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Matthieu Dejean and Perrine Galand-Willemen, *Chanteloup, the Renaissance Garden of the Villeroys: An Initiation to Humanism*. Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2022. 352pp. Illustrations, notes, references, and index. $78.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 978-2-600-06230-5.

Review by Sara Wellman, University of Mississippi.

In *Chanteloup, the Renaissance Garden of the Villeroys: An Initiation to Humanism,* garden historian Matthieu Dejean and Latinist Perrine Galand-Willemen provide valuable insight into the connection between French garden design and humanist thought from the 1560s, when the Chanteloup garden was created, through the following decades when it rose to fame, and ending in the 1630s when it seemed to be in decline. Almost no visual representations of the now lost garden have been discovered, but Dejean and Galand-Willemen have done extensive archival research to uncover textual traces that they piece together to offer the reader an extremely engaging virtual walk through what was one of France's most famous Renaissance gardens. In addition to the striking visuals created in their written descriptions, the book is full of illustrations and maps that supplement our understanding of what the garden may have looked like, why it became so popular, and what kind of plants it contained, as well as our understanding of the literary and historical influences that shaped its design.

In Part I of the book, Dejean begins by situating Chanteloup in its cultural context, tracing the history of the estate through several generations of its aristocratic owners and exploring the connection between gardening and social ascension in Renaissance France. In 1518, Nicolas II de Neufville, seigneur de Villeroy, financial secretary to François I, acquired the former royal hunting lodge of Chanteloup near the town of Châstres (now Arpajon). It was the next generation of Villeroys, particularly Nicolas de Neufville's two sons Jean and Nicolas III, who made expanding their properties and gardens a major part of the family's identity. Dejean recreates for readers what a Renaissance visitor to the garden might have seen, drawing on a diverse array of sources, including travel diaries of numerous Renaissance visitors who came from all over Europe to discover the wonders of Chanteloup, passages from agricultural and gardening manuals such as Olivier de Serres's *Théâtre d'agriculture et mesnage des champs* (1600), Chanteloup estate records of gardeners' tools, and poetry that describes the garden and its owners (especially the neo-Latin poem *Cantilupum*, the first (1587) and second (1588) editions of which are studied and translated by Galand-Willemen in Part III). Dejean characterizes the first section of the garden as "strongly reminiscent of humanist culture, a sort of garden of wisdom" where "the visitor was instructed on the unpredictability of Fortune, the cruelty of fate and the importance of a virtuous life" through a series of scenes created entirely out of sculpted

shrubs, or topiaries (p. 51). For example, one group of topiaries represented the young Hercules choosing between the allegorical figures of vice and virtue, ultimately choosing the path of virtue. The visitors participated in his "reward," entering next a palace of greenery complete with topiary furniture and a banquet table set with terracotta plates. Throughout the garden, inscriptions in Latin on wooden panels guided the visitor's interpretations of the moralizing scenes. Other notable topiary sculptures included several recreations of Roman rites and recreations of the ancient mausoleums of Rhodopis and Halicarnassus, displaying "a blend of the skill of the archeologist and the gardener" (p. 55). From the descriptions of the gardens and gardening manuals of the time, Dejean provides a list of plants that may have been used to form the elaborate green sculptures at Chanteloup and discusses how the garden's creators may have understood the relationship between nature and art.

Part II is a collection of twenty descriptions of Chanteloup written by late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century visitors that Dejean drew on in Part I's reconstruction of the garden. This section sheds light on the importance of garden tourism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Western European culture, and the kind of people who engaged in this type of travel. Each description is printed in its original language (Italian, German, French, English, or Latin) alongside an English translation. Dejean includes a brief biography of each writer and an explanation of the circumstances of their visit to Chanteloup. The earliest accounts are from 1596 and the latest from 1643. Many of these accounts marvel at the garden's storytelling through topiary, the numerous automata created by hydraulic engineers, or the "Universe Fountain" which impressed the young Tyrolean nobleman Hans Georg Ernstingers on his 1612 visit: "a richly decorated fountain representing the celestial sphere with the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the seven planets, made of boxwood and of mostly painted privet" (p. 227). By 1643, the abbé de Coulon spoke about the glory of Chanteloup in the past tense. By then, the garden had come into the possession of Benedictine nuns "who have not kept it up; thus it is no longer worth stopping for" (p. 241). Dejean explains this decline not only in terms of change in ownership, but also in changes in taste and literary and cultural references that became gradually less familiar to visitors.

Part III is Galand-Willemen's critical edition and translation of *Cantilupum*, a neo-Latin poem that praises the beauty of Chanteloup and details its many remarkable features. While the poem was anonymous, Galand-Willemen presents convincing evidence that it was written by Madeleine de L'Aubespine Villeroy (1546-1596), a woman of letters who lived at Chanteloup during the height of the garden's glory. Just as the garden itself was in part created to enhance the family's social status, the poet may have written the *Cantilupum* to help gain favor for her husband Nicolas IV de Neufville, whose position in the court of Henri III was made more precarious because of his association with the Catholic League. In 808 lines of verse, the poet takes the reader on a walk through the garden, praising the features for which it had become famous. Galand-Willemen's extensive notes provide yet deeper insight into the literary and cultural references that demonstrate the connection between humanist thought and garden design at Chanteloup.

While Dejean clarifies that Chanteloup was perhaps too unusual to be considered representative of French gardens of its era, this book provides valuable insight into the cultural importance of Renaissance gardens, perhaps too often overshadowed by scholarly attention to seventeenth-

century *jardins à la française*. The only shortcoming of this impressively researched, informative book is that there are spelling errors and vestiges of French syntax in Part I that can make the text a bit difficult to follow at times. Despite this caveat, the book, the interdisciplinary approach of which serves literary scholars, historians, and garden historians alike, is an important contribution to Renaissance studies.

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