Introduction

In 1834 the German-Russian economist Heinrich Friedrich von Storch traveled to Caserta to behold one of the grandest royal palaces in Europe. Dismayed rather than impressed, he lamented to his colleague and guide, Ludovico Bianchini, that it was a pity so much money was squandered on it. Storch assumed Bianchini would agree, and, at first, he seemed to do so, confirming that vast resources went into building the palace. However, he stopped short of condemning the expense and instead cautioned Storch that one must also weigh the palace's many benefits. After all, would he have visited Caserta without it?[1] Bianchini's question reminded Storch that a palace, though built as a residence, sparked cultural, economic, and political transformations that went beyond its ostensible purpose. This book follows Bianchini's line of reasoning to recover the transformational aspects of palaces during the period of the Enlightenment, when thinkers brought new modes of analysis to bear on all aspects of society. It does so by focusing on the three palaces built near Naples during the reign of Charles of Bourbon (1734–59): the one at Caserta, another built above Naples at Capodimonte, and a villa along the coast beneath Mt. Vesuvius at Portici. Taken together they constitute what Rudolf Wittkower termed "some of the largest architectural schemes ever devised in Italy" and count among the most fascinating, costly, and complex architectural commissions of the eighteenth century.[2] They have never been examined together or considered within their dynamic political, cultural, and economic contexts. This book aims to do just so, arguing that Enlightenment ideas were connected to their construction. These modes of thinking saw the palaces as more than just loci of royal pleasure or muscular assertions of the Crown's power. Writers and royal ministers felt that they were active agents in improving the vitality of the kingdom itself.

The three palaces were commissioned by King Charles of Bourbon and Queen Maria Amalia of Saxony, who reigned over the Kingdoms of Naples and Sicily, also called the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies.[3] The king was the son of Philip V of Spain and Queen Elizabeth Farnese, who in 1731 had sent the *infante* Don Carlos to Italy as heir to his mother's Farnese duchies of Parma and Piacenza. Spanish forces accompanied him, and when the War of Polish Succession broke out,

FIG. 1 | Francisco de Goya y Lucientes, *Charles III in Hunting Dress*, ca. 1786. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photo © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

FIG. 2 | Anton Raphael Mengs, *Maria Amalia of Saxony*, ca. 1761. Oil on canvas. Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. Photo © Photographic Archive Museo Nacional del Prado.

Charles led his Hispano-Italian army south to conquer the Two Sicilies. In 1734, after routing Austrian Habsburg troops, he entered the capital of Naples. Philip and Elizabeth quickly granted him the realm to rule on his own, making him the first resident monarch of Southern Italy in more than two hundred years. Since he was the third Charles to reign over Sicily and the seventh to rule over Naples (or eighth if one regarded an additional predecessor as legitimate), the new king was simply known as Charles of Bourbon.

Charles had a narrow face dominated by a large bulbous nose and lively blue eyes.[4] He grinned habitually, and the smile both registered his general good humor and helped conceal his thoughts. A passionate hunter, he is represented, in Francisco de Goya's disarmingly frank portrait, wearing the attire he preferred (fig. 1). Tutored

in many arts, from engraving to architecture, Charles was also an enthusiastic builder. He shared his "mal de piedra" with Maria Amalia, who married him in 1738.[5] A Saxon princess and daughter of King Augustus III of Poland and the Habsburg Maria Giuseppa of Austria, she grew up in Dresden during the period of its artistic florescence (fig. 2). Like her husband, she had a narrow face, prominent nose, and wide blue eyes. Intelligent, impatient, and opinionated, the queen proved an indispensable advisor to Charles both privately and in royal councils. Their exceptional closeness also resulted in Maria Amalia's giving birth to thirteen children.

Charles and Maria Amalia ruled the Two Sicilies until 1759, when the king was called to Madrid to assume the Spanish throne upon the death of his half-brother. Though they only governed Naples for a quarter century, the effects of their reign were profound. Royal reformers worked to centralize control while diminishing the legal and economic privileges of ecclesiastical and feudal powers. Economic growth was guided by a supreme magistracy of commerce that bolstered trade and exports in order to breathe new vitality into the kingdom's economy. Meanwhile, consuls and diplomatic treaties opened new markets for the kingdom's exports.[6] "To raise the nation," the Crown set up new manufactories for tapestries, *pietre dure*, porcelain, and armaments.[7] The king and queen also founded an academy of art, undertook excavations at Herculaneum and Pompeii, and commissioned buildings in the capital to address civic needs and social ills. Their architectural projects included the largest opera house in Europe, an enormous hospice for the urban poor, and some of the most advanced military barracks on the continent.[8] These civic buildings effectively remade Naples into a capital, and the palaces at Capodimonte, Portici, and Caserta were hatched at the same time and with the same spirit of reform.

Exceptional in size and complexity, the Bourbon palaces ringed a city that was already peppered with aristocratic residences.[9] The Neapolitan nobility, like their Venetian counterparts, rooted their aristocratic status in exclusive rosters of the city's most ancient families. They also intermarried with the kingdom's feudal nobles who moved to the capital to cultivate stronger ties with the Spanish (and later Austrian) viceroys. Whether civic or feudal, noble palaces shared architectural characteristics such as large portals on the exterior and elaborate staircases within. In addition to these palaces, the city boasted several royal residences. The Castel Nuovo, positioned near the port, was the seat of the city's Angevin and Aragonese kings in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. With the arrival of the Spanish viceroys in 1504, Viceroy Pedro of Toledo built a simple bastioned Palazzo Vicereale to its west. Then, in 1600, Domenico Fontana adjoined a completely new structure to that palace's southern end.[10] This second viceregal residence was known as the Palazzo Reale, and it both befitted the ceremony and etiquette of the viceroys' station and served as the representational seat of the absent Spanish king. Fontana's three-tiered façade had an arcade on the ground floor. On the *piano nobile*, the viceroy's apartment lay behind a façade of simple pilasters and pedimented windows. The main apartment terminated in a corner bedroom suite that extended toward the bay, and for the vicereine Fontana planned a similar suite to the east, though it was never completed. The architect also positioned

a chapel on the east side of the palace's central courtyard and added next to it a large room for grand ceremonies that became known as the Hall of the Viceroys after the portraits lining its walls. In the wake of his conquest of Naples, Charles moved into this palace, making it the primary seat of his court.[11] The main apartments were refashioned to meet the needs of expanded protocol, and many of the smaller rooms in the private apartments were redecorated. The Crown also added a new stable wing topped by a terrace toward the bay and, to the north, erected the San Carlo opera house in 1737.

As artists and architects remodeled the Palazzo Reale, the king and queen began to amass a series of suburban retreats. Known as the *siti reali*, these royal sites were administered by the royal household and modeled on similar circuits of properties elsewhere in Europe. Forebears included the Medici villas outside of Florence, the Savoy palaces ringing Turin, the chateaux of Louis XIV near Paris, and the Wettin *Schlösser* in Saxony. For Charles and the Spanish aristocrats who dominated his court, the most pertinent precedents were the *reales sitios* that Philip II and his successors had established near Madrid. During Charles's youth, his father had shuttled the *infante* and the rest of the royal family between them, so when Charles thought of palaces, his mind returned to Aranjuez, El Escorial, El Pardo, and La Granja of San Ildefonso.[12]

The royal sites ringing Naples would eventually number more than a dozen (fig. 3).[13] Most were selected as optimal locations for hunting and fishing, and they encompassed a variety of landscapes. These included the island of Procida, in the Bay of Naples; the verdant extinct volcanic crater of Astroni, to the west of the capital; marshy Lake Patria, near the coast to the northwest; the forested riverbanks of the Sele River, south of Salerno at Persano; and the mountainous wilds of Venafro, north of Caserta. Most of the sites had only modest buildings compared to the monumental palaces that distinguished the *siti reali* of Capodimonte, Portici, and Caserta.

These three palaces boldly stood out from their local peers, and to recover their broader historical importance within a European context, it is important to understand the evolving ideology of palaces. As residences of the powerful, palaces were imbued with important political meanings. Etymologically, they were descendants of the ancient imperial residence on the Palatine, and cognates of the hill's name were applied from a very early date to royal and noble residences. Whether *palácios* or *pałace*, these structures constituted a single architectural family, even if few were modeled on the Palatine itself. In the fifteenth century, some architects and patrons aspired to re-create the Roman domus to evoke the ancient hill.[14] For example, architectural borrowings from antique examples breathed historical authority into the recherché Palazzo Medici and Palazzo Rucellai in Florence. As architects looked to ancient exemplars, writers heaped praise on the positive effects of palace building. Leonardo Bruni wrote that palaces were an ornament to the city, elevating the *imago urbis* for locals and foreigners alike.[15] Other Renaissance humanists, drawing upon Aristotle's description of magnificence in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, regarded them as fitting indicators of the status of their owners. Aristotle's maxim that "the suitability of the expenditure . . . is relative to the spender" meant patrons had to be decorous in their ambitions.[16] Cosimo de' Medici rejected

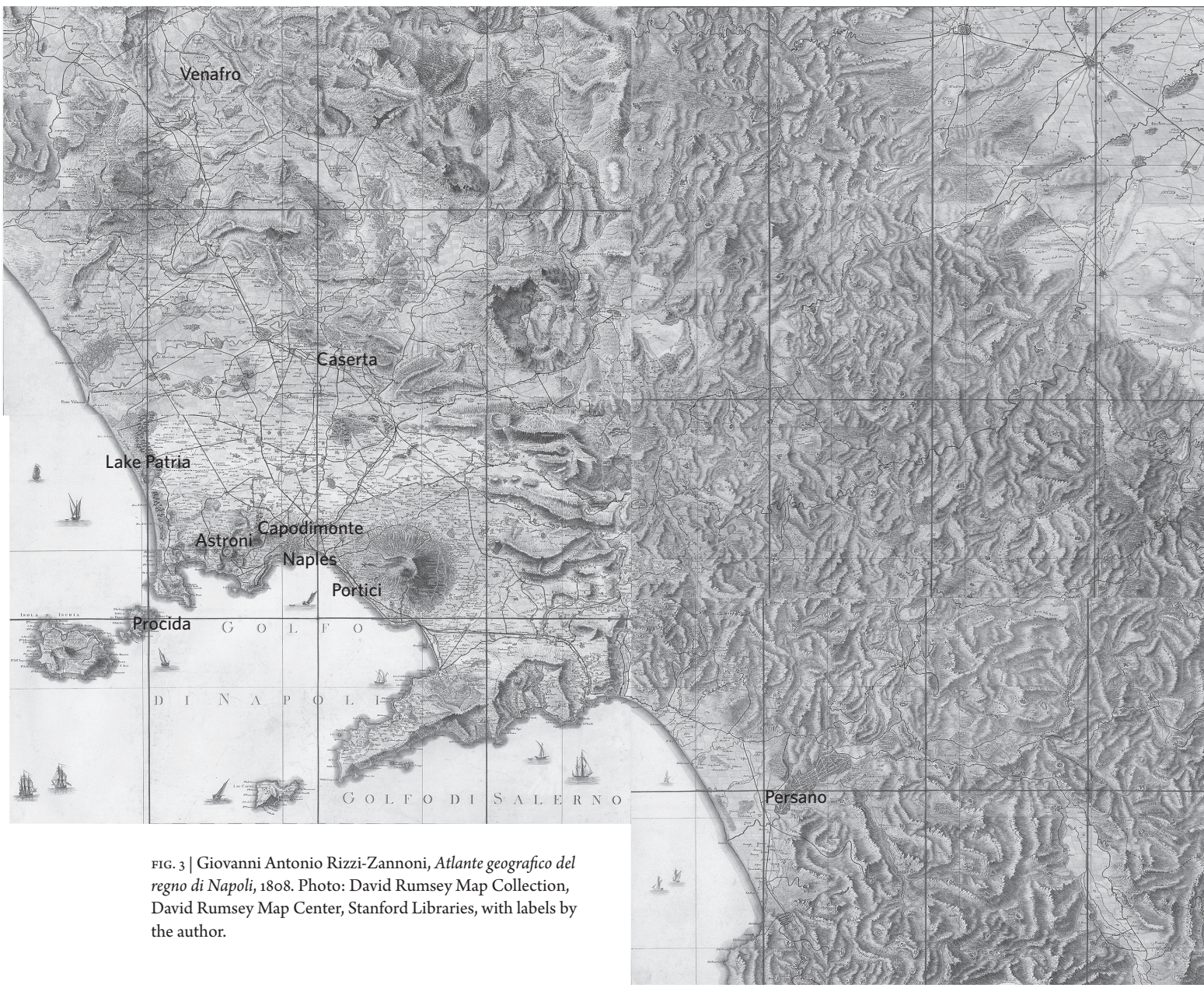

FIG. 3 | Giovanni Antonio Rizzi-Zannoni, *Atlante geografico del regno di Napoli*, 1808. Photo: David Rumsey Map Collection, David Rumsey Map Center, Stanford Libraries, with labels by the author.

Filippo Brunelleschi's model for his family palace as "too sumptuous."[17] The Loredan had their Venetian palace's façade inscribed with a humble evocation of the biblical passage "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name goes the glory" (Ps. 115:1). And Antonio Penne's palace in Naples preempted skeptics with a carved paraphrase of Martial's epigram "Jealousy, do you grimace? Do you hate to read such things? Then be envious of all, envied of none." Meanwhile, architectural theorists from Filarete to Leon Battista Alberti parsed ideas of Aristotelian decorum. At the end of the fifteenth century, the Neapolitan humanist Giovanni Pontano instead cut loose some of the theoretical strictures on magnificence. He explored the concept in two books: *De Magnificentia* (1498) and *De Splendore* (1498), which effectively split Aristotelian magnificence into two related concepts. Pontano used "magnificence" to describe grand public expenditures such as buildings, and "splendor" to denote spending on more-private spaces, like interiors.[18] Overall, Pontano blunted moralizing critiques of spending and helped make "magnificence" a sanctioned byword for patrons and builders for the next few centuries. The term recurs frequently in seventeenth-century writings, and since it crops up in the book published on the Palace at Caserta in 1756, George Hersey explicated how that palace reverberates with Pontanesque magnificence.[19]

While magnificence continued to hold sway, fresh ideological concerns came to the fore in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A host of new terms helped justify the money spent on palaces as a general sense of their positive economic benefits grew.[20] Philibert Delorme argued for their public good by noting that the Tuileries Palace provided for the "relief and aid of the poor who came each day, and in great number, to work" on it.[21] Likewise, Pope Alexander VII and Gianlorenzo Bernini believed that construction bolstered employment and thus was socially beneficial.[22] Meanwhile, architects became more attuned to the intricacies of aristocratic ceremony. As Patricia Waddy has demonstrated, concerns about etiquette were embedded in the long enfilades that came to dominate palace plans.[23]

Decorative programs simultaneously shifted toward unabashed celebrations of the patron's family. In Rome propagandistic painting cycles of familial history and allegorical imagery openly trumpeted the lineage, deeds, and fortune of the owner.[24] Charles's Farnese ancestors were prime contributors to this shift, celebrating their deeds on the walls of palaces in Rome and Caprarola. Although those cycles dated to the sixteenth century, auto-celebratory imagery in Piacenza as late as the eighteenth century featured the life of Charles's mother, Elizabeth Farnese.[25] Mythologizing or allegorizing dynastic power took hold in many other corners of Europe. Rubens telegraphed messages of royal authority in his paintings for the Banqueting House of Whitehall, which Antonio Verrio, Louis Laguerre, and James Thornhill picked up and adapted for other lordly estates and royal residences in England.[26]

Louis XIV preferred glory over magnificence and expressed it fully at Versailles, which fundamentally reshaped palace ideology on several fronts.[27] First, it was designed to be a symbolic microcosm of the kingdom, with the king's bedroom at its heart and the nobility drawn under its roof, thus giving architectural flesh to Louis's dictum "L'état, c'est moi." In constructing it, Louis also sparked economic growth by employing a vast workforce of soldiers

and laborers and ordering various stones quarried from within his kingdom. Finally, he built Versailles with an eye to future generations, as Jean-Baptiste Colbert noted when he wrote that "nothing better demonstrates the grandeur and spirit of princes than buildings, and all posterity measures them in light of those superb mansions that they erected during their lifetimes."[28] Baldassare Castiglione had advised rulers to build for similar reasons, and with the Hall of Mirrors featuring allegorized events from Louis XIV's life, Versailles conveyed this thirst for *gloire* better than any other.

As a political testament in brick and stone, Versailles bequeathed a potent example to others. Most princely palaces of the eighteenth century have therefore been cast as natural outgrowths of similar *ancien régime* concerns. Understood in this vein, they are lesser imitations of Versailles and swan songs of absolutism. For example, John Summerson has characterized Caserta as "addressed to the palace problem in the last years when that problem could still be taken with immense seriousness."[29] This view, taken through the lens of the French Revolution, obscures the fact that these palaces were instead hatched during a time of fervent cultural transformation. The discourses and writings of the Enlightenment animated European cultural life, and these palaces, rather than the last gasps of an architectural form, were part of an eighteenth-century building boom. Palaces rose like "exhalations" in Iberia, Britain, France, and Italy, in eastern, central, and northern Europe.[30] Many pioneered novel plans and singular decorative schemes that distinguished them from their predecessors. Interiors evoked the global curiosity of the age through visual references to Asia, and virtuoso craftsmen transformed the walls of rooms with plaster, boiserie, lacquer, stone, amber, mirrors, and porcelain.[31] This golden age of palaces was also subject to sharp critique.[32] When David Hume beheld the Residenz at Würzburg, he found its scale stunning and wondered, "What a surprising thing it is, that these petty princes can build such palaces."[33] Frederick II of Prussia, a great builder of palaces himself, likewise criticized minor princes for building grand palaces.[34] Blenheim Palace, built as a "monument to the nation" as much as for the victorious Duke of Marlborough, was funded by the public purse, and the satirical *Dream at Woodstock* (1714), on the building of the palace, revealed that "[s]ome judged there had already been too much expended about it already, and that 'twas Time to finish it, and put an end to the Charge."[35] Even when a building did not outstrip the status of the owner or draw public censure, patrons were attuned to how their commissions might be perceived. Pope Benedict XIV thanked God that he had not indulged in building an extravagant "folly" like the Villa Albani, and the empress Maria Theresa cautioned her daughter Marie Antoinette not to spend too much on embellishing the Petit Trianon.[36]

As patrons weighed public perceptions, they also began to regard palaces as part of a broader economic system. This concern was particularly pronounced in Naples, where Charles earned credit as an "enlightened despot" for using royal power to bring order to the administration of his realm.[37] As mentioned, he sought to trim the influence of the church and introduced economic reforms that aimed to standardize regulation and lighten burdens on trade. The Crown sponsored projects with important scientific, historical, and philosophical value, and during Charles's reign

Naples became one of the most important centers of innovative thought in Italy.[38]

Debates about the Enlightenment have become legion. For ill and good, it has been characterized as the cultural prelude to the revolutions of the eighteenth century and the imperialism of the nineteenth. There is no denying the complex and morally equivocal legacy of Enlightenment ideas, but this book approaches the Enlightenment historically rather than philosophically.[39] It looks at what occurred during the *ancien régime* in eighteenth-century Europe, and within that context, historians have reoriented our understanding of the Enlightenment away from a single corpus of ideas emanating from France and toward a more localized and heterogeneous conception of the movement. As Charles Withers states, it was "situated in multiple practices, concerned in different places and in different ways with different conceptions of practical reason."[40] With such an enlarged geographic understanding, it becomes difficult to corral competing and sometimes contradictory aspects of the era into a clear definition.[41] Immanuel Kant's *sapere aude*, "dare to know," remains one ingredient of the glue that historians use to bind the movement together. Confidence in empirical thought, science, and progress was also an essential aspect of the age.[42] Scholars have simultaneously outlined a religious enlightenment and a rise of sentiments and feelings in art and literature as equally important.[43] In this book my conception of the Enlightenment follows those that highlight the efforts of writers and administrators to increase well-being and to place greater emphasis on empirical facts and reason. Since I connect these efforts to an absolutist regime, I do not narrow the Enlightenment to only its most politically radical voices.[44] I instead emphasize the practical manifestation of the Enlightenment and explore tangible efforts by the Crown and its agents to increase labor, foster economic growth, encourage new curiosity about global powers, and advance scientific and technical knowledge as it relates to art and architecture.

During this time Naples was an unruly intellectual landscape, characterized by vastly different interests and approaches.[45] Most prominent today is Giambattista Vico, whose philosophy of a cyclical history and critique of Cartesian rationalism were but two of his many interests, which also included what we would categorize as linguistic theory, legal history, and cultural anthropology.[46] Though in the last years of his life he served as Charles's royal historiographer, his influence was limited among contemporaries. Vico's limited renown during his life stands in stark contrast to the notoriety of Pietro Giannone, who became a lightning rod of controversy for his hotly anticlerical history of the kingdom. His *Storia civile del Regno di Napoli* (1723) landed on the Vatican's Index of Prohibited Books and led to his eventual imprisonment in Turin. Yet this work was quickly translated into English and made him one of the founders of civil history.[47] Occupying the middle ground between the two was the mathematician and philosopher Paolo Mattia Doria, who, like Vico, is sometimes branded an anti-Enlightenment thinker for his hostility to Descartes, Locke, and Spinoza, yet whose writings on ethics and politics led him to advocate for political reform and enlightened rule by sovereigns.[48] With the arrival of the new dynasty, political reform became an ever more popular subject for Naples's reading public, and it is noteworthy that the first Italian translation of Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* appeared in Naples in 1750.[49] Naples's greatest political philosopher

was Gaetano Filangieri, whose *La scienza della legislazione* was widely read in Europe and led to the author's correspondence with Benjamin Franklin.[50] Alongside such writings on politics, Naples also witnessed a boom in scientific investigation. The royal chaplain and rector of the university, Celestino Galiani, was one of the leading proponents of Newtonianism in Italy. Though he published nothing in his lifetime, he guided the city's intellectual life as much as anyone, gathering fellow thinkers around the academy of science that he led.[51] Among the most prominent members of his circle was Giovanni Maria della Torre, who served as a university professor and royal librarian while authoring important works on natural philosophy, including an eyewitness analysis of the eruption of Mt. Vesuvius in 1751.[52] Thanks to these learned individuals, the Enlightenment in Naples was vibrant and varied.

Among the broad array of Neapolitan thinkers, however, the political economists stood out. Carlo Antonio Broggia, Antonio Genovesi, Ferdinando Galiani, Giuseppe Palmieri, and Giuseppe Maria Galanti fostered new understandings of economic production and consumption that underscored the Crown's role in encouraging growth.[53] If Friedrich Melchior von Grimm characterized his age with "Today everything is philosophe, philosophic, and philosophy in France," these thinkers ensured that in Naples it was economist, economic, and economics.[54] The Neapolitan political economists were part of the "economic turn" in Enlightenment thought near the middle of the century that also took hold in France, Milan, and Scotland.[55] Political economists did not limit their focus to production and consumption. They often wrote on a variety of subjects that ranged from science to religion, and they grafted these interests onto their economic analyses to create remarkably diverse theories.[56] Their writings variously addressed value, labor and employment, economic policy, quantitative methods, agricultural production, wealth, and luxury. These ideas, although given sharper focus and debated in a larger number of texts during the Enlightenment, grew out of earlier economic writings.[57] In the seventeenth century mercantilist pamphleteers and theorists had staked their ideas for growth on domestic production of goods. Producing everything within one's borders, they posited, made realms richer and more independent. Typical of this approach was Colbert in France and the Neapolitan Antonio Serra, whose 1613 treatise advocated domestic industry above all.[58] While such ideas remained relevant to some in the eighteenth century, by 1700 this literature, often predicated on protectionism, was challenged by free-trade enthusiasts, who felt that goods should be produced where they could be made most cheaply. Growth in labor could instead come from other stimuli, including building. In German lands cameralist writers regarded the paternalistic role of the sovereign as instrumental in prompting such alternate modes of production, and in many respects the Neapolitan court would follow such a model.

In addition to such policies, a debate on luxury began to rage in Europe. It took as its point of departure Bernard Mandeville's *Fable of the Bees* (1714), a satirical poem that claimed luxury did more to advance nations than many traditional virtues. Mandeville's ideas, later expanded upon in essays, sparked justifications of a consumer society similar to those articulated by Jean François Melon in his *Essai politique sur commerce* (1734) and Voltaire in his *Le mondain* (1736) and *Défense du mondain, ou L'apologie du luxe* (1737).[59] Their Italian counterparts generally

followed their lead, though they did not embrace individual consumerism with the same fervor. Instead, they felt that governments should shepherd luxury so that it led to shared economic growth. They therefore upheld public happiness, or *pubblica felicità*, as their goal. This concept was explored most extensively by the Modenese thinker Ludovico Antonio Muratori in his *Della pubblica felicità* (1749). It posited that architecture and the arts were outward signs of public happiness, their quality and quantity reflecting fundamental economic and moral health. Inspired by these ideas, Bartolomeo Intieri, an economist whose own publications followed French physiocrats' proposals for increasing agricultural production, endowed Europe's first university chair in political economy, at the University of Naples.[60] Occupied by Antonio Genovesi, the position was merely the outward manifestation of a movement that kept economics at the forefront of Neapolitan political debates for the better part of a century.[61]

Though differing in age, all the Neapolitan political economists experienced the eventful decades of the Caroline building campaign. Some published their most important treatises during Charles's reign, and many had close ties to royal ministers. Like the French physiocrats, they fretted most about agricultural production, especially since grain was one of the kingdom's largest exports. They also wanted to boost the economic vitality of the kingdom through the encouragement of domestic manufactories, and it is in their discussion of skilled trades that their thinking turned to the Bourbon palaces. Carlo Antonio Broggia was the earliest and most moralizing of the group.[62] Guided by his Catholic faith, he regarded good government, moral instruction, and economic vitality as inextricably combined. He decried excessive luxury among the kingdom's aristocrats and wanted the Crown to steer surplus spending. Royal projects were better than the diffuse corrupting effects of frivolous luxury, and Broggia sought to unmask magnificence as excessive luxury in disguise. Unfortunately, his combative tone and subsequent criticism of royal finances led to his exile in 1755.

Ferdinando Galiani, a precocious nephew of Celestino, authored an influential treatise on monetary policy, *Della moneta*, in 1751. Among the many topics he tackled was luxury, which he upheld as a requisite ingredient of happiness, and he pointed to the Crown as the best catalyst for increasing it. Galiani argued that the richest prince was one who spent rather than conserved, and he recommended that the Neapolitan court use royal spending on stupendous works like palaces to jump-start growth and increase commerce.[63] Like Broggia, he had great faith in the monarchy, but they disagreed in most other respects, leading Broggia to label his younger peer's book a work of licentious Epicureanism. Though controversial among devout Catholics, Galiani's thinking was influential among the king's ministers, whom he counted as friends. In 1759 he would even be sent to Paris by the royal government as secretary to its embassy in the French capital.

Royal ministers also drew upon the writings of Antonio Genovesi. Genovesi was the leading light of the political economists, and through his many publications from the 1750s and 1760s, he argued that a large and employed population was the best indication of a realm's economic health.[64] To that end he advocated for big projects, palaces among them, that could provide work, keep money circulating, and improve and unify trades and manufacturing. Like Voltaire, he regarded monarchies

as the engines of robust economies and stated that "the grandeur and happiness of a monarch is inseparable from that of his subjects."[65] While Genovesi cautioned against excessive prodigality in court expenses, he found avarice equally dangerous. Resources could not be held like water in a cistern; they had to be tapped for festivals and palaces to encourage the growth of specialized trades and local production. Glassworks, tapestry manufactories, and academies for artists and architects were all necessary ingredients of a prosperous state.[66] With regard to luxury, Genovesi stated that as long as it was not "wild" or dependent on imports, it cultivated a thriving economy and society.

Palmieri, who studied under Genovesi, followed his teacher's thinking while additionally seeking to eliminate internal barriers to commerce.[67] His ideal society abounded in public happiness, and he felt grand buildings were effective means to that end, stating, with reference to biblical kings, "the sums used by Solomon were the product of great commerce undertaken by him to give a useful occupation to the populace."[68] Galanti, also Genovesi's pupil, was explicit in his praise of the Caroline building program in achieving these ends.[69] Like Genovesi, he claimed that the prosperity of the *patria* and sovereign were indivisible. Praising Charles for restoring the kingdom, he lauded the ways royal policy resulted in economic growth. He gushed that the kingdom owed Charles an "almost religious" debt of gratitude and singled out the Palace at Caserta for exceptional praise. For him, Charles, more than any monarch, increased public happiness, and partly on the back of palace projects.

In the three chapters that follow, I explore the ways in which these and other Enlightenment ideas helped shape the meaning of the Bourbon palaces. The three buildings were not begun at the same time and similarly do not conform to a single overarching impetus or interpretation. Nor were all of the palace projects resounding successes. The Crown, its builders, and artists encountered numerous challenges. Some projects overcame setbacks, but others remained mired in problems for decades. Like members of a family, their histories are both intertwined and distinct, and each chapter therefore examines both the commonly shared and individual circumstances of planning and decoration.

Chapter 1 explores the grand hunting lodge atop Capodimonte. It was the first of the Bourbon palaces, and its construction ignited a building boom that lasted the rest of the century. The palace's architects planned the parklands before designing the palace on a nearby promontory. With three aligned courtyards, it promised to be the largest residence in the realm. Begun with such great ambition, its construction became fraught with complications that left it unfinished for decades. Rather than the palace, the site prospered thanks to the porcelain manufactory the king and queen founded on its grounds. It was one of the earliest of its kind in Europe and initiated local production of wares that could compete with imports. By fostering local manufacturing, Capodimonte set the template for how royal residences could advance the economic and cultural life of the realm.

A few years after Capodimonte, the king and queen began work on a palace at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius at Portici, the subject of chapter 2. Using a nucleus of preexisting noble villas, the palace grew to sprawl over the landscape and bridge a major roadway. A salubrious retreat for the sovereigns, the palace became the cultural

showpiece of the monarchy because of its location near Herculaneum. There, the Crown sponsored the first systematic excavations of the ancient city and displayed the unearthed artifacts in a museum located within their residence. This public museum made Portici famous throughout Europe and transformed life within the palace's walls, with the royal family sharing space with the scholars, restorers, and engravers charged with preserving, displaying, and publishing the artifacts. In the dedication of his 1758 translation of Vitruvius, Bernardo Galiani praised Charles for these efforts to valorize the past. He also lauded the king for his engagement with the present, and Portici likewise featured decoration that celebrated contemporary diplomatic and cultural ties. Portraits of recent Ottoman and Tripolitan envoys hung in prominent places to remind visitors of important treaties the court had brokered. Meanwhile, Maria Amalia's *chinoiserie* porcelain cabinet underscored local connections to China through the Collegio dei Cinesi, an institution founded in 1732 for training Chinese missionaries. Through these spaces, Portici celebrated contacts that bound Naples to the wider world.

The Palace of Caserta, discussed in chapter 3, was the largest and most costly of the three. Its plan would be a model of architectural clarity and compactness, its construction would proceed with exceptional ease and organization, and its economic impact would be almost entirely positive. Planned on land expropriated from a rebellious noble, it was designed by the Roman architect Luigi Vanvitelli with the king and queen's direct input. Vanvitelli took up the simple geometry of Capodimonte, inflated its scale, opulently adorned its grandest interior spaces, and avoided any of the pitfalls of the former project. Meanwhile, by feeding off of the ideas of political economists, Caserta became one of the Crown's most effective engines of progress. As the walls rose, Vanvitelli designed a new town to accommodate a growing population. In addition, the king dispatched masons throughout the kingdom to find new domestic quarries, and the rose, bluish-gray, and cream-colored stones they carted back both displayed the mineral wealth of the Two Sicilies and created enduring supply chains for domestic materials. An extensive new aqueduct, the largest built in Italy since antiquity, not only brought water to the palace's gardens but also flowed beyond the palace to Naples itself, thus supplying both Crown and capital.

The court could not have foreseen all the ways the palaces benefited Southern Italy. Capodimonte subsequently became one of Italy's most important art museums. Portici became the destination of the peninsula's first railroad and eventually the seat of the University of Naples's faculty of agriculture. Caserta served as the headquarters of Allied commanders in 1944 and the site of the German surrender in Italy in 1945. It has repeatedly been a film set and, as one of the most visited museums in Italy, draws crowds of increasing numbers. Bianchini would have proudly pointed out that these tourists would not have visited the city without it. He claimed that Charles "immediately gave back to his populace by raising majestic works, which stimulated, drove, and increased public wealth."[70] The present legacy of the Caroline palaces confirms his assessment, and the pages that follow recover the history of this *pubblica felicità*. My ultimate aim is to show how stone, mortar, paint, plaster, and porcelain altered the fortunes of a realm.