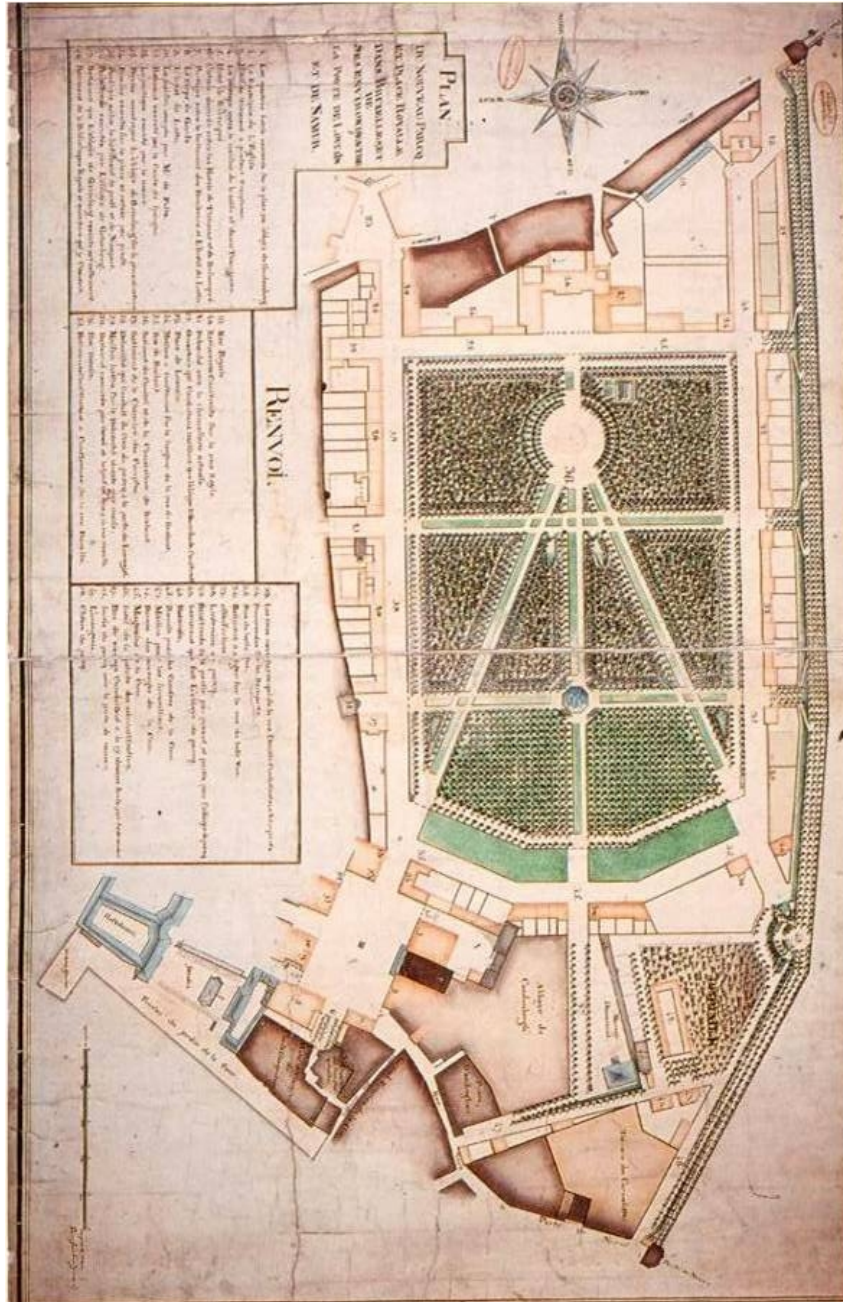


Masonic space?

Joël Goffin



Foreword: Freemasonry in the Austrian Netherlands

In the 18th century, most of what is now Belgium belonged to the House of Austria under the name of the Austrian Netherlands.

Freemasonry was introduced very early on in our region, located opposite Great Britain and bordering France. The situation finally took shape in 1770 when the Marquis de Gages received a charter from the Grand Lodge of England and immediately established the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Austrian Netherlands.

Originally, it had only five lodges; by 1785, there were twenty-six! The Marquis de Gages later organized Chapters that conferred the “Higher Degrees” (see Chapter III, Appendix 4). Nowadays, we talk about degrees of perfection that extend the three fundamental degrees of the symbolic “blue” lodges: Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason. There is no hierarchical superiority between these levels and the “High Degrees.” Initiation and the three fundamental degrees are more than sufficient. However, in the second half of the 18th century, particularly in France, there was an escalation of degrees that allowed some to distinguish themselves from others, out of vanity or a chimerical desire to possess an ever more mysterious secret. The development of Freemasonry in our regions is closely linked to the policy of Empress Maria Theresa, who was rather hostile to it. However, her husband, Emperor Francis I, who was a Freemason with a keen interest in alchemy, and her brother, Governor Charles of Lorraine, who was the protector of the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Austrian Netherlands, prevented a policy of repression despite the condemnation of Freemasonry by several popes, including Clement XII in 1738.

The situation deteriorated with the accession of Joseph II in 1780. He was not opposed to the principles of the Lodges, but he was suspicious of certain Illuminist currents that ran through them, such as alchemy, Christian Kabbalah, the Rosicrucian movement, the Templar lineage, etc. In 1784, when the Grand Lodge of Austria was established, the Grand Lodge of the Austrian Netherlands became just one of the seven provincial components of the new Obedience established in Vienna, i.e., a simple branch. The imperial rescript of 1785 confirmed this upheaval, under the pretext of preventing “irregular” lodges and ensuring the quality of recruitment (sic). It reduced the number of lodges in the capitals of the “provinces” to three. Only L'Union, Les Vrais Amis de l'Union and L'Heureuse Rencontre remained in Brussels, the most prestigious of the three due to the social standing and cosmopolitanism of its members. Most of the other “Belgian” lodges disappeared, some continuing to operate clandestinely in the form of secular societies.

One last notable fact: in 1798, Les Vrais Amis de l'Union, which in the following century would become Les Vrais Amis de l'Union et du Progrès Réunis, sponsored Les Amis Philanthropes, whose activity after Belgium's independence in 1830 would be tireless and invaluable. Consider the founding of the Université Libre de Bruxelles, created by Les Amis Philanthropes in 1834 under the impetus of Théodore Verhaegen.

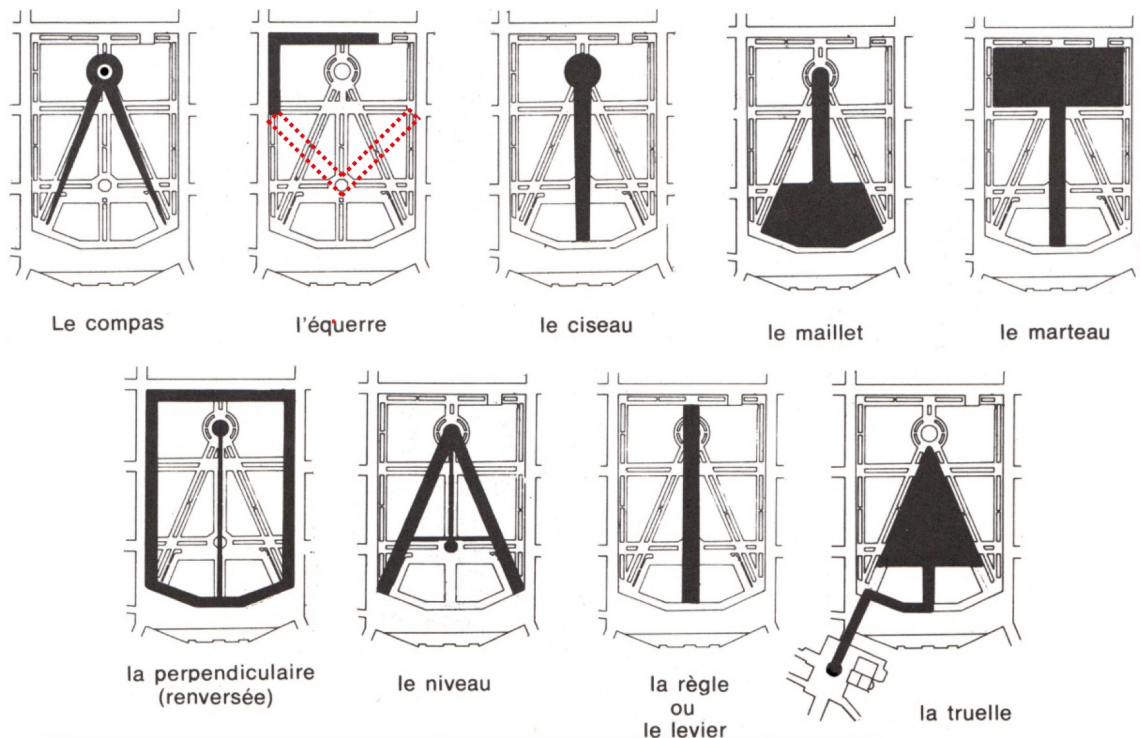
Without dwelling on the origins of Freemasonry, which are not always clear because they are so varied, I must emphasize that it is committed to the individual improvement of its

members through symbolic means. Originally, it was a charitable (or philanthropic) society that helped to relieve the most disadvantaged or to develop charitable works and a place of emulative and emancipatory conviviality. The social diversity of Freemasons (aristocrats, members of the wealthy bourgeois clergy, and artists) allowed for the exchange of new ideas in the second half of the 18th century. This was the period known as the “Age of Enlightenment.”

In this study, I will discuss the Strict Observance Templar (SOT) and the Rectified Scottish Rite (R.:. E.:. R.:), which paradoxically constitute reactions against the emergence of Reason, against a backdrop of Christian mysticism and illuminism.

It would be a fundamental mistake to confuse them with the “Illuminati,” who today perpetuate the most far-fetched conspiracy theories, including the fantasy of a secret global government.

Chapter I: Brussels Park or the Perfect Plan?



Description of the Masonic Park

In *Bruxelles, Mille ans de mystères* (Rossel, Brussels, 1978), original insights rub shoulders with the most fantastical. Paul de Saint-Hilaire seems to be the first contemporary author to have considered in writing the layout of the Royal Park of Brussels, or more simply the Brussels Park, from a Masonic point of view. He sees in it a desire to incorporate the main tools of the Lodge into the very layout of the Park. The following tools can be found: the compass, the square, the chisel, the mallet, the hammer typical of the Strict Templar Observance, which I will discuss later, the plumb line, the ruler or lever, and the trowel.

I have revised his drawing based on my research. For example, 18th-century Lodge paintings associate the trowel with the Worshipful Master, particularly in the R. E. R. At the Apprentice level, it is used to build "temples to Virtue. In this case, it is Charles de Lorraine, immortalized in a statue in Place Royale in 1775, who holds the handle of the trowel.

For 18th-century Masons, the compass is the most important symbolic tool because of its correspondence with the Creator, [the divine Geometer](#) or the Great Architect of the Universe. Hence its prominence in the Park.

1. The sponsor: Prince Starhemberg

He was the grand-nephew of Count Ernst Rüdiger von Starhemberg, military governor of Vienna and a leading figure in the resistance of Vienna under siege by the Ottomans and in the “Great War” that followed from 1683 to 1699. With the help, it should be noted, of John Sobieski, King of Poland. From 1765 onwards, the House of Starhemberg had the status of a Holy Roman Empire state and equal rights with the sovereign houses (“Hochgeboren,” meaning of high birth). .

When Georges-Adam von Starhemberg (1724-1807) was three years old, he lost his father. He was educated in Vienna by his mother and his great-uncle Gundaker Thomas von Starhemberg, Austrian Minister of Finance and a prominent figure at court. He then he embarked on his “Grand Tour”: accompanied by a mentor, he visited a number of European capitals and courts. For a time, he was tutor to the future Joseph II. He was then appointed ambassador to Louis XV. There, he negotiated a spectacular reversal of alliances in favor of France and Austria (Treaty of Versailles, 1756) against Prussia, thanks in part to his privileged ties with Madame de Pompadour.

After this successful diplomatic mission, he returned to Vienna in 1766, where his friend Wenzel Anton Kaunitz, nicknamed “the coachman of Europe,” succeeded in getting him into the Council of State as Minister of the Conference for Internal Affairs. In the meantime, he was made hereditary and imperial prince for services rendered during his delicate diplomatic mission to Versailles. But his disagreement with the future Joseph II (the one who appears in the film *Amadeus*), who found him too close to his mother Empress Maria Theresa, forced him to try his luck elsewhere. He therefore resumed his diplomatic career and arrived in Brussels in 1770 with the enviable title of Minister Plenipotentiary (Prime Minister) to the General Government of the Austrian Netherlands. He succeeded the extravagant Count Charles de Cobenzl, who had just died. It should be noted that Cobenzl and Starhemberg had been received together into the Order of the Golden Fleece in 1759. The lavish ceremony took place in the church of the former Abbey of Saint-Jacques-sur-Coudenberg. This leads us to conclude that Starhemberg was already familiar with the state of the upper part of the city and the wasteland resulting from the fire that had ravaged the Coudenberg Palace in 1731.

His good relations with Charles de Lorraine seem to have been constructive, if I may say so, since he had a free hand in an ambitious urban development project and, more generally, in the affairs of Charles de Lorraine's government. The latter preferred to indulge in the pleasures of the princes of the time: hunting, lavish parties, theater, and opera, but also science and alchemy, for mercantile rather than mystical purposes.

The governor hoped above all to turn base metal into hard cash. Like Cobenzl, Starhemberg's predecessor, who had received the fabulous Count of Saint-Germain in Brussels with a view to easily bailing out Austria, which was heavily in debt after the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756-1763).

But let us return to our main subject. In 1775, Starhemberg decided to develop plans for the future Royal Quarter and the Park at its center, with the agreement of Charles of Lorraine, Chancellor Kaunitz, and Maria Theresa in Vienna on May 10, 1776.

He surrounded himself with collaborators such as his loyal right-hand man Ange-Charles de Limpens, known as “the younger,” a member of His Majesty's Council of Domains and Finances.

Michèle Galand has shown that Starhemberg quickly became the de facto governor of the Netherlands. He held full powers for a year after the death of Charles of Lorraine in July 1780. From 1781 to May 1783, he formed an exclusive duo with Albert of Saxe-Teschen, in whose name he governed. Both were members of the Aux Trois Aigles Lodge in Vienna. In 1784-85, the park was completed.

For reasons of inheritance, but above all because he was not in favor of the zeal of Joseph II, a supporter of radical reforms, he left our city without regret in May 1783 to take up the honorary position of First Grand Master of the Court in Vienna, granted by Maria Theresa in 1780. There he was reunited with his friend Chancellor Kaunitz, who had closely followed the development of the Royal Quarter. After the death of Joseph II, Emperor Leopold II confirmed Starhemberg in his position. As Minister of the Conference, he participated in consultations concerning a possible war against Prussia.

When the Count of Artois (the future Charles X) and other French émigrés arrived in Vienna in 1791, Starhemberg introduced them to the court. However, he did not believe in the chances of success of the royalist plan to invade revolutionary France.

After the death of Leopold II, his successor Francis II of Austria confirmed Starhemberg in his position as Chancellor of the Supreme Court.

When Bonaparte appeared victorious before Vienna in 1797, Starhemberg organized the transfer of the government and the court to Prague. His emperor charged him with providing expert advice on a possible peace agreement with France. Subsequently, apart from his representative duties, the prince no longer played a significant political role.

The Freihaustheater in Vienna, located on Starhemberg's vast estate, staged 223 performances of *The Magic Flute*, the Masonic opera by Mozart, who was a member of the Strict Observance, as were the director and librettist Schikaneder, to which the prince belonged. He did not close the theater until 1801 due to rental nuisances. But that year also saw the severe restriction, even suppression, of Freemasonry by the Austrian Emperor Francis II...

Remarkably, the Austrian Chancellor Kaunitz, a prominent Freemason and supporter of the ideas of the Enlightenment, had married a Starhemberg (Marie Ernestine). It was the Kaunitz family who sought a strong alliance with the prestigious Starhembergs, whose family had saved Vienna and Europe from Ottoman ambitions. In addition, the chancellor was an associate member of [*L'Heureuse Rencontre*](#), a prestigious Brussels lodge. Despite his Christian Illuminist tendencies, Starhemberg was favorable to the innovative ideas of the Age of Enlightenment, or at least to very enlightened despotism. He was responsible

for establishing the first public school in the Austrian Netherlands, combating poverty, setting up the Theresian Academy—run by the Freemason du Chasteler—which still exists today, developing the library of the Dukes of Burgundy, and much more. During the American War of Independence, Starhemberg attempted to establish trade contacts with the young emerging nation, most of whose founders were Freemasons (Franklin, Washington, not to mention La Fayette).

Starhemberg's Masonic career

In the 1760s and 1780s, in the Germanic part of Europe, the Strict Observance Templar (SOT) held sway and was not accountable to other European Obediences. It claimed to be the heir to the Order of the Temple and wanted to reconstitute it.

At the beginning of its existence, it did not hesitate to claim the temporal goods and privileges that the knights had enjoyed! It was organized into “Provinces” in imitation of the Order of the Temple. Thus, our regions depended on the Province of Burgundy. Its rituals, sometimes rudimentary, were essentially Templar and Trinitarian. In any case, at the Brunswick Convent in 1775, the Strict Observance was at its peak: twenty-six German princes attended the proceedings. At the Congress of Wilhelmsbad (1782), it took on an esoteric Christian orientation with the development of the Rectified Scottish Rite (R.: E.: R.:), which died out during the French Revolution before rising from the ashes at the beginning of the 20th century. Intelligently, the R.: E.: R.: renounced its Templar lineage in favor of a purely chivalrous ideal. Its guiding light, Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, drew on Martinezism, invented by Martinès de Pasqually, founder of the Order of the Elect Coëns, more pompously known as the Elect Coëns Knights Masons of the Universe. It is based on the principle of regeneration and the reintegration of the Being into its primordial state, that which preceded the Fall of Adam. This Rite is therefore essentially Gnostic and spiritualist, steeped in Hermeticism, Christian Kabbalah, Arithmosophy, etc. Louis Claude de Saint-Martin, nicknamed the Unknown Philosopher, produced a brilliant synthesis of Willermoz's rites and Martinès' doctrine. In the 1880s, the Parisian occultist Gérard Papus, who became the custodian of Willermoz's archives, drew on them as a source for his publications, which influenced the pictorial and literary symbolist movement. Today, a minority still works within the R.: E.: R.: within Freemasonry. The profound reform proposed in 1782 by Willermoz and his Rectified Scottish Rite (R.: E.: R.:) led to the gradual disappearance of the Strict Observance Templar (SOT) as an autonomous and structured organization. Among the members of the Strict Observance, which continued to exist until 1792, were several celebrities: the writers Lessing and Wieland, Mozart, Goethe, Hahnemann, founder of homeopathic medicine, etc.

Thanks to the influence of French Masons established in what would become Germany (Prussia, Saxony, etc.), the SOT is said to have promoted the development of the degrees of Rose-Croix and Chevalier Kadosh, which still today constitute two of the highest levels of Masonic progression.

At barely twenty years of age, Starhemberg, the future high dignitary of the Empire, if not the most prestigious among them, was accepted in 1744 as an affiliate member in Leipzig

in a lodge probably called *Aux Trois Compas*, created in 1741, which would become *Minerva* (1746), *Minerva zum Cirkul* in 1747 (*Minerve au Compas*) through a merger with the former. The latter joined the SOT in 1766. And finally *Minerva zu den Drei Palmen* (*Minerva aux Trois Palmiers*) in 1766, which resulted from the union of *Minerva zum Cirkul* and *Zu den Drei Palmen* (*Aux Trois Palmiers*). [There is no ambiguity](#) about his affiliation in Leipzig. The table on the *Minerva zu den Drei Palmen* website lists his name and his status as a diplomat. It should be noted that the Saxon cities of Dresden and Leipzig in Saxony were the birthplace of the Strict Observance Trinity founded by Baron Hund in 1756. Prior to this Saxon affiliation, it is likely that Starhemberg was initiated in March 1743 at the Lodge *Aux Trois Canons*, named after the one in Leipzig. It was the future Prince-Bishop of Breslau, Philipp Gotthard von Schaffgotsch, who created this first Viennese Lodge. Its name may refer to the three canons of instruction for the symbolic degrees (Apprentice, Fellow Craft, and Master Mason). It used French for its ritual work and protocols. Some of their kabbalistic signs and phrases referred to Rosicrucian and alchemical mysticism. To become an affiliated member in Leipzig (1744), Starhemberg had to have been received as a Master in Vienna.

Unfortunately, in 1743, Empress Maria Theresa, who believed that the founders of the Lodge were agents of her enemy, the King of Prussia, forcibly interrupted the solemn ceremony for the degree of Apprentice of a certain Trauttmansdorff, despite the presence of high-ranking aristocrats (a Starhemberg, a Salm, a Kaunitz, a Hesse-Rheinfels-Rothembourg, etc.). However, the report does not mention any first names, merely referring to a "young Count of Starhemberg," which was his title at the time, and the presence of a Chamberlain of the Court, a position he held in Vienna. If this is indeed our Starhemberg, it does not seem to have affected his good relations with Empress Maria Theresa, of whom he became a close confidant. But this sudden expulsion from his first Lodge undoubtedly made him cautious about revealing his membership of Freemasonry. Even though Maria Theresa would later prove to be more tolerant.

Starhemberg would subsequently have more affinity with the Lodge *Zu den drei Adlern* (To the Three Eagles, 1770) established in Vienna. Albert of Saxe-Teschen, the future successor to Charles of Lorraine, would be a member of this ultra-secret Viennese Lodge. It awarded Scottish High Degrees from 1776 onwards (Grand Commandery of St. Pölten). The Rosicrucian movement, keen on alchemy, elixirs of youth, and other fanciful ideas, exerted a significant influence there. Coincidentally, Starhemberg stayed in Vienna for several months in 1775, shortly before the creation of the Royal Quarter.

As early as 1773, Maria Theresa asked the prince to inform her about the activities of the Lodges in our region. Relying on reports from well-paid informants, he sent her soothing reports full of insignificant and useless details (letter to Maria Theresa "to Starhemberg, March 3, 1773).

Further proof of his Masonic affinities: a certain Bonardy, Starhemberg's controller (finance inspector), was the Worshipful Master of the *True Friends of Justice* (Brussels, close to the Grand Orient de France, 1775). He had his Lodge's mail sent to... the prince's address.

Our country seems to have maintained concrete links with Starhemberg's Minerve aux Trois Palmiers Lodge for a long time: Eugène Defacqz (1797-1871), Grand Master of the Grand Orient de Belgique, became an honorary member in 1850. It is difficult to see the connection between Leipzig and the Grand Orient de Belgique... except for the memory of the prince and his Royal Quarter in Brussels! At the same time, Defacqz closely followed the work of a "Park Commission" tasked with restoring the site to its former glory, whose Masonic symbolism seems to have been reinforced since the 1840s. As early as 1797, the Count of Lannoy, a former member of the aristocratic lodge L'Heureuse Rencontre, chaired a commission appointed by the city to manage and maintain the park. It must be said that the Sans-culottes had ravaged it in 1793. He lived at 70-74 Rue Royale.

As an anecdote, the Aux Trois Aigles Lodge seems to have felt very secure in Vienna. It organized meetings in a somewhat ostentatious manner. Emperor Joseph II advised Schmidburg to be more cautious, to hold meetings less frequently and more secretly, but also to correspond on Masonic matters using cryptograms, etc. In any case, the Lodge grew and counted among its members several scions of the greatest Austrian and Hungarian houses (Auersperg, Starhemberg, Forgach, Batthyany).

2. The architect Barnabé Guimard or Gilles Barnabé Guymard de Larabe

Born in Amboise, Guimard (1739-1805) studied at the prestigious Royal Academy of Architecture in Paris under Ange Jacques Gabriel (Petit Trianon) and Jacques-François Blondel. Settling in Brussels in 1761, Guimard attracted the attention of Minister Plenipotentiary Cobenzl, a high-ranking Masonic dignitary, who appreciated his taste for antiquity and introduced him to the chancellor. The latter appointed him to design the catafalque of the Holy Roman Emperor Francis I, displayed in St. Michael's Cathedral (1765), and to survey the site of the former Court (1768). In the same year, the magistrate of Brussels entrusted Guimard with the task of erecting an obelisk fountain near the Church of Notre-Dame de la Chapelle. A replica was placed there in 2005. At the same time, in 1761, he worked at the Bureau des Ouvrages under the direction of Jean Faulte, Charles de Lorraine's architect. In particular, he collaborated on the design of the plans for his palace (now Place du Musée). In 1764, he slammed the door on Jean Faulte's workshop, probably because the latter had used his drawings and ideas without revealing this borrowing to Charles de Lorraine.

Much later, Starhemberg, Cobenzl's successor, entrusted him with the construction of the Place Royale and the park of the same name, and asked him to build the mansions that border them. The complex would be named the Royal Quarter. Thanks to his extensive training, Guimard was perhaps able to understand the symbolic implications of Starhemberg's commission. In fact, half of Parisian architects were members of the Freemasons. Today, he is recognized as the main author of the overall plan, in accordance with his prince's recommendations. The Parisian Jean-Benoît-Vincent Barré is said to have provided the design for the façade of Saint-Jacques-sur-Coudenberg, modified by Guimard, and for a mansion on Place Royale (see Chapter III). The prince chose Guimard, who had not won the Grand Prix d'Architecture in Paris and was not very active in Brussels, instead of the military engineer and Freemason Fisco and Baudour, who in 1772 had been approached to design a rectangular square on the site of the ruins of the old palace. Laurent Dewez, for his part, was the chief architect of Charles de Lorraine, but he had fallen into disgrace. The protection of his predecessor, Count Charles de Cobenzl, a high-ranking Masonic dignitary of the SOT, seems to have been the main reason for Starhemberg's choice of Guimard.

The prince had the good taste to add the expertise of the landscape architect and gardener of the Orangery in the Park, Joachim Zinner (1742-1814), who drew up the first detailed plan of the Park of Brussels. Zinner then collaborated with the Freemason Charles de l'Escaille on the management of the Sonian Forest. This was not without its hiccups.

The development of the Royal Quarter took almost a decade, from 1776 to 1784-85. Guimard was considered an architect independent of the City and the Court, unlike his rival Dewez. He left Brussels shortly after Starhemberg's departure for Vienna in 1783. Starhemberg was his patron and therefore the only person to whom he was accountable. In this specific case, we can speak of a partnership with a relationship of subordination to

the prince's demands. Before leaving the Austrian Netherlands, Guimard carried out his last official commission by erecting a temporary triumphal arch to mark the arrival of the new governors in their capital (1781), Albert of Saxe-Teschen and his wife Marie-Christine. He ended his successful career in Belgium by designing, among other things, the pleasure house at Wannegem-Lede (1785-1786).

After his departure in 1786, he returned to his native region (Indre-et-Loire), where he taught architecture at the École Centrale de Tours in 1795. Guimard died in 1805 in his mother's village of Mosnes (Indre-et-Loire). No portrait of this meteoric architect is known to exist, and many aspects of his life remain a mystery. Barnabé Guimard left no trace of his residence in the Brussels registers. He probably stayed at the Palace or at Starhemberg's residence at 23 Rue aux Laines at the Hôtel de Mérode (recently the headquarters of the prestigious private club The Merode) or at the Château de Meudon in Neder-over-Hembeek (largely destroyed, now Meudon Park), the prince's private residence.

Was Guimard a Freemason? No one can say for sure. His father, a university advisor and lawyer in Parliament, the name given to the court of justice under the Ancien Régime, is said to have been a knight of the Order of Saint John (Order of Malta). He was a member of the minor nobility of Amboise under the name of Seigneur du Sauvage. Many French aristocrats were both Freemasons and "Maltese." In 1745, his father, who was divorced, moved to Paris. His son undoubtedly accompanied him to study there.

As a biographical coincidence, Barnabé Guimard was of the same generation as Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin (1743-1803). Both belonged to noble families in the small town of Amboise. Louis-Claude de Saint-Martin, nicknamed the "Unknown Philosopher," was the secretary of Pasqually (Order of the Elected Coëns) and then of Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, the founder of the R.: E.: R.: In 1775, he wrote his first important book, *Des erreurs et de la vérité* (On Errors and Truth).

Sketches of the Park: 1775 and 1776

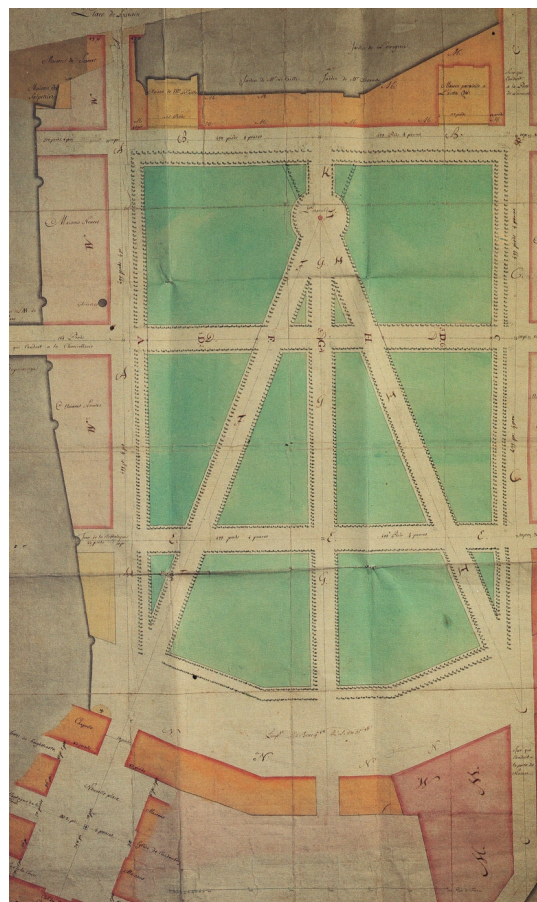
The sketch of the plan (1774) could show both the square and the compass, as well as a huge delta or pyramid under the screw.

A “pyramid” (sic) was planned for the round basin on [the plan of 1776](#) attached to the Austrian patents. The crossroads led to the Chancellery (Council of Brabant, 1796-1782) and the Domus Isabellæ, converted into a library for the Dukes of Burgundy, which Starhemberg decided to keep intact. However, he had it concealed by avant-corps or vegetation.

The obelisk, the ultimate solar symbol, represents the link between man and his god, earth and sky, matter and spirit, death and life in a perspective of resurrection (Osiris). With its four-sided base and point, it also represents the quintessence (the quaternary transcended by the Principle) and the Blazing Star. It has close ties to the regenerative forces of the underworld. The symbolism of the pyramid, which is more mortuary in nature, is similar.

Starhemberg ultimately opted for a triangular obelisk, this frozen ray of sunshine.

The obelisk was never erected because of Joseph II.



3. The ornamentalist: the sculptor Gilles-Lambert Godecharle

Godecharle (1750-1835, self-portrait) can boast a body of work that is classical in style but not devoid of sensitivity. In a letter dated March 6, 1777, addressed to his brother, he expresses his gratitude to the Brussels authorities who approached him to decorate the Parc de Bruxelles.

He became the official sculptor to the court of Charles de Lorraine, replacing his master, the famous Laurent Delvaux, who died in 1778. The latter was the creator of the “terms” or “Hermes” of the Park, statues with human faces, bodies covered in scales, and white marble feet (p. 29), which were originally located at Tervuren Castle.

After formative stays in Paris and Berlin, where he was sculptor to Frederick II (1775-1777), London, and Rome, Godecharle returned to Brussels around 1780 with the sketch of his first monument in his trunk: a fountain-obelisks intended to adorn the Park (see Appendix 1). This is confirmed by Xavier Duquenne:

In 1775, even before the Park was created, it had been planned to erect a statue or obelisk, or even a pyramid, in the middle of the roundabout, where the longitudinal paths converged.

It is worth noting that Godecharle frequented Les Vrais Amis de l'Union, a Masonic lodge founded in 1782. Its meetings were held on Rue de l'Orangerie, now Rue Henri Beyaert, behind the Palais de la Nation. Godecharle, who may have had his sculpture studio there at the same time, was noted as a “visitor” to the Lodge in December 1792. He eventually joined in July 1793, at a time when the armies of the French Revolution were shaking the Austrians. This late affiliation shows that he was initiated into another Lodge, probably in Prussia during his long stay in Berlin (Potsdam) where he was a guest of the Freemason King Frederick II of Prussia. If this is indeed the case, Godecharle could have been a member of the Germanic SOT dear to his prince... Could this be the objective reason for the close collaboration between Starhemberg and his sculptor?

On the other hand, in the 1770s, Godecharle had studied in Paris with Jean-Antoine Houdon. The latter became a member of the famous lodge *Les Neuf Sœurs*. As for the Brussels artist, he was the protégé of the Austrian ambassador to France, Florimond de Mercy-Argenteau, who had succeeded Starhemberg. Consequently, Godecharle may have been initiated in France.

With regard to this study, we also owe to Godecharle the ornamentation of Wespelaar Park, whose Masonic symbolism is evident (Appendix 1).

Until the end of his long life, he continued to frequent Les Vrais Amis de l'Union after having lived through five political regimes: the Austrian Netherlands, the revolutionary era, the Empire, the United Netherlands, and the young Kingdom of Belgium!

The base of the *Allegory of Truth* (p. 61) by Freemason Thomas Vinçotte (1881) features his portrait in a grove in the park.

4. The dedicatee: Charles of Lorraine

Charles of Lorraine (1712-1780) was appointed governor of the Austrian Netherlands from 1744 to 1780. His name is only mentioned at the bottom of the list because he played only a "modest and formal" role in the design of the park and its ornamentation. He relied entirely on Starhemberg.

A Knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece (until 1761), like his Prime Minister, then Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, he administered the populations entrusted to him with wisdom and good nature. One drama had a lasting impact on his life: the cession of the Duchy of Lorraine to King Louis XV of France by his elder brother François. The latter had been promised the coveted title of Holy Roman Emperor and Grand Duke of Tuscany thanks to his marriage to Maria Theresa of Austria. -Thérèse of Austria. As compensation, Francis I^{er} offered Charles the administration of the Austrian Netherlands.

Upon his brother's death, Charles of Lorraine became King of Jerusalem, a purely honorary but prestigious title that is not without interest for my study.

Was Charles of Lorraine a Freemason?

Many authors have wondered whether Charles of Lorraine was a Freemason, considering that he was the architect of the new Royal Quarter. Even if we can answer in the affirmative with little risk of error, this dispute is of little importance since, in reality, the duke played only a secondary role.

Starhemberg showed him the plans and he signed them, whether or not he understood the intentions and symbolic and philosophical subtleties of his Prime Minister. In this study, I will show that his close circle was full of Freemasons (Chapter III, p. 85).

There is a portrait of Charles de Lorraine that I find particularly intriguing. It dates from 1753 and was painted by a certain Jean-Charles François. The caption states that the engraving is sold "at the author's premises at the Triangle d'Or Hôtel des Ursins behind St Denis de la Chartre. In Paris with P. du R. [Privilège du Roi] "

At the time, the Hôtel des Ursins sometimes hosted the Grand Lodge of France (notably the Lodge known as Bussy-Aumont, according to André Kervella), at the home of Brother Saint-Martin, caterer (sic) . It should be noted that the Freemasons of the time did not have a Temple and most often met in the back room of an inn: a colorful banquet followed the ritual meeting. In this case, the sign *Au Triangle d'Or* is undoubtedly a Masonic allusion. The discerning eye will notice the alchemical vase at the bottom left, but above all the main tools used in Masonic rituals: square, compass, level, chisel, etc.

As an anecdote, Jean-Charles François was the engraver of the exiled King of Poland, Stanislas Leczinski, who resided in Lunéville, in the former palace of the family of Charles de Lorraine. The King of Poland promoted the growth of Freemasonry from his arrival in 1737. In general, the Rectified trend (SOT) was flourishing in Lorraine.

This eloquent engraving serves as the frontispiece to the *Règlement et ordonnance pour toute l'Infanterie de SM l'Impératrice-Reine [...]*. Brux., 1772, whose author is named H. Rameau de la Motte, an officer in the Prié Regiment. This Prié regiment, stationed in Mons, had many Brothers among its officers, such as Captain Meuret and Lieutenant Beuvers. It is therefore more than likely that Captain Rameau de la Motte was a Freemason. It should be noted that this Treatise on Artillery has no connection whatsoever with Freemasonry. One would have expected symbols related to the art of war or artillery itself... (p. 20, note 16)

The second clue to Charles de Lorraine's Masonic affiliation is a letter from the Marquis de Saulx-Tavannes to Bertin du Rocheret dated October 9, 1738, concerning his desire to "receive " Charles de Lorraine, aged 26, into a military Lodge. This was done very simply at the time. The Brothers would meet until the number seven was reached and the Lodge was declared "just and perfect," meaning that it became valid to receive a new candidate. If the Lodge was already established, it was responsible for confirming the reception-initiation at the next meeting. Here is the exact content of the letter:

Our order has received a terrible blow from our Holy Father. You will see that it will be necessary to receive him [editor's note: initiate him]to disabuse him and teach him not to judge his neighbor so harshly and not to condemn what he does not know.

I was greatly impressed by the Grand Duke [Francis of Lorraine], who is a very good Mason, and I would have received the Prince of Waldeck, Prince Charles of Lorraine, and many generals here if we had had the required number. But I am expecting one, and Milord Grafford, who is here, and I will receive the Prince of Waldeck. Do not forget me to your dear frimassone (sic) whom I greet with all my heart.

In this letter, "receive" means "initiate." The latter is a common term today, but it was not made official until... 1826!

Another important argument: in the *Apologetic Defense of Freemasons*, published anonymously in 1747 (the duke was 35 years old), Charles de Lorraine's "reception" seems to have taken place, according to this explicit paragraph:

There are many initiates in the Order. François-Estienne de Lorraine, Grand Duke of Tuscany, now Emperor; Charles-Alexandre de Lorraine, his brother; Charles-Frederic, King of Prussia, Head of the famous Berlin Lodge, & Grand Master of all the lodges of Prussia; almost all the princes of Germany; in England, from the Prince of Wales to the Bourgeois of London, provided they are of good character and morals; and in France, where the Order is merely tolerated...

An analysis of the style and vocabulary used suggests that a Lorrain, the Baron de Tschoudy, could be the author, according to an assessment by André Kervella. He wrote several studies on Freemasonry, one of which is entitled *Écossais de Saint-André d'Écosse, contenant le développement total de l'Art royal de la Franc-Maçonnerie* (1780). He was close to the Golden Rosicrucian Society.

We should also note the statement by Charles de Lorraine, quoted by Ludwig Abafi:

The governor of the Netherlands, Duke Charles de Lorraine, declares to the empress, his sister, that he is the protector of all Dutch lodges and therefore asks Her Majesty "not to proceed with the commissions undertaken against the Praguers."

That is to say, the repression of the lodges in the capital of Bohemia. Why would he intervene in these distant lands if he were not a Freemason? On the other hand, he was the godfather of a child of the Marquis de Gages, Grand Master of the Provincial Grand Lodge of the Austrian Netherlands. As an anecdote, in 1768 the latter obtained from his Lodge in Mons the granting of regular constitutions for a Lodge in Lunéville, the birthplace of Charles de Lorraine. And in 1765, *Unanimité* in Tournai had been founded under his auspices.

Finally, there was a Lodge in Brussels called [*Saint-Charles d'Heredom*](#) (Chapter of Clermont) 1762-1780) in Brussels, which disappeared in the year of Charles de Lorraine's death, the two events seeming to me to be linked. Heredom is a reference to the Scottish chivalric masonry of Heredom of Kilwinning (Order of Heredom of Kilwinning). Is the name Saint-Charles a dedication to Charles de Lorraine? In the absence of documents on this Lodge, we must rely on Cordier, who gives a detailed account of a patent from the Grand Lodge of France and links with the Chapter of Clermont ("High Degrees"). It seems unlikely to me that he would have circulated a forgery. Especially since Cordier tells us that his source comes from the Grand Lodge of France...

In the capital of the Austrian Netherlands, the third lodge, L'Union, had a Chapter responsible for awarding the High Degrees. Its members were sometimes referred to as "Rose-Croix d'Hérédome."

It should be noted that an aristocrat could create a private Lodge in a wing of his palace at will. And there was at least one Lodge at the Palace of Versailles. Even some abbeys and religious orders, such as Fécamp and Clairvaux, the Récollets of Mons, etc., followed this unusual path. I cannot resist the temptation to quote Cédric Andriot, who mentions three members of the clergy who celebrated a mass in Lunéville as a Masonic ceremony:

[It was a] mass solemnly sung in the hospital chapel by the first, the third officiated triangular, and the symbols of the Order were lavishly displayed, not only in the church and around the representation, but even on the altar.

As an anecdote, on February 11, 1770, Baron Louis-Anne-Charles de Bon, French ambassador to Brussels (1768-1773), boasted in writing to the Duke of Choiseul that he frequented "the temple of His Royal Highness [Charles de Lorraine]."

Finally, in his autograph papers, explicit notes and sketches of fireworks were found, referring to the "sign of the Freemasons." "

Disturbingly, upon Charles de Lorraine's death, Marie-Thérèse asked Starhemberg to burn the governor's writings, particularly those on alchemy. Starhemberg assured the empress that he had carried out this task...

The lowlands of Brussels Park

The lowlands are a remnant of the former warren (known as “de warande” in Flemish) belonging to the Dukes of Brabant, Burgundy, and Charles V, which was located next to the Coudenberg Palace, burned down in 1731. From the 15th century onwards, a remote corner of this game reserve was commonly known as the “secret garden” and then “the labyrinth.” The valley was called Coperbeek (“copper stream”). Initially, there was a desire to fill in this depression, which was an eyesore in the orthogonal park. However, the government decided that filling it in would be a costly and considerable undertaking. Nevertheless, there is frequent mention of a small “English” park in correspondence, and an underground vaulted gallery connecting the two valleys was mentioned! In the *Guide for Foreigners during the Holidays* (1830), we find this surprising description:

The lowland we descend into is separated from its neighbor by the middle path; however, it was to be connected to it by means of an underground vaulted gallery; the vault had already been built, but the mischievous people of Brussels had complained about the author and purpose of this project, so one side was quickly filled in, the construction collapsed on the other side, the workers continued the backfilling and the matter was forgotten. If, in a few centuries, someone decides to dig the passageway separating these two basements, they will be very surprised to find ruins where there have never been any monuments, and our archaeologists will rack their brains to give them a brilliant origin.

Later, many will invest the space open to their free imagination, ideally located opposite the Royal Palace, completed in 1829 in its first version. Sheltered by shrubs, we discover in an artificial cave a Madeleine moved to this location in 1879, her head resting on her left elbow. The Repentant reads the Bible. It is attributed to Jérôme Duquesnoy the Elder or his son. The reclining saint was already in the park before the 18th-century modifications. It is also the oldest of its statues. She is depicted here in her cave at Sainte-Baume, one of the most important sites in operative masonry, where she is said to have lived as a hermit for thirty years. In Hainaut, the nymph in the cave of the “Masonic” garden of the Château d'Attre (Belgian Hainaut) is also called Mary Magdalene. Both have a similar posture. In the past, a spring flowed from the cave of the “bas-fond de la Madeleine” (Madeleine's low ground). In this meditative reading pose, Madeleine most often symbolizes Wisdom as a repentant sinner. But she also symbolizes faith, love, and hope in the resurrection of Christ, of which she is a privileged witness.

In the *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'alchimie et des alchimistes* (Reasoned Dictionary of Alchemy and Alchemists)¹, Magdalene is described as one of the most allegorical figures in Alchemy because she embodies essential symbols:

[...] the seven demons (metals, lepers, dragons) to be conquered, the three phases of the work (the three ministries), the cross (the crucible), transmutation (resurrection) and, finally, the adept himself, Christ in the form of a gardener, the heavenly gardener [editor's note: the alchemist], the one who cultivates love.

Mary Magdalene at the foot of the Cross sometimes appears in the early paintings of the Rose Cross Lodge (circa 1760).

Opposite the sculpted group is the prestigious bronze bust of Peter the Great. No one has ever wondered why it was deemed appropriate to recall that, during his visit to Brussels, the Tsar vomited at this spot after a drinking binge at the nearby Palace! As the Latin inscription on the square coping of the old Madeleine fountain at the bottom of the well reminds us in more refined terms. In essence, the sovereign “ennobled the water with the wine he had drunk at the third hour of the afternoon on April 16, 1717.” Jacques Dubreucq, author of the magnificent *Bruxelles 1000, une histoire capitale*, is inclined to think that this is a tall tale. The presence in an obscure location of this bust, whose historical anecdote was not very flattering, may have an unusual cause. The incident is said to have occurred one fine day in April 1717: it may have provided an opportunity for some 19th-century Brussels lodge to celebrate, beneath the august portrait, the year of the probably mythical founding of speculative Freemasonry in London, namely 1717! A mere supposition? It should be noted that the base of the bust is inscribed with the date 1717. -maçonnerie à Londres, à savoir 1717 ! Simple supposition ? Remarquons que le socle du buste (at the very bottom) only mentions the year 1717 and not the precise date of the Tsar's visit to this place. This chronogram was also visible in... the paved courtyard of Brussels City Hall in 2017, the bicentennial year of the “official” founding of Freemasonry! It was Prince Anatole Demidoff who, in 1854, donated the bust to the city of Brussels in memory of the Tsar's official visit 137 years earlier. With this gift, a work attributed to the German sculptor Christian Daniel Rauch, he wished to pay tribute to the sovereign who had ennobled his ancestor Nikita Demidoff, the court armorer. It is not known why the bust—along with the square coping of the fountain—was moved to a low-lying area that is not easily visible to the general public. In this curious context, the “Stone” is virtually “hidden” here, in accordance with the V.I.T.R.I.O.L. formula. An alchemical allusion is also possible: the first name “Pierre” is reminiscent of the “Philosopher's Stone,” the Elixir of Long Life. Do not the words of the Gospel resort to this play on words:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)

And did not our “Peter” the Great, like Christ, change, transubstantiate water into wine (Saint Hilaire mentions this briefly)? From a Masonic perspective, this episode could evoke the cup of libations or the chalice of bitterness offered to the candidate, representing the difficulties of the initiatory path. These “displacements” of statues in the right-hand recess took place in the second half of the 19th century. At the same time, the Freemason [Louis Samain](#) made a copy of the Madeleine in the recess.

In 1904, the Belgian state, on the instructions of Leopold II, had halved the size of the lower grounds of the park in order to widen the view of the brand-new Royal Palace. This greatly angered the population, who were very attached to this remnant of the old warren. Three years later, work was undertaken clandestinely (sic) to remove them permanently. But Charles Buls, a militant Freemason and influential politician in Brussels, where he had been mayor, managed to stop the maneuver and have the king's architect, Henri Maquet,

condemned. This was a judgment that was far from insignificant. In 1829, a guidebook mentions that to access the lowlands, one must pass through arches of chestnut and acacia trees... Coincidentally, the **acacia branch** symbolizes the immortality of the soul, resurrection, and spiritual rebirth. It is also a major Masonic symbol.

An unusual detail is that the imposing street lamps on Place des Palais, installed by the City of Brussels (1843?), are decorated with discreet five-pointed stars and other motifs such as palm tree trunks.

Unexpectedly, the star adorns Leopold II's [Norwegian chalet](#) at the rear of the Royal Palace on Rue Bréderode. It alludes to the first flag of the Belgian Congo designed by the Freemason explorer Stanley.

Alchemical ornamentation?

Without falling into the trap of Saint-Hilaire, who tended to see mystery and secrecy around every corner, it is useful to mention the following subjects because they may have a link with “alchemical symbolism” “ in the Royal Park². Often dating from after its creation. On the retaining wall of the slums, not far from the “couple” Madeleine and Pierre, visitors will find the inscription V.I.T.R.I.O.L. (and, mirrored, L.O.I.R.T.I.V.) . This is an acronym used in both alchemy and Freemasonry, meaning “Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificandoque Invenies Occultum Lapidem,” or “*Visit the interior of the earth and by rectifying [editor's note: by discovering the right path] you will find the hidden stone*” Rectify here means to align and reintegrate the central internal vertical axis, the place of free circulation of celestial and terrestrial energies and the philosopher's stone, namely the basin and its obelisk. Doesn't the title “bas-fonds” (underworld) of the Park indicate that the visitor is inside the earth, or at least at the gates of a realm between two worlds?

These fourteen finely forged letters are the remnants of an exhibition organized in 1991 by the French Community. Jean-Pierre Vlasselaer, former director of the Visual Arts Department, was the curator. He was the first to offer an elaborate and coherent Masonic interpretation of the Brussels Park. Indeed, Paul de Saint-Hilaire, whose pseudonym evoked the liturgical feast of Saint Hilaire linked to the inauguration of the Council of Troyes (1128), which proceeded to the investiture of the Order of the Temple, probably frequented the neo-Templar circles. Unfortunately, he only touched on the subject in his Brussels, Mille ans de Mystères (Brussels, A Thousand Years of Mysteries), thereby exposing himself to the mockery or disbelief of the high clergy. It was as if he had only exploited a simple “tip” without any further explanation from his “informant”... Jean-Pierre Vlasselaer, for his part, refers very subtly to the Park:

[...] the rigor of the argument [which] leads to mastery of space. Work on wasteland, or rather on rough stone, slow and endless polishing, a conscious exodus on a path to be traveled.

To my knowledge, the City of Brussels has never pursued what must be called a “transformation” of a heritage site that has been classified since 1971. I conclude that the city officials have given their tacit agreement...

In many places, we discover sculptures from the time the Park was created, most of them by Delvaux and Godecharle himself. Let us list them without any order of precedence or superfluous commentary: Madeleine and Pierre, two petrified Japanese lions (1780) transferred from Rue Héraldique (now gone) and placed opposite the Royal Palace, Venus, Thetis (now gone), a Mercury with a caduceus, the alchemical couple Apollo (sun) and Diana (moon), etc. But also Leda, Narcissus, the Argonaut Meleager slaying the boar and Adonis, an Apollo Belvedere and a Venus with a mirror by a pupil of Godecharle (whose hand was cut off by a vandal), Cleopatra and Alexander representing Egypt and Greece, countries of Alchemy, Mysteries, and Wisdom, Flora and Pomona (1781), the

dying Lucretia, a lion known as the Lion of Florence, the octagonal basin or fountain of youth (1780), Mercury, the eagle and Hermes from the rejected obelisk, etc. (p. 42). As an anecdote, the overflow from the water jet fed the Coperbeek flowing into the lowlands. Many of the sculptures come from the castle of Tervuren (Laurent Delvaux), the country estate of Charles de Lorraine, who died in 1780, the former labyrinth of La Warande, and the Hôtel de Tour et Taxis. It was Godecharle who was responsible for scattering them throughout the park. It is likely that the current arrangement of the ornamentation differs significantly from what was planned in the overall design. Near the octagonal basin is a remarkable group of eight hermaic steles (p. 18), including what is probably a Christ-Hermes or Lapis (the philosopher's stone?).

In honor of Hermes, god of merchants, it was customary to place this type of monument at crossroads to guide disoriented travelers. Hermes was an important figure for Freemasons. He was both the messenger of the gods, the herald and guardian of the ancient Mysteries with his share of trials preceding initiation, but also a psychopomp god and an adept in alchemy. He was sometimes called Trismegistus, the Thrice-Powerful Hermes. There are symbolic affinities with Saint James, protector of pilgrims. Hermes gave his name to the so-called Hermetic Wisdom.

As for the **four elements**, they are represented in the Park as follows: after avoiding the valley of the **earth** on the left, we come to the perpendicular or plumb line. It allows us to travel from **water** (the octagonal baptismal font) to **fire/air** (the unplaced obelisk)³. In the 18th century, there were only two trials: water and fire for the purpose of purification. As elements in the form of trials, the R.: E.: R.: added that of earth. The order was: fire, water, earth.

The central axis could therefore be read from the pediment (Chapter II) to the Heraldic Chamber. This housed the offices of the King of Arms known as "Golden Fleece" and was located at the end of **this central axis**, which represents "the sacred path," the axis mundi (Appendix 5). The Golden Fleece is a powerful symbol of the Philosopher's Stone, which crowns the work of the Great Work of alchemy (Appendices 4 and 5).

The urban planners of the Parc district placed heavy emphasis on the word "royal": Parc Royal, rue Royale, and place Royale. With regard to the Parc, this could be an allusion to the Royal Art, in the Masonic and/or alchemical sense. "royal": Parc Royal, Rue Royale, and Place Royale. With regard to the Parc, this could be an allusion to the Royal Art, in the Masonic and/or alchemical sense of the term. At the same time, in his exordium to the profane, the Marquis de Gages speaks of the Royal Art when referring to Freemasonry (see Chapter III, Appendix 4). In reality, Charles de Lorraine called himself "Royal Highness" and held the rank of prince for Empress Maria Theresa. He also honored himself with the title of "King of Jerusalem." As an anecdote, his full-length statue was erected in the center of the Place Royale in 1775 on the site of the current Godefroid de Bouillon, King of the Holy City, without bearing the title as a sign of Christian humility.

Another point, perhaps alchemical, is that Godeharle had designed an obelisk fountain that was to be erected on the site of the round basin. Minerva/Athena and Mercury/Hermes

would have been its emblematic figures. An Abundance ([cornucopia](#)), i.e., one of the attributes of Isis-Ceres-Demeter or the statue itself, and the Scheldt were also planned (sketch p. 42), all on a fake rock with four fountain openings. Finally, four marble medallions, namely of Maria Theresa, Joseph II, Charles of Lorraine, and Starhemberg, enhanced the monument. The latter, placed in a privileged location, admired the “**perfection**” of his park. In his opinion, the planned obelisk was a “sublime design.” The term ‘sublime’ was often used in Masonic circles in the 18th century. It is also found among alchemists and thinkers, where it means “raised in the air.” Figuratively, it is defined as follows: “That which is very high in moral, aesthetic, and intellectual values.”

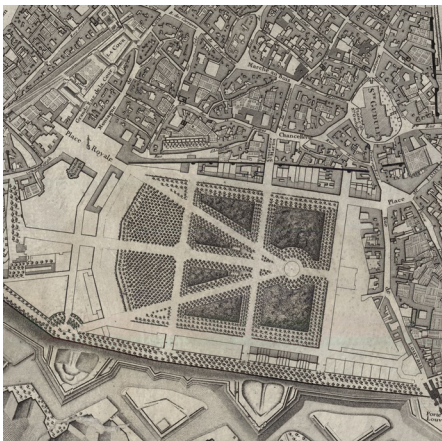
Finally, the hypothesis of Charles de Lorraine's palace with alchemical connotations (now the Museum Square) should not be dismissed out of hand. Note, among other things, the presence of Hercules, a cherub riding a sphinx and making the sign of silence, the declination of the four elements, etc.

Masonic geometry and structure of the Park

The appearance of a Masonic symbol is not sufficient to assert that the composition of a garden is underpinned by an initiatory intention. But the number of symbols, their orientation, and the order in which they appear can take on meaning, like the parts of a rebus or the markers of a path⁴.

First and foremost, it is important to emphasize that there were no urban planning constraints on the creation of a green carpet between the first medieval intramural wall, the lower part of the city, and the 18th-century boulevards that were soon dismantled (Portes de Namur and Portes de Louvain). It is even a setting designed to protect a jewel (see plan on p. 54). The ramparts are marked with a thin black line.

Generally speaking, the park has three main entrances, this “monumental trinity” according to Bernard De Smedt's 1847 guide, centered on the screw and the points of the compass. In this symbolic place, the ascending path—a 6.2-meter difference in height across the width is attested—begins with the sloping path on the left near the shallow end and its statue of Charity, the first quality of a Freemason. Directly to the right is **the central axis**: it begins at the octagonal basin and the pediment represents its apogee. The return was via the other right-hand path and its rotunda, visible on the map and indicated as such on Zinner's map (legend no. 41 on p. 54), then returns to the axis with a view of the Starhemberg residence and the Heraldic Chamber. The route ended at the Church of St. James on the Place Royale (see Chapter III). In reality, few Masonic temples are actually built on an east-west axis. But on his “aerial” map, Ferraris places the compass point to the East. This eastward-facing map of Brussels was an exception in the 18th century, since Mercator. The east indicates the direction of the rising sun, where Paradise is supposed to be. However, if we consider that the Park is indeed a Lodge carpet, the compass point is in the East and the configuration of a Masonic Temple is well respected. Isn't the leveled Park it not in itself a rough-hewn and polished stone, since it follows on from an enclosed hunting reserve? It should be remembered that the Lodge carpet or tableau of a Masonic Temple, originally drawn in chalk on the ground, represents symbols and tools emblematic of the rituals.



The park project is particularly highlighted in relation to the rest of the city. Dupuis is the engraver and Joseph Ferraris, an associate member of the *L'Heureuse Rencontre* Lodge in Brussels in the same year that the plan was published, is the cartographer.

The square was closed off by a “[Passage des Colonnes](#)” (Passage of the Columns). This brings to mind the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar) and the unknown world beyond, the otherworld, terra incognita. But it also brings to mind the two columns of the Lodge erected in the West, which

separate the sacred space or Temple from the profane world. In this configuration, working-class Brussels, or the lower or “vulgar” city, is located to the north of Ferraris' map, supposedly a place of ignorance and deprived of light. Moreover, from the closed environment of the Royal Quarter, the walker could not see this aspect of Brussels, this populous city crossed by the unsanitary Senne River.

For the moment, let us leave on our left the Church of Saint-Jacques-sur-Coudenberg, which has close links with King Solomon's Temple—and its corollary, the New Jerusalem—omnipresent in the chivalric Masonic rituals of the 18th century. I will discuss this at length in Chapter III.

The trophies of the Impasse du Borgendael, Place Royale (now the Constitutional Court), the Hôtel Errera, at the beginning of Rue Royale (No. 14) and Rue Ducale, evoke the quest for the Golden Fleece linked to the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Long Life (Appendix 4 and p. 62).

Compared to the left side alley, indicated by the former statue of Charles de Lorraine on Place Royale, the lowlands on the right, an allegory of the rough stone, could correspond to the bowels of the earth or the cave of “election,” the cavern that precedes initiation into the True Light.

After the valleys, let us contemplate **the central axis** that rectifies what is crooked, namely the slanted path. Indeed, the configuration evokes the sentence “Dirigit Obliqua” of the Strict Observance Templar (SOT) and the Rectified Scottish Rite (R.:. E.:. R.:.): “He/she makes straight/rectifies what is oblique.” In the mystical sense: “He (God) straightens the man who has erred” in accordance with the teaching of the Scottish Rite, rightly called “Rectified.” “Dirigit obliqua” are also the words of recognition for the degree of Companion of the SOT. In this case, it is indeed **the central axis that leads from the lower depths** (Place des Palais) **to the majestic pediment of the Parliament** (Rue de la Loi), it is the path to the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul that plays this eminent role of regeneration and rectification (Appendix 5). It could also signify the perfection of the Order's work under the aegis of the Worshipful Master or that “His Majesty reforms all abuses that creep into the State.”

Furthermore, the statue of Charles de Lorraine in Place Royale is also located in the perspective of the round basin symbolizing God, of whom he is the representative on earth. This diagonal points to the sunset of [Saint John's Day](#) (Place Royale). The evangelist is one of the two “patrons” of Freemasonry.

Freemasons celebrate the winter solstice, Saint John's Day, on December 27. “Enlightened,” they honor the moment when the sun begins its journey again. They participate in the birth of their “inner Sun” during the solstice ceremony. At that moment, light triumphs over darkness, as stated in the prologue to the Gospel of John, dear to 18th-century Freemasonry: “The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.” Associated with Janus, the winter solstice ([around December 21](#)) provides the key to the Gate of the Gods and the Great Mysteries. This was the period when all

Freemasons had to attend a solemn mass, their Masonic regalia hidden under their costumes. The celebration was followed by a meeting and a banquet in the evening.

Let us return to the left aisle. Here, visitors will find a 17th-century sculpture of [Charity](#), which was deliberately placed in this location. Charity, in the plural sense, was the primary virtue of all Freemasons in the 18th century. In an interview with Emperor Joseph II, the high Masonic dignitary Sudthausen explained what he meant by the concept of charity:

It is thus, Imperial Majesty, that one of the main objectives of our Order is to practice charity and to encourage each other to do so. The word charity, however, has such a broad interpretation among Freemasons that it also includes everything that can enlighten and perfect the human mind, and that is why Freemasonry deserves to be called the most excellent thing in the world.

With its obelisk (absent), the central axis and the oblique walkways could symbolize the contribution of the creative Light of the East to the darkness of the West.

The right-hand side walkway, meanwhile, would have been aimed at a simple mound or a rotunda lined with plane trees, symbols of regeneration. Was a temple/tholos dedicated to Venus, Apollo, or Friendship planned? This is the current Place du Trône. It can be seen on Ferraris' map, at the bottom left (represented by a small black square), and on Zinner's map. In any case, a temple to Venus was located in the garden of Starhemberg's successor, Belgiojoso... A straight line via the two points of the compass connected this unplaced rotunda to the statue of Charles of Lorraine, the "guardian of the Temple," and to his palace with alchemical connotations (now Place du Musée).

The oblique path is therefore "rectified" by **the central axis** of the Park, "the celestial path," which targets the Allegory of (Divine) Justice of the Palace of the Nation (Parliament and Senate) or the Victorious Virtue over Vices, a major theme for the Masons of the 18th century, virtue representing Knowledge and vice representing ignorance (see Chapter II).

In the opposite direction, this straight axis pointed to the portico of the Heraldic Chamber, which housed the Treasury of the Golden Fleece (illustration) from 1789 to 1794 until the hasty departure of the Austrians upon the arrival of the French revolutionaries (Appendix 5). There is no certainty about the year 1789...

Originally, the paths of the Park were covered with white stone gravel, waste from cut stone. The round basin is the focal point of the Park: it allows visitors to discover its controlled layout. It should be remembered that the manifested God, the "Supreme Being" (a term used by the SOT), but also the alchemical Sun and Gold are all represented by a point at the center of a circle. For Freemasons, the importance of the point within a circle, of the compass point, i.e., the round basin in the park, is self-evident:

The compass, with one of its points resting on the ground, cannot fail to describe a perfect circle with its other point; thus, the Master should also circumscribe his actions so that they are flawless, and therefore set a good example for others.

Godecharle's triangular obelisk with Minerva-Athena, Abundance, and Mercury-Hermes in its center was to provide "the final stone of the entire edifice," or the keystone.

The original plan of the park from 1776 is based on four squares measuring 499 feet and 4 inches and two slanted squares. The entire park (in green) corresponds to the two-to-three ratio of the [carpet of the Lodge of the SOT](#) (p. 17). In this Rite, the first third, to the west, represents the Porch of the Temple, while the center represents the Temple itself. It is used for meditation on Masonic symbols and is a visual summary of the Temple as a whole.

The three pillars of a Masonic temple, Strength, Beauty, and Wisdom, give it its sacred character. Thus, in the Royal Quarter, Strength “which supports” (left aisle) would correspond to the statue of Charles de Lorraine; Beauty “which adorns” should have been represented by a rotunda that I have just mentioned (now Place du Trône); Wisdom would be located at the basin, which was to be adorned with an obelisk, and at the pediment of the Palais de la Nation (Minerva-Wisdom or Justice).

In general, it is curious that the truncated column, symbol of the Order of the Temple abolished in 1312, but still standing thanks to the Strict Observance claiming its spiritual heritage, is not found in the Park. In any case, some see it on the right trophy of the [entrance gate to the Senate](#). Others, more perceptive, see it on the base of a raised monument dedicated to Godecharle, sometimes called *Allegory of Truth* or *Truth Unveiled* (1881), hidden in the bushes not far from the round pond. It appears as the final touch to the Park. A young woman unveils the sketch of the pediment of the Palace of the Nation, which exalts Justice. This shows a truncated column in the middle (see Chapter II).

Finally, some claim that the goose foot at the [entrance to the Palace of Versailles](#) served as a model for the Park in Brussels. In reality, this layout at the entrance to a garden almost always has uneven branches. In our case, the compass and goose foot can indeed be confused, but this layout was largely obsolete in 1775. As Peter V. Conroy Jr. points out in his article “The Controversial Garden of J.-J. Rousseau.” In France, the wave of English gardens began to sweep across the country in the 1760s, at the time when Rousseau was publishing *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1761). Examples of French gardens heavily influenced by English design include Ermenonville (1766-1776), Bagatelle (1777-1787), and Le Désert de Retz (1785). Furthermore, a Le Nôtre-style garden is geometric and flat; its design is clear and visible from a distance, whereas the park, composed of lowlands, high forests, and coppices, resembles a “massif forest.” ▲ These elements confirm the influence of the English garden on the Royal Park. It is therefore a combination of two styles. This is also the case with the symbolic park in Schwetzingen, which is contemporary with the one in Brussels.

Remarkable in itself, the “compass” of our park forms a 45-degree angle. This is most often the angle of the compass of the jewel at the Master's degree. [Le Tuileur de Vuillaume \(1820\)](#) describes it in more detail:

A four-inch-wide blue moiré cord worn as a sash from right to left; at the bottom of the cord hangs the jewel, with a red rosette, which consists of a square on which a compass open at 45 degrees is crossed.

At that time, it was believed that the garden could contribute to the advent of a new golden age marked by greater social harmony and perfection. The idea was to shape the landscape to display lessons in philosophical morality.

Finally, the piers of Godecharle's three main entrances marking the compass are decorated with three circles of dots arranged horizontally and topped, it seems, with pomegranates, common in Masonic temples, or pine trees. In any case, their symbolism is similar: in short, fertility and eternal life. Do they have any connection with Freemasonry? Or are they simply ornamental? No one can say for sure. As an anecdote, Godecharle's three points were not included in Guimard's initial design.

The Master's Mark?

The architect Guimard took the utmost care with the plans for the Place Royale and the city's park. Each of the combinations that were made before deciding on the smallest part of these two vast projects was accompanied by plans drawn up by Guimard on the orders of the government.

Memoir addressed by Limpens to Starhemberg, 1780.

In the **central axis** of the park, the project therefore planned to erect an obelisk, a mausoleum or a pyramid at the circular basin, all topped by a golden-crowned eagle (Fire/Air). The tapered triangular obelisk was to be enhanced by three medallions: Maria Theresa, Joseph II and... Starhemberg. It would have been embellished with four statues placed on four bas-reliefs with cascades – the four rivers of Paradise? – (Water). The whole would have been jealously guarded by eight sphinxes which, according to Plutarch, represented both Isis and a theology based on enigmatic, or hermetic, wisdom. Note the sequence of sphinxes (8), cascading basins (4), triangular obelisk and medallions (3), and point or God-Principle and immortal Soul (1, circle and primordial unity). (p. 30)

And this is where the rebus ends. For now. The obelisk was dedicated, as I wrote, to Mercury (Hermes), Minerva (Athena), goddess of Wisdom, Abundance (Isis-Ceres-Demeter), and the Scheldt. The monument never saw the light of day following the refusal of Emperor Joseph II, who preferred, under a futile pretext, to finance public works such as the port of Ostend. And yet the Royal Quarter, in accordance with the will of the ruling power, had been largely financed by the City and the surrounding monastic orders, to the point of ruining some of them. Such as the Coudenberg Abbey! As for the obelisk, it was paid for by the provincial states... Originally, it was a project kept “**secret**” ▲ .

With the engraved plan, the triangular obelisk built “**according to the rules of perspective**” ▲ would have served as a signature for the entire Royal Park.

In front of the pond, the prince had to settle for a monument to [Mercury-Hermes with his caduceus](#) (note the remaining glass eye, which makes him look awake) and his coat of arms adorned with the Golden Fleece. It is entitled Commerce and Navigation. It features a crossbow with three hammers, also known as Jacob's staff. This navigational instrument was used to measure the height of the sun at noon and the North Star at night, allowing hesitant travelers to continue on their way safely. Nearby is the anchor of Hope, a Christian symbol adopted by Freemasonry. Together with the Faith on the pediment of the Palais de la Nation and the Charity in the Park, the sloping left-hand path could evoke the triad of Faith, Hope, and Charity of the Rose-Cross degree.

The prince, supported by his architect Guimard and his ornamentalist Godecharle, probably chose to work for the initiated: the aim was to leave his mark on an emblematic location in the new Royal Quarter. As I said, it is important to note that in the 18th century, a classic French-style park did not provide visitors with a map, as it was easy to understand. It was not a complex maze. But a park composed of high forests and

coppices, in the English style, required a guide. If visitors wanted to grasp its intricate layout at a glance, they could consult the second monument dedicated to the Arts and Sciences at the main crossroads, where a map was engraved on a cartouche. This was also the work of our friend Godecharle (1784). The child on the right, wearing a cap, is holding a compass resting on a set square, symbols of mastery among Freemasons. The closed books, or the preserved secret (Gnosis), and the globe surrounding them represent the universality of Knowledge and Brotherhood. His brother offers the visitor a map of the park, two-thirds unfolded and crowned with roses. At his feet are a mallet and what look like two stonemason's chisels (or two burins), two of the Apprentice's tools. The base, which should have been raised, alludes to the stone that the Apprentice was asked to rough-hewn during his initiation. It is decorated with a wreath of laurel berries. Higher up, we see a crown and a trumpet of Fame, symbols of victory. The Master looks kindly upon his Companion: the Park is his "Masterpiece." It is worth noting that Chevalier de Ramsay, in his famous Discourse of 1736, which launched the chivalric legend of Freemasonry with its allusion to the Crusaders, insisted that a love of science and the liberal arts was an essential quality for the Order. This is the title of the sculpted group. And at the end of the 18th century, children playing with tools near a sphere were part of the Masonic cliché about diplomas. The two emblematic monuments were erected in 1784, shortly after the prince's departure for Vienna (1783). Was this Starhemberg's final challenge to Joseph II?

It is interesting to quote Ramsay at greater length on this subject, which foreshadows *The Encyclopedia of the Age of Enlightenment*, and even the resources of Wikipedia:

*The fourth quality required to enter our Order is a taste for useful sciences and liberal arts of all kinds, as the Order requires each of you to contribute, through your protection, your generosity, or your work, to a vast undertaking that no academy or university can suffice, because all private societies are composed of a very small number of men, their work cannot encompass such an immense subject. All the Grand Masters in France, Germany, England, Italy, and throughout Europe urge all scholars and artists of the Confraternity to unite in providing the material for a **universal dictionary of all the liberal arts and all the useful sciences**, with the sole exceptions of theology and politics. Work has already begun in London, but by bringing our colleagues together, we will be able to bring it to perfection in a few years. It will explain not only technical terms and their etymology, but also provide the history of science and art, its main principles, and how to work in these fields. In this way, the enlightenment of all nations will be brought together in a single work, which will be like a general store and a universal library of all that is beautiful, great, enlightening, solid, and useful in all the natural sciences and noble arts. This work will grow with each century, as knowledge increases; in this way, a noble emulation of the taste for belles-lettres and fine arts will spread throughout Europe.*

In conclusion, the construction of the Royal Park of Brussels is akin to an investment in public space by a high-ranking Freemason, in this case the Prince of Starhemberg. It should be seen as a highly speculative intellectual treasure hunt combined with a very human desire for personal prestige (the park would "immortalize his memory" ▲). It was not an initiatory journey in the strict sense of the term.

Although this study tends to demonstrate the contrary...



The following symbols appear on this diploma: the eagle with the caduceus, the pelican, the children, the compass opened at 45 degrees, the square, the closed book, the obelisk-pyramid, the broken column, Isis veiled, Artemis unveiled, Minerva-Athena, the Seal of Solomon with the letter G, two sphinxes, etc. All these elements should have been found in the East of the Park, among other things, thanks to Godecharle's

obelisk, “the most essential and important point of all.” ▲ Houdon, a member of the famous *Les Neuf Sœurs* Lodge, had offered to design, free of charge (sic), the main bas-relief “which should make the monument speak”⁵. ▲

Masonic diploma of the time:

[Master Mason diploma](#) from the *Royal York Lodge of Friendship* in Berlin (1796). Description above.

1 Christian Montésinos, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'alchimie et des alchimistes*, Éd. de La Hutte, Bonneuil-en-Valois.

2 For any alchemical interpretation in the 18th century, it is essential to refer to Dom Pernety and his extravagant but often well-documented *Dictionnaire mytho-hermétique*, in which we find the fabulous allegories of poets, metaphors, enigmas, and barbaric terms of hermetic philosophers explained (1758). [Online at Gallica BnF](#).

3 On the symbolism of the obelisk in the middle of a circle in 18th-century English gardens: Patrizia Granziera, *Freemasonic Symbolism and Georgian Gardens*, in *Esoterica. The Journal of Esoteric Studies*, vol. V, 2003 (p. 14 et seq.).

4 Loir, Christophe, Turcot, Laurent, *La promenade au tournant des 18e et 19e siècles (Belgique-France-Angleterre)* in *Études sur le 18e siècle*, volume XXXIX, Éditions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 2011. Article by Jean-Louis Vanden Eynde, [Promenades initiatiques aux jardins](#), p. 196, note 20. Online.

5 Main source: *Archives Générales du Royaume, Création du Parc et de la Place royale*.

The words in quotation marks marked in bold and with a triangle concerning the Park come from correspondence between Starhemberg and officials in the Austrian Netherlands.



Engraved map of the Park crowned with roses ("sub rosa" means "under the sign of secrecy").

Rough-hewn stone: work assigned to the Apprentice. Proportion by two and three as in R.: E.: R.:

Chisel and mallet of the Apprentice who has become a Fellow Craft: the plan of the Park is his "masterpiece."

Bound sheaf (fertility) or laurels with berries (victory and eternity).

Closed books: Knowledge of the Master.

Laurel wreath (immortality) and perhaps trumpet of Fame (victory).

Compass crowning the Master's Masonic square and globe (universality of Masonry).

Copied identically in 1891-92 by Freemason Isidore De Rudder.

Appendix 1. An avatar of Godecharle's model?



This allegorical group was probably inspired by Godecharle's obelisk project intended to adorn the large pond in the Royal Park. Joseph II rejected it, considering it too expensive. Here is the description taken from the catalog *La Toison d'Or, Cinq Siècles d'Art et d'Histoire* (Ed. Ville de Bruges, 1962, p. 264):

The emperor, wearing the Collar of the Golden Fleece, stands upright. He is flanked on one side by a helmeted woman carrying a scepter and on the other by a Victory figure accompanied by the Lion of Belgium. Behind the emperor stands an obelisk, the top of which bears a medallion depicting the bust of Empress Maria Theresa, surmounted by the eagle and the imperial crown. Lying behind the obelisk, an old man symbolizes the Scheldt. This group is made of soft biscuit porcelain and comes from the Tournai factory. It must have been made in 1780.

We can see that the medallion of Maria Theresa, who died in 1780, is still central. And Emperor Joseph II has become the main character in the composition. He has replaced... Mercury-Hermes! But Minerva is still present, accompanied by Victory (?). Curiously, she has abandoned her traditional spear for the emperor's scepter. It should be noted here that Minerva (Minerve au Compas then Minerve Aux Trois Palmiers) is the patron goddess of the Saxon Lodge of Starhemberg.

The imperial eagle is undoubtedly Austrian, but on an esoteric level, the eagle controlling the lightning at the top of the obelisk could allegorize Saint John the Evangelist, nicknamed the Eagle of Patmos and "the Son of Thunder" (Mark 3:17), that is, baptized in Light or by fire.

As I said, the diagonal line towards the Place Royale points to the sunset on St. John's Day in winter (p. 33). The eagle on the obelisk at its zenith, i.e., the sun at its zenith at noon, looks in this direction. The Scheldt, in the form of a reclining old man, is located behind the obelisk: it could represent the profane Old Man, the old Adam, whom the future initiate must shed in order to make way for the regenerated Man. However, this type of representation is quite common.

The rock-shaped base, which was probably openwork, would have symbolized the Passage to Eternity. A "Belgium" lion would also have been placed there.

The original allegorical ensemble was intended to constitute "the main piece," "the most important and essential point of all" ▲ and "the closely guarded secret of our Park" ▲, according to Starhemberg.

Finally, to support the Masonic thesis of the Park, it is worth noting that Godecharle was the principal sculptor of the gardens of Wespelaar Castle (Flemish Brabant, near Leuven) from 1791 to 1822. His patron was Jean-Baptiste Plasschaert, a dignitary of Freemasonry, whose bust was created by the artist. His assistant, the architect Ghislain-Joseph Henry, was a Brother. The symbolic value of Godecharle's ornamentation is not in doubt. An obelisk representing immortality was its centerpiece. It was located on an island meant to represent the Champs Élysées, the place where heroes and virtuous people enjoy eternal rest. The obelisk in Wespelaar was topped by an Ouroboros, the snake biting its own tail, a symbol of eternity and enlightenment.

An article in the highly reputable Flemish daily newspaper published on December 7, 2002, also supports this theory:

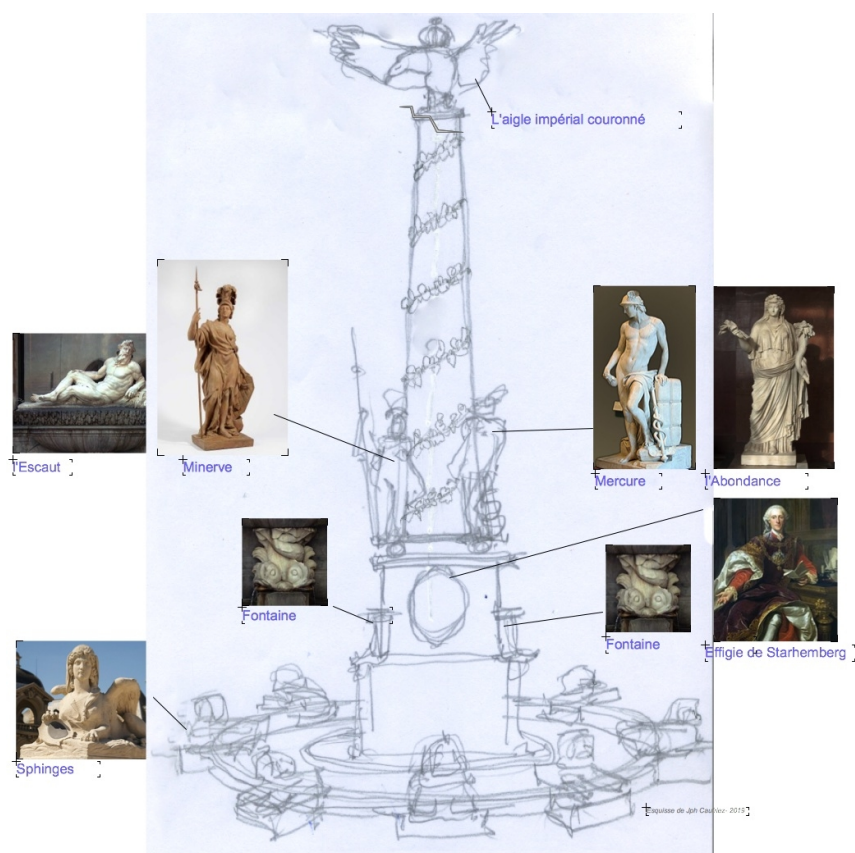
Only the central monument, the obelisk, has been preserved on site. The Elysée was probably a Masonic site. The Masonic symbolism includes the circle (the circumference of the island, the circular arrangement of the busts, the central open space, the shape of the snake), the number three, which appears three times (three steps at the bottom, three floors in the vertical position of the pedestal above the steps, and the three parts of the obelisk), the square (the circumference of the monument), the triangle (the top of the obelisk), the obelisk itself, and the Ouroboros that crowns the monument.

At the top of the pyramid sits the Ouroboros, the snake biting its own tail, symbol of eternal return.

Patrizia Granziera, author of *Freemasonic Symbolism and Georgian Gardens*, states that "obelisks in Masonic symbolism were associated with the sun and astronomical phenomena related to mythology. They were symbols of continuity, power, stability, resurrection, and immortality."

This parallel with Godecharle's obelisk project, which was to adorn the Brussels Park pond, seems to me to be an important argument in favor of the hypothesis of its Masonic character.

Artist's impression of Godecharle's obelisk in the round basin



Sketch of a reconstruction of Godecharle's obelisk in the round basin
(the statues are not those of the sculptor).

© Jean-Philippe Caufriez

At the General Archives of the Kingdom, I have not yet been able to find the sketch of Godecharle's obelisk mentioned in several official letters of the time. However, the file there is the result of a “random and incomplete sorting” dating from the 19th century, i.e., pieces taken from different collections. As for the model plan of the obelisk, it is believed to be in Vienna, along with numerous documents (Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv). The obelisk was to be decorated with three medallions, including those of the sovereigns, perhaps full-length, and that of Starhemberg in the central axis.

The Fontaine du Palmier on the Place du Châtelet in Paris (1808) gives an idea of what it might have looked like. A column topped with a Victory replaces the obelisk; the Virtues have replaced Minerva and Mercury-Hermes. The cornucopia (cornucopia), but also the later sphinxes are very much present. The Parisian fountain is also located in the center of a circular basin.

Appendix 2. Medals of Minerva at the Three Palms (Leipzig)

The Minerva Lodge at the Three Palms in Starhemberg is the result of a long merger of lodges, including the Minerva Lodge at the Compass (Minerva zum Zirkel, 1747-1766). It was under this name that in 1766 it joined the Strict Observance before taking its final name (p. 12). In this regard, it is curious to note that the statue of Minerva on the Godecharle obelisk was to occupy the head of the compass in Brussels Park. This is the exact allegory of Minerva at the Compass!

In 1776, the year of the death of Baron Hund, founder of the SOT, Minerva aux Trois Palmiers kept a diary (now destroyed) and dedicated a medal to him. A little-known fact is that this same baron had been received as a “Scottish Master” in Brussels on August 22, 1742 (Chapter of Clermont, the first high degree after Mastery) long before preparing his “Templar” project.

The medallions of the Lodge feature the trowel, the sphere with the sphinx, the pyramids, and Athena's owl. Minerva is the Roman equivalent of the goddess Athena. It is undoubtedly the Acropolis dedicated to the cult of Athena that is represented in the background. The palm tree, which translates as “phoenix” in ancient Greek, is one of the attributes of the goddess Isis. It is a symbol of eternity.



with the trowel and the sphere.

Appendix 3. The Phoenix at the Parc roundabout?

In 1841, to enhance the four-day national holiday (September 24-27), a green dodecagonal kiosk, designed by Jean-Pierre Cluysenaar, was placed in the circular basin of the Park, where the obelisk was to stand. Like the obelisk, the phoenix is a mediator between heaven and earth.

After five years, it was moved between the central alley and the left-hand alley pointing towards the Place Royale because it blocked the view of the Palais de la Nation and Godecharle's allegorical pediment erected on Rue de la Loi (sic). The bandstand and the number of its columns decorated with garlands can be linked to universal harmony and divine perfection (the heavenly Jerusalem has twelve gates). Insofar as it has a symbolic meaning.

It is decorated with golden pheasants. According to the Ancients and the famous Cuvier (1769-1832), this magnificent bird was the inspiration for the Phoenix, "the golden bird " or "solar bird," which is the ultimate symbol of resurrection. *Le Magazine Universel* (1837-1838), published during the years when the kiosk was designed, also refers to this.

Also known as the "bird of fire," it is one of the major emblems of Freemasonry, mainly in the R.·. E.·. R.·. But also in the field of alchemy, where "the Caesar of Birds" represents the Philosopher's Stone, the Stone of Wisdom. The golden pheasant phoenix is also featured on Touzay-du Chenteau's philosophical map dedicated to Charles de Lorraine (Appendix 7).

A few years later, in 1848, the Freemason Louis Jehotte, Godecharle's successor as professor at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts, sculpted a full-length statue of Charles de Lorraine. The statue was intended to adorn the large pond in the park or the Place Royale. In the end, it was Godefroid de Bouillon, the other "King of Jerusalem," who won the competition. Set apart in the Place du Musée, Charles de Lorraine holds a manuscript or a plan (of the park?) in his right hand and a completely unrolled map at his left foot. Unless this is an allusion to his passion for cartography.

In 1850, the same Jehotte sculpted a cursed Cain for the garden of the Palais des Académies on Rue Ducale. His crime accomplished, Cain recoils in horror. The club with which he killed his brother Abel has just fallen to the ground. He raises his left hand to his eyes in a gesture of horror: this movement has caused the animal skin covering him to slip halfway down.

The Brussels Park could be an allegory for the Garden of Eden (see Appendix 5).

Appendix 4. The Golden Fleece at the entrance to the Park?



Starhemberg was a knight of the Order of the Golden Fleece. This alone does not, in my opinion, justify the importance given to the Golden Fleece in the Royal Quarter and more particularly around the Park. It should be noted that, since the 10th century, the Golden Fleece has symbolized the search for the philosopher's stone and, later, the elixir of life (Chapter II, p. 62).

Just opposite the left (and logical) entrance to the Royal Park is a trophy of arms placed on the balustrade wall that connects the Hôtel de Grimbergen (Place Royale, 10) to its neighbor, the Hôtel Errera (Rue Royale, 14) . It is located not far from the site of the apse of the former Palatine Chapel of the Coudenberg Palace, which housed the Treasure of the Golden Fleece. The sculpted group depicts a breastplate adorned with a sword, spears and axes (frisques), a shield and a club. On the left, there is a helmet encircled with laurels and the mouth of a dragon with oak leaves. The whole is surmounted by a sign bearing the inscription "PATRIA." The shield, decorated with a head, evokes the aegis of Pallas Athena (Minerva), the half-sister of the god Hermes. She is the lunar goddess of Wisdom and War. Greek mythology tells us that by shaking the aegis, Zeus could unleash thunder and lightning, spreading terror among mortals. He occasionally lent it to Athena, but also to Apollo. When armed with the aegis, Athena used it to give strength rather than to terrify: thus, it was with the aegis in her hand that she encouraged Heracles/Hercules before his fight with Cycnos. She also covers Achilles with it as he sets off to challenge the Trojans and allow the Greeks to recover the body of Patroclus. She is the protector of Jason and the Argonauts who set out to conquer the Golden Fleece.

In this sculpted group, the dragon that defended access to the precious fleece—as evidenced by his laurel wreath and oak leaves—is slain or put to sleep by Medea's magic. On the right, we can see the club of the god Hercules, who accompanied the Argonauts on their journey for a time. Hercules is also the patron god of the House of Lorraine. Through his twelve labors, he is associated, as in the case of the conquest of the Golden Fleece, with the achievement of the Great Work of alchemy. A fleece, or goat skin linked to the symbolism of Athena, may be found to the left of the club. The old man on the aegis bears a striking resemblance to the "Mouth of Truth" in the church of Santa Maria in Cosmedin in Rome. According to legend, it has the power to cut off the hands of all those who lie. Putting one's hand in the mouth of the effigy was considered a subtle form of initiation. One's hand would only remain intact if one was deeply honest, loyal, and virtuous: themes that were eminently Masonic in the 18th century. This tradition is the subject of a scene in the film *Roman Holiday* starring Gregory Peck and Audrey Hepburn (1953).

It is not impossible to draw a parallel with the degree of Knight Benefactor of the Holy City (synonymous with Knight Templar) belonging to the Inner Order of the R.: E.: R.: Their trophy of arms is described as follows:

[...] consisting of a breastplate pierced by a lance, surmounted by a helmet, a shield and an antique sword, and a white scarf [...] placed diagonally across the breastplate; on the pectoral of the breastplate will be a cross of the Order engraved or raised in relief.

Love of country (PATRIA) is the foremost “military” virtue of this knightly rank... And the word “PATRIA” is highlighted on the sculpted group on Rue Royale. To complete the picture, the two lions (dated 1781) at No. 6 form a striking duo facing each other, locked in combat. Facing the Place Royale and its Passage des Colonnes (now demolished), i.e. the secular world, one roars, while the other looks serenely towards the left-hand alley of the Parc de Bruxelles.

A forgotten trophy in the Impasse du Borgendael, to the left of the church, adopts a style similar to the one I have just described above (sometimes accessible in summer via the courtyard of the BELvue Museum). But its symbolism is striking: a huge owl and the aegis on Athena's breastplate are at the center of the trophy, and the Greek helmet decorated with rams (the Quest for the Golden Fleece?) is topped by a sphinx, whose presence here seems incongruous. The allusion to the Egyptian Mysteries, the secret of the sphinx or Isis, the search for truth and Knowledge is likely. The scales of Justice are shapeless, which could echo the pediment of the Palace of the Nation centered on the notion of Justice (see Chapter II). The observer also notices a shield, a bundle, a closed book, a manuscript on the right, a sphere or globe, a torch, a sundial, a sword... The face of the goddess Athena seems to have been replaced by that of a monster. It may be a tree trunk (oak) or the dragon guarding the Golden Fleece. Another hypothesis is that this specific part of the trophy was damaged or chiseled away by the sans-culottes. One cannot help but be struck by the similarity between the trophy and the commemorative medal for the bicentennial of the Grand Lodge of France, minted in 1936, which features a helmet adorned with rams.

The location allowed the Minister Plenipotentiary to go directly from his residence to the choir of Saint-Jacques Church. His coat of arms and an inscription were probably at the foot of the trophy (now the figure of King Albert II). There was also a fountain decorated with lions and suns, which has been moved to the Parc de la Porte de Hal. The Grand Serment Royal et de Saint-Georges des Arbalétriers de Bruxelles (Grand Royal and Saint George's Oath of the Crossbowmen of Brussels) is currently located in this cul-de-sac. Its museum occupies the former cellars, which are located directly beneath the choir of Saint-Jacques.

Finally, at the beginning of Rue Ducale, a lion roaring louder than the one on Rue Royale gazes towards the West. The disfigured trophy of the Palais des Académies shows a ram's or lamb's head attached to the base, designed by the Freemason Joseph Jaquet. Further on, you can see vases where the ram (p. 46) has replaced the lion. Still on Rue Ducale, opposite Place du Trône, two children standing on the balustrade raise their arms in a sign of victory (illustration at the bottom of the page). Are they heralding the end of the Quest

for the Golden Fleece (1874)? Some elements were erected in the mid-19th century; the vases are by Guimard.

Curiously, the Brouckère fountain was erected in 1866 at the Porte de Namur, not far from Rue Ducale, in homage to the former Freemason mayor Charles de Brouckère, who served from 1844 to 1860 and lived on Rue de Bréderode, near the Palace. It has since been moved to Square Palfyn. It is decorated with numerous “Egyptian” or roaring lions. At the top of the fountain, one of the three children, now badly damaged, holds out a laurel wreath (illustration above). In 1851, the road extending from Place du Trône was dedicated to... the Golden Fleece. With the Brouckère fountain, the Quest is considered victorious.

Appendix 5. The Starhemberg residence and the Golden Fleece in line with the Park?

Place des Palais, Guimard had planned two mansions, one of which was intended for Minister Plenipotentiary Georges-Adam de Starhemberg (now the Grand Salon Blanc of the Palais Royal). Ideally, they should have been inaugurated in the summer of 1783. Had he not returned to Vienna in July of that year, the prince would have had the satisfaction of having the Parc de Bruxelles, "his masterpiece" and "a delightful spectacle for the thinking man," permanently before his eyes [...] "but as the people hardly think, they see only vast promenades" ,“ according to official letters of the time! It would therefore be a "philosophical garden" in the Enlightenment sense. Or a park transformed into the Garden of Adam (Eden), representing a return to the Golden Age, if we refer to one of the Prime Minister's first names... Isn't Ferraris' map deliberately oriented towards the east, where Paradise is supposed to be? In Anderson's Constitutions of 1723, isn't Adam the first Freemason?

A Masonic exegesis defines this Golden Age of harmony as follows:

Paradise in many religions has been described as a lush garden, where peaceful life followed the course of eternity, a life without imbalance, a life in perfect harmony. The ancients, whatever their beliefs, always located paradise as the center, the heart of the World, where a spring gushed toward the heavens, thus personifying the ideal place for a relationship with God, the Supreme Being, the Principle, the Great Architect.

The Heraldic Chamber, built between 1784 and 1785, was located at the rear of the Minister Plenipotentiary's residence, in a cul-de-sac. It consisted of a simple ground floor. Beyond it stood a vast building which, seen from a distance, appeared to have been built on top of the Heraldic Chamber. It housed a museum dedicated to the glory of the Habsburg epic (moved from the former Arsenal), but also the offices of the King of Arms known as "Toison d'Or," the chief heraldic officer—at that time, it was the chamberlain Count Chrétien-Joseph(?) de Lannoy, a member of L'Heureuse Rencontre (p. 14)—who was in charge of organizing ceremonies. The Chamber also kept the insignia and decorations of the Order, as well as the Treasury of the Golden Fleece itself and its fabulous Cross of the Oath (p. 34). It was flanked by the Chamber of Accounts and a vast library.

Since the time of Charles V, the treasure had been kept in the palatine chapel of the Coudenberg. After the fire of 1731, it was kept in a remnant of the palace. However, with the approach of the French revolutionaries, the Austrians took it to Vienna in 1794. Did Starhemberg, himself a Knight of the Golden Fleece, cherish the hope of keeping the Treasure in the Heraldic Chamber (near the current Rue de Bréderode)? Did this complex not overlook, through the former Carmelite gardens, the new church of Saint-Jacques-sur-Coudenberg, parish of the court and notables of the new district?

The central axis of the park, marked by the Hermes stones indicating the path of Light, would thus have been lined with the “Golden Fleece” or the Philosopher's Stone, the Elixir of Long Life, the octagonal basin linked to the fountain of youth and resurrection, the obelisk of the circular basin – Champs Élysées where the virtuous enjoy the rest of the Blessed – and finally the pediment of the Palace of the Nation and its crowning of the Chosen One rewarded by Justice (see Chapter II).

In 1803, for Napoleon's visit to Brussels, Godecharle placed a priestess of Isis, perhaps to flatter his pronounced taste for Egyptology, at the entrance to the former residence designed by Starhemberg, almost in line with the Park (rue des Palais). In 1798, the young Bonaparte, accompanied by a few loyal followers, had walked through it on foot. On that occasion, he was saddened by the dilapidation of the park and the disappearance of certain sculptures following the ransacking by the sans-culottes in 1793.

The perpendicular therefore represents the central axis of the park. It is often confused with the plumb line. It is a fundamental symbol at the Apprentice level, which will be complemented by the level, lever, and ruler at the Fellow Craft degree (see illustration). The perpendicular/plumb line, with its symbolism of verticality, is often associated with self-improvement and individual elevation. It represents the quest for spiritual perfection. The Freemason must find the path to the divine within himself. The direction of the plumb line shows him the way to the Light, the straight path, the path of righteousness, his commitment to justice and the search for truth (see Chapter II).

Sometimes placed at the center of the lodge, the perpendicular/plumb line evokes the universal Law, the cosmic law, the axis of the world, or even the tree of life. It is the backbone of the world. One must not stray from this axis: progress must be made in a straight and balanced manner, in accordance with the Law. To deviate from the axis would be to fall back into pride and illusion. Finally, the plumb line evokes the center of the circle. As is the case with the circular basin in the Park.

In general, the perpendicular/plumb line symbolizes the position of the Freemason and his profound nature: between the top and the bottom, both matter and spirit (divine or not).

Appendix 6. A Philalèthe sponsored by Charles de Lorraine?



On October 30, 1775, an eccentric who called himself Touzay-du Chenteau (1741-1788) dedicated to Charles de Lorraine a philosophical and mathematical map with an Illuminist Masonic, alchemical and kabbalistic purpose. Only a very few copies were published. A philosopher, alchemist, mathematician and expert in kabbalistic sciences (sic), du Chenteau was a member of the Philalèthes, literally the Friends of Truth, an elite circle founded in 1773. It was an offshoot of the influential Parisian lodge Les Amis Réunis (1771). The Occultist Academy was created in 1775. In search of absolute truth, this circle aimed to gather in its library everything related to Freemasonry and, more broadly, the "occult sciences ." It was also a member of the Society of Unknown Philosophers.

According to Claude-Antoine Thory, this card reveals "the great mysteries" of the Élus Coëns, which partially inspired the R.·. E.·. R.·. Remarkably, one of the engravings appears to depict Charles de Lorraine as Imperator decorated with the Seal of Solomon (bottom right)³. His face, particularly the characteristic shape of his mouth, and his Roman uniform are reminiscent of the statue of the governor unveiled in the Place Royale on January 17 of that same year, 1775 (illustration). It is a work by Verschaffelt, the ornamentalist of the symbolic garden of Schwezingen. The Charles de Lorraine on the card allegorizes "red sulfur," or the Phoenix, namely the Philosopher's Stone or its median capable of transmuting one metal into another.

Du Chenteau—but what was this Parisian doing in Brussels? – and the prince were practically neighbors in the Brussels countryside in Schaerbeek: the alchemist lived in Borcht Castle, at the current intersection of Avenue Louis Bertrand and Rue Kessels, and Charles de Lorraine regularly resided in Monplaisir (from the roundabout on Avenue Huart-Hamoir to Schaerbeek station).

According to [Gallica BnF](#), the map is a striking example of graphic esotericism:

The author wants to illustrate two major ideas. Behind the different religions, there is a single philosophia perennis (eternal philosophy), a primordial tradition to which the study of Kabbalah and symbols can give us access. All the components of creation and life are linked by subtle but very real connections. This gives rise to a vast network of analogies and correspondences that inspire and sustain the dynamic force that animates and supports the world. This large and complex composition thus reveals the correspondences and links that Hermetic-Kabbalistic thought believes it can establish between the constellations of the zodiac, angelic hierarchies, the divine attributes of Kabbalah, the seven heavens of Antiquity, the seasons, and the parts of the human body.

This “Philosophical and Mathematical Map of the Magical and Perpetual Calendar” is supposed, according to its author, to deliver a complete knowledge of philosophy, “containing the contemplation of the deepest and most secret things.” . It also offers an exhaustive overview of Masonic Illuminism during the Age of Enlightenment.

Two asterisks mark Touzay-du Chenteau's additions, notably on the drawing opposite, but also the Masonic columns Jachin and Boaz with pomegranates, the pointed cubic stone, Wisdom, the zodiac, the sacred tetragrammaton, etc.

So was Charles of Lorraine a member or sympathizer of the Philalèthes?

The grandiloquent dedication enhanced by the prince's coat of arms and the formal approval of the high-ranking Brussels official Limpens would suggest so...

Finally, there is a tangible link between Starhemberg, the park's designer, and Les Amis réunis: Prince Charles-Constantin of Hesse-Rheinfels-Rotenburg, his nephew, was a member, as well as of the prestigious L'Heureuse Rencontre lodge in Brussels (1777).

Appendix 7. The Royal Park “at the highest point in the sky”

As curious as it may seem today, Governor Albert of Saxe-Teschen and his wife Archduchess Marie-Christine, who had succeeded Charles de Lorraine, applied for and obtained “Brabant naturalization” in 1786. “Brabant naturalization.” The aim was to win the favor of a people who were beginning to be exasperated by Joseph II's brutal reform projects. To celebrate the event, they invited Frenchman Jean-Pierre Blanchard (1753-1809) to demonstrate ballooning over Brussels Park on June 10, 1786, and again on Sunday, June 25, the day after St. John's Day. The intrepid adventurer had just successfully crossed the English Channel, though not without difficulty.

The hot air balloon, or rather a flying boat, rose from the Rue de Louvain to fly over the Royal Park, the Place Royale, and the Porte de Namur. It was perhaps the perfect opportunity to show off spectacularly above the urban jewel of Prince Starhemberg, completed by his “brother” Albert of Saxe-Teschen. Both were members of the Three Eagles Lodge in Vienna. Here is the account that appeared in the Gazette des Pays-Bas on June 12, 1786:

Mr. Blanchard, a French physicist and pensioner of His Most Christian Majesty, had the honor of conducting his 18th balloon experiment here the day before yesterday, in the presence of Their Royal Highnesses and a huge crowd of people from both this city and the surrounding areas. He caught the attention of the most knowledgeable spectators with his excellent maneuvering. He rose from the garden of the suppressed Annonciades and, initially following the direction of the wind, which was blowing from the north, passed over the park, greeting everyone with his flag, on which was the coat of arms of our august Governors. He repeated this several times, as the occasion demanded, notably by lowering a lamb suspended from a parachute beyond the gates of the city, known as the Namur Gate [...] Finally, after hovering for some time, as if he wanted to descend, Their Highnesses having left through the said gate, he again had the honor of greeting them, and then descended on the territory of Osmal [editor's note: Watermael], near Oudergem [...] Returning to the city, Their Royal Highnesses and the public gave him an indescribable welcome.

As an anecdote, the airship rose into the air a stone's throw from the headquarters of the elite lodge L'Heureuse Rencontre, which had its meetings on Rue Notre-Dame-aux-Neiges – Rue de l'Enseignement is close to its route – at the home of François Louis (?) van Marcke de Lummen from 1772 onwards. L'Union was also welcomed there. And very close to the Les Vrais Amis de l'Union Lodge, which had its headquarters at what is now 4 Rue de l'Orangerie (now Rue Henri Beyaert). It should be noted that the houses on the former Rue de l'Orangerie have been destroyed. More precisely, Blanchard took off from the courtyard of the Annonciades – mentioned in the gazette article – whose order dedicated to the Virgin Mary, considered idle and useless, had just been abolished by Emperor Joseph II and the convent transformed into barracks (1785). It was located in the central axis of the Park.

The hero of the day, aeronaut Jean-Pierre Blanchard, was a devout Freemason. Thus, one year after the festivities in Brussels, he presented himself on June 18, 1787, at the Saint Louis Saint Philippe de la Gloire Lodge in Nancy, Lorraine. He took part in the Saint-Jean d'Été celebrations, which at that time were still a compulsory festival for all Freemasons. After receiving a barrage of compliments and bombastic tributes, as was customary, Jean-Pierre Blanchard launched a scale model of his balloon at the end of the banquet, eloquently dedicating it to the "Great Architect of the Universe"!

Chapter II: Symbolism of the pediment of the Palace of the Nation



- What are the seven virtues of a Mason?
- Faith, hope, and charity, which are the main ones;
- Justice, temperance, prudence,
- The seventh is still unknown to me.
- Rectified Scottish Rite, Master's degree ritual.

History and description

On August 24, 1779, Prince Starhemberg laid the first stone of what would one day become the Palace of the Nation or Parliament of the future Kingdom of Belgium. It was completed in 1783 according to Guimard's plans and inaugurated by Governor Albert of Saxony -Teschén. The majestic neoclassical pediment, punctuated by eight columns, is located on the north side of the Royal Park, i.e., to the virtual East (p. 31), in the exact extension of its central axis. Whether by chance or not, it was on August 24, 1312, the date of the palace's inauguration, that all the property of the Order of the Temple was transferred (devolution) to the Knights of Malta¹, and it was Starhemberg himself who had chosen this specific day.

A revealing detail, in my opinion, is that the prince demanded a trowel, a compass, and a hammer, all made of gilded copper, for the laying of the first stone. These are the three tools found on the altar of the Venerable Master at the degree of Apprentice of the R. E. R. successor of the Strict Observance, of which he was a member. The bas-relief, begun in the spring of 1782 by Freemason Gilles-Lambert Godecharle, allegorizes *Justice punishing Vice and rewarding Virtue* or *Justice rewarding Virtue, protecting Weakness and driving out Vice*. By a curious coincidence, a ritual of Chevalier Kadosh (c. 1800), now the 30th degree of the "High Degrees," contains the following formula:

– *Who will punish vices and reward virtue?*

Answer: – *The Great Architect of the Universe alone.*

And for Strict Observance, “*punishment and reward are the great principles of the order*”². Overall, the composition reads in this order: Justice occupies the central position. His throne is accessed by three steps. To his right, the positively marked side, are the Virtues, all represented by women: the Elected One through his Virtue, that is, moral righteousness and Love of God, Temperance, Prudence, Charity, and Hope. Wisdom (Minerva-Athena), who makes the introductions, is an exception as she is not a Virtue in the theological sense of the term. To the left of Justice is Fortitude, isolated, which is a cardinal virtue. For the theologian Thomas Aquinas, Fortitude, synonymous with firmness and constancy, is the condition of all virtue. It is undoubtedly for this reason that it is the only cardinal virtue to be found on the left side of Justice. Faith-Religion or Clemency is seated in front of Fortitude. Further away are the Vices: discord, hypocrisy, fanaticism, etc. – not to be confused with the seven deadly sins – are being chased away by a man wielding an unidentifiable instrument. Is he the son of Justice-Themis, Prometheus, the thief of fire who offered the Light of Knowledge to humanity, or the new, regenerated Adam? Is he not chasing away a woman with a snake (Eve)? The Vices are thrown into a dungeon. This bas-relief evokes a phrase from a Masonic catechism:

Dig dungeons for vices and raise temples to virtue, prefer Justice and Truth in all things, and advance on the path of Wisdom and Knowledge.

The motifs of the bas-relief are inspired by antiquity or the Middle Ages. Justice is the main figure. She is seated next to the scales and holds a sword, her traditional attributes. With her right hand, she holds out a laurel wreath, symbolizing immortality, to an “Elect One.” This virtuous being is equipped with an arrow: he could therefore be the incarnation of God's Love and its corollary, Virtue, or, in a purely Masonic context of the 18th century, the “Lover of Virtue,” “he who acts with righteousness.” This is all the more likely given that he is represented by a fully clothed young woman. In this case, the arrow would symbolize the exchanges between heaven and earth or the eternal power of God's Love.

For Saint Augustine, faith is the first of the virtues:

One cannot love something until one believes it exists. But if we believe and love, by acting well we also manage to hope.

This is why, on the bas-relief, Faith-Religion precedes Charity, which in turn precedes Hope. This is in accordance with the Masonic triad of “Faith-Hope-Charity” in the Rose-Cross degree. Finally, the Epistle to the Ephesians (8:2) proclaims:

It is by grace that you are saved, through faith. And this does not come from you, it is the gift of God.

Jansenism, centered on the personal gift of divine grace, influenced a significant part of 18th-century Freemasonry. The whole scene is reminiscent of the Last Judgment in medieval iconography. Indeed, this Justice is not that of men: she is not blindfolded because God sees everything and is infallible in his judgment. It is the Supreme Judge who grants salvation through grace.

Minerva, the goddess of wisdom, recognizable by her plumed helmet, announces to Justice the arrival of the Chosen One, who has taken the form of a winged Victory

because his soul is immortal. As I said, the presence of Minerva-Athena in this allegory is unusual. This is especially true since the pagan goddess occupies a position higher than the theological and cardinal virtues of Christian origin. To Minerva's right are two of the four cardinal virtues (Temperance and Prudence) and two of the three theological virtues (Faith-Religion, Hope, and Charity). Here is Temperance with an hourglass and a bridle. And in front of her is Prudence, whose right arm is wrapped in a subdued snake. Further away is Charity accompanied by children, like the one in the Royal Park at the beginning of the left aisle. This is one of the fundamental virtues of a Christian, but also of a Freemason in the sense of charity and universal brotherhood. In the lower left corner of the bas-relief, the observer discovers an oil lamp, symbol of the immortality of the soul and eternal light, and a young woman in a seated position meditating on a book. The other three are closed. These are undoubtedly the canonical gospels, with John's remaining open. Or perhaps an allusion to Knowledge. The young girl strangely turns her back on the scene imagined by Godecharle. Between the lit lamp and a book, the sculptor has engraved his name and the year 1782 ([Godecharle me fecit](#)) on a perfectly smooth stone. Does she also represent the wise virgin? (Matthew, 25:1-13)



On the opposite side, the Vices or the damned are pushed back towards a pile of rough stones. To the left of Justice, the seated figure places his hand on the truncated column and the tilted scales. This is thought to be an allegory of Faith, Religion, or Clemency. This is reinforced by the luminous Delta on his chest (see p. 65) and she is holding a book, probably the Bible, in her left hand. In Freemasonry, this triangle evokes the Great

Architect of the Universe or the Eye of Consciousness. A flame emerges from an urn, sometimes associated with the allegory of Faith or the immortal soul. Clemency, on the other hand, is most often depicted pushing aside the lictor's fasces, placed here at the foot of Justice. With her right hand, she tips the scales, no doubt laden with olive or laurel branches, as tradition dictates. Clemency often has a veiled face and a bare, bent knee. Logically, she is the one who tips the scales of Justice, softening its severity. But, as I said, the hypothesis of an allegory of Faith-Religion can also be put forward. Here, Clemency could be identified with the merciful Virgin Mary. Or, better still, with the goddess Isis, dear to the Masons of the 18th and 19th centuries, often depicted veiled and nicknamed "the comforter." The lock of hair highlighted by Godecharle would be an additional clue.

In the R. E. R., the cardinal virtues are presented in the following order: Justice-Mercy (Apprentice), Temperance (Fellow Craft) and Prudence (Master). This is in the same order as the composition. Strength, the cardinal virtue isolated on the bas-relief, is associated with the Scottish Master of Saint Andrew of the R. E. R. It should be noted that the three Masonic Pillars, Strength-Wisdom-Beauty, are represented by Godecharle if we accept that Beauty derives from the manifestation of divine Justice, of intelligence. Is not the Supreme Being harmony, fullness, and perfection? Minerva represents Wisdom. The ritual of the Master of the R. E. R. of 1782, the year the pediment was completed, indicates that the sword (of Justice) is "the perfect emblem of the power that every Master must exercise against vice in order to ensure the reign of religion and virtue ."

Fortitude (Fortitudo), or constancy, stands beside her, recognizable by the mace she carries, as is the case with the Blade of the Tarot by Mantegna. The motto of the Master's degree in the R.: E.: R.: is as follows: "in silence and hope [in God], I draw my strength" (translated from the Latin "in silentio spe fortitudo mea"). According to this Rite, it is the courage necessary to practice the other three cardinal virtues. Hence its emphasis by Godecharle.

At the bottom of the allegory, we see a tilted crown and the club of Hercules, the mythical hero of the House of Lorraine, the Argonaut, and the tutelary god of alchemy.

Does Godecharle's pediment (1781-82) provide the symbolic key to the Park, as does the plan of his monument to children near the round basin from 1784 (p. 39)?

Curiously, no one has examined the symbolism of the huge leafy branch at the bottom of the frieze, which stands out like a signature of the monumental ensemble. It is probably a palm branch, a symbol of resurrection and eternal life. Or the palm of Minerva-Isis. Indeed, the representation of Minerva is often associated with the palm of Victory, and the Egyptian cult of Isis makes the palm tree the symbol of Eternity. Generally speaking, Minerva, present on the pediment, is assimilated to Athena and the great Isis. In Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*, is Minerva not confused with Venus of Paphos, Ceres, Proserpine of the Eleusinian Mysteries, and Isis? But when was the palm tree (re)inserted into the composition? During the restoration by Godecharle himself around 1811-1812 and after the fire of 1820? No one can say at this stage of the research. Furthermore, *Minerva of the Three Palms*, whose palm tree is emblematic, is the name of the Prince of Starhemberg's Lodge. It should be noted that this Saxon Lodge was part of the Strict Observance.

According to André Kervella, until the period of Nazi persecution, it possessed the diary of Hund, founder of the SOT. At the time of the construction of the Park and the future Palais de la Nation, the Strict Observance was under the influence of the Lyon silk merchant Jean-Baptiste Willermoz, who was striving to synthesize his own rituals with the more rudimentary Germanic ones imbued with neo-Templarism. At the Convent of Willhemsbad (summer 1782), the year the pediment was completed, the R.: E.: R.: developed by Willermoz imposed itself on the Strict Observance, borrowing many elements from its rituals.

There is a sketch of this pediment in the shape of a broken barrel hidden by tall bushes in the northeast of the park. It can be accessed via a path. This is the "Godecharle monument," created by Freemason Thomas Vinçotte (1881). The work is entitled *Allegory of Truth*, following the model of Ripa. It brings to mind a phrase from the Apprentice degree of the R.: E.: R.:

The veil that covers our mysteries can only be lifted before you as your intelligence pierces it. And a second sentence: Attain truth through the practice of virtues.

But let us return to the allegory: a Mason's quest consists in seeking his inner truth despite difficulties and even disillusionment. Clemency or Faith-Religion is not visible in the work of Freemason Thomas Vinçotte. Or perhaps it is veiled. Moreover, it only appeared on the second design of the pediment (see p. 63).

Final details of the bas-relief at the Palais de la Nation. The laurel wreath, scales, and axe of the fasces are gilded. Does this enhancement reflect the intentions of Godecharle or a restorer? Justice and the Clemency of God or Faith-Religion (according to the official

description) rest their hands on a truncated column: this is the main symbol of the Apprentice ritual practiced by the SOT and the R.:E.:R.:, accompanied by the words “Adhuc Stat.” They signify that the Order of the Temple has been struck down, but that it still stands thanks to the SOT and its supposed “Templar lineage.” On an esoteric level, the urn from which a flame emerges would indicate that the spirit of the Order of the Temple never dies or that the soul is in the process of purification. This type of urn also appears in the Inner Order of the R.: E.: R.: In a non-Templar but Christian Masonic context, the truncated column would show that, despite his Adamic fall, man can still hope for regeneration and reintegration into the primordial unity of the Golden Age. For the sake of completeness, it is worth noting that *La Chrysopée du Seigneur*, attributed to Raymond Lulle, already evoked the importance of the Virtues in a very subtle way, but only in the context of mystical alchemy. In 1749, Hermann Fictuld's treatise on alchemy, *Aureum Vellus* (The Golden Fleece), was published in Leipzig, the city of one of the Starhemberg Lodges. In the years 1750-1770, a German para-Masonic movement, [The Order of the Golden Rose Cross](#), both close to and rival to the SOT, likened the Quest of the Argonauts to the search for the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Long Life³. For its followers, the precious Fleece was both the raw material prepared for the Work and the final result. It was distinguished only by its purity, fixity, and maturity (see Appendix 4). In 1775, the Golden Rosicrucians settled in Vienna, which became one of their centers of influence. At the time, Freemasons, particularly those in Austria, were engaged in alchemical operations. The idea was widespread among them that the transmutation of base metals into pure gold was reserved only for the great initiates and that it had once made the Templars' fortune. This was the belief of Emperor Francis I and probably his brother Charles of Lorraine. Similarly, when it was founded, the SOT had cherished the hope of recovering all the assets of the Order of the Temple! Before the Convent of Willhelmsbad and the victory of the R.: E.: R.: (1782) put an end to this pipe dream...

*[Great Architect of the Universe, Eternal and Infinite Being, who is goodness, **justice** and **truth** yourself...] deign to grant our zeal a happy success, so that the Temple we have undertaken to raise for Your glory, being founded on **Wisdom**, adorned with beauty and sustained by the **Strength** that comes from You [God], may be a place of peace and fraternal union, a refuge for **virtue**, an impenetrable bulwark against vice, and the sanctuary of **truth** [...]*

Rectified Scottish Rite, prayer from the ritual for the degree of Apprentice.

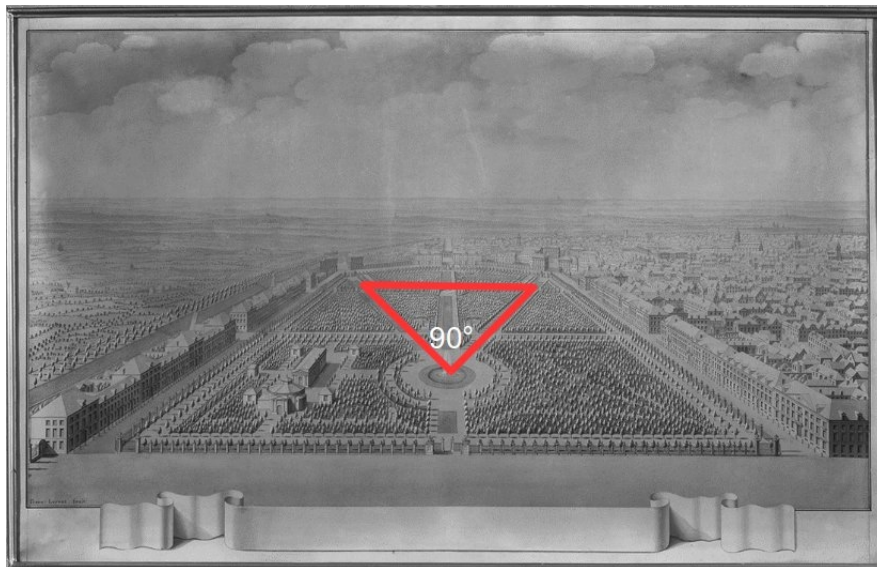
Could the Park and its Godecharle monument be this “sanctuary of Truth,” only for those who seek it, and the pediment of the Palace of the Nation “a refuge for Virtue”?

The Park of Brussels seen from the symbolic East

Dissatisfied with the approximate reproductions of the Park and the Place Royale that proliferated from 1777 (sic), the Government ordered “the tax officers of Brabant to be vigilant in stopping the distribution of these drawings and not to grant any permission for the engraving and sale of such representations without first informing His Excellency the Minister Plenipotentiary, Prince of Starhemberg.”

This fact alone confirms his key role in the design of the Royal Quarter.

On the occasion of the visit to Brussels in 1782 of the future Tsar Paul I and his wife Sophie-Dorothee of Württemberg, the niece of Frederick II, the all-powerful Starhemberg had richly framed views of the Royal Quarter before and after its urbanization ostentatiously placed in the apartments of his distinguished guests. It should be added that the Tsarevich was keen on Christian Illuminist masonry, influenced among others by his favorite, Prince Kouriakine, who was a dignitary of the SOT. Much to the chagrin of his mother, the tyrannical Catherine II.



The Park seen from the pediment of the Palace of the Nation by François Lorent (1778).
Museum of the City of Brussels, inv. L-1900-87.

From a higher vantage point, and thanks to a clever optical effect, the compass seen from the pediment of the Palais de la Nation, in the symbolic East, forms a triangle whose apex (round basin) formed by its two equal sides is a right angle. The whole is similar to a delta. In this particular configuration, we can see a square, a compass emanating from a round basin or from the compass screw. The compass opened at 90 degrees complements that of Zinner's plan, which forms an angle of 45 degrees (p. 35). . It should be noted that the Rose-Croix jewel offers this opening between 45 and 90 degrees, symbolizing Mastery and the Spirit victorious over Matter. Therefore, the view from the pediment of the Palais de la Nation represents a (spiritual) elevation, a “sublimation” in relation to the Park, or even its culmination. This is probably not a coincidence. Were the representations of the new Park not part of the strictly codified framework imposed by Starhemberg? Note the

perspective on the Heraldic Chamber (p. 48) in the axis of the Park. Contrary to what Georges Renoy claimed, who spoke only of compasses and not of crow's feet, and other followers, the location of the festive venues (theater, Vauxhall, etc.) was drawn as early as 1778, at the bottom left.

A government privilege granted exclusive rights to operate these attractions and theatrical performances and the Vauxhall to the Bultos family, notorious Freemasons, notably Alexandre Bultos, a traveling actor, and his brother Herman, who had run the Théâtre de la Monnaie. The patriarch, Pierre François, was a member of the Stockholm Lodge, which worked according to the Swedish Rite, a rival and cousin of that of the SOT, and of *L'Heureuse Rencontre*.

The Phoenix: Perit ut vivat!

The Rectified Scottish Rite in the making decided at the Convent of Gaul (1778) to take the Phoenix as its emblematic symbol. The motto accompanying the legendary bird, "Perit ut vivat" – it perishes so that it may live – confirms the Christian dimension of the Rite by evoking Christ the Redeemer: through his sacrifice, he saved humanity. It is the triumph of true life over death (see Chapter I, Appendix 3). It is fully synonymous with resurrection and rebirth in the sense of the doctrine of "Reintegration" present in the R.:. E.:. R.:. through the spiritual heritage of Martinès de Pasqually and his Order of the Elect Coëns. The latter affirms the existence of God: we must help fallen man to revive, through Initiation, the part of divinity that remains in him after what is symbolically called the "Adamic" Fall, and give him the means, like the Phoenix rising from its ashes, to reintegrate his original divine nature. Rebirth through fire is also a purely alchemical approach.

In Freemasonry, at the Rose-Cross level, the Phoenix is associated with the Eagle and the Pelican. On the reverse side of the R.:. E.:. R.:. medal was the general emblem of the Rectified Lodges of France: the Phoenix with the motto "Perit ut Vivat ." It was a discreet reminder of the current state of the Order of the Temple, destined to rise from its ashes, at least according to the "reform of Lyon" in 1774 before this affiliation was abandoned in 1782. Today, the Phoenix is still present as a symbol of the R.:. E.:. R.:. .

Finally, for Templar Masonry, it allegorizes the burning at the stake of Jacques de Molay, Grand Master of the Order of the Temple.



The Phoenix, emblem of the Rectified Scottish Rite.
Engraving by Friedrich Justin Bertuch (1790-1830).

[1 Letters patent](#) from King Philip the Fair confirming the papal decision and the transfer of the Order of the Temple's property to the Order of Malta.

[2](#) Quoted in *La Stricte Observance Templière avec ses deux manuscrits datés du XVIIIe siècle*, Rouvray, Les Éditions du Prieuré, 1994, pp. 26-29.

[3](#) Claudine Lemaire (ed.), Charles-Alexandre de Lorraine - vol. 1/ Governor General of the Austrian Netherlands – vol. 2/ The Man, the Marshal, the Grand Master, Cultureel Centrum van de Vlaamse Gemeenschap, Alden Biesen, 1987. Europalia 87.

Conclusion: proof from the Amis Philanthropes...

In the 18th century, Freemasonry had all the characteristics of a discreet, even secret society due to its Christian Illuminist or subversive branch.

Three papal bulls excommunicated or implicitly condemned all Brothers who belonged to a Lodge, even if they were sometimes little or not at all enforced by the ruling powers. Thus, several Catholic countries, such as Gallican France and Austria, refused to apply the exequatur, or enforcement of these condemnations from Rome. The fact remains that Emperor Joseph II did not think much of them. No one therefore had any interest in boasting about the “Masonic” layout of the Royal Park in Brussels, which was not immediately apparent at first glance. This was all the more true given that the chosen location, the Royal Quarter, was emblematic of the Austrian authorities and that Papists still held a large number of important positions in the administration.

The Lodge of the *Amis Philanthropes*, created in 1798, originated from a traveling military lodge of the French Republic, which had occupied Brussels since 1794 after driving out the Austrians. When it left the capital for other theaters of military operations, the Lodge left behind eleven French officers. Joined by a few Belgian notables and merchants and French civil servants, these pioneers established the “permanent military lodge of the *Amis Philanthropes* in the East of Brussels” in 1798 under the auspices of the *Vrais Amis de l'Union*. On the same day, the members elected as Worshipful Master Brother Pierre-Paul-Serge Passenaud, who had led the Lodge Les Vrais Amis de l'Union during the Austrian period and had affiliated Godecharle, the sculptor of the Park. The epithet “military” disappeared shortly afterwards and the Lodge received its letters of constitution from the Grand Orient de France. The new workshop, which worked according to the French Rite, grew rapidly: four years later, it had more than 100 members. Among them was General Belliard, future French ambassador to Brussels, whose full-length statue stands opposite the park on Rue Baron Victor Horta. After the fall of the Empire and their banishment by Louis XVIII, many of the regicides who had voted for the death of Louis XVI joined the lodge. The Lodge welcomed them all the more because the newcomers brought intellectual and philosophical added value. Prieur de la Marne, a former member of the Committee of Public Safety whose talents as an orator earned him the nickname “Crieur de la Marne” (Crier of the Marne), is the best known of them. As surprising as it may seem, there is a tangible link between the R. E. R. and Les Amis philanthropes. From its establishment in 1798, most of the maxims engraved on the forecourt of the Temple were taken from the Masonic Rule adopted at the Convent of Willhelmsbad (1782), founder of this Rectified Rite, successor to the SOT.

Furthermore, if “the Masonic Park” is a hoax, one might wonder why Freemasons, who risked their reputation, collaborated on the guide entitled *Itinéraire de la Franc-maçonnerie à Bruxelles* (Itinerary of Freemasonry in Brussels)¹. With the usual reservations, the route follows Saint-Hilaire's itinerary. A contributor to the book renowned for her scientific rigor, ULB archivist Andrée Despy-Meyer, told the newspaper *Le Soir* on May 10, 2000:

The layout of the Brussels park, centered around the two arms of a compass, is the most famous example of Masonic symbolism in the city's urban planning.

In *Parcs et jardins de Bruxelles* (Brussels-Capital Region, 1993), landscape architect Jacques Boulanger-Français takes up the Masonic Park hypothesis. In his *Initiation à la Franc-Maçonnerie* (Marabout, 2007), co-author Jean-Michel Quillardet, former Grand Master of the Grand Orient de France (2005-2008), confirms this:

In front of the Royal Palace, the Parc de Bruxelles is also a reference; the traditional symbols of Freemasonry can be found in the layout of its paths and flowerbeds.

In his *Bruxelles omnibus* (Michel Lafon, Paris, 2019), Patrick Weber shares the same opinion, and on his website altaplana.be, the famous scenographer François Schuiten alludes to it.

But the most indisputable proof, because it is the most formal, can be found in the design of the official first-day commemorative stamp celebrating the bicentenary of the *Amis Philanthropes* on the theme of free thought (1798-1998). Gerard Alsteens is the designer of the stamp itself. *The Amis Philanthropes* included an old map of the Park surrounded by a “chain of union” (p. 99). It also appears on the envelope, of which 100 copies were printed.

[On his website](#), the late Freemason and philatelist Jean-Pol Ducène, who died in 2019, confirms the Masonic character of the Park². It should be noted that this type of Masonic-themed envelope always has a symbolic illustration on the left-hand side. In Jean-Pol Ducène's book, for example, we can see those from the 175th anniversary of the [Grand Lodge of Luxembourg](#) (1978) and the [GODF](#) (1973).

Question: why choose the park if it had nothing to do with Freemasonry?

[1](#) *Parcours maçonnique*, Brussels, Société Royale Belge de Géographie, co-ed., 2000 (reprinted in 2008, pp. 51-55) and 2022. The hypothesis of the “Masonic” park is repeated throughout.

[2](#) Jean-Pol Ducène, *Une apologie de la thématique maçonnique*, Le Club 92, Erquelinnes, 1998.

First day cover: Joël Goffin collection.

On the copy in the CEDOM's possession, [two copies of the Amis Philanthropes](#) stamp on free thought have been added. The page bears the donor's dedication. It so happens that this stamp is not described in Ducène's book: it was probably issued shortly after its release in bookstores.