



Symbols and Allusions in Early Landscape Gardens

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Abstract: Historic gardens hide the marks of the times that had created them. Not only are they green surfaces for recreation, but their proper restoration and disclosing of their inner substance may lead us to a more profound knowledge and understanding of past periods. This is especially true for Early Landscape Gardens, attempting to manifest ideas of the Enlightenment. There was a prominent secret society the Freemasonry played important role in this period. Symbolism of the society influenced the garden art, and the society's signs and symbols first appeared as decoration on the Lodges' documents and equipment, then also emerging in Landscape Gardens.

Keywords: freemasonry, landscape garden, garden art, enlightenment

1. Introduction

The Age of the Enlightenment and within that the birth of Early Landscape Gardens is one of the most productive and exciting times in garden history. None of the other periods can be typified so much by their garden art. Landscape Gardens created anew or transformed from Baroque gardens spread along with a new way of thinking that highlights the individual and the idea of progress through one's personal merit rather than privileges. Against the neatly cut alleys of the Baroque garden, here each lively component develops according to its own nature and contributes to the whole.

In this period, there was a secret society playing an important role. Its objectives were strongly related to those of the Enlightenment. This society is Freemasonry, whose history goes back to Medieval guilds, but from the 18th century it can be described more as an intellectual community, whose members no longer work on actual constructions, but rather build themselves and thereby construct society. Among its members, we find several significant figures of the period: progressive thinkers, noblemen, persons of no rank and artists alike. It's enough to mention Goethe, Mozart, Haydn, etc.

Lodge members included a large number of creators and holders of Landscape Gardens. For instance, William Kent, the grand master of picturesque English Parks, was a Lodge member, just like the owners of Stowe, Rousham and Holkham Hall. Alexander Pope, the lord of Twickenham, Lord Burlington, the creator of Chiswick, so much in love with architecture. On the continent we can mention Vicomte de Girardin, the creator of Landscape Garden at Ermenonville, Comte d'Albon, the owner of Landscape Garden in Franconville-la-Garenne, the Leopold III Frederick Franz, the enlightened Duke, who turned Anhalt-Dessau into a model state, and designed the famous Garden of Wörlitz.

2. Materials and Methods

In Western Europe several foundation works mention the Masonic influence on Garden Art. First of all I have to mention the most chief foundation study, "The Art and Architecture of Freemasonry" by James Stevens Curl. Curl's work investigate thoroughly how the society's signs and symbols reaching back to Ancient times' legends of origin and first appearing as decoration on the Lodges' documents and equipment, then also emerging in Landscape Gardens.

European Garden History works mention the Masonic connection, like "*Landschaftgarten*" by Adrian von Buttlar. In Germany there is a garden, Schwetzingen nominated for the list of World Heritage sites in 1999 precisely for its Freemasonic allusions. In Austria Géza Hajós dealt with this topic in connection with the gardens around Vienna. In Hungary Géza Galavics mentioned Masonic connection in his study about Hungarian Landscape Gardens.

In Hungary, just like in Europe, a number of creators or owners of Landscape Gardens were Lodge members. Since very little built structures survived in our Parks, the Freemasonic connections are often hard to prove. But carefully historical research can help us to understand the messages of the gardens of this period. To avoid sensational hypotheses, always necessary to study the

biography of the holder and creator of the garden, and only personal Masonic connection, and several parallel coincident can prove the Masonic influence.

3. Results and discussions

Perhaps it is somewhat strange that during the centuries of rationality, these progressive and cultured persons would find their purpose in a society surrounded by legends and mysticism. There was still a need for the transcendental, which was satisfied in the Lodges by rituals recalling the world of the Medieval guilds and the cultures of disappearing civilizations, which were being discovered at the time. The society was established with a fine purpose, as its members worked on building up society by building up themselves. They believed in progress through knowledge and self-building. In a highly absolutist world, the society gave no value to noble privileges. Here, one could only rise higher through his own merits. This self-building process is signified by their most basic symbol, the stone that always appears in a double form. The unworked stone always appears with the cube, the finished stone. The Landscape Garden has become a similar symbol, as what else is an English park, than constructed nature.

The society's symbolism spread into the gardens. Through the allusions, legible only for the initiated, it sent messages to the strollers. In most cases, the constructions, sculptures and the garden's iconographic programme carried special meaning, often made obvious through decorations or inscriptions. These symbolic constructions later became parts of the English Garden's toolkit, and today we consider them typical Landscape Garden elements.

Pantheon-like constructions in Landscape Gardens carried Freemasonic meaning, referring to Solomon's temple, the perfect building. The divine Solomon's temple realized the laws and proportions of nature in architecture, thus symbolizing moral perfection. In 18th century England, it was Shafesbury who introduced the idea of Solomon's temple as a moral construction. Its references were the Renaissance engravings of Jean de Tournes from 1554 and Martin Von Heemkert from 1557, who presented Solomon's temple as a Pantheon-like building. This kind of representation spread along with the idea [1]. Pantheon-like garden temples appeared in the early Landscape Garden first in England, in Chiswick, Stourhead, and later on the continent [2]. In the Biblical description, the two columns, Jachin and Boaz, standing in front of the temple's entrance refer to Solomon's temple [3]. The columns that show up in the Lodges and on Freemason publications, appearing in the gardens generally mark the starting point of theme paths, or were employed around mausoleums.



Figure 1-2: Pantheon-like garden temple in Stourhead and Wörlitz

The application of Egyptian constructions or decorations may also refer to Freemasonry. This was the time of heightened interest in disappearing civilizations and in archaeology. The carved stone constructions of Egyptian sites and their clean geometric forms were easily related to Freemasonry, not to mention the mystery of hieroglyphs, unsolved for centuries. Travel accounts were published one after the other. Richard Pococke published his study in 1743, entitled “*Observation on Egypt*”. Then in 1757 appeared “*Travels in Egypt and Nubia*” the work of F. L. Norden. In 1803 a Freemason, Quatremère de Quincy analysed Egyptian architecture related to Karnak and Thebes in his study called “*De L’Architecture Égyptienne...*” Interest in the Egyptian sun cult was increased by the idea of sunlight as spiritual light within Enlightenment. The Egyptian architecture and body of beliefs integrate into the symbolism of the Lodges [4].

The most typical forms of Egyptian references were the application of pyramids, sphinxes and obelisks, first only in the Lodges and their documents, then in Landscape Gardens. Obelisks represent the connection between earth and the universe, and symbolize continuity, strength and immortality. Obelisks are often employed at cross-roads, especially on the continent, but we can also find them in the already mentioned estates of Pope and Burlington. William Kent erected an obelisk in Holkham Hall, while pyramids or pyramid-like constructions were built in the parks of Twickenham, Chiswick, Stowe, Rousham, Studley Royal, Castle Hill and Castle Howard. In Castle Howard the gate structure is also crowned by a pyramid, designed by Vanbrugh, just like the obelisk standing along the road that leads to the park.



Figure 3: Obelisk and sphinx in Blenheim



Figure 4: The British worthies in Stowe

In Stowe, a pyramid stands in the middle of the temple erected for the English worthies. Inside its oval chamber, he placed the bust of Mercury. Mercury is identical with the Greek mythology's Hermes, the great messenger god, another important figure in the Lodges' legends of origin [5]. Mercury was respected as the protector of travellers, and as a messenger between the gods and men. It is not surprising therefore to find the presence of a Hermes-cult in the Lodges that considered themselves the keepers of divine knowledge. Hermes, just like Mercury, is present in the Landscape Gardens of Rousham and Chiswick.



Figure 5: Mercury in Rousham

Another interesting example of Freemasonic symbolism manifested in a garden is in Schwetzingen, Elector Carl Theodor prince's summer residence, which was submitted for the tentative list of World Heritage sites in 1999 precisely for its Freemasonic allusions. This garden bears the marks of two distinct eras. Its central, regular Baroque part is surrounded by Landscape Garden areas. The garden's style evolved according to its lord's changing mentalities. The park's layout is very expressive. In the front court, instead of the usual square parterres, we find a central circular one. The circle symbolizes a perfect community among Freemasons. Around the circle, the Landscape Garden's channels draw the compasses that defines this perfect form. The circular parterre can already be discovered on the first garden plans designed by Ludwig Petri. From 1762 Nicolas de Pigage (1723-96) takes over the design work and creates the garden's entire architectural and sculptural scene. In the last third of the prince-electors life, the park's landscape part is designed by Ludwig Skell (1750-1823) [6].



Figure 6: Mercury temple and ...



Figure 7: ... sculpture of Geometria in Schwetzingen

In the Baroque garden, the main axes is defined by the sculptures of two deer. Allegedly, these animals strayed into the ornamental garden from the game reserve

and were killed at this point. The garden's iconographic programme presents the opposition between wild nature and the civilized world.

The civilized world being placed south of the main axes with the Minerva temple and a hidden niche within it. North of the main axes lies the boundless nature with Pans and bath-houses for affectionate rendezvous. The garden also celebrated the arts. The central basin is decorated with the fountain of Arion to honour poetry, while in the north garden the temple of Apollo venerates theatre and drama. Here light appears again associated with spiritual light. Pigage created the temple of Mercury standing next to the pond, then as a sign of openness towards eastern cultures, he designed a Mosque. To show the increased interest in the Nature with the temple of botany, and Roman water castle was built to honor antique world. Although Schwetzingen was submitted only for the tentative list of World Heritage List, its collective value is still compelling [7].

In Hungary, just like in Europe, a number of creators or owners of Landscape Parks were Lodge members. To name a few, Lajos Batthyány, who founded the castle park of Körmend was a Freemason, just like Gedeon Ráday the proprietor of Pécel, György Festetics the lord of Keszthely and László Orczy the founder of Orczy garden. Since very little dokument survived about Landscape Gardens, the Freemasonic connections are often hard to prove.



Figure 8: Pyramid in Körmend

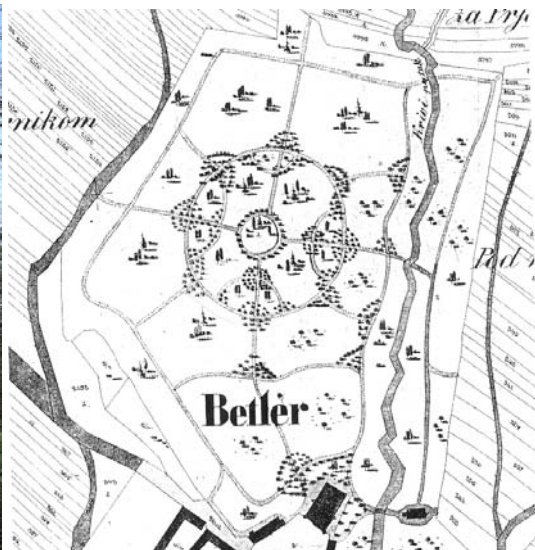


Figure 9: The layout of Landscape Garden in Betlér

Nevertheless, Freemasonic allusions are sure to be found in the Andrassy castle park of Betlér. The layout carries the perfect form of the circle, and the formal

elements of the pavilion standing in the park can undoubtedly be tied to the society. The octagonal pavilion's openings are six-pointed star-shaped, triangular, and octagonal. On the inside, the illusionist painting depicts a profane temple [8].

We find a similar chapel in Hédervár, near the castle of another Freemason, Mihály Viczay. The Freemasonic connections of this structure, however are not yet proved. In front of the castle, there is a column with a ribbon festoon ornament and a sphere – the perfect form – on top of it, clearly a Freemasonic allusion. The entrance of the castle is guarded by sphinxes and the park's centaur sculpture depicts a scene of a woman being kidnapped. This can be related to Schwetzingen's Pan Sculpture and the Galatea basin's kidnapping episode. Both refer to the idea of the primitive, instinctive savage snatching the woman of a civilized world.



Figure 10: Centaur sculpture

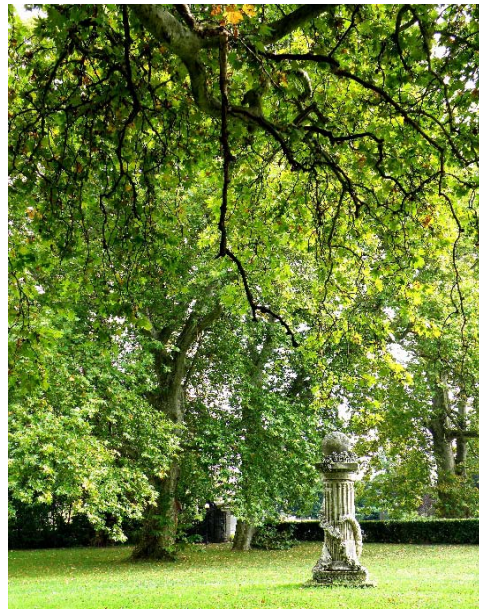


Figure 11: A column with a ribbon festoon ornament and a sphere – the perfect form – on top of it

Similar to European examples, monuments erected in honour of certain personalities in Hungarian gardens may carry Freemasonic allusions. In England, a monument stands for Alexander Pope, while on the continent, Salomon Gessner (1730-1788) Swiss German poet is honoured. We find Salomon Gessner memorials in the garden of Ferenc Széchenyi in Sopronhórpács as well as in Lajos

Batthyány's castle park in Körmend. Both owners were Freemasons. And there is a so called 'Gessner house' in Csákvár [9].

In Hungary, Ferenc Kazinczy had a similar role to that of the already mentioned Alexander Pope. Kazinczy – with his extended social network – was a key figure of both Freemasonry and the spreading of Landscape Gardens. He was also the one who translated the work of Gessner into Hungarian. The Lodge member Ferenc Gyulai erected a memorial to Kazinczy's visit in his garden in Dédács.

Among the lords of Transylvanian estates, we should highlight György Bánffy, the owner of Bonchida and Sámuel Bruckenthal the proprietor of the castle of Felek, Sámuel Teleki the founder of the castle in Sáromberke, and Antal Josika the lord of the castle of Szurdok. They were all members of the society and can be tied to a significant piece of garden art. Several of our prominent historic gardens are connected to the personalities of the Freemasonic social network.

4. Conclusion

Comparing the history of the gardens' origins and the Freemasonic past of their creators is certainly a worthwhile study. A thorough knowledge of the movement's symbols can help us clarify the wider cultural and intellectual context of these gardens, as well as lead the researcher to new, undiscovered territories.

Acknowledgements

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