

Maniera Etrusca

Gardens, Vernacular Landscape, and Regional Identity in Sixteenth Century Tuscany

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Abstract

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Tuscia, a volcanic region of central Italy between Florence and Rome, is home to a veritable cohort of interrelated designed landscapes, which until now had never received their own regional study. Three of these sites are well known to scholars of art history and landscape architecture—Villa Lante in Bagnaia, Villa Farnese in Caprarola, and the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo—and figure prominently in studies of central Italian *villeggiatura* during the late Renaissance. However, our understanding of these sites has ultimately remained divorced from their surrounding cultural and topographical landscape. This dissertation is a recontextualization of these designed landscapes through a specifically regional lens, and I frame these sites as products of a lively and ongoing dialogue between their patrons concerning gardens, villa culture, and the distinctive nature of Tuscan landscape. As the patrons' conversations about art, nature, and local identity evolved, so too did their gardens, and across the chapters of my dissertation I demonstrate how these sites appear to have responded to each other throughout the mid- to late sixteenth century.

These chapters approach the patrons' designed landscapes from a material and experiential perspective, shifting the dialogue away from what is represented within the gardens and onto the matter of how landscape was organized and how its constituent elements were utilized. This dissertation intervenes against iconographic, programmatic readings of the sites that focus on

discourses of pastoralism, epic literature, and Roman antiquarianism, and proposes a new perspective which privileges the gardens' relationships with the surrounding territory over emblematic meaning. Through this lens, the present study ultimately reveals what I have termed the *maniera etrusca*, a uniquely regional school of art which emerged in sixteenth century Tuscia, celebrating local vernacular culture and Etruscan heritage.

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Writing a dissertation can be a very solitary process, where the author's time is spent deep within their own mind, performing an almost alchemical transformation of the blank page from nothing into something. Writing can also be isolating, as the author withdraws hermitlike from both social and academic circles in order to focus exclusively on the task at hand. Only the author can spin their own thoughts into words, but there are those along the way who lighten the load and make the journey bearable.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: From a History of the Field to the Path Ahead

“The passion for gardens which swept Italy as a result of the Renaissance evidently found a particularly assiduous group of devotees among the landowners of the Cimino Hills. It is a pity that this interesting group of gardens has never been made the subject of a detailed study like the better known ones of Tivoli and Frascati, for they contain much that is of interest...”¹

In her 1961 text, *Italian Gardens*, Georgina Masson noted that the designed landscapes of mid- to late sixteenth century Tuscany in the hill country north of Rome form a veritable cohort of interrelated environments deserving of their own regional study. Three of these sites are well known to scholars of art history and landscape architecture: Villa Lante in Bagnaia, Villa Farnese in Caprarola, and the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo. However, while these gardens figure prominently in studies of central Italian *villeggiatura* during the late Renaissance, they ultimately remain divorced from their greater cultural and topographical landscape. Despite the glut of scholarly discussion concerning the Sacro Bosco, the most enigmatic of the three sites, to date these gardens have yet to receive the type of in-depth, all-encompassing examination proposed by Masson over fifty years ago.

This is the goal of the present study: a recontextualization of these designed landscapes, among other lesser-known works within the region, through a specifically Tuscan lens. In this dissertation I will demonstrate that these sites’ patrons participated in an ongoing dialogue that was shaped by interests, ideologies, and aesthetics both endemic to Tuscany and originating from beyond the region’s nebulous borders. Across the chapters of this dissertation, the patrons’ conversation about art, nature, and local identity will take shape as I show how the gardens evolved and responded to each other across the mid- to late sixteenth century. Simultaneously engaging

¹ Georgina Masson, *Italian Gardens* (New York: Harry N Abrams, 1961), pp. 145-146.

with central Italy's prevailing villa culture and Tuscia's distinctive cultural and topographical landscape, this interrelated group of gardens collectively paints the region as a veritable intellectual laboratory where the period discourses of art, nature, regional style and identity were experimented with and explored. Not only did sixteenth century Tuscia provide a unique stage where multiple approaches to garden design coexisted—and occasionally intermingled—the region also produced its own autochthonous landscape architectural idiom, which was closely connected to the vernacular aesthetics and architectural traditions characteristic of the region's rough, volcanic terrain and myriad rupestrian hilltowns.

At the heart of this landscape architectural dialogue is the concept of *genius loci*, here defined as the abstract, qualitative, and totalizing spirit of a place that is shaped and expressed in the admixture of physical and cultural properties which give a location its individual character. Through the deliberate implementation—or intentional eschewal—of the region's *genius loci*, these designed landscapes communicate valuable information about their patrons' worldviews, ambitions, and identities, ultimately revealing a burgeoning sense of Tuscianness, or *tusciانيتà*. When viewed through the lens of the region's rock-cut vernacular architecture, the sites that express and embody the Tuscan *genius loci* come into focus as products of a regional micro-Renaissance which drew upon local Etruscan heritage rather than the world of ancient Rome. In a three-way collision between Renaissance garden culture, provincial style, and early Etruscology, sixteenth century Tuscia emerges as a new and important locus for period discourses surrounding art, antiquarian culture, and the environment.

Although the region's designed landscapes partake of the same basic materials—plants, trees, water, and a volcanic stone known as *tufo*—they are markedly dissimilar from each other in both atmosphere and appearance. Of the three main sites, Villa Farnese in Caprarola is the largest;

attached to a massive villa designed in 1559 by Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola, the gardens commissioned by Cardinal Alessandro Farnese were started in the late 1550s with work continuing through the late 1580s, in addition to later embellishments completed in the early Seicento under Cardinal Odoardo Farnese. The grounds are divided into two groups: a stately lower complex with geometric parterres and a variety of grotto features, and a wooded upper garden complete with a smaller garden *casino*. The lower gardens flank two sides of the pentagonal villa and are effectively self-contained, inward-facing spaces, while the upper portion originally revealed itself as an oasis of fountains in the *bosco* leading away from the residence.

Less than 20km across the Monti Cimini is Bagnaia and Villa Lante—a site also attributed to Vignola—which was begun in 1568 for Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara, the Bishop of Viterbo. Like Villa Farnese, Villa Lante is bipartite, composed of a large cultivated *bosco* and a smaller jewel box of a garden made up of a linear series of fountains and terraces. As the water flows downhill, the terraces become more and more ornate in appearance, ultimately arriving at the formal parterres on the lowest level where the garden *casini* are located. While the left hand *casino* was added by Cardinal Alessandro Peretti di Montalto, who made a handful of changes to the site in the early seventeenth century, the garden was largely complete in 1578, and apart from the *bosco*, which fell into disrepair over the centuries, these gardens are the least modified from their original state of the three main designed landscapes covered by this study.

In marked contrast to these sites is the Sacro Bosco, a mazelike tangle of opaque wooded pathways that was begun sometime around 1552 for Pierfrancesco “Vicino” Orsini, the Duke of Bomarzo, a small hilltown some 15km east of Bagnaia. Repeatedly revised during Vicino’s lifetime, the *bosco* is an enigmatic juxtaposition of strange and colossal stone tableaux, which includes monsters, mythological figures, invented ruins, and bizarre dreamlike imagery. The

Sacro Bosco has none of the formality of the Cardinals' gardens, and is both more rustic in appearance and more light-hearted in content and mood. The *bosco* was 'rediscovered' by scholars of art and landscape in the mid-twentieth century around the same time that its modern owners made significant changes to the property and clear-cut the site's existing foliage with the intention of revealing every rock-cut figure and edifice.

This group of built environments initiated within the region during the latter half of the sixteenth century also includes: the Parco degli Orsini in Pitigliano, built in the 1560s for Vicino's cousin, Niccolò Orsini; the small garden and stony *Mammalochi* figures of Penna in Teverina, created around the same time for Vicino's brother, Maerbale Orsini; the gardens of Castello Ruspoli in Vignanello, created in the early seventeenth century at behest of Vicino's daughter, Ottavia Orsini; the Papacqua Fountain of Soriano nel Cimino, built in 1561 for Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, the bishop of Trent; the recently rediscovered gardens of the Villa Cornelia in Viterbo associated with the Nini family; the underground rockcut *ninfeo* of Orte; and the largely decrepit remains of Vincenzo Giustiniani's early seventeenth-century garden in Bassano Romano. All of these sites, like the region's three more famous gardens, are primarily composed of *tufo*, and in many cases the garden forms have been directly hewn from the living rock itself. Many sites within this group of designed landscapes share a variety of similarities beyond a common approach to *tufo*; a number partake of the same systems of meaning, organizational logic, siting within their surroundings, or references to Etruscan antiquity as their compatriots.

The Roots of the Discourse

These many similarities have been remarked upon by a number of scholars within the field of art and landscape architectural history. While the Sacro Bosco has received the vast majority of scholarly attention since its 'rediscovery' in the 1950s, and both Villa Farnese and Villa Lante

have been the subject of a fair number of monographs, the number of authors who treat with two or more of these sites in any great detail is relatively small. Of this cohort, there are two basic groups: the authors who set the Tuscan sites within a larger study of Italian gardens, and those who focus on the other sites strictly through the lens of the Sacro Bosco. Furthermore, the former group generally approaches the Sacro Bosco from a landscape architectural perspective, while the latter often takes a more art historical approach, attempting to find symbolic meaning or formal correspondences between the sculptural elements in the gardens.

Writing in 1961, Masson appears to be the earliest author to discuss these many Tuscan gardens as part of a larger regional unit, and she takes an ekphrastic, experiential approach when she discusses all of the aforementioned designed landscapes save for Villa Cornelia, the nymphaeum of Orte, and Maerbale Orsini's properties in Penna in Teverina. She makes few moves toward interpretation, and instead catalogues—or better yet, narrates—a particular *percorso* through each site, interspersing her sharp descriptions of what she has seen with bits of historical information about the sites, their patrons, and later fortunes. David Coffin's *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, written in 1991 some thirty years after Masson's text, takes an equally experiential approach as he walks his reader through Villa Lante and the Sacro Bosco, interspersing details of the sites' construction with thematic readings of the gardens' sculptural figures and fountains. While Coffin is working from a more established landscape architectural perspective, there is little conversation between sites in his text, and though he connects the Sacro Bosco to Pitigliano's Parco degli Orsini, he draws no connections between these environments and the other designed landscapes of Tuscany.

Claudia Lazzaro's 1990 text *The Italian Renaissance Garden: From the Conventions of Planting, Design, and Ornament to the Grand Gardens of Sixteenth-century Central Italy* is an excellent—and exhaustive—study of central Italian gardens and *villeggiatura*. More interpretive

than Masson, yet less tied to iconography and programmatic themes than Coffin, Lazzaro approaches the Sacro Bosco, the Papacqua fountain, and the Parco degli Orsini in Pitigliano as part of a conversation concerning Etruscanness, stone, and the rougher side of landscape. Lazzaro, however, does not put these sites into a larger conversation with Villa Farnese and Villa Lante, which are each presented as discrete units.

Between their paired works from 1986, “Le Due Anime nelle Ville della Tuscia” and “Da Bomarzo a Pratolino,” Marcello Fagiolo and Vincenzo Cazzato respectively discuss the similarities between the Sacro Bosco, Villa Lante, and Villa Farnese, and while their study proposes itself as a dialogue between patrons, the authors mainly discuss formal or iconographic similarities between the sites. Fagiolo and Cazzato offer less synthesis than Lazzaro, addressing each of the gardens within individual sections that play up the normative/abnormal binary which tends to be emphasized in the less rigorously academic discussions of the sites. Overall, the authors pay more attention to the Sacro Bosco, treating the other two sites as the supporting cast to Bomarzo’s star, instead of equals within an ensemble.

Of the works which are more Bomarzo-focused, half a dozen are worth mentioning. Paolo Portoghesi’s 1955 article “Nota sulla Villa degli Orsini di Pitigliano” appears to have been one of the earliest texts comparing the Sacro Bosco to another stony *bosco* within Tuscia; Portoghesi discusses the two sites in terms of Etruscanness, and a larger regional atmosphere “*del selvaggio, del primitivo, dell’antico*.”² S. Lang, in 1957’s “Bomarzo 2” similarly introduced the Papacqua fountain to the field of Bomarziana, focusing more on iconography and epigraphy, and even going so far as to say that the two sites bore “no likeness” to Villa Lante and Villa Farnese whatsoever.³

² Paolo Portoghesi, “Nota sulla Villa degli Orsini di Pitigliano,” *Quaderni dell’Istituto di Storia dell’Architettura*, 7-9, April 1955 p. 76

³ S. Lang, “Bomarzo 2,” *Architectural Review* 124.725 (June 1957), p. 430

In her *Les Mystères de Bomarzo et des Jardins Symboliques de la Renaissance* from 1976, Jaqueline Theurillat expands upon Lang's discussion of the Papacqua fountain in order to shed further light on Vicino Orsini's relationship with Cardinal Madruzzo, and while she works with primary documents from the Cardinal that directly state his preferred interpretations of the site, Theurillat does not cite her sources, ultimately calling her work into question. In his 1985 text—translated into Italian in 1989 as *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro di Bomarzo: Un Principe Artista ed Anarchico*—Horst Bredekamp also touches upon the Papacqua fountain, as well as the Parco degli Orsini; he connects the sites in a larger discourse of Etruscanness, but is more focused on the potential significance of rock-cut tombs in Pitigliano as a source of inspiration for the Sacro Bosco than he is in creating any dialogue with Villa Lante or Villa Farnese.

Among more recent authors is Sofia Varoli Piazza, whose 2009 article, “Maraviglioso Boschetto,” considers the three main sites in terms of their respective relationships between garden and *bosco* in an attempt to reconstruct how the landscapes may have looked in their prime. Luke Morgan, on the other hand, in 2016's *The Monster in the Garden: The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design* pivots away from how the gardens may have looked to consider the anachronic properties of living stone, using the Papacqua Fountain as a lens to better understand the Sacro Bosco. While Morgan emphasizes that these works are more than mere “idiosyncratic expressions of the personal taste of Orsini's circle,”⁴ the structure of his book—which culminates into a veritable crescendo of Mannerist monstrosity with the Sacro Bosco—privileges Bomarzo over the other sites, and he does not discuss regional aesthetics or identity.

⁴ Luke Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden: The Grotesque and the Gigantic in Renaissance Landscape Design* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), p. 149. Morgan notes on p. 203 n. 6 that my master's thesis, “A Dream of Etruria: The Sacro Bosco of Bomarzo and the Alternate Antiquity of Alto Lazio,” is the “most interesting recent study” of the garden.

Overall, the literature shows that authors generally have a strong sense that some sort of dialogue was going on between, at the very least, a handful of Tuscan nobles who commissioned designed landscapes made primarily of *tufo*. Although none of the scholars have attempted the type of region-specific study suggested by Masson, these works show a distinct and growing awareness that this conversation about landscape was woven throughout the clutch of built environments created in Tuscia from the mid- to late sixteenth century and beyond. The present dissertation will explore this problem in far greater detail, taking an expanded, regional perspective rather than synthesizing these sites through the lens of or in the service of interpreting the Sacro Bosco. By recontextualizing the sites within a specifically Tuscan discourse, I hope to avoid the normative/abnormal binary which has often characterized the field.

Crafting a Conversation

In order to recreate this dialogue between the three main patrons' gardens, I have taken inspiration from Renaissance literature itself, modeling this dissertation on the type of conversations that would have been found in a period *discorso*, a polyphonic dialogue between learned, witty characters in the style of Pietro Bembo's *Gli Asolani*, Baldassare Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*, and Raffaello Borghini's *Il Riposo*. This format of erudite repartee between interlocutors—some fictional, some historical, some famous Renaissance personalities, and some an author's contemporaries—who discuss topics like love, art, and courtly manners would have been familiar to well-read men of the same interests and social classes as the patrons encompassed by this study. This specific literary format of cultured and clever banter would have been the model for our patrons' ideas about what it meant to be a learned man of substance, and would have to some degree or another guided their own relationships. These dialogues were frequently set in gardens, and they present a certain ideal model of gentlemanly *villeggiatura* that would have been

both influenced by and reflective of the type of discussions our patrons had while strolling on each other's gardens paths or sitting in each other's garden *casini*.

This is the format in which I invite the reader to think of these gardens as participating over time, with the sites' patrons responding back and forth in a conversation, discussing topics as broad as water and stone, or as specific as the role of landscape painting in the reception of nature in the garden. This *discorso* was carried out during the mid- to late Cinquecento in the language of the gardens themselves, in everything from their plantings to their siting in the surrounding terrain. In short, the interlocutors' gardens will be made to speak for their patrons, revealing a uniquely Tuscan conversation about villa life in sixteenth century Italy.

Methodologically speaking, this project utilizes an interdisciplinary vantage point, fusing materiality and social history with ecocritical perspectives. This approach will be sensitive to the subjective and experiential nature of place, exploring the intersection of art and nature through spatial relationships and organizational principles rather than iconographic, programmatic, or other semantic systems which privilege abstract meaning over embodied experience. This emphasis on ecocritical methods situates us between landscape architecture and art history, tempering the anthropocentric focus of the latter with an eye toward the relationships between the gardens, their surroundings, their materials, and their modifications to their environments.

The human dimension is not unimportant, however, as this *discorso* will lay out Tuscia's unique history and culture through an elision of vernacular architecture, regional aesthetics, and Etruscan identity, whatever that may have been understood as during the mid-to late Cinquecento. It also reveals how the different strata of classes in sixteenth century Tuscia conceived of the landscape around them, how they responded to and utilized typical regional modes and materials. Of

particular interest is the recurring theme of a unique sculptural, architectural, and landscape architectural style where vernacular culture, *tuscanità*, and *genius loci* intersect.

This *discorso* also examines the flourishing of a rupestrian vernacular, a particular regional style which claimed a pre-Roman legacy and established itself as a unique artistic tradition that presented itself as an Etruscan Renaissance. It was not a revival of Roman aesthetics—or even Tuscan or Umbrian aesthetics—but a Tuscan Renaissance, both a *rinascità* and a celebration of uniquely regional antique modes, motifs, and materials. This sixteenth century rebirth of the region's rupestrian tradition presents a unique and heretofore largely unexplored corner of the Italian Renaissance, where provincial aesthetics engaged in conversation with the revival of classicizing Greco-Roman antiquity.

But why did this Tuscan *rinascità* happen primarily in gardens? Why is the Renaissance garden so connected to the evocation of antiquity, and more precisely, to whose antiquity does it harken back? Why was Tuscia's sixteenth century artistic scene largely consumed with landscape in one form or another? And why do these gardens differ so widely from each other, even when they partake of the same basic materials? What can these sites tell us about period perceptions of landscape, and is this lens connected to the crystallization of a particularly Tuscan vernacular style in the arts?

The significance of this study lies not just in the confluence of high and vernacular culture, or the question of how both personal and local identity were connected to regional style and materials; this *discorso* will cast light on sixteenth-century Tuscia as a veritable laboratory for Renaissance understandings of art and nature, a testing of the limits of what a garden could be, and a blurring of the lines between manmade nature and human cohabitation with the environment. The importance of studying this region derives less from the need to introduce relatively backwater

provinces into our contemporary Renaissance discourse, and more from the fact that the themes at play—the limits of art, the many valences of nature, the influence of the vernacular, and regional identity as connected to artistic and architectural style, among others—are applicable to the field at large.

This *discorso* has been arranged in a quasi-scenographic manner. The first part represents the background, and is composed of three chapters: one detailing the landscape and vernacular of the region; another chapter its history, both real and imagined; and the last introducing our sixteenth century patrons and interlocutors. The next part concerns the middle ground, a quick bump in the road in the process of getting our interlocutors into the garden, addressing how the patrons' palaces and villas establish a lens for their designed landscapes. The third part of this scenographic narrative is the foreground, the front of the stage where the action of our *discorso* takes place in the gardens themselves: chapter six considers the organizational principles of each garden, as the patrons begin to walk through the designed landscape; the seventh asks them to discuss stone, while the eighth provides them the theme of water; and the ninth chapter revolves around the topic of plant life, whether flower, fruit, shrub or tree. A final coda ultimately wrestles with the core questions of why *tufò*, why Tuscia, why gardens?

PART I
THE BACKGROUND

Before launching into the *discorso*, we must first probe the environmental, historical, and cultural context within which our interlocutors' designed landscapes are situated. In order to unpack how these gardens dialogue both with each other and their surroundings, we need to better acquaint ourselves with Tuscia, as it is difficult to fully grasp the significance of these sites without first understanding the human and topographical landscapes of region. Tuscia's gardens must not be divorced from their unique setting and background, just as they should not be viewed in complete isolation from each other. We must move away from examinations that treat these designed landscapes as though they emerged from a conventional mold of pan-Italian Renaissance taste and culture, and as we refocus our lens squarely on Tuscia, the closer we come to recreating the lively conversation between the sites' patrons.

CHAPTER TWO

Setting the Stage: Tuscia's Topographical and Cultural Landscape

Defining Tuscia as a region is a surprisingly thorny task, since the territory straddles several administrative provinces of central Italy, and finds no concrete, delineated representation on a modern map. Historically, the region comprised the southern portion of the Ancient Roman *regio* of Etruria, and later during the early medieval era was referred to as the Patrimonium Tusciae within the larger Patrimony of Saint Peter. Various Renaissance and early modern maps provide conflicting definitions of Tuscia's exact size and scope; in the Vatican's Galleria delle Carte Geografiche, the region is styled as Tuscia Suburbicaria, encompassing Orvieto, the southern Maremma, and all of Lazio falling north of Rome (Figure 1),⁵ just as Baldassare Croce's map of the area in Viterbo's Palazzo dei Priori stretches from Orvieto to Rome's doorstep (Figure 2). In his 1536 map, *Chorographia Tusciae*, Girolamo Bellarmato drew no distinct barriers between Tuscany, western Umbria, and northern Lazio (Figure 3), much in the same way Abraham Ortelius' early seventeenth-century map of the region referred to the entire expanse as ancient Tuscia, only splitting the region into amorphous districts of Etruria Maritima, Etruria Transciminia, and Etruria Lartheniana (Figure 4).

While tourist guides and maps of Tuscia overwhelmingly follow modern cartographic confines and maintain a strict focus on the Viterbo province, scholarly publications generally take a more expansive approach to the region, occasionally including portions of the Maremma as far west as Orbetello and territories in Umbria as far east as Amelia.⁶ The question of whether Tuscia

⁵ There is a good deal of overlap between the territories represented in the Patrimonium S. Petri and those depicted as part of Etruria in a neighboring fresco. Both of these maps (as well as the one depicting Latium and Sabina) were repainted by Luc Holste between 1636 and 1637, as Ignazio Danti's originals were "severely criticized by his contemporaries Filippo Pigafetta and Magini." Lucio Gambi, *The Gallery of Maps in the Vatican* (New York: George Braziller, 1997), 12-13, 42.

⁶ Berardo Cori and Paolo Roberto Federici quote Giuseppe Toniolo and describe the borders between Lazio, Umbria, and Tuscany as "open and indeterminate," yet indicate that Tuscia includes portions of all three regions. Claudio Cornini draws a topographical triangle of similarity between Orvieto, Amelia, and Viterbo, describing this zone as

constitutes a proper cultural and/or geographic region is as widely debated in the literature as are its boundaries; Italian scholars do not generally define Tuscia as a unified region in terms of heritage, government, or landscape, noting historical and topographical discontinuities between Tuscia's constituent communities.⁷ However, Marcello Arduini and Sandra Puccini have described Tuscia as “more a *luogo del cuore* than a homogenous geographic entity,”⁸ pointing toward some manner of ineffable regional essence that unites a patchwork territory of heterogeneous *comuni*.

This matter of *genius loci* is key to understanding how the landscape architectural projects of Cinquecento Tuscia dialogue with their surroundings, and requires further unpacking in order to demonstrate how markedly the region differs from the rest of Tuscany, Umbria, and Lazio. For our purposes here, Tuscia will be roughly defined as an oval-shaped region bounded on its eastern side by the Tiber River and the Tyrrhenian coast on its west, with Sovana, Aquapendente, and Orvieto creating a nebulous border to the north, and Lago di Bracciano and Veii forming its southernmost reaches (Figure 5). Drawing on Claudio Margottini, Laura Melelli, and Daniele

an “area united by nature and divided by history.” Stefano Pifferi describes the name ‘Tuscia’ as a neologism for Viterbese Lazio and lower Tuscany. Sandro Bassetti casts a wider net, defining Tuscia as the lands that fall between Orbetello, Orvieto, Tarquinia, and the Tiber. See Cori and Federici, “Etruria, Tuscia, Toscana – Una Regione Naturale?” in *Etruria, Tuscia, Toscana: L'Identità di una Regione Attraverso i Secoli* vol. I, ed. Michele Luzzati (Pisa: Pacini, 1994), 21; Cornini, “Preface” in *Accademie e Giardini: Il Sogno della Natura tra Umbria e Tuscia* (Perugia: Mediocredito dell'Umbria, 1997), 7; Pifferi, “Nullus Locus Sine Genio: Qualche Introduttiva Riflessione su Luoghi, Genio, Viaggi e Identità,” in *Viaggio e Identità dei Luoghi: Immagini della Tuscia*, ed. Stefano Pifferi (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2011), 17; Bassetti, *I Templari della Tuscia Suburbicaria* (Vignate, Milan: Lampi di Stampa, 2018), 12.

⁷ Ersilia Pannucci argues that the region was not considered as such until 1870, determined more from “political events than geomorphological characteristics and historic, cultural, or folkloric traditions.” She maintains that the region does not possess its own proper individuality, with too great a variety of physical and cultural landscapes to be thought of as one succinct entity. Marcello Arduini and Sandra Puccini echo Pannucci, describing Tuscia as “a discontinuous territory from the point of view of landscape, history, anthropological characteristics, and economic vocations.” While Piferi calls Tuscia a “*non-luogo empirico*,” he allows that the identity of the territory is based largely in the region's status as a borderland, a palimpsest of a site defined by confluences and populations in flux. See Pannucci, “Il Paesaggio,” in *Tuscia Viterbese*, ed. Pio Bartolozzi and Saverio Migliori (Rome: DEA, 1968), 4; Arduini and Puccini, “Frammenti e Mosaici; Tra Luoghi, Memorie, Tradizioni della Tuscia,” in *Viaggio e Identità dei Luoghi: Immagini della Tuscia*, ed. Stefano Pifferi (Viterbo: Sette Città, 2011), 21; Piferi, “Nullus Locus Sine Genio,” 18-19.

⁸ Arduini and Puccini, “Frammenti e Mosaici,” 21.

Spizzichino’s description of Tuscia as a cultural landscape “where human modifications contrast with and overlap the natural landforms,”⁹ these parameters have been delineated based on both the formations and distribution of volcanic rock as found within the selected territory, as well as the communities’ shared traditions of rock-cut architecture and infrastructure that are unique to this slice of central Italy.

Tuscia is almost entirely comprised of three extinct volcanic districts: the Monti Volsini encircling Lago di Bolsena, the Vico-Cimino complex that includes Lago di Vico and the Monti Cimini, and the Monti Sabatini which surround Lago di Bracciano (Figure 6).¹⁰ Active largely during the Pleistocene era,¹¹ these volcanic complexes helped define the topography of the region with its characteristic rises and depressions, creating calderas and crater lakes, as well as *tuffo* cones, ignimbritic plateaus, and lava domes.¹² Although it is currently dormant, the oldest volcano in the region is Monte Cimino,¹³ and the surrounding Monti Cimini are some of the hilliest and most densely forested patches of Tuscia; this interior zone of foothills just to the west of the Valle del Tevere has been described as a “magic triangle,”¹⁴ where pristine nature is relatively untouched by the structures and interventions of human civilization. From this green heart, Tuscia extends westward to the Tyrrhenian Sea, gradually turning from mesophilous woodlands of evergreen, oak, chestnut, and beech to *macchia mediterranea*—a type of shrubland largely used for agriculture or

⁹ Claudio Margottini, Laura Melelli, and Daniele Spizzichino, “The Tuff Cities: A ‘Living Landscape’ at the Border of Volcanoes in Central Italy,” in *Landscapes and Landforms of Italy*, ed. Mauro Soldati and Mauro Marchetti, (New York: Springer, 2017), 293.

¹⁰ Francesco Mauro, “Volcanoes and Crater Lakes in Latium: Nature and History of Rome,” in *Natural Heritage from East to West: Case studies from 6 EU Countries*, ed. Niki Evelpidou et al. (New York: Springer, 2010), 222.

¹¹ Paola Fredi and Sirio Ciccacci, “A Route of Fire in Central Italy: The Latium Ancient Volcanoes,” in *Landscapes and Landforms of Italy*, ed. Mauro Soldati and Mauro Marchetti (New York: Springer, 2017), 304.

¹² Mauro, “Volcanoes and Crater Lakes,” 229; Fredi and Ciccacci, “A Route of Fire,” 306.

¹³ Mauro, “Volcanoes and Crater Lakes,” 227.

¹⁴ Giacomo Mazzuoli and Giuseppe Moscatelli, “Presentazione,” in *Monumenti Rupestri Etrusco-Romani tra i Monti Cimini e la Valle del Tevere* (Grotte di Castro, Viterbo: Ceccarelli, 2011), 5.

pastorage¹⁵—and finally a more classically Mediterranean coastal biome with umbrella pines and sandy, salty soil.¹⁶ The deep woods are arguably most characteristic of Tuscia, as the region was not subject to quite the same historical deforestation as Tuscany, Umbria, and southern Lazio¹⁷ due to the hilly, volcanic landscape which made large tracts of the region relatively impassable and inhospitable.

The volcanic past played a significant role in the hydrological makeup of the region as well; the landscape is pockmarked with lakes of volcanic origin—the largest of which are Lago di Bolsena, Lago di Vico, and Lago di Bracciano—and the Viterbo area is particularly renowned for its thermal pools and mineral hot springs. These shallow pools are ringed with bright white travertine crusts which stand out markedly from the surrounding landscape,¹⁸ and, as in the case of the Bullicame (Figure 7) and the Bagnaccio (Figure 8), a slight sulfur smell accompanies the subtly bubbling water. The region’s hot springs have been credited with therapeutic properties for centuries,¹⁹ receiving mention in the writings of Varro, Strabo, and even Dante.²⁰ Bathing complexes have occupied the countryside around Viterbo since at least the Roman Empire,²¹ and while few ruins remain of both Renaissance and ancient baths, the practice of bathing in the waters for therapeutic benefit continues to this day.

The same volcanic past that created these mineral hot springs played a distinct role in the geological makeup of the region, as the majority of the rocks found within are volcanic in origin.

¹⁵ Oretta Zanini de Vita, *Popes, Peasants and Shepherds: Recipes and Lore from Rome and Lazio*, trans. Maureen B. Fant (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2013), 72-73.

¹⁶ Pannucci, “Il Paesaggio,” 64-70.

¹⁷ Emilio Sereni, *History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 110 and 157 specifically for the medieval and Renaissance deforestation of Tuscany.

¹⁸ Allan Pentecost, *Travertine* (Berlin: Springer, 2005), 67.

¹⁹ Pannucci, “Il Paesaggio,” 32.

²⁰ Ibid. 32, Angelo Allegrini, “Una Lunga Storia tra Miseria e Nobiltà,” in *Viterbo e le sue Terme: Una Lunga Storia tra Miseria e Nobiltà*, ed. Manuela Claudiani (Viterbo: BetaGamma, 2004), 1.

²¹ Simonetta Valtieri, “Le Terme di Viterbo nel Rinascimento: Tra *Sanitas* e *Otium*,” in *Viterbo nel Rinascimento*, ed. Simonetta Valtieri and Enzo Bentivoglio (Rome: G. Bentivoglio, 2012), 52.

While Tuscia has its fair share of sedimentary rocks—including limestones such as travertine and clastic conglomerates like breccia—it is largely comprised of basalt, leucite, pozzolana, and various kinds of *tuffa*, a type of extrusive stone composed of volcanic ash (Figure 9).²² Easily the most pervasive of these materials, *tuffa* is a very young stone in terms of geological time, thus making it relatively soft, porous, and weak against erosion, as demonstrated by the many crumbling hilltowns perched atop slowly disintegrating mesas scattered throughout the region, of which Calcata (Figure 10) and Civita di Bagnoregio (Figure 11) are the most well-known examples. *Tuffa* comes in an array of colors, ranging from red to yellow to grey; the different types are well known to inhabitants of the region, who can differentiate the salt and pepper grey of *peperino*—which comes in two varieties, *tipico* and *delle alture*—from the slightly lighter grey *nenfro*.²³

The volcanic past has forged the region into one of topographical contrasts, with the terrain alternating between rough buttes to densely forested mountains and gullies, creating a landscape of extremes that stands in marked contrast to those of the surrounding territories. From the steep Apennine-facing Monti Cimini to the almost lunar-looking badlands of Bagnoregio's Valle dei Calanchi (Figure 12), Tuscan topography is largely defined by rock formations, their dips and swells creating a network of winding ravines and sharp buttes, which often obscure the horizon in a dizzying juxtaposition of high and exposed places with low and narrow ones. Vegetation grows thick in the narrow gorges known as *forre* or *fossi* (Figures 13-14), reducing the amount of natural light that reaches the visitor, who must brave thick brambles and sandy, unstable soil when exploring the forested valleys. In these wooded depths, the horizon is often obscured behind the crests of nearby hills, and sightlines rarely extend for great distances. The stark contrasts within

²² Pannucci, "Il Paesaggio," 49-55.

²³ Ibid. 51.

the landscape create a sense of topographical illegibility and impenetrability, so that it is easy to become lost or disoriented in the *forre* without a clear sense of one's position or destination unless, of course, one is intimately familiar with local topography.

Created through millennia of erosion, the *forre* are a lush tangle of vegetation, stone, and water which give the impression that one has entered an enclosed and isolated canyon. Christian Norberg-Schulz describes these characteristic hollows as “a kind of ‘underworld’ profoundly different from the everyday surface above,” where the visitor experiences of a visceral sense of being “inside” as opposed to having the broad expanse of the outdoors laid out before them.²⁴ He nevertheless describes the spaces as “idyllic,”²⁵ and Ersilia Pannucci gives shape to this assertion, writing that the *forre* possess a certain “bucolic poetry,” where profound silence is punctuated by the movement of water, the singing of birds, and the chatter of cicadas.²⁶ Moss, lichen, and a variety of climbing plants adorn the winding *tufi* walls, and the light that filters through the canopy of evergreens, beech, and oak and is dappled and moody, casting great expanses of shadow. The undergrowth is dense, brambly and chaotic, and a cushion of desiccated leaves and twigs blankets the ground, amplifying the visitor's footfalls. Above the *forre*, the eye is met with a great and heaving sea of greens, and despite the lofty vantage point, one can barely see beyond the next tall ridge, making it impossible to perceive long distances or situate one's self within a larger cohesive landscape.

Compared to the nearby regions of Tuscany, Umbria, and the Roman *campagna*, Tuscia is a world apart, its convoluted spaces seemingly inhospitable to the outsider in a way that contrasts sharply with the gently undulating hills and expansive planes of surrounding topographies. Unlike

²⁴ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 144.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 143.

²⁶ Pannucci, “Il Paesaggio,” 30.

Umbria's broad valleys and monumental hilltop vistas which stretch for miles, or the Roman *campagna* with its "majestic and controlled rhythm in the articulation of the masses, in a subordination of the single figures to slowly rising or falling movements,"²⁷ the landscape of Tuscia lacks the visual unity of distant horizon lines or the measured recession of foreground into middle and background. Norberg-Schulz distinguishes the "violent contrasts between forms, [and] powerful juxtaposition of mass and space, mountain and valley"²⁸ found in Tuscia from the easily perceptible, "classical" landscape of the Alban Hills where the eye is treated to a "distinct and easily imaginable relationship between masses and spaces."²⁹

With the exception of its two main cities, Viterbo and Orvieto, Tuscia is a region made up of cliffside villages and minor hilltowns, and the siting of these small population centers in dramatic landscapes among mountains and gorges also contributes to the distinctly different perception of space which one experiences in Tuscia. Unlike the hilltowns of Tuscany, Umbria, and the Castelli Romani, where settlements are nestled halfway up prodigious inclines or draped across conical slopes, the villages of Tuscia are largely found clinging to rocky mesas or promontories which jut violently out of the landscape (Figures 15-16). Whereas neighboring regions' hilltowns fluidly ascend to a strategic apex occupied by a castle, church, or governmental *palazzo*, villages in Tuscia are frequently situated on the flat top of an elevated plateau, with steep escarpments around their edges that create not only abrupt distinctions between the towns and their surroundings, but also finite boundaries to the urban centers.

Buildings extend to the very precipice of these hilltowns, fusing with the cliff edge and exaggerating the shape of the landforms (Figure 17); Norberg-Schulz comments on this

²⁷ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 142-143, quoting Hans Peter L'Orange's *Romersk Idyll*.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 142-143.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 146.

phenomenon, writing that “the houses appear as a more precise version of the natural forms, and usually the villages are located in such a way that they define and emphasize important structural features in the landscape, such as crests, isolated plateaus, and ‘promontories.’”³⁰ *Tufo* is omnipresent in Tuscia’s towns and villages, as edifices built from the rock appear to emerge almost organically from the *tufo* mesas they occupy, growing both upward out of the inchoate cliff face, and burrowing downward into the living stone. There is rarely a clear-cut separation between a town and the stone that forms its foundation—the two have so symbiotic a relationship that they have become wholly inextricable from one another—thus dissolving any precise distinction between the natural world and the realm of human civilization.

The urban hearts of these historic villages are equally tuffaceous, and the narrow, sinuous streets of their historic centers seem to echo with the twisty, stony hollows in the forests and *forre* below (Figures 18-19). The visitor is often surrounded on all sides by *tufo*, and one’s experience of space oscillates between small, claustrophobic areas with limited access to natural light or fresh air, and brief glimpses of the surrounding countryside from rooftops, windows and dead-end streets. Norberg-Schulz draws parallels between the enclosed spaces of the region’s hilltowns and its *forre*, and comments on the formal characteristics of the Tuscan vernacular:

The houses usually have a simple prismatic shape with a sloping roof which hardly projects beyond the wall. Mostly they are joined together in such a way, however, that it is not easy to distinguish the single units. The general character is massive and enclosed; the windows are small and cut into the walls like holes. [...] The softness of the material and the rather irregular joining of the blocks make the

³⁰ Ibid. 155-157.

buildings seem ‘modelled’ rather than ‘built,’ an impression which is stressed by the continuous but irregular rows of facades.³¹

Many historic properties incorporate lightly-worked or even raw masses of *tufò* into their outward-facing sides as well as their interior living spaces, as though previous generations of builders were responding to the natural shapes and thermal properties of the stone, working in conjunction with the hard, undulating terrain instead of at cross-purposes with it.

While the earliest traces of human habitation in these *comuni* date back to the Etruscan period in the form of rock-cut spaces deep within the bedrock, the villages’ street plans and foundations are generally medieval³²; as for structures above the ground, masonry began to gradually replace wooden edifices during the Renaissance.³³ *Tufò* is approached as both an additive or subtractive substance, and most buildings are generally several stories tall, with an average of two floors above ground made out of *tufò* blocks and wood, and at least one level below ground entirely hewn from the rock itself. The rock excavated from rooms underground is used on the surface for all manner of civic and domestic construction projects; homes in the region are built out of, into, and outfitted with numerous fixtures like fireplaces and stairs made entirely of *tufò*, to the extent that many individuals did—and still do—spend their lives surrounded by the stone. The sense of enclosure once again reappears, as a person standing within one such room would merely be occupying a negative space within the earth that is excavated from and bordered on all sides by *tufò*, which forms the peripheries of lived experience both indoors and out, above ground and below.³⁴

³¹ Ibid. 155.

³² J.B. Ward-Perkins, “Etruscan Towns, Roman Roads and Medieval Villages: The Historical Geography of Southern Etruria,” in *The Geographical Journal* 128 no. 4 (Dec. 1962), 400-401. Some street plans are older still; Civita di Bagnoregio is one such example, with its main *decumanus* that stretches from one end of the village to the other. See Nancy Carol Martin, *Change and Continuity in Civita, an Italian Hill Town* (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1975), 86-88.

³³ Ward-Perkins, “Etruscan Towns,” 400-401

³⁴ The potential differences between above ground and subterranean materiality are explored by Tim Ingold’s extended metaphor of ‘anthropologically trained moles’ in his article, ‘Materials Against Materiality’. Ingold

The custom of close cohabitation with *tufu* is widespread throughout Tuscia, with numerous rock-cut tombs and underground chambers liberally scattered throughout the region, pointing toward the establishment of a localized rupestrian vernacular as early as the first Etruscan settlement of the region. Many of these hilltowns have within their historic centers several dozen *cantine*, cubic grottoes beneath homes that are hewn from the living rock and date back to as early as 800 BCE,³⁵ when they may have served as storage or burial sites for the region's Etruscan inhabitants (Figures 20-21). Re-appropriation of these subterranean rooms remains a common custom in Tuscia, and many *cantine* bear traces of medieval, Renaissance, and early modern alterations, as they were absorbed into the homes of nobles and peasants alike. Records of *cantine* serving as sites for perishable goods go back to at least the medieval era, and their function as storerooms continues into the present day.

Reuse of ancient rock-cut spaces is standard, with Etruscan cave tombs repurposed as peasant homes in the early modern era or, as they are used currently, as shelters for livestock.³⁶ The tradition of repurposing partially underground Etruscan chambers as dovecotes began during the medieval era, just as the rock-cut Roman mithraeum in Sutri was converted into a Christian church (Figure 22). Entire cities like Orvieto and Sovana that perch atop large *tufu* plateaus are perforated with a warren of underground tunnels and rooms which link together homes, businesses, and local

writes that said moles would understand materials not as 'culturally *constructed* but culturally *excavated*', with the material world '[residing] beyond the things of culture, on the far side of their inward facing surfaces'. For Ingold's moles, material culture below ground would be primarily understood as one of absences and empty spaces both excavated from and bordered by the earth, with material things simply existing 'out there,' removed from mole civilization. While Ingold provides an extreme example, his discussion of earth and rocks as structural boundaries forming the peripheries of lived experience instead of discrete objects finds resonance with the cultural and architectural role of *tufu* throughout Tuscia. Tim Ingold, "Materials against Materiality," in *Archaeological Dialogues* 14 no.1 (2007), 6-7.

³⁵ Nancy Carol Martin, *Change and Continuity in Civita, an Italian Hill Town*, 96.

³⁶ Animals also lived within the hilltowns proper; up until the mid-twentieth century many farmers stabled sheep, donkeys, and other livestock in the ground level of their homes and lived on the second floor, taking advantage of the warmth generated by the creatures. Carol Martin-Watts, "Tourism and Subterranean Structures of Central Italian Hilltowns," in *Reinterpreting Traditional Spaces for Contemporary Needs*, ed. Nezar Alsayyad (Berkeley, CA: Center for Environmental Design Research, 1994), 9.

infrastructure alike (Figure 23). Connection with the region's distant past is palpable through its *tufi*, not only forging connections across time and culture, but also establishing strong linkages between stone, heritage, and topography.

Compared to its neighboring regions' architectural traditions, Tuscia's rupestrian vernacular stands out as decidedly separate, and it is important that we think of it as distinctly regional in both style and approach to materials. *Tufo* is hardly unique to Tuscia—it can also be found throughout southern Lazio and the Bay of Naples—and was not only written about by Pliny in his *Natural History* and Vitruvius in his *De Architectura*, but was also used extensively by the Romans for much of their early civic architecture.³⁷ Nevertheless, Tuscia is the only region with *tufi* in central Italy to have developed a distinct rock-cut tradition, where construction work of any stripe is hewn directly from the living stone. Even in its raw form, the stone is ubiquitous across all walks of life from a duke's castle to the peasant's *cantina*, and Massimo Miglio writes that it draws a “line that unites caves with cities and villages, with castles and country villas” intersecting all levels of social and economic hierarchy.³⁸ The role of *tufi* in Tuscia gives us pause in the study of pre-industrial materiality, for there are scant few substances or objects that were so egalitarian in their usage during this period of relatively rigid social stratification. There is something unique about the Tuscan vernacular and its connection with the region's *genius loci*, that its characteristic forms which are utilized by rich and poor alike are rooted in the earth itself, drawing directly from and fusing with the topography on the most direct level possible.

³⁷ David B Williams, *Stories in Stone: Travels Through Urban Geology* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2019), 204; Marie Jackson and Fabrizio Marra, “Roman Stone Masonry: Volcanic Foundations of the Ancient City,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 110 no. 3 (2006), 405.

³⁸ Massimo Miglio, *Asterischi: Tracce di Storie della Tuscia* (Manziana, Rome: Vecchiarelli 2000), 101.

The Ancient Landscape

The role of *tuffo* in defining the region extends far beyond its hand in the shaping of the urban landscape, and extends out into the woodlands, where rock-cut monuments and edifices from a range of time periods populate the landscape. This variety of ruins found throughout the forests of Tuscia differs dramatically in their location from the Ancient Roman ruins found throughout Tuscany, Umbria, and the rest of Lazio in that they are not situated particularly close to population centers, and are often only stumbled upon when trekking between villages through the *forre* or deep woodlands. These ruins are not integrated into the fabric of everyday life, and many of these rupestrian structures and monuments—often carved out of the living *tuffo*, without inscriptions or other identifying marks—appear almost inexplicably out of place in the forest, leaving the viewer at a loss to interpret these functionally indeterminate structures.

Rocky Etruscan necropolises are scattered liberally throughout the region, taking a variety of forms while still partaking of the same stony vernacular. Unlike the painted tombs of Tarquinia or the *tumuli* of Cerveteri, these burial complexes feature minimal decorative elements and are generally excavated from hillsides rather than dug down into the earth. The necropolises utilize raw stone as their primary material, and approach it from a largely subtractive point of view, extracting exterior shapes and interior spaces alike from great expanses of *tuffo*, from which these sites are exclusively constructed. Dating anywhere from the seventh to the second century BCE,³⁹ the appearance of these sites varies dramatically, from the cube-shaped tombs of Blera (Figure 24) and Norchia to the simple caves of Monte Casoli outside of Bomarzo (Figure 25); some of the rock-cut facades even feature incised doorways and low-relief pediments. Columbaria, loculi,

³⁹ Paolo Giannini, *Centri Etruschi e Romani del Viterbese* (Viterbo: Societa Archeologica Viterbese Pro Ferento, 1970), 7-10.

niche tombs, well tombs, and ditch tombs are some of the other forms that are well represented in the necropolises of Tuscia, ranging from Sovana in the north to Sutri in the south (Figures 26-29).

Located predominantly in the countryside some one to five kilometers from medieval *borghi* or rock-cut hilltowns, these necropolises are experienced as a place apart from the urban *comuni*, whether discovered deep in the woods, or reached just across several fields. Yet there is a connection between the familiar urban spaces and the cities of the dead: the carving techniques and subtractive approach to stone remain the same. An inhabitant of a hilltown with access to a *cantina* or urban rock-cut space would surely be able to understand these two types of spaces as similar on a stylistic, material, and tactile level. In many cases the cuboid spaces (Figure 30) and rock-cut stairs found in the necropolises are virtually identical in size and shape to the ancient *cantine* and other rock-cut rooms and passageways found within not only one's own particular hilltown but also a number of others throughout the region. Even without a real sense of the region's archaeological history, one would be inclined to see the necropolis complexes as long-abandoned version of a familiar vernacular.⁴⁰

Frequently found adjacent to these necropolises is the uniquely Tuscan phenomenon of the *vie cave*, twisting lengths of road excavated from the living *tufo* (Figure 31). These deep rock-cut trenches are Etruscan in origin—dating largely from the seventh and sixth centuries BCE⁴¹—and

⁴⁰ The question also remains whether or not these sites were more or less abandoned as they are today. Sheep and goats could be found grazing in and among the caves and columbaria of Monte Casoli when I last visited in the summer of 2012. Were these sites used for the same purposes in the sixteenth century? It is difficult to chart when these Etruscan sites were first—if ever—truly 'rediscovered' by later generations of Tuscians; it is extremely doubtful that George Dennis, arguably the father of modern Etruscan studies, was the first to come across these monuments, even though he may be the first to mention them in print. Similarly attesting to early modern Tuscan awareness of the region's pre-Roman landscape are the writings and experiences of seventeenth century Jesuit scholar Athanasius Kircher, who during his survey of Etruscan ruins encountered cave-dwelling *bomarzesi* who professed an awareness of local subterranean tombs decorated with frescoes. Eugenio Battisti, *L'Antirinasimento* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1962), 126.

⁴¹ Juha Tuppi, "Approaching Road-Cuttings as Instruments of Early Urbanization in Central Tyrrhenian Italy," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 82 (2014), 41.

functioned as direct routes for traffic through the challenging terrain; rather than building roads up and over the uneven, deeply forested landscape, the Etruscans opted instead to bore straight through the soft *tuffa*, creating narrow, artificial canyons of roadway.⁴² While the most well-known of these rock-cut incisions into the landscape are found near Sovana, Sorano, and Pitigliano, the *vie cave*—or *tagliate* as they are sometimes called—are scattered across Tuscia’s rocky uplands, ranging from Vulci to Veii. The excavated roads, which sometimes include rupestrian steps and drainage ditches, cut through difficult topography like a stone wormhole, providing an evenly graded path between disparate points separated by steep hills and treacherous ravines. Rising to heights anywhere from thirty to sixty feet tall, the walls of the *vie cave* curve sinuously through the landscape, surrounding the visitor with a sunken stone channel which resonates with the enclosed spaces of the *forre*. Vegetation still grows at the top of the manmade cliffs, forming a dense canopy of branches that blocks out much of the light, and as a result the *vie cave* are cool, shadowy passageways which give the visitor the impression that they are traveling simultaneously through and below the Tuscan countryside.

Some of these winding hollows are marked with epigraphy in Etruscan or Latin, and an early sixteenth century sketch by the Tuscan architect Baldassarre Peruzzi (Figure 32) of inscriptions on the Tagliata delle Rochette outside Bomarzo (Figure 33) implies that later generations of Tuscans still knew of—and arguably utilized—these Etruscan shortcuts through the forest. To create this rare sixteenth century depiction of Etruscan finds within the region, Peruzzi must have been led by a knowledgeable local over a kilometer and a half into the woods to see the *tagliata* during his time in Bomarzo renovating Palazzo Orsini. Peruzzi’s sketchbook also contains a drawing of a cuboid form bearing a Latin inscription (Figure 34), indicating that Renaissance inhabitants of the

⁴² Ibid. 47.

region had some familiarity with the enigmatic Etrusco-Roman monuments found throughout the Monti Cimini. The fact that this monument has yet to be conclusively identified in the modern era potentially points toward sixteenth century Tuscians having a more comprehensive knowledge of Etruscan sites within the region than we do today.

The type of monument sketched by Peruzzi—a form common to the Monti Cimini and dating from roughly the first century BCE to the first century CE⁴³—differs fundamentally from the region’s earlier rock-cut sites, in that they tend toward convex shapes rather than interior or enclosed spaces (Figures 35-38). As in the case of the necropolises, these stone monuments are generally found deep in the forest and utilize the same subtractive carving techniques, however, they are mostly hewn from the large *tuffo* boulders scattered across the foothills between Vitorchiano, Soriano nel Cimino, and Bomarzo. While some of these rocks bear dedicatory Latin inscriptions or light incising, for the most part their original function and significance remain effectively unknown. Regardless, these giant monuments show unmistakable signs of human workmanship with many of them shaped into massive, hulking cubes or stepped platforms that stand out in marked contrast from the many other large stones scattered throughout the woods. Divorced from their original context, the ancient monuments are essentially rendered mute, able only to mystify and bewilder the viewer who has stumbled upon them while trekking through the dense and disconcerting woodlands. There is a certain uncanniness in the carved boulders’ seeming inexplicability, for the viewer has come across something bearing the distinct traces of long-absent people deep in the *forre* and far removed from civilization.

The woods are also home to a number of derelict rupestrian settlements which postdate the Roman Empire, and while these sites range widely in date and structural complexity, they too tend

⁴³ Stephan Steingräber and Friedholm Prayon, *Monumenti Rupestri Etrusco-Romani tra i Monti Cimini e la Valle del Tevere* (Grotte di Castro, Viterbo: Ceccarelli, 2011), 85-86.

to be hewn from the living *tuffo*. The earliest of these complexes is Santa Cecilia, an early medieval village outside of Bomarzo (Figure 39-40) believed to have been established in the sixth century CE and inhabited until the early decades of the Quattrocento⁴⁴; the vast, abandoned settlement is a veritable ghost town of rock-cut walls, trench tombs, boulders inscribed with rectangular niches, and large cube-like forms that provide few clues as to their original function. While some authors have posited that the nearby settlement of Corviano (Figure 41) and that of Vitozza (Figure 42) near Sorano have their roots in the Etrusco-Roman period,⁴⁵ these rupestrian towns were at their peak during the medieval era.⁴⁶ Corviano and Vitozza appear to have been occupied until the fifteenth century⁴⁷, yet both the structure and appearance of the rock-cut spaces differ little from the Etruscan cave tombs from over a millennium earlier. It is only the medieval hermitage of Poggio Conte (Figure 43) outside of Ischia di Castro that separates itself as stylistically distinct from the other rock-cut settlements of the period; its Gothic arches and low-relief quatrefoil designs exhibit an attention to decorative embellishment not otherwise seen in Tuscia's rupestrian spaces.⁴⁸ Unlike Santa Cecilia, Corviano, Vitozza, or any of Tuscia's rock-cut complexes—regardless of period—the Gothic arches pin the hermitage to a specific time, while the other sites

⁴⁴ Ibid 98-99.

⁴⁵ Giovanni Menichino, *Escursionismo d'Autore nella Terra degli Etruschi: Viaggio nella Maremma Toscana* (Pitigliano, Grosseto: Laurum 2007), 159; Giovanni Menichino, *Escursionismo d'Autore nella Terra degli Etruschi: Viaggio nella Tuscia* (Pitigliano, Grosseto: Laurum, 2008), 91.

⁴⁶ Elisabetta de Minicis, "Introduzione," *Insedimenti Rupestri Medievali della Tuscia*, ed. Elisabetta de Minicis (Rome: Kappa, 2003), 11-12; Franco Dominici, *Vitozza: La Città di Pietra: Storia, Archeologia e Natura* (Arcidosso, Grosseto: Effigi, 2013), 14-23.

⁴⁷ Steingraber and Prayon, *Monumenti Rupestri Etrusco-Romani*, 99; Dominici, *Vitozza*, 24.

⁴⁸ The *tuffo* also bears traces of painted figures and geometric motifs, and while some Etruscan tombs outside of Tarquinia and Vulci have simple painted elements—most notably the Tomba Rosa on Lago di Bolsena's Isola Bisentina—the practice of painting the living rock is relatively uncommon in the rupestrian tradition of the region. Simone Piazza, *Pittura Rupestre Medievale: Lazio e Campania Settentrionale (Secoli VI-XIII)* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 2006), 56-57.

and their absolute sculptural simplicity not only makes dating difficult⁴⁹ but also gives them an ineffably transhistorical air.

Simply put, *tuffo* is one of the defining elements of the topographical and cultural landscape of the region, forming the backbone of Tuscia's longstanding rupestrian vernacular. The woods—just as much as the medieval hilltowns—divulge a world both shaped and enclosed by *tuffo*, where one's experiences within and without the confines of the *comune* knit the region's distant Etruscan past with its present through pumicey, friable stone. Then and now, backwards and forwards, above, and below; at one point or another, they are all *tuffo*. Norberg-Schulz noted in 1979 that the profession of *grottaio* (excavator of grottoes) was still a necessary facet of Tuscan society,⁵⁰ and a quick glance at realty websites will show that properties in the *centri storici* of the region generally feature *tuffo* walls, ceilings, *cantine*, masonry, or in some cases, the inchoate rock fusing into the building's floor or façade itself. Between the dense forests, narrow *forre*, vertigo-inducing cliffsides, and dank, enclosed spaces, one is left with a sense of the landscape as one of extremes, where centuries of communities have bored into, through, and under the *tuffo*, all the while echoing and merging with the natural landscape. This sense of topography and community as a continuous—and dare I say, multitemporal—union through *tuffo* creates spaces where past rhymes equally with present, and architecture equally with nature.

⁴⁹ Elisabetta De Minicis, "Metodi e Strategie d'Indagine per lo Studio degli Insediamenti Rupestri nel Lazio," in *Insediamenti Rupestri di Età Medievale: Abitazioni e Strutture Produttive: Italia Centrale e Meridionale*, ed. Elisabetta De Minicis (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro Italiano di Studi sull'Alto Medioevo, 2008), 303-304.

⁵⁰ Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, 146.

CHAPTER THREE

A Snapshot of Tuscan History—Both Real and Invented—Prior to 1500

When writing the history of pleasure gardens as opposed to say, utilitarian kitchen *orti*, the historian generally concerns themselves with the sphere of the leisure class, who—it just so coincidentally happens—are also the writers of history. Gardens of this spectacular nature, however, necessitate cooperation between a variety of classes and professions; the high class patron employed the services of the learned architect, who himself earned more than the sculptor contracted for a particular fountain, who in turn had more gentlemanly social standing than specialized craftsmen like *fontanieri*. At the bottom of this hierarchy of wealth, power, and position are the gardeners who tended to the site daily, who had their own set of specialized knowledge, in addition to the laborers whose jobs included clearing, terracing, and irrigating the sites.

As an overwhelmingly rural area, Tuscia was occupied by many more individuals of this rung of the social hierarchy: people who spoke regional dialect, lived in vernacular rock-cut homes, and had negligible access to the cultural powerhouse that was Rome. While a trip from Tuscia to Rome is only a matter of hours today, such a journey would have taken days during the sixteenth century, effectively placing the art, architecture, and amenities of the papal city entirely out of reach for most residents of the region. While Viterbo and Orvieto were sizeable urban centers, they paled in comparison to hubs like Florence and Rome in terms of population and area, and most of the towns and villages of Tuscia paled in comparison to these two cathedral cities. Much of Tuscia's history has been effectively anonymous, so any attempt to write a subaltern history of the region is hindered by a lack of documentation about average Tuscians leading average lives. It is only centuries later, in the works of outsiders like Athanasius Kircher or George Dennis that the historian gets a peek at preindustrial Tuscan *cultura contadina*. The relative anonymity of these

enduring hilltowns and villages means that a history of the region is largely gleaned from records regarding the Church or lords and aristocrats, which therefore means that Tuscia's historical narrative is often driven by Viterbo, the largest of its cathedral cities.

This is not to say that Viterbo's history is the most significant or most representative of the region, nor is it to say that nothing of note ever occurred in Tuscia's myriad small hilltowns; it simply means that the history of agrarian settlements populated by non-elites are generally excluded from recorded history. This makes the task of writing Tuscia's history doubly challenging, for this overlooked region is for the most part made up of overlooked *comuni*. Therefore, while the present examination of Tuscia's history is reluctantly slanted toward Viterbo and the realms of the elite patrons rather than the sociocultural spheres of the average Renaissance Tuscan, we must remember that the upper class experience of the region was far from typical.

A Brief History of the Region

Viterbo was not always the *capoluogo* of Tuscia, as it was not until the eleventh century that the city itself took on any truly sizeable role in the region.⁵¹ The ancient history of Tuscia is largely decentralized, made up of settlements scattered across the map rather than based around one central cultural or governmental hub. Some of these ancient sites have been inhabited for millennia—and in some cases, are older than Rome itself—while the ruins of others have become overgrown with moss and climbing vines, rejoining Tuscia's wild landscape. While locals have always lived in close proximity to these vestiges of their pre-Christian heritage, the ancient history of sites is largely known to us through the efforts of archeologists working in the last two hundred years, and not through period sources. There are no Etruscan documents concerning the history of Etruscan Tuscia; what we know about the era comes either from archaeological or ancient Roman sources.

⁵¹ Edward T. Price, "Viterbo: Landscape of an Italian City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 54 no. 2 (Jun. 1964), 248.

Modern archaeology has been instrumental in reconstructing the world of ancient Tuscians, yet much of what we know today about South Etruria was not known to the people of the Renaissance, just as the fledgling field of Etruscology was largely centered around Tuscany during this period.⁵² Thus, the narrative related here will cleave closely to the ancient Roman accounts of the region, as they were some of the only sources that Renaissance Tuscians had concerning their history.

Though the Etruscans probably descended from the Bronze Age proto-Villanovan culture, their origins were of great interest to authors across the ancient Mediterranean. Greek authors like Herodotus and Hellanicus of Lesbos respectively placed the Etruscans' origins in Anatolia and Thessaly.⁵³ Romans like Livy and Pliny the Elder forwarded the hypothesis that the Etruscans came to the Italian peninsula from north of the Alps.⁵⁴ Among the ancient sources, Dionysius of Halicarnassus stands alone in his assertion that the Etruscans were an "autochthonous" people, originating directly from the territory they controlled.⁵⁵

Based on these sources, a Renaissance reader would be aware that Etruscan civilization centered primarily in Tuscia, Tuscany, and Umbria, and that many of the cities and settlements within that territory had pre-Roman roots. From Livy, a reader would also be aware that Etruscans lived in city-states, twelve of which formed the dodecapolis, a league of confederated cities that formed a larger civic body that met at Fanum Voltumnae, the primary sanctuary related to Etruscan faith and politics.⁵⁶ While the exact cities that made up the dodecapolis are unknown, a number of the cities discussed heavily in Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita* are likely candidates, including five in

⁵² While André Chastel's 1959 article "L'Étruscan revival' du XVe siècle" set the standard for inquiries into Renaissance Etruscology, the most useful recent texts are penned by Caroline Hillard (2016), Stephen Bule, and Gilda Bartolini and Piera Bocci Pacini.

⁵³ Mario Torelli, "History: Land and People," in *Etruscan Life and Afterlife: A Handbook of Etruscan Studies*, ed. Larissa Bonfante (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 48.

⁵⁴ Christoph Ulf, "An Ancient Question: The Origin of the Etruscans," *Etruscology* vol. 1, ed. Alessandro Naso (Boston: De Gruyter, 2017), 18.

⁵⁵ Torelli, "History," 48.

⁵⁶ Simon F. K. Stoddart, *Historical Dictionary of the Etruscans* (Lanham, MA: Scarecrow Press, 2009), 79.

Tuscia: Cerveteri, Tarquinia, Veii, Vulci, and Volsinii, in addition to Fanum Voltumnae itself. A Renaissance reader might have been familiar with these cities only in theory, however, as some places' names had changed over the centuries and others still had been abandoned. Tarquinia, for example, was called Tarchna or Tarchuna by the Etruscans, and Tarquinii by the Romans. Populations shifted during the early medieval era, moving several kilometers away to the *borgo* that was known as Corneto until 1922, when the town's name was changed to Tarquinia to reflect its Etruscan origins.

From Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, a sixteenth century antiquarian would know that the Etruscans were powerful contemporaries to the Trojans and Latins, whose civilization predated the arrival of Romulus and Remus to the site that was to become Rome.⁵⁷ Under the first kings of Rome, Livy reports that the Romans and Etruscans clashed mostly in and around Veii, yet there seems to have been some interpenetration between the two cultures, as the three final kings of Rome hailed from Tarquinia.⁵⁸ After the overthrow of the Roman monarchy, war between the Romans and Etruscans raged for decades, with southern Tuscia seeing the majority of the action; hostilities generally focused around Veii, Sutri, Nepi, Cerveteri, and Tarquinia.

By 396 BCE, Veii had been conquered by Roman forces, and shortly thereafter Cerveteri was annexed, and colonies were established in Sutri and Nepi.⁵⁹ For at least a century, the Etruscans and Romans continued to clash in Tuscia in a cycle of truces, treaties, and uprisings, with the Etruscans occasionally forming alliances against Rome with the Faliscans, Umbrians, Samnites, and Gauls.⁶⁰ Despite its proximity to Rome, South Etruria proved to be a tough nut to crack due

⁵⁷ Livy, *The Early History of Rome: Books I-V of The History of Rome from its Foundation*, trans. Aubrey de Sélincourt (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 1.2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 1.33.

⁵⁹ Letizia Ceccarelli, "The Romanization of Etruria," in *A Companion to the Etruscans*, ed. Sinclair Bell and Alexandra Ann Carpino (Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 28-29.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.* 29.

in large part to the green tangle of the Silva Ciminia, the dense primeval forest that defined the region and thwarted the Roman armies' attempts to control the landscape.⁶¹ Decisive battles between the Etruscans and Romans at Lake Vadimo sounded the death knell of Etruscan resistance in the region,⁶² and while cities like Vulci and Volsinii remained independent for several more decades,⁶³ by the mid-third century BCE Etruria was absorbed into Rome.

From Roman sources, a sixteenth century reader would have had a good sense of Etruscan military history, but little information about what everyday life was like in Tuscia for their Etruscan ancestors. The reader would be familiar with Etruscan contributions to the pagan Roman religion—the sources all emphasize the Etruscans' great piety and exceptional divinatory skills—but a great many particulars about Etruscan culture would remain mysterious, just as they did for the Roman authors. From Vitruvius, the reader would be able to conjure up an image of an idealized Etruscan temple, with a columned portico, pitched roof, and three interior *cellae*; from Pliny the Elder and Horace, the reader would know that Etruscans excelled as both painters and sculptors of all materials, from bronze to terracotta.⁶⁴ Yet none of these material aspects of Etruscan culture would particularly resonate with a Tuscan audience, who were more accustomed to rock-cut tombs, monuments, spaces, and roads. The rupestrian nature of South Etruria is effectively neglected in the sources, making an already mysterious people seem all the more strange and unique to a Renaissance-era reader.

Vestiges of Roman Tuscia, while less common in the region than Etruscan ruins and remnants, were much more identifiably Roman. Constructed in the early third century BCE, the Via Cassia,

⁶¹ Ward-Perkins, "Etruscan Towns," 392.

⁶² Giuseppe Gavelli, "La Storia," in *Tuscia Viterbese*, ed. Pio Bartolozzi and Saverio Migliori (Rome: DEA, 1968), 110.

⁶³ *Ibid.* 111.

⁶⁴ Nancy Thomas de Grummond, "Rediscovery," in *Etruscan Life and Afterlife: A Handbook of Etruscan Studies*, ed. Larissa Bonfante (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 19.

Via Aurelia, and Via Clodia, with their characteristic paving, cut through the region⁶⁵ just as the aqueducts of Orte, Montalto, Monteromano, and Tarquinia leave their indelibly Roman mark on the landscape. The semicircular theater of Ferento and the amphitheater in Sutri announced themselves as identifiably Roman forms, as did the remains of thirteen bathing complexes outside of Viterbo, the oldest known structures associated with the region's hot springs.⁶⁶ Numerous inscriptions in Latin are carved into *tufi* monuments, tombs, and mile markers scattered throughout the countryside.⁶⁷ The survival and Romanization of *tufi* culture as the region passed from Etruscan to Roman control is not particularly surprising considering the Roman propensity toward absorbing other traditions, beliefs, and peoples under the mantle of Rome. Romanized Tuscians simply adapted their rock-cut tradition to Roman life, as the rupestrian amphitheater and mithraeum of Sutri attest.

While the region was slow to Christianize, rock-cut catacombs in Nepi and Bolsena show that rupestrian vernacular was adapted for the use of Christian communities in the area as early as the third century CE.⁶⁸ As the power of Rome eventually disintegrated and the invasions of northern tribes set Italian populations in flux, many of Tuscia's communities fragmented; Roman settlements were generally either abandoned in favor of older Etruscan ones, as in the case of Blera and Norchia, or new sites altogether, sometimes located on fortified hilltops,⁶⁹ or other times deep within the woods, like the rock-cut settlement of Santa Cecilia outside of Bomarzo.⁷⁰ Control of the region alternated between Gauls, Ostrogoths, Byzantines, Langobards, and Franks during this

⁶⁵ Gavelli, "La Storia," 119-120

⁶⁶ Charles Mack, "The Bath Palace of Pope Nicholas V at Viterbo," in *An Architectural Progress in the Renaissance and Baroque: Sojourns in and out of Italy* vol. 1, ed. Henry Millon and Susan S. Munshower (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1992), 45; Angelo Allegrini, "Una Lunga Storia," 1.

⁶⁷ Lidio Gasperini's *Iscrizioni Latine Rupestri nel Lazio; Etruria Meridionale* (Rome: Università di Roma, 1989) is an exhaustive study of this multitude of inscriptions.

⁶⁸ Gavelli, "La Storia," 122.

⁶⁹ J.B. Ward-Perkins, "Etruscan Towns," 400.

⁷⁰ Steingräber and Prayon, 98.

period, until various fragments of Tuscia were parceled out as gifts to the papacy during the eighth century, forming the Patrimonium Tusciae of the Patrimony of Saint Peter, an early form of the Papal States.⁷¹ This period also saw the establishment of the Via Francigena, the major pilgrimage route to Rome, which passes through a number of Tuscan *comuni*, including Bolsena, Montefiascone, Viterbo, Vetralla, and Sutri.

By the eleventh century, Tuscan society was largely feudal, and families like the Capocci, Annibaldi, Farnese, Anguillara, and Orsini were emerging as powerful lords in the region.⁷² Viterbo also began to emerge as a city of substantial size and population,⁷³ just as many of the *centri storici* of the region's hilltowns were establishing their footprints upon the landscape.⁷⁴ This era also saw an architectural boom, with the construction of a number of Romanesque basilicas throughout the region; most of these churches—from the *duomo* in Sovana to San Giorgio in Soriano nel Cimino—make extensive use of *tuffo*, attesting to the historic continuity of the *tuffo* vernacular, and its ability to adapt as architectural forms and functions changed across time.

As the late twelfth century bled into the Duecento, Viterbo became increasingly important in the conflicts between the papacy and the Holy Roman Emperor; the town was majority Guelph, and not only generally proved loyal to the Pope, but also produced a child mystic—Saint Rose of Viterbo—who preached against Frederick II's occupation of Italy and rallied her city against his besieging forces in 1243.⁷⁵ The city's reputation as a papal home-away-from-Rome was also established during this era, with the construction of the distinctively Gothic Palazzo dei Papi in 1257. Multiple popes were elected, lived, and even died in the *palazzo* until the Conclave of 1281,

⁷¹ Gavelli, "La Storia," 125-126, 131.

⁷² Daniela Pagliai, *Itinerari della Tuscia: Storia, Arte, Natura* (Rome: Editalia, 1991), 83.

⁷³ Edward Price, "Viterbo," 248.

⁷⁴ Ward-Perkins, "Etruscan Towns," 400

⁷⁵ Bruno Barbini, *Viterbo: History and Masterpieces* (Florence: Bonechi, 2000), 6

when the *viterbesi* rioted in displeasure at the election of Martin IV, who subsequently moved the Papacy to Avignon.⁷⁶ In the absence of the papal court, the leading families—including the Gatti, the Tignosi, and the di Vico—vied for control of the city, resisting papal authority.⁷⁷ While Cardinal Gil de Albornoz and his army of mercenaries restored papal order to the city in 1354, it was not until the 1430s that the last di Vico was finally subdued.⁷⁸ The popes effectively shunned Viterbo until Nicholas V returned to the city in 1450 to restore the medieval *bagni*, which he credited with curing his gout.⁷⁹

Viterbo's hot springs were a crucial player in the city's development during the Quattrocento, as the papal spa, designed by Bernardo Rossellino, quickly became a popular locus for members of the papal court and curia.⁸⁰ Work on the bath palace continued under Pope Calixtus III up through Pope Sixtus IV;⁸¹ Pius II took the waters multiple times for his gout, and described the *paesaggio viterbese* in a letter as a bucolic retreat whose simple pleasures were reflected in the beauty of the landscape.⁸² Others still—including Niccolò Perotti and Cardinal Basilius Bessarion—commissioned their own private bathing complexes in the area.⁸³ While some came to Viterbo seeking a cure, for many the baths primarily served a social and intellectual function; Simonetta Valtieri describes them as a “fertile cultural environment” that nurtured the humanist circles which began to emerge in Rome during the latter half of the fifteenth century.⁸⁴

⁷⁶ Barbini, *Viterbo*, 6-7.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 8.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.* 8.

⁷⁹ Mack, “The Bath Palace,” 46.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 46.

⁸¹ *Ibid.* 47.

⁸² Valtieri, “Papi, Mercanti, Umanisti e Curiali nella Viterbo del Rinascimento,” in *Viterbo nel Rinascimento*, ed. Simonetta Valtieri and Enzo Bentivoglio (Rome: G. Bentivoglio, 2012), 24.

⁸³ Valtieri, “Le Terme di Viterbo,” 58-59.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 50.

The 1470s saw Nicola della Tuccia publish his *Cronache e Statuti della Città di Viterbo*, and while he focused almost exclusively on the late medieval history of the region, his brief references to Tuscia's pre-Roman past are telling. In his introduction, Nicola demonstrated knowledge of Rome's wars against the Etruscans—he mentions Veii and the Roman statesman Marcus Furius Camillus—yet he credits Japheth, the son of the biblical patriarch Noah, with establishing human civilization in the region.⁸⁵ However, this association with the Great Flood was hardly a Quattrocento invention; the thirteenth century chronicler Godfrey of Viterbo appears to have been the earliest author to link the region to Noah and his family.⁸⁶ Although these mythic origins were clearly a part of the public imagination for centuries, Nicola's text shows that for all their proximity to Etruscan ruins and spaces, fifteenth century Tuscians relied as much on fiction as on fact in their understanding of their region's history. The Etruscan past, therefore, was effectively a nebulous blank slate ripe for interpretation or manipulation, an empty vessel for meaning upon which any necessary signification could be inscribed.

This method of harnessing the shrouded pre-Roman past in the service of *campanilismo* had already been employed by Renaissance Florentines; Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo Bruni, and Lorenzo Ghiberti were among the many authors who enshrined the Etruscans as the storied fathers of Florentine character, values, and artistic prowess.⁸⁷ Although the Florentines lacked a well-rounded picture of Etruscan civilization, the myriad of unknowns served less as a hindrance and more an expedient in the construction of a unifying national character and legitimizing past; the

⁸⁵ Manuela Doni Garfagnini, *Il Teatro della Storia fra Rappresentazione e Realtà: Storiografia e Trattatistica fra Quattrocento e Seicento* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2002), 95 no. 70.

⁸⁶ Ingrid D. Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo," in *The Etruscan World* (London: Routledge, 2013), 1125.

⁸⁷ Caroline Susan Hillard, *An Alternate Antiquity: The Etruscans in Renaissance Florence and Rome* (Diss. Washington University in Saint Louis, 2009), 38-44; Steven Bule, "Etruscan Echoes in Italian Renaissance Art," *Etruscan Italy: Etruscan Influences on the Civilizations of Italy from Antiquity to the Modern Era*, ed., John Franklin Hall (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Museum of Art, 1996), 310

Etruscans, in short, were easily adaptable, and were ripe to be molded in favor of certain ideologies, localities or narratives.

Just as the rise of humanist and antiquarian pursuits in late Quattrocento Viterbo created the ideal environment for renewed fascination with the Etruscan past, the relative malleability of the Etruscans as an ideological device opened the door for authors motivated largely by local agendas. To lionize the Etruscans was to lionize Tuscia, which—despite having its own unique topography, history, dialects, and culture—had long been overshadowed by the glory and prestige of Rome. While the Renaissance has been largely defined in terms of its relationship with Roman antiquity, authors like Anthony Grafton have emphasized that the period also saw an intense flurry of interest across Europe in alternative, non-Roman histories that valorized local personalities, narratives and aesthetics.⁸⁸ Etruscan heritage was poised to provide the perfect ingredient in the fashioning of a uniquely Tuscan identity, and with the intervention of one particularly inventive Dominican friar, the region would be the recipient of an illustrious Etruscan history which eclipsed that of Rome itself.

Annio da Viterbo's Tangled Histories

While he is now infamous among scholars for his counterfeit antiquities and literary fabrications, the writings of Giovanni Nanni—or Annio da Viterbo, as he later styled himself—are essential to any discussion of Renaissance Tuscan history and identity. Dishonest methods aside, the popularity of his texts demonstrates that his forays into Etruscology and local history struck a chord with his readers, and fulfilled an apparent need within the community; Annio's writings not only meant that Tuscia was no longer relegated to languish in Rome's shadow, they

⁸⁸ Anthony Grafton, "Inventions of Tradition and Traditions of Invention in Renaissance Europe: The Strange Case of Annio da Viterbo." *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 14.

also provided much-needed context for the plethora of ancient ruins and monuments which defined the local landscape. Even though this context was largely spurious, Annio's body of work was the first substantial study of the Etruscans—let alone the first study of pre-Roman Tuscia—to be written during the Renaissance, synthesizing authentic artifacts and ancient texts with outright forgeries.

Born in 1437 to a humble *viterbese* family, Annio entered the city's Dominican convent of Santa Maria in Gradi at the age of 11.⁸⁹ While the Order of Preachers would take Annio across Italy—he spent time in Rome, Florence, and Genoa preaching, teaching, and writing treatises on topics like alchemy and astrology—by 1489 he had returned to his native city, where he turned his attention to matters of local history.⁹⁰ In 1491, he published a treatise dedicated to the Farnese,⁹¹ providing the family with an impressive line of descent that stretched back to the Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris.⁹² In a move that would become one of his signature rhetorical practices, Annio strategically wove together a complex tapestry of genuine ancient sources, homegrown folklore, and outright falsehoods, twisting the words of authors like Diodorus Siculus to add weight to his fabricated claims. Leaning on Diodorus' pro-Egyptian slant, Annio argued that Isis and Osiris founded Viterbo and established the Etruscan civilization, who subsequently colonized and brought learning to all corners of the world.⁹³

⁸⁹ Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo," 1118

⁹⁰ Ingrid D. Rowland, "Viterbo as a Model of Rome in the Work of Annio of Viterbo," in *Topoi, Topographies, and Travellers: Papers of a Conference at the Swedish Institute for Classical Studies in Rome, 10-12 November 2016*, ed. Stefano Fogelberg Rota and Anna Blennow (Rome: Svenska Institutet i Rom, 2019), 62-63.

⁹¹ Brian Curran, Amanda L. Collins, and Ingrid Rowland all write that Annio dedicated the treatise to one Cardinal Ranuccio Farnese, brother to Alessandro Farnese (the future Pope Paul III), yet he had no brother named Ranuccio. The only cardinal to go by this name was not born until 1530. However, Ranuccio was a common first name in among the Farnese, so it is possible that Annio wrote the treatise for someone from a different branch of the family tree. Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance: The Afterlife of Ancient Egypt in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 121; Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy and its Legitimizing Potential: Annio of Viterbo, Etruscan Inscriptions and the Origins of Civilization," in *The Afterlife of Inscriptions*, ed. Alison Cooley (London: University of London Press, 2000), 60; Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo," 1122.

⁹² Amanda L. Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 60.

⁹³ *Ibid.* 60, 72.

Annio doubled down on these claims in his next treatise, which focused more explicitly on the history of the city. Drawing on the legend that Hercules had founded Viterbo, Annio elaborated that the city was established by Osiris and his son, Hercules the Egyptian, as the capitol of the Italian peninsula, and that it was “a place of delight, full of pleasantness and pleasure, supremely rich and suitable for every kind of human use.”⁹⁴ He also discussed local place names in his treatise, anchoring his arguments in the landscape of the city itself. Viterbo, he claimed, was a corruption of the original Aramaic (read: Etruscan) name Biturgion—which meant “next to the flowing Urgion,” a reference to the Urcionio river that ran through the city.⁹⁵ Similarly, he claimed nearby Vallepiatta to be a corruption of the Aramaic name Py Atta that allegedly meant “entrance to the sacred grove,”⁹⁶ potentially alluding to the wooded sanctuary of Fanum Voltumnae, which Annio located on the hill occupied by the city’s Rocca Albernoz.⁹⁷ Many of these place names, he wrote, were mentioned by Ptolemy,⁹⁸ lending an air of credibility to his tangled linguistic web.

Annio’s next treatise, written in 1492, concerns six epigraphic plaques that he referred to as the Tablets of Volturrhena, eliding a local place name associated with the Urcionio and *Tyrrhenoi*, the Greek name for the Etruscans.⁹⁹ The tablets varied in both material and style of script: two were written in Greek, one in Latin, one in hieroglyphs, and two more in Etruscan—which of course only Annio could read—one of which was even purported to be enchanted, radiating with a magical inner light that caused the text to shift between a concave and convex appearance.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁴ Rowland, “Annius of Viterbo,” 1123.

⁹⁵ Ibid. 1123.

⁹⁶ Ingrid D. Rowland, “Annius of Viterbo (1432/7-1502), and the Beginnings of Urban History,” in *From Site to Sight: The Transformation of Place in Art and Literature*, ed. Turid Karlsen Seim and Victor Plahte Tschudi (Rome: Scienze e Lettere, 2013) 26.

⁹⁷ Ibid. 27; Ingrid D. Rowland, “Annius of Viterbo and the Beginning of Etruscan Studies,” in *A Companion to the Etruscans*, ed. Sinclair Bell and Alexandra Ann Carpino (Chichester, England: Wiley Blackwell, 2016), 439.

⁹⁸ Rowland, “Annius of Viterbo,” 1123

⁹⁹ Rowland, “Viterbo as a Model,” 63-64; Rowland, “Annius of Viterbo and the Beginning of Etruscan Studies,” 439.

¹⁰⁰ Collins, “Renaissance Epigraphy,” 61-62; Rowland, “Annius of Viterbo,” 1125.

Taken as a whole, these tablets presented a slightly different version of Viterbo's founding than Annio had written about a year earlier; it was actually Janus, the Etruscan deity later incorporated into the Roman pantheon of gods, who brought civilization to Italy and founded Viterbo as his capitol and established the Etruscans as his chosen people.¹⁰¹ Osiris and Hercules the Egyptian were recast as minor characters, as the tablets attested that the former had only visited the city to celebrate a triumph, and the latter was credited with building Viterbo's monumental city walls.¹⁰² The tablets also revealed that the ancient deity Cybele was of local extraction, and that she had actually been an Etruscan queen, who later emigrated from Etruria to Asia Minor to found Troy, where she was worshipped as a mother goddess.¹⁰³

This treatise marks a turning point in Annio's thinking, as he no longer claimed outside influences to have been responsible for the rise of Etruscan culture. Instead, civilization spread outward from Tuscia to the rest of the Mediterranean, attesting to the absolute preeminence of the region, which far outstripped the accomplishments of either Greek or Roman society. Viterbo had been the heart of a powerful and sophisticated empire, and Annio had the artifacts to prove it.

These epigraphic tablets, however, were far from genuine antiquities; the stelae with Etruscan script allegedly disintegrated shortly after Annio translated them, just as the Greek and Latin inscriptions were of a style more akin to early medieval texts than ancient epigrams.¹⁰⁴ While it is still a matter of debate whether Annio forged most of these artifacts himself or simply exploited found objects to his own purposes,¹⁰⁵ the tablets' provenance is ultimately irrelevant. What mattered at the time was that there were enough of them—a whole four out of six things—that

¹⁰¹ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 69

¹⁰² Alexander Nagel and Christopher Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance* (New York: Zone Books, 2010), 249; Rowland, *Annio of Viterbo (1432/7-1502)*, 23.

¹⁰³ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 61-62.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.* 62-63; Rowland, "Viterbo as Model," 64.

¹⁰⁵ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 65.

looked foreign in appearance, which meant perhaps they were ancient. And if they were ancient, that could only mean then that they were Etruscan, not Roman, and wholly unique to Tuscia. The treatise was addressed to Viterbo's governing council of eight, and the matter was actually taken surprisingly seriously. Records attest that the objects were proudly displayed in both the city's Palazzo dei Priori and cathedral,¹⁰⁶ their very presence proving the treatise in a "mutually reinforcing circuit between visual and verbal document."¹⁰⁷ Annio's tablets looked and read like the kind of real evidence that lent legitimizing support to local foundation myths.

Yet two questions remain: why, in a region filled with authentic Etruscan ruins, artifacts, and unreadable inscriptions, would Annio create fake Etruscan antiquities? And why would he carve them out of alabaster and marble instead of *tuffo*? We know Annio was familiar with genuine Etruscan antiquities as early as 1493, when he either happened to discover—or a little too serendipitously 'discover'—an Etruscan burial mound while Pope Alexander IV Borgia was hunting in the region.¹⁰⁸ Contained inside were Etruscan sarcophagi sculpted from *tuffo*, which were then also displayed alongside his forgeries in the Palazzo dei Priori.¹⁰⁹ Upon finding the grave goods, Annio declared them to be commemorative figures referring to the marriage of Cybele to the King of the Etruscans and descendant of Janus, Jasius Ianigena, in the presence of Isis. While the inscriptions that Annio documented on the base of the sarcophagi are no longer visible, he did transcribe them for his fourth treatise, the *Borgiana Lubraciuncula*, and they have been shown to be an invented pseudo-Etruscan script. But why would Annio need to doctor authentic ancient objects with what has been described as "Semitic-Hebraic mish-mash"¹¹⁰?

¹⁰⁶ Hillard, *An Alternate Antiquity*, 63-64; Walter Stephens, "When Pope Noah Ruled the Etruscans: Annio of Viterbo and his Forged *Antiquities*," in *MLN* 119 no.1 (Jan. 2004), 214.

¹⁰⁷ Nagel and Wood, *Anachronic Renaissance*, 247

¹⁰⁸ Hillard, *An Alternate Antiquity*, 58; Rowland, "Annio of Viterbo," 1123

¹⁰⁹ Rowland, "Annio of Viterbo," 1123

¹¹⁰ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 73

Perhaps in the answer lies in the simple fact that Annio's invented artifacts were much more manageable when only he had the cipher. Although he was no more capable of reading Etruscan than other luminaries of Renaissance antiquarianism like Leon Battista Alberti or Francesco Colonna—no one could read Etruscan in the fifteenth century—one could easily recognize non-Latin characters as looking characteristically Etruscan. Annio's fabricated antiquities were carefully deployed ur-objects that shed light on Etruscan history, culture and origins. If authentic objects and sites could not be made to speak for the Etruscans, then the next best option was to manufacture a mouthpiece for the culture as a whole, helping to put all other Etruscan traces and fragments into perspective, while simultaneously bending to the will of Annio's propagandistic ideologies.

The *Borgiana Lubraciuncula* saw Annio's work take a turn toward catching the interest of the Borgia pope, who in 1499 bestowed upon the friar "the third highest position in the Dominican order: Master of the Sacred Palace, the Vatican's resident theologian and censor of published books."¹¹¹ His most explicitly pro-Borgia text was also his most fantastic and most superlative in terms of the history he provided Viterbo; published in Rome by the prolific papal printer Eucharius Silber in 1498, Annio's *Commentaria Fratris Joannis Annii Viterbiensis super Opera Diversorum Auctorum de Antiquitatibus Loquentium* (often referred to as simply the *Antiquities* in English) was his *magnum opus*, published in at least eighteen different editions between the date of their first release and 1612, reaching a wide European audience.¹¹² The work refined some of Annio's earlier arguments about the founding of Viterbo, and drew on his signature pastiche style of folding forged ancient documents in among authentic ones to prove his arguments.

¹¹¹ Rowland, "Viterbo as Model," 64-6

¹¹² Stephens, "When Pope Noah Ruled," 204-205.

The *Antiquities* held by Annio's earlier contention that Janus had founded Viterbo—but perhaps in an effort to downplay the sacrilegious nature of arguing for a pagan deity's phenomenological existence—Annio specified that Janus was actually the biblical Noah, and that Viterbo was the first city he established in the rebuilding of postdiluvian society.¹¹³ As direct descendants of Noah, the Etruscans stood elevated above all other ancient peoples as true progenitors of civilization, and it was under their guidance that humanity enjoyed a Golden Age of two hundred and fifty years.¹¹⁴ The Etruscans inherited not only Noah's worldly wisdom which they spread across the globe, but also his deep faith and connection to God, and Annio reframed the Etruscans' ancient reputation for mysticism and piety as one of specifically Judeo-Christian devotion, slipping into the realm of *prisca theologia*, as though the *Etrusca Disciplina* prefigured Christian rites.¹¹⁵ By ennobling the Etruscan people as far more than simple pagans, Annio effectively established Viterbo as the most important settlement in human history, casting the Etruscans and their descendants as the true Chosen People of the Judeo-Christian tradition.¹¹⁶

Deftly mixing fact with fiction, mythology with theology, Annio wrote that Noah/Janus was the first *pontifex maximus*,¹¹⁷ a claim that lent a certain Old Testament pedigree to Tuscia's long-standing connections with the papacy. And yet there was a strange kernel of truth in the outlandish assertion; the *pontifex maximus* had been the high priest of Rome since the Etruscan kings, and just as ancient Rome borrowed from Etruscan beliefs and practices, Christian Rome had borrowed the *pontifex maximus* from the pagans.¹¹⁸ But then again, Annio also asserted that Noah/Janus and

¹¹³ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 74; Stephens, "When Pope Noah Ruled," 208; Walter Stephens, *Giants in Those Days; Folklore, Ancient History and Naturalism* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 104.

¹¹⁴ Collins "The Etruscans in the Renaissance: The Sacred Destiny of Rome and the *Historia Saeculorum* of Giles of Viterbo (c. 1469-1532)," in *Historical Reflections*. 27 no. 1 (2007), 115.

¹¹⁵ Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo," 1125

¹¹⁶ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 74

¹¹⁷ Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo and the Beginning of Etruscan Studies," 443

¹¹⁸ Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo," 1125-1126

his family, who now included Isis, Osiris, and Hercules the Egyptian, had actually been giants.¹¹⁹ Annio also managed to locate the Spanish Borgia family's origins in Noachian/Etruscan Viterbo, connecting Alexander VI to Osiris and Hercules the Egyptian by way of the bull in the family's heraldic device, which he, among others, claimed was the sacred bull Apis of ancient Egypt.¹²⁰ It is frequently difficult to separate his sincere efforts to try to understand the Etruscans from his outlandish claims motivated by both *campanilismo* and his desire to please the Pope. Yet despite all the flatteries and falsehoods, it is clear that Annio knew enough about the Etruscans to correctly state that their language read like Hebrew from right to left,¹²¹ and we know that by 1498 he had made more progress deciphering Etruscan script and pronunciation than any other antiquarians of his time.¹²²

In order to support his many bold and far-fetched assertions, Annio wove references to reliable texts by authors like Aristotle, Virgil and Thomas Aquinas together with doctored sources. The most notable of these counterfeit texts was his "recovery" of the lost books of Berosus the Chaldean, who was known through the works of Pliny the Elder and Flavius Josephus to have been a Babylonian sage and astrologer whose histories partially aligned with certain Old Testament narratives.¹²³ The 'authenticity' of these freshly discovered and translated documents was corroborated by Berosus' mention in the works of such illustrious authors, and Annio appeared for all intents and purposes as a great antiquarian on the cutting edge of his field, piecing together a lost history of most ancient Tuscia from esoteric texts thought lost by other humanist scholars. Annio's trail of citations appeared watertight, for by folding his own fabrications in among credible

¹¹⁹ Stephens *Giants in those Days*, 103; Anthony Grafton, "Inventions of Tradition," 12.

¹²⁰ Rowland "Annius of Viterbo," 1126; Curran, *The Egyptian Renaissance*, 117.

¹²¹ Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance: Ancients and Moderns in Sixteenth-Century Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 56.

¹²² Rowland "Annius of Viterbo," 1127-1128

¹²³ Collins, "Renaissance Epigraphy," 73; Stephens "When Pope Noah Ruled," 209.

sources, he legitimized his invented sources, in turn legitimizing his claims. Through this masterful juxtaposition of distinguished ancient sources, biblical narrative, local myth and calculated falsehood, Annio's publications appeared to conform to proper scholarly structures, as they "looked—and read—like a comprehensive and powerful history of the world."¹²⁴

Naturally, his theories were well regarded in his home town. Viterbo adopted as its city seal the four sacred letters—FAVL—which Annio claimed stood for the four Etruscan settlements that once made up Viterbo: Fanum Voltumnae, Arbanum, Vetulonia, and Longula.¹²⁵ In 1558, Teodoro Siciliano immortalized Annio in fresco among other elite *viterbesi* in the Sala del Consiglio of the city's Palazzo dei Priori.¹²⁶ Annio's work was again saluted in the late 1580's as Baldassare Croce and Tarquinio Ligustri frescoed the palazzo's Sala Regia with a series of events chosen from Annio's texts, including a scene of Janus/Noah founding Viterbo.¹²⁷ As a side note, the foundation imagery was accompanied by frescoes of maps depicting the region and generic landscape scenes representing the various Tuscan *comuni*, hinting at associations between regional identity, terrain, and Etruscan heritage.

While Annio is believed to have died in 1502—rumored either to have been murdered by Cesare Borgia, or dying as a madman "in chains" after one of several breakdowns which purportedly left him incapacitated¹²⁸—his ideas about the Etruscans were taken up and elaborated on by the Augustinian friar, Egidio da Viterbo, who, like Annio, found himself involved with the papal court of the early Cinquecento. While Egidio was eventually made a Cardinal and even served as Bishop of Viterbo from 1523 to 1532, it was during his years as a preacher in the courts of Popes Julius II

¹²⁴ Grafton, "Inventions of Tradition," 12.

¹²⁵ Rowland, "Annius of Viterbo," 1126

¹²⁶ Hillard, *An Alternate Antiquity*, 63

¹²⁷ *Ibid.* 63-64

¹²⁸ Rowland, "Viterbo as Model," 69

and Leo X that Annio's Etruscans made their way into his orations and writings. In a 1507 sermon, Egidio claimed that the arrival of Janus/Noah to Viterbo ushered in a third Golden Age that anticipated the arrival of Christ, making explicit reference to Annio's forged writings of Berossus the Chaldean.¹²⁹ Egidio also argued that FAVL stood for four key Etruscan religious principles as well as the four creatures of Ezekiel's vision, and that the Gospels therefore contained these important Etruscan values, further enfolding the ancients into a Christian worldview.¹³⁰ In his principal work, the unpublished *Historia Viginti Sæculorum per Totidem Psalmos Conscripta* of 1513, Egidio continued to emphasize this Christianized version of the Etruscans, framing them as the "crucial sacred link between the Old and New Testament, and... the guardians of the sacred mysteries of God."¹³¹ Through Egidio's lens of *prisca theologia*, Viterbo was simultaneously the seat of the ancient world and the Old Testament world, collapsed into one handy holy land whose promise was fulfilled by the new Christian age of Rome. Like the fictive ancestry conjured up by Annio for the Borgias, Egidio emphasized the Etruscan lineage of Pope Leo X de' Medici, shifting the spotlight on Etruscanness from Tuscia to Tuscany; it was a Florentine, not a *viterbese* who was ushering in a new Christian/Etruscan Golden Age.¹³²

But the seat of the *pontifex maximus* would not stay occupied by a Tuscan for long. In 1534, Cardinal Alessandro Farnese—the son of Pier Luigi I Farnese, the *condottiere* lord of Montalto di Castro in western Tuscia—assumed the mantle of pope as Paul III. While the Farnese had controlled small hilltowns clustered on the western side of the Lago di Bolsena like Canino, Gradoli, Valentano, and Latera for several centuries, Alessandro and his sister Giulia "la Bella" were the first family members to extend their political ambitions beyond the affairs of Tuscia.

¹²⁹ Collins, "The Etruscans in the Renaissance," 123-124

¹³⁰ *Ibid.* 125

¹³¹ *Ibid.* 127-128

¹³² *Ibid.* 135

With a Tuscan pope, not only did the region's relationship with the papacy once again change, its social structure was completely altered as well. To tell the story of Tuscia in the Cinquecento is to tell the story of the Farnese family's rise in wealth, influence, and power.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Patrons and the Changing Landscape of Cinquecento Tuscia

In order to understand the designed landscapes of sixteenth century Tuscia and their ultimate significance, we must first examine the careers, interests, and families of their patrons, for this study partakes of the school of thought that these works reflect the values, tastes, and ideals of the individuals for which they were designed. This is not to say that they are not also the creative expression of the landscape architects, sculptors, and gardeners who crafted and tended these locations, but as sites devoted to personal leisure, they were more tailored to the earthly wants and needs of their patrons than, for example, an altarpiece. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that these gardens should not be read through a primarily biographical lens, as this study rejects programmatic, narrative, and iconographic readings of landscape. The sites—from their materials to their organizational principles—should be approached as capsules of information about their patrons, and the more we know about the lives and times of these individuals, the better we can define their parts in the *discorso*.

While this conversation between the patrons regarding their designed landscapes should be read as a friendly demonstration of erudition, it is important to note that it is also a nuanced interpersonal game of sorts, wherein one attempts to outwit or outdo one's contemporaries through a display of abundance, preciousness, and *meravigliosità*. Even though the patrons were all well-educated nobles living in Tuscia, they came from vastly different social standings and backgrounds. Tuscia's social fabric was changing in the sixteenth century—due in large part to the Farnese—and we should be sensitive to the subtle frictions and potential hostilities that the meteoric rise of the *nouveau riche* would have created between our interlocutors. In order to accurately portray the characters' voices in the *discorso*, this changing social dynamic must be explored in greater depth, starting with the shift of Farnese power from the Lago di Bolsena region towards Rome.

Alessandro Farnese, Cardinal *Nipote*

Sometime around 1491, just as Annio da Viterbo published his first treatise on the history of Tuscia, Giulia “la Bella” Farnese of the Montalto line of her family began an affair with Pope Alexander VI. While it is difficult to parse rumor from reality¹³³—as it almost always is when the Borgias are concerned—Giulia’s involvement with the pope proved beneficial to her family’s interests. Her brother, Alessandro, was made a cardinal in 1493, and used the opportunity to forge alliances among religious and secular powers alike, and while Giulia’s relationship with the Borgia pope would not last out the decade, Alessandro was a quick study at curial politicking. He also took a mistress, with whom he had five children, the eldest of which was the infamous *condottiere* Pier Luigi II, whose own son, also named Alessandro Farnese, was the patron of Villa Farnese and one of our main interlocutors.

Born in 1520, this younger Alessandro was well-acquainted with the rewards as well as the responsibilities of being born into privilege. He received his early education in Bologna and Rome where he studied under Gian Pietro de’ Grassi, the Bishop of Viterbo,¹³⁴ but when the elder Alessandro was unanimously elected as Pope Paul III in 1534, he was called upon to serve the family interests. At the age of only fourteen, the young Alessandro was made a cardinal by his grandfather.¹³⁵ Under Paul III’s wing as the cardinal *nipote*, Alessandro would have opportunities—financial, political, material, to name just a few—to which few other nobles in Italy could lay claim. But in exchange, Cardinal Alessandro would have to surrender his rights of

¹³³ Loek Luiten, “Sexuality, Agency, and Honor in the Connections between the Borgia and Farnese Families in Renaissance Rome,” in *The Borgia Family: Rumor and Representation*, ed. Jennifer Mara DeSilva (London: Routledge, 2020), 34.

¹³⁴ Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale: Alessandro Farnese, Patron of the Arts* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 10

¹³⁵ *Ibid.* 2.

primogeniture to family properties, and devote his life to both the Church and the furthering of Farnese interests.

Paul III saw that his family was well taken care of though, and he began carving up Tuscia to portion out as Farnese possessions. In 1537, Paul III created for his son, Pier Luigi II, the Duchy of Castro, a territory combining historic Farnese properties with newly acquired *comuni* like Nepi and Ronciglione. This duchy consisted of: Castro, Montalto, Musignano, Ponte della Badia, Canino, Cellere, Pianiano, Arlena, Tessennano, Piansano, Valentano, Ischia, Gradoli, Grotte, Borghetto, Bisenzio, Capodimonte, Marta, Bisentina, and Martana, as well as outlying satellite properties such as Caprarola, Carbognano, Fabrica di Roma, Canepina, Vallerano, Vignanello, Corchiano and Castel Sant'Elia.¹³⁶ With the stroke of a pen, the Farnese went from being feudal lords of scattered hilltowns to a proper sixteenth century ducal dynasty unified under Paul III's line.

Massimo Miglio has described the Farnese acquisition of major swaths of Tuscia as “the ultimate event” in the history of the region,¹³⁷ characterizing the formation of the Duchy of Castro as the decisive catalyst in early modern Tuscan history, when the territory's identity was largely rewritten—for better or for worse—as a Farnese one.¹³⁸ With the elevation of Paul III as pope, the upwardly mobile family's trajectory was given a substantial boost of wealth, influence, power, and property. The Farnese had been slowly cultivating strategic alliances throughout Lazio for generations, marrying up into both the Pitigliano and Vasanello lines of the Orsini family, as well as to the Caetani and dell'Anguillara families; but now the tables had turned, and it was politically

¹³⁶ Luciano Passini, *Caprarola: Il Paese e la sua Storia* (Rome: Manfredi, 2011), 42.

¹³⁷ Miglio, *Asterischi*, 105

¹³⁸ The author specifically couches this characterization of Tuscan history in landscape terms, describing the Farnese mark on the region as one of “paessaggio, boschi, barchi, giardini, essenze arboree, fontane, stemmi, simboli testimoniano quanto profondamente una dinastia possa influire su una realtà.” Miglio, *Asterischi*, 104-105.

advantageous to marry a Farnese. Paul arranged strategic unions for his grandchildren, marrying his granddaughter Vittoria to Duke Guidobaldo II della Rovere of Urbino, his grandson Ottavio to Charles V's illegitimate daughter, Margaret of Austria, and his youngest grandson Orazio to Diane of France, the illegitimate daughter of King Henri II.

As for Alessandro, he began to accumulate an impressive collection of prestigious—and above all lucrative—offices, serving as everything from the Governor of Tivoli to the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem. In a staggering display of nepotism, he concurrently held 13 bishoprics and 64 benefices—more than any other cardinal of the sixteenth century—between 1534 and 1539¹³⁹, and his grandfather bestowed upon him the office of Cardinal Chancellor of the Roman Church, a position second only to the Pope in Church hierarchy. As many of these positions required little of him and entailed few religious duties, Alessandro played a role far more political than spiritual, to the extent that he would not officially take holy orders until 1564.¹⁴⁰ Serving as crown-cardinal for both Spain and the Holy Roman Empire, Alessandro was directly immersed in international politics, where he learned to navigate the shifting web of alliances between Europe's heads of state. He frequently served as a papal legate for his grandfather, representing Paul III in a variety of diplomatic situations, including the negotiation of peace between Charles V and François I at the Truce of Nice in 1538, the same year he was appointed secretary to the Pope. Before he was 30 years old, Alessandro was not only the consummate Renaissance cardinal—rich, powerful, well-connected, and just a little corrupt—he was also the epitome of the cardinal *nipote*, basking in the favors bestowed upon him by his grandfather.

As pope, Paul III had more in common with his predecessor Clement VII than Adrian VI, in that he used the papacy more as a stepping stone to secure wealth, territory, and influence for his

¹³⁹ Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 10.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 161.

family than furthering any particular religious agendas. In 1545, Paul named Alessandro's younger brother Ranuccio a cardinal, and seeking to expand the family holdings ever further, Paul gave Alessandro's father both Parma and Piacenza in 1546. Unfortunately for the Farnese, Pier Luigi II was murdered in 1547 in a plot by the Gonzaga, and the two cities were lost to the family until 1551 when they were reclaimed by Alessandro's younger brother, Ottavio. In 1549, Paul III died at the age of 81, effectively making Alessandro the de facto patriarch of the family; this also meant that the cardinal *nipote* had no pope to sustain him.

Relationships between the Farnese and Julius III were rocky and while the del Monte pope, allied with Charles V, tried to take back Parma and Piacenza in 1551, the Farnese family officially allied themselves with the French throne and went to war for roughly a year against the Holy Roman Emperor and the Papal States.¹⁴¹ The conflict was resolved in 1552, but the next year Alessandro's youngest brother, Orazio the Duke of Castro, was killed in France during the Battle of Hesdin; Ottavio now controlled the Duchy of Castro in addition to Piacenza and Parma, which became the site of his permanent residence. During this period, Alessandro turned his attention to the incomplete structure at the family's holdings in Caprarola, securing the services of the architect Giacomo Barozzi da Vignola in 1556. By the end of the decade, fortunes had largely stabilized for the Farnese with the election of Pope Pius IV de' Medici—announced and crowned by Alessandro himself¹⁴²—and it was during this period of prosperity that construction resumed at Caprarola.

Alessandro's grandfather had acquired the town in 1504 back when he was still a cardinal, and sometime in the early 1520s work began on a pentagonal fortress, with both Baldassare Peruzzi

¹⁴¹ Ibid. 12.

¹⁴² Mary Hollingsworth, *Conclave 1559: Ippolito d'Este and the Papal Election of 1559* (London: Head of Zeus, 2021), 157.

and Antonio da Sangallo the Younger providing plans for this original structure. The property eventually came to Alessandro, who commissioned Vignola's transformation of the *rocca* into a garden villa. Work on the site began around 1557, with the leveling of both the *piazza* in front of the villa, and the gardens to the rear. The ceremonial opening of the villa with a Mass of dedication was said in 1559,¹⁴³ the same year Taddeo Zuccari, of the fashionable school of Roman Mannerist painters, began to paint fresco cycles within the *piano nobile*. While changes were made across time to the lower gardens, they were largely complete by Vignola's death in 1573. The upper gardens of the villa along with the *casino* were probably designed by Giacomo del Duca and built between 1584 and 1586, toward the very end of Alessandro's life. The cardinal died in 1589, leaving the villa to his grandnephew, Cardinal Odoardo Farnese.

Villa Farnese was not the only garden associated with Alessandro. In 1542, he purchased land on Rome's Palatine Hill that was to become the Orti Farnesiani, one of the first private botanical gardens in Europe. While ownership of the site bounced from Alessandro to Ottavio, from Ottavio to Ranuccio, and then back to Alessandro on Ranuccio's death in 1565,¹⁴⁴ the design of the site has generally been attributed to Vignola, attesting to a long history of patronage between the cardinal and the architect. The Orti consist of a series of terraces oriented outward onto the ancient Forum, and the gardens—which were replete with aviaries, nymphaea and fountains—intermingled with ancient ruins, drawing direct associations between Renaissance landscape practices and the world of Roman antiquity.

Heir to the humanist culture of High Renaissance Rome, Alessandro kept within his entourage some of the great polymaths, humanists and antiquarians of the sixteenth century. In 1548, he took the noted poet, author, and translator Annibale Caro into his employ as a secretary; not only did

¹⁴³ David Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 285.

¹⁴⁴ David Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 70.

Annibale own a small *vigna* in Grottaferrata near Frascati, where the Farnese and their Roman circle also owned villa properties,¹⁴⁵ he has also been credited as the brain behind the iconography of Villa Farnese's fresco cycles. After Annibale's death in 1566, the celebrated antiquarian and historian Onofrio Panvinio—who had been Alessandro's chief librarian since 1554—was attached to the project, as was Fulvio Orsini. The illegitimate son of Maerbale Orsini of Mugnano in Teverina, Fulvio was a humanist and antiquarian who entered Alessandro's employ upon the death of Ranuccio Farnese, working for both cardinal brothers as a curator and librarian.

The Farnese had amassed an extensive assortment of antiquities in Rome during the first half of the Cinquecento thanks in large part to Alessandro's grandfather, who had obtained them either by purchasing or confiscating a number of sculptural collections from other wealthy families and cardinals, including those of Cardinal Federico Cesi and the Colonna.¹⁴⁶ Alessandro enlarged this cache with his own acquisitions, some of which came from the del Bufalo and Sassi collections, while others came from excavations in the Terme di Carcalla, including the Farnese Bull, the Farnese Hercules, and two monumental granite basins.¹⁴⁷ These works were mostly housed in or around the city's Palazzo Farnese, which Paul III had commissioned from Antonio da Sangallo the Younger, with later work by Michelangelo, Giacomo della Porta, and Vignola. Although Alessandro would spend the majority of his adult life in Rome, his primary place of residence was the nearby Palazzo della Cancelleria, which had housed Vice-Chancellors of the Church since the site was commissioned by Cardinal Raffaello Riario in 1517.

¹⁴⁵ David Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 48; Tracy L. Ehrlich, *Landscape and Identity in Early Modern Rome: Villa Culture at Frascati in the Borghese Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4.

¹⁴⁶ Federico Rausa, "Le Collezioni Farnesiane di Sculture Antiche: Storia e Formazione," in *Le Sculture Farnese: Storia e Documenti*, edited by Carlo Gasparri (Naples: Electa, 2007), 15.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 15; Kathleen Wren Christian, *Empire Without End: Antiquities Collections in Renaissance Rome, c. 1350-1527* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 206, 280.

As a collector and patron of the arts, Alessandro appears to have had a penchant for objects that were simultaneously precious and magnificent; items he commissioned include the Cassetta Farnese—a gilded coffer studded with rock crystal and lapis lazuli—as well as a sumptuously detailed book of hours from Giulio Clovio, and an ornate *pietre dure* table from Vignola. While his collections contained drawings by Raphael, Parmigianino, and Correggio, Alessandro had more of a passion for objects like medals, engraved gems, coins, and maiolica than for painting, generally deferring to his advisors when contracting with painters for portraits or fresco cycles. His ignorance in these matters was apparently well-known in the city, as he is discussed in Francisco de Holanda’s *Roman Dialogues* as a man “who does not know what painting is.”¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Alessandro’s advisors steered him well, connecting him with some of the most lauded and sought-after painters of his day, including Titian, Francesco Salviati, Giorgio Vasari, and El Greco. In his later years, perhaps driven by Counter-Reformation trends in Rome—or, more cynically, his desire to fashion himself as a pious *papabile*—his interests shifted from predominantly secular commissions to the building and restoration of churches in and around the city, as well as the patronage of local confraternities.

As evidenced by his correspondences, Alessandro appears to have taken his most active role as a patron in architectural commissions; he worked directly with Vignola on a number of projects, expressing “very firmly decided ideas”¹⁴⁹ about the appearance and function of the constructions he financed. Besides the villa in Caprarola, Vignola spearheaded the construction or renovation of family *palazzi* in Latera, Piacenza, and Isola Farnese, and was connected to a number of Farnese architectural and infrastructural projects focused around the Viterbo area, in particular the city’s Porta Fauille and the fountain in Piazza della Rocca. His most famous Farnese commission is the

¹⁴⁸ Clare Robertson, *Il Gran Cardinale*, 237.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 236.

Chiesa del Gesù in Rome, the construction of which was funded entirely by Alessandro, who was an early benefactor of the Society of Jesus. The Cardinal was extremely territorial about this project, insisting that only he and Vignola were to make decisions regarding the church's design, which he wanted to appear as modern and commanding as possible.¹⁵⁰ Alessandro clashed with the Jesuits on numerous occasions, particularly over his insistence that the church be outfitted with a grand vault instead of a simple flat roof, and it was clear that he thought of the site as 'his' church, reserving space in front of the high altar as a Farnese sepulcher for both himself and successive generations of the family.¹⁵¹ Il Gesù should be considered as Alessandro's primary public legacy, as much a monument to reform-minded Jesuit aesthetics as it is a testament to the wealth and ego of a man accustomed to getting what he wanted.

Vicino Orsini, Duke of Bomarzo

For all that Alessandro Farnese represented the cosmopolitan world of the privileged Renaissance cardinal, Vicino Orsini could be said to embody the vanishing world of feudal Tuscia that the newly ascendant Farnese dynasty was threatening to destabilize. For centuries, the Orsini had been one of the most powerful noble families in Lazio, yet by the Cinquecento their fortunes and position were on the decline, waning as the great families of early modern Rome like the Pamphili, Aldobrandini, and Borghese consolidated power. Compounding that, Vicino came from a lesser branch of the Orsini; Bomarzo was a small and relatively insignificant backwater compared to the family holdings on Rome's doorstep like Bracciano or Monterotondo. While his own line of the family may have at one point claimed a loftier social standing than that of the Farnese, the rise of Paul III saw such a drastic shift in the region's power dynamics that within the span of a generation the Orsini increasingly found themselves at the Farnese's behest.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid. 183-184

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 184-185, 189

Vicino was born in 1523, the second son of Clarice Orsini di Franciotto of the Monterotondo line of the family and Duke Giovanni Corrado Orsini of Bomarzo. When their eldest son Girolamo was disinherited for refusing to join the clergy,¹⁵² it set into motion an inheritance dispute between Vicino, his brother Maerbale, and other members of the Orsini that grew so contentious that in 1542 Cardinal Alessandro Farnese was finally called upon to arbitrate the issue. In the first of many incidents where the Farnese would take an authoritative position over the Orsini, Vicino was ultimately given Bomarzo and the nearby village of Chia, while Maerbale received both Mugnano in Teverina and Penna in Teverina.

In his youth, Vicino appears to have been a man of some renown throughout Tuscia, as authors in the Viterbo area attempted to curry his favor by dedicating their works to him. In 1541, a comedy entitled *La Cangiara* was performed in Viterbo in his honor, and in 1544 Giuseppe Betussi dedicated his dialogue on love, *Il Raverta*, to Vicino, extoling the young duke's immortal honor and virtue, characterizing him as a man of "immense and fatal" beauty in both body and soul.¹⁵³ Vicino also proved himself to be an accomplished poet, publishing three of his verses—sonnets in a Petrarchan style, expressing a certain inquietude of the soul, as well as a desire for glory and virtue—in a 1545 collection of poems compiled by his friend Lodovico Domenichi.¹⁵⁴

Sometime in the mid-1540s, Vicino married Giulia Farnese, the great-niece of Paul III. Hailing from the Latera branch of her family, Giulia started life as a minor noble of the same basic social standing as Vicino, yet with the election of her grand-uncle as pope, the Duke of Bomarzo was now marrying up into her family. While this union made Vicino and Cardinal Alessandro cousins-in-law and granted him entry into a new sphere of social and political influence, it also effectively

¹⁵² Jessie Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo: A Renaissance Riddle* (London: Francis Lincoln, 2007), 8.

¹⁵³ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 287-290.

¹⁵⁴ Mariella Perucca, "Giulia Farnese Orsina, spouse of Vicino," in *Viterbo delle Delizie; La Camera delle Belle Castellane, Cortigiane, Dominatrici*, trans. Anthony Shuggar (Milano: Grafiche Milani, 1989), 198-199.

turned Vicino into a liege of the Farnese dynasty. Like his father before him, Vicino was a *condottiere*, and by 1546 he had been assigned by Pope Paul himself to a regiment commanded by Orazio Farnese. That same year, he found himself deployed in Germany to fight in the Schmalkaldic War, and Bomarzo was left under Giulia's care, as attested by a dedicatory inscription on a public cistern she installed within the town. While the exact nature of her stewardship is debated in the field of Bomarziana, the couple's friends and associates lauded Giulia as a prudent and stalwart individual, whose fidelity to and unwavering support for her husband was truly remarkable.¹⁵⁵

Though the match between the two appears to have been an amicable one, the Habsburg-Valois War of 1551-1559 meant that Vicino was frequently absent from Bomarzo in the service of the Farnese. In 1553, he and his friend Torquato Conti, who was also Alessandro Farnese's nephew-in-law, were captured at the Battle of Hesdin after the death of their commander, Orazio Farnese, and they were held as prisoners of war. While Vicino wrote to Alessandro requesting the Cardinal's aid, his efforts proved fruitless, and it was not until the intervention of Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo two years later that the pair returned home. The next year, the Farnese called upon Vicino to carry sensitive diplomatic documents to their agent in Paris; this mission was a delicate and dangerous one, as the Farnese in an act of "underhand diplomacy" were breaking their alliance with the French in favor of the Spanish Crown.¹⁵⁶ In a letter to Ottavio Farnese, Vicino voiced frustration regarding the mission and his relationship with Alessandro, yet he begrudgingly concluded, "I have served, I know how to serve, and shall continue to serve."¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Perucca, "Giulia Farnese Orsina," 202.

¹⁵⁶ Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 250.

Vicino's correspondences show that while he understood his obligation to and position under the Farnese, he was also deeply ambivalent toward the game of social niceties and aristocratic positioning. When Ottavio wrote him requesting a visit to Bomarzo, Vicino responded, "No duke has yet entered my house, and should one come, then perhaps a duke in title but not according to the impression made," adding that "I cannot receive you, at least not as Duke of Parma, but rather as Ottavio Farnese, whom I value with sword and cloak rather than seeing him as a princely character."¹⁵⁸ Simultaneously embracing Ottavio as a personal friend while dismissing his recently acquired title, Vicino strikes a balance between deference and impertinence. In a note to his friend Giovanni Drouet, he elaborates on his social strategy: "I would commend to you the manners I adopt with [Cardinal Farnese]... be like someone who makes himself scarce without a greeting, without asking permission — I come and I go, and do what I like."¹⁵⁹ Vicino appears to have pushed back against the social hierarchies at play between him and the Farnese through humor, and his letters frequently take a sarcastic, flippant, or even overly candid tone, as though it entertained him to behave coarsely in the face of polite society. When writing to Alessandro—his wife's cousin—Vicino thanks the Almighty for his many "*puttane*,"¹⁶⁰ and while it is unclear whether Giulia was still alive at this point, the sheer crassness of the statement is shocking, especially given that his union with the Farnese had afforded him status, opportunities, and connections that might not have been accessible to him otherwise.

Giulia died sometime before 1564, as evidenced by a letter from family friend Francesco Sansovino referring to her as Vicino's "former consort,"¹⁶¹ and it is through his correspondences with Vicino that the Sacro Bosco has been linked to Giulia's memorial. On three separate

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. 253.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. 271.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 251.

¹⁶¹ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 118.

occasions, Sansovino indicates that the garden—or perhaps just its *tempietto*—was in some way dedicated to her,¹⁶² and thus the standard interpretation of the site has held that Vicino, bereft with grief at the loss of his treasured wife, created the *bosco* in her memory as a grand gesture of love, crystalizing his longing for her into stone monuments and monstrosities. Vicino’s own writings paint a different picture of their relationship, however, as he never mentions Giulia in relation to the *bosco* or even with any particular affection, and reveals himself to be somewhat of a serial philanderer who took multiple lovers before and after her passing. His letters to Giovanni Drouet are frequently bawdy; he describes himself as “dry straw before the flames of lust,”¹⁶³ with an insatiable hunger for “*potta, potta, potta.*”¹⁶⁴ He writes of the pleasures of his garden, where he is free to “dally with [his] beautiful shepherdesses under the shade of a fine beech tree,”¹⁶⁵ and in a particularly ribald poem laced with double entendres he extols his *boschetto*—also a term for a small, handmade trap to catch little birds—for its ability to excite female guests, who react with noisy squeals and giggles when holding an *uccello* “*grosso e grasso*” in the palm of their hands.¹⁶⁶

Besides Vicino’s propensity to use the garden as a site for trysts, the presence of an inscription in the *bosco* dating to 1552 casts further doubt on the interpretation of the site as his memorial to Giulia. If construction on the *bosco* began that year, Giulia was still alive and managing their estate in Vicino’s absence, as he was on campaign in the service of the Farnese for much of the 1550s. While this raises interesting questions regarding the nature of Giulia’s involvement with the garden in its early stages, it is unlikely that the site was her brainchild, and scholarly consensus pins the conception of the *bosco* on Vicino, whose literary interests were vast and eclectic; he was

¹⁶² Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Sacro Bosco*, 297 (1570) and 302 (1575).

¹⁶³ Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 21.

¹⁶⁴ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Sacro Bosco*, 260 (mid-April 1574).

¹⁶⁵ Sheeler, *The Garden at Bomarzo*, 23.

¹⁶⁶ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Sacro Bosco*, 264 (1574).

a voracious reader of Marsilio Ficino, Rabelais, Ariosto, and Girolamo Cardano, with a particular taste for the eccentric and the unorthodox, professing in his correspondences a passion for diverse and extravagant subjects.¹⁶⁷

The 1552 date also definitively places the Sacro Bosco at the head of the landscape timeline for our present study, over half a decade before work commenced on the lower gardens at Caprarola, and a full 16 years before Cardinal Gambara wrote Cardinal Farnese requesting Vignola's services in the creation of his own villa gardens. While it appears that a great many additions to the *bosco* were undertaken in the 1570s when Vicino was well into his retirement from military service, the starting date of 1552 would mean that the site was not created as a reactionary and idiosyncratic answer to the relative orthodoxy of Villa Farnese and Villa Lante's gardens. It indicates that Vicino was the first nobleman to commission a pleasure garden of any substantial size in the region. It would also indicate that the earliest taste for monumental landscape design and aristocratic garden life in the region came from sources other than the High Renaissance models of the *vigna*, nymphaeum, or enclosed sculpture garden that Alessandro Farnese would have been familiar with in Rome. Vicino was neither aping other regions' garden traditions nor following any precedent set by the tastemakers of the Farnese circle.

Outside of his garden, however, it is difficult to define Vicino's taste in art. While he discussed with Annibale Caro a potential fresco cycle for the loggia of Palazzo Orsini depicting the Fall of the Giants, the plans never came to fruition. Apart from some minor alterations to the *palazzo* and a bronze portrait medal, no other works can be securely pinned to him as a patron. Vicino's single-mindedness in his patronage shows his passion for his garden, and it is not unsurprising that he happily referred to himself as a "*cittadin de boschi*."¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Ibid. 52; Luisa Quartermaine, "Vicino Orsini's Garden of Conceits," in *Italian Studies* 32 (1977), 70.

¹⁶⁸ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Sacro Bosco*, 260 (mid-April 1574).

Vicino died in 1586, yet unlike Alessandro Farnese, it is not known where he—or Giulia for that matter—is buried, attesting to the wide gulf in social status between the two patrons. Where Cardinal Odoardo Farnese inherited the villa in Caprarola and carried on his great uncle’s legacy as a patron of art and architecture, Vicino Orsini’s line in Bomarzo petered out by the mid-Seicento, when the Lante della Rovere family absorbed the feudal seat into their holdings. The Sacro Bosco, Vicino’s legacy project, effectively slumbered through the centuries, excluded from the ranks of the *grandi giardini italiani* until the 1950s, when it was ‘rediscovered’ by historians of art and landscape architecture.

Gianfrancesco Gambara, Bishop of Viterbo

If Alessandro Farnese was the consummate Renaissance prince of the Church, Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara represented the changing face of the sixteenth century cardinalate. While his villa garden indicates that Gianfrancesco did not shy away from personal luxuries, a closer look at his life and patronage shows that he took the duties of his station relatively seriously as Italy’s Counter-Reformation climate began to emphasize piety over politicking within Church offices. Like Alessandro, Gianfrancesco came from a noble family and was accustomed to certain privileges, yet unlike the Farnese *nipote*, he was not privy to the same advantages of limitless wealth and power afforded to one under the Pope’s wing. Caught between two polarities—the Farnese dynasty on one hand and the Borromeo family on the other—Gianfrancesco walked a middle path, a Cardinal committed to *restitutio* who still knew how to have a good time.

Gianfrancesco’s mother, Virginia Pallavicini, came from a noble Lombard family; as the daughter of the *marchese* of Cortemaggiore, a *comune* between Parma and Piacenza, she was engaged to Ranuccio Farnese, son of the cardinal who would eventually become Pope Paul III, (*not* the son by the same name of that same man’s elder brother, who also became a cardinal, and

was brother to our central figure Alessandro).¹⁶⁹ When this elder Ranuccio died in 1529, a bond of kinship remained between the families, even though Virginia ultimately married Brunoro Gambara, *comte* of Pratoiboino, younger brother to both Cardinal Uberto Gambara and the poet Veronica Gambara. In 1533, Virginia and Brunoro had Gianfrancesco Gambara. When Brunoro died in 1559, Virginia again remarried, this time to Gilberto Borromeo, who already had a son from a previous marriage, named Carlo. In short, Gianfrancesco knew the man who would become the sainted Cardinal Carlo Borromeo simply as his stepbrother.

Like his uncle Cardinal Uberto Gambara, Gianfrancesco was a well-studied young man, whose educational background included the universities of Padua, Bologna, and Perugia, studying both Church and secular law.¹⁷⁰ After graduating, Gianfrancesco joined his uncle at the court of Charles V and later that of Julius III; Uberto also gave Gianfrancesco the position of provost at S. Maria di Palazzolo in their home town of Brescia. Gianfrancesco rose through the ranks of the Apostolic Chamber, eventually becoming its president.¹⁷¹ When Uberto died in 1549, family ties obliged Alessandro Farnese to take the fledgling Churchman under his wing. In 1561, Pope Pius IV Medici di Marignano made Gianfrancesco a cardinal, and sent him to the Council of Trent until its end in 1563; Gianfrancesco himself signed Pius' name to the Council's acts.¹⁷²

By 1566 Gianfrancesco was named Bishop of Viterbo, an office where he followed in the footsteps of men like Egidio da Viterbo and Cardinal Raffaele Riario, who purchased for the bishopric the property that Gianfrancesco inherited in Bagnaia. He kept busy with Church projects, serving in 1566 as a delegate for the sanitary vigilance of Rome during an epidemic, and

¹⁶⁹ Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 347

¹⁷⁰ Carla Benocci, *Villa Lante a Bagnaia: Tra Cinquecento e Seicento, La Chiesa in Forma di Villa* (Vetralla, Viterbo: Davide Ghaleb, 2010), 10.

¹⁷¹ Salvador Miranda, *The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church* (Miami, FL: Florida International University Library, 1998), retrieved from <https://cardinals.fiu.edu/cardinals.htm>.

¹⁷² *Ibid.* n. pag.

the next year he was appointed a seat on the tribunal of the Inquisition, with a special emphasis on heretical books.¹⁷³ During his tenure on the tribunal, he saw through with the deaths of several people deemed heretics, including humanist Pietro Carnesecchi and pamphleteer Niccolò Franco, who were both associated with the reformist *spirituali*.¹⁷⁴ Gianfrancesco's period with the Inquisition marked the final days of prosecution against the *spirituali*, who had gained a foothold in Viterbo during the early Cinquecento with their heterodox *Ecclesia Viterbiensis*, led by Cardinal Reginald Pole, Cardinal Giovanni Morone, and Vittoria Colonna. In Viterbo, Gianfrancesco focused on stamping out heretical belief as well as reform of the clergy and the restoration of churches within his diocese. It was also during this time that Gianfrancesco turned his mind toward the episcopal properties in Bagnaia he had inherited as Bishop of Viterbo; in 1568 he became governor of Bagnaia, the same year that he wrote a letter to Alessandro Farnese requesting Vignola's services in transforming Riario's early-Cinquecento hunting *barco* just south of Bagnaia's *tuffo* heart.

By 1576, Gianfrancesco had resigned the government of his diocese, and in the following years took the titular Roman churches of San Clemente and Santa Maria in Trastevere, living in part on his annual cardinal's pension.¹⁷⁵ It was during this period that he consecrated the basilica of Santa Maria della Quercia near Bagnaia that was home to a miracle-working Quattrocento icon of the Virgin and Child which had originally hung on an oak-tree in a makeshift shrine. When Pope Gregory XIII visited Tuscia in 1578—travelling first to Caprarola, then to visit the Madonna della Quercia—he visited Gianfrancesco's villa in Bagnaia, which we know from accounts to have been largely completed at this point, and only somewhat brighter in its splendor than it is today. The

¹⁷³ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 245.

¹⁷⁴ Benocci, *Villa Lante a Bagnaia*, 9.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 32.

next year, the Pope revoked Gianfrancesco's pension.¹⁷⁶ Carlo Borromeo—in a literally holier than thou letter—wrote from Milan to his stepbrother, chiding his fellow Cardinal over the money expended on the luxurious gardens at Bagnaia, which could instead have benefitted the religious orders.¹⁷⁷ Borromeo reproached him for making structures to house birds, fish, and animals at the expense of the needs of his spiritual flock; Gianfrancesco did not appear to heed his step-brother's saintly advice, however, and continued to refine his garden and the attached *casino*, writing to Francesco I de Medici with a request for 200 fir trees.¹⁷⁸

Examination of his patronage gives two very different impressions of Gianfrancesco, and points to a strong separation between public and personal life, sacred and secular. In his role as the Bishop of Viterbo, he oversaw the modernization of the Romanesque cathedral of San Lorenzo, which was believed to have been built on the site of an Etruscan temple to Hercules. Gianfrancesco commissioned the reconstruction of the *duomo*'s façade, roof and apse, while adding new chapels and windows.¹⁷⁹ He stripped away centuries' worth of artistic embellishment, and the overall impression is one of architectural and decorative simplicity. His repristinated result is a rustic fusion of cosmatesque floors, an archaizing arcaded nave, and a gabled wooden ceiling, all of which visually hearkened back to earlier periods in the history of the Roman Church, which held new fascination in the Counter-Reformation climate. The back-to-basics reconstruction is a far cry from Alessandro Farnese's vision for Il Gesù, and shows that Gianfrancesco was taking his stepbrother's call for reformed paleo-Christian aesthetics to heart.

¹⁷⁶ Claudia Lazzaro, *The Villa Lante at Bagnaia* (PhD. diss., Princeton University, 1974), 28.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 28.

¹⁷⁸ Hervé Brunon, "Dalle 'Fieri non Rapaci,' ai 'Fruttiferi e Pomati Arbori': Villa Lante a Bagnaia e l'evoluzione del Barco nel Rinascimento," in *Villa Lante a Bagnaia*, ed. Sabine Frommel and Flaminia Bardati (Milan: Electa, 2005), 40.

¹⁷⁹ Lazzaro, *The Villa Lante at Bagnaia*, 20.

While at face value it seems somewhat difficult to square this commitment to Borromean sobriety in the *duomo* with the exuberant display of abundance found at Villa Lante, the stark difference between the two sites speaks to the nuanced nature of perspectives on art—including its appearance, appropriateness, and ultimately its function—in the wake of the Council of Trent. This is hardly the steamroller of artistic conservatism that has come to characterize Tridentism in the popular imagination; Gianfrancesco obviously understood the demands of his time for artistic austerity in sacred environments, but these clearly did not apply to the secular realm, indicating an attitude of increased compartmentalization between these two types of space. There was a time and place deemed appropriate for the display of extravagance, and the demands placed on art within a church held no sway over a garden. The record of Gianfrancesco's commissions paints a picture of two distinct aesthetics—ecclesiastical and personal, and never the twain shall meet—that complicates our understandings of Counter-Reform patronage, demonstrating that Churchmen with artistic reform on their minds were hardly the dour iconoclasts as they have sometimes been portrayed.

The Cardinal cultivated a diverse circle of friends including Cardinals Ippolito d'Este and Antonio Carafa, as well as Pope Pius V Ghislieri, to whom Gianfrancesco served as a confidant and advisor; he also maintained close relationships with Alessandro Farnese, Vicino Orsini, and Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, who kept a *palazzo* in nearby Soriano nel Cimino. Gianfrancesco's friendship with Vicino, combined with the presence of various trick fountains throughout the garden, indicate that the Cardinal had a sense of humor and levity, despite his reputation for religious zeal and conservative politics. As in the case of Vicino, Gianfrancesco's garden was his primary foray into art patronage and collecting, indicating that the site took priority in his personal life and was his central mode of self-fashioning outside of his identity in the Church. Unlike

Vicino, however—who hurt himself in a fall from a dam in his *bosco*—Gianfrancesco’s correspondences do not show him playing the same active role in the formation of his garden, ultimately aligning him with the approach seemingly favored by Alessandro Farnese: a more passive, gentlemanly engagement with the landscape.

Yet unlike Alessandro, Gianfrancesco did not have a promising young cardinal nephew to which he might leave his garden. When the cardinal died in 1587, his properties in Bagnaia were sequestered by the Camera Apostolica, which ultimately gave the property to the *nipote* of Pope Sixtus V, Cardinal Alessandro Peretti di Montalto, who made a handful of alterations to the garden, including the addition of the pendant Casino Montalto to Gianfrancesco’s Casino Gambarà.¹⁸⁰ In 1645, Cardinal Ippolito Lante Montefeltro della Rovere—the very same man who came to own Bomarzo—purchased the property, thus explaining the site’s current appellation of Villa Lante rather than Villa Gambarà. As for Gianfrancesco, he was buried not in Brescia, Rome, or the cathedral of Viterbo, but Bagnaia’s neighboring church of Santa Maria della Quercia, potentially indicating either special devotion to the Madonna della Quercia, or a personal fondness for the area.

The Supporting Characters

Alessandro, Vicino, and Gianfrancesco are the principal interlocutors in the present *discorso*, but they are joined by a supporting cast of characters who are woven throughout the dialogue, appearing from time to time to discuss their own gardens or the designed landscapes of their friends and family members. While their landscape architectural projects are less well known than the gardens at Caprarola, Bomarzo, and Bagnaia, these projects form an important contextual tapestry behind the three main sites, further highlighting both the shared as well as the unique features of

¹⁸⁰ Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 360.

the three gardens at the heart of this study. Just as these sites' inclusion helps project a more complete picture of *villeggiatura* in the region, the introduction of these individuals in the *discorso* helps flesh out the social and familial relationships between the patrons. All told, these additional characters add greater nuance to this conversation about landscape, villa life, regional identity, art and nature.

The first of these ancillary characters is Niccolò IV Orsini, Count of Pitigliano, and the eldest of the interlocutors; born in 1510 to Gianfrancesco Orsini and Ersilia Caetani, Niccolò was a first cousin to Alessandro Farnese—his aunt Girolama Orsini was Alessandro's mother—and a somewhat more distant relative to Vicino in Bomarzo. On the very edge of Tuscia, the Orsini of Pitigliano frequently clashed with Orvieto and the Republic of Siena, and in 1547 a people's revolt unseated Niccolò's father and forced him to flee the city. Shortly thereafter, Niccolò regained control of Pitigliano, leading to rumors that he had fomented the revolt in order to seize his father's title.¹⁸¹ But Niccolò was not well-liked by the people, and in 1562 he was ousted from Pitigliano by a pro-Medicean uprising, and would not regain his feudal seat until 1576.¹⁸²

While there are no documents confirming patronage, the largely derelict Parco degli Orsini on the outskirts of Pitigliano has long been connected to Niccolò. Garden historian David Coffin has surmised that the *parco* dates from sometime before 1562 rather than after 1576,¹⁸³ thus making it roughly contemporary with Vicino's Sacro Bosco. Coffin also postulates that the site's ruinous condition may have been the result of Farnese incursions in the 1570s on Pitigliano from the Duchy of Castro,¹⁸⁴ which was controlled by Alessandro's younger brother Ottavio, indicating a strained

¹⁸¹ Irene Fosi, *Papal Justice: Subjects and Courts in the Papal State, 1500-1750*, (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2011), 92.

¹⁸² Lidia Cacioli, "Giovanni da Falgano fra Pier Vettori e la Camerata de' Bardi," in *Rinascimento: Rivista dell'Istituto Nazionale di Studi sul Rinascimento* 31 (1991), 323.

¹⁸³ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 124.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.* 124.

relationship between the cousins in terms of property rights. While Niccolò is believed to have owned a sizeable cabinet of curiosities,¹⁸⁵ little else is known about his activities as a patron, and he is primarily remembered for his bellicose nature, his feud with the Medici, and his stint in Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo under suspicion of heresy.¹⁸⁶

On the other side of the coin is Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo, who—like Gianfrancesco Gambara—was an outsider to the region. Cristoforo was born to a noble Tyrolean family in Trent in 1512, and while his mother tongue was German, he spent his youth at Italian universities studying law and philosophy.¹⁸⁷ In 1529 he was made a canon of Trent, and within a decade he had become the Prince-Bishop of the diocese, a role unique to the Holy Roman Empire that fused religious and secular duties. Cristoforo participated in the Imperial Diet of Regensburg in 1541, and ultimately took up holy orders in 1542; by 1545, he was elevated to the rank of cardinal by Paul III Farnese.¹⁸⁸ That same year, Paul convened the Church's nineteenth ecumenical council in Trent, and Church officials descended on Cristoforo's diocese for the next 18 years to discuss the rise of Protestantism and the role of reform within the Catholic Church.

In 1560, in exchange for hosting the Council, Pope Pius IV de' Medici gifted Cristoforo the feudal seat of Soriano nel Cimino, a fief that had once been controlled by the Orsini, and had subsequently passed through the hands of the Borgia, della Rovere, and Carafa families.¹⁸⁹ Cristoforo began work on a new *palazzo* on the western side of Soriano, diverting the nearby Papacqua spring to the town as both a new source of drinking water for the citizens and to feed the fountains and three-sided nymphaeum connected to his palace. Completed in 1561, the Papacqua

¹⁸⁵ David Ekserdjian, "Notes," in *The Autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2010), 440.

¹⁸⁶ Fosi, *Papal Justice*, 92

¹⁸⁷ Salvador Miranda, *The Cardinals of the Holy Roman Church*, n. pag.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.* n. pag.

¹⁸⁹ Marinella Festa Milone, "Il Casino del Cardinal Madruzzo a Soriano nel Cimino," in *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* 17-19 (1970-1972), 71.

fountain was Cristoforo's only known landscape architectural commission, though Vicino Orsini dedicated the *casa pendente* in the Sacro Bosco to the Cardinal that bore a celebratory inscription indicating that the mind which is quiet is thereby wiser. Cristoforo was indeed noted for his wisdom, as well as his dedication to the reform of the Church, and he was a close friend to a variety of reformist Churchmen, including Cardinals Ercole Gonzaga and Giovanni Morone.¹⁹⁰ He was a prolific patron of religious music, and publishing houses in Trent flourished under his support.

Additional ancillary characters in the *discorso* include Vicino's brother Maerbale Orsini and his friend Torquato Conti, who was married to Ottavio Farnese's daughter, Violante, and served alongside Vicino in the Habsburg-Valois War. While Torquato lived outside of Tuscia in Poli, he consulted Annibale Caro regarding plans for his villa's garden, which he hoped would top the many "*stravaganze*"¹⁹¹ of Vicino's *bosco*. Torquato's garden has now largely vanished, but his interest in outdoing the Sacro Bosco demonstrates that this network of friends and family members engaged in a certain degree of competition with each other in terms of their landscape architectural projects. Maerbale's garden at Penna in Teverina is in a similarly ruinous state, and he is largely absent from historical record and Vicino's correspondences—the quarrel over their inheritance may have driven a wedge between the two brothers—but what little remains of the site helps establish patterns in Orsini patronage throughout Tuscia, and serves as another familial foil to the Sacro Bosco.

We should also consider Annibale Caro and Cardinal Ranuccio Farnese as background characters in the *discorso*; for a period in the mid-Cinquecento, Ranuccio owned the Orti Farnesiani in Rome, just as Annibale acquired a *vigna* in Grottaferrata on the Cardinal's advice.

¹⁹⁰ Marion Leathers Kuntz, *Anointment of Dionisio: Prophecy and Politics in Renaissance Italy* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 40.

¹⁹¹ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 294.

The two add their voices to the dialogue as educated patrons familiar with period garden culture, and while both represent Farnese interests, they demonstrate that garden ownership was an important facet in the cultivation of the self for this close social and familial circle. Although both men died in the mid-1560s while construction on the gardens at Caprarola, Bomarzo, and Bagnaia was still underway, they should be considered early participants in the discourse, helping establish a precedent for the other patrons. Annibale is especially important in this regard, as his learned advice was often sought out by a two of our interlocutors concerning the decoration of their villas or the potential contents of their gardens.

Not only should we think of all these individuals' designed landscapes as being part of an ongoing artistic conversation with each other, we should also take into consideration that the patrons visited each other's villas and residences frequently, and no doubt strolled through their gardens together, discussing the features before them. They surely sat together in the garden *casini*, partaking of food, drink, and companionship while they enjoyed erudite conversation in the shade. Their interpersonal relationships were caring, competitive, and sometimes more than a little complicated, but they shared plants, rocks, fruit, and even architects with each other to the extent that it is impossible to disentangle one garden from the others and study it in pure isolation. Delving deeper into the threads of conversation woven throughout the *discorso* sheds new light on this clutch of designed landscapes, and helps us better understand sixteenth century villa culture and ultimately the gardens that played host to it.

PART II THE MIDDLEGROUND

Before we turn to the gardens themselves, the interlocutors' residences must first be examined. This study assumes that villa and garden function as a matched pair, and that within the context of the sixteenth century *villeggiatura* lifestyle the two would have been thought of as part of a larger unit for recreation and relaxation away from the urban core. One cannot have a pleasure garden without it being anchored to some sort of abode, just as one cannot have a villa without gentrifying some portion of the landscape beyond wild First Nature. This study casts the villa as the lens through which the garden is viewed, as visitors during our interlocutors' lifetimes would most likely have been received by the patron at their place of residence before exploring the surrounding landscape. I argue that the residence and its approach to landscape—from its siting to its decoration—prime the visitor to read the garden a particular way, and that these modes of viewing both built and natural environments help us further reconstruct our interlocutors' voices within the *discorso*.

CHAPTER FIVE
Town and Country: The Residence as Lens

While many villas of the early Renaissance fulfilled some sort of productive agricultural function, by the mid-Cinquecento the vast majority of these properties in central Italy served primarily as status symbols for their owners. These extravagant estates were a world away from the simple agrarian pleasures of Virgil's *Georgics* or even Cosimo de' Medici's claims in the fifteenth century that he retired to his villa at Careggi to "cultivate" his soul¹⁹²; the early Cinquecento saw the focus of villa life shift from the rustic country retreat toward increasingly ostentatious luxury destinations created specifically to flaunt wealth and taste. By the sixteenth century, *villeggiatura*—the practice of retreating to a country residence as a leisure activity—had accrued a certain degree of cultural baggage that elided the custom not only with the performance of elite social status, but also with the many intellectual and ideological trappings of humanist culture. Participation in *villeggiatura* was an important facet in the fashioning of a fully rounded gentleman of substance, as owning a villa was more than a simple expression of one's wealth; it signified one's participation in an exclusive slice of the period's cultural life.

As a type, the villas of sixteenth century central Italy fulfilled needs that were "not material but psychological and ideological,"¹⁹³ in that they privileged pleasure over productivity, and catered to the bucolic fantasies of their patrons. These secondary residences effectively served no practical function within their respective communities, and were wholly dependent for both their "construction and maintenance on surplus capital normally earned in urban centers."¹⁹⁴ As sites of upper class leisure, these structures lacked the "contractual and reciprocal" bonds that defined

¹⁹² Katie Campbell, *Cultivating the Renaissance: A Social History of the Medici Tuscan Villas* (London: Routledge, 2002), 50.

¹⁹³ James Ackerman, "The Villa as Paradigm" in *Pespecta* vol. 22 (1986), 11.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.* 15.

the relationship between castle-dwelling feudal lords and their subjects, as patrons of villas had no particular obligation toward their surrounding population.¹⁹⁵ *Villeggiatura* might have been a removal from *urbe* to *rus*, but it was not rural life by any stretch of the imagination, and while we can glean much about how privileged sixteenth century urbanites viewed the countryside through their villas and gardens, these projects generally have little to tell us about local attitudes toward the surrounding landscape. As a verdant refuge from the demands and hazards of metropolitan life, the villa may style itself as a foil to the city, but ideologically speaking, it is more an extension of the urban sphere—a satellite, even—than a product of the countryside. It is rare to see rural populations creating analogous environments of leisure, which is why Tuscia presents us with such an interesting case study.

A Traditional Hilltown Bastion

While it might seem counterintuitive to begin our discussion of *villeggiatura* with Vicino Orsini—whose home was decidedly not a villa—Palazzo Orsini in Bomarzo dates back the furthest of the three main interlocutors' Tuscan residences, and must be examined first to establish traditional patterns of habitation within the region. In many respects, Bomarzo is a typical Tuscan hilltown. Situated on a *tuffo* butte that rises from the green sea of surrounding woodlands like a stone aerie (Figure 44), the *comune* fully blankets the landform, extending to and fusing with the rockface. The upward thrust of the promontory that the town perches upon is accentuated by the deep *forre* on either side of Bomarzo; to the west lies the Fosso Castagnolo and the rough, forested zones of the Bosco di Serraglio and Selva di Malano, while the eastern side is defined by the Fosso Morello and the surrounding wooded areas of Cagnemora and Tacchiolo. Apart from the

¹⁹⁵ Ibid. 15.

northernmost tip of the town that overlooks the Valle del Tevere where Tuscia begins to cede to Umbria, Bomarzo is an elevated rocky island surrounded on three sides with dense woods.

Approaching from the south, Bomarzo's rock-cut *centro storico* reveals itself as one emerges downhill from the foothills of the Monti Cimini, and the face of the hilltown that greets the visitor is largely made up of Palazzo Orsini (Figure 45). Although there is only one main point of access to the *centro storico*, it is far from a stately entrance; the visitor must wind an asymmetrical road up and around the *tuffo* mass, making several sharp turns and passing through both an arch and a covered passageway. The road funnels the visitor directly to the door of Palazzo Orsini, and one must pass through this chokepoint before venturing further into town.

Continuing onward around the corner and past the *palazzo*, the visitor comes to the hilltown's centralized Piazza del Duomo, which is dominated by the modest church of Santa Maria Assunta. The rest of Bomarzo extends northward on the *tuffo* butte, and like most *centri storici* in Tuscia there is no clear separation between the town and the topography. Space is tight here—buildings nestle right next to each other with little to no gaps in between—and the narrow, sinuous streets seem to rhyme with the twisty, stony hollows in the forests and *forre* below. Without any trees or urban green spaces in the hilltown's tuffaceous heart, Bomarzo proper is defined both above and below ground by the salt-and-pepper gray of *peperino*, as the town appears to emerge almost organically from the stone mass, growing upward from the inchoate cliff face and burrowing downward into the living rock (Figures 46-47).

Palazzo Orsini takes up a sizeable portion of this *tuffo* butte, and given its position at the threshold of town, the building reads more as a fortress than a palace. While fortified residences are relatively uncommon in the field of Italian garden studies, this manner of structure that walks the line between *castello* and *palazzo* is typical of the late medieval and early Renaissance

landscape of feudal Tuscia. While just as rural as the typical upper-class villa, this type of structure could simultaneously represent a noble family and fulfill a practical function within the community, serving not as a status symbol but as the institutional backbone of the *comune*. Unlike the villa purpose-built for personal leisure, rural *palazzi* like Palazzo Orsini offered protection to the people who worked the surrounding countryside and lived in the defensible rock-cut hilltown. As opposed to the many Churchmen who came to Tuscia to relax or take the waters, Vicino had no vacation home—his *palazzo* was a retreat only in the most tactical sense—and with Bomarzo as his sole place of residence, he would have been deeply immersed in the seasonal rhythms of rural life within the region. Living cheek-by-jowl with his subjects in the town's tangled urban nucleus, Vicino's relationship to both his residence and its surroundings would have fundamentally differed from the experience of both town and countryside as filtered through the lens of *villeggiatura*.

Where villa culture placed a certain emphasis on the immediate pleasure of the individual patron, strongholds like Vicino's represented not only a more public face for its inhabitants, but also a more dynastic imprint upon the local landscape. Palazzo Orsini was the seat of the Bomarzo line of the family since the Duecento, and generations of Vicino's family were born, lived, and died within the structure's walls. This was both the hub of Orsini life and the locus of their power within the town, and given the way the residence visually dominates the *tufo* butte, Palazzo Orsini effectively defines Bomarzo. For Vicino, the personal significance of the *palazzo* would have been multifold; it represented his family's dominion over the territory—their past, their present, and their future in Bomarzo—just as it visualized the highest rung of the period's rigidly stratified social ladder to which he would ever be able to climb. Unlike the upwardly mobile Cardinal Farnese, Vicino's fortunes would not carry him to loftier heights than a small duchy in a backwater

province. It was his lot in life to be a minor rural lord and he would ascend no further. Yet for all that Palazzo Orsini simultaneously represented Vicino's responsibilities and limitations, it also signified his total control over the *bomarzese* territory; while he may not have been able to climb any higher in polite Italian society, in Bomarzo, Vicino was lord of his own domain, the biggest fish in his own personal pond.

Palazzo Orsini squarely anchored Vicino in Bomarzo as a lifelong Tuscan, and its appearance both inside and out largely reflects local aesthetics and traditions. While the *palazzo* was given a modernizing facelift by Baldassare Peruzzi in the early Cinquecento under Vicino's father Gian Corrado¹⁹⁶, these alterations appear to have been primarily structural and the building retains its fundamentally Tuscan character. The exterior of the *palazzo* is composed almost exclusively of *tuffo*, unifying the façade with the vernacular stone buildings that surround it. Though rock is coarsely worked across the many faces of the asymmetrical residence, several façades are treated with a homogenizing coat of plaster (Figures 48-49). While the coarsely worked blocks fronting the *palazzo* may recall Antonio da Sangallo's rusticated portal for Palazzo Farnese in Rome, the same type of rough stonework is employed throughout Bomarzo. Given the connections Sebastiano Serlio articulated in his *Fourth Book of Architecture* between rusticated architecture, "*opera toscano*," and Etruscan identity¹⁹⁷, the usage of roughly cut stones at Palazzo Orsini may have been an ideologically loaded one, although this approach to masonry may also be a function of the material properties of *tuffo*. The nubby, crumbly stone is peppered with air pockets and

¹⁹⁶ For Peruzzi's involvement in the renovation of Palazzo Orsini see Christoph Luitpold Frommel, "Un'Opera Riscoperta di Baldassarre Peruzzi," and Fabiano Tiziano Fagliari Zeni Buchicchio's "Il Palazzo per Giovanni Corrado Orsini" in *Römisches Jahrbuch der Bibliotheca Hertziana* 32 (1997-1998).

¹⁹⁷ James Ackerman. "The Tuscan/Rustic Order: A Study in the Metaphorical Language of Architecture," in *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* vol. 42.1 (Mar. 1983), 15.

mineral deposits, and as such it can neither hold fine detail nor be worked to a lustrous smoothness. Roughness and irregularity are standard when working with the stone.

The omnipresence of *tufò* in the construction of the *palazzo* continues indoors to its *piano nobile*, where the stone is employed in a variety of domestic details from fireplaces to doorjambs. Exploring the many floors of Palazzo Orsini, the visitor encounters *tufò* in nearly every room, but it is most especially prevalent in less public, less formal spaces intended for use by servants and retainers. The further one delves into the lower levels of the *palazzo*, stone is handled in an increasingly vernacular—that is to say, rupestrian—manner. Large masses of raw *tufò* are either incorporated into or erupt out of the walls, vaults, and flooring (Figure 50), a practice employed in many living spaces throughout Bomarzo’s historic properties, where masons simply worked around the stony landscape rather than completely razing it. Additionally, the cellar of the *palazzo* is comprised of rock-cut *cantine* (Figure 51) that are virtually indistinguishable from other rupestrian chambers found throughout other hilltowns of Tuscia. Arguably the earliest among the palace’s spaces, these *cantine* lie at the deep core of the building’s structure, the taproot that anchors the site within the mass of *tufò*. While Peruzzi’s alterations gave Palazzo Orsini a distinctly sixteenth-century veneer, these lower levels of the building reveal its vernacular heart shaped by age-old local techniques and traditions. Taken as a whole, the interior of the *palazzo* reads as a lordly but decidedly provincial home, grand in comparison to the surrounding *case contadine*, but spartan and rustic compared to the richly outfitted villas built for upper class patrons seeking a respite from Rome or Florence. Although the *palazzo* is now adorned with a number of frescoes, they postdate Vicino’s tenure in Bomarzo; the only alterations that can securely be connected back to him are a handful of inscriptions. However, records indicate that Vicino may have been

interested in decorating the *palazzo*, as a 1564 letter from Annibale Caro addressed to the Duke outlines a proposed fresco cycle of the mythological fall of the giants from Mount Olympus.¹⁹⁸

Adjoining the top floor of the *palazzo* are twin *loggie* composed primarily of *tufo* (Figures 52-53) that face southward toward the Monti Cimini, looking out over the approach to Bomarzo and the surrounding woodlands (Figure 55). Though the Bosco is visible from the westernmost loggia, the structures are not aligned with the gardens, indicating that the purpose of these spaces was to enjoy the characteristically rough and rocky landscape of the region. Featuring inscriptions such as “VINCE TE IPSUM ERIS,” “VIVE TIBI IPSI FELIX,” and “NON VIRI LOCIS SED LOCA VIRIS HONESTANTUR,”¹⁹⁹ the *loggie* appear to invite both reflection upon the self and one’s relationship to the surrounding locale, as though contemplation of the landscape was tied to philosophical rumination. Functioning more as *belvederi* than strategic vantage points, the *loggie* stand apart from similar structures of the time period. While scenic outlook points from gardens and villas were not unheard of during the Renaissance, the panoramas were usually far-ranging, encompassing valleys, cityscapes, or distant mountain ranges²⁰⁰; rarely did they feature more proximate views of raw, untamed First Nature.

In this respect, the *loggie* in Bomarzo are strikingly similar to the rock-cut *belvedere* in Niccolò Orsini’s mid-sixteenth century *parco* on the outskirts of Pitigliano, where benches carved from the

¹⁹⁸ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 294-296.

¹⁹⁹ Respectively, these inscriptions read “overcome yourself,” “live happily for yourself,” and “men are not honored by places, but places are honored by men.”

²⁰⁰ Following Alberti’s recommendations for the siting of villas “on the summit of a hill, or on a height, which would afford the possibility of a panorama of 360 degrees,” the gardens of Palazzo Piccolomini in Pienza provide an early example of the integration of scenic vistas into villa life. The patron, Pius II, wrote of the view: “Looking from the highest room toward the West, [one] sees beyond Ilcino and Siena, and even as far as the Alps of Pistoia. On the North, the landscape offers a variety of hills with their gay and verdant woods, spreading widely five thousand *passi*; a sharp eye can also see the Apennines, but the depth of the river Chiana makes it impossible to see Cortona, the town settled upon that high hill not far from the lake of Trasimeno, which looks over the valley situated in between.” Gina Crandell, *Nature Pictorialized: ‘The View’ in Landscape History* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 69-70.

living *tufo* face overlook the *forre* (Figure 56). With pedimental detailing reminiscent of the region's Etruscan *tombe a dado*, the juxtaposition of these seats with the characteristically Tuscan vista points toward larger ideological connections between local terrain, heritage, and identity. In both cases, the irregularity and unevenness of the region's rough terrain is pointedly framed for viewing, seemingly an early impulse toward the concept of the scenic overlook as we understand it today, occurring not in Tuscany or the Roman *campagna* with their expansive, far-ranging vistas, but in the backcountry of Tuscia. Vicino's *loggie* also recall the rupestrian nymphaeum found under Palazzo Zuppante in the nearby hilltown of Orte (Figure 54), as both sites are uniquely Tuscan hybrids of Renaissance aesthetics and tastes with vernacular materials and methods. Yet where the nymphaeum in Orte is distinctly subterranean—as though dedicated to a chthonic nymph associated not with a forest or spring, but the scabrous *tufo*—the *loggie* in Bomarzo instead soar above the *forre* below, directing one's attention outward to sweeping panoramic vistas of the surrounding countryside.

The panorama must have been one of the highlights of Palazzo Orsini, because Peruzzi produced a sketch from this area looking south (Figure 57), including the *borgo* at the foot of the hilltown that huddles in the shadow of the massive *tufo* bluff opposite the *centro storico*.²⁰¹ The vista was also mentioned by the author Francesco Sansovino in his 1570 edition of Jacopo Sannazzaro's *Aracadia*, which he dedicated to Vicino. In his foreword, Sansovino lavishes praise on Vicino's "charming and delightful" ducal seat, and specifically mentions the loggia that "gives a view of the whole countryside," including the Bosco's many features. Waxing nostalgic, he

²⁰¹ This sketch from the Taccuino Senese is an early instance of pure landscape depiction, and as such invites consideration of the perennial question within the field: did public taste for natural vistas bring about the rise in landscape depiction, or did landscape imagery prime viewers for the aesthetic appreciation of nature? It would seem, at least based on Peruzzi's example, that the view from the loggia invited depiction rather than the other way around.

compares Sannazzaro's pastoral landscapes to the natural beauty of Bomarzo, and remarks that revisiting *Arcadia* makes his heart stir with longing for the characteristic "hills and valleys" of the region.²⁰² Both Sansovino's words and Peruzzi's drawing seem to indicate that the natural landscape of Bomarzo held a certain fascination not just for the Orsini but for outsiders to the region as well, and that the *palazzo* served as a visual and ideological linkage between its patrons and the surrounding Tuscan topography.

Looming large in this discussion of Palazzo Orsini is the question of how Vicino's residence informs our understanding of his garden. Whether on account of its earlier construction or its removed location in the *centro storico*, the *palazzo* has rarely been discussed in conjunction with the Sacro Bosco.²⁰³ However, examination of Vicino's residence demonstrates how far removed his world actually was from the average Cinquecento villa compound, underscoring the relative incongruity between the pastoral fantasy of *villeggiatura* and actual rural living. Despite its spectacular vistas and nearly impregnable location, Palazzo Orsini was hardly a status symbol, and compared to the luxury villas of Tivoli, Frascati, or even the suburbs of Rome, it would have seemed rustic, provincial, and even a bit old fashioned. Vicino surely would have been conscious of his residence's shortcomings when faced with sites like Cardinal Farnese's lavish villa in Caprarola, but he also would have had a deep and abiding sense of his family's roots within the region. Unlike the rich and powerful upper crust who periodically retreated to the Tuscan

²⁰² The connections Sansovino draws between Sannazzaro's pastoral and the *bomarzese* countryside are particularly interesting given the propensity for later generations of painters and poets to envision the ancient Arcadian landscape in the style of the Neapolitan or Roman *campagna*. Was Sansovino making an unorthodox comparison for his time, or was the collective cultural image of Arcadia still relatively undefined in the Cinquecento? This naturally raises the question of what exactly made Bomarzo read as Arcadian to Sansovino. Was it the unspoiled woodlands? The mythological denizens of the Sacro Bosco?

²⁰³ Two articles by Arnaldo Bruschi are perhaps the best discussions of Palazzo Orsini and its relationship to the Sacro Bosco. See "L'Abitato di Bomarzo e la Villa Orsini," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* 7-9 (Apr. 1955), and "Nuovi Dati Documentari sulle Opere Orsiniane di Bomarzo," *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* 10 (1963).

countryside as a leisure activity, Vicino was a permanent resident of the region, and *tuscianità* would have been a key pillar of his identity. Where others were merely visitors—playing at a sort of sanitized imitation of rural life—Vicino was native to the region, and Palazzo Orsini was a visible marker on the *bomarzese* landscape of his family’s autochthonous origins.

While the addition of the Sacro Bosco to this particular landscape indicates that Vicino had an interest in period garden culture and outdoor leisure activities, it would be inaccurate to speak of his residence in the same breath as the other garden villas of central Italy in the sixteenth century. The spatial disjunction between *palazzo* and built environment as seen at Bomarzo is incredibly rare in the field of Renaissance landscape architecture, as nearly every period garden was connected directly to its patron’s residence. On one hand, the placement of the Sacro Bosco in the valley below the *palazzo* was clearly chosen out of necessity—there was no free space in the *centro storico* for such a sizeable project—but on the other hand, it points to a specifically Tuscan spatial paradigm. Perched on promontories, buttes, and cliffsides, the region’s hilltowns partake of a stark spatial binary, as one is either up and inside the rocky urban core of the *comune*, completely removed from green nature, or down below in the woodlands and agricultural zones. Within this topography of contrasts, the realm of human civilization does not gradually cede to the realm of nature, but instead abruptly terminates at cliff’s edge. This strict separation of spaces diverges from the typical villa model that unites the residence with verdant nature, bringing the environment to the patron rather than the other way around.

The spatial disconnect between *palazzo* and garden as seen at Bomarzo is also present in Pitigliano, where Niccolò Orsini’s rock-cut *parco* is located nearly a kilometer outside the town’s *centro storico*. Like Vicino, Niccolò inherited his residence—another fortified medieval stronghold in a rupestrian hilltown—and found himself without an immediately adjacent plot of

land upon which to build his garden. While the Parco degli Orsini is situated on a hill outside Pitigliano rather than in the valley below as in the case of the Sacro Bosco, a visit to the garden nevertheless requires one to leave the tuffaceous urban core. In both towns, the visitor must step beyond the edge of civilization and venture through the characteristically Tuscan landscape in order to find something wondrous within the woods. The dislocation between both Orsini residences and their respective gardens recreates a fundamentally Tuscan experience of landscape in microcosm, reinforcing the ‘in here’ versus ‘out there’ spatial binary that comes with hilltown living. Whether or not this dislocation was a conscious choice on the part of the gardens’ designers is unclear; however, it points toward a different conceptualization of town, home, and countryside than the more integrative model typical of central Italian *villeggiatura*. Indeed, Vicino and Niccolò appear to have come from a shared tradition of thinking about landscape, and based on the similarities between their sites—and dissimilarities with other period gardens outside of Tuscia—it would appear that a unique school of garden design flourished within the region before Vignola even began work on Alessandro Farnese’s properties in Caprarola.

Opulence and Dominion

When it comes to the type of residence each patron owned in Tuscia and how these structures are sited in and relate to their surrounding landscape, Alessandro Farnese stands almost like a literary foil to Vicino Orsini. Like Vicino, Alessandro inherited his Tuscan residence, which had also been originally designed more as a fortified *castello* than as a vacation retreat. However, the similarities effectively end there; despite their shared Tuscan origins, the two interlocutors’ residences in the region visualize the disparities in wealth, power, and status that existed between the Orsini and the newly ascendant Farnese. Vicino’s *palazzo* is older, humbler, more sparsely decorated, and despite Peruzzi’s involvement in its remodeling, the site has largely been

overlooked in the study of Renaissance architecture. Alessandro's villa, on the other hand, has received exponentially more scholarly attention on account of its monumental footprint on the *caprolatto* landscape, its unique pentagonal configuration (Figure 58), and its sumptuous Mannerist fresco program celebrating the Farnese name. In truth, the amount of ink spilled regarding the Farnese villa at Caprarola far outweighs and overshadows the number of scholarly treatments concerning the property's gardens. Unlike Bomarzo, where the gardens are the focus of fascination, at Caprarola the villa is and always has been the main attraction.

Located in the southern foothills of the Monti Cimini, the town of Caprarola is a little over a kilometer east of Lago di Vico, perched high above the shore on a long, thin ridge of *tufo* (Figure 58). Though not as deeply scored with *forre* as Bomarzo or Pitigliano, the region is still rough and hilly, to the extent that Michel de Montaigne, writing in 1581, described the local landscape as “barren and alpine.”²⁰⁴ The terrain is fertile and tuffaceous thanks to the Vico volcano that created the eponymous caldera lake and the two peaks which define the local horizon, Monte Fogliano and Monte Venere (Figure 59). Local legends connect the region to Hercules—who allegedly created the Vico caldera by plunging his staff into the earth to demonstrate his strength—and Jupiter's foster mother Amalthea, who nursed the infant god in the shadow of Monte Cimino. Despite this prestigious ancient pedigree, records show that Caprarola only emerged as a *comune* sometime in the eleventh century, relatively late when compared to nearby towns with Etruscan roots.

Removed from the main routes that traverse Tuscia, Caprarola was a small, sleepy hilltown of about 400 residents before it came under Farnese control in 1504, when Alessandro's grandfather Pope Paul III—still a cardinal at the time—purchased it from the Duke of Urbino, who had himself

²⁰⁴ Loren W. Partridge, “Palazzo Farnese,” in *Caprarola: Palazzo Farnese*, ed. Valerio Riva (Milan: Franco Maria Ricci, 1988), 97.

been gifted the town by his uncle, Pope Julius II.²⁰⁵ While ensuing decades would extend the family's reach far beyond Tuscia, in the early Cinquecento the Farnese were largely clustered further north in the region around Lago di Bolsena, and thus the acquisition of Caprarola was not only a major boon, but an expansion of familial power beyond their historic properties. In the early 1520s Alessandro's grandfather commissioned a *rocca* for Caprarola, and plans for pentagonal fortresses were drawn up by both Antonio da Sangallo the Younger and Baldassare Peruzzi. Preliminary work began on the site in the early 1530s, and in the years following Paul III's ascent to the Papacy, Caprarola was incorporated into the newly formed Farnese Duchy of Castro, and given to Alessandro's father Pier Luigi II. Yet by the time Alessandro inherited Caprarola, the *rocca* was little more than a five-sided foundation excavated from the *tufi* bedrock, a score of walls, and a handful of defensive bastions.²⁰⁶ In 1556, he commissioned Vignola to complete the unfinished structure, launching a campaign of drastic alteration to the *caprolatto* landscape that would continue for the next three decades.

In conjunction with his work on the villa, Vignola also designed a number of civic and infrastructural features at Alessandro's behest, including a public fountain, a hospital, and a new church complete with a convent.²⁰⁷ While he also rerouted 25km of road to create a more direct route toward Rome,²⁰⁸ his most significant thoroughfare in the area runs the length of the town, a single straight incision bisecting the irregular, curvilinear urban fabric of Caprarola (Figure 60). Leading directly to the villa, the rectilinear road effectively realigns Caprarola around the Farnese, shifting the town's visual and ideological focal point away from the communal realm and

²⁰⁵ Partridge, "Palazzo Farnese," 20; Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 281.

²⁰⁶ Loren W. Partridge, "Vignola and the Villa Farnese at Caprarola – Part I," *The Art Bulletin* 52 no. 1 (Mar. 1970), 81.

²⁰⁷ Partridge, "Palazzo Farnese," 20.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 20.

recentering it on the private sphere. Visually, the climb up the street becomes a perspectival experience for the visitor (Figure 61), where the villa serves as the vanishing point, and the rest of Caprarola dissolves into the background as mere orthogonal lines, propelling one further uphill toward the implied destination. Simply put, the *comune* becomes background, like perspectival set dressing for the villa. Vasari even appears to have experienced this relative blindness to the town in favor of the villa when he visited, as Paolo Portoghesi has noted that the Tuscan author wrote about the villa as though it were a synecdoche for the whole of Caprarola itself.²⁰⁹ Much the same can be said for Giovanni Antonio Liberati's 1614 poem entitled 'La Caprarola.'

Just as Vignola's straight street restructures one's experience of Caprarola around the Farnese—creating, as Enrico Guidoni describes, “a clear link of dependency between them”²¹⁰—the massive, fortified villa makes the family's dominion over the town abundantly clear. Since the hilltown never proved to be a particularly strategic location, the fortress-like villa essentially reads as overkill, an aggressive expression of Farnese control over the region. The rigid geometry and immense bulk of the pentagonal edifice visually estrange the villa from its surroundings, creating between the two a disconnect which Marxist art historian Arnold Hauser characterizes as both hostile and arrogant.²¹¹ Authors have consistently remarked on the extreme class separation and imbalance of power at Caprarola, which is further reinforced visually by the juxtaposition of Vignola's cutting-edge design with the town's vernacular architecture.

These spatial inequalities are also reflected by the manner in which a visitor enters the villa; if one is highborn, the residence is accessed through a series of ramps and terraces that further

²⁰⁹ Paolo Portoghesi, “La Fortuna Critica del Palazzo Farnese di Caprarola,” in *Caprarola*, ed. Paolo Portoghesi and Ferdinando Bilancia (Rome: Manfredi, 1996), 174.

²¹⁰ Enrico Guidoni, “Paesaggi di Caprarola: La Sintesi Progettuale Farnesiana,” in *Caprarola*, ed. Paolo Portoghesi and Ferdinando Bilancia (Rome: Manfredi, 1996), 24.

²¹¹ Arnold Hauser, *Mannerism: The Crisis of the Renaissance and the Origin of Modern Art* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1965), 284.

distance the structure from Caprarola proper. Standing at the front door, one is once again aligned with Vignola's straight street that now appears to recede away from the visitor and into the surrounding countryside, which unfolds in the distance for kilometers; situated in this privileged viewing position, one feels almost as if all Caprarola were at their feet. However, if one is born of lower status and needs to enter the villa, there is an entrance at the bottom of the ramps that provides access to the lower levels of the complex, where household labor operated largely out of sight (Figure 62). These lower levels are cut from the living *tuffo* in the vernacular tradition, and were apparently considered so intriguing that upon the occasion of his visit to the villa in 1578, Pope Gregory XIII personally requested to see them.²¹²

While it is tempting to assume that certain ideological connections existed between *tuffo* and social class, the material is employed throughout the villa much as it was at Bomarzo, and doorframes, staircases, fireplaces as well as other domestic amenities are carved from the stone. Even the monumental Scala Regia, one of the most celebrated spiral staircases of the early modern era, is carved from pockmarked and pumiceous *tuffo* (Figures 63-64). Easily the wealthiest of our interlocutors, Alessandro Farnese could have certainly afforded a chicer, more prestigious material than *tuffo* for this showpiece of a space that funneled visitors from the entrance to the *piano nobile*. The usage of *tuffo* in the villa seems to indicate that there may have been a connection between the rock and relative informality of space, as if the rustic material was seen as particularly well suited for a country retreat. The stone's associations with local pre-Roman heritage may also have been a factor in its selection.

Period sources indicate that the villa did create an impression of Etruscanness upon its visitors. In a letter describing his visit to the villa, the Florentine sculptor Bartolomeo Ammannati

²¹² Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 289.

commented that the site reminded and affirmed for him what he knew about Etruscans and buildings from Leon Battista Alberti's works. Noting that the "*toscani*" were masters of "*disegno e decoro*," Ammannati wrote that Villa Farnese followed in the storied Etruscan tradition of "*superbissime e grandissime*" structures.²¹³ His words radiate with a personal pride in his own Etruscan heritage, and although Ammannati assimilates the villa into the Florentine artistic tradition, it is clear that he perceives a connection between Tuscan identity, Farnese lands, and Etruscanness.

Tuscan roots receive additional emphasis in the villa's decorative program, the general thrust of which is the glorification of the Farnese family. With an astonishing 35 rooms covered in fresco cycles, the villa showcases the Roman school of Mannerist painting, featuring the work of Taddeo and Federico Zuccari, as well as that of Antonio Tempesta, Jacopo Bertoia, and Raffaellino da Reggio. The frescoes' complex iconographic scheme has variably been attributed to Annibale Caro, Fulvio Orsini, and Onofrio Panvinio, who are credited with creating an environment so saturated with meaning that Mario Praz has described it as a secular "Bible of the rich"²¹⁴ which encapsulated and emblemized Cinquecento art, culture, and thought in a manner analogous to medieval cathedrals' totalizing artistic programs.

Of particular interest here is the Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani (Figure 65) that purports to depict key events in the family's history, including the exploits of Alessandro and his brothers in the service of the Church. However, many of the scenes and their inscriptions vastly overstate or outright misrepresent Farnese involvement in local affairs, as Loren Partridge has demonstrated in his text, "Divinity and Dynasty at Caprarola: Perfect History in the Room of Farnese Deeds." The most egregious mistruths identified by Partridge include the claim that the city of Orbetello was founded

²¹³ Portoghesi, "La Fortuna Critica," 175.

²¹⁴ Mario Praz, "Caprarola," *Il Palazzo Farnese di Caprarola*, ed. Mario Praz (Turin, SEAT, 1981), 11.

in 1100 by one Pietro Farnese, and that in 1313 a Guido Farnese had been made the Prince of Orvieto “at the request of the citizens,” restoring peace to the hilltown.²¹⁵

More factual *istorie* include the marriage of Alessandro’s brother Ottavio Farnese to Margaret of Austria in 1539, and the Cardinal’s own meeting with the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V and King Francis I of France in Paris in 1540. In a sea of portraits depicting Farnese brothers, cousins, wives and their noble families, several familiar faces emerge, including a depiction of fellow interlocutor, Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara, who has been identified in a scene depicting Ottavio Farnese receiving the fiefdom of Parma in 1550.²¹⁶ A portrait of Cardinal Cristoforo Madruzzo—mutual friend to both Alessandro and Vicino, and owner of the rock-cut Papacqua fountain in Soriano nel Cimino—is similarly inserted into a scene depicting Pope Paul III Farnese making his son, Alessandro’s father Pier Luigi II, commander of the papal army in 1535.²¹⁷ The portraits hint at Alessandro’s social circle at Caprarola, indicating that he cultivated close relationships with the other villa owners who frequented the area rather than mixing with noble Tuscan society. Alessandro may have had Tuscan roots, but his social circle in the region still reflected his life as a Church heavyweight; there was little to be gained from flaunting associations with the local Orsini, Caetani, or Gatti families. The Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani may depict Tuscia as the cradle of the Farnese, but the many frescoes make clear that the family’s sights extended far beyond the region to a worldwide platform.

Farnese ambitions also take center stage in the Sala del Mappamondo and the Sala d’Ercole which are both covered in frescoes of maps, and visualize space and landscape as a matter of cartography, encompassing subjects as small as minor Tuscan hilltowns and as large as a

²¹⁵ Loren W. Partridge, “Divinity and Dynasty at Caprarola: Perfect History in the Room of Farnese Deeds,” *The Art Bulletin* 60 no. 3 (Sep. 1978), 499-501.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.* 522.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* 507.

cosmographic sky chart. The Sala del Mappamondo (Figure 66) juxtaposes a frescoed map of Italy with one of the Holy Land, and the opposite wall is dominated by a colossal map of the known world—the ceiling, meanwhile, depicts the constellations and signs of the zodiac—and while authors have teased out this room’s Counter-Reform themes as well as its complex personal iconography,²¹⁸ its importance in our interlocutors’ *discorso* comes from the usage of topography as a language of power. By mapping the world on so monumental a scale, the Farnese convey a certain ownership over the depicted lands, just as the two-dimensional frescoes translate and reify the incomprehensibly vast topographies into concretized artistic *meraviglie*. Alessandro was not only presenting himself as a worldly man of refined learning, he was also positioning the Farnese as an international dynasty, expressing a newly expansive worldview for the family which looked far beyond Tuscia.

While the nearby Sala d’Ercole (Figure 67) is similarly coated in maps, the messages it conveys regarding landscape and power are far more immediate, as the room depicts chorographic views of Farnese holdings within the region (Figure 68)—including Ronciglione, Fabrica, Castro, Capodimonte, and Canino—as well as those further afield like Parma and Piacenza. The Sala’s southern face was perforated by a number of unglazed windows that were part of an open-air loggia, and a fountain ornaments the western wall, further interpolating exterior with interior. Originally intended as a formal dining room, the loggia looks out over Caprarola, aligning with Vignola’s straight street which runs the length of the hilltown. In combining these immediate views of the *caprolatto* landscape with the room’s frescoed vistas, the visitor is met with a profusion of Farnese properties both present and absent, extending the family’s reach far beyond the horizon.

²¹⁸ The most recent text to consider the cartographic imagery at Villa Farnese is Alessandro Ricci and Carlotta Bilardi’s *Cartografia, Arte e Potere tra Riforma e Controriforma: Il Palazzo Farnese a Caprarola* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 2020).

Ornamented with *tufi* frames, the painted views hint at a way of thinking about topography as an aesthetic commodity rather than as an immersive experience of place, and coupled with the emergence of landscape painting as an independent genre in the late Cinquecento, the frescoes are tantalizing clues as to how Alessandro viewed space and terrain. Scholars of art and environmental history have long discussed the connection between landscape thinking—the objectification and commodification of nature—and the increasing taste for landscape painting, which also coincided with the rise of capitalism and the ideology of empire.²¹⁹ Landscape painting modeled for viewers how to look at and how to think about the natural environment, and the combination of actual views with frescoed ones on the loggia would have created a mutually reinforcing circuit of possession. The paintings effectively transform the depicted lands into objects, and their placement in the loggia prompts the visitor to similarly read the surrounding *caprolatto* landscape as a static scene intended for passive viewing pleasure, as an aesthetic experience rather than a living environment.

Given the abundance of landscape imagery employed within the villa—not only in the Sala d’Ercole and the Sala del Mappamondo, but throughout other fresco cycles there as well—the question looms large as to how Alessandro’s taste for two-dimensional depictions of space would have flavored his own experiences of the garden. If he indeed engaged in this type of landscape thinking, he would have read his gardens first and foremost like a painting, like a series of fixed, scenic spaces that were activated and made meaningful only by the authoritative presence of the viewer’s eye. Given the anthropocentric and scopophilic nature of landscape painting,

²¹⁹ While the scholarly literature concerning the roots and implications of landscape thinking is as rich and deep as it is vast, readings essential to my thinking include Dennis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998); Julian Thomas, “The Politics of Vision and the Archaeologies of Landscape” in *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, edited by Barbara Bender (Providence, RI: Berg, 1993); WJT Mitchell, “Imperial Landscape,” in *Landscape and Power*, edited by WJT Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

Alessandro's use of such two-dimensional representations as the primary frame of reference for viewing his gardens would have doubly estranged the city-dwelling cardinal from the local environment. Filtered through the two-dimensional lens of painting, he would have seen the garden—already a simulacrum of nature—even more obliquely, like another decorated wing of the villa, yet another marvelous sight to behold in the family's collection of wonders. This profusion of wonder is precisely what is so significant about the Farnese villa within our interlocutors' *discorso*; no one else in Tuscia possessed anything remotely like it, and yet the sumptuous estate at Caprarola was neither Alessandro's primary residence nor his only garden. Alessandro surely knew he was creating a personal oasis at Caprarola—after all, he retired to the villa during his later years—but the property was only one of many jewels in the Farnese crown.

Yet this was where Alessandro took people like Pope Gregory XIII whom he wanted to impress, and this target audience for the villa would have come from Rome or further afield rather than from inside Tuscia. The ultimate status symbol, the site showcases not only the vanguard of Roman Mannerist painting, but also the cutting edge of Cinquecento architecture and urban development, bringing the big city to hilltown Tuscia with all the comforts of Rome intact. Tuscan aesthetics and identity would have held little social currency within Alessandro's various circles, and as one of the most powerful cardinals in Rome, there was a certain type of image he needed to project. While the *tuffo* accents scattered throughout quietly assert Alessandro's roots within the region, there is little else specifically Tuscan about the villa's construction or decoration, as though he was consciously aligning himself with prevailing Cinquecento tastes and visual languages which communicated power and class. This injection of high culture into a vernacular environment visually and ideologically estranges the residence and its attendant spaces from the larger regional context, casting an almost colonial shadow over the *caprolatto* landscape. Villa Farnese effectively

functions as a protective bubble against Tuscia itself, allowing elite visitors to experience a sanitized version of the region kept safely at arm's length, filtered through the pacific lens of landscape painting and formal gardening. Indeed, the villa reads less like a Tuscan retreat from Rome's urban sphere and more like an extension of the city into the countryside.

Villeggiatura without the Villa

While the scale and scope of work at Caprarola is unparalleled, this particular framing and domestication of the region—completely removed from what one encounters in Vicino Orsini's Bomarzo—is not unique to Alessandro Farnese, as Cardinal Gianfrancesco Gambara's villa in Bagnaiia creates a similar atmosphere of refinement. Despite his position as the Bishop of Viterbo, Gianfrancesco was even more of an outsider to Tuscia than Alessandro, and while Bagnaiia was his primary place of residence, his properties there have more in common with the estate at Caprarola than they do with Palazzo Orsini in Bomarzo. Although Gianfrancesco's living arrangements differed from the customary model of villa life, both the function and the appearance of his properties in Bagnaiia align with period practices and expectations for a well-heeled gentleman's country residence. Villa Lante may not be a villa in the strictest sense, but it still expresses the period culture of leisure associated with *villeggiatura* and the Cinquecento urbanite's experience of the countryside, demonstrating a divergent perspective toward the region's landscapes other than that projected by the residences of native Tuscians.

Bagnaiia presents a unique case in our *discorso* since Gianfrancesco owned two residences in the town roughly half a kilometer apart, each of which served vastly different functions for the Cardinal. Predating Gianfrancesco's tenure in Bagnaiia is the town's Palazzo Vescovile—also known as Palazzo Ducale or Palazzo della Loggia—that sits on the edge of the *centro storico*, occupying the site of a medieval fortress which by the sixteenth century had been reduced to little

more than its clock tower (Figure 69). Gianfrancesco's secondary residence is the more informal *casino* located within the garden itself, and while the site was originally designed to incorporate two pendant pavilions, only the righthand structure was built during the Cardinal's lifetime. Unlike Alessandro's *casino* in the upper gardens of Villa Farnese that dates to the mid-1580s, Gianfrancesco's pavilion was from the outset a key element in the site's design. The separation between the *palazzo* and the *casino* not only reflects two distinct, discrete aspects of Gianfrancesco's professional and personal life, it also points toward two vastly different experiences of the *bagnaiolo* landscape.

In terms of its placement within the greater environment, the *centro storico* of Bagnaia occupies a tongue-shaped promontory at the nexus of the Fosso della Cava and the Valle Pierina (Figure 70). As in the case with Bomarzo, the relatively flat *tufo* landform projects outward into space on three sides, with its southern face gradually receding into the wooded hills of the Monti Cimini. The southern perimeter of the *centro storico* curves around the remnants of a medieval wall, and as a result the town is a self-contained oval, accessible only through a single arched entry point. While Bagnaia officially entered the record books in the tenth century, ruins of Roman baths outside the town that were visible until the nineteenth century attest to ancient habitation in the area. The cramped, medieval streets are lined with vernacular buildings packed closely together, and the only substantial open space is Piazza Castello just inside the fortified archway. Like Bomarzo, Bagnaia's *centro storico* is almost entirely grey—a self-contained island of *tufo* wholly barren of plant life—creating a rigid spatial binary between the realm of green nature and the rocky world of human civilization.

Perched on the southwestern edge of this stone island over the site of the medieval *castello* is Palazzo Vescovile, Gianfrancesco's primary residence in Bagnaia. Construction on the *palazzo*

began some time around the turn of the sixteenth century under the patronage of Cardinal Raffaele Riario who, after assuming the Bishopric of Viterbo in 1498, established a hunting *barco* in Bagnaia on the property which would later become Villa Lante. Yet it was under Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi—a papal administrator of Viterbo, who came to Bagnaia in 1540²²⁰—that the lion’s share of the work on the *palazzo* was completed, including the distinctive loggia on the western side overlooking the Fosso della Cava (Figure 71). Ridolfi employed the Sienese architect Tommaso Ghinucci, whom he also contracted for the road between Bagnaia and Santa Maria della Quercia, as well as the aqueduct which crossed the *barco* to deliver water to the *palazzo*.²²¹

After Ridolfi’s death in 1550, the residence passed through a number of hands until Gianfrancesco moved to Bagnaia in 1568, and in the 1570s he commissioned a southern wing to the *palazzo* that was decorated with a series of fresco cycles. Some of these frescoes feature religious narratives and others portray the labors of the months or the signs of the zodiac, however the common thread running through these diverse scenes is the preponderance of space devoted to the depiction of landscape. While landscape historian Denis Ribouillault has discussed these frescoes as being perhaps more consistent with Counter-Reform expectations for a Churchman’s home décor than actually reflecting Gianfrancesco’s personal tastes,²²² the connection between country residence and landscape imagery is apparent. Besides providing a decorous source of beauty, depictions of landscapes further concretized one of the purposes of an urbanite’s rural retreat: to feast one’s eyes upon—and in a variety of senses, possess—a slice of the countryside without immersing oneself in the rude and rustic world of the *contadino*. The painted landscape

²²⁰ Lazzaro, *The Villa Lante at Bagnaia*, 15.

²²¹ *Ibid.* 17; Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 51.

²²² Denis Ribouillault, “Il Cardinale Gambara e il Palazzo della Loggia a Bagnaia,” in *Villa Lante a Bagnaia*, ed. Sabine Frommel and Flaminia Bardati (Milan: Electa, 2005), 47.

brought indoors underscored this desire to lay claim to tidy and tame scenery, to view terrain as an object rather than a habitat.

This friction between the representation of landscape and the experience of actual space comes to a head in the loggia on the western side of the *palazzo*, which is decorated with frescoes depicting views of Florence, Siena, Rome, Naples, and Bagnaia (Figure 72). Although the dating of these paintings is inexact—Ribouillault considers them products of Gianfrancesco’s time in Bagnaia²²³—their effect is similar to that of the landscape frescoes in the Sala d’Ercole at Villa Farnese. The painted *vedute* in the loggia model for the visitor how to approach the western prospect overlooking the Fosso della Cava, creating a feedback loop between fictive and immediate landscape that aestheticizes and flattens the Tuscan environment into a static two-dimensional object of appreciation. With the view filtered through the lens of painting, the visitor is effectively distanced from the visceral experience of the physical landscape, which is read as being like an image rather than the other way around, where art is traditionally seen as the ape of nature. A *paragone* is established between the painted landscapes and the visitor’s surroundings, prompting one to not only put the two in conversation together, but also to read the western vista in pictorial terms, applying period discourses of art to the terrain. Combining the fresco of Bagnaia with those of major urban centers adds further dimension to this *paragone*, and encourages the visitor to think in terms of binary opposites—town versus country, familiar versus foreign, absent versus present—heightening the comparative atmosphere.

This dualism also finds expression in the fresco depicting Bagnaia itself that effectively doubles the landscape, as if to elicit direct comparison between the painted countryside and the topography at hand. Just like a premodern portrait, the fresco projects a subjective and polished vision of the

²²³ Ribouillault, “Il Cardinale Gambara,” 50.

city and its surroundings that is not necessarily a faithful rendering of actual conditions, and yet when presented in conjunction with its dynamic and unpredictable referent, the painting becomes the definitive version of the *bagnaiolo* landscape. Sandwiched between the vista and its two-dimensional doppelgänger, the visitor is thrust into a mediatory role between the real and the ideal, the variable experience of one's own senses and the invariable impression of the painter. While the fresco reinforces a sense of ownership over the vista and works to draw the outdoor environment up to the loggia, the effect is that of being immersed in the painting, the visitor's most immediate and accessible frame of reference regarding the local landscape.

Just as the loggia presents a series of binary oppositions, the visitor's experience of Bagnaia is similarly defined by spatial dualism, as the town is split into two distinct locales: the tuffaceous *centro storico* and the sixteenth century *borgo* on the southern outskirts of the urban core. Where the medieval quarter is defined by the interpolation of cramped, winding lanes and sweeping views overlooking the countryside, the *borgo* is characterized by a spacious *piazza* with an adjoining trivium of straight, regularized streets (Figure 73). Sited on the gently sloping plane that spreads outward from the self-contained *centro storico*, not only is the *borgo* disconnected from the characteristic Tuscan landscape, it is also effectively indistinguishable from other Renaissance additions to historic *comuni* across central Italy. Since the main road to Viterbo passes directly through the *piazza*, the axial *borgo* becomes the visitor's first point of contact with Bagnaia, shaping one's impression of the locale not as a vernacular hilltown, but as an urbane and modern outpost of society in the rugged Tuscan backcountry. Much like the rectilinear thoroughfare which slices through the heart of Caprarola, Bagnaia's straight streets and expansive *piazza* read as architectural imports from major metropolitan centers like Florence or Rome, inscribing the orderly sensibilities of the urban Renaissance upon the rural landscape.

While the earliest work on the *borgo* appears to have begun prior to Gianfrancesco's arrival, most of the new neighborhood was completed in lockstep with the construction of his garden, linking the two sectors of town together as part of the Renaissance redevelopment of Bagnaia. The three straight axes that run the length of the *borgo* terminate at the northern wall of Villa Lante, as though their primary function was to channel visitors from Gianfrancesco's official residence to his garden retreat. Just as Vignola's straight street effectively renders the rest of Caprarola incidental to Alessandro's villa complex, the *borgo* recenters Bagnaia around Gianfrancesco, establishing his properties as the town's two principal foci. This spatial reconfiguration further distances the visitor from the local topography that was visible primarily from the edges of the *centro storico* and the southern reaches of town, recasting the Cardinal's *palazzo* and his garden as the main lenses through which one interfaces with the *bagnaiolo* landscape.

As the other pole of Gianfrancesco's Bagnaia, his private garden complex not only serves as the foil to the Palazzo della Loggia—an informal architectonic island surrounded by greenery, as opposed to the formal *palazzo* abutted on three sides by stone edifices—but it also occupies a unique place in the history of central Italian *villeggiatura*. As opposed to other villa owners who withdrew from urban centers to rural hinterlands, Gianfrancesco located his garden retreat mere minutes away from his official residence; yet unlike the Sacro Bosco which is also within walking distance of its patron's *palazzo*, Villa Lante contains a secondary residence, firmly cementing its status as a site of *villeggiatura*. Where the Sacro Bosco functioned more like an early modern amusement park in the wild Tuscan backcountry, Villa Lante was a place of refined repose fit for a gentleman, a *locus amoenus* indexical of civilized society where the Cardinal and his friends could escape the burdens of their station without sacrificing any of its comforts.

Although it is too small to be classified as a villa in its own right, the *casino* within the garden fulfills the same basic functions as a full-scale sixteenth century vacation home, immersing the visitor in verdant surroundings which wed polished artifice with cultivated rusticity (Figure 74). The *casino* fully embodies this fusion of the informal with the formal; while emphatically rectangular and ornamented with classicizing details—which include Doric pilasters and a frieze replete with triglyphs and metopes—the pavilion is composed entirely of *tufo*, a choice of material that may have been the basis for a contemporary description of the structure as “*una bella casotta alla rustica.*”²²⁴ Though the rough volcanic stone may have been used to play up the bucolic connotations of a countryside retreat, the *casino* completely lacks the rock-cut elements found at Villa Farnese and Palazzo Orsini, indicating that this flirtation with the Tuscan vernacular was superficial at best. The *casino* more closely resembles an urban *palazzo* in miniature than it bears any particular likeness to the region’s medieval *rocche* or the relatively plain, piecemeal residences of its rural nobles. Simple yet sophisticated, Gianfrancesco’s *casino* sets the tone for the larger garden complex, which unites the period’s prevailing sensibilities of art with the uniquely urban investment in a return to rustic Arcadian nature.

This fusion of pastoral fantasy with cosmopolitan comforts is echoed by the building’s interior; numerous rooms are lavishly outfitted with fresco cycles attributed to artists like Antonio Tempesta and Raffaellino da Reggio who were both active at Caprarola, and Gianfrancesco’s *casino* reads less as a rustic pavilion and more as a luxurious showpiece of late Mannerist painting. Rooms where frescoes bring the outdoors indoors, like the Sala della Pesca and the Sala della

²²⁴ Claudia Lazzaro, “Rustic Country House to Refined Farmhouse: The Evolution and Migration of an Architectural Form,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 44 no. 4 (Dec 1985), 351. While Lazzaro contends that it was the shape of the *casino* that elicited this impression of rusticity from the sixteenth century visitor, the potential valences of *tufo* as a unique signifier of rural Tuscany and its vernacular buildings have yet to be fully plumbed by scholars.

Caccia with its illusionistic *uccelliera* (Figure 75), recall these painters' work at Caprarola, as well as the fictive pergolas and aviaries of sites in Rome like Villa Giulia, Villa Medici on the Pincian Hill, and the Vatican *loggie* as completed by Raphael's workshop. These rooms' illusionistic scenes of hunting and fishing immerse the visitor in a cohesive 360-degree environment comprised entirely of landscape paintings which depict pleasures of the countryside. While much of the underlying landscape thinking remains constant from Gianfrancesco's loggia in his *palazzo*, the frescoed scenes in the *casino* reveal a place wilder than the tame, preened Third Nature²²⁵ of the garden or the urban environments depicted at Palazzo della Loggia. Though the imagined wooded landscapes in the Sala della Caccia (Figure 76) hardly resemble the surrounding Selva Cimina, they not only recall the property's past function as a *barco*, but also point toward the same category of forested First Nature biome as could be found just to the south beyond the garden wall. These painted landscapes are active and decidedly anthropocentric, depicting the natural world somewhere between a verdant playground for the leisure class and a productive domain shaped to the wants and needs of human civilization. Standing in the middle of this room, the visitor is the spoke at the center of a totalizing environment, assuming a kind of dual authority over the landscape as both the room's visual protagonist and the human master of this fictive natural world.

The centrality of the visitor's eye is again invoked on the pavilion's first floor loggia, where a lively fresco cycle combines *grotteschi*, mythological figures, and scenes from Hyginus' *Poetica Astronomia* with six *vedute*, the largest of which depicts the garden and its *bosco* (Figure 77). In his "Toward the Archaeology of the Gaze: The Perception and Function of Garden Views in Italian

²²⁵ The Renaissance concept of Third Nature—as expressed by both Bartolomeo Taegio and Jacopo Bonfadio—derives from Cicero's discussion of Second Nature in reference to the agricultural and infrastructural landscape, with the implication being that First Nature was conceived of as the wild natural world. Writing in the sixteenth century, both Taegio and Bonfadio frame gardens as Third Nature, effectively a fusion of art and environment. See John Dixon Hunt, *Greater Perfections: The Practice of Garden Theory* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 32-34.

Renaissance Villas,” Ribouillault discusses the fresco not as a faithful portrait of the site, but as a theoretical architectural *disegno*, an artistic translation of the architect’s imaginative processes that served as both a projection and a guarantee of the finished product’s appearance.²²⁶ In light of Ribouillault’s arguments, it is necessary to shift from thinking of this fresco as a map of the garden or a Renaissance snapshot of the site’s layout, plantings, and waterworks, and instead examine its greater ideological implications. Through this lens, the fresco functions more as a tool for the visitor to envision the entirety of the villa’s properties in one great, totalizing master view of both garden and *bosco* that can be experienced simultaneously and instantaneously in their entirety. Just as in the Sala della Caccia, the fresco’s impossible aerial *veduta* once again puts the visitor in a privileged viewing position, this time collapsing and objectifying the entire villa complex into one easily digestible image. The painted view effectively presents itself as the definitive version of the grounds—Ribouillault even says that “the garden imitated the fresco rather than the opposite”²²⁷—and much in the same way as the landscape paintings on the loggia of Gianfrancesco’s *palazzo* in the *centro storico*, the fresco invites the visitor to join the dialogue about the *paragone* between the painting and the landscape outdoors.

This comparative atmosphere carries over to the smaller *vedute* on the other walls, two of which depict views of Villa Farnese and Villa d’Este in Tivoli, indicating that Gianfrancesco was presenting these sites as contemporaries, and thinking of his garden within the same typological framework as the other two designed landscapes. Given his quasi-familial bond with Alessandro Farnese, the depiction and outright comparison of Villa Lante with the complex at Caprarola is to

²²⁶ Denis Ribouillault, “Toward an Archaeology of the Gaze: The Perception and Function of Garden Views in Italian Renaissance Villas,” *Clio in the Italian Garden: Twenty-First Century Studies in Historic Methods and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Mirka Beneš and Michael G. Lee (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks, 2011), 206-207.

²²⁷ *Ibid.* 207.

be expected. The inclusion of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este's villa, however, provides a glimpse at Gianfrancesco's social circle, and the type of people he felt were not only important to cultivate relationships with, but also to conspicuously namedrop. Notably absent is the Sacro Bosco, indicating four possibilities: the first being that the Sacro Bosco proved too complex a *disegno* for a painter to properly represent in two dimensions; the second being that the Cardinal did not see his villa properties as existing in the same category as Vicino's *bosco* of monsters; third, Gianfrancesco was not particularly close with Vicino; and lastly, there was nothing to be gained socially from publicly asserting bonds of friendship with the Duke of Bomarzo. Association with Cardinals Ippolito d'Este and Alessandro Farnese carried far greater social currency, and Gianfrancesco clearly envisioned his own garden as coeval with—or perhaps even a rival to—the grand landscape architectural projects of Tivoli and Caprarola.

The frescoes prompt the well-connected visitor to compare their experience of Villa Lante with their memories of the other cardinals' gardens, playing on the same fertile tension between absence and presence invoked by the cityscapes painted on Gianfrancesco's loggia in Palazzo Vescovile. Prompted by the frescoes to assume this role of judge, one evaluates the features of these disparate sites in the exact same manner as sixteenth century visitor to the villa, Michel de Montaigne, who wrote that the site's waters were "more lively" than those at Villa d'Este and more plentiful than those at Villa Medici in Pratolino.²²⁸ Touching on everything from the plantings and fountains to the sculptural and architectural features, this conversation of comparison reflects the type of dialogue envisioned here between our interlocutors, as they move through, comment upon, and ultimately respond to each other's gardens.

²²⁸ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 52.

Just as the interlocutors' residences have laid the foundation for understanding their gardens, these sites also revealed a great deal of information about each patron's personality, from his social ambitions to his sense of continuity with local heritage, helping establish each voice within the *discorso* at hand. Between the decorous *vaghezze* of the landscape paintings in Palazzo della Loggia and the garden *casino* covered in lively Mannerist frescoes which abound with *grotteschi*, Gianfrancesco Gambara comes across as a well-informed and *au courant* connoisseur of mid-Cinquecento art. His properties in Bagnaia paint a picture of a cardinal on permanent holiday in the countryside who brought along with him all the comforts of the city and his station, domesticating the rough Tuscan backcountry, and transforming the landscape into a garden paradise that would rival those of his friends and peers. While Alessandro Farnese's villa complex in Caprarola partakes of many of the same discourses of urbane leisure and rarified artistic savvy, there is a dual emphasis on *romanità* and *tuscanità*, with the family's local roots on display alongside Alessandro's Roman leanings, tastes, and ambitions.

Vicino Orsini, on the other hand, reads as a lord of only minor consequence outside of Tuscia, who despite being somewhat hindered socially by his family's provincial roots, appears to have been both deeply invested and fully immersed in Bomarzo's vernacular landscape. The odd man out among the citified and upwardly mobile cardinals, Vicino—alongside the other native Tuscan patrons of gardens and designed landscapes—appears to be following the beat of a different drummer all together, responding to local artistic heritage and aesthetics rather than the fashions of Rome or Florence. However, when his voice is folded in among those of the other interlocutors, including Cardinals Gambara, Farnese, and even Madruzzo in Soriano nel Cimino, a conversation carried out in the medium of landscape architecture begins to emerge regarding period discourses of art, nature, regional style and identity. Through examination of both the spatial organization of

these sites and the materials employed within, these voices become clearer, revealing not only how these sites embody period ideas about gardens and the environment, but also demonstrating how late Renaissance thought and aesthetics took on a uniquely regional flavor in Tuscia, and birthed an emphatically regional school of art that celebrated local vernacular culture and Etruscan heritage.

PART III THE FOREGROUND

Ever since historians of art and architecture began turning their attention to Italian gardens, the representational and architectonic aspects of Renaissance designed landscapes have received the brunt of scholarly attention within the discipline. Sculpture and architecture have ruled the day, and what they potentially resemble or reference has taken precedence over the very basic matter of how—not what—the sites represent. The current study assumes that just as each iconographic detail added to a sculpture is calculated and each frieze applied to a structure is loaded with meaning, so too do the materials and organizational principles employed in a garden represent intentional choices made at each step of that site's creation. The following chapters concern themselves from the point of view of the elements of landscape itself: the layout of the sites on the terrain is considered first; then stone is the topic brought to life by our interlocutors; the next chapter discusses the role of water in the patrons' sites; and finally, we turn to the use of flora of all varieties, from the tallest tree to the geometric hedge.

CHAPTER SIX

Carving out Space: Compositional and Organizational Factors

The very shape and footprint of the garden upon the landscape is the first aspect to be discussed on our patron's hypothetical stroll through each other's sites. Issues of how paths are carved—sometimes literally—into the terrain, as well as the balance between formal *giardino all'italiana* and informal *bosco* will be discussed, as well as how sites' various axes may (or may not) have been read. In turn, the interlocutors' voices will take further shape in the dialogue, expressing everything from their connections with Tuscia to their ambitions a world away in Rome.

A Tangle in *Tufo*

Since work on the Sacro Bosco began around 1552, making it the earliest of the three gardens, we should address the site first in our *discorso*, operating under the assumption that nothing else quite like Vicino's monstrous *bosco* had ever before existed in Tuscia. At least, nothing that courted such erudite monstrosity and Mannerist multivalence had ever graced the artistic or topographical landscape of Tuscia before. But perhaps the Sacro Bosco resembles other sites within the region on an organizational level and in terms of its footprint on its surrounding environment much more than it does in terms of its representational aspects. Perhaps the rupestrian complexes—whether Etruscan, Roman or medieval—scattered throughout the thick *boschi* surrounding Bomarzo laid the groundwork for thinking about a specifically Tuscan type of landscape design.

The Sacro Bosco is essentially blanketed across the uneven terrain in the valley to the northwest of Bomarzo's rock-cut *centro storico*. Instead of excavating land to even out the topography, the garden undulates with the rocky terrain, cascading down the site's slope like a giant amoeba spreading over a multitude of tiered terraces. Rather than moving large boulders, many of the garden's footpaths, stairs and retaining walls are cut directly into the rocky obstructions scattered

throughout the site, boring through the land instead of simply removing the stones altogether (Figure 78). The *bosco* responds with a certain flexibility to the shape of the terrain beneath it, bending in response to the composition and natural textures of the topography rather than butting up against and radically altering it.

The overall footprint of the *bosco* on the terrain is nebulous and asymmetrical (Figure 80), and while the *tempietto* occupies the highest point of the complex, the layout of the park does not visually frame or foreground this terrace as the visitor's ultimate destination in their ramblings through the Sacro Bosco. The winding paths and dense forestation of the site largely obscure the other terraces from the visitor's questing eye so that one's field of vision is overwhelmingly taken up by their immediate surroundings (Figure 79), and with no clearly demarcated target destination in sight, all one can do is simply press onward. Although the *tempietto* eventually reveals itself as a kind of classicizing culmination of the *bosco* (Figure 81), depending on the route taken there, the structure is not necessarily encountered as the climax of the visitor's journey through the park. Without a perspectival or linear sequenced path, the *tempietto* may be visited at the beginning, middle, or end of on one's sojourn in the garden. Without an implied hierarchy or sequential ordering of terraces, the visitor is not only free to dictate their own path through the Sacro Bosco, but also to explore the site and make interpretive connections between tableaux however they see fit.

Unlike other gardens of the period whose layout could be experienced in a limited number of ways—from the top down, from the bottom up, a left or a right at a particular intersection—the sheer number of forking, meandering, and circuitous paths in the Sacro Bosco means that the site can hypothetically be experienced from a greater bank of routes. In short, there are so many potential itineraries through the *bosco* that rarely does one visitor's path through the garden exactly

mirror another's. When this infinitely flexible approach to the linear sequencing of the visitor's experience at Bomarzo is compared to the layout of contemporary gardens around Florence or Rome, we find there is nothing else quite like Vicino's *bosco*. Take, for example, Villa d'Este in Tivoli, where scholars have generally read the garden as having two potential itineraries: one the path of virtue, and the other of Venus' sensual *voluptas*.²²⁹ Villa Medici at Pratolino comes closest to the Sacro Bosco in terms of its organizational complexity, but its design—that is, if Justus Utens' lunette is to be trusted as an accurate representation of the park's layout—with its straight alleys and long vistas, still makes a complete circuit of the site as easy to conceptualize as it is to complete. And yet at the Sacro Bosco, the viewer, lost among the trees, has to make blind choices as to the trajectory of their itinerary, and must often double back on their path in order to ensure they have seen the full measure of the *bosco*'s marvels.

The paths that wind through the park are rarely straight, so the visitor is left guessing what awaits them around the bend, in the next clearing within the forest (Figure 82). These routes—though just as calculated as their rectilinear kin at Villa Lante or Villa Farnese—give off an impression of somehow being more natural or organic than straight alleys, further emphasizing the relative informality associated with the *bosco* as both a general type and as a sylvan foil to the formal *giardino all'italiana*. Admittedly, we do not know if all the trails through the *bosco* in its current state adequately reflect the shape and number of pathways found there during the prime of Vicino's patronage here may have been any number of paths weaving across the site, and they may not have even been paved with gravel. All we can be sure of are the clearings and pathways intimated by rock-cut retaining walls, stairs, and benches (Figures 83-84). But it should also be noted that this glaring absence of absolute surety about the paths' exact shape in the sixteenth

²²⁹ David Coffin, *The Villa d'Este at Tivoli* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 81-84.

century would indicate that these pathways were so informal in their construction that they were easily swallowed up by native undergrowth when the *bosco* fell into disrepair after the Bomarzo line of the Orsini died out. Whatever the case, there is no indication that there were any real axes, formal alleys, or grand vistas to help the visitor navigate the garden, just clearings sprinkled haphazardly throughout the forest across a number of terraces connected by a chaotic web of informal pathways.

This organizational ambiguity also invokes the problem of where exactly one entered and exited the *bosco*. While we know that certain monuments, such as the sphinxes with their declamatory inscriptions that introduce the park to the visitor, were moved during renovation of the site in the 1950s, their original location by the *casa pendente* seems to indicate that it was possible to enter the park from the northeastern corner.²³⁰ However, this portion of the park faces away from both population centers and local roads; the entrance opens onto the deep woods of Monte Casoli, functioning more as an exit than as the visitor's first point of contact with the *bosco*. It is likely that visitors entered on the opposite end of the park, heading westward downhill from Palazzo Orsini. Yet unlike other designed landscapes of the period, it is debatable whether a visitor to the *palazzo* would be able to identify Vicino's *bosco* within the topography while standing on his *loggia* (Figure 85). Concealed by the tangled sea of vegetation below the town, there would be few visual clues on the terrain indicating how to arrive at the *bosco*. A visitor might simply have to take Vicino's word that something wonderful awaited them among the trees and rocks in the valley below Bomarzo. Without a clearly defined entrance or path, the visitor may have been expected to wander through the no man's land of First Nature between the town and the *bosco*'s Third Nature, stumbling upon the designed landscape almost serendipitously.

²³⁰ Quartermaine, "Vicino Orsini's Garden of Conceits," 72 n.19.

These many spatial ambiguities could be considered one of the defining characteristics of the Sacro Bosco, running in tandem with the site's slippery approach to semantic stability. Ultimately, the disjointed organizational principles behind the site's construction appear to support the claim that there is no larger narrative, no iconographic key that connects the scattered clearings into some greater meaning. One simply wanders rustic paths through the forest encountering wonder upon unexpected wonder.

While this vision of the *bosco* may be reminiscent of Francesco Colonna's fantastical dreamscapes as described in his 1499 text, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, it might also conjure up images of places like Santa Cecilia (Figures 86-87), the early medieval rupestrian complex to the southeast of Bomarzo's *centro storico*, or Corviano several kilometers west, halfway to Vitorchiano. Whether we have stumbled upon an Etruscan necropolis or an abandoned cluster of rock-cut dwellings in the Tuscan countryside—or maybe even one of Vicino's *tuffo* monsters—the effect upon us is the same: surprise, bewilderment, bewitchment, and maybe most importantly, the intense urge to interpret this *meraviglia* of the highest degree. We are confronted by a place or object which seems so far removed from our own time and understanding that it makes no immediate sense to us. The *bosco* parrots back the experience of discovering something like the *piramide etrusca* (Figure 35) or the *sassi del predicatore* (Figures 37-38), just as its winding paths superlatively recreate the experience of traveling the *forre* and backwoods trails through the great expanses of First Nature surrounding Bomarzo. Blending the ambiguity surrounding the local rupestrian vernacular's ancient roots with the notoriously ambiguous structures of meaning that have come to characterize the Mannerist period with which the Sacro Bosco has invariably been associated, Vicino's garden displays itself as a uniquely *bomarzese* hybrid of ancient and modern, courtly eloquence and regional dialect.

The fact that Vicino chose to forgo the formal *giardino all'italiana* altogether in favor of a *bosco* is quite telling. He had neither the need for a hunting *barco*—Bomarzo was surrounded by thick forests, after all—nor did he apparently have the interest in geometric parterres. He made himself a courtly, erudite playground that was just this side of rude and rustic. Provincial enough to have its own vernacular, but learned enough to fold in among erudite references to Italian literature and antiquarian culture²³¹, the Sacro Bosco recreated the experience of the enigmatic Etruscan *boschi* of Tuscia as filtered through the three lenses of the grotesque, the carnivalesque, and the Poliphilesque. A marginal space in other period gardens, the *bosco* here has grown as large and monstrous as Vicino's *tufo* creatures themselves.

And yet, returning to the fact that Vicino's *bosco* was the first major garden project ever commissioned in Tuscia in all its recorded history, it is particularly interesting to note that it immediately takes a satiric bent that also can be read as a sort of tongue-in-cheek criticism—as slanted as the garden's *casa pendente*—of prevailing garden culture as a whole. If we take *ut hortus poesis* to heart, then the Sacro Bosco should be considered the burlesque, vernacular cousin to the courtly sonnet of early to mid-sixteenth century landscape architectural projects in Rome and Florence. The backwaters of Tuscia, roughly halfway between the two artistic centers, but a world removed, would be the best place to playfully satirize court culture, whether it be the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, the papal court of Rome, or even the episcopal circle of Viterbo. The semantic and the literal disorganization of the *bosco* make it a ludic place of blurred lines and permeable boundaries; both its haphazard footprint upon and the minimalist alteration of the terrain itself reflect this rustic, burlesque tone.

²³¹ The most exhaustive studies of the Sacro Bosco's potential references to learned Renaissance culture include Margaretta J. Darnall and Mark S. Weil's "Il Sacro Bosco di Bomarzo: Its 16th-Century Literary and Antiquarian Context" in the *Journal of Garden History*, and Maurizio Calvesi's *Gli Incantesimi di Bomarzo: Il Sacro Bosco tra Arte e Letteratura*.

In our patrons' hypothetical *discorso*, Vicino's voice takes on an ironic, satirical quality, the erudite fool in the conversation. He counts himself the wittiest, most knowledgeable, most worldly among rustics, a comically patchworked king of Arcadia. A polyglot, he speaks courtly Italian as well as Latin, all playfully mixed together with the *bomarzese* vernacular, a specifically Tuscan take on the learned tangle of languages found in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili's* literary gardens. He also establishes himself as a sort of trickster character, at home in the ambiguities of his *bosco's* riddles, double-entendres, and carnivalesque world turned upside-down.

And yet it appears that Vicino was not the only Orsini to court this aesthetic of semantic and spatial indeterminacy; turning to the Parco degli Orsini in Pitigliano, we see that his cousin Niccolò had a taste for landscape that ran in a similar direction. As in the case of the Sacro Bosco, Niccolò's *parco* is significantly removed from his hilltown *palazzo*, and given its position on a craggy ridge of *tufo* northeast of Pitigliano's urban core, it is as much—if not more—of a walk from his residence to some sort of entry point to the garden than at Bomarzo. Depending on the tree cover, the *parco* may have been visible from a window or *loggia* connected to the *palazzo*, but without any secure documentation concerning the original route between the two sites, we must assume the pathway was not particularly formal, and that the borders of the designed landscape were not sharply defined. The lack of surviving terraces or paths through the site today that can be definitively traced back to the sixteenth century seems to indicate that this particular landscape worked more in tandem with the topography it occupies rather than attempting to regrade or reshape it.

The *parco* is effectively draped over the hill with minimal intervention upon the existing terrain, so we might assume that the spatial experience of the site for a sixteenth century visitor was not too radically different from the way the environment is navigated today. We might also assume

that the visitor to the *parco* walked through a hilly, wooded area along twisting paths (Figure 77) much like at the Sacro Bosco, in a similar experience of discovering various rock-cut monuments, sculptures, and structures (Figure 89). As with the Sacro Bosco, the boundaries of Parco degli Orsini are nebulous and loosely defined, and there is rarely any clear separation between the ‘in here’ of Third Nature and the ‘out there’ of First. Even in the case of the park’s *belvedere* (Figure 56)—where the land across the valley is incorporated into the property’s vista as a clear focal point—spatial margins become fluid and penetrable, and without any clear sense of where the garden ends and nature begins, the two meld into each other. In terms of its spatial and organizational layout, the *parco* reproduces the experience of the local landscape in a manner that is consistent with the character of the region to the extent that the two types of space not only visually complement one another, but they remain difficult to differentiate several centuries later.

The *belvedere* is of particular interest here, as it toes that ambiguous line between ‘in here’ and ‘out there,’ natural and intentional, ancient and modern. Situated on the furthest spur of the hill, the visitor is met with rock-cut seats (Figure 90) in a stony clearing on the edge of a cliff, looking outward over the *forre* below. The effect is doubly surprising; not only are we seeing the incorporation of natural topography into a *veduta* long before the rise of the landscape garden, but we are also seeing the aesthetic appreciation of the uniquely Tuscan terrain. The *forre* becomes an object of wonder incorporated into the garden from the outside, and because the outward-facing designed landscape lacks definitive boundaries, First and Third Nature intermingle far more insistently than they do at the Sacro Bosco. While the experience of the Tuscan forests is not quite so fancifully re-presented as it is in Vicino’s visionary environment, a visitor to Parco degli Orsini still finds themselves wandering up and over hills in a disorganized wooded area populated with strange rock-cut monuments that call to mind the Etruscan necropolises of the region.

It has been frequently commented within the literature on the *parco* that the seats in the *belvedere* bear archaizing details that visually connect them to Etruscan tombs and monuments found throughout Tuscia, but it is the juxtaposition of these elements which read as Etruscan with the organization of space and experience of landscape that is of particular importance here. The Etruscanizing rock-cut features are visually linked with the view over the *forre*, as though Niccolò were speaking about Tuscia's Etruscan heritage and its characteristic landscape all within the same breath, as though one was best experienced and understood through the lens of the other. First Nature is not simply being admired for its beauty; the *belvedere* looks out over the *forre* because the landscape has been imbued with a precious sense of ancientness. The implementation of rupestrian structures with Etruscanizing elements provides a framing device for the exact type of Tuscan landscape where such ancient remnants could be found, communicating to the visitor that they are deep within Etruscan country. The rugged woods, the steep hills, the winding *forre*—all these components of impenetrable, anticlassical space—are presented as not only uniquely Tuscan and uniquely Etruscan, but also as marvels of nature worthy of admiration.

Even though Niccolò's park recreates the experience of stumbling upon ancient rock-cut structures and spaces in the deep Tuscan forests through the same basic organizational approaches taken toward the terrain as at Bomarzo, the tone of the two sites differs dramatically. Unlike the lighthearted, satirical Sacro Bosco that re-presents the Tuscan countryside in enchanted, superlative language, Niccolò's approach reads as much more serious. The Parco degli Orsini could almost be described as a fraternal twin to the Sacro Bosco that has thoroughly dispensed with Vicino's monsters and mythical creatures, and if we approach the park as such, we start to see a larger picture of sixteenth century understandings of Tuscan Etruscology. In order for these gardens' designers to be able to recreate the spatial experience of the region's Etruscan

landscapes—not to mention some of the intended visitors, who were expected to be able to read these built environments as having an Etruscan flavor—sixteenth century inhabitants of Tuscia from a range of social classes appear to have had a surprisingly rich understanding of their region's unique pre-Roman heritage. Whether they hailed from Pitigliano or Bomarzo, Cinquecento Tuscians were clearly venturing out into the woods and looking at the myriad of necropolises, tombs, *vie cave*, and monuments that speckle the landscape.

Furthermore, we are not only seeing the development of a specifically regional style of landscape design based on these experiences within the woods, but we are also seeing the emergence of a heretofore unacknowledged facet of Renaissance antiquarianism. We know so little about what sixteenth century Italians understood of the Etruscans, and we know even less about the more provincial corners of Italy during the Renaissance, but what is emerging between these two Orsini environments is a sense that there is much to be discovered about cultural heritage, vernacular identity, and regional memory not just in liminal places but the liminal arts as well. If we can get a glimpse of this one particular example of the afterlife of Etruscan civilization in Tuscia through local tastes in landscape design alone, there are surely other avenues to the recovery of subaltern, regional histories of Tuscia within its other spaces, arts, and products of material culture. While Vicino and Niccolò only offer the voices of relatively minor hilltown lords, the synchronicity of their speech suggests a rich vein of vernacular knowledge about local Etruscan heritage that when properly tapped, could begin to rewrite the story of the Renaissance's connection with and reclamation of Italian antiquity.

As interlocutors in our *discorso*, the Orsini cousins function as two sides of the same coin—both emphasize their Tuscan roots through the display of tangled, wooded environments—yet where Vicino uses his Sacro Bosco to amuse, amaze, and stupefy, Niccolò remains relatively staid

and restrained, emerging as the serious foil to Vicino's erudite joker. Both Orsini slip seamlessly between Italian and the Tuscan vernacular, proudly asserting their local identity, but where Vicino is all wordplay and puns, his cousin plays the composed straight man, emphasizing their deep links to the region and claims to authentically Etruscan ancestry. The two are acutely aware that Farnese and Gambara have the type of wealth, power, and influence the cousins could only dream of wielding for themselves, yet the cardinals lack both the profound familiarity with the region and the degree of clout that accompanies this esteemed indigeneity. There is a certain pride in provincial origins, and the Orsini landscapes speak of a joy in unrefined nature, whether it be performed by our interlocutors in an erudite game of manners, or admired by them on a *belvedere* after a leisurely stroll through a disorganized *bosco*.

Uniformity, Opticality, and Authority

The garden at Villa Farnese (Figure 91), on the other hand, speaks a far more refined tongue, with its earliest interventions on the site pointing toward the influence of landscape practices from in and around cities like Florence, Rome, or even Viterbo rather than from the vernacular woods so favored by Niccolò and Vicino. The villa's lower garden complex brings the sophistication of both urban and suburban garden aesthetics to the countryside, creating a Rome away from home in Caprarola. The upper gardens, added almost two decades later, provide a more bucolic counterpoint to the formality of the lower terraces, and while this space courts a forested aesthetic, the woods remain genteel and manageable, embellishing the Tuscan countryside as befitting a gentleman cardinal. When read as a complete unit, the bipartite gardens function much like a premodern palace; the further the visitor is granted access to the complex, the more private the space becomes, and the closer one's association is with the proprietor. Alessandro's garden may

meet the public with its Roman face forward, but his roots in the wilds of Tuscia become gradually more exposed to the visitor the deeper one enters the garden.

Unlike the Orsini landscapes, the garden at Caprarola is connected directly to the villa (Figure 92), so there is no question of how the visitor would have accessed the site, only the matter of whether they took the western or northern entrance. Whereas the visitor to Parco degli Orsini or the Sacro Bosco had to cross some sort of undetermined no-man's land between the *palazzo* and the garden, the visitor to Caprarola simply walked out a door and into the garden. While one might expect the effect to be a stark transition from indoor to outdoor, the way that the lower gardens are situated behind the *palazzo* gives the visitor the impression that they have merely moved from an architectural room to a verdant one. The site fits snugly within the terrain, as the hill directly behind the *palazzo* was regraded to accommodate the flat, quadrate terraces, aligning the hidden and contained nature of the lower gardens with the more urban model of the *hortus conclusus*. There is a distinct sense of the lower gardens as a finite space, with a clear separation between the 'in here' of the designed landscape and the 'out there' of everything else (Figure 92).

This first phase of the garden where rectilinear space was excised from the irregular landscape is reminiscent of the axial thoroughfare that slices through Caprarola's urban core; instead of working with the existing terrain, in both cases the Farnese restructured and reshaped space to meet demands that were more aesthetic than practical. These surgical approaches to the topography convey a sense of almost colonial dominion over the local landscape, as though the Farnese were exerting control over the *comune* by carving pieces out of Caprarola for their own usage. The lower gardens are particularly emblematic of this attitude, for in regrading and cordoning off this swath of land, the Farnese have not only made a literal imprint upon the terrain in the name of personal pleasure, they have also appropriated this space as private property, tucked

away from public view behind both walls and the bulk of the villa itself. Sandwiched between the hillside and the residence, the visitor is buffered from the surrounding environment by walls, and without any vista points looking outwards over Caprarola, the gardens are effectively unmoored from any specificity of place, creating a sort of insular bubble divorced from the larger landscape (Figure 94).

This model of an enclosed, inward-facing garden just on the edge of the urban center is reminiscent of the High Renaissance *vigne* that grew up near Rome's *disabitato*, garden spaces that were closely associated with the city's antiquarian culture during Alessandro's grandfather's youth. These were the meeting places of humanist sodalities led by such luminaries of early Cinquecento Roman intellectual society as Angelo Colocci and Johann Goritz, sites of feasts and recitations of poetry both ancient and archaizing, where the rarified hothouse culture of High Renaissance Rome perhaps came closest to embodying and communing with the spirit of the ancient city.²³² Though most of the earliest Roman *vigne* and backyard grotto gardens are lost to us now, we know they generally featured ancient and archaizing sculptures that comingled not only with ruins and all variety of trees and plants, but also gentle fountains and gnarled, rusticated rock.²³³

While the lower gardens feature all these elements, it is their spatial and organizational layout—particularly the foregrounding of both water features and statues in recessed niches as focal points along a series of linear pathways, all within a contained and easily comprehensible area—that concerns us here. Compared to the sprawling Sacro Bosco, the visitor is able to quickly locate the

²³² Jozef IJsewijn, "Poetry in a Roman Garden: The Coryciana," in *Latin Poetry and the Classical Tradition: Essays in Medieval and Renaissance Literature*, edited by Peter Godman and Oswyn Murray (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 212-216; Ingrid Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance*, 13.

²³³ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 32-34; Elisabeth B. MacDougall, "The Sleeping Nymph: Origins of a Humanist Fountain Type" *The Art Bulletin* 57 no. 3 (Sep. 1975), 361-365.

lower gardens' highlights and mentally map a route across the site, and without any twists, turns, or forking paths, there are no choices that need to be made as in the case of Villa d'Este. The lower gardens' formal organization creates straight and direct sightlines that extend across open and uncomplicated space, clearly framing the fountains and architectural features as obvious destinations. The site's modest human scale not only further aligns the earliest interventions at Villa Farnese with the small, self-contained backyard gardens of High Renaissance Rome, it also unifies space into a straightforward, comprehensible whole. The site is experienced as balanced, measured space that calls to mind the formal and rectilinear properties of a cloister, an effect that is also emphasized by the very private and circumscribed nature of the lower terraces.

This first major phase of the gardens at Villa Farnese reads not just as an expression of Alessandro Farnese's refined tastes or a recapitulation of High Renaissance Roman forms and aesthetics, but also as a deliberate implementation of a larger central Italian garden tradition. With their modular plots of private, formally organized land bound by distinct geometric perimeters, the lower terraces conform to this outside tradition of landscape rather than following in the footsteps of the disorderly and amorphous Orsini sites, which appear to predate initial work on the Farnese gardens. Instead of approaching the Sacro Bosco as an eccentric, idiosyncratic retort to more conventional sites like Villa Farnese, it is perhaps more beneficial to our study to reverse the narrative and read Villa Farnese as a rejection of the vernacular aesthetics favored by Niccolò and Vicino. In terms of their spatial organization, the lower terraces have more in common with sites like Villa Medici in Castello or Villa Madama in Rome, as though Alessandro was essentially importing this prevailing fashion for gardens from major cosmopolitan centers and imprinting it upon the local landscape. The stark contrast between the flat, formal garden and the rugged, hilly terrain around Caprarola further underscores the relative foreignness of this type of garden to a

Tuscan hilltown environment. With all the style and comfort of Rome or Florence, Cardinal Farnese has brought the straight lines and knowable spaces of the classical Renaissance to the Etruscan backcountry, establishing his gardens as a sort of refined retreat within the greater outpost of ‘civilized’ society that is the villa.

While these early phases resemble other inward-facing, rectangular environments found across Italy during the first half of the Cinquecento, the upper garden seems to actively engage with the surrounding landscape in a manner more akin to the Orsini sites than the walled plots of Florence or Rome. Since the upper section was a later addition to the site—work most likely began in the early 1580s—we should perhaps read this area as a reply to the example posed by the Sacro Bosco rather than approaching it first and foremost as a product of changing styles. Instead of framing the upper portion as an exuberant Mannerist expansion upon the lower terraces’ relatively conventional High Renaissance *giardino all’italiana*, it may be more apt to think of the two sections as either working in congress with or at cross purposes against the local terrain. In the lower section, flat and linear space is impressed upon the hill to create definitive boundaries between the ‘in here’ of the Third Nature and the ‘out there’ of both the natural and the urban landscape. The upper gardens, on the other hand, are radically different in their approach to the villa’s surroundings, and their informal organization and emphasis on seemingly serendipitous discovery appear to indicate a more relaxed attitude toward the characteristic Tuscan topography.

Accessed by way of a steep hill between the lower terraces (Figure 95), the route leading to the upper garden is unassuming and offers the visitor no insight as to the location of either the *casino* or its gardens that lie just beyond the rise and through the trees. The rustic path snakes uphill and around a corner through the *bosco*, and while the visitor’s sense of space is more enclosed here than in the lower gardens, the surrounding trees make for a much more permeable and nebulous

periphery than the hard retaining walls and straight alleys of the formal terraces (Figure 96). For a moment, the visitor is back wandering the forests of Tuscia—or at least, a more polished, mild-mannered version of them—propelled by the same curiosity to explore an alluring and enigmatic *selva oscura* that was so deftly mined at the Sacro Bosco. However, the visitor to Villa Farnese’s *bosco* is not required to make choices regarding their route as one is constantly prompted to do in either Vicino’s garden or the wild Tuscan backcountry. Alessandro’s *bosco* domesticates one’s encounter with the Tuscan woodlands; the visitor still has the experience of venturing out into the unknown forest and finding something marvelous hidden away there, yet all the variables and hazards have been removed. One simply needs to follow the path to the clearing up ahead (Figure 97).

In order to understand how this clearing was originally intended to be experienced, the modern-day visitor must envision the site without the stately walls, grottoes, and other architectonic elements that were added in the 1620s (Figure 98). Without an architectural buffer between the *bosco* and the chain of fountains running downhill from the *casino*, the clearing would have felt smaller and more intimate, just as the visitor’s arrival at the site might have felt more serendipitous, like discovering a bucolic waterfall or ancient rock-cut ruins on a trip through the *forre*. The site would have read like an oasis in the trees, a secret arcadian vision revealed to only a select and privileged few in the Cardinal’s inner circle. In the absence of the heavy seventeenth century masonry, the clearing would have spread out and away from the visitor along the lone sightline of the *catena d’acqua*, with the visual weight concentrated in the distance between the fountain of the river gods and the *casino*, the *loggia* of which is aligned with the central axis, perfectly framed by the waterworks. Surrounded by the *bosco*, the straight lines and perspectival organization of

the upper gardens draw the visitor uphill to the vanishing point of the *casino* that comes into focus as one's ultimate destination, an island of polite society in the middle of the woods.

This revelation of the *casino*, and the experience of discovering something so rarified and precious in the *bosco* partakes of the same dialectics of wonder as an excursion deep into the region's forests and one's encounter with the vestiges of past civilizations found therein. Though the two could not be more different—modest rupestrian monuments and a cardinal's haute couture hermitage—in both cases, the visual rhythm of unrestrained, organic nature with all its lumps, bumps, and curves is disrupted by straight lines and exacting edges that point toward the artful intervention of human workmanship. Whether one has come upon something after a stroll through the woods as emphatically symmetrical as the layout of the villa's upper gardens or as improbably linear as the ancient cuboid monuments in the foothills of the Monti Cimini, the effect is the same: the forest gives way to an environment transformed by art. The single path through the *bosco* guarantees that every visitor has this same experience of discovery from the same basic vantage point, potentially indicating that surprise was the desired effect for the first-time visitor to the upper gardens. Furthermore, the passage through liminal, informal space is the key element in framing the surprise, and instead of functioning like an optional, wooded satellite to the formal *giardino all'italiana*, the *bosco* here is the necessary link between the garden's two main sectors. To be in close with Alessandro, to be allowed access to this even more relaxed and intimate side of the villa, meant to journey into the unknown *bosco* with him.

While the lower terraces seem to look toward Rome or Florence for organizational and aesthetic inspiration, the upper gardens—where a journey through the *bosco* is an integral part in the experience of the Tuscan landscape—appear to draw from the same well of inspiration shared by the Orsini environments of Bomarzo and Pitigliano. This phase of the garden may have been

Cardinal Farnese's ultimate showstopper environment built to impress his visitors but it was also among his most informal and convivial of spaces within the villa, a retreat within a retreat from the pressures of public life. The loggia of the *casino* (Figure 99) would make an ideal setting for this chapter of the *discorso*; in that very space, our interlocutors no doubt drank, dined, and discussed the kind of erudite topics in which Renaissance nobles were expected to be conversant, potentially comparing each other's landscapes to the surrounding gardens. From this privileged viewpoint in the *loggia* where water flows downhill and direct sightlines recede away on a centralized axis from one's eye, the visitor—or perhaps more specifically, the cardinal himself—is placed in a certain position of eminence over the landscape that is reminiscent of the *vista* from the villa's other *loggia*, looking out over the straight street incised down the spine of Caprarola's urban center. In both cases, ownership is conveyed through the perspectival gaze across linear space, and despite the disparate styles and formats of the upper and lower gardens, the message is the same: Farnese control over the landscape brings order and prosperity.

While Alessandro's gardens are first and foremost a statement about power, they are more than just an expression of Farnese claims to the *caprolatto* territory. Whether they draw from the backyard grottoes of Rome or the *boschi* of Tuscia, both the upper and lower gardens transform the landscape into easily comprehensible linear space that is oriented around the visitor's body as the central organizing principle. Should one find themselves in the geometric parterres of the lower garden or at the foot of the *catena d'acqua*, the site's primary destinations align with both the straight avenues of footpaths and the line of the visitor's gaze. Even though the layout privileges opticality first and foremost—the path of the visitor's eye merges with the narrative I as one walks through the gardens—the site's insistently linear organization means that there can be little variation in how one sequences their visit. Given the absence of alternate pathways, one's

experience of the site is effectively identical to the cardinal's, as though the path of his authoritative gaze provides the only proper way to see the garden. Unlike the Sacro Bosco, where the visitor selects the route for their own epic adventure, the spatial organization of Villa Farnese's gardens prioritizes a master program for experiencing the site, effectively manipulating what one sees and how one moves within the landscape in this soft expression of Farnese power.

As an interlocutor, this insistence on legibility and the eschewal of variables within the garden reads on Alessandro's part as a sort of formal rigidity, an awareness of his place at the apex of the social hierarchy, and a desire for control. Alessandro has the power to move land and the people upon it, and even though his landscapes consistently privilege one principal viewpoint, he is not without some degree of levity, as the theatricality of the upper gardens' reveal makes plain. He is inextricably connected to Rome—the city's recent past has shaped his career, his education, and his aesthetic tastes—but once one has become close enough with the cardinal to be invited to his informal *bosco*, Alessandro's Tuscan roots have begun to show a little. While his appreciation of the view from the *loggia* of his *casino* could not be more different than that of Niccolò Orsini admiring the *forre* of Pitigliano from a rock-cut *belvedere*, the later additions to Alessandro's gardens indicate that he ultimately still conceived of the Tuscan woods as the ultimate getaway from his responsibilities as both a cardinal of the Church and the public face of the Farnese family in Rome. However, based on his villa's gardens and the way they utilize space, it seems as though Alessandro thought of nature primarily in passive terms, not as a place to explore or inhabit but as something for the eye to admire and observe, and it begs the question whether this optic—rather than haptic—approach stems from the Cardinal's taste for landscape painting.

Furthermore, given the way that the site's organization streamlines and homogenizes the visitor's experience, we must also consider whether Alessandro understood his gardens as having

a similarly fixed approach to meaning. How might this have affected his conversations in the garden with Vicino or Cardinal Gambara, and how might Alessandro have experienced their respective designed landscapes? Based on the many formal and representational similarities between the upper gardens and those of Villa Lante, like the *catena d'acqua* and the monumental river gods, the cardinals' voices in our *discorso* would frequently be in agreement, their close rapport providing a liveliness to the conversation. Alessandro shares the same Tuscan origins as the Orsini cousins, but he finds most in common with Gianfrancesco Gambara, for they speak the same cultured, cosmopolitan language of Cinquecento Churchmen. Together, their gardens paint a larger picture of how prevailing, central Italian tastes in landscape architecture translated to the Tuscan countryside.

Putting Nature in Perspective

While the shape of the Sacro Bosco seems to have grown organically over the years however Vicino Orsini's whims dictated, and the geometric footprint of Villa Farnese changed over the course of several decades, Villa Lante presents a case rather the opposite. Seeing as Cardinal Gambara was granted control of Bagnaia in 1568, and the garden was effectively complete by 1578 for the occasion of Pope Gregory XIII's visit, it is most likely that it was designed as a standalone, cohesive unit by a single landscape architect, rather than evolving over time. Like the lower gardens of Villa Farnese, Villa Lante's gardens (Figure 100) are attributed to Vignola, and this is another key element that sets Gianfrancesco's site apart from the other built environments of Tuscany. Whether or not we can be completely sure of the extent of Vignola's involvement, when compared to something like the Sacro Bosco, both Villa Lante and Villa Farnese read as spaces designed by someone with architectural training. This is not only on account of the gardens being connected like ornaments to an adjoining villa or *casino*, but also because the different

terraces within the sites read for the visitor like a series of floors, rooms, and passageways through space.

Like Villa Farnese, Villa Lante is also broken into two main sections—a *giardino all'italiana* and a *bosco*—yet in Bagnaia we have a clearer sense than at Villa Farnese of how big the *bosco* originally was. Based on the Tarquinio Ligustri print of Villa Lante (Figure 101) and the fresco depicting roughly the same view in Casino Gambara, we can easily say that the *bosco* took up more than half of the property. In both these raked bird's eye Cinquecento plans, however, the smaller and more heavily worked *giardino* carries greater visual weight than that of the sprawling *bosco*, catching the viewer's eye with regimented, orthogonal lines of plantings that appear to radiate outward from a unified vanishing point. Although the formal garden reads in these images as a rectangular strip carved out of the lefthand side of the property, the overall footprint of the complex is an irregular circular blob with a single squared edge on its northeastern corner. While the shape of Villa Lante is amorphous, it is far from ambiguous; together, the formal *giardino* and the *bosco* are ringed by a garden wall that creates a distinct sense of enclosed, finite space. Like a nesting doll of cordoned off spaces, the formal garden within is also walled, with only two points of access between the formal terraces and the informal *bosco*, limiting the number of possible itineraries one could map throughout the complex.

Since the garden is not connected directly to the cardinal's residence, a visitor to the site must cross the Cinquecento *borgo* of Bagnaia, following one arm of the trivium to the northern garden wall, where the complex's two main entrances are located. There is some question regarding which of these two gates was the preferred point of entry. Although the northeastern entrance at the foot of the *giardino* aligns with the central axis, there is also another gate to the northwesternmost corner of the formal garden that looks in the sixteenth century images like a

formal, ornamented archway. Should the visitor take the latter entrance, they have the option of either heading straight to the semicircular *piazza* next to Casino Gambara and the formal *giardino*, or veering west into the *bosco*. A visitor who started their exploration of the site from either the centrally aligned entrance or by way of Casino Gambara would experience the *giardino all'italiana* as an ascent toward the garden's water source, where they could then enter the *bosco*. If the visitor came in the opposite direction—*bosco* first, as it were—the formal garden would be read from top to bottom, following the water's path downhill. This approach to space speaks of an extreme binary rigidity, and limits the number of possible itineraries one can map throughout the complex.

Before unpacking how the two distinct sections of Villa Lante are organized and experienced, we must take into consideration two important factors. First, the *bosco* has changed substantially over the centuries and most of the fountains are either lost or irreparably damaged, and secondly, we must question how much we can trust the sixteenth century fresco and prints of the garden to accurately represent the site's layout. Landscape historian Denis Ribouillault has demonstrated that the garden views painted inside Tivoli's Villa d'Este represent idealized projections of the site rather than being veristic likenesses of the complex as it looked in the mid-Cinquecento. In terms of the fresco in the *casino* and the Ligustri print, at least one aspect is blatantly inaccurate—we know that only one of the two mirrored *casini* on the lowest terrace (Figure 102) was built during Cardinal Gambara's lifetime—which gives us cause to question other points of accuracy in the images as well. While these works might not be able to tell us exact details about planting patterns or the details of fountains, they do show us how Cardinal Gambara wanted his garden to be conceptualized by others. The choice to represent the *bosco* alongside the formal garden is

intriguing, as though both environments held equal ideological and visual importance, and were so inextricably linked that no visit to Villa Lante was complete without seeing both.

For the purpose of our study here, our interlocutors will start their *percorso* through the gardens by following the route outlined by Ligustri, from the lowest terrace of the formal garden to the top and out into the *bosco*. Following prevailing interpretations, this route through the complex can be interpreted as having a larger programmatic narrative concerning a return to nature. Moving from the formal parterres of the northernmost terrace to the rustic grotto and then into the relaxed *bosco*, the garden effectively reverses time and returns the visitor to an idyllic, arcadian state. Read in the other direction, however, the visitor emerges from the sprawling *bosco* at the Grotto of the Deluge, and in following the water downhill, postdiluvian civilization as represented by Third Nature becomes ever more ordered thanks to the interventions of art.

Starting with Ligustri's route at the entryway to the foot of the formal garden, the visitor is in the ultimate privileged position; aligned with the central axis, the entire site unfolds before them in one point perspective. Space recedes out and away from the visitor, up the gentle incline of the site's terraces toward the Grotto of the Deluge, and even though this vanishing point for the garden's many straight lines is sometimes obscured from view, the visitor always has a sense that their ultimate destination lies at the top of the hill (Figures 103-104). The path itself rarely overlaps with the central axis—sometimes running parallel to it, other times branching away diagonally—but the points where the two meet effectively function as backwards and forwards-facing *belvederi* (Figure 105), where the visitor's eye once again aligns with the authoritative, perspectival view. Indeed, the rigorously perspectival nature of the formal gardens recalls the optical effects employed to represent space in two dimensions, now translated back into three dimensions and

inscribed onto the landscape. Spatially, Villa Lante is experienced almost as a perspectival landscape painting come to life.

Since the longitudinal axis is largely composed of fountains, plantings, and other installations, the visitor's movement across the spine of the garden is frequently obstructed, and one must choose whether they want to follow the path just right or left of center (Figure 106). While it is entirely possible for a visitor to experience the garden solely from one side or the other, at the centrally aligned *belvedere* points, one can cross the axis and make their way uphill by weaving back and forth from left to right. Whichever side the visitor picks is ultimately immaterial, though, since all the main features are connected to the central axis, and unlike at the Sacro Bosco, one is never left questioning whether they missed anything in their visit to the garden. The route forward is always easily comprehensible—uphill, in line with the axis—removing any guesswork or chance on the visitor's part. As a result, the sequence in which visitors experience the formal terraces is relatively standardized, as in the case of the upper gardens at Villa Farnese. While Cardinal Gambara's *giardino all'italiana* may have influenced the linear singularity of the approach to Villa Farnese's *casino*, the site bears more than a passing similarity to the lower gardens of Caprarola, with their straight paths and modular, rectilinear terraces.

This clarity in terms of spatial organization is also reflected in the formal garden's near perfectly symmetrical design, which would have been disrupted by the fact that only one of the twin *casini* that were included in the fresco and the Ligustri print was built during Gambara's lifetime. The empty space where Casino Montalto now stands would have been experienced in dramatically different ways depending on whether the visitor had already seen the images of the property before exploring it. For our interlocutors, the void created by the lack of a *casino* would most likely read as a space pregnant with potentiality, as much a part of the temporal component in the garden as a

newly planted sapling or a sprout ready to unfurl its leaves. For others, however, the lone *casino*—when everything else in the garden is mirrored—would create a visual imbalance and disunity of space, and instead of reading as one of the dual visual anchors of the lower terrace, it would function more as the central hub of Villa Lante.

Reexamining the plan of the entire complex with Casino Montalto omitted, Casino Gambara becomes the focal point of the garden, and is experienced as neither part of the *giardino all'italiana* nor the *bosco*, but like an island in the middle of the villa's sea of green. The centrality of Casino Gambara to the villa complex is further underscored by the semicircular *piazza* just to the west of the garden's architectural nucleus, from which the main paths to the *bosco* radiate outward like spokes in a wheel. Compared to the unobtrusive footpath near the Grotto of the Deluge that leads off into the *bosco* almost like an afterthought (Figure 107), the way the paths converge at the *piazza* indicates that this area was the main springboard for exploration of the villa's wooded areas. However, this ultimately raises questions as to whether a visitor was more likely to return downhill to Casino Gambara after reaching the Grotto of the Deluge, from there taking one of the main arteries that stem from the adjoining *piazza* to enter the *bosco*. Furthermore, such a route—uphill to the source and back down again, and then out into the *bosco*—would seemingly disrupt the application of any programmatic narrative across the two distinct spaces. How then would the visitor have been prompted to understand the *bosco* and the *giardino all'italiana* in relation to one another?

While most of the original features of the *bosco* have been lost or irreparably damaged over time, many of the long, straight paths depicted in the fresco and the Ligustri print still stretch across the complex, terminating in either angular intersections with other alleys or ending in small clearings with badly degraded fountains. Even though the layout of paths through the *bosco* is

asymmetrical and unsystematic, Cardinal Gambara's orderly woods have little in common with the jumble of curvilinear paths in Vicino's Sacro Bosco. The *bosco* at Villa Lante is crisscrossed with a network of linear thoroughfares that slice through the disorder of the forest (Figure 108), and channel visitors directly from one point to another and beyond. In a manner akin to the ancient Roman roads that branch across Tuscia like the Via Cassia and the Via Clodia, the uniform linearity of these paths establishes a distinctly human presence on the landscape. These straight, flat corridors through green space domesticate the forest experience in a way so that the visitor never feels removed from civilization as one might when following a deer path through the *forre*. The long avenues running through the *bosco* create far-reaching sightlines—easily the longest in any of our interlocutors' environments—and while the visitor might not be able to see their destination in the distance, one has the distinct sense that they are on the road to somewhere.

The visitor is treated to somewhat of a surprise when a clearing and its features finally come into focus. While the fountains within were nothing quite so surprising as the oasis in Alessandro's *bosco* or the monsters in Vicino's, the prevailing theme of discovery is still apparent here, as one's walk through the forest has led them to find something as unexpected as it is a product of human creativity. Yet unlike the wild Tuscan backcountry, the markers of human civilization found in Cardinal Gambara's *bosco* are mannered creations of sixteenth century Third Nature that elevate the experience of the forest to something more refined, more calculated and controlled than an unmediated ramble through the region's woodlands (Figure 109). Villa Lante presents the visitor with a simplified, navigable, and easily comprehensible version of a forest—a tame and balanced Tuscia, safely ensconced behind walls and then rationalized with straight avenues—the organization of which lends an anthropocentric air to the landscape. While it may serve as a sylvan foil to the *giardino all'italiana*, the network of long, straight streets and ornamented *piazze* carved

out of the *bosco* read like they were ideated by an architect more accustomed to urban landscapes than forested ones. Of all the interlocutors' *boschi*, the wooded section of Villa Lante is the most transformed, as its avenues function like private promenades traversing space rather than immersing the visitor in the unique character of the locale. As a result, the visitor is presented a sort of nonspecific, idealized experience of the woods that could plausibly be recreated in any arboreal landscape; Cardinal Gambara may have had a designer *bosco*, but it was hardly designed to reflect the region's *genius loci*.

Yet this is to be expected from outsiders to Tuscia. Neither Cardinal Gambara nor Vignola—or whomever was the architect responsible for the site's organization—would have been intimately acquainted with the region's characteristic woodlands, and as a result, Villa Lante is not so much a panegyric to the Tuscan landscape as it is a product of the drafting table. This is not to say that the gardens are unsuited to their environment, although they do read as wholly separate from their surroundings, like a conservatory hothouse encircled by a contrasting biome. As in the case of the gardens at Villa Farnese, Villa Lante reads as a meticulously organized aberration on the rugged Tuscan landscape, an environment created with perhaps the more navigable and comprehensible spaces of Tuscany or the Roman *campagna* in mind. However, this is much more than a case of both cardinals or Vignola imposing big city Renaissance culture onto a provincial locale; when compared to the Orsini *boschi*, the manner in which Gambara and Farnese's sites are organized indicates that we are looking at two radically different modes of thinking. Not only do they diverge in terms of their approaches to both composition and the visitor's experience of space, but they also reveal vast differences in how the natural world was experienced and understood by various strata of sixteenth century Italian society.

The spatial and organizational properties of Villa Lante tell us that Gianfrancesco Gambara appreciated nature in predominantly optical and relatively passive terms, as a series of static *viste* kept at arm's length behind a balustrade or hedge. The emphasis on linearity throughout the gardens likens the experience of the site to a linear sequence of living landscape paintings in strict one-point perspective, as if the three-dimensional world was best understood through the lens of two-dimensional representations. This type of 'landscape thinking' where one's environment is perceived first and foremost through the lens of visual culture—rather than being understood in the context of other natural spaces—is further evidenced by the frescoed *vedute* in the *loggia* of Casino Gambara, which effectively invite the visitor to think of the site in pictorial terms. Unlike the Orsini cousins, whose environments demonstrate familiarity with the Tuscan woodlands, Gianfrancesco Gambara's gardens reveal him to be rather detached from not only the Tuscan environment but also the very realm of nature itself. As a man of cosmopolitan cities and courtly circles, Gianfrancesco was likely more well-versed in painted landscapes than sylvan ones, and the many pictorial, perspectival *viste* in the garden seem to indicate that each terrace of the garden was experienced as a distinct *veduta* in a collection of scenes. In this way, the garden becomes a string of showpiece *prospettive* designed not to celebrate the local landscape, but to lionize its patron. Created both for and by outsiders to Tuscia, the garden has a somewhat generic *genius loci* of its own; it could be just as easily at home in the Tuscan countryside or Roman *campagna*. The site instead provides us with the ultimate snapshot of prevailing tastes and trends in mid-Cinquecento villa culture, the ultimate adornment of fashion and class.

Here we see Gianfrancesco reveal a hint of competitiveness, as his garden is larger and many ways grander than the region's other designed landscapes were by 1578; his decision to seek out Vignola after his involvement with Villa Farnese implies a desire to see the architect outdo himself

in Bagnaia. This competitive spirit is also revealed in the frescoed *vedute* of contemporary gardens in the *loggia* of Casino Gambara, which seem to imply that the Cardinal wanted his site to be compared to other environments. As an interlocutor, this propensity toward competition makes Gianfrancesco a lively character in our *discorso*, and while his tastes might be more orthodox than those of say, Vicino, he prides himself on having what he considers to be the chicest, most magnificent vision of nature yet created in Tuscia.

Nevertheless, he is a stranger to the region; Gianfrancesco is unable to follow along when other interlocutors slip into dialect, and his knowledge of the region's Etruscan past is more hypothetical, more textual than what the Orsini cousins know from firsthand experience gained while adventuring in the rugged Tuscan backcountry. Though he may not have picked this region for the site of his villa retreat, Gianfrancesco has transformed his slice of Tuscia into his ideal location, as his chosen architect levelled and rationalized space into flat terraces, long promenades, and perspectival sightlines. As in the case of the lower gardens at Villa Farnese, this reshaping of the terrain reads almost like rectilinear Roman modes of thinking being imported into and impressed upon a landscape long steeped in irregular, curvilinear—vernacular—epistemologies of space.

At this point in the *discorso*, we seem to be looking at two different schools of landscape architectural practice: one favored by the Orsini circle, and another employed by the upper echelons of Italian society that came to roost in Tuscia. This latter approach might be characterized as having a broad appeal in cosmopolitan sixteenth century circles across Italy and beyond, an international garden aesthetic that tapped into a generic and open-ended Arcadian impulse. On the other hand, the modes of thinking about landscape and the close connection with *genius loci* seen at Bomarzo and Pitigliano are something altogether different from mainstream Renaissance attitudes toward the creation of place and the experience of nature. Might the Orsini environments

represent a particularly Tuscan way of seeing the local environment, or might they serve as evidence of a uniquely regional school of landscape architecture? Why did this type of designed landscape emerge in mid-Cinquecento Tuscany, and why did only some of our interlocutors adopt this spatial approach to their gardens?

The simple answer would be that these were choices made from a strictly financial angle—the Cardinals could afford professional architects like Vignola, while the Orsini and their Tuscan circle could not—and that insubstantial funds meant for more informal spaces. Our Orsini interlocutors would certainly protest, attributing these differences to a unique regional character, one that celebrated local Etruscan heritage and vernacular landscape. Their local identity is the one advantage they see themselves as having in this *discorso* over Cardinals Farnese and Gambara, who despite having spent most of their lives outside of Tuscany, have the majority of wealth, power, and influence in the region. Alessandro and Gianfrancesco may have come to retire in the region, bringing *oltraciminiati* aesthetics and approaches to space with them, but they are hardly the type of *cittadin de boschi* that Vicino prided himself as being. Here the organization of the very land itself becomes a stage for Tuscan *campanilismo*, a space to reify all things regional, from the rugged woodlands to the region's rock-cut vernacular.

CHAPTER SEVEN
From *Tufo* to *Tartari*: The Application and Excavation of Stone

Just as *tufo* unites past with present, Etruscan with vernacular, topography with *comuni*, the stone is the common thread running throughout Tuscia's sixteenth century designed landscapes. Although the Sacro Bosco's tuffaceous appearance has frequently been remarked upon (albeit generally only in passing) within the literature, the use of the stone in other landscape architectural projects—and any larger connections that can be drawn between them—has generally escaped discussion of these sites. Perhaps the stone's ubiquity across all manner of spaces and walks of life in the region is partly to blame, as the scholar's eye becomes acclimated to *tufo* and ultimately sees past the stone as a bearer of meaning; or perhaps the stone has become the victim of under-interpretation because it does not have the backlog of pre-modern literary renown in the manner that marble, porphyry, or lapis lazuli were examined and celebrated. Perhaps still, the stone has been overlooked because it is neither beautiful nor rare, and the materiality of that which is utilitarian and commonplace is vastly under-theorized in the field of art history. Nevertheless, if all the gardens around Florence made overwhelming use of *pietra serena*, scholars would be quick to assert that there was some manner of tacit cultural understanding that linked the stone with the re-presentation of the Tuscan landscape, steeped in a heady brew of *fiorentinità* and local stone culture.

The gardens of Tuscia must be examined in the same light and with the same sensitivity given to travertine at Villa d'Este in Tivoli, or the association long understood between marble and the Florentine sculptural tradition. Tuscia offers a unique example in the study of Renaissance materiality, as no other region in Italy during this time exhibited such a unified clutch of landscape architectural projects, all partaking of the same emphatically regional stone. While it could be argued that all the patrons selected *tufo* for their gardens because of low cost and ease of access,

such a statement only begs the question of why *tufu* was not utilized in a wider variety of garden projects throughout central Italy. The stone was easily available and well-known for its relative durability through Roman sources; why did it become a popular building material solely for gardens and villas in Tuscia? Why did Cardinal Farnese not employ *tufu* in his Orti Farnesiani in Rome? Why was it not utilized by patrons in Tivoli and Frascati? Perhaps the stone was coded for a sixteenth century audience as uniquely Tuscan and an essential part of a specifically Tuscan landscape.

Mining the Vernacular

Both the ubiquity and centrality of *tufu* to the Tuscan *genius loci* are best demonstrated by the Sacro Bosco of Bomarzo, which expands its program of reiterating characteristic local topography beyond the erratic, organic layout of the park. Through the use and display of stone, the *boschetto* reveals itself to be an active conversation between the forces of Third Nature and those of Tuscan *tufu* culture as articulated in the topography and architectural practices of the region. Slipping easily in and out between the Tuscan vernacular and the erudite tongue of courtly humanists, the Sacro Bosco speaks a rarified, hybridized visual language reminiscent of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. Whether addressing the rivalry between ancients and moderns, or the role of the sculptor in the creation of a piece, prevailing cultural questions and ideological motifs are filtered both through the volcanic stone and its potential local valences.

The sculptures and structures of the Sacro Bosco are entirely composed of *tufu*, and in many cases are directly hewn from the living rock itself. The valley in which the *bosco* is located is strewn with large *tufu* boulders (Figure 110), and it seems as though the artists responsible for the garden used this fact to their advantage, carving many of the stones where they lay rather than introducing to the complex figures carved off-site in a workshop. Some of the figures' feet (Figure

111) and structures' foundations (Figure 112) poke up out of the earth, giving one the impression that the Sacro Bosco is emerging from the forest floor, having grown up and out of the site itself. That which is not carved from the living rock—whether Cerberus' heads (Figure 113) or the curving seat of a bench—is still roughly hewn from blocks of *tufò*, with few truly smooth edges. The *tufò* has a tough, rocky appearance and pick marks are often visible on monsters and architectonic elements alike (Figure 114), pointing up both the hand of the sculptors and the subtractive process of their sculpting. The stone is left in a relatively unfinished state, regardless of whether it is a figure's billowing drapery or a rectangular block in a retaining wall.

It has been forwarded that the rock-cut forms of the Sacro Bosco have their origins in pareidolia, as though the artisans—like Leon Battista Alberti's hypothetical primitive sculptor²³⁴—assessed the shape of the *tufò* boulders and creatively extrapolated upon them, as though they were reading shapes in the clouds. Certain forms in the *bosco* seem to court this interpretation, as they appear to materialize half-formed from the boulders, their nascent shapes dictated by the contours of the great masses of stone. As in the case of the heraldic bench (Figure 115), the origins of the garden's forms are often hinted at by raw, unworked rock, and the natural contours of the boulder both blend into the hillside and define the shape of the seat's backrest; the bench's armrest is a simple volute flourish on amorphous craggy stone. The disruptive juxtaposition of carved and uncarved, natural and artistic, almost implies a pause in the generative processes of *natura pictrix*, or an even-stonier-than-thou answer to Michelangelo's *non finito*.

This is Renaissance Third Nature at its cheekiest, both fraying away at and poking gentle fun at the concept of an art/nature binary; here the two are in perfect synch—art is neither the ape of nature nor its subjugator—and they seem to wield a dual influence, each amplifying the other. As

²³⁴ H.W. Janson, "The Image Made by Chance in Renaissance Thought," in *De Artibus Opuscula XL: Essays in Honour of Erwin Panofsky* volume 1, edited by M. Meiss (New York, New York University Press, 1961), 254.

figures emerge from the inchoate, in situ stone, art is brought forth directly out of nature through subtractive carving, literally materialized by the sculptor out of the landscape. The *paragone* between art and nature blends with the Renaissance garden's analogous *paragone* of First and Third Nature, wittily combining the twin discourses in novel and unexpected ways.

There is also a certain humor in the handling of the *tuffo*. A low relief representation of the Three Graces (Figure 116) is rough and anything but graceful; the natural divots in the *tuffo* make the figures' bodies look lumpy and pockmarked with cellulite. There is a wonderful absurdity to carving a graceless brace of Graces from so homely and common a material, as though the sculptor were accentuating the shortcomings of the crumbly, volcanic stone. This is not stone that looks like flesh in the manner of Giambologna, nor is this is not even Michelangelo's unyielding stony flesh; this is flesh that looks emphatically like stone. The *tuffo* is never worked to the point that it does not resemble itself or lose its naturally pitted and nubby appearance.

The sculptor's punning on materiality is also evident in the rock-cut tree stump (Figure 117) found on the edge of a clearing in the *bosco*. This stone facsimile of a tree is in medium relief and bears traces of painted text on what remains of its very badly weathered top half; the presence of the barely discernable (let alone readable) epigram seems to indicate that attention was meant to be drawn to this piece. With a particularly dry sense of humor, the rock-cut tree shows not just the sculptor's hand in bringing art out of nature, but also signs of pruning and the gardener's cooperative hand in the shaping of Third Nature out of First. Yet the tree is not a tree, it is an artificial representation of artful nature made by art out of nature. Juxtaposed with genuine trees, it becomes a meta-image about the re-presentation of nature in the Renaissance garden itself.

The *bosco* also includes a number of unworked or very lightly worked boulders that appear to have been left as-is by the sculptors (Figures 118-120), and these stones add further charge to the

dialogue between the creative act of art and the creative power of nature. Walking among these extremely *non finito* masses, the visitor to the site is privy to the inner workings of the sculptor's *ingenio*, as they are presented with an apparition of the decisions made in a work's creation. Once removed from the artist's studio, a discrete marble sculpture would lack the material context of surrounding blocks of stone indicating earlier non-figural stages in the marble's life. Nor could such a sculpture show the processes of its maker, the pieces yet to be carved or the pieces unsuited for carving. Yet the unworked rocks of the Sacro Bosco, situated side-by-side with their figural kin, give visual form to the choices made by the sculptor in the way that one could never figure the brushstrokes not painted or the notes not played.

The presence of the uncarved block—as opposed to the absent brushstroke—foregrounds the subtractive nature of sculpture, with the remains of the sculptor's *disegno* literally scattered throughout the *bosco*. These in situ, inchoate rocks similarly emphasize the frontier where First Nature and Third Nature meet; in a garden where forms are chiseled away rather than imported from nearby locations, First Nature is neither truly softened nor expanded upon, and some components of the landscape remain in their primordial forms. The indigenous boulder worries the edge between artist's creation and nature's creation, simultaneously the product of nature's making and the byproduct of the artist's choosing. An intentional unintentional image, the rock signals its own naturalness, yet through the artistic process it was left untouched by the sculptor, perhaps to underscore the illusion that the visitor is in a wholly natural space, bringing to mind the question posed by the garden's sphinx, whether the wonders the *bosco* holds were “made as trickery or as art.”

It is important to recognize, however, how unique the inclusion of these boulders is for its time period; designers of sixteenth century gardens did not share Capability Brown's notion of the

picturesque, so we cannot assume that the rocks were left in situ to make the park look more ‘natural,’ as a landscape designer might choose today. Other designed landscapes of the period simply did not incorporate this type of rock in spaces where sculpture was present. Boulders of this magnitude would have been moved out of the way altogether in more formal period gardens like Villa d’Este in Tivoli or Villa Medici in Castello, and other gardens that had cultivated wooded areas, as is the case at Villa Lante, may have punctuated certain points along paths with fountains or sculptures, but boulders were never part of the *mise en scene*.

The techniques used, as well as the relatively *laissez-faire* approach to raw, in situ stone indicates that the designers behind the project were not professionally trained like Pirro Ligorio or Vignola, and the fact that we have no names of architects or sculptors attached to the site is telling. These were most likely local Tuscians who were trained to work with *tufo*, the type of people who would never be part of any artistic *accademia*. They lived and worked in the *tufo* hilltowns of Tuscia, not Rome or Florence. Whoever carved the stone denizens and edifices of the *bosco* had experience shaping *tufo* into a variety of forms—stairs, retaining walls, *cantine*, benches, basins, human and animal figures—and it seems most plausible that local stonecutters steeped in Bomarzo’s overwhelmingly tuffaceous culture would possess the greatest expertise with the stone. It would be only natural for artisans trained in a subtractive approach to rock in a region whose inhabitants are more likely to literally carve out spaces for themselves than build new ones would apply these techniques in the creation of the garden.

Perhaps even more intriguing is the fact that the sculptors were clearly as knowledgeable about the handling of raw *tufo* as they were knowledgeable about Cinquecento trends in both sculpture and architecture. The garden’s *tempietto* fuses the Brunelleschian dome of Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence with a Bramantesque portico, and Bramante’s design for the Vatican Belvedere is

echoed in the garden's semicircular, stepped *teatro*. While general consensus within the field of Bomarziana swings toward the opinion that Vicino Orsini was the driving creative force behind the *bosco*'s general appearance, these sculptors were versed in both the carving of *tufo* into the usual Renaissance suspects like Pegasus, sphinxes, and nymphs, and something a bit more utilitarian, like retaining walls, rock-cut stairs, and underground *cantine*.

The architectural plot thickens even deeper when we examine the reproductions of regional types of rock-cut Etruscan tombs in the Sacro Bosco (Figure 121). Laying on its side, the faux-ruin by the heraldic bench requires the visitor to tilt their head to reconstruct the fragment before them; with its partial façade and gabled pediment, the stony mass cuts the figure of a rupestrian Etruscan aedicule tomb, seemingly cracked in half down the middle, giving the impression that this piece had crumbled away from the rest of a larger, unseen structure, only to land in its current resting place. The pediment is carved with a number of lively figures, including dolphins, a ram, and a mermaid with a bifurcated tail, recalling the hybrid female figures encountered elsewhere in the garden. In his "A Reproduction of an Etruscan Tomb in the Parco dei Mostri at Bomarzo," John P. Oleson has linked the faux-ruin with the Tomba della Sirena, a third century BCE aedicule tomb outside of Sovana (Figure 122).²³⁵ Oleson argues that Vicino Orsini would potentially have had access to the rupestrian tombs of Sovana through the Pitigliano line of the family, and intimates that Vicino and Niccolò Orsini had a vested interest in the Etruscan heritage of the region.²³⁶

The region's history is re-presented in the very stone that shaped its history, and it could be argued that the designers of the *bosco* were twining together Etruscan heritage and the subtractive carving of *tufo* as central facets of Tuscan identity. It should be emphasized that it is not only the

²³⁵ John P Oleson, "A Reproduction of an Etruscan Tomb in the Parco dei Mostri at Bomarzo," *Art Bulletin* 57, no. 3 (Sep 1975), pp. 410-417.

²³⁶ *Ibid.* 416.

shape and the decoration of the faux-tomb that make it seem Etruscan, it is the vernacular handling of the *tuffo*; the thread of identity connecting past and present is embedded in rock and the uniquely Tuscan practice of handling it. This is Tuscan heritage depicted in local rock—as local as one could ever be when carved in situ—using the vernacular approach to stone carving.

But the faux-tomb is not the only nod to characteristic local Etruscan forms in the Sacro Bosco. There is also a reproduction of an Etrusco-Roman *tomba a fossa* (Figure 123)—a rectangular sepulchral pit excavated from the living rock—that is almost identical to a group of similar tombs found less than two kilometers away from the Sacro Bosco in Bomarzo’s wooded Selva di Malano (Figure 28). This seems to imply that both sculptors and patron alike were so well-versed in regional architectural history that they could respectively reproduce and appreciate these relatively exacting copies. It is also implied that visitors to the Sacro Bosco were expected to understand that these structures were something emphatically Tuscan that harkened back to the region’s mysterious and exciting Etruscan past. In this light, the *bosco* effectively separates its visitors in two basic groups: those with an intimate knowledge of the region who thus possess the right visual tools and background to read the garden, and those who do not, who must attempt to decipher the site’s visual riddles and enigmatic tableaux from a more generalized vantage point without the benefit of localized experience and sensibilities. Simply put, these faux-tombs reward a Tuscan viewer in a way that a visitor from Frascati, Florence, or France is neither privy to nor able to truly appreciate.

These particularly regional implications that associate Etruscanness with the traditional handling of *tuffo* are apparent with the Sacro Bosco’s most iconic sculpture: the Hell Mouth (Figure 124). While most of the literature concerning the structure remarks on the ludic grotesquerie of the garden pavilion that devours the picnicking visitors inside, little has been made of the rock-cut

space's similarity to local rupestrian forms. The cuboid room excavated from within the monster's head (Figure 125) is remarkably similar to the interior of a hilltown *cantina* (Figure 51), or the inner chamber of an Etruscan rock-cut tomb (Figure 126). Whether referencing Etruscan antiquity or the local vernacular—or perhaps even both—the form and subtractive handling of stone are explicitly Tuscan. We must remind ourselves that while the Sacro Bosco has one foot in the imaginative world of *Orlando Furioso* or the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the park has its other foot in the stony, hardscrabble world of Bomarzo. The resonances that outsiders to the region are able to draw between text and image are not necessarily the same ones that would have been discerned by those who have lived in this type of environment; an outsider to Tuscia does not know that the cool, clammy atmosphere of these rock-cut spaces feels the same, that they smell the same, or that the *tuffo* leaves a fine, dusty grit on one's fingers when touched. The Sacro Bosco is Cinquecento down to the bone in terms of its erudite themes and textual homages, but then it also manages to be emphatically Tuscan in its references to rupestrian Etruscan heritage and local vernacular aesthetics.

While the stark differences between Vicino's garden and those of Cardinals Farnese and Gambara has led scholars to treat the Sacro Bosco as a bit of a unicum within the field, when we consider only the sculptors' handling of the *tuffo*, the site finds comparison with other sixteenth-century landscape architectural projects throughout Tuscia. A thorough examination of the gardens and built environments of both Vicino's close friends and family, as well as those of other minor Tuscan lords shows a pattern of intention, built upon a fascination with both the Etruscan past and its mapping upon the distinctive stone of the region. Indeed, the agenda of localization at play in the Sacro Bosco comes increasingly into focus when viewed in tandem with nearby

contemporary works in the surrounding hilltowns that visualize and foreground the rupestrian culture of the rough Tuscan backcountry.

In terms of its approach to *tuffo*, one of the closest parallels to the Sacro Bosco can be found in the Parco degli Orsini outside of Pitigliano. Like Vicino's *boschetto*, the site features coarsely hewn sculptures that are largely excavated from the living *tuffo* and seem to vacillate between intentional construction and chance formation. As in the case of the Sacro Bosco, the location of the in situ boulders largely determines the relatively unsystematic network of canopied benches, seats and miniature rock-cut grottoes. A handful of crude sculptural elements ornament the park, including the now largely fragmentary forms of a colossal male nude holding a cornucopia (Figure 127), and a female figure reclining atop a large tuffaceous cube (Figure 89).

The Etruscan atmosphere of the park has frequently been noted in scholarly discussion concerning the site, with visual connections drawn between the site's sculptures and the Etruscan necropolises of Sovana and Sorano,²³⁷ particularly in regard to the numerous recessed benches and individuated high-backed seats with their tall, fluted capping (Figure 92) reminiscent of pedimental detailing on rock-cut tombs in the area. Claudia Lazzaro has remarked on the fact that the seats appear to emerge from the ruins of such a tomb, noting that it creates a scenario of fictive reuse and cultural continuity, as though the sixteenth century park had simply been grafted onto an existing necropolis.²³⁸ This impression that an ancient complex had been coopted and altered for modern usage also points toward the vernacular practice of appropriating rupestrian Etruscan spaces both within and without the confines of hilltown *comuni*. Coupled with the rough, subtractive carving of the *tuffo*, the park parrots back the stony aesthetics and traditions of the

²³⁷ Portoghesi, "Nota sulla Villa Orsini di Pitigliano," 76; Steingraber and Prayon, *Monumenti Rupestri*, 104-105; Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 118; Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 124-125.

²³⁸ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 118.

region, implying that both Etruscanness and contemporary Tuscan identity are synonymous with a certain handling of the stone.

Just like at the Sacro Bosco, the excavation of forms from the living rock disrupts the line between not only art and nature, but also past and present. These *paragoni* are playfully grafted together through the vernacular, as the visitor is not entirely sure whether the roughly hewn shapes and spaces are ancient, naturally occurring, or of sixteenth century construction. The forms found at the Parco degli Orsini are far rockier and more ambiguous in appearance than those found at the Sacro Bosco, recalling the Etrusco-Roman monuments of the Monti Cimini. The visitor's experience of the nebulous rock-cut shapes and structures in the *parco* mirrors their encounter with puzzling stone forms in the region's forests, where the rupestrian vestiges of long-gone Tuscians boldly announce themselves yet offer few clues to their provenance or intended function. In both cases, the visitor is surrounded by seemingly inexplicable oddities carved from *tuffo* boulders that partake of the Tuscan vernacular, emerging out of the terrain as if the longstanding regional style were a natural product of the landscape itself.

The fact that both the Sacro Bosco and the Parco degli Orsini reproduce characteristically Tuscan Etruscan antiquities in the rupestrian vernacular seems to point to a calculated program of meaning widely accepted and understood by the Orsini and their peers. The particular correspondences between the Sacro Bosco and the Parco degli Orsini go beyond mere coincidence, indicating a larger overarching connection between Orsini blood, the stony landscape of Tuscia, and the Etruscan past. In such a light, Vicino's *bosco* can be read as an extension of a theme, a ludic interaction with a discourse seemingly predating and independent from the site's creation, operating instead within the parameters of an aesthetic linked to an innately Etruscan Orsini identity. The connection between *tuscianità* and the tuffaceous vernacular found at the Sacro

Bosco appears equally present at the Parco degli Orsini, which in turn looks to the Etruscan monuments and remnants of its own locale, equally displaying and bolstering personal and familial connections to the surrounding land, regional style, and Tuscia's illustrious, enigmatic past. While both sites emphasize the characteristic local landscape, the *parco* and the *bosco* ultimately approach this display from divergent vantage points and degrees of earnestness, with the garden at Bomarzo presenting itself in a far more blithe and erudite manner than its counterpart in Pitigliano. The underlying connection to the *genius loci*, however, remains a constant, producing environments that simultaneously mirror and play homage to their cultural, historical and topographical surroundings.

Further light is cast on this dialogue with the rupestrian vernacular and the region's storied Etruscan past when removed from a specifically familial context and examined in conjunction with the Papacqua fountain of Soriano nel Cimino. While two sides of the three-walled nymphaeum are made up of rusticated *tuffo* blocks, the back wall—composed of two different types of *tuffo*, one slightly redder and smoother than the other—is cut from the living rock and features a colossal female satyr reclining amid jets of water, her infant offspring, and a variety of pastoral characters (Figure 128). The face of the bearded satyr (Figure 129) in the bottom left corner of the nymphaeum's back wall closely resembles those of the herms in the Sacro Bosco (Figure 130), and based on the proximity between Bomarzo and Soriano nel Cimino it is possible that the same hand may have carved these figures. Most of the Papacqua's figures are carved in mid- to high relief, and rough diagonal pick marks are used to represent texture or shaded background (Figure 131).

The fountain also features two epigrams, one in Latin that extolls the nymphaeum as a pleasant site of relaxation and retreat, its inspiration drawn from the Muses and the spirit of the place,²³⁹ and another directly below the satyress in Etruscan pseudoscript (Figure 132). Taken as a whole, the inscriptions read as a direct invocation of the *genius loci*—a specifically Etruscan *genius loci*—and effectively cast all the depicted elements as extensions and embodiments of this spirit. Cut directly from raw *tuffo*, the figures project an essential oneness with this most characteristic building block of Tuscan life, as though their being had flowed just as naturally from the land as the Papacqua itself. There is also an elision between the archaizing figures as embodiments of the landscape and the method of their sculpting; in effect, the subtractive Tuscan carving of local Tuscan stone best represents the Tuscan *genius loci*.

In freeing these pastoral figures from the wall, the sculptor has revealed not just the form hidden within the block, but the true form of the spirit of the place. At this point, they have tread into the territory of Third Nature as well, for their hand channels the ultimate cooperation of art and nature in representing the face of the region's *genius loci* from an inchoate chunk of the region's characteristic stone. Standing in as the *genius loci* incarnate,²⁴⁰ the satyress appears to equate the stone with a time and place removed from the present, an ancient Arcadia still perceptible in the essential spirit of the place as articulated by the *tuffo* and rupestrian *tuscanità* itself.

²³⁹ S. Lang, 'Bomarzo 2', 430. The full inscription reads: 'Quod felix faustumque sit. Pio IV Pont. Max. Surlatinorum Marchionatus, cui Galliesium et Bassianum subditur, institutori, Madrutiorum propinquo CRISTOPHORUS MADRUT. CAR., Marchiae Legatus, Tridenti Brixinaeque Episcopus, Princeps German. Italus, postquam sub divo Carulo V obit, cum in Alemania, tum in Italia, diversa munera publica, et sub Phiippo filio Isubres rexit, Ludovico Madrutio Car, nepoti curam rerum tradidit, celebrem arcem hanc jam vetustam instauravit, Ecclesiaeque libertati aequae ac Madrutius patere jussit, quin etiam vivos gelidi fontis Papaquae, lacus suo otio atque negotio, musis, genio loco, studiosorum secessui exornavit MDLXI'.

²⁴⁰ Ibid. 430; Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 158, 161; Marinella Festa Milone, 'La triplice allegoria dell'Acqua di Papa, la fonte del Cardinale Madruzzo a Soriano nel Cimino', in *Psicon* 3 no. 8-9 (July-Dec. 1976), p. 129.

In a 1563 letter to Giulio de Cavalieri, an associate of the Farnese, Cardinal Madruzzo underscored these Etruscan associations with a distinctly Annian flavor, describing his satyress as “profess[ed] to derive from the sister of Janus,”²⁴¹ as if the *tufi* nymphaeum were a figuration of sacred, ancient, and above all Tuscan history. It is implied, however, that one is able to glimpse this visualization of Annian Etruria long after its Golden Age through the spirit of the land, as observed in its topography, colossal *tufi* monuments, and vernacular practice. Equally telling is Madruzzo’s comment in a 1564 letter to Cardinal Farnese where he described his Papacqua fountain—“*queste nostre spelonche*”—as the “antidote” to the “*grandezza*” of Caprarola,²⁴² as though something about Villa Farnese were a bad taste that could only be washed out of the mouth with a visit to the rupestrian spaces of Soriano nel Cimino, which are true representations of the Tuscan landscape.

The International and the Artificial

But what exactly about Villa Farnese is so poisonous that it requires an antidote? When Cardinal Madruzzo wrote to Farnese, the gardens at Caprarola were nowhere near the state of grandness or complexity that they reached in the 1580s, yet there clearly must have been something that seemed diametrically opposed to Soriano’s tuffaceous spaces. In her timeline of the lower gardens, Francesca Romana Liserre has shown that work on Caprarola’s grottoes—as well as a fountain “*costruita in pietra da taglio*” located in the chestnut *boschetto*—occurred primarily in the early to mid-1560s.²⁴³ These early grottoes, which include the Nymphaeum of Venus (Figure 133), the Fountain of the Unicorns (Figure 134), and the Grotto of the Satyrs (Figure 135), were niches of varying sizes set back in an architectonic facade ornamented with pebble mosaics, shells,

²⁴¹ Theurillat, *Les Mystères de Bomarzo*, 148.

²⁴² Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 294, 1.9.1564a.

²⁴³ Francesca Romana Liserre, *Grotte a Ninfei nel '500: Il Modello dei Giardini di Caprarola* (Rome: Gangemi, 2008), 8-10.

marble sculptures, and rusticated cave stone called *spugne* or *tartari*. Occurring naturally within caves systems, *tartari* are stony concretions of calcium²⁴⁴ that were applied to the walls and ceilings of artificial garden grottoes. Through the implementation of this luxury material, Alessandro's grottoes and niche fountains stand as the exact opposite of Cardinal Madruzzo's *tufo* nymphaeum. As artificial caves made of rare and fine materials, they inhabit a different realm within Third Nature, one more refined and worldly than the grottoes of Tuscia, whether natural or vernacular in origin.

Devoid of *tufo*, the fountains of the lower gardens seem to recall the genre of rusticated fountains that surged in popularity in Rome during the High Renaissance, evoking muses, nymphs, or the spirit of the place. Sometimes referred to as *fontane rustiche*²⁴⁵ or *fontane alla romana*,²⁴⁶ these fountains generally featured a nude or lightly-draped statue in a rustic stone alcove situated above a wall fountain that emptied into a pool or marble sarcophagus (Figures 136-138), and were a near-ubiquitous feature in the modest gardens of Roman humanists and their supporters, including Agostino Colocci, Johan Goritz, Cardinal Paolo Emilio Cesi, and Cardinal Ridolfo Pioda Carpi.²⁴⁷ In terms of meaning, these rusticated sites evoked something of antiquity's essence to their owners, functioning almost as a portal to a virtual reality where the ancient past—or at least, as it was imagined by fifteenth and sixteenth century Italians—could be embodied and

²⁴⁴ David Dernie, "The Use and Meaning of Materials in the Garden of the Villa d'Este at Tivoli" in *Architecture Research Quarterly* 2.3 (Spring 1997), 67.

²⁴⁵ Frank Joseph Alvarez, *The Renaissance Nymphaeum: Its Origins and Development in Rome and Vicinity* (PhD diss. Columbia University, 1981), 84-87.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 171.

²⁴⁷ The four main elements needed for this particular garden feature are: a small fountain, a rusticated niche, a sculpture of a nude or semi-nude woman, and an inscription referring to a nymph or spirit. Some of the aforementioned sites incorporated all four, while others utilized only two or three; the composition in the Vigna Carpi lacked a water source, and while the fountain in Goritz's garden featured inscriptions referring to a nymph, no sculpture was present. See Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 32-34, 38; MacDougall, "The Sleeping Nymph," 361-365; Otto Kurz, "Huius Nympha Loci: A Pseudo-Classical Inscription and a Drawing by Dürer," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 16 no. 3-4 (1953), 173; Phyllis Pray Bober, "The Coryciana and the Nymph Corycia," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 40 (1977), 224, 226, 231.

occupied. Although the fountains were not so much direct replications of any one particular ancient prototype, something about the combination of water, sculpture, and rough stone sparked the antiquarian imagination and carried a strong suggestion of the Roman past, and we may be better served to think of these sites as a creative exploration or re-presentation of the ancient world, a fanciful laboratory of sorts, attempting to poetically capture the essence of a world long gone. As the centerpieces of the gardens and *vigne* where High Renaissance sodalities would meet, these rusticated *fontane alla romana* were arguably the point of origin for not only the increasingly architectural and sculptural built environments of the sixteenth century, but also the association between garden spaces and evocations of ancientness.

While the grotto phenomenon quickly disseminated across Italy and beyond, evolving into a number of regional variants, the ideological links between this form of rough stone niche and High Renaissance humanist culture would surely have been apparent to any well-heeled inhabitant of Lazio. As the cardinal *nipote* of Pope Paul III, Alessandro was the direct heir to this intellectual culture and would no doubt have had access to *fontane alla romana* both in the *palazzi* and *vigne* of the Eternal City as well as the early sixteenth century villas of the Farnese circle in Frascati.²⁴⁸ It is no surprise that the form is reproduced in the lower terraces of Alessandro's garden at Caprarola; its evocations are suitably fitting for a highly educated, heavily cultured Cardinal wishing to emphasize his intellectual and political links with the greatness of Rome both past and present.

The Fountain of Venus and the Grotto of the Satyrs are composite rocky spaces that make abundant use of spiky *tartari* (Figure 139), which were most likely applied by a specialist in

²⁴⁸ While best known for sites created in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the earliest villas in Frascati were established by Farnese courtiers during the papacy of Paul III. Ehrlich, *Landscape and Identity in Early Modern Rome*, 4, 49-50.

manmade *grotte* a world away from that of Bomarzo's *grottaioli*. By comparison, Alessandro's artful constructs of Third Nature were luxury caves coming from a completely different specialist tradition of stonework, taking an additive rather than subtractive approach to sculpture and architecture alike. Use of *tartari* in grottoes was widespread in Europe by the mid-sixteenth century, and we know from a letter by Vicino Orsini to Alessandro Farnese that the duke offered the cardinal a "*mostra de tartari*" from his family holdings in Collestata, indicating that work with the speleothems—whether being mined for the Orsini or applied to surfaces for the Farnese—began as early as 1561.²⁴⁹ (It also raises questions about why, if he had access to this stone all along, did Vicino chose not to use it in his *boschetto*? Why make vernacular caves instead of the ones favored by the tastemakers of Rome and Florence?) Alessandro's caves are the exact opposite of Vicino's in Bomarzo and Cristoforo Madruzzo's in Soriano nel Cimino, they were made by specialists from Rome, Florence, or Tivoli, or at least someone with an extensive background in other sites that partake of the Mannerist, 'international' grotto type, who built caves rather than excavated them. *Tufo* specialists and *tartari* specialists were not one and the same; the latter was probably paid more and seen by their employer as more of a specialized artist than the former because of the rarified nature of the material used to create an additive grotto.

In recent decades, authors like Philippe Morel have discussed the many valences of both gnarled, rusticated stone and mucilaginous, cauliflowered speleothems (Figures 140-141) within the manmade grottoes of the mid- to late Cinquecento, demonstrating that these encrustations were understood to be materials in transition, created through the slow accretion of dripping waters, which congeal or conglutinate into a distilled 'sauce' of aquatic essence, ultimately taking on a telluric form through the introduction of extremes in heat or coldness.²⁵⁰ Broadening this discourse

²⁴⁹ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 10.

²⁵⁰ Philippe Morel, *Les Grottes Maniéristes en Italie au XVI^e Siècle* (Paris: Macula, 1998), 9-19, 31-36.

beyond the natural histories of Aristotle, Theophrastus, and Avicenna, this taste for *spugna* has been connected to dialogues of poetic indeterminacy, pareidolic imagery, the creative and destructive forces within the environment, and the age-old *paragone* between Art and Nature.²⁵¹ Not yet fully hardened into ‘genuine’ stone like marble or travertine, *tartari* were seen as occupying an intermediary state within the metamorphosis, and were thus cast as an impressionable, nascent material representative of both nature’s potential and active processes.²⁵² In short, these stones serve as lenses to focus meditation on numerous philosophical discourses that occupied sixteenth century theories of art, and they have a literary pedigree—a paper trail—which something as common as *tuffo* does not.

This is the type of grotto where men of a certain social standing could ponder the relationship between art and nature, First and Third Nature, sculpture and architecture. The Grotto of the Satyrs is also one of the arranged stops on the patrons’ fictive journey through the gardens in our *discorso*, where the interlocutors make comments that range from satiric jest to erudite references to an Etruscan Pyrrha and Deucalion foundation myth. While not at the center of the lower gardens, this grotto is their focal point, the jewel in the proverbial crown, and what was no doubt a key stop in any itinerary through the garden, whether Vasari’s in 1568 or Pope Gregory XIII’s a decade later. The grotto becomes a primary point of interaction in the social performance that is the patron’s stroll through the garden with an esteemed visitor or close friend. This is where erudition and education are tested, and the ideal insider is well-read in the theories, treatises, and *discorsi* coming out of Florence and Rome about a variety of topics from the origins of art to the origins of stone. The conversation is just as much a part of the game of the garden as are the trick fountains, and it is the *tartari* and their many erudite evocations that take the center stage of the conversation.

²⁵¹ Ibid. 21-26.

²⁵² Ibid. 31, 35-37.

But this is not to say that Alessandro Farnese completely eschewed the use of *tuffo* or sought to only align himself with the cultural centers of Rome or Florence; he simply used *tuffo* much later in designed spaces that date from the 1580s. Moving further into the garden, passing through the *bosco*, the visitor encounters the garden *casino*, and here in the upper gardens we start to see the first large scale implementation of the stone. The *catena d'acqua* (Figure 142), the Fountain of the River Gods (Figure 143), and other smaller decorative elements date from this period and are composed entirely of *tuffo*. Just as one's access deeper into a Renaissance *palazzo* was a function of one's intimacy with the owners, this space deep within Caprarola's grounds was a place of more relaxed repose for the Cardinal to share with his close circle of friends. It also appears as though the more private the space and the deeper into the forest, the more *tuffo* was employed.

This calculated usage of *tuffo* could be connected to any one of several ideological ends. Is it possible that *tuffo* was deemed particularly apt for a more rustic retreat removed from the official and strait-laced business of the villa? The roughness of the stone fountains and ornaments may have read as appropriate to the function of the *casino*. Period authors like Alberti and Vasari discussed the use of rustic stone in garden spaces both modern and ancient,²⁵³ and based on its nubbly and pitted appearance, *tuffo* may have been selected as a 'naturally' unrefined rock.

Or might the stone's associations with local vernacular culture have made *tuffo* the ideal material for an informal—or at least by comparison—sanctuary where the cardinal could let his hair down? While such an approach seems out of step and a little tasteless in terms of its classist overtones, the dream of Arcadia is admittedly an idealized notion of pastoralism filtered through a place of leisure and economic privilege. Aristocratic playing at rusticity is one of the leitmotifs of the

²⁵³ Giorgio Vasari, *Vasari on Technique: Being the Introduction to the Three Arts of Design, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting, Prefixed to the Lives of the Most excellent Painters, Sculptors, and Architects*, trans. Louisa S Maclehorse (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 91; Leon Battista Alberti, *On the Art of Building in Ten Books*, translated by Joseph Rykwert, Neail Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1988), 299.

Western landscape architectural tradition, and the villa of Paul III's cardinal *nipote* is no exception. From this angle, we also drift into questions of cultural appropriation—Alessandro's family had deep Tuscan roots, but his exposure to vernacular *tuffo* culture was likely limited in comparison to that of actual *caprolatti*—and whether or not it was problematic for the early modern upper classes to engage in pastoralist pursuits, co-opting the vernacular style and materials of the labor classes.

Whatever the exact motivation for picking *tuffo*, associations between the removed wooded setting, the relatively informal function of the *casino*, and the roughness of *tuffo* are twined together, and in comparing the earlier niche fountains to the these later *tuffo* works, we might say that Cardinal Farnese is using *spugne* and other rusticated stones in his formal garden to style himself as the quintessential Renaissance man of papal Rome, and *tuffo* in less formal spaces of the garden to play up his Tuscan roots. But these are still refined Tuscan roots; this is not the rupestrian vernacular of the Sacro Bosco, and we can see the difference in the handling of the *tuffo*. These are polished forms a world apart from the vernacular *cantine* of the region's hilltowns or the rock-cut figures of the Sacro Bosco. *Tuffo* is used to a similar ideological end of regional identity, but it is dressed up in a cardinal's vestments.

The *tuscanità* of *tuffo* teased out in Vicino Orsini's *boschetto* and the landscape projects of his closest circle is still palpable at Caprarola; it seems only right that the twin river gods—personifications of the landscape—would be depicted in *tuffo*, a characteristic component of the Tuscan landscape. *Tuffo* still carries its Etruscan valences, its Tuscan valences, but there is an extra level of polish. No rock-cut spaces, no in situ boulders, everything befitting a sophisticated *nouveau riche* cardinal with ties to Rome as strong as his roots in the region. This is Tuscany filtered through the lens of high culture and the more international landscape architectural tastes generated in cities like Florence or Rome. Caprarola is the opposite of Cristoforo Madruzzo's *spelonche* in

Soriano nel Cimino because it applies international sensibilities to the Tuscan landscape and its constituent elements rather than adopting vernacular style and practices that are in line with the regional *genius loci*. *Tufo* is utilized, but not approached from the perspective of local *tufo* culture.

Refining the Rustic

Much the same can be said of the usage of *tufo* at Villa Lante in Bagnaia. *Tufo* is used extensively throughout the garden—much more than at Villa Farnese, though somewhat less than at the Sacro Bosco—but it is carved largely from an additive approach, completely removed from the world of the Sacro Bosco’s subtractive vernacular. As in the case of Villa Farnese, Villa Lante’s grotto spaces are doubly artificial manmade caves, built up from materials quarried off-site, rather than carved away from the living rock as it is encountered in situ. And perhaps most intriguing of all: both sites’ manmade caves incorporate no *tufo*. They partake of the international Cinquecento grotto tradition—not the Etrusco-Tuscan vernacular tradition—they are the classic ornament of artful nature to adorn an aristocratic garden in the mid-sixteenth century.

And yet the grotto spaces at Villa Lante do not contain actual cave stone like those used at Villa Farnese, or even Villa d’Este, to think on a slightly grander scale. The rough interior spaces meant to evoke caves are neither carved out of the ground nor composed of actual speleothems. Instead at Villa Lante we see a mosaic of small gnarled, rusticated rocks (Figures 144-145). Compared to the stone adorning the ceiling of the Grotto of the Satyrs at Villa Farnese, the rocks used in the rusticated cave spaces of Villa Lante could be considered perhaps a cheap *tartari* substitute. The kind of artificial caves to which Cardinal Madruzzo believed his own to be an antidote were not all created equal; an artificial cave built from real cave formations was a much more precious piece of art about nature than one built from common materials. Nevertheless, in its artificiality, Gianfrancesco’s ‘lesser’ quality grotto is still a gentleman’s cave—the type of space preferred by

cardinals, grand dukes, and princes across Europe—not the vernacular *grotto* so favored by Vicino Orsini.

The decision, however, to use this approach to artificial cave-making for the Fountain of the Deluge, from which flows the garden's entire program of Art from the font of Nature, seems to be a pointed twist on naturalness, filtered through the precise alignment of *terza maniera* humor and *terza natura* practice. The representation of ordinary raw nature as a built grotto constructed by the hand of the artist becomes a sort of absurd riddle of the cave's origins. The puzzle becomes stranger still when the patchwork of nubby rocks in Villa Lante's 'natural,' chthonic spaces give way to the *tufo* utilized throughout the rest of the garden. Unlike at Villa Farnese, *tufo* is utilized in the more formal sections of the garden (Figure 146), where themes of civility and refined nature are invoked.

In light of the attention to detail given the type of stone used in the more informal, rusticated spaces, the decision to use *tufo* as the main stone for the rest of the garden is intriguing, especially since the garden was largely completed by Gregory XIII's 1578 visit, predating the upper gardens of Villa Farnese and their introduction of widescale *tufo* usage in Caprarola's grounds. *Tufo*, therefore, is not being used simply because Cardinal Farnese—the local tastemaker—is using it; Cardinal Gambara must have been motivated by other means to use it. One potential option is that the material was cheap, and Gianfrancesco—who apparently did not have the means to encrust his grottoes with the good kind of *tartari*—chose *tufo* instead of higher quality stones. Another possibility is that the stone was chosen because it carried some cultural meaning that Gianfrancesco, as the Bishop of Viterbo might have been aware of and wanted to emphasize. Whether it might have been the stone's Etruscan valences (and all the Annian implications that entails) or its place in the vernacular traditions and soul of the region remains to be seen; what is

particularly interesting about the *tuffo* here is that it is being presented as a more sophisticated shade of rustification than the grotto rocks.

While the type of stone used might not be consistent throughout the site, the move downhill from the Fountain of the Deluge, following the prescribed route through the garden as written about by Michel de Montaigne in 1581, sees a change in the presentation of stone. This path also follows the traditional programmatic reading of the site that starts with the Great Flood, and follows the course of water downhill to a geometric parterre with a large pool where the water and plantings have become refined and ‘civilized.’ The standard interpretation is that the visitor’s path follows order descending out of chaos, civilization out of ruin, and Art out of Nature; the presentation of the rock follows this reading, as it goes from the nubby grotto-rock of the Fountain of the Deluge to the smooth, sculptural rock of the Fontana del Quadrato in the lowest parterre. The latter was originally surmounted by either a pyramid or a *guglia sudante*, a sweating obelisk modeled after the most famous stone fountain of them all, the ancient Meta Sudans in Rome. While this centerpiece was replaced with a sculpture of four nudes by Cardinal Montalto in the early seventeenth century (Figure 147), whatever we picture at the center of the fountain—whether pyramid, obelisk, or the figures we have there today—this is the smoothest of the worked stone in the garden, and the most polished, exacting form taken by the *tuffo* at the site. A sharp-edged *tuffo* obelisk here would be the exact opposite of the amorphous rock-cut shapes emerging from the *tuffo* blocks back in Vicino Orsini’s *bosco*. The sculptor has worked the *tuffo* to the point that it no longer quite resembles itself in its rawest form; the stone has been dressed up almost beyond recognition.

But why even use *tuffo* to make smooth, exact surfaces when it is such a crumbly material that slowly loses its shape after years of weathering? Why chose *tuffo* in the first place if its natural

bumps and divots are only going to be smoothed away to make the rock approximate the texture of something slicker and harder like travertine? Why use the stone at all if the plan is to shape it into delicate balustrades, smooth vases, and exacting geometric shapes, eschewing traditional carving methods and handling of the stone?

Is it because the *tuffa*, with its vernacular connotations, looked quaintly rustic to the upper class, essentially evoking a sense of the pastoral? With all its connotations of rustic living and connection to the Tuscan *genius loci*, *tuffa* may have been selected for Cardinal Gambara's garden because it was the natural choice for a country retreat on the outskirts of Viterbo. It may have been selected because of its Annian Etruscan valences, of which Gianfrancesco certainly would have been aware as the bishop of Anagni's *caput mundi*. It may also have been selected to announce by way of materials that the visitor that was no longer in Rome or Tuscany, but in the very heart of Tuscia. *Tuffa* might perhaps have been chosen because it had distinctly local connotations as part of Tuscan landscape and customs, ones that Cardinal Gambara, as an outsider from Brescia now representing the region, would have wanted to appropriate.

Yet just like at Villa Farnese, this is *tuffa* in a cardinal's vestments. We are seeing the local stone, with all its ancient and regional connotations, dressed up as befitting men of great status, power, and influence. Looking at the *tuffa*, we get a sense that this is a completely different way of thinking about space, shape, and stone than the Sacro Bosco. No in situ boulders, no rock-cut figures, no excavated *tuffa* grottoes—these are the fancy kind of caves, the artificial ones—and we get a sense that the sculptors who worked at Villa Lante were not working on the same operating system as those sculpting in Bomarzo.

Still, we must remind ourselves that these artisans were hardly members of any academic brotherhood of artists; they were probably local sculptors who went home at night to vernacular

tufo houses, and yet we see them using a different skill set than the one employed at the Sacro Bosco. This *tufo* arrived from a quarry and was built up into spaces and smoothly shaped into forms rather than being hacked away from the living stone. We might consider this as above-ground thinking, not underground rupestrian thinking, and as a result we should be safe to assume that the *tufo* work at Villa Lante and Villa Farnese was carried out by a different workshop, family, or perhaps even class of sculptors than those who worked at the Sacro Bosco.

What seems to be emerging here from this closer examination of stone and materiality is a portrait of two different ways of thinking about rock, regardless of whether it is used as a sculptural or architectural material. There is the distinctly Tuscan vernacular practice of working with stones in situ—carving into and around them in a sort of symbiotic existence with the *tufo* boulder—and then there is the international taste in landscape and grotto design that was in vogue from Tivoli and Florence all the way to Paris and Salzburg, where architectonic elements are created in an additive fashion and a certain preciousness of artificial nature still holds sway. *Tufo* is a key player in all the Tuscan landscape architectural projects of the mid-Cinquecento, used to emphasize the patrons' links to the region and play up the many potential valences of *tuscanità*, but only the designed landscapes associated with Vicino Orsini and nobles of a similar station partake of the subtractive vernacular approach.

Of further interest when considering the built environments that parrot back Tuscan *tufo* culture and engage in a larger dialogue concerning the spirit of the place are two lesser known *tufo* landscape architectural projects which also date from the sixteenth century: Villa Cornelia in Ponte d'Elce outside of Viterbo, and the rockcut nymphaeum of Orte. Although both sites have gone practically unnoticed by scholars in the field—due perhaps to decades or even centuries of neglect—the garden and the nymphaeum partake of the same approach to rock-cut *tufo* as the

Sacro Bosco, framing Vicino's *boschetto*, Niccolò Orsini's *parco* in Pitigliano, and Cristoforo Madruzzo's fountain in Soriano within a larger cohort of stony built environments in the region. The ruined gardens of Villa Cornelia have been linked to the Viterbese Nini family, and contain a number of rock-cut figures partially excavated from raw *tufo* (Figures 148-149). In terms of their roughness and incomplete articulation from the stone, they closely resemble the figures of the Sacro Bosco and the Parco degli Orsini, emerging out of the earth itself instead of having been freed from an autonomous block of stone. While the figures are badly damaged and it is difficult to make out much of their iconography, how the forms are presented seems ultimately more important than what they represent. They are sculpted in subtractive high relief from large in situ masses, employing particularly vernacular practices of handling the stone instead of applying extraterritorial stone carving traditions to the *tufo*.

Although the nymphaeum (Figure 54), carved deep into the rock below Orte's Palazzo Zuppante, lacks such secure attribution as the gardens in Ponte d'Elce, it is of particular relevance here since it is extracted almost entirely from the living rock, much like the subterranean *cantine* common throughout the region. This subtractive, distinctly vernacular approach to construction of the site seems to indicate that the nymph, spirit, or muse associated with the place was decidedly Tuscan, deriving not from a spring or the forests, but the hard, scabrous rock itself. In the rock-cut cavern, nature is overwhelmingly represented by stone, and since the site is unconnected to a larger outdoor garden, it seems almost as if the patron and sculptors involved were indicating that the Tuscan landscape could be best appreciated by delving below the surface, into the rocky Etruscan past and the vernacular forms of the region. The fact that something so elevated—and by comparison, decadent—as a nymphaeum was carved in an almost identical fashion to the underground Etruscan tombs and medieval storehouses is unique, courting a level of rusticity not

usually seen in Renaissance nobles' landscape architectural projects. Whether this impulse was one of populism, cultural appropriation, or a sincere appreciation of vernacular aesthetics remains to be seen; however, the fact that *tuffo*, the stone connected to the region's sacred Etruscan heritage, unites both rich and poor, both cardinal and *contadino*, gives one pause. The implications of nobles and cardinals borrowing from folk culture to both construct and perform regional identity are relatively unexplored within the history of Renaissance art and landscape architecture.

It could be further argued that the region's culture of *tuffo*, which differentiated Tuscia so drastically from its neighbors, was understood as part of a burgeoning sense of local identity, a sense that this stone carried within it the very essence of the region. When this group of built environments is viewed as a whole—especially keeping in mind the continuity between the region's Etruscan heritage and its vernacular aesthetics—we begin to see what could be considered a predominant theme, or perhaps even movement, in the designed landscapes of Tuscia: the assertion of Tuscan identity through *tuffo*. Sixteenth century Tuscia begins to emerge as a rather unique and heretofore uncharted model of both Renaissance materiality and regional identity, all while highlighting the sixteenth century garden as an experimental space where high and low culture could intermingle among the stones.

What does this in-depth examination of stone ultimately tell us about these many sites? What do these patrons have to say about Tuscia and stone in our fictive *discorso* wherein we imagine them sitting around in each other's gardens having sophisticated, erudite conversation? All seem to be in agreement that *tuffo* is Tuscia and Tuscia is *tuffo*, but Vicino Orsini and his faction seem to be insisting just a little bit louder that they are from the region through and through and that they know local history and traditions. The cardinals are asserting their refinement and taste, while Vicino reads not only as proudly *bomarzese*, but also the comedic character, engaging in erudite

wordplay and cheeky absurdity. Cristoforo Madruzzo, Niccolò Orsini, and the other lesser nobles read almost as a pastoral chorus echoing the vernacular asides made by Vicino as he slips—jesterlike—between high court culture and local tradition. Yet the cardinals are also strategically asserting or appropriating *tuscianità* through its material signifiers, which means there was something valuable about asserting this identity instead of an explicitly Roman one, or say, a Tuscan one, or an Umbrian one. The patrons are broadly agreeing on a local aesthetic to match a local identity, and it is *tuffo* culture, as the stone is intrinsically connected to the Tuscan *genius loci*.

While Gianfrancesco Gambara and Alessandro Farnese partake of the international grotto tradition and an additive approach to structures and figures within a landscape, they still prominently display *tuffo*, and lionize it as the most apt material for a specifically Tuscan country retreat. However, by acknowledging the stylistic schism between the Orsini circle of vernacular stone-handling and that employed at Villa Lante and Villa Farnese, two questions arise: do we think of this clutch of rupestrian environments as vernacular landscape architecture, or do we think of them as the better part of a body of work conducted in a uniquely Tuscan school of sculpture based on local traditions and techniques? And if we choose to accept both of these premises, then might we also accept that a uniquely Tuscan aesthetic can be discerned in landscape design, sculpture, and architecture?

We might also think of this group of designed vernacular landscapes as the basis of an argument for a greater regional style distinct from both neighboring vernaculars and the international Mannerist taste of mid- to late sixteenth century Europe. These sites should not be considered outsider landscape architecture, though; it is perhaps more appropriate to think of them as interlocutors responding in a distinctly Tuscan vernacular to questions about art, nature, and

antiquity as posed by Rome and Florence. From the web of erudite references throughout the Sacro Bosco to the pseudo-Etruscan inscription of the Papacqua Fountain, these sites are far from mere provincial oddities; they are the product of a lively intellectual culture in Tuscia working in tandem with *tuffo* experts who had a similar visual vocabulary, and should be recognized as a particular school of landscape-sculptural-architectural design that flowered in the region during the latter half of the Cinquecento.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Channeling Water: Fountains and Other Hydrological Features

Just as *tufo* has defined the experience of the vernacular Tuscan landscape, water has been a key element in the construction of the region's social landscape. Tuscia's natural hot springs have drawn bathers from all over the region and beyond for millennia, as ruins of Roman baths in and around Viterbo attest, and during the Renaissance, outsiders to Tuscia were attracted to the region not only by the healthful reputation of the waters but also the humanist culture that flourished around the area's many bathing complexes. Early modern travelogues ranging from the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne in the late Cinquecento to the English author John Murray writing in the mid-nineteenth century paired visits to the thermal springs of Viterbo with excursions to the region's *grandi giardini*. Water played a significant role in the upper crust's social itinerary across Tuscia, attracting humanists, antiquarians, cardinals, and popes alike, and both its display and manipulation were important social currency within the greater landscape of power. In the context of the present *discorso*, our interlocutors each approached the use of water within their respective designed landscapes from vastly different perspectives, adding further nuance to the patrons' ongoing conversation about *villeggiatura* and the Tuscan environment.

The Fosso and the Fonte

Among our interlocutors' landscape architectural projects, the waterworks in Vicino Orsini's Sacro Bosco are in easily the most ruinous condition. Not only are its water features completely dry, but scholars have also debated a number of fundamental questions, including a definitive list of which features employed water, how the element was moved through the park, and which effects the fountains produced when operational. Surveys of the Bosco over recent years²⁵⁴ have yielded

²⁵⁴ Sharp, Wass, et al. in 2015 and 2017, and Morgan, Garton, Tchikine, Monteleone, et al in 2022.

some clues about the site's original hydrological engineering, but unlike in the case of Villa Lante or Villa Farnese, a significant component of the park is missing altogether, making it difficult for us to fully comprehend both this particular aspect and the visitor's overall experience of Vicino's brainchild.

We can be sure of several things, however. The Bosco certainly featured some manner of manmade lake, as evidenced by Vicino's own letters; on April 20th of 1561 he wrote to Cardinal Farnese that he had taken a fall off the "*muro del lago del mio boschetto*"²⁵⁵ and was laid up in bed. Francesco Sansovino likewise mentions the lake in the dedication accompanying his 1570 edition of Jacopo Sannazaro's *Arcadia*, where he extolled the feature as one of the many highlights of Bomarzo.²⁵⁶ Scholars have long located the lake on the southeastern side of the garden, representing it in maps and plans of the Bosco as an irregularly shaped, curvilinear body of water.

Several inscriptions within the park also provide clues about hydraulics in the Bosco, their repeated allusions to *fonti* rather than *fontane* indicate that these waterworks were either closely associated with natural springs or helped weave an illusion of naturality to the element within the garden. Two inscriptions near the sculpture of the river god—the first of which states "NOTTE E GIORNO NOI SIAMO VIGILI E PRONTI A GUARDAR D'OGNI INGIURIA QUESTA FONTE,"²⁵⁷ while the second partial epigram reads "FONTE NON FU NON PLU...TIA TRA SELVE CHIN GUARDIA SIA DELLE PIU STRANE BELVE"²⁵⁸—effectively confirm that the now empty pool the figure presides over was once a fountain (Figure 150). On the terrace below, a partial inscription in the nymphaeum reads "L'ANTRO E LA FONTE IL BEL... D'OGNI

²⁵⁵ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 251, 20.4.1561.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid* 297, 1570 (1586).

²⁵⁷ "Night and day we are vigilant and ready to guard the fountain from any injury."

²⁵⁸ "The fountain was not... between forests that guard the strangest beasts."

OSCURO PENSIER GLI ANIMI SGOMBRA...”²⁵⁹ indicating that the structure incorporated some manner of water feature (Figure 151), most likely sharing its source with the nearby basin ornamented with dolphin heads from which water certainly flowed (Figure 152).

Sketches created by the early Seicento visitor Giovanni Guerra (Figure 153) indicate that the circular basin on the lowest terrace that features a rearing Pegasus was once a fountain bedecked with now-missing figures of the Muses (Figure 154). Other minor features in the garden appear to have employed water, including a number of reliefs depicting open mouthed faces, some of which are still attached to walls above basins, while others in more fragmentary condition lie on the ground. Based on a 1563 letter from Annibale Caro to Vicino’s friend, Torquato Conti, we can also be relatively sure that the waterworks in the Bosco employed a certain degree of variation. Concerning hypothetical plans for a garden in Conti’s seat of Poli, Caro advises him that they would need “jets, streams, ponds, fountains etc.” if they wanted to outdo the “extravagant things” in Vicino’s *boschetto*.²⁶⁰

Other aspects of the waterworks are less certain, and our understanding of them is still developing. While scholars have historically represented the lake on the southwestern edge of the garden—sinuous and asymmetrical, as if it were a prototype of similar features later found in English landscape gardens—there is no trace of it upon the landscape in this sector of the Bosco to support these claims. After recent onsite research in the spring of 2022, Anatole Tchikine has proposed that in light of this paucity of concrete evidence, we should instead locate the lake at the northern edge of the Bosco, in an area now outside the bounds of the modern-day Parco dei Mostri (Figure 155). Tchikine argues that the large rectangular *bacino* in this little-studied section of the Bosco was the lake of which Vicino and Sansovino spoke, noting that during the Cinquecento the

²⁵⁹ “The cave and the fountain... clear the mind of every dark thought.”

²⁶⁰ Bredekamp, *Vicino Orsini e il Bosco Sacro*, 6.6.1563.

word ‘*lago*’ connoted a sizeable body of still water that could be either naturally occurring or a substantial manmade pool decidedly geometric in shape.²⁶¹ While it is clear that some of the Bosco’s waterworks were supplied by the Fosso della Concia, which runs through the eastern perimeter of the park and flows north into the Fosso Castagnolo, the matter of how this water was stored and conducted through the park has also been debated in recent years. Stephen Wass has proposed that the tower at the center of the garden (Figure 156) was a storage tank supplied by the Fosso della Concia,²⁶² but the latest onsite work as of 2022 has determined that the structure, with its hollow construction, was most likely a cistern that provided water to the river god fountain, the *nymphaeum*, and the *barcaccia*.²⁶³

However, concerns regarding the technical details of how water was conducted and stored throughout the park are ultimately tangential to the interlocutors’ purpose within the *discorso*. It matters less to our interests here how Vicino and his team of landscape architects accomplished this feat than it matters that they accomplished it, and that they were the first in Renaissance Tuscia to produce such an ambitiously engineered environment. With the Sacro Bosco, Vicino had something unique to the region before any of the other members of the Tuscan upper crust possessed anything remotely similar, and he was clearly bringing certain tastes and tropes from surrounding region’s cultures of *villeggiatura* to his particular neck of the woods. Both the garden’s extant as well as its lost features point toward the Sacro Bosco’s waterworks as having been effectively comparable in their hydrological sophistication to any central Italian garden

²⁶¹ Anatole Tchikine, personal communication, June 7 2022, discussing his chapter on water in the Sacro Bosco for the forthcoming edited volume, *The Sacro Bosco at Bomarzo: Landscape and Sculpture in Renaissance Lazio*, estimated date of publication 2024.

²⁶² Stephen Wass, “Parco dei Monstri, Bomarzo: Some Preliminary Observations on the Use of Water,” *Garden History* 45 no. 1 (2017), 12.

²⁶³ Tchikine, personal communication.

produced during the first half of the Cinquecento, including Villa Medici at Castello or Villa Madama on the outskirts of Rome.

Engineering waterworks this sophisticated would have required a specialist, but unlike the park's anonymous sculptors, the identity of whom authors have speculated upon for decades, there has never been a particular *fontaniere* put forward as the individual who brought water to the Sacro Bosco. The names of very few *fontanieri* active in Cinquecento Italy have come down to us across the centuries; the two individuals encountered most often in studies of gardens throughout Lazio are Tommaso Ghinucci, who engineered the waterworks at Villa Lante, and Curzio Maccarone, who was responsible for both Alessandro Farnese's fountains at Caprarola and those of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este in Tivoli. Comparing the works of these *fontanieri* with what we know about fountains at the Sacro Bosco effectively dismisses the possibility that Ghinucci or Maccarone was responsible for the project. Their respective bodies of work could be described as substantially flashier and more dynamic—not only more complex and sophisticated, but more *meraviglioso*—than what we can reconstruct for the Sacro Bosco. So if not Ghinucci or Maccarone, then who?

Without the documentation of any particular individual's involvement, we must assume that the Bosco's *fontaniere* was someone of lesser fame and status, who was arguably local to the region. This local hydrological engineer possessed the specialized knowledge of how to bend water to both ornamental and practical purposes, creating an array of fountains in the Bosco and at least one dam for the lake. Not only does the presence of this *fontaniere* expand the garden's work force from just sculptors to include at least one hydrological engineer, it also supports the present thesis that an autonomous and autochthonous school of landscape architecture flourished in Tuscia during our interlocutors' lifetimes.

Vicino may not have had to look beyond Bomarzo for someone knowledgeable about local water systems, perhaps utilizing the same specialists who built the new cistern during his wife's stewardship of the hilltown. Whoever the *fontaniere*—or perhaps *fontanieri*—may have been, they probably came from the cistern builders' professional sphere, with a background in water from a largely infrastructural perspective, more accustomed to hydrological engineering within an urban setting than in gardens. The Sacro Bosco may have been the first designed landscape on which its *fontanieri* worked.

But it may not have been their last. Just as some of the figures in the Papacqua Fountain seem to bear a certain stylistic kinship to those at Bomarzo, as though carved by the same sculptor or workshop, the waterworks also appear to have been comparable. The fountain commemorates Cristoforo Madruzzo's role in the diversion of the Papacqua spring to Soriano nel Cimino, and it seems plausible that the same mind or minds behind the Bosco's fountains might have worked for the Cardinal as well. These *fontanieri* may have also played a role in the engineering of the spring's redirection to the hilltown as a new source of drinking water. The same hands may also have worked on the fountain inside the underground nymphaeum in Orte, or at Villa Cornelia in Ponte d'Elce outside Viterbo, where waterworks emerge from a raw, unworked cliff face to accentuate and frame the rock's innately concave shape. In the case of all these sites, the hydrological engineering is remarkably sophisticated—how did *fontanieri* channel water to the nymphaeum in the heart of Orte's *tuffo* plateau?—yet the fountains themselves remain fairly reserved and unadorned.

What separates these environments from Villa Farnese and Villa Lante is not just the increased complexity of the Cardinals' waterworks, but also how these sites stage the movements of water. In our Tuscan built environments, modest spouts of water either jet from spigots or drool

downward from sluices into relatively stagnant basins; there is none of the hydrological wizardry that so defines sites like Villa d'Este in Tivoli or Villa Medici in Pratolino. The *grandi giardini* of Tuscany and the Roman countryside frame water as spectacle—more as a protagonist within the environment than as a decorative component—a technological *meraviglia* that weds the processes of nature with the stylish *inganno* of art. In these gardens, water is manipulated to a variety of purposes and effects, whether it rockets dramatically upward, fans outward in great misty sprays, burbles like a rolling boil, seeps down grotto walls, or surges downward from artificial cascades. The period's wide variety of fountains has been discussed at length by Tchikine in “*Giochi d'Acqua: Water Effects in Renaissance and Baroque Italy*,” wherein he examines the rich period vocabulary for water features, which included “spinning tops (*girelle*), darts (*guizzi*), and pins (*spilli*), [...] jets (*zampilli* and *pispinelli*), sprays (*spruzzi*), and bubbles (*bolle*).”²⁶⁴ Tchikine also notes the extensive terminology used for the movements and actions performed by water in the Renaissance garden that ranged from “trickling (*gemitii*), sprays (*spruzzamenti*), gurgling (*gorgogli*), bubbles (*bollori*), murmurs (*mormorii*), ripples (*tremoli*),” to “the ‘music of falling waters’, [which] included dripping (*grondaie*) and foam (*spume*).”²⁶⁵

These many disparate features are practically nonexistent in the waterworks of Tuscia's anonymous *fontanieri*, where water flows simply with minimal adornment or artifice. While the Sacro Bosco surely represents the most diverse assemblage of water effects among the designed landscapes within this group, even with what we can reconstruct of the park's waterworks, they do not appear to have been of the same complex technological caliber as say, contemporary waterworks engineered by Curzio Maccarone in Tivoli. This is not to say that the use of water in

²⁶⁴ Anatole Tchikine, ‘Giochi d’Acqua: Water Effects in Renaissance and Baroque Italy,’ *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 30 no. 1 (2010), 58.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 58.

Vicino's *bosco* was not a marvel for its particular time and place—it was most certainly an ambitious project on the cutting edge of homegrown Tuscan engineering—however, for all their novelty, the waterworks appear to lag behind the increasingly flamboyant hydrological developments coming from the rest of central Italy in the mid- to late Cinquecento. Both the display and conveyance of water through the Sacro Bosco may have afforded Vicino certain bragging rights, but apart from the lake, the garden's waterworks did not number among its chief wonders.

Nevertheless, the Bosco's water features show that Vicino's *fontanieri* had their proverbial finger on the pulse of the period's trends in fountain design. Just as the theater which recalls Bramante's design for Cortile del Belvedere and the *tempietto* with its Brunelleschian dome indicated that Vicino's sculptors were knowledgeable about and responding to characteristic architecture from neighboring regions, the Bosco reveals a familiarity with a range of water features that were present in a number of other landscape architectural traditions from outside Tuscia. The many fountains where water once gushed out of animal or grotesque human mouths align with practices exhibited in other Mannerist designed landscapes across Italy as demonstrated by both Luke Morgan²⁶⁶ and Claudia Lazzaro.²⁶⁷ The Pegasus fountain was also a common *topos* of the Cinquecento garden, as discussed by Louis Cellauro, who described the combination of “Apollo, the Muses, Pegasus and the Hippocrene spring, and mounts Parnassus and Helicon” as “the most frequent iconographical subjects of Renaissance gardens.”²⁶⁸ Similarly, stationary bodies of water like artificial ponds and *peschieri* were frequently featured in sixteenth century

²⁶⁶ Morgan, *The Monster in the Garden*, 56-57.

²⁶⁷ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 140.

²⁶⁸ Louis Cellauro, “Iconographical Aspects of the Renaissance Villa and Garden: Mount Parnassus, Pegasus, and the Muses,” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 23 no. 1 (2003), 42.

gardens; what separates Vicino's rectangular lake from the rest of the park is that it was most likely used for bathing, as Tchikine has proposed.²⁶⁹

Easily the most peculiar feature separating the Bosco from other Cinquecento designed landscapes is the direct incorporation of the Fosso della Concia into the garden environment. Taking the stairway underneath the colossal tortoise, the visitor is brought into direct contact with the stream, and even encouraged to climb across several boulders and over the rushing water into the mouth of the fanged monster on the other side (Figure 157). This type of close interaction between the visitor and a garden's water source—especially one left to flow organically along its natural course—is unprecedented, a virtual unicum across the many schools of landscape design seen in Renaissance Italy. The *fontanieri* of the Bosco appear to have blended the tastes and tropes connected to neighboring regions' styles of garden design with something wholly unique.

All told, the park's water features paint Vicino as a patron wanting to make a statement, as someone who was thinking competitively and encouraging visitors to compare his Sacro Bosco to other designed landscapes they visited. The restrained, rustic style of the water features found throughout reflects the informality of the *boschetto*, and speaks of a certain directness; the water does not attempt to mimic the processes of nature like trickling fountains in a grotto, nor does it stand in for something it is not, as in the case of the stone trumpeters at Villa Lante whose instruments spurt water, or the figure of Ceres' 'lactating' breasts in the Juno fountain from Villa Medici in Pratolino. Given the overlap between the grotesque and grotto-esque, it is particularly intriguing that the Bosco's grotto was not designed to drip water, and given Vicino's sense of humor it is surprising that the park was not equipped with hidden fountains which drenched guests when triggered. Either his *fontanieri* could not accomplish such technical feats, or there was no

²⁶⁹ Tchikine, personal communication.

interest in such features. Perhaps those elements were not seen as reflective of the particular aesthetic Vicino and his team strived for in the Bosco, which drew on both the *genius loci* of the *bomarzese* countryside and Tuscia's ancient vernacular traditions of architecture. Perhaps the uniquely Tuscan school of landscape architecture that appears to have launched in Bomarzo, points to a different agenda at work in their display of water, or a different relationship with the region's environment. The park's waterworks, with their lack of characteristically Mannerist artifice or ostentatious effects, might have been an attempt on their designers' part to create a superlatively naturalistic designed landscape—one with a real stream running through it—one that disrupts the distinction between First and Third Nature, recreating the experience of the surrounding Tuscan landscape.

A Competition with Nature and Neighbors

If these many features in the Sacro Bosco could be described as representing a homegrown Tuscan approach to the display of water that blurred the line between the creations of nature and those of art, the waterworks at Villa Farnese in Caprarola fall squarely within the category of normative Cinquecento fountain design. The water features in Alessandro Farnese's lower gardens have more in common with contemporary fountains, grottos, and nymphaea that were produced outside of Tuscia than they do with the Sacro Bosco or the Papacqua Fountain. The upper garden at Caprarola, on the other hand, appears to be a response to Gianfrancesco Gambara's hydrological ante in Bagnaia, as though Alessandro was borrowing and enhancing select features from Villa Lante in an attempt to outdo his friend. While the differences in the handling of water between the lower and upper gardens has often been described as a transition from Renaissance style to the proto-Baroque, the evolution of these effects at the villa may have its roots in the landscape architectural arms race which defined mid- to late Cinquecento Tuscia. This radical change in the

way water is displayed between Alessandro's two distinct environments not only represents a shift from *fontanieri* imitating to outstripping nature, but also recenters the villa within a specifically Tuscan sphere rather than courting direct comparison with other regions' garden traditions.

Before we begin to unpack the agenda and aesthetics at play in the lower gardens—the first of the two spaces realized at Caprarola—we must first consider the more concrete particulars of the villa's waterworks, namely their relation to local bodies of water, and the identity of their designer. In a 1568 letter from Alessandro to Paolo II Vitelli, the Marchese of Cetona and Carmiano, the cardinal expressed a desire to secure Curzio Maccarone's services in the construction of his garden fountains, although the *fontaniere* was otherwise occupied in the employ of Ippolito d'Este in Tivoli.²⁷⁰ Maccarone finally came to Caprarola in 1572 after the death of his previous employer, and the executive design of the lower gardens' fountains has generally been attributed to him.

However, recent research by Francesca Romana Liserre shows that Maccarone's presence at Caprarola was sporadic and largely occurred after Vignola's death in 1573. Liserre casts Maccarone more as a hydraulic specialist—an engineer trained in the technical side of fountain construction instead of as an architect steeped in the art of *disegno*—and she attributes the basic scheme of the fountains to Vignola.²⁷¹ However, the iconography and representational aspects of the fountains are of less importance to us here than the material nature of the water itself, and we must acknowledge and prioritize Maccarone's hand in the manipulation of the element throughout the lower gardens. The aesthetic appearance and physical movements of water at Caprarola take precedence in our *discorso*, much as they did for Cinquecento visitors like Michel de Montaigne and Fabio Arditio, who marveled at the gardens' water effects rather than the fountains' sculptural features.

²⁷⁰ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 54

²⁷¹ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 102-104

In terms of Vignola's involvement as an engineer, however, we know that he also designed a number of public fountains for the Farnese within both Caprarola and Viterbo proper,²⁷² and that he "lower[ed] and control[led] the water level of Lake Vico in order to gain new farmland" that was given to families displaced by the straight street which ran the length of town straight up to the villa.²⁷³ Records from 1564 show that Vignola also constructed an aqueduct in Caprarola that brought water both to the *comune* and Alessandro's gardens²⁷⁴ from Lago di Vico, travelling underground some 3.5km through channels excavated from the tuffaceous terrain.²⁷⁵ In addition to supplying Caprarola with water, the mythology that surrounds Lago di Vico plays an important role in the lionization of the Farnese name. The shape of the crater lake was explained by a myth recorded by Servius in his commentaries on the works of Virgil, wherein Hercules—a legendary ancestor of the Farnese family—demonstrated his strength by plunging his staff into the earth. When no one else could remove the staff, Hercules withdrew it himself, thus creating Lago di Vico, for which the locals were so grateful they erected a circular temple in his honor.²⁷⁶ The myth is illustrated in the villa's Sala d'Ercole, and Paolo Portoghesi writes that the frescoed image of the circular temple "is certainly a paraphrase" of Villa Farnese, "meaningfully hinged on a circular courtyard[.]"²⁷⁷ In this light, not only does Alessandro assume a Herculean role for bringing water to Caprarola, but his villa is also cast as a sort of temple to the family legacy.

²⁷² Partridge, "Palazzo Farnese," 20; Simonetta Valtieri, "Le Fontane come Poli Urbani nella Viabilità di Viterbo nel Cinquecento," in *Viterbo nel Rinascimento*, ed. Simonetta Valtieri and Enzo Bentivoglio (Rome: G. Bentivoglio, 2012), 66.

²⁷³ Partridge, "Palazzo Farnese," 49-51.

²⁷⁴ Loren W. Partridge, "Vignola and the Villa Farnese at Caprarola," 84 n. 22. The relevant passage in the *notizie di lavori* reads: "Messer Jacomo Vigniola ha fatto intendere a essi signori Priori che si hebba fare la cava dello conduttato dell'acqua che ha da venire al giardino."

²⁷⁵ Luciano Passini, *Caprarola*, 293 and 296.

²⁷⁶ Loren W. Partridge, "The Sala d'Ercole in the Villa Farnese at Caprarola – Part II," *The Art Bulletin* 54 no. 1 (Mar. 1972), 50. See Liserre 110-111 for Fabio Arditio's retelling of the myth.

²⁷⁷ Portoghesi, "La Fortuna Critica," 189.

One of the earliest fountains to be installed within the gardens, the Nymphaeum of Venus (Figure 133), plays upon these associations between local topographical features and Farnese ascendancy. Located in the eastern section of the bipartite lower garden, the nymphaeum features a marble statue of Venus within a niche outfitted with *spugne*. The figure is installed atop its own mountain of *spugne*, seemingly referencing Monte Venere on the shore of Lago di Vico,²⁷⁸ and from the basin in her arms water flowed down the mound and into a pool—perhaps representing the lake itself—which in turn was ornamented during the Cinquecento with two sculptural unicorns who bent down by the water’s edge to immerse their horns into the fountain (Figure 158). A heraldic symbol for the Farnese, the unicorns’ presence “ensured the absolute purity” of the water, and likened its quality, as Liserre extrapolates, “to the moral virtues of the family.”²⁷⁹ Fabio Arditio, who in 1578 documented Pope Gregory XIII’s visit to the villa, commented on the beauty of the nymphaeum, noting the diverse manners in which the water was manipulated that ranged from a boiling effect in Venus’ basin to a chattering flow which cascaded down the mound of *spugne*.²⁸⁰

In their current state these fountains are dry and derelict, yet Arditio’s descriptions of the *giochi d’acqua* help reconstruct and reanimate the nymphaeum’s water features. Of particular interest here is the talkative water that streamed down the face of the gnarled and mucilaginous *spugne* which, as discussed in the previous chapter, was understood during the Renaissance to be a coagulation or accretion of dripping fluids. This portion of the fountain therefore stages the

²⁷⁸ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 28.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 30.

²⁸⁰ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 23-24. The relevant passage reads, “un bellissimo nicchio et in esso una Venere di marmo ignuda con due figurine dai lati, fatte per termine, posta sopra un monte ornato di pumici, coralli et varie conchiglie marine, et tenendo un catino con ambe le mani, dal cui fondo sorge un grandissimo bollor d’acqua, si bagna tutta; la quale acqua, discorendo giù per il monte, che medesimamente manda fuori tre altri gran bollori, si ferma in un gran vaso fatto di misture et di musaico, che sembra alla forma et al colore una gran conca marina, alla quale s’inclinano da i lati due alicorni in atto di voler bere.”

processes of both creation and transformation, which are juxtaposed with Farnese symbols and references to local topography, as if to emphasize the extent of Alessandro's worldly power. Like a rare bird retained in an *uccelliera*, Alessandro had captured and possessed something extraordinary: a little slice of *natura naturans*—essentially nature in its active state—in his own backyard. The water's gurgling chatter further enlivened this process and gave voice to the nymphaeum, which according to Liserre, effectively celebrates and re-presents the “*genius loci caprolatto*”²⁸¹ through an overtly Farnesian lens.

This display of watery natural processes is also foregrounded in the Grotto of the Satyrs (Figure 139) on the other side of the lower gardens, where liquid dripped from stalactites made of *spugne*, taking to its absolute limits the Renaissance obsession with art imitating nature, as genuine speleothems inserted into an artificial cave were implicated in the ongoing congealment of water into stone. The already fragile line between art and nature found within the garden was completely blurred here. Sixteenth century visitor Michel de Montaigne commented on this blending of art and nature, writing that the artificial rain that bathed the grotto artfully reproduced the “most natural” sight, sound, and feeling of rain.²⁸² Claudia Lazzaro notes that for Cinquecento visitors, the rain—rather than the *spugne* or the sculpted satyrs—was the artificial cave's “most significant feature,” and that it was generally identified as the Fountain of the Rain rather than its modern day appellation.²⁸³ Showcasing the full breadth of Maccarone's technical prowess, the grotto combines a variety of water effects that ranged from “a light rain, impetuous cascades, a placid basin, and spiteful jets which surprise visitors.”²⁸⁴ Through this grafting of *natura artificiosa* to *natura*

²⁸¹ Ibid. 29.

²⁸² The relevant passage reads: “Ci sono anche fuora parecchi cose regguardevoli e belli. Fra le altre, una grotta la quale, spruzzando l'acqua in un laghetto, con arte fa parere, ed alla vista ed al suono, la scesa della pioggia naturalissima.” Portoghesi, “La Fortuna Critica,” 178.

²⁸³ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 60.

²⁸⁴ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 49.

naturans, the grotto functions as a hybrid environment, a *meraviglia* of art, nature, and technology that was regarded as the lower garden's primary point of interest.

Other water features of note within the lower garden include the Fountain of the Shepherd and the Fountain of the Unicorns, the latter of which—while heavily damaged—bears a certain resemblance to the indoor fountain located in the villa's Sala d'Ercole. Both structures feature a modest centralized basin fountain that is backed by a flat wall upon which dry stone mosaics and stucco reliefs create an illusionistic *pittura paesaggistica*. In the Fountain of the Unicorns (Figure 134), water once spurted from the mouth of a grotesque face into the scalloped basin at center of the wall, from which we can assume a semicircular cascade tumbled into the small pool below. Although it is difficult in the absence of period descriptions or drawings to reconstruct the exact nature and full extent of the water effects here, the construction is reminiscent of the particular type of scenographic niche fountain favored by humanists in and around Rome during the High Renaissance and into the mid-sixteenth century.²⁸⁵ Just as with the Fountain of the Unicorns, water in these Roman niche fountains was understated, with stone dominating each fictive environment.

Better represented in period documents and images is the Fountain of the Shepherd (Figure 159), which is situated between the lower garden's twin parterres. The fountain is a freestanding *fontana rustica*—a sort of stony set piece not dissimilar from the Fontana dell'Aquila in the Vatican Gardens—punctuated on either side by mirrored rustic herms and river god figures reclining on vessels from which water once flowed into a shallow kidney-shaped pool. At the center of the construction is a niche with a sculpture of a shepherd; according to a 1604 sketch by Giovanni Guerra (Figure 160), above this figure a semicircular curtain of water fell from a basin supported by two small *ignudi*. From Giovanni Antonio Liberati's 1614 ode to the villa, *La*

²⁸⁵ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 68-70; MacDougall, "The Sleeping Nymph," 357-365.

Caprarola, we also know that the back wall of *spugne* was covered with moss and small plants, given that he waxed poetic about these features lending the fountain a greater degree of naturalness.²⁸⁶ The addition of living plants shifts the fountain from pure *natura artificiosa* and into the sphere of *natura genetrix*, granting the water a sort of fertile charge.

This emphasis on natural processes, natural transformation, and natural growth is a key defining feature of the lower garden's fountains. Water is set within independent, semi-enclosed, and above all stony environments, where it either mimics or participates in a variety of behaviors and forms observed beyond the garden wall in the realm of First Nature. In this regard, Alessandro's fountains have much in common with the general period inclination toward viewing grotto-esque environments as veritable laboratories of *meraviglie*, where natural processes and creations intermingled with the inventions of both art and technology. The lower garden's waterworks align with mid-Cinquecento trends in fountain design where water performed some manner of natural—or naturalistic—function to the delight and wonder of the observer. These were waterworks far more sophisticated than anything seen at the Sacro Bosco, and the lower gardens should not only be read as a demonstration of Alessandro's wealth and taste, but also should be considered the first designed landscape in Tuscia fit for a proper gentleman. Alessandro was not trying to outdo Vicino's *bosco*—in the Cardinal's mind there would have been no competition—he was instead asserting his place at the top of the food chain in the Tuscan garden scene.

Yet by Gregory XIII's 1578 visit to Tuscia, the vibrant waterworks at Cardinal Gambara's garden in Bagnaia presented serious competition to Alessandro's fountains, and by the early 1580s Giacomo del Duca began his transformation of Caprarola's chestnut *bosco* above the lower gardens. This grove had originally held the Fountain of the Goat, which featured a statue of the

²⁸⁶ Liserre, *Grotte e Ninfei*, 73.

eponymous animal feeding a group of *putti*; Fabio Arditio commented on the long *spilli* which squirted from the goat's udder, noting that he observed a rainbow effect shining in the water.²⁸⁷ But by 1587, the Fountain of the Goat was a mere memory, replaced by a series of fountains that included a *catena d'acqua* and a monumental *bicchierone* flanked by twin river god figures.

Standing at the base of the clearing, the three separate fountains that punctuate the slope running toward the *casino* appear as one grand interconnected unit where water flows uninterrupted down to the visitor, who is conversely pulled uphill to investigate its source. The first installation one encounters upon emerging from the *bosco* that separates the upper garden from the lower one is a circular fountain, which a drawing by Giovanni Guerra (Figure 161) shows to have featured at its center a female figure surrounded by two concentric rings of jets. He illustrated these jets as employing different effects, with the interior ring spouting straight upward, and the exterior ring squirting water in parabolic arcs toward the center of the fountain. No processes of nature are invoked; water instead functions here more as an ornamental element, meant to be admired for its aesthetic beauty rather than its generative behavior or naturalistic handling.

This appears to be a reaction to the approach taken in Gianfrancesco Gambara's garden, where playful water effects privilege the pleasures of the senses over the intellectual discourses associated with sixteenth century garden *meraviglie* like grottoes and automata. Seemingly without concern for the imitation or replication of active nature, Gianfrancesco's fountains have both a drama and a dynamic flash that is somewhat lacking in the relatively understated waterworks of Alessandro's lower gardens. Water at Villa Lante functions as a source of *vaghezza*—ravishing aesthetic beauty—to be admired in its own right, outstripping not only nature itself but also the other

²⁸⁷ Ibid. 85.

fountains found throughout Tuscia, and Alessandro appears to have been firing back through the addition of similar features to his upper garden.

The feature most obviously borrowed from Villa Lante is the *catena d'acqua* that runs the length of the slope leading up toward the *casino*; the thin, elongated fountain is ornamented with dolphins and heraldic Farnese lilies, and whorls of water roll down an undulating chain of shallow steps (Figure 162). The focus of the fountain is not its sculptural elements but the eddying movements of the aerated water, which takes on a vivid white froth when running at full capacity. The water performs three distinct actions—swirling its way down the chain, splashing into the basin below, and streaming from the basin to the pool directly underneath—that work together to create a trio of voices with their own unique tone and resonance. Rather than being active in the generative sense, water in the upper garden is enlivened primarily in the pursuit of sensual pleasure. Neither representing nor recreating, water here is part of a multisensorial spectacle intended above all else to dazzle and enchant the visitor.

The spectacle culminates at the top of the *catena d'acqua*, where the visitor comes upon the upper garden's *pièce de résistance*: a giant vase, overflowing with water and bookended by symmetrical river gods (Figure 143). While this fountain bears close similarities to one found at Villa Lante, Alessandro's is larger—as perhaps expected—and his sculpted figures, slightly more contorted than Gianfrancesco's, loom above the pool rather than sitting at the water's edge. The river gods at Caprarola hold cornucopias from which *pispini* arc into the *bicchierone*, joining with water from a centralized fixture that may at one time have been crowned with a Farnese lily (Figure 163). From there, the water tumbles over the vase's lip in scores of rivulets, falling like great goutts of rain into the tranquil pool below, and creating a cacophony of small splashes that all strike the same note over and over like watery applause. Although the hydrological effects are understated

compared to the monumental bulk of the sculpted forms, the fountain is still alive with visual interest, as the myriad beads of water falling from the *pìspini* or running from the vase catch the sun like a great profusion of diamonds.

Taken as a whole, the handling of water here has a flamboyance that is otherwise lacking in the lower gardens, and this dynamic quality has at times been described as a proto-Baroque theatricality, an early harbinger of the Seicento's taste for extraordinary environments like the water theater at Villa Aldobrandini in Frascati. However, ascribing these changes in hydrological effects to a simplistic notion of stylistic evolution is perhaps shortsighted. It seems that somewhere between the construction of the lower gardens and the upper ones, a sort of shift occurred in how Alessandro and his landscape architects conceptualized water, arguably prompted by Tommaso Ghinucci's innovative work at Bagnaia for Cardinal Gambara. Between Alessandro's two gardens we see water shift from being framed as an element of active nature into something more akin to an inspirited sculptural material, the sensuous aesthetic appeal of which is ultimately an end unto itself. Rather than being associated with the realm of nature—either as an imitator of or catalyst for its processes—water in the upper garden crosses over into the domain of art, taking on the role of artistic material *par excellence*, an animate substance with which to paint a landscape. Taking a cue from Villa Lante, water is harnessed here not to a specific function but in the service of pure *vaghezza*, as a *locus* of beauty with no express purpose other than to delight.

But what do the gardens' fountains and their use of water say about Alessandro as a patron, and how do they shape his voice in our *discorso*? Between his relentless pursuit to acquire such a renowned *fontaniere* as Curzio Maccarone, and his taste for fashionable, cutting edge *meraviglie*, Alessandro emerges as a man with competition on his mind, wanting to establish *paragoni* between his garden and other extravagant designed landscapes like Villa Medici in Pratolino and Villa

d'Este in Tivoli. He no doubt considered himself to be the winner of such comparisons, so when Gianfrancesco Gambara began to give him a run for his money in Bagnaia, Alessandro clearly felt the call to outdo his friend's garden as well. The water in the gardens reflects his personal ambitions, for it was not only used to demonstrate his wealth and power, but it also signaled—above all else—his impeccable taste and prestige. As with other aspects of the Farnese complex at Caprarola, Alessandro's waterworks reveal him as someone keenly aware of his spot at the top of Tuscan society, and who desired the very best in all things as befitting that station.

A Decorous Feast for the Senses

While the waterworks at Villa Farnese are defined by both a competitive and an imitative spirit, with fountains and grottoes modeled on techniques seen in gardens across Italy, the handling of water at nearby Villa Lante might be best described as innovative. This unique approach to water in Gianfrancesco Gambara's garden is less a function of his fountains' composition, siting, or *giochi d'acqua*, and more closely related to the effect they are meant to have on the visitor. Certainly, most Cinquecento patrons of designed landscapes strived to create wondrous environments that amazed and stupefied, and Villa Lante is no different. The main distinction here is that the garden of Villa Lante, which inundates the visitor with rare aesthetic delights, achieves this effect through an emphasis on abstract, non-figural sensuousness. Profoundly shaped by critical period concerns regarding beauty and propriety in art, Gianfrancesco's garden is perhaps the quintessential Counter-Reformation environment, walking a middle path between worldly *vaghezza* and restrained decorum.²⁸⁸

A member of the Inquisition and proxy for the Pope at the Council of Trent, few cardinals would have been more aware than Gianfrancesco about the changing discourses of art upon the

²⁸⁸ This friction between *vaghezza* and decorum is best illustrated in Stuart Lingo's *Federico Barocci: Allure and Devotion in Late Renaissance Painting* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 6-7.

post-Tridentine cultural landscape. Caught between the saintly austerity of his stepbrother Carlo Borromeo and the princely extravagances of his friend Alessandro Farnese, Gianfrancesco's public patronage of art and architecture largely aligned with Tridentine demands. While the secular space of the garden provided a less restrictive environment for the cardinal where he could indulge in licit sensuality, the overwhelming emphasis on water as the star of the proverbial show—not sculpture, as in other gardens both within and beyond the borders of Tuscia—seems to be indicative of the post-Tridentine preference for the relocation of aesthetic beauty away from the problematic body. Compared to the fountains of High Renaissance Rome that foregrounded nymphs in various states of undress, or even the multitudes of nudes found at sites like the Sacro Bosco and Villa Medici in Pratolino, Gianfrancesco's garden is “nearly devoid of statues,” emphasizing vases, architecture, and water features rather than human figures.²⁸⁹ Abstract water effects assume a new and expanded role as the garden's primary *locus* of *vaghezza*, throwing beauty beyond the bounds of figural representation or even naturalism itself. Delighting the eyes, the ears, and even the more haptic senses, the sensual experience of the garden's waterworks provides the visitor with thoroughly innocent pleasures.

The beauty of these waterworks was at the forefront of chroniclers' minds when they recounted their visit to Villa Lante, as they “remarked specifically on the scale and inventiveness of the fountains [...] their large size and variety, with water falling in various and capricious ways.”²⁹⁰ In his 1578 record of Pope Gregory XIII's visit to Tuscia, Fabio Arditio wrote that Villa Lante's fountains were considered “among the most beautiful in all Europe,”²⁹¹ for at first glance they “do not resemble a single fountain, but a thousand, indeed a whole hill, decorated with the purest

²⁸⁹ Carla Benocci, *Villa Lante a Bagnaia*, 20.

²⁹⁰ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 256.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* 243.

crystal...”²⁹² Writing three years later, Michel de Montaigne judged the waterworks at Bagnaia to be “fresher and more lively” than those at Villa d’Este in Tivoli and “more abundant”²⁹³ than the fountains at Pratolino. He continues, commenting that Tomasso Ghinucci, the *fontaniere* behind the garden’s waterworks, “is not finished, and thus always adding new inventions to the old, he has put into this his last work even more art, beauty, and grace.”²⁹⁴ Montaigne credits Ghinucci with “infinite designs,” and praises the *fontaniere* for making “a great advance in the use and service of water.”²⁹⁵ These travelogues, however, were not the first authors to put pen to paper in praise of Ghinucci and Bagnaia’s waters; first employed in Bagnaia by Cardinal Niccolò Ridolfi in 1549, the *fontaniere* demonstrated his skills as a hydraulic engineer with the introduction of water to the Cardinal’s hunting *barco*, the site of which would eventually become Villa Lante. Three poems—two by Marcantonio Flaminio and one by Augusto Cocceiani—extolled the waters transported by Ghinucci to Bagnaia via aqueduct, with the latter poet praising the site as “the new home of the Muses, who had migrated there from Helicon.”²⁹⁶ While it is unclear whether Gianfrancesco actively sought out Ghinucci for his garden’s waterworks, or if he rather ‘inherited’ the *fontaniere*’s services when he assumed control over the episcopal properties in Bagnaia, the division of labor was arguably the same as at Caprarola, with Vignola providing the basic *disegni* for the fountains and Ghinucci working more in the capacity of hydraulic engineer.

²⁹² Letizia D’Addazio, *I Giochi d’Acqua nei Giardini delle Ville Rinascimentali: Il Caso di Villa Lante a Bagnaia* (MA thesis, Università di Camerino, 2011,) 94. The text reads, “Ma quello che più lo rende notevole è la fontana, la quale è tenuta una delle più belle, che siano in tutta Europa, perciocché nel primo aspetto non si rappresenta una fontana sola, ma mille, anzi tutto un colle, ornato di purissimo cristallo ...”

²⁹³ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 52. The passage reads, “Et in questa parte, pare che non solamente pareggi, ma vinca a Pratolino e Tivoli. Prima ha l’acqua di fontana viva, che non ha Tivoli; et tanto abbondevole (che non ha Pratolino).”

²⁹⁴ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 52.

²⁹⁵ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 257.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.* 133-134, 304 n.18.

The case for a single creator behind the fountains' design hinges largely on the prevailing argument that the many works are connected by a unified narrative that can be read uphill or downhill depending on the visitor's position in the garden. The fountains—in addition to the stonework and plantings—grow increasingly rustic as one ascends the hill, as though the garden was staging a sort of return to nature, wherein the visitor moves from formal parterres and glassy pools to the roughly worked Grotto of the Deluge and then out into the *bosco*. Read from the opposite direction, the visitor moves downhill from the Arcadian *bosco* and the cataclysmic flood of Deucalion through increasingly ordered environments, with artful Third Nature representing the linear advancement of postdiluvian society. This narrative approach to the waterworks, however, was never discussed in Renaissance or Early Modern visitors' accounts, and largely overlooks the aesthetic experience of Ghinucci's inventions, which was the aspect of the garden that left the most significant impression on period commentators.

Nevertheless, following the path downhill from the water source as laid out by this linear reading and as described by Fabio Arditio, helps illustrate the changing traits of the water effects throughout the garden. While Arditio postulated that the water that flows through the Grotto of the Deluge (Figure 143) came straight from a mountain spring, the fountain—as with all others in the park—is fed by a reservoir further uphill which itself is supplied by Ghinucci's aqueduct, bringing water from nearby Monte San Valentino.²⁹⁷ Rivulets of water pour from three different sources on the grotto's rocky facade, soaking the surrounding ferns and hanging moss, ultimately tumbling into a placid semicircular pool at the visitor's feet. While these particular streams are not handled ostentatiously, the grotto's waterworks are deceptively simple, as surprise jets edge the roofline of the twin *loggie* that flank the fountain; when activated, the two lines of jets squirt

²⁹⁷ Ibid. 266.

across the grotto (Figure 164), creating crisscrossed arcs of water which, depending on one's location, may be experienced as either a fine mist or a torrential rainfall. Water is at its wildest and most unpredictable here, either taking on a generative, productive role supporting the grotto's plant life, or drenching the unsuspecting visitor in the deluge that gives the structure its name.²⁹⁸

Following the implied flow of water away from the grotto, the visitor comes upon a structure which in the 1588 inventory of the garden was called the Fountain of the Octagon (Figure 165); although in some images and accounts of the garden, it is named as the Fountain of Coral, today it is generally referred to as the Fountain of the Dolphins. An octagonal construction designed to be viewed in the round, the fountain is composed of tiered steps, and features an overflowing basin at its summit, and jets of water that spurt from the mouths of vases and grotesque faces lining its middle levels. We know from Arditio that the fountain was once crowned with an artificial trunk of coral from which a tall spout shot upward, and that water once spurted down from the coral into stone vases from which jets arced upward and inward, back toward the center.²⁹⁹ From the mouths of the eponymous dolphins, streams of water once squirted across one another, and at the base of the entire construction were "*inganni da piedi*" that soaked the feet of visitors who dared to stand too close.³⁰⁰ Although it is now only a shell of its former self, in its original state the fountain must have appeared like a grand watery confection, a shimmering liquid mountain with jets moving in every direction, delighting the eye and ear with a variety of water effects.

²⁹⁸ The grotto's name has frequently been linked through relatively tenuous associations with either the Great Flood of the Bible or the flood which Hesiod wrote ended the Bronze Age of Man. If such a reading was indeed intended, one cannot help but wonder if the name held any Annian valences for visitors, given the friar's location of postdiluvian society in Etruscan Viterbo.

²⁹⁹ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 262 and 320 n. 58. The relevant passage reads, "...d'intorno ha un grosso tronco finto di corallo... al tronco del corallo, oltre a un bollor grande, che gli sorge in cima, si spiccano otto altri grossi cannelli d'acqua, che ogn'uno separatamente la getta nel suo vaso, che intorno girano facendo un ottangolo et poi da questi discende in altre tanti più bassi et finalmente ridottasi tutta in un vaso maggiore degli altri..."

³⁰⁰ Ibid. 262.

Moving downhill, the visitor encounters Gianfrancesco's *catena d'acqua* (Figure 166), the head and foot of which take the form of an elongated crayfish, referencing the Gambarara family's heraldry; while its head, legs, and claws are well defined, the midsection of the *gambero* is abstracted into a chain of undulating and coiling volutes. Water streams from the crayfish's mouth, coursing sheetlike down the stepped levels of the chain, churning in little eddies as it is "molded, almost sculpted"³⁰¹ by the rippling edges of the fountain. Should the visitor drag a hand through the water, one is met with a hint of resistance as the swirling currents are disrupted, and all new whorls are created in the fingers' wake. During Gregory XIII's visit, Arditio commented on how the water surged down the *catena*, rising up and breaking against itself into an aerated froth that made the fountain appear at a distance as though it were a very thick chain of silver running down the hill.³⁰² Swirling through the fountain's sinuous arabesques, the water, now transmuted into precious metal, surges out through the crayfish's pincers—Arditio described the canal as vomiting the water as if from a mouth³⁰³—falling in two cascades from one basin to another into the Fountain of the River Gods (Figure 167).

Named for the two colossal figures that recline on either side of the lower basin, and preside over a large tranquil pool, the fountain (Figure 168) no longer operates at full capacity. Short jets known as *fioroni* once spurted skyward from the stone rosettes that line the edge of the pool, just

³⁰¹ Ibid. 260.

³⁰² D'Addazio, *I Giochi d'Acqua*, 94. The passage reads: "va ad essere tutta sorbita da un gambaro, il quale la trasmette giù per un canale di marmo lunghissimo, che per essere intagliato nel fondo hor alto hor basso, nel discender che fa l'acqua giù con molto impeto fra questi intoppi si rompe et alzandosi con molta spuma de lontano sembrano anella di una grossissima catena d'argento."

³⁰³ Ibid. 95. Arditio's description of the fountain is as follows; "A piede di questo canale si ritrova un piano, dove sono molti arbori di platani bellissimi, come sono ancora in due altri, che tuttavia si ritrovano discendendo giù dal monte, ma prima che discende in questo primo piano si ritrova un altro gambaro grandissimo sopra il quale è una sirena a cavallo, che, ricevuta tutta l'acqua del detto canale, la vomita con molto impeto, così per la bocca, come per le branche, in un vaso da basso, sostenuto da un satiro et perché la serena, che è sopra il gambaro, sta in atto di sonare una buccina, manda con quello instrumento posto alla bocca spilli d'acqua altissimi al cielo, la quale va poi tutta in una gran conca ovata con un numero infinito di cannelle intorno, che la mandano fuora." Many of the features he mentions are missing, and may perhaps have been made of ephemeral materials to celebrate the Pope's visit to the garden.

as water erupted from the vases edging both the balustrades and the steps behind the twin river gods. The visual effect would have been spectacular—Arditio wrote that the fountain was ornamented with an “infinite number”³⁰⁴ of spouts—and the unique voice of each fountain type would have created a veritable chorus of interwoven sounds. Between the *catena d’acqua* and the myriad fountains surrounding the river gods, water is deployed to the express purpose of rapturous *vaghezza* without the barest hint of naturality. This is neither the *natura naturans* of the verdant grotto nor the *natura artificiosa* of the fake coral, this is water being implemented first and foremost as an artistic material, as an animate component of a multimedia tableau created expressly to delight and stupefy. This approach to hydrological design was absolutely unprecedented and unparalleled in Tuscia at the time, as though Gianfrancesco was answering the challenge presented by Alessandro Farnese in the lower gardens of Caprarola with the intention of absolutely trouncing his friend in the race to have the most exquisitely wondrous environment.

Mere steps from the Fountain of the River Gods, the visitor finds a monumental stone table (Figure 169) with a trough running down the center in perfect alignment with the *catena d’acqua*. Intended as a site for *al fresco* dining, the cold water running through the central channel kept bottles of wine chilled, just as the narrow waterways along the foot of the table functioned as a prototypical air conditioner. Plates of food could be floated down the central canal—which both Arditio’s account of the garden and a drawing by Giovanni Guerra (Figure 170) reveal to have been enlivened by a number of *bollori*—clearly borrowing from Pliny the Younger, who described a similar table in the garden of his Tuscan villa.³⁰⁵ Once more describing the garden’s waterworks as a kind of hydrological alchemy, Arditio equated the water channel to a beautiful table of

³⁰⁴ Ibid. 95.

³⁰⁵ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 95.

crystal.³⁰⁶ Again, water is used here in the service of wonderment, in the creation of a superlative environment where the element is harnessed solely in the service of sensory pleasure, not only rivaling but surpassing both the gardens of the ancients and Gianfrancesco's contemporaries.

Following the path of the water downhill, the visitor comes upon the Fountain of the Lamps (Figure 171), the structure's concentric rings of steps—which appear to reference Bramante's design for the theater of the Cortile del Belvedere—are studded with 160 small jets set within stone cups resembling ancient oil lamps. Around the fountain are vases from which water once spouted, and at the center of the construction is a circular basin, where once a great spout erupted skyward, as illustrated by Giovanni Guerra. Remarking on the lustrous clarity of the water as it caught the sunlight, Arditio wrote that the multitude of jets resembled “many silver candles on their candleholders,”³⁰⁷ once more emphasizing the visual allure of the garden's multitude of fountains.

Heading downhill to the garden's final terrace, the visitor encounters the Fountain of the Square (Figure 172), now commonly referred to as the Fountain of the Moors on account of the four male nudes at the center of the composition, a later addition by Cardinal Montalto. The fountain is effectively a large pool divided into four quadrate parts, at the center of which is a circular stone island; originally, an obelisk that sweated rivulets of water like the ancient Meta Sudans stood at the very center. A grand finale to the garden's cavalcade of hydrological wonders, the fountain featured sweating effects that had been out of reach only a generation earlier,³⁰⁸ foregrounding Ghinucci's technological wizardry over both the processes of nature and figural sculpture. The

³⁰⁶ D'Addazio, *I Giochi d'Acqua*, 95. The passage reads: “Vi è anco un altro bellissimo vaso grande et longo assai, incavato, non però molto profondo, il quale empiendosi egualmente per tutto nella sua superficie, somiglia una bellissima tavola di cristallo et, essendo nel mezzo della detta tavola compartiti molti bollori d'acqua, che alzandosi egualmente fanno bellissima vista...”

³⁰⁷ Ibid. 95. His exact words: “per tutti questi piani si discende et si sale per scale ornate da balaustri, sopra a i quali et ad ogni scalino è una fontanella con un bollor di acqua, che paiano tante candele d'argento sopra loro candelieri.”

³⁰⁸ Tchikine, “Giochi d'Acqua,” 57. In a 1543 letter to Giambattista Grimaldi, the philologist Claudio Tolomei expressed hope that *fontanieri* would someday be able to imitate sweat.

only fixture in the garden that Michel de Montaigne described in any detail, the spire clearly captured his eye, and he wrote that the fountain, “spouts water in many different ways: one jet rises, another falls.”³⁰⁹ While Arditio also commented on the many jets surrounding the spire, it was a piece of ephemera added to the center of the fountain that received his highest praise: four heraldic dragons in honor of Pope Gregory XIII. Almost at a loss for words, Arditio recounted how water burst from the dragons’ mouths like fire, along with “a thousand other water effects, which are impossible to describe.”³¹⁰ While not particularly complex in terms of its architectural or sculptural elements, the fountain—which combined placid waters with cutting-edge effects—is a far cry from the wild naturalism of the Grotto of the Deluge. Whether or not the visitor’s path downhill is inscribed with any particular interpretive program, one’s *percorso* through the garden reveals ever more involved hydrological effects that take water on a transformative journey from mountain spring and rushing river to tranquil lake. *Vaghezza* for its own sake seems to have been the driving force behind the waterworks, which increasingly emphasize the inventive and the spectacular, reframing water not as a marvel of nature but one of art and technology.

More fountains exist, however, beyond the boundaries of the garden wall, spread throughout the *bosco*, or in the case of the Fountain of Pegasus (Figure 173), at the entrance to the villa complex. While many of these fountains privileged representational sculpture over architectonic elements, most of them are in more ruinous condition than anything found at the Sacro Bosco, almost completely stripped of their figures and water features. A drawing by Giovanni Guerra

³⁰⁹ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 252

³¹⁰ D’Addazio, *I Giochi d’Acqua*, 95. The passage reads: “Ne l’ultimo piano poi a piè del monte è un bellissimo et spatioso giardino, in un capo del quale è fabbricata una bella casotta alla rustica et nell’altro all’incontro se ne fa un’altra. In mezzo al giardino, tra belle piantate di platani et altri arbori di più sorte, è una bellissima peschiera, divisa in quattro parti, in ciascuna delle quali sorge un gran bollor d’acqua, ma nel mezzo un maggiore di tutti, essendo hora per la venuta del Papa posti vicini a questi quattro draghi rivolti la schiena l’uno contra l’altro, che in un tempo medesimo gettano per la bocca non solamente acqua, ma fuoco ancora, con mille altri effetti della detta acqua, che racontar non si possono.”

depicting the Fountain of Bacchus (Figure 174) reveals the fixture to have featured five sculpted nudes—a rarity considering the near aniconism of the formal garden—and the relative informality of the *bosco* may have allowed for this divergence from the overarching artistic program. Only the Fountain of Pegasus remains intact and operational; at the center of an ovoid pool backed by a tall semicircular wall ornamented with busts of the Muses, the winged horse rears up atop the peak of Mount Helicon, his hoof striking the Hippocrene Spring and giving way to a tall spout of water that rockets high into the air. The difference between the fountains inside and outside the formal garden is striking. Claudia Lazzaro theorizes that the unifying theme of the *bosco* is earthly paradise,³¹¹ and through such a lens, the formal garden may read more like a heavenly paradise, a rapturously beautiful environment that effectively eschews fleshly beauty in favor of abstracted *vaghezza*. The garden offers up innocent sensual pleasures in the sight, sound, and haptic experience of water, all while leaving prevailing post-Tridentine sensibilities relatively untroubled.

The nature in which water is implemented at Villa Lante helps further characterize both Gianfrancesco's patronage and his voice in our *discorso*, revealing him to be a man at a cultural crossroads, with one foot in the world of his stepbrother, Carlo Borromeo, and the other in Alessandro Farnese's. Gianfrancesco felt the pull to participate in the culture of *villeggiatura* in which his friends and contemporary cardinals reveled, but he was also keenly aware of the shifting discourses surrounding art and decorum. Seemingly motivated by a desire to outdo Alessandro's gardens in Caprarola, Gianfrancesco knew that show-stopping magnificence would have to come from somewhere other than the realm of fleshly sculpture. The abstract beauty of water served his purposes perfectly. He could still have the most exquisite, most indulgent environment in all of Tuscia—rivaling any garden in Italy—without crossing any lines of propriety the way Vicino

³¹¹ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 268.

Orsini arguably did with the many provocative sculptures that populate his Sacro Bosco. Gianfrancesco commissioned a garden that reflected his own cultural climate, one which reconceptualized the nature of beauty in art, and explored alternative sources of *vaghezza* beyond the human body. Landscape and its constituent elements were relatively safe places to experiment with sensual pleasure, and the water at Villa Lante, with its appeal to multiple senses, was preeminently suitable for the task.

Reuniting Gianfrancesco's voice with those of Vicino Orsini and Alessandro Farnese, our *discorso* takes further shape, with three vastly different approaches to water emerging. Both the Sacro Bosco and the other, more obscure Tuscan gardens demonstrate the least developed and most straightforward use of water, seemingly ascribing to their own regional style of landscape design, which differed dramatically from the rarified water effects employed at Caprarola and Bagnaia. Between these two sites, we see water used as either a *meraviglia* of nature or one of art, resulting in two distinct styles of hydrological design, with Villa Farnese's gardens partaking of both approaches across two different periods of construction. All three patrons' waterworks bespeak competitive personalities, but Alessandro's decision to emulate Gianfrancesco's garden almost to the letter sets him apart as a man uniquely concerned with his reputation as both a patron and a member of Cinquecento society's elite. Vicino, on the other hand, was a lifelong denizen of a rock-cut Tuscan hilltown, and came from a vastly different social station and cultural background than Alessandro or Gianfrancesco; a *cittadin de boschi*, he had more experience with the rougher side of nature—and water—than the city-dwelling cardinals. Where other gardens approached water as an artistic material, Vicino's Bosco, complete with a creek running through it, purported to possess a certain naturalness that no other designed landscapes exhibited at the time. While Gianfrancesco, too, sought to set his garden apart from other environments, it was

with refined and conscientious artfulness that he made his mark, demonstrating the definitive course for navigating between good taste and appropriateness. Taken as a whole, the three interlocutors' gardens represent a rare instance in Renaissance landscape design where a multiplicity of hydrological modalities existed within the same region and the same generation, framing Tuscia not only as the birthplace of a uniquely regional style of garden design, but also a melting pot for other landscape architectural traditions.

CHAPTER NINE
Flowers, Fruit, and Forests: Plant Life within the Gardens

Plant life has been an essential feature in the tradition of Italian gardens since the *horti* of the ancient Romans, yet of all the constituent elements that make up the peninsula's designed landscapes, flora is by far the most fragile. As living entities, plants are evanescent and mercurial by nature, growing and transforming with the seasons to the extent that no two visits to any given garden are ever truly identical. Yet with its temporal lifespan, vegetation lacks the permanence of other features upon the landscape, frequently making it difficult for us to reconstruct historic gardens in their entirety. Plant life is also subject to the changing notions of fashion in ways that materials like stone and water are not, and many designed landscapes across Italy have undergone radical changes in terms of both the type of flora that is displayed and the manner in which it is presented. It is rare to find a Renaissance garden that still conforms to its original layout of plantings, and fewer still feature the same catalogue of flowers, shrubs, and trees which once flourished on their grounds. In many cases, the exact nature of a garden's original flora is ultimately lost to us, obscured by centuries of replanting or neglect. Our interlocutors' gardens are no different, and while it is effectively impossible to accurately grasp the full extent and nature of their sites' original plantings, what little information we do have not only adds further dimension to the present *discorso* but also helps inform our understanding of Cinquecento Tuscians' relationship with their surrounding environment.

Bosco within a *bosco*

While the field of Bomarziana already abounds with uncertainties—much of what we know about the Sacro Bosco falls somewhere between that which is certain and that which is unknown—the largest area of uncertainty concerns the question of how vegetation was utilized and styled throughout the site. This lacuna of information is near total, as no sixteenth century descriptions

or records of plantings exist, and the site has gone through several phases of growth and denudement since its inception. Though we have some idea of how the garden looked at various points after Vicino's death, we know effectively nothing about the plantings of the Sacro Bosco during the mid- to late Cinquecento.

When Giovanni Guerra visited the Bosco in 1604, nearly twenty years after Vicino's death, he sketched the garden's sculptures in isolation on their respective pages, without any context in terms of their surrounding landscape. Only his drawing of the garden's hippodrome (Figure 175) includes vegetation, as he encloses the eastern portion of the terrace with a veritable wall of trees and underbrush. Guerra's lower perimeter of the hippodrome is populated by a handful of loosely sketched trees, and the space in between is demarcated by two faintly lined rectangles painted with the same light wash used on other flora within the sketch, possibly indicating beds of plantings. However, Guerra's sketch is far from a trustworthy portrait of the site—he must have been drawing the Bosco from memory as some sculptures are placed or depicted incorrectly—and thus the pattern of trees and shrubs may be more schematic than anything else.

Over two decades later in 1625 when Bartholomäus Breenbergh made sketches of the Pegasus fountain (Figure 176) and the colossal tortoise (Figure 177), he depicted the *tufi* monuments amid a sea of trees and undergrowth, as though he had serendipitously stumbled upon them in a wild and rambling wood. Might this have been how the vegetation looked during Vicino's lifetime, or was the forest rather reclaiming his Bosco? During Breenbergh's visit, Bomarzo was still in the hands of Vicino's family—it would finally be sold in 1645 by his son, Marzio Orsini, to Ippolito Lante Montefeltro della Rovere, who also purchased Gianfrancesco's garden—but it is difficult to say whether his children let the Bosco go to rack and ruin or if they maintained the site just as their father had left it.

The next images of the Bosco to be made would be photographs taken in 1927 by fellows of the American Academy (Figures 178-179), who found the site a largely treeless expanse where creeping vines proliferated, practically engulfing the Hell Mouth. This drastic haircut undoubtedly occurred under the Borghese family's control of the property, which began in 1836 when the Lante della Rovere family sold Bomarzo to Prince Francesco Borghese, and lasted until 1940. Writing in 1964 for *Harper's Magazine*, Giovanni Borghese—who would have been a boy in Bomarzo in 1927—spotlighted his mother Isabel's efforts to bring “attention to the gardens after so long a time,” crediting her with cleaning the sculptures of “moss and underbrush and the debris of centuries.”³¹² Photos taken in 1950 (Figure 180) show an even greater transformation of the landscape, with the Sacro Bosco's land being used for agriculture, further disrupting any traces that might have remained of Vicino's original vision.

In 1954 the Bettini family acquired the Sacro Bosco, transforming the site into its modern-day incarnation as the Parco dei Mostri, replanting the grounds entirely. Utilizing trees, flowers, and other plants both native and non-native to the region, the Sacro Bosco as it appears today is a loosely planted and informally organized wooded expanse, complete with layers of underbrush. Ferns abound, and *tufi* is covered by moss and lichen, leaving today's visitor with an impression of ‘naturalness’ in the way green nature is presented. But this might not have been how Vicino planned for vegetation to shape the experience of his garden, and it is worthwhile examining the possibilities posed by different styles of plantings, and how each could potentially change our understanding of the Bosco.

Our first step is to unpack the term ‘*bosco*,’ and examine its usage in relation to sixteenth century landscapes. The word itself denotes a woodland, and appears to have been used

³¹² Giovanni Borghese, “The Horrors of Bomarzo,” *Harper's* 228 no.1367 (Apr. 1964), 68.

interchangeably with ‘*selva*,’³¹³ which in turn corresponds to ‘forest’ in English. Although no explicit differentiation was made between manmade and naturally occurring woods—take for example, the wild Bosco del Serraglio just to the west of the Sacro Bosco—the defining element that united these two types of *boschi* was a prevailing “sylvan aspect usually conveyed by a predominantly arboreal palette.”³¹⁴ A *bosco* seems to have differed from a *barco* only in terms of function, as the latter was a wooded expanse used for hunting, and the former had no explicit purpose other than to serve as the more relaxed foil to the formal *giardino*. Somewhat surprisingly, the organization of *boschi* differed from villa to villa; some utilized orderly and regimented plantings, while others featured a loose and informal arrangement of trees.³¹⁵ Regardless of organizational method, a *bosco* differed fundamentally from a *giardino* in that it generally featured “oblique views and meandering routes,”³¹⁶ affording visitors a different kind of experience from the circumscribed axial paths and orthogonal *viste* of the garden proper.

While we cannot say with any certainty which type of organizational method was employed in Vicino’s *bosco*, what makes his woods particularly noteworthy is that it was not paired with the obligatory *giardino*. Plenty of designed landscapes in the Renaissance lacked *boschi*, but an independent *bosco* without a formal *giardino* was completely unprecedented.³¹⁷ The fact that the first monumental landscape architectural project in Renaissance Tuscia was not a garden but a

³¹³ Anatole Tchikine, “The Expulsion of the Senses: The Idea of the “Italian Garden” and the Politics of Sensory Experience,” in *Sound and Scent in the Garden*, ed. D. Fairchild Ruggles (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks 2017), 238. The Cinquecento historian Giovanni Maria Zappi specifically refers to the *bosco* of the Villa d’Este as a *selva* in his 1576 description of the garden. Katherine M. Bentz, “Gardens, Air, and the Healing Power of Green in Early Modern Rome,” in *Visualizing the Past in Italian Renaissance Art: Essays in Honor of Brian A. Curran*, edited by Jennifer Cochran Anderson and Douglas N. Dow (Leiden: Brill, 2021) 252, n. 71.

³¹⁴ Anatole Tchikine, “Among the Wonders of Bomarzo: The Sylvan Landscape, the *Paragone*, and Memory Games in the Orsini Sacro Bosco,” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 41 no. 2 (2021), 97.

³¹⁵ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 121.

³¹⁶ Tchikine, “Among the Wonders of Bomarzo,” 97.

³¹⁷ Arnaldo Bruschi proposed that a *giardino* may have existed in the expansive field in the valley below the cliffs of Bomarzo, just east of the Sacro Bosco, but the hypothesis has largely been debunked in recent years, most particularly by Morgan, Garton, Tchikine, Monteleone et al. Bruschi, “L’Abitato di Bomarzo,” 13.

wood is quite telling, and indicates a very pointed agenda on Vicino's part. He most certainly wanted his Sacro Bosco to be compared with other Cinquecento designed landscapes—consider the inscriptions throughout the site that tout its singular uniqueness in the world—and it seems as though he wanted to present his visitors with something they had never seen or experienced before. Might this heterodox wooded environment, untethered to any sort of conventional garden, have been the result of a uniquely Tuscan approach to landscape architecture? Why would the first significant designed landscape in Tuscia be so vastly different from anything else conceived during the Renaissance, unless perhaps Tuscans possessed a different set of aesthetic expectations concerning environments of leisure?

It would be easy to dismiss Vicino's *bosco* as an idiosyncratic aberration created by a provincial eccentric—a mere fluke in the world of Renaissance landscape design—were it not for his cousin Niccolò Orsini's park in Pitigliano. The Parco degli Orsini is blanketed over a relatively steep and uneven hill that would have been completely unsuitable for the planting of formal beds; Niccolò's site must have been a *bosco* as well. The existence of two *boschi* both located in the same deeply forested region, both absent the stabilizing presence of a formal garden is hardly a coincidence. Something was afoot regarding landscape architecture in mid-Cinquecento Tuscia, and it appears that the region's inhabitants had a taste for a distinctly wooded version of Third Nature, preferring such a setting over the more carefully controlled environment of the *giardino*.

The question of how vegetation was handled in these *boschi* adds further nuance to our developing notion of a uniquely Tuscan school of landscape architecture. If the Sacro Bosco featured regimented plantings of trees and beds of vegetation, as Giovanni Guerra's sketch may suggest, how would the visitor have experienced the site? The question is intriguing to ponder. Since the Bosco shows no evidence of encircling walls separating the site from its surroundings,

we might envision an organized wood amidst the wild *bomarzese* forest, emerging from the chaotic tangle of vegetation like something out of a dream. Absent the frame provided by a garden wall, the juxtaposition of orderly plantings with the dense Tuscan woodlands would have been shocking in its uncanniness; visitors might have felt as though they had been transported from the realm of the mundane into some sort of enchanted glen populated by surreal stone creatures and tableaux. Would Vicino's *boschetto* have been viewed as a supernatural sanctuary ensconced within the forest, or would visitors have likened their experience of the site to the garden island of Cytherea in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, the orderly center of which was encircled by vast groves of trees? Whatever the association made by visitors, green nature would have appeared as a strange and mysterious spectacle not because it conformed to the archetype of the dangerous *selva oscura*, but on account of its rigorous organization. In a sophisticated pivot from one type of *bosco* to another, rationalized space would have been made to seem alien, as if to possibly intensify the impression of disorientation and destabilization an outsider would feel deep in the Tuscan woodlands.

But what if the Sacro Bosco had been designed with informal plantings? What if Vicino's gardeners had left the area's plants and trees largely as they found them, removing only what was absolutely necessary for the creation of pathways and clearings on the Bosco's terraces? Given the relatively hands-off approach toward the Fosso della Concia and the site's many in situ boulders, it seems possible that similar tactics could have been employed toward plant life. If vegetation had been left largely undisturbed in the Bosco, this could possibly point us toward another facet of Tuscan landscape design. A potential reliance on native plants in their natural habitat—especially when held up in combination with vernacular stonework, and understated

‘naturalistic’ waterworks—would start to paint a picture of a worldview where Tuscan identity, local landscape and notions of naturalness are all interwoven.

Some of these native plant species that may have called the Sacro Bosco home can be found roughly a kilometer to the northeast in the Riserva Naturale Monte Casoli, including wild elm (*Ulmus minor*), willow (*Salix fragilis*), and ash (*Fraxinus ornus*).³¹⁸ Other potential trees native to inland Tuscia include: common oak (*Quercus robur*), Turkey oak, (*Quercus cerris*), Spanish chestnut (*Castanea sativa*),³¹⁹ silver poplar (*Populus alba*), and black poplar (*Populus nigra*).³²⁰ Undergrowth could have included lady fern (*Asplenium filix*) and Hart’s tongue fern (*Asplenium scolopendrium*),³²¹ as well as bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and a variety of mushrooms like porcini (*Boletus edulis*) and the variegated bolete (*Boletus aureus*).³²² Herbs and shrubs from the *Astrogalus* family may also have grown in the Bosco, potentially alongside wildflowers in the *Ornithogalum* genus, the *Anemone* genus, and the *Robinia* genus.³²³ Cowslips (*Primula officinalis*), poet’s narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus*), and white asphodel (*Asphodelus albus*) may also have bloomed within the landscape.³²⁴

If these plants were part of the original makeup of Vicino’s *bosco*, then something very different would have been happening at the site in terms of the gardeners’ approach to vegetation, if in fact there were gardeners at all. Preexisting native growth was rarely preserved in the creation of sixteenth century designed landscapes, so if we were to entertain the possibility that only minimal interventions were made upon the plant life at the Sacro Bosco, then it would be the rare site

³¹⁸ John Garton, “Botanical Symbolism in Vicino Orsini’s Sacro Bosco,” *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 41 no. 2 (2021), 143.

³¹⁹ Pannucci, “Il Paesaggio,” 70.

³²⁰ Ibid. 72.

³²¹ Garton, “Botanical Symbolism,” 143.

³²² Pannucci, “Il Paesaggio,” 71.

³²³ Ibid. 72.

³²⁴ Ibid. 72.

indeed. It would represent a landscape architectural point of view wholly distinct from what was being produced elsewhere in Italy, one which not only put the *bosco* before the *giardino*, but also preserved the naturally occurring flora there within. In addition to signaling a taste for the rough and unrefined, such a use of vegetation would also show that sixteenth century Tuscians possessed a concept of ‘naturalness’ in landscape design not seen elsewhere in Europe for centuries. The possibility that a similar approach was adopted by Niccolò Orsini in Pitigliano—and potentially even at Villa Cornelia outside of Viterbo, though after centuries of disrepair it is difficult to discern much about the grounds—could indicate that sylvan spaces were an important component of the vernacular Tuscan style of landscape design.

Whether the grounds of the Sacro Bosco were left largely unspoiled or if plant life was implemented there in an orderly manner, Vicino was using vegetation to differentiate his site from all other designed landscapes. His choice of a *bosco* instead of a formal *giardino* shows that he was already thinking about green nature in a decidedly different manner than other Cinquecento patrons. As the first in the region to own a monumental designed landscape, he comes into focus as a patron with innovative tastes who dispensed with functional *barchi* or aesthetically pleasing *giardini* in favor of an informal *bosco*. The Sacro Bosco’s arboreal design not only immediately separated the site from its Cinquecento predecessors, it also seemed to present the woods as one of the great pleasures of the region, as a place to linger and explore. A self-described *cittadin de boschi*, Vicino clearly privileged wooded spaces, a preference that was undoubtedly influenced by his life surrounded by woodlands in Bomarzo.

His Sacro Bosco seems in many regards to have engaged with the *genius loci* of this *bomarzese* backcountry, as if the site was a superlatively marvelous recreation of the surrounding forests populated by equally puzzling rock-cut oddities. Keeping in mind that both types of *boschi* in

Bomarzo were home to Etruscan ruins—or at least, in the garden’s case, manufactured ruins—there also appears to have been some degree of ideological connection here between rustic wooded landscapes and the world of ancient Tuscia. Vicino’s sylvan Arcadia was an Etruscan one, and depending on the manner of the original plantings, it may have been a uniquely Tuscan one at that.

Exquisite Order

Unlike at the Sacro Bosco, where we know effectively nothing about the original implementation of greenery, the plants in Alessandro Farnese’s gardens at Caprarola were the subject of significantly better documentation. Though the lower terraces were entirely replanted with boxwood—aligning the site with the invented archetype of the Italian garden as promoted by the 1931 *Mostra del Giardino Italiano*—sixteenth century records help reconstruct Villa Farnese’s flora, and attest to the variety of plants that once flourished there. As opposed to the relatively homogenized terraces that now greet visitors to the villa, Alessandro’s gardens were originally home to an assortment of flowers and fruit trees, creating a vibrant environment of colors, textures, scents, and even flavors.

Unlike the sylvan upper garden, the lower terraces were formally planted in orderly beds. While a fresco of Villa Farnese in Villa Lante’s Casino Gambarà (Figure 181) shows each terrace quartered by cross-alleys and divided into smaller parterres, we must remember that the painting in Bagnaia is less an accurate portrait of Alessandro’s gardens, and more an idealized view of the property. Although the exact nature of these beds’ shape and design is lost to us, many Renaissance parterres borrowed motifs from “collections of ornaments designated for interior

design (paneling, ceilings, parquet floors),”³²⁵ and ranged in complexity from simple geometric shapes to the imaginative patterns and scenes described in the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*. The latter half of the sixteenth century saw a rise across Europe in the publication of books detailing *disegni* for parterres, so Alessandro’s options were nearly as limitless as his budget. Despite its shapeable nature, box was not the preferred material for sixteenth century parterres—period authors advised against its use on account of its “unpleasant smell”³²⁶—so the beds at Villa Farnese most likely would have been composed of flowers.

A poem written in Latin during the mid- to late 1580s by Ameto Orti³²⁷ provides clues about the type of flowers employed in the lower garden. However, David Coffin questions the extent to that we can trust the veracity of Orti’s verse. He cautions that the poet may have been “pursuing the traditional classic literary device of a ‘flower garland’”³²⁸ which would have been read more as a flattering embellishment than a detailed inventory. Nevertheless, the poem gives us a taste of what might have grown in Caprarola’s gardens. Orti described the parterres as being outlined with privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*), and containing flowers that included marsh marigolds (*Caltha palustris*), saffron crocuses (*Crocus sativus*), and purple hyacinth (*Hyacinthus orientalis*),³²⁹ which was a recent introduction to Europe from Asia in the sixteenth century. The gardens also included violets and narcissi, though the exact species are unclear.³³⁰ In the symbolic

³²⁵ Małgorzata Szafrńska, “Plants and Gardens in the 16th Century,” in *Garden History: Garden Plants, Species, Forms and Varieties from Pompeii to 1800*, ed. Dagfinn Moe, James H. Dickson, and Per Magnus Jørgensen (Rixensart, Belgium: PACT, 1994), 108.

³²⁶ Ibid. 111

³²⁷ Diane DeGrazia argues that Orti was actually the penname of the humanist Aurelio Orsi, who was not only part of the Farnese circle, but also known for his Latin poetry. See DeGrazia, *Bertoia, Mirola, and the Farnese Court* (Bologna: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1991), 70-71, n. 11.

³²⁸ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 198.

³²⁹ Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 299-301.

³³⁰ Ibid. 299; Coffin *Gardens and Gardening*, 208. Portoghesi points out that poet’s narcissus (*Narcissus poeticus*) is native to Caprarola, and lists other indigenous species in the vicinity, including European columbine (*Aquilegia vulgaris*), globe candytuft (*Iberis umbellate*), belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*), tiger lilies (*Lilium bulbiferum*), and flowers in the *Lunaria* genus. See Paolo Portoghesi, “Caprarola, il suo Territorio, l’Area Protetta del Lago di Vico,” in *Caprarola*, ed. Paolo Portoghesi and Ferdinando Bilancia (Rome: Manfredi, 1996), 12.

Renaissance language of flowers, both violets and narcissi carried funerary connotations; the former were associated with mourning,³³¹ while the latter were seen as representing of death and resurrection.³³² Orti also extolled the garden's "snowy" white lilies (*Lilium candidum*),³³³ which carried a more explicitly religious connotation due to their association with the Virgin Annunciate, symbolizing both bodily and spiritual purity.³³⁴

However, according to Orti, the villa's lower garden was dominated by a great profusion of roses.³³⁵ Though the specific species of rose is unclear, Celia Fisher notes that prior to the introduction of additional species and cultivars in the sixteenth century, Europe was home to only the red *Rosa gallica* and the white *Rosa alba*.³³⁶ More certain is the period association of roses with Venus,³³⁷ and given both the nearby Monte Venere and the nymphaeum dedicated to the goddess on the eastern terrace of the lower garden, the juxtaposition seems intentional.

Orti's poem also specified that plantings differed between the two terraces, as the eastern half teemed with flowers, and the northern section was comprised mainly of fruit. This terrace was populated by espaliered pomegranates (*Punica granatum*), citrons (*Citrus medica*), and oranges³³⁸—sources are vague as to the exact variety, though the bitter Seville type (*Citrus x aurantium*) was common in the designed landscapes of Renaissance Rome³³⁹—and wooden pergolas laden with grapes (*Vitis vinifera vinifera*) extended along the paths bisecting the parterres.³⁴⁰ Natsumi Nonaka differentiates Alessandro's pergolas from those of Villa Giulia in

³³¹ Celia Fisher, *Flowers of the Renaissance* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2011), 139.

³³² *Ibid.* 131.

³³³ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 208.

³³⁴ Fisher, *Flowers of the Renaissance*, 35.

³³⁵ Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 301; Regina Celine Stefaniak, *The Lower Gardens at Caprarola and Ecolgue at Gote-Hill* (PhD diss. University of California Berkeley, 1984), 35.

³³⁶ Fisher, *Flowers of the Renaissance*, 21.

³³⁷ Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 1979, 301.

³³⁸ *Ibid.* 301.

³³⁹ Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 198.

³⁴⁰ Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome*, 301; Partridge, "Palazzo Farnese," 88.

Rome or Villa d'Este in Tivoli, commenting that the structures at Caprarola were not “elaborately designed in emulation of high architecture, but rather were rustic structures derived from vernacular tradition.”³⁴¹ This fusion of the rural vernacular “reinterpreted through the aesthetics of high taste”³⁴² with carefully shaped fruit trees and neatly divided geometric parterres adds an intriguing dimension to the garden. From the usage of rare cave stones to the complex water effects employed, the lower terraces paint Alessandro as a patron looking beyond Tuscia for inspiration, and yet the rustic pergolas center him squarely within the realm of local taste and culture. Were the vernacular pergolas intended to offset the relative formality of the lower terraces, or perhaps meant to evoke the ancient concept of the noble *vita rustica* in retreat from the urban realm? Or did the pergolas signal to visitors that they had left the sphere of Rome and were now deep within the Tuscan countryside?

This impression of ruralness would have been heightened by the garden’s *bosco*, which served at Caprarola as a sort of buffer between the villa and the unknown wilds to the north of the property, offering visitors a taste of Tuscia’s sylvan realm in a carefully controlled atmosphere where one could explore in comfort, safety, and style. The site has changed much over time—in the 1580s with the addition of the upper gardens and *casino*, and the 1620s with additional alterations made by Odoardo Farnese—but in 1578 when Pope Gregory XIII visited, it was still mostly *bosco*. Fabio Arditio described groves of elm (*Ulmus minor*) and Spanish chestnuts (*Castanea sativa*)—both native to the region— “compartmented together with equal order and measure,”³⁴³ establishing that at least part of the *bosco* was formally planted and used indigenous materials. Arditio also

³⁴¹ Natsumi Nonaka, *Renaissance Porticoes and Painted Pergolas: Nature and Culture in Early Modern Italy* (London: Routledge, 2019), 118.

³⁴² Ibid. 125.

³⁴³ Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 44.

mentioned juniper (*Juniperus communis*), and what was probably silver fir (*Abies alba*),³⁴⁴ both of which claim origins outside of Tuscia. Additional silver firs were introduced to the site in 1584 when Alessandro purchased 400 seedlings from Tuscany.³⁴⁵ Though Caprarola is home to one of Europe's southernmost beech groves³⁴⁶ with some trees as old as 400 years,³⁴⁷ it is unclear whether they were originally included in Alessandro's *bosco*. Equally present in the Caprarola area are Turkey oak (*Quercus cerris*), European hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya carpinifolia*), and Italian maple (*Acer opalus*),³⁴⁸ but their presence is also unattested to on the villa grounds.

Based on the information we have about the *bosco*, we can say with some degree of certainty that Alessandro owned a mannered, designer forest that blended native species with trees from other regions around Italy. The site's informal nature did not necessarily translate to an informality of plantings, and the effect, it would seem, was meant to be one of orderliness; not First Nature conquered, but First Nature domesticated and refined for more rarified tastes. Visitors could immerse themselves in a sylvan environment relatively removed from civilization yet remain untroubled by the typical uncertainties or dangers associated with the type of deep, wild woodlands found across Tuscia. This was the type of Tuscan *bosco* worthy of receiving the Pope himself.

With the addition of the fountains and garden *casino* just a few years after the Pope's visit, the function of the *bosco* subtly shifted. In what had once been a site for relatively aimless wandering through the trees—with the modest Fountain of the Goat as the *bosco*'s only point of interest—the villa's woodlands were now thrust into the role of scenic framing device. With the *casino*, one

³⁴⁴ Nonaka, *Renaissance Porticoes and Painted Pergolas*, 117.

³⁴⁵ M. Agrimi et al, "The Management of Woodlands within the Historic Parks – The Case Study of Forest Stands in Villa Farnese at Caprarola (Viterbo, Italy)," in *Proceedings from the 4th International Congress on "Science and Technology for the Safeguard of Cultural Heritage in the Mediterranean Basin*, ed. Angelo Ferrari (Naples: Grafica Elettronica, 2010), 41.

³⁴⁶ Mauro, "Volcanoes and Crater Lakes in Latium," 227.

³⁴⁷ Portoghesi, "Caprarola, il suo Territorio," 11.

³⁴⁸ Agrimi et al, "The Management of Woodlands," 41.

now had an explicit destination, and the *bosco* became the transitional space that funneled visitors from the formal *giardino* to the upper garden like a green tunnel of set dressing. The experience of the *bosco* also became much less open-ended, as the trees themselves channeled the visitor forward, toward the bend in the path where the *casino* and upper gardens become visible. Set to its new purpose, the *bosco* helped create a linear narrative of the place that each visitor still experiences to this day along the path to the upper gardens, with the trees first concealing, then revealing the otherworldly vision in the woods. At this point, the *bosco* functioned less as a pendant piece to the formal *giardino*, and more like the connective tissue linking the lower garden to the upper one.

Despite this unique configuration, the overall approach taken to vegetation at Caprarola is effectively typical of sixteenth century Italian gardening practices, in terms of both planting style and the individual species of plants selected for the site. Through this lens, we see none of the competitive spirit that Alessandro demonstrated as a patron in other aspects of the villa and its gardens. The site was not home to exotic plants or hothouse cultivars, as Alessandro did not seem to have a passion for collecting plants like his nephew Odoardo Farnese, who transformed the Orti Farnesiani in Rome into a vast botanical garden. While the plantings in Alessandro's garden may have been conventional, there does seem to have been a preference for plants with fruit or flowers, especially those with noticeable aromas; hyacinths, lilies, and roses are all known for their powerful fragrances, as are blossoms on pomegranate, citron, and orange trees. This emphasis on the visitor's olfactory—and perhaps even gustatory—experience reveals a sensual component of the garden now missing from the boxwood parterres, and added another pleasurable layer to the site beyond that which is intended for the eye.

Period accounts of vegetation throughout the gardens reveal relatively orthodox attitudes toward plant life well in line with other Cinquecento patrons' sites, and show that Alessandro was thinking about Caprarola first and foremost as a *locus amoenus*, not as a platform for experimentation with the limits of what a garden could be, as Vicino Orsini may have been doing with his Sacro Bosco. Partaking of a shared botanic language of beauty that permeated Renaissance Europe, Alessandro's gardeners worked within a well-established palette of plants known for their aesthetic and sensorial merits. Coupled with an overarching sense of orderliness, the gardens read more as conforming to a type common of the period and less as an attempt to outdo other designed landscapes, which is admittedly a motive we have seen Alessandro exhibit before in his choices for the villa. Lacking his characteristic penchant for prestige, the approach to plants at Caprarola seems instead to have been driven by pleasure, with the visitor's experience put before ideological concerns.

Beauty and Bounty

Regarding plant life, Gianfrancesco Gambara's properties in Bagnaia are in many ways similar to Alessandro's gardens in Caprarola, most particularly in terms of vegetation being used primarily in the pursuit of pleasurable experiences rather than a personal agenda. Like the gardens of Villa Farnese, Villa Lante's implementation of plants was ambitious and rivaled that of any other Cinquecento designed landscape, while still falling well within the parameters of what was ordinary or typical for a Renaissance garden, deviating little from period customs of planting. Both gardens broke ground well after the Sacro Bosco, and having adopted a more normative period approach to plant life and woodlands, these designed landscapes should not be read as a reaction against Vicino's *boscoso* aesthetic—as his site has wrongly been interpreted in light of the cardinals' villas—but instead considered more as an implementation of a prevailing central Italian

style. Where Vicino's Tuscan paradise was forested, Gianfrancesco and Alessandro saw upon the landscape orderly and productive rural retreats, signaling both taste and status through the adaptation of established planting conventions to their respective properties.

Also similar to Villa Farnese, is the current state of Villa Lante's plantings, which differ significantly from the inventory of flora taken in 1588 after Gianfrancesco's death. Boxwood is now much more heavily utilized, and rhododendrons, azaleas, and camellias have been introduced to the site. Where once there were flower beds on the lowest terrace are now seventeenth century French style *parterres de broderie*, which would have been in fashion when the Lante della Rovere family acquired the property. Photos taken in the early twentieth century by the Irish author Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed (Figure 182) show that palm trees were even briefly incorporated into the garden. The *bosco* in particular has suffered over the centuries, as the fruit trees planted during Gianfrancesco's lifetime are no longer extant, and the area—having lost much of its formality—now perhaps has more in common with the wooded parklands of English landscape gardens than with its former configuration.

Keeping in mind, however, that the property was originally Cardinal Riario's hunting *barco*, these changes that the site has undergone in the last four centuries are nothing quite so radical as the modifications made during Gianfrancesco's time in Bagnaia. Nearly half of the *barco* must have been completely deforested to accommodate the formal garden, and the area would have seen intense replanting between 1568 when work began on the site and 1578 when Pope Gregory XIII visited. We see glimpses of progress on the grounds in Gianfrancesco's correspondences. In 1573 he sent a gift of melons—“*che sono de primi che habbia prodotti il mio parco*”³⁴⁹—to Alessandro at Caprarola, and in 1576 he wrote to the Cardinal's brother, Ottavio Farnese, to say that he had

³⁴⁹ Brunon, “Dalle ‘Fieri non Rapaci,’” 36.

planted a *bosco* of plane trees (*Platanus orientalis*) on the Duke of Parma's advice.³⁵⁰ In 1579, he wrote to Francesco de' Medici, the Grand Duke of Tuscany, hoping to acquire 200 silver firs (*Abies alba*) from him.³⁵¹

The 1588 inventory of the grounds, compiled by the Roman notary Tydeo de Marchis, serves as our botanical master list for the *bosco* and formal *giardino*. Claudia Lazzaro notes that while de Marchis' descriptions of the plantings are "less subtle" than the terms he chose for water effects or grotesques, his inventory is unusual in that it treats so heavily with vegetation.³⁵² De Marchis started his itemization from the southern gate of the garden—where he was met with a group of elm (*Ulmus minor*) planted in rows—on into the lowest terrace of the formal *giardino*, where he described twelve parterres, each filled with eight different fruit trees and edged with laurustinus (*Viburnum tinus*).³⁵³ The inventory also lists plane trees, arbutus (*Arbutus unedo*), holm oak (*Quercus ilex*),³⁵⁴ and possibly cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*)³⁵⁵ within the garden. Moving out into the *bosco*, de Marchis found fir, juniper (*Juniperus communis*), myrtle (*Myrtus communis*), medlar (*Mespilus germanica*), oak (*Quercus robur*),³⁵⁶ and chestnut (*Castanea sativa*).³⁵⁷ Gianfrancesco's *bosco* was also full of fruit trees, with de Marchis cataloguing pomegranates (*Punica granatum*), quinces (*Cydonia oblonga*), olives (*Olea europaea*), peaches (*Prunus persica*), plums (*Prunus domestica*), fig (*Ficus carica*),³⁵⁸ and apricots (*Prunus armeniaca*).³⁵⁹ De

³⁵⁰ Ibid. 40.

³⁵¹ Ibid. 40.

³⁵² Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden*, 328.

³⁵³ Ibid. 329.

³⁵⁴ Ibid. 330.

³⁵⁵ Ibid. 330 n. 5.

³⁵⁶ Ibid. 331.

³⁵⁷ Ibid. 332.

³⁵⁸ Ibid. 331.

³⁵⁹ Ibid. 332.

Marchis also attested to hedges of roses (*Rosa gallica* or *alba*), as well as an assortment of unspecified vines and reeds.³⁶⁰

Perhaps most striking about the inventory is the preponderance of trees and shrubs throughout the grounds, and the relative lack of flowers when compared to Orti's account of the gardens at Caprarola. Unlike Alessandro's multicolored parterres, Gianfrancesco's formal *giardino* would have been predominantly green, and in many places shaded by a cover of foliage; only the lowest terrace would have incorporated flowers and delicate "dwarf fruit trees grafted on quince,"³⁶¹ with the rest of the garden growing increasingly sylvan as the visitor headed uphill and out into the *bosco*. Giovanni Guerra's drawings from 1604 show both the water table (Figure 170) and the *catena d'acqua* (Figure 183) bordered on both sides by regimented rows of trees, which are also indicated as surrounding the Fountain of the River Gods. These areas of the garden—now encircled by boxwood hedges of varying heights—take on a vastly different character in Guerra's work; the formal *giardino* appears far more enclosed in his drawings, like a series of interconnected 'rooms' and thoroughfares in an orderly arboreal setting.

Populated with far more trees than flowers, questions arise concerning what exactly separates Gianfrancesco's formal wooded *giardino* from his *bosco*, and why such a heavily sylvan palette was used in the first place. The upper reaches of the garden appear to signal a departure from thinking about green space in the modular parterre-style of planting seen both on the lowest terrace and at Caprarola, shifting toward a more immersive environment of discovery similar to that of Villa Medici at Pratolino. In Gianfrancesco's garden, the linear organization of trees and shrubs would have funneled visitors along the prescribed route—moving from one open space to another—while creating a narrative experience of the place as the path through the site unfolded

³⁶⁰ Ibid. 332.

³⁶¹ Penelope Hobhouse, *Plants in Garden History* (London: Pavilion Books, 1992), 160.

itself. The prevalence of trees may have been a function of this atmosphere of revelation, their foliage helping block portions of each successive terrace from view while climbing the hill toward the source of the garden's water. It may also have been a response to Vicino's *bosco*—a different set of marvels in a forested setting—or perhaps even engaging with the Tuscan *genius loci* itself, as though the garden's location warranted a woodsier aesthetic.

In truth, little would have differentiated the sylvan garden from the *bosco*, as both areas would have been thick with trees planted in orderly formations, and would have incorporated fountains and other sculptural or architectural features. The main distinction between the two zones would therefore have been the amount of space dedicated to these types of fixtures, with the *bosco* containing far more trees than points of interest, and the garden skewing in the opposite direction. The fixtures in the *bosco* were fewer, smaller, and further apart than those in the formal garden, and without a linear, sequential path seamlessly connecting them all, visitors were left to wander and forge their own route. The *bosco*, it seems, was a site for leisurely rambles among the trees, while the garden was intended for more directed movement, with a clear terminus point whether the visitor was climbing up or down the terraced hill. Walking the *bosco*'s long, straight alleys, visitors may have felt as though they were immersed in a green tunnel of trees that stretched all the way to the next clearing.

Setting this sector of the property apart from other planned forests of the Cinquecento is the high proportion of fruit trees that would have been found there. Fecundity was not a core attribute of the Renaissance *bosco*, and yet Gianfrancesco's was teeming with productive growth, to the extent that we might even think of the area as a network of orchards interspersed with small groves of non-fruit-bearing trees. Arditio mentioned this admixture of trees in his account of Pope Gregory XIII's visit, commenting on the *bosco*'s "very lovely alleys covered by the shade of

different sorts of trees, for the most part fruit-bearing, in addition to the groves, in part rustically produced by nature and in part planted with industry and art.”³⁶² This interplay between *natura artificiosa* and *natura naturans*—or more concisely here, between formal and informal plantings—would have created a patchwork landscape, making for a diverse cavalcade of micro-environments for visitors to experience as they explored the *bosco*. Part mannered forest and part practical *frutteto*, Gianfrancesco’s *bosco* wavered between the sylvan and the georgic, offering visitors two different models of the rural sphere. Additionally, the fact the *bosco* yielded produce adds further dimension to the sensorial experience of the garden—we might even imagine our interlocutors sitting around the water table eating Gianfrancesco’s fruit—and introduces the question of functionality. Gianfrancesco’s *bosco* was neither ornamental like Alessandro’s nor a puzzle like Vicino’s; instead, it was productive. Conjuring up images of a lush Golden Age landscape, the fruitful *bosco* would have blended Second and Third Nature in an imitation of the First, cultivating a vision of the bountiful countryside for Gianfrancesco and his guests.

Coupled with his preference for trees in the formal garden, Gianfrancesco emerges as a patron emphasizing the rurality of his villa, who used verdant, fecund nature to express to his visitors their distance from the brown and grey stone environments largely lacking in vegetation that characterized Italian cities during the Renaissance. Deep in the forests of Tuscia, Gianfrancesco’s villa was a green retreat from the urban sphere that afforded the Cardinal and his visitors all the bucolic pleasures of the country in a manner appropriate to their social station. On the villa’s grounds, there were none of the dangers associated with the region’s rough and raw forests, nor were there any of the intrusive realities associated with hardscrabble agrarian life. Together, the garden and the *bosco* used plant life to paint an idealized pastoral fantasy of the rural world—an

³⁶² Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome*, 206.

Arcadia as abundant as it was luxuriant—where one could become lost among the trees without straying too far from civilized society.

Through the introduction of non-native trees and shrubs, the villa largely conformed to central Italian conventions of planting that would have couched the landscape in a familiar botanical vocabulary. The site would have been less a recapitulation of the Tuscan *genius loci* and more like a loose translation. The preponderance of trees on the property demonstrates that the sylvan nature of the local environment was clearly being acknowledged, yet the planting choices show that Gianfrancesco and his gardeners were looking beyond the region for an already established language of plants required to build a beautiful landscape. As at Caprarola, aesthetic beauty and sensorial pleasure were the ultimate aims behind the choice of plants, without the ideological underpinnings relating to self-glorification, competition, or identity as seen in other aspects of the gardens. Plant life seems to have been a relatively straightforward medium for the two Cardinals, and one cannot help but wonder if this is due to the fact that sculpture and water effects were so heavily emphasized and invested with meaning in Cinquecento gardens.

Where Alessandro and Gianfrancesco seem to have let plants take a proverbial backseat to other features within their gardens, Vicino appears to have been doing the opposite in Bomarzo, implementing the trees in his *bosco* like theatrical framing devices to stage his surreal tableaux. Though we lack information about the type of plants used in the Sacro Bosco or their organization, the fact that he eschewed the formal *giardino* altogether in favor of a *bosco* seems to indicate that he felt a wood was the most appropriate setting for his stone monsters, and intended the experience of the forest to be part of the visitor's personal narrative of the site. Neither of the Cardinals used plant life so pointedly in their gardens—as the defining component of the site's *mise-en-scène*—and given that they seem to have employed flora primarily as either an ornament or a feast for the

senses, we might expect different perspectives regarding green nature from them than we would from Vicino.

As the application of plants at Villa Farnese and Villa Lante falls within the parameters of period convention, we might assume that Alessandro and Gianfrancesco were following the lead of other Italian gardens, and looking to these sites for ideas they might apply to their respective properties. Though the cardinals have both revealed a competitive nature in other aspects of their respective gardens, their approaches to vegetation were not particularly radical. While they may have been drawing inspiration from these other gardens, there does not seem to have been a great drive to surpass them in terms of plant life, raising larger questions about whether or not plants were ever considered the main attraction within Cinquecento gardens, or if sculptural and hydrological components ruled the day. Vicino, on the other hand, seems to have been decisively breaking with tradition in his *bosco*-only approach, looking to outdo other designed landscapes by virtue of his park's absolute singularity. We see him applying plants in order to differentiate his Sacro Bosco from other gardens, instead of using them to align it with period standards of beauty.

In our *discorso*, Vicino emerges as someone with a deep personal affinity for woodlands, and having been raised deep in the green tangle of the Monti Cimini, it is probable that he would have invested forests with a different personal meaning than the cardinals. If Niccolò Orsini's *parco* in Pitigliano and Cornelia Nini's site in Ponte d'Elce were also garden-less *boschi*, this personal meaning for Vicino may have been part of something larger like regional or cultural significance. The cardinals, on the other hand, seem to have approached plants from a more urban perspective, framing their gardens not as recapitulations of the surrounding landscape, but as cultivated oases in the midst of the rugged Tuscan backcountry. Their voices join the *discorso*, emphasizing the

lure and pleasure of the prevailing central Italian vision of an orderly *locus amoenus* over Vicino's imaginative simulacrum of the Tuscan *genius loci*.

If in fact the plant life was left largely undisturbed in the Sacro Bosco with minimal intervention on the natural vegetation of the site, then Vicino would have been doing something no other patron of a Renaissance garden had done before: making a designed landscape from in situ native flora. This would be a significant departure from the established traditions of planting that the cardinals adopted, and an absolute unicum in the field of Renaissance landscape architecture. That is, unless similar ideas were simultaneously developing at Parco degli Orsini and Villa Cornelia, sites that also may have opted to incorporate this preservation of preexisting botanical life into their handling of plants. If such were the case, we would be looking at two vastly different epistemologies of landscape articulated by two distinct schools of landscape architecture operating within Cinquecento Tuscia: one partaking of design sensibilities that originated elsewhere in Italy, and the other entirely homegrown. The implied associations between naturality and local identity are tantalizing, especially given the elision we have seen made before between Tuscia's historic and its topographical landscape. We could be looking here at a vernacular micro-renaissance that was concentrated within the field of landscape design, and wholly unique to Cinquecento Tuscia.

CHAPTER 10
Conclusion: Defining the *Maniera Etrusca*

Based on my analysis of the materials and organizational principles that constitute Tuscia's designed landscapes, the present *discorso* has revealed that our interlocutors' environments effectively fall into two categories: one which partook largely of orthodox sixteenth century Italian *villeggiatura* and garden culture, while the other courted a less polished, less constrained aesthetic. Whether we consider the boulders left in situ at the Sacro Bosco or the Parco degli Orsini's *belvedere* overlooking the *forre* outside Pitigliano, this second style of landscape architecture privileged the vernacular landscape of the region, not only echoing the Tuscan *genius loci* through representational and organizational means, but also enshrining the natural environment itself through its incorporation into the garden. Coupled with a reliance on vernacular rupestrian carving techniques and visual references to the region's Etruscan past, this school of garden design appears to have placed great emphasis on Tuscan identity and its connection to the region's landscape. We see nothing even remotely similar in appearance or structure to these gardens occurring anywhere else in early modern Europe. This was a uniquely Tuscan phenomenon.

Based on the time and place in which it was conceived, we might refer to this Tuscan school of landscape architecture as what I have termed the *maniera etrusca*, a calculated style of garden design that wedded self-reflexive Mannerist sensibilities and erudite systems of meaning with the region's longstanding vernacular traditions and Etruscan heritage. In addition to the Sacro Bosco and the Parco degli Orsini in Pitigliano, sites adhering to this particular style include Villa Cornelia in Ponte d'Elce, the Papacqua Fountain in Soriano nel Cimino, the rock-cut nymphaeum of Orte, and the ruins of Maerbale Orsini's garden at Penna in Teverina. Hallmarks of the *maniera etrusca* include rough rupestrian handling of *tuffo*, wooded environments, loose organization of paths, and minimal intervention against the site's preexisting water, stone, and plant life to the extent that the

designed landscape meshes with its surrounding environment rather than contrasting with it as in the case of a formal *giardino*. The *maniera etrusca* was not only a revival of Etruscan carving techniques, it also heavily employed Etruscanizing imagery to the extent that manmade ruins were even fabricated for some sites.

My identification of a homegrown, vernacular approach to landscape architecture that developed and flourished in Tuscia during the mid- to late Cinquecento opens new interpretive doors to how we conceive of the Italian Renaissance garden as a larger phenomenon. This new emphasis on regional style helps rewrite the early twentieth century narrative that Italian Renaissance gardens neatly conformed to a specific type, complicating and challenging the notion of one-size-fits-all, pan-Italian tastes and aesthetics within the realm of designed landscapes. My findings concerning the *maniera etrusca* not only add a greater degree of nuance to the field, as they introduce a new voice to the study of Renaissance landscapes while shining a much-needed light on a relatively marginalized corner of Italy, but they also highlight our relatively myopic focus on Florence and Rome as tastemakers. Providing a model for subsequent studies of other landscape architectural idioms, this study points toward the potential existence of other regional garden traditions across the Italian peninsula. If we direct our lens of inquiry at other locales, would we see similar instances of vernacular resurgence, where these regions' characteristic styles, topographies, and traditions were also revived and celebrated?

This study also resituates the Sacro Bosco within the greater discussion of Renaissance gardens, positioning it more accurately within a specifically Tuscan context to help make sense of its distinctive appearance and composition. Rather than squeezing the site under the same stylistic umbrella as Villa Lante and Villa Farnese—a place where it never quite fit—when viewed as part of the *maniera etrusca*, the Sacro Bosco reads less as a landscape architectural anomaly and more

as the ultimate expression or full flowering of a distinctly regional school of art that celebrated vernacular traditions which reach back as far as the Etruscan era. When the site is examined alongside built environments like the underground nymphaeum of Orte or the Papacqua Fountain in Soriano nel Cimino, we see the emergence of a regional micro-renaissance, one drawing on local Etruscan heritage instead of Italy's ancient Roman past. Tuscia's micro-renaissance was neither a response to nor a conscious rejection of some sort of monolithic, archetypal Roman Renaissance, it was a regional and inward-looking artistic movement that used landscape and its constituent elements to express local heritage and identity.

But why did this vernacular micro-renaissance occur within the sphere of landscape architecture? What made designed landscapes the 'it' possession in mid- to late Cinquecento Tuscia, and why are we not speaking of a *maniera etrusca* within the realm of painting? What made landscape the preferred medium?

There appears to have been a different type of relationship in Tuscia between the realm of humanity and the realm of nature that prompted this abundance of designed landscapes which fall under the banner of the *maniera etrusca*, as if Tuscan identity was somehow entangled with the region's environment. Both the characteristic landscape, and how its inhabitants lived upon or within it have always been defining factors in the drastic difference between Tuscia and surrounding regions like Tuscany, Umbria, the Roman *campagna*, or even the Sabine and Alban Hills. Taking into account the region's strong rupestrian traditions, and the unique relationship between hilltown Tuscia's inhabitants and their surrounding topography, it would seem as though these patrons of the *maniera etrusca* were responding to the region's *genius loci* as a defining feature of *tuscanità*. This idea of Tuscianness was best communicated through landscape design because it derived directly from the region's topography, its stones, and its forests.

In approaching the *maniera etrusca* as a locally-inspired micro-renaissance—rather than part of a broader *antirinascimento* as proposed by Eugenio Battisti—I have shifted the focus of the discourse squarely onto sixteenth century Tuscan society, uncovering an entire creative industry of sculptors, hydrologists, and gardeners that flourished in the region before Vignola even entered the employ of Cardinals Farnese and Gambara. This pool of workers came from within Tuscia, seemingly emerging out of nowhere in a region with no strong tradition of stone sculpting to speak of from the medieval era up through the early Renaissance. They were a skilled labor force, who could reference Etruscan tombs and sarcophagi just as adeptly as they could imitate the works of Brunelleschi or Bramante. Whatever the job, a familiarity with *tuffo* seems to have been a key ingredient in the making of one who worked within the *maniera etrusca*, and their knowledge of how to cut and excavate the stone for practical functions most likely came before their ability to sculpt figures for aesthetic purposes. This was a flourishing for vernacular architects and tradespeople, workers who most likely cut their teeth at Bomarzo and then expanded their services to a number of patrons across the region.

Unlike most people who owned gardens during the Renaissance, these local patrons effectively commissioned nothing else of note, and their names are primarily known to us because of their sites, speaking here to the centrality of landscape in the fashioning of both one's memory and their Tuscan identity. This singularity of patronage was one of the key factors differentiating the Tuscan sites from those of Alessandro Farnese and Gianfrancesco Gambara, whose gardens and villa lifestyle diverged so profoundly from the landscapes of the *maniera etrusca*. Evidently, with different experiences of Tuscia came different landscape architectural projects with different visions of the region. The sites seem to have dialogued with each other to a certain extent, revealing Cinquecento Tuscia as having also been a veritable laboratory of style, where the formal

parterre shared a space with the vernacular wood, and the calculated use of stone, water, and plant life shaped one's experience of the landscape.

This dialogue actually continued beyond our interlocutors' generation, with other patrons in Tuscia commissioning landscape architectural projects in the early Seicento. Upon moving to neighboring Vignanello to live with her husband Marcantonio Marescotti, Vicino Orsini's daughter Ottavia began work on a formal parterre garden in the shadow of their castle. A secret *hortus conclusus* tucked away from prying eyes, the site bears more similarities to Villa Farnese and Villa Lante than to her father's *boschetto* of monsters. Around 1605 Vincenzo Giustiniani, a Genoese banker and art collector, renovated a medieval castle in Bassano Romano that had once belonged to the Anguillara family, and commissioned a garden transforming the site into a villa complex. Though the gardens are in relatively ruinous condition, and it is difficult to ascertain their original splendor, traces of semicircular ringed parterres still remain. Activity was also underway at Caprarola in the early Seicento, as Alessandro Farnese's nephew Odoardo made changes to the villa's upper gardens, adding both sculptural figures and heavy architectonic elements along the approach to the *casino*, thus altering the character of the site. In Bagnaia, the villa's new owner—the *marchese* Cardinal Alessandro Peretti di Montalto, a nephew of Pope Sixtus V—made changes to a handful of fountains and realized the pendant structure opposite Gambara's *casino* that was detailed in the frescoed *disegno* from the 1570s. After this group of patrons, however, landscape architectural projects in Tuscia effectively ceased until the modern era, and questions arise as to why there was such an upsurge in the commissioning of designed landscapes in the area during the relatively brief span between 1550 and 1620. Were the early Seicento patrons of these sites responding to the landscape architectural challenge issued by our interlocutors' gardens? Did they also partake of the *maniera etrusca*, or did the style wither on

the vine and die at the end of the Cinquecento? If these Seicento patrons drew their inspiration from the same orderly and classicizing well of style as the designed landscapes of Villa Farnese and Villa Lante, does that mean that successive generations intentionally eschewed the *maniera etrusca* in favor of the prevailing central Italian style as seen at Alessandro Farnese and Gianfrancesco Gambara's properties? Would that mean the cardinals have won the *paragone* between the respective gardens, and come out on top at the end of our *discorso*?

Even if the *maniera etrusca* was only utilized for a generation, the brief period in which it flourished leads to several core conclusions. The first concerns *tufo*: as a defining component of Tuscan life, the stone was the key factor in the region's endemic renaissance, and we should conceptualize its implementation in a manner analogous to marble's role in the revival of Roman antiquity. Second, the existence of the *maniera etrusca* helps rewrite what we know about Renaissance Italians' understanding of their pre-Roman past, casting sixteenth century Tuscia as an important hub in the early modern development of Etruscology. Finally, it demonstrates the driving role of designed landscapes in the period impulse to recover and reinhabit the realm of the past; the living garden was the site par excellence for both the resurrection of and communion with hallowed antiquity. All told, Tuscia's *maniera etrusca* represents an alternate example of artistic rebirth, running on a parallel track to the contemporary paradigm of ancient Roman revival.

In reframing Tuscia's many designed landscapes as part of an ongoing and syncretic conversation about landscape, art, and identity, I have approached them as mouthpieces for their patrons, communicating not only their owner's views on nature, but also their beliefs and ambitions. The two cardinals consistently looked beyond the borders of Tuscia to other traditions of central Italian garden design for their own sites, linking themselves to an established villa culture that carried a certain social currency reserved exclusively for the top tiers of Cinquecento society.

As urbanites, their experience of the country—held away at arm’s length from the villa complex whether wild or agrarian—was different from that of the local Tuscians. Conversely, patrons like Vicino Orsini recreated their region’s topographical and historical landscape through overtly vernacular approaches, embracing looser organization and relatively noninterventionist attitudes toward the natural environment. Where Alessandro Farnese and Gianfrancesco Gambara commissioned escapist environments that contrasted with their surroundings, sites associated with the *maniera etrusca* mirrored the distinctive character of the region’s vernacular landscape, as the patrons employed the style to reify both their Tuscan identity and connections to the local topography. The designed landscapes of the *maniera etrusca* celebrated the unique environmental and cultural characteristics that differentiated Tuscia from its neighbors, drawing inspiration from within rather than looking beyond the region to other traditions of garden design. A paean to the region’s *genius loci*, the *maniera etrusca* was essentially and unequivocally Tuscan, an autochthonous expression of local identity and Etruscan heritage as fashioned from the very elements of the landscape itself.

APPENDIX A
IMAGES

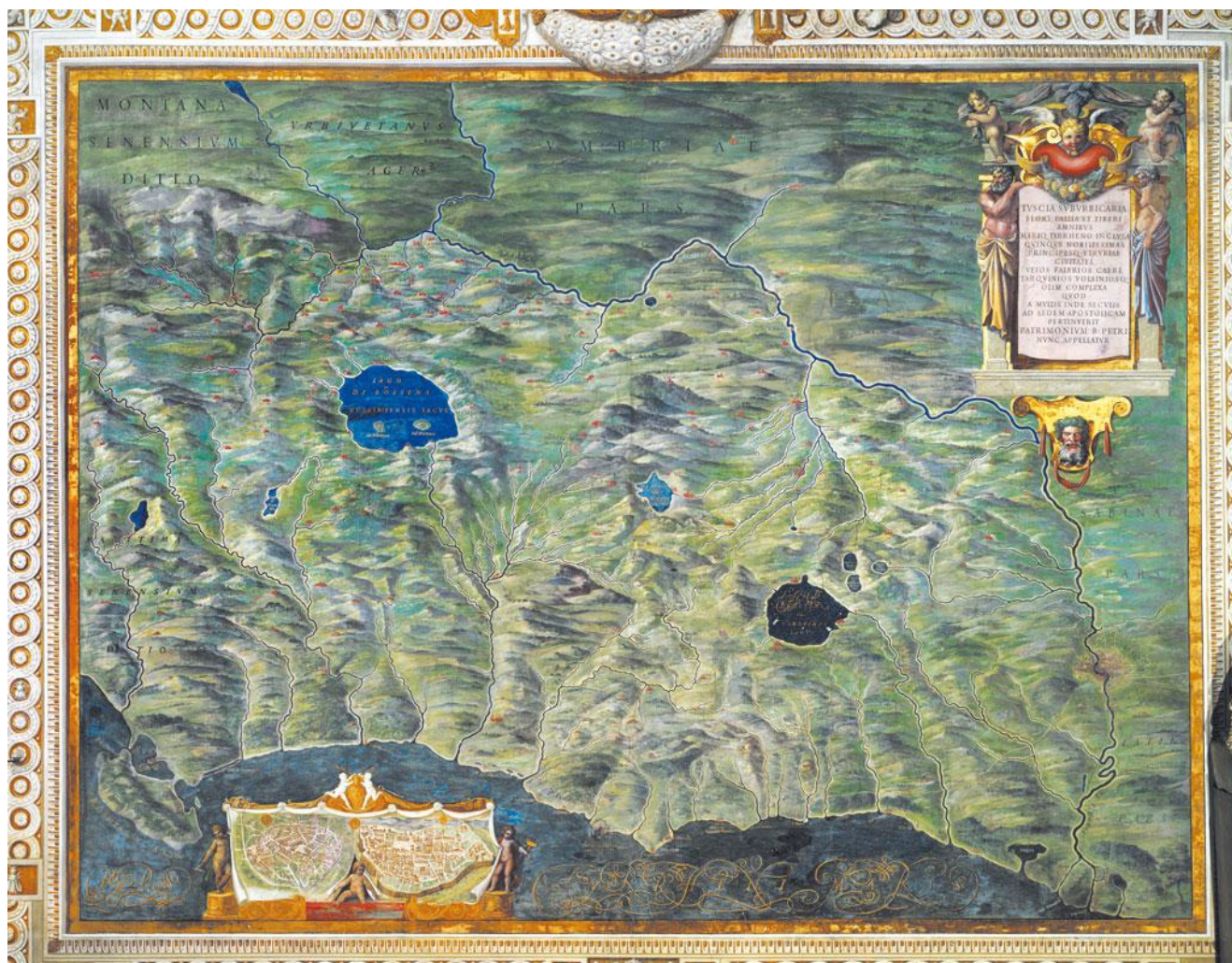


FIGURE 1
 Tuscia Suburbicaria
 Luc Holste (original Ignazio Danti)
 Galleria della Carte Geografiche, Vatican City
 Repainted 1636-1637
 Fresco



FIGURE 2
Tuscia
Baldassarre Croce
Sala Regia, Palazzo dei Priori, Viterbo
Circa 1588
Fresco



FIGURE 3
Chorographia Tusciae
 Girolamo Bellarmato
 1536



FIGURE 4
 Ancient Tuscia
 Abraham Ortelius
Theatrum Orbis Terrarum
 1608

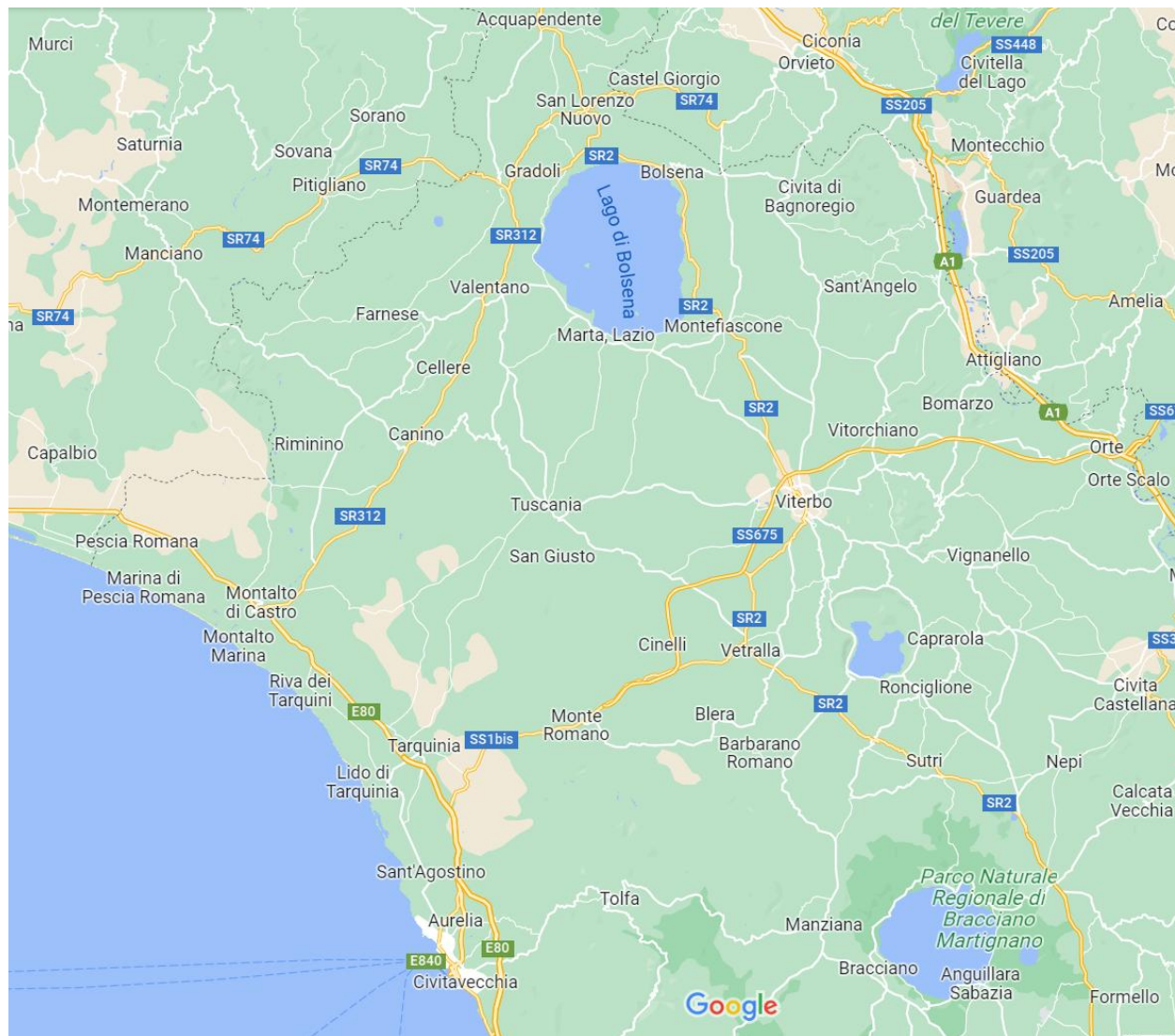


FIGURE 5
Tuscia

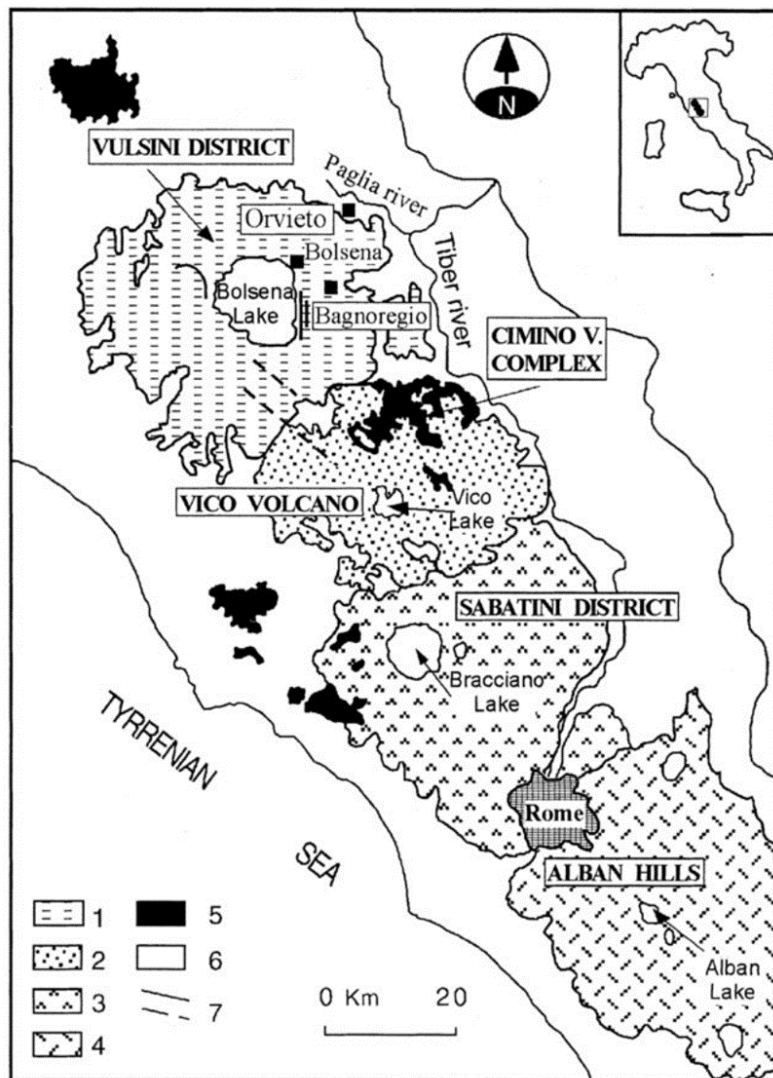


FIGURE 6
Volcanic regions of Tuscìa



FIGURE 7
Terme del Bullicame
Viterb



FIGURE 8
Terme di Bagnaccio
Viterbo



FIGURE 9
Tuffo (peperino)



FIGURE 10
Calcata



FIGURE 11
Civita di Bagnoregio



FIGURE 12
Valle dei Calanchi
Bagnoregio



FIGURE 13
Fosso Castello
Chia

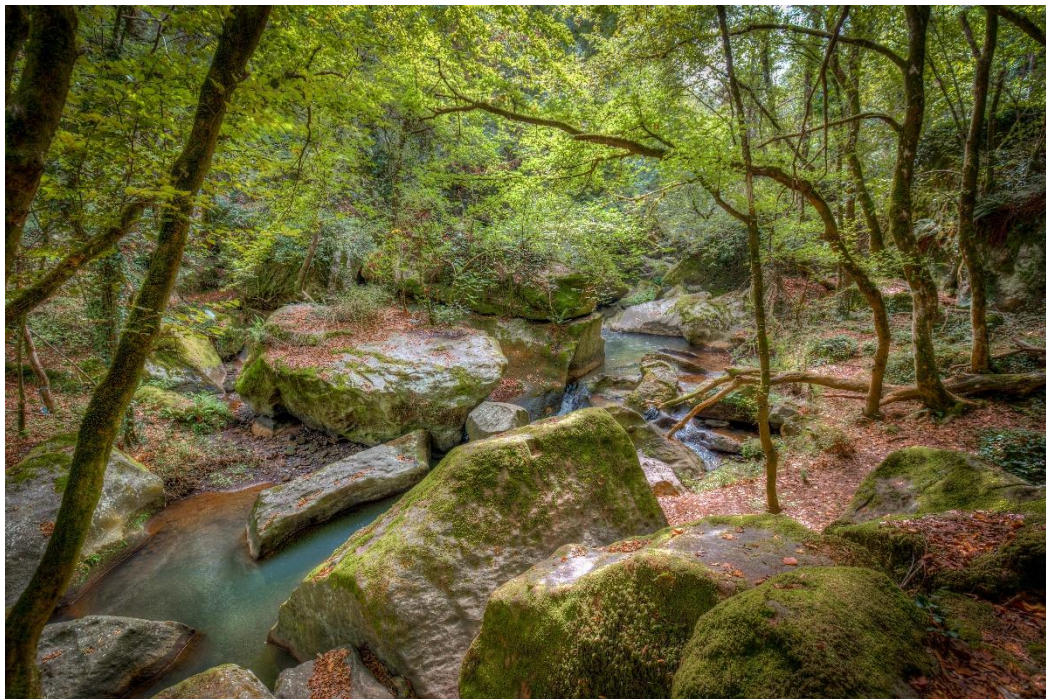


FIGURE 14
Fosso Castello
Chia



FIGURE 15
Corchiano



FIGURE 16
Sorano



FIGURE 17
Pitigliano



FIGURE 18
Centro storico
Bomarzo



FIGURE 19
Centro storico
Calcata



FIGURE 20
Cantine
Civita di Bagnoregio



FIGURE 21
Cantina
Viterbo



FIGURE 22
Church of the Madonna del Parto
Sutri



FIGURE 23
Underground passageways
Orvieto

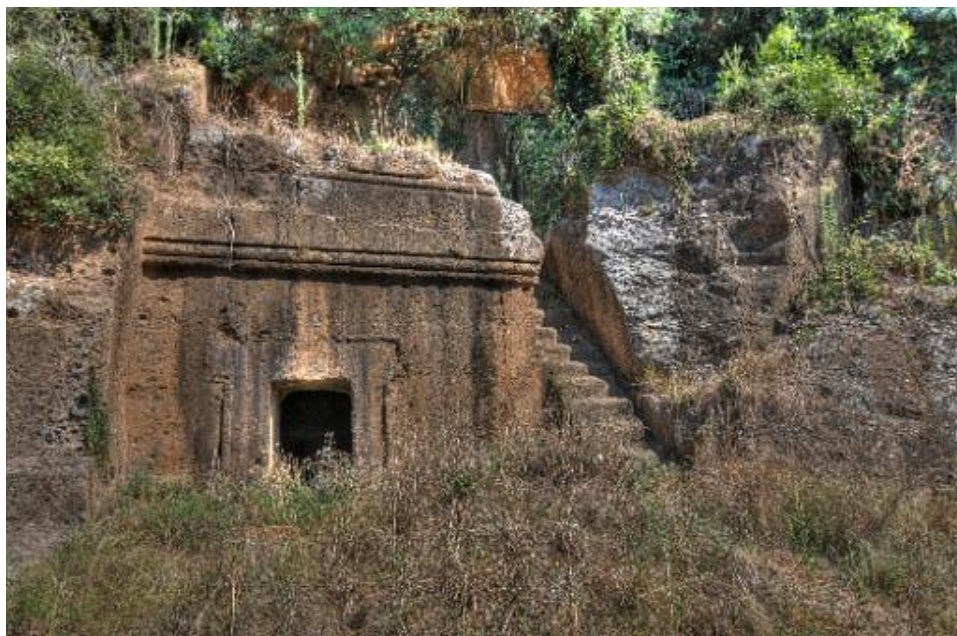


FIGURE 24
Tomba Penta
Casetta necropolis
Blera



FIGURE 25
Monte Casoli necropolis
Bomarzo



FIGURE 26
Tomba Ildebranda
Parco Archeologico Città del Tufo
Sovana



FIGURE 27
Tombe Doriche
Norchia necropolis
Vetralla



FIGURE 28
Ditch tombs
Selva di Malano, Bomarzo



FIGURE 29
Columbarium
Lega necropolis
Blera



FIGURE 30
Tomba Rossa
Pienezze necropolis
Grotte di Castro



FIGURE 31
Via cava
Pitigliano

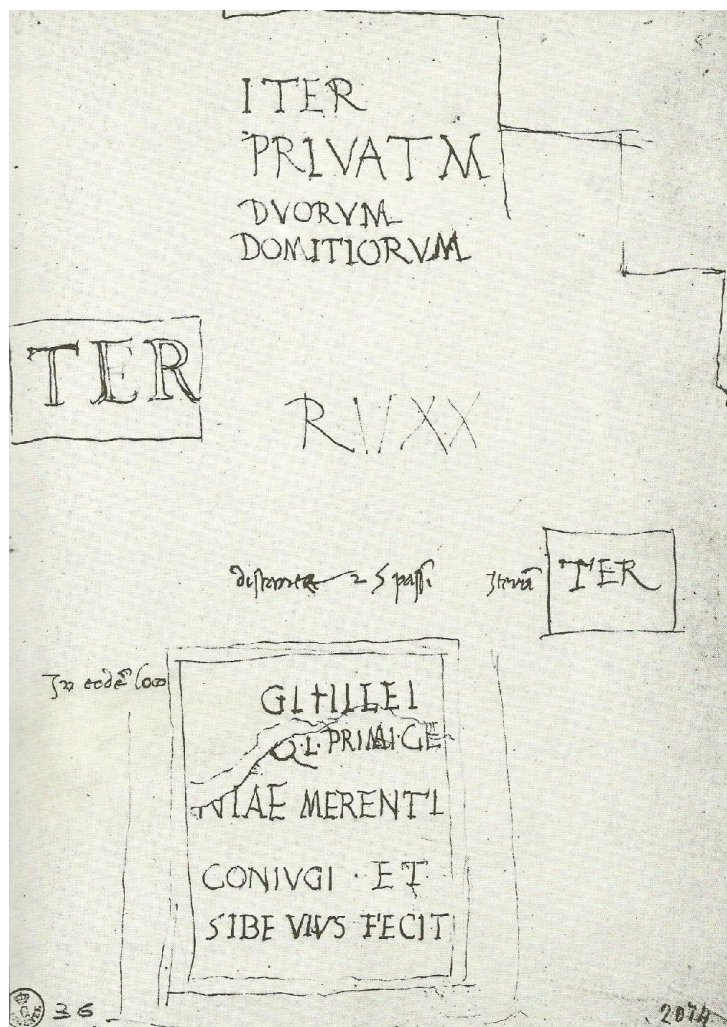


FIGURE 32
Inscriptions from Tacchiolo, Bomarzo
Baldassarre Peruzzi
Sketch
Circa 1519-1535

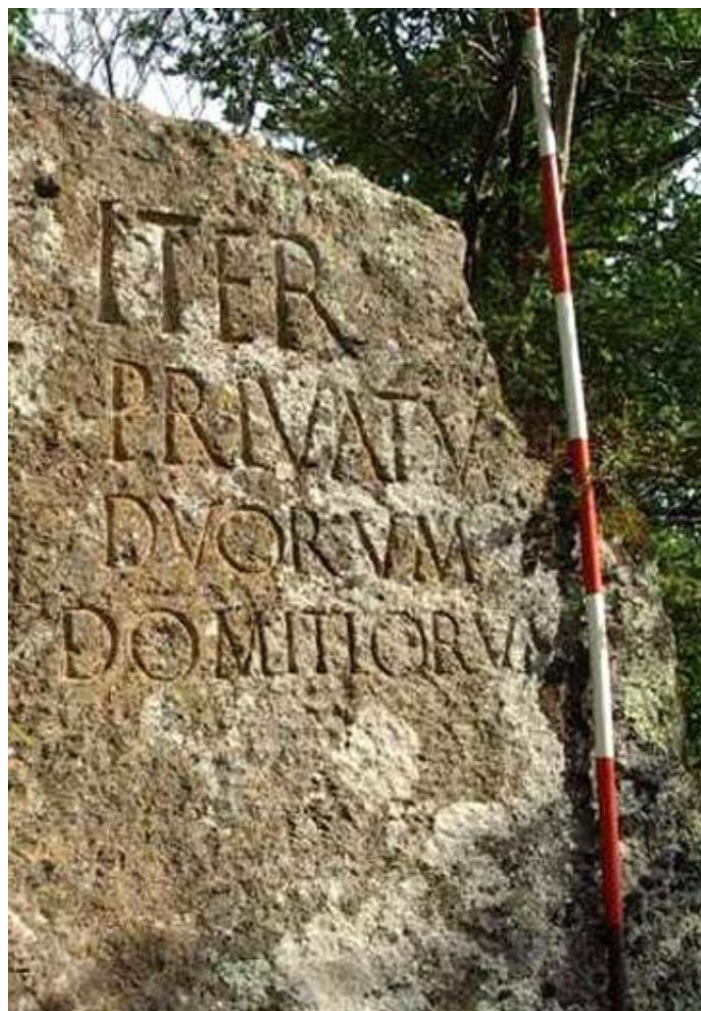


FIGURE 33
Inscription on the Tagliata delle Rocchette
Tachiolo
Bomarzo

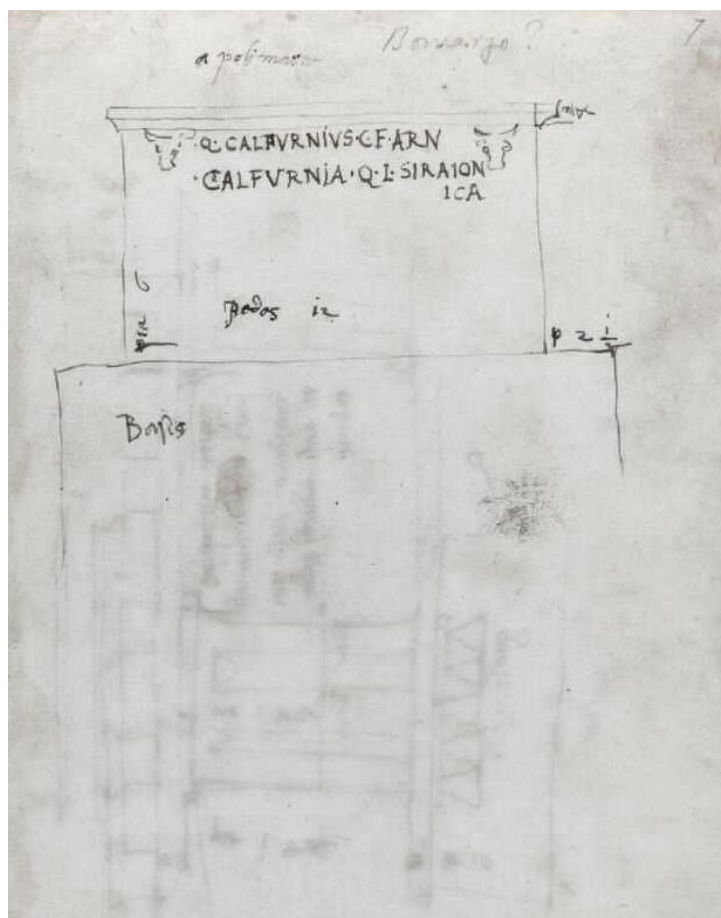


FIGURE 34
 Cube-shaped monument near Bomarzo
 Baldassarre Peruzzi
 Sketch
 Circa 1519-1535



FIGURE 35
 "Piramide Etrusca"
 Tacchiolo, Bomarzo



FIGURE 36
“Ara Cubica”
Selva di Malano, Bomarzo



FIGURE 37
“Sasso del Predicatore” #1
Selva di Malano, Bomarzo



FIGURE 38
“Sasso del Predicatore” #2
Selva di Malano, Bomarzo



FIGURE 39
Santa Cecilia
Bomarzo



FIGURE 40
Santa Cecilia
Bomarzo



FIGURE 41
Corviano



FIGURE 42
Vitozza



FIGURE 43
Poggio Conte



FIGURE 44
Bomarzo



FIGURE 45
Bomarzo



FIGURE 46
Centro storico
Bomarzo



FIGURE 47
Centro storico
Bomarzo



FIGURE 48
Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 49
Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 50
Interior of Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 51
Cantine, interior of Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 52
Loggie, Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 53
Loggie, Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 54
Nymphaeum
Orte



FIGURE 55
View from the *loggia*, Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 56
Belvedere, Parco degli Orsini
 Pitigliano



FIGURE 57
 View of Bomarzo
 Baldassarre Peruzzi
 Sketch
 Circa 1519-1535



FIGURE 58
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 59
Caprarola with Monte Venere in the distance



FIGURE 60
Via Filippo Nicolai
Caprarola



FIGURE 61
Via Filippo Nicolai
Caprarola



FIGURE 62
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 63
Scala Regia
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 64
Scala Regia
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

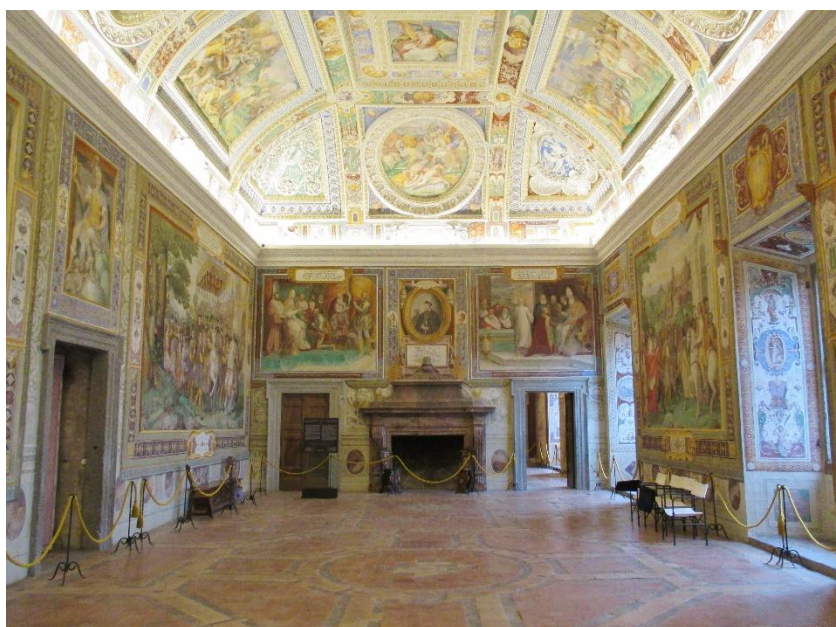


FIGURE 65
Sala dei Fasti Farnesiani
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 66
Sala del Mappamondo
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

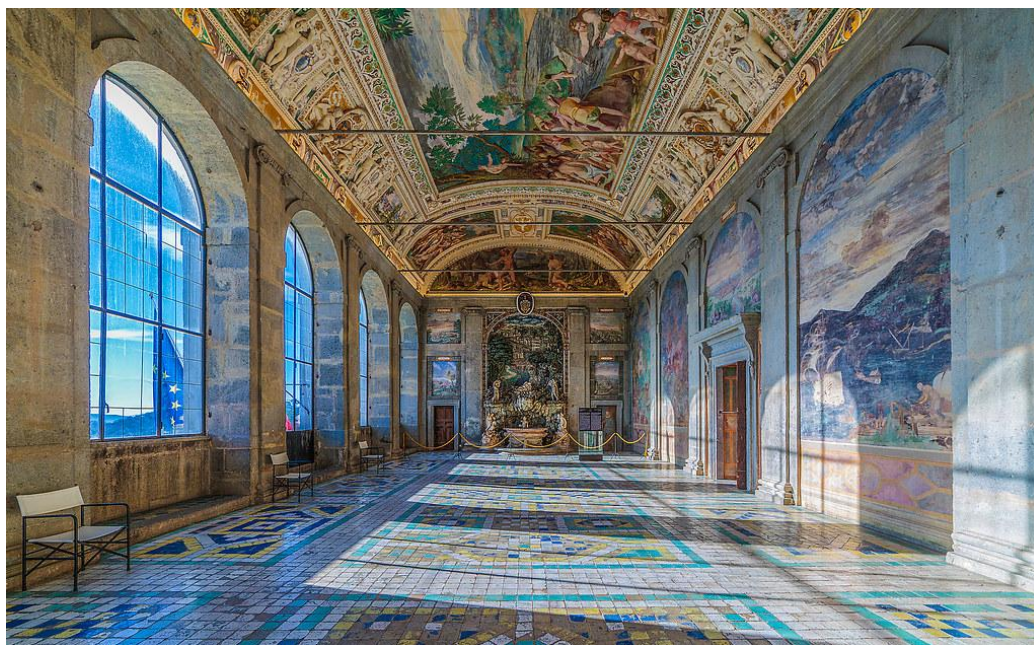


FIGURE 67
Sala d'Ercole
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 68
View of Caprarola, Sala d'Ercole
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 69
Palazzo Vescovile
Bagnai



FIGURE 70
Bagnaiia



FIGURE 71
Palazzo Vescovile
Bagnaiia



FIGURE 72
Loggia
Palazzo Vescovile
Bagnaia



FIGURE 73
Piazza XX Settembre
Bagnaia



FIGURE 74
Casino Gambara
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 75
Sala della Caccia
Casino Gambara
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 76
Sala della Caccia
Casino Gambara
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 77
Frescoed loggia, Casino Gambara
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 78
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

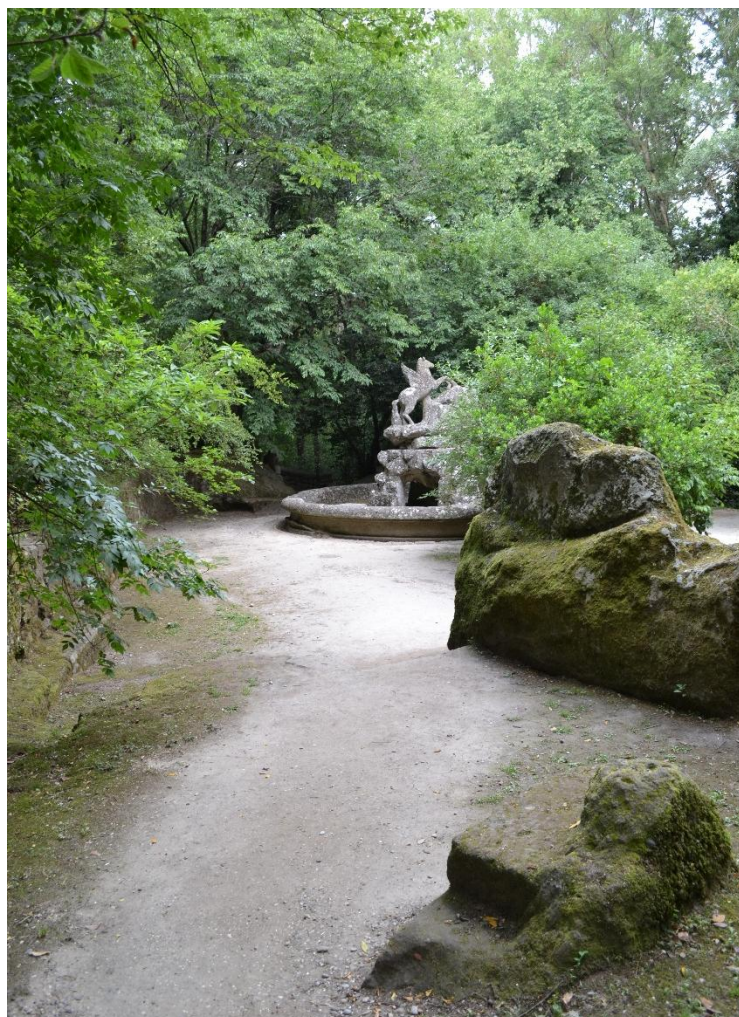


FIGURE 79
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

FIGURE 81
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

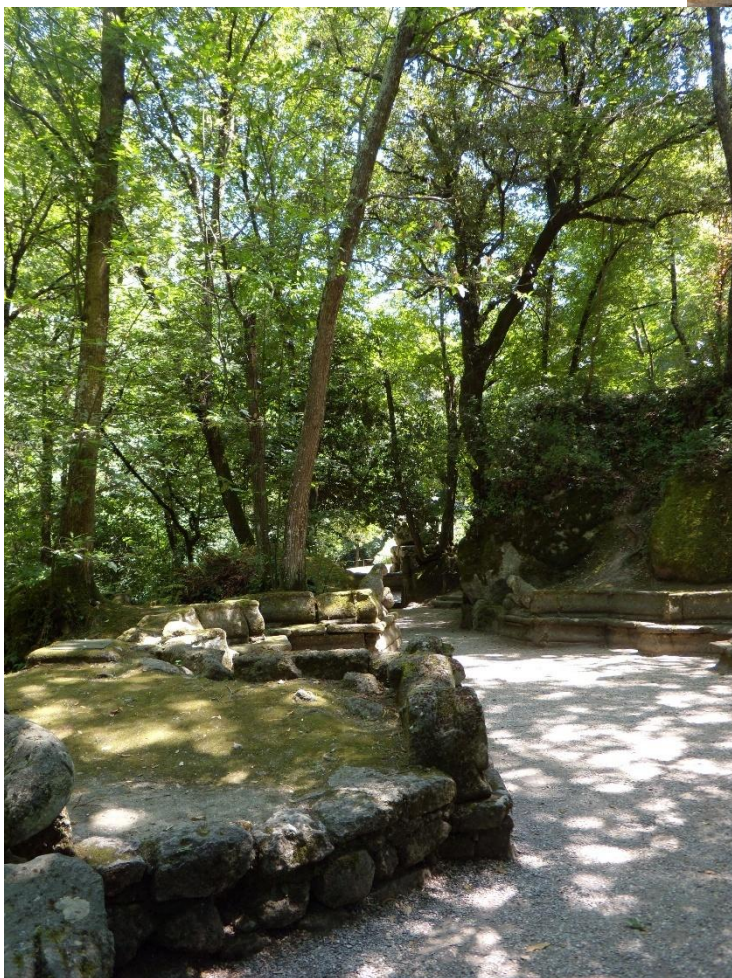
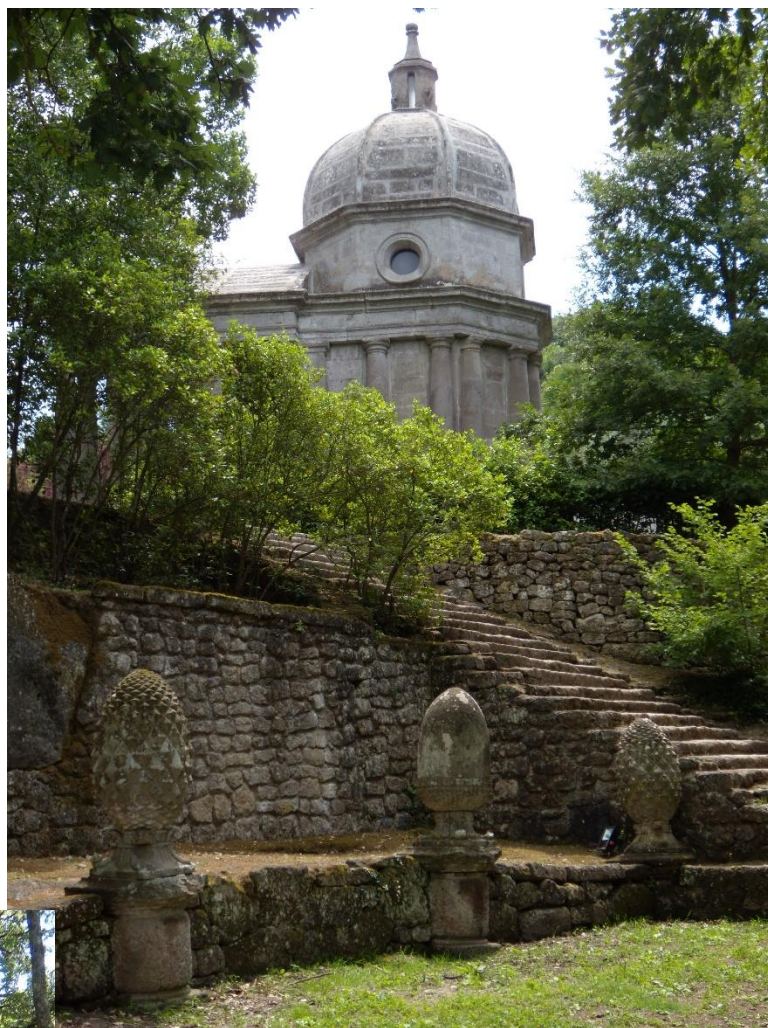


FIGURE 82
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 83
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 84
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 85
View of the Sacro Bosco from Palazzo Orsini
Bomarzo



FIGURE 86
Santa Cecilia
Bomarzo



FIGURE 87
Santa Cecilia
Bomarzo



FIGURE 88
Parco degli Orsini
Pitigliano



FIGURE 89
Parco degli Orsini
Pitigliano

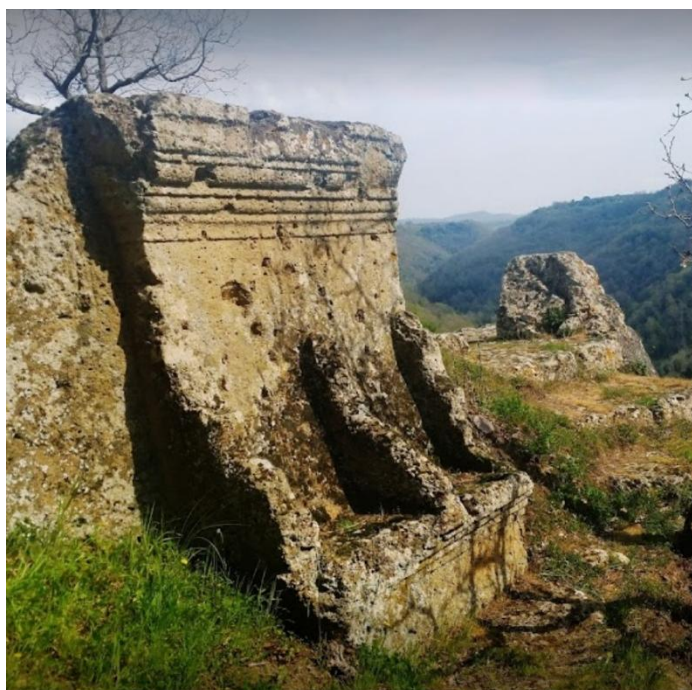


FIGURE 90
Parco degli Orsini
Pitigliano

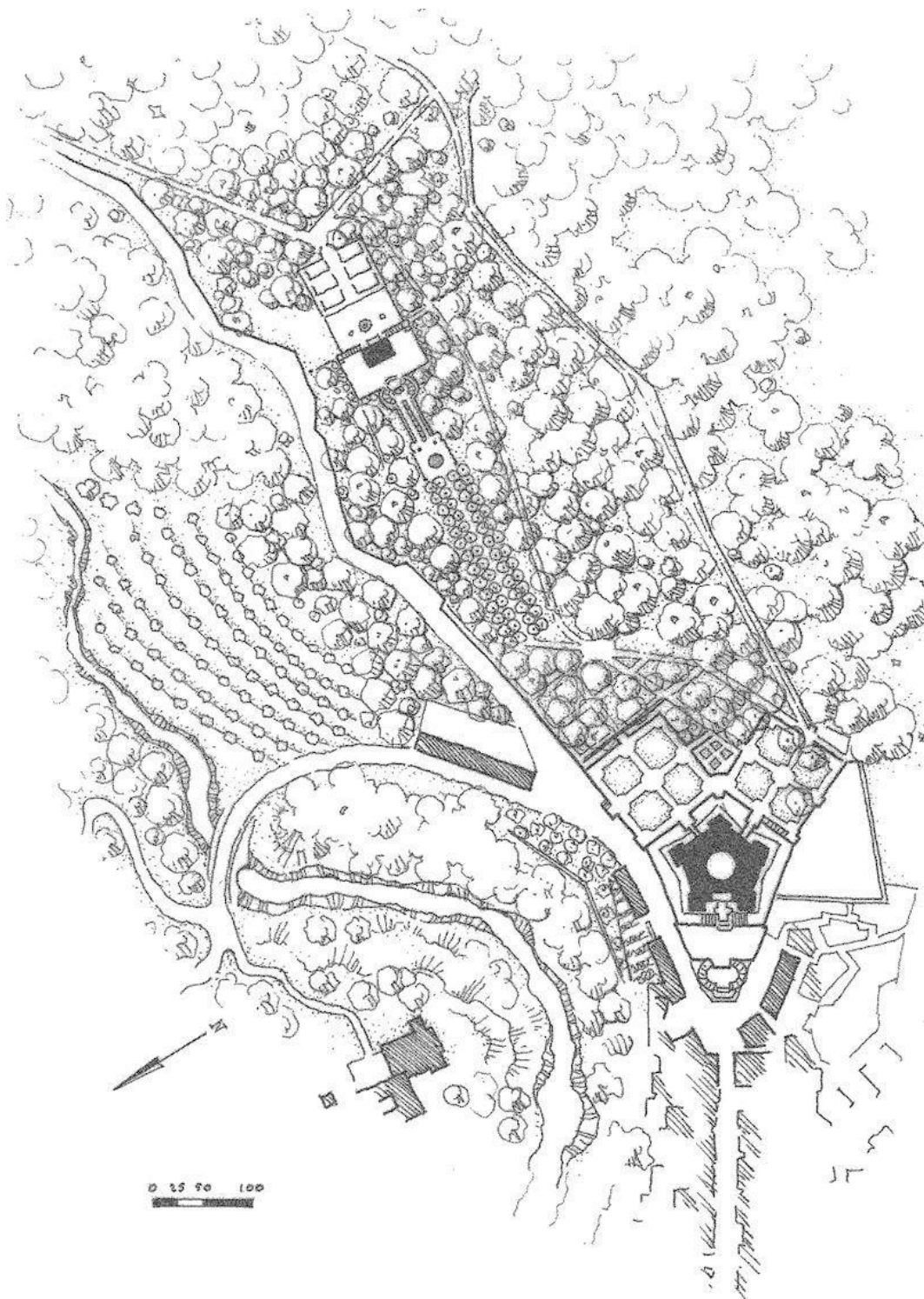


FIGURE 91
Plan of Villa Farnese's gardens



FIGURE 92
Lower gardens
Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 93
Lower gardens
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 94
Lower gardens
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

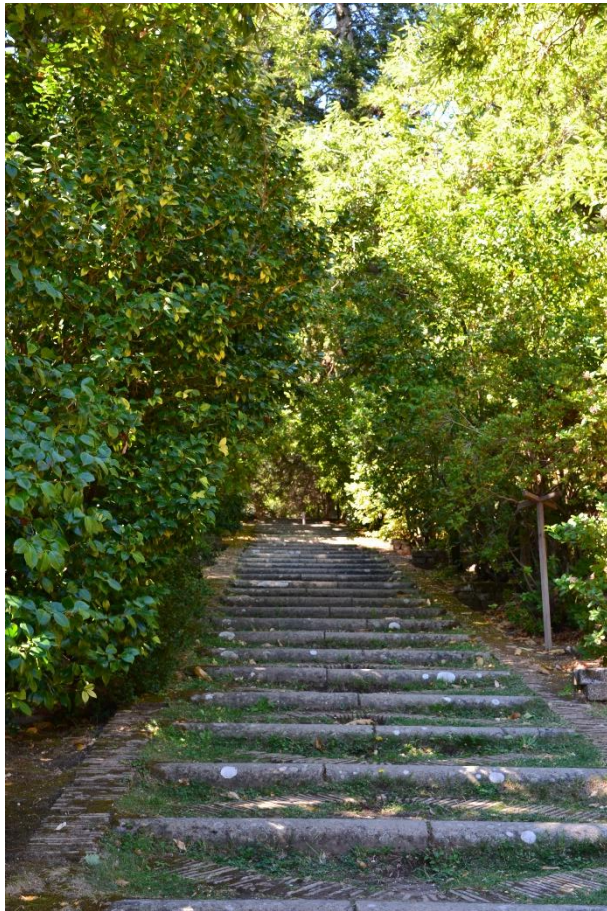


FIGURE 95
Upper gardens
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 96
Upper gardens
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

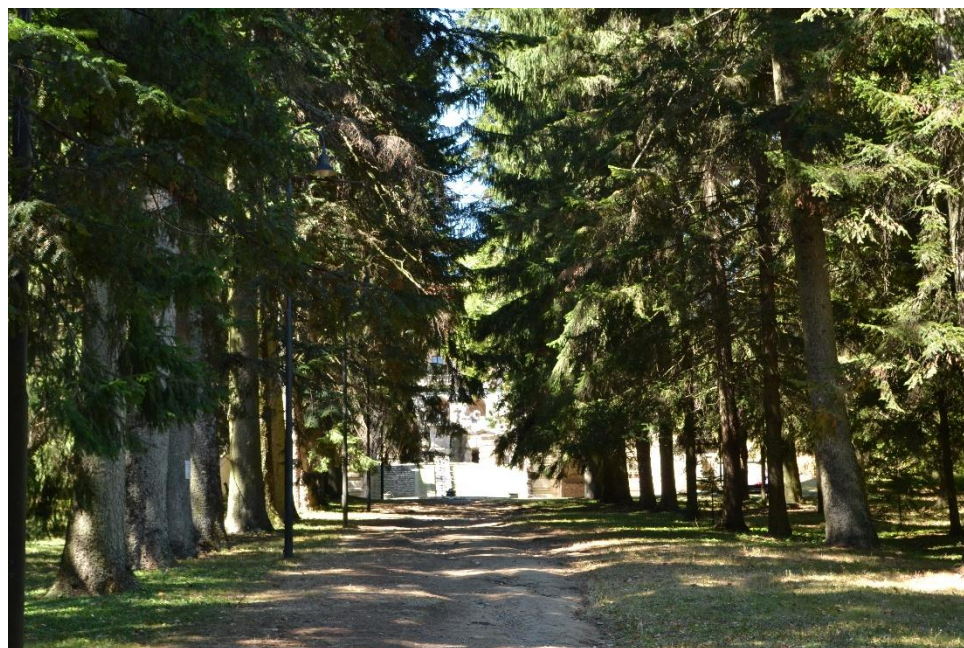


FIGURE 97
Upper gardens
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 98
Upper gardens
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 99
Casino
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

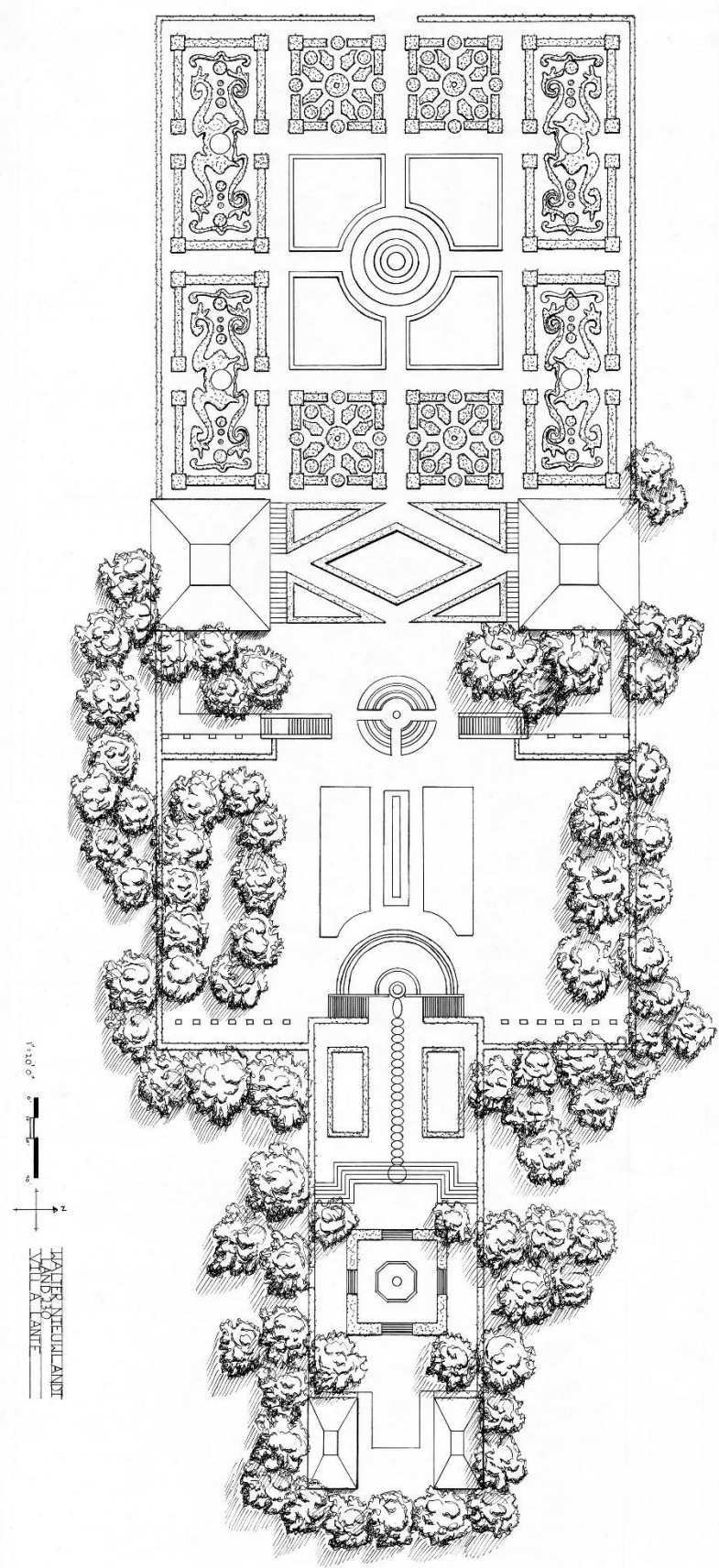


FIGURE 100
Plan of Villa Lante's gardens

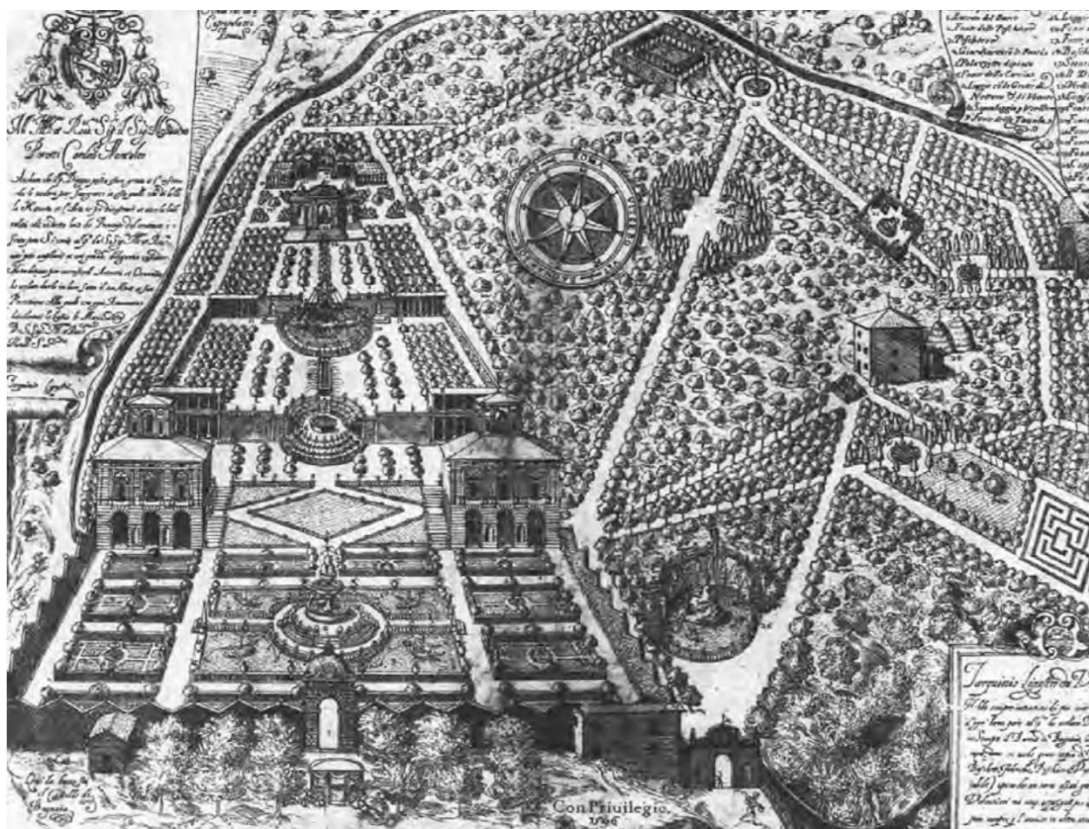


FIGURE 101
 Tarquinio Ligustri
 Engraving of Villa Lante
 1596



FIGURE 102
 Villa Lante
 Bagnaia



FIGURE 103
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 104
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 105
Villa Lante
Bagnaia

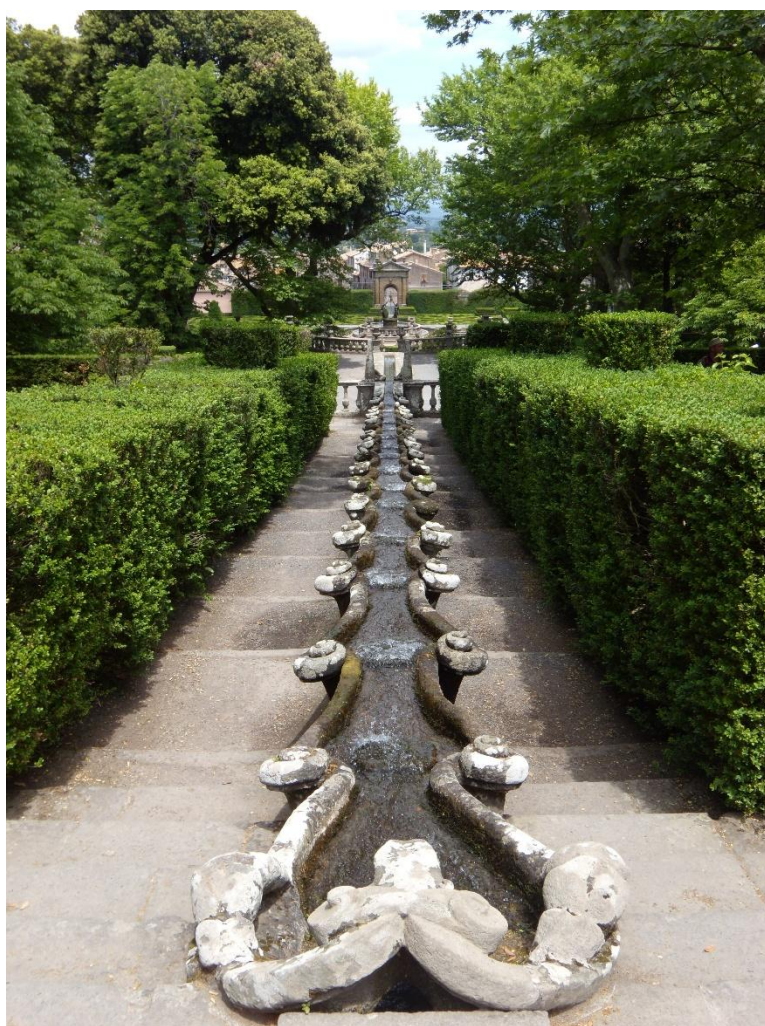


FIGURE 106
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 107
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 108
Bosco
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 109
Bosco
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 110
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 111
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

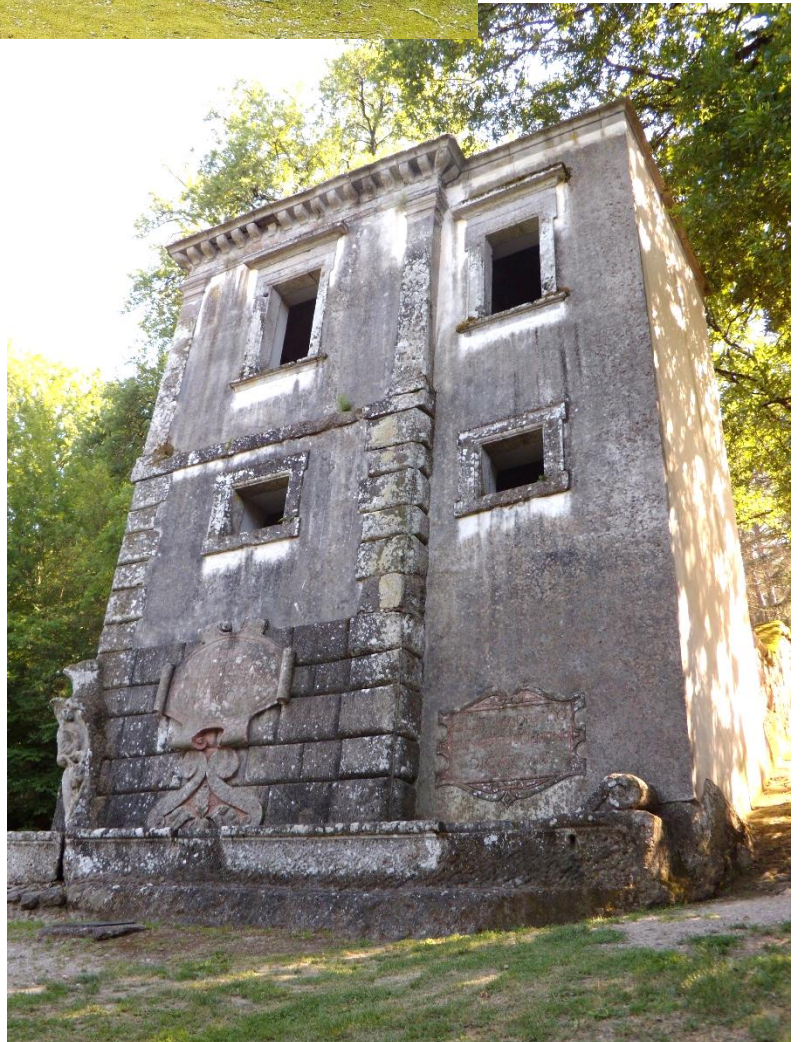


FIGURE 112
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 113
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 114
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 115
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 116
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 117
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

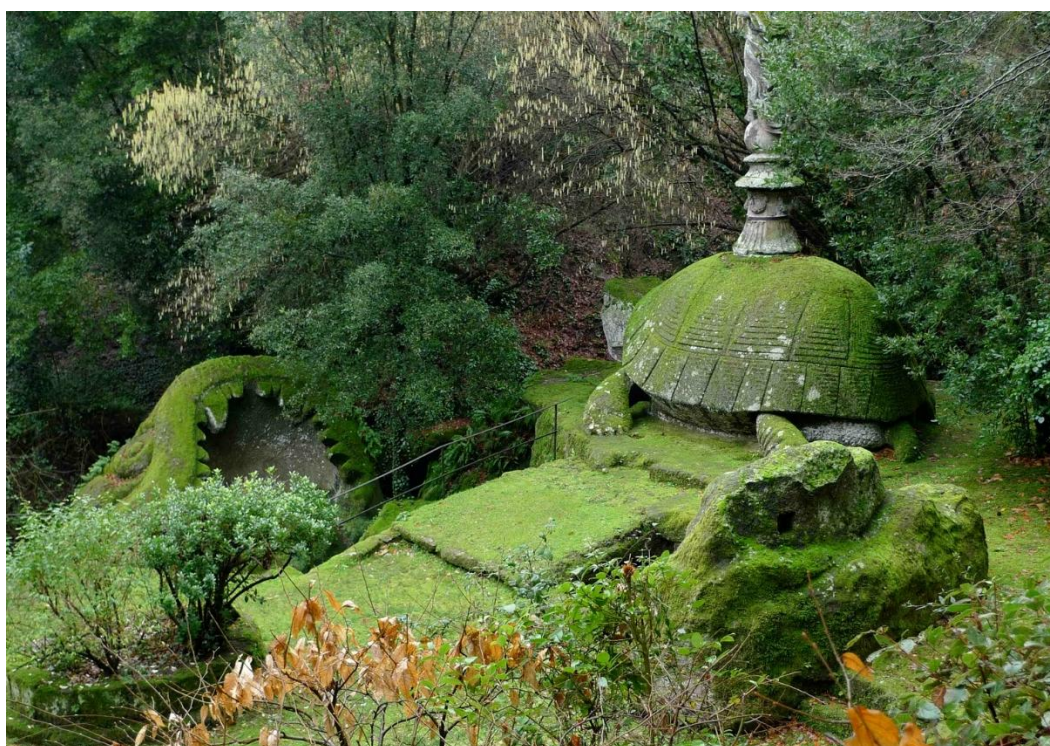


FIGURE 118
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

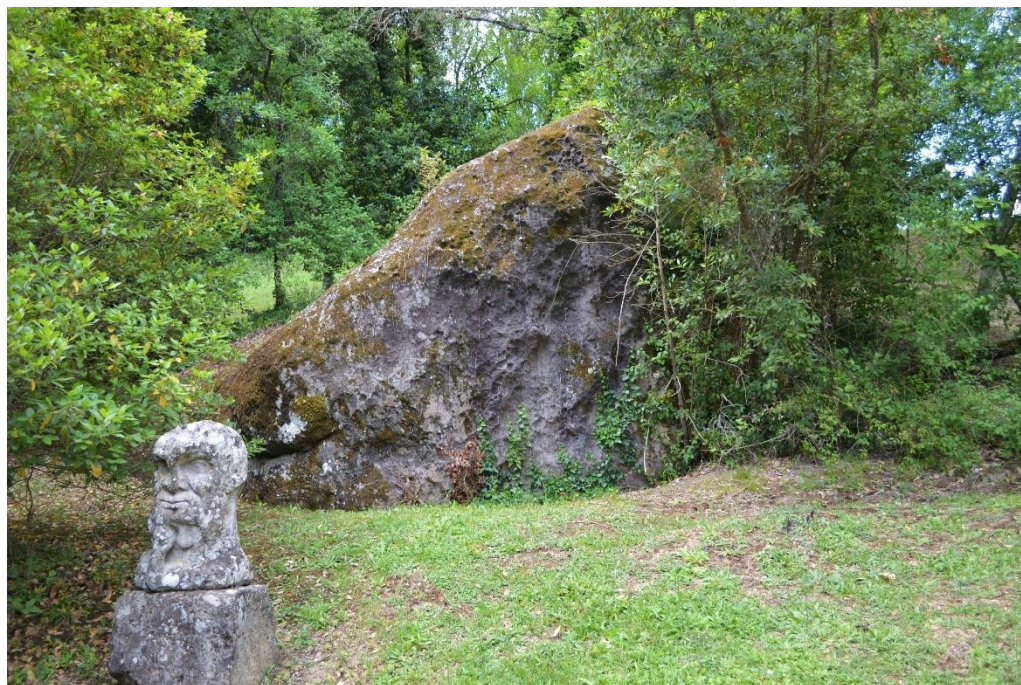


FIGURE 119
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 120
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 121
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 122
Tomba della Sirena
Parco archeologico Città del Tufo
Sovana



FIGURE 123
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 124
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

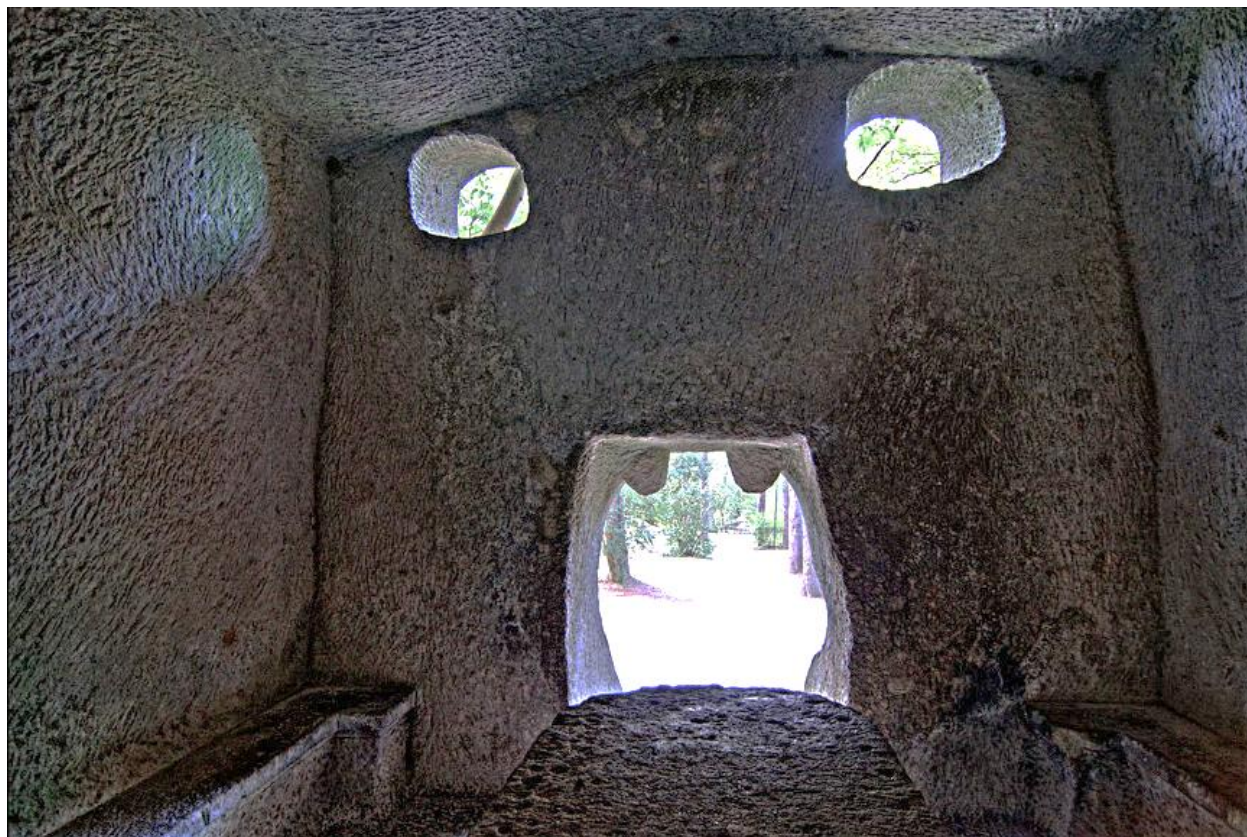


FIGURE 125
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

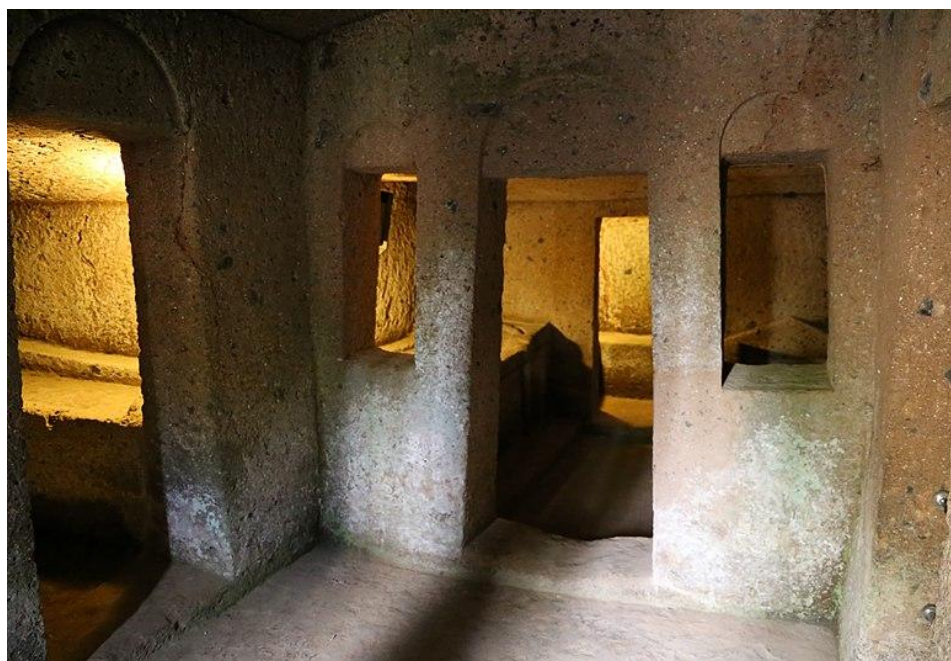


FIGURE 126
Tomba della Casetta
Banditaccia
necropolis
Cerveteri



FIGURE 127
Parco degli Orsini
Pitigliano

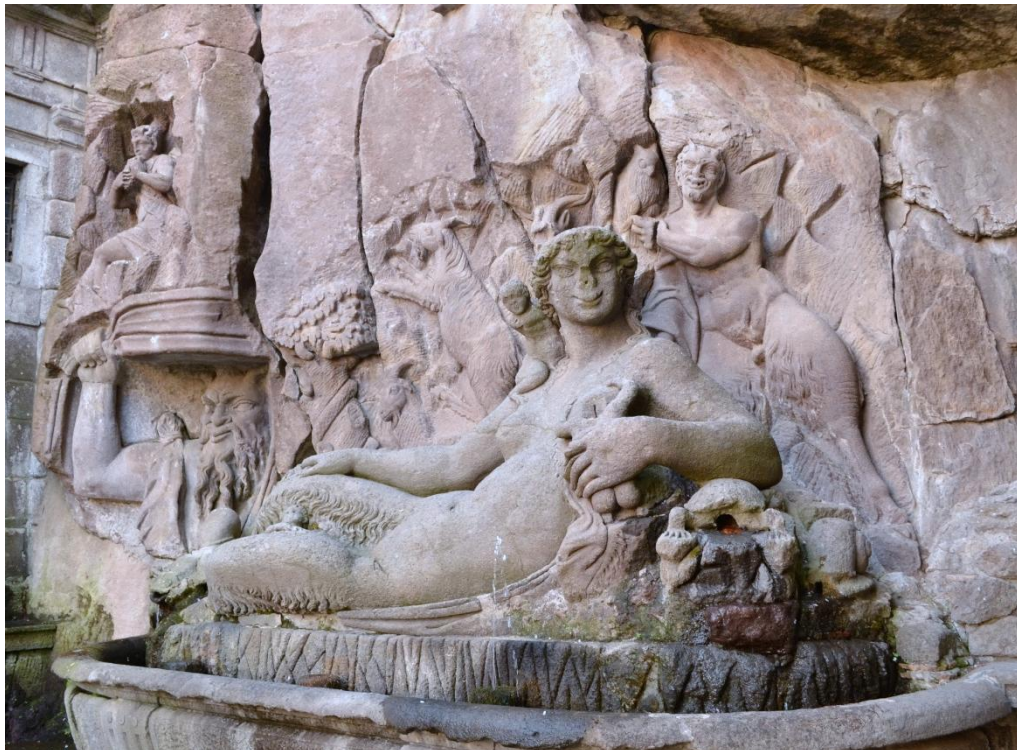


FIGURE 128
Papacqua Fountain
Soriano nel Cimino



FIGURE 129
Papacqua Fountain
Soriano nel Cimino



FIGURE 130
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 131
Papacqua Fountain
Soriano nel Cimino



FIGURE 132
Papacqua Fountain
Soriano nel Cimino



FIGURE 133
Nymphaeum of Venus
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

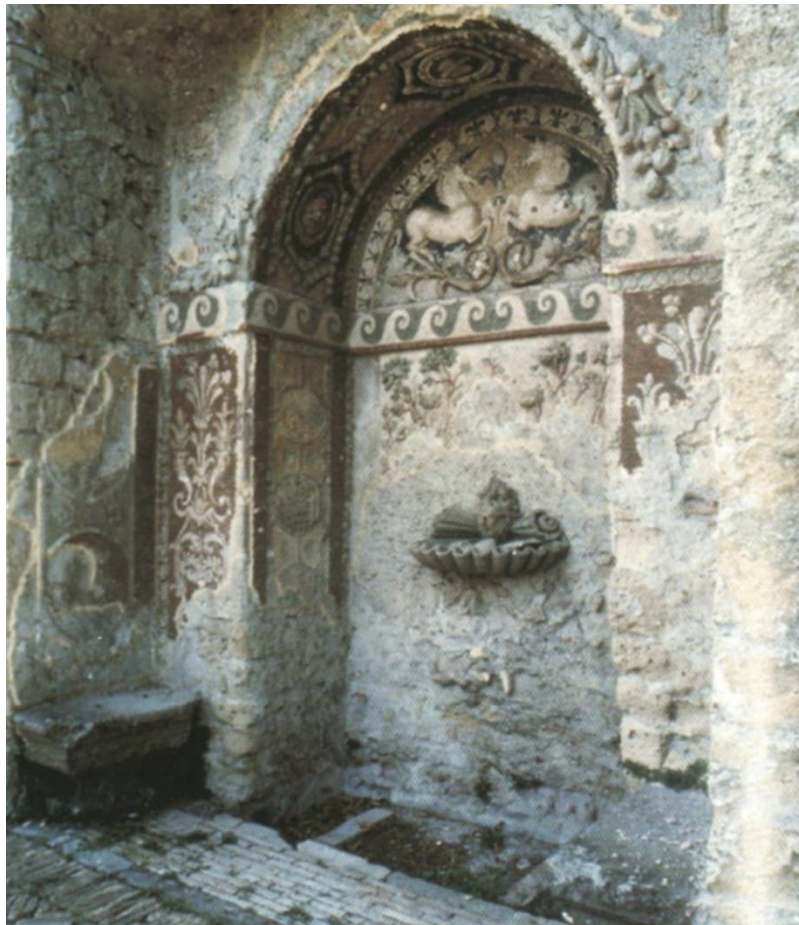


FIGURE 134
Fountain of the Unicorns
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 135
Grotto of the Satyrs
Villa Farnese
Caprarola

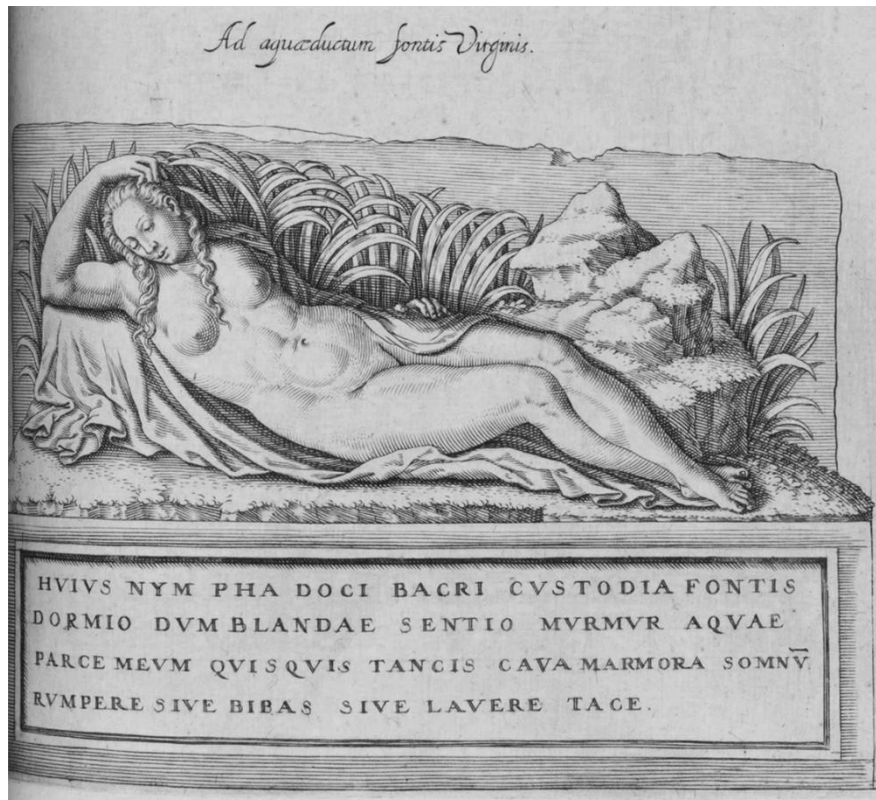


FIGURE 136
Jean Jacques Boissard
Sleeping Nymph Fountain in the Garden of Angelo Colocci
Romanae Urbis Topographiae, part 4, plate 25
engraving
1597-1602



FIGURE 137
Francisco d'Ollanda.
Ariadne Grotto in the Belvedere Statue Court
Drawing
1538-1547



FIGURE 138
Vigna Carpi nymphaeum, sleeping nymph
Engraving
Mid-16th century

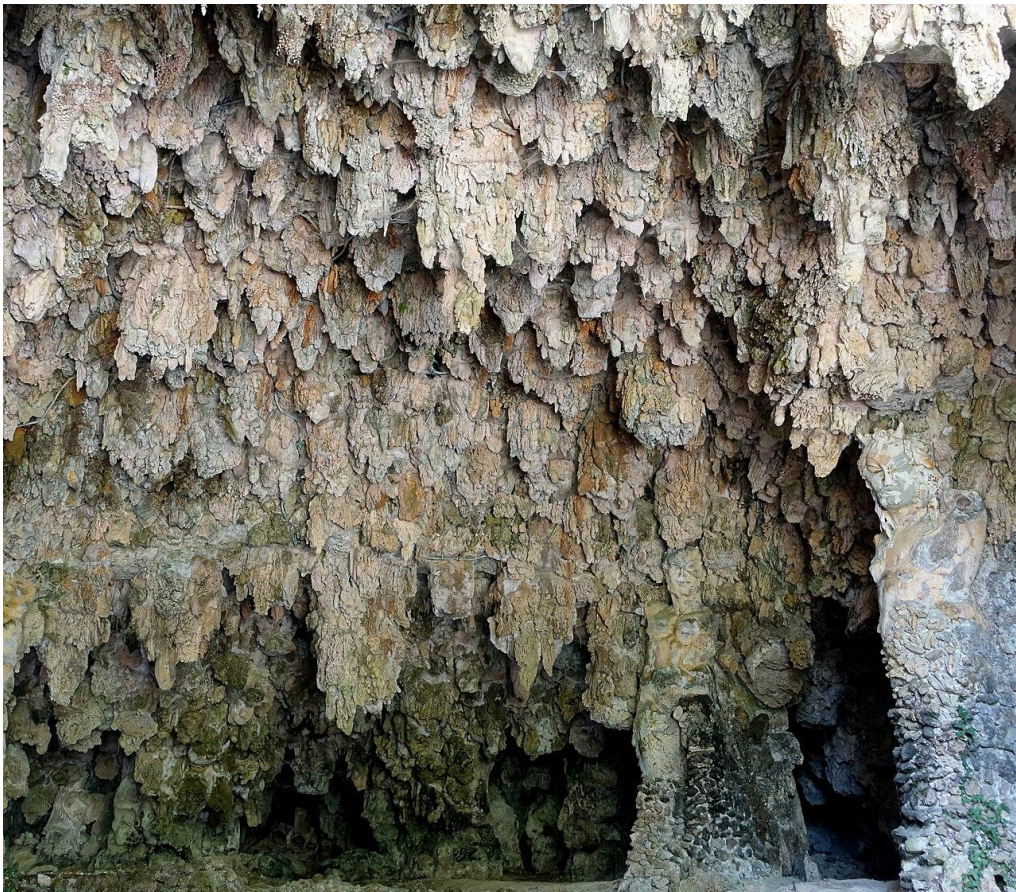


FIGURE 139
Grotto of the Satyrs
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 140
Tartari
Villa d'Este
Tivoli



FIGURE 141
Tartari
Buontalenti grotto
Boboli Gardens
Florence

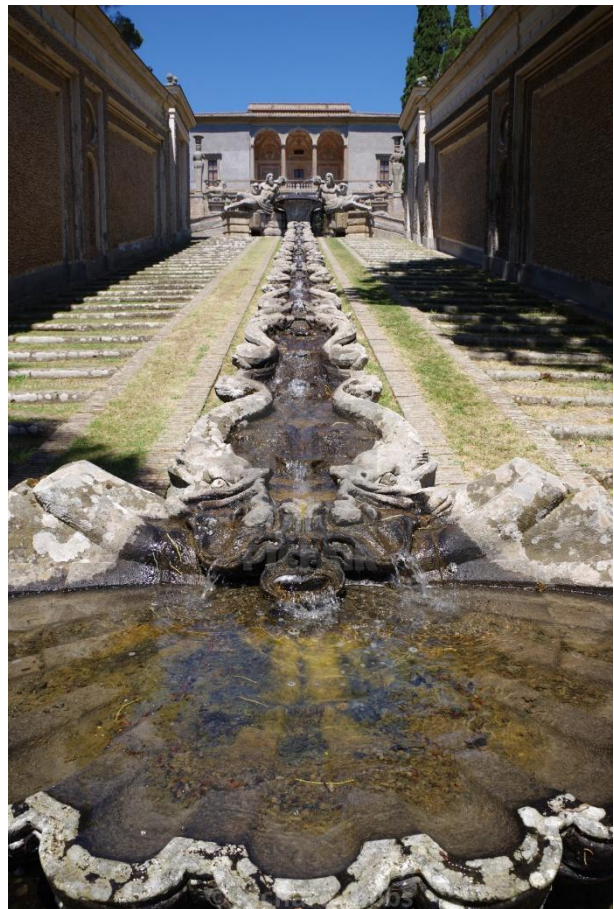


FIGURE 142
Catena d'acqua
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 143
Fountain of the River Gods
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 144
Grotto
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 145
Grotto of the Deluge
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 146
Fountain of the Square
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 147
Fountain of the Square
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 148
Villa Cornelia
Viterbo



FIGURE 149
Villa Cornelia
Viterbo



FIGURE 150
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 151
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 152
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 153
Giovanni Guerra
Pegasus Fountain, Sacro Bosco
Drawing
1604



FIGURE 154
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo

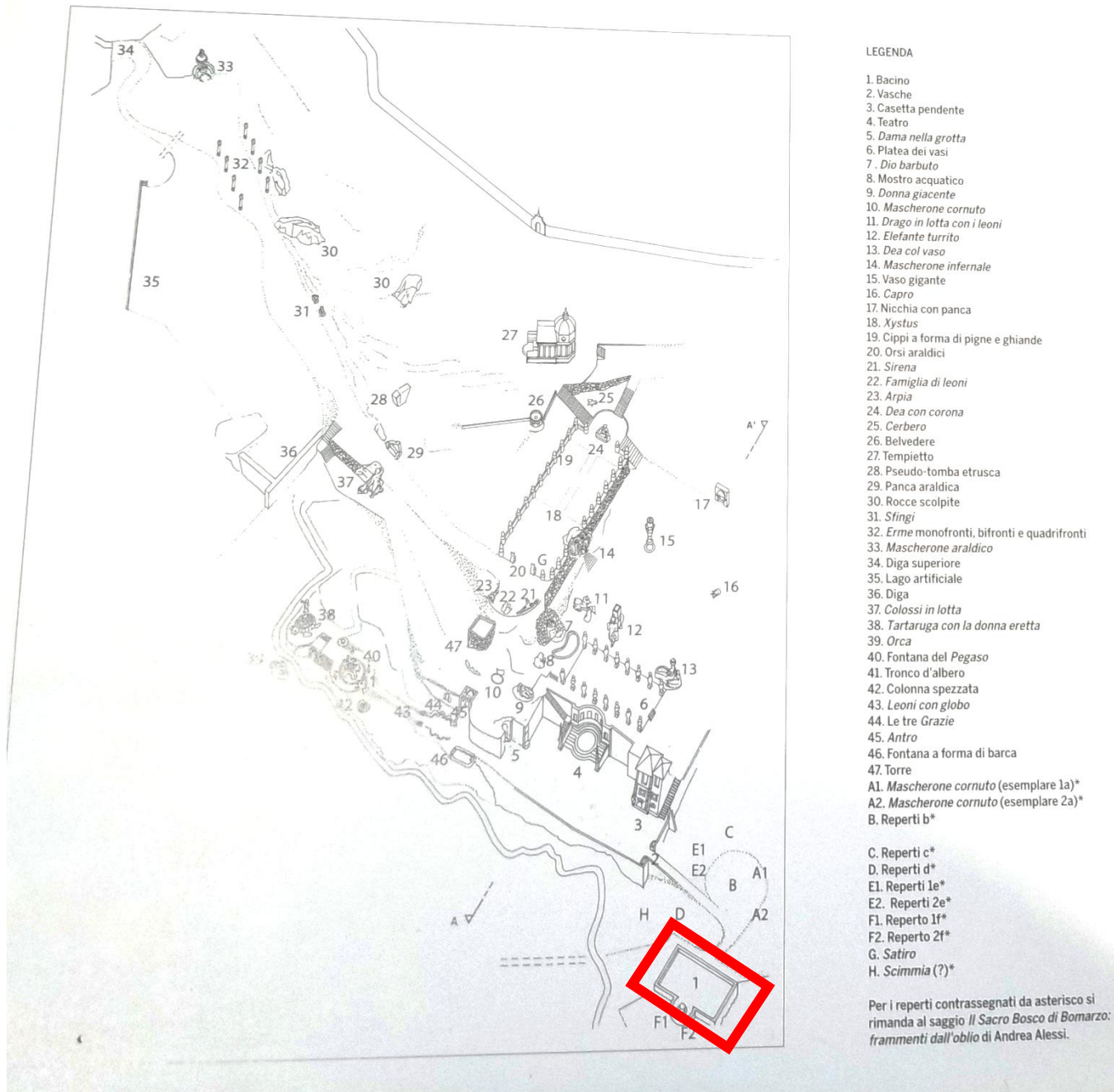


FIGURE 155

Plan of the Sacro Bosco, with the potential location of the lake in red



FIGURE 156
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 157
Fosso della Concia
Sacro Bosco
Bomarzo



FIGURE 158
Giovanni Guerra
Nymphaeum of Venus, Villa Farnese
Drawing
1604



FIGURE 159
Fountain of the Shepherd
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 160
Giovanni Guerra
Fountain of the Shepherd, Villa Farnese
Drawing
1604



FIGURE 161
Giovanni Guerra
Upper gardens, Villa Farnese
Drawing
1604



FIGURE 162
Catena d'acqua
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 163
Fountain of the River Gods
Villa Farnese
Caprarola



FIGURE 164
Fountain of the Deluge
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 165
Fountain of the Octagon
Villa Lante
Bagnaia

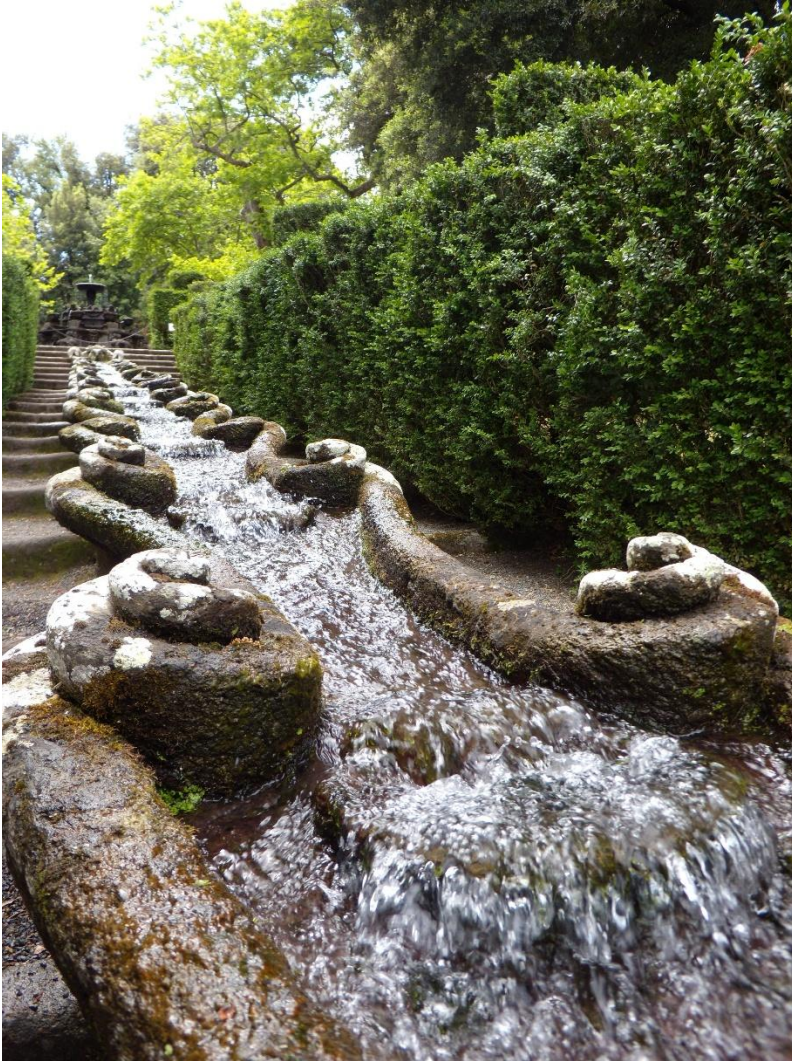


FIGURE 166
Catena d'acqua
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 167
Fountain of the River Gods
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 168
Fountain of the River Gods
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 169
Water table
Villa Lante
Bagnaia

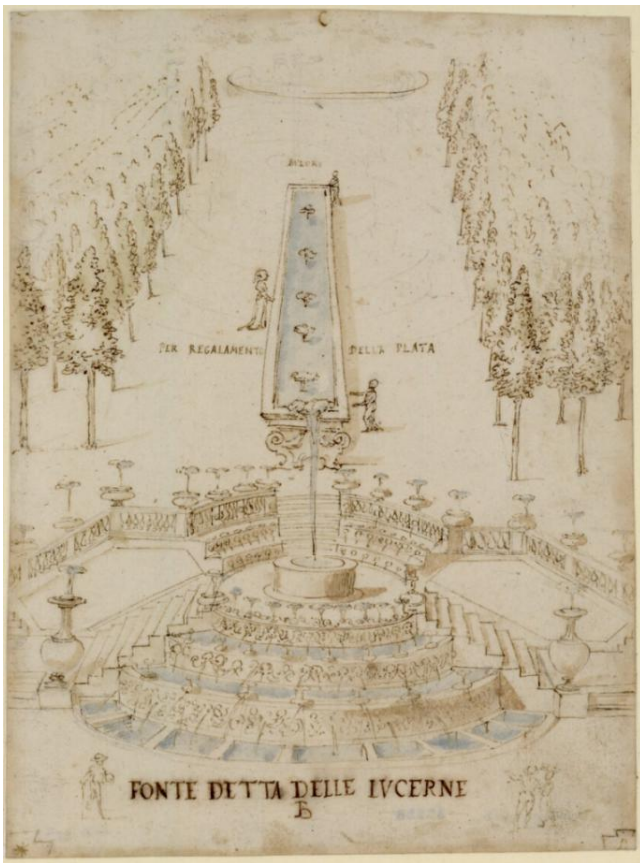


FIGURE 170
 Giovanni Guerra
 Water Table and Fountain of the Lamps, Villa Lante
 Drawing
 1604



FIGURE 171
 Fountain of the Lamps
 Villa Lante
 Bagnaia



FIGURE 172
Fountain of the Square
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 173
Fountain of Pegasus
Villa Lante
Bagnaia



FIGURE 174
Giovanni Guerra
Bacchus Fountain, Villa Lante
Drawing
1604



FIGURE 175
Giovanni Guerra
Hippodrome, Sacro Bosco
Drawing
1604



FIGURE 176
Bartholomäus Breenbergh
Pegasus Fountain, Sacro Bosco
Drawing
1625

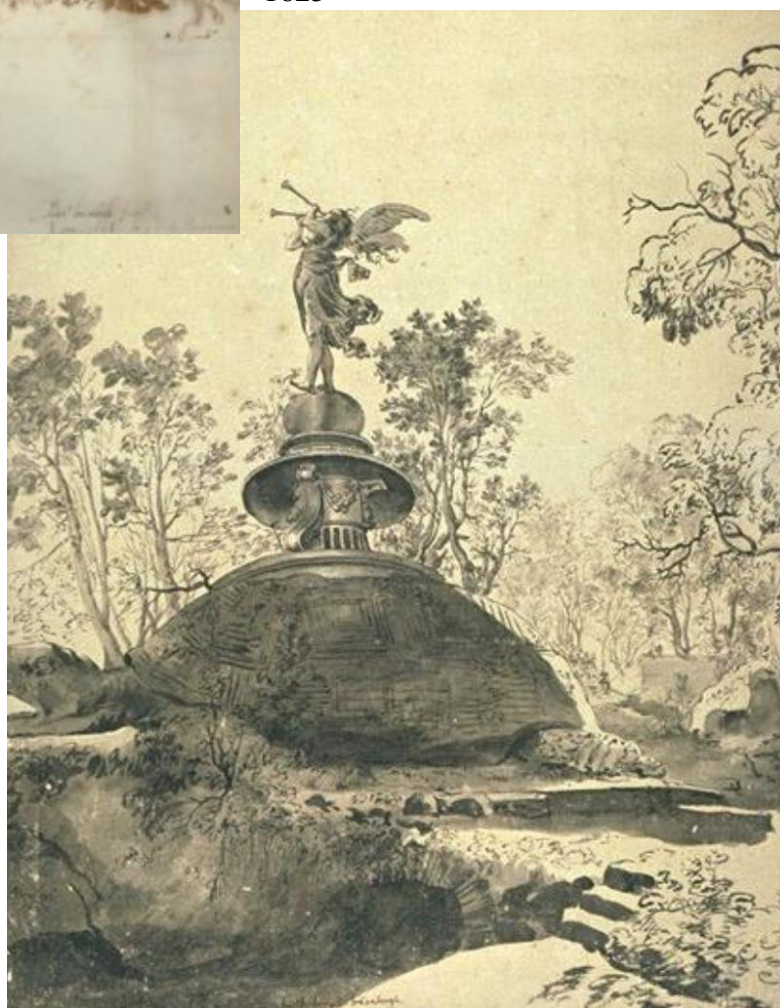


FIGURE 177
Bartholomäus Breenbergh
Tortoise, Sacro Bosco

Drawing
1625



FIGURE 178
Richard K. Weibel
Fighting Giants, Sacro Bosco
1927



FIGURE 179
Richard K. Weibel
Hell Mouth, Sacro Bosco
1927



FIGURE 180
Milton Gendel
Sacro Bosco
1950



FIGURE 181
Frescoed loggia, Casino Gambara
Villa Lante
Bagnaia

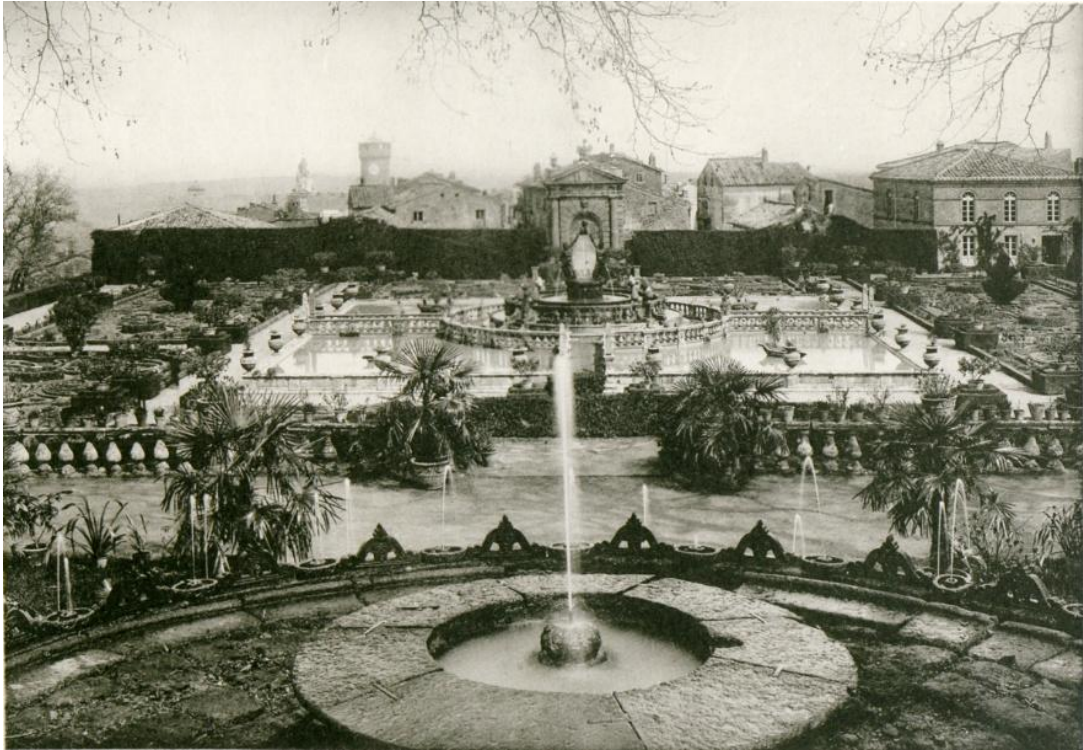


FIGURE 182
Elizabeth Hawkins-Whitshed
Villa Lante
1913



FIGURE 183
Giovanni Guerra
Catena d'acqua and Fountain of the River Gods
Drawing
1604

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