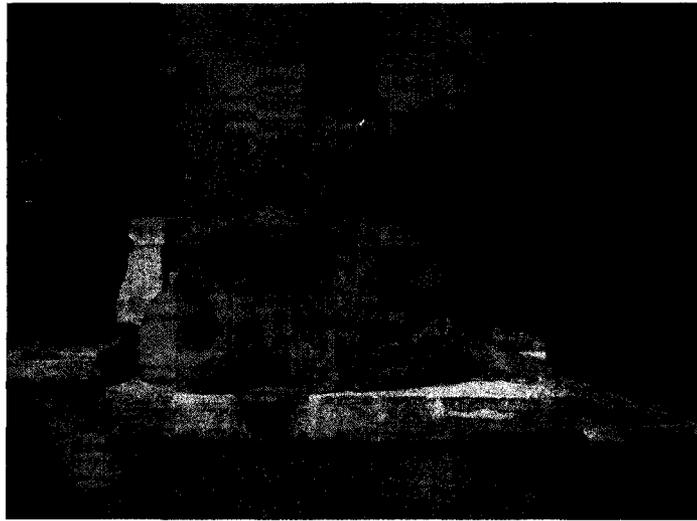


Fig. 1.13. *Fighting Giants*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 1.14. Detail: The aggressor. *Fighting Giants*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 1.15. Detail: The victim. *Fighting Giants*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.

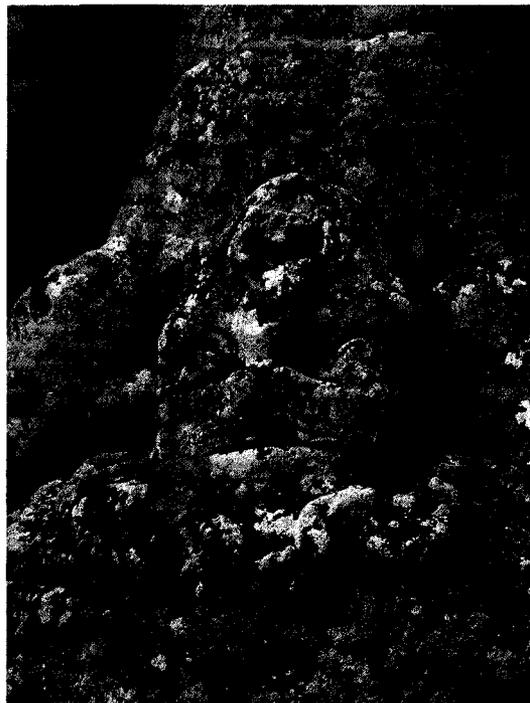


Fig. 1.16. Giambologna. *Appennino*. Villa Medici, Pratolino. c. 1579.<sup>406</sup>

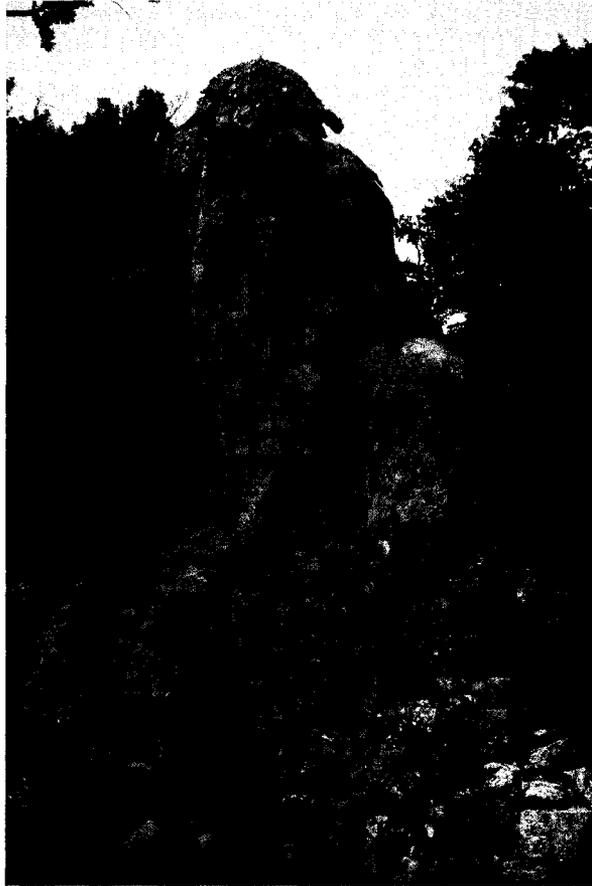


Fig. 1.17. Gaspard Marsy. *The Fountain of Enceladus*, Versailles. 1676.<sup>407</sup>



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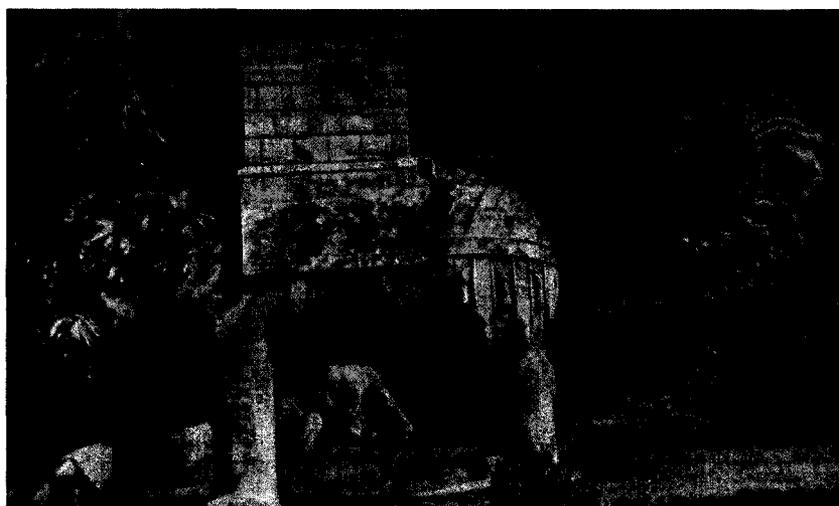
<sup>406</sup> Photograph by Daniele Valeriani.

<sup>407</sup> Photograph by Wally Gobetz.

Fig. 1.18. *Orsini Mask*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 1.19 *Elephant with Soldier* and *Hell Mouth*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.<sup>408</sup>



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<sup>408</sup> Theurillat, *Les Mystères de Bomarzo*, 20.

Fig. 1.20. Giovanni Guerra. *Orsini Mask*. 1604.<sup>409</sup>

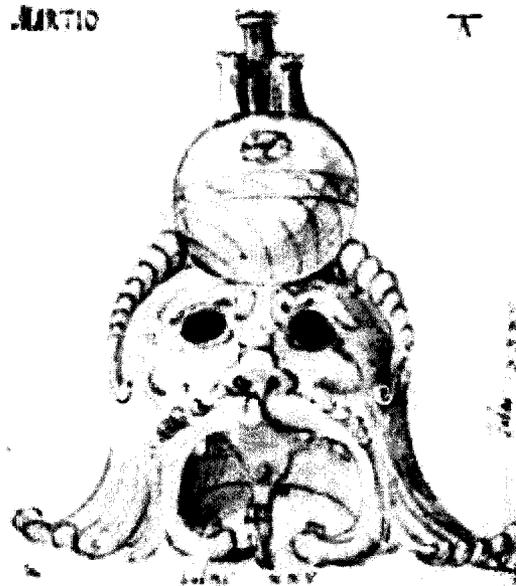


Fig. 1.21. Tenon head from the New Temple in Chavín de Huántar. c. 500-200 BCE.<sup>410</sup>



<sup>409</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 48.

<sup>410</sup> Hébert-Stevens, *L'Art ancien de l'Amérique du sud*, 55, fig. 18.

Fig. 1.22. Reconstructive drawing of a Peruvian jaguar relief carving on the lower west wall of the New Temple in Chavín de Huántar. c. 500-200 BCE.<sup>411</sup>

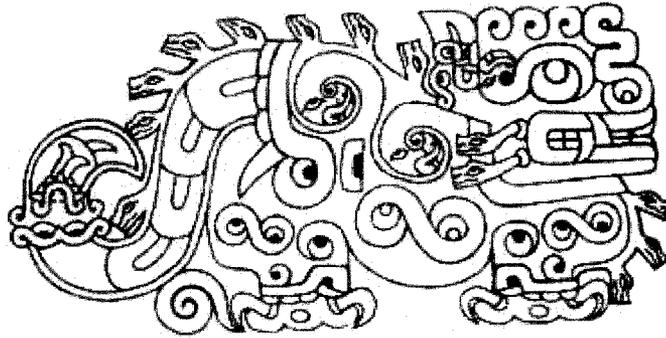


Fig. 1.23. André Thevet. Cannibal feast. In *Les Singularitez de la France Antarctique*. 1557.<sup>412</sup>



<sup>411</sup> Ibid., 60, fig. 34.

<sup>412</sup> Lestringant, *Cannibals*, 56.

Fig. 1.24. André Thevet. *Portrait of a Cannibal King*. 1575.<sup>413</sup>



Fig. 1.25. *Cannibal King*. In Aldrovandi's *Monstrorum Historia*, 109. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.



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<sup>413</sup> Ibid, 47.

Fig. 1.26. *Angel Locking the Damned in Hell*. In the *Winchester Psalter*. Mid-12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>414</sup>

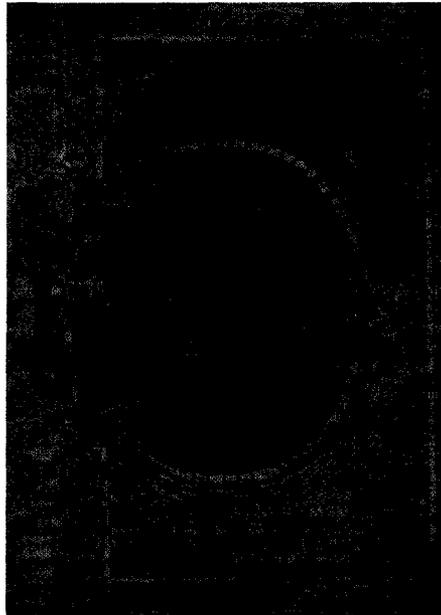


Fig. 1.27. Detail: Demon grabbing damned man by his genitals. *Angel Locking the Damned in Hell*. In the *Winchester Psalter*. Mid-12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>415</sup>



Fig. 1.28. Detail: King poked with pitchfork. *Angel Locking the Damned in Hell*. In the *Winchester Psalter*. Mid-12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>416</sup>



<sup>414</sup> Image from ARTstor online database. Image Id.: AHSC\_ORPHANS\_1071314387.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8DhbZCk2NzYrJSEnd1N7Q38rXXwsdII%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

Fig. 1.29. *Hell Mouth*. Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati. Early 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>417</sup>

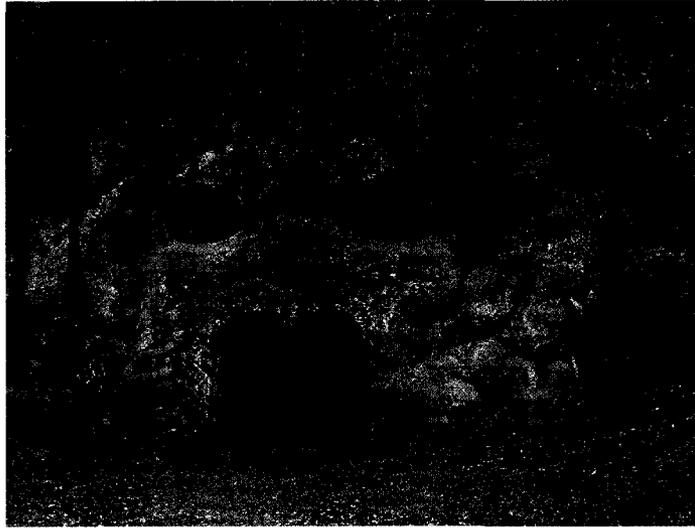


Fig. 1.30. Bartolommeo Ridolfi. *Hell Mouth Fireplace*. Villa della Torre, Fumane. c.1555-1556.<sup>418</sup>



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<sup>417</sup> Photograph by anon.

<sup>418</sup> Attlee, *Italian Gardens*, 80. Photograph by Alex Ramsay.

Fig. 1.31. *Dragon Chasing Poliphilo*. In Francesco Colonna's *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.  
Published in 1499.<sup>419</sup>

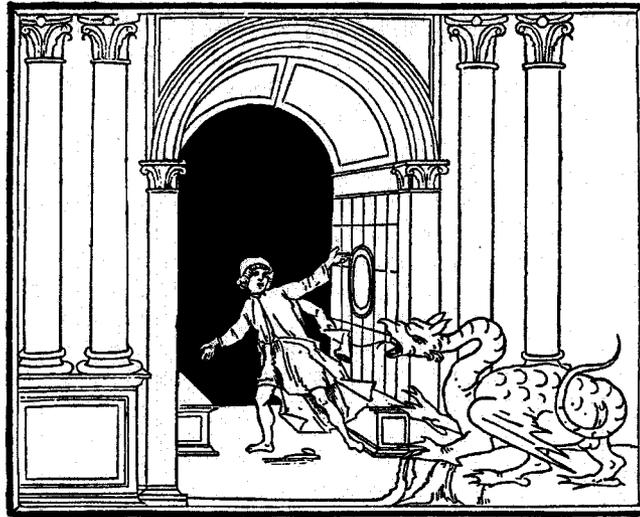
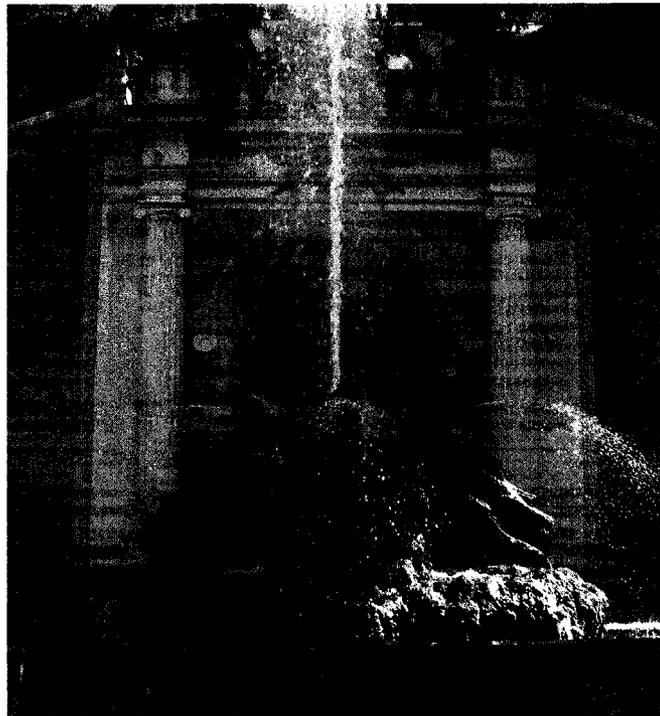


Fig. 1.32. Frontal View: *Fountain of the Dragons*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. 1572.

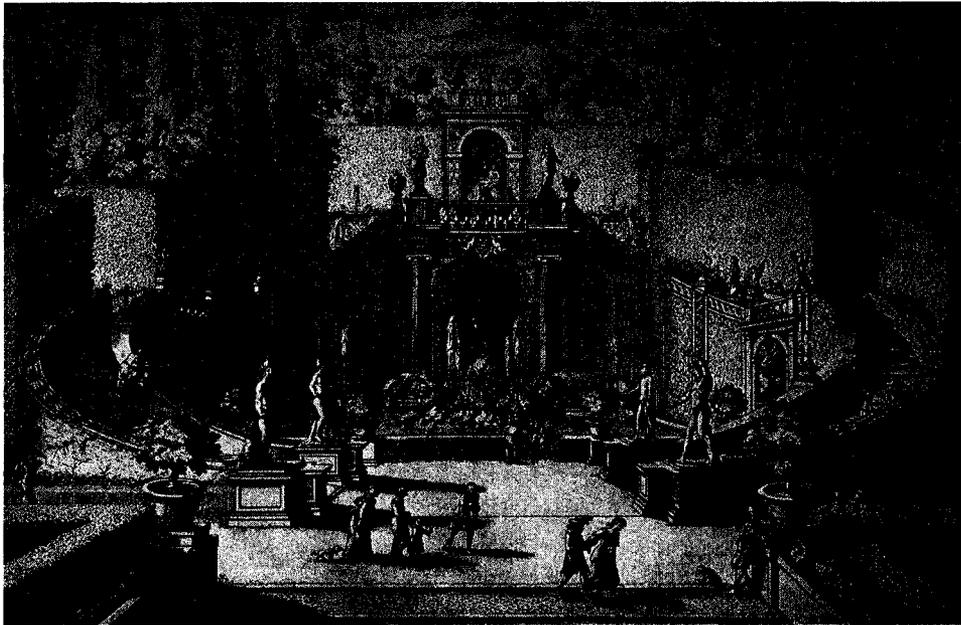


<sup>419</sup> Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, 62.

Fig. 1.33. View looking down from the staircase: *Fountain of the Dragons*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. 1572.<sup>420</sup>



Fig. 1.34. Giovanni Francesco Venturini. *Fountain of the Dragons*. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>421</sup>



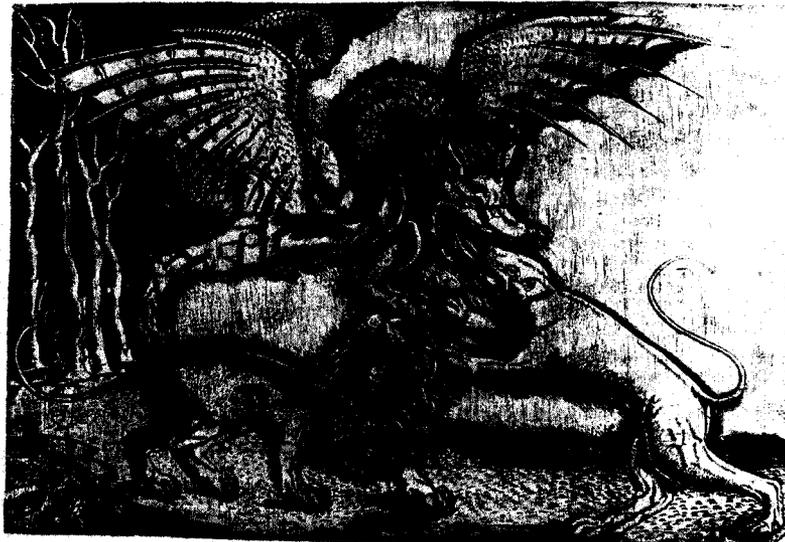
<sup>420</sup> Photograph by Julie Corsi.

<sup>421</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: ARTSTOR\_103\_41822003334784.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3orfVp%2Fdio%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 1.35. *Dragon and Lions*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.<sup>422</sup>



Fig. 1.36. Lucantonio degli Uberti. Print after Leonardo of a dragon fighting a lion and a lioness. Early 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>423</sup>



<sup>422</sup> Photograph by Gabriele Morano.

<sup>423</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_5780056.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNZLiEyzh5&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 1.37. Nicholas de Verdun. Detail: *Dragon Hell Mouth*. Klosterneuburg Altar. 1181.<sup>424</sup>

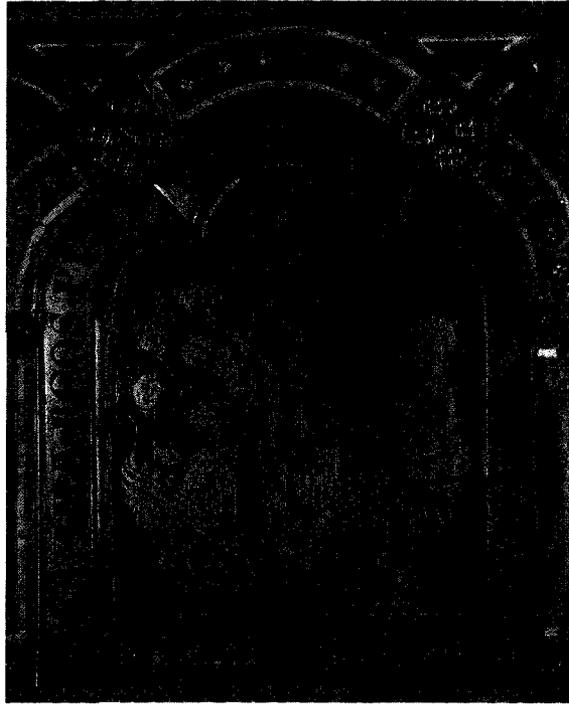
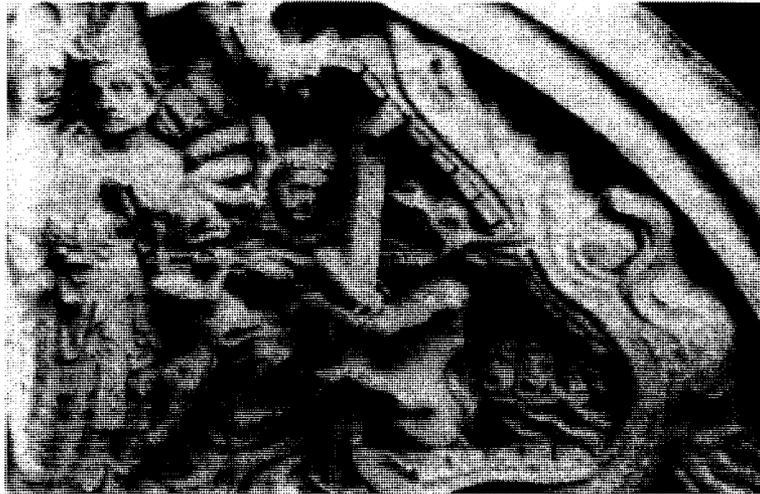


Fig. 1.38. *Dragon Hell Mouth*. Church of Our Lady of Esslingen. Early 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>425</sup>



<sup>424</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: LESSING\_ART\_10310119461.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=%2F1hWdC8hIywtPygxFTx5RngoX3Emf1o%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

<sup>425</sup> Schmidt, *The Iconography of the Mouth of Hell*, 126.

Fig. 2.1. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Fountain of the River Gods*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 2.2. Giacomo del Duca. *Fountain of the River Gods*. Villa Farnese, Caprarola. c. 1584-1586.<sup>426</sup>



<sup>426</sup> Photograph by Alessandro Fantini.

Fig. 2.3. Lucha Clericho, Claude Venard and Pirrino del Gagliardo. *The Fountain of Nature*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. Begun 1568.

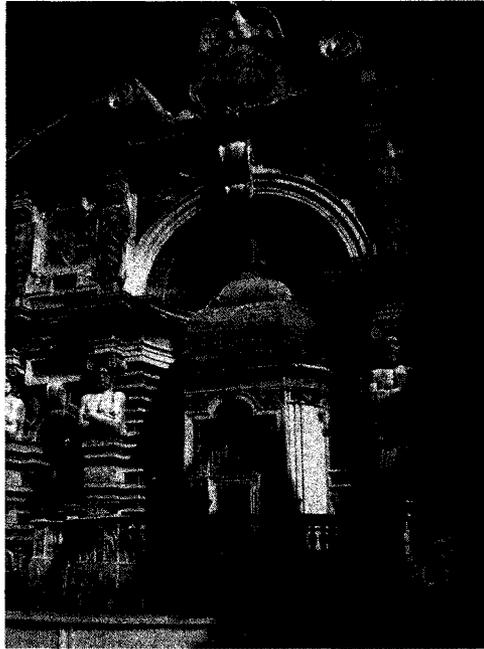


Fig. 2.4. Carlo Maderno and Giovanni Fontana. *Water Theatre*. Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati. c. 1601-1606.<sup>427</sup>



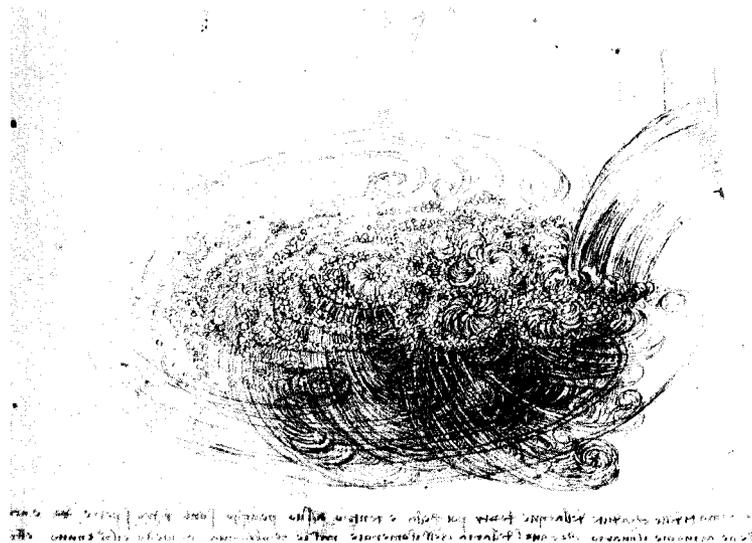
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<sup>427</sup> Photograph by Julian Weyer.

Fig. 2.5. Leonardo da Vinci. *A Star of Bethlehem and Other Plants*. c. 1505-1508.<sup>428</sup>



Fig. 2.6. Leonardo da Vinci. *Studies of Water Formations*. c. 1507-1509.<sup>429</sup>



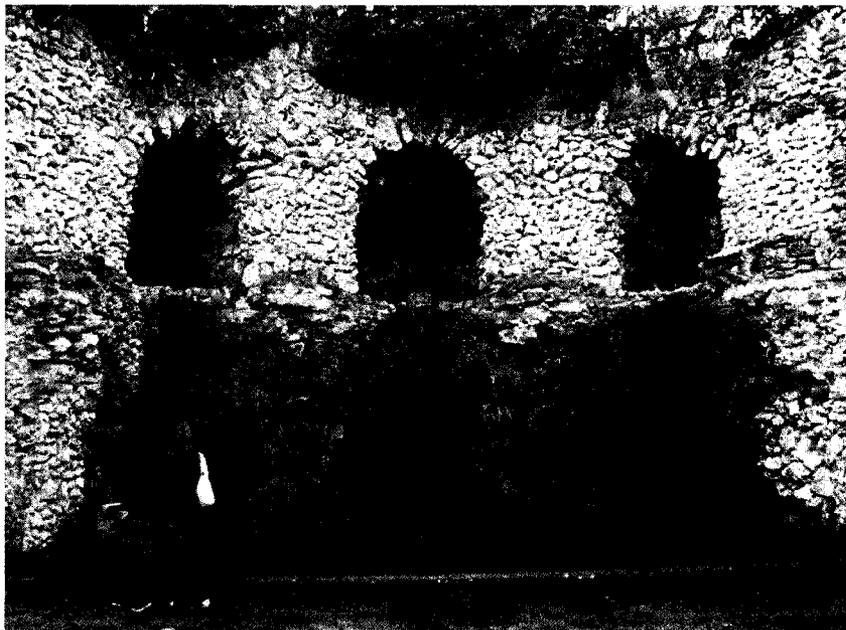
<sup>428</sup> Costantino, *Leonardo*, 99.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid*, 101.

Fig. 2.7. Leonardo da Vinci. *A Deluge*. c. 1515.<sup>430</sup>



Fig. 2.8. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Fountain of the Deluge*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



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<sup>430</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: ARTSTOR\_103\_41822001034584.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3gqflp9dCo%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 2.9. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Loggia delle Muse* (left building).  
Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 2.10. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Loggia delle Muse* (right building).  
Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 2.11. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Fountain of the Dolphins*. Villa Lante,  
Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 2.12. Bernardo Buontalenti. *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. c. 1583–1593.<sup>431</sup>

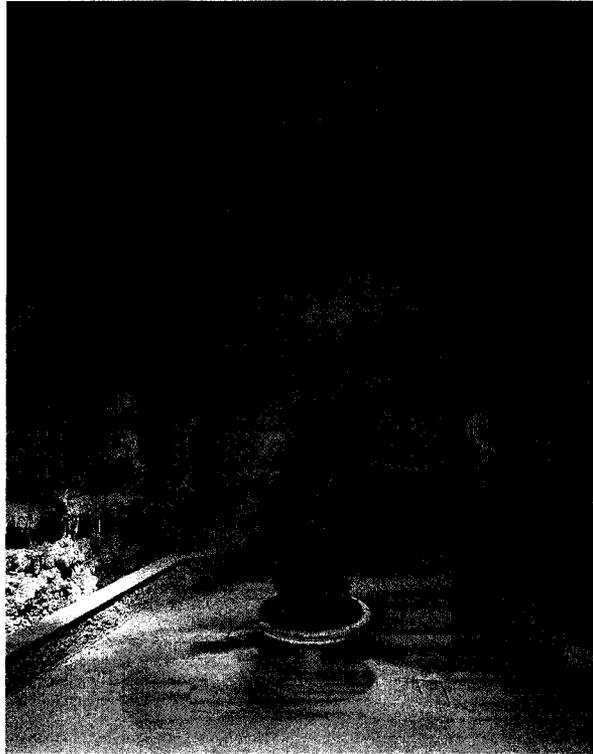
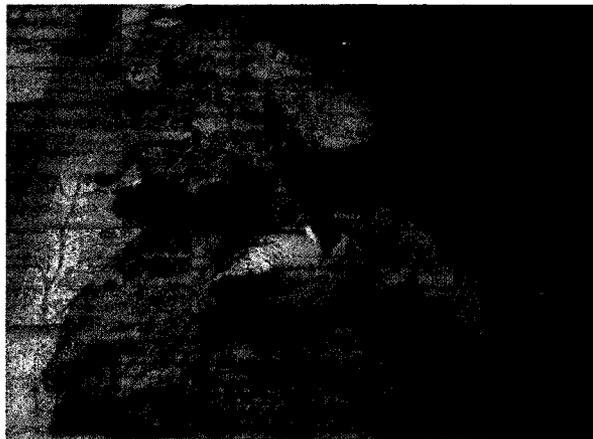


Fig. 2.13. Bernardo Buontalenti. Shell Decoration, *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. c. 1583-1593.



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<sup>431</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: SCALA\_ARCHIVES\_1039931368.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCcijy8laCt2KngqVXkhf195dw%3D%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 2.14. Bernardo Buontalenti. Basin Tiles, *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. c. 1583-1593.

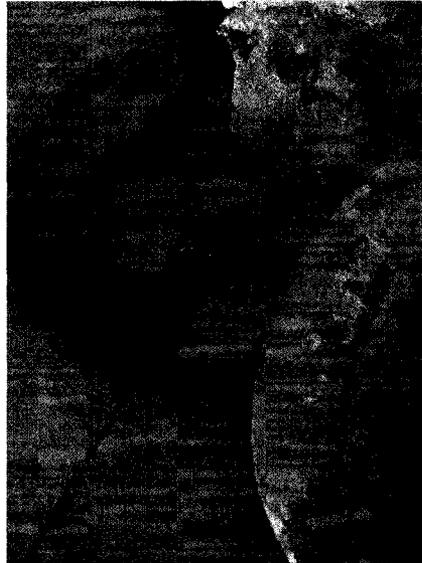


Fig. 2.15. Bernardino Poccetti. Trompe l'oeil vaults and oculus. *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. c. 1583-1593.

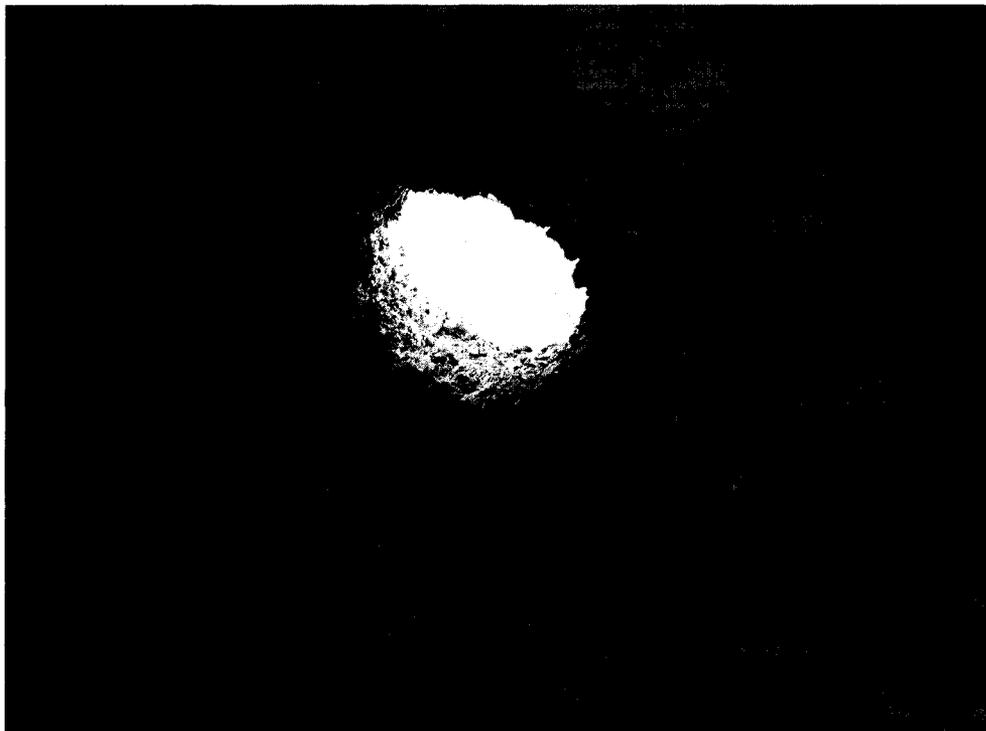


Fig. 2.16. Bernardino Poccetti. Detail: Trompe l'oeil vaults. *Grotta Grande*, Boboli Gardens, Florence. c. 1583-1593.



Fig. 2.17. Michelangelo. Copy of the unfinished sculpture known as *Atlas* in the *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. The original was carved between 1530-1534.

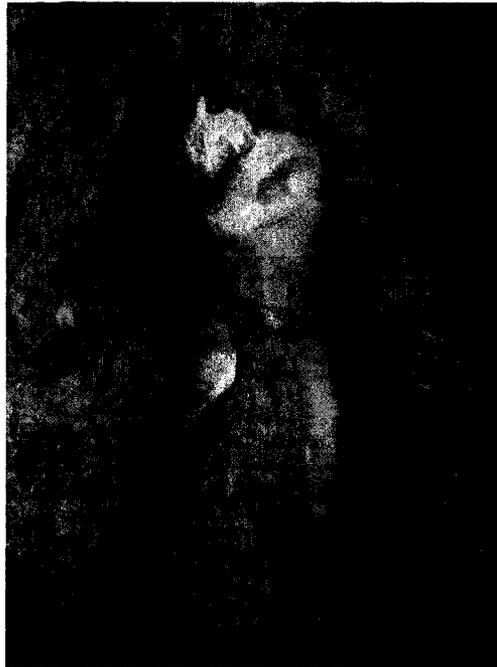


Fig. 2.18. Jost Ammon. *The Deluge*. 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>432</sup>



Fig. 2.19. Michelangelo. *The Deluge*. Sistine Chapel, Rome. 1508-1512.<sup>433</sup>



<sup>432</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_3240022.

<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNfLSg%2Bez96&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: SCALA\_ARCHIVES\_1039779435.

<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCcijy8laCt2KngqVXcrc1B7fw%3D%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 2.20. Michelangelo. Detail: Desperate victims of the flood. *The Deluge*. Sistine Chapel, Rome. 1508-1512.<sup>434</sup>



Fig. 2.21. Jan Sadeler. *Mankind Before The Deluge*. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>435</sup>



Fig. 2.22. Jan Sadeler. *Mankind Awaiting the Last Judgment*. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>436</sup>



<sup>434</sup> Ibid.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_910006.

<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNVJC86ezs%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

<sup>436</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_910007.

<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNVJC86ezo%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 2.23. Janet Cox-Rearick. Diagram of the iconographic program of the choir of San Lorenzo.<sup>437</sup>

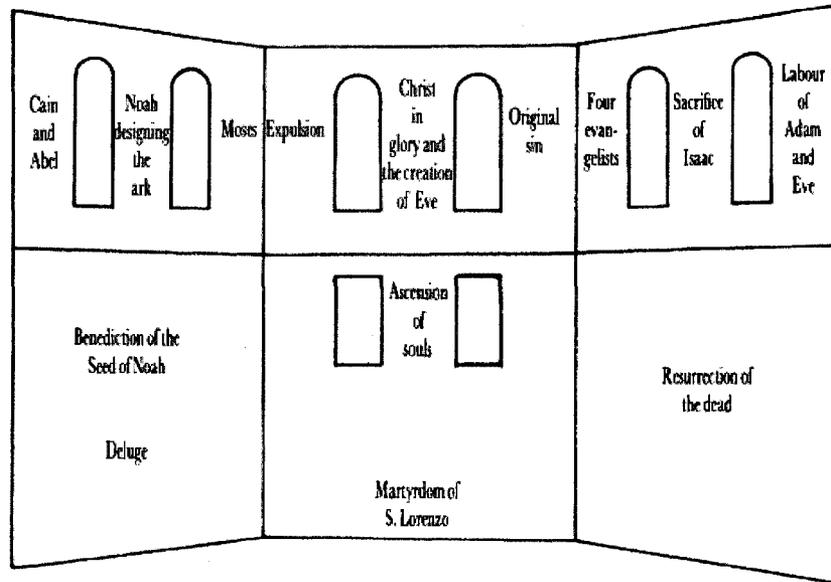
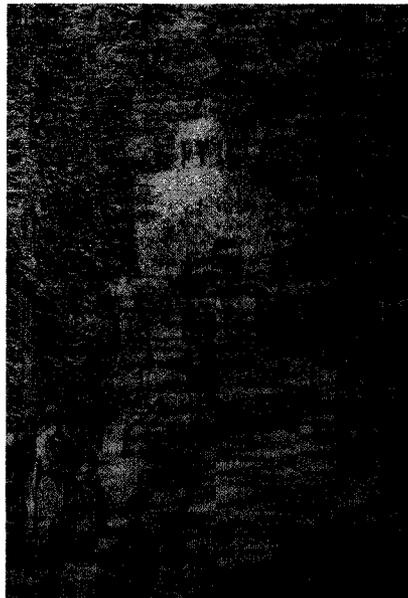


Fig. 2.24. Stefano della Bella. Detail: Exterior view of the *Grotto of Cupid*. Prato: *Alley with Water jets*. In Sgrilli's *Descrizione della regia villa, fontane, e fabbriche de Prato*. Published in 1742.<sup>438</sup>



<sup>437</sup> Cox-Rearick, "The Lost 'Deluge' at S. Lorenzo," 239, fig. 14.

<sup>438</sup> Massar, *Presenting Stefano della Bella*, 33.

Fig. 2.25. *Isolotto*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1630s.

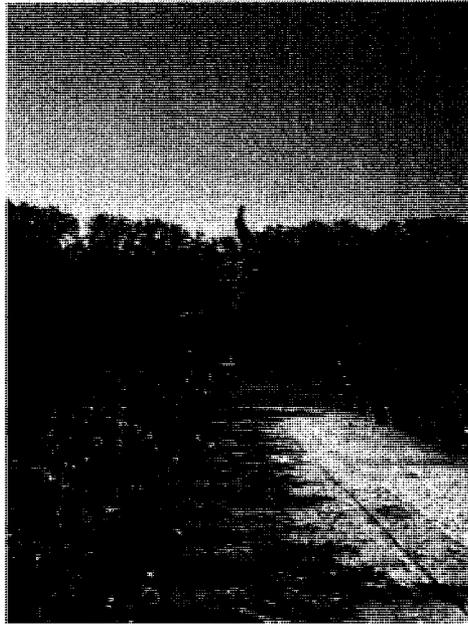
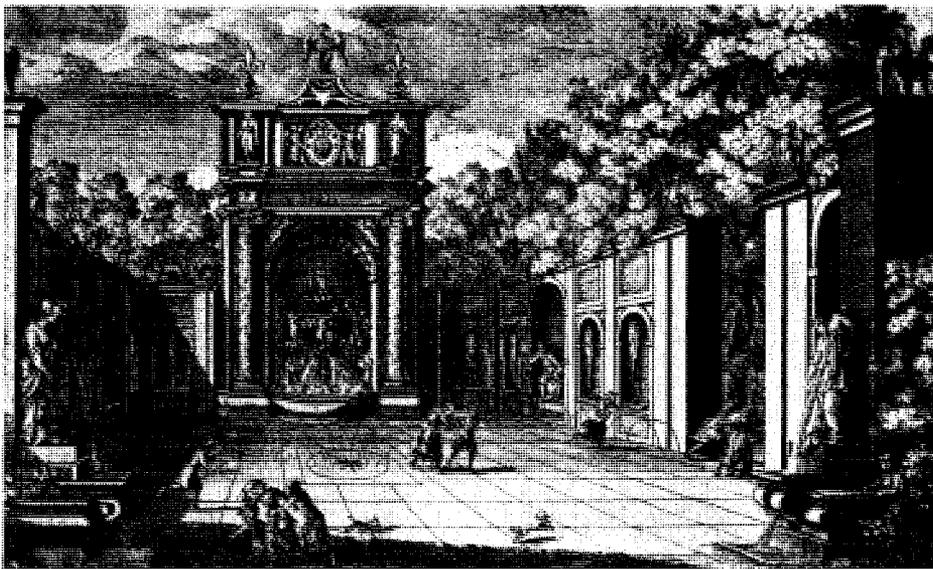


Fig. 2.26. Giovanni Francesco Venturini. *Fountain of the Owl*, Villa d'Este. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>439</sup>



<sup>439</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: ARTSTOR\_103\_41822003334917.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?pid=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnrX3orfVpxcSA%3D&useId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 2.27. Giovanni Francesco Venturini. Detail: People running from surprise waterworks. *Fountain of the Owl, Villa d'Este*. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>440</sup>

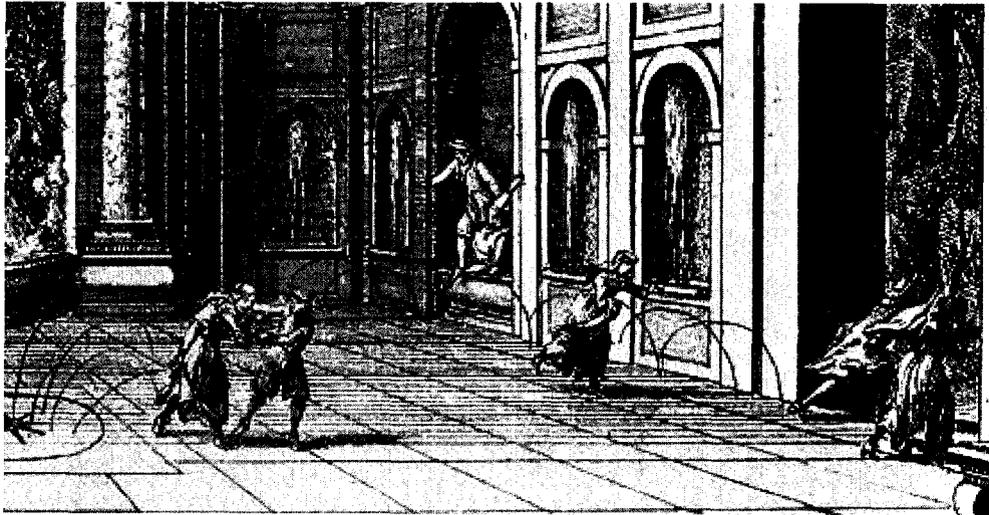


Fig. 2.28. Giovanni Francesco Venturini. *Rometta Fountain, Villa d'Este*. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>441</sup>



<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: ARTSTOR\_103\_41822003334933.

[http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3orfVpxcyY%3D&use\\_rId=hDdAcTA%3D](http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8CJGczI9NzldLS1WEDhzTnkrX3orfVpxcyY%3D&use_rId=hDdAcTA%3D).

Fig. 2.29. Giovanni Francesco Venturini. Detail: Trick gate. *Rometta Fountain, Villa d'Este*. Late 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>442</sup>



Fig. 2.30. Water cascade alongside the ramp below the *Fountain of the Dragons*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1567.



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<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

Fig. 2.31. Water cascade alongside the staircase by the *Fountain of Proserpina*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1569-1570.



Fig. 2.32. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. Water cascade. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 2.33. Giacomo del Duca. Water cascade. Villa Farnese, Caprarola. c. 1584-1586.<sup>443</sup>

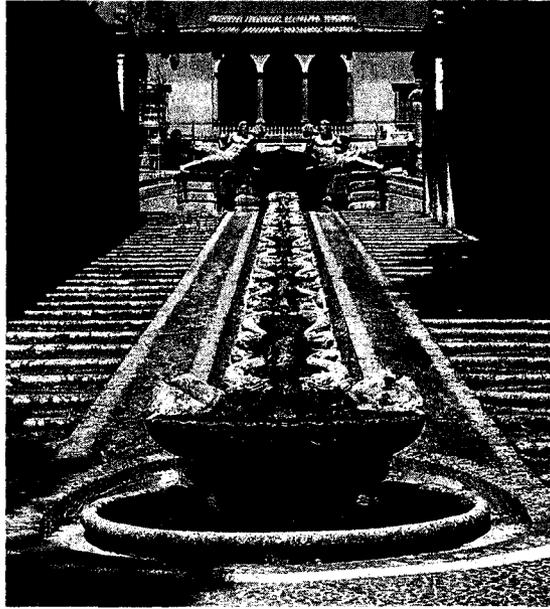
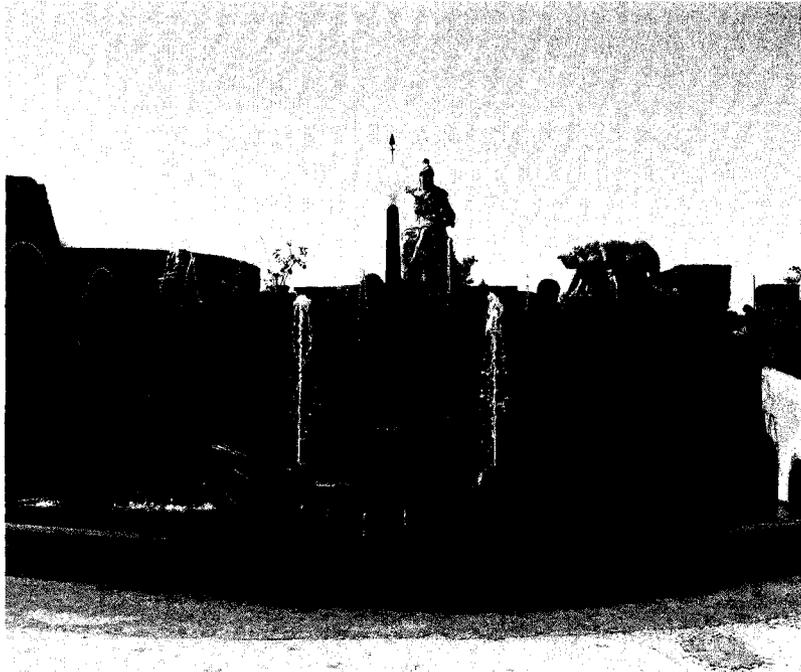


Fig. 2.34. Curzio Maccarone. Detail: Overflowing boat. *Rometta Fountain*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1567-1568.



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<sup>443</sup> Photograph by Julian Weyer.

Fig. 2.35. Carlo Maderno. *Ship Fountain*. Villa Aldobrandini, Frascati. Early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Print by Giovanni Battista Falda, from *Le fontane delle ville di Frascati...*, *Le fontane di Roma*, II. Published in 1675.<sup>444</sup>

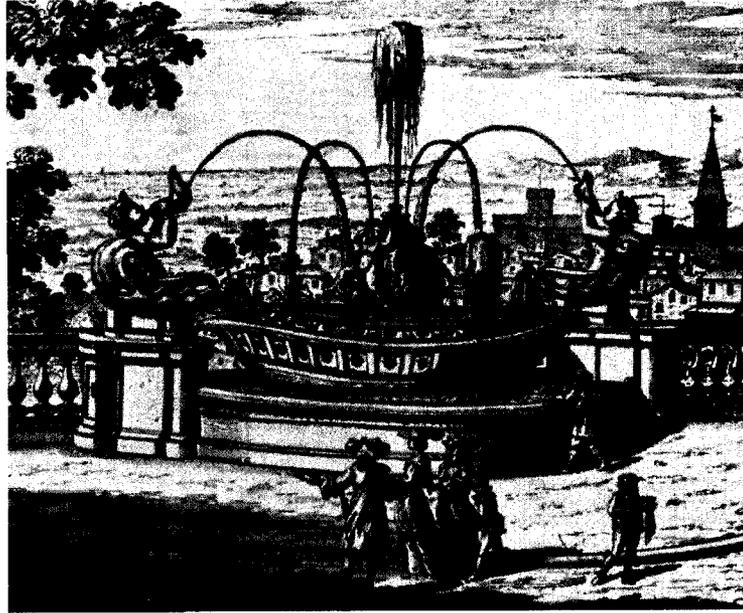


Fig. 2.36. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. Naval boat in the *Fountain of the Moors*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



<sup>444</sup> Hibbard and Jaffe, "Bernini's Barcaccia," 162, fig. 25.

Fig. 2.37. *Boat Fountain*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 2.38. *Sea Creature and Neptune Fountain*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 2.39. *Sea Creature and Turtle and Fame*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 2.40. Hans Rudolf Manuel. Marine Bestiary in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia*.  
Published in 1550.<sup>445</sup>



<sup>445</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_2840019.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8zJtCjI2ISNejiI%2Bezxy&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 2.41. Jan Sadeler. *Bodies Carried Away by the Deluge*. c. 1586.<sup>446</sup>



Fig. 2.42. Jan Sadeler. Detail: Sea monster. *Bodies Carried Away by the Deluge*. c. 1586.<sup>447</sup>



<sup>446</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_880052.

<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?pid=8zJTcjI2ISNULCY6fjo%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid.

Fig. 2.43. Bartolomeo Ammannati. *Neptune Fountain*. Piazza della Signoria. 1565-1575.<sup>448</sup>



Fig. 2.44. Stoldo Lorenzi da Settignano. *Neptune Fountain*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1565-1568.



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<sup>448</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: SCALA\_ARCHIVES\_1039778179.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCciJy8laCt2KngqVXcrlR6dw%3D%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 3.1. Giacomo del Duca. Grottesque statue. Villa Farnese, Caprarola. c. 1584-1586.<sup>449</sup>



Fig. 3.2. Antonio Tempesta. *Grotesque Ornament with Armed Rider Jumping over Flames in Centre.* 1609.<sup>450</sup>



<sup>449</sup> Photograph by anon.

<sup>450</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: BARTSCH\_2230007.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8zJTcjI2ISNeLC85ez19&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 3.3. Paolo Calandrino. *Daphne Changing into a Laurel Tree*. *Grotto of Diana*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1572.<sup>451</sup>

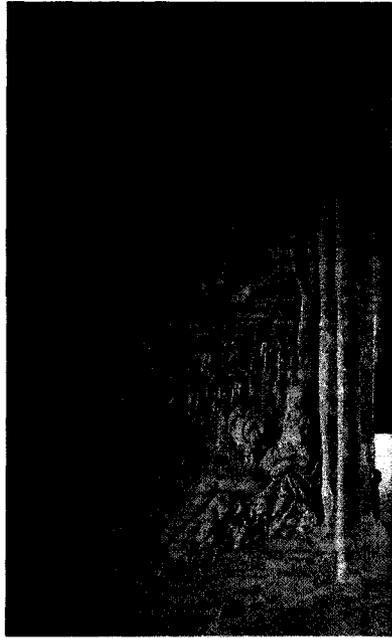
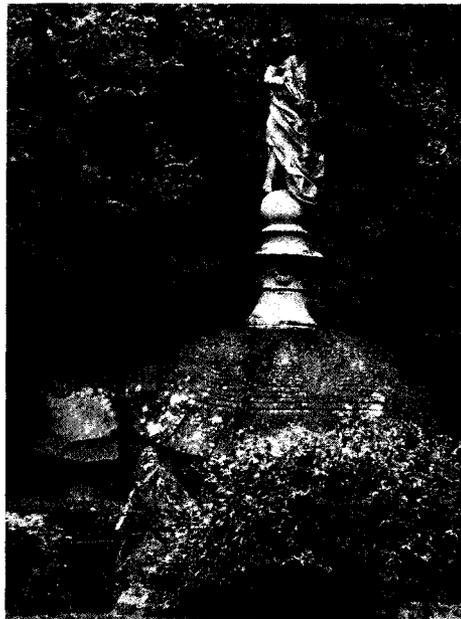


Fig. 3.4. *Turtle and Fame*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



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<sup>451</sup> Madonna, *Villa d'Este*, 36.

Fig. 3.5. Giovanni Guerra. *Turtle and Fame*. 1604.<sup>452</sup>



Fig. 3.6. Bartolomeo Ammannati. *Appennino*. Villa Medici, Castello. 1563-1565.



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<sup>452</sup> Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 54.

Fig. 3.7. Diagram of the tilt of the *Pegasus Fountain* and the *Disc* in the Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo.<sup>453</sup>

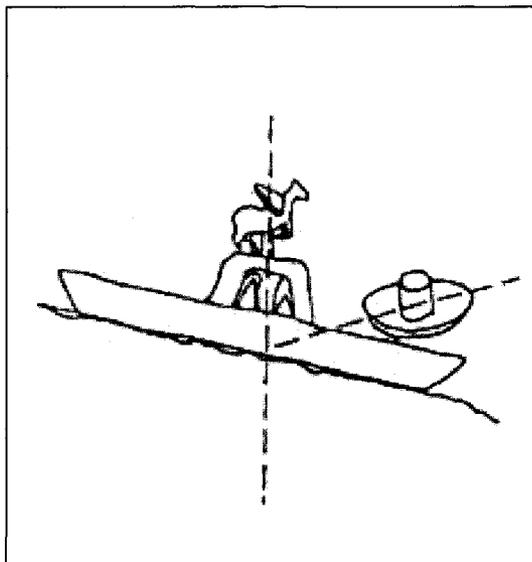
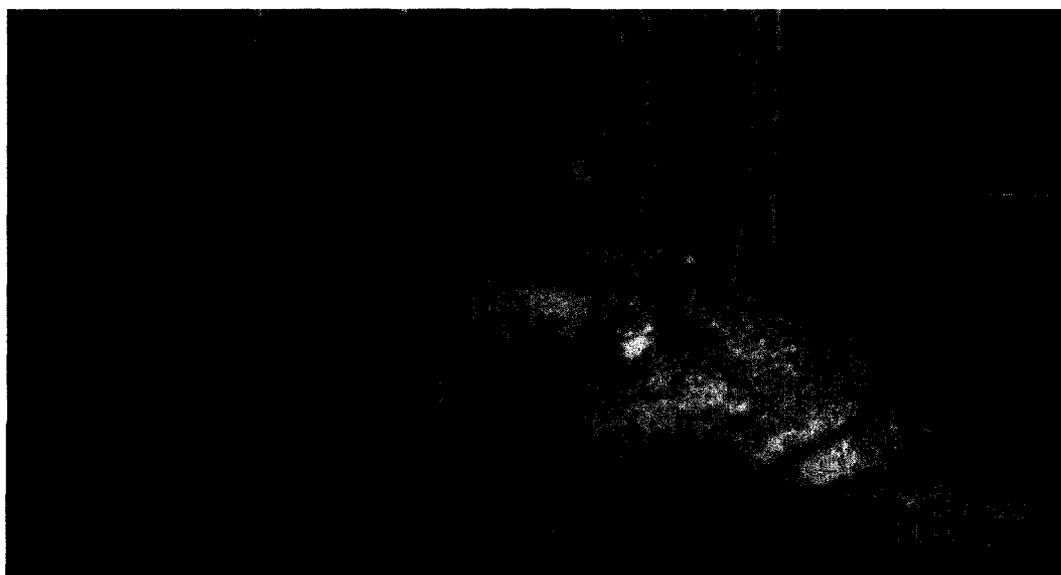


Fig. 3.8. *Disc*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.<sup>454</sup>



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<sup>453</sup> Soc. Giardino di Bomarzo, *A Guide to the Park of Monsters*, 55.

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

Fig. 3.9. Giulio Romano. Courtyard Façade. Palazzo del Te, Mantua. 1525-1535.<sup>455</sup>

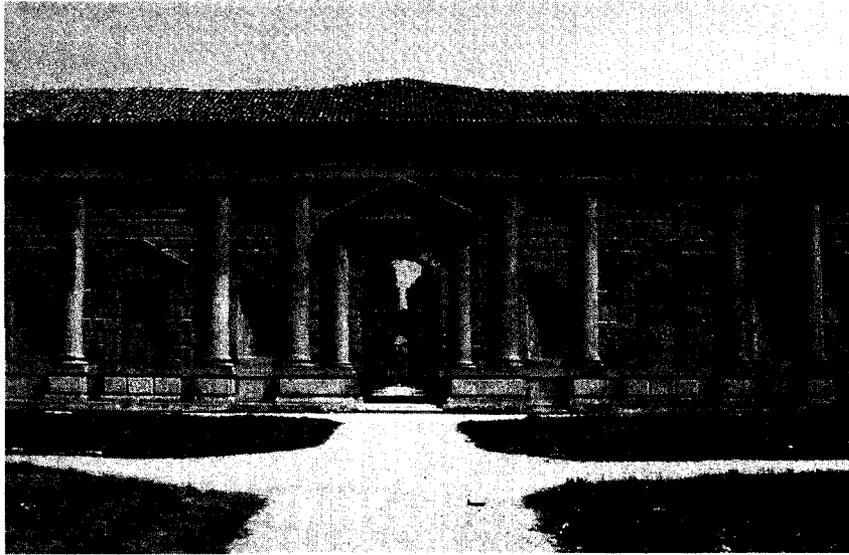


Fig. 3.10. Giulio Romano. Sala dei Giganti in the Palazzo del Te, Mantua. 1530-1532.<sup>456</sup>



<sup>455</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: AHSC\_ORPHANS\_1071313528.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=8DhbZCk2NzYrjSEnd1N7Q38rXXstclc%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

<sup>456</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: SCALA\_ARCHIVES\_1039613680.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCcjy8laCt2KngqVXYsf1hycQ%3D%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 3.11. Pietro Santi Bartoll. *Sala dei Giganti*. c. 1680.<sup>457</sup>

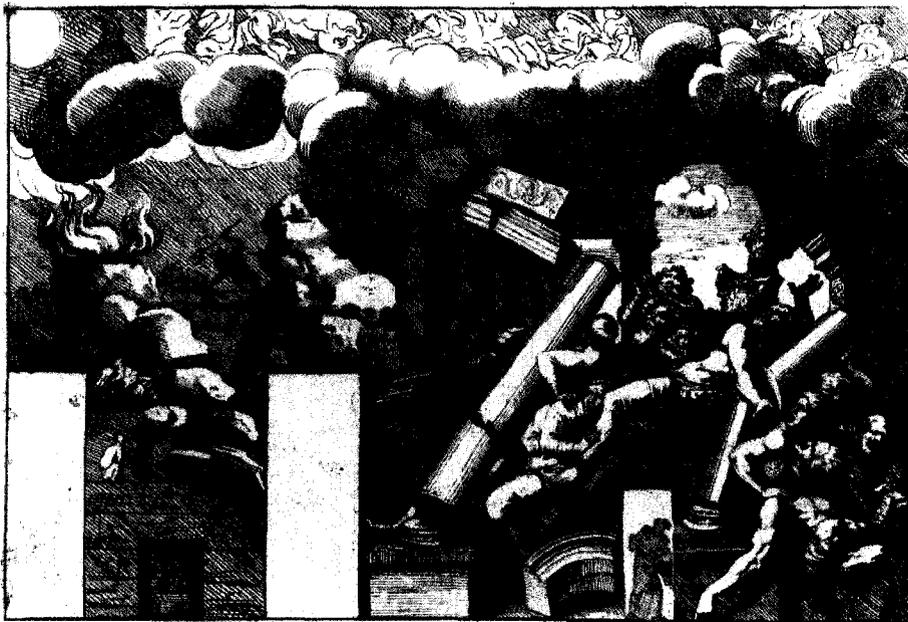


Fig. 3.12. Mock-Fragment of an Etruscan Tomb. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



<sup>457</sup> Carabell, "Breaking the Frame," 96, fig. 6.

Fig. 3.13. Exterior View: *Grotticina*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1553-1554.

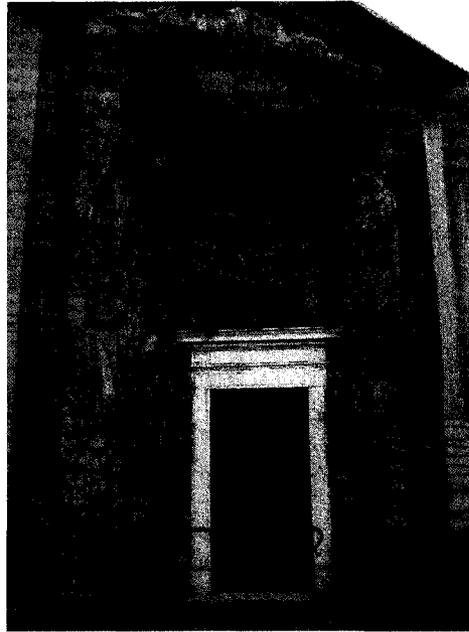


Fig. 3.14. Interior View: *Grotticina*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1553-1554.

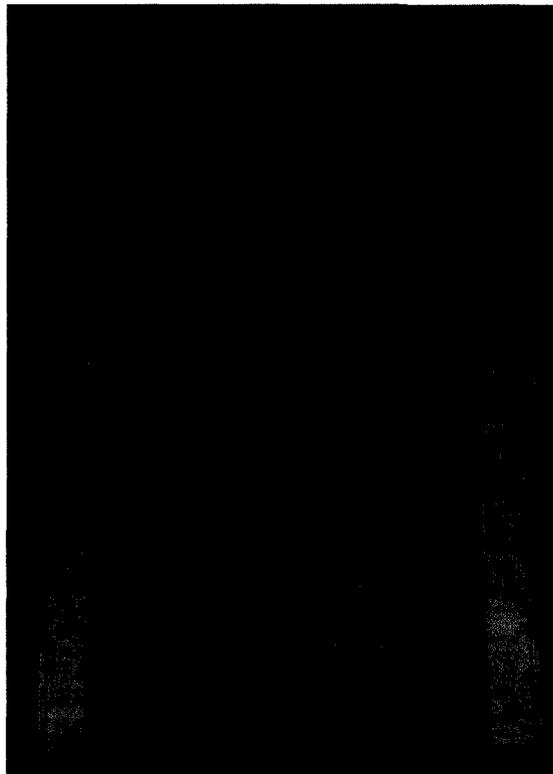


Fig. 3.15. Niccolò Tribolo, Giorgio Vasari, and Antonio di Gino Lorenzo. *Grotto of the Animals*. Villa Medici, Castello. 1565-1572.



Fig. 3.16. *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. Giorgio Vasari, Lower façade, 1556-1560. Bernardo Buontalenti, Upper Façade, 1583-1593.

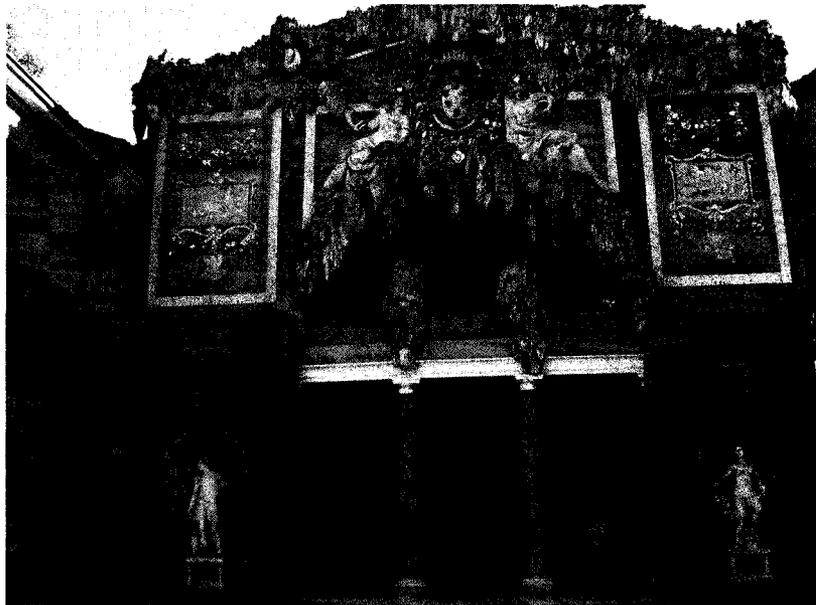


Fig. 3.17. Piero Matti. River god. *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1583-1585.



Fig. 3.18. Piero Matti. Shepherds. *Grotta Grande*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1583-1585.



Fig. 3.19. Valerio Cioli. *Dwarf Morgante*. Boboli Gardens, Florence. 1560.



Fig. 3.20. Sea monster spewing water at the top of the ramp in front of the *Fountain of the Dragons*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 3.21. Grotesque face swallowing water at the bottom of the banister in front of the *Fountain of the Dragons*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 3.22. Grotesque face spewing water at the bottom of the banister below the *Fountain of the Dragons*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. Late 16<sup>th</sup> century.



Fig. 3.23. *Avenue of a Hundred Fountains*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1569.



Fig. 3.24. Spewing face, *Avenue of a Hundred Fountains*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1569.



Fig. 3.25. Face swallowing water in the trough of the *Avenue of a Hundred Fountains*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. c. 1569.



Fig. 3.26. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. Banister with multiple spewing grotesque heads. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 3.27. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. Grotesque face on the north end of the *Table Fountain*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 3.28. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. Grotesque face on the south end of the *Table Fountain*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



Fig. 3.29. Giusto Utens. Detail: *Fountain of the Washerwoman*. *Villa Medici and Garden at Pratolino*. 1599.<sup>458</sup>

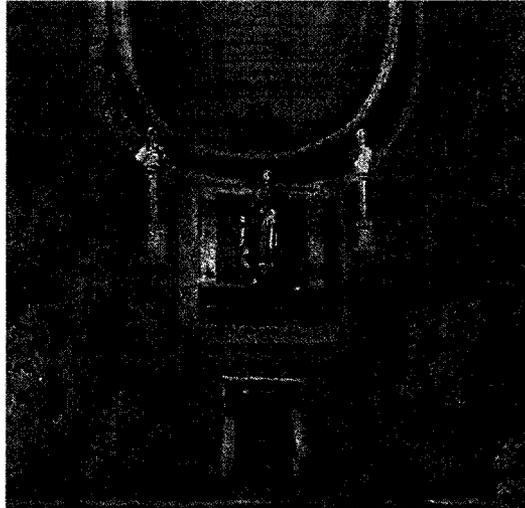


Fig. 3.30. Jacopo Vignola and Tomaso Ghinucci. *Grotto of Venus*. Villa Lante, Bagnaia. c. 1568-1578.



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<sup>458</sup> ARTstor online database. Image Id.: SCALA\_ARCHIVES\_1039488593.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCcijy8laCt2KngqVXQnfVBwcv%3D%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 3.31. Bartolomeo Ammanati. *Ceres*. c. 1555.<sup>459</sup>



Fig. 3.32. Gillis van den Vliete. *Goddess of Nature*. Villa d'Este, Tivoli. 1560s.



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<sup>459</sup> Ibid. Image Id.: SCALA\_ARCHIVES\_1039778182.  
<http://www.artstor.org/artstor/ViewImages?id=4iFCeTg4NCciJy8laCt2KngqVXcrclR1cw%3D%3D&userId=hDdAcTA%3D>.

Fig. 3.33. Giambologna. *Venus Emerging from her Bath*. Grotta Grande. Boboli Gardens, Florence. c. 1572.

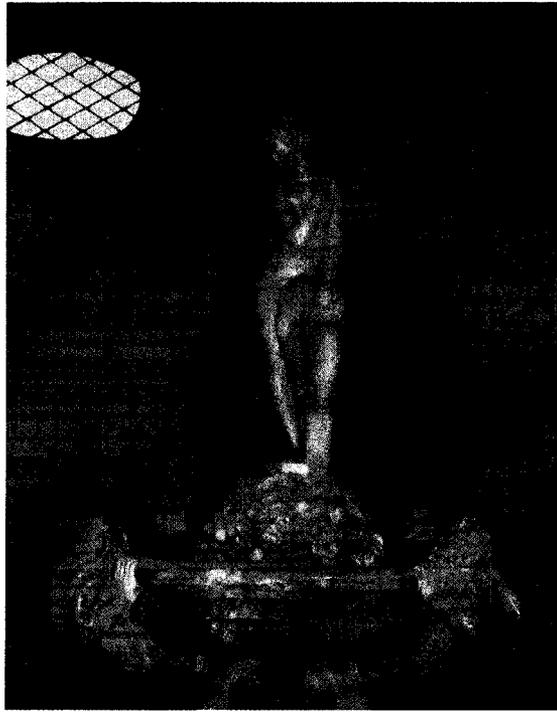


Fig. 3.34. *Elephant and a Soldier*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.

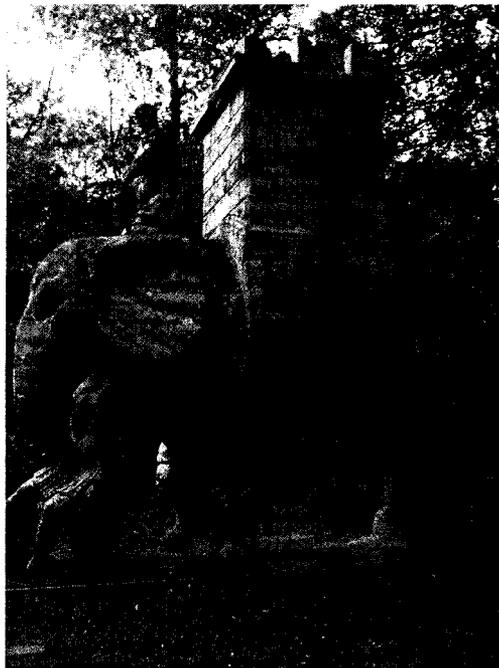


Fig. 3.35. *War Elephant*. In Schoefferlin's German Livy. Published in 1514.<sup>460</sup>



Fig. 3.36. Rear view: *Elephant and a Soldier*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



<sup>460</sup> Bury, "Bomarzo Revisited," 216, fig. 1.

Fig. 3.37. *Empty Grave*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



Fig. 3.38. *Cerberus*. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo. c. 1557-1584.



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