

The Gardens of Lucca

Katrina Grant

*Beautiful, and sweet it is to see those slopes
All strewn, at the feet, in the middle, to the heights
With delightful rural abodes
Of every grandness, and elegance, and so many that
I cannot number them, and
They place Lucca in the centre,
above which is a vast circle
that makes for this city a noble crown
Which interposes woody valleys and avenues
Little forests, woods of nature and of art
And of the age marvellous work
And kitchen gardens always green, and full of flowers
And well ordered vineyards, and thick groves
And silver-plated olive.¹ Cristofano Martelli-Leonardi*

Lucca began as an Etruscan city, then was made a Roman colony from 180 BC, and in the twelfth century became an independent commune. Although it fell under the domination of Pisa for a brief period after 1314 it soon reclaimed its autonomy and remained independent of Florentine, or any other outside domination, until Napoleon seized it in 1805 and made his sister Elisa Bonaparte and her husband Felice Baiocchi rulers of the Principality of Lucca.

Throughout its history Lucchese society was characterised by an active and prosperous merchant class. Michel de Montaigne travelling in the late-sixteenth century observed that '[y]ou cannot enjoy the company of the Lucchesi because they are all, even the children, continually occupied at their business and in acquiring goods by means of trade.'² As with the merchants of nearby Florence, much of their wealth was based upon an active textile trade in silk and wool as well as a stable system of banking, which

¹ *'Bello, e dolce è veder quelle pendici/Tutte cosparse al piè, nel mezzo, all'alto/Di villarecci deliziosi alberghi/D'ogni grandezza ed eleganza, e tanti,/Che e numerar non sono, e che diresti/A Lucca istessa come posta in centro/Sopra d'un cerchio immensamente esteso/ Far d'un'altra città nobile corona,/ Cui tramezzano valli e vie selvose,/ Boschetti, e boschi di natura, d'arte/E delle età mirabile lavoro/ Ed orti sempre mai Verdi, e fiorenti,/ E ben schierate vigne, e ciuffi spessi/ Dell'argentata oliva... Non cela Segromigno... Accenna ancor Marlia elegante/ ... Ti scopre San Pancazio... Ti spiega Saltocchio là, qual nobile matrona'* C. M. Martelli-Leonardi, *I Giardini ossia l'Arte di abbellire i Paesaggi del sig. Abate De Lille Traduzione e l'idea de' medesimi giardini applicata alle Mura e Contorni di Lucca, originale del sig. Abate Cristofano Matteo Martelli-Leonardi canonico di Pietrasanta*, (Lucca: [n. pub], 1794), unpaginated.

² P. d. Montaigne, *The Complete Works of Montaigne: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), p. 1015.

made their currency much in demand throughout Europe. In addition, or indeed as a result of this, Lucca enjoyed recognition as a major literary and artistic centre. It should be noted that in Lucca nobility was simply equal to citizenship; noble titles were used only outside of Lucchese society in order that these 'citizens' be treated properly by their foreign peers, the principal mark of status in Lucca was wealth.³

Leonardi's elegiac words present Lucca, fifty kilometres to the west of Florence, as a place that is both elegant and rural: estates filled with art and flowers, as well as vineyards and kitchen gardens. The city of Lucca is built upon a plain, and the villas surround the city across the *colline di Lucca* (the hills of Lucca), hence forming the crown described by Leonardi. Although Lucca was somewhat off the beaten track, a number of travellers throughout the centuries did make their way there and the accounts which they left us convey the beauty of the city and its villas. Despite his unenthusiastic assessment of Lucca's citizens Montaigne was nonetheless struck by the beauty of the town and its surroundings:

It is one of the most pleasant sites for a town that I ever saw, surrounded by two full leagues of plain, of superlative beauty at the narrowest point, and then beautiful mountains and hills, where most of them have country lodgings.⁴

The eighteenth-century traveller Georg Christoph Martini wrote of the view from the Villa Santini (today Villa Torrigiani) near Camigliano:

From the top of the palazzo, woods, verdant hills, the sea, rivers and every other thing that makes the environs so attractive.⁵

The city of Lucca was never limited to the urban area within the walls. Autumn and winter would be lived in the city palazzo, with life concentrating upon commercial activities enlivened by entertainments such as music and theatre. In spring and summer life was relocated *en masse* to the villa. Martini commented, with a tone of wonderment, that '[n]early every citizen has a country home commensurate with his status and fortune.' This interrelationship between city and country has frequently been commented on. Images from as late as the nineteenth century show how the villas in the ring of hills surrounding the city were visible from the old walls. Similarly the city itself was visible from the nearby hills and their villas, as is shown in a late-nineteenth century drawing by John Ruskin. Indeed a sixteenth-century treatise upon agriculture by the Lucchese Giovanni di Vincenzo Saminati offers the following instructions for choosing a site for a noble villa,

The site for building a palazzo in the country..., exposed as much as possible with a view of the entire farm, and most noble places with villages, and if possible also the City in order that the lovely sight of them may be enjoyed, and so that it in turn offers a noble sight and perspective to the surrounding palazzo and places.⁶

³ G. Biagi-Ravenni and C. Gianturco, 'The "Tasche" of Lucca: 150 years of Political Serenatas', *Proceedings of the Royal Musical Association*, 111 (1984–1985), 45–65 (pp. 45–47).

⁴ P. d. Montaigne, *The Complete Works of Montaigne: Essays, Travel Journal, Letters* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1943), p. 983.

⁵ G. C. Martini, *Viaggio in Toscana (1725–1745)*, ed. by O. Trumpy (Massa and Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1969), p. 136.

Such instructive treatises were typical in the sixteenth century, more famous is that by Andrea Palladio *I Quattro Libri d'Architettura* (The Four Books of Architecture). Though Saminati's is distinct from Palladio's as it is primarily an agricultural treatise, rather than a handbook of instructions to architects. Saminati's instructions are directed more at the patrons of such villas, more than the architects, and thus his views reflect the outlook of the wealthy citizens of Lucca. The layout and design of the gardens should be recognised as reflecting the input and ideals of both the patrons as well as the garden designers.

In the Renaissance and Baroque periods the designers of gardens were generally also architects or artists; very few artists worked solely within garden design. Some of the architects active in Lucca in the seventeenth century include Pietro Vagnarelli da Urbino (seventeenth century), Matteo Oddi (active c. 1613 and 1625), Muzio Oddi (active c. 1625 and 1636), and Giovanni Tedeschini (active c. 1640). Ottaviano Diodati, a Lucchese nobleman, designed his own villa as well as working upon the garden of the Villa Garzoni at Collodi. The most famous architect associated with the villas of Lucca is Filippo Juvarra, most notable for his work in Turin including the church of the Superga and the Palazzina di Stupinigi, he produced designs for buildings and gardens during his Roman period (1704–1714).⁷ Lucca had close relationships with wider Europe, and Paris in particular and this is reflected in the gardens of the region. For example, the nobleman Stefano Orsetti renamed his villa Marlia, after 'Marly' the well known royal chateau outside Paris. Moreover, the name of André Le Nôtre, the great French garden designer of Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles, is attached to several garden projects in Lucca.

Many of Italy's most well known gardens are predominantly sixteenth century in origin; for instance, the Villa d'Este and the Villa Lante. Lucca's gardens, however, generally date from the 1650s onwards. In truth, the dating of gardens is difficult as, more than any other art form, they grow (literally) and change over time and their fragility makes them more susceptible to changing fashions. One has only to look at the photographs published in the spate of early-twentieth century English books upon the gardens of Italy to see how they have changed even over the past hundred years. The photographs of the Villa Garzoni in E. March Philips' 1914 *The Gardens of Italy* show the lower garden with precisely-clipped hedges and brilliant white statuary, very different to the somewhat misshapen topiary and cracked and faded sculpture that one can see today. Further, the number of flowers has been considerably reduced, which some scholars have attributed to the aesthetic of 1930s and 40s landscape architecture that favoured the clean lines of hedge and stone. As many of these Renaissance and Baroque estates were restored in this era this early twentieth-century aesthetic has left a clear stamp on the way the gardens now appear.⁸ Hence, as viewers even when viewing a baroque garden that has undergone restoration, as opposed to renovation, we must still

⁶ G. Saminati, *Trattato d'Agricoltura*, (1580–1590), in I. Belli Barsali, *La villa a Lucca dal XV al XIX secolo*, (Rome: De Luca, 1964), pp. 231-260.

⁷ G. Gritella, *Juvarra l'Architettura* (Modena: Franco Cosimo Panini, 1992), pp. 188–211.

⁸ C. Lazzaro, 'Il giardino italiano: Due differenti punti di vista/ The Italian Garden: Two Different Concepts', in *Ville e Giardini Italiani: I disegni e paesaggisti dell'American Academy in Rome*, ed. by V. Cazzato (Rome: Istituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 2004), pp. 17–30.

be aware of the way that past and current fashions have effected the landscape before us.⁹

The gardens around Lucca represent high points of seventeenth and eighteenth-century garden design, and, as such, fit within a basic concept of 'baroque gardens'. However, many of the estates and their buildings in fact originate from the late sixteenth century, and were subject to change throughout their history, most dramatically during the nineteenth century to reflect the then current fashion in Italy for English gardens. As Harold Acton described it, 'the beautiful Italianate gardens... were swallowed up by the growing preference for landscape gardens in the so-called English style.'¹⁰ Therefore, the gardens we see today present us with a mixture of garden styles. Some, such as the Villa Garzoni, still retain their overall seventeenth-century design with but few additions from the following centuries. Others, such as the Villa Torrigiani and the Villa Reale at Marlia, were largely transformed by the fashion for English gardens in the nineteenth century and are now a mix of garden styles, baroque, English landscape, and, in the instance of the Villa Reale, Art Deco. Still others are but shadows of their former selves. The celebrated garden at the Villa Mansi, Segromigno, is one such example; what does remain has largely degraded through neglect while other sections have been completely lost. Though sketched plans by Filippo Juvarra and a series of eighteenth century engravings helps us to recreate how the garden once appeared.

In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries a unique Lucchese style emerged and several common features can be identified. These include the presence of garden theatres and various architectonic uses of yew or box hedge, water tricks, 'garden rooms' the best way to describe the intimate spaces, usually square in shape and enclosed by walls of either stone or hedge, large fish pools (*peschiera*), and large lawns into which the main villa building is set. The gardens of Lucca also display typically Italian preoccupations with the dramatic effect of moving water in fountains and cascades, figurative sculpture usually depicting characters from pastoral myth such as satyrs, nymphs, Apollo and Daphne, or Flora the goddess of flowers and an approach to plants that generally regarded them as secondary, as building blocks for creating the overall effect, rather than as an interest in-and-of themselves. An attitude that contrasts dramatically with many nineteenth and twentieth-century gardens.

Despite these common characteristics, the gardens of Lucca are best explored and understood on an individual basis. To look at them all is far beyond the scope of this essay. I will outline the best preserved and the most significant.

Villa Garzoni at Collodi and the spaces of a Baroque Garden in Lucca

Best preserved amongst the gardens of Lucca, in terms of its original seventeenth and eighteenth century form, is that of the Villa Garzoni at Collodi. Antonio Cerati, an eighteenth-century poet and member of the Arcadian Academy, described the Villa

⁹ One recent example is the garden of the Villa Garzoni that has been extensively restored over the past five or so years, information points in the garden all illustrate a plan of the garden taken from a property map dating to 1797 (held in the Archivio di Stato, Lucca, Fondo Garzoni 198), therefore it is presumably this point in time that the garden is being restored to.

¹⁰ H. Acton, *Villas of Tuscany* (Florence: Thames and Hudson, 1973), p. 201.

Garzoni as ‘a metropolis of the Lucchesi villas for its beauty, its magnificence, its originality.’¹¹ The villa sits, in fact, upon the very western edge of the province of Pistoia and not in the province of Lucca. However, the man who began its construction in 1633, Romano Garzoni, was a merchant and citizen of Lucca. The family palazzo was on Via del Crocifisso within the city walls, and Romano was an active patron of theatre and music, as well as a member of the leading literary academy, the *Accademia degli Oscuri*.¹² The castle at Collodi originally belonged to the Republic of Lucca and was purchased by the Garzoni family during the first half of the seventeenth century. The gardens were constructed during the second quarter of the century and the castle was remodelled as a palatial villa.

If one stands at the gates to the garden, the palazzo or *castello* is visible high on the left hand side; the small village of Collodi rises behind the castle. This rather ‘indispensable’ obstacle meant that the garden, instead of being laid out behind and around the palazzo as is customary, was assigned an axis all of its own on the neighbouring slope. The garden’s seventeenth-century designer took full advantage of the unusual position.¹³ The garden climbs the hill on a succession of terraces, drawing the eye up through a series of interconnected staircases, and along the grand *cascata* (cascade). These aspects have a certain Roman quality: the terracing echoes gardens such as the Villa d’Este at Tivoli and the Orti Farnesiani on the Palatine in Rome (now mostly lost); the rocky cascade recalls the popular *catena d’acqua* (water chain) of sixteenth-century gardens near Rome such as those of the Villa Lante at Bagnaia and the Villa Farnese at Caprarola. The garden is undeniably unique and was described by Georgina Masson as ‘almost as exotically un-Tuscan as the Boboli Kafé-haus’.¹⁴ Moreover, a recent volume upon the gardens of Lucca left it out, ostensibly on the basis of its location outside of the province of Lucca, but perhaps reflecting Harold Acton’s belief that the garden was ‘irreversibly alien’ to others within the province.¹⁵ However, despite its first appearance as overwhelming individual, as one enters the spaces of the Garzoni garden one does find typically Tuscan features amongst the influences from Rome, as well as those from Northern Italy and France, a mixture of influences in itself typical of Lucchese gardens.

¹¹ A. Cerati, *Le Ville Lucchesi con altri opuscoli in versi ed in prosa* (Parma: [n. pub], 1783), p. 39. The Arcadian Academy was set up in Rome at the end of the seventeenth century and was intended to spread good taste in the arts, particularly poetry. Its member took on pseudonyms as shepherds and received a pretend plot of land in the mythical land of Arcadia. Their members always met in gardens, more can read about them in L. Barroero and S. Susinno, ‘Arcadian Rome, Universal Capital of the Arts’, in *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by E. P. Bowron and J. J. Rishel (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2000), pp. 47–77.

¹² Archivio di Stato, Lucca, Fondo Garzoni 198, c.10–11; A. Pellegrini, “Spettacoli Lucchesi nei secoli XVII–XIX,” in *Memorie e Documenti delle storia di Lucca*, (Lucca: Tipografia Giusti, 1881).

¹³ Although there is as yet no absolute evidence of the designer, the name of the architect Muzio Oddi (active between 1625 and 1636) is attached to some plans made of the palazzo in the 1630s so it is possible he was also involved in the garden design, Archivio di Stato, Lucca, Consiglio Generale 673, c. 1715.

¹⁴ G. Masson, ‘Florentine and Tuscan Gardens of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’, *Apollo*, 100 (1972), 210–217 (p. 213).

¹⁵ G. Bedini, *Le Ville di Lucca* (Milan: Idearte, 2003).

A rudimentary sketch of 1633 shows the castle and town before the gardens were built. The hillside where the gardens were eventually laid out, to the right of the *castello*, is bare: a small bridge passes over the river Pescia and links the town with the neighbouring hill. Much of the garden was apparently finished by 1652 when Francesco Sbarra Francesco Sbarra, the seventeenth-century librettist and author of *Il Pomo d'Oro*, wrote *Le Pompe di Collodi* (The Splendours of Collodi), in which he celebrated the achievements of Romano Garzoni and described in verse features such as the cascade, the terraces, the labyrinth and the semicircular entrance area.¹⁶

A more detailed description of the seventeenth century garden exists in a *Territorio* or territory map of 1692; a description made that year is now in the state archives in Lucca and indicates how the gardens appeared at the end of the seventeenth century. The description mentions a *Romitorio*, a hermitage (a popular feature of seventeenth and eighteenth-century gardens throughout Italy), a small wood of cypresses and another of Ilex, avenues of espaliered Laurels and cypresses, the stone staircases and terraces were evidently complete as were the grottoes.¹⁷

Further changes were made in the eighteenth century, in particular by Ottaviano Diodati for the last Romano Garzoni (1721–1786). These included a new hydraulic system, the completion of the water display of the cascade, as well as a new planting of the bottom garden and the addition of statues. Other additions include the early eighteenth century *Palazzina dell'Orologio* by Filippo Juvarra and the conversion of the *Romitorio* into a bathing house, still apparently in use in the 1920s.¹⁸

Another source of information on the Villa Garzoni is from a *Territorio* (a property map) of 1797, which details the garden and villa.¹⁹ It is immediately obvious that little has changed over the centuries; the labyrinth still exists though it is need of maintenance and the overall structure of the main garden remains the same. If one was to enter the garden from the palazzo, one would first go through the labyrinth and then cross over the street and into the *bosco* planted behind the terraces of the hill. From here if one follows the path through the wood it leads to the highest terrace and the mouth of the great cascade. There is a triangular pool to the left above which, on a rocky outcrop, stands a large statue of Fame, trumpet in hand, appearing as though she is about to take flight. Turning away from the pool one can view the rocky cascade as it tumbles down the hillside toward the white gravel of the lower garden with its flower parterres and circular pools of water.

As mentioned above, the cascade was a popular feature of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century gardens such as the delicate *catena d'acqua*, with the water elegantly funnelled down a series of small channels carved from *tufa*, at the Villa Lante at Bagnaia., however, the Garzoni one is unique in several aspects. First it is the only example of its kind near Lucca, where the majority of gardens were laid out upon more gentle inclines,

¹⁶ F. Sbarra, *Le Pompe di Collodi Delitiosissima Villa del Signor Cavalier Romano Garzoni* (1652), a hand-written copy exists in the Biblioteca di Lucca, Codici Baroni Bernardini No. 7.CC, Ms 996.

¹⁷ Archivio di Stato, Lucca, Fondo Garzoni 28.

¹⁸ G. Masson, *Italian Gardens* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), pp. 89–90.

¹⁹ An inventory made in 1670 indicates that at least the Labyrinth and garden theatre were already in place by that time, Archivio di Stato, Lucca, Fondo Garzoni 55.

or even very flat ground. Second, although clearly derived from those examples of water chains or cascades found in early Baroque cascades, such as those at the villas Ludovisi and Aldobrandini at Frascati, where the water was generally channelled through symmetrical and finely carved channels, perhaps with one or two rustic fountains, the effect at the Villa Garzoni, on the hand, is quite different. Here, the designer created a much more rustic cascade, an approximation of a natural waterfall. It is formed by a series of descending pools, ringed with roughly-hewn naturalistic masonry, the central channel appears strewn with randomly placed natural rocks, though they are in fact artificial, created by a mixture of *tufa* and a type of concrete. Gently inclining staircases ascend on either side of the cascade. Essentially the Garzoni cascade is a mixture of the architectonic and naturalistic fused together. When viewed from below this is even more striking. The eye is first led up three levels by a grand scenographic staircase, which corresponds with the walled and neatly planted terraces, then beyond this the naturalistic cascade begins. Although the vertical axis connects the various levels, there is still a distinct division between the ordered architectonic section with the staircase and the naturalistic cascade above, flanked by a seemingly impenetrable wood. As if to emphasise this division two giant reclining satyrs flank the foot of the cascade, forming a sort of proscenium arch as if to suggest that beyond the top of the staircase lies a more wild and rustic nature.

Apparently the design of the ‘naturalistic’ rocks was originally contrived to include an anamorphic face, so that a viewer standing at the bottom gate would in fact be able to discern a craggy old man’s features in the cascade.²⁰ This typically Baroque combination of illusion, humour and science characterised gardens across Italy. To a certain extent, the cascade is an ordered, artificial creation, but it seeks much more the illusion of appearing to be a naturalistic cascade than do the sixteenth- and earlier seventeenth-century gardens. An even more ambitious and naturalistic cascade was created in the eighteenth-century gardens of the royal palace at Caserta.²¹

In the tree-covered terraces to either side of the cascade are hidden several intimate and curious spaces. One of the first features discovered is the small hedge theatre (*teatrino*), a feature common to Tuscan gardens and that probably originated in Lucca. This is one of the tiniest examples and Sbarra described it as ‘un Teatro a giorno’, a day theatre, though whether it was actually used as a performance space is uncertain. It was adorned with sculpture and fountains and so perhaps was just ornamental. Alternatively, it may have been used for recitations of pastoral poetry; we know that the grove of trees situated slightly above the theatre certainly was.

Although today the visitor enters the garden at the bottom gate, an anonymous description of the seventeenth century leads the visitor into the garden from the palazzo, a route that would have been typical of the more distinguished visitors to the gardens

²⁰ This anamorphic face is recorded in a number of visual documents of the garden made in the eighteenth century including a watercolour by F. Cecchi of 1792–1794 in a private collection see reproduction in M. Fagiolo, ‘The garden of the Gamberaia in the Seicento: The Mysteries of the Waters, the Elements and Earthquakes’, *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, 22 (2002), 17–33 (p.30 fig.17). The face also appears in a territory map or *Terrilogo* of the Garzoni properties now in the Archivio di Stato, Lucca, *Fondo Garzoni*, 198, c.13.

²¹ For more upon cascades as a garden feature see R. W. Berger, ‘Garden Cascades in Italy and France, 1565–1665’, *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 33 (1974), 304–322.

during the seventeenth century. We can assume that visitors would already have taken in the impressive view from the bottom gate as they approached the palace. The experience of entering the garden from the palace itself is quite different. Entering by this route meant first moving through a succession of smaller and more intimate spaces. The small garden or *giardinetto*, the Labyrinth, the bridge across the river that lead into another wooded area. It is hard to ascertain whether the garden was intended to have a set route. Certainly the view from the gates on the public street was considered the ideal viewing point of the whole garden as a sort of amphitheatre was constructed opposite the gates for exactly that purpose. The fact that the garden does not have any set iconographical program to its sculptural display, or other such features that would have demanded the visitor follow a set itinerary, it seems likely that the garden features were to be discovered one-by-one, though in no particular order.

The garden made a great impact upon the late-eighteenth century English visitor William Beckford, whose record of his visit conveys a good sense of the garden's dramatic impression upon its visitors.

After riding for six or seven miles along the cultivated levels, we began to ascend a rough slope, overgrown with chestnuts; a great many loose fragments and stumps of ancient pomegranates perplexed our route, which continued, turning and winding through this wilderness, till it opened on a sudden to the side of a lofty mountain, covered with tufted groves, amongst which hangs the princely castle of the Garzoni, on the very side of a precipice. Alcina could not have chosen a more romantic situation. The garden lies extended beneath, gay with flowers, and glittering with compartments of spar, which, though in no great purity of taste, strikes for the first time with the effect of enchantment. Two large marble basins, with *jets d'eau*, seventy feet in height, divide the parterres; from the extremity of which rises a rude cliff, shaded with cedar and ilex, and cut into terraces. Leaving our horses at the great gate of this magic enclosure, we passed through the spray of the fountains, and mounting an endless flight of steps, entered an alley of oranges, and gathered ripe fruit from the trees. Whilst we were thus employed, the sun broke from the clouds, and lighted up the green of the vegetation; at the same time spangling the waters, which pour conspicuously down a succession of rocky terrace, and sprinkle the impending citron-trees with perpetual dew. These streams issue from a chasm in the cliff, surrounded by cypresses, which conceal by their thick branches a pavilion with baths. Above rises a colossal statue of Fame, boldly carved, and in the very act of starting from the precipices. A narrow path leads up to the feet of the goddess, on which I reclined; whilst a vast column of water arching over my head, fell, without even wetting me with its spray, into the depths below. I could hardly prevail upon myself to abandon this cool recess, which the fragrance of bay and orange, maintained by constant showers, rendered uncommonly luxurious.²²

Beckford's description is particularly engaging as he evokes the changing way in which all his senses experienced the garden: sight, smell, touch, and even taste. He later describes climbing to the summit of the garden where 'arbours afforded us both shade and refreshment; I fell upon the cluster which formed our ceiling like a native of the north, unused to such luxuriance.'²³ Beckford's description is very different from that of the *Terrilogo* or inventory descriptions; it is the record of an experience, rather than simply a catalogue of splendours.

²² W. Beckford, *Italy; with sketches of Spain and Portugal* (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), p. 189.

²³ W. Beckford, *Italy; with sketches of Spain and Portugal*, (London: Richard Bentley, 1834), p. 189.

Such experiences recall the theory suggested by Norman M. Klein in which he uses the description 'scripted spaces' to describe a 'walk-through or click-through environment', citing as examples 'a mall, a church, a casino, a theme park, a computer game.' He points out that these scripted spaces, 'are designed to *emphasise* the viewer's journey - the space between.'²⁴ In other words the movement up the steps of a garden staircase is as equally an important part of the experience as the view back across the garden when the ascent has been completed. This general description of space applies well to the Baroque garden, and particularly the gardens of Lucca, which emphasise the sense of a series of spaces, from the grand cascade to the quiet bosco and the intimate theatre. John Dixon Hunt has also written about the way that movement must be considered as an essential part of the garden experience.²⁵ Both the garden's design and its terrain contribute to the way in which the visitor moves around. The anonymous description, although presenting itself in some ways as a virtual visit, has a sense of being quite regimented, almost a ritual walk or formal procession that distinguished visitors would be taken upon and where they would pause so that all the beautiful statuary and ingenious engineering could be pointed out. It is, in a sense, an early type of guidebook intended to ensure that visitors properly understood the reputation and prestige of the owner whilst moving around the garden. It would also have served armchair garden visitors, experiencing the garden solely through its written form. Beckford, on the other hand, as he strolls through the garden, notes what interests and engages him, and pauses where the ambience is most pleasant.²⁶

The intimate and the grandiose in the Villas of Lucca

One of the earliest Lucchese gardens still extant is the Villa Bernardini at Saltocchio. The surviving portion is in the form of a small *giardino segreto* (secret garden) beside the house. As at the Villa Garzoni influences are drawn from a wide range of sources. The exact date of the garden is not certain but it was probably built in the late sixteenth century. The surviving stairways that link the levels recall sixteenth-century gardens, such as that at the Villa d'Este in Tivoli (constructed from 1560 onwards), and the architectural style of the balustrades owes a lot to late mannerism, again suggesting a date toward the end of the sixteenth century. Moreover, the garden is adorned with sculpture, fountains and a large semi-circular pool reminiscent more of late sixteenth-century Roman gardens than those of Tuscany.

Behind the house is one of the first examples of the 'garden rooms' so characteristic of the Lucchese style. These rooms take the form of either sunken gardens, such as those still visible at the Villa Torrigiani and the Villa Maionchi both at Camigliano, enclosed by stone walls usually decorated with coral and tufa fragments. Alternatively they were created by planting walls of box or yew hedge as at the Villa Reale at Marlia. These rooms take on the appearance of having been cut into the existing vegetation, many

²⁴ N. M. Klein, *The Vatican to Vegas: A History of Special Effects* (New York and London: The New Press, 2004), p. 11.

²⁵ Hunt's discussion of movement is found in J. D. Hunt, *The Afterlife of Gardens* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004).

²⁶ Recently an entire conference was dedicated to the discussion of movement in gardens and the proceedings can be read in M. Conan, *Landscape Design and the Experience of Motion* (Washington, (DC): Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2003).

Italian sources write of these spaces being *scavato* or excavated from the surrounding greenery. Georgina Masson in her book *Italian Gardens* points out that these 'garden rooms' of Lucchese gardens contrast with the Roman garden style of building 'out into space'.²⁷ Think, for instance, of the gardens of the Villa d'Este that would seem to take all the surrounding countryside as part of the garden.

The Villa Bernardini has both types of 'garden rooms', the sunken garden and a green room which takes the form of a small wood (*boschetto*). It has been dated to around 1590, and was almost certainly constructed after the *giardino segreto*. This would suggest that 'garden rooms' were a feature of Lucchese gardens from as early as the second half of the sixteenth century, despite the fact that most of the examples that survive are from the 1650s or later and, as a result, are generally considered to be derived from the *bosquets* created in the gardens of Versailles at around the same time. The Villa Bernardini's 'garden room' suggests that Lucchese designers were interested in creating these intimate garden spaces long before Louis XIV's garden popularised such features throughout Europe.

Another garden notable for its 'garden rooms', and one that was inspired by Versailles, is the Villa Torrigiani at Camigliano. The present structure dates to the second half of the sixteenth century, and originally belonged to the Buonvisi family. By the second half of the seventeenth century the villa was in the possession of the Santini family. Niccolo Santini was Lucca's ambassador to the court of Louis XIV, and this villa was intended as his summer residence. Work on the garden was begun in the 1670s under the direction of the architect Bernardino Raggi. The traveller Georg Christoph Martini wrote of the Villa Torrigiani as 'questa piccola Versailles' ('this small Versailles') and the small *borgo* (town) at the gate of the villa was renamed 'Parigi' (Paris).²⁸ Niccolo Santini had clearly been inspired by the gardens of the Sun King during his sojourns at the court of Louis XIV.

In the nineteenth century major areas of the original Baroque garden were uprooted to install an English park. Of the Baroque garden installed in the seventeenth century there now remains only the sunken garden, enclosed by walls, as well as two irregularly shaped pools in the lawn in front of the palazzo, and a *peschiera* (fishpond), at the rear and to the right hand side.

An eighteenth-century engraving shows how the complete Baroque complex would have appeared. The two irregularly shaped basins, now floating somewhat aimlessly in the expanse of lawn in front of the palazzo, were the centrepieces of several *parterres en broderie*, with sinuous volutes curling around the four squares surrounding each basin. This pattern is echoed in the garden behind the palazzo, where four larger parterres surround a circular basin with great *jet d'eau* (water jet) shooting high into the air. These features can also be seen in a design for the garden which is preserved in the collection of the Villa Santini Torrigiani. This purports to be by the great French

²⁷ G. Masson, *Italian Gardens* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1961), also see Masson's work upon Tuscan gardens in G. Masson, 'Florentine and Tuscan Gardens of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *Apollo*, 100 (1974), 210–217.

²⁸ G. C. Martini, *Viaggio in Toscana (1725–1745)*, ed. by O. Trumpy (Massa and Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1969), p. 139.

architect and garden designer André Le Nôtre.²⁹ Again we find a set of parterres with their elegantly curved volutes, or *broderie*, and a set of basins with water jets. This design, whether truly by Le Nôtre or not, clearly underlines the influence of French gardens, in particular Versailles, upon the Villa Torrigiani. The parterres and their basins take direct inspiration from those that immediately surrounded the palace at Versailles.

A description by Georg Christoph Martini further assists us in reconstructing the Baroque garden. It also gives an impression of the relative importance of the Villa Torrigiani amongst the Lucchese villas.

On well cultivated hills, that surround on every side the fertile plain of Lucca are scattered, amongst the *vigne* and olive groves, the agreeable villas of the patrician families; they are distant, in general, three or four miles from the city. The most well regarded is the Villa Santini di Camigliano, about five miles from Lucca. To reach it one is taken down a long avenue bordered by tall cypresses, at the foot of which stands the notable palazzo, with a grand field in front. Encircling all the palazzo is a wall with espaliered greenery. One enters by a Flemish gateway, the pilasters of which are in the grotesque style, with fountains on either side. On the lawn one finds two great basins with high jets of water. This great green lawn, of 130 steps length, is divided from another, smaller, one that is in front of the palazzo, a little elevated by means of a balustrade or railing. This terrace, or '*piazzetta*', one can access by means of a few steps, to either side of which are two fountains of stone in the form of candlesticks... In a small adjacent garden, to the left of the grand one, there are fountains and water tricks of most grand effect... One descends a staircase filled with water tricks designed to surprise; at the foot of the stair one enters into a grotto ... rich with every type of shell and made with blocks of *tuffo*, that the Lucchesi call *scogli*. It is fashioned in the manner of stalactites. There are niches with figurines of marble and yet more water tricks. The principle grotto at the back has the form of an octagonal pavilion with a cupola on which there is a statue of Flora with a quantity of flowers worked into branches.

Outside, in two niches there are the statues of Hercules shackling Cerberus to the chain and of Hercules killing the Hydra with a club. Both are made of stone and shells which gives them a most terrifying appearance; from them squirt strong jets of water that sprinkle all the surrounding area. The pavilion itself is a precious grotto full of good taste (*buon gusto*). The cornice is supported by the god Hermes, the lower part of his body formed by two interwoven fishtails. A few figures of Moors are made in black stone. Amongst these figures there are some large masks and from these, as from the Hermes, are emitted jets of water which intersect in most pleasing variations. On the pavilion and on the steps one encounters a large number of water tricks designed to surprise. From the flowers of the goddess Flora comes a rain most torrential, from which there is no shelter.

These water tricks could apparently imprison the visitor within the garden by producing a wall of spray from jets concealed in the highest steps. Water tricks also lined the paths so that the unfortunate visitor could be pursued by water all the way to the end of the garden and the temple of Flora. This contained still more water tricks, forcing any visitor wanting to escape a soaking to climb the stairs to the terrace above, where they would receive a final soaking from the statue of Flora. At first glance the garden

²⁹ G. Bedini, *Le Ville di Lucca* (Milan: Idearte, 2003). On Le Notre see also F. H. Hazlehurst, *Gardens of Illusion. The Genius of André Le Nôtre* (Nashville, [TN]: Vanderbilt University Press, 1980).

appears to be a pleasant enclosed flower-garden celebrating the goddess Flora, but when the water tricks turned on pleasant walk through the garden became an elaborate game where the unfortunate visitor could be drenched with water to the amusement of the garden's owner. Such spaces were clearly intended to be playful as well as peaceful and intimate.

Another set of 'garden rooms' is described by Martini behind the palazzo:

[Here] there is a pleasant flower garden with parterres, fountains, statues and vases, bordered by a high semi-circular hedge like a theatre, behind which there is a park of high cypresses and other trees: the whole is created on a light downward slope that invites repose. Close by there are small gardens for animals with deer and other wild game: also seen were two white peacocks, the tails of which stood out like a splendid flower on one of white damask and on the underneath of many colours.³⁰

The 'small gardens for animals with deer and other wild game' are presumably the wooded areas between the large circular basin and the fishpond. The engraving and plan show these to consist of neatly trimmed high hedges planted to form the walls of 'rooms.' They may well take their inspiration from Versailles which was famous for its *bosquets* big enough to use as a ballrooms or feast halls. These spaces could also be described as *boschetti* (small woods). *Boschetti* had been a common feature of Italian gardens from the early Renaissance. They were conceived as a mid-point between the orderliness of the formal gardens immediately surrounding the palazzo and the large-scale wooded hunting parks that generally surrounded the property as a whole. Earlier sixteenth-century examples are known at the Villa Lante in Bagnaia, as well as at many of the Medici villas near Florence.³¹ However, the sixteenth-century Italian versions were usually more 'wild', lacking the formal orderliness of the Villa Torrigiani's *bosquets*, which demonstrate the influence of French garden design. The tall hedges that surround these small formal gardens at the Villa Torrigiani are neatly clipped forming straight pathways and evenly-spaced open areas.

Although Martini mentions that these small gardens were filled with 'wild game', whether these small gardens were actually used for hunting or not is uncertain. Instead, they were probably places where one could see animals such as peacocks or rabbits, but not actually engage in hunting. Hunting was a popular pastime for Italian nobles at their villas but was generally conducted in the larger woods surrounding the gardens, the *bosco* or *barco*.³² Nevertheless some miniature areas for hunting did exist, one type of garden area similar to the Villa Torrigiani's *boschetti* were *ragnaia*, literally meaning an area with webs, a later eighteenth-century version still survives at the Villa Geggiano

³⁰ G. C. Martini, *Viaggio in Toscana (1725–1745)*, ed. by O. Trumpy (Massa and Modena: Aedes Muratoriana, 1969), pp. 134–135.

³¹ C. Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden: From the Conventions of Planting, Design, and Ornament to the Grand Gardens of Sixteenth-Century Central Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990).

³² The distinction between these different types of wooded areas is discussed in C. Lazzaro, *The Italian Renaissance Garden: From the Conventions of Planting, Design, and Ornament to the Grand Gardens of Sixteenth-Century Central Italy* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), see Chapter 5 'Nature without Geometry,' pp. 109–130.

near Siena. It is essentially a small wood that could be covered with nets to capture small birds.

These 'garden rooms' are a feature that speaks of the desire for an intimate type of garden experience. They are distinct from the awe-inspiring perspective *allées* one generally associates with grand princely gardens, such as those that spread out before the royal palaces of Versailles, or Schönbrunn, or Caserta, intended to overwhelm and impress the spectator. This experience was then countered by the intimate *bosquets*, which allowed the visitor to experience moments of solitary introspection or clandestine romantic dalliances. The garden experience was both wholly vast, overwhelming and impressive, and intimate and personal. Similarly in Lucca these garden rooms were part of a contrast between the intimate and the grandiose, a contrast that has been identified as very characteristic of Lucchese villas. At the Villa Torrigiani a long *stradone* (driveway), stretched 1000 metres in a straight line from the gates of the villa across the surrounding property. The *stradone* at the Villa Cenami at Saltocchio was even longer at 1250 metres. The intimacy of the 'garden rooms' and sunken gardens provided a dramatic contrast with the seemingly infinite *stradoni* and the vast views across the surrounding countryside toward the city.

Another dramatic contrast between the intimate and the grandiose can be found in the garden of the Villa Garzoni. When one arrives at the gate the eye seemingly takes in the whole garden, sweeping across the white gravel and flower parterres of the lowest level up the great *cascata* toward the white figure of Fame at its apex. The *Terrilogo* of 1792 records the existence of a type of amphitheatre positioned opposite the gate intended as the ideal point for viewing the entire garden.³³ But once the garden is entered and explored one finds that the green terraced levels framing the staircase and cascade hide a multitude of small features including a green theatre, a maze and even a bathhouse (originally a *romitorio* or hermitage).

At first glance the gardens of Lucca present an impressive and awe-inspiring façade. However, more intimate experiences can be enjoyed behind walls of box hedge, yew and ilex. This contrast reveals something to us about how the Lucchese considered their gardens. On the one hand it was important for the estate to appear vast and impressive, and thereby suggest that the owner was wealthy and owned land as far as the eye could see. On the other, it was clearly important for the patrons of these villas to be able to use their gardens in a more intimate and relaxed manner. Groves were included for poetry readings, and grottoes and sunken gardens were fitted with water tricks for amusement in the hot summer weather. Even theatres were included so that the ever popular life of theatre and music could be transported into the garden.

Villa Reale at Marlia and Garden Theatres

The original garden at the Villa Reale, Marlia dates from the second half of the seventeenth century and originally represented a true unity of design. Typical of Lucchese gardens, an open lawn surrounded the villa and the more ornamental features of the garden were concealed within 'garden rooms', surrounded by high hedges. The

³³ Archivio di Stato, Lucca, Fondo Garzoni 198, c.14 'una specie di Anfiteatro in punto di veduta del Giardino.'

garden's form is dominated by architectonic effects, as though the designer intended to re-create the interior spaces of a palazzo with natural materials such as yew, box-hedge and cypress. The garden is almost 'severely' green; flowers appear only in a few enclosed sections of the garden, as though their presence would detract from the architectural structure of the garden's spaces.

The original garden was created by the Orsetti family, wealthy Lucchese merchants, who had purchased the property from the Buonvisi family in 1651. They renovated the palazzo, laid out the gardens and constructed the 'Palazzina dell'Orologio.' The name *Reale* comes from the fact that the villa served as the residence of Napoleon's sister Elisa Baiocchi, whom he created princess of Lucca. Princess Elisa was responsible for altering the original Baroque layout to include an English style garden.³⁴ More land was bought so that the property expanded to include another villa and its grounds, the *Villa del vescovo* (Villa of the bishop). This added to the entire complex, amongst other things, a nymphaeum and a lake. After Napoleon's downfall it passed to the Bourbon princess Maria Luisa, who received it in exchange for the duchy of Parma. In the twentieth century it was bought by the Count and Countess Pecci-Blunt, they restored the garden and also commissioned the French architect Jacques Greber to create a 'Spanish garden.' An eighteenth-century print shows the villa's layout before its renovation. The original seventeenth century garden remains more-or-less intact. However, the renovation of the garden and the inclusion of the *Villa del Vescovo* has altered the relationship between its constituent parts.

Looking at the eighteenth-century print we can work our way through the various types of architectonic and ornamental garden decoration. When one enters the gardens today, one emerges on the lawn, to the left of which is a sweeping view toward the villa, and to the right a lake, part of the nineteenth-century additions. The path one stands upon represents the old road that ran past the villa before it was merged with the *Villa del vescovo*. If we move into the 'old' garden to the left, there are straight walls of hedge enclosing each side of the lawn. In keeping with the Villa Marlia's architectonic aspirations, the lawn could be compared to a *salone*, the main reception room of the palazzo. Straight avenues were cut into the neatly trimmed hedge, creating a series of avenues, which still exist today, though the planting has been softened in comparison to the baroque one, which had sharply architectonic hedge punctuated at the corners with clipped cypress, now there is a graduated planting of bushes and trees.

To the right of the lawn these avenues lead into a 'garden room', in which there is a large square pool. This has been described by one scholar as 'a vast Baroque ballroom whose dancing floor is a great sheet of shimmering water.' The pool is virtually the same now as it was in the Baroque period. The far end is decorated with two reclining river gods on the balustrade and behind is a small theatre-like structure decorated with rusticated columns, a typical Italian style of garden architecture, into the central niche if which there is set a sculpture of Leda and the swan. A pair of lions, the symbol of Lucca, made from terracotta sit atop the structure. This structure is echoed by a smaller exedra at the opposite end of the 'garden room' which contains a simple fountain.

³⁴ Acton writes that the princess, 'loll[ed] on a chaise-longue (while) Paganini played for her from behind a yew-hedge.'

From this ‘garden room’ a passage leads off to the *teatro di verzura* (garden or topiary theatre), built in 1652.³⁵ The theatre is 24 metres in length and constructed from yew hedges, which enclose a semicircle of stone seats. Further seating for spectators is provided by a set of tiers with windows and niches made in the semi-circular hedge. The stage is formed by a succession of wings formed from yew hedges, which are about five and a half metres high. These alternate with terracotta statues of *commedia dell’arte* characters such as Pulcinella, Columbina, and Pantalone. Today, at the centre, between the stage and the orchestra, are two topiary forms that supposedly represent the podium for the conductor and a prompt box. Conductor’s podiums were not a feature of the seventeenth or eighteenth-century theatre and do not feature in the eighteenth-century print, and it is therefore a later addition.³⁶

These *teatri di verzura* were a particular feature of Italian Baroque gardens and they are largely found in Tuscany, with examples at the Villa Garzoni, the Villa Gori, the Villa Bianchi Bandinelli at Geggiano near Siena, and the Villa Bernardini at Vicopelago. Lost examples also existed at the Villa Torrigiani and the Villa Cenami at Saltocchio; moreover, they were still being constructed in the early twentieth century as at the Villa Gamberaia outside Florence.

Teatri di Verzura vary a lot in size, though are generally constructed of yew or box hedge with hedge wings. The one at the Villa Bianchi Bandinelli, for example, is considerably larger and was constructed for a series of performances to mark a wedding between the Bianchi Bandinelli and Chigi families.³⁷ Each of their coat of arms are placed on the stone proscenium of the theatre. The theatre at the Villa Bernardini, close to the Villa Marlia, was created in the second-half of the eighteenth century and appears much more like an amphitheatre. It has three levels that surround a sunken horseshoe shaped section of grass, which represented the stage. As at the Villa Geggiano it was situated directly behind the palazzo creating a direct relationship between the theatre and the palazzo. These theatres were on a direct axis with the palazzo and the stage could be viewed from the windows of the building as though from a theatre box. Such a relationship is very different to that of the theatres at the Villa Marlia and Garzoni where they are ‘hidden’ away in small gardenrooms.

At Marlia, if we move behind the palazzo there is another type of theatre, a *teatro d’acqua* (water theatre), similar to those of the Villas Mondragone or Aldobrandini at Frascati, though here constructed partly in hedge rather than entirely in stone and thus a conflation of the *teatro di verzura* with the *teatro d’acqua*. Water theatres were a Baroque version of the nymphaeum or grottoes popularised by the humanist garden

³⁵ I. Belli Barsali, *La Villa a Lucca dal XV al XIX secolo* (Rome: De Luca, 1964), pp. 200–202.

³⁶ See M. Piccione et al., *Gardens of Tuscany* (Florence: EDIFIR Edizione Firenze, 2001), pp. 89–90; J. Wade, *Italian Gardens* (New York: Rizzoli, 2002), pp. 158–163, for brief description, the garden and its theatre are discussed in much more detail in V. Cazzato, M. Fagiolo and M. A. Giusti, *Teatri di Verzura: La Scena del Giardino dal Barocco al Novecento* (Florence: EDIFIR Edizione Firenze, 1993), pp. 97–102, including images and diagrams; M. Mosser and G. Teyssot, *The Architecture of Western Gardens: A Design History from the Renaissance to the Present Day* (Cambridge (MA): The MIT Press, 1990) p. 112.

³⁷ N. Fagnoli, ‘Teatri di Verzura’, in *Vita in Villa Senese*, ed. by L. B. Conenna and E. Pacini (Siena: Pacini Editore, 2000), pp. 325–347.

designers of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. These features were intended to emphasise the elements of spectacle and display, rather than the intimacy and contemplation usually associated with a Renaissance grotto. Water theatres often included complex hydraulic engineering that could move automata, such as statues of figures or animals, and create sounds such as birdcalls, or even music as at the water organ of the Villa d'Este. The water theatres were not only an engaging diversion they also demonstrated the patron's control of nature, making the water dance to his tune.

The exact purpose of these theatres – both *teatri di verzura* and *teatri d'acqua* – is not clear and has been the subject of much debate amongst modern garden historians. Topiary itself was hugely popular in Baroque gardens, with many including whole arrays of figures and animals. A rather credulous Russian visitor to a garden near Venice in the seventeenth century described the array of topiary:

Approaching the city I saw a miraculous thing: around a garden there is a fence of bushes, and these bushes grow like a stone wall an arshin thick and 2 arshins high. Along this wall of bushes the bushes grow like various figures, such as a walking man with a spear, or with a halberd, or with a sabre, another is like a man on a horse with weapons; another is like an angel with wings; another is like a woman or a girl dressed in the French fashion; another is a figure like a barque with sails and with ropes; another is just like a Venetian gondola, that is, a boat, with an awning, and on it a man with an oar; others are like fountains of various shapes; others grow in the likeness of animals and beasts and birds of various sorts, and others are like fine vessels. In the corners of this garden the bushes grow just like towers on top of which grow people in the shapes of soldiers with weapons. This thing is exceedingly marvellous and wondrous, since this bush grown in these various shapes.³⁸

The theatres may have just been another type of virtuosic topiary art, or they may have been used for performances, perhaps recitations of poetry, though clear references to such a use remain elusive. Georg Christoph Martini describes the theatre at the Villa Marlia as 'a theatre for *commedia* closed by hedges: the scenery is realised with plants of such elegant arrangement as to seem unreal.' Although the once stone seats have now been covered with faux hedge seats, the Villa Marlia theatre is essentially functional in design and the presence of *commedia dell'arte* characters suggests they were indeed used as theatres. Though it should be noted that the figures of Coumbina, Pulcinella and Harlequin are eighteenth-century additions. Lucca enjoyed a thriving theatrical and musical life, which was transported to the villas during the summer season of *villeggiatura*.³⁹ Gardens were used as performance spaces throughout Europe, sometimes on an extremely grand scale, as with the Medici performances in the Boboli gardens in Florence and those held at Versailles by Louis XIV, or the feast and opera staged in the now lost gardens of Cardinal Flavio Chigi's *Ville alle Quattro Fontane* in Rome.⁴⁰

³⁸ P. A. Tolstoy, *The Travel Diary of Peter Tolstoy: A Muscovite in Early Modern Europe* (DeKalb [IL]: Northern Illinois University Press, 1987), p. 129.

³⁹ A. Pellegrini, *Spettacoli Lucchesi nei secoli XVII–XIX* (Lucca: Tipografia Giusti, 1881).

⁴⁰ See A. Blumenthal, 'Giulio Parigi's Stage Designs: Florence and the Early Baroque Spectacle', (unpublished doctoral thesis, New York University, 1984); C. Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), and D. R. Coffin, *Gardens and Gardening in Papal Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), pp. 230–231 for descriptions of these events.

Another explanation for the garden theatres of Lucca may lie in those constructed for the use of the Arcadian Academy in Rome.⁴¹ Although these were constructed later (the Academy itself was not formed until 1690) they are similar in size, if not always in form, to those of the Lucchese gardens. The Roman versions were constructed for meetings of the Academy and the performance of pastoral poetry and madrigals. In 1726 a garden and theatre was constructed that was entirely devoted to the activities of the Academicians, however, before this several other versions existed within the gardens of wealthy members of the Academy, such as those of Ranuccio II Farnese on the Palatine hill. In Lucca in the seventeenth century when several of these garden theatres were created we find that each of the owners of the gardens were members of a similar type of Academy, the *Accademia degli Oscuri*. We know that the members participated in literary discussions and poetry readings, as well as sponsoring productions of music, theatre and opera.⁴² Within such an environment it would seem plausible to suggest that the *teatri di verzura* were built for similar purposes as those in Rome in the following century.

Lucca's gardens in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries

Very few new villas were constructed after the mid-eighteenth century, however, many of the existing buildings and their gardens were altered according to new currents of taste. The first half of the nineteenth century was dominated by 'romantic' fashions, in the case of the gardens this meant a taste for 'naturalistic' gardens *all'inglese* (in the English style). The overall appearance of many of the gardens, such as the Villa Grabau at San Pancrazio, is now that of a naturalistic landscape park. The emphasis moved away from displays of classically inspired sculpture, elaborate fountains, virtuosic topiary and elaborate and intricate *parterres*. The nineteenth-century garden did not embrace symmetry, preferring to soften the edges of plantings. In the garden of the Villa Mansi at Segromigno where in the eighteenth century the lawn and the smaller garden sections were *parterres* and paths all laid out with an exact symmetry, in the nineteenth century the entire effect was made more 'naturalistic'. Large cluster of trees replaced the hedges, and features such as the Baths of Diana that originally formed part of a very neat *parterre* garden, are now discovered amongst a copse of tall trees. Moreover, many of the 'garden rooms' were softened and re-planted with trees to create a more natural and wild appearance in keeping with romantic ideals of *le beau sauvage*. In a sense these French influenced *bosquets*, such as those at the Villa Torrigiani, returned to being *boschetti* in the sixteenth-century sense, though having been filtered through a style of English landscape architecture.

The best garden in which to observe this dramatic change in garden style is the Villa Reale at Marlia, here the garden created in the nineteenth century in the grounds of the *Villa del vescovo* contains all the features of the 'natural' garden. Trees are planted in clusters, the edges of garden beds are soft and flowing, which contrast with the more-or-less intact Baroque garden surrounding the palazzo.

⁴¹ S. M. Dixon, *Between the Real and the Ideal: The Accademia degli Arcadi and its Garden in Eighteenth-century Rome* (Newark [DE]:University of Delaware Press, 2006).

⁴² A. Bertacchi, 'Storia dell'Accademia Lucchese', in *Memorie e documenti per servire alla storia di Lucca*, (Lucca: Tipografia Giusti, 1881).

The nineteenth century also saw an increasing interest in plants as-and-of themselves. *Orti botanici* (botanical gardens) were added and these would house rare and unique specimens of plants from all corners of the worlds. One well known example is at the Villa Grabau at San Pancrazio which even housed a banana plant and sterile man-made hybrids. In the early twentieth century the gardens of this villa were further enhanced with the additions of California palm trees and date palms from the Canary Islands, in keeping with the Art Nouveau style of garden design. As well as these changes in plantings there was also added many small buildings such as coffeehouses and small temples (*tempietti*) influenced by the English landscape garden, famous examples of which include the garden of Stowe in Buckinghamshire. At the same time the gardens retained their distinctive Lucchese style, as late as the mid-nineteenth century the Villa Grabau had a green theatre added to its features, and a small *parterre* garden was added on one side of the Villa del Vescovo at the Villa Reale at Marlia.

Today many of the gardens are being carefully restored and maintained, either by the families descended from the original owners, as at the Villa Torrigiani, by new owners, or by the Italian state. The Villa Garzoni is undergoing an extensive restoration, with much of the sculpture being restored and plants replaced. The gardens around Lucca still afford rich experiences, even where they are a mingling of several styles. As discussed above gardens can not and should not ever be a static form of art. One can still experience the rich feast for the senses as expressed in the writings of William Beckford. There remains the contrast between intimate and grandiose spaces. Although the nineteenth century owners embraced a more 'natural' style of gardening, a sense of the theatrical still clings to most gardens creating the sense that one is entering into an 'enchanted' space, a mid-point between the urban world of cities and the mythical world of Arcadia.

Katrina Grant

Art History Discipline, School of Culture and Communication

The University of Melbourne

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