Ovid tells the story of Latona, the mother by Jupiter of Apollo and Diana. In her flight from the jealous Juno, she arrives faint and parched on the coast of Asia Minor. Kneeling to sip from a pond, Latona is met by the local peasants, who not only deny her effort but muddy the water in pure malice. Enraged, Latona calls a curse down upon the stingy peasants, turning them to frogs.

In his masterful study, Thomas F. Hedin reveals how and why a fountain of the strange legend of Latona was erected in the heart of Versailles in the 1660s, the inaugural decade of Louis XIV’s patronage there. Louis XIV was viewed as the reincarnation of Apollo, the god of creativity, the inspiration of artists and scientists. Hedin’s original argument is that Latona was a double declaration: a glorification of the king and a proud manifesto by artists.