

RECENZII / BOOK REVIEWS

Matthieu Dejean, Perrine Galand-Willemen, **CHANTELOUP: THE RENAISSANCE GARDEN OF THE VILLEROYS – AN INITIATION TO HUMANISM** (Publisher Droz 2022, 352 pp., ISBN-10: 2600062300, ISBN-13: 978-2600062305).

This scholarly work is based on meticulous research that incorporates a broad range of primary sources – particularly historical short descriptions and the court poem *Cantilupum* – as well as secondary and complementary materials such as archival diaries, manuscripts, paintings, drawings, maps, and plans, etc. It is further supported by an extensive bibliography covering universal and French history, intellectual and natural history, the history of parks and gardens, and biographies, with works in multiple languages, including French, English, Italian, German, and Latin.

In addition to its rich narrative, the publication is enhanced by numerous illustrations, including archival materials such as maps, plans, and paintings, alongside contemporary imagery. These visual elements, coupled with written comparisons, allow readers to grasp the complexity of the garden and the cultural aspirations of the Villeroy family, providing a well-rounded understanding of the site's cultural significance.

This book provides invaluable insights into the Villeroy Renaissance Garden at Chanteloup, a historically significant but under-researched site. It highlights the garden's importance within the broader history of gardens, with a particular focus on its role in French garden history and intellectual history. More than a display of aesthetic splendour, the garden served as an intellectual sanctuary, embodying a stoic-Christian initiatory journey. Its exceptional features included intricate topiaries, automata, statues, architectural models, and fountains, designed to evoke the Roman civilization and invite the stroller on a contemplative and reflective path.

The publication is organized into seven primary chapters, encompassing a concise introduction, an examination of the Villeroy family, their finances, and their patronage of the arts. It includes detailed accounts of the gardens at Chanteloup and connections with the poem *Cantilupum*, as well as analyses, descriptions, and comparative studies with other analogous sites. Additional chapters address the themes of European tourism and sources of inspiration, particularly the influence and imitation of Renaissance gardens. They also examine the collections of natural and man-made artifacts associated with the site. The work concludes with a synthesis of the findings. These chapters are supplemented by appendices containing historical descriptions of the garden, a detailed study of *Cantilupum*, a comprehensive bibliography, and indexes of authors, historical figures, artists, places, monuments, and illustrations.

The garden of the Chanteloup Castle (Saint-Germain-lès-Arpajon), owned by the Villeroy-Neufville family, was

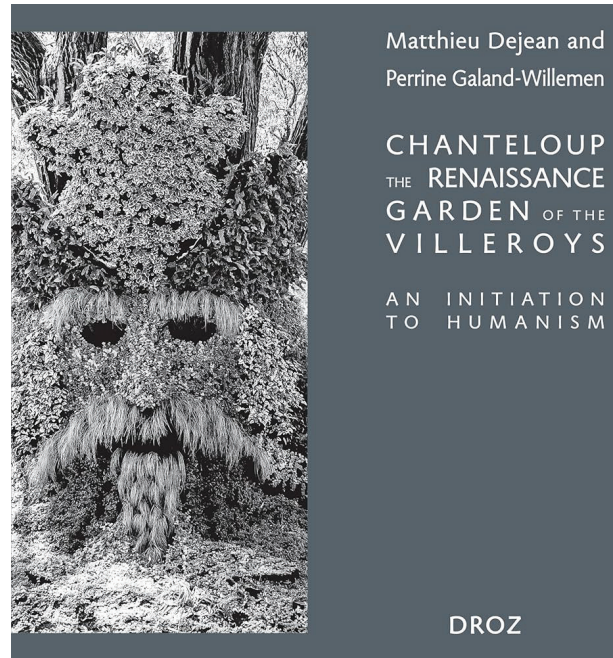


Fig. 1. Chanteloup: the Renaissance Garden of the Villeroy – book cover

a masterpiece of the French Renaissance, comparable to the great Italian gardens of the time (e.g. Belvedere or Villa Madama in Rome). Through their publication, Matthieu Dejean and Perrine Galand-Willemen revived this remarkable garden, weaving its historical, cultural, and intellectual significance. Combining meticulous research with an extensive array of primary and secondary sources, the book offers a comprehensive exploration of the Villeroy Renaissance Garden at Chanteloup. It effectively highlights the site's architectural, cultural, and intellectual importance, positioning it as a masterpiece of the French Renaissance comparable to the era's great Italian gardens. The detailed analysis of *Cantilupum* and the integration of visual and textual materials enhance the depth of the study, while the structured chapters provide a logical framework for understanding the garden's complexity and historical context. This publication not only revives the memory of a remarkable artistic creation but also establishes its place within the broader history of gardens and Renaissance intellectual thought. It thus serves as an essential resource for scholars and researchers interested in garden history, cultural studies, and the Renaissance period.

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