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The Château Anet as Artistic Inspiration

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From its inception, the Renaissance Château Anet, located due east of Paris just outside the town of Dreux, was envisaged as a locale not only for the best and brightest of the royal court—namely, the king Henry II and his mistress Diane de Poitiers—but also as a veritable canvas for the most prominent architects, sculptors, painters, and poets of the day. These artists, and particularly the poets, viewed Anet as a spectacular artifice that mirrored Diane's beauty and elegance. While clearly catering to the court, the poetry reflected the common perception of Anet. Upon visiting the château in 1557 the Florentine Gabriel Simeoni concluded that even Nero's golden house could not have been richer or more beautiful, while French chronicler Seigneur de Brantôme declared that France would never see decoration to equal it.¹ Historically, Henry II and Diane are most associated not with Anet but with Chenonceau in the Loire valley, from which Diane was removed unceremoniously by the queen Catherine after Henry's death in 1559. Diane was given Chaumont in exchange, but it was Anet where she preferred to live. She died there in 1566. Largely dismantled during and after the French Revolution, Anet in its full glory remains only in the artistic works it inspired.

Diane’s eventual exalted status was attainable because she was in so many ways not the typical royal mistress. A full twenty years older than Henry, Diane was of the generation of his father Francis I and was rumored to have been that king’s mistress, in order to save her father from the gallows. Despite this age difference, Diane remained Henry’s mistress for virtually all of his adult life. In fact it was at Anet in 1531 that Henry’s marriage contract with Catherine de Medicis was brokered. Once Diane’s role was established, she wielded considerable political and personal power over Henry. She served as mediator between Protestants and Catholics, oftentimes dictated foreign affairs, and even saw to the education of Henry’s children.

The creation of Anet served to both signal and maintain Diane’s power and presumably the love shared by her and Henry. Originally a château-fort, Anet was completely reconstructed between 1547 and 1555, with Philibert de l’Orme being the principal architect. The château offered the latest in Italian influence and yet was a singularly French enterprise. Diane wanted a truly French château and therefore confined its construction and decoration to French artists. In his 1875 history of the château, Pierre Roussel makes the intriguing observation that at this period of the nascent religious wars, Catholic and Protestant French artists worked together peaceably to create a masterpiece. This served in contrast to the bickering Italian artists building Fontainebleau. Roussel does not cite his source for this admittedly rosy picture of artistic unity in the name of nationalism. One can, however, imagine that this bit of lore may well have arisen from the remarkably coherent themes developed throughout the château. Albeit financed by Henry, the château was considered Diane’s, and it was she who orchestrated the unified motifs in Anet’s architecture and ornamentation. Copious notes, drafts, and drawings of Anet still exist, allowing us to better envisage these works.

Anet ostensibly was a funeral monument to Diane’s late husband, Louis de Brézé, who had died in 1531. As such, the color black dominated in the choice of marble, a material used throughout the château.

Roussel, 28.
The architecture of windows and chimneys was tomb-shaped. Funereal palm shapes were often enlaced with Diane’s initials, and this motif was replicated throughout the château. Diane officially remained in mourning the rest of her life, never wearing any color except black and white. Her concern for this outward show of grief extended to Henry, who, in chivalric fashion, took to wearing her colors. And yet Diane very much incorporated Henry into the Anet decoration. His initial is found with hers in various combinations (see illustration 1). Interlaced with arrows, crescents, and deltas of the Greek alphabet, these initials were found on the capitals of columns, on pavements, doors, ceilings, stained glass, locks, screws, furniture, rugs, tapestries, china, and even book bindings. The crescents being particularly ubiquitous, artisans made careful distinctions between them and capital Cs which might inappropriately stand for the queen Catherine.

In her history of French queens of the Renaissance, Simone Bertière speculates that Diane’s widow motif was part of her strategy to be not just legitimized, but honored, by the royal court. Hoping to transcend the label of an ordinary courtesan, Diane presented herself...
1. Diane's and Henry's initials are combined in various ornamentations throughout the Château Anet.
Margaret Harp

as Henry's protector and tutor. While highlighting a respectable and respected role, the sage mother and widow, Diane also appropriated the symbols of her namesake, the goddess Diana. It is this motif for which Anet is best remembered. Diane exploited the renewed interest in Greek and Roman mythology by humanists, and particularly by the Pléiade (an eminent group of French humanist poets), by surrounding herself with symbols of this goddess. Diana, or Artemis in the Greek tradition, had varied attributes but was principally known as goddess of the moon and of the hunt. Most importantly for Diane de Poitiers's purposes, Diana was the fierce aloof virgin and a protector of marriage and mothers. What better classification could Diane find than being a stalwart defender of chastity and fidelity? These motifs, of course, were only a façade, but their combination caught the imagination of artists who were also eager to please this powerful member of the court. They saw Anet as an incarnation of Diane's own splendor and elegance. The goddess provided the leitmotif for the entire château in all the decorative arts from Anet. Philibert de l'Orme's collection of drawings and descriptions, *Architecture* (1567), offers an engraving of a doorway most likely from Anet that incorporates together the symbols of the crescent, the moon, the quiver, the bow and arrows. And Anet is arguably most known for two famous sculptures of Diana: Jean Goujon's sculpture *Diana with the Stag* and Benvenuto Cellini's bronze bas-relief of a reclining Diana decorating the entrance arch, both of which are now located in the Louvre. Ostensibly Diana the goddess, these statues were taken universally as portraits of Diane de Poitiers. Much has been written about these sculptures but very little

associated herself with a particular mythical figure, Diana the chaste goddess, Catherine saw to it that she was portrayed as Artemisia, the powerful widowed mother who served as queen in Asia Minor. (See Sheila ffolliott, “Catherine de' Medici as Artemisia: Figuring the Powerful Widow,” in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986].)

about the poetry inspired by Anet. It is a selection of these poems that this study will consider.

In an ode dedicated to Diane, after having spoken of the idyllic locales of Tempé and Délos, Joachim Du Bellay highlights the inextricable link between Diane and her château:

> Après ceux-ci faut dire  
> Le Paradis d’Anet;  
> Mais, pour bien le décrire,  
> Nommez le Dianet²

Du Bellay elaborates specifically on the close correspondence between Diane and Anet in the following sonnet of praise:

> De vostre Dianet (de vostre nom j’appelle  
> Vostre maison d’Anet) la belle architecture,  
> Les marbres animez, la vivante peinture,  
> Qui la font estimer des maisons la plus belle:  
> Les beaux lambriz dorez, la luisante chappelle,  
> Les superbes donegons, la riche couverture,  
> Le jardin tapisse d’éternelle verdure,  
> Et la vive fonteine à la source immortelle:  
> Ces ouvrages (Madame) à qui bien les contemple,  
> Rapportant de l’antiq le plus parfait exemple,  
> Monstrent un artifice et despence admirable.  
> Mais cette grand’ douceur jointe à ceste hautesse,  
> Et cest Astre benin joint à ceste sagesse,  
> Trop plus que tout cela vous font emerveillable.

*(Les Regrets CLI)*³

²Cited in Roussel, 159.

Considering Diane’s funereal pretensions for Anet, what is most striking in Du Bellay’s sonnet is the dominant theme of \textit{life}. Consider his terms: marbres \textit{animez} (not black or somber), \textit{vivante} peinture, \textit{éternelle} verdure, \textit{vive} fontaine, source \textit{immortelle}. Rather than black, the shades of gold and light dominate in the imagery. Here, Anet is a joyful, not somber, residence. Du Bellay was perhaps, like the other artists writing about Anet, emphasizing the château’s beauty rather than its origins. And yet, knowing Du Bellay’s sarcastic wit and derision of Roman power demonstrated in his collection \textit{Les Regrets}, one cannot help but wonder if he is perhaps tweaking the royal couple. His representation of the adornment and atmosphere of Anet would seem to negate any reference to Diane’s husband. In the concluding tercet Du Bellay diminishes Anet’s grandeur by stressing that in fact Diane’s sweetness and wisdom are what truly make her and her château marvelous. Mellin de Saint-Gelais makes a similar remark, claiming that the beauty of the château only demonstrates Diane’s modesty and good sense:

\begin{quote}
Au long ne veux vous compter l’artifice
Ni la beauté du gentil édifice
Qui monstre bien, en mesnage et haultesse,
La modestie et bons sens de l’hostesse.
\end{quote}

These verses suggest that Anet simply has too many splendors to recount. Attracted by the splendor of Anet, the poets tend to heighten and then dismiss its beauty in order to better praise Diane. Whether as a sign of respect toward the queen or simply a preference to maintain consistently the image of Diane as the virgin goddess, the poetry rarely refers to Henry.

It is the poet Pontus de Tyard (1521–1605) who would have been the most familiar artistically with Anet. Best known for his poetic works \textit{Erreurs amoureuses} and \textit{Solitaire premier}, Tyard also served as a humanist

\footnotesize{Mellin de Saint-Gelais, \textit{Œuvres complètes}, Bibliothèque Elzivirienne 90 (Paris: Paul Daffis, 1873), 126.}
expert and interpreter to painters. A member of the Pléiade, Tyard was considered to be, if not the most talented poet, the most erudite and well-rounded one. A scholar of music, astronomy, philosophy, and theology, Tyard incarnated for over half a century, as Sylviane Bodkam has put it, "the alliance of science and the Muses, of the encyclopedia and theology."9 Pierre de Ronsard, principal poet of the Pléiade, claimed that Tyard "knew all" and Étienne Pasquier borrowed from Ovid's epitaph to offer Tyard's: "Omnia Pontus erat." Tyard was of noble birth and upon his father's death was known as the Seigneur de Bissy. He became canon of the cathedral at Maçon in 1562 and was appointed bishop of Chalon in 1578 by Henry III. His episcopal duties included being counselor to this young king, son of Henry II and Catherine, giving him lectures on the arts and astronomy, and encouraging him to follow an ambitious program of study. Hence, it was early in his career, when Tyard was considered principally a poet, that he became involved in the decoration of Anet. He chose twelve stories taken from Greek and Egyptian mythology to serve as decorative art for Anet. Sharing the motif of miraculous or powerful bodies of waters, these myths—modeled on those found in the pseudo-Plutarch's De Fluviis, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and the writings of Pausanias—were reproduced as paintings in the chateau but also by Tyard in his corresponding summaries and epigrams of the myths, along with instructions as to the composition of the paintings. These written forms of the myths, known as Douze fables de fleuves ou fontaines, were published by Étienne Tabourot in 1585, long after Anet's completion in the mid-1550s. A great admirer of Tyard, Tabourot chose to distribute these writings in order to prove that Tyard was in fact the principal aesthetic contributor to Anet's beauty rather than those who had since claimed responsibility and hence gained the glory.10 This is high praise indeed, considering

Anet was, as previously mentioned, designed by Philibert de l'Orme and decorated with sculpture by Jean Goujon and Benvenuto Cellini. Tyard's association with the château was only once again acknowledged in 1860 by A. Feuillet and further emphasized by Roussel. However, more recent studies of Anet and its art, such as that of Anthony Blunt, mention neither Tyard nor the paintings. Thus, while Tabourot's aim in establishing Tyard as a principal designer of Anet clearly failed, his edition does indicate that Tyard was integrally involved in the planning and coherence of the decorative arts of the château. It is unclear why Tyard's participation in the design of Anet has been generally unacknowledged, particularly even in his own lifetime. Perhaps Tabourot exaggerated and Tyard was involved only in the design of the paintings. Or simply the renown of de l'Orme has eclipsed Tyard's role. While little is actually known concerning his personal life, it is doubtful that Tyard fell from favor among the royal family even after Henry II's death and Diane's exit from power. It does not appear that Catherine targeted any of the poets who had praised Diane de Poitiers. Ronsard and others adapted quickly and continued playing a large role at court.

From the viewpoint of architectural historians, it is fortunate that the Tabourot edition remains. While Roussel and other historians do not find reason to doubt that the paintings Tyard designed were executed, these paintings no longer exist, apparently replaced by mirrors in 1698 during a major reconstruction of the château. One-time existence of the paintings is supported by several extant tapestries designed for Anet; these tapestries depict mythological themes. Epigrams believed to be Tyard's are in fact embroidered at the bottom of these screens, recounting the same story.11

This rapid summary is a matter of well-known historical record, certainly for scholars of Tyard. Of primary interest to literary scholars are Tyard's twelve epigrams. They are not particularly epigrammatic, revealing little if any satirical or ironic intent. Instead, their content, in general, is descriptive, emphasizing the moment of metamorphosis

11Roussel, 93.
in the creation or the power of mythical waters. The epigrams follow faithfully the structure of a regular sonnet.

In his critical edition of Tyard’s poems, John Lapp dismisses this collection as an événage curieux but nonetheless concludes that it serves to clarify the role of humanism in sixteenth-century art. Indeed, Tyard’s Fables are the epitome of the close rapport between poetry and the arts which was taken for granted during the Renaissance. One might claim a general preoccupation with ut pictura poesis during this general period. Vasari, Michelangelo, and Ben Jonson all considered “design the father of the arts,” to quote Judith Dundas. Among the Pléiade poets, Tyard may well best exemplify this interest, as his intricate study on musical theory Solitaire second attests. In her study of French academies, Frances Yates indicates that this consolidation of artistic endeavors was expected from sixteenth-century poets and that it was only with the establishment of the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres by Jean-Baptiste Colbert in 1663—a break-away branch of the Académie Française—that poets’ rôles were restricted to that of their medium: words.

While Lapp’s introductory comments are brief, they do include a succinct summary of what is probably the most important aspect of these poems: they indicate Tyard’s interest in “tout ce qui est création, mais surtout ce qui est changement, mutation, transformation” which this “poète des métamorphoses” later develops in his Discours philosophiques of 1557. Hence, Lapp emphasizes the common theme found in each fable, not just that of water but the way in which this element causes dramatic change due to the actions of various protagonists. What he does not mention is that the principle of metamorphosis is itself intensified in Tyard’s duplication of the myth through poetry, prose, and painting. At the time of the paintings’ completion, there would have

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12Lapp, ed., 255.
been four versions or, depending on medium, transformations of Tyard’s myths: the painting, the instructions for its execution, the fable summary, and finally, the epigram. Certainly the painted version would have offered the most variation. For even if the anonymous painter or painters followed meticulously Tyard’s precise directions on composition and color, their own renderings—which at times Tyard’s instructions encourage—would not only alter but, quite possibly, enrich a given fable. One could even claim a fifth metamorphosis: that which occurs when the twelve stories are considered collectively, rather than discretely, by the viewer or the reader.

Following are translations of the titles Tyard gives to his twelve fables in the order in which they appear in Tabourot’s edition.15 First, the fable of the river Clitorie, which can make one sober; next, the fable of the fountain Andre, which can inebriate; third, the fable of the river Selemne, which eradicates the passion of love; fourth, the fable of the fountain Callirhoe, which inspires reciprocal love; fifth, the fable of the river Phasis, which reassures the jealous; sixth, the fable of the river Araxe, which determines a maiden’s virginity; seventh, the fable of the river Inde, from which comes the stone that protects virgins from the violence of attackers; eighth, the fable of Narcissus’s fountain, in which if a lover admires himself, he receives comfort; ninth, the fable of the river Salmace, which creates

15The French titles are Premiere Fable du fleuve Clytorie, qui a force de desenyvrer; Second Fable de la Fontain d’Andre, qui a force d’enyvrer; Troisieme Fable du Fleuve Selemne, qui efface la passion d’Amour; Quastriesme Fable du fleuve Callirhoe, qui engendre le reciproque Amour; Cinquiesme Fable du Fleuve Phasis, qui assure les Jaloux; SIXiemesme Fable du Fleuve Araxe, ou se prouve si la fille est vierge; Septiesme Fable du Fleuve Inde, ou vient la pierre qui conserve les Vierges contre la violence des ravisseurs; Huitisme Fable de la Fontaine de Narcisse, dans laquelle si un amoureux se mire, il reoit allegeance; Neufiemesme Fable du Fleuve Salmace, qui fait les Hermaphrodites; Diziesme Fable du Fleuve Chrysoroas, dedans lequel se trouve l’or; Onziemesme Fable du Fleuve Strymon, qui console les desolez; Douziemesme Fable du Lavatoire d’Isis, qui sert d’assurance contre les larves, malins esprits et chiens aboyans.
hermaphrodites; tenth, the fable of the river Chrysoroas, in which is found gold; eleventh, the fable of the river Strymon, which consoles the grieving; and last, the fable of the bath of Isis, which insures against larvae, evil spirits, and barking dogs. It is only this last fable that refers explicitly to Anet. The astonishing attributes of the various waters given in these austere titles derive in most cases from, as will be shown, oftentimes passionate and violent circumstances.

As Lapp has noted, the first four fables are presented as two pairs of contrasting tales. The bacchic theme, and specifically that of inebriation, is integral to the first two fables. Tyard had a sustained interest in poetic variations on the power of Bacchus. In the second ode of his *Livre de vers lyriques* (1555), *Au Jour des Baccanales*, Tyard lauds Bacchus’s ability to chase away his melancholy, distracting the poet from the cares of ambition, money, or frustrated love. In the introductory fable, Tyard prefers to highlight the violent and dramatic birth of Bacchus, son of Semele and Jupiter, describing how the tears of the nymph Clitorie, who had saved the infant Bacchus from the immolation of his mother, simultaneously quenched the fire but melted her into a river that, accordingly, extinguishes the power of wine. In this tale Tyard takes great liberty with Ovid’s version of Bacchus’s birth, which makes no mention of the nymph Clitorie. Lapp suggests that Tyard took inspiration from Ovid’s description of the river Clitor, which provokes a distaste for wine to whoever drinks from it. According to the painting instructions, it is Clitorie who is the focus of the composition, “à demy transformée en fleuve.” Next to the dying Semele, she holds Bacchus, who is enveloped in both flames and tears. While he does not name it as such, Tyard’s sonnet emphasizes the futility of Clitorie’s generous action. The second quatrain reveals that due to his divinity, Bacchus cannot be injured by the flames that have killed his mother: These last two lines (vv. 7–8) suggest that the flames are in fact salubrious, giving him strength and vigor. And so the nymph’s

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6 Lapp provides a brief comparison of Tyard’s ode with those of Ronsard and Du Bellay on the same theme (xxxviii–xxxvix).

7 Lapp, ed., 258.
compassion proves to be her own undoing. Her river of tears, transmuted by the divine flame, becomes a larger, more potent river capable of extinguishing the "ardeur du vin." It serves, however, more as a neutralizing source against the power of wine rather than an aggressive antidote as described by Ovid. The river’s protection against drunkenness mirrors Clitorie’s shielding of Bacchus from the ravages of fire. Despite its title’s emphasis on the subsequent magical power of the river Clitorie, Tyard’s epigram highlights the river Clitorie’s origin, which is simultaneous with the birth of Bacchus, the death of Semele, and the transformation of the nymph Clitorie—a moment of multiple metamorphoses to say the least.

Tyard’s second epigram explains how the stream from the Andre fountain became intoxicating. It is a playful poem, one which, fittingly, offers a joyful atmosphere. Bacchus’s master Silenus, in the midst of a bacchanal celebration, has toppled into his stupor in the stream. The thirsty ass which he was riding had trotted to the water and in its haste had unseated its rider. Amused by the scene, Bacchus decrees that in memory of Silenus’s accident the stream henceforth will taste like wine and no animal will further drink from it.

The metamorphosis described in both the fable and epigram is less dramatic than that occurring in the first story. It does not even concern the river, as the transformation takes place by pronouncement rather than by action. The only metamorphosis seen is in Silenus’s mood. Having fallen, he becomes angry and embarrassed. Might we even conjecture that the water has sobered him, giving him further reason for his ill humor? The accident has only heightened the bacchic frenzy of those around Silenus: Tyard’s painting description emphasizes that the drunken satyrs helping Bacchus get up are staggering with laughter as well as drink.

Considered together, we see how the narrative tone of each story is appropriate to the given river’s power. The tragic end to Semele, and by extension to Clitorie, certainly is sobering to the reader, while the reading of Silenus’s ridiculous plight provokes laughter and joy—wholesome attributes of “ivrognerie.” These two introductory fables and their corresponding epigrams and painting descriptions are emphasized here
because they exemplify best the variety of movement and themes found in the other ten fables, all of which would lend themselves to vibrant poems and paintings.

It is important to note that the next two fables follow a similar pattern of demonstrating first the antidote, then the cause of a human predicament. In these, the literal inebriation from wine is replaced by the figurative inebriation of love. The third fable tells of a young “pasteur” transformed into a river after his love for the nymph Argire remains unrequited. Fittingly, his river’s water extinguishes love. The following fable is equally sad, with the tale of Coresis, who commits suicide rather than follow the order to kill his beloved, Callirhoe. She in turn, inspired by his act of “dévouement,” kills herself near a fountain. Their mutual love and death cause the water of this fountain to inspire reciprocal love.

Tyard’s technique of offering sequential fables about waters with contrasting powers as described in these first four fables echoes the principle of *contraires*, valued by the Petrarchan poets. The counterpoint technique also recalls Marguerite de Navarre’s *devisants* in the *Heptameron*, offering stories whose moral contrasts with that of the preceding story. Tyard does not maintain this ordering in the fifth fable but does return to it in a limited way in the sixth and seventh and in an even more subtle way in the eighth and ninth, making the collection all that more intriguing.

Indeed, Lapp finds the connections between the last eight fables not only more complex but to a certain extent inexplicable. They no longer present, certainly, evident pairings as did the first four, but there are further observations to be made, if only to underscore the diversity of these fables. Lapp’s summary, for instance, that the tales told in the fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, and tenth fables concern feminine jealousy and inconstancy is just but does not acknowledge other dominant elements, such as the metamorphosis wrought by these vices. He reasons that there must be further obscure significance to some of these fables, a significance modern readers could no longer decipher. This is undoubtedly true: to see the physical representation of the twelve paintings in the room of Anet, an impossibility today, surely would have enriched the import of the epigrams. But, in general, this remark is curious because the myths, while problematic, are certainly comprehensible at some level and despite the
span of time some substantive conclusions on their import may be made. There very well may be no perfect coordination between the fables to be found. The question emphasized in this study is to what extent, if any, the myths can be seen as emblematic of Anet.

As Diana the goddess provides the leitmotif for the rest of Anet’s decorative arts, one of the first striking aspects of this collection of myths is the relative absence of references to her or even to her symbols: the crescent, the moon, a bow, quiver, or arrows. In the first eleven fables there are only the most subtle allusions to the goddess or to Diane de Poitiers and Anet. For example, the fourth fable concerns reciprocal love, such as Henry and Diane demonstrated. The sixth and seventh fables champion virginity, the best-known attribute of the goddess Diana, and finally the eleventh, which concerns bereavement, could allude to Diane de Poitier’s late husband, Louis de Brézé, and her official status as grieving widow. Considered more generally, however, with the notable exception of the second, humorous bacchic myth recounted previously, all the waters described derive their miraculous properties from the death of characters suffering most often from the trials of love and loss, and sometimes a combination of the two. For example, the river Phasis in the fifth fable is named after the son of Phebus, who killed his mother, Ocyroe, after discovering her to be an adulterer. He then drowned himself in despair in the river. From this double tragedy comes the growth of river plants that have the affirming property of keeping the wives of jealous husbands faithful. In the sixth fable the king Araxe, too, drowns himself when his two virgin daughters are killed. His tragedy continues in his transformation to

Both Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani and Jean Miernowski have considered the significance of these myths in their excellent studies but have emphasized the connections between the poetry and the descriptions rather than between the paintings and Anet (see Gisèle Mathieu-Castellani, “Ut fabula pictura, ut pictura poesis. . . . Les descriptions pour la peinture dans les Douze fables de Pontus de Tyard,” in Emblèmes de la mort. Le dialogue de l’image et du texte [Paris: Nizet, 1988], 107–19; and Jean Miernowski, “La Poésie et la peinture, les Douze fables de fleuves ou fontaines de Pontus de Tyard,” Réforme, Humanisme, Renaissance 18 [June 1984], 12–22).
another type of river plant: any young virgin who picks this plant from his river will instantly grow old. On the other hand, maidens' virginity is protected in the next fable by a powerful stone found in the river Inde, the transformation of a young rapist who drowns in the river while being pursued. In short, the double and seemingly opposed motifs of love and death found in the majority of the fables mirror the contrasting symbolic imagery of Anet, both a funereal memorial to Diane de Poitier's dead husband and a joyous tribute to her love shared with the king Henry II.

It is only in the last, twelfth fable that Tyard pays Diane explicit and due homage, and he does so in a characteristically expansive and erudite way. Tyard has metamorphosed the Greek goddess Diana into Isis, the Egyptian goddess of the moon. She is clearly the heroine of the fable, moved by pity at the premature death of Chrysochoas and active in assuaging the youth's fear of Hades' shadows and watchdog, Cerberus. Tyard's description of the accompanying painting confirms the assumption that Isis represents Diane, and yet his instructions are curiously ambiguous. He notes that Isis's long robe should be painted in diverse colors—white, blue, red, and especially black—in order to remain faithful to the descriptions of Isis found in the classical writers. Here he most likely refers to Plutarch's *Of Isis and Osiris*, which has such a description. However, Tyard continues with an aside that he is of the opinion—sure that he has read it in some reliable source—that Isis could also be dressed in black and white, with a veil of black over a dress of white. He goes on to say that Isis should be wearing a crescent on her forehead. Such a description is identical to Diane's appearance in one of her famous portraits (see illustration 2). Why the aside? His description certainly calls for the multicolored gown even if black is highlighted. As already mentioned, Tyard does not contort the other myths to include Diane in the iconography, but he does nonetheless change them in other respects. And yet perhaps he does want to acknowledge that a depiction of Isis wearing black and white, and hence more clearly offering a veritable portrait of Diane, would not be inaccurate. It is curious, however, that he does not specify his "reliable source" as he is so careful to do in the other descriptions. This vague reference may well reveal that Tyard is doing his best to accommodate the myth and its representation to a fitting tribute to
The corresponding poem, which serves notably as conclusion for the entire cycle of poems, ends with a quote from Isis, and by extension Diane de Poitiers, offering refuge and welcome:

Vien (dit Isis) descens dedans mon Lavatoire,
Et ne crains les horreurs de la region noire,
Pendant que tu auras ma faveur opportune:
Ne crains jamais icy ny les larves ombreuses
Ny des malins esprits les faces tenebreuses,
Ny les chiens aboyans vainement à la Lune. 19

The “region noire” alluded to by Isis could also be the black marbled Anet itself, with an invitation to all who enter its grounds. The “Lavatoire” is surely an allusion to the fountain decorated with Goujon’s sculpture, as in his painting description Tyard wants it depicted “like that one found at Anet.” 20 The last line underscores Diana’s immutable power—impervious to Cerberus’s barks but also protector of all who visit. This may suggest Diane de Poitiers’s own unquestioned power at both Anet and the French court. Tyard’s transformation of Diane de Poitiers specifically into Isis, if anything, expands her power and heightens her praise. As described by Tyard’s source Plutarch, Isis is “the female aspect of Nature, which is receptive of all forms of generation . . . She inclines always to the Good and offers herself to it to generate upon her and to sow in her its effluxes and likenesses.” 21 Considered in this light, Isis and Diane are virtually infinite in their influence and benevolence.

Tyard’s preference for the motif of mythic waters and their metamorphoses in his tribute to Diane de Poitiers is perhaps rooted in his poetics. After all, metamorphosis can be taken as an inherently platonic theme, and as Eva Kushner has argued, “Platonism is at the very root of

19 In Lapp, ed., 277.
the thought of Pontus de Tyard between 1549 and 1555, "precisely the dates during which Anet was being designed, built, and decorated. Neither Tyard nor Tabourot indicates a precise date of composition for the fables. However, as Tyard's 1549–1555 platonic period corresponds to the construction of Anet it would also necessarily influence the development of the fables and their accompanying paintings and poems. While Anet's refurbishment was begun before 1547 under the direction of another architect, it appears that de l'Orme began the major construction in 1549 with the central portion of the château, where the room depicting the fables was located, being built first between 1549 and 1551. Hence the decorations would have been painted early in the decade, following Tyard's instructions. The château was considered complete in 1555. Tyard would pursue the theme of metamorphosis in his subsequent, and better-known, poetry. In his *Premier curieux* the dominant theme is nature and all its manifestations, but as Lapp points out the emphasis is placed on creation, mutation, and transformation.

The question of why Tyard chose twelve myths as opposed to, say, eight, ten, or fifteen also arises. He had multiple water myths to choose from and did not hesitate to consider them several years later in his *Discours* of 1557, listing several examples, only one of which, that of the river Clitorie, comes from the *Douze fables*. Perhaps the dimensions of the room best accommodated twelve paintings. Assuming they were of the approximate size of the mirrors that later replaced them, the paintings would have been 5'7" high and 2'7" wide. The narrow width does suggest either a relatively small room compared to others at Anet or a certain amount of spacing between them. Symbolically, twelve immediately evokes, simultaneously, the zodiac and Christian symbolism: the tribes of Israel, the apostles, a multiple of three (the Trinity) or a multiple of four. The four rivers of Paradise as listed in Genesis do come naturally to mind given the theme of water in the fables. The Book of


23Lapp, ed., 255.

24Yates, 135.
Revelation's description of a twelve-sided New Jerusalem is evoked and seems particularly apt: is Anet the worldly and secular reflection of the City of God? As seen previously in his ode, Du Bellay already has called Anet “Paradis.” Given the context of the pagan myths represented in the paintings, these Christian references, nonetheless, are incongruous and uncharacteristic of the harmonious symbolism Tyard emphasizes in his other works.

These admittedly strained speculations are best pursued, perhaps, by art historians. It is crucial to understand, however, that an explanation of the significance of the number of paintings, their sequence, and placement undoubtedly would influence the reading of their corresponding poems. This interplay and synthesis between the plastic and literary arts, an artistic practice so eloquently championed by the poets of the Pléiade, is what makes the *Douze fables de fleuves ou fontaines* unique. Tyard's ekphrasis thrown in for good measure encourages multiple readings.

I have emphasized Tyard's fables because they are explicitly linked to plastic arts adorning Anet. Yet Du Bellay's ode and sonnet also, very succinctly, concern metamorphosis, not of mythical waters but of Diane into Anet and Anet into Diane—precisely Diane de Poitiers's intent, it would seem.
WORKS CITED


