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# LANDSCAPE DESIGN

## A CULTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

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## IV. CURRENTS OF FASHION: THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ITALIAN GARDEN IN FRANCE

Italian humanism laid the groundwork for the development of French garden style in the sixteenth century. Alberti's treatise and the publication in 1546 of a French translation of Colonna's influential *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, carried certain currents of Renaissance thought northward. Equally important was the invasion of the kingdom of Naples in 1494 by the French king Charles VIII (ruled 1470–1498) in an attempt to reassert an old dynastic claim to the throne. Charles's occupation lasted only five months, but Alfonso II's state-of-the-art gardens at Poggio Reale, overlooking the Bay of Naples and with a view of Mount Vesuvius, made a lasting impression on him and on the nobles in his retinue.

Following the capture of Castel del Uovo, Charles took up residence there and had ample opportunity to marvel at the straight *allées* approaching the castle on all sides, the orange and other fruit trees surrounding it, its large walled garden, ingenious hydraulic system, fountains, ornamental fish ponds, canals, aviaries, and game-filled hunting park. Though it has long since disappeared and its design cannot be accurately reconstructed, we know that this pleasure palace was square with corner towers and had a sunken court that could be flooded for water spectacles. When Charles returned to his own palace at Amboise in October, he brought with him Italian artists and craftsmen, including the Neapolitan priest-gardener Pacello de Mercogliano.

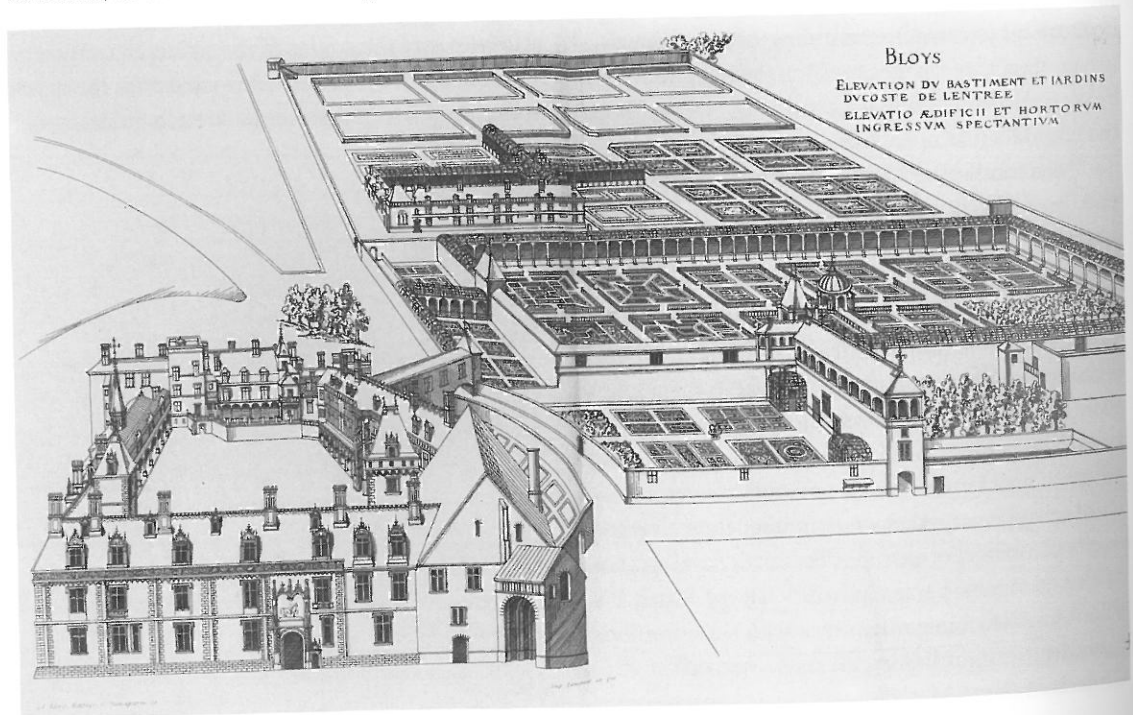
The appearance of the palace and garden at Amboise, as well as that of other great châteaux of

the Loire Valley, was recorded between 1576 and 1579 by the architect Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (c. 1520–c. 1584) in a monumental series of engravings, which were published in several editions of *Les plus excellents Bastiments de France*, an invaluable reference work for garden historians inasmuch as almost all sixteenth-century French gardens have disappeared. The work is important, moreover, as a record of the French transformation of Italian Renaissance gardening principles into a unique design idiom. The châteaux engraved by du Cerceau were those that had been built during the several preceding decades of the sixteenth century when French designers were appropriating the lessons of Italy and refashioning them into expressions of their own aristocratic culture.

### SIXTEENTH-CENTURY CHÂTEAUX: BLOIS, FONTAINEBLEAU, ANCYLE- FRANC, ANET, CHENONCEAUX

Charles VIII died suddenly in 1498, but his nephew and successor Louis XII (ruled 1498–1515) was equally enthusiastic about the new princely pastime of garden-making. He continued to make improvements at Amboise and the other royal châteaux he had inherited. At Blois, he placed the garden outside the castle walls, and this permitted a considerable expansion in size over the one at Amboise (fig. 4.40). Its design, however, made no attempt to unite the château and garden visually by aligning them along a common axis as was being done in Italy.

4.40. Blois. Engraving by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le Second Volume des plus excellents Bastiments de France*. 1579. The main gate leading to the principal axis of the garden is approached through a dogleg passage connecting with a covered bridge that leads from the palace. The expert craftsmanship of the joiner is evident in the octagonal wooden pavilion with its tall domed lantern covering a marble fountain and in the galleries formed by wooden trellises. These galleries were high enough to accommodate riders on horseback.

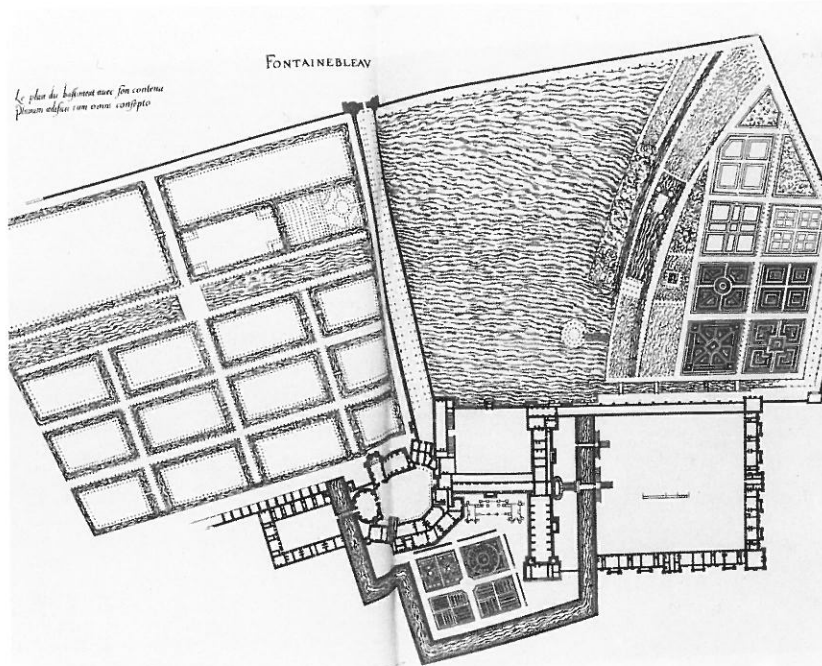


Louis XII was succeeded by his nephew Francis I (ruled 1515–1547). The sister-in-law of the new king became the duchess of Ferrara, which, as the home of the Este family's gardens and parks, was an important site of garden design. This connection with Italy perhaps, along with Francis's favorable disposition toward the new cultural developments there, fostered the burgeoning French Renaissance.

Francis sought to conquer Italy and become Holy Roman Emperor, but was checked by Emperor Charles V (who was also king of Spain) in 1525. Upon Francis I's return to France the next year, following imprisonment in Spain, he decided to abandon his Loire Valley *châteaux* and to establish the court in the environs of Paris as part of a political alliance he sought with the bourgeois class. In 1528, he began rebuilding the *château* at Fontainebleau (fig. 4.41). The master mason Gilles de Breton was put in charge of the work. He built a new triple-story entrance to the Court of Honor and a new courtyard with an Italian-style gallery overlooking a trapezoidal lake. On the shore opposite the elm-lined causeway leading to the main entrance of the *château*, the Jardin des Pins was laid out as a series of square beds with a pine-bordered central axis.

Francis imported Italian artists to assist in the decoration of Fontainebleau, and the presence of these talented men in France gave additional impetus to the spread of Renaissance art and humanism. Francesco Primaticcio (1504–1570), one of the Italian painters and architects summoned to France, is reputed to have designed the grotto at Fontainebleau. In this way, the development of the Renaissance landscape in France continued with direct assistance from designers trained in Italy during the generation in which a new artistic idiom was being forged and refashioned into a style that was identifiably French.

The Italian Renaissance architect Sebastiano Serlio was also invited to France by Francis I. Better known as a theoretician and architectural consultant, he is credited with the design of Ancy-le-Franc in Burgundy (fig. 4.42). The project, begun under his direc-



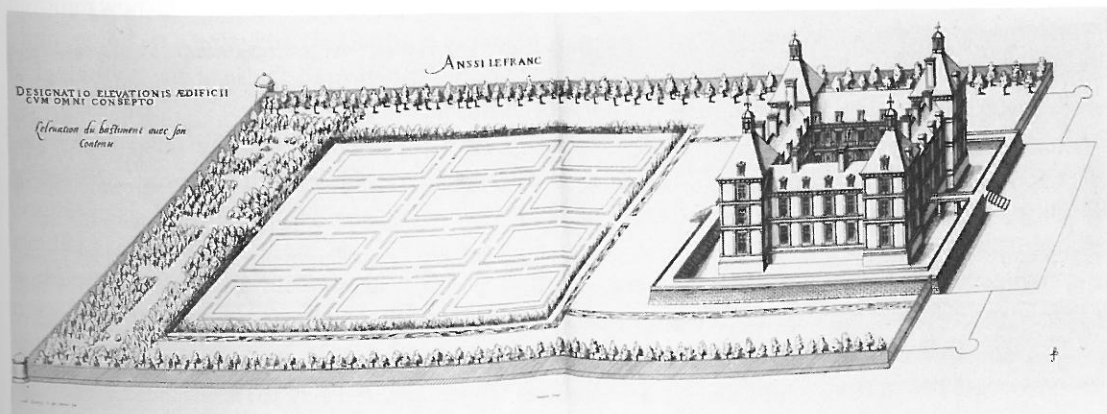
tion in 1546, firmly established axial symmetry and the unity between house and garden probably for the first time in France.

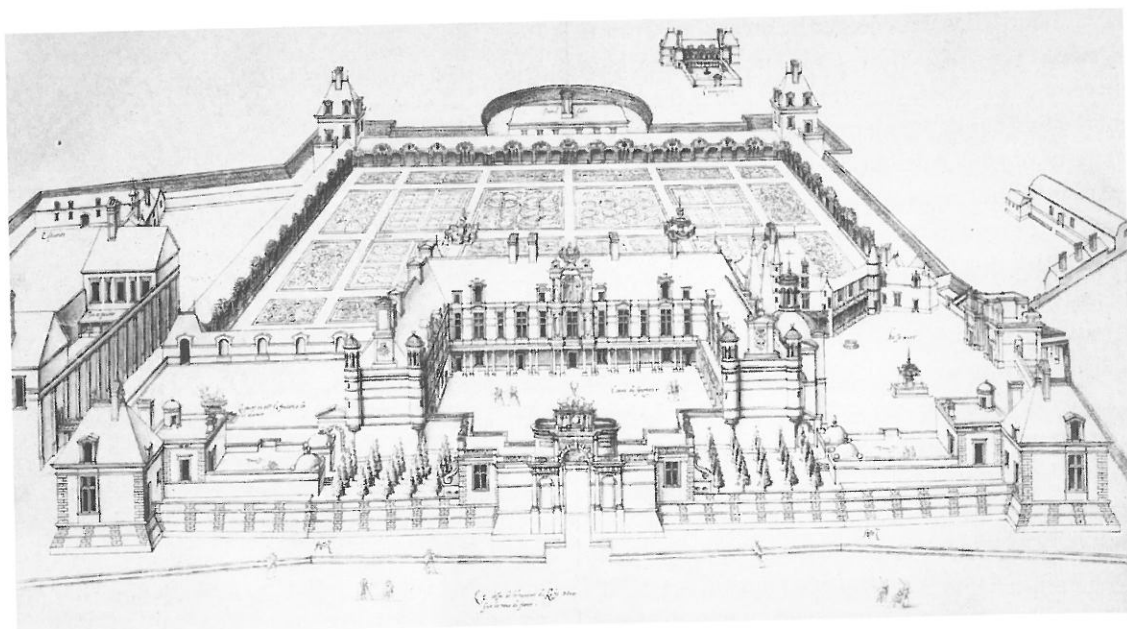
The preference for Italian architects and garden designers did not endure for long in France. French national pride was responsible for diverting commissions from Serlio and his compatriots as native designers grasped the principles of Renaissance architectural composition. Foremost among the first generation of such designers was Philibert de l'Orme (c. 1510–1570). Between 1533 and 1536, de l'Orme went to Rome to study antiquities. There he was introduced to the circle of humanists, collectors, and artists who were excavating Hadrian's Villa and beginning to build the new villas that were to exert a powerful influence on future generations of designers. Upon his return to France, he exercised his talent in the service of Cardinal Jean du Bellay, whom he had met while in Rome, and shortly after Henry II became king in 1547, de l'Orme was appointed superintendent of all royal buildings.

Henry's mistress, Diane de Poitiers, a widow eighteen years his senior, held sway over the king's

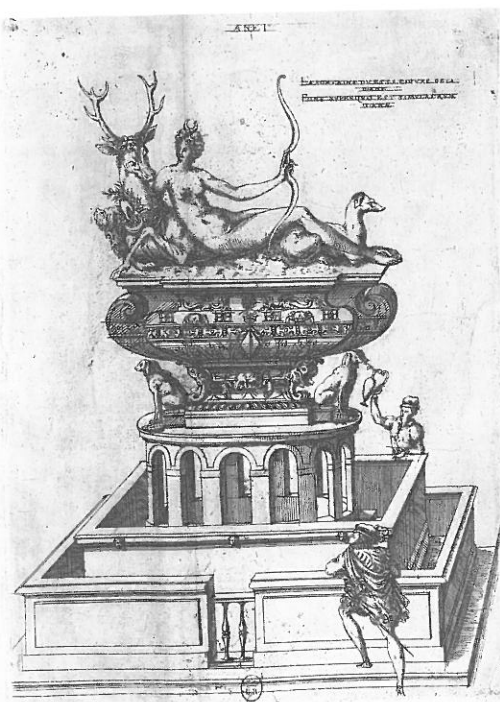
4.41. Fontainebleau. Engraving by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le Second Volume des plus excellents Bastiments de France*, 1579

*Below:* 4.42. Ancy-le-Franc. Engraving by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le Premier Volume des plus excellents Bastiments de France*, 1576. Serlio used the terrace of the medieval moat surrounding the *château* as an overlook from which to view the twelve compartments contained within the rectangular garden. A hedge and a canal both outline the garden. Beyond it is a *bosquet* similar to the *boschi* of contemporary Italian gardens. Within it, along an axis perpendicular to the main axis running through the *château* and the garden, a broad grassy swath has been carved. On either side of it are green byways and small secluded areas.





4.43. Anet, designed by Philibert de l'Orme. Engraving by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le Second Volume des plus excellents Bastiments de France*. 1579. The Court of Honor is enclosed by the U-shaped *château* and entrance structure, in this case an impressive gatehouse. Stretching on either side of this gatehouse, symmetrical small *bosquets* and terraces terminate in mirror-image pavilions. The moat surrounding Anet has been enlarged to form a semicircular pool encompassing a pavilion for theatrical spectacles. The crescent-shaped pool perhaps echoes the shape of the moon, the device of Diana the Huntress. Because this mythological goddess is also associated with the woods, the stands of trees on either side of the entrance may represent one of her groves.



4.44. Diana Fountain, Anet. Engraving by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, *Le Second Volume des plus excellents Bastiments de France*. 1579. This elegantly elongated image boldly portraying a nude Diane de Poitiers as Diana the Huntress can be found in the Louvre Museum today.

affections. Instead of allowing Anet, the *château* in which Diane's husband had held a lifetime interest, to revert to the crown as it was supposed to upon his death, Henry made a present of it to her. Philibert de l'Orme was immediately appointed architect of its reconstruction.

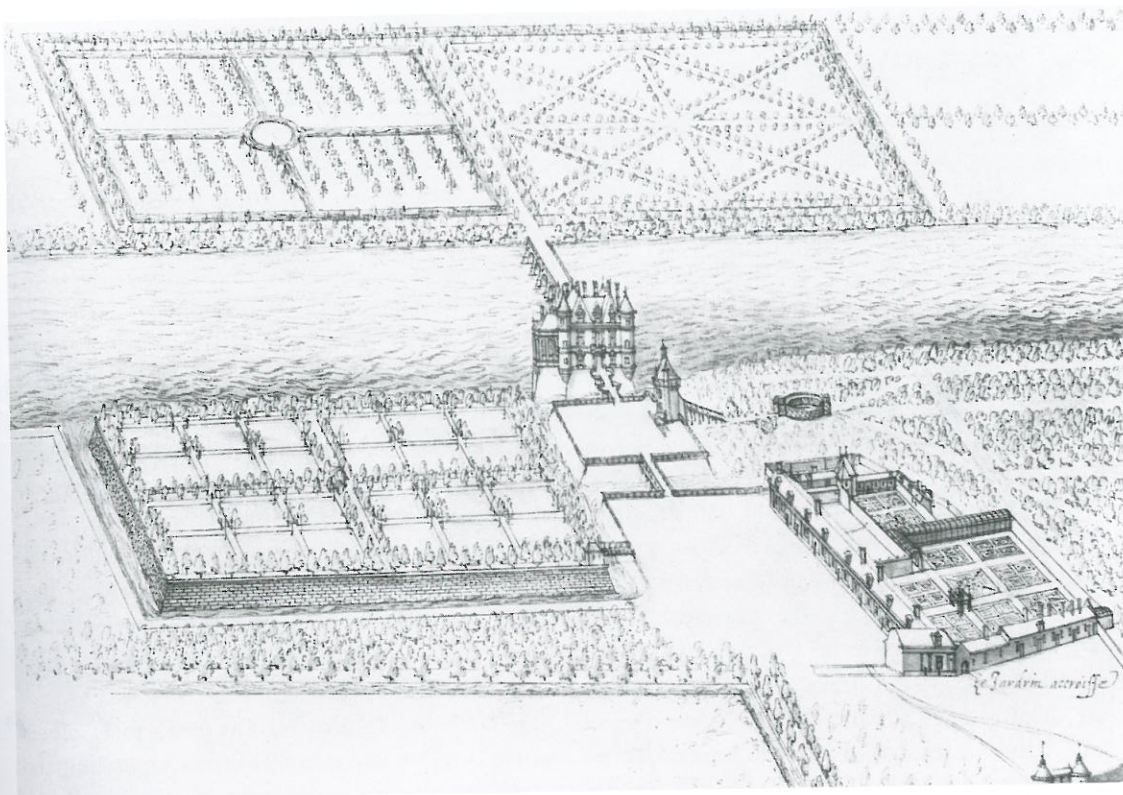
Although he had to preserve the existing house, de l'Orme incorporated it within a symmetrical plan as he applied the lessons he had learned in Italy in a rational, comprehensive ordering of space (fig. 4.43). The garden was enclosed and inward-focused, but its

size and impressive surrounding gallery gave it a very modern appearance at the time. Twin pavilions overlooked its far end, and in these musicians played for the king, his mistress, and members of the court. Also at the far end of the garden stood a pavilion for theatrical entertainment, a new feature of French Renaissance garden design. As at nearby Gaillon, the *château* built in 1502 by Georges d'Amboise, archbishop of Rouen, the garden pavilion rose from a pool of water.

Ostensibly built as a memorial to Diane's late husband, Anet actually glorified Diane herself and celebrated her liaison with the king. Not only was this done in typical Renaissance style with monograms and coats of arms fashioned out of boxwood in the garden compartments but also with the kind of decorative program seen at the Villa d'Este and the Villa Lante. At Anet, the thematic program refers to Diana, goddess of the hunt, in such sculpture as the stag and hounds crowning the main entrance portal and in the elegant Mannerist fountain (now removed from the entry court) depicting a reclining, nude Diane de Poitiers in the guise of the mythological Diana (fig. 4.44).

In spite of Henry II's attachment to his mistress, he fathered ten children with Queen Catherine de Médicis, among them three future kings of France. The daughter of Lorenzo de' Medici, duke of Urbino, and Madeleine de La Tour d'Auvergne (a Bourbon princess), Catherine had been orphaned almost at birth. She was raised by nuns and married at the age of fourteen to Henry. When, after a few years, she began to bear royal children, she lived quietly and pri-





4.45. Chenonceaux. Drawing by Jacques Androuet du Cerceau. The original owner, Thomas Bohier, had built an enclosed garden with the trellised galleries and square compartments associated with the period of transition between medieval and Renaissance style. It can be seen in the right foreground of du Cerceau's engraving. To the left of the entrance, Diane of Poitiers ordered a high moat-surrounded terrace on which was laid out a considerably larger rectangular garden of twenty-four beds arranged around a principal cross-axis. Planted with the assistance of the archbishop of Tours, it contained many different kinds of fruit trees, musk roses, lilies, and vegetables. The axis of the bridge de l'Orme had built to span the river extended as a tree-lined *allée* to connect with a new garden commissioned by Catherine de Médicis. De l'Orme placed the bridge slightly to one side of the main axis of the *château*, thereby preserving the principal view of the river from the entrance corridor without forsaking an impression of axial linkage.

vately, supervising their education until, following Henry II's sudden death in 1559, she was catapulted onto the stage of history as regent and queen mother during the reigns of her sons Francis II, Charles IX, and Henry III. Well-read, politically astute, vivacious, artistic, and energetic, she was an enthusiastic participant in the new fashion for *château* remodeling and garden building that was gathering force in France during the second half of the sixteenth century.

During the King's lifetime, Diane de Poitiers was mistress of the royal *château* at Chenonceaux, dating from 1512 and defensively sited within the river Cher (figs. 4.45, 4.46). After the king's death, Catherine claimed this remarkable structure for her own. She took an interest in the garden that Diane had begun and directed the construction of a new south garden. She probably retained Philibert de l'Orme's services for this project.

Catherine used the enlarged gardens of Chenonceaux for political ends, staging elaborate pageants and festivals within them to celebrate the peace treaties that punctuated the bloody religious wars that raged during the reigns of her sons. There were festivals, too, at Fontainebleau and at the Tuileries. The use of these gardens as settings for various allegorical pageants



4.46. Chenonceaux

marked the beginning of an enduring tradition. As will become evident in the next chapter, the gardens of French monarchs increasingly assumed the role of theaters for court life, and certain spaces were built within them to accommodate the spectacles and plays that were regularly staged as entertainments for royalty and nobility. The politicization of the garden was paralleled by the design of cities as didactic expressions of royal prestige as Henry IV began the impressive transformation of Paris from a medieval to a modern city.

## NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. Dante's cosmology in *The Divine Comedy* was, like that of Aristotle, one of hierarchical space, Earth-centered and spherically bounded. Heaven was positioned somewhere within the luminous celestial ring that constitutes the upper "band" of Earth's ether, a place where physical laws governing the terrestrial world no longer apply. Here dwelled, according to the medieval Christian cosmology to which Dante was heir, the divinity of godhead, angels, saints, and beatified souls. Because of the doctrine of resurrection, those who were redeemed had a transcendent, yet corporeal, existence within this immaterial, yet real, realm. By contrast, Nicolaus of Cusa's treatise *On Learned Ignorance* posited a theory of limitless, uncentered space, which rendered Dante's concept of a hierarchy of spheres invalid. Cusa's discovery thus anticipated the theory of axial extension—infinite spatial extension—expounded by the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes.
2. Quoted in James S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 73.
3. See Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988), p. 295.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
5. Ackerman, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
6. The author of this edition is surmised to have been Sir Robert Dallington (1561–1637), a courtier and man of letters. His translation, which is incomplete and very inexact, has been superceded on the five-hundredth anniversary of the work's original publication by the Aldine Press in Venice by a thorough and highly readable translation by Joscelyn Godwin, Professor of Music at Colgate University. Now, at last, scholars of garden history who read English can not only admire the illustrations that inspired many aspects of Renaissance garden design but can also comprehend the pleasure Colonna and his contemporaries, many of whom were churchmen like him, felt in appropriating from antiquity the licence to celebrate eroticism in its many aspects, ranging from sexual love to love of beautiful art and architecture. See Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999).
7. Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), p. 6.
8. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 274.
9. For Colonna's description of the twenty groves of trees on the Isle of Cytherea, see Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin, pp. 294–99.
10. The concept of "third nature" is one of the constructs of the Renaissance mind. A complex topic, it may be explained in simplified terms as follows: "First nature," or *natura naturans* (nature's vital force), plus "second nature," or *natura naturata* (nature's created substance), when influenced by the human mind and hand, becomes "third nature," nature with the added component of design. For a good explanation of the Renaissance derivation of the concept of "third nature," see Claudia Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 9–10.
11. As Professor Godwin points out in his introduction to his translation of *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, although Colonna was undoubtedly familiar with both Alberti's treatise and that of Vitruvius and appropriated Alberti's term *lineamenta* to signify architectural details, his cast of mind was scarcely mathematical, and "when he deals with dimensions or geometrical constructions, he is soon out of his depth." While Colonna's vivid, detailed, enthusiastic descriptions and graphic illustrations were obviously inspirational, the *Hypnerotomachia* was hardly "the manual of a practitioner." See Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin, pp. xi–xii.
12. This remarkable basin is now to be found in the Sala Rotondo of the Museo Pio Clementino within the Vatican Museums.
13. Here Ligorio's archaeology is evident in his use of antique coins and reliefs as inspiration for these stucco designs.
14. For a complete discussion of the role of these important *fontanieri* in creating and maintaining the fountains of the Villa d'Este, see David Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 54–55.
15. For instance, the central stairway in the garden is interrupted half-way up by the oval Dragon Fountain, framed by gracefully curving stairs. The four dragons within the fountain basin are doing double iconographic duty. Cardinal Ippolito identified himself with the virtues chosen by the mythological hero Hercules when he slew the dragon that was guarding the Garden of the Hesperides and then picked the three golden apples symbolizing temperance, prudence, and chastity. The dragon was also the crest of Pope Gregory XIII, and the fountain with its four dragon heads was hastily completed in honor of his visit to Tivoli on September 27, 1572, shortly before the Cardinal's death.
16. See David Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 358–59 and Reuben M. Rainey, "The Garden as Myth: The Villa Lante at Bagnaia," in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 33: 1 & 2, (Fall/Winter 1981–82), pp. 98–99.
17. Quoted in Ackerman, *The Villa*, p. 98.
18. Caroline Constant, *The Palladio Guide* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), pp. 9–10.
19. Quoted in Ackerman, *The Villa*, p. 106.
20. Burlington built his villa at Chiswick as a scaled-down version of the Villa Rotonda (see fig. 7.1), and Howard commissioned the architect Sir John Vanbrugh to design the Temple of the Four Winds also in imitation of the Villa Rotonda (see fig. 7.11).
21. Jefferson borrowed ideas derived from English Palladianism at Monticello, and his work at his Poplar Forest estate is an exercise in geometrical form and mathematical harmony that owes a clear debt to Palladio (see figs. 7.43, 7.44).
22. This building was originally known as the Palazzo dei Senatori but renamed the Palazzo del Senatore, or Palace of the Senator, when after 1358 the papacy assumed control over civil Rome and the Senate was reduced to a single representative appointed by the pope.
23. To stimulate the Roman economy through the production of silk and woolen cloth, Sixtus V enacted a law commanding the widespread planting of mulberry trees and also established a wool-spinning factory within the Colosseum, a project that languished only because of his death.
24. See Kenneth Woodbridge, *Princely Gardens: The Origins and Development of the French Formal Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), for an excellent discussion of this subject. I am indebted to this source for much of what follows in Section IV.
25. See Hilary Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV: Architecture and Urbanism (The Paris of Henri IV: Architecture and Urbanism)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), for a lucid, scholarly study that portrays the birth of modern Paris and explains Parisian land speculation in the early seventeenth century. Here, the reader will find a detailed narrative of the creation of various streets, squares, and buildings and watch, as it were, the Louvre, the Pont Neuf, and other now-familiar landmarks rising out of the ground.
26. See Ballon, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–39.