

TRANSLATION NOTATION

Proceedings of the
**Society of Architectural Historians,
Australia and New Zealand**
Vol. 31

edited by Christoph Schnoor
(Auckland, New Zealand SAHANZ and Unitec ePress;
and Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2014).

The bibliographic citation for this paper is:

Luke Morgan, "'My Proper Flesh': Hybridity and the Grotesque in Renaissance Landscape Design," in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand: 31, Translation*, edited by Christoph Schnoor (Auckland, New Zealand: SAHANZ and Unitec ePress; and Gold Coast, Queensland: SAHANZ, 2014), 155–164.

Published in

Auckland, New Zealand: SAHANZ and Unitec ePress [ISBN - 978-1-927214-12-1];
and Gold Coast, Australia: SAHANZ [ISBN - 978-0-9876055-1-1]

*All efforts have been undertaken to ensure that authors have secured appropriate permissions to reproduce the images illustrating individual contributions.
Interested parties may contact the editor.*

*This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License.*



Luke Morgan, Monash University

"My Proper Flesh":

Hybridity and the Grotesque in Renaissance Landscape Design

John, Lord Lumley's garden (1570s) at Henry VIII's old palace of Nonsuch, is one of the earliest examples of Mannerist landscape design in England.

A contemporary visitor, Baron von Waldstein, noted that in the Grove of Diana, sculptures of the goddess, two nymphs and Actaeon transforming into a stag appeared.

It has not been noticed that a Latin inscription near the figure of Actaeon alluded to Horace's comments on fantastic composites as examples of inappropriate poetic licence. During the sixteenth century, Horace's opinion of hybridity, or mescolanza (mixture), along with Vitruvius' critical comments about the grotesque paintings of his period, were discussed in numerous architectural treatises.

This paper proposes that mescolanza is an equally significant concept in landscape design of the period. Composite figures, for example, are among the most familiar but least understood motifs of the Renaissance garden. It is argued that their meaning becomes clearer if they are related to contemporaneous theories of the hybrid, mescolanza and the grotesque. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these themes, which problematize the received idea that the Renaissance garden was an idealized place apart or untroubled locus amoenus (pleasant place).

Nonsuch

Waldstein visited Nonsuch in 1599. According to him, there are "three distinct parts: the Grove, the Woodland, and the Wilderness, with a circular deer park nearby."¹ This division of the landscape into distinct types recalls design practices in Italy, as do other aspects of the garden.² The "Woodland" and "Wilderness," for example, resemble the bosco (wood) at the Villa Lante, Bagnaia, which acted as a contrasting foil to the terza natura (third nature) of the ornamental garden with its water parterre or, at Nonsuch, the Privy Garden.³

The Privy Garden contained an obelisk with the Lumley arms on its pedestal to the west and a column with a prancing horse at its summit to the east.⁴ In the centre were two more columns capped by globes and the Lumley popinjays, which flanked a fountain of Diana "from whose tender breasts flow jets of water into the ivory-coloured marble, and from there the water falls through narrow pipes into a marble basin."⁵ The motif of lactation is familiar from the garden sculptures of Tuscany and Lazio. A drawing of Diana in the Lumley Inventory of 1590 (the "Red Velvet Book," which includes descriptions and drawings of furniture, tombs and sculpture commissioned by Lumley), for example, strongly resembles Bartolommeo Ammannati's figure of Ceres for the Juno Fountain (c.1556), now in the Bargello, Florence, from whose breasts jets of water spurt.⁶

Roy Strong has convincingly associated the figure of Diana with the iconography of Elizabeth I.⁷ There are, however, other unacknowledged connotations of the theme. These are suggested by a second drawing of a Diana Fountain in the Lumley Inventory, which was probably intended as a Fountain of Diana (or Artemis) of Ephesus.⁸

During the sixteenth century, nature was frequently personified as Diana. Her depiction as a nude lactating woman and, in a related visual tradition, as a woman endowed with many breasts, appears to have been invented in Naples in the 1470s.⁹ By the later sixteenth century, the motif had become a common one in so-called grotteschi, from which the modern term and concept of the 'grotesque'

1 *The Diary of Baron Waldstein, A Traveller in Elizabethan England*, trans. and annotated by G. W. Groos (London: Thames and Hudson, 1981), 159. For a clear illustration of the layout of the landscape at Nonsuch, see Martin Biddle, *Nonsuch Palace: The Material Culture of a Noble Restoration Household* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2005), 4.

2 See John Dixon Hunt, "Paragone in Paradise: Translating the Garden," *Comparative Criticism* 18 (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 55-70, for the concept of the "three natures" in sixteenth-century Italian garden design.

3 For the Villa Lante, Bagnaia, see Claudia Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden: From the Conventions of Planting, Design, and Ornament to the Grand Gardens of Sixteenth-Century Central Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), 243-69.

4 See Roy Strong, *The Renaissance Garden in England* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1979), 65.

5 Anthony Watson quoted in Strong, *Renaissance Garden in England*, 65.

6 See Strong, *Renaissance Garden*, 67, fig. 33, for an illustration.

7 See Biddle, "Gardens of Nonsuch," 148, 51, for reproductions. See Strong, *Renaissance Garden*, p. 66, for the iconography.

8 See Strong, *Renaissance Garden*, 67, fig. 34, for an illustration.

9 Katherine Park has attributed this new image of nature to the collaboration between the humanist Luciano Fosforo and miniaturist Gasparo Romano, who worked together on an edition of Pliny's *Natural History*. See Katherine Park, "Nature in Person: Medieval and Renaissance Allegories and Emblems," in *The Moral Authority of Nature*, ed. Lorraine Daston and Fernando Vidal (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 51.

is derived. (The word was coined in the late fifteenth century to describe the decorative schemes of what were misinterpreted as the underground caverns or grottoes of Nero's Domus Aurea.) Raphael and his workshop, for example, included variations on the theme in their frescoes for the Vatican loggie (c. 1518–19) and in the Stanza dell'Incendio (1514–17). Lorenzo Lotto and Giorgio Vasari also depicted the figure on more than one occasion.¹⁰

The most important precedent for Nonsuch, however, is the expatriate Flemish artist Gillis van den Vliete's Goddess of Nature (1568) for the garden of the Villa d'Este, Tivoli (fig. 1).¹¹ Van den Vliete's figure is based on the second-century Farnese Diana now in the Museo Nazionale, Naples, and reflects the antiquarian interests of the designer of the d'Este gardens, Pirro Ligorio.¹² It is an image of the goddess as the multi-mammary Ephesian Artemis, a conflation of Classical and near Eastern themes (the cult of Artemis originated in Asia Minor); her overflowing breasts symbols of Nature's fertility. Although the fountain design in the Lumley Inventory shows Diana without the many breasts, her lower body is covered in a sheath-like skirt ornamented with the heads of animals (including lions), in a clear reminiscence of the many images of the Goddess of Nature as Artemis/Diana produced during the period.



Fig. 1. Gillis van den Vliete, Goddess of Nature, 1560s, Villa d'Este, Tivoli.
Photograph by Luke Morgan..

The dedication of Nonsuch to Diana and by implication to Elizabeth and Nature (or perhaps Elizabeth is Nature here), is confirmed by the garden's most interesting feature: the Grove of Diana in the "Vale of Gargaphy". Waldstein provides a detailed description: "We entered the famous Grove of Diana, where Nature is imitated with so much skill that you would dare to swear that the original Grove of the real Diana herself was hardly more delightful or of greater beauty." Statements of this kind

¹⁰ See Marjatta Nielsen, "Diana Efesia Multimammia: The Metamorphoses of a Pagan Goddess From the Renaissance to the Age of Neo-Classicism," in *From Artemis to Diana: The Goddess of Man and Beast*, Danish Studies in Classical Archaeology, Acta Hyperborea 12, ed. Tobias Fischer-Hansen and Birte Poulsen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2009), 460–64.

¹¹ See David R. Coffin, *The Villa d'Este at Tivoli* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960), 18–19, for the relevant documents.

¹² In his *Libro dell'Antichità*, Pirro discusses Diana of Ephesus, "whose mysterious veil and dark skin referred to her secrets." See Nielsen, "Diana Efesia Multimammia," 466.

originate in Italian ideas about the beneficial collaboration and paragone (rivalry) of art and nature in garden design.

After passing a summer or banqueting house with a black marble table inside and inscriptions on the outside walls, Waldstein writes that

"we were taken along the path which leads to the Fountain of Diana itself. This spring rises in a secluded glade at the foot of a little cliff. The source was from a number of pipes hidden in the rock, and from them a gentle flow of water bathed Diana and her two nymphs; Actaeon had approached; he was leaning against a nearby tree to hide himself and gazing lecherously at Diana; she, with a slight gesture of her hand towards him, was slowly changing his head to that of a stag; his three hounds were in close pursuit."¹³

The Ovidian subject again recalls Italian precedents such as the Villa d'Este, Tivoli, where there was a Grotto of Diana the Huntress. The consistent expression of a single theme in the Nonsuch landscape differentiates Lumley's garden from earlier English gardens. Indeed, the repetition and integration of the *topos* of Diana at Nonsuch, which had political and iconographical significance in Elizabethan England and which is absorbed into the design of the landscape as a whole, comprises a genuine *congetto* (poetic concept) on the Italian model.

Lumley's layout of the gardens at Nonsuch was clearly influenced by the principles and *topoi* of Italian landscape design. The remainder of this paper focuses on three of these: (1) The sixteenth-century concept of the grotesque; (2) *Mescolanza* (mixture) as an important term in architectural discourse and landscape design; and (3) The symbolic implications of the presence of hybrid or composite figures in the late Renaissance garden.

Grotteschi and Mescolanza

Near the figure of Actaeon in the Grove of Diana there was a Latin inscription, which Waldstein transcribed: "It would cause resentment if a painter should choose to join a horse's / neck or a dog's face to a human head. / Diana lays a stag's head on my neck. / I demand against the unjust one my proper flesh."¹⁴

Actaeon's plea that his "proper flesh" be restored by Diana, the "unjust one", deliberately recalls the opening line of Horace's *Ars Poetica*, quoted here from the first English translation by the playwright Ben Jonson:

13 *Diary of Baron Waldstein*, 161.

14 This is Martin Biddle's translation of the transcription of the inscription by Anthony Watson, Lumley's employee. See his "The Gardens of Nonsuch: Sources and Dating," *Garden History* 27, no. 1 (1999), 178, for the translation, and 173, for the original Latin text. See *Diary of Baron Waldstein*, 160–65, for Waldstein's version of the inscriptions, which contains several errors.

"If to a woman's head a painter would / Set a horse-neck, and diverse feathers fold / On every limb, ta'en from a several creature, / Presenting upwards a fair female feature, / Which in some swarthy fish uncomely ends: / Admitted to the sight, although his friends, / Could you contain your laughter?"¹⁵

The reference to Horace suggests that English gardens, like their Italian counterparts, were being thought about during the period in relation to aesthetic concepts of the grotesque. The *Ars Poetica* and Vitruvius's *De Architectura* (c. 25 BC) were the two most important textual sources for Renaissance ideas about poetic license and the legitimacy of the grotesque. In Chapter 5 of Book 7 of *De Architectura*, Vitruvius provides a concise history of mural painting. He states that the ancients correctly observed the principle that a "painting is an image of that which exists or can exist". According to Vitruvius, however, this principle was no longer observed. Contemporary artists instead demonstrated a "depraved taste":

"For monsters are now painted in frescoes rather than reliable images of definite things ... Now these things do not exist nor can they exist nor have they ever existed ... How, pray tell, can a reed really sustain a roof, or a candelabrum the decorations of a pediment, or an acanthus shoot, so soft and slender, loft a tiny statue perched upon it, or can flowers be produced from roots and shoots on the one hand and figurines on the other? ... Minds beclouded by feeble standards of judgment are unable to recognize what exists in accordance with authority and the principles of correctness."¹⁶

Vitruvius's condemnation of grotteschi is unequivocal. For him, these "monsters" were unacceptable for the simple reason that they had no basis in reality.



Fig. 2. *Grotteschi*, 16th century. Villa d'Este, Tivoli.
Photograph by Luke Morgan.

They were blatantly erroneous from the point of view of naturalism and logic (fig. 2). Like Vitruvius, Horace also denounced the grotesque imagery of his period, but in more ironic terms. If Vitruvius'

¹⁵ Jonson's translation published in 1640, but probably written much earlier. See *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, vol. 7, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, Ian Donaldson (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 10.

¹⁶ Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, VII, 5, 3-4.

tone is one of moral outrage, Horace's is more amused, though no less critical. In *Ars Poetica*, he suggests that the only possible response to a painting of a composite figure with a human head, horse's neck, feathers, an assortment of limbs and a fish's tail, is laughter. For him, such images resembled a "sick man's dreams" (*aegri somnia*).¹⁷

Some sixteenth-century writers endorsed the views of their ancient predecessors, while others were in favor of grotteschi.¹⁸ The former group (of "Vitruvians") included two of the earliest translators of *De Architectura*, Cesare Cesariano (1521) and Daniele Barbaro (1556), both of whom dutifully condemned the grotesque as being against nature. Other writers, however, wrote in support of the grotesque. Anton Francesco Doni (1549), for example, attempted to reconcile the capricci and bizarrie of the painters with the laws of nature.¹⁹ His argument was that nature itself produced strange and outlandish forms. He claimed that this justified the fantasia of artists, whom he suggests are entitled to produce what he calls "chimeras".²⁰ Sebastiano Serlio, in his *Cinque libri d'architettura* (Venice, 1540) went further, emphasizing the complete freedom of the artist from nature.

Giorgio Vasari was, however, more cautious, even ambivalent about the merits of the grotesque. He defined grotteschi as a "species of very licentious and ridiculous painting" (*una spezie di pittura licenziosa e ridicola molto*) that was nonetheless governed by certain rules.²¹ Michelangelo's opinion of the grotesque (or at least the opinion attributed to him by Francisco da Hollanda), that "sometimes it is more in accordance with reason to paint a monstrosity... if done by one who understands", suggests a similar attitude.²² His quotation of Horace indicates that the *Ars Poetica* could be cited in defense of poetic license, despite the ancient poet's criticism of the hybrid creatures imagined by painters. Finally, towards the end of the century, Gian Paolo Lomazzo and Ligorio reiterated the position of Michelangelo and Hollanda, arguing that grotesques were acceptable within the constraints imposed by nature and decorum.²³

The sixteenth-century debates about the grotesque, the metamorphic and the composite were not confined to painting. Alina Payne has pointed out that for "a Renaissance architect Vitruvius' *De*

17 See David Summers, "The Archaeology of the Modern Grotesque," in *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, ed. Frances S. Connelly (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 21, for a discussion of Horace's phrase.

18 The best account of these debates, which I have inevitably relied upon here, remains Nicole Dacos, *La Découverte de la Domus Aurea et la Formation des Grotesques à la Renaissance* (Studies of the Warburg Institute, vol. 31) (London: The Warburg Institute and Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969). See, in particular, Part 3: "Fortune des Grotesques au XVIe Siècle," 121-35.

19 Doni, *Disegno, partito in piu ragionamenti* (Venice, 1549).

20 For a discussion of Doni's argument and its sources, see Dacos, *Domus Aurea*, 124-26, and Alessandra Zamperini, *Ornament and the Grotesque: Fantastical Decoration from Antiquity to Art Nouveau* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2008), 171.

21 Cited in Dacos, *Domus Aurea*, 126.

22 Quoted and translated in David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 135-36.

23 "Selon lui [Lomazzo], les grotesques doivent se conformer à l'ordre de la nature et par conséquent aux règles de la pesanteur, à celles des proportions et à celles de la composition, qui doit être symétrique." Dacos, *Domus Aurea*, 130.

architectura both vindicated mixtures and offered the link to the monsters of classical literature.”²⁴ The “monsters [which] are now painted in frescoes rather than reliable images of definite things” were, in Vitruvius’s view, an example of ‘bad’ mixtures, or what in Renaissance architectural theory was described as mescolanza (‘assemblage’ may convey the sense more effectively than ‘mixture’ to modern readers).

In contrast, the invention of the Corinthian capital was, for Vitruvius, a story about the ‘good’ mescolanza that resulted from the sculptor Callimachus’s chance encounter with a young girl’s tomb marker.²⁵ Vitruvius relates how a basket containing the girl’s possessions and covered with a roof tile was placed on her grave, underneath which was an acanthus root. As time passed the leaves and tendrils of the plant curled over the edges of the tile creating coils at the edges. Callimachus was inspired by this composition – an assemblage of disparate elements and materials – to invent the Corinthian capital. In Payne’s summary: “To the Corinthian as good mescolanza Vitruvius opposes the irrational of the Pompeian grotesque, the failed mescolanza, the monster.”²⁶

The concept of mescolanza undergoes a further translation during the sixteenth century. It also frequently appears in discussions of landscape design. The Renaissance garden could, in fact, be defined as an assemblage of the same components of the tomb marker that inspired Callimachus to invent the Corinthian capital. It too was a mixture of the organic and the inorganic. Gardens were also the outcome of collaboration between nature and art.

In his description of a garden grotto near the Trevi Fountain in Rome, for example, Claudio Tolomei uses the word mescolando (‘mixing’ or ‘mingling’). According to him, “mingling art with nature, one does not know how to discern whether it is a work of the former or the latter; on the contrary, now it seems to be a natural artifice, then an artificial nature.”²⁷ This idea is also familiar from sixteenth-century descriptions of gardens. Jacopo Bonfadio, for example, observed that in those of the region of Lake Garda, “nature incorporated with art is made an artificer, and the connatural of art; and from both of them is made a third nature, which I would not know how to name.” The Milanese Bartolomeo Taegio made a similar point when he wrote that: “Here are without end the ingenious grafts that show with great wonder to the world the industry of a wise gardener, who by incorporating art with nature brings forth from both a third nature, which causes the fruits to be more flavourful here than elsewhere.”²⁸ In short, the concept of mescolanza is as applicable to gardens as it is to buildings. In both cases, the term implies hybridized forms, composite structures and combinations of materials. These are also, of course, defining features of the grotesque.

24 Payne, “Mescolare, Composti and Monsters in Italian Architectural Theory of the Renaissance,” in *Disarmonia Brutezza e Bizzarria nel Rinascimento*, Atti del VII Convegno Internazionale (Chianciano-Pienza 17-20 luglio 1995), a cura di Luiso Secchi Tarugi (Florence: Franco Cesati Editore, 1998), 285.

25 Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, IV, 1, 8-10.

26 Payne, “Mescolare,” 286.

27 For Tolomei, see Bartolomeo Taegio, *La Villa*, ed. and trans. by Thomas E. Beck (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 61.

28 Taegio, *La Villa*, 58-59.

The Hybrid Figure

The hybrid figure is a leitmotif of grotteschi in painting and mescolanza in architecture, but it is also common in the late Renaissance landscape. The depiction of Actaeon at Nonsuch, metamorphosing into a stag-man, provides an example, as do the many images of Diana Ephesia with her supernumerary breasts (an early modern misinterpretation of what were, in archaic votive figures, bulls' testicles).²⁹ Yet hybrid figures often have negative connotations. For Horace, they were the product of a "sick man's dreams," whereas Vitruvius described them as "monsters," as did many sixteenth-century commentators.

The harpies of the xystus in the mid to late sixteenth-century Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo, provide an example (fig. 3). In Renaissance mythography, the symbolic meaning of harpies is overwhelmingly negative. According to Natale Conti, for example, the "bodies of Harpies exactly expressed the souls of misers". For Ulisse Aldrovandi, the harpy signified rapacity, voraciousness and filthiness.³⁰ In art harpies are often an attribute of the deadly sin of avarice, "weak with a hunger they cannot appease".³¹ In both cases, they are creatures to be feared.



Fig. 3. Harpy, 16th century. Sacro Bosco, Bomarzo.
Photograph by Luke Morgan.

Fear is not, however, a response usually associated with the experience of gardens. More often than not, gardens of the period are assumed to have been conceived as serene Arcadian refuges from reality; as if Petrarch's trecento dream of a day when it would be possible to walk back into the "pure radiance of the past" was finally realized in landscape design two centuries later.³² Indeed, the idea of the locus amoenus ('pleasant place'), familiar from the works of Homer, Theocritus, Virgil and numerous subsequent writers became a standard convention in Renaissance evocations of real and

29 See Gérard Seiterle, "Artemis: die Grosse Grötten von Ephesos," *Antike Welt* 10 (1979), 3-16.

30 Malcolm South, ed., *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures: A Source Book and Research Guide* (New York and Westport, Conn. And London: Greenwood Press, 1987), 155.

31 The phrase is from Jorge Luis Borges's entry on harpies in his *Book of Imaginary Beings*. See Simona Cohen, *Animals as Disguised Symbols in Renaissance Art* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), for a useful account of harpies and hybrids in art.

32 For Petrarch's phrase, see Erwin Panofsky, *Renaissance and Renascences* (London: Paladin, 1970), 10.

ideal gardens.³³ It remains a key explanatory concept in modern histories of Italian Renaissance landscape design.

Yet this notion of the garden as an untrammelled reflection of paradise or idealized place apart may not be fully adequate to the task of reconstructing the experience of landscape design in the period. Besides the troubling presence of the grotesque and the representation of hybrid figures, whose symbolic meanings are so often negative, there are the fearful responses to the effects and structures of the garden that visitors sometimes recorded. An example is provided by the account of an anonymous early seventeenth-century British visitor of the Fountain of the Dragons at the Villa d'Este, Tivoli, which he says belched water "being of so black a colour, that it resembleth an ugly smoke, fearful to behold."³⁴



Fig. 4. Bernardo Buontalenti, Interior of the Grotta Grande, Frescoes by Bernardino Pocetti, 1560s. Boboli Garden, Florence. Photograph by Luke Morgan.

Even the architectonic structures of the garden could provoke fear. In 1591, Francesco Bocchi noted that the seemingly ruinous state of the Grotta Grande in the Boboli Gardens, Florence, "aroused delight, but not without terror, because the building seemed about to collapse to the ground" (fig. 4).³⁵

The imagery of Renaissance landscape design is, similarly, distinctly anti-Arcadian at times. Giambologna's colossal personification of the Apennines at the Villa Medici (now Demidoff), Pratolino, for instance, is depicted crushing the life out of a "monstrous head" (fig. 5).³⁶ The same

33 See Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1953), 183–202, for the classic account of the idea of *locus amoenus*. For an account of the revival and subsequent fortunes of the *topos* in Italian literature, see Lucio Battaglia Ricci, "Gardens in Italian Literature during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *The Italian Garden: Art, Design and Culture*, ed. John Dixon Hunt, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 6–33, and Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto, "Writing the Garden in the Age of Humanism: Petrarch and Boccaccio," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 23, no. 3 (Autumn 2003), 231–57.

34 Quoted in John Dixon Hunt, *Garden and Grove: The Italian Renaissance Garden in the English Imagination, 1600–1750* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1986), 44.

35 Francesco Bocchi, *Le bellezze della città di Firenza* (Florence, 1591), 69. See Paula Campbell, "Breaking the Frame: Transgression and Transformation in Giulio Romano's Sala dei Giganti," *Artibus et Historiae* 18, no. 36 (1997), 89, for the translation.

36 The phrase is Claudia Lazzaro's. See her *Italian Renaissance Garden*, 150.

figure has recently been described by Una Roman d'Elia as an image of misery and sorrow.³⁷ Elsewhere, at the Villa Medici, Castello, Bartolomeo Ammannati's earlier and more melancholy version of the theme personifies the Apennines as a "shivering and crying" man who clasps his sides in a futile attempt to keep warm.³⁸ At Bomarzo, one giant viciously tears apart another, while nearby a dragon is mauled by lions. Indeed, Anne Bélanger has argued that the grotesque figures of the Sacro Bosco imply a concept of the garden as potentially frightening and of nature as arbitrary and amoral, if not cruel.³⁹



Fig. 5. Giovanni da Bologna, Appennino, 1570–80.
Villa Medici (now Demidoff), Pratolino..
Photograph by Luke Morgan.

To conclude: mescolanza and the grotesque are, demonstrably, themes of Renaissance landscape design, but they cannot be easily accommodated to the overarching concept of the garden as a locus amoenus. Rather, as Hervé Brunon has recently argued, the Renaissance garden, in addition to its characterisation as a locus amoenus, was also (and simultaneously) conceived of as a locus horridus or "topos antagoniste".⁴⁰ An expanded concept of early modern landscape design would be capable of accommodating this antagonism. It would also enable a fuller understanding of the presence of hybrid, even "monstrous" figures, such as that of Actaeon at Nonsuch or the harpy at Bomarzo. In the meantime, Leonardo da Vinci's conflicted response to a grotto might be taken as representative of the complex experience of gardens during the Renaissance: "And after having remained at the entry some time, two contrary emotions arose in me, fear and desire - fear of the threatening dark grotto, desire to see whether there were any marvelous thing within it."⁴¹

³⁷ Una Roman d'Elia, "Giambologna's Giant and the Cinquecento Villa Garden as a Landscape of Suffering," *Studies in the History of Gardens and Designed Landscapes* 31, no. 1 (2011), 1–25.

³⁸ The phrase is Montaigne's.

³⁹ *Bomarzo ou les incertitudes de la lecture: Figure de la "meraviglia" dans un jardin maniériste du XVIe siècle* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2007).

⁴⁰ Hervé Brunon, "Du Songe de Poliphile à la Grande Grotte de Boboli: la dualité dramatique du paysage," *Polia, Revue de l'art des jardins* 2 (Autumn 2004), 7.

⁴¹ Leonardo da Vinci, *The Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci*, trans. E MacCurdy, 2 vols., II (London: Jonathon Cape, 1938), 526.