

Luke Morgan. *Nature as Model: Salomon de Caus and Early Seventeenth-Century Landscape Design.*

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In this lucid and convincing study Luke Morgan demonstrates that Salomon de Caus (1576–1626), though much neglected in the literature, was central to the dissemination throughout Europe of late sixteenth-century Italian garden motifs, particularly grotto and fountain designs that he knew firsthand from traveling in Tuscany. Best known for his design of the Hortus Palatinus in Heidelberg (begun ca. 1614 and left unfinished in 1619), the only garden for which he was fully responsible, De Caus was a masterful technician who spent most of his life in the world of hydraulic technology. He was also skilled in the art of perspective and wrote seven treatises that reveal the breadth of his interests, including works on fountain and grotto design (in which he specialized), hydraulics, musical composition, astronomy, and cartography.

From the outset Morgan makes it clear that this book is a revisionist history, and some readers may mourn the loss of the magical garden at Heidelberg. Morgan is an empiricist at heart, as demonstrated by his extensive work in the archives as well as his analysis of the Palatine garden. He aims to demystify the Hortus Palatinus, arguing that it was not a hermetic garden laced with secret or occult meanings, but rather a straightforward landscape design based on well-known Italian precedents both stylistic and iconographic. He reveals its meaning to be plainly understandable rather than abstruse and available only to a narrow audience.

Morgan builds this argument over the course of an introduction, six chapters, and a conclusion. Illustrated in black and white, this book does not overwhelm with the sparkle of its images (as most of De Caus's built work has not survived) nor with the cleverness of its argument. Instead, the author proceeds quite me-

thodically, and a bit predictably, addressing in chapter 1 the historiography of De Caus scholarship, in 2 the biography of the man, and in 3 and 4 the major contributions of De Caus as an hydraulic engineer and landscape designer in the courtly circles of Brussels, London, and Paris. Perhaps the most interesting chapter is 5, which addresses the relationship between what De Caus read, what he wrote, and what he built. Like his subject, Morgan is a pragmatist, and his final chapter on the Hortus Palatinus debunks enticing myths about the garden promulgated by such writers as Francis Yates, Umberto Eco, and Simon Schama.

Morgan's central argument rests on the premise that there is a strong relationship between theory and practice in the work of De Caus. Close examination of De Caus's own writings — such as *Les Raisons des forces mouvantes avec diverses machines tant utiles que plaisantes ausquelles sont adjoints plusieurs desseings de grottes et fontaines*, 1615, or *Hortus Palatinus*, 1620 — reveals little to support earlier scholars' symbolic interpretations of the Heidelberg garden. Morgan further contends that it was rare for late Renaissance gardens to support a single linear narrative structure (the Villa d'Este at Tivoli is a notable exception); instead, most European gardens featured variety and contrast, their meaning derived from familiar themes or *topoi*. These *topoi* — which took the form of grottoes, fountains, statuary, mounts, pergolas, and groves — can be traced to the major Tuscan gardens of the period that De Caus knew well. In *Les Raisons*, as in the Palatine garden itself, De Caus reproduced many of these familiar designs, in turn supporting their currency throughout Europe.

Acknowledging the important work of Elisabeth MacDougall on late sixteenth-century Roman gardens, Morgan points to such figures as Neptune, Venus, and the Muses in the Hortus Palatinus as belonging to the standard *topoi* that comprised an “Italianate international style” (155). Morgan highlights two themes central to understanding the Heidelberg garden: the *paragone* of art and nature, a theme that recurred in many late Renaissance gardens; and the landscape of love, a theme closely bound to the patron Frederick V and his wife Elisabeth Stuart. Like many Italian gardens, the Hortus Palatinus was organized according to principles of variety and contrast rather than unity, though most of the garden motifs in some way supported the two principle *topoi*. In addition, there was a conventional princely iconography since Frederick was associated with Neptune, signaling his authority over water. There were also readily identifiable local geographical references. Morgan rejects not only Hermetic but also astrological and Neoplatonic interpretations of the garden. Dissolving much of the mystery that formerly surrounded the Hortus Palatinus and its creator, Morgan has produced a volume of interest not only to specialists in landscape history but also to all those concerned with the cultural history of the period.

TRACY L. EHRLICH
New York City