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Memory and Performance.
Classical Reception in Early Modern Festivals

Edited by Francesca Bortoletti, Giovanna Di Martino,
and Eugenio Refini

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RAIMONDO GUARINO*

Nympha Loci: Gardens, Statues and Poetry in Early Renaissance Rome

Abstract

This study addresses *Nympha loci*, the topos of the sleeping nymph as expressed in tangible and intangible form in the humanist gardens of early Renaissance Rome as shown in a confluence of texts, images, statues, epitaphs and epigrams. By collecting fragments of antiquities, humanists and cardinals pursued and shaped an environmental imitation of the Roman *horti* transposed into the Christian city. These were places devoted to the knowledge and celebration of ancient Rome. The collections were galvanised and enhanced by performances of drama, poetry and oratory, bringing together the political and spiritual values of the *sodalitas* for the *Accademia Romana*. The study also considers the transposition of *theatrum* and *scaena* within the context of the architectural inventions conceived for *Villa Chigi* and *Villa Madama*.

KEYWORDS: nymph; humanism; gardens; Roman academies; collections

1. A Nymph and Her Sources

The nymph that inhabits and haunts the gardens of Roman Renaissance villas is at once a tangible and intangible figure: precarious, mobile and elusive but also real and ubiquitous. Loitering amidst the residences of academicians and the mansions of cardinals and aristocrats, she embodied the sites that encapsulated in their identity the prospects return of ancient Rome to the modern city. The gathering of texts and images, finds and artefacts, considered with respect to the places where such collecting was carried out or the places it was associated with, is one of the processes characterising the relations of humanists and collectors with antiquity in the Roman context.

In one of her last contributions on the legacy of Pomponius Laetus and his *Accademia Romana*, Phyllis Pray Bober wrote:

Two aspects of Roman cultural and literary life in the early Cinquecento epitomize a heritage of devotion to the arts of poetry on the part of Leto and his circle. Whether revival of the ceremony of *laureatio* as part of

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inaugurating a celebration of Rome's birthday, the *Palilia*, or the resurrection of ancient comedy with its stimulus to contemporary secular drama, each documents the historical nature of Pomponius' humanism. The role of lyric expression in the Accademia Pomponiana at Rome is no less striking than the Orphism of Poliziano and Ficino in Florence . . . Convivial Latin poetry shapes the origin of the *Palilia* celebration. (2004, 249)¹

Within the context of the residences of the Pomponians, the *Palilie* as celebrations of the foundation of Rome inspired the recitations and performances identified by Cruciani (1983, 180-4) as the fulcrum of humanist theatre in Rome. In the framework of the collections, gardens and nymphaeums of humanists, cardinals and aristocrats, the patterns of linkage and separation between epigrams, real or alleged epigraphs, statues and declamation concern the substance of relevant practices and meanings. The exceptionally broad scope of the Apollonian and Dionysian meanings attributed to the sleeping and speaking nymph is explained in another fundamental essay on archaeological gardens by Phyllis Pray Bober (1977). Here she explores the sites of the academic meetings and the material contexts of practices that we would now define as performative, based on the relationship between the archaeological collections and oral poetry. This area of studies points up the originality of the Roman humanists as compared to the legacy of and contacts with Florentine Neoplatonism and the dialectics proper to the Roman milieu (Guarino 1995, 2010, 2020; Cavallaro 2007; for the most exhaustive overview, complete with a vast bibliography and a catalogue of the sources of the collections, Christian 2010).

The epigram “*Huius nymppha loci, sacri custodia fontis*”, referred to a statue of the sleeping nymph, has been attributed to Giovanni Antonio Campano (1429-1477):

Huius nymppha loci, sacri custodia fontis,
Dormio, dum blandae sentio murmur Aquae.
Parce meum, quisquis tangis cava marmora somnium
Rumpere: sive bibas, sive lavere, taces.

[I, The nymph of the place, the guardian of the sacred fount,
I sleep as I listen to the murmur of the enchanting waters.
Be careful, whoever approaches to this marble cave.
Not to disturb my slumber, drink or bathe in silence.]²

¹ For more about Neoplatonism in Florence and Rome, see Bober 2000.

² Transcribed and translated in Christian 2010, 134, 238.

The attribution to Campano was proposed on the basis of an indication by Bartolomeo Fonzio in a note around 1470 stating that Campano was the author. The epigram appears in the collection of *Epigrammata antiquae Romae* by Francesco Ferrarini (c.1470) and was referred to by Bartolomeo Fonzio as “Romae recens [or *nuper*] inventum. Campani est” (discussed in Kurz 1953; MacDougall 1975; Bober 1977; a survey and more recent speculations in Agnoletto 2019). Campano’s authorship was accredited and confirmed by reference to a manuscript collection of epigrams dedicated by Campano to the Bishop of Pavia, Iacopo Ammannati Piccolomini. This would indicate a connection with a sculpture present in the Roman residence of the prelate (Pataki 2005, 1.36-44; Christian 2010, 132-6, with further examples of poem/statue/epigraph correlations). Other contemporary sources refer to a statue owned by the Cardinal Domenico della Rovere:

[Domenico] della Rovere’s garden featured a fountain of the sleeping nymph which included the statue of a reclining woman and the famous *Huius Nympha loci* epigram. Between about 1482 and 1485 della Rovere served as the official Cardinal Protector of Pomponio Leto’s Academy and his nymph fountain may well have been one of the favored Academy’s gathering points . . . Several manuscripts of the late Quattrocento include poems which were written about della Rovere’s statue. (Christian 2010, 367)

Ammannati, Domenico della Rovere and their residences connect the nymph with festive and academic milieux of literary creations. Ammannati records in his own correspondence, in 1474, the relationships between “artifices, histriones, mimi” from Florence and the festive initiatives of Cardinal Pietro Riario (Ammannati Piccolomini 1997, 3.1790). Campano’s poetic activity leads back to traces of recitative practices in the milieu of Cardinal Bessarion. Recollecting facts and memories about Campano in his biographical introduction to the *Opera Campani* (first printed in Rome in 1496), Michele Ferno celebrates his importance in the context of Bessarion’s *familia* and as an exemplum of the *magnificentia* of the cardinals’ courts. Ferno describes a feast in which Campano offers a eulogy to Bessarion after a *masquerade*. During the Roman carnival: “urbs tota festivitibus aliquando exultabat ut in Carnispriviis debacchantium turba larvatorum plausibus et cantu plena” (Campano 1502, 14v; The whole city enjoyed the carnival, crowded by masks applauding and singing like a Bacchic procession).

During this feast, a masked pupil sang the verses of the eulogy for the cardinal (“Quos larvatus ephēbus . . . submodulata lyra incuinisset”; A masked boy sang these verses with a tuned lyre). The association between Roman villas and Parnassus surfaces in some poems from the circle of Bessarion; this association will recur after some years, around 1480, in poems by Lazzarelli,

Marso and Perotti (Schröter 1980; Guarino 2010, 2011), in which Latin verses gave shape to the restoration of the *Palilie*.³

In a letter written in October 1471 from a legation in Würzburg, the first letter of the sixth book of the *Epistulae*, which was addressed to Gentile de' Becchi, preceptor to Lorenzo de' Medici, Campano mentions the most notable Florentine poets, and among them celebrates "Marsilius noster" (Marsilio Ficino) who evokes Apollo with songs *ad citharam*. Campano mentions as well the Florentine *cantore* Baccio Ugolini and the *romana ingenia*, with Calderini, Platina and Pomponio, members of the *sodalitas pomponiana* (Campano 1502, *Epistularum Libri*, 47v; Di Bernardo 1975, 220-32). Campano celebrates Baccio as a singer *ad citharam* in the Roman nights: "Baccius sumpta cithara per urbem / Nocte sopitas canit ad fenestras" (Baccius, taking his cithara, sings nightly through the city to the sleeping windows). Through the protection of Campano, witnessed in *Epistolae*, and the munificence of Pietro Riario, Baccio was active as a poet and singer in Rome. The letter therefore evidences Campano as a leader of a Florentine-Roman network around 1470. Ugolini, under the protection of Pietro Riario, created the role of the singing Orpheus of the banquet for Eleonora d'Aragona, in Santi Apostoli in June 1473, as well as playing the bilingual Orpheus in at least one presentation of the *Fabula di Orfeo* by Angelo Poliziano. The famous episode regarding Baccio's role as an arbitrator between Latin and vernacular improvisers, as recounted by the humanist Ottavio Cleofilo in a letter sent from Rome to his friends in Ferrara in April 1474, adds further interest on top of the presence of Baccio in Rome and Pietro Riario's *entourage*. Cleofilo took note of the presence of Baccius as the judge of the poets' match: "Eligitur consensu utriusque iudex Baccius florentinus, homo bene eruditus et vulgaris musae poeta egregius" (Dionisotti 1968, 30-2; Wilson 2022, 202-3; For both Latin and vernacular poems, Baccio from Florence was chosen as the judge, a very distinguished man and an outstanding poet of the vernacular muse).

The presence of Bessarion and Campano is key to following the traces of the nymph and of her epigram. More important than the origin of the pseudo-Latin epigrams and songs is the context of antiquarian collections and pseudo-classical poetry:

Campano was a protégé of Cardinal Bessarion, and was undoubtedly familiar with the Greek Anthology, for Bessarion owned a complete copy of the Planudean collection of epigrams. In addition, both Bessarion's Academy in Rome and Pomponio Leto's, of which Campano was also a member, were noted for their promotion of studies in Greek literature and its translation.

³ On convivial poetry in Bessarion's circle, see Bianca 1994.

Campano's poems testify to the strong influence on him of Greek poetry.
(MacDougall 1975, 358)

The sleeping nymph was the recurrent and accomplished personification of the substantial intercourse between poetry and archaeology. Her moving and ubiquitous presence is in present-day studies the perfect (and sometimes overlooked) connection between places housing collections, literary gatherings and performance practices. The connections she reveals are, in addition, the evidence of multiple and important exchanges between Florentine Neoplatonism and the Roman academies, and of connections between dramatic and musical performances in late Quattrocento festivals in Rome.

Consequently, Campano's personality, writings and relationships represent a link between the cosmic significance of Florentine Neoplatonic poetry and the archaeological and celebratory experiences of the Roman humanists. Hence, we can trace the derivation of pseudo-classical verses from the circles of the cardinals Bessarion and Pietro Riario to the constellation of academic sites in Rome.

2. Voices in the Gardens

Apparitions of statues and speaking mythological figures, vernacular and neo-Latin poetry, and improvised and carefully planned verses coexisted in a widespread and well-documented reality that provided the contexts for performing poetry in late Quattrocento Italy (Richardson 2017). Grasping the Roman expressions of this phenomenon means localising texts, artefacts and performances within the sites of humanist circles. A peculiar interest in the connection between statues, grottoes, fountains and epigraphs involves the projection of the written word into the sites where antiquarian collecting took place. The academic gardens therefore constitute a decisive terrain for the reconstruction of groups and communities within the Roman humanistic milieu. Amidst texts and sites, the lines of *Huius nympha loci* spread into and animated the places frequented by the Roman humanists, illustrating their literary expressions and the symbolic associations of the nymph with poetic creation. In this way, the resonances of Neoplatonic inspiration within the Roman context are clarified. Direct and extensive evidence of the stylistic and linguistic hybridisations of the Roman settings is found in the dialogue *Li Nuptiali* by Marcantonio Altieri (written between 1504 and 1515), which praises the talents of the poets who trained under humanists at the time of Julius II (Altieri 1995). The attractiveness of Marcantonio Altieri's testimony revolves around the wedding feasts of the aristocracy, which were juxtaposed with the communal celebration of the carnival *ludi* of Testaccio and the

spectacles prepared for Leo X in September 1513 in the temporary theatre built on the Capitoline Hill (Cruciani 1968). The list extends to the numerous and heterogeneous presences that took over from the dominant figure of Serafino Aquilano, who died in 1500 (on Serafino, see Bortoletti 2020). Under the protection of the sleeping nymph, gardens and collections were, in one characterisation of the academies, “safe areas for intellectual expression” (D’Amico 1983, 89). A statement about the *Palilie* in Pomponio’s house on the Quirinal hill in Jacopo Gherardi’s *Diario* refers to a festive banquet, a poetical contest, and orations and verses prepared for the celebration of *laureatio* and the performance of comedies (Gherardi 1904, 117; Christian 2010, 129).

Scholars looking for characters and contexts in early Renaissance Rome have often quoted the lines from Altieri’s *Li Nuptiali*. These lines refer to the choice of vernacular and Latin poets who could be invited to recite their verses for the wedding feast of an aristocratic couple. The wedding that provided the occasion for the dialogue was the marriage between Gian Giorgio Cesarini and Marzia Sforza di Santa Fiora, which actually took place in April 1504. Altieri is a Roman *nobilis vir*, a patrician who celebrates ancient Roman culture and discusses with other citizens the right way to defend, to recover and to enhance the glory and “the ancient honors” of the Roman aristocracy against the imperial policy of Pope Julius II. His lines are intended to gather all of the poets active about 1500 into one list, facilitating the selection of literary skills appropriate to the nuptial rite. What draws our attention is not this social and ethnographic point, which has been well treated in outstanding papers about the Roman *nobilitas* by Christian Klapisch-Zuber (1988) and Massimo Miglio (1995). Our point is the choice of poets from the list compiled for the wedding feast.

In the initial lines, we find reference to two Neo-Latin poets, Cosmico and Marullo, who are called:

to nurture the ears of the invited people with some merry and gracious inventions. And for the delight of the invited women, I would like to invite Serafino. But if the mentioned poets should refuse, with your permission I would ask Scrofolato to take care of this task, if his illness will allow him, and also Mr Bernardino de’ Massimi, Mr Carlo Della Valle, Mr Pantagato de Capranica, and Messrs Pavolo degli Albertoni, Emilio Boccabella and Alessio Marinello. And there could be also Batista Casale, always cherished by the Muses. But I should remind you also of Blosio, Pimpinella, Phaedra and Casanova, who will be ready to willingly satisfy our request and answer our call. And if Serafino should be missing, there could be in his place Rustico Perleone, and in his absence, you could demand my Ramondo delli Albertoni. Almost all of them are of similar condition, as Roman gentlemen; and all of them well ready to comply; these are not lesser in their composed and published works to the most renowned that I have mentioned. And I would

like to add, also, as not less worthy, Antonio Lelio, Camillo Porzio and my nephew Fausto Capodiferro. (Altieri 1995, 8-9)

[Pigliassimo con Cosmico e Marullo el pensier de rascionare; et astrignerli, come me certifico farete, che con qualche iocunda et grata inventione, pascessero le orecchie non sol de' convitati ma de qualunca circostante desideroso de più oltra sapere . . . Et acciò le donne de qualche delectevile trastullo similmente se trovassero cibate, provarome anche condirve el Serafino. Quando questi vostri electi e nominati, per qualunca lor faccenda fossero impediti, col vostro grato assenso et con honor molto maiore della città, darremone la cura al Scrofolato, se lo mal suo non ce lo intertenga, a misser Bernardino de' Massimi, a misser Carlo Della Valle, misser Pantagato de Capranica, misser Pavolo degli Albertoni, Emilio Boccabella, Alessio Marinello. E quando de' nominati ognun v'abbandonnasse, non mancarace messer Batista Casale; quale sì se dimostra dedito alle Muse, che a sua richiesta de Parnaso, de Elicona et de Castalide, onde possa in qual volessimo gran tema, molto agilmente et in pronto satisfacerve. Et vience hora alla memoria esserve anche el Blosio, Pimpinella, Phedra et Casanova, sì come giovinetti interlassati; quali sonno de natura sì disposti al compiacere che non tanto le Muse lor familiare, ma lo corpo a qualunchesso grave incomodo exporrando prontamente per servirve. E de rincontro al Sarafino sarrave el Rustico Perleone; e quando esso ve mancassi ce haverete el mio Ramondo deli Albertoni. Quasi tutti coetanei e de una consimile creanza, et tutti gentilhomini romani; et ciascun de essi disposti similmente al compiacere: quali, sì come fra de' letterati è divulgato, se ritrovano in sì bona opinione, che per le lor composte cose e pubblicate, alli narrati non se tengono in acto alguno litterale inferiore. Pur me confido, per la benigna e facile natura delli primi, et non meno delli secondi nominati, alli quali anche (non già per supplimento) ce addurria Anton Lelio, Camillo Portio, et Evangelista Magdaleno Capodeferro mio nipote; ma per proximi ali primi, per quanto in questo honorevile successo abisognassi, per compiacerve mai denegarase.]

In this long list we find two major neo-Latin poets (Cosmico and Marullo), then humanists from Pomponio's Academy, and the scions of the Roman *nobiles familiae*, who are assumed to be their pupils (Albertoni, Capodiferro), and Serafino and his makeshift poet singer Pierleone, known as Rustico Romano. Roman feasts were places of fusion, confusion, and contestation involving contrasting voices. Rustico defines himself in the frontispice of *Compendio di sonetti*, his *canzoniere* printed in 1492, as a "devotissimo imitatore de' volgari poeti" (very devoted imitator of the vernacular poets). Like Serafino he was a performer, and the table of his works in the same document contains two texts acted by Rustico (see: *Compendio di sonetti et altre rime de varie texture intitolato lo Perleone recolte tra le opere antiche et moderne del humile discipolo et imitatore devotissimo de vulgari poeti Giuliano*

Perleonio dicto Rustico Romano . . ., in Napoli, per Aiolfo de Cantono da Milano, 1492; on Rustico Romano, see Adesso 2017).

As for the archaeological continuity, Bessarion casts a long shadow on the Roman gardens. His *viridarium*, his archaeological *hortus*, was built near his titular church, the Santi Apostoli. When Bessarion passed away, the *commenda* was assigned by Sixtus IV to his nephew Pietro Riario, and after the death of Pietro was inherited by Giuliano della Rovere, the cardinal of San Pietro in Vincoli, which became the location of the future pope's *viridarium*, in which the *Apollo* from Esquilius was placed after its unearthing in 1489 until its transfer to the Vatican Belvedere in 1508.

3. Beyond the Gardens

In Rome a concrete local aura enveloped the platonic values embodied in the archaeological collections of epigraphs and statues gathered by humanists and aristocrats. The speaking silence of the epigraphs was not merely “an attempt at providing archaeological authenticity to the setting”, but also “a matter of achieving an *ambiente*”, a composite imitation of an ancient environment that was in itself a hybridisation merging the Roman model of *villa* into Greek and Hellenistic sources (Brummer 1970, 220, 217; Ackerman 1951). The effect of the “poetic galvanization of sculpture” (Brummer 1970, 118) by means of the creation and recitation of texts that enabled them to speak, is exemplified by the poem written by Evangelista Maddaleni Capodiferro titled “Fausto” for the *Apollo* positioned in the *viridarium* of Cardinal Giuliano della Rovere, and later, after he became Pope Julius II, installed in the Vatican Belvedere designed by Bramante (on the dramaturgy of the statues, after Brummer 1970, Cruciani 1983, Farinella 1992, Nesselrath 1998, Magister 2002, Christian 2010, 152-7).

We can read, in the manuscripts of Fausto (Altieri's nephew) (Vat. Lat. 10377) some verses referring to speaking statues, and some traces of the *actio* concerning eclogues and mythological dialogues. Brummer, in his reference work about the statues in Belvedere courtyard, wrote about this “poetic galvanization of the sculpture” as “a not unusual literary phenomenon” (Brummer 1970, 118-19). In a wider sense, poetry written for speaking statues created a kind of (projected) oral ekphrasis for the modern reinvention:

The recreation of the classical villa must have comprised more than pure architectural features. Presumably a recreation of this kind was just as much a matter of achieving an *ambiente* . . . The very acts of recovering and installing statues must have assumed a significance beyond the mere revival of the antique: the physical presence of the sculptures undoubtedly enhanced the retrospective atmosphere. (Brummer 1970, 217-19)

The *Apollo* statue, eventually installed in Belvedere Court, actually spoke with a human voice in May 1504 during a banquet in the palace of the cardinal Giovanni Colonna, who was living in the former house and *viridarium* of Giuliano della Rovere near Santi Apostoli, which had been the residence of Bessarion. On this occasion we know that there was a statue (Apollo), and added to the verses in the manuscript by Fausto Capodiferro is the note, “Acta in convivio Johannis Columnae”. In this case we can fix the date of a *recitatio* in the presence of the sculpture. We know that this note found the statue still in situ – Apollo was relocated to the Vatican only in 1508. In these documents showing the intercourse of poets and marble gods, we have the text, the site, the statue and the performance of the text employed as an *actio* related to the sculpture. The verses include the following sentence: “Non me marmoreum nunc aspicias. Aspice verum” (Now you don’t look at me as a marble god. Look at my true presence; *Ecloga acta in convivio cardinalis Columnae kalendis Maii 1504*; Brummer 1970, 224-26; Magister 2002, 581-83, from BAV, Cod. Vat. Lat. 3351, f. 29v; BAV, Cod. Vat. Lat. 10377, ff. 63v-65r). For the Cleopatra/Ariadne in the Belvedere Court, Fausto Capodiferro wrote *De Statua Cleopatrae*:

The Cleopatra installation was meant to stimulate the poetic imagination. Thus Fausto Capodiferro evokes the memory of the Queen who seduced Julius Caesar, and added that the second Julius loved her marble image with equal fervour. The Queen now served as a fountain figure in the Vatican. (Brummer 1998, 75)

It was not only their visual and architectural quality, but the aura emanating from epigraphs, statues and *recitationes* that gave life to the archaeological mimetism of humanists and antiquarians, and the poetry for the speaking statues was not only a genre and frame for occasional verses. In a paper which stands as a milestone in the studies of the archaeological collections in early Renaissance Rome, Phyllis Pray Bober (1977) traces a long-term continuity between the first Pomponian Academy and its rituals, referring to the groups of poets gathered in the garden of Angelo Colocci near the Aqua Virgo and the villa of Johann Goritz near the Velia, from which originated the print of *Coryciana* in 1524. The connecting thread is a sculpture laying above an epitaph and a carved epigram in which the nymph invites the visitor of the garden to silence. The continuity of the nymph’s speech created the interweaving of a philosophical background with the archaeological setting of the gardens, enhanced by the voices of the neo-Latin poetic festivals. We meet the *coniunctio* between epigrams and epitaphs in the Colocci garden, which reflects the passion for collecting of Pomponius Laetus. And we find the carved epigram *Huius nympha loci*, without the statue, in the garden where Johann Goritz celebrates the neo-

Latin poetical games, culminating in the writing of verses for Sansovino's plastic group of Maria, Anna and the Christ child.

These voices had different accents. There were *recitationes* of *edita carmina*, declamations and improvisations. Around 1500, the presence of Serafino and eulogies about Serafino trigger a process of fixing values in the vernacular field, following the genealogy that leads from Petrarch to the Aquilano. Two other poets selected by Altieri were involved in a *laureatio* celebrated at the Vatican Belvedere in November 1512. The master of the ceremony was Tommaso Inghirami, the pupil of Pomponius, *praefectus* to the Vatican Library ("Phaedra"/"Phaedrus" for Altieri, Sadoleto and his contemporaries. For his *cursus*, Cruciani 1980). The academic ritual took place near the courtyard of statues planned by Bramante for Julius' collection. The poets were the young Pimpinella, crowned as a new Orpheus while singing a *carmen* surrounded by dancing nymphs. The second is the old blind learned man, "cieco dotto", probably Raffaele Brandolini, who sang improvised Latin verses (the sources for *laureatio* in Guarino 2010, 2011). His treatise *De musica et poetica*, dedicated to Leo X in 1513, recalled, with a repertory devoted to Ficino and Landino, the orphic genealogy and the allegorical Neoplatonic values of poetry. Both Aurelio and Raffaele Brandolini were mainly orators in Latin, but they sang or improvised Latin and vernacular poetry (Moyer 2001). Brandolini junior passed away in 1517. The clichés of the performance of Neoplatonic inspiration came back in the text *De poetis urbanis*, the long poem about Roman poets written about 1520 by Francesco Arsilli, which closes the 1524 print of *Coryciana* (Alhaique Pettinelli 2004).

The symbiosis of epigram/epigraph/statue encapsulates and materialises the synthesis between invention and memory. Modern pseudo-classical poetry was recited in locations created using the inspiration of this synthesis, in which statues and inscriptions were tangibly connected. In the combination of archaeological imitation and the survival of the ancient city, the recumbent or sleeping nymph was effectively a *genius loci*, a deity of the place, the custodian of the symposial values of the humanist group and of the refractions and regenerations of the fragments, finds and artefacts contained in the collections. The recumbent figure assumed various mythical and historical projections – Ariadne, Cleopatra, Anna Perenna, Corycia – that were sensitive to different arrangements of the settings reproducing the ancient villa in modern Rome, absorbing the resonances of melancholy, silence, dream and Bacchic ecstasy (Baert 2018). These symbolic values were associated with practices of poetry and archaeology, Ariadne with myths and songs related to Dionisos. The female recumbent statue recalling Ariadne in Naxos and her ecstasy became Cleopatra in the imperial context of the Vatican Belvedere, to be celebrated in the poem by Fausto Capodiferro, who borrowed verses from *Huius nympa* (Kurz 1953, 175). Anna Perenna was a

fluvial nymph celebrated in Ancient Rome with poetical contests (MacIntyre 2018). Corycia was reborn as the eponymous stepmother of Johannes Goritz' humanistic group. The intertwining of the recitations in the gardens with the poetic practices of the Roman context shows the actors involved in these experiences engaged in reviving the celebratory values of oratory and drama. This pursued a continuity stretching from the context of Bessarion to the traces and texts of the Pomponians, the proposals of the Vatican Belvedere and the very concept of the statue courtyard of Julius II, through to the garden of Angelo Colocci and the anthology of the *Coryciana* from 1524.

The symbolic dilation of the statuary presences and the epigraphic collections can be extended to the retrieval and representation of the natural and rural universe in the urban space, which blends the absorption of Greek culture into the ancient Roman villa (Giesecke 2010). However, this contribution is too short to explore this substrate. On this aspect too, I refer to the already-mentioned essay by Phyllis Pray Bober, "The *Coryciana* and the Nymph Corycia" (1977), which explicitly takes up the profound impetus of *Pagan Mysteries in the Renaissance* by Edgar Wind (1958) and provides a crucial complement to Cruciani's studies of the Pomponians (Cruciani 1980, 1983). For members of the Roman academies, writes Bober:

Participants in these mysteries linked in their minds Goritz's fountain and Colocci's dormant naiad with the full inscription at another favourite gathering place next to the Acqua Vergine, and the cave of Nymph Corycia above Delphi on Mount Parnassus. Her grotto was one of those *hieroi topoi* arousing spontaneous veneration in antiquity, as Leto echoes from his knowledge of Pausanias and other literary allusions. Lightly punning and at the same time gravely 'academic', the symposiasts' preference for the form Corycius as Goritz's name, and the title *Coryciana* for the anthology of verses he inspired, is placed in a new light. Illumination is also cast upon an earlier stage in the development of the nymph cult with a hint as to the role of Pomponio Leto, who not only recognized ancient reverence for springs and grottoes, but also shared responsibility for the *editio princeps* of Frontinus, where the sacred and healing powers of water are set out. (Bober 1977, 229)

In the convergence of the ritual aspects and archaeological values that marked the modern Roman villa within the residences of aristocrats and cardinals and in the vicinity of the Vatican, the statue – actual or virtual – embodied the enmeshing of words and contexts. Its genesis and meanings are inevitably tied up with the link between recitation and poetry. It is impossible to define Roman humanist theatre without reconstructing the genres, practices and presences of the statues in the gardens of the archaeological collections. From Sulpizio da Veroli's dedication to Raffaele Riario in the first printed edition of Vitruvius's *De Architectura* of 1486, through to the theatre erected

on the Capitoline Hill in 1513 and the initiatives of poetic *laureatio* proposed to Julius II by Tommaso Inghirami, the most distinguished of Pomponius' pupils in the Vatican (Guarino 2010, 2011), the very concept of theatre came to a new life in the context and in the dissemination of the antiquarian collections. In the topography, structure and usage of the Roman gardens, theatre assumed the dynamics and directions of an ambience materialised on the boundary between sites of dynastic and personal hegemony and the civic value of public spaces. The Roman villa, according to Martial, was "rus in urbe" (*Epigrammata* 12, 57). Its liminal area and structures sheltered a world that was set apart, giving life in the early Renaissance to a peculiar "cultural landscape" (Riboullault 2019). In Peruzzi's project for Villa Chigi and in Raphael's designs for Villa Medici on Monte Mario (Villa Madama), architectural inventions and symbolic condensations were transposed into the tensions between villa and *urbs* that characterised and shaped Renaissance theatre, orienting the conversion of the *theatrum* into a public building within the space of the villa (Elet 2018). The *frons scaenae* designed by Peruzzi for Agostino Chigi and the projects by Raffaello and Antonio da Sangallo for Villa Madama in 1515-1518 were inspired by Vitruvius and by the literary sources describing Roman residences (Pliny the Younger), in a synthesis that transposed and reshaped architectural patterns for *theatrum* in the modern Roman villa *all'antica*.

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