

Notes

Reverie and Action

The Bomarzo Woods

Silo

Reverie and Action

Madrid, Columbus Square. Amid trees, water and flowers, two hieratic, distanced protagonists assert their counterpoint. Whereas the Monument to the Discovery of America is set centrally, the statue of Christopher Columbus occupies a lateral space. And at night, when the urban noise has been muted, a world of calculated labyrinths, of scarcely-traced contradictions acquires high relief. Lit by powerful beams of white light, the monument's massive weight is imposing, while the celebrated navigator's silhouette rises, erect, faraway and ghostly. Thus the observer is caught in a dream-like situation in which the objects take on an appearance of strangeness. The statue, standing on a corner of the square, cannot be fully appreciated because its back is to the observer. Neither can one get to the monument, because it is surrounded by a pond. One must leave the square and, going roundabout, reenter it from the street. But from there one is too close to the blocks, and it is impossible, as one backs up, to regulate the distances necessary to enable one to observe the details and the whole. Finally, when one tries a different perspective, some trees block the line of vision. And so one can only view the complex one aspect at a time—just one aspect, step by step. Two stern cypresses are outlined between the blocks of the monument, while olive and magnolia trees alternate in the gardens. Small lampposts with yellow lights and a few stone benches frame the calm, compacted, disconcerting ambiance.

The square was inaugurated toward 1841. At present a fine, twenty-meter Neo-Gothic column rises up from the gardens, above which the figure of the great Genovese¹ is emplaced. It holds in its right hand a folded banner with a cross atop its staff, seems to be stepping forward. There are no decisive dates to read on the scene of stone. One does not see the names, embroidered on the flag, of the King and Queen of Spain. There are no caravels or natives from America. Absent are the figures of the Pinzón brothers accompanying the landing at Guanahaní. This is because it was not the sculptor's intention to show the reality of an extraordinary adventure; rather he materialized the image the mariner had of himself when he felt himself embodying Saint Christopher of legend. The artist rendered visible the reverie that impelled Christopher Columbus to replace his civil name with a fictitious one. It is thus that one comprehends that the word stamped on numerous documents from that era is not a pseudonym, but the author's representation²—it is his signature that says "*Cristo ferens*," and it means "the bearer of Christ."³

The Monument to the Discovery of America⁴ is set in the central space over a tiered platform equipped with ramps. Over that floor rise enormous walls of reinforced concrete. The monument consists of four volumes, the tallest of which is 17 meters high. Large, cut-up drawings and massive texts occupy the 2,000 meters of decorated surface on the segmented murals. The light plays over the walls' flat or curved faces, composed with the arid reds of Alicante. The grand construction impresses with its astonishing features.⁵

On the monument's two central volumes are engraved the principal dates, places and names in the history previous to the discovery. One sees Columbus with his son Diego and can make out the interview with the Spanish monarchs. Further on are the bars, castles and lions of Castile and Aragon, together with the bars and eagles of Sicily. This is the heraldic stamp on the flag that was carried to the lands of Guanahaní.

On the enormous final block, called "The Discovery," the names of the crewmembers and the circumstances of the adventure can be read in bas-relief:

...The Admiral went ashore on the armed barge, and Martín Alonso Pinzón and his brother, Vicente Yáñez, who was the captain of the La Niña. The Admiral took out the royal flag and the two captains the two flags of the green cross with an 'F' and a 'Y,' each letter bearing its crown. Standing on land they saw very green trees, and many waters, and fruits of diverse kinds ... later many people of the island gathered there.

A seven-meter figure of Columbus in the style of the Saint Christophers of the cathedrals, his feet in the water and the great staff in his hand, dominates the whole of the ensemble.

The disquieting first block, which the architect of the works called "The Prophecies," shows several inscriptions. One is of the chorus of Seneca's "Medea," exactly as it was translated from the Latin into Castilian by Columbus to support his arguments before the Court. In the free translation of the verses written by the Roman from Cordoba, one reads: "*There will come, in the late years of the world, certain times when the ocean sea will loosen the bindings of things, and a great land will open up, and a new mariner, like the one who was guide to Jason and whose name was Typhis, shall discover a new world, and the island of Thule will no longer be the hindermost of lands.*" Actually a very different phrase from the one written by Seneca: "*Times will come, with the passing of the years, when the ocean will let loose the barriers of the world, and the earth open up in all its breadth, and Tethys shall disclose to us new worlds, and the end of the earth will no longer be Thule*".⁶

Another writing, this time by Saint Isidore of Seville, accompanies Seneca's words on the wall. Eight centuries before the Discovery the author of *Etymologies* asserts: "*Aside from the three parts of the world, there exists another continent beyond the ocean.*" This rather suggestive inscription contains little of prophecy, and, in any case, approximates Raymundo Lulio's perception, in which he speaks of the existence of a great land "*where the ocean must lie to the west.*"

Also brought to the walls are the words that Columbus wrote on the margin of a page of Pierre d'Ailly's *Ymago Mundi*:⁷ "*Beyond the Tropic of Capricorn is found the most beautiful dwelling place, since it is the highest and noblest part of the world—that is, Earthly Paradise.*" The theme of paradise on earth is pondered by the Navigator especially on his third voyage, and this creates some problems with regard to the reliability of the documents and the language used. But once the difficulty is overcome, an extraordinary mythic geography appears that aids in the comprehension of certain motivations for the new travels and discoveries.⁸ "*The Holy Scripture testifies that Our Lord created Earthly Paradise and in it placed the tree of life, and from it a fountain flows, from which derive in this world the four principal rivers.*" That place is found in the highest point of the world, and crossing the sea it rises higher, as it advances toward the south. "*And it seems that Aristotle was of the opinion that the Antarctic or the land that is below it, is the highest part of the world and the closest to the sky.*" And farther on he comments that the world "*...is in the shape of a pear that is very round, except there where it has the stem, where it is most prominent, or like a very round ball, and in one part of it there was a prominence like a woman's breast, and that the part of the nipple would be the highest and the nearest to the sky.*"⁹ Of course, Columbus's idea (that there is a place higher than all the rest on the world's sphere and that also in that zone the water is also higher), corresponds to beliefs that had already been proven wrong for centuries. In this respect, one should remember what Dante wrote in 1320: "*The water does not have any hump at all protruding from its regular circumference,*"¹⁰ and also: "*This argument originates from a fallacious imagination, for sailors at sea imagine that they cannot sight the land from the ship because the ship is higher than the land; but this is not so; rather the exact contrary happens, since they would make out a much broader vista than the one that they do see. The cause consists of the fact that the direct ray from the visible object breaks between the object and the eye, due to the water's convexity; since, given that the water necessarily, in all places, has a circular form around its center; therefore, from a certain distance, the water forms a barrier for the sight with its own convexity.*"¹¹ Although Dante refutes the ideas regarding the highest parts of the waters in the globe, he sustains that in the southern hemisphere there is a gigantic mountain over which Earthly Paradise is situated. These images mixed with Ptolemy's geocentric conception will continue to inflame navigators' imaginations until well into the seventeenth century.¹²

On this first block one reads a prophecy that seems to have been born in the lands of America before the arrival of the Europeans. The inscription says: "*They are already a shout away, a day*

away, Oh, Father! Receive your guests, the bearded men, those from the east, the ones who bring the sign of Ku, the deity." The quote is attributed to the Mayan book *Chilam Balam de Chumayel*,¹³ one of the cornerstones of indigenous American literature.¹⁴ But the phrase is composed of two different paragraphs: The 11 Ahau says: "...They came from the east when they arrived in this land, the bearded ones, the messengers of the sign of the divinity, the foreigners of the earth, the reddish-blond men." The 12 Ahau says: "...*Receive your guests; one day away, one shout away, they are already coming.*" All this is better understood when we read the 13 Ahau, which says: "*The Ah Kines, Priests-of-the-Sun-Worship, prophesied because they understood how the Spanish foreigners would arrive; they read them in the signs of their papers and for this reason they began to say: 'Truly we will make them our friends and we will not wage war on them,' saying besides: 'To them tribute will be paid.'*" By the way, these texts are subsequent to the conquest. The matter is already very clear from the 1 Ahau, in which "prophecies" are made after the events have happened: "...*At the end of the katun, from the Heart of the Mount, Caesar August (Charles V) will receive his alms, his share, in deaths from starvation, in vultures in the houses.*"

From 1930 on, materials of the Mayan culture began to circulate, translated into the different European languages. The specific case of the prophecies is still a topic of discussion among philologists and historians, and has served as inspiration for writers and artists, as is left very clear in this first block of the monument.¹⁵

On the other hand, the sequence of blocks leads us to reflect on the fantasies that Columbus elaborated, and that did not merely remain in his mind, but ended up acting in the interpretations of some authors who devoted themselves to recreating his life. Many of these images influenced those who adopted the Navigator as the model of an extraordinary discoverer, as a kind of ever-contemporary adventurer, notwithstanding the passing of the centuries. Even today we can discern this in a cinematographic creation where the director (and producer) did not come from the field of the arts, but from astronautics.¹⁶

Through the monument of Columbus Square, one intuits the universe of images that impelled the Navigator throughout his life. His projects were above all grand flights of imagination and his actions turned out to be consistent with those ecstatic visions. After all, there are cases in which a few unlikely reveries end up orienting the protagonist's life, and, the interplay of historical forces, become converted into decisive factors. Something of this took place in a few of Christopher Columbus's projects. He himself dismissed various plans as being unattainable,¹⁷ and others, whose basic conceptions were erroneous, nonetheless hit the mark.

And now one reaches the point of comprehending why a separation—one would say a clash—has been produced between the statue of Columbus and the Monument to the Discovery. Everything that appears as surprising and contradictory in the square is, in reality, a reflection of what was the world divided, of the dreamer and the man of action.

Notes to Reverie and Action

- ¹ There are statues dedicated to Columbus in many squares and promenades [in Madrid, Spain]. One of them, in Barcelona, is especially significant. The one we are concerned with, three meters in height, we owe to A. Mérida and J. Suñol, who finished it in 1885. In 1892, it was set atop a column seventeen meters high, in the center of [Paseo de] La Castellana. Once finished, the Monument to the Discovery of America was placed in its current location in the square. Another three meters were added to the column after a restoration.
- ² In the Municipal Palace of Genoa, a letter dated March 21, 1502 in Seville and addressed to Nicoló Oderigo, Ambassador of Genoa to Spain, has been preserved. Columbus signed it: "Cristo ferens."
- ³ According to a third-century Syrian legend, there was a man whose occupation was to help travelers across a swiftly-flowing river. To carry out his task he would place the traveler on his shoulders, and, walking across the riverbed, would put them down on the opposite bank. He often walked leaning on a piece of wood as if it were a cane. One day a boy appeared who asked for his services. Halfway across the river, the boy had become so heavy that the man's strength began to fail. In the midst of the danger the child revealed that he was Jesus Christ, whereupon the man, amazed at the miracle, converted to Christianity, taking the name *Christóforos* (Lat. *Christus*, Christ; and Gr. *Foros*, bearer). Christopher went on to become the patron saint of travelers. The Middle Ages saw the development of colossal Saint Christopher statues which can still be found in numerous cathedrals. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in Germany and the Netherlands, stamps were printed that circulated throughout Europe and that had the power to give protection in misfortune. During Columbus's time the legend was well known among the common folk. A little later, in 1584, in the cathedral of Seville, Mateo Pérez de Alesio painted a Saint Christopher that was over nine meters high. In religious paintings and statues, Saint Christopher is shown crossing a river while carrying Jesus on his shoulders. The child, in turn, carries in his right hand the globe of the world topped by a cross. On the basis of this representation, people have been telling an ironic riddle in Austria for various centuries: "If Christopher carried Christ, and Christ carried the world -- where was Christopher standing?"
- ⁴ It was inaugurated by the mayor of Madrid on May 15, 1977, in the presence of the king and twenty mayors from the capital cities of the countries of America.
- ⁵ The eminent Italian architect A. Sartoris says, "*Vaquero Turcios has created a sculptured architecture, divided into segments with concavities, and articulations of volumes. . . . Over these volumes, over the bold and powerful corbels leaping into the void, the figures have been excavated and the texts of the inscriptions fitted in graphically, in the manner of great drawings and graffiti. Flying forms of a monolithic character. Narrative monument. First constructed work of art realized at an urban scale.*" As for O. Guayasamin, this is his opinion of the work: "*From the aesthetic point of view it attains the levels of high poetry. The architectural masses, which might at first appear too static, acquire great lightness and balance. The monument is at the same time the Andes Mountains and the ships' sails. By this I mean that it is as solid as a rock and as light as a ship's sail. It is, finally, the most wide-reaching monument realized in Europe in recent times, and the most solid.*" Sartoris, A. *Vaquero Turcios y el Arte Construido. Monumento al Descubrimiento de América*. Madrid: Abaco, 1977.
- ⁶ Seneca. *Medea*. Act II: 375 par. Madrid: Gredos, 1997. [Also: *Seneca VIII Tragedies*: Loeb Classical Library. Vol. 62 Ed. and trans. J.G. Fitch. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.] The text that Columbus possibly used was that of the *Editio Princeps* of Ferrara, 1484, and not—as was presumed until recently—the editions by Martinus Herbipolensis in Leipzig, or by Carolus Fernandus in Paris. These editions have no recorded years of publication and only became known in 1492, and they appear as dating from the same year as *Tragoediae Senecae cum duobus commentaries* by Marmita, published by the latter in Venice in 1493. As for the text that concerns us, the translator and commentator of Seneca's works, Jesús Luque Moreno, says: "*For centuries (by Abraham Oertel, for example), this passage has been interpreted as the prophetic announcement made by a Spaniard about the discovery of the New World, which would later be carried out by Spain.*" Ferdinand (Hernand) Columbus, the discoverer's son, noted beside this passage, in his copy of Seneca's theater play: "*haec propheta expleta est per patrem meum Christoforum Colon almirantem anno 1492*" (This prophecy was fulfilled by my father, Admiral Christopher Columbus, in the year 1492).

- ⁷ Biblioteca Colombina, Seville.
- ⁸ Colón, C. *Diario. Relaciones de viajes*. Madrid: Sarpe, 1985. In this book's introductory note it is sustained that “*relatively few documents from the author have survived; and, in any case, a good portion of them have come to us thanks to copies made by Fray Bartolomé De Las Casas, who maintained a close friendship with Diego Columbus, enabling him to have direct access to the discoverer's books and archives. In this way, thanks to a handwritten copy by De Las Casas, the summaries of the Diaries of the first and third voyages have been preserved. This leads to the thought that the Diaries' original text has been altered considerably. Nevertheless, subsequent researchers have gone about polishing the copies, [correcting] imprecisions and alterations, and the current versions are highly trustworthy. Another difficulty is posed by the Columbian works, in addition to the absence of originals: the debated problem of the language that the author used... Columbus is above all a seaman—and in consequence, this mariner was accustomed to jabbering in a thousand languages without expressing himself well in any one. Day after day, and during the years of his youth, the Admiral had to be able to communicate with his companions in the jargon then known as 'Levantine'—that is, from the Levant, from the Mediterranean.*” [Columbus, Christopher. *Writing of Christopher Columbus, The Discovery and Occupation of the New World*. Ed. Paul Leicester Ford. New York: Charles L. Webster / Co., 1892. 133.]
- ⁹ “*I always read that the world, land and water, was spherical, in the authorities and experiments that Ptolemy and others who wrote about this place gave and demonstrated to that end, through the eclipses of the moon, and other demonstrations that they carry out from the Orient to the Occident, as well as through the elevation of the North pole in the South. Now I saw so much irregularity, as I have already said, and for this reason I set myself to study this matter of the world, and I decided that it is not round, in the way that they write it as being, but that it is in the form of a pear that is very round, except there where it has the stem, where it is most prominent; or like a very round ball, and in one part of it there was a prominence like a woman's breast, and that the part of the nipple would be the highest and nearest to the sky, and it would be below the equinoctial line, and in this sea Occeana, at the end of Orient (I call 'end of Orient' where all land and islands end). And for this I postulate all the reasons written above, regarding the line which passes to the Occident of the Azores one hundred leagues from North to South, which upon passing from there to the West, the ships already go rising gently toward the sky...*” Op. cit. *Relación del tercer viaje*.
- ¹⁰ Alighieri, Dante. *Disputa sobre el agua y la tierra*. O. C. Madrid: BAC, 1973: 8 par. *La Quaestio de situ aquae et terrae* denies the theory sustained by Pliny, Seneca and Saint Basil, according to which the sea occupies a higher place than the earth [See also: *The Latin Works of Dante Alighieri Quaestio/De Aqua et Terra*. 1904. New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969].
- ¹¹ Op. Cit.: 82 par.
- ¹² What in Dante is poetry, for many of his readers ends up being the description of a physical reality that is found in the southern seas. The bard narrates: “*I'mi volsi a man destra, e posi mente a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle non vista mai fuor ch'a la prima gente. Goder pareva il ciel di lor fiammelle: oh settentrional vedovo sito, poi che privato se'di mirar quelle!*” [“*I turned to the right and set my mind on the other pole, and I saw four stars never seen before but by the first people; the sky seemed to rejoice in their flames. O widowed region of the north, since thou art denied that sight!*”] *The Divine Comedy*. Purgatory, Canto I. For Dante, the Earth, according to Ptolemy's system, is motionless. Around it revolve the celestial spheres and, with them, the Sun, the planets and the stars. In the poem these are the cardinal points of the world: to the north, Jerusalem, above the infernal abyss; to the south, in the antipodes of Jerusalem, the mountain of Purgatory; to the east, the Ganges; to the west, the Strait of Gibraltar. Hell and Purgatory are on Earth, one in the form of an abyss, the other in the form of a mountain, Earthly Paradise on its summit. Moreover, the Ptolemaic image would prevail even after the publication in 1543 of *Revolutionibus orbium coelestium* by Copernicus. Because the latter denied that the Earth was the center of the universe, his concept was vigorously resisted. In 1609, Galileo introduced the astronomic lens and confirmed Copernicus's heliocentric theory, but several decades still had to pass before the new vision of reality would be established.
- ¹³ “*El Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Comes from the people of Chumayel, Yucatán. It was the property of Bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona. In 1868, when it was already in his ownership, it was copied by hand by Dr. Berendt and in 1887 photographed by Teoberto Maler. George B. Gordon, Director of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, photographed and published it in facsimile form in 1913. It

passed on to the Cepeda Library of Mérida in 1915, from where it was stolen together with other manuscripts, before 1918. In 1938, it resurfaced for sale in the United States for the sum of seven thousand dollars. It was later offered once more for sale to Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley for the sum of five thousand dollars. Parts of it have been translated and published since 1882, but the first complete translation was published in 1930 by Antonio Médez Bolio in Costa Rica, in Spanish. The second translation, into English, was by Ralph L. Roys, who published it in 1933." *El Libro de los Libros de Chilam Balam*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. 1963.13.

¹⁴ "The so-called Books of Chilam Balam make up one of the most important sections of indigenous American literature. They were written after the Spanish conquest; therefore their written form and material format are European. That is to say, their written form is the Spanish friars' adaptation of the phonology of the Mayan language of Yucatán, and the paper used—at least in the copies now in existence—is also European, in the form of notebooks. Some, if not all, had cowhide covers.... As can be seen, the diversity of their content encompasses all the cultural phases that the Mayan people of Yucatán went through until they ceased to be compiled.... Undoubtedly a large part of their purely native religious and historical texts come from the ancient hieroglyphic books.... They came to be called the Books of Chilam Balam, from what date we do not know. Today this name is not recorded as the original title of any of them, although Pío Pérez notes down in one of his transcriptions that: 'Here ends the book entitled Chilambalam, which was preserved in the town of Maní....' Pérez Codex. Ms. 137. In any case, the name is already an accepted technical reference for this type of Yucatec book.... As to how the Books of Chilam Balam came to be organized and multiplied, our assumption is as follows: Some priest (or various priests simultaneously) could have received instruction from the friars and learned to read and write in his own language. Taking advantage of this new acquisition of his culture, he may have transcribed religious and historical texts contained in their hieroglyphic books, including the predictions of Chilam Balam. From one or several sources, copies may have been produced that passed on to the hands of native priests from other villages, and the names of their places of origin became included in their titles: Chumayel, Maní, Tizimín, etc. Time destroyed the books materially, and destroyed in turn the understanding that their curators should have had of their content, upon modifying their own culture. Thus, the copies that exist today are not the originals from the sixteenth century in their fundamental texts, but are copies made from copies from much later, some from the seventeenth century and others even from the present century. A large part of these texts that we call "fundamental" are repeated one or more times in the Books, but on each occasion the versions are not identical, for the reasons noted." Op. cit. 9 +.

¹⁵ The scholars, thinkers and scientists who found inspiration in the teachings of history are legion. This has been particularly notable among science fiction writers. One example suffices: Ray Bradbury. Surely this author was influenced by various writers of fantasy stories when he wrote his *Martian Chronicles*. The impact on him of the great maritime and terrestrial discoveries are also very clear. In his book Bradbury endeavored to show the harmful consequences of the encounter between cultures (in his case, between Martian and Terrestrial cultures), inspiring himself in facts such as the events in Guatemala following the arrival of the Europeans, when a smallpox epidemic decimated the Mayan groups in a considerable area. The novelist recreates this situation as the chickenpox plague that is carried by the earthlings and that annihilates the Martians (in contrasting to the terrestrial disease that kills the Martian invaders in H.G. Wells's *War of Worlds*). The first edition of *The Martian Chronicles* is from the year 1946, later by thirteen years than the complete translation into English of the books of *Chilam Balam*. The prophetic dream related by one of the Martians, announcing the arrival of the first human beings, brings to mind the quibblings of the Mayan prophecies, supposedly recorded before the Europeans' discovery of America. The Mayans as well as the Martians announce in their prophecies that the foreigners are very near, at a distance of one day; also, in both cases, the invaders' physical characteristics are described. The strange sound books that are "read" by the Martians bring to mind the "painted" or hieroglyphic books of the Mayans. Finally, the masks of which the members of both cultures are so fond, confirm Bradbury's play on images as inspired by Mayan literature.

¹⁶ Reference to the film, "Christopher Columbus, The Discovery," produced and directed in 1992 by John Glen.

¹⁷ Columbus had imagined that it was possible to raise an army of 50,000 foot soldiers and 5,000 horses, to rescue the Holy Sepulcher, even going so far as to request permission from the Spain monarchs to launch a crusade that would expel the Muslims from Jerusalem. As time went by, he gradually gave up this idea in order to concentrate on the final stage of his career of discoveries. On May 9, 1502, he set sail from Cadiz on his fourth and last voyage to America.

The Bomarzo Woods

Bomarzo:¹ The Opera²

Before the curtain rises, the voice of the Shepherd Boy fills the theater:

“Poor though I am,
I would not trade places
with the Duke of Bomarzo.
He has a herd of rocks
and my herd is of sheep.
I am content with what is mine
with this peace of Bomarzo,
the sweet voice of the stream,
the cicadas’ song...”

There is an Act I, Scene III, called “The Horoscope.” Later, the scene of “The Alchemy,” and finally, “The Park of the Monsters,” in which an enormous and grotesque face, carved in stone, appears. Then a baritone defines the situation with this stanza:

“It is a night for loving, like no other.
For dying as well, for everything trembles
with the mystery of unique hours.
And the enormous monsters that my brother
orders sculpted on taciturn stones³
lie in wait for those who dare
to walk along the thicket.”

Information on The Park

Near Viterbo, a hundred kilometers from Rome, there is a wood publicized today as “Parco dei Mostri” [The Park of Monsters]. It is visited by tourists of various kinds. There are always some who are drawn by the site’s mystique, having heard a rumor passed on by word of mouth, newspaper articles and television programs. The basic idea is more or less like this:

The sacred wood of Bomarzo was created by a gentleman named Orsini in the sixteenth century. The park’s concept is purely esoteric, and anyone who knows how to walk in an orderly manner among its monuments achieves an inner transformation similar to what the alchemists effected in their laboratories.

In 1645, Vicino Orsini’s *Sacro Bosco* becomes the property of the Della Rovere family. Only a few drawings without commentaries⁴ remain from this period. After a silence that lasts until 1845, the park resurfaces in the hands of the Borghese family. In 1953, a newspaper article⁵ calls attention to the Wood. In 1955, various studies are published.⁶ In 1954, Giovanni Bettini acquires the property and makes significant changes, removing the bordering walls, outlining interior paths, and modifying the positions of the monuments (sphinxes, obelisks and others). After the restoration of some sculptures, the park is opened to the public.⁷ In 1955, a group of professors from the *Facoltà di Architettura di Roma* carries out an investigation on the archives and field work, including mapping. In 1958, Mujica Lainez visits the site,⁸ and in 1962 publishes his novel *Bomarzo*, which leads to the libretto of the opera of the same name, written in collaboration with Ginastera and premiered in 1967. From that moment on, numerous articles, books and films begin to diffuse a stereotypical image of the *Sacro Bosco*. Of course, apart from the works approached

with scientific sobriety, fanciful works appear, inspired by the *Bomarzo* novel and opera, that force interpretations based a type of deep psychology that was popular in the 1970s.

The Place

The *Sacro Bosco* is located at the foot of the town of Bomarzo. Entering a gate, one comes upon a wood preserved in its “wild” state, interspersed with some conifers and a few cultivated species. No doubt during the time of Orsini this wood looked quite similar to the Nemi Wood, also quite close by, where stood the sanctuary to Diana Nemorensis, or Diana of the Forest. Like the Nemi wood, Bomarzo featured numerous oaks, dotted here and there with the sacred mistletoe, from which Aeneas broke off a golden bough so as to be able to enter Hell.⁹ But there is more than arboreal variety, streams, stone walls, constructions and sculpted rocks. There is, above all, an ambience ruled by the Mannerist aesthetic, in which the depersonalized Renaissance garden has lost its place. Here personal experience is now highlighted.¹⁰ In this wood, visual unity and spatial coherence have vanished. Places that occupy opposing positions in the imagery of the times are placed at the same level of importance. In this way, heavens and hells can coexist with all naturalness. This is made manifest in the statuary, which derives from figures sculpted *in situ*, taking advantage of the rocks already found there. The artist will use the elements at hand and take advantage of the topographical conditions to design his garden. A continual allegorization will become manifest, inspired by myths and legends that produce “wonder” and amazement in the spectator. Here the system of thought that was so fond of geometry, equilibrium and rationality, that a few years before had reigned over the paths, gardens and villas of cultivated Europe, has already changed.¹¹

For anyone interested in comprehending the formation and process of profound mythic images that originated with Western Humanism and continues into our times, this forest will be paradigmatic. It will be necessary to revisit the springs of inspiration that Vicino Orsini and the artists who worked in Bomarzo drank from, in order to comprehend the meanings of the sphinxes, ogres, demigods and fabled animals that populate the site.

Bibliographic References

The earliest bibliographic note reports on the letters exchanged by Pierfrancesco Orsini and the French alchemist Jean Drouet. The correspondents were connoisseurs of Bernardo Tasso's *Amadigi* and Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*; however, these men hold in esteem, above all other literature, that strange book entitled *Hypnerotomachia Polifili*,¹² also one of the most important sources of a profusion of literary, pictorial and sculptural productions. Furthermore, its influence will make itself felt in numerous architectural productions, and even in landscape design.¹³ We should take into consideration the first Venetian edition of 1499, an in-folio illustrated with 171 wood engravings, in which one can observe the plastic representation of the text descriptions. Taking the first chapter of *Poliphilo's Dream* (“The struggle of love in the dreams of Poliphilo”), illustrated by the first woodcut, we see the figure of the protagonist entering the wood. The text comes to our aid: “...hard wild holm oaks, strong black and holm oaks laden with acorns and such an abundance of branches that they did not allow the sun's pleasant rays to completely reach the dew-drenched ground.” The book's dense descriptions continue thus, until they lead to interminable encounters (illustrated by the engravings) with abandoned buildings, Egyptian-style pyramids, domes, towers and pantheons, temples and obelisks. Large amphorae and gigantic vases also appear, marvelous trees, incomprehensible machines and devices. Of course elephants, winged horses, and dragons are unfailingly present. Processions, ceremonies and rituals follow in succession, showing beautiful maidens and youths in readiness for the practice of pagan religiosity and the dramas of love. And there are, of course, the transformisms of Poliphilo's dream, which present his beloved Polia in opposing facets of mysticism and criminality.

The hieroglyphics, extravagantly commented on, also play an important role. Here is an example:

When I finally returned to the square, I saw a pedestal of porphyry, carved around it were these majestic hieroglyphs: first, a bull's cranium with two farming tools tied to its horns; and an altar supported over the two hooves of a billy goat, with a burning flame above it, and on its forehead, an eye and a vulture; later a wash bowl and a washstand... these hieroglyphs were writings rendered in superb sculpture. I meditated on these ancient and sacred scriptures and interpreted them thus: EX LABORE DEO NATVRAE SACRIFICA LIBERALITER, PAVLATIM REDVCES ANIMVM DEO SVBIECTUM. FIRMAM CVSTODIAM VITAE TVAE MISERICORDITER GVBERNANDO TENEBIT, INCOLVMENQVE SERVABIT.¹⁴

Although *Poliphilo's Dream* is the immediate bibliographic source that serves as inspiration for the artisans of the Bomarzo woods, the book's imagery has, in turn, very remote origins. With respect to the hieroglyphs commented on above, we must point out that by 1422, the *Hieroglyphica*¹⁵ had already begun to circulate, and it had become fashionable to write, paint and sculpt in this style, overladen with allegories and signs that in many cases were indecipherable. Perhaps one of the best expressions of hieroglyphic art can be found in "*Maximillian's Triumphal Arch*," engraved in wood by Dürer in 1515.¹⁶ And so it was that in *Poliphilo's Dream*, as well as in so many works until the early nineteenth century (and even today in occultist texts), the hieroglyphic interpretations based on the *Hieroglyphica* were considered authoritative, until they lost all credibility when the Egyptian language was effectively deciphered in 1822.¹⁷

The inspirational bibliography of the *Sacro Bosco* artisans is very extensive, and is of course by no means limited to *Poliphilo's Dream*, but is indissolubly linked to the productions of the fifteenth century humanists, influenced by Byzantine thought and by the rediscovery of the Alexandrian rigor of the third century.¹⁸ On the other hand, not only is there a concurrence of an abundant literature here, but of an oral tradition as well, that is transmitted through architects, designers and sculptors.

The Woods

We have in our hands a catalog—almost an inventory—that gives an account of the "marvelous" objects in the Wood. It mentions some sphinxes, the monument to the Triple Light, the Gigantomachy [Wrestling between Giants], the harpies, the giant turtle, the dog Cerberus, the elephant topped by a tower, Pegasus and the dragon confronting a wild beast. The sacred places are also mentioned: Neptune's fountain, the leaning tower of meditation, the nymphs' cavern, the fountain of life. This material, prepared as a guide for tourists as to the order in which they should take pictures, also elaborates on the ambient light of the place, the vegetation, streams, the ascending and descending planes, the stairways, artificial grottos, the footpaths with the aligned amphorae.... It is well worth devoting a morning to careful observation of this endeavor, carried out over four hundred years ago. It will also be interesting to follow a group of visitors as they listen to the guide dissertate on the ceremonies of magic held here; on the alchemists who, after following an initiatory circuit, finally acquired an ineffable knowledge.

We shall reach the wood by walking along a brook. A river, a bridge and a gate with battlements that bears the Orsini coat of arms will come into view. We shall enter the space that Pierfrancesco referred to in several of his letters as "*El Sacro Bosco*" (The Sacred Woods).

The visitor is received by two "gynocephalic [female-headed] sphinxes" that face one another. These fabled creatures, reposing over their pedestals, present their riddles, written in stone. But here is our first surprise. These monsters do not ask the classical riddles. They are not models of profundity, but are rather like advertising signs with slogans written in the taste and style of the day. A sphinx invites us to respond to her exacting challenge: "TU CH'ENTRI QUI CON MENTE PARTE A PARTE ET DIMMI POI SE TANTE MARAVIGLIE SIEN FATTE PER INGANNO O PUR PER ARTE."¹⁹ The inscription on the other sphinx says: "CHI CON CIGLIA INARCATE ET

LABRA STRETTE NON VA PER QUESTO LOCO MANCO AMMIRA LE FAMOSE DEL MONDO MOLI SETTE”.²⁰ This is a reproach, and a demand for “seriousness.” The Seven Wonders of the World are mentioned in passing, letting us make a mental association with the eighth. We breathe more easily upon realizing that there is a careless humor in the statement, not entirely without impudence, but removed from any ponderous solemnity. Seeing this, nothing better than to continue searching for the messages that we may be given by the craftsmen of the Wood, directly and without the intermediation of interpretative theories.²¹

When we come upon the “battle between giants,” on a stone stele to the left of the monument we read: “SE RODI ALTIER GIA FU DEL SUO COLOSSO PUR DE QUEST IL MIO BOSCO ANCO SI GLORIA E PER PIU NON POTER FO QUANTO POSSO”.²² One more instance of self-glorification.

In the so-called *ninfeo* [nymphs’ cavern], we find an inscription, unfortunately quite worn by the passage of time. We can only make out these words: “L’ANTRO LA FONTE IL LI ... D’OGNI OSCUR PENSIER...”.²³

And searching for new inscriptions, we come to the “theatre,” which, as in any important Roman garden, could not be left out. In the proscenium one can read with difficulty: “PER SIMIL VANITA MI SON AC... (CORDA)... TO D’ONORARE...”.²⁴ At the foot of this stage, portions of two recently-unearthed obelisks have been placed. One of them says: “VICINO ORSINO NEL MDLII.”²⁵ The other announces: “SOL PER SFOGARE IL CORE.”²⁶

On an urn near “Neptune’s fountain,” an inscription reads: “NOTTE ET GIORNO NOI SIAM VIGILI ET PRONTE A GUARDAR DOGNI INGIURIA QUESTA FONTE”.²⁷ And on another: “FONTE NON FU TRA CHINGUARDIA SIA DELLE PIU STRANE BELVE”.²⁸

Coming to the “Orco”—the ogre—we see this legend on the monster’s upper lip: “OGNI PENSIERO VOLA”.²⁹

Nearby is an “Etruscan bench” whose backrest says: “VOI CHE PEL MONDO GITE ERRANDO. VAGHI DI VEDER MARAVIGLIE ALTE ED STUPENDE VENITE QUA, DOVE SON FACCIE HORRENDE ELEFANTI, LEONI, ORSI, ORCHI ET DRAGHI”.³⁰ It is an invitation to see an amusement park.

An inscription on the “rotunda,” or circle, reiterates the undisguised promotion of the Wood: “CEDAN ET MEMPHI E OGNI ALTRA MARAVIGLIA CH EBBE GIAL MONDO IN PREGIO AL SACRO BOSCO CHE SOL SE STESSO ET NULL ALTRO SOMIGLIA”.³¹

The inscriptions have enabled us to understand the intentions of Bomarzo’s creators; at least, we’ve understood the direct messages of Pierfrancesco Orsini. But with this disclosure of the interest of this visit, we find ourselves before a hollowness of meaning...

We have not gone into the imagery of this Woods because it is not its exclusive patrimony, but has to do with the common landscape wherein the mystique of the Renaissance is expressed—a mystique at times barely delineated, and at others—as in this case—roundly presented.

Whether because of epochal necessity or in order to accentuate the ingenious personality of the lord of the place, the architects, designers and sculptors called on alchemical, astrological and mystery themes, we cannot presume that the artisans had full knowledge of what sorts of meanings they were dealing with. In any case, the expressions of that mystique are there before our eyes, and—as can happen in some abandoned attics—valuable materials accumulate amidst the many absurdities. Surely the information (or, better said, the disinformation) on the Bomarzo Woods will multiply. We’ll be able to consult virtual libraries, leaf through books that will talk in a disorganized way about the stars, the philosopher’s stone, and even about the collective unconscious; but none of it will ease the access to a complex cultural ambience that began to be forged in the Hellenic syncretism of ancient Alexandria.

Notes to The Bomarzo Woods

- ¹ There are statues dedicated to Columbus in many squares and promenades [in Madrid, Spain]. One of them, in Barcelona, is especially significant. The one we are concerned with, three meters in height, we owe to A. Mérida and J. Suñol, who finished it in 1885. In 1892, it was set atop a column seventeen meters high, in the center of [Paseo de] La Castellana. Once finished, the Monument to the Discovery of America was placed in its current location in the square. Another three meters were added to the column after a restoration.
- ² In the Municipal Palace of Genoa, a letter dated March 21, 1502 in Seville and addressed to Nicoló Oderigo, Ambassador of Genoa to Spain, has been preserved. Columbus signed it: "Cristo ferens."
- ³ According to a third-century Syrian legend, there was a man whose occupation was to help travelers across a swiftly-flowing river. To carry out his task he would place the traveler on his shoulders, and, walking across the riverbed, would put them down on the opposite bank. He often walked leaning on a piece of wood as if it were a cane. One day a boy appeared who asked for his services. Halfway across the river, the boy had become so heavy that the man's strength began to fail. In the midst of the danger the child revealed that he was Jesus Christ, whereupon the man, amazed at the miracle, converted to Christianity, taking the name *Christóforos* (Lat. *Christus*, Christ; and Gr. *Foros*, bearer). Christopher went on to become the patron saint of travelers. The Middle Ages saw the development of colossal Saint Christopher statues which can still be found in numerous cathedrals. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in Germany and the Netherlands, stamps were printed that circulated throughout Europe and that had the power to give protection in misfortune. During Columbus's time the legend was well known among the common folk. A little later, in 1584, in the cathedral of Seville, Mateo Pérez de Alesio painted a Saint Christopher that was over nine meters high. In religious paintings and statues, Saint Christopher is shown crossing a river while carrying Jesus on his shoulders. The child, in turn, carries in his right hand the globe of the world topped by a cross. On the basis of this representation, people have been telling an ironic riddle in Austria for various centuries: "If Christopher carried Christ, and Christ carried the world -- where was Christopher standing?"
- ⁴ It was inaugurated by the mayor of Madrid on May 15, 1977, in the presence of the king and twenty mayors from the capital cities of the countries of America.
- ⁵ The eminent Italian architect A. Sartoris says, "*Vaquero Turcios has created a sculptured architecture, divided into segments with concavities, and articulations of volumes... Over these volumes, over the bold and powerful corbels leaping into the void, the figures have been excavated and the texts of the inscriptions fitted in graphically, in the manner of great drawings and graffiti. Flying forms of a monolithic character. Narrative monument. First constructed work of art realized at an urban scale.*" As for O. Guayasamin, this is his opinion of the work: "*From the aesthetic point of view it attains the levels of high poetry. The architectural masses, which might at first appear too static, acquire great lightness and balance. The monument is at the same time the Andes Mountains and the ships' sails. By this I mean that it is as solid as a rock and as light as a ship's sail. It is, finally, the most wide-reaching monument realized in Europe in recent times, and the most solid.*" Sartoris, A. *Vaquero Turcios y el Arte Construido. Monumento al Descubrimiento de América*. Madrid: Abaco, 1977.
- ⁶ Seneca. *Medea*. Act II: 375 par. Madrid: Gredos, 1997. [Also: *Seneca VIII Tragedies*: Loeb Classical Library. Vol. 62 Ed. and trans. J.G. Fitch. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.] The text that Columbus possibly used was that of the *Editio Princeps* of Ferrara, 1484, and not—as was presumed until recently—the editions by Martinus Herbipolensis in Leipzig, or by Carolus Fernandus in Paris. These editions have no recorded years of publication and only became known in 1492, and they appear as dating from the same year as *Tragoediae Senecae cum duobus commentaries* by Marmita, published by the latter in Venice in 1493. As for the text that concerns us, the translator and commentator of Seneca's works, Jesús Luque Moreno, says: "*For centuries (by Abraham Oertel, for example), this passage has been interpreted as the prophetic announcement made by a Spaniard about the discovery of the New World, which would later be carried out by Spain.*" Ferdinand (Hernand) Columbus, the discoverer's son, noted beside this

passage, in his copy of Seneca's theater play: "*haec prophetia expleta est per patrem meum Christoforum Colon almirantem anno 1492*" (This prophecy was fulfilled by my father, Admiral Christopher Columbus, in the year 1492).

⁷ Biblioteca Colombina, Seville.

⁸ Colón, C. *Diario. Relaciones de viajes*. Madrid: Sarpe, 1985. In this book's introductory note it is sustained that "*relatively few documents from the author have survived; and, in any case, a good portion of them have come to us thanks to copies made by Fray Bartolomé De Las Casas, who maintained a close friendship with Diego Columbus, enabling him to have direct access to the discoverer's books and archives. In this way, thanks to a handwritten copy by De Las Casas, the summaries of the Diaries of the first and third voyages have been preserved. This leads to the thought that the Diaries' original text has been altered considerably. Nevertheless, subsequent researchers have gone about polishing the copies, [correcting] imprecisions and alterations, and the current versions are highly trustworthy. Another difficulty is posed by the Columbian works, in addition to the absence of originals: the debated problem of the language that the author used...Columbus is above all a seaman—and in consequence, this mariner was accustomed to jabbering in a thousand languages without expressing himself well in any one. Day after day, and during the years of his youth, the Admiral had to be able to communicate with his companions in the jargon then known as 'Levantine'—that is, from the Levant, from the Mediterranean.*" [Columbus, Christopher. *Writing of Christopher Columbus, The Discovery and Occupation of the New World*. Ed. Paul Leicester Ford. New York: Charles L. Webster / Co., 1892. 133.]

⁹ "*I always read that the world, land and water, was spherical, in the authorities and experiments that Ptolemy and others who wrote about this place gave and demonstrated to that end, through the eclipses of the moon, and other demonstrations that they carry out from the Orient to the Occident, as well as through the elevation of the North pole in the South. Now I saw so much irregularity, as I have already said, and for this reason I set myself to study this matter of the world, and I decided that it is not round, in the way that they write it as being, but that it is in the form of a pear that is very round, except there where it has the stem, where it is most prominent; or like a very round ball, and in one part of it there was a prominence like a woman's breast, and that the part of the nipple would be the highest and nearest to the sky, and it would be below the equinoctial line, and in this sea Ocçeana, at the end of Orient (I call 'end of Orient' where all land and islands end). And for this I postulate all the reasons written above, regarding the line which passes to the Occident of the Azores one hundred leagues from North to South, which upon passing from there to the West, the ships already go rising gently toward the sky...*" Op. cit. *Relación del tercer viaje*.

¹⁰ Alighieri, Dante. *Disputa sobre el agua y la tierra*. O. C. Madrid: BAC, 1973: 8 par. *La Quaestio de situ aquae et terrae* denies the theory sustained by Pliny, Seneca and Saint Basil, according to which the sea occupies a higher place than the earth [See also: *The Latin Works of Dante Alighieri Quaestio/De Aqua et Terra*. 1904. New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969].

¹¹ Op. Cit.: 82 par.

¹² What in Dante is poetry, for many of his readers ends up being the description of a physical reality that is found in the southern seas. The bard narrates: "*l'mi volsi a man destra, e posi mente a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle non vista mai fuor ch'a la prima gente. Goder pareva il ciel di lor fiammelle: oh settentrional vedovo sito, poi che privato se'di mirar quelle!*" ["*I turned to the right and set my mind on the other pole, and I saw four stars never seen before but by the first people; the sky seemed to rejoice in their flames. O widowed region of the north, since thou art denied that sight!*"] *The Divine Comedy*. Purgatory, Canto I. For Dante, the Earth, according to Ptolemy's system, is motionless. Around it revolve the celestial spheres and, with them, the Sun, the planets and the stars. In the poem these are the cardinal points of the world: to the north, Jerusalem, above the infernal abyss; to the south, in the antipodes of Jerusalem, the mountain of Purgatory; to the east, the Ganges; to the west, the Strait of Gibraltar. Hell and Purgatory are on Earth, one in the form of an abyss, the other in the form of a mountain, Earthly Paradise on its summit. Moreover, the Ptolemaic image would prevail even after the publication in 1543 of *Revolutionibus orbium coelestium* by Copernicus. Because the latter denied that the Earth was the center of the universe, his concept was vigorously resisted. In 1609, Galileo introduced the astronomic lens and confirmed

Copernicus's heliocentric theory, but several decades still had to pass before the new vision of reality would be established.

- ¹³ “*El Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Comes from the people of Chumayel, Yucatán. It was the property of Bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona. In 1868, when it was already in his ownership, it was copied by hand by Dr. Berendt and in 1887 photographed by Teoberto Maler. George B. Gordon, Director of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, photographed and published it in facsimile form in 1913. It passed on to the Cepeda Library of Mérida in 1915, from where it was stolen together with other manuscripts, before 1918. In 1938, it resurfaced for sale in the United States for the sum of seven thousand dollars. It was later offered once more for sale to Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley for the sum of five thousand dollars. Parts of it have been translated and published since 1882, but the first complete translation was published in 1930 by Antonio Médez Bolio in Costa Rica, in Spanish. The second translation, into English, was by Ralph L. Roys, who published it in 1933.” *El Libro de los Libros de Chilam Balam*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. 1963.13.
- ¹⁴ “The so-called Books of Chilam Balam make up one of the most important sections of indigenous American literature. They were written after the Spanish conquest; therefore their written form and material format are European. That is to say, their written form is the Spanish friars’ adaptation of the phonology of the Mayan language of Yucatán, and the paper used—at least in the copies now in existence—is also European, in the form of notebooks. Some, if not all, had cowhide covers.... As can be seen, the diversity of their content encompasses all the cultural phases that the Mayan people of Yucatán went through until they ceased to be compiled.... Undoubtedly a large part of their purely native religious and historical texts come from the ancient hieroglyphic books.... They came to be called the Books of Chilam Balam, from what date we do not know. Today this name is not recorded as the original title of any of them, although Pío Pérez notes down in one of his transcriptions that: ‘Here ends the book entitled Chilambalam, which was preserved in the town of Maní....’ Pérez Codex. Ms. 137. In any case, the name is already an accepted technical reference for this type of Yucatec book.... As to how the Books of Chilam Balam came to be organized and multiplied, our assumption is as follows: Some priest (or various priests simultaneously) could have received instruction from the friars and learned to read and write in his own language. Taking advantage of this new acquisition of his culture, he may have transcribed religious and historical texts contained in their hieroglyphic books, including the predictions of Chilam Balam. From one or several sources, copies may have been produced that passed on to the hands of native priests from other villages, and the names of their places of origin became included in their titles: Chumayel, Maní, Tizimín, etc. Time destroyed the books materially, and destroyed in turn the understanding that their curators should have had of their content, upon modifying their own culture. Thus, the copies that exist today are not the originals from the sixteenth century in their fundamental texts, but are copies made from copies from much later, some from the seventeenth century and others even from the present century. A large part of these texts that we call “fundamental” are repeated one or more times in the Books, but on each occasion the versions are not identical, for the reasons noted.” Op. cit. 9 +.
- ¹⁵ The scholars, thinkers and scientists who found inspiration in the teachings of history are legion. This has been particularly notable among science fiction writers. One example suffices: Ray Bradbury. Surely this author was influenced by various writers of fantasy stories when he wrote his *Martian Chronicles*. The impact on him of the great maritime and terrestrial discoveries are also very clear. In his book Bradbury endeavored to show the harmful consequences of the encounter between cultures (in his case, between Martian and Terrestrial cultures), inspiring himself in facts such as the events in Guatemala following the arrival of the Europeans, when a smallpox epidemic decimated the Mayan groups in a considerable area. The novelist recreates this situation as the chickenpox plague that is carried by the earthlings and that annihilates the Martians (in contrasting to the terrestrial disease that kills the Martian invaders in H.G. Wells’s *War of Worlds*). The first edition of *The Martian Chronicles* is from the year 1946, later by thirteen years than the complete translation into English of the books of *Chilam Balam*. The prophetic dream related by one of the Martians, announcing the arrival of the first human beings, brings to mind the quibblings of the Mayan prophecies, supposedly recorded before the Europeans’ discovery of America. The Mayans

as well as the Martians announce in their prophecies that the foreigners are very near, at a distance of one day; also, in both cases, the invaders' physical characteristics are described. The strange sound books that are "read" by the Martians bring to mind the "painted" or hieroglyphic books of the Mayans. Finally, the masks of which the members of both cultures are so fond, confirm Bradbury's play on images as inspired by Mayan literature.

¹⁶ Reference to the film, "Christopher Columbus, The Discovery," produced and directed in 1992 by John Glen.

¹⁷ Columbus had imagined that it was possible to raise an army of 50,000 foot soldiers and 5,000 horses, to rescue the Holy Sepulcher, even going so far as to request permission from the Spain monarchs to launch a crusade that would expel the Muslims from Jerusalem. As time went by, he gradually gave up this idea in order to concentrate on the final stage of his career of discoveries. On May 9, 1502, he set sail from Cadiz on his fourth and last voyage to America.

¹ At the foot of the town of Bomarzo lies the *Sacro Bosco* created by Duke Pierfrancesco Orsini (1523-1585), nicknamed 'Vicino'. 'Bomarzo' means, more or less: "Good Mars." The name "Sacro Bosco" [Sacred Wood] was coined after Orsini's death.

² The opera "Bomarzo" by Alberto Ginastera, based on texts by Manuel Mujica Lainez, premiered on May 19, 1967 in Washington's Lisner Auditorium. In consequence, on July 18, 1967, the Municipality of Buenos Aires issued a decree that excluded the opera from the repertoire of Teatro Colón, where it was scheduled to open a few days later. The decree declared: "This Municipal Office recently obtained full information on the characteristic features of the referenced show. In its fifteen scenes there are continual, obsessive references to sex, violence and visions, accentuated by the staging, chorus, decoration, choreography and the rest of its accompanying elements. The plot and staging of the piece are manifestly in conflict with basic moral principles in matters of sexual decorum." The singular decree was celebrated by humorists from various countries and helped spread the work's fame. These municipal initiatives—such as, for example, the resolution in 1910 of the Municipality of Florence, which decided to dress Michaelangelo's *David* with a grape leaf—tend to be received afterwards with much merriment. In 1970, the opera was presented in the Opera Houses of Kiel and of Zurich, conducted by the eminent Ferdinand Leitner. From these dates on, interest in Bomarzo Park begins to grow.

³ This is the song of Girolamo, the older brother of Pierfrancesco Orsini. As for "the enormous monsters that my brother ordered sculpted," it is known who took part in the two phases of sculptural work that began in 1552 and were later interrupted, to be resumed in 1564 until their conclusion in 1573. It has not yet been sufficiently clarified who the park's general designer was. In any case, a commission was given to the architect Pirro Ligorio (remembered for his project in 1550 of the Villa d'Este Gardens in Tivoli).

⁴ Two ink drawings have survived, one known as "Buon Martio" (Vienna. Graphische Albertina. Portale e Uran. Cat. No. 27), and the other, "Vue du Jardin de Bomarzo" (attributed to Breenberg, Louvre, Inventory No. 23373). These are the oldest references.

⁵ Praz, Mario. "I Mostri di Bomarzo." *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 1953, No. 8.

⁶ *Quaderni dell'Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* (April 1955, special fascicle dedicated to the Villa Orsini). Several works, among them: Arnaldo Bruschi, *L'Abitato di Bomarzo e la Villa Orsini*; Giuseppe Zander, *Gli Elementi Documentari del Sacro Bosco*, and Leonardo Benevolo, *Saggio d'Interpretazione del Sacro Bosco*.

⁷ By comparing the photographs in the first edition of the brochure, "Bomarzo Parco dei Mostri" (in black and white), to those in the second edition (in color), one can observe important modifications in the monuments. See, for example, "Pegasus," totally restored. These brochures, undated, are sold at the park entrance.

⁸ As read in the dedication in *Bomarzo*. Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1962.

⁹ See Frazer, J.G. *La Rama Dorada*. Fondo de Cultura Sudamericana: Buenos Aires, 1962 [Also: Frazer, J.G. *The Golden Bough*. First ed. 1890. London: Chancellor Press, 1994.]. The relationship to the sacred woods of the oak and the mistletoe is explored in Chapter LXV ("Balder y el muérdago" [Balder and the Mistletoe]). To grasp the mythic significance of this tree and its parasite, see: Virgilio. *Libro VI, Eneide*. Ed. Losada: Buenos Aires, 1984 (112). On page 112 one reads: "...Bajo la opaca copa de un árbol se oculta un ramo, cuyas hojas y flexible tallo son de oro, el cual está consagrado a la Juno infernal; todo el bosque lo oculta y las sombras lo encierran entre tenebrosos valles y no es dado penetrar en las entrañas de la tierra sino al que haya desgajado del árbol la áurea rama; Prosérpina

tiene dispuesto que ese sea el tributo que se lleve...” [“In the neighb'ring grove /There stands a tree; the queen of Stygian Jove /Claims it her own; thick woods and gloomy night /Conceal the happy plant from human sight. /One bough it bears; but (wondrous to behold!) /The ductile rind and leaves of radiant gold: /This from the vulgar branches must be torn, /And to fair Proserpine the present borne, /Ere leave be giv'n to tempt the nether skies.” From John Dryden’s English translation of *The Aeneid*, Internet Classics Archive edition, <classics.mit.edu>.]

- ¹⁰ “Through the animation of the human figure, Gothic art took the first great step forward in the evolution of modern expressive art. The second was made by Mannerism with its dissolution of Renaissance objectivism, the accentuation of the artist’s personal point of view and of the spectator’s personal experience.” Hauser, A. *Historia social de la literatura y el arte. Debate*. Vol. I. Madrid, 1998. 426.
- ¹¹ See *El Sacro Bosco de Bomarzo. Un Jardín Alquímico* [The Sacred Woods of Bomarzo. An Alchemical Garden]. Roquero, L. Madrid: Ed. Celeste, 1999. 22.
- ¹² Colonna, F. *Sueño de Polifilo*. Barcelona: El Acantilado, 1999. In the book’s Introduction it says: “*Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice, 1499) is one of the most curious and enigmatic books ever to come out of a printing press. Grolli refers to it as ‘the greatest work of fantasy, the only poem of the fifteenth century’ while Croce condemns it with these words: ‘If the book were not so serious, long and ponderous, it could be interpreted as a caricature of Humanism’.”
- ¹³ In the Introduction cited above, Pedraza comments that *Poliphilo’s Dream* aroused interest in the most diverse fields—in the literature of the précieux, satire and alchemy, architectural theory, heraldry, and landscape design. It influenced French précieux literature, Romanticism, the pre-Raphaelites and Symbolism. From *Francisco I to Rodolfo I* it was very highly considered in royal courts and palaces. Even in *Gargantua* by Rabelais it is cited as a book of interest.
- ¹⁴ Op. cit., Chapter IV. “Sacrifice to God with generosity the bounty of nature obtained through your work. In this way, little by little, you will fashion your spirit after his own. He will firmly guard your life, governing it with mercy, and will keep you from harm.” The hieroglyph is composed ideographically, with each object in the drawing corresponding to one or more Latin words: bucraneum=“ex labore”, eye=“deo”, bird =“naturae”, altar=“sacrifica”, etc.
- ¹⁵ “By Horus, Ficino meant Horus Apollo or Horapollo, the author of the *Hieroglyphica*, alleged to be the Greek translation of an Egyptian work, which was discovered in 1419 by a Florentine monk, Cristoforo Buondelmonti. Purchased by Buondelmonti on behalf of Cosimo de’Medici, the manuscript of the *Hieroglyphica* eventually reached Florence in 1422, where it caused a sensation. For there, at last, was a work explaining the hidden meaning of the mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphs. Its text was widely circulated and eagerly commented upon, despite its many shortcomings; and it is responsible for the Renaissance view of hieroglyphs.” Klossowski de Rola, S. *The Golden Game*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1988. 9. [Klossovsky de Rola, S. *El Juego Aureo*. Madrid, 1988. 12.]
- ¹⁶ “The gigantic *Arch of Triumph of Maximilian*, the largest wood engraving in history, is a set of images measuring 350 x 279 cm. Exactly on the upper portion of the monument there is a panel (described by Stabius, Maximilian’s historiographer, as ‘a mystery in sacred Egyptian letters’) showing the emperor on his throne surrounded by elongated symbols, from among the illustrations that Dürer made for Horapolo’s book. Following R. Wittkower, I now refer to Erwin Panofsky’s translation of the German text by Stabius and the Latin text by Pirckheimer, which allows us to decipher the image (interpolations are Panofsky’s): ‘Maximilian (the emperor in person)—prince (dog covered with a stole) of great piety (star atop the emperor’s crown), magnanimity, strength and courage (lion), ennobled by an eternal and imperishable glory (basilisk over the emperor’s crown), descendant of an ancient lineage (the bundle of papyri on which he is seated)...etc.’” Op. cit.. 13.
- ¹⁷ “The Rosetta Stone is a stele found by a French officer in 1799 in Rosetta, a locality near the Mediterranean Egyptian coast. It is currently housed in the British Museum of London. The text, written in two languages and three scripts (hieroglyphics, demotic and Greek), was used by Jean-Francois Champollion as the basis for deciphering the hieroglyphs in 1822. The decree that it contains reproduces the decisions adopted by a synod of Egyptian priests held in 196 B.C.E., on the honors to be given to Ptolemy V and Cleopatra I.” Schulz, R., and Seidel, M. *Egipto El Mundo de los Faraones*. Colonia: Könemann, 1997. 519.
- ¹⁸ “In 1439, under pressure from the Turks in Constantinople (seat of the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church), a Council is called in Florence. For Florentine intellectual circles, the Oriental delegations’ stay

in their city entails a rediscovery of Greek culture in the Hellenic period. The taking of Constantinople in 1453 by the Turks will provoke a massive arrival of Byzantines in the Italian Peninsula. With the help of the Byzantine scholars, the Greek texts of the classical and Hellenistic eras are translated. These translations, together with the publication of numerous compendia and commentaries, will bring the Florentine Academia unprecedented prestige. This Academy was founded by the multifaceted Marsilio Ficino of *Philosophus platonicus, Theologus et Medicus*.... The recovery of Hellenic culture through the Byzantines presupposes an upheaval in Quattrocento Italy. Cosimo de Medici mobilizes agents to locate manuscripts, and in 1460, a copy of *Corpus Hermeticum* arrives from Macedonia. Marsilio Ficino is charged with its translation, with an order to postpone the translation of Plato's texts and assign priority to the great Hermes, because he is more venerable and more ancient. An error of historical perspective is produced: what was the late fruit of a Platonism contaminated by eclectic interference from other cultures is considered as being the originating doctrine that was spread from Egypt in very remote times throughout the entire ancient world, influencing Plato himself.... The translations revitalize the hermetic-alchemical tradition and stimulate a renewed interest in astrology. Hermetic fever seizes the Italian courts. Not a single Renaissance court was without its resident astrologers and alchemists, nor was there any library that did not collect works of traditional alchemy." Roquero, L. *El Sacro Bosco di Bomarzo*. Un jardín alquímico. Madrid: Ed. Celeste, 1999. 11.

19 "You who enter with the idea of carefully observing everything, tell me afterwards whether so many marvels were made for deception, or rather for art."

20 "Whoever does not walk through this place with eyebrows arched and lips pressed together, will neither know how to admire the famous seven wonders of the world."

21 The embarrassing rubbish heap of interpretations has obscured the reality of Bomarzo Wood. For a sampling, see Kretzulesco-Quaranta, *Los Jardines del Sueño* [(The Dream Gardens) Chapter on Bomarzo: "The Sacred Wood." Madrid: Ed. Siruela, 1996]—although this book should be given credit for the good research work it contains on the mystique of the Renaissance.

22 "If Rhodes was famous for its Colossus, my wood is also cause for glory, and even more, because I cannot do more than I have done."

23 "*La caverna, la fuente, el li...de todo obscuro pensamiento...*" [The cavern, the fountain, the li...of all dark thoughts....] Perhaps it can be completed like this: "*L'antro, la fonte, il lieto cielo. Libero l'animo d'ogni oscur pensiero.*" That is, "The cavern, the fountain, the contented sky. The soul free of all dark thought"—keeping in mind that the shrine of the nymphs includes the urns of the nymphs who inspire the five senses; namely: a mirror, for sight (Horatia); a musical instrument, for hearing (Aloe); a perfume flask, for smell (Ophrasia); a bunch of grapes, for taste (Geussia); the resting hand, for touch (Aphae). See *El Sueño de Polifilo*, Chapter VII: "Poliphilo speaks of the pleasantness of the land where his journey ended, how as he wandered through it, he found an exquisite and very remarkable fountain, and how he saw five charming maidens coming towards him...." The nymphs, before saying their names and reciting their attributes, point out to Poliphilo: "Our appearance and our presence ought not to frighten you; don't be afraid, because it is not the custom to do any harm here, nor will you encounter anything unpleasant." The situation narrated in Poliphilo's Dream (the inspirer of many of the Bomarzo allegories), justifies the completion of the faded inscription of the nymphs' cavern as we have done above ("...The cavern, the fountain, the contented sky. The soul free of all dark thoughts").

24 Which could be dubiously translated as: "Before such vanity, I am in agreement with honoring...."

25 "Vicino Orsini in 1552." Interpreted as meaning that the work was completed in 1552.

26 "Only to unburden the heart." Explains that his intention has been to "unburden his heart," and not, for instance, "to create an alchemic forest where an initiatory circuit can be followed," as some tourist agencies announce, and certain esoteric advocates of the psychology of the collective unconscious.

27 "Night and day, we are vigilant and ready to save the fountain from any harm."

28 "The fountain was (is) not for those who are on guard in front of the strangest beasts."

29 "All thought flies."

30 "You who wander aimlessly through the world in search of noble and splendid marvels—come here where there are horrible faces, elephants, lions, ogres and dragons."

31 "Memphis, and any other wonder that may already exist in the world, yield in appreciation of the Sacro Bosco, which only itself and no other resembles."

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- ¹ There are statues dedicated to Columbus in many squares and promenades [in Madrid, Spain]. One of them, in Barcelona, is especially significant. The one we are concerned with, three meters in height, we owe to A. Mélida and J. Suñol, who finished it in 1885. In 1892, it was set atop a column seventeen meters high, in the center of [Paseo de] La Castellana. Once finished, the Monument to the Discovery of America was placed in its current location in the square. Another three meters were added to the column after a restoration.
- ² In the Municipal Palace of Genoa, a letter dated March 21, 1502 in Seville and addressed to Nicoló Oderigo, Ambassador of Genoa to Spain, has been preserved. Columbus signed it: “Cristo ferens.”
- ³ According to a third-century Syrian legend, there was a man whose occupation was to help travelers across a swiftly-flowing river. To carry out his task he would place the traveler on his shoulders, and, walking across the riverbed, would put them down on the opposite bank. He often walked leaning on a piece of wood as if it were a cane. One day a boy appeared who asked for his services. Halfway across the river, the boy had become so heavy that the man’s strength began to fail. In the midst of the danger the child revealed that he was Jesus Christ, whereupon the man, amazed at the miracle, converted to Christianity, taking the name *Christóforos* (Lat. *Christus*, Christ; and Gr. *Foros*, bearer). Christopher went on to become the patron saint of travelers. The Middle Ages saw the development of colossal Saint Christopher statues which can still be found in numerous cathedrals. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, in Germany and the Netherlands, stamps were printed that circulated throughout Europe and that had the power to give protection in misfortune. During Columbus’s time the legend was well known among the common folk. A little later, in 1584, in the cathedral of Seville, Mateo Pérez de Alesio painted a Saint Christopher that was over nine meters high. In religious paintings and statues, Saint Christopher is shown crossing a river while carrying Jesus on his shoulders. The child, in turn, carries in his right hand the globe of the world topped by a cross. On the basis of this representation, people have been telling an ironic riddle in Austria for various centuries: “If Christopher carried Christ, and Christ carried the world -- where was Christopher standing?”
- ⁴ It was inaugurated by the mayor of Madrid on May 15, 1977, in the presence of the king and twenty mayors from the capital cities of the countries of America.
- ⁵ The eminent Italian architect A. Sartoris says, “*Vaquero Turcios has created a sculptured architecture, divided into segments with concavities, and articulations of volumes. . . . Over these volumes, over the bold and powerful corbels leaping into the void, the figures have been excavated and the texts of the inscriptions fitted in graphically, in the manner of great drawings and graffiti. Flying forms of a monolithic character. Narrative monument. First constructed work of art realized at an urban scale.*” As for O. Guayasamin, this is his opinion of the work: “*From the aesthetic point of view it attains the levels of high poetry. The architectural masses, which might at first appear too static, acquire great lightness and balance. The monument is at the same time the Andes Mountains and the ships’ sails. By this I mean that it is as solid as a rock and as light as a ship’s sail. It is, finally, the most wide-reaching monument realized in Europe in recent times, and the most solid.*” Sartoris, A. *Vaquero Turcios y el Arte Construido. Monumento al Descubrimiento de América*. Madrid: Abaco, 1977.
- ⁶ Seneca. *Medea*. Act II: 375 par. Madrid: Gredos, 1997. [Also: *Seneca VIII Tragedies*: Loeb Classical Library. Vol. 62 Ed. and trans. J.G. Fitch. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 2002.] The text that Columbus possibly used was that of the *Editio Princeps* of Ferrara, 1484, and not—as was presumed until recently—the editions by Martinus Herbipolensis in Leipzig, or by Carolus Fernandus in Paris. These editions have no recorded years of publication and only became known in 1492, and they appear as dating from the same year as *Tragoediae Senecae cum duobus commentaries* by Marmita, published by the latter in Venice in 1493. As for the text that concerns us, the translator and commentator of Seneca’s works, Jesús Luque Moreno, says: “*For centuries (by Abraham Oertel, for example), this passage has been interpreted as the prophetic announcement made by a Spaniard about the discovery of the New World, which would later be carried out by Spain.*” Ferdinand (Hernand) Columbus, the discoverer’s son, noted beside this

passage, in his copy of Seneca's theater play: "*haec propheta expleta est per patrem meum Christoforum Colon almirantem anno 1492*" (This prophecy was fulfilled by my father, Admiral Christopher Columbus, in the year 1492).

⁷ Biblioteca Colombina, Seville.

⁸ Colón, C. *Diario. Relaciones de viajes*. Madrid: Sarpe, 1985. In this book's introductory note it is sustained that "*relatively few documents from the author have survived; and, in any case, a good portion of them have come to us thanks to copies made by Fray Bartolomé De Las Casas, who maintained a close friendship with Diego Columbus, enabling him to have direct access to the discoverer's books and archives. In this way, thanks to a handwritten copy by De Las Casas, the summaries of the Diaries of the first and third voyages have been preserved. This leads to the thought that the Diaries' original text has been altered considerably. Nevertheless, subsequent researchers have gone about polishing the copies, [correcting] imprecisions and alterations, and the current versions are highly trustworthy. Another difficulty is posed by the Columbian works, in addition to the absence of originals: the debated problem of the language that the author used...Columbus is above all a seaman—and in consequence, this mariner was accustomed to jabbering in a thousand languages without expressing himself well in any one. Day after day, and during the years of his youth, the Admiral had to be able to communicate with his companions in the jargon then known as 'Levantine'—that is, from the Levant, from the Mediterranean.*" [Columbus, Christopher. *Writing of Christopher Columbus, The Discovery and Occupation of the New World*. Ed. Paul Leicester Ford. New York: Charles L. Webster / Co., 1892. 133.]

⁹ "*I always read that the world, land and water, was spherical, in the authorities and experiments that Ptolemy and others who wrote about this place gave and demonstrated to that end, through the eclipses of the moon, and other demonstrations that they carry out from the Orient to the Occident, as well as through the elevation of the North pole in the South. Now I saw so much irregularity, as I have already said, and for this reason I set myself to study this matter of the world, and I decided that it is not round, in the way that they write it as being, but that it is in the form of a pear that is very round, except there where it has the stem, where it is most prominent; or like a very round ball, and in one part of it there was a prominence like a woman's breast, and that the part of the nipple would be the highest and nearest to the sky, and it would be below the equinoctial line, and in this sea Ocçeana, at the end of Orient (I call 'end of Orient' where all land and islands end). And for this I postulate all the reasons written above, regarding the line which passes to the Occident of the Azores one hundred leagues from North to South, which upon passing from there to the West, the ships already go rising gently toward the sky...*" Op. cit. *Relación del tercer viaje*.

¹⁰ Alighieri, Dante. *Disputa sobre el agua y la tierra*. O. C. Madrid: BAC, 1973: 8 par. *La Quaestio de situ aquae et terrae* denies the theory sustained by Pliny, Seneca and Saint Basil, according to which the sea occupies a higher place than the earth [See also: *The Latin Works of Dante Alighieri Quaestio/De Aqua et Terra*. 1904. New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969].

¹¹ Op. Cit.: 82 par.

¹² What in Dante is poetry, for many of his readers ends up being the description of a physical reality that is found in the southern seas. The bard narrates: "*l'mi volsi a man destra, e posi mente a l'altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle non vista mai fuor ch'a la prima gente. Goder pareva il ciel di lor fiammelle: oh settentrional vedovo sito, poi che privato se'di mirar quelle!*" ["*I turned to the right and set my mind on the other pole, and I saw four stars never seen before but by the first people; the sky seemed to rejoice in their flames. O widowed region of the north, since thou art denied that sight!*"] *The Divine Comedy*. Purgatory, Canto I. For Dante, the Earth, according to Ptolemy's system, is motionless. Around it revolve the celestial spheres and, with them, the Sun, the planets and the stars. In the poem these are the cardinal points of the world: to the north, Jerusalem, above the infernal abyss; to the south, in the antipodes of Jerusalem, the mountain of Purgatory; to the east, the Ganges; to the west, the Strait of Gibraltar. Hell and Purgatory are on Earth, one in the form of an abyss, the other in the form of a mountain, Earthly Paradise on its summit. Moreover, the Ptolemaic image would prevail even after the publication in 1543 of *Revolutionibus orbium coelestium* by Copernicus. Because the latter denied that the Earth was the center of the universe, his concept was vigorously resisted. In 1609, Galileo introduced the astronomic lens and confirmed

Copernicus's heliocentric theory, but several decades still had to pass before the new vision of reality would be established.

- ¹³ “*El Chilam Balam de Chumayel*. Comes from the people of Chumayel, Yucatán. It was the property of Bishop Crescencio Carrillo y Ancona. In 1868, when it was already in his ownership, it was copied by hand by Dr. Berendt and in 1887 photographed by Teoberto Maler. George B. Gordon, Director of the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, photographed and published it in facsimile form in 1913. It passed on to the Cepeda Library of Mérida in 1915, from where it was stolen together with other manuscripts, before 1918. In 1938, it resurfaced for sale in the United States for the sum of seven thousand dollars. It was later offered once more for sale to Dr. Sylvanus G. Morley for the sum of five thousand dollars. Parts of it have been translated and published since 1882, but the first complete translation was published in 1930 by Antonio Médez Bolio in Costa Rica, in Spanish. The second translation, into English, was by Ralph L. Roys, who published it in 1933.” *El Libro de los Libros de Chilam Balam*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. 1963.13.
- ¹⁴ “The so-called Books of Chilam Balam make up one of the most important sections of indigenous American literature. They were written after the Spanish conquest; therefore their written form and material format are European. That is to say, their written form is the Spanish friars' adaptation of the phonology of the Mayan language of Yucatán, and the paper used—at least in the copies now in existence—is also European, in the form of notebooks. Some, if not all, had cowhide covers.... As can be seen, the diversity of their content encompasses all the cultural phases that the Mayan people of Yucatán went through until they ceased to be compiled.... Undoubtedly a large part of their purely native religious and historical texts come from the ancient hieroglyphic books.... They came to be called the Books of Chilam Balam, from what date we do not know. Today this name is not recorded as the original title of any of them, although Pío Pérez notes down in one of his transcriptions that: ‘Here ends the book entitled Chilambalam, which was preserved in the town of Maní....’ Pérez Codex. Ms. 137. In any case, the name is already an accepted technical reference for this type of Yucatec book.... As to how the Books of Chilam Balam came to be organized and multiplied, our assumption is as follows: Some priest (or various priests simultaneously) could have received instruction from the friars and learned to read and write in his own language. Taking advantage of this new acquisition of his culture, he may have transcribed religious and historical texts contained in their hieroglyphic books, including the predictions of Chilam Balam. From one or several sources, copies may have been produced that passed on to the hands of native priests from other villages, and the names of their places of origin became included in their titles: Chumayel, Maní, Tizimín, etc. Time destroyed the books materially, and destroyed in turn the understanding that their curators should have had of their content, upon modifying their own culture. Thus, the copies that exist today are not the originals from the sixteenth century in their fundamental texts, but are copies made from copies from much later, some from the seventeenth century and others even from the present century. A large part of these texts that we call “fundamental” are repeated one or more times in the Books, but on each occasion the versions are not identical, for the reasons noted.” Op. cit. 9 +.
- ¹⁵ The scholars, thinkers and scientists who found inspiration in the teachings of history are legion. This has been particularly notable among science fiction writers. One example suffices: Ray Bradbury. Surely this author was influenced by various writers of fantasy stories when he wrote his *Martian Chronicles*. The impact on him of the great maritime and terrestrial discoveries are also very clear. In his book Bradbury endeavored to show the harmful consequences of the encounter between cultures (in his case, between Martian and Terrestrial cultures), inspiring himself in facts such as the events in Guatemala following the arrival of the Europeans, when a smallpox epidemic decimated the Mayan groups in a considerable area. The novelist recreates this situation as the chickenpox plague that is carried by the earthlings and that annihilates the Martians (in contrasting to the terrestrial disease that kills the Martian invaders in H.G. Wells's *War of Worlds*). The first edition of *The Martian Chronicles* is from the year 1946, later by thirteen years than the complete translation into English of the books of *Chilam Balam*. The prophetic dream related by one of the Martians, announcing the arrival of the first human beings, brings to mind the quibblings of the

Mayan prophecies, supposedly recorded before the Europeans' discovery of America. The Mayans as well as the Martians announce in their prophecies that the foreigners are very near, at a distance of one day; also, in both cases, the invaders' physical characteristics are described. The strange sound books that are "read" by the Martians bring to mind the "painted" or hieroglyphic books of the Mayans. Finally, the masks of which the members of both cultures are so fond, confirm Bradbury's play on images as inspired by Mayan literature.

¹⁶ Reference to the film, "Christopher Columbus, The Discovery," produced and directed in 1992 by John Glen.

¹⁷ Columbus had imagined that it was possible to raise an army of 50,000 foot soldiers and 5,000 horses, to rescue the Holy Sepulcher, even going so far as to request permission from the Spain monarchs to launch a crusade that would expel the Muslims from Jerusalem. As time went by, he gradually gave up this idea in order to concentrate on the final stage of his career of discoveries. On May 9, 1502, he set sail from Cadiz on his fourth and last voyage to America.

¹ At the foot of the town of Bomarzo lies the *Sacro Bosco* created by Duke Pierfrancesco Orsini (1523-1585), nicknamed 'Vicino'. 'Bomarzo' means, more or less: "Good Mars." The name "Sacro Bosco" [Sacred Wood] was coined after Orsini's death.

² The opera "Bomarzo" by Alberto Ginastera, based on texts by Manuel Mujica Lainez, premiered on May 19, 1967 in Washington's Lisner Auditorium. In consequence, on July 18, 1967, the Municipality of Buenos Aires issued a decree that excluded the opera from the repertoire of Teatro Colón, where it was scheduled to open a few days later. The decree declared: "This Municipal Office recently obtained full information on the characteristic features of the referenced show. In its fifteen scenes there are continual, obsessive references to sex, violence and visions, accentuated by the staging, chorus, decoration, choreography and the rest of its accompanying elements. The plot and staging of the piece are manifestly in conflict with basic moral principles in matters of sexual decorum." The singular decree was celebrated by humorists from various countries and helped spread the work's fame. These municipal initiatives—such as, for example, the resolution in 1910 of the Municipality of Florence, which decided to dress Michaelangelo's *David* with a grape leaf—tend to be received afterwards with much merriment. In 1970, the opera was presented in the Opera Houses of Kiel and of Zurich, conducted by the eminent Ferdinand Leitner. From these dates on, interest in Bomarzo Park begins to grow.

³ This is the song of Girolamo, the older brother of Pierfrancesco Orsini. As for "the enormous monsters that my brother ordered sculpted," it is known who took part in the two phases of sculptural work that began in 1552 and were later interrupted, to be resumed in 1564 until their conclusion in 1573. It has not yet been sufficiently clarified who the park's general designer was. In any case, a commission was given to the architect Pirro Ligorio (remembered for his project in 1550 of the Villa d'Este Gardens in Tivoli).

⁴ Two ink drawings have survived, one known as "Buon Martio" (Vienna. Graphische Albertina. Portale e Uran. Cat. No. 27), and the other, "Vue du Jardin de Bomarzo" (attributed to Breenberg, Louvre, Inventory No. 23373). These are the oldest references.

⁵ Praz, Mario. "I Mostri di Bomarzo." *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, 1953, No. 8.

⁶ *Quaderni dell' Istituto di Storia dell'Architettura* (April 1955, special fascicle dedicated to the Villa Orsini). Several works, among them: Arnaldo Bruschi, *L'Abitato di Bomarzo e la Villa Orsini*; Giuseppe Zander, *Gli Elemento Documentari del Sacro Bosco*, and Leonardo Benevolo, *Saggio d'Interpretazione del Sacro Bosco*.

⁷ By comparing the photographs in the first edition of the brochure, "Bomarzo Parco dei Mostri" (in black and white), to those in the second edition (in color), one can observe important modifications in the monuments. See, for example, "Pegasus," totally restored. These brochures, undated, are sold at the park entrance.

⁸ As read in the dedication in *Bomarzo*. Buenos Aires: Ed. Sudamericana, 1962.

⁹ See Frazer, J.G. *La Rama Dorada*. Fondo de Cultura Sudamericana: Buenos Aires, 1962 [Also: Frazer, J.G. *The Golden Bough*. First ed. 1890. London: Chancellor Press, 1994.]. The relationship to the sacred woods of the oak and the mistletoe is explored in Chapter LXV ("Balder y el muérdago" [Balder and the Mistletoe]). To grasp the mythic significance of this tree and its parasite, see: Virgilio. *Libro VI, Eneide*. Ed. Losada: Buenos Aires, 1984 (112). On page 112 one reads: "...Bajo la opaca copa de un árbol se oculta un ramo, cuyas hojas y flexible tallo son de oro, el cual está consagrado a la Juno

infernal; todo el bosque lo oculta y las sombras lo encierran entre tenebrosos valles y no es dado penetrar en las entrañas de la tierra sino al que haya desgajado del árbol la áurea rama; Prosérpina tiene dispuesto que ese sea el tributo que se lleve...” [“In the neighb’ring grove /There stands a tree; the queen of Stygian Jove /Claims it her own; thick woods and gloomy night /Conceal the happy plant from human sight. /One bough it bears; but (wondrous to behold!) /The ductile rind and leaves of radiant gold: /This from the vulgar branches must be torn, /And to fair Proserpine the present borne, /Ere leave be giv’n to tempt the nether skies.” From John Dryden’s English translation of *The Aeneid*, Internet Classics Archive edition, <classics.mit.edu>.]

¹⁰ “Through the animation of the human figure, Gothic art took the first great step forward in the evolution of modern expressive art. The second was made by Mannerism with its dissolution of Renaissance objectivism, the accentuation of the artist’s personal point of view and of the spectator’s personal experience.” Hauser, A. *Historia social de la literatura y el arte. Debate*. Vol. I. Madrid, 1998. 426.

¹¹ See *El Sacro Bosco de Bomarzo. Un Jardín Alquímico* [The Sacred Woods of Bomarzo. An Alchemical Garden]. Roquero, L. Madrid: Ed. Celeste, 1999. 22.

¹² Colonna, F. *Sueño de Polifilo*. Barcelona: El Acantilado, 1999. In the book’s Introduction it says: “*Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (Venice, 1499) is one of the most curious and enigmatic books ever to come out of a printing press. Gnolli refers to it as ‘the greatest work of fantasy, the only poem of the fifteenth century’ while Croce condemns it with these words: ‘If the book were not so serious, long and ponderous, it could be interpreted as a caricature of Humanism’.”

¹³ In the Introduction cited above, Pedraza comments that *Poliphilo’s Dream* aroused interest in the most diverse fields—in the literature of the précieux, satire and alchemy, architectural theory, heraldry, and landscape design. It influenced French précieux literature, Romanticism, the pre-Raphaelites and Symbolism. From *Francisco I to Rodolfo I* it was very highly considered in royal courts and palaces. Even in *Gargantua* by Rabelais it is cited as a book of interest.

¹⁴ Op. cit., Chapter IV. “Sacrifice to God with generosity the bounty of nature obtained through your work. In this way, little by little, you will fashion your spirit after his own. He will firmly guard your life, governing it with mercy, and will keep you from harm.” The hieroglyph is composed ideographically, with each object in the drawing corresponding to one or more Latin words: bucraneum=“ex labore”, eye=“deo”, bird =“naturae”, altar=“sacrifica”, etc.

¹⁵ “By Horus, Ficino meant Horus Apollo or Horapollo, the author of the *Hieroglyphica*, alleged to be the Greek translation of an Egyptian work, which was discovered in 1419 by a Florentine monk, Cristoforo Buondelmonti. Purchased by Buondelmonti on behalf of Cosimo de’Medici, the manuscript of the *Hieroglyphica* eventually reached Florence in 1422, where it caused a sensation. For there, at last, was a work explaining the hidden meaning of the mysterious Egyptian hieroglyphs. Its text was widely circulated and eagerly commented upon, despite its many shortcomings; and it is responsible for the Renaissance view of hieroglyphs.” Klossowski de Rola, S. *The Golden Game*. London: Thames and Hudson Ltd., 1988. 9. [Klossovsky de Rola, S. *El Juego Aureo*. Madrid, 1988. 12.]

¹⁶ “The gigantic *Arch of Triumph of Maximilian*, the largest wood engraving in history, is a set of images measuring 350 x 279 cm. Exactly on the upper portion of the monument there is a panel (described by Stabius, Maximilian’s historiographer, as ‘a mystery in sacred Egyptian letters’) showing the emperor on his throne surrounded by elongated symbols, from among the illustrations that Dürer made for Horapolo’s book. Following R. Wittkower, I now refer to Erwin Panofsky’s translation of the German text by Stabius and the Latin text by Pirckheimer, which allows us to decipher the image (interpolations are Panofsky’s): ‘Maximilian (the emperor in person)—prince (dog covered with a stole) of great piety (star atop the emperor’s crown), magnanimity, strength and courage (lion), ennobled by an eternal and imperishable glory (basilisk over the emperor’s crown), descendant of an ancient lineage (the bundle of papyri on which he is seated)...etc.’” Op. cit.. 13.

¹⁷ “The Rosetta Stone is a stele found by a French officer in 1799 in Rosetta, a locality near the Mediterranean Egyptian coast. It is currently housed in the British Museum of London. The text, written in two languages and three scripts (hieroglyphics, demotic and Greek), was used by Jean-Francois Champollion as the basis for deciphering the hieroglyphs in 1822. The decree that it contains reproduces the decisions adopted by a synod of Egyptian priests held in 196 B.C.E., on the honors to be given to

Ptolemy V and Cleopatra I.” Schulz, R., and Seidel, M. *Egipto El Mundo de los Faraones*. Colonia: Könemann, 1997. 519.

- 18 “In 1439, under pressure from the Turks in Constantinople (seat of the Patriarchate of the Orthodox Church), a Council is called in Florence. For Florentine intellectual circles, the Oriental delegations’ stay in their city entails a rediscovery of Greek culture in the Hellenic period. The taking of Constantinople in 1453 by the Turks will provoke a massive arrival of Byzantines in the Italian Peninsula. With the help of the Byzantine scholars, the Greek texts of the classical and Hellenistic eras are translated. These translations, together with the publication of numerous compendia and commentaries, will bring the Florentine Academia unprecedented prestige. This Academy was founded by the multifaceted Marsilio Ficino of *Philosophus platonicus, Theologus et Medicus*.... The recovery of Hellenic culture through the Byzantines presupposes an upheaval in Quattrocento Italy. Cosimo de Medici mobilizes agents to locate manuscripts, and in 1460, a copy of *Corpus Hermeticum* arrives from Macedonia. Marsilio Ficino is charged with its translation, with an order to postpone the translation of Plato’s texts and assign priority to the great Hermes, because he is more venerable and more ancient. An error of historical perspective is produced: what was the late fruit of a Platonism contaminated by eclectic interference from other cultures is considered as being the originating doctrine that was spread from Egypt in very remote times throughout the entire ancient world, influencing Plato himself.... The translations revitalize the hermetic-alchemical tradition and stimulate a renewed interest in astrology. Hermetic fever seizes the Italian courts. Not a single Renaissance court was without its resident astrologers and alchemists, nor was there any library that did not collect works of traditional alchemy.” Roquero, L. *El Sacro Bosco di Bomarzo*. Un jardín alquímico. Madrid: Ed. Celeste, 1999. 11.
- 19 “You who enter with the idea of carefully observing everything, tell me afterwards whether so many marvels were made for deception, or rather for art.”
- 20 “Whoever does not walk through this place with eyebrows arched and lips pressed together, will neither know how to admire the famous seven wonders of the world.”
- 21 The embarrassing rubbish heap of interpretations has obscured the reality of Bomarzo Wood. For a sampling, see Kretzulesco-Quaranta, *Los Jardines del Sueño* [(The Dream Gardens) Chapter on Bomarzo: “The Sacred Wood.” Madrid: Ed. Siruela, 1996]—although this book should be given credit for the good research work it contains on the mystique of the Renaissance.
- 22 “If Rhodes was famous for its Colossus, my wood is also cause for glory, and even more, because I cannot do more than I have done.”
- 23 “*La caverna, la fuente, el li...de todo obscuro pensamiento...*” [The cavern, the fountain, the li...of all dark thoughts....] Perhaps it can be completed like this: “*L’antro, la fonte, il lieto cielo. Libero l’animo d’ogni oscur pensiero.*” That is, “The cavern, the fountain, the contented sky. The soul free of all dark thought”—keeping in mind that the shrine of the nymphs includes the urns of the nymphs who inspire the five senses; namely: a mirror, for sight (Horatia); a musical instrument, for hearing (Aloe); a perfume flask, for smell (Ophrasia); a bunch of grapes, for taste (Geussia); the resting hand, for touch (Aphae). See *El Sueño de Polifilo*, Chapter VII: “Poliphilo speaks of the pleasantness of the land where his journey ended, how as he wandered through it, he found an exquisite and very remarkable fountain, and how he saw five charming maidens coming towards him....” The nymphs, before saying their names and reciting their attributes, point out to Poliphilo: “Our appearance and our presence ought not to frighten you; don’t be afraid, because it is not the custom to do any harm here, nor will you encounter anything unpleasant.” The situation narrated in Poliphilo’s Dream (the inspirer of many of the Bomarzo allegories), justifies the completion of the faded inscription of the nymphs’ cavern as we have done above (“...The cavern, the fountain, the contented sky. The soul free of all dark thoughts”).
- 24 Which could be dubiously translated as: “Before such vanity, I am in agreement with honoring....”
- 25 “Vicino Orsini in 1552.” Interpreted as meaning that the work was completed in 1552.
- 26 “Only to unburden the heart.” Explains that his intention has been to “unburden his heart,” and not, for instance, “to create an alchemic forest where an initiatory circuit can be followed,” as some tourist agencies announce, and certain esoteric advocates of the psychology of the collective unconscious.
- 27 “Night and day, we are vigilant and ready to save the fountain from any harm.”
- 28 “The fountain was (is) not for those who are on guard in front of the strangest beasts.”

²⁹ “All thought flies.”

³⁰ “You who wander aimlessly through the world in search of noble and splendid marvels—come here where there are horrible faces, elephants, lions, ogres and dragons.”

³¹ “Memphis, and any other wonder that may already exist in the world, yield in appreciation of the Sacro Bosco, which only itself and no other resembles.”