Expatriate Gardens in Tuscany: Planting Ideas of Nationality

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Expatriate Gardens in Tuscany: Planting Ideas of Nationality

An Evaluation of Three Gardens in the
Anglo-American Creation of a Renaissance-Defined Nation

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Introduction

The Italian villa is no stranger to the world of literature, thanks greatly to its continued appeal to the literate elite of the ages. Indeed, from their origins to the Grand Tour, the villa proves resilient as both a social and literary topic. In the early twentieth-century, Tuscany is in the spotlight with an overwhelming presence in both the social scene and the body of publications and writings coming from its own hills. Over the previous few decades, villas in and around Florence were receiving new life thanks to the inpouring of wealthy Anglo-Americans. Growing fascination with garden studies at the turn of the century coincided with that arrival of numerous foreign writers, artists, diplomats, and intellectuals to Florence and its surrounding country. While the early patrons made some renovations, the defining of what should be considered as Italian villas and gardens began in rural Tuscany at the cusp of the century. At Villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce, the patrons combined their own mixed lineage and upbringings with their perceived ideals of the Italian Renaissance, making a visible display of the confluence. Viewed together, they create the timeline of power given to formal gardens to express and influence the understanding and defining of Italy by foreign expatriate elites.

Anglo-Americans peppered themselves across the hills: At Maiano, English writer Vernon Lee (pseudonym of Violet Paget 1856-1935) at Il Palmerino; Janet Ross (1842-1927) and her husband at Poggio Gherardo, not far from Bernard (1865-1959) and Mary (1864-1945) Berenson, the couple making I Tatti the home of a great library and collection of Renaissance art; Lady Sybil Cutting (1879-1943) at the Villa Medici in Fiesole; Charles Augustus Strong (1862-1940) building Le Balze; and Arthur Acton

(1873-1953) with his American-born wife, Hortense Mitchell (1871-1962) taking on the Capponi villa of La Pietra. Many of these new expatriate patrons took an active role in restoring and renovating their properties. Often they called on each other, exchanging advice and gossip about architecture, gardening, architects, gardeners, and their neighbor's villas and gardens. Neighbors and friends brought guests, the patrons invited friends of their own, and soon "visitors, armed with letters of introduction, began arriving from the British Isles, northern Europe, and increasingly from the United States, eager to learn the lessons of Italian garden design."[1] Though they were eager to learn the lessons of Italian design, the gardens were defined as Italian out of an amalgamation of Anglo-American design, nostalgia, and foreign perception.

The disconnect between the two worlds, that of the Anglo-American and the native Italian, is undeniable. What was created and recorded as Italian in the villas and formal gardens at the dawn of the twentieth-century was mere idealization, and representative of a modern understanding of, and preference for, the Italian Renaissance by foreign expatriates. This is clear in the literature concerning the members of the Anglo-American community, and works written by said members. Primary sources are abundant thanks to the fact that many of the community were prolific writers. Letter correspondence, biographies, and publications of art, garden, and life philosophies make up the bulk of their oeuvre. Biographies of their visiting poet, writer, and art dealing friends give due attention to the inspiration taken from residence in, and travels through, the Italian Peninsula. Edith Wharton, Bernard Berenson, Janet Ross, and Harold Acton each make their valuable contributions to the body of published authority on art and

[1] Osmond, Patricia J. *Revisiting The Gamberaia*. 2nd edition. Centro Di, 2014. 12

architecture.[2] Berenson's work sets precedents in artist identification, and the valuation of Renaissance art. At the front of recorded correspondence is Mary Berenson. Her tenacity and dedication to an awareness of all social happenings within the Anglo-American community, with Bernard's activities and knowledge in assistance, fills her letters with endless drama, gossip, complaints of ongoing construction, and praise of the Tuscan countryside.[3] Edith Wharton, in *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*, establishes what would be for many years the guide to interpreting villa garden design based upon her methodological reduction of Renaissance garden design to its most enduring elements.[4] From their vantage point in the steeply traditional Tuscan countryside, the Anglo-American owned properties offer a unique opportunity to explore the timeline of the political relationship of landscape romanticism and planted reality.

While the experience of rural Tuscany in the twentieth century was not simply another Grand Tour, some habits die hard, and a sense of western colonization is read in the tone of the expatriate authors. Life in Italy was an adventure, a get-away, an equally pleasant and tiring experience. Part of that experience was a blatant judgment of the native Italians. Italians were consistently portrayed as inferior. They were either beautiful in their picturesque Italian-ness, or incompetent and slovenly in their work. They were amiable creatures to observe, gracious in the perceived wonderment of the Anglo-American community, and irritating in necessary practical interactions of business and

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[2] Acton, Harold. *Tuscan Villas*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1973.

[3] Together, the Berensons produced a massive body of work, both professional and personal. Berenson, Bernard. *Conversations with Berenson*. 1st American ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965. *Sketch for a Self-Portrait*. London: Constable, 1949. *Sunset and Twilight: From the Diaries of 1947-1958*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963. *The Passionate Sightseer: From the Diaries 1947-1956*. London: Thames and Hudson, c1960. *The Selected Letters of Bernard Berenson*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964.
Berenson, Mary Smith. *A Modern Pilgrimage*. New York: Appleton, 1933.

[4] Wharton, Edith. *Italian Villas and Their Gardens*. New York: The Century Co., 1904.

labor. Accounts of the wealthy expatriates passing by Italians while on an automobile jaunt portray the Italians in jovial awe of the magnificent strangeness of the foreigners. It is from within this atmosphere of elitism that the writings of Edith Wharton, Bernard and Mary Berenson, and Harold Acton craft and assert their authority on Italian art, architecture, and landscape history. The Italy and the "rural society that mattered in the present was the one that was always already gone".[5] It was to their own high-society thoughts on the Renaissance Italy that the Anglo-Americans looked to inspire their gardens, not the truth of the contemporary landscape that surrounded them.

The romantic view of the Renaissance held by the Anglo-Americans revealed in the changes being made to their villas and gardens stood against a recently unified country whose Fascist party took up the idea of creating a definition of unified Italy out of its long and diverse past as a way to advance their political agenda. Literature of the earliest Fascist concerns for Italy come from the agriculture sector in the form of writings of policy makers, statisticians, and government agencies concerned solely with the facts of food production. With a focus on land improvements, their works often exclude the estates of the Anglo-Americans perched on their hillsides not only by their foreign status, but also due to their lack of ability and interest in the land. By the 1930's, the Fascist party began in earnest to take up the up the idea of defining Italy by its Renaissance glory, at once building off of a foreign tendency while dispelling the foreign power of defining what is Italy and what is Italian.

Recent scholarship and publications are working to educate and warn today's visitors to the Tuscan hillsides against too quickly assuming a language similar to the past

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[5] Gaggio, Dario. *The Shaping of Tuscany: Landscape and Society between Tradition and Modernity*, 2017. 9.

expatriate and Fascist rhetoric towards the formal villa garden without first understanding the layered and complex history beneath their feet. Claudia Lazzaro traces the intersect of garden tradition and Fascist political interests.[6] She examines how the party realized that they as a country were being recognized by foreigners for those traditions, and took advantage of that groundwork. The Fascists defined themselves by the Renaissance characteristics that seemed so envious to expatriates, at the same time separating themselves from foreigners by defining Italy and its gardens not always for what they were, but for what they were not. English and German garden traditions stood as their greatest counterpoints.

An important display of the Fascists' full takeover in defining Italy by its Renaissance past and modern interpretation of Renaissance garden culture occurred at the 1931 Mostra del Giardino in Florence. Raffaella Fabiani Giannetto explains how the event displayed the struggle to reconcile the modern garden, regional variation, painted Renaissance landscapes, and the coveted architectonic elements of the Renaissance style into one definitive and recognizable Italian garden tradition and style.[7] In the rush to put the event together, historical accuracy gave way to historicism, and to inspire a spirit of common cultural patrimony was the goal. Giannetto, like Lazzaro, gives credit to the foreigners in Tuscany's hills for having determined which formal style was most representative of Italy, and connects them to the Fascist construction of the notion of a unified Italian garden tradition. In addressing the painted Renaissance landscapes that

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[6] Lazzaro, Claudia, and Roger J Crum. *Donatello Among the Blackshirts: History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*. Ithaca N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005.

[7] Giannetto, Raffaella Fabiani. "'Grafting the Edelweiss on Cactus Plants': The 1931 Italian Garden Exhibition and Its Legacy." In *Clio in the Italian Garden: Twenty-First-Century Studies in Historical Methods and Theoretical Perspectives*, edited by Mirka Beneš and Michael G. Lee. Washington, D.C: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2011.

were the interest of the Italian scholars, Giannetto explains how their attention to the lunettes by Giusto Utens adds another layer to the convoluted history. The lunettes were taken at face value, almost like photographs, rather than cross-examined or taken purely as visual inspiration instead of two-dimensional fact.

One common factor connecting the Renaissance to its modern proponents, both expatriate and Italian, is that of privilege. The elite classes invented landscape as a source of enjoyment and an object of control. Elites are the ones that have "landscapes". Denis Cosgrove persuasively argues that in early modern Europe a particular "way of seeing" gave rise to landscapes as abstract space to be dominated and/or artistically enjoyed.[8] Certainly this body of theoretical writings found expression through the expatriate playgrounds of Villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce. The patrons took full advantage of the space available to them and impressed their preferences of the past and present into the soil, as did the Fascists after them.

Dario Gaggio in his book about the post war era, aims to demonstrate that "rural Tuscany is a good case to think with about the ways modern societies produce "landscapes" in their ongoing attempts to read themselves in the spaces they inhabit."[9] No landscape conveys a simple and unitary message, they can also be powerful and persuasive. Analogous to Gaggio's thinking, this thesis understands landscape not as simple topography or scenery, but as a complex and evolving set of relationships between place, in its multiple meanings, and society, with its tensions and fractures. Landscapes are also about senses of time, about the stories that a place tells, or is made to tell, and

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[8] Cosgrove, Denis E. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998.

[9] Gaggio, Dario. *The Shaping of Tuscany: Landscape and Society between Tradition and Modernity*, 2017. 20.

those that are left untold or get forgotten. For villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce, their time and stories alike are decidedly modern through their intent to make the stories of their gardens Renaissance ones.

Looking at Tuscan villas is optimal over those of other regions due to the direct connection to Florence as the main stage of the Italian Renaissance, and the state of its surrounding hillsides. The agriculture and social structure around the villas, from the foundations of sharecropping in the 1400s until 1943, had never fundamentally changed. After that, everything changed, and Italy was to be defined by the Fascist party using Tuscany to promote the dreams and fears of both progress and nostalgia. The landscape works of Villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce played an important part in the expatriate community's defining of Italy, with obvious preference for the Italy of the Renaissance. They formed the very springboard from which the Fascists began to define Italy themselves, having seen the value in defining Italy by the modes of its past. The Fascist party's political goals were both supported by, and a reaction against, foreigners who tended to see Tuscany as a stage where they could connect to a more authentic self and a way of life that had been lost to their version of modernity. To that end, "the authenticity of rural life had to be constructed so that it could be perceived to have always been there".[10] Italy was defined as its Renaissance past, and Princess Ghyka, the Berensons, and the Origo's perpetuated the nostalgic vision of Italy in their gardens.

La Foce, the estate of Iris (1902-88) and Antonio (1892-1976) Origo, is the major send off from the Anglo-American community to the modernizing Fascist Italian state. Iris recorded the story of La Foce in her autobiography *Images and Shadows*, an excellent

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[10] Gaggio, Dario. *The Shaping of Tuscany: Landscape and Society between Tradition and Modernity*, 2017. 31.

primary source for understanding the mindset of a patron in the act of reconciling ideals of the past with the present, Fascist and Foreign. [11] A magnificent bibliography of the marchesa's life, written by Caroline Moorhead, situates Iris' own story within the greater scope of the Anglo-American community and Fascist Italy as only an outside observer can.[12] Moorhead is able to reveal the greater part La Foce and Iris played in the transition of values from one Renaissance nation defining group to the next in rural Tuscany. Both the primary and secondary sources give a spectacular amount of attention to the estate's landscape projects. While the agriculture logistics and implementation of modern technologies and Fascist projects fell primarily under Antonio's jurisdiction, Iris showed an avid awareness and interest in the overall success of her home and the couple's original shared dream to create a grand productive Tuscan villa in the spirit of the Renaissance. The goal of La Foce, with its holistic approach to existing as a productive estate, wrestled more directly with the Fascist defining of Italy, leaving off from the expatriate community and their Italy that Iris had grown up a part of.

Expatriate gardens in Tuscany at the beginning of the twentieth century illustrate the power of formally crafted landscapes to create and project the idea of Italy as a nation defined by the Renaissance. Villa patrons' experiences of the Tuscan countryside relied on highly selective senses of place and time, capable of producing coherent and legible images in the shape of a formal garden. Their experiences are exquisitely modern. The very landscape visitors to villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce came to see and feel was the complex and contradictory product of modern processes and sensibilities.

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[11] Origo, Iris. *Images and Shadows: Part of a Life*. 1st American ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971.

[12] Moorehead, Caroline. *Iris Origo: Marchesa of Val d'Orcia*. London: John Murray, 2000.

Rural Tuscany is today above all an iconic landscape, represented and recognized all over the world. It is the product of a deeply rooted history, and the fight to define the nation of modern Italy. The Anglo-American expatriate villas help us to understand the capabilities of reading that tension in the formal garden, as well as the broader landscape. This thesis looks at the three expatriate villas as a specific route from the trend of foreign and expatriate home ownership in Italy, and following the buildup to Fascist control over the defining of the newly unified nation of Italy and its garden tradition. It starts with Villa Gamberaia as the stepping stone for expatriates into a written critical examination of modern elements and past ideals culminating in what they would define as an Italian garden. The trend passes to Villa i Tatti and a grandiose renovation of the villa and gardens, a vision born of its two patron Renaissance art scholars, well connected to the literati and authors recoding and commenting on their stylistic choices. La Foce stands at the beginning of the end. It is a crucial visual testimony to the transition of power from the expatriate community to the Fascist party.

Villa Gamberaia

Appearing in Giuseppe Zocchi's *Vedute delle ville della Toscana*, the Villa Gamberaia etching features the west facade of the villa, newly restored by the marchesi Capponi.[13] Designed for the market of the Grand Tour, Zocchi's prints were particularly popular in England (Figure 1). In this form, the villa met its new fans, the Anglo-American expatriates of intellectual, artistic, and literary interests. It did not take long before the Gamberaia, and its Romanian patroness Princess Ghyka (1864-1954) had a firm hold on their attentions. At the turn of the century, the villa was honored and admired in 4 major villa and garden publications by British and American authors: Janet Ross' *Florentine Villas* (1901), Edith Wharton's *Italian Villas and their Gardens*, *The Gardens of Italy by Charles Latham with Descriptions by E. March Phillipps*[14], and *The Art of Garden Design* by H. Inigo Triggs (Figure 2).[15] Its fame continued through the following decades as the garden was mentioned regularly in travel guides, including Mrs. Aubrey Le Blond's *The Old Gardens of Italy: How to Visit Them*[16], and the first edition of *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance* with drawings by John Shepherd and descriptions by Geoffrey Jellicoe published in 1925.[17]

Villa Gamberaia intensified its fame in the Tuscan hillside community by becoming an oddity for its greater attempted privacy. Permission had to be granted to enter its gates. Bernard and Mary Berenson, the patrons of Villa I Tatti themselves, first had to be admitted by Carlo Placci, a well-connected member of the Florentine literary

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13 Zocchi, Giuseppe. *Vedute Delle Ville Della Toscana*. Roma: D. Audino, 1744.

14 Latham, Charles, and Evelyn March Phillipps. *The Gardens of Italy*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Southampton: Country Life Ltd. and George Newies Ltd., 1905.

15 Triggs, H. Inigo. *The Art of Garden Design in Italy*. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906.

16 Blond, Aubrey Le. *The Old Gardens of Italy: How to Visit Them*. London: J. Lane, 1912.

17 Shepherd, J. C., and Geoffrey Jellicoe. *Italian Gardens of the Renaissance*. New York: Scribner's, 1925.

and social scene. In her diary in 1896, Mary remarks that Placci was the only one who had permission to visit the gardens and had proudly taker her and Bernard to see it for the first time early in March that year.[18] Years later, permission granting power passed to Mary Berenson herself after the First World War.

Despite its greater privacy, the villa and its gardens became well known to its neighbors and friends. During the first decade of the century, much of the interest in the Gamberaia centered around its *parterre d'eau* (water parterre), created by Princess Ghyka at the south end of the garden after her purchase of the villa in 1896 (Figures 3-5). The Princess' new creation replaced the older *parterre de broderie* (planted parterre), a change which inspired much admiration in fellow Florentine dwelling expatriates. Janet Ross admired that Princess Ghyka was "restoring the beautiful old-fashioned garden to its pristine splendour with infinite patience and taste."[19] Evelyn March Phillipps added to the compliments, while also expanding the complimented party to include the Princess' companion Miss Florence Blood (1866-1925), praising them as two "artists" who are "careful not to go too far" in making changes, and "yet who have initiative, who are not afraid to show that the world has gone forward, and that today can add beauty even to the most beautiful creations of yesterday."[20] Another fan of the changes, H. Inigo Triggs, agreed that the villa's "old-world charm has been considerably enhanced by [the Princess'] taste and artistic judgment."[21] While clearly many were in favor of the

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[18] Ernest Samuels. *Bernard Berenson. The Making of a Connoisseur.* Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1979. 264

[19] Ross, Janet. *Florentine Villas, with Reproductions in Photogravures from Zocchi's Etchings and Many Line Drawings by Nelly Erichsen*. London; New York: J.M. Dent & Co.; Dutton & Co., 1901. 119.

[20] Latham, Charles, and Evelyn March Phillipps. *The Gardens of Italy*. Vol. 2. 2 vols. Southampton: Country Life Ltd. and George Newies Ltd., 1905. 113-20.

[21] Triggs, H. Inigo. *The Art of Garden Design in Italy: Illustrated by Seventy-Three Photographic Plates Reproduced in Collotype Twenty-Seven Plans and Numerous Sketches in the Text Taken from Original*

contemporary flair added to an old design element, it found a critic in Edith Wharton. She remarked on the design saying that it had been remodeled "on an elaborate plan ... unrelated in style to its surroundings."[22] Already past and present were in contention, and at the mercy of foreign opinion.

Along with an availability to be beautifully measured and drawn, Villa Gamberaia spread its renown in the early 1900s through an aura of mystery, about its gardens, but also about its past. Very little was know of the villa's origins, a stymying fact discovered by Janet Ross while preparing her essay on the Gamberaia for *Florentine Villas*. Nothing definite could be discovered about its early history, and extremely sparse sources seemed to be available even to those who took the time to deliberately search for them. Thanks to Princess Ghyka, Ross was able to see an old legal document regarding a dispute about water rights. In the Florence archives she found a number of contracts from the time of Cosimo Lapi (c. 1624-35) granting him the right to make conduits through neighboring properties in order to bring water to the villa. This seemed proof of ambitious plans for constructing fountains and giochi d'acqua in the gardens of the Villa Gamberaia, consequentially leaving him heavily in debt and forcing his son to mortgage the villa. Aside from these few documents, unfortunately, there was little from which to retrace the history of several centuries. Such limited sources forced subsequent writers, Edith Wharton, Evelyn March Phillipps, and H. Inigo Triggs in the early 1900s and later, even, to Harold Acton in the 1970s, to generally limit themselves to repeating the same information that Janet Ross herself recounted.

Surveys and Plans Specially Made by the Author and Thwenty-Eaight Plates from Photographs by Mrs. Aubrey Le Blond. London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906. 83.

[22] Wharton, Edith. *Italian Villas and Their Gardens: Illustrated with Pictures by Maxfield Parrish and by Photographs*. New York: The Century Co., 1904. 41.

Being forced to face a lack of genuine historical knowledge, combined with her decision to implement a design that was open to modern ideas, desires, and interpretations, the formal garden of the Gamberaia became a playground for the patron's imagination. Beyond Zocchi's prints and the recorded water rights dispute, Princess Ghyka was forced to base her restorative interventions on what she saw before her, without the aid of any further historical precedent for her garden space. Such a situation made her design decisions truly interventions rather than restorations. Indeed, despite her greater love for privacy than her neighbors, Princess Ghyka was not immune to the modes of thought transforming the Florentine hillsides, making her interventions as equally in line with the idea of remaking the Renaissance as the rest.

In regards especially to the parterres, the princess did not change the form of the historical design element, only the material. The parterres were born from a modern and foreign whim, but cannot be observed as wholly unusual in the consideration of the greater collection of inspirational Renaissance bodies of water. Within its own limited known history, Villa Gamberaia's record of water rights disputes proves that there were early intentions for a grand aquatic display. The *parterre d'eau* is an interpretation of Renaissance forms and materials, but in a combination born of the turn-of-the-century modernism and economy. The Renaissance garden boasted aquatic bedazzlement more often in the form of fountains, reflecting pools were uncommon as the role of water was to animate the space. Princess Ghyka layered the planted and hydrological elements of a historical garden, forged them into one, and created an expression of Italian past forms in a modern element of similar shape and plan, but lacking the humor and life or past waterworks. Without even considering the rest of the garden, the parterre alone gained

the villa its fame among the expatriate community entrenched in realizing designs of foreign nostalgia glazed with modern sensibilities in a place overtly active in a centuries-old landscape memory.

Looking again at the greater array of garden elements, the inseparable weave of garden traditions shared over time and borders, between historicism and foreign modernism, can be espied. The bowling green along the side of the villa, introduced before the princess' ownership, is a reminder of earlier foreign influence on stylistic choices and international exchange. (Figures 6-7). Framing the pools of water, Princess Ghyka had planted a colorful variety of roses, irises, lilies, and oleanders. In a broad sense, Edith Wharton called it incongruent with history. Wharton was convinced that, while the Italian Renaissance garden was not purely monochromatic in the green spectrum, flowers seemed to her a superfluous addition to an otherwise more perpetuating geometrical evergreen design. As for the flowers themselves, while roses are certainly a notably English preference, the presence of the colorful blossoms as a whole were only shattering to the more architectonic ideals of Renaissance gardens held by her contemporaries, not to historical garden plans. It was in this act of Wharton, a modern English woman asserting her authority to judge what is historically Italian, that created the greatest disconnect between expatriate and native Italian sensibilities, both modern and historical. Even the planting of flowers became a point of contention over what would be considered appropriate in an interpretation of an Italian Renaissance garden.

Past and present, native and foreign, were not only converging physically, but the function and use of the formal garden also revealed their mixed expression socially. Villa Gamberaia and its princess were more in-tune with past patrons than some of their

twentieth-century contemporaries, but still with characteristic expatriate differences. Princess Ghyka was born Catherine Jeanne Kesko to the Romanian Princess Pulchérie Sturdza and Colonel Kesko of the Imperial Russian Guard (Figure 8). Country villas historically being the home of wealthy and influential people, Princess Ghyka was the perfect candidate to carry on tradition. Despite her position as foreign royalty, she took advantage of her Italian home to remove herself from society to a greater degree than both her historical predecessors and contemporary neighbors. She was reputed to be aloof and enigmatic. Bernard Berenson, quite the character himself, described her as "a narcissistic Rumanian lady who lived mysteriously in love with herself perhaps and certainly with her growing creation, the garden of the Gamberaia."[23] Despite his opinions, Berenson did not often turn down an invite to the Gamberaia, certainly not when Princess Ghyka did hold a social gathering and the villa was host to important others of the literary and artistic worlds.

The Princess grew less visible as the years passed, or so it is understood from the account of the marchesa Iris Origo. As a child, Iris accompanied her mother, Lady Sybil Cutting, on strolls through the gardens. She recalls in her memoirs:

> "Occasionally we visited the most beautiful, and certainly in my eyes the most romantic garden of all, that of the Villa Gamberaia, and I wandered about, hoping that I might catch a glimpse of the place's owner, Princess Ghyka, a famous beauty who, from the day that she had lost her looks, had shut herself up in complete retirement with her English companion, refusing to let anyone see her unveiled face again. Sometimes, I was told, she would come out of the house at

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[23] Berenson, Bernard. March 5th [1948], I Tatti, *Sunset and Twilight: From the Diaries of 1947-1958*. 1st ed. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1963. 65-66.

> dawn to bathe in the pools of the water-garden, or would pace the long cypress avenue at night – but all that I ever saw (and I wonder if a hopeful imagination was not responsible for even this) was a glimpse of a veiled figure at an upper window."[24]

While using the garden for personal and possible amorous purposes is not in conflict with historical record, the desire for more extensive privacy is. Renaissance patrons were always happy to stroll through their gardens as a display of their wealth, even if only with a single lover to accompany them. Princess Ghyka was much more selective in her company, and often left the garden to show itself, enjoying it herself only once alone.

While the Princess may have been more withdrawn, her companion, the American artist Miss Florence Blood was, conversely, very much a part of the local expatriate literary and artistic social scene. She maintained the more historically accurate and acceptable contemporary social functions of the garden. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the First World War soon changed life for the female companions. Miss Blood abandoned the bliss of the Gamberaia in order to manage a hospital for allied soldiers, set up in the villa Sachino bought by Princess Ghyka's sister near Biarritz. After the war, she returned to the Gamberaia, but her failing health left her to live her last few years as an invalid. Miss Florence Blood died in Florence in October 1925. For Princess Ghyka, the war and the Russian Revolution had taken a toll her properties and fortune. In the same year of Miss Blood's death, she sold the villa, moving first to one, then to another, of the smaller houses on, or close to, the property of the Gamberaia. Eventually she settled in a small village in Switzerland where she spent the last years of her life.

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[24] Origo, Iris. *Images and Shadows*. 1st American ed. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971. 130-31.

After the princess' departure, there is a break in knowledge of the villa. That is to say, there is very little in the way of published writings and surviving sources of the Gamberaia between the work of Geoffrey Jellicoe and the first of the essays by Sir Harold Acton around 1971. During that time, Matilda (Maud) Cass Ladyard, Baroness von Ketteler (1871-1960), daughter of Henry B. Ledyard, President of the Michigan Central Railroad, and widow of the German diplomat Baron Clemens August von Ketteler, became the villa's new American-born owner.[25] As part of the meager information available from the villa's dark years, a small scale model of the villa buildings and gardens, and a few photos taken in the 1940's reveal the significant changes made by the Baroness. As mentioned earlier, Princess Ghyka had artistically framed the pools of water with a colorful variety of roses, irises, lilies, and oleanders. The Baroness, however, preferred a monochromatic, evergreen garden of box, cypress, and yew, sculpted into distinctive topiary forms that are still seen today (Figures 9-11).[26] Significant in its turn to a Wharton Renaissance, Baroness von Ketteler seemed almost to correct Princess Ghyka's use of a Renaissance form into what was believed to be actual Renaissance planting design. It was yet another example of how the Anglo-American expatriate followed their own modern whims and understandings to define the Italian past.

Princess Ghyka was Romanian royalty, but in Italy she was merely an aloof foreign lady making early twentieth-century changes to a seventeenth-century late Renaissance villa in the style of the supported assumptions of Renaissance garden design as interpreted by her expatriate contemporaries and herself. Those who loved her aquatic

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[25] Holtz, Walter. *Villa Gamberaia in Settignano bei Florenz, zum sechzigsten Geburstag des Verfassers herausgegeben und mit einer Bibliographie versehen von Gisela Siebert.* Munich, 1972.

[26] Osmond, Patricia J. *Revisiting The Gamberaia.* 2nd edition. Centro Di, 2014. 18

adaptations praised it for its innovation upon old forms in a way that maintained the greater Renaissance ideals. Edith Wharton condemned it for being inaccurate to its past. This layering of time and place made the Villa Gamberaia a true art piece. It was a collage of the identity of its foreign patroness, ideas of Italian history, the truth of that history in the earth itself, and the implications and meanings cast upon it by both native and foreign admirers. The villa became a truly beautiful example of an expatriate using her artistic license to represent and interpret historical elements, moving the garden forward while looking back, chasing a vision of the past through modern construction. It can be defined neither as purely Italian Renaissance nor foreign Renaissance interpretation, for it inextricably bound them both in a planted web of mixed ideals.

Villa I Tatti

With eyes trained on the dealings of Renaissance paintings, Bernard and Mary Berenson made a home of Villa I Tatti, and delivered it into the modern age as the vision of an intellectual nucleus. Art dealers and connoisseurs, literati, and well-connected travelers often passed through their doors. As much heady conversation, debate, and frivolity that took place within the walls of the home, outside the gardens were needed to complete the Berensons' vision. Crafted to support the role of the villa as a harkening to Renaissance villas of equal social and intellectual attentions, the garden landscape embodies the past ideals that Bernard found so enamoring in his paintings, and combines them with his and Mary's undeniable presence in a modern expatriate society in the Florentine hillsides. Together they had to reconcile a love for the Italian past with their own modern Anglo-American circumstances and desires.

Mary was raised in England by her father, Robert Pearsall Smith, a man who believed in the free expression of physical love as the route to divine love, and by a prototype feminist mother, Hannah Whitall Smith, who wanted her daughters to stand equal with men. Mary strove for that equal footing and became a well-educated woman of Smith College and the newly established Harvard Annex. Having her education, along with the thoughts and philosophies of her parents in her mind, Mary's disposition proved to be a recipe for disaster for her first marriage to Frank Costelloe in 1885. Costelloe was a London barrister, and a man who attempted to restrict Mary's own successes by pressuring her to play better at the role of domestic wife. Mary had two daughters with Frank, Rachel in June 1887, and Karin in March 1889. Despite her love for her children, the attachment was not enough to console Mary in her caged life with Frank.

Bernard Berenson arrived in Boston in 1875 as a 10 year-old Lithuanian emigrant. His father took up work as an itinerant peddler with a route between Massachusetts and Maine, meanwhile, his mother was taking in lodgers. Berenson was known as a brilliant student, attending Boston Latin School and then Harvard, to whom he later entrusted his villa creation. Thanks to the support of several wealthy patrons, Berenson managed to travel to Italy in 1887, at which point he began in earnest to craft himself into the Italian art collector and dealer that would be his legacy. His dealings produced the funds for I Tatti's drawn out transformation. It was his great capacity for humanistic learning and attentive eye for details that gained him his clients, his fame, and Mary's attentions.

Through their intellectual pursuits, Bernard and Mary were introduced, and only a few months after their second meeting in the summer of 1890, the two became lovers. Together they sailed to Italy in August 1891 with the mission of studying the history of Italian art, Mary acting under Berenson's tutelage. Two years later, Mary asked Frank Costelloe for a divorce. He refused, but granted her a formal separation on the condition that she relinquish her parental rights. Mary agreed and cast her lot with Berenson. Ethne Clarke remarks that "She [Mary] was not troubled by her ostracism from English society, because she felt that in Italy she had found the sort of spiritual and intellectual freedom for which she had been searching".[27] Frank Costelloe died in 1899, which allowed Mary and Bernard to marry. They did so in Florence on December 29, 1900 (Figure 12).

Although ostracized from English society, Mary was still very English. A few beliefs did not change the core of her being, as was evident in her decisions regarding the villa and its gardens. In a sense, the most English thing Mary did was to create something

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[27] Clarke, Ethne. *An Infinity of Graces: Cecil Ross Pinsent, an English Architect in the Italian Landscape*. 1st ed. New York: W. W. Norton, c2013. 56.

in Tuscany after her own educated assumptions of the Italian past as a way to say that she was better than the typical England dweller. The Anglo-American expatriate society assumed that they appreciated the art of Italian history more than the native Italians, and so by striving to recreate the best and favorite of that history announced their own foreignness. English and American elitism abroad was made obvious in their act of ascribing the Renaissance to the Italian nation, and saying so through renovated and newly constructed garden design.

For nearly fifty years, Mary and Bernard Berenson lived at I Tatti in a state of mutual critique. Most often their disagreements were born of their own romantic lives, entangled with the coming and going of various lovers. When it was not their personal affairs, the couple found much to discuss, debate, praise, and lament in the creation of the villa and its surrounding gardens. Such precarious happiness was not helped by the fact that this was their architect, Cecil Pinsent's (1884-1963), first major Italian commission, one that eventually established him as the architect of choice for expatriates in Florence.

Cecil Pinsent was the son to Alice Mary, daughter of an English expatriate family in South America, and Ross Pinsent, an entrepreneurial businessman. He grew up in England after the age of five, and resented the typical boarding school as well as his father's desires that he pursue a career in law. Notably, on March 15, 1901 Pinsent was elected as a student member of the Architectural Association. Membership involved an apprenticeship to an established architecture practice and studying with the Architectural Association school's tutors in the evenings. For Pinsent, his apprenticeship was to architect William Wallace. Later he worked as a draftsman at E.T. Hall's office (Edwin Thomas Hall 1851-1923) and studied at the Royal Academy School of Architecture from

1905-07. At the time, the Royal Academy School was at the center of architectural radicalism, teaching and hosting lectures about ideas of English renaissance formalism and rural vernaculars as a source for a new language of English design. It emphasized that the spirit, rather than the exact details of the lauded styles of the past would be used to guide modern design. Observation, the school taught, was the key to new application. Pinsent was skilled in measured drawing, and understood that the minute details of historic work would allow for better and more free interpretations of their ideals. Indeed, Pinsent's work in Tuscany was always referencing the past, but avoided copying it directly in favor of appeasing the sensibilities of his modern patrons.

Cecil Pinsent had a unique insight to the struggle between foreign and native, past and present, national identities. This awareness was due to the fact that he "studied architecture near the end of a transitional period in the decorative arts known collectively as "The Battle of the Styles". For several decades before 1900, English architects had been arguing over what could legitimately be considered a national style of architecture, and whether the constituent design elements of any such style could be said to be authentically English."[28] Having heard debates, and witnessing the struggle to define even a single, native English style, Pinsent would have been aware of the great struggle involved in trying to reconcile multiple different personal and local styles and ideals with their own varying temporal definitions and understandings.

It was through close family friends that Pinsent was introduced to the Tuscan landscape and future patrons. Avid travelers, "The Houghtons [Edmund and Mary] knew many of the more influential and wealthy expatriates in Florence, and so were able to

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[28] Clarke, Ethne. *An Infinity of Graces: Cecil Ross Pinsent, an English Architect in the Italian Landscape.* 1st ed. New York: W. W. Norton, c2013. 35-37.

introduce Pinsent to potential clients who were constructing new villas and gardens or renovating old properties in the hillside towns of Fiesole and Settignano to the east of the city. They would, the Houghtons explained, find it far easier to deal with an English-trained and English-speaking architect than with the native craftsmen and workers, who were routinely regarded with suspicion and not a little disdain."[29] Pinsent was introduced to Bernard and Mary Berenson at I Tatti a few weeks after New Year's Day 1907. Berenson hired him in 1909, and Pinsent quickly became the architect in charge. By August of 1911, Pinsent wrote to Mary Berenson, informing her that the garden was growing merrily (Figure 13). Undoubtedly, Pinsent was the perfect architect for a couple fully guilty of scrambling together their haughty English opinions, a preference for the image of a past Italy that Bernard saw in his Renaissance paintings, and modern expatriate sensibilities and social functions.

As the standard bearers of the expatriate attitude towards property in Tuscany, Bernard, Mary, and Pinsent worked towards a garden *all'italiana*. They implemented what they believed to be the proper elements of Renaissance garden plans and ornament through both perceived restoration and new construction. Despite their constant grumbling about his efforts while the garden was under construction, both Bernard and Mary grew to appreciate Pinsent's work and his subtle expressions of the historic language of the Renaissance style. Box and cypress hedges are used to frame views and mimic historic models, a contrast to the overbearing dimensions of their Victorian English counterparts (Figure 14). Perhaps following the vision of the Berenson's Renaissance paintings, the garden beds were kept simple, often filled with turf sprinkled

[29] Ibid. 49.

over with wild meadow flowers, violets, daisies, and the like. A familiar Italian friend is found in the container-grown citrus accents to walkways and transition points, with the added flavor of roses and flowering shrubs speaking to an English affinity for such blossoms.

Cecil Pinsent transformed the villa from an overgrown sixteenth-century Italian farmhouse into an Anglo-American expatriate gentleman's estate. Villa I Tatti was made to float above a cascade of Wharton's Renaissance's favored manicured box-edged terraces, the scene punctuated with a scattering of fountains and statuary (Figure 15). Pinsent sited the main garden on the south side of the villa, descending the hillside in a series of stepped terraces, the entrance to which is framed by an arched passage created from the old *limonaia* with a balcony of a small double staircase leading into the garden below (Figure 16). Speckled as accents on the stairs, and throughout the gardens, were what Pinsent's contemporaries referred to as "sponge stone mosaics" (Figure 17). It was considered one of his trademarks; "it is made from chunks of spongelike volcanic rock," and as Ethne Clarke rightfully notes, "Known as *spugna*, it is typical in the decoration of Renaissance garden features such as grottoes and retaining walls."[30] Though the forms have changed their exact shape and influence, historical elements did visibly inspire Pinsent's work. True to his schooling, the ideals of the Renaissance were more important at I Tatti than exact replication.

From the double staircase, a main axial path sweeps down the hill through the box-trimmed terraces ending at a shallow reflecting pool (Figures 18-21). Further down the path, drawn into the garden, there is a cloistered space made of shadows thrown by

[30] Ibid 70.

tall cypress and oak hedges (Figures 22-23). Here the Baroque drama of light and shade reveals the danger of looking to the past while designing a contemporary space. It is hard not to give in to the delectable details of what lies between the then and now. The stone was thrown back to the Renaissance, but landed in the Baroque. In the cloistered space no flower color is allowed to risk the elegance of the perceived purity of a green garden theater, another nod to Edith Wharton's garden authority.

Cecil Pinsent was increasingly recognized as an adept in the architectural and landscape language of the Italian Renaissance. At I Tatti, his interpretations of Renaissance ideals were easily legible. Such recognition was enabled by the coupling of those interpretations with more contemporary flower choices and a stricter, English use of plantings to create architectural forms within the garden as a perceived extension to the villa itself. While both Bernard and Mary were Renaissance art enthusiasts, they wanted their own Anglo-American aspects to welcome them home to their own roots while standing on Tuscan soil. Mary had her roses, Bernard had his transition of styles clearly delineated so that he might choose the exact balance of his expatriate defined Italian and foreign influences he wanted to experience as he strolled. The Berenson's had their Renaissance paintings, they needed only so much of that time in Italian history translated into their garden so that they might have a few living paintings to enjoy. Holding those images together was their own Anglo-American expatriate fancies.

La Foce

Iris (Cutting) Origo, daughter of Bayard (1878-1910) and Sybil Cutting, spent her childhood years traveling. From Switzerland, to the Middle East, to America, Iris went with her parents trotting across the globe chasing after good health and adventure. At age seven, upon the death of her father, Bayard's intentions for Iris were made clear. In a last letter to his wife, he wished that they should have a home, but that Iris should be raised in such a way as to avoid what Bayard saw as the afflictions of national pride. Following the wishes of her American husband, Sybil, of Anglo-Irish descent, found a home for herself and her daughter in Italy. Iris maintained family ties in both America and the British Isles, but never considered either place home. Over the course of her life, she developed a stronger liking for England, but stated often in her own writing that she felt very much to be an untethered soul. In Italy, Iris grew up at the house her mother had chosen for them, the Villa Medici in Fiesole. Close to the villas i Tatti, la Pietra, Gamberaia, Poggio Gherardo, and their society of minds including the literary and artistic circles of Bernard and Mary Berenson, Edith Wharton, Janet Ross, the Actons, Cecil Pinsent, and her future step-father, Geoffrey Scott, Iris learned much from them as individuals. Although, as a collective group, she was never truly impressed by their society. Shy and feeling ungrounded, it was not until she was about to choose a place at which to live her married life that Iris managed to find somewhere she could truly call home. La Foce's origins formed in the Renaissance, when it is believed to have been a post-house. In 1557, Santa Maria della Scala, a Sienese hospital, was given the entire estate. While its Renaissance history established the foundations of the land, the estate during the early twentieth-century merely selected a few of the elements from those origins, otherwise taking on a

new modern life at the time when Iris and her new Italian husband, Antonio, made it their own (Figure 24). It was there, still in Italy, in rural Tuscany near Siena, that Iris lived and planted a reconciliation of national identities. La Foce was forever changed by the battle of nationalities, not only by Iris, but also by the struggle of a young nation to reorder itself in the modern era.

October 1923, Iris was out house-searching with Antonio when theywere first shown the Val d'Orcia. Iris had imagined finding a fourteenth- or fifteenth-century villa, ones she described as having an "austere facade broken only by a deep loggia, high vaulted rooms of perfect proportions, great stone fireplaces, perhaps a little courtyard with a well, and a garden with a fountain and an overgrown hedge of box."[31] She was surprised, however, by the realization that those properties were already on land that had been tilled for centuries, their terraced hillsides spouting olive-trees, and vineyards that seemed themselves to have witnessed the Renaissance. For a couple looking primarily to challenge themselves with new creation and hard work, these properties were not for them. Rather, La Foce with its 3,500 acres in a wide valley, only a trickle of water and the ridges of the *crete senesi* running across the land, to Antonio and Iris this place promised to become home. It would be the focus of their life together a pursuance of Italianate dreams, to bring to a halt the erosion of the steep ridges, turn the bare clay into golden fields, rebuild the farms, see prosperity returned to their dependents, and restore the woods. In November of 1923 they signed the deed of purchase, and the property was theirs.

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[31]Origo, Iris. *Images and Shadows: Part of a Life*. 1st American ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich 1971), 199.

Married in March 1924 and returning to the Val d'Orcia immediately following their honeymoon, life for the Origos was not always easy. It was not just the transformation of their new land that caused issues. Iris, and even Antonio, joined in the international fad of love affairs. The loss of their son, Gianni, threatened their marriage, differences in dealing with grief exposed their individual characters to a heightened degree. With the advent of the Second World War came the precarious position of the couple's politics. Iris, susceptible to the growing animosity towards the British, found herself battered on both sides. Italians were wary of her, and her Anglo-American family and friends constantly inquired in accusing tones as to Antonio's political views and position within Italian society. Throughout the madness of life, and the inescapable divisions of national alliances, the couple persevered in their shared dream, La Foce.

First and foremost in both of their minds was the farm. As stated earlier, the estate at the time of purchase was 3,500 acres, a large part of which was woodland or rather miserable grass. Only a small part was good land, of which only a fraction had already been planted with vineyards or olive groves. Around the villa and central farm buildings, there were twenty-five other outlying farms. To these ran roads or tracks in a deplorable state, some of them ending at buildings in equal disrepair. Concerning the villa itself, beneath it were deep wine cellars with enormous vats of seasoned oak, and a wing connected the villa to the *fattoria*. Just beyond, stood the building where the olives were pressed, and the oil made and stored. There were the granaries, laundry shed, wood shed, carpenter's and blacksmith's shops, and the stables. A small room serving as the school stood next to the kitchen. Ox-carts with their loads of wheat, wine, and grapes were unloaded in the yard. Iris notes that "Thus villa and *fattoria* formed, according to old

Tuscan tradition, a single, closely-connected little world."[32] Their little world expanded further in 1934 when they were able to buy Castelluccio and the 2,150 acres that came with it, bringing the original Renaissance lands of the La Foce estate altogether once again.

Their mutual understanding was that, at first, any ideas for the house or garden were to give way to the needs of the tenants and the land. Everything the crops brought in, any gifts from relations, it all went into the land. It was an approach to estate restoration completely foreign to the other Anglo-American expatriates. Transitioning from six centuries of traditional farming, the Origo's set out to slowly incorporate new techniques and machinery. The eventual influence and assistance from the Fascists and their new agricultural initiatives came into play later as a helpful tool in furthering the beneficent agenda of the new *padrone* and his Anglo-American wife. Helping the larger land owners like the Origo's, the first agrarian intentions of the rising Fascist groups were working with the landowners to develop new departments intended to aid in land projects. Later, La Foce utilized its self-sufficiency attained through the assistance of those programs to help people on the opposite side of the law and national divides. The relative isolation both spatially and mentally allowed for remote properties with enough monetary capital like La Foce to survive through the Second World War.

Early on, the Origo's realized the necessity of external funding. They knew they would need government subsidies, as well as the collaboration of their neighbors. The first may have been the easier as the latter was asking much of a population of few landowners who had either the capital to invest, or any interest in adopting new methods.

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[32] Ibid., 203.

In describing these more social oppositions, Iris writes that they would certainly have a difficult time with the peasants, "illiterate, stubborn, suspicious, and rooted, like countrymen all the world over, in their own ways."[33] Proof that although she may not have personally felt very much a part of the Anglo-American community, she carried some of their biases and that of the intellectual classes in general. There was, at first, passive resistance by the *contadini* (tenants) to the Origo's innovations. The land was operating on the *mezzadria* system which had been in place in Tuscany for nearly six centuries. This profit-sharing contract held the landowner to the responsibilities of building the farmhouses, keeping them in repair, and supplying the capital for the purchase of half the live-stock, seed, fertilizers, machinery, etc. The *contadino* was responsible, with the members of his family, for the labor. After the harvest, owner and tenant shared the profits equally. In bad years, it was the landowner who would bear the burden of the losses, and who would lend the tenant what he needed to buy his share of the cattle, seed, and fertilizer, with the tenant to pay this back at the time of a better year. This was the system, almost identical to that of the fourteenth-century, well rooted and still very much in place for the beginning of the Origo's life at La Foce.

The Origo's now learned and lived by the farmer's calendar. In the early spring there was the plowing before planting corn and clover, lambs were the main event in March and April along with the making of pecorino cheese. Hay-making in May was followed by the harvest and threshing in June (Figure 25). In October, they saw to the vintage, then the autumn plowing and planting season before concluding the year with the olive gathering and oil making in December. Upon their arrival, many of these operations

[33] Ibid., 204.

were done in ways that truly recalled past ages, and produced in the imaginations of artists the idyllic landscapes for their paintings. Images that would circulate throughout Europe, inspiring the Anglo-American expatriate communities to come to Italy in search of the Tuscan picturesque, bringing the story full circle back to Iris at her new home, a foreign witness to the residue of the Renaissance in action. In the wheat fields, the reaping was done by hand, the sickle movements of the reapers flowing slowly and rhythmically across the fields, followed by a procession of low-bending binders and gleaners. Most enchanting, perhaps, was the threshing as threshing day was the star feast-day of a farmer's year. In this process, La Foce was slightly more up-to-date with a steam-powered threshing machine. All the neighboring farmers would lend a hand and helped to craft the tall straw ricks such as those of Impressionists' dreams. For lunch, the women laid out a banquet, a parade of all the best the now harvested land could provide.

When October came, the vintage started with the bunches of grapes being brought to the *fattoria* by ox-cart. At the beginning of the time of the Origo's, the grapes were squashed with stout wooden poles in the *bigonci* (tall wooden tubs) they arrived in, with the mixture of stems, pulp, and juice then left to ferment in open vats for a couple of weeks after which, it was put into barrels to complete fermentation during the winter. In their time, Antonio and Iris saw the process modernized with the stems being separated from the grapes by a machine before the pressing, and the juice would flow directly into vats.

Another modernization of processes came about with the olives and oil making. At first, like the grapes, the olives were delivered to the *fattoria* by ox-cart, placed on long flat trays, and then ground by a large circular millstone worked by a donkey. The

left over pulp was put into rope baskets and placed beneath heavy presses operated by four strong men pushing at a wooden bar. After this produced the first and finest oil, the process was repeated with a stronger press, and the oil stored in large earthenware jugs. Lastly, the pulp was sold for the ten-percent of the oil it still contained. Transitioning from a scene of muscular men and fast-paced work over all hours day and night, the new electric presses and separators came to do their job in a tenth of the time, with more efficiency and less human labor. Finally, one other change was eventually brought about. With the slow but successful reclamation of the estate's land, Antonio was able to invest in tractors. These machines replaced the *maremmano* oxen used to plow the heavy soil (Figure 26). Though occasionally they were still used to plow the steeper or narrower tracts, the oxen were eventually cross-bred into near oblivion.

Not only were mechanical changes inevitable, but Iris, in retrospect, examined the *mezzadria* system and its inevitable demise. She wrote of a few explanations for the system having lasted as long as it did, giving the Tuscan landscape itself as the first and most obvious.[34] The image of prosperity composed of terraced hills with vineyards and olive groves, wheat fields, orchards, and vegetable plots spoke for itself. Iris thought that the other explanation was a deeper psychological one, that the strength of the *mezzadria* system lay in unquestioning conviction, on both sides, that the system was overall fair and equitable. Even where there may not have been much actual fairness, it was the conviction of the system's fairness that gave it stability. It was when conviction was shaken that the system finally met its downfall during the twentieth-century. The process was not swift, but like most things, resulted from a progression of events and

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[34] Ibid., 217.

circumstances over time. In their own, these intermediate steps may not have been bad or foretelling, but the end result was seemingly inevitable. For La Foce, the new institutions and involvement with government agencies was representative of those intermediary phases. In 1930, the *consorzio* in the Val d'Orcia was founded with Antonio as its president and energetic spirit, as he would be for over thirty years. These *consorzi di bonifica* (landowner's associations) were formed under Mussolini, and assisted by State subsidies. Some of the members of the Anglo-American expatriate community were tempted to jump to quick conclusions and judged Antonio as pro-Fascist, when the reality for him and his estate was much more complex. Seen time and time again through history, people will support what they believe is needed in order to further their vision of a better life. For Antonio and other landowners, this meant the assistance of government funds to fulfill their goals of revitalizing the land. Extra monetary help is always welcome when implementing costly farming experiments. Despite having to appease the rising Fascist regime to secure funds, Antonio's connections allowed him to construct dams and reinforcements against landslides (Figure 27). Projects were put into place to control the course of the Orcia River as well as direct channels of water coming down from the hills. Artesian wells, re-afforestation, and new roads were just some of the ways in which the modern Italian agencies' money was put to use on and around La Foce. It changed the size and intensity of the cultivation of the estate's farms allowing for more variety and better quality of produce. By 1934, all of the major building had been finished. These were the early signs of the old Italy being replaced by a new, Fascist desired, modern national image.

Iris, having felt the reticence of the Anglo-American community during the shift in Italian nationalism, gave very little voice to it in her own thoughts and writings. Her concern and energies were directed at her garden (Figure 28). La Foce had no garden at all when they bought the property as the well was only capable of producing the necessary drinking-water. Therefore, a garden was absolutely not possible until after the farmland was taken care of. That is one of the reasons why an examination of La Foce's relationship to the definition of Italy's national landscape has to consider more than the formal garden, unlike the other estates. Money and water problems contributed to the slow start, which Iris noted helped them to avoid making costly mistakes, such as what was witnessed at other expatriate villas like i Tatti. After what must have been to her a shocking visit, the garden was made possible by a present from Mrs. Cutting of a pipe to carry water up from the valley to the house. Fortune saw to it that the pipe provided twice as much water as the Origo's had been expecting.

Cecil Pinsent, longtime friend of Iris and her mother Lady Sybil, and now well known for the work he did for the Berensons, was naturally the first choice in helping to make the garden a reality. Having already worked on the house for the couple while they were on their honeymoon, Pinsent was familiar with the place. Iris knew that he had proven himself through his other projects as capable of creating beautiful spaces that were not quite Renaissance revivals. He was an architect and designer with developed sensibilities in historical accuracy and Renaissance and Tuscan ideas, but capable of adapting them to particular plots of land and the desires of individual patrons. He adapted buildings and gardens to the contours of the land, and executed techniques to handle the changes in elevation that were admirable even by Renaissance standards.

Pinsent designed, Iris planted. She loved flowers. The presence of herbaceous borders were clearly from the English impressions on her gardening sensibilities (Figure 29). Flowers in general, contrary again to the thoughts of Edith Wharton, were a part of the Italian Renaissance gardens, so their presence was not so much a sign of warring national influences as was their use and arrangement. Bulbs and roses were sent as presents from friends and family of English connection. Pinsent conceded parts of his design to support this profusion of colors, smells, and an occasional majestic tree to remind Iris of English parkland.[35] Tulips, forget-me-nots, hyacinths, marigolds, zinnias, and chrysanthemums, a full array of blossoms to feed the modern sensibilities was introduced to what had been barren soil only a few years before (Figures 30-31). Iris ordered many of her seeds from England. In fact, the wooden labels for the plants came "from Paglienti & Figli in Pistoia, dahlias from Lyons, seeds from Suttons, shrubs and trees from Gauntlett and Co. in Surrey, roses from Murcell in Shepperton, irises from Orpington in Kent, and peonies from Millet et Fils in France."[36] She especially loved the scented roses. The English influence is clear. While Italian Renaissance gardens may not have been as austere as the scholars of the early twentieth-century thought, certainly the profuse draping of wisteria acted as an English umbrella under the blue Tuscan sky (Figure 32).

The major planting plan was realized in 1929 and 1930. Pinsent created a walled Italianate garden of box hedges around a less formal flower garden with lemon trees in their terracotta pots (Figures 33-35). The grass Iris edged with spring flowers and irises,

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[35] Moorehead, Caroline. *Iris Origo: Marchesa of Val d'Orcia*. (London: John Murray, 2000), 146.

[36] Ibid., 147.

she had the walls covered in climbing roses, honeysuckle, and jasmine, with some tree peonies and pomegranates positioned in front (Figures 36-37). One of the true Italianate elements that Pinsent was sure to include in his design at La Foce was that of fountains. Two notables are the dolphin fountain, and the tiered fountain placed in the grotto (Figures 38-39). In an attempt to bring back an air of Renaissance Tuscany, the Origo's constructed a winding road lined with cypresses leading up to one of the farmhouses visible on the top of a distant hill (Figure 40). John Dixon Hunt in his piece 'Cecil Pinsent and the Making of La Foce' states that "the lessons of each – vista versus enclosure, modernism versus tradition, personal representation versus generic garden formulae, the descent and ascent of terrace versus flatness of parterre, the play of hard-edge intervention versus the happenstance of natural growth, the play of larger landscape against immediate garden – are all pulled into a fresh and accomplished ensemble for Iris Origo."[37] Indeed, the battle within Iris of who she was and to which community she felt she belonged, was expressed within the garden itself, only to be upstaged by the greater contrast between formal garden and productive landscape. Seemingly English on the inside, Italian on the outside. It was perhaps the land which best illustrated Iris' struggle with private feelings and desires for social belonging.

With Iris and Antonio Origo, the differences between the garden and the agriculture as a reconciliation of the Anglo-American and Italian national identities and visual ideals may be the easiest to explain in comparison to the other villas of the expatriate community. He is Italian, she is not. The desired interpretation of the Renaissance compositional ideals in the garden is inverted in the movement out of the

[37] Origo, Benedetta, ed. *La Foce: A Garden and Landscape in Tuscany*. Penn Studies in Landscape Architecture. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 280.

Renaissance and into the modern era in the productive landscape. As much as the Origo's changed La Foce, the two world wars and Fascism changed the land of Italy. There was no going back. Time, the land, and people had all changed. While Renaissance ideals and forms may have greeted and enticed them in the beginning, through their will and energies, and by the explosive forces of the changing political climate, by the time of recuperation after World War II, the land had finally moved on. Iris, Antonio, La Foce, the people of Europe, and of the world, were now brought fully and irreversibly into the modern era.

Conclusion

Looking at the three expatriate villas as a specific route from the trend of foreign and expatriate home ownership in Italy, and following the buildup to Fascist control over the defining of the newly unified nation of Italy and its garden tradition is important as a way to understand what is meant by an Italian garden. Rural Tuscany is today above all an iconic landscape, represented and recognized all over the world. While it is common knowledge that the landscape is a product of a deeply rooted history, what has to be noted is how it became the standard for Italy. The desire to define the nation of modern Italy started naturally with the Anglo-American expatriate community in their Florentine villas in the early twentieth-century. Until that time, the foreign community and Italy traded their stylistic preferences fluently. Villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce help us to understand the capabilities of reading the tension in the formal garden which announce a time when the trade of styles was suddenly restricted by a political agenda.

Villa Gamberaia was the stepping stone for expatriates into a written critical examination of modern elements and past ideals culminating in what they would define as an Italian garden. Still steeped in a past of blurred lines between Italian and foreign originating garden elements, Princess Ghyka's changes to the parterres brought about some of the crucial questions as to what was proper for a garden in Italy. Suddenly a standard of critical analysis had to be set, and the expatriates were the ones interested in outlining a set of Italian standards.

Villa i Tatti was subjected to grandiose renovations of the villa and gardens. Bernard and Mary Berenson drew from their Renaissance art studies a vision of perfectly executed, modern interpretations of Renaissance ideals. As prominent members of the

intellectual social circles in and around Florence, the Berensons were directly confronted by the literati and authors recoding and commenting on their stylistic garden choices. For a project of that scale, they had to rely on Cecil Pinsent, an architect trained in England in the new language of defining national styles, and perfect for an Italian garden that was becoming more defined by a preference for its architectonic elements.

La Foce stood at the beginning of the end. A crucial visual testimony to the transition of power from the expatriate community to the Fascist party. The disconnect between the two worlds, that of the Anglo-American and the native Italian, was undeniable. What was created and recorded as Italian in the villas and formal gardens at the dawn of the twentieth century was idealizations and interpretations of Renaissance forms. The Fascists locked on to some of the same basic modern understandings of, and preferences for, the Italian Renaissance by the foreign expatriates. In order to affirm the modernization of Renaissance ideals as an Italian act in definition of their new nation, the Fascists had to capitalize on the greater, more encompassing design elements already declared by the expatriates, while also putting on a front of full separation from foreign influence. At La Foce, Iris could have her expatriate styled garden because it did not interfere with the overall appearance of an otherwise Fascist estate. On their land alone, the transition of power from expatriates to Fascists is visible in the definition of what are acceptable landscape elements, reminiscent of the Renaissance, and defined by modern nationalists.

Looking at Tuscan villas is optimal over those of other regions due to the direct connection to Florence as the main stage of the Italian Renaissance, and the state of its surrounding hillsides. The agriculture and social structure around the villas had not

fundamentally changed in centuries. The expatriates did not disturb the status quo and it was only when Italy was defined by the Fascist party, using Tuscany to promote the dreams and fears of both progress and nostalgia, that the greater landscape drastically changed. While it is important to look at the formal garden works of Villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce in contrast to the sudden and dramatic changes in the greater landscape that surrounded them, their gardens played an important part in expressing the shift of power in a microcosm.

The expatriate community's defining of Italy, with obvious preference for the Italy of the Renaissance, formed the very springboard from which the Fascists began to define Italy themselves, having seen the value in defining Italy by the modes of its past. The Fascist party's political goals were both supported by, and a reaction against, foreigners who tended to see Tuscany as a stage where they could connect to a more authentic self and a way of life that had been lost to their version of modernity. Italy was defined as its Renaissance past, and Princess Ghyka, the Berensons, and the Origo's perpetuated the nostalgic vision of Italy in their gardens.

Expatriate gardens in Tuscany at the beginning of the twentieth century illustrate the power of formally crafted landscapes to create and project the idea of Italy as a nation defined by the Renaissance. Villa patrons' experiences of the Tuscan countryside relied on highly selective senses of place and time, capable of producing coherent and legible images in the shape of a formal garden. Their experiences are exquisitely modern. The very landscape visitors to villas Gamberaia, I Tatti, and La Foce came to see and feel was the complex and contradictory product of modern processes and sensibilities. Defining the Italian garden and landscape would have been significantly different without their

presence, and the bold written and spoken ideas from the expatriate community about their design actions. Gardens have the power to define nations and be the spearhead for major political parties. Tuscany was used to define Italy through it formal gardens and rural situation.

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Illustrations

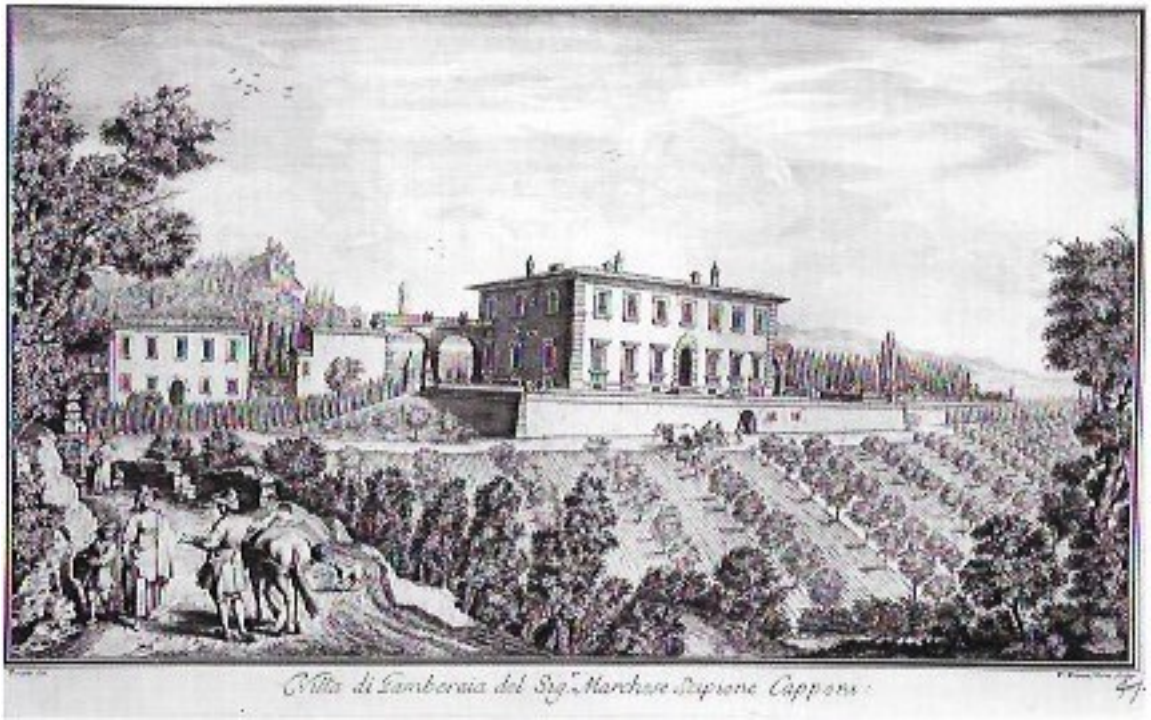

Figure 1 | *Villa di Gamberaia del Sig.r Marchese Scipione Capponi*, Giuseppe Zocchi, 1744

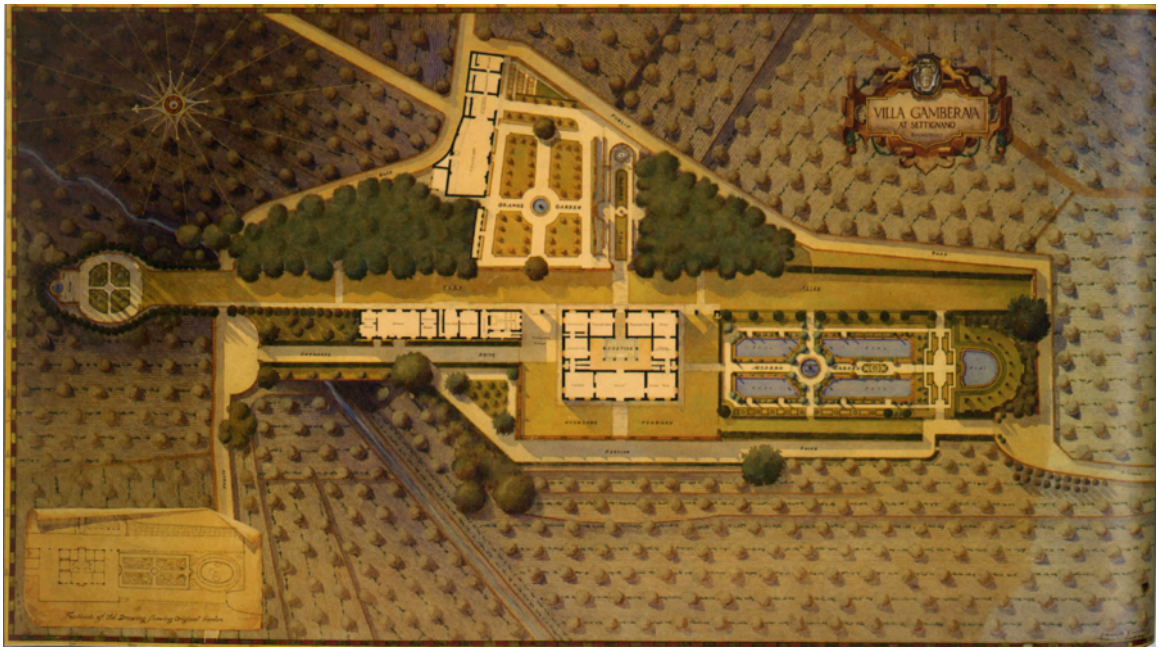

Figure 2 | Villa Gamberaia, Edward Lawson, c. 1917

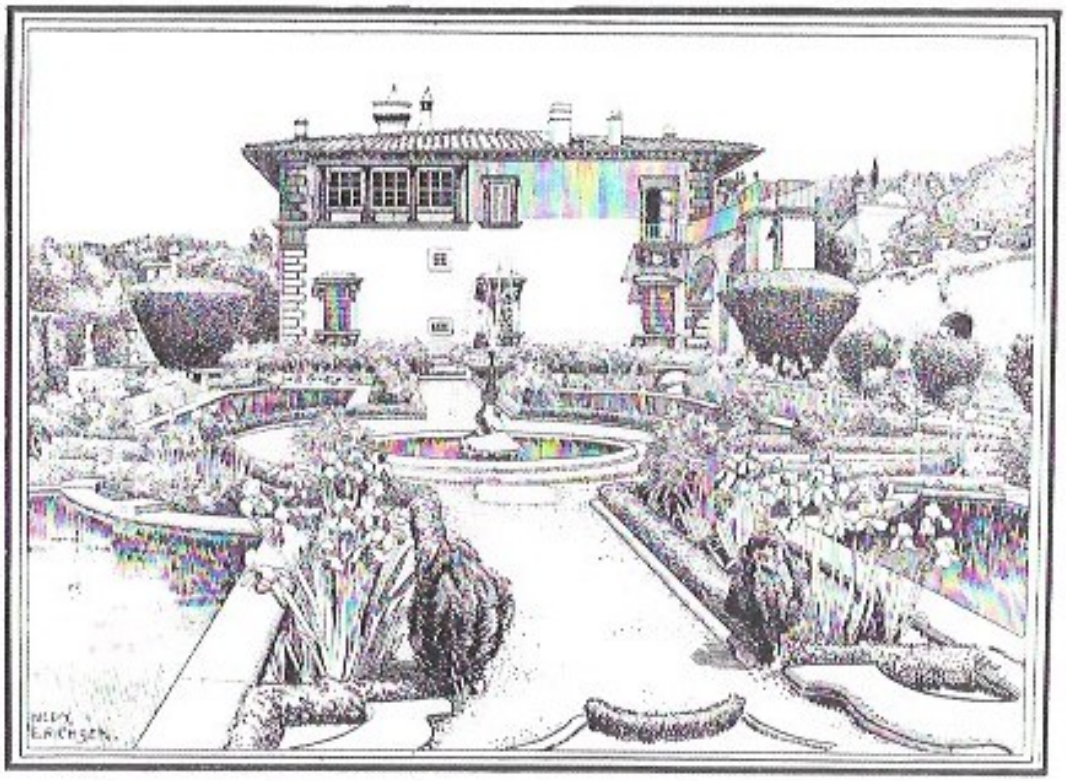

Figure 3 | View of the villa from the water parterre, Nelly Erichsen, 1901

Figure 4 | Western Garden from the Villa Balcony, Charles Latham, 1905

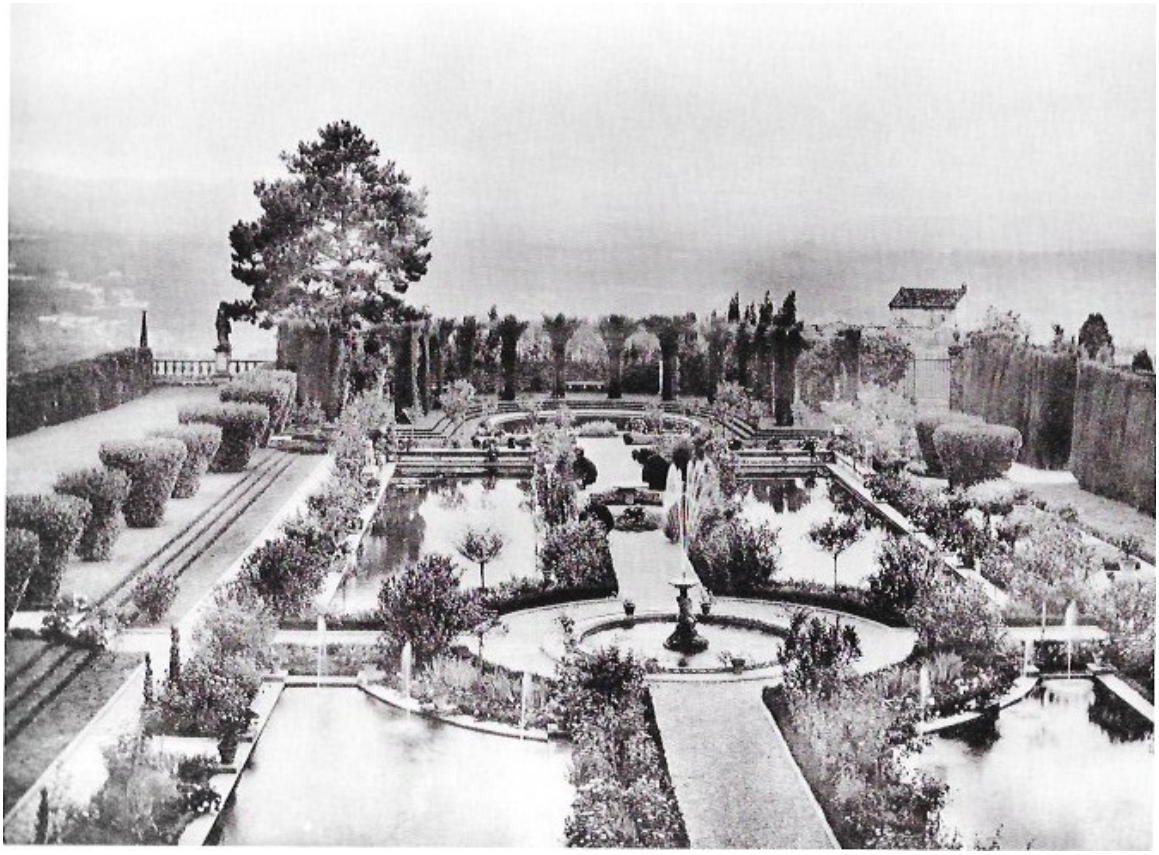

Figure 5 | General View from the Casino, H. Inigo Triggs and Aubrey Le Blond, 1906

Figure 6 | The Bowling Alley, A Zielcke, 1973

Figure 7 | The Bowling Green, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 8 | Princess Ghyka at Gamberaia

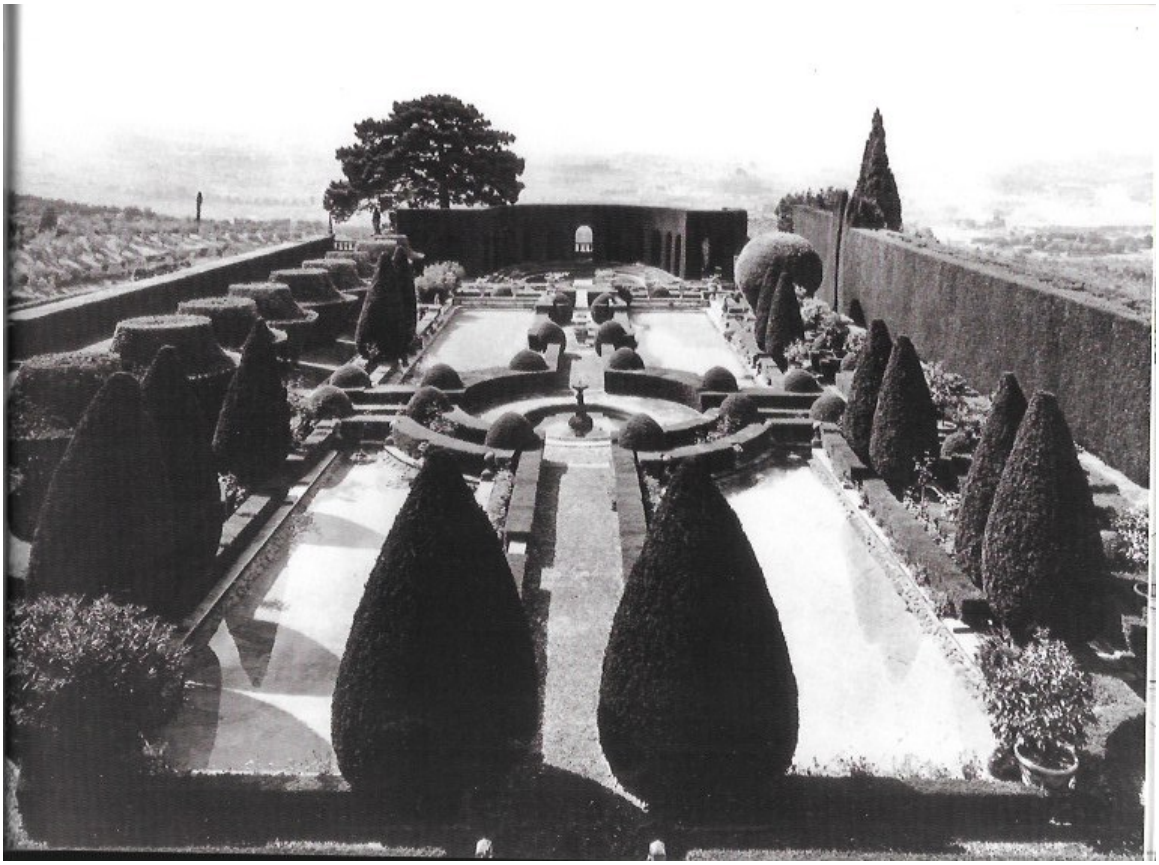

Figure 9 | General View, Balthazar Korab, 1971

Figure 10 | View towards the Casino, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 11 | Detail of parterre garden, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 12 | Bernard and Mary Berenson in the garden at I Tatti, 1922

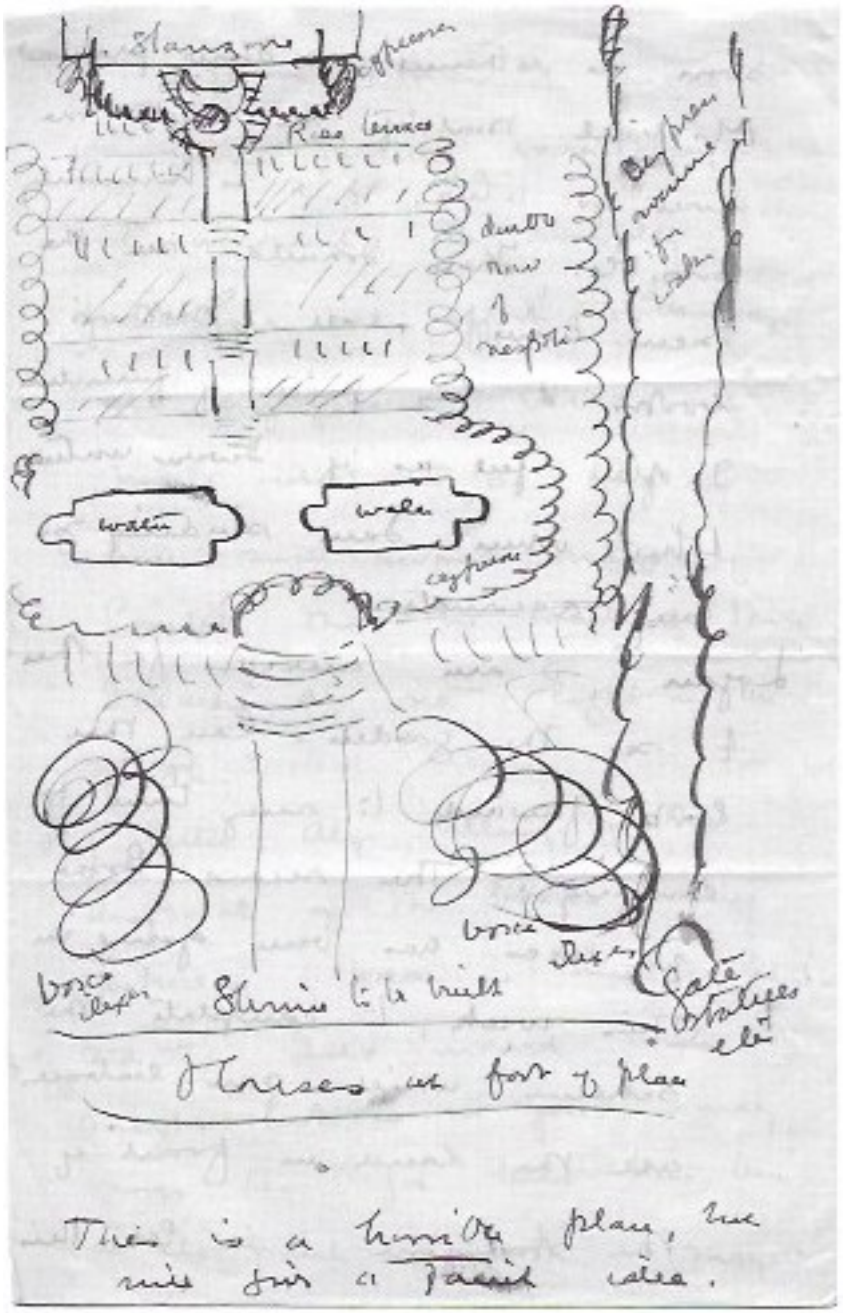

Figure 13 | Sketch of the formal garden, Mary Berenson, 1911

Figure 14 | View of the terraced garden, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 15 | Statue in the garden, Jessica Brown, 2016

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Figure 17 | Pensile garden detail, Ethne Clarke, 2013

Figure 18 | Terraced garden detail, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 19 | View from the bottom of the terraced garden, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 20 | View of the terraced garden, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 21 | Reflecting Pool, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 22 | Lower garden, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 23 | Hedges, Jessica Brown, 2016

Figure 24 | Antonio and Iris Origo, Cecil Pinsent, c. 1923-31

Figure 25 | The *trebbiatura* (threshing), Antonio Origo

Figure 26 | Long-horned *maremmani* oxen reaping wheat, Antonio Origo

Figure 27 | Building retaining dams to prevent erosion

Figure 28 | La Foce

Figure 29 | Lavender Border, Morna Livingston, 1997-99

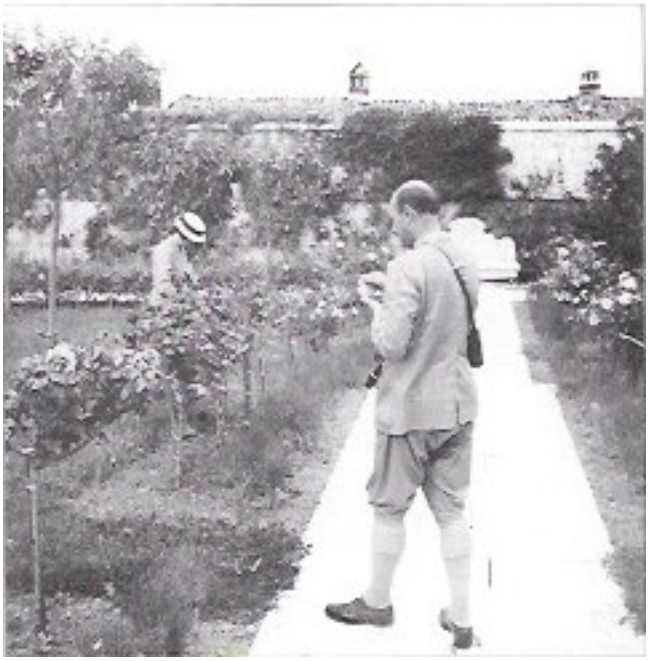

Figure 30 | Antonio and Iris Origo among the flower beds in the lower garden, 1935

Figure 31 | Formal garden set against the crags of the Val d'Orcia, 1935

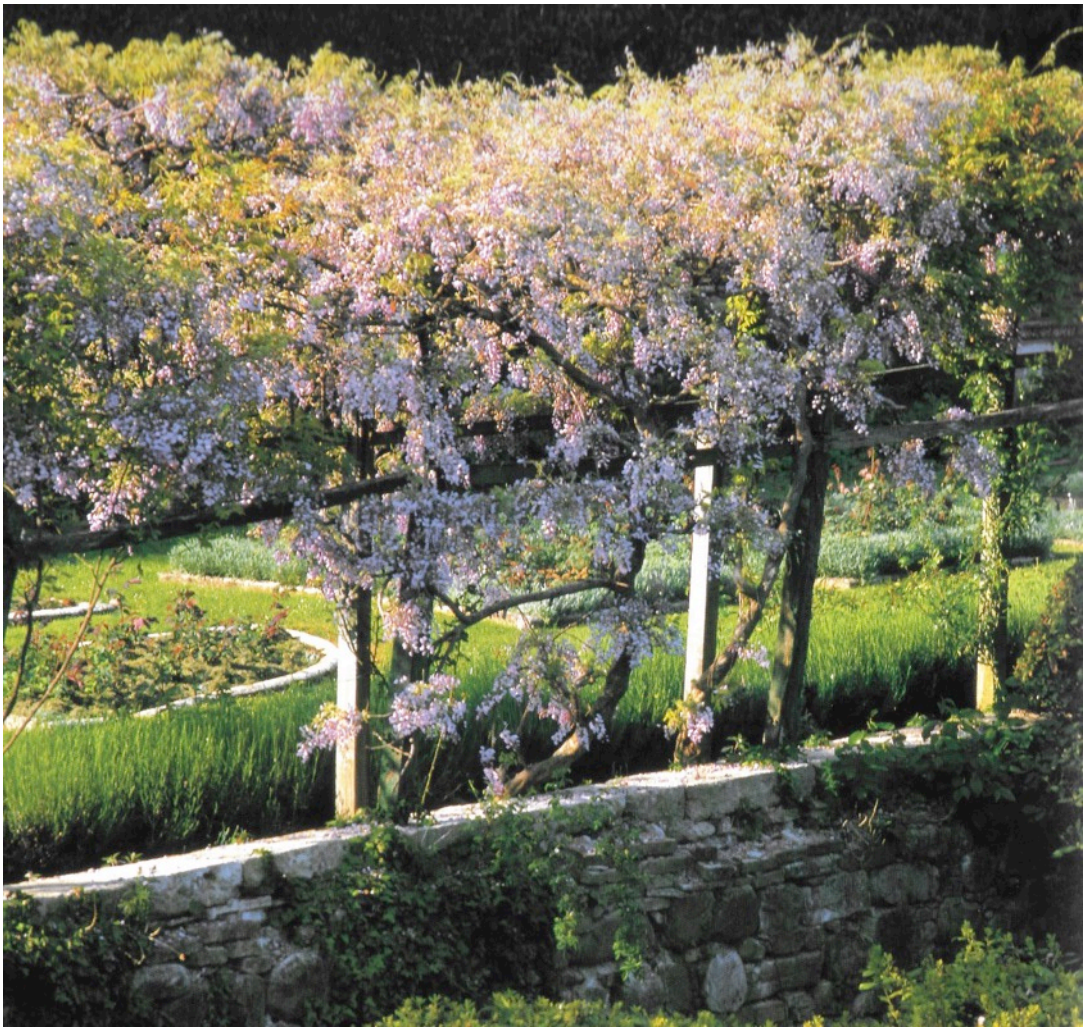

Figure 32 | Wisteria Arbor, Morna Livingston, 1997-99

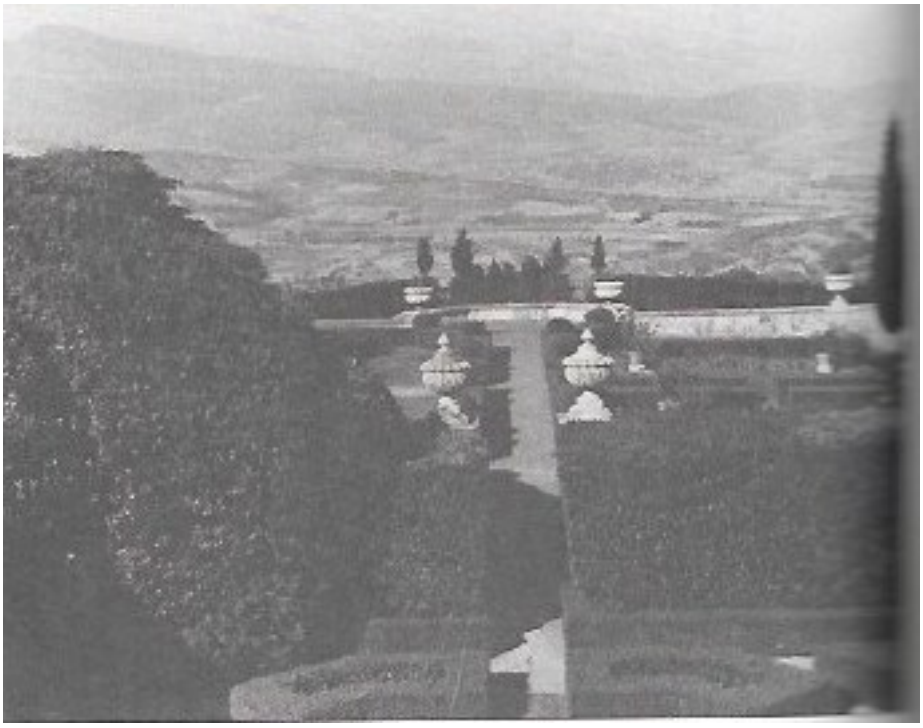

Figure 33 | The Garden, Iris Origo

Figure 34 | Monte Amiata and the Garden at Sunset in June, Morna Livingston, 1997-99

Figure 35 | The Garden from Iris' Study in Late Afternoon, Morna Livingston, 1997-99

Figure 36 | The House, Iris Origo

Figure 37 | Paths and lawns edged with narrow floral ribbons, 1935

Figure 38 | Dolphin Fountain at Sunset, Morna Livingston, 1997-99

Figure 39 | Grotto in the Lower Garden, Morna Livingston, 1997-99

Figure 40 | Switchback Road