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LANDSCAPE DESIGN

A CULTURAL AND ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

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loyal follower Achille de Harlay, the seventy-one-year-old president of the Parlement, whose own house lay adjacent to the future square; Harlay was obligated to build the housing ensemble as designed for tradesmen within a period of three years or find others who would buy the lots and do so. Although not in strict alignment for reasons of geography, the ensemble—bridge, sculpture, and square—was conceived as an urbanistic unit, signifying a new integrative approach to the planning of cities, one that exploited the visual relationships of objects in space.

FRENCH GARDEN STYLE

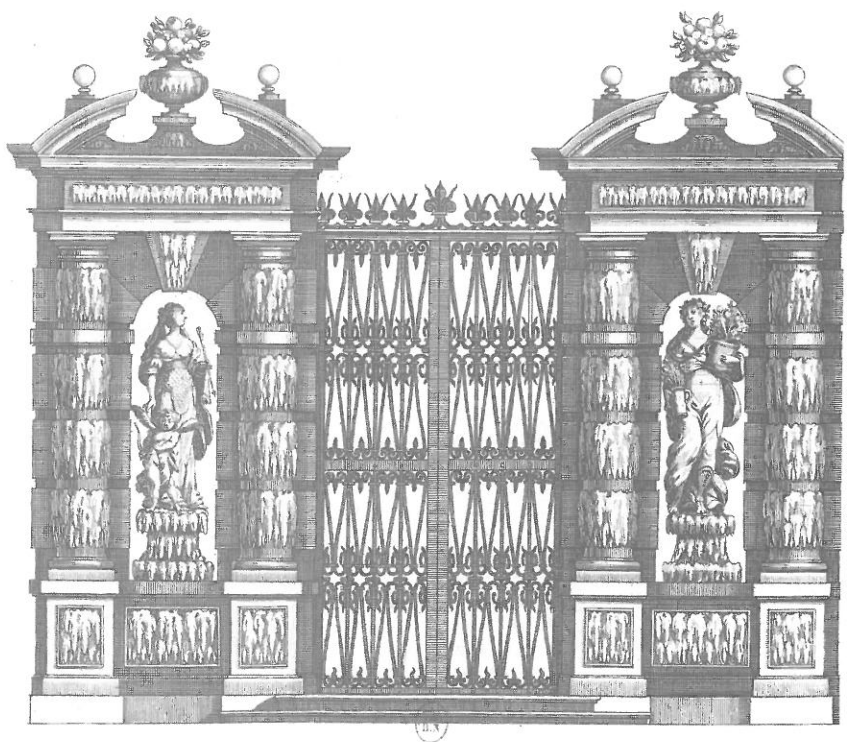
The period of Henry II and Catherine de Médicis had been one in which French designers thoroughly assimilated the lessons of Italy. During the reign of Henry IV (1589–1610) and the lifetime of his queen and widow Marie de Médicis, they forged a distinctive garden style, one that nevertheless was firmly rooted in Italian precedent and developed as a translation of the basic vocabulary of Italian design into a native idiom. Because of the king's connection through marriage with the Medici family, the period of his reign marked another wave of Italian influence, sometimes referred to as the Second School of Fontainebleau in recollection of the designers brought north by Francis I in the 1530s. Beginning in 1598, members of the Francini family of hydraulic engineers, sent by Grand Duke Ferdinando de' Medici, came north bearing knowledge of contemporary Medici garden design at the Boboli Gardens where Marie de Médicis had spent her childhood and where there was a splendid grotto, at Castello where there was also a fanciful grotto, and at Pratolino where there was a long avenue lined with fountains leading to the villa. They were also familiar with the mechanical equipment needed to propel jets in the contrivances known as *giochi d'acqua*, or water games, found in the gardens of the Medici, and to pump and manage the flow of water in the fountains and other aquatic features that adorned the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, the Villa Lante at Bagnaia, the Villa Farnese at Caprarola, and the Villa Aldobrandini at Frascati. In France, they created at Saint Germain-en-Laye grottoes and automata modeled on those of the Villa Medici at Pratolino. These both frightened and intrigued the Dauphin, the future Louis XIII, when he was a child growing up at Saint Germain-en-Laye. Alessandro (Alexandre) Francini is believed to have designed the ornamental grotto for Marie de Médicis in the Luxembourg Gardens, and his 1631 book of architectural drawings contains elaborate ornamental doorways that evidently served as models for several found on French architectural grottoes of the seventeenth century (fig. 4.50). A French Huguenot, Salomon de Caus (1576?–1626), who traveled exten-

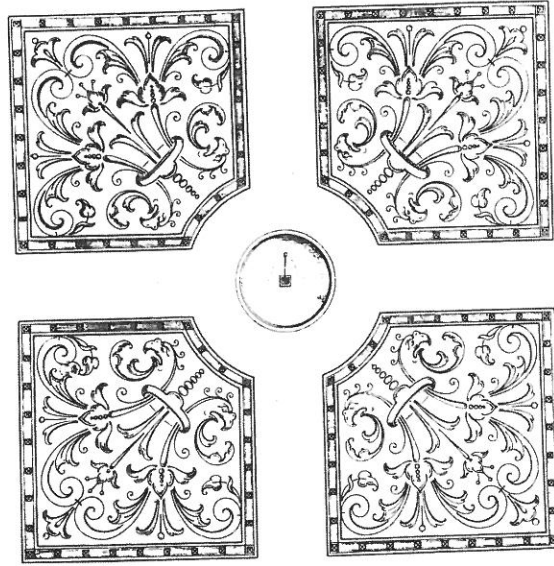
sively in Italy, published his treatise on garden hydraulics, *Les Raisons des forces mouvantes* in 1615, when the enthusiasm for automata had begun to wane.

Although the grotto, the ornamental cascade, the architectural fountain, and the fountain arrangement known as a *buffet d'eau* remained in vogue as French garden style matured under Louis XIV, the ingenious Italian-derived hydraulics that were fashionable in the time of Henry IV and Marie de Médicis fell into disuse. As France readied itself to become the supreme European power in the second half of the seventeenth century, French designers, having thoroughly incorporated Italian influence, codified—through treatises on garden theory and in engravings published in pattern books—their own distinctive and subsequently influential style of landscape design. Perhaps the most original feature of the new French garden was the *parterre de broderie*, an embroiderylike design of decorative scrolls, palmettes, and arabesques in herbs, boxwood, or clipped grass, often with the addition of a monogram, which replaced the geometrically configured beds in Italian gardens (fig. 4.51). Several *parterre* patterns are found in the *Traité du jardinage selon les raisons de la nature et de l'art* (1638) by Jacques Boyceau de la Baraudière, André Mollet's *Le Jardin de plaisir* (1651), and Claude Mollet's *Le Théâtre des plans et jardinages* (1652).

The Mollets were royal gardeners residing and working in the Tuileries, along with members of the Le Nôtre and Desgots families, who also formed several generations of gardeners in the service of the crown. Under their care the Tuileries became a kind

4.50. Entrance to a grotto, from *Livre d'Architecture* by Alexandre Francini. 1631





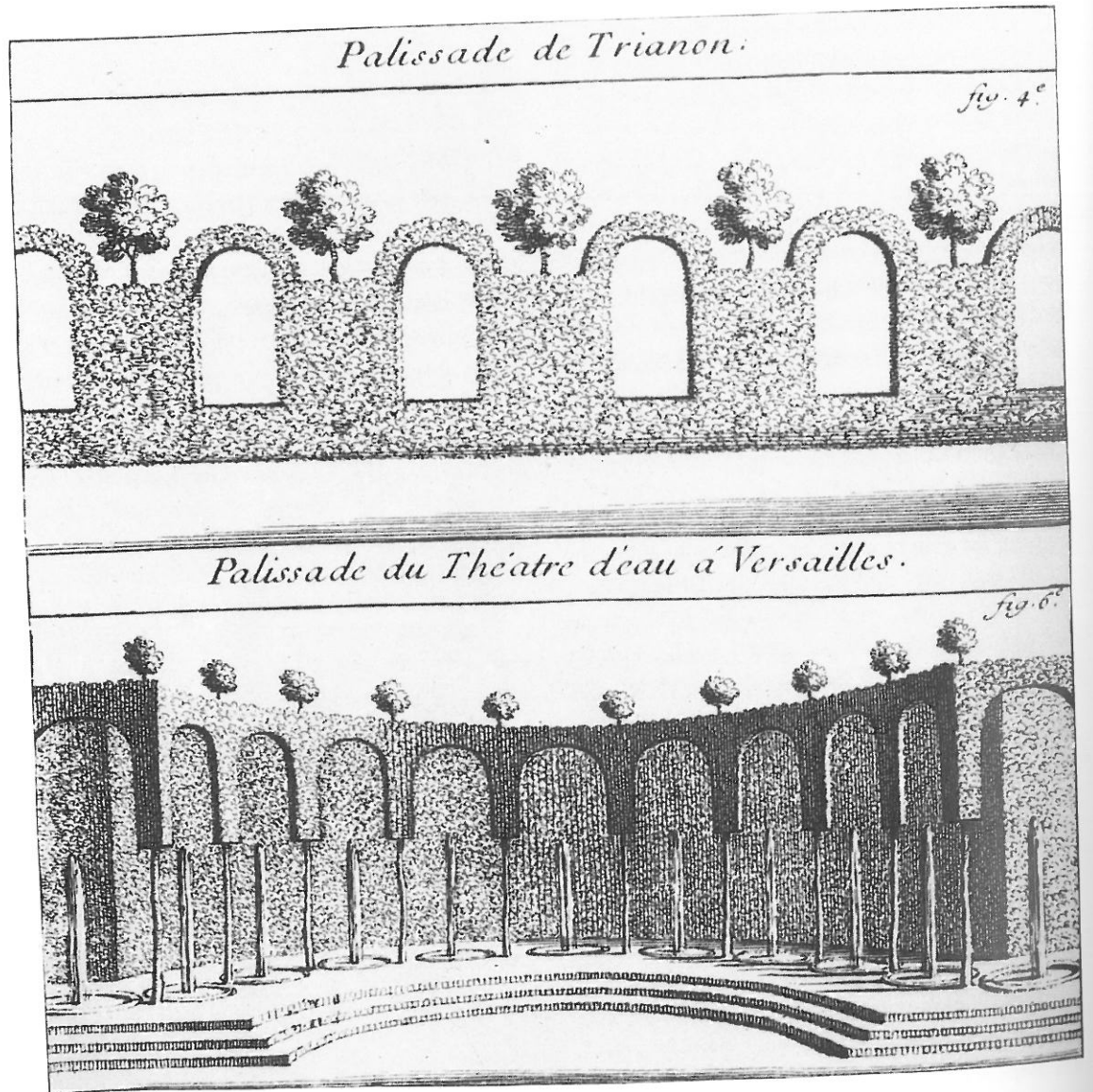
451. Design for a *parterre de broderie* in the style of André Mollet. Engraving from *Traité du Jardinage* by Jacques Boyceau. 1638

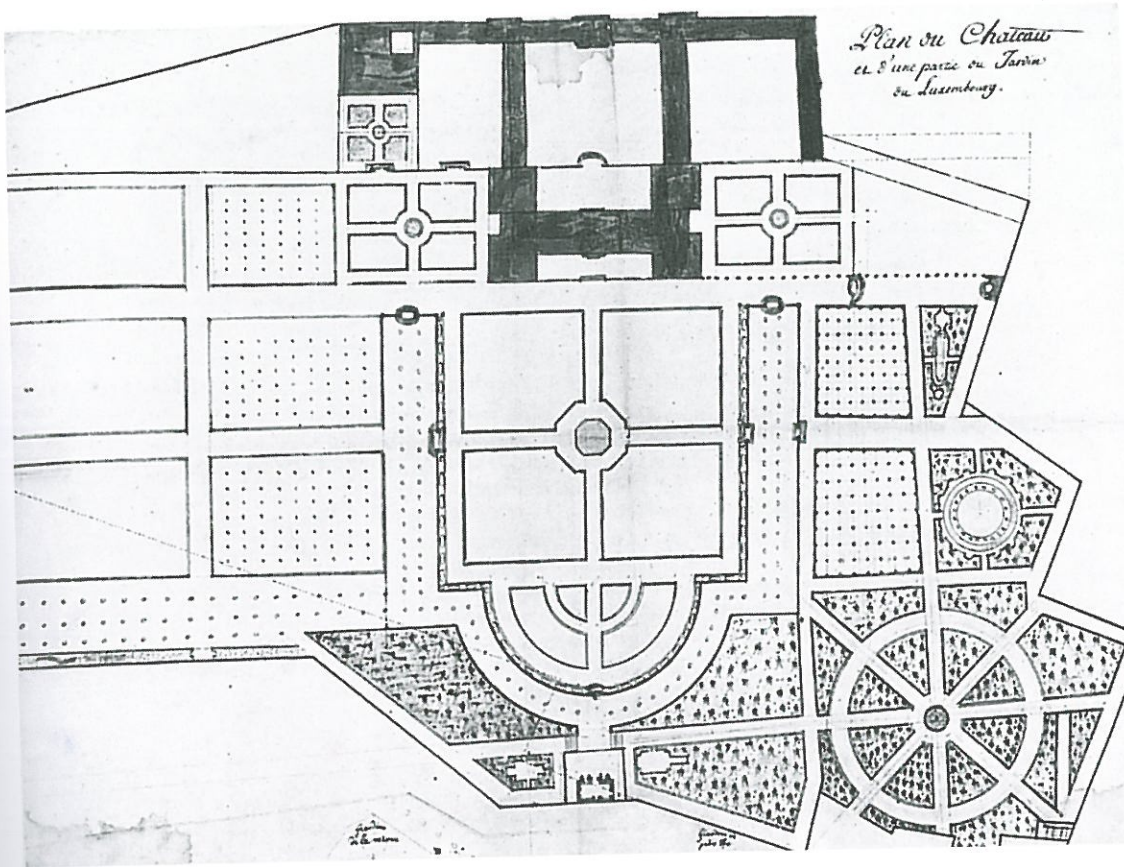
Below: 452. *Palissades*, plates 4 and 6 from *Le Théâtre des plans et jardinages* by Claude Mollet. 1652

of laboratory in which the French garden style, with its axial *allées*, intricate *parterres de broderie*, clipped cone-shaped yews and space-defining tall hedges, called *palissades*, was matured and perfected (fig. 4.52).

Jacques Boyceau was not a gardener in the same practical mold as these. He was a Huguenot warrior and aristocratic intellectual who had been made an official of the king's chamber even before he was granted the position of *intendant-general* of the king's gardens, including those of the Luxembourg Palace (figs. 4.53, 4.54). A friend of some of the most notable intellectuals of his day, he aimed to produce in his *Traité* something more significant than a trade book. Like Alberti before him, he found in nature's forms the perfection and symmetries to guide human artistic creation. The mastery of these laws, or at least a thorough practical acquaintance with them, formed for him one of the essential ingredients of the gardener's education. Boyceau's chief importance to the history of landscape design is his role in articulating the principles governing a new landscape idiom and the influence he exerted in supervising such talented practitioners as the Mollets and Le Nôtres.

In addition to furnishing many elegant *parterre* patterns, Boyceau's *Traité du jardinage* enunciated





4.53. Plan of Luxembourg Gardens drawn before 1627. Though Jacques Boyceau's role in the creation of the Luxembourg Gardens for Marie de Médicis cannot be proved, a certain design maturity is evident here. There is a fine sense of proportion in the relationship of path width to *parterre* and *palissade*, a generosity of scale, the manipulation of the ground plane for optical effect, calculated diversity within a framework of carefully balanced symmetry, and the use of eye-catching features—fountains, sculpture, orange trees in boxes, balustrades, and stairs—to break up space with rhythmical accents, thereby creating measurability.

Below: 4.54. Luxembourg Gardens

what might be called the first professional curriculum of landscape design, thereby recognizing garden-making as a distinct profession. Trained gardeners, according to Boyceau, needed instruction in geometry, draftsmanship, architecture, and aesthetics besides learning practical horticulture through apprenticeship. He sought to instill in them through this curriculum a thorough understanding of perspective and proportion. His work both laid the groundwork for

future developments in French landscape design and exemplified the developments that had taken place in France during the past century as the lessons of Italy were thoroughly absorbed. With its confident repertoire of patterns for elaborate *parterres* of boxwood “embroidery” and axial means of organizing landscape space, his treatise served Louis XIV's royal gardener André Le Nôtre so well that the latter never felt compelled to write a treatise of his own.



NOTES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

1. Dante's cosmology in *The Divine Comedy* was, like that of Aristotle, one of hierarchical space, Earth-centered and spherically bounded. Heaven was positioned somewhere within the luminous celestial ring that constitutes the upper "band" of Earth's ether, a place where physical laws governing the terrestrial world no longer apply. Here dwelled, according to the medieval Christian cosmology to which Dante was heir, the divinity of godhead, angels, saints, and beatified souls. Because of the doctrine of resurrection, those who were redeemed had a transcendent, yet corporeal, existence within this immaterial, yet real, realm. By contrast, Nicolaus of Cusa's treatise *On Learned Ignorance* posited a theory of limitless, uncentered space, which rendered Dante's concept of a hierarchy of spheres invalid. Cusa's discovery thus anticipated the theory of axial extension—infinite spatial extension—expounded by the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes.
2. Quoted in James S. Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 73.
3. See Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, trans. Joseph Rykwert, Neil Leach, and Robert Tavernor (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1988), p. 295.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 300.
5. Ackerman, *op. cit.*, p. 78.
6. The author of this edition is surmised to have been Sir Robert Dallington (1561–1637), a courtier and man of letters. His translation, which is incomplete and very inexact, has been superceded on the five-hundredth anniversary of the work's original publication by the Aldine Press in Venice by a thorough and highly readable translation by Joscelyn Godwin, Professor of Music at Colgate University. Now, at last, scholars of garden history who read English can not only admire the illustrations that inspired many aspects of Renaissance garden design but can also comprehend the pleasure Colonna and his contemporaries, many of whom were churchmen like him, felt in appropriating from antiquity the licence to celebrate eroticism in its many aspects, ranging from sexual love to love of beautiful art and architecture. See Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999).
7. Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin (New York: Thames & Hudson, 1999), p. 6.
8. Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 274.
9. For Colonna's description of the twenty groves of trees on the Isle of Cythera, see Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin, pp. 294–99.
10. The concept of "third nature" is one of the constructs of the Renaissance mind. A complex topic, it may be explained in simplified terms as follows: "First nature," or *natura naturans* (nature's vital force), plus "second nature," or *natura naturata* (nature's created substance), when influenced by the human mind and hand, becomes "third nature," nature with the added component of design. For a good explanation of the Renaissance derivation of the concept of "third nature," see Claudia Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), pp. 9–10.
11. As Professor Godwin points out in his introduction to his translation of *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, although Colonna was undoubtedly familiar with both Alberti's treatise and that of Vitruvius and appropriated Alberti's term *lineamenta* to signify architectural details, his cast of mind was scarcely mathematical, and "when he deals with dimensions or geometrical constructions, he is soon out of his depth." While Colonna's vivid, detailed, enthusiastic descriptions and graphic illustrations were obviously inspirational, the *Hypnerotomachia* was hardly "the manual of a practitioner." See Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, trans. Joscelyn Godwin, pp. xi–xii.
12. This remarkable basin is now to be found in the Sala Rotonda of the Museo Pio Clementino within the Vatican Museums.
13. Here Ligorio's archaeology is evident in his use of antique coins and reliefs as inspiration for these stucco designs.
14. For a complete discussion of the role of these important *fontanieri* in creating and maintaining the fountains of the Villa d'Este, see David Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 54–55.
15. For instance, the central stairway in the garden is interrupted half-way up by the oval Dragon Fountain, framed by gracefully curving stairs. The four dragons within the fountain basin are doing double iconographic duty. Cardinal Ippolito identified himself with the virtues chosen by the mythological hero Hercules when he slew the dragon that was guarding the Garden of the Hesperides and then picked the three golden apples symbolizing temperance, prudence, and chastity. The dragon was also the crest of Pope Gregory XIII, and the fountain with its four dragon heads was hastily completed in honor of his visit to Tivoli on September 27, 1572, shortly before the Cardinal's death.
16. See David Coffin, *The Villa in the Life of Renaissance Rome* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 358–59 and Reuben M. Rainey, "The Garden as Myth: The Villa Lante at Bagnaia," in *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, 33: 1 & 2, (Fall/Winter 1981–82), pp. 98–99.
17. Quoted in Ackerman, *The Villa*, p. 98.
18. Caroline Constant, *The Palladio Guide* (Princeton: Princeton Architectural Press, 1985), pp. 9–10.
19. Quoted in Ackerman, *The Villa*, p. 106.
20. Burlington built his villa at Chiswick as a scaled-down version of the Villa Rotonda (see fig. 7.1), and Howard commissioned the architect Sir John Vanbrugh to design the Temple of the Four Winds also in imitation of the Villa Rotonda (see fig. 7.11).
21. Jefferson borrowed ideas derived from English Palladianism at Monticello, and his work at his Poplar Forest estate is an exercise in geometrical form and mathematical harmony that owes a clear debt to Palladio (see figs. 7.43, 7.44).
22. This building was originally known as the Palazzo dei Senatori but renamed the Palazzo del Senatore, or Palace of the Senator, when after 1358 the papacy assumed control over civil Rome and the Senate was reduced to a single representative appointed by the pope.
23. To stimulate the Roman economy through the production of silk and woolen cloth, Sixtus V enacted a law commanding the widespread planting of mulberry trees and also established a wool-spinning factory within the Colosseum, a project that languished only because of his death.
24. See Kenneth Woodbridge, *Princely Gardens: The Origins and Development of the French Formal Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), for an excellent discussion of this subject. I am indebted to this source for much of what follows in Section IV.
25. See Hilary Ballon, *The Paris of Henri IV: Architecture and Urbanism (The Paris of Henri IV: Architecture and Urbanism)* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1991), for a lucid, scholarly study that portrays the birth of modern Paris and explains Parisian land speculation in the early seventeenth century. Here, the reader will find a detailed narrative of the creation of various streets, squares, and buildings and watch, as it were, the Louvre, the Pont Neuf, and other now-familiar landmarks rising out of the ground.
26. See Ballon, *op. cit.*, pp. 36–39.



POWER AND GLORY: THE GENIUS OF LE NÔTRE AND THE GRANDEUR OF THE BAROQUE

In seventeenth-century France, the nature of monarchy changed in a functional way. Feudal kings in the late Middle Ages had traveled with their retinues, holding court in castles scattered throughout their kingdoms or enjoying the hospitality of vassal lords. The Renaissance princes of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries were peripatetic, enjoying the pleasures of the hunt in several royal forests and performing affairs of state while entertaining in the *châteaux* of the Loire Valley and the Île de France, some of which we examined in the previous chapter. It was not until the rule of Louis XIV (ruled 1643–1715) that this situation changed. Although the king and his retinue traveled to various royal seats—Fontainebleau, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, Chambord, and, later, Marly—residing in these for considerable periods of time, the court of France increasingly revolved in the orbit of Versailles, as Louis's attachment to his father's old hunting lodge and his determination to make it the radiant center and symbol of his reign grew. It was here that a distinctive style expressing authoritarian order and elegant rationality matured.

This style might never have gained pre-eminence as an international design idiom had not Louis XIV heeded Cardinal Jules Mazarin's deathbed recommendation and appointed Jean-Baptiste Colbert (1619–1683) as his finance minister. Colbert soon reformed the system of taxation, making it more honest, and during the first part of the king's long reign, Colbert's brilliant reorganization of finance and industry increased the prosperity of France. Louis was able during most of his reign to enjoy its benefits and turn them to both personal and national advantage.

Through the elevation of all the arts to new heights of excellence, as well as through astute political diplomacy, Louis XIV established France as the leading power in Europe, making it a great state and also the exemplar of style. Both Colbert and the king understood well the role that all the arts, especially the fine arts—architecture, painting, and sculpture—would play in that process.

Colbert belonged to the prestigious Académie Française, established by Cardinal Richelieu and incorporated in 1635, and was instrumental in founding several academies for the advancement of the arts and sciences. The establishment of these ushered in an era of important building projects sponsored by the king.¹

The king gave dance, music, and theater new dignity and status. He founded the Académie Royale de Danse in 1661, and the Académie Royale de Musique (the Paris Opera) in 1669. Molière's troupe of actors was the precursor of the Comédie Française, which was officially chartered by the king in 1680. Louis himself was a dancer and performed in several ballets in his youth. Thus, Louis over the years, with the assistance of Colbert, supported and institutionalized the diverse talents that were responsible for forging a rich and sophisticated culture within which the French seventeenth-century style flourished as a powerful political and social statement and tangible manifestation of the power and glory of monarchy.

We have seen how readily the French appropriated the idiom of the Italian Renaissance and how thoroughly they transformed it into a style with a distinctly French inflection. Building upon this French Renaissance style, the architects and planners who served Louis XIV now took inspiration from contemporary Italian Baroque art and architecture, adapting it into yet another distinctive style. It is a style of sober grandeur, which is differentiated from the robust plasticity and exuberant theatricality of its Italian models by its linear elegance and by the application of mathematical principles to produce designs of eminent rationality.

There was a moment, however, at the beginning of the young king's reign when this outcome may have been in doubt. Colbert understood that work on the unfinished Louvre Palace should be recommenced as a first major building project of the new regime. In 1665, displeased with the plans submitted by French architects, he summoned to Paris the distinguished Italian architect and sculp-

tor Gianlorenzo Bernini (1598–1680) in order to commission a design that would glorify the young king with the same kind of dynamic, robustly theatrical architecture that Bernini had brought to papal Rome. But the Italian's three proposals, vast in scale, would have demolished the existing palace. His solution, moreover, although also neoclassical in its inspiration, would have taken French architectural aesthetics in a dynamically Baroque direction rather than the more chaste one advocated by the king's advisors.

Louis, ceding to Colbert's counsel after several months of consideration, dismissed Bernini's proposals and put the problem in the hands of a committee consisting of Claude Perrault (1613–1688), an expert on the architecture of antiquity, the architect Louis Le Vau (1612–1670), and the painter Charles Le Brun (1619–1690). The East Front of the Louvre, which represents the solution their collaboration produced, has a central Roman-style pavilion, colonnaded wings with paired columns, and symmetrical pavilions at each end. The whole architectural composition is upheld by a ground-floor podium. In choosing an architectural vocabulary that directly linked Louis XIV symbolically with the might of imperial Rome, especially with the cool Olympian grandeur of the classicizing styles of emperors Augustus and Hadrian, the Louvre design committee substituted its own brand of neoclassicism for that of the Italian Baroque. Even though the architects who worked for Louis used such Italian Baroque forms as high domes and curving walls with verve and skill, the path of austere grandeur that is represented by the term *French classicism* is one that they never relinquished, and the Baroque elements that they did appropriate were submitted to its firm authority.

Except for the Louvre and a few other projects, Louis XIV, unlike Henry IV, took only a secondary interest in beautifying the capital, concentrating instead upon making the palace and gardens of Versailles into a cynosure of universal renown. That he was able to accomplish this astonishing feat is due not only to the circumstances of patronage that he and Colbert established but also to the presence of genius at his side. That genius belonged to a remarkable generation of French designers, in the front rank of whom stood André Le Nôtre (1613–1700), a man who throughout his long life was honored to bear the title of king's gardener.

In Le Nôtre's hands, Renaissance garden style—which we today frequently characterize as “formal”—assumed a new scale and, as it did so, forsook small-scale compartmentalization and intricate effects in favor of unified spatial composition and monumentality expressive of the evolving French style of regal grandeur in landscape terms. Formal order was made to merge with nature, and boundaries appeared to dissolve into distant prospects. The walled gardens of Catherine de Médicis, though large by Renaissance standards, were suddenly dwarfed by the dimensions of the new gardens. The former are composed of axially arranged, visibly contained spaces, inwardly focused and walled, whereas the latter are commensurate with their illusion of limitlessness—that is, large enough to have distant and generally imperceptible boundaries and axes that carry the eye to the horizon line.

This illusion of indeterminate axial extension provides a landscape analogue to the spatial concepts of René Descartes

(1596–1650), the French philosopher, mathematician, and founder of analytical geometry. Descartes believed that starting from skepticism the human intellect could comprehend the mathematical principles underlying God's creation. His rigorous methodology viewed the natural world in mechanistic terms, as objectively measurable. With Descartes, the scientific enterprise itself became boundless, and this new mode of open-ended inquiry helped establish fresh cosmological premises. The seventeenth-century cosmology, which Descartes's philosophy synthesized, provided the groundwork for modern physics. Descartes built his cosmology on that of the German astronomer, physicist, and mathematician Johannes Kepler (1571–1630), who explained how planets moved in elliptical orbits. To Kepler's theories Descartes added the concept of a heliocentric universe previously expounded by the Polish astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543). Because of the invention of the telescope by Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), the universe was now known to be much vaster than previously imagined. Descartes held that space was indefinitely divisible and that all movement is in a straight line. Accordingly, extension (*extensio*) is the essence of both space and matter, which are equated with each other and which determine the nature of quantity, dimension, and the measurement of distance. This meant in effect the abandonment of the Aristotelian notion of *topos*, the idea that place is coterminous with contained and defined space. Cartesian space, by contrast, is boundless and, with regard to the concept of place, value-neutral, since space could now be conceived as a universal grid of mathematical coordinates with places existing merely as locational points along its infinitely extensible planes.²

In this view, place is secondary to matter and space. Its nondistinctive status helps account for the abstract character of Le Nôtre's designs, which express Descartes's attempt to geometricize all nature rather than to explicate *topos*. The geometric formality of Le Nôtre's designs is also due to his employment of Cartesian analytic geometry as a practical compositional tool; the precisely calculated proportions of their component parts and his calculation of the effects of perspective on the viewer manifest an understanding of Cartesian mathematics. Although Le Nôtre may not have intended explicitly to portray the Cartesian vision of heliocentric cosmic space, an impossibility in any case, Cartesian philosophy is implicit in the indefinitely extended axes of the serenely grand gardens he designed for France's Sun King.

In addition to giving expression to a new cosmology, Descartes assisted in the overthrow of Aristotelian Scholasticism by espousing a philosophy based upon the belief that the human mind could, through deductive reasoning, grasp and control the world. The optimism inherent in the Cartesian belief that, through their own powers of intellect, human beings could master the inner workings of nature and direct these toward progressive ends is echoed by the confident grandeur of Le Nôtre's gardens. It was the Sun King's duty to symbolize in his divinely appointed person and to project through his royal authority France's position as the intellectual leader of the modern Western world, and it was Le Nôtre's job to portray this absolute power through landscape design. Both king and gardener realized, however, the difference between

reality and suggestion. Le Nôtre created a garden that implied rationality yet was based on an illusion, human dominance over nature; for his part, the king realized the limits of rationalism as a tool of power and means to accomplish his political goals in a world filled with passion and intrigue.³

While it is often assumed that William Kent in eighteenth-century England was the first designer to “leap the wall” of the garden to embrace all of nature, Le Nôtre, operating under the cultural influence of Descartes, had performed this feat nearly a century earlier. But unlike the naturalistic style of the English garden formulated by Kent and his followers, the confident, world-embracing idiom of the French classical style with its extended axes and geometrically derived layouts celebrated absolute monarchy, not libertarian values.

The work of transforming ordinary countryside into stepped terraces, grand canals, artificial cascades, and axial promenades was accomplished at the price of villages and fields laid waste and peasants relocated. It was also achieved at a huge monetary cost, even at the low prevailing wage rates. It was certainly seen as impressive just for that reason; the enormous expenditure was an important aspect of the seventeenth-century French gardens’ message, demonstrating the king’s economic power and superior taste. Furthermore, these gardens were designed to serve as stages upon which the members of an aristocratic society played out the dramas of their lives with theatrical ritual as they met one another upon balustraded terraces, walked along sweeping *allées*, or trysted within the relative privacy of *bosquets*.

Theaters of social life, the gardens of seventeenth-century France often served as real stages for the performing arts. Within them, concerts, ballets, plays, fireworks, and banquets took place with increasing regularity. Theatrical entertainments were part of Louis XIV’s means of keeping an otherwise bored nobility in check. Le Nôtre knew the composer Jean-Baptiste Lully (1632–1687) and the playwright Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin, 1622–1675) and organized his spaces with their performance requirements in mind.

French classical gardens were theatrical in yet another sense. Had they been merely expositions of Cartesian logic, elegantly defined empty stages for aristocratic intercourse and entertainment, they would have been boring. But with their abundant water jets and populations of stone gods and goddesses, they provided the spectator with movement and a rich mythological companionship. Like the Renaissance villa gardens of Italy from which they are derived, they were programmatic texts in stone, water, and vege-

tation. Le Nôtre and his collaborators (notably Le Brun, whose express charge was the sculptural program of the gardens at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles) had a sufficient humanistic education to continue the Renaissance practice of garden arrangement according to elaborate programs of allegorical allusion.

The elegant rationality of the style Le Nôtre forged in collaboration with the architects, artists, and artisans of his day influenced courts throughout Europe. Just as France under Louis XIV became the dominant military power in Europe, so the French classical landscape style became prevalent during and after his reign. Although inflected according to regional conditions of taste and topography, it rapidly spread to the Netherlands, England, Germany, and Russia.

The French classical garden was influential even in Italy, as is apparent a century later in the scale and plan of the royal gardens of Caserta near Naples. But Italian landscape design was so imbued with the robust theatricality of local taste that French classicism was never thoroughly integrated into it. Rather, the currents of Italian Baroque style continued to flow northward as various European monarchs and princes summoned artists and craftsmen to mingle their talents with those of French designers. In Italy itself, a wealthy clergy and its related aristocracy brought the art of villa garden building to a triumphant and spectacular close. Humanistic iconography, at first in the service of the princes of the church and state, was finally abandoned altogether and ornament became an end in its own right. Thus, the elaborate symbolical programs that informed such gardens as the Villa d’Este gave way to the kind of sculptural tableaux one finds at Caserta (see fig. 41).

Grand-scale geometrical landscape composition in the French manner initiated another tradition, that of monumental city planning, beginning already in the time of Louis XIV and carried forward in the eighteenth century in Washington, D.C. and St. Petersburg, as discussed in the next chapter, and in the nineteenth century, most spectacularly in Paris itself, as we shall see in Chapter Ten. And although they may work with an entirely contemporary sensibility and no longer have as their primary philosophical reference the Cartesian cosmological view that was a principal *raison d’être* for axial extension in the seventeenth century, many of today’s French landscape designers stand squarely in Le Nôtre’s long shadow as they rebuild the public spaces of Paris and other French cities. For all of these reasons it is worthwhile to examine more closely the career of this remarkable royal servant.

I. THE MAKING OF VAUX-LE-VICOMTE AND VERSAILLES: ANDRÉ LE NÔTRE

By luck, André Le Nôtre was born at the moment when all the fashionable and newly wealthy men of seventeenth-century France, following Cardinal Richelieu's example, sought to display their taste and status in an increasingly grand manner and on an increasingly lavish scale by constructing new *hôtels* and *châteaux* or extensively remodeling old ones. As these city mansions and country estates were furnished with gardens, Le Nôtre obtained many commissions during his long professional life.

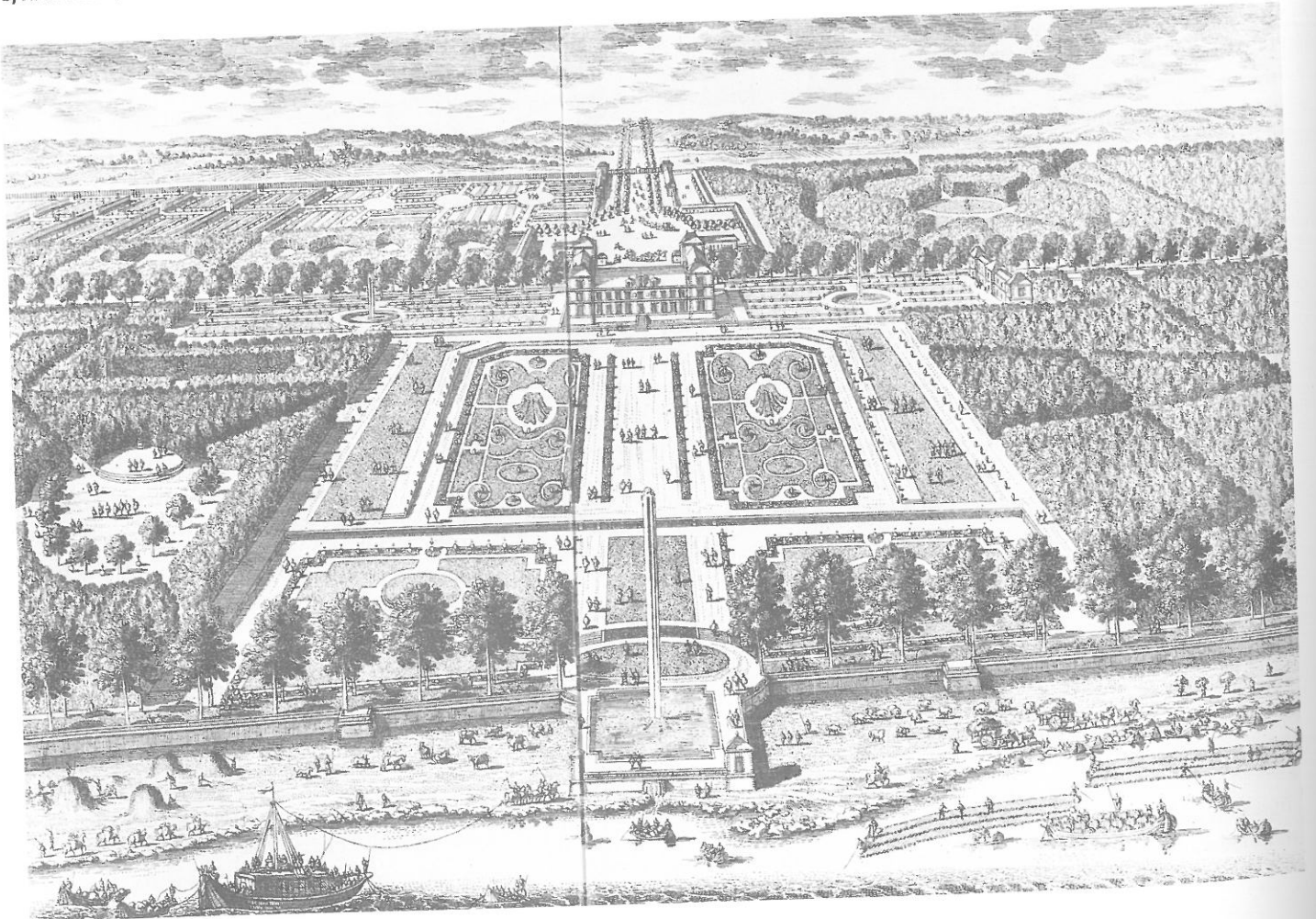
It was not only royalty and the nobility who were in a position to offer Le Nôtre commissions; the new financial elite, the *surintendants* and *intendants*, who were in charge of collecting taxes and maintaining the country's finances and administration, formed a class that rose to prominence during the decades when the old nobility's wealth was declining after prolonged religious and civil wars. The newly wealthy professional administrators were sufficiently enriched to own property of a scale to demand the services of architects and landscape designers, thus providing opportunities to consolidate the previous century's experiments.

ANDRÉ LE NÔTRE'S PREDECESSORS AND TEACHERS

François Mansart (1598–1666) was the most original architect and garden designer among André Le Nôtre's immediate predecessors, carrying Italian Renaissance axial planning to a new scale.⁴ This design achievement had a cultural basis. As human confidence and the desire to dominate nature increased in the seventeenth century with the opening of new continents through exploration and the expansion of mental horizons through science, Mansart grasped the possibility of projecting the garden outward in an open-armed gesture of seemingly illimitable axial extension. He stretched axes in long perspective lines emanating from, and converging upon, the *château*. At Maisons, Berny, Balleroy, Fresnes, Petit Bourg, Gesvres, and elsewhere, he elaborated approaches and forecourts, running axial vistas through village and forest (fig. 5.1). He and his followers placed the *château* within a field of successive sight lines, dramatically revealing it along intersecting axes.

Jacques Lemercier (1585–1654), the architect employed by Cardinal Richelieu on several projects,

5.1 *Château* and gardens of Petit Bourg, Corbeil, France. Design attributed to François Mansart, ca. 1650. Engraving by Adam Pérelle, 1727



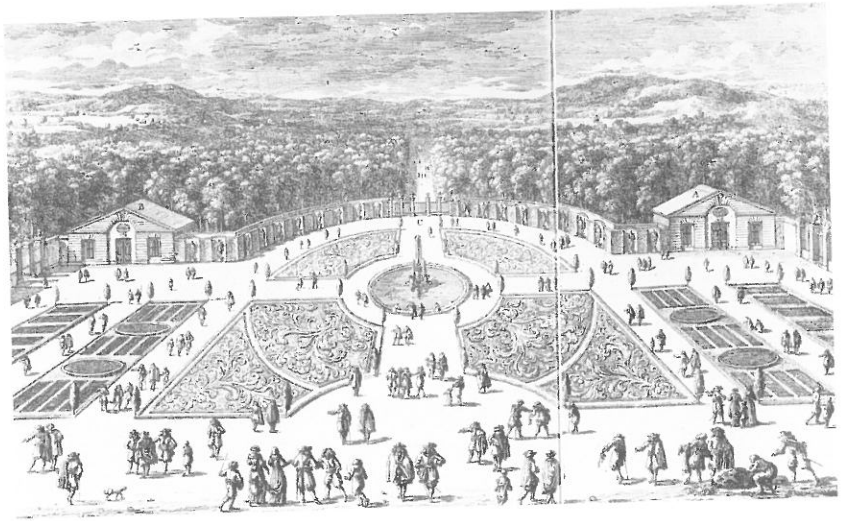
was also an important influence for the young Le Nôtre. Lemercier's commissions from the cardinal included his country retreat, Rueil, where he built an impressive architectural cascade, and the *château* and new town that bore the cardinal's name. At Richelieu, Lemercier laid out an abstract grid that encompassed the extensive grounds of the *château* and canalized the river Mable as an important cross axis (fig. 5.2). This early application of Cartesian geometry to landscape design helped set the course that Le Nôtre would follow and perfect.

In his youth, Le Nôtre may have worked with Mansart; it is clear that his genius owes a debt to that of this temperamental and arrogant master builder. But Le Nôtre's pivotal, enduring accomplishment had much deeper sources than this purported apprenticeship. Indeed, history offers few examples of the marriage of vocational destiny, natural genius, and opportunity more complete than that of André Le Nôtre. His grandfather, Pierre, had been *Maître Jardinier* in the service of Catherine de Médicis, and his father, Jean, held the title of *Premier Jardinier du Roi*. Born in the gardeners' quarters of the Tuileries Gardens in 1613, André grew up constantly exposed to his future profession. The companions of his infancy and childhood were members of the Mollet and Desgots families, gardeners who were also lodged in the Tuileries. Ties of closest friendship and even marriage knit their members into a solid professional clan.

Not only did Le Nôtre inherit his father's title upon the latter's retirement, but, more important, he displayed a quick intellect in receiving the education to which his father directed him. That education was the one prescribed by Jacques Boyceau in his treatise of 1638; it incorporated among other things the means to give physical form to Cartesian rationality through newly formulated laws of geometry, perspective, and optics.

Le Nôtre's education also included a sensory approach to, and appreciation of, line, proportion, and color, which he acquired during his apprenticeship in the studio of the painter Simon Vouet (1590–1649). The fact that Jean Le Nôtre, his father, placed him with Vouet in order to develop his draftsmanship and general aesthetic perceptions illustrates the position landscape gardening now occupied in relation to the fine arts. Later, Le Nôtre became a notable connoisseur and collector of works of art.⁵

In addition to his training with Vouet, Le Nôtre seems to have received a sound education in architecture. It is likely that he was instructed by both Mansart and Lemercier. Certainly, his gardens are so imbued with architectural principles and architectural intelligence that it would have been impossible for Le Nôtre to have designed them without a thorough aca-



5.2. View of *Parterre* and *Demi Lune*, Richelieu, Touraine, France. Designed by Jacques Lemercier. 1631–39. Engraving by Pérelle, 1688

demical training in architecture. Endowed with practical experience from his earliest years as well as personal gifts and technical skills that enabled him to be more than a talented practitioner of a well-respected craft, Le Nôtre took on the task of transforming the tenets of French Renaissance garden design into a new idiom.

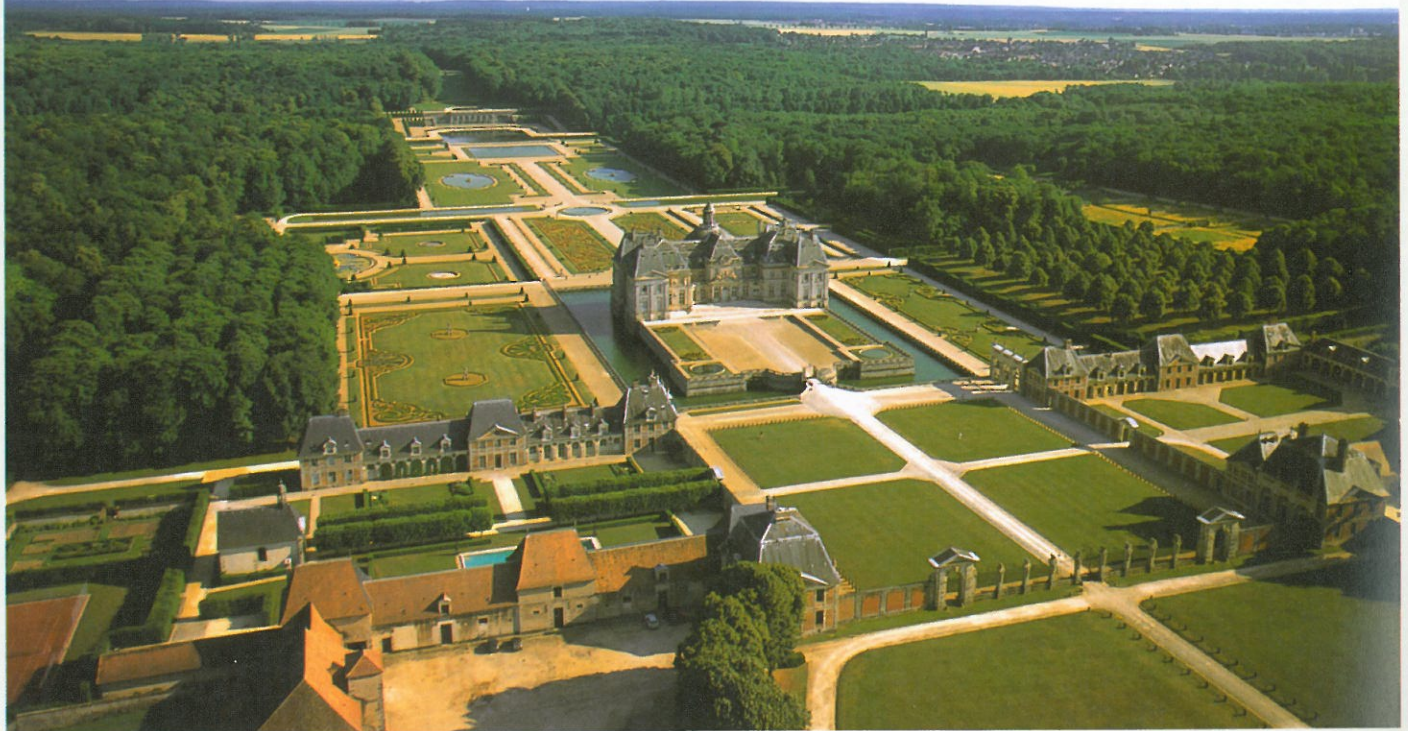
Shortly after Louis XIV took over the reins of government, Le Nôtre had the good fortune to have as a client the king's minister of finance, the ambitious and cultivated Nicolas Fouquet (1615–1680). Fouquet knew how to solicit from artists their best and most imaginative work and how to add an educated client's eye and discernment to the collaborative process necessary for realizing a notable design. Like other passionate builders, he was willing to spare no expense to achieve perfection. Thus equipped by taste and temperament and enriched by the emoluments of office, Fouquet approached, at the age of forty-one, the task of creating the monument of his brilliance and also of his doom, Vaux-le-Vicomte, the *château* and garden that epitomize the French classical style.⁶

VAUX-LE-VICOMTE

Lying within the broad agricultural plain that is the predominant landscape of the Île de France, Vaux-le-Vicomte was a small estate that Fouquet had inherited in 1640 from his father. It was an unremarkable piece of countryside, bereft of the topographical drama of contemporary villa gardens in Italy, where patrons and designers sought hillside sites because they considered them inherently salubrious and scenic. Such manipulations of topography as were necessary to realize the design of Vaux-le-Vicomte would have to be achieved by brute labor.

Expectation and surprise—or, put another way, rationality and mystery—are both present in a masterpiece of landscape architecture. Vaux-le-Vicomte is rich in both elements. It has a plan of complete

VAUX-LE-VICOMTE



5.3. Vaux-le-Vicomte, Melun, France. Designed by André Le Nôtre. 1656–61

Vaux-le-Vicomte opens up like a play in several acts. There is, first, the drama of entry that many visitors approaching from the modern parking lot are apt to miss. Approaching instead along the central axis, which runs through the middle of the *château* and the garden beyond it, one walks down a slight incline toward a beautiful grille punctuated at intervals with tall stone herms and terminated by symmetrical pedimented pseudoportals. The moat is sunk well below the balusters, and its sudden appearance produces the first of many grade-manipulated surprises. Only as one attempts to follow visually one of the arms of the moat around the *château* can one guess that the elaborate screen of grille, pseudoportals, and service buildings has been masking something magnificent beyond.

Standing at the entrance to the *château*, one now can see on either side verdant grass *parterres*, the edges of which are punctuated with yews clipped into precise identical cones, and, through the far windows of the central pavilion, one glimpses more manicured verdure. With the same anticipation that is to be felt upon the rising of the curtain in a theater, one walks through the central vestibule and oval salon out to the terrace. There lie the *parterres de broderie*, parallel beds of box and gravel patterned like brocade (fig. 5.4). Fountains, pools, sculpture, topiary, hedges, and trees are all laid out along a grand central axis that

finally turns from graveled promenade into a grassy ramp upon which stands a colossal gilded Hercules, symbol of virtuous strength and intended somewhat arrogantly by Fouquet as a reference to himself (fig. 5.7). Still this axis continues, banked by forest groves, until it seems to melt into the luminous sky.

Strolling along the central axis one finds changes in level that were not apparent at first. The axis, from successive vantage points, extending from the *château* all along the distance of the central promenade, deceptively appears to flow in one unbroken sweep to meet the grassy ramp and gilded Hercules; in fact, Le Nôtre has manipulated the ground plane to produce several surprising results.

A few feet beyond the circular pool at the end of the *parterre de broderie* just beyond the garden's first principal cross axis, which is emphasized by a pair of previously invisible long rectangular pools, there is a slight shift in the elevation. Descending, the visitor continues along the central promenade. Here one walks along a barely perceptible incline past flower-filled urns that today mark what was once the Allée d'Eau, so named for the evenly spaced low jets of water bordering it. The mild slope of this part of the garden allowed the runoff from the aqueous balustrade formed by the water jets to flow in two clear streams on either side of the central *allée*. This part of the garden terminates

in a large square pool.

Beyond the pool, and now suddenly visible, is one of the most impressive surprises in the entire garden. The elaborate architectural grotto, which from a distance appears to rise from the far end of the square pool, does not in reality do so. Here, the ground abruptly drops, revealing a huge chasm. This chasm contains the garden's second major cross axis in the form of a wide canal. As unexpected as this sight is, it is only half of the surprise, for at the bottom of the stairs to the canal, the entire supporting wall of the terrace above becomes a giant water feature, the Grandes Cascades (fig. 5.5), a mighty wall of water, commensurate in effect with the scale of the canal beside it and a dramatic counterpoint to the grotto opposite. Now dry, it must be imagined with the roar and gurgle of water spouting from grotesque masks into cupped bowls and upturned shells.

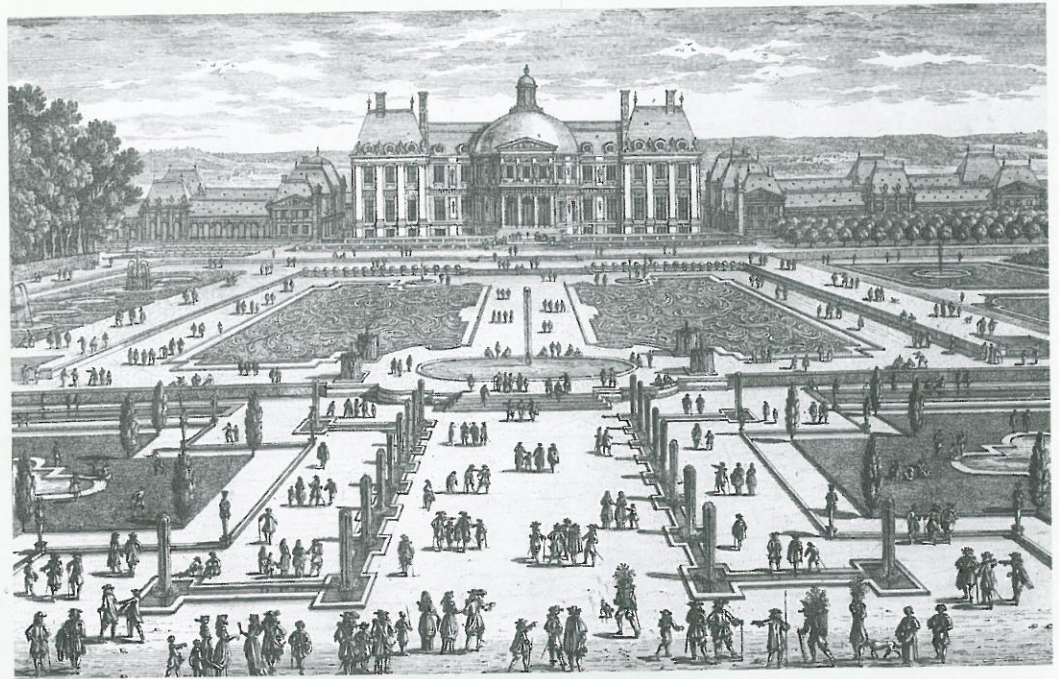
To approach the grotto one must walk to the far end of the canal and back along the opposite bank. Its architecture of rusticated stone forms a massive support for the terrace above. Beneath the flanking pair of broad stairs that rise to meet this terrace repose giant classical river gods, one symbolizing the Tiber, the other the local Anqueil, the river feeding the canal (fig. 5.6). The grotto steps contain a carved lion and squirrel. The agile high-vaulting squirrel was Fouquet's emblem, and the lion symbolized his protector, the king. Herms carved in bold

relief separate the grotto into seven niches containing artificial rockwork over which water was made to flow into a large rectangular basin. The balustrade of the terrace above the grotto was originally decorated with sculptures. Behind it a jet of water known as the Gerbe, was, according to contemporary accounts, as thick as a man's body and rose a lofty five meters (16'5") into the air.

The Gerbe, when operable, must have appeared as a shimmering base for the gilded Hercules. Modeled on the Farnese Hercules, the scale of this colossus is not apparent from the terrace of the *château*. When apprehended, it makes one aware of the great distance—half a mile (800 meters)—one has traveled in a straight line from the spot where it first appeared in view.

Beneath the towering base of the Hercules is an ordinary stone bench. From this vantage point one may gaze back at the *château* (fig. 5.7). Now all the games with geometry, perspective, and optics are played all over again in reverse. The canal and cascade are no longer visible; all the garden's cleverly interlocking parts are visually compressed into a single flattened plane. The garden presents itself once again as a unified image, the undisputed focus of which is the *château* with its swelling roof dome breasting the sky, the centerpiece of Le Nôtre's and Le Vau's collaboration, to which all its component parts now adhere.

5.4. *Château and Grand Parterre, Vaux-le-Vicomte. Engraving by Adam and Nicholas Pérelle, from Recueil des Vues des Plus Beaux Lieux de France, 1688*



5.5. *Grandes Cascades, Vaux-le-Vicomte. View by Israël Silvestre, engraving by Adam Pérelle, from Recueil des Vues des Plus Beaux Lieux de France, 1688*



5.6. *River god, Grotto, Vaux-le-Vicomte*



5.7. *View of the château of Vaux-le-Vicomte from the base of the Hercules sculpture*

clarity, a design in which one may grasp the whole composition and from its organizing axes infer the principal spaces, a design in which there is a deft interlocking of parts and a logical progression from one to another. It also contains much more than meets the eye when the eye enjoys its first satisfying survey of the harmoniously proportioned whole. And even that whole is not revealed at first glance, but rather through a process of unexpected discovery.⁷

It is by the laws of geometry, perspective, and optics that Vaux achieves, within the framework of logic, a number of masterly surprises, an accomplishment belonging not only to Le Nôtre, but also to the architect Louis Le Vau and the painter Charles Le Brun with whom he worked in close collaboration. Le Nôtre had in all probability read the *Traité de la section perspective* (1636) by the mathematician and engineer-architect Girard Desargues (1591–1661), who attempted to modify Cartesian theory with the notion of a properly geometric infinity. The subtle alterations of grade and multiplicity of perspectives at Vaux dramatize and dignify the *château* and carry the eye along an axial progression to carefully established focal points within the garden, as well as to the remote horizon beyond. These effects are the result of precise mathematical calculation. The application of this mathematical knowledge allowed Le Nôtre to conceal certain elements of the garden until the visitor, progressing through its sequenced spaces, finds them revealed as if by some sort of legerdemain (figs. 5.3–5.7). In this orchestration of garden experience, Le Nôtre exhibits his kinship with the Renaissance designers responsible for hide-and-reveal tactics found at the Villa Giulia and elsewhere.

As is well known in the annals of garden history, Fouquet gave a party to celebrate his achievement on August 17, 1661. To it he invited the entire court and the young king. Not only had Fouquet naively deluded himself with regard to the effect that so much ostentation and fashionable display would have upon his master Louis XIV, but, ever confident of his ability to charm and flatter his way into power, he had been foolhardy in offering financial advice and credit to the king's mistress, Louise de La Vallière, offending her and enraging the king. In addition, he had as an enemy Jean-Baptiste Colbert, who, eager to succeed him, was able to persuade the dying Cardinal Mazarin to denounce Fouquet. Whether or not Fouquet actually did use public funds to build Vaux, its magnificence and size certainly suggest that this might have been the case.

The party itself lives on in history, not only because of its ironic, if predictable, outcome, but because it expanded the scale of garden festivities, just as Vaux had expanded the scale of the garden itself,

to unprecedented dimensions. First, there was a royal tour through the garden with its dancing waters and allusive sculptural program developed perhaps by the fabler La Fontaine.⁸ Then a lavish banquet was held indoors, followed by a comedy and fireworks. The guests returned outside after the banquet to watch *Les Fâcheux*, written for the occasion by the young Molière, who was one of the actors. This was performed in front of the *Grille d'eau*, a beautiful tiered fountain at one end of the first cross axis. Molière begged the king to help him by commanding the garden itself to cooperate in producing the spectacle. Thereupon, statues appeared to come to life, trees to move, and rocks to open.⁹ When night fell, the *château* was lit by hundreds of lanterns placed upon the cornices; the grotto, too, was illuminated. Elaborate fireworks rained down from above, some in the form of *fleurs de lys*. A mock whale swam the length of the canal discharging more fireworks. Then, as the king prepared to depart, rockets shot from the dome of the *château*, setting the whole sky ablaze.

On September 5, Fouquet was arrested on charges of high treason and embezzlement. Although judged innocent on counts that might have warranted the death penalty, Fouquet was imprisoned for life. Louis, having immediately appropriated much of the sculpture and new plantings he had seen at Vaux-le-Vicomte, as well as the services of its creators, began redesigning both the gardens of Fontainebleau and those his father had laid out at Versailles.¹⁰

VERSAILLES

Shortly after Fouquet's arrest, the three principal designers of Vaux-le-Vicomte—Le Vau, Le Brun, and Le Nôtre—were hard at work transforming Louis XIII's old hunting lodge at Versailles into a place for entertainment with a suitably grand suite of apartments for the young king and queen. Le Vau was in charge of remodeling the *château* without altering its basic lines; he was also asked to create an orangery. Le Brun was made responsible for the decoration of the *château*. To Le Nôtre fell the task of developing the plan that would enlarge the gardens to a monumental scale, defying both the site's marshy and highly irregular terrain and Colbert's assertion that Versailles was but meanly proportioned as a symbol of monarchical magnificence.¹¹

As Superintendent of the King's Buildings, Colbert oversaw the financing and coordination of the entire construction process, a task in which he was assisted by Charles Perrault (1628–1703), First Clerk and later Comptroller of Buildings. Perrault, whose more enduring fame rests upon a much-loved collection of fairy tales, was probably responsible for the development and construction in the 1660s and 1670s



of the heliocentric iconography that celebrated the glory of the Sun King and the sun's—and therefore Louis's—mythological representative, Apollo, throughout the gardens of Versailles (fig. 5.8).

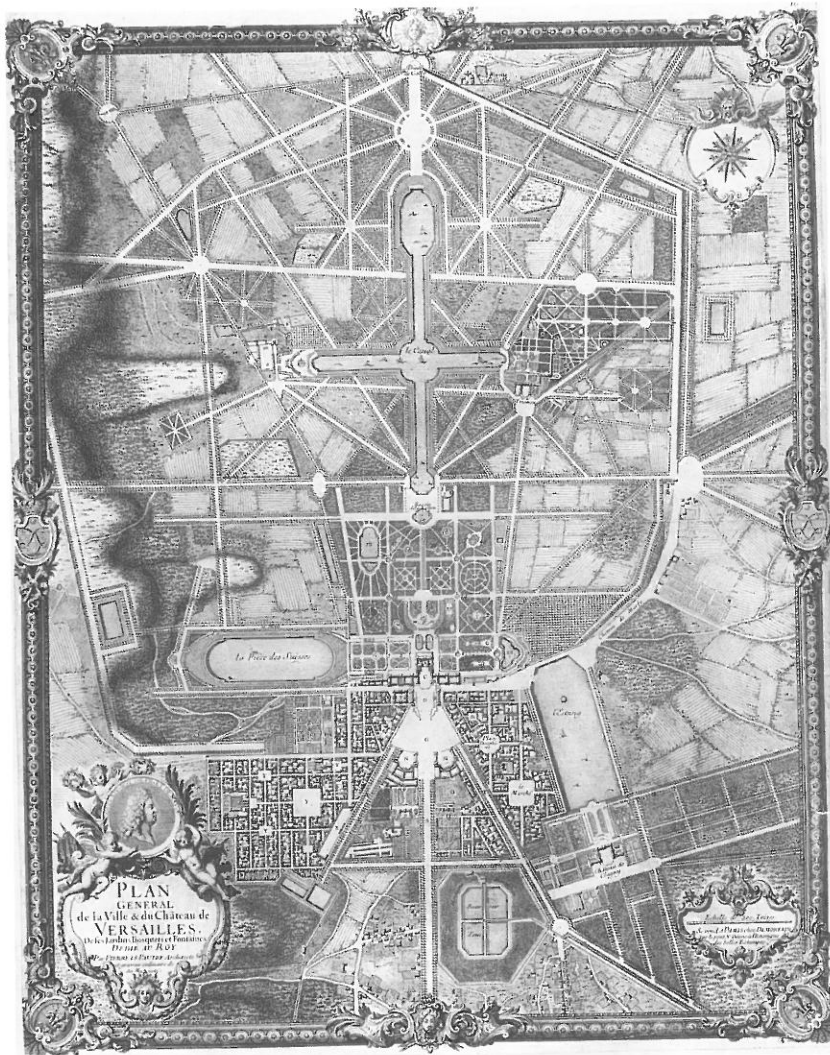
As the iconography of the Sun King became elaborated in several garden compositions, Versailles more and more became the center of court life. After 1678, when Jules Hardouin-Mansart (1645–1708), the grandnephew of François Mansart, had succeeded Le Vau as official architect to the king, Louis decided to make his favorite *château* the seat of government. Throughout the early building campaigns at Versailles, Le Nôtre guided the design of the gardens. In creating in the central *allée* the smooth greensward of the *tapis vert* and its flanking *bosquets* of geometrically arranged trees, in laying out the *parterres* beside Hardouin-Mansart's 1683 Orangerie, and in building the gardens of the Trianon and the long canal that extended the principal axis to the distant reach of the garden, he worked steadily with professional collaborators, workmen, and gardeners.

But because Versailles was not conceived as a single unified scheme, as was Vaux-le-Vicomte, it does not have the coherence of its predecessor. Its size is gargantuan, a mighty sprawl over hundreds of acres. And yet Le Nôtre maintained a rigorous logic in its design; its central axis and several transverse axes provide a strong framework around which various fea-

tures were arranged and rearranged over the years. Within this framework, Le Nôtre and his collaborators contributed much pleasing incident in the form of fountains, pools, treillage, sculpture, and crisply geometric topiary. It was Le Nôtre's genius to substitute for the ordered intricacy of the older French Renaissance gardens a new clarity, simplicity, austerity, and refinement, creating a style of great architectural strength. He drove his axes into the indefinite distance, erasing all visible garden boundaries, creating the paradigm of a world-embracing landscape. In so doing, he also laid down the premises for a new urban order.

It is a style in which monumentality is achieved not so much by architectural means as through spatial ones. Because of its role as a model for future garden and urban design, the plan for Versailles as it existed shortly before the king's death is worth studying in regard to its organization of space (figs. 5.9, 5.10). By the application of Cartesian mathematics, landscape is geometricized on a grand scale. Space is projected by axes and defined by cross axes. Radials converge as a *patte d'oie*, or goose foot, upon the palace; these are tree-lined boulevards, the principal avenues of the town of Versailles—a planned community of red brick and stone buildings of regulated height, which was laid out as a grid with public squares at certain intersections.

5.8. Apollo Fountain, Versailles. Sculpture by Jean-Baptiste Tuby. 1668–71



5.9. Plan of 1710 by Pierre Le Pautre of the palace, gardens, and town of Versailles

Below: 5.10. Aerial view, Versailles



Nôtre's genius for producing a sense of rational order under awkward conditions. The palace sits athwart the main axis. The first cross axis of the garden bisects *parterres de broderie*, embroidery-like designs in boxwood and colored gravel. Here, where it is seen from the palace windows at close range, the design is intricate and the scale compact. Several successive cross axes and axes paralleling the principal one create a grid within the old stand of forest trees. These are subdivided by paths forming geometric designs, each with a central feature, usually a fountain basin with sculpture. For instance, along the axis of the Parterre du Nord near the palace, the Allée d'Eau—twin rows of fountains supported by cherubs—leads to the circular Bassin du Dragon.¹²

The principal axis, which would be vapid if simply projected the length of the garden as an *allée* of uniform grade, width, and surface material, is enlivened by changes of level and dimension; alternations between gravel, grass, and water; and the addition of several important sculptural features celebrating the Sun King. The first of these, which is reached by a broad flight of stairs descending from a horseshoe-shaped terrace located just beyond the second cross axis of the garden, is the 1670 masterpiece of Jean-Baptiste Tuby (1630–1700), the Fountain of Latona, mother of Apollo. The sculptural grouping depicts Latona and her two children, Apollo and Diana, surrounded by the wicked Lycian peasants who had refused them water and who, as victims of divine retribution, are in the process of being metamorphosed into frogs (fig. 5.11).¹³ This allegorical composition based on a story from Ovid's *Metamorphosis* refers to the Fronde, the civil war in which a rebellious faction representing the parliament of Paris opposed the crown during the minority of Louis XIV, a threat to royal power the king never forgot or forgave. Here the anti-authoritarian *frondeurs* are symbolized by the discomfited former peasants, now frogs.

Beyond the two mirror-image *parterres* adjacent to this fountain, the axis turns from gravel into grass, with side *allées* flanked by *bosquets*. This strip of lawn, or *tapis vert*, is terminated by another major sculptural feature punctuating the axis: the Basin of Apollo with Tuby's sculpture of the god rising as the morning sun from the water in a chariot drawn by splendid horses, his appearance heralded by horn-blowing tritons (see fig. 5.8). Cast of lead and then gilded, this group remains one of the principal sights of Versailles as the morning sun illuminates its frontal, east-facing side or the setting sun washes it from the rear. On the far side of the Basin of Apollo, the axis becomes a canal that appears to stretch in a watery line to the horizon, now marked by two giant poplars. It has an important cross axis, giving it a cruciform shape. The



5.11. Latona Fountain, Versailles

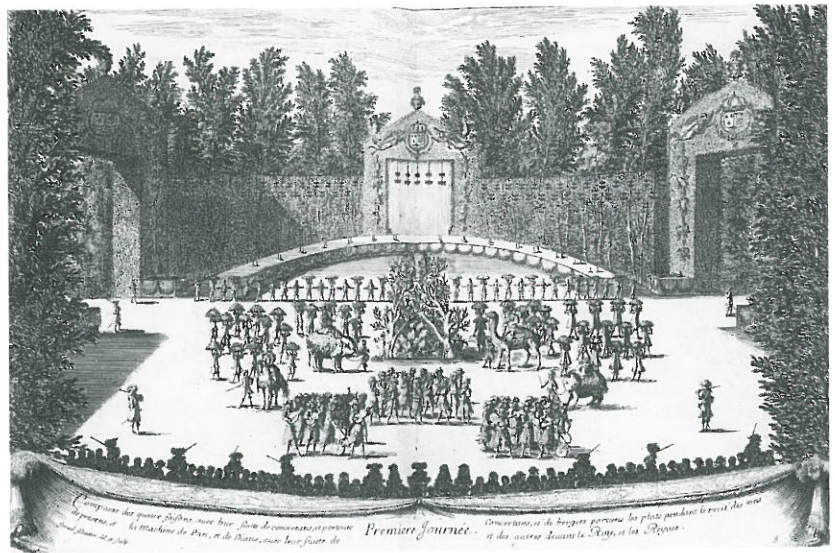
northern arm extends to an embankment beside the Trianon, the pavilion and gardens Louis built as a private retreat in 1671 and reconstructed in 1687.

An octagonal basin forms the head of the canal and the point of departure for a major cross axis and two pairs of diagonal axes. These diagonal axes set up a new series of alignments as they and other minor axes crisscrossing them project the garden's space outward in a dynamic fashion. Beyond the canal, a *rond-point* creates a starburst of axes, which is echoed elsewhere in the garden by other circles with axes radiating out from them. It is as if Le Nôtre were trying to demonstrate in a terrestrial manner Descartes's proposition of *extensio*, the indefinite extension of cosmic space. Practically, the plan of Versailles furnished the inspiration for thousands of landscape creations, serving as the wellspring for gardens and city plans throughout Europe and, later, all across the globe.

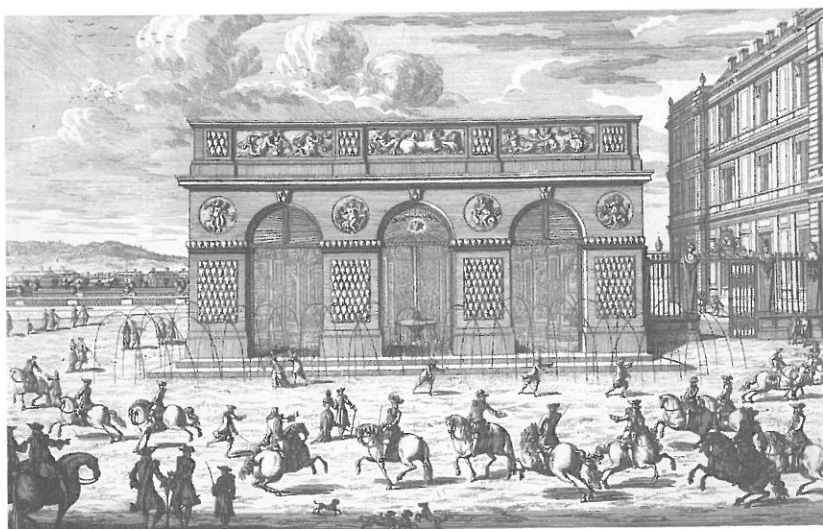
Over the years, Louis directed Le Nôtre to revise several parts of the gardens. He caused the fountains and *bosquets* containing sculpture illuminating the Apollonian theme to become the tourist attraction they have remained ever since. Because Louis's life was lived almost entirely in public amid the busy swarm of his ever-present court, there was an almost endless stream of visitors from home and abroad to admire the gardens. Madeleine de Scudéry, a contemporary to whom we owe a lively account of the unforgettable but unfortunate festivity at Vaux-le-Vicomte, in 1669 produced *La Promenade de Versailles*, an itinerary for visitors. In 1674, the artist and historiographer André Félibien published his guidebook entitled *Description sommaire du chateau de Versailles*. The king often conducted tours and was the author of a periodically revised guide, first issued in 1689, which peremptorily advised one where to stand and what to notice.

The engravings of Israël Silvestre, Adam Pérelle, and Antoine Le Pautre are all animated by human fig-

ures in aristocratic dress, lending a measure of scale to buildings, *palissades*, and fountain jets and bringing the gardens to life with many telling social details. The gardens at Versailles were, moreover, not only intended as a stage for the pageantry of aristocracy; Le Nôtre and his collaborators created elaborate temporary stages and areas suitable as outdoor theaters for the actual dramas and other spectacles that soon became an indispensable part of court life (fig. 5.12). The composer Lully collaborated with Molière on several of the spectacles that were staged there. *Palissades* served as theatrical wings; similarly, arches of plaster, masonry, and greenery could be used as side



5.12. Israël Silvestre's suites of engravings of the memorable *Fêtes de Versailles* (Paris: *Les Plaisirs de L'Isle Enchantée*, 1673) provide a fine example of Versailles' ability to accommodate theatrical spectacle. The engravings depict the entertainments that both glorified the king and demonstrated his power. The first celebrated his alliance with his mistress, Louise de La Vallière, during five days at the beginning of May 1664. The marriage of nature and stagecraft is apparent in several tableaux of various events and is discernible even in a banqueting scene, where torchbearers form a line of "footlights" in front of the guests, while, behind them, costumed waiters hold aloft trays of mounded delicacies as they move with balletic grace and precision in front of the security guards that hold back the gathered spectators. In a similar fashion, a proscenium arch was erected to frame a garden perspective that served as the living backdrop for both a ballet and a play, which was given on the second day of the *fête*.



5.13. Grotto of Thetis. Engraving by Adam and Nicholas Pèrelle, from *Recueil des Vues des Plus Beaux Lieux de France*, 1688

entrances. Sometimes these were enlarged to define a proscenium in the same way that the frame of a picture defines its illusionistic space and focuses the viewer upon its perspective lines.

In 1665, work was begun on the Grotto of Thetis, which had a reservoir on its roof to supply water for the gardens' numerous fountains (fig. 5.13). One of the last and most opulent of such architectural grottoes to be built, it stood on the upper terrace between the north side of the *château* and the Parterre du Nord. Charles Perrault developed the concept for the grotto, relying on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for the story of Apollo driving his fiery steeds across the sky all day and then repairing at nightfall to the underwater palace of the sea goddess Thetis. Its three niches contained sculptural groups depicting the repose of Apollo, who is being bathed by the nymphs of Thetis, and the grooming of the horses of the Sun by Tritons. The interior walls were richly ornamented with shell mosaic, and the exterior of the grotto was equally decorative. Perrault credited his brother Claude, a physician-architect, with designing the gilded grilles forming a sunburst pattern in its three wrought-iron arched gates. When these gates were opened, the richly decorated facade and well-lit interior became the backdrop for theatrical productions, including that of Molière's *Le Malade imaginaire* in 1674. The descent of Apollo and his horses into the sea, which was expressed in the grotto's exterior frieze by Gérard van Opstal, was symbolically paired with Tuby's horses rising with the god in the Basin of Apollo.

The extensive building period to which the construction of the Grotto of Thetis, the decoration of the Basin of Apollo, and the installation of the Latona Fountain belong coincided with the king's taking the witty and accomplished Athénais Rochechouart de Mortemart, Marquise de Montespan, for his new mistress in 1668.¹⁴ Her establishment was followed by the construction of Le Vau's Enveloppe, or the

Château Neuf, as it was also called. Because its broad façade destroyed the floral *parterre*, or queen's garden, on the south side of the old *château*, the king, who loved flowers, sought another part of Versailles where he could enjoy the fragrance and colorful display of exotic specimens in carefully arranged beds. He also wished to have a pleasant retreat where he could retire with Madame de Montespan and a few favorites, away from the public glare of the large, well-populated Château Neuf.

It was for these reasons that in 1671, on the site of the former village of Trianon, the Trianon de Porcelaine, so named for the Delft ceramic tiles that decorated its roof, was built. Throughout the long period in which the Trianon de Porcelaine was in use, Madame de Montespan remained the favorite; its demolition in 1687, when Hardouin-Mansart's Grand Trianon (the Trianon de Marbe) was built, marked her replacement by Françoise d'Aubigné, Madame de Maintenon. Michel Le Bouteux, the husband of Le Nôtre's niece, was in charge of the nurseries that supported the lavish floriculture of this section of Versailles. He was also responsible for ordering and planting many exotic flowers, such as tuberoses, which gardeners installed at every season of the year in floral *parterres*. The ability to procure these exceedingly rare treasures symbolized absolute monarchy as much as did Le Nôtre's commanding axes and Versailles's heliocentric iconography celebrating Louis XIV's role as Sun King.

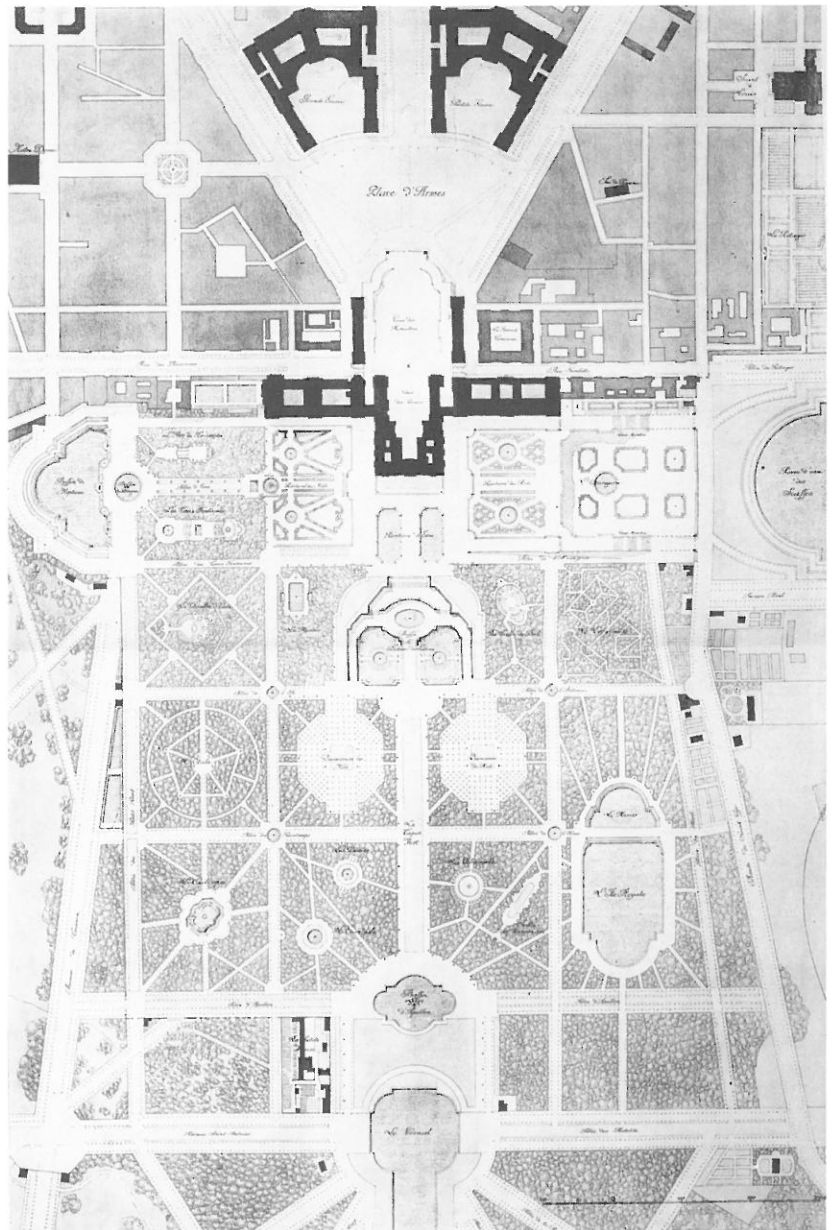
During this period, by which time the main architectonics of Versailles were established, increasing attention was paid to the development of the *bosquets* (fig. 5.14). Le Nôtre created several of these green theaters within the Petit Parc, including Le Marais, a fanciful rectangular pond surrounded by metallic reeds and containing a tree, also of metal, in the *bosquet* just beneath the terrace sustaining the Parterre de Nord; L'Étoile, a starlike maze of tree-lined paths converging upon a central Montagne d'Eau formed of *rocaille* (rustic rockwork); and the Labyrinthe located to the west of the Orangerie on the south side of the Petit Parc where various turnings and cul-de-sacs were punctuated by fountains with sculptures depicting animals from the *Fables* of Aesop. The ground to the west of the Labyrinthe was low-lying and spongy. Here, in 1671–74, Le Nôtre used two units of his *allée*-gridded plan to form a large water feature consisting of a semicircular basin known as the Miroir and a larger basin containing the Isle Royale. He emphasized the garden's dominant theme by making the Isle Royale circular like the Sun and projecting sixteen raylike *allées* from the edges of the water basin in which it sat. The Enclade, the only remaining *bosquet* built before 1680, has in its center

a round pool in which Gaspard Marsy's giant sprawls, felled in his hubris by the mountain he tried to erect to heaven. It is an arresting piece reminiscent of Giambologna's Appenino at Pratolino, less in keeping with the elegant classicism of Versailles than with the theatricality of Italian Baroque art.

The 1680s, which opened with Le Nôtre's return from Italy (where he had traveled only to learn that the most advanced concepts in landscape design were now originating in France), also constituted the period in which Jules Hardouin-Mansart was busy directing the last major building phase of Versailles. Louis, at the height of his power and passion for building, now sought a new retreat, one even more private than the Trianon. At Marly, overlooking the Seine and Saint-Germain in the distance, he commissioned Hardouin-Mansart to design a new small *château* with separate guest pavilions in order to ensure the king's privacy (fig. 5.15). By 1683, he was able to host entertainments in the unfinished gardens. Because Marly, unlike Versailles, enjoyed a hillside location, the king was eager to have Le Nôtre design for it a cascade such as the ones he had seen on his recent trip to Italy. However, it was not until 1697–99, just before Le Nôtre's death, that the project of building La Rivière on the slope behind the *château* was accomplished.

Today all but a few of the marble sculptures that once decorated Marly, together with an abundance of bronze and marble vases and statues, are displayed at the Louvre. The *château* and guest pavilions have vanished. Only a broad stripe of green turf marks the course of the king's cascade. This piece of grass symbolizes the chief problem that beset not only Marly, but also Versailles and the Trianon: an insufficiency of water for the more than 1,400 dazzling waterworks these gardens contained. The grotto, *parterres*, and *bosquets* of the Petit Parc at Versailles and the gardens of the Trianon were in the time of Louis XIV enlivened with water cascading, purling, leaping, or lying quietly in basins. Water served as one of the principal performers in the pageantry of these landscapes, mirroring their architecture of stone and verdure and animating perspectives. There was, in fact, an insatiable demand to furnish the ever-multiplying fountains, which constantly taxed the ingenuity of the *fontainiers*, plumbers, and engineers who worked to increase and maintain water supply and pressure.

To operate the fountains at Versailles required a corps of highly disciplined workers under a master-*fontainier*. Rarely was there adequate water to allow all of the fountains to play at once. Boys were commanded to serve as runners when the king or other important visitors toured the gardens, blowing whistles to alert plumbers to turn on valves as the royal entourage approached. The king's hydraulic engi-



5.14. Plan of the *bosquets* of Versailles. 1664–1713

Below: 5.15. Château de Marly. Engraving from *Recueil des Vues des Plus Beaux Lieux de France* by Adam and Nicholas Péréelle, 1688



5.16. Cascade, Sceaux

neers undertook many elaborate and costly schemes to increase the water supply. Between 1682 and 1688, they built a vast contraption known as the Machine de Marly. It was equipped with fourteen huge wheels that powered pumps conveying water from the Seine uphill to two reservoirs, whence it was distributed to the gardens of Marly, Versailles, and the Trianon. But even then the fountains could not all flow simultaneously. After 1684, the military engineer Sébastien Le Prestre de Vauban directed an ambitious scheme to divert the waters of the Eure River 28 miles (70 kilometers) distant; as many as 30,000 soldiers were set to work, and huge sums of money were spent. In the face of the War of the League of Augsburg, Louis abandoned the project.

The treatment of the royal gardens of Louis XIV as vast public works projects employing both military and civilian workers in the movement of earth on a scale hitherto unknown—leveling view-obstructing hills, excavating low-lying marshes to form canals, and filling in depressions to create enormous level terraces—is evident even in the Potager du Roi, the vegetable garden at Versailles. Here, between 1677 and 1683, Jean-Baptiste de la Quintinie (1626–1688), the king's head gardener for fruits and vegetables, oversaw the creation of a 20-acre walled enclosure on low-lying lands to the southeast of the palace with dredged spoil from the Pièce d'Eau des Suisses and topsoil from the Satory Hills. A statue of this highly respected man today presides over the extensive *potager* with its planting beds carefully delineated by many varieties of espaliered fruit trees.

It was Le Nôtre's genius to consolidate the work of such predecessors as Boyceau and Lemercier into a style of great architectonic strength, carrying their achievements to a logical conclusion and substituting for the ordered intricacy of the older Renaissance gardens a new clarity, simplicity, austerity, and refinement. Le Nôtre's legacy lies in his treatment of space as an abstract, geometrical entity, his understanding of spatial optics, and his expansion of landscape design to a monumental scale. This far-reaching legacy is expressed not only at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles, but also in the gardens Le Nôtre designed at other royal and noble residences near Paris. He reorganized Fontainebleau according to a grandly simple plan. At Saint-Germain-en-Laye he laid out a new rectangular garden, which replaced that of Henri IV, and at Saint-Cloud, he employed the hilly terrain to good effect, creating a broad *allée* that dropped and then ascended to a high point, affording a fine view of Paris in the distance. He gave expression to the power and the optimism of the age at Colbert's *château* of Sceaux in the construction of a spectacular cascade and the digging of a 3,465-foot- (1056-meter-)

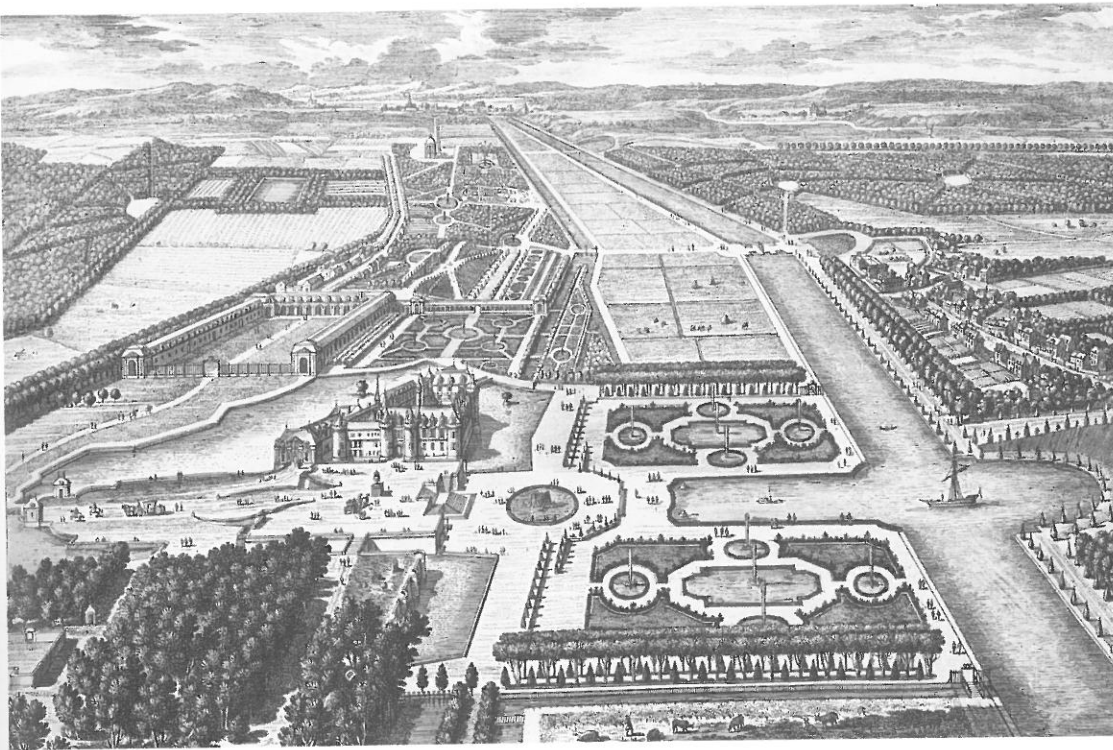


long canal that today, with its reflected border of tall swaying poplars, serves as a canyonlike cloud chamber (fig. 5.16). In another major feat of design and hydraulic engineering, he created the Grand Canal, a great circular basin, and magnificent oval pools at Chantilly between 1671 and 1681 (fig. 5.17).

In 1700, shortly before Le Nôtre's death, Louis and his gardener toured the gardens of Versailles for the last time. Because of his advanced years, Le Nôtre was invited to ride in a chair wheeled by a footman. With characteristic modesty and frank delight, Le Nôtre was heard to exclaim: "Alas! my poor father, had he been alive to see this poor gardener, his own son, riding in a chair beside the greatest king on earth, his happiness would have been complete."¹⁵

Between Le Nôtre's death in 1700 and his own in 1715, Louis faced family tragedy and became increasingly stoical as he anticipated his own approaching end amid disastrous military defeats and the declining economic power of France.¹⁶ The vanished glory of his age was soon after captured by eighteenth-century painters such as Jean-Honoré Fragonard in scenes of figures disporting themselves in the now-derelict great gardens of the epoch of the Sun King, which they saw in their abandonment as sweetly picturesque (see fig. 7.41). A similar air of melancholy vacancy appears in the photographs Eugène Atget made of some of Le Nôtre's gardens at the beginning of the twentieth century.¹⁷

The reaction to a static and authoritarian order had already begun to set in as new ideas and voices challenged the spirit of the *ancien régime*. But Le Nôtre's influence remained strong. His practice was inherited and his style continued by his nephew Claude Desgots (d. 1732). In Antoine-Joseph Dezallier d'Argenville (1680–1765) Le Nôtre found an author who codified his design method in the treatise that he had never found time to write. Dezallier's book became a manual for designers commissioned by the courts of Europe to create gardens in the French classical style. As combined with the lingering influence of the Italian garden, it evolved through the first two-thirds of the eighteenth century into an international garden style, which was inflected according



5.17. Chantilly. Engraving from *Recueil des Vues des Plus Beaux Lieux de France* by Adam and Nicholas Péréle, 1688

to local conditions and taste. It is a style that is still influential, as can be seen in some of the gardens of the American landscape architects Dan Kiley and Peter Walker, for example. It can also be observed in

France itself, where the recently built Parc Citroën in Paris shows how its enduring principles can be translated into a contemporary idiom.

II. THE GARDEN AS THEATER: ITALIAN BAROQUE AND ROCOCO GARDENS

The austere harmonies of French classicism never penetrated very deeply into the Italian design ethos. The seventeenth-century Italian style, like that of Le Nôtre, was an integrative one in which individual parts were organized into a unified composition. But instead of achieving compositional unity with authoritarian axes flung down along lines apparently extending into infinity, the builders of Italian gardens—often encouraged by topography—wove dramatic hanging terraces and ornamental flights of stairs into hillsides to produce theatrical arrangements of landscape. The dramatic potential of moving water continued to be exploited in the construction of elaborate sculptural cascades like the one at Villa Lante (see fig. 4.25). Unlike French garden designers, whose struggles to furnish water to their fountains, pools, and cascades were herculean and often intensely frustrating as well as wasteful both of capital and human lives, Italian architects were more fortunate in their ability to convey water to their sites in copious quantities, albeit also at the expense of much backbreaking labor and often intense politics. Their gardens were vehicles for princely pomp and display, and the glorification of their patrons became ever more explicit as

decorative coats of arms and other family emblems were prominently featured instead of being merely encoded symbolically into the landscape.¹⁸

Not only were dramatic astonishment and theatrical perspective effectively used in the layout of Italian Baroque gardens, but also many of the gardens of this period contained actual outdoor theaters with a grassy stage, hedges for wings, and sometimes, peeping forth from the greenery, terra-cotta figures representing stock characters of the *commedia dell'arte* tradition popularized by troupes of Italian actors since the second half of the sixteenth century (fig. 5.18). Pastoral drama was echoed in the sculptural Satyrs and Pans that populated garden woods or the edges of garden walks, as well as in the taste for genre figures of peasants engaged in a variety of tasks.

Italian designers probably found the Cartesian paradigm of non-place-specific axial planning less congenial than one that recognized place as particular and bounded. This may be explained by the fact that the topography throughout much of Italy is hilly, thereby promoting greater opportunity visually for spatial enclosure than for spatial extension. In

NOTES FOR CHAPTER FIVE

1. See Robert W. Berger, *In the Garden of the Sun King: Studies on the Park of Versailles Under Louis XIV* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), Chapter 2, for a good discussion of the role of Petite Académie (later renamed the Académie Royale des Inscriptions et Médailles) in determining the iconographic program at Versailles. The Petite Académie was an institution devoted to developing an iconography of royal glorification that could be applied to the creation of medals commemorating the deeds of the king as well as to the decoration of royal buildings. Richelieu by his own example was responsible for initiating a building craze among the aristocracy. During the first half of the seventeenth century more than three hundred new *hôtels* and gardens were built in Paris. French pride in their capital dates from this period, and although Louis XIV had no particular desire to live there, he was nonetheless supportive of the city's increasing beautification.
2. According to philosophy professor Edward Casey, for Descartes "the spatial world is to be grasped as a plenary, seamless realm of *res extensae*—of material things whose very nature consists in their extension." See Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 154.
3. The king, fearing the political consequences of rationalism, forbade the teaching of Descartes's theories in French schools.
4. For my discussion of Mansart, I am indebted to Kenneth Woodbridge, *Princely Gardens: The Origins and Development of the French Formal Style* (New York: Rizzoli, 1986), pp. 166–78. Much of what follows in this chapter describing seventeenth-century French gardens and landscape designers is derived from my reading of this indispensable volume on the subject.
5. André Le Nôtre collected painting and sculpture, bequeathing near the end of his life to Louis XIV, the king whom he had served so long and so well, his fine collection of Poussins, Claude Lorrains, and other masters of the French School along with many fine antique marble and bronze sculptures.
6. Fouquet's device, appropriately enough, was the high-vaulting squirrel; his enemy and successor Colbert, with greater wisdom, chose as his symbol the lowly grass snake.
7. A useful guide for experiencing the unfolding perspectives of Vaux-le-Vicomte is that provided by the architectural historian Franklin Hamilton Hazelhurst, whose diagrams and sketches illustrate Le Nôtre's manipulations of grade and perspective to achieve a masterfully rational yet boldly dramatic design. See *Gardens of Illusion: The Genius of André Le Nôtre* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 1980), pp. 17–45.
8. See Denise and Jean-Pierre Le Dantec, *Reading the French Garden: Story and History* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 116–17. The authors' assertion that La Fontaine was possibly associated in some way with Vaux is supported by the fact that he was a few years later directly responsible for the thematic development of the Labyrinthe at Versailles. For a complete discussion of his contributions to the iconographic program there, see Robert W. Berger, *In the Garden of the Sun King* (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1985), Chapter 4.
9. From an account by La Fontaine, *Oeuvres diverse*, La Pléiade, pp. 522–27, as quoted in Bernard Jeannel, *Le Nôtre* (Paris: Fernand Hazan, 1985), p. 42.
10. At the time of Fouquet's memorable party, Louis was deeply in love with Louise de La Vallière, his first publicly acknowledged mistress. And it was to honor his love for Louise, as well as to create the spaces for the delightful summer entertainments that would celebrate his reign, that he commissioned work to progress during the greater part of the 1660s. As the garden historian William Howard Adams has remarked, "The sequence of the development of the gardens at Versailles is intimately related to the emerging power of the King, his concept of the monarchy, and his love affairs. All three influences were at times entangled in the expansion and use of the gardens to further the King's policies or to celebrate an amorous conquest." See Howard Adams, *The French Garden 1500–1800*, (New York: George Braziller, 1979), p. 84.
11. Almost twenty years older than the king, Colbert tried to lecture the young monarch on the unsuitability of such a poor place as the symbolic representation of the greatest king in the world. But Louis was an absolute monarch firmly in command of his own will, and Colbert was forced to gracefully submit as he took on the job of overseeing Louis's ambitious building program at Versailles. See Jeannel, *op. cit.*, p. 46.
12. Louis XIV had been king since the age of five. He had lived through the civil disturbances known as the Fronde, lasting from 1648 to 1653, during which time a rebellious Parlement in league with Louis II de Bourbon, prince of Condé, had attempted to wrest power from the Queen Mother, Anne of Austria, and her chief minister, Cardinal Mazarin. This left a lasting impression on the king, who was forever suspicious of any challenge to his supreme authority or the concentration of power, however slight, in any hands other than his own. The Dragon, like the Python, was used as a symbol of the rebellion of the Fronde, and, as the swans surrounding this figure were the attributes of Apollo, the putti riding the swans can be read as the youthful Louis resisting the plotters against the divine right of kings. See Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
13. Latona with her two children can be read as the mother of Louis XIV, who, with her sons, Louis and Philippe, suffered the indignities of the *frondeurs*, or rebels, whose representation here as frogs carries the explicit message of royal triumph. See Berger, *op. cit.*, p. 26.
14. Seeking the king's attentions, Athénaïs had become the friend and confidante of her predecessor, Louise de La Vallière; Madame de Montespan, in turn, was replaced in 1675, after she had borne the king several children, by their governess, Madame Scarron—or Madame de Maintenon as she had become known after the king, following Madame Montespan's pleas, bought for her the estate of Maintenon.
15. Louis, Duc de Saint-Simon, *Saint Simon at Versailles*, ed. Lucy Norton (New York: Harper Brothers, 1958), pp. 58–59.
16. The tragedies of the king's old age included the loss of the two heirs-apparent his son, the Dauphin, in 1711, and his grandson, the duc de Bretagne, who along with his wife, the princess of Savoy, died of measles in 1712.
17. For an excellent discussion of Atget's work in the gardens of Le Nôtre, see William Howard Adams, *Atget's Gardens* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1979).
18. The Villa Lante provides a useful example illustrating this point: Cardinal Gambara's crayfish is cunningly woven into the fabric of the sixteenth-century garden, whereas Cardinal Montalto's device of three mountains surmounted by a star, which was added in the seventeenth century, is much more obviously and ostentatiously displayed in the central fountain of the *parterre* garden where it is held aloft by the figures of four youths with lions (see fig. 4.27).
19. See David Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1991), p. 198; also Georgina Masson, *Italian Gardens* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Antique Collector's Club, 1987), pp. 140–41.
20. The financial resources, opulent lifestyle, intellectual curiosity, and aesthetic sensibilities of this prince of the Church can be gauged by the fact that, in addition to the Orti Farnese and the villa at Caprarola, he purchased and enjoyed the old Chigi villa on the banks of the Tiber, designed by Baldassare Tommaso Peruzzi (1481–1536) and decorated by Raphael, which has since been known as the Farnesina.
21. See Coffin, *op. cit.*, p. 208.
22. See Coffin, *op. cit.*, pp. 160–62. Coffin suggests that, since the mid-seventeenth century engravings of Villa Pamphili that depict embroidered *parterres* were by a French engraver, they may have been represented according to the contemporary French convention well in advance of their actual conversion to this style.
23. The road actually passed through the villa until its most recent restoration and remodeling in the 1950s.