

# The concept of boundary in the Roman garden

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## VI

BETTINA BERGMANN

### THE CONCEPT OF BOUNDARY IN THE ROMAN GARDEN\*

“The first man who, having fenced in a piece of land, said ‘This is mine,’ and found people naïve enough to believe him, that man was the true founder of civil society.”

Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Discourse on Inequality* (1754)

Roman gardens, like all gardens past, are notoriously difficult to recover. On the Bay of Naples, an exceptional natural disaster and modern advances in landscape archaeology have yielded rare evidence of planting patterns, which, together with surviving wall frescoes, have inspired recreations of gardens both in their original contexts and, more remotely, in museum exhibitions. In recent years, sections of the spectacular murals from the *nymphaeum-triclinium* complex of the House of the Golden Bracelet in Pompeii (VI.xvii.42), detached between 1979 and 1983, have traveled far and wide and become renowned for their breathtaking realism and precise botanical and ornithological detail, not to mention the virtuoso skills of the anonymous 1<sup>st</sup>-century painters. The exhibition “Pompeii and the Roman Villa” at the National Gallery in Washington,

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DC in 2009 displayed one section of the garden mural near potted bushes and garden statuary; to invoke the atmosphere of a living garden yet further, songs of the birds pictured in the frescoes were piped into the gallery, even though only a supernatural aviary could have produced such a symphony.<sup>1</sup> The Roman garden, it seems, is perpetually fertile ground for the modern imagination.

It is worth noting that the exhibited fresco, cropped and displayed like a separate picture, originally formed the central part of one of four walls in a high vaulted room, where the surrounding visual framework would have altered its impact entirely (Fig. 6.1). Ancient viewers would not have missed the intricately detailed borders above and below. What is more, this room was just part of a complex that extended into a living garden right outside.<sup>2</sup> The installation of a similar exhibition in the British Museum in 2013 included more sections, placed on three walls to recreate an interior space, but the central illusionistic garden scenes continue to draw maximum attention, despite the bold borders that deny access to the inviting park. The tendency of humans as upright beings to focus first on what appears at eye level has led us to overlook the primary role played by the boundary in Roman gardens and their representations.

## I. Miniature gardens

This essay considers a neglected yet key aspect of gardens, namely the man-made features that enclosed and defined them. Our focus is an unusual group of images painted in porticoes

<sup>1</sup> MATTUSCH 2008, 172-173, No. 65.

<sup>2</sup> Since their discovery in 1978, the frescoes from this complex have been extensively published: CONTICELLO 1991*a*; JASHEMSKI 1993, 348-358 ("House of the Wedding of Alexander"); SAMPAOLO 1996 (pre-restoration); MASTRO-ROBERTO 2003, 398-401; STEFANI & BORGONGINO 2006; CIARDIELLO 2006, 71-77; 162-255; DI PASQUALE & PAOLUCCI 2007, 323-327.

and interior rooms in 1<sup>st</sup>-century CE Italy: miniature, self-contained, and perfectly ordered garden precincts, seen from above in an axonometric plan. One fine example has gone unnoticed among all the spectacular details of mosaics and frescoes from the House of the Golden Bracelet, namely fragments of a black dado showing an aerial view of a symmetrical garden with wicker enclosures, a trellis with purple grapes, and, in the center, a marble statue of Dionysus and his panther standing under a roofed *tholos* on the edge of a pool (Fig. 6.2).<sup>3</sup>

Because of their small size and secondary location within decorative wall schemes, many such garden views were left to fade when the larger and more glamorous figural scenes were cut from the walls and taken to museums. At least sixty examples survive, some of them only in photographs or drawings, and these must be just a fraction of what once decorated Roman walls.<sup>4</sup> No two are identical and, while some were quickly sketched, others present remarkably precise renderings of whimsical structures made of wood and reed. As we shall see, these imaginative forms offer a glimpse of a lost art of Roman landscape design and communicate some of the meanings that gardens held in the late Republic and early Empire.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> 49 × 68 cm: SAMPAOLO 1996, 144, No. 186; DI PASQUALE & PAOLUCCI 2007, 315. The broken fresco fragments were discovered in a channel in the garden in 1983, evidently debris from damage caused by the earthquake of 62 CE, perhaps to a room in the upper story overlooking the garden.

<sup>4</sup> On the schematic garden paintings: WARSCHER, 1942; WARD-PERKINS & CLARIDGE 1978, Nos. 79-80, 91; BASTET & DE VOS 1979, 133; BRAGANTINI *et al.* 1992, 423-426 *s.v.* Giardino; DE VOS 1983, 244; GRIMAL <sup>3</sup>1984, 267-269; DE CAROLIS 1992, 105-106, Nos. 3-5; JASHEMSKI 1993, 380-404; MOORMANN 1995, 396-397; LANDGREN, 2004, 120-122; SETTIS 2002, 35; BERGMANN, forthcoming; BLANC, forthcoming.

<sup>5</sup> On the status of garden paintings as providing limited direct evidence for actual gardens but, nevertheless, valuable indirect evidence for cultural attitudes, see HALPERN 1992. New methodological approaches to historical gardens received a boost in the late 1980s from the Landscape Architecture program at Dumbarton Oaks under the directorship of John Dixon Hunt. Involved in that pioneering work was Nicholas Purcell. Wilhelmina Jashemski's treasure trove of findings could now begin to be assessed within a rigorous theoretical framework.

A well-preserved fragment from the Villa Imperiale in Pompeii gives a clear example of the basic scheme (Fig. 6.3).<sup>6</sup> A rectangular enclosure appears to float, unframed, on an ambiguous black ground. A yellow lattice fence, shown from the front, has two symmetrical square arbors and a large opening that reveals a square pool with a fountain statue on a pedestal. The sides of the fence recede upward and inward toward an optically shorter back fence with three gates or arbors. On each end of the fence stands a pillar with a vase, echoing the symmetrical placement of trees at each corner of the pool. Inside the fence grow regularly planted trees and pink flowers (roses?), while on the lower, outside edge there are uniform clusters of plants with white blossoms.

The same basic elements — a lattice fence or stone wall, pergolas and gates, marble pools and fountains, statues and vases, orderly trees and bushes — recur in myriad variations. A larger fragment from Pompeii, now in the Naples Museum, presents a more complex plan (Fig. 6.4).<sup>7</sup> We see the plot from above, but from a lower viewpoint, and the fence curves into multiple semicircular niches and *pergulae*, all shown from different viewpoints. Just behind the fence grow bushes with white blossoms, perhaps oleanders. The area in front is painted green (for grass?) and alternating blue and white flowers dot the outer edge of the fence (Fig. 6.5). A large white water bird loiters in front of each niche, while a fourth perches on the lattice roof of a bower. Even the vessels atop the fences are created with the same basketry technique. Two marble fountains spurt tall jets of water that reflect the sunlight. The precinct terminates at each end in a square pergola, where green vines and clusters of purple grapes hang from a gridded roof.

<sup>6</sup> Antiquarium di Boscoreale 21630, 12 × 35 cm.; CONTICELLO 1991*b*, No. 3; JASHEMSKI 1993, 401-403, Nos. 195-197.

<sup>7</sup> Museo Nazionale Archeologico, Naples 9964, 33 × 137 cm (SAMPAOLO 2006, 67 gives the dimensions as 28.05 × 134 cm); WARD-PERKINS & CLARIDGE 1978, 145-146, No. 80; BUDETTA 2006, 90, No. 5; ASSKAMP *et al.* 2007, 235, No. 5.8.

A less well-preserved fragment suggests the many possible variations on a basic combination of wicker fencing and water features (Fig. 6.6). Two large square pools are surrounded by low fences and shady *pergulae*; fresh garlands swing between wicker posts supporting vessels.<sup>8</sup> In this example the painter went to great lengths to reproduce, in miniature, the detailed latticework of the enclosure. Note especially the intricate patterns of the central apse. Indeed, this garden designer (*topiarius*?) has woven reeds to emulate architectural features in stone: pillars with capitals, a triangular pediment, and the semi-dome as a conch shell, a veritable facsimile of a mosaic *nymphaeum*, even adding a pool of blue water at its base.

Although most of the schematic garden views survive in Pompeian houses, examples have been found elsewhere in Italy and also in the western provinces — in Gaul, Belgium, and Holland. Not all embellished domestic spaces.<sup>9</sup> An uncommonly large fragment from a public context was found in 1760 in a room off the portico of the 1<sup>st</sup>-century CE forum at Veleia (Fig. 6.7).<sup>10</sup> In this case, the garden precinct is projected onto a black zone that rises above a simulated, projecting podium and continues *behind* an illusionistic column standing on that fictive podium. Despite its greater horizontal extent, the design resembles the smaller images in Campania. A rectangular enclosure of wicker fences is punctuated by semicircular niches and prominent gates; covered walks (now faded) lead the eye

<sup>8</sup> Antiquarium di Boscoreale 41675, 58 × 117 cm; CONTICELLO 1992, Fig. 5; DI PASQUALE & PAOLUCCI 2007, 315.

<sup>9</sup> Although the phenomenon primarily seems to be Italian, about a dozen miniature precincts dating from the 1<sup>st</sup> century have been found in Gaul: BARBET 2008, 295-304. Fresco fragments of what must have been a stunning representation now in the Gorga Collection at the Palazzo Altemps in Rome resemble the example from the House of the Golden Bracelet, showing a rectangular water pool with marble columns, a wicker fence, and a delicate *pergula* or *tholos* containing a marble statue: CIARROCCI 2013, 84-87.

<sup>10</sup> The only indication of its origin is in an 18<sup>th</sup>-century plan. Thankfully, a watercolor made soon after discovery gives an idea of the multitude of marble sculpture. SPINAZZOLA 1953, 657-658; CALVANI 1975, 156-157, Fig. 47; RICCOMINI 2005, 13-19.

up toward a back fence. The center is taken up by a large square pool filled with blue water; pillars supporting *oscilla* stand at each corner. An unusual number of white marble craters adorn the top of the fence, and statues of dancing figures, much like the satyrs found in Campanian peristyles, materialize in open archways. Every entrance is blocked. As usual, vegetation is subordinate and there are no human figures.

The remarkable aspect of the schematic garden scenes is their minimalism and abstraction. Seen from above, the enclosed area stands alone, detached from any larger architectural unit, quite in contrast to the actual green spaces contained in peristyles at the center of Pompeian townhouses. These images present a separate realm that lacks any of the air or atmosphere conjured up in the illusionistic garden rooms. Indeed, the viewing experience of the miniature plans is quite the opposite of that in the other main mode of garden painting, the lifesize inhabitable illusion, the most famous of which is from the Villa of Livia at Prima Porta (Fig. 6.8). For most spectators standing in the spacious reconstructed room in the Museo Nazionale Romano in Palazzo Massimo in Rome, the first impression is one of being immersed in a dense grove of flowering and fruiting trees, gently swaying in the breeze under warm sunlight, an impression that is enhanced by the continuity of the painted garden around the room, uninterrupted by corners or any weight-bearing vertical supports.<sup>11</sup> Gradually, however, the sense of absorption in an unbounded nature is arrested as one notices the series of man-made horizontal borders below eye level — a cane fence, a manicured lawn, and a marble balustrade — all of which firmly place us in a zone 'outside' (Fig. 6.9). With their pictorial illusions, the muralists negated the actual built walls, only to replace them with the very same fences and stone walls seen in the schematic garden views.

<sup>11</sup> On the optical experience promoted by the room: SETTIS 2002. On the identification and meaning of the plants: GABRIEL 1955; KELLUM 1994; CANEVA 1999.

What a contrast to the initial glance at a miniature precinct! The first thing one sees is the man-made geometrical space, produced *ad hoc*, like a colony (see Figs. 6.3-6.7). The illusionistic views that stimulate so many senses simultaneously are here reduced to a linear diagram that at once encompasses a vast area, yet lacks any relation to compass points or a horizon, presenting instead a reified and uncontaminated island of stillness, arrested in time.<sup>12</sup> The observer hovers over this pristine world as if over an architect's sketch. Yet these were not hand-held drawings, and their locations present a paradox. Many appear on the lower part of a wall, where their elevated perspective playfully undermines the solid support asserted by the simulation of the painted socle. Others are either at eye level or overhead in the upper zone of wall decoration, so that the aerial view contradicts the natural perspective of a spectator standing below.

Where did these diminutive elevated views come from, and what might they have communicated to 1<sup>st</sup>-century viewers? The axonometric plans are, to my knowledge, unique in Roman art. Elevated views of formal gardens do, however, survive from other cultures and periods, and these can illuminate what the ancient examples do and do not share. *Hortus conclusus*, the term often used by modern scholars to categorize the Roman images, connotes a cloistered garden that is entirely walled off and divided into four sections with a fountain of life in its center, an image that became emblematic of the Virgin Mary in medieval poetry and painting. On walls of Egyptian tombs, painted millennia before the Roman frescoes, composite views of geometrically aligned trees and pools, frequently confined within defining walls, promise pleasure in the after-life.<sup>13</sup> Portraits of Italian Renaissance villa gardens, too, appear

<sup>12</sup> On the miniature: STEWART 1984, 37-69; BACHELARD 1994, 148-182.

<sup>13</sup> LOEBEN, *supra*, *passim*. A few Egyptian tomb paintings represent professional gardeners at work: TIETZE 2011, 90-100.



from elevated viewpoints painted on interior walls of the villas themselves, they offer visitors breathtaking prospects of the cultivated grounds immediately outside, testifying to the owner's wealth and taste.<sup>14</sup>

Common to all these examples is an aerial, comprehensive view of linear, horticultural arrangements seen from above. But there are differences. Unlike the impenetrable barriers of *horti conclusi*, the fences and balustrades of Roman precincts are fragile and porous; furthermore, there is no hint of a symbolic or sacred milieu. Nor are the precincts intended for the after-life; even the tantalizing Roman pictorial and epigraphic evidence for planted tomb plots, including inscribed groundplans, reveal the very same design and decor as the frescoes, because graveyards were, after all, gardens of remembrance for the living.<sup>15</sup> And although there seem to have existed portraits of villas — Cicero mentions a visual aid in a courtroom case about private property<sup>16</sup> — the skeletal schemes on walls hardly document specific plots. That said, the images of garden precincts often *were* located near living green spaces and thus, in a sense, reflected back upon specific gardens, as did the frescoes in Renaissance villas.

It is clear that where and how the painted precincts were seen can tell much about their significance. After considering the physical contexts of a few critical examples, we will look more closely at their constituent parts to see which aspects of actual gardens wall-painters selected and accentuated. Finally, these enigmatic schemes are considered as expressions of the larger spatial and cultural environment of Italy in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE and 1<sup>st</sup> century CE.

<sup>14</sup> LAZZARO 1990; MOSSER & TEYSSOT 1991.

<sup>15</sup> PURCELL 1996; BODEL, forthcoming.

<sup>16</sup> CIC. *Sest.* 93: Gabinius, tribune in 67 BCE, displayed a painting of Lucullus' villa to prove its excessive luxury.

## II. Embedded reflections

The well-preserved fragment from the Villa Imperiale was just one of a series decorating the lower wall of the eighty-meter-long portico facing the Bay of Naples on the west (see Fig. 6.3). Recent investigations have shown that when the portico was erected over the old city wall of Pompeii in about 15 BCE, soil was brought in from the banks of the Sarno River to cover the ancient road and create a sunken garden.<sup>17</sup> The long hall thus offered shade and opened onto a formally planted green space, and its location at the edge of the city allowed a panoramic view beyond that garden to the Bay of Naples.

Almost all of the miniature schemes, like this example, occur in multiples, and often in porticoes. Vitruvius advises just such series, *uarietates topiorum*, for the decoration of colonnades, claiming that sequential images create a rhythmic cadence for ambulation.<sup>18</sup> Individually, each garden scheme allowed the viewer to take in its salient features at a glance, but the successive variations also invited discrimination among their ever-unique designs. Above all, such repetition yet variety must have informed the viewer's perceptions of the living garden, which appeared intermittently between columns on the other side.

Roman homeowners, as is well known, appreciated clever juxtapositions of actual views and painted simulations. But the desire for combinations of varying modes of garden representations within a single space has not been acknowledged. Once

<sup>17</sup> PAPPALARDO, CIARDIELLO, & GRIMALDI 2008, 302-305 for a reconstruction of the porticus and sunken garden, which seem to have resembled the *ambulationes* at villas on Capri and at Baiae and Misenum.

<sup>18</sup> Though not specifically gardens: "in covered promenades, because of the length of the walls, they used for ornament the varieties of landscape gardening, finding subjects in the characteristics of particular places; for they paint harbours, headlands, shores, rivers, springs, straits, temples, groves, hills, cattle, shepherds", *ambulationibus uero propter spatia longitudinis uarietatibus topiorum ornarent a certis locorum proprietatibus imagines exprimentes; pinguntur enim portus, promunturia, litora, flumina, fontes, euripi, fana, luci, montes, pecora, pastores*, VITR. *De arch.* 7, 5, 2, trans. F. GRANGER; BERGMANN 2002b, 100.

one looks, however, such juxtapositions become everywhere apparent. Consider the House of the Golden Cupids in Pompeii (VI.xvi.7), famous for its imposing Rhodian peristyle and extensive sculptural installation, recovered *in situ* (Fig. 6.10).<sup>19</sup> Forgotten, so far, are the small axonometric plans painted on the lower walls of the exedra (G) overlooking the open green space on the east. Six elaborate enclosures, each measuring about 50 × 150 cm, appear on black dadoes below the figural panels. Now faded but recorded in drawings, they demonstrate the care with which painters distinguished each precinct and its amenities.<sup>20</sup> The enclosure on the rear wall to the east, for example, breaks the simple rectangular form by extending the fencing at the rear beyond an enclosed square into protruding lateral wings (Fig. 6.11). The eye moves from the entrance gate upward to a wide hemicycle enclosing a square fountain basin. On either side, symmetrical arcuated *pergulae* provide shade for paths and connect to rear entrances. Statues once stood in the gateways, and waterbirds with red beaks and talons enlivened the formally bedded foreground. In a still further inventive adaptation on the north wall, the painter inscribed a semicircle of low fences (or an arbored passageway) within a square perimeter.

The location of six miniature garden schemes in a room facing directly onto a richly embellished open-air peristyle can hardly be a coincidence. To a person reclining within the shady exedra, the vignettes would have been clearly visible and must have seemed to refract the green area outside. In fact, the original contexts of all the miniature garden scenes consistently reveal complex systems of visual cross-referencing, whether among different pictorial modes, actual views, or the immediate architectural framework of the viewer. Even the Villa at Prima Porta offered visitors alternative experiences of planted

<sup>19</sup> SEILER 1992.

<sup>20</sup> SPINAZZOLA 1953, 657, Fig. 650; SEILER 1992, 33-35; JASHEMSKI 1993, 398, Nos. 175-180, Figs. 489-490.

spaces. On the terraces of the upper level, a 'hanging garden' created in the Augustan period featured a two-meter-wide *eurippus*, a series of apses, and planting pots for small trees, while a second green area, a peristyle with a concrete fountain in its center, offered distant views of the Tiber river, the city of Rome, and the Alban hills. The cool subterranean room below must have presented a stimulating painted counterpoint to the live prospects enjoyed upstairs.<sup>21</sup>

The artistic dialogue among garden images can also be seen in a monumental complex within Rome, the semi-underground Auditorium of Maecenas, whose enormous apse was painted in the Tiberian period with illusionistic niches imitating windows, thereby suggesting such sights in the extensive gardens immediately outside (Fig. 6.12).<sup>22</sup> Each 'window' presents a highly contrived view of a specimen tree and a bubbling fountain enclosed by a marble niche. The shapes of the fountains vary from one 'window' to the next: a tall narrow crater follows a wide-brimmed shallow bowl, and so on. Less visible to a viewer from afar — and less well-known — are the miniature enclosures, alternating with frolicking Bacchic figures, that appear on a black frieze directly below the illusionistic niches (Fig. 6.13). Each depicts a spacious precinct fitted out with wicker trellises, splashing waterworks, and marble statuary, settings that could well be understood as diagrams of the exterior parkland containing the horticultural arrangements seen in close-ups above.

The context of the garden vignettes, here and elsewhere, thus possesses a recursive quality, like a *mise en abyme*, whereby an image contains a smaller copy of itself. In this case, the miniature precinct could contain the sights in the 'windows', which may simulate the living garden outside the Auditorium. Indeed, the optical shifts between the precincts, seen in miniature as if from afar, and the framed lifesize prospects are not unlike the

<sup>21</sup> KLYNNE & LILJENSTOLPE 2000.

<sup>22</sup> DE VOS 1983; SALVADORI 2002, 35-37.

ever-changing vistas experienced by a person moving along a colonnade. It is no surprise that the closest literary parallels to the ensembles of garden views should be descriptions by the proud owners of gardens themselves. Pliny the Younger's ekphrastic villa letters are routinely brought into service, for although written a century later, the passages capture the pleasures of moving through formal gardens and observing their coveted features (*ea uarietate, ea descriptione, quocumque inciderint oculi, reficientur*).<sup>23</sup> However, Pliny's descriptions have not been discussed in relation to the miniature schemes, and yet his proprietary rhetoric and shifting perspectives are quite like the multiple viewing modes seen in the larger settings of the diminutive garden plans.

For instance, in a letter about his Tuscan villa, Pliny leads his reader from one vantage point to another, usually through or along a portico, presenting a kaleidoscopic array, from elevated prospects of vast terrain to minute details of gurgling marble fountains and flowering plants. Everything that is seen has been shaped to perfection through human skill, and it is sometimes difficult to tell whether Pliny means a painted simulation or a real view. One oft-quoted passage offers a particularly close verbal parallel for the 'windows' in painting and mosaic:

"There is also another room, green and shady from the nearest plane tree, which has walls decorated with marble up to the ceiling and a fresco (which is no less attractive) of birds perched on the branches of trees. Here is a small fountain with a bowl surrounded by tiny jets which together make a lovely murmuring sound."<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> "[T]he harmony to be found in this variety refreshes the eye wherever it is turned", PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 13, trans. B. RADICE. See FÖRTSCH 1993; DU PREY 1994; BERGMANN 1995; MYERS 2005.

<sup>24</sup> *Est et aliud cubiculum a proxima platano uiride et umbrosum, marmore excultum podio tenuis, nec cedit gratiae marmoris ramos insidentesque ramis aues imitata pictura. Fonticulus in hoc, in fonte crater; circa sipunculi plures miscent iucundissimum murmur*, PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 22-23, trans. B. RADICE. The image is preceded by a similar description of an actual fountain: "Almost opposite the

The elements are familiar: verdant shade, birds, a jet fountain. Of special interest, here and elsewhere, is the attention drawn by Pliny to the man-made border, in this case a marble socle as beautiful as the living elements of the garden.

The rivalry between art and nature, of course, constitutes the very essence of all garden paintings, but the miniature schemes express that rivalry in a unique way. Their idiosyncratic nature becomes clear when they are compared with the cultivated green spaces represented in another popular mode on Roman walls, the so-called 'villascape'. Both modes appear in the *tablinum* of the House of Lucretius Fronto in Pompeii (V.iv.a/V.iv.11) (Fig. 6.14). In contrast to the abstract plans hovering in ambiguous space, the illusionistic framed pictures (*pinakes*) contain polychromatic views. On the two facing walls of the *tablinum*, four *pinakes*, seen at eye level as if supported on elaborate stands, present vibrant scenes (Fig. 6.15): against a blue sky, sunlight hits the columns of porticoes; the yellow, red, and white façades glitter with metallic decorations; figures move across a clipped lawn; paths are painted yellow to represent beaten earth. Notably, these green areas are not enclosed by ephemeral wicker latticework, as in the miniature views. Instead, manicured lawns and shrubs are planted on solid concrete terraces and subdivided by marble balustrades and dirt paths that extend the lines of the architecture, while regularly spaced trees are confined behind the buildings.<sup>25</sup>

middle of the colonnade is a suite of rooms set slightly back and round a small court shaded by four plane trees. In the centre a fountain plays in a marble basin, watering the plane trees round it and the ground beneath them with its light spray", *Contra mediam fere porticum diaeta paulum recedit, cingit areolam, quae quattuor platanis inumbratur. Inter has marmoreo labro aqua exundat circumiectasque platanos et subiecta platanis leni aspergine fouet*, PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 20, trans. B. RADICE.

<sup>25</sup> On average, the 'villascapes' measure about 76 × 30 cm. Of more than 25 examples of the third and fourth styles, only a few have been found in a public context, namely the Suburban Baths and the Temple of Isis. ROSTOVITZEFF 1904; BERGMANN 1991; THAGAARD LOFT 2003, 7-28.

The naturalistic views in the *pinakes* present an entirely different kind of space from the schematic gardens that decorate the bottom of each wall (Fig. 6.16; see also Fig. 6.14).<sup>26</sup> At first glance, the enclosures on the two facing walls appear to be mirror images: in each, *scholae* flank a central fountain; birds perch on a marble balustrade; white and purple flowers grow just inside it, and a garland lies along its base. Yet, as is typical, the pairing unveils variations. Thus, on the north wall, a fountain splashing in a circular bowl stands inside a semicircular niche, while on the south wall the fountain is a tall crater inside a rectilinear niche.<sup>27</sup> Each viewpoint, however, represents only half of a garden enclosure, so that, hypothetically, the observer stands at the very center of a playfully asymmetrical arrangement. It is impossible to reconcile the two kinds of gardens in this room. The aerial views on the black dadoes essentially negate the surface of the wall that displays, above, portable pictures on their stands. The resulting conflict unsettles our own position in space.

The multiple perspectives within one small room of a modest Pompeian house exemplify the efforts of builders and painters to enhance the interplay of inside and outside. There was more, for this was a transitional space that opened through a wide door onto a back garden, extending the views from the painted walls to a living green zone and beyond to more painted scenes in the garden portico. There animals prance about in a different kind of cultivated landscape that had also become fashionable in Italy from the first century BCE: the wild animal preserve. Again, it is descriptions of landowners' views that best correlate with the panorama of beasts in the garden. Columella tells estate owners to make sure to watch the hunting of hares, goats, and boars from the house so as to whet the appetite, "so that their being hunted within range of

<sup>26</sup> JASHEMSKI 1979, 78; JASHEMSKI 1993, 396-397; PETERS 1993; *PPM* 3, 1006-1017.

<sup>27</sup> PETERS 1993, 211-213, Figs. 225-227.

his sight might delight the eyes of the proprietor and that when the custom of giving feasts called for game, it might be produced as it were out of the pantry".<sup>28</sup> Representations of such preserves capture the optimal vantage point over a sturdy barrier and into an enclosed arena. A fine example on a marble relief brings attention to the opulent boundary with its detailed fencework, statues on bases, and portrait herms; as with the Campanian murals, the viewer remains safely outside the frame and observes a wild kingdom now preserved on private land.<sup>29</sup> Pliny alludes to the potential spectacle lurking within view of his Tuscan villa:

"Picture to yourself a vast amphitheatre such as only could be a work of nature; the great spreading plain is ringed about by mountains, their summits crowned by ancient woods of tall trees, where there is a good deal of mixed hunting to be had."<sup>30</sup>

The overview of a landscape and its creatures, all contained within an architectural frame, conveys a calm sense of mastery.

Boundaries ostensibly define, protect, and enshrine, but in pictorial representations, walls and fences function as much more than physical barriers. In lifesize illusions, they form the threshold beyond which we cannot move but can see, sometimes into an impossible distance or a surreal realm.<sup>31</sup> The axonometric garden view, however, offers something far more complex, namely not just the boundary between us and the glimpse of a desirable world beyond, but the entire circumference of that world. The geometric outline gives the selected

<sup>28</sup> . . . *ut et conspectu sui clausa uenatio possidentis oblectaret oculos, et cum exegisset usus epularum, uelut e cella promeretur*, COLUM. *Rust.* 9 *prae*f. 1, trans. E.S. FORSTER & E.H. HEFFNER (adapted).

<sup>29</sup> Musei Vaticani 1409: DI PASQUALE & PAOLUCCI 2007, 252-253.

<sup>30</sup> *Imaginare amphitheatrum aliquod immensum, et quale sola rerum natura possit effingere. Lata et diffusa planities montibus cingitur, montes summa sui parte procera nemora et antiqua habent. Frequens ibi et uaria uenatio*, PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 7, trans. B. RADICE.

<sup>31</sup> LAUTER-BUFE 1975; TESSARO PINAMONTI 1984.



realm a clarity of shape, proportion, and extent. Miniature gardens are themselves painted on walls that are within buildings and, within ever more structured spaces beyond, the enclosure is just one set of boundaries nesting inside others; it is a frame-within-a-frame that both embodies and reconciles inner-outer tensions and, seen isolated and from above, offers itself for our possession. The role of the boundary in living gardens deserves closer attention. We now turn to the stuff of which it is made.

### III. Raw materials

The types of enclosure seen in garden paintings correspond to those recommended by agricultural writers in the 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE and CE. The first advice that they give landowners is to mark the outer limits of private property very clearly.<sup>32</sup> Columella states: "Before you set the plants I advise you to surround the bounds of your orchard with walls or a fence or a ditch and to deny a passage not only to cattle but also to man".<sup>33</sup> A garden designer, too, needed to begin with the ground surface, measuring and demarcating the area, then placing vertical elements upon it to articulate the limits and functions of internal zones. The miniature precincts lay bare the ways in which these vertical elements subdivide spaces, direct movement, and determine lines of sight.

<sup>32</sup> VARRO *Rust.* 1, 14. Although of much later date (5<sup>th</sup> century CE), Palladius gives detailed advice about the many varieties of enclosure, divisions of the garden, and planting beds: PALLADIUS *Op. agric.* 1, 34, 4-7, HENDERSON 2004, 104.

<sup>33</sup> *Modum pomarii, priusquam semina seras, circumuenire maceriis uel saepe uel fossa praecipio nec solum pecori sed et homini transitum negare*, COLUM. *Rust.* 5, 10, 1, trans. E.S. FORSTER & E.H. HEFFNER (adapted). Compare Columella's poetic line at 10, 27-28, trans. E.S. FORSTER & E.H. HEFFNER: "This plot let walls or thick-set hedge enclose" (*Talis humus uel parietibus uel saepibus hirtis / claudatur*). So, too, VERG. *Georg.* 1, 125-126.

Varro and Columella distinguish different kinds of enclosures, both for the whole estate and for its divisions, including gardens. Varro's expert, Scrofa, names four types: the natural, the rustic, the military, and the masonry. The materials required — stone, wood, and reed — are all attested in the frescoes, as they are in the excavations of actual gardens.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, Scrofa says that in lieu of a built enclosure, landowners can plant trees along property edges, specifically pines, cypresses, and elms; one wonders whether the rows of regularly spaced trees seen behind the complexes in the 'villascapes' might represent such a boundary (see Fig. 6.15).

The material of the barrier is significant. Stone was the most costly and added permanence to the transient milieu of a living space. Columella quotes Democritus' *Georgics* to the effect that the cost might not be worth it:

"Democritus . . . thinks that people who build garden walls are being shortsighted, since a wall made of brick can't last forever, as it normally gets attacked by rain or storm, and on the other hand the outlay rules out stone, way over the top in terms of relative importance."<sup>35</sup>

But inscriptions, texts, and images convey the high value of *maceria*, a term used for the built circumference of a garden or grove from at least the early second century BCE.<sup>36</sup> The visible age of *maceriae* could reveal the antiquity of a plot whose legal boundaries had been established long ago, and in reliefs and

<sup>34</sup> MUGIONE, GIORDANO, & CIARALLO 2012, 214 tabulate the types of barriers depicted in 90 garden paintings: 40 wicker fences, 11 stone walls, and 6 wooden gates. On the architectural and decorative elements of gardens: CIARALLO 2012, 149-159. BLANC, forthcoming, offers detailed analyses of the barriers depicted in paintings.

<sup>35</sup> *Democritus . . . parum prudenter censet eos facere qui hortis extruant munita, quod neque latere fabricata maceries perennare possit pluuiis ac tempestatibus plerumque infestata et lapidea supra rei dignitatem poscat inpensam*, COLUM. *Rust.* 11, 3, 2, ed. R.H. RODGERS, trans. J. HENDERSON (adapted).

<sup>36</sup> BODEL, forthcoming, has collected references to Greek and Latin terms associated with tomb gardens. *Maceriae* and gardens: PLAUT. *Truc.* 303; TER. *Ad.* 908; CIC. *Fam.* 16, 18, 2. On *saepes*: WHITE 1975, 25-26.

paintings it is stone walls, usually of sacred precincts, that crumble as the spreading branches of a powerful tree win the battle of time.<sup>37</sup>

Obviously, the boundaries of pleasure gardens would have been more decorative than those of a working farm. While some paintings depict simple wooden fences made by tying branches to supports, others exhibit a sculptor's handiwork.<sup>38</sup> An early example, the mid-1<sup>st</sup>-century BCE *cubiculum* from Boscoreale, shows an ornamental marble balustrade above the edge of a grotto, below a stone and wooden arbor laden with ripe purple grapes. In the garden room from Prima Porta, the continuous white and pink marble barrier is composed of separate panels with alternating designs — elongated diamonds, overlapping fish scales, and horizontal rectangles bisected by paired diagonals — the latter, intriguingly, imitations of cheaper, less permanent wooden fences (see Fig. 6.9).<sup>39</sup> It is worth noting that in contrast to the many marble walls in large garden paintings, in the miniature precincts stone borders are few and far between. An exception is the marble balustrades in the *tablinum* of the House of Lucretius Fronto, where the precincts are somewhat larger than the norm (see Figs. 6.14; 6.16).

Scrofa's second type of boundary, the rustic, made of wood, could take any number of forms, and there is ample archaeological evidence in Campanian gardens, vineyards, and orchards for post holes and nails from fences, gates, and arbors. Most common would have been a makeshift criss-cross design, assembled by simply tying or nailing stakes together. In a vivid fresco fragment from Pompeii, just such a modest wooden

<sup>37</sup> Relief from Horti Tauriani on the Esquiline, Musei Capitolini 960; CIMA & TALAMO 2008, 95-96 (with Fig. 30).

<sup>38</sup> CIARALLO 2012, 152-153; 305-309 on *plutei*; BLANC, forthcoming, on the evidence of the garden paintings for materials employed for walls and fences.

<sup>39</sup> A significant contemporary parallel is the rustic wooden enclosure that is reproduced in marble on the interior walls of the Ara Pacis: SETTIS 1988, 406-410.

recess frames — and forms a marked contrast to — an elaborately carved and fluted marble basin with a high jet of spurting water (Fig. 6.17).<sup>40</sup> The juxtaposition of diverse natural materials in varying states of human manipulation recurs everywhere in garden paintings, large and small, and seems to have been as evocative as the pairing of actual and simulated views. But as is the case with stone walls, few wooden fences appear in the miniature garden schemes.<sup>41</sup>

By far the majority of paintings depict a fence made of cane or bamboo reeds, plants that may well have grown within the garden itself. Agricultural writers place the highest value on this most inexpensive and also indestructible boundary, especially the ‘living hedge’ of thorn, *saepe sepe*, whose roots are alive and cannot be destroyed by fire. Columella advises planting a thicket in the trenches: “I shall point out a method which lets us wall off a garden, from trespass by people or livestock, without major input”.<sup>42</sup> A living fence is difficult to identify in pictorial representations, but in some lifesize garden paintings the yellow in the wicker latticework, which seems to imply dried twigs, is deliberately interwoven with green strands, suggesting a screen of live plants. Again, it is notable that the living hedges that form geometrical borders in gardens appear in the ‘villascapes’, but not in the small axonometric plans. And nowhere does one find images of Pliny’s famous *opera topiaria*, the ornamental hedges cut into novel shapes, despite the fact

<sup>40</sup> Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples 9705, 80 × 80 cm; JASHEMSKI 1993, 380, Fig. 453, No. 124; WARD-PERKINS & CLARIDGE 1978, No. 93; ASSKAMP *et al.* 2007, 235, No. 5.7.

<sup>41</sup> An unusual, now faded, polychromatic picture that once formed the central image in a room in a corner of the garden of the House of Successus (I.ix.3) presents a blue sky, green plants, and a large apse-shaped enclosure that is painted brown and is thus apparently of wood, encircling a round basin in which the requisite high jet of gushing water tumbles downward in dual streams. Seen by Jashemski in 1959 and published only once: JASHEMSKI 1993, 395, No. 155, Fig. 482, 115 × 107 cm.

<sup>42</sup> *Ipse igitur ostendam rationem qua non magna opera hortum ab incurso hominum pecudumque muniamus*, COLUM. *Rust.* 11, 3, 2, ed. R.H. RODGERS, trans. J. HENDERSON.

that the inventor of *ars topiaria*, Matius, is said to have lived during the Augustan period, just when the craze for garden representations began.<sup>43</sup>

In the garden room from Prima Porta, a wicker fence forms the outer border, perhaps skirting a pathway, and lies below — and thus in front of — the clipped lawn and ornamental marble balustrade (see Fig. 6.9). Its modest criss-cross design is ubiquitous in all modes of garden painting, including the miniature views (see Figs. 6.3-6.7). A semicircular niche in a fragment from Pompeii again combines fragile wicker with a fashionable marble feature, in this case a pillar entwined with ivy and topped with a painted *pinax* containing a tragic mask; a peacock, a desirable exotic pet, encounters a dove perched on the *pinax* (Fig. 6.18).<sup>44</sup> The image could be a close-up of a miniature fence with a series of such niches and marble garden furniture frequented by birds (see Figs. 6.4-6.7).

Some representations display more complicated two-dimensional latticework patterns in precise detail. The murals of the small *uiridarium* (L) in the Villa della Farnesina, onto which faced the famous suite of twin *cubicula* and a large black *triclinium*, imitate a tightly-woven reed fence with regularly spaced niches, flowering plants, carved fountains, and in the center an inviting marble bench.<sup>45</sup> Once more, the arrangement is nearly identical to those seen in miniature schemes. Even more elaborate wicker configurations embellished the vaulted Room 32 of the House of the Golden Bracelet (see Fig. 6.1). As at Prima Porta, multiple borders include an outer reed fence and an inner marble balustrade. The lattice fence immediately above the black dado, on which grow regularly

<sup>43</sup> *Opera topiaria*, PLIN. *HN* 35, 116. Matius, member of the Equestrian order and friend of Augustus, invented *opus topiarium*, *nemora tonsilia*, *uiridaria tonsa*: PLIN. *HN* 12, 6.

<sup>44</sup> Museo Archeologico Nazionale, Naples 8760; ASSKAMP *et al.* 2007, 233, No. 5.1; MATTUSCH 2008, 175, No. 67.

<sup>45</sup> Museo Nazionale Romano 1090, 1091, 59626; JASHEMSKI 1993, 386; BRAGANTINI & DE VOS 1992, 123-127; MOLS & MOORMANN 2008, 44-46.

spaced green plants, is perforated with large apertures of different geometric shapes — square, diamond, circular, and fish-scale — to admit breezes and invite glimpses of blossoming plants behind (Fig. 6.19).<sup>46</sup>

That such decorative fences existed was firmly established by the discovery in the 1980s of a complex on the Via dell'Abbondanza, often called the House of the Chaste Lovers, but in fact an amalgam of rooms with different functions (IX.xii.1).<sup>47</sup> Archaeologists found traces of an interior 'hanging' garden raised two meters over the street, where imprints left by roots and palynological (i.e., pollen-based) and dendrological analyses allowed the species of plants, flowers, and shrubs to be identified. The garden, subsequently replanted and rebuilt, is an excellent example of a meticulously executed geometric precinct. The parallel box-hedges, irrigation channels, earth forms of flowerbeds, and interior paths were aligned with rooms around the three-sided portico. In the center grew roses and either cypress or juniper trees in symmetrical arrangements; ferns lined the edges of gutters. Here was even found a marble fountain statue, still displaying traces of paint, that depicted a boy with yellow hair seated on a dolphin, adding the compulsory marble and water features seen in garden representations. What is more, postholes and carbonized remains of a cane trellis revealed fences outlining the planting beds. These were composed of two different kinds of reed: *Arundo donax* L. in the upper parts and the thinner *Phragmites australis* (Cav.) Trin. ex Steud., which was inserted into the ground at different angles, so that when it was rebuilt, a diamond pattern with lozenge shapes automatically materialized, providing a direct parallel for the design — if not for the intricacy of its weaving — of the fence depicted in the House of the Golden Bracelet.

<sup>46</sup> SAMPAOLO 1996, 117-118; 134-138.

<sup>47</sup> On the garden of the House of the Chaste Lovers: VARONE, 1993; CIARALLO & MARIOTTI LIPPI 1993, 110-116; MUGIONE, GIORDANO, & CIARALLO 2012, 213-216.

Clearly there must have been an endless variety of patterns for wicker garden fences. Two types have been found in the grand peristyle currently being excavated at the Villa Arianna at Stabia. The layout of this complex is much like the miniature precincts, with a central pool, regularly spaced plants beside parallel walkways, and large shrubs punctuating their end-points. Traces of diagonal reed fencing have been found inserted into the curbing, while post and reed constructions have emerged at the ends of wide planting beds.<sup>48</sup> It is thanks to the recovery of such planting beds, here and elsewhere in Italy and the provinces, that one can establish the outlines of lost fences and walls and thus the original geometric configuration of gardens.<sup>49</sup> The open green space of the House of the Golden Bracelet, for instance, seems to have been articulated as a rectangle, bisected down the long axis by a path, with an oval bed in the middle and a trapezoidal bed in each corner, each outlined by low hedges (Fig. 6.20).<sup>50</sup> It is difficult to imagine that such designs were devised without a graphic plan.

The ubiquity of reed fences in garden representations seems to be consistent with the advice given by agricultural writers to use the most readily accessible and economical materials at hand, and this surely would have been standard practice in farms and productive gardens. The paintings, however, demonstrate something else, namely how old-fashioned techniques of hand-made basketry were refined to manufacture extremely elaborate contrivances that communicate a significant investment of time and

<sup>48</sup> GLEASON 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Excavations in the gardens of the House of the Greek Epigrams (V.i.18) and a house in Regio VI (VI.xvi.27) have revealed flower pots, the position of trees and shrubs, and, most significant, a rectangular grid pattern of beds of herbaceous plants; alluvial soil on the roots suggests that the plants were raised in a nursery on the Sarno floodplain. The research program has been developed by the British School at Rome, the German Archaeological Institute in Berlin, the Swedish Institute in Rome, the Herculaneum Conservation Project, the University of Reading, and the University of Stockholm: <<http://www.arch.ox.ac.uk/EAPH.html>>.

<sup>50</sup> JASHEMSKI 1979; 1993. The most famous remains of green architecture have been found at Fishbourne in Britain: CUNLIFFE <sup>2</sup>1998.

expertise (see Figs. 6.1, 6.2-6.9, 6.11, 6.13, 6.18-6.20).<sup>51</sup> It takes years for hedges to grow to full height; trelliswork could instantly introduce impressive scale and formality, and create sightlines and focal points, and zones for movement, rest, and privacy. The extensive spaces of miniature views exhibit the continuous play within a single garden enclosure of alternating curvilinear and square niches, arches, arbors, and *pergulae*, designs that recall the *scaenae frons* backdrops of contemporary wall-paintings. In short, the miniature precincts on Roman walls, long neglected by scholars, offer interesting glimpses into a sophisticated practice of landscape architecture long before Le Notre's treillage whimsies at Versailles. Even decorative attachments of pillars and vessels, woven of the same woody filigree, integrate the forms of hard basketry with architecture (see Figs. 6.4-6.6).<sup>52</sup>

In effect, the garden structures represent an art of metamorphosis, whereby the natural plants growing in the garden become its container. Nowhere is the creative interplay of living and refashioned plants more apparent than in the overhead latticework structures.<sup>53</sup> Kinetic grapevines (*Vitis*

<sup>51</sup> CIARALLO 2012, 151-152; 300-305. Inscriptions often mention reed beds in conjunction with vineyards; an inscription of 301 CE from the town of Hypaipa in southern Lydia advises that reed beds be planted between two vineyards, demarcating the boundary and supplying reeds for use as props: *IK 17.2-Ephesos*, 3803 D; VAN NIJF 1997, 67.

<sup>52</sup> On fencing see WHITE 1975, 24-28; rigid wicker baskets and boxes: 56-76; hard basketry used for protective frames of nursery beds: 76-79. Movable fencing called *cratis* (a wickerwork hurdle) was mounted on forked sticks and covered with interwoven reeds. VARRO *Rust.* 1, 23, 5 recommends planting thickets for making such heavy hurdles in order to enclose sheep and lighter ones for drying fruit. The vertical screens could be quite tall; PLIN. *HN* 17, 71 advises erecting *crates* the height of a man to block the sun and thatching them with straw to ward off cold. VERG. *Georg.* 1, 166: *arbutae crates* on a farm; COLUM. *Rust.* 12, 15, 1: *crates pastorales*, a basketry architecture woven of straw, rushes, or bracken with an arched roof used for drying figs. Another term for such structures, *teges*, refers to matting and outdoor buildings made of reeds, palm fronds, and rushes: WHITE 1975, 82-84. For images and techniques of basketry depicted on reliefs, see BLANC & GURY 1989.

<sup>53</sup> For detailed instructions on how to bend vines within a trellis frame, see COLUM. *Rust.* 4, 24, 14; 4, 26, 3; PLIN. *HN* 17, 164.



*uinifera*), roses (*Rosa* sp.), and gourds (*Cucurbita* sp.) were trained to climb the lattice of vertical screens and reed roofs, providing dappled shade for people dining or strolling in the garden. Ephemeral outdoor pavilions are simulated in two small rooms of the House of the Fruit Orchard in Pompeii (I.ix.5). In Cubiculum C, the upper ledge of the black dado is covered with yellow earth, upon which are scattered green branches; from there finely wrought trellises project and recede in three dimensions, with the sections in shadow painted reddish-brown. Above the trellises rise slender white pillars that support a thin architrave, on which stand marble vases, *pinakes*, and live birds. Garlands and ornaments 'hang' from the vault directly overhead, painted as an arbor covered with vine leaves, bunches of ripe grapes, and Bacchic masks.<sup>54</sup> Just such a wicker pavilion for *al fresco* dining appears in the much earlier Palestrina Mosaic from the late 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, where, under clusters of purple grapes, revelers on couches engage in animated *conuiuium*. For first-century CE Pompeians, such a scenario was close at hand. Just a few minutes away from this painted room, they could recline on masonry *triclinia* shaded by lattice roofs in actual orchards, and thus consume the environment through all the senses: taste, sight, smell, sound, and touch.<sup>55</sup> What is fascinating about the miniature views is that the pavilions form just part of a single extensive precinct built entirely of wood and reed. And curiously, although the arbors are heavy with grapes, the spaces below remain empty, unfurnished with couches, not to mention people basking in the cool shade and absorbing the sweet scents of ripened fruit (see Figs. 6.4-6.6).

<sup>54</sup> FRAZER 1992, 55 points to the origin of *stibadium* in a rustic couch strewn with rushes and branches.

<sup>55</sup> Masonry couches and holes for posts to support vines and trellises have been found in vineyards, the so-called Garden of Hercules (II.viii.6), the Villa of Diomedes, the Villa of Mosaic Columns, and the House of Sallust (VI.ii.4): JASHEMSKI 1979, 286-287; 315-317; 151-153; 168-169; 1993, 94-96; 281; 277-278; 121.

The simple reed must have seemed like a miraculous plant. Eminently malleable, it served a variety of uses in a garden.<sup>56</sup> A common sight on painted walls is the solitary reed used for training plants and vines. In the lively detail on the south wall of Room 32 in the House of the Golden Bracelet, a warbler balances on the hollow stake (*Arundo donax*) supporting a rose bush, a sign of the gardener's skill and attention.<sup>57</sup> It is no surprise that reeds were attributes of the River Sarno, along whose banks we now know were the nurseries and supply stores for town gardens. Honored with images throughout Pompeii, the reclining river god appears in a fresco from the House of the Vestals (VI.i.7), wearing a crown of reeds and holding more reeds in his right hand, while water pours from an overturned urn in his left. The two nymphs standing at either side extend large overflowing basins with both hands, possibly personifying the sources of the Sarno river at Santa Maria della Foce.<sup>58</sup> Blessed with abundant water, rich alluvial soil, and hardy reeds, the Sarno generated the fertile flowers and vines for which the region was known.

By its very nature, garden architecture, without any weight-bearing function and erected in the open air, invites experimentation. It is thus fascinating to observe that in rendering the ephemeral edifices of gardens in the axonometric views, muralists did not take the liberties that they did in the larger wall schemes, as seen in the *tablinum* of the House of

<sup>56</sup> *canna*, *ae*, *f.*, = *κάννα*, a reed, cane (less frequent than *harundo*): the hollow, jointed stem of a tall grass, especially bamboo, or the stem of a slender palm such as rattan: COLUM. *Rust.* 4, 32, 3; 7, 9, 7; CATO *Agr.* 6, 3-4; 48, 2; ULRICH 2011. On the common Egyptian practice of using reeds as vine props as cost-saving: BANNON 2009, 161. Willows used for vine trellises and weaving into basketry: PLIN. *HN* 17, 174-175. An 'osier bed' as the third most important crop on a farm: CATO *Agr.* I, 7. On the uses of natural plants: WHITE 1975, 233-240.

<sup>57</sup> JASHEMSKI 1993, 355.

<sup>58</sup> TRAN TAM TINH 1974, 35-36, No. 10, 92 × 178 cm. The fragment was found during excavations of the House of the Vestals in 1785. In 1825, Francis I, king of Naples, presented it to Louis XVIII of France, after which it went to the Louvre.

Lucretius Fronto, where columns and pediments are liberated from any structural function (see Figs. 6.14; 6.16).<sup>59</sup> Instead, the miniature precincts remain logical and coherent. For the viewer, the thrill comes in discovering how precisely the painter has reproduced, in minuscule detail, the textures of natural materials and how elegantly those materials mimic the convoluted shapes of concrete and stone architecture.

To get an idea of the role played by wicker boundaries within a costly multimedia complex, we return to the House of the Golden Bracelet, which, as we have seen, artfully paired painted and living gardens (see Fig. 6.20). The illusionistic murals of both rooms presented a veritable collage of trellis-work. Unlike the functional fences appearing to guard the precinct below, in the upper zones of Room 32 wicker screens frame the garlands, masks, *oscilla*, and *pinakes* that swing back and forth in black air, all cues for outdoor garden spaces (see Fig. 6.1).<sup>60</sup> The decor of the central *triclinium* next door to it was especially fantastic (Fig. 6.20). A reclining person could enjoy the fresh water splashing from the ornate mosaic apse, while the murals on the three surrounding walls simulated a lattice fence bordering a planted garden, thereby creating the illusion that the person actually lay *inside* one of the wicker structures shown in the miniature views. From within this pretend temporary enclosure, the vista opened onto lush vegetation painted on the side walls and, looking out of the *triclinium*, onto the actual planted garden, where a rectangular pool with a semicircular extension offered a display of water springing from 29 separate jets. So overwhelming must have been the visual, auditory, and tactile stimuli in this space that distinctions between living and man-made evaporated. And somewhere in this complex, perhaps in the room directly above the *triclinium*, a viewer would have seen a floating miniature garden precinct, complete with fencing, a pool, and a marble

<sup>59</sup> BERGMANN 2002a.

<sup>60</sup> CONTICELLO 1991a.

statue of Bacchus (see Fig. 6.2). An exaggerated space contained within a tiny image, the entire complex, with its spatial contradictions, became abstracted and compressed. As the French philosopher, Gaston Bachelard, realized, one must go beyond logic to experience what is large in what is small.<sup>61</sup>

Garden structures made of raw materials introduced a new dimension of flexibility in building.<sup>62</sup> While reed boundaries create emphatic divisions, their fragile substance makes them more like the living plants that they contain than the buildings that people inhabit. Such insubstantial architecture presents an antidote to the heavy concrete structures celebrated in the 'villascapes' and seen everywhere in Italy in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, especially on the Bay of Naples, renowned source of pozzolana. At the same time, the delicate wicker apses, *pergulae*, and arbors emulate more monumental forms, such as the enormous concrete *nymphaeum* complex at Massalubrense, with its series of mosaic apses,<sup>63</sup> or the pergola-covered walks, *ambulationes tectae*, along the *euripus* of the House of Octavius Quartio (II.ii.2), which, similar to the arbors over masonry *triclinia*, were built of wood.<sup>64</sup> In contrast to the crumbling old walls in reliefs, where vegetation gains the upper hand, in the schematic garden views the perishable edifices hold strong, as if they are brand new.

How plausible are such constructions? It is highly unlikely that screens of pliable reeds could have supported the heavy

<sup>61</sup> BACHELARD 1994, 150.

<sup>62</sup> PURCELL 1996, 143-149.

<sup>63</sup> BUDETTA 2006, 64; 93 no. 8; CIARALLO 2012, 152-154; 309-313.

<sup>64</sup> On Massalubrense: BUDETTA 2006; on the wooden *pergulae* of the House of Octavius Quartio: SPINAZZOLA 1953, 407-418. NONAKA 2012 notes that the Italian term *pergola*, a popular image of trelliswork with climbing plants, birds, and small animals in Renaissance villas and palaces, derives from the Latin *pergula*, which denoted a modest appendage to a building with a utilitarian function; however, *pergula* and *trichila* seem to have become freestanding structures in the first century CE, at the same time that authors first relate them to viticulture and gardens and specifically to trelliswork over an outdoor dining area. The archaeological evidence corresponds to this development, in that the majority of such structures found in Campanian gardens provided shade for *triclinia*.

marble vessels depicted in some of the paintings (see Fig. 6.7). Could wicker fences have withstood strong winds? Were they erected for special events, enhancing their value yet more? And if they were temporary, how should one explain the presence of fountains fed by underground pipes? The paradoxical combination of such delicate edifices with permanent marble features anchored into the ground challenges comprehension.

Without a doubt, the miniature schemes represent extravagant layouts: maintained grounds, imported marble, state-of-the-art waterworks, and man-made arbors, apses, and *pergulae*.<sup>65</sup> The 'accessories' of gardens had potent signal value.<sup>66</sup> Nurturing grape vines required enormous attention over time. Fountains needed a water source and underground pipes, which form the main concern of many legal documents and personal accounts of estate owners.<sup>67</sup> The immense investment in the impermanent and finely braided latticework architecture erected outside in the elements must have constituted its very appeal. A contemporary viewer might have appreciated the cost of obtaining and keeping exotic species of plants and pets, or the many hours of slave labor needed to supply and feed water up into the marble fountains to produce such high jets, a spectacle probably only witnessed on special occasions. To modern eyes, these novel creations may convey an unapologetic conspicuous consumption, but in Italy in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE they became the sites and objects of contemplation and philosophical conversation. It is then that the forms of pleasure gardens were given names.

<sup>65</sup> Pliny's villas are filled with such amenities, specifically white marble seats, elaborate waterworks playing in marble fountains, and vine-covered structures for reposing in the shade — the very elements that constitute the miniature precincts: cf. PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 36-40.

<sup>66</sup> HIGGINBOTHAM 1997, 32 notes that *pergulae* served as 'eye-catchers', signaling the location of *piscinae* within gardens.

<sup>67</sup> BANNON 2009, 2013.

#### IV. New cultures, new vocabularies

*Viridarium, ars topiaria, opera topiaria, calybae, triclia, ambulationes*: so new were the terms and the things that they identified, that today scholars are at a loss to match the verbal with the visual, although, paradoxically, the literary terms have in themselves generated a rich history of visual recreations.<sup>68</sup> The terms appear in diverse sources. Inscriptions in tomb gardens mention *diaetae* (pavilions), *triclinae* (pergolas of reeds and climbing plants), and water sources (cisterns, wells, and fountains).<sup>69</sup> Similar features appear in Latin poetry, for example the anonymous 1<sup>st</sup>-century elegiac poem in which an innkeeper (*copa*) boasts about her garden, with its *topia* and *calybae* (leafy bowers), wine ladles, roses, flutes, lyres, and *triclia umbrosis frigida harundinibus* (pergolas cool with shady reeds).<sup>70</sup> Although the appearance of such confections remains vague, the *calybae, triclia, xystus, gestatio, and ambulatio* all served leisure activities, specifically reclining and strolling within a garden.

Again, it is the villa owners who offer the most detailed information about decorative gardens. Cicero, in particular, makes the earliest surviving references to *ars topiaria* and *uiridarium*. In a letter of 54 BCE he remarks on an expert gardener (*topiarius*) who trained ivy to envelop architecture and statuary so artfully as to confuse nature with artifice:

“I praised your landscape gardener: he has so covered everything with ivy, both the foundation-wall of the villa and the spaces between the columns of the walk, that, upon my word, those

<sup>68</sup> DU PREY 1994. The difficulties are exemplified by efforts to match Pliny’s terms with archaeological remains: FÖRTSCH 1993; BERGMANN 1995.

<sup>69</sup> On architectural features, pools, and fountains in gardens, see FÖRTSCH 1993; FARRAR 2000, 27-96; CIARALLO 2012, 150-159. On pools in Campanian gardens: HIGGINBOTHAM 1997, 185-218. On *pergulae* (vine arbors) over pools: HIGGINBOTHAM 1997, 27-29; 32-33.

<sup>70</sup> APP. VERG. *Copa* 7-8: *Sunt topia et calybae, cyathi, rosa, tibia, chordae, / et triclia umbrosis frigida harundinibus*. BODEL, forthcoming, discusses the terms used in tomb inscriptions.

Greek statues appear to be engaged in fancy gardening, and to be shewing off the ivy".<sup>71</sup>

In an earlier letter to Atticus written in late 60 or early 59, Cicero stresses *inter alia* the aesthetics of orderly arrangement in the garden, when relating the famous encounter between Lysander and Cyrus in Sardis in 409 BCE. Cicero relates how after Cyrus paraded Lysander in front of the quincunx rows of the king's ornamental garden (*derectos in quincuncem ordines*), Lysander claimed that the man who really should be admired is he who created the park, namely the gardener. "But it was I," Cyrus replied, 'who planned it all; mine are the rows and mine the arrangement, and many of those trees I set out with my own hands'.<sup>72</sup> In this and other anecdotes, the *uiridarium* brings glory to the patron and geometry is its guiding principle; as later legal sources make clear, *uiridaria* were designed for *otium*.<sup>73</sup>

The vocabulary of gardens was a product of new cultures, specifically agriculture, horticulture, arboriculture, and architecture.<sup>74</sup> In his books on architecture dedicated to Augustus, Vitruvius articulates much of what we see in gardens, addressing design theory, landscape architecture, engineering, water supply, and public parks. He explains how to construct sand-covered walks with drains and how to use a *modulus* in the spacing of columns and niches; the luxury parts of villas, he

<sup>71</sup> *Topiarium laudavi. Ita omnia conuestiuit hedera, qua basim uillae, qua intercolumnia ambulationis, ut denique illi palliati topiarium facere uideantur et hederam uendere*, CIC. QFr. 3, 1, 5, trans. E.S. SCHUCKBURGH. *Topiarium*: PLIN. HN 16, 140; PLIN. Ep. 5, 6, 35. On Cicero's gardens: BANNON 2009, 172-178.

<sup>72</sup> *Et Cyrum respondisse: "atqui ego ita sum omnia dimensus; mei sunt ordines, mea discriptio, multae etiam istarum arborum mea manu sunt satae"*, CIC. Sen. 59, trans. W.A. FALCONER; KELLUM 1994, 217.

<sup>73</sup> Two hundred years later, the jurist Ulpian compares the pleasure gardens (*uiridaria*) of a luxury estate (*praedium uoluptuarium*), complete with drives and shady walkways beneath non-fruit-bearing trees, with productive gardens for profit (*horti olitorii*): Dig. 7, 1, 13, 4.

<sup>74</sup> DE CAROLIS 1992, 29-38; SALVADORI 2002; BUDETTA 2006.

says, can be constructed according to rules for urban buildings.<sup>75</sup> Above all, Vitruvius believed that all architecture had its origins in natural materials.

The first named professional horticulturists come onto the stage at about the same time. Columella, writing in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century CE, says that earlier agricultural writers had ignored gardening (*cultus hortorum*), but by his day it had become *uel celeberrimus*.<sup>76</sup> Pliny the Elder in citing his sources for Book 19 on gardening mentions treatises by five specialists, all Roman, two of them from the Augustan period: Valerius Messala Potitus, a vintner and a suffect consul in 29 BCE, and Sabinus Tiro, who — notably — dedicated his treatise to Maecenas.<sup>77</sup> The new genre of horticultural writing must have included technical diagrams, possibly even three-dimensional projections of garden plans.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, the architectural drawings attested for villas and baths must have extended to the grounds of such complexes. Cicero tells his brother that an architect's plan for his villa gave him only partial information, which he needed to fill out by discussing the design directly on site with the contractor.<sup>79</sup> Aulus Gellius says that Fronto's builders presented rival 'specimens' for a bath building in the form of paintings on parchment: *depictas in membranulis uarias species balnearum*.<sup>80</sup> Our best evidence for architectural drawings, however, is Vitruvius, who distinguishes three types, or *ideae*, all born, he claims, from reflection and invention: first is the ground plan (*ichnographia*), which uses a compass

<sup>75</sup> VITR. *De arch.* 6, 6, 5; use of the *modulus*, 5, 9, 3.

<sup>76</sup> COLUM. *Rust.* 10 *praef.* 1; THIBODEAU 2011, 220-221.

<sup>77</sup> Valerius Messala Potitus, suffect consul in 29 BCE: PLIN. *HN* 1, 19b. Sabinus Tiro: PLIN. *HN* 1, 19b; 19, 177.

<sup>78</sup> On the possibility that the garden views reproduce architectural drawings: MICHEL 1980, 390-391, "Der Garten als 'Zitat'"; DE VOS 1983, 244; SETTIS 2002, 35-37.

<sup>79</sup> CIC. *QFr.* 2, 6(5), 3.

<sup>80</sup> GELL. *NA* 19, 10, 2; TAYLOR 2003, 27-36 (on drawings for clients, 31-32); CUOMO 2007, 134. The scanty evidence for architects working for private patrons derives from the letters of Cicero and Pliny, which indicate that they could be citizens, freedmen, or slaves: DONDERER 1996, 55-57.



and rule to draw outlines on the soil of the building site; second, the elevation (*orthographia*), an upright image of the façade; and third, a perspective view (*scaenographia*), which includes the “representation of the facade with the sides receding and converging toward the fixed point of the compass.”<sup>81</sup> *Scaenographia*, then, shows multiple angles of a building in perspective from above. How better to envision *scaenographia* than as an axonometric view? Equally important in this context is Vitruvius’ insistence that wall painting is an essential concern of the architect. Wall-painters, in turn, must have used something resembling architectural drawings in designing walls.

The creative connections among architectural drawing, wall painting, garden design, and horticultural diagrams occurred in the Augustan period. At this time, the new spatial vocabularies introduced by professionalized specialists were eagerly embraced by a prosperous class of patrons keen to demonstrate their intellectual and artistic cultivation. Yet, still another discipline became significant at this time that I believe links the parallel expressions within an inclusive world-view. To this we shall now turn.

## V. Aesthetics of the boundary

After the granting of Roman citizenship in 90-89 BCE, colonization and centuriation fundamentally reshaped the landscape of Italy. Private property now belonged to an inclusive, gridded space. Especially after Augustus’ empire-wide census, which involved a system of land registration, boundary disputes increased. Surveyors assumed new authority in the official process of taxation and in conflict resolution between

<sup>81</sup> *Frontis et laterum abscedentium adumbratio ad circinique centrum omnium linearum responsus*, VITR. *De arch.* 1, 2, 2: 7 *praef.* 11; WILSON JONES 2000, 49-56; SMITH 2003, 67.

private citizens, which required the *demonstratio finium*, with each party proving, through signs in the landscape, the limits of their property.<sup>82</sup> The visible signs of walls, fences, boundary stones, trees, and rivers all gained significance as proof of ownership. The surveyors' *formae* and the inscriptions on rural landmarks express the immense value placed upon both man-made and natural boundaries.<sup>83</sup>

The vocabulary and techniques of mensuration (*limitatio*), with their *fines* and *limites* marked by boundary stones (*termini*), made an expanding world more intelligible, and from the late 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the terminology of surveying appears in Roman literature with increasing frequency. The gridded landscape became a metaphor for modernity, order, and culture — for better or for worse.<sup>84</sup> Ovid sees boundary-making as a necessity of the iron age, when land became privately owned: “The land, which had previously been common to all, like the sunlight and the breezes, was now divided up far and wide by boundaries, set by cautious surveyors”, and he claims that the golden age was distinguished precisely by the absence of *mensores*: “No one furrowed the earth, in those good days, with the ploughshare, no surveyor marked off the properties

<sup>82</sup> CAMPBELL 2000; CUOMO 2007, 103-130. L. Decidius Saxa, who had been made a tribune of the plebs by Caesar, had been a military surveyor (lit. ‘measurer of military camps’, *castrorum metator*) and now is ambitious to measure out Rome itself with a measuring rod (*decempeda*): CIC. *Phil.* 14, 10.

<sup>83</sup> The sanctity of boundaries was clear from the altars and statues that stood between communities, providing a definite *limes* and representing symbols of trust in rural areas. On Terminus as the incarnation of the boundary and recipient of offerings from adjacent landholders: OV. *Fast.* 2, 639-684. In tomb gardens, border *cippi* on the corners of walls mark the consecrated area, while funerary inscriptions noting plot sizes indicate the importance of the perimeter: CAMPBELL 2000, 324-325; BODEL, forthcoming.

<sup>84</sup> As early as 200 BCE, Plautus assumed that his audience knew the terms: demarcated areas (*regiones*), boundaries (*limites*), confines (*confinia*), surveyor (*finitor*), PLAUT. *Poen.* prologue 47-49. On surveying as a sign of modernity: VERG. *Georg.* 1, 125-128; *Aen.* 5, 755-756; OV. *Fast.* 4, 825; SEN. *Phaed.* 525-529. Into late antiquity, the *disciplina mirabilis* was lauded for imposing logic onto boundless fields: CASSIOD. *Var.* 2, 52.

bounded with lines".<sup>85</sup> The boundary signified the collective recognition of private property.

The slopes of Vesuvius and the surrounding territory were gridded more than once in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE.<sup>86</sup> The gardens, orchards, and vineyards of suburban villas at Oplontis, Boscoreale, Boscotrecase, and the Villa of the Mysteries, to name just a few, align with each other and with major arteries into outer towns through centuriation.<sup>87</sup> The rigidly organized field was not just evidence of human control; to contemporaries, such planting patterns yielded optimal results from nature.<sup>88</sup> Varro explains that trees planted in rows are warmed by the sun and the moon equally on all sides, with the result that more grapes and olives grow and can ripen earlier; the ordered vineyards, he claims, make a more attractive landscape, for which a man will pay.<sup>89</sup> Vergil lays emphasis on the lanes and rows of the vineyard and their equal measurements (*omnia sint paribus numeris dimensa uiarum*), and states that well-ordered vines serve not just visual pleasure, but also maximum fertility.<sup>90</sup> Surely for this reason Varro's narrator, Cn. Scrofa, a surveyor himself who actually played a role in allocating the territory of Campania, was considered the person most skilled in agriculture and also possessed the most beautiful landscapes: "His estates, because of their high cultivation, are a more pleasing sight to

<sup>85</sup> *Communemque prius ceu lumina solis et auras / cautus humum longo signavit limite mensor*, Ov. *Met.* 1, 135-136; *Nec ualido quisquam terram scindebat aratro, / signabat nullo limite mensor humum*, Ov. *Am.* 3, 8, 41-42, trans. R. HUMPHRIES.

<sup>86</sup> On the 'allotted world of the Roman citizen': NICOLET 1991; WHITTAKER 1994; PURCELL 1996, 123; HORDEN & PURCELL 2000, 220-224; on the division and maintenance of property and the ideology of allotment, 279-280.

<sup>87</sup> The alignment of certain types of trees and bushes was determined by plaster casts of roots and soil analyses: JASHEMSKI 1987, 71-76; 1993, 293-301; BERGMANN 2002b, 93.

<sup>88</sup> On the precise measurement of land for planting vines: COLUM. *Rust.* 5, 1-4; WHITE 1970, 229-246; JASHEMSKI 1979, 210-215.

<sup>89</sup> VARRO *Rust.* 1, 4, 2; 1, 7, 2-4; BANNON 2009, 189.

<sup>90</sup> VERG. *Georg.* 2, 284. Stress on orderly planting: VERG. *Ecl.* 1, 73; VARRO *Rust.* 1, 7, 2; PLIN. *HN* 17, 78; BANNON 2009, 189-190.

many than the country seats of others, furnished in a princely style".<sup>91</sup>

Images of plots subdivided by right angles, vineyards perfectly aligned in parallel rows, trees planted before columns as green architecture, all attest to an aesthetic that prized a rational, linear ordering of nature. Indeed, the very ditches that sliced the ground formed pleasing right angles, and the planting beds with their different colors of earth molded into various geometric shapes were sights of beauty.<sup>92</sup> Columella remarks on the joy of making grids in the soil:

"Grab a hoe. Hoes gleam through wear on the soil. Engineer small-gauge channels. One end straight to the other. Then go back, make a grid. Wee paths set at a right angle. Attention: now the earth has been combed, and the 'partings' are clear. She stripped off soiled clothes, and she shines. Demands seed of her own".<sup>93</sup>

The connection between surveying and garden planning is obvious. According to Scrofa, the four main issues to be observed by the farmer are the topography of the land, the

<sup>91</sup> *Fundi enim eius propter culturam iucundiore spectaculo sunt multis, quam regie polita aedificia aliorum*, VARRO *Rust.* 1, 2, 10, trans. W.D. HOOPER; Varro's own monumental aviary at Casinum featured marble columns and trees in alignment: *Rust.* 3, 5, 11-12.

<sup>92</sup> Again and again, Pliny the Younger points out walled sections of his estates as discrete zones within the larger landscape, as if sketching a plan from above: "It is a great pleasure to look down on the countryside from the mountain, for the view seems to be a painted scene of unusual beauty rather than a real landscape", *Magnam capies uoluptatem, si hunc regionis situm ex monte prospexeris. Neque enim terras tibi sed formam aliquam ad eximiam pulchritudinem pictam uideberis cernere*, PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 13, trans. B. RADICE; "The whole garden is enclosed by a dry-stone wall which is hidden from sight by a box hedge planted in tiers; outside is a meadow, as well worth seeing for its natural beauty as the formal garden I have described; then fields and many more meadows and woods", *Omnia maceria muniuntur: hanc gradata buxus operit et subtrahit. Pratum inde non minus natura quam superiora illa arte uisendum; campi deinde porro multaque alia prata et arbusta*, PLIN. *Ep.* 5, 6, 17-19, trans. B. RADICE.

<sup>93</sup> *Tunc quoque trita solo splendentia sarcula sumat / angustosque foros aduerso limite ducens, / rursus in obliquum distinguat tramite paruo. / Verum ubi iam puro discrimine pectita tellus / deposito squalore nitens sua semina poscet*, COLUM. *Rust.* 10, 91-95, trans. J. HENDERSON; PLIN. *HN* 19, 60.

nature of the soil, and the size of the plot and the protection of its limits.<sup>94</sup> Access to good soil and a water source were crucial. So, too, the garden designer must have examined, measured, dug foundation trenches, demarcated the edges, and leveled the plot. Columella connects surveying with architecture and with agricultural practice, but also bemoans the over-specialization of the professions:

“I replied that this was the duty not of a farmer but of a surveyor (*mentor*), especially as even architects, who must necessarily be acquainted with the methods of measurement, do not deign to reckon the dimensions of buildings which they have themselves planned, but think that there is a function which befits their profession and another function which belongs to those who measure structures after they have been built and reckon up the cost of the finished work by applying a method of calculation . . . [I]nstructions about measurements . . . is really the business of geometricians rather than of countrymen.”<sup>95</sup>

In a word, surveying constituted a sophisticated technique of observation and a true art of reading landscape, and this skill was intimately allied with the evolving practices of agriculture, horticulture, floriculture, and the visual arts. It is no coincidence that the elevated and inclusive perspective became a popular mode in Roman art at a time when techniques for shaping the land began to inform architectural planning and landscape design — and, by extension, artistic compositions.<sup>96</sup> Although assembled and illustrated at a later date, the handbooks of Roman surveyors repeat much of what Varro and Columella advise, as in just one example, that trees form the natural

<sup>94</sup> VARRO *Rust.* 1, 14, 1-4, trans. W.D. HOOPER.

<sup>95</sup> *Quod ego non agricolae sed mentoris officium esse dicebam, cum praesertim ne architecti quidem, quibus necesse est mensurarum nosse rationem, dignentur consummatorum aedificiorum, quae ipsi disposuerunt, modum comprehendere sed aliud existiment professioni suae conuenire, aliud eorum qui iam extracta metiuntur et imposito calculo perfecti operis rationem computant . . . praecepta mensurarum . . . id opus geometrarum magis esse quam rusticorum,* COLUM. *Rust.* 5, 1, 3-4, trans. E.S. FORSTER & E.H. HEFFNER.

<sup>96</sup> For bibliography on the bird’s-eye view: BERGMANN 2008.

boundaries of land, planted at regular intervals like a natural fence.<sup>97</sup> The maps and plans of the *Corpus Agrimensorum*, not the original *formae* of surveyors but instructional images, make clear that the *ars* of surveying was based in geometry, the language of architects and painters.<sup>98</sup> Surveyors required knowledge, sensitivity, and a quasi-religious mode of seeing.<sup>99</sup>

The boundaries and divisions of the miniature enclosure, like colonial foundations, were created by a grid of rhumb lines (lines crossing all meridians at the same angle). Such gardens present a paradox: the man-made perimeter surrounds nature, reversing the natural order whereby countryside surrounds the city. The miniatures encapsulate the aesthetic purity of the Roman grid in a bird's-eye view, which Bachelard saw as a utopian image of organized control that correlates macrocosm and microcosm in a "dream of high solitude".<sup>100</sup>

For those who observe closely and patiently, however, sustained looking at garden paintings brings revelations beyond the immediate impression of the regular grid. In nature a garden wall stands outside in the elements, it weathers and erodes, it becomes a place for weeds and creepers. The agricultural writers and poets insist that landowners constantly rid their garden of weeds.<sup>101</sup> Let us return to the comparison between

<sup>97</sup> On marking the boundaries of private property: CAMPBELL 2000, 372-373 n. 24; 468-471. On trees as boundaries in miniature of manuscript Palatinus 1564, Vatican Library (9<sup>th</sup> century): BUSSI 1983, 266 Fig. 256; CAMPBELL 2000, 319 Ill. 201.

<sup>98</sup> Limited territory with a colonial house in miniature of Acerianus A (6<sup>th</sup> century CE), Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Frontinus *De Conrouersiis* 3, 7 *ager Arcifinus* with *subseciuum*, Codex Guelf.Arc.f.18r: BUSSI 1983, 113, Fig. 73; CAMPBELL 2000, 279 Ill. 6. Diagram documenting a controversy about territory in miniature of Acerianus A (6<sup>th</sup> century CE), Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek: BUSSI 1983, 111, Fig. 69; CAMPBELL 2000, 284 Ill. 35; 344 n. 44.

<sup>99</sup> GARGOLA 1995, 25-50; CAMPBELL 2000; 2005; CUOMO 2007, 113-114; 127-128.

<sup>100</sup> BACHELARD 1994, 173; in general: 150-173.

<sup>101</sup> "Therefore, unless your hoe is ever ready to assail the weeds, your voice to terrify the birds, your knife to check the shade over the darkened land, and your prayers to invoke the rain, in vain, poor man, you will gaze on your

the different viewing experiences of the lifesize illusion and the miniature plan. In the immersive room, boundaries only gradually come to one's attention, until the dominant geometry of the entire room prevails, only to unravel again as the eye focuses on vivid natural details. Weeds grow in front of a wicker fence; foliage peeps through walls and crawls over them (see Figs. 6.9, 6.17, 6.18).<sup>102</sup> The miniature garden, in contrast, initially appears to be a linear perimeter existing outside of space and essentially devoid of space. Sustained looking, however, exposes a playful undermining at the edges of order. While meticulously spaced blossoms obediently follow their prescribed course alongside the fence, vines protrude through lattice and weeds creep up from underneath. These artful violations of the boundary, like the birds that perch upon it or fly over it, underscore its tenuous hold over nature.

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neighbour's large store of grain, and you will be shaking oaks in the woods to assuage your hunger", *Quod nisi et adsiduis herbam insectabere rastris / et sonitu terrebis auis et ruris opaci / falce premes umbram uotisque uocaueris imbrem, / heu magnum alterius frustra spectabis aceruum / concussaue famem in siluis solabere quercu*, VERG. *Georg.* 1, 155-159, trans. G.P. GOOLD.

<sup>102</sup> GURY, forthcoming (a); (b).

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## DISCUSSION

*C. Loeben:* Bei den kleinen Gartendarstellungen, meist in den unteren Wandzonen und vor schwarzem Grund, frage ich mich, ob sowohl der Blick von oben in diese Gärten als auch die Wahl eines durchblickbaren Maschenzaunes um sie herum nicht vielleicht ganz spezifisch deshalb gewählt worden sind, um verstärkt genau diese Leere des Gartens zu illustrieren. Wenn man z. B. in dem zum Garten offenen Raum des Auditorium des Maecenas vor den Wänden, in deren unteren Bereichen diese Darstellungen angebracht sind, sitzt oder liegt und in den realen, üppig mit vielen Pflanzen und Blumen ausgestatteten Garten blickt, wäre es dann möglich, dass die kleinen Darstellungen der leeren Gärten im Rücken der Personen eine Art Vanitas-Darstellung (eine Art *memento mori* oder *carpe diem*) sein sollen, mit der Aussage: "Genieße jetzt noch den schönen lebendigen Garten, denn eines Tages werden auch die Gärten leer (und somit tot und uninteressant) sein und nur noch ihre Umfriedung wird an den einst lieblichen Inhalt erinnern!".

*B. Bergmann:* Emptiness and lack of any location in space are indeed the major characteristics of the floating garden precincts. The juxtaposition of the two pictorial modes in the Auditorium of Maecenas is rare, but most of the miniature views do appear near an actual garden. Because of their pristine condition, I had not considered that they depict a moment after the florescence of a garden, and thus *uanitas*. But such an interpretation could well be applied to the illusionistic, lifesize garden paintings, where flowers and fruit are depicted as if at the height of fruition.

*R. Taylor:* It does appear that the presence of the plants themselves within these miniature garden contexts is minimized. However, you should be mindful that similar miniaturizing genres that use this chiaroscuro effect sometimes applied the lighter paint *al secco*, with the consequence that much of the paint has flaked off the background. One well-known example of this is the fresco in House IX.i.7 at Pompeii representing Thetis and the shield of Achilles in the forge of Vulcan. Today the shield seems to bear little more than a blank, dark field, but originally it carried intricate monochromatic renderings of battle scenes, of which only small fragments remain. So it is important to verify that the appearance of emptiness within the garden fences is not deceptive.

*B. Bergmann:* It certainly is the case that many details added *al secco* have flaked off the frescoes, especially on black walls such as those of Triclinium C from the Villa Farnesina. However, the better-preserved fragments in the Naples Museum do show tiny blue, red, and white flowers, combined with leaves in different shades of green. The attention to detail in plants like these is astounding; only upon very close looking and magnification do they come to light. This was a true art of the miniature. But these plants were in fact secondary within the larger precincts, whose focus was the linear enclosure and empty space within and without.

*C. Loeben:* Es fällt mir schwer, mich des Eindrucks zu erwehren, dass in den kleinen Garten-Darstellungen nicht ganz viel mit Innen und Außen gespielt worden ist. Zuerst einmal kann man dank des Blicks von oben und des Flechtzaunes gut in sie hineinblicken. Dann gibt es stets die ins Garteninnere hineinragenden zum Teil Apsis-artigen oder auch überdachten Einbuchtungen, die einem ein nach 'Innen' gelangen erlauben, ohne sich jedoch wirklich innerhalb der Umfriedung zu befinden, und zuletzt sind häufig Vögel präsent, für die kein Zaun



über Innen- oder Außensein entscheidend ist . . . Kann dahinter eine Bedeutung stecken?

*B. Bergmann:* This is an important point. In several cases, it is not clear if we are looking at the outside 'façade' of such a garden precinct or are positioned in the middle of a far more extensive one. The apses present such a contradiction: one would expect to stroll past burbling fountains set in niches while *inside* a garden, not outside. The birds only undermine the fact that such walls and barriers may be erected by humans to keep other creatures in or out, but nature does not obey them.

*K. von Stackelberg:* So many of these scenes include blocked entrances, blind alleys and tight walkways, playing on a tension between what is accessible to the eye and what is accessible to the body. I think a very useful theoretical approach to understanding this aspect of Roman spatial sense would be Merleau-Ponty's work on phenomenology.<sup>1</sup>

*B. Bergmann:* Yes, the physical experience suggested by the garden precincts is quite ambiguous, as Christian Loeben observes about what is 'in' and what is 'out'. Our instant access to both the exterior and the interior through the bird's-eye view is contradicted on the ground by blocked entries and lack of clarity about what is where.

*K. Coleman:* The absence of human and animal figures in the miniature garden paintings is very striking, especially as boundaries delineate a space from which undesirable elements are meant to be kept away. We know that there were porters in the *fauces* of townhouses, and herms, which had an apotropaic function, appear in garden paintings and (obviously) in the gardens of the *Priapea*. The Greek epigrammatist Lucillius,

<sup>1</sup> MERLEAU-PONTY 2012.

writing under Nero, comments on the punishment of a certain 'Meniscus' for stealing three apples from the garden of Zeus;<sup>2</sup> this may or may not have been staged as a 'fatal charade,' but at the very least it shows a concern with keeping thieves out of gardens. Do any of the Roman garden-paintings show gardens locked or policed in any way?

*B. Bergmann:* No, and this lack is thought-provoking. Both the miniature and lifesize paintings at first seem to present accessible garden spaces, but movement was through limited access points and these are visually blocked by a pool or a statue. The Pan and Priapus statues seen protecting sacred precincts in paintings are not present in gardens. In fact, there does not seem to be any protection beyond the walls, but in a few illusionistic garden paintings (Boscoreale, Oplontis) the walls appear to have grates and metal spikes.

*É. Prioux:* La juxtaposition que vous avez mise en évidence entre la riche polychromie de représentations illusionnistes du jardin et les vues axonométriques de jardins miniatures et vides sur fond noir est un exemple frappant de la tension (fréquente dans les fresques romaines) entre construction et déconstruction de l'illusion. Cette juxtaposition n'attire-t-elle pas aussi l'attention du spectateur sur l'habileté des peintres qui sont capables de maîtriser et de mettre en œuvre des manières très différentes de peindre, avec des usages très différents du coloris, qui reposent notamment sur le choix de mettre en valeur, ou non, la structure géométrique du jardin et de jouer, ou non, sur un traitement très graphique de l'image qui repose sur l'entrecroisement de très nombreuses lignes d'une finesse extrême? Dans les miniatures qui limitent l'usage des couleurs à un jeu de contrastes marqués sur le clair et le sombre, n'y a-t-il pas une attention particulière portée à la notion même d'ombre, essentielle à la fois pour la peinture et pour le jardin? Dans la

<sup>2</sup> *Anth. Pal.* 11, 184.

mesure où le nom grec des pergolas n'est autre que *σκιάδες* il est intéressant de les trouver, traitées avec un tel jeu de clair-obscur, dans la skiagraphie.

*B. Bergmann:* Your description of the tension between the construction and deconstruction of pictorial illusion, and thus the display of the painter's virtuosity, is very incisive. Your further point about the artist's emphasis on line, light, and shadow and a possible connection between *skiagraphia* and the actual light effects produced by a pergola (*skiades*) reminds me that we miss the associations of colors in Roman art. Much would come, I believe, from closer study of descriptions of physical sensations experienced within a natural environment and the representations of such environments.

*N. Nonaka:* What does the representation of boundaries (wickerwork fence, stone wall, grotto, pergola, etc.) in painted views of Roman gardens suggest about the notion of liminality in the Roman mind?

*B. Bergmann:* It is just this question that initially drew me to this unusual group of images. Others have written about Roman notions of space (Florence Dupont, for example)<sup>3</sup> and I resist venturing an assessment of the 'Roman mind'. But a more concrete answer might be found in the material remains of the Roman period. The wall or fence separates two realms but belongs to neither, in this case either inside or outside, and the garden itself is an in-between space, neither indoors nor outdoors. Markers defining sacred space are common in earlier Greek art; sacred enclosures and guardian statues multiply in Hellenistic representations (as they do in poetry). What appears to be new is the all-encompassing view of boundaries within their larger landscape. It is tempting to see a connection with conquest and colonization.

<sup>3</sup> DUPONT 1989.

*R. Taylor:* I am struck by the potential symbolism of the imagery attached to the borders. Do you think there is any significance to their residual symbols? The Dionysiac theme always seems to dominate, but underlying the forms there are other, perhaps related ideas. A wine vessel or a similar kind of form atop a column or pillar, for example, evokes a popular kind of funerary monument, modeled perhaps on the Greek *heroon*, in which the vessel functions as a cinerary urn. Countless examples are represented on south Italian vases, and even at Pompeii we see the motif, both in real space (for example, the tomb of Aesquillia Polla outside the Nola Gate) and in representations (for example on the Seven Sages mosaic from the Villa of Siminius Stephanus). Could such symbols represented in trelliswork perhaps evoke the kind of philosophic contemplation that we associate with some Greek memorial gardens, such as the Academy? And are there other layers of meaning there as well?

*B. Bergmann:* The presence of these common forms in philosophical and funerary gardens may be due to their ubiquity in the Roman landscape. The growth of private villas in the later Republic and early Empire led to the incorporation of shrines and tombs into private property, so that these features became part of villa gardens. This makes it difficult to differentiate among the functions of open-air spaces.

*A. Marzano:* Thank you for bringing to our attention such delightful and interesting representations. When I saw these axonometric enclosed garden views, I also thought of land surveyors and centuriation, and the *forma* that recorded the boundaries and land plots, not because they were the same thing, of course, but because of the idea inherent in both about measuring, defining, marking boundaries physically, and creating geometric forms. I wonder whether the fact that usually these depictions are located on the dado, below the lush painted gardens, might be seen as an allusion to the first phase of laying

out a garden, that is the plan and definition of its boundaries, and then the larger scenes above show the actual result of such planning.

*B. Bergmann:* If the depictions do relate to groundplans drawn by landscape architects (real or fantastical), as I believe they do, your explanation of their placement would make a lot of sense. The fact that so many examples are seen from above, and lie on black fields below painted architecture and vegetation, hints at a kind of spatial logic (from solid earth to air in the uppermost zone).

*S. Dalley:* It occurred to me that the wicker surround to the miniature garden was not related to the evidence for wicker surrounds for individual beds. The former is there instead of stone; the latter has no equivalent in stone. Could that type of garden represent a structure that could be dismantled and transported for occasions outside the owner's property? Might this possibility be linked to the placement below the main garden picture, and to the black background (if I remember correctly), as if it were usually in storage?

*B. Bergmann:* You are correct that the wickerwork that we see in the miniature views is quite distinct from the looser examples reconstructed in actual Campanian gardens. The material and designs may be similar, but the enclosures of the spacious precincts are far more architectural and elaborate. In fact, the series of apses more closely resembles concrete and stone structures such as the massive *nymphaeum* at Massalubrense.<sup>4</sup> The idea of transitory structures set up for special occasions is intriguing. One wonders then about the more permanent fixtures of marble waterbasins and statues on bases. Perhaps they could have stood in the open, planted garden and then become focal features for such ephemeral structures.

<sup>4</sup> BUDETTA 2006, 64; 93, No. 8; BUDETTA & VON HASE 2013.

I doubt that the placement of so many of the miniature views at the bottom of the wall related to storage, however.

*A. Marzano:* The precision of the representations, their small size, the black background, and the intricate weaving work achieved with the reeds all suggest to me the idea of preciousness. Actually, the reedwork is almost like a piece of jewellery in filigree technique. These elaborate yet ephemeral boundaries might mark out an important, special part of the grounds of the garden or estate. Furthermore, there is evidence, besides what is mentioned in the agronomists, of the importance given to reed beds as part of estates. There are inscriptions and papyri that talk of reed beds, normally in relation to vineyards, and of the importance of keeping or replanting them so that reeds are always available when needed. Some of the inscriptions are funerary and refer to legacies left to professional associations and garden tombs. To my knowledge, the reed beds are not explicitly mentioned in relation to the creation of this intricate fencing. Mention of leases of reed beds in conjunction with vine cultivation occurs also in papyri.<sup>5</sup> Lastly, there is a funerary inscription about a garden tomb that mentions among the various features also a reed bed (*harundinetum*).<sup>6</sup>

*K. von Stackelberg:* Your paper illustrates how intensely garden scenes demonstrated the Roman ludic pleasure of viewing. Do you think they may also have served as prompts to activate visual literacy, so that they were teaching people how to look or reminding them to look more closely at what was before their eyes? After years of encountering the image of the bird on the reed, I've only just realised that the image is also a visual pun: the warbler on the syrinx synaesthetically transposes sight and sound.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., *P. Oxy.* XIV 1631, contract for labor in a vineyard.

<sup>6</sup> *CIL* VI 29847.

*B. Bergmann:* I definitely think that the combination of different ways of depicting gardens invites alternative ways of viewing them. This is most apparent in the porticoes bordering on living garden spaces. Another question is whether the illusionistic garden paintings might have prompted viewers' visual literacy of botany and ornithology. The plants and birds are so specific that they may be drawn from illustrated treatises. Your observation about the pun on the reed poses the question whether more can be read into these lifelike realms. It has been suggested that the trees in the Garden Room of Livia represent specific Olympian deities. Whether or not the garden paintings do embody a sophisticated, coded language, as do Dutch still lifes (for example), remains an open question.

*D. Nelis:* Vergil's first *Eclogue* talks about land division and hedges and evokes the whole question of landscape, describing both rough land full of marsh and rocks and a much more garden-like *locus amoenus* with a stream, bee-hives, shade, etc. A reference to land measurement in relation to the loss of land by the family of Propertius in the confiscations is exactly parallel to *Eclogue* 1.<sup>7</sup>

*B. Bergmann:* The poetic references to divisions caused by the newly structured landscape of Italy tend to be poignant. As has been shown, this mood finds parallels in the dreamy 'sacro-idyllic' landscape paintings, which offer a striking alternative to the cool, geometric garden plans. The illusionistic garden paintings, on the other hand, with their grafted fruit trees and tamed vines, would seem to celebrate the bounty that results from agricultural and horticultural control. In other words, the range and variety of verbal and visual responses to the recent, radical changes in the natural environment, and the potential tension among these responses, deserve more attention.

<sup>7</sup> PROP. 4, 1, 130.

*K. Coleman:* Are vegetable gardens ever depicted? And, if not, why not?

*B. Bergmann:* This is an excellent question and one more example of the asymmetry between the paintings and Latin poetry, where vegetable gardens play a role. Nicholas Purcell has shown how the 'landscape of production' became an aesthetic in villa culture from the first century BCE, but while fruit trees grow in the lifesize garden paintings, vegetables do not.<sup>8</sup> These instead appear in still lifes (*xenia*). Perhaps gourds, cabbages, and asparagus were not considered among the visually pleasing *ornamenta* of a garden.

*R. Lane Fox:* Your excellent paper reminds us of an often forgotten garden-aesthetic, the aesthetics of garden structures. You show us a Roman world of big, green horti-parks and fenced trellis and pergola gardens. We have learned to look, now, beyond big 'landscape-gardens' in 18<sup>th</sup>-century England and to consider the smaller gardens in 'country boxes' and suburban gardens. The crucial sources are the paintings by Thomas Robins, first catalogued by John Harris.<sup>9</sup> They also show structures and ornamental fences. The aesthetics of the screen, the 'balustrade', and the boundary can be studied and compared very well in Japanese and Chinese poems and paintings. A contrast, or a similarity between cultures? It would be good to know.

<sup>8</sup> PURCELL 2003.

<sup>9</sup> HARRIS 1978.



