

Enlightenment and Freemasonry in Eighteenth-century Venice: The Hermeticism of Querini's Garden at Altichiero

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The garden and villa of the Venetian senator Angelo Querini was located on the banks of the Brenta River, near the town of Padua. Unfortunately, very little is left of this historical garden. A detailed description of this garden was written in 1787 by Countess Justine Wynne Rosenberg, an educated woman who was well known among the Venetian intellectual elite and a good friend of Angelo Querini. With the help of this eighteenth-century description, we will try to reconstruct this “philosophical” garden, and explain how it might have been used as an initiatory space.

Angelo Querini (1721-1796) belonged to a small élite of enlightened cosmopolitan intellectuals with strong links to Freemasonry who were criticizing the government of Venice, which at that time was in a state of decadence. They were trying to spread the ideals of the English enlightenment in the Veneto region. In Italy, it was Venice that had the closest contacts with English society. This allowed a continuous exchange of political ideas between England and Venice.

An important member of this enlightened circle was Scipione Maffei, one of the first Freemasons in the Veneto. He belonged to the lodge in Verona, probably founded by Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk and Grand Master of the London Grand Lodge, who was in the Veneto in 1729.¹ Maffei was also a good friend of Querini and according to Countess Rosenberg he helped him to identify the authenticity of ancient altarpiece he bought for his garden.²

Maffei was instrumental in forming the tastes of the Franciscan father Carlo Lodoli (1690-1761). A famous teacher of philosophy in Venice, Lodoli also taught in a school for the sons of the nobility: his pupils included Andrea and Bernardo Memmo, Girolamo Ascanio, Giustinian and Angelo Querini. His teachings concerned the nature of society and the meaning of authority. He wanted his pupils to apply the critical method to Venetian State documents, and he came into conflict with the State Inquisitors.³ Lodoli's above-mentioned disciples, Bernardo and Lorenzo Memmo, Querini and Giustinian eventually became Freemasons and belonged to the same Venetian Lodge called de la Fidélité (of the chapter of St. John) as their names appear in a lodge list of 1785.⁴ This lodge was founded in 1780, after the first English lodge, called Union, was closed.

1 C. Francovich, *Storia della Massoneria in Italia dalle origini alia Rivoluzione Francese*, (Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1974), 41. Maffei, like Poleni, Algarotti and other exponents of the Venetian enlightenment was also critical of the decadent government of Venice and he proposed the reformation of the Republic in his work *Suggerimento per la perpetua preservazione della Repubblica Veneta atteso il presente Stato d'Italia e d'Europa* (which was published for the first time only in 1797). A. Scolari, "Il consiglio politico di Scipione Maffei, contributo alia storia delle dottrine politiche in Italia nel secolo XVIII," in *Atti e Memorie dell'Accademia d'Agricoltura, Scienze, Lettere di Verona*, V(1931)ix: 37-87.

2 Justine Wynne Rosenberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, 47.

3 G.F. Torcellan, *Una figura della Venezia settecentesca: Andrea Memmo. Ricerche sulla crisi dell'aristocrazia veneziana*, (Roma: Istituto per la Collaborazione Culturale, 1963), 30-35.

4 Renata Targhetta, *La massoneria veneta dalle origini alia chiusura delle logge 1729-1785*, (Udine: Istituto di Storia, 1988), 150-151.

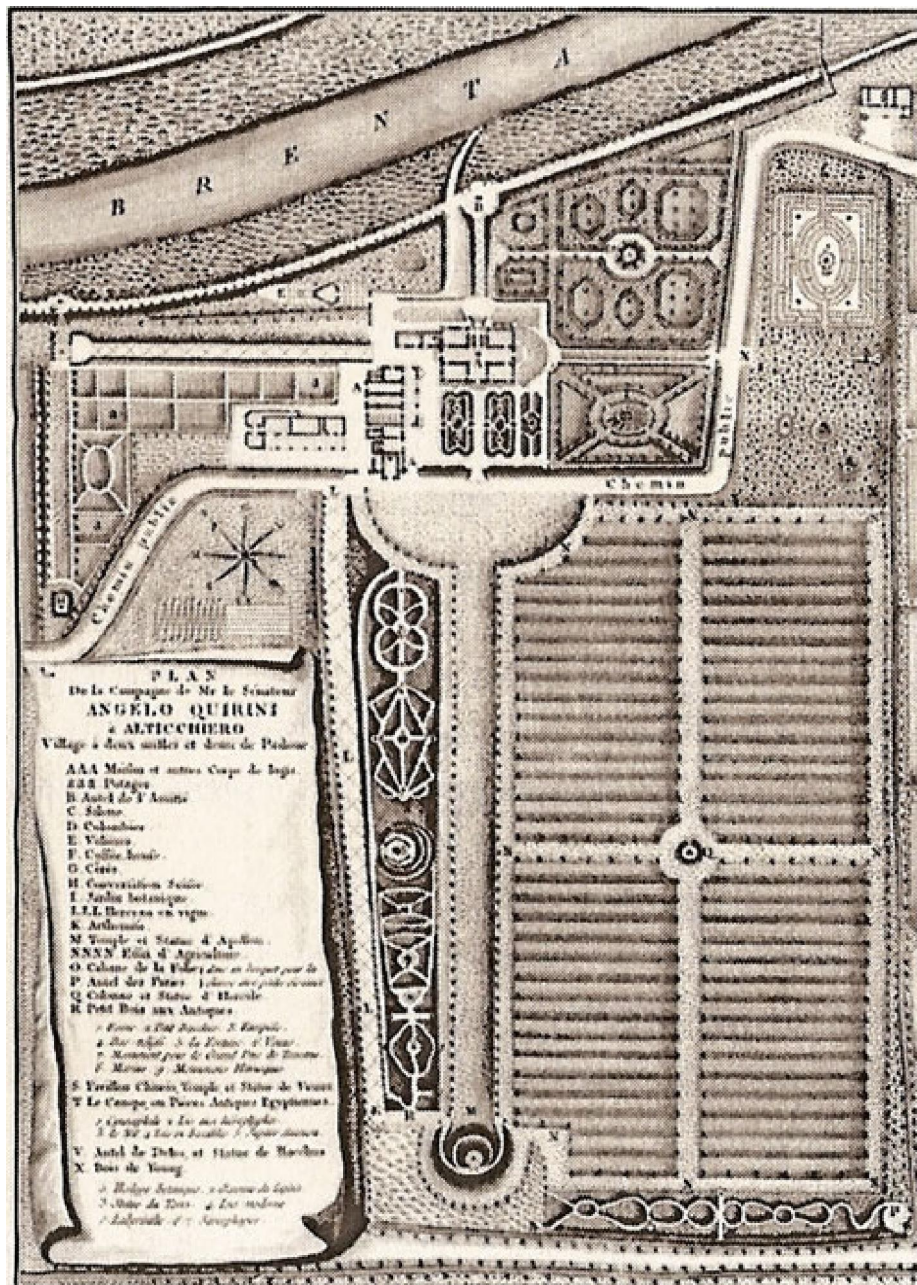


Fig. 1. Map of Querini's garden,
Justine Wynne Rosenberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, Pl. I.

Angelo Querini, following the teachings of his master Lodoli, was the protagonist of a famous debate against the State Inquisitors. Elected “Avogador del comun” In 1758, he became the leader of a group of patricians who criticized the empowerment of two organs of the Venetian government: the Council of Ten and the State Inquisitors. He affirmed that the “Avogadori,” whose task was to check on the execution of laws, had lost their original power, and that the State Inquisitors had slowly acquired more authority on matters that before were only considered the task of the “Avogadori.” The “Avogadori” were the direct representatives of the common people. In a way, their function was similar to that of the Roman plebeian tribune. Querini wanted their power to be reaffirmed. This political controversy between liberal and conservative groups ended with the victory of the more conservative party guided by Duke Marco Foscarini. For his accusations, Querini was arrested in 1761 and exiled to Verona. After two years of banishment, he succeeded in

coming back to Venice and continued to work in public administration. However, he decided to maintain a low profile in Venetian politics and preferred to express his innovative political ideals in private among friends. A typical “connoisseur” and educated man of his time, Querini in 1777 traveled around Switzerland and visited famous scientists and scholars such as Voltaire, for whom he felt a great admiration.⁵ When he came back from this journey, he dedicated his life to the study of archeology, history and natural science and retired to his Villa at Altichiero near Padua where he laid out a garden.

Querini was then a Freemason and an “enlightened” nobleman. Many aristocrats and intellectuals of the eighteenth century Europe were Freemasons. The period of the European Enlightenment coincides with the diffusion of Freemasonry in England and Europe. It is in fact at this point in its history that Freemasonry develops as a focus for intellectuals, politicians, the gentry, artists and architects, thus fostering a continuous exchange of ideas, aesthetic values and beliefs between English and European intellectuals. Freemasons believed in virtue, progress, equality, and they contributed to the preparation of the soil for the late eighteenth century democratic revolutions. These Enlightenment ideals, which they helped propagate through their international links, were also reflected—by means of iconography and design—in the architecture and landscape gardens of the time.⁶ From England, these ideals spread to Europe and to Venice.

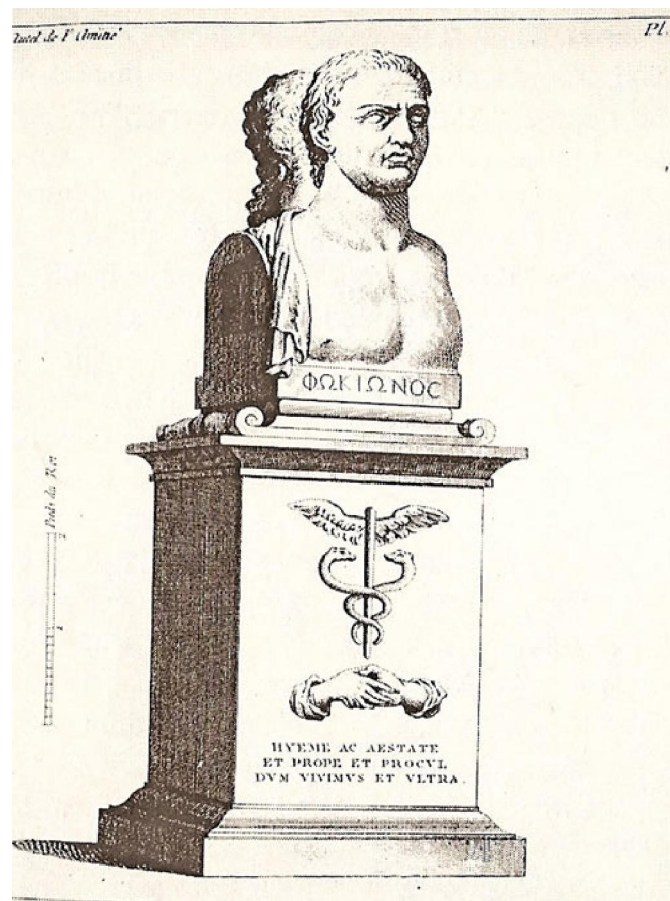


Fig. 2. Altar of Friendship,
Justine Wynne Rosenberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, Pl.II.

5 Paolo Preto, Girolamo Festari, *Medicina, Lumi e Geologia nella Valdagno del 700*, (Valdagno: Comune di Valdagno, 1995), 31-36.

6 Patrizia Granziera, *The Ideology of the English Landscape Garden 1720-1750*, PhD thesis, University of Warwick, 1997.

Altichiero's garden is probably one of the best, if not unique examples of this kind of “philosophical” and Masonic garden in the Veneto region. Unfortunately, the only document we possess for the reconstruction of Altichiero's garden and architecture is a description written in 1787 by Countess Rosenberg. We will follow her itinerary throughout the garden. (Fig. 1)

The Countess started the visit of Altichiero from the back door of the Villa, which faced the Brenta river. On the jamb of this door there was a bust of Jupiter, and on the balustrade there were two sphinxes which posed their paws on two coat of arms carrying two inscriptions: one from Hippocrates, the ancient Greek physician, father of medicine and one from the wise Jewish King Solomon.⁷ King Solomon was an important figure in Freemasonic history. For Freemasons, the Solomonic Temple was the only building on Earth which was erected as a result of God's direct intervention in accordance with His rules. The reconstruction of the Solomonic Temple in Freemasonic thought represented the intention to imitate the rules of a divine architecture, to apply the natural laws of proportion and balance, and to search for an individual and common purification. The Temple became a moral edifice as an example of what was noble, splendid and true in the first ages of the world.⁸ This was, then, the first reference to Freemasonry in the garden.

From this back door of the Villa, a garden path led to the altar of friendship composed of a stone pedestal with two colossal busts of Phocion and Epicurus. On one side of the pedestal there was an inscription dedicated to Girolamo Ascanio Giustinian, senator of the Venetian republic, a Freemason and closed friend of Querini. On the other side there was a Latin inscription saying: HYEME / AC AESTATE / ET PROPE / ET PROCUL / DUM VIVIMOS / ET ULTRA (In Winter and in Summer, always till we live and beyond). The pedestal also featured a brotherly shake of hands and a caduceus. (Fig. 2) The caduceus was an ancient astrological symbol of commerce and is associated with the Greek god Hermes, the messenger for the gods, conductor of the dead, and protector of merchants. Hermes was an important figure for Freemasons, as he was identified with Hermes Trismegistus (Hermes the thrice-greatest), the herald and keeper of mysteries and also the god of trial and initiation. Hermes Trismegistus was credited with numerous writings, reputed to be of immense antiquity. The Hermetic books, first printed in the late fifteenth century, were supposed to contain the Egyptian mysteries, which were believed to be a key to a complete knowledge of the Universe and of man.

The Hermetic movement influenced the development of Freemasonry and became part of the first system of lodges, which emerged in Scotland, adding to the already Masonic lore the myth of the secret order of invisible brethren who were dedicated to the search of ultimate truths and to the understanding of the mysterious universe.⁹ Thus, this altar was a clear reference to Masonic brotherhood and Hermeticism.

It was on top of this friendship altar that Querini chose to place the busts of two famous Athenian characters: Phocion and Epicurus. Phocion was a famous Athenian statesman whose advice was frequently ignored by the Athenian Assembly, in the same way Querini's

7 The two Latin inscriptions said : DESPERATIS HYPPOCRATES VETAT ADHIBERE MEDICINAM (to the desperate, Hippocrates prohibits maedicaments) and LAETARI ET FACERE BENE (to be happy and to do good).

8 According to the legend, after the flood Pythagoras found the two pillars on which the secrets of geometry were inscribed and he, together with the great geometer Hermes Trismegistus, told these secrets to the Greeks. These pillars, among others, were set up by Solomon to build his temple. The left-hand column was called Joachim and it was associated with establishment and legality; the right-hand column of the Temple was called Boaz and symbolized strength. Jones Knoop, *The Genesis of Freemasonry*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1949), 67-69.

9 David Stevenson, *The Origins of Freemasonry. Scotland's Century 1590-1710*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 97-105.

reforms were ignored and rejected by the Venetian government.¹⁰ The philosopher Epicurus was one of the first Greeks to break from the god-fearing and god-worshipping tradition common at the time.¹¹ His ideas could be linked to Freemasonry, as this semi-secret society placed itself beyond any particular religion. Freemasonry was not based on a revealed religion: Freemasons as individuals could profess any creed. As Freemasons, they professed a rational religion of nature, a “Religion in which all Men agree,” that is, a universal religion. At the core of this natural religion was the idea of a Supreme Principle Creator and an understanding of the moral law.¹² Epicurus not only held a rational view of religion, but also showed little interest in participating in the politics of the day. He advocated instead seclusion. The most well-known Epicurean verse, which epitomizes his philosophy, is *lathe biōsas*, meaning “live secretly,” i.e. live without pursuing glory or wealth, but anonymously, enjoying little things like food, the company of friends, etc. Epicurus formed The Garden, a school named for the garden he owned that served as the school's meeting place.¹³ Querini followed his example when he decided to retire from politics and lay out the garden of Altichiero, where he could meet up with his enlightened, Masonic circle of friends.



Fig. 3. Ceres,
Justine Wynne Rosemberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, Pl. III.

10 In politics, he is known chiefly as the consistent opponent of the anti-Macedonian party, headed by Demosthenes, Lycurgus and Hypereides, whose fervent eloquence he endeavoured to damp by recounting the plain facts of Athens's military and financial weakness and her need of peace. Phocion's criticisms were often unpopular with the Athenian Assembly. Claude Orrieux, Pauline Schmitt Pantel, *Storia Greca*, (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1995), 377-385.

11 The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/>

12 David Stevenson, op. cit, 117-124.

13 The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy, <http://www.iep.utm.edu>

Leaving the altar of friendship, and following the garden path described by the Countess, we reach near the bank of the river a statue of Ceres (Fig. 3). Countess Rosenberg reports that it was placed here in 1770 to honor the foundation of the Agriculture Academy in Venice. Among the Romans, Ceres was the goddess of agriculture; among the Greeks she was worshiped under the name of Demeter, as the symbol of the prolific earth. To her is attributed the institution of the Eleusinian Mysteries in Greece, the most popular of all the ancient initiations. The Greco-Roman Eleusinian and Isaic mystery cults required initiates to await enlightenment, while being kept isolated in darkness, and there were rules concerning silence, patience, and fortitude.¹⁴ These mysteries became part of Freemasonic rituals, as they suggested a Masonic initiation.¹⁵

In the drawing provided by Rosenberg, Ceres is sitting on a globe showing the three astrological signs of Libra, Scorpio and Sagittarius, which represent the three elements air, water and fire. During some Masonic rites the candidate had to pass the trial by air, water and fire before reaching enlightenment.¹⁶ Ceres is also holding a cornucopia, symbol of abundance and adopted in Freemasonic symbolism as the jewel of the Stewards of a Lodge.¹⁷ Finally the goddess is sitting near a column with an owl on top. Owls were emblematic of night and death. So to a Freemasonic eye, this statue stood for trials of initiation. However to a non-Freemasonic eye, like that of our Countess, it only indicated agriculture. After having described the monuments at the back of the Villa, Countess Rosenberg reaches the facade of the villa and reports that it was covered with two acacias while the portico was decorated with rose bushes. Acacia (*Mimosa Nilotica* or *Acacia Vera*) is a symbol of immortality, innocence, and of initiation in Freemasonic thought and the rose associated with Isis and Horus/Harpocrates was considered a flower of silence and secrecy.¹⁸ As an emblem of Isis and later of Venus, roses were used in Isaic rites. Lucius, the protagonist of Apuleius's work *The Golden Ass*, eats roses during his initiation and the flower of Isis was the unfading rose.¹⁹

A bit farther away from the parterre in front of the house, there was a botanical garden with an altar dedicated to Tranquility, and a statue of the *Genius loci*. In Roman mythology, a *Genius loci* was the protective spirit of a place. It was often depicted as a snake.²⁰ The serpent had a prominent place in all the ancient initiations and religions. Among the Egyptians, it was the symbol of Divine Wisdom when extended at length, and the serpent with his tail in his mouth was an emblem of eternity. A serpent was also a symbol of healing. Sometimes the serpent was represented with Harpocrates, the Egyptian god of silence.²¹ In classical times, his statue was often placed at the entrance of temples and places where the mysteries were celebrated, as an indication of the silence and secrecy that should there be observed. So the *Genius loci* under the form of a serpent could also be a reference to Freemasonic silence and initiation at Altichiero's gardens.

From the façade of the Villa, walking down a long avenue and following a spiral path, one would reach the Temple of Apollo. Apollo is the Sun God and in Freemasonic thought symbolizes rationality, strength, stability. The Sun is a male symbol and it is always present in the Lodge together with the Moon, which symbolizes intuition and sensitiveness. Not far from Apollo statue there was in fact a statue of Artemis/Diana, a goddess identified with the

14 E. O. James, *The Cult of the Mother Goddess*, (London: Thames and Hudson, 1959), 153.

15 James Stevens Curl, *Art and Architecture of Freemasonry*, (London: B.T. Batsford, 1991), 35.

16 Ibid., 158.

17 http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/mackeys_encyclopedia/h.htm

18 A. E. Waite, *A New Encyclopedia of Freemasonry (Ars Magna Latomorum) and of Cognate Instituted Mysteries, Their Rites, Literature and History*, (London: 1921), 1-3.

19 James Stevens Curl, op. cit., 142.

20 Anna Ferrari, *Dizionario di Mitologia Greca e Latina*, (Novara: Istituto Geografico de Agostini, 2006), 589.

21 A. E. Waite, op. cit., 10.

moon.²² Apollo as the sun god also symbolized enlightenment, and the spiral path that the visitor had to follow to reach this statue could be a reference to the path towards enlightenment.

To the right of the hill where the Apollo Temple was placed, a big portion of soil was dedicated to agricultural experiments. As a man of the enlightenment, Querini was interested in new agricultural experimentations based on diversification and rotation of crops. In the center of this big portion of the garden there was a statue of Hercules placed on top of a column. Hercules represents strength. Strength, Wisdom and Beauty are words with powerful Masonic connotations.²³ In Altichiero, Strength is represented by this statue of Hercules, Beauty by a temple dedicated to Venus and Wisdom by another temple dedicated to Athena Pallas (Minerva for the Romans), which was added after Rosenberg's description. We know of its existence because Querini expressed the wish to be buried inside this temple.²⁴ A marble bas-relief inserted on the plinth of the Hercules column portrays an angry Timon of Athens in the act of destroying the altar of friendship, while Mercury interceded for him with Jupiter watching the scene.²⁵ According to Rosenberg, it was a gift to Angelo Querini from his friend Gaspare Gozzi. Timon was a wealthy lord of Athens who overextended his munificence by showering patronage on parasitic writers and artists, and delivering his dubious friends from their financial straits. When Timon's creditors made their demands for immediate payment, Timon found himself abandoned by his former friends.²⁶ The reference here could be autobiographical and linked to Querini's political battles. A similar reference to his political career could be the altar dedicated to the three furies: Ignorance, Envy and Calumny, which was placed in a little wood at the end of the garden.

From here the Countess continued her stroll through the garden along the avenue that leads to the house, where there were a number of little *bosquets* named the "Museum" because of the antiquities scattered around this area. Starting from the end, there was a statue of a small Bacchus, a bust of Euripides, and a statue of Fortune. A bit farther away, in the following clearing, was a monument dedicated to the grand duke of Tuscany, Leopold II. It was placed here after his visit to Altichiero in 1785.²⁷ On top of it was a sphinx and on the side of the monument a bas-relief with Apollo, Pegasus, and the spring of Hippocrene (Fig. 4). The inscription said: AD IRRIGANDUM SEMINA VIRTUTIS (sow the seeds of virtue). In Greek mythology, Hippocrene was the name of a fountain on Mt. Helicon. It was sacred to the Muses and was formed by the hooves of Pegasus. Its name literally translates as "Horse's Fountain," and the water was supposed to bring forth poetic inspiration when imbibed. Here the reference to virtue and cultural enlightenment applies to the craft, as

22 Eugenio Bonvicini, *Massoneria Moderna: Storia, Ordinamenti, Esoterismo, Simbologia*, (Foggia: Bastogi Editore, 1994), 221.

23 These three concepts were evoked before starting a lodge meeting, when three candles were lit and the following words were pronounced: That Wisdom might enlighten our work, Strength make it steady, and Beauty irradiate it. Eugenio Bonvicini, op. cit., 222. The three orders of architecture and the three cardinal points were also associated to these three concepts: the Doric order stood for Strength (West) Ionic for Wisdom (East) and Corinthian for Beauty (South). A. E. Waite, op. cit., 43.

24 Bruno Brunelli Bonetti, Un Riformatore Mancato, Angelo Querini in Archivio Veneto, V (1950-51), 46-49.

25 On the plinth some Latin inscriptions reported the following dialogue;. Timon: O JUPITER SODALITIE.....JURAMENTI PRAESES UBI ARDENS CANDENS TERRIFICUM FULMEN (Oh Jupiter of the brotherhood, guardian of oath, where the lightning is burning, shining, terrifying) Mercury: TIMONEM PROBITAS EVERTIT ET HUMANITAS (honesty and humanity demolished Timon).

26 Rolf Soellner, *Timon of Athens: Shakespeare's Pessimistic Tragedy*, (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979).

27 Leopold II of Asburg and Lorraine (1747-1792) was Grand duke of Tuscany from 1765 to 1790. He was the ninth son of Francis duke of Lorraine, husband of the empress Maria Theresia, who became Freemason in 1731. Renata Targhetta, op. cit., 27.

Freemasonry was at the heart of much that was enlightened, forward-looking, and promised a regeneration of society. The sphinx, guardian of the Mysteries, is associated with Egyptian mysteries and thus Masonic initiation.

A bit further away, at the center of a *bosquet*, was a colossal statue of the Roman Republican consul Gaius Marius (157 B.C.E. – 86 B.C.E.) a Roman general and politician elected Consul an unprecedented seven times during his career. During his tenure on the tribunal, Marius was something of a populist. He was also noted for his dramatic reforms of Roman armies, authorizing recruitment of unlanded citizens, before excluded from military service. This helped the poor plebian class for which the military service became a new possible source of income.²⁸ Clearly the statue of Marius reflected Querini's political orientations.

Not far from this statue there were some Etruscan monuments with an urn containing the bones of Lucius Cornelius Scipio, collected from Querini in 1782. At the sides there were two phallic symbols (Fig. 5). The worship of the phallus is said to have originated in Egypt. Osiris, the sun god was killed by Typhon/Seth, and cut up into pieces. When Isis, his wife and the moon and earth goddess, heard this, she searched and found all the parts of his body except his phallus. She buried all the parts and built a column [obelisk] as a symbol of his erected phallus, the missing part, and worshipped it.



Fig. 4. Monument dedicated to the Grand Duke of Tuscany (Leopold II of Asburg and Lorraine 1747-1792), Justine Wynne Rosenberg, Altichiero, Padova, 1787, Pl. IX.

In Egypt, obelisks were originally erected in honor of the sun god and they were an ancient phallic symbol of the male and solar energy. The obelisks in Freemasonic symbolism were associated with the sun and were symbols of continuity, power, stability, resurrection and immortality. In Continental Freemasonry, the monument in the Master's Degree is often made in the form of an obelisk, with the letters M. B. inscribed upon it.²⁹

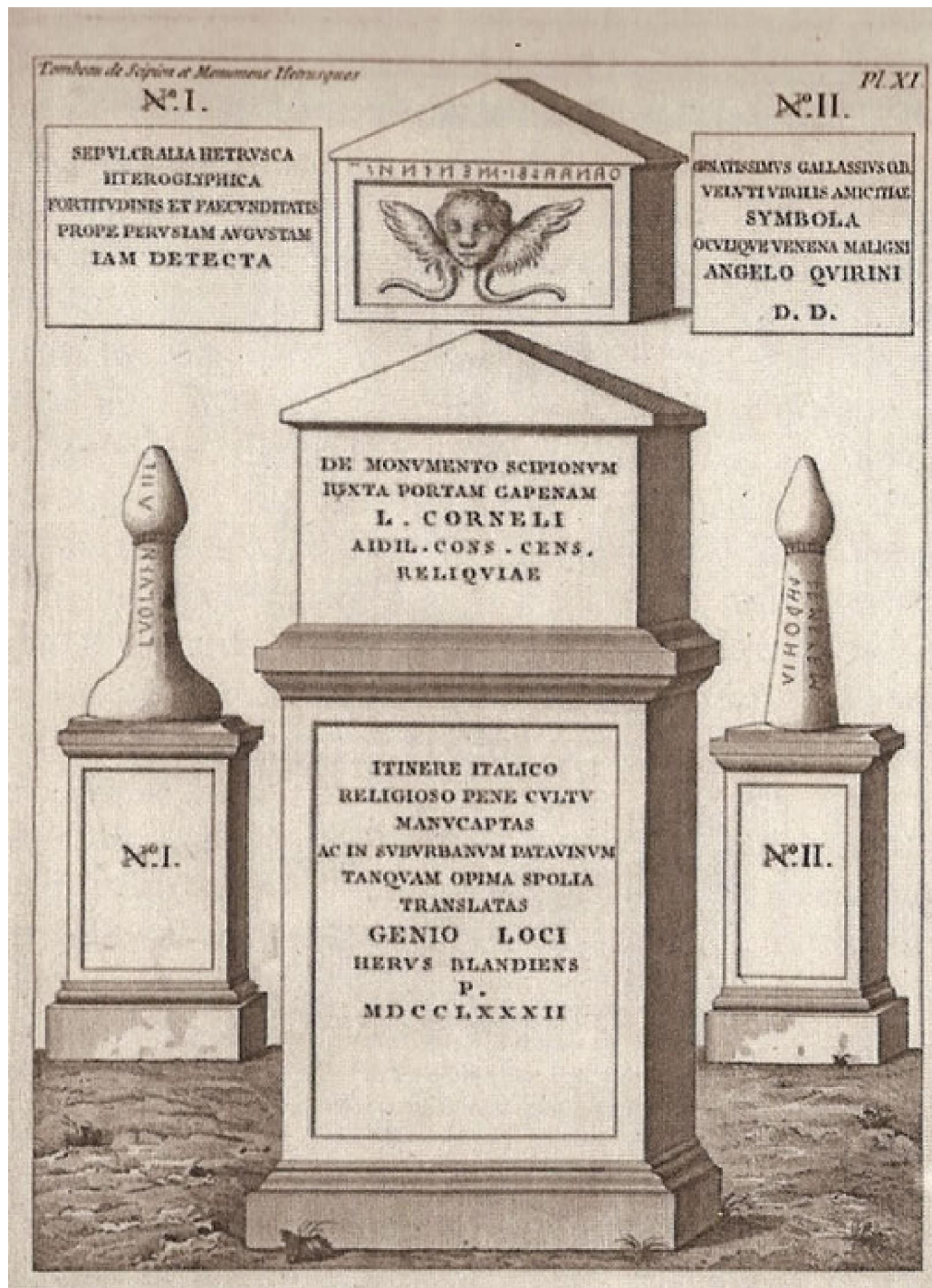


Fig. 5. Urn with bones of Lucius Cornelius Scipio,
Justine Wynne Rosenberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, Pl. XI.

29 See http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/mackeys_encyclopedia/o.htm

At the center of this area called the Museum there was also a temple of Venus, which looked like a Chinese pagoda. One had to follow a spiral path in order to reach the temple. Inside there were busts of Scipio, Plato, Silla, and Demostenes and on the wall was reported an inscription from Bacon's work *De Veritate*. Venus was the goddess of beauty, and beauty was symbolically one of the three supports of a Lodge. It was normally represented by the Corinthian column, because Corinthian is the most beautiful of the ancient orders of architecture,³⁰ The construction of a Chinese type of building was also a sign of Querini's enlightened mind as a wide-ranging eclecticism was associated with a broadening of the mind and a liberalization of ideas: it indicated universality and freedom from bigotry.

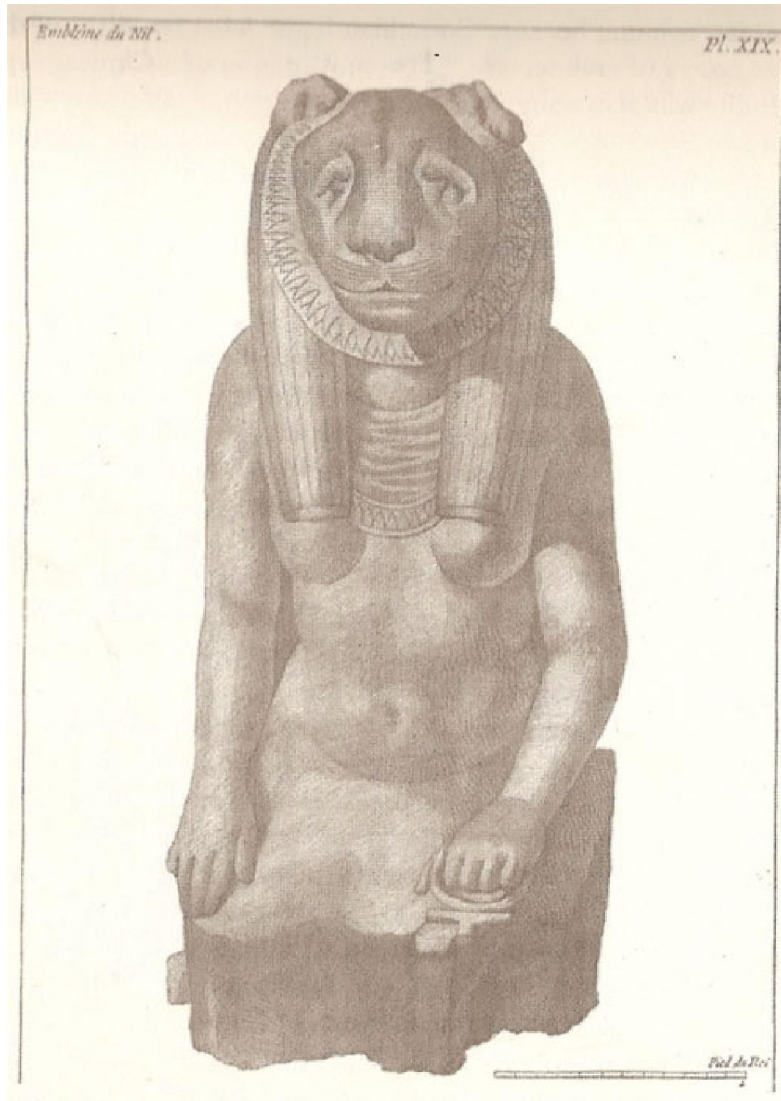


Fig. 6. Emblem of the Nile (Sekmet),
Justine Wynne Rosenberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, Pl. XIX.

Leaving the hill where the temple to Venus was placed, one would enter a space called the Canopy, which contained some Egyptian antiquities. Canopus (or Canobus) was an Ancient Egyptian coastal town, located in the Nile Delta near of modern-day Alexandria. In this part of the garden, the link with Freemasonry is also reinforced by the presence of Egyptian statues and inscriptions. It was generally believed that the prototypes of initiatory

30 A. E. Waite., op. cit., 43.

architecture were Egyptian, as Egypt was the home of Hermetic magic developed by the Egyptian priests who venerated Hermes Trismegistus, the first Magus. The first piece of this Egyptian collection was a statue of Anubis. This Egyptian deity was an equivalent to the Greek Hermes, having the head of a jackal, with pointed ears and snout, which the Greeks frequently changed to those of a dog. His duty was to accompany the souls of the deceased to Hades or Amenthes, and assist Horus in weighing their actions under the inspection of Osiris.³¹ Part of the collection featured also two Isaic tablets and the emblem of the Nile, a sculpture with the body of a woman and the head of a lion carrying an ankh or key (as Rosenberg says) on its paw (Fig. 6). This idol was collected with the Isiac tablets near Memphis. The Isaic tablets were regarded as containing all secrets of initiation.³² The ankh, an Egyptian hieroglyphic character, was associated with eternal life and it became a powerful hermetic symbol.³³ The statue of the Nile, was in fact a representation of the Egyptian goddess Sekhmet. The Goddess Sekhmet was associated with war and battle. Her name literally means “the Powerful One,” and she was the punisher of the damned, those who revolted against moral law in the underworld.³⁴ Opposite to Sekhmet's statue was a statue of Isis (Fig. 7). The piece came from the Adrian's villa. Isis, sister and the wife of Osiris, was worshiped by the Egyptians as the great goddess of nature. In the eighteenth century, largely under the influence of Terrasson's novel *Séthos* from 1731, it was believed that her mysteries constituted one of the degrees of the ancient Egyptian Initiation. The last piece of this Canopy was a head of Jupiter Ammon, Jupiter Ammon so called by the Greeks, was Amun, the supreme God among the Egyptians of Thebes.³⁵

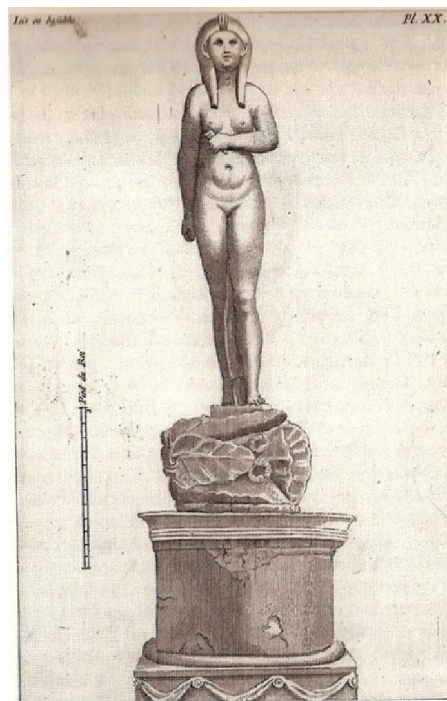


Fig. 7. Isis,
Justine Wynne Rosenberg, *Altichiero*, Padova, 1787, Pl.XX.

31 Anna Ferrari, op. cit., 100.

32 A. E. Waite., op. cit., 10.

33 Clement Salaman and Dorine Van Oyen and Wharton, William D. Jean-Pierre Mahe, (translation) *The Way of Hermes: New Translations of The Corpus Hermeticum and The Definitions of Hermes Trismegistus to Asclepius*, (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2000), 19.

34 Lorna Oakes and Lucia Gahlin, *Ancient Egypt*, (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2003), 294.

35 Anna Ferrari, op. Cit., 73, 564.

Together with the Canopy, another interesting part of the garden was the so-called “Young's woods” situated to the right of the house. At the entrance there was an wrought-iron gate and two statues of the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers, Heraclitus and Democritus. Inside this space, which looked like real woods with trees and bushes, there were scattered around broken columns, sarcophaguses, and other antiquities. Among some of these ruins and leaning on a column was a statue of Saturn, the god of time, holding a clepsydra and a scepter. A bit farther away was a broken column, which was recuperated by Querini from the ruins of Baiamonte Tiepolo's house in Venice. Tiepolo was the leader of a political battle against the Doge Gradenigo, who in 1297 promulgated some rules that limited the democracy of the Venetian Republic. The Duke banned him from the city and had his house demolished. Later, a column of infamy was placed on the same spot.³⁶ This is the broken column that Querini collected and made a symbol of fight for democracy. The column inscription, which said MONUMENTUM ANTIQUAE DEMOCRATIE (Monument to ancient democracy), was a clear reference to Querini's political views. In addition, the broken column has a Masonic meaning: it symbolizes the destruction of the Solomonic Temple and the effort that every brother has to make in order to build a new ideal temple.

Another interesting piece of these woods was a botanical clock with a Janus statue, holding a lance used as gnomon to measure the hours on small columns placed around in ellipsis. In Roman mythology, Janus was the god of gates, doors, doorways, beginnings, and endings. He was usually depicted with two faces looking in opposite directions and was frequently used to symbolize change or transition, such as the progression of past to future, of one condition to another, of one vision to another.³⁷ Being a god of transition explains his placement in these woods where Freemasonic initiation could have taken place. Near this botanical clock, on a higher spot that one could reach after climbing seven steps, was a statue of Cybele, the Phrygian Earth mother, that Rosenberg calls “Egyptian Isis.” Her head was crowned with a tower. She was holding the sun and moon in her hands and had the three elements inscribed on her belt. Near her statue on the ground was an enigmatic inscription reported by the Countess.³⁸ Here the first Masonic reference is given by the seven steps that the visitor had to climb in order to reach the statue of Cybele. Seven is an important number in Masonic symbolism. Seven are the steps to enter the temple.³⁹ The symbolic value of the number seven also derives from the seven liberal arts and sciences, which, according to the old Legend of the Craft, were the foundation of Freemasonry.⁴⁰ In addition, Cybele was considered a life-death-rebirth deity. She was associated with the Mystery religion concerning her son, Attis, who was castrated and resurrected.⁴¹ Ceremonies

36 Gerardo Ortalli and Giovanni Scarabello, *Breve Storia di Venezia*, (Pisa: Pacini Editore, 2001), 49-52.

37 Anna Ferrari, op. cit., 592-594.

38 A Latin inscription on a memorial label near Cybele's statue said: D. M. AELIA LAELIA CRISPIS/ NEC VIR NEC MVLIER NEC ANDROGYNA/NEC PVELLANECIVVENIS NEC ANUS/NEC CASTA NEC MERETX NEC PUDICA/SED OMNIA/SVBILATA/NEQUEFAME NEQUE FERRO NEQUE VENENO/SED OMNIBVS/NEC COELO NEC AQUIS NEC TERRIS/SED VBIQVE IACET/LVCIVS AGATHO PRISCIVS/NEC MARITVS NEC AMATOR/NEC NECESSARIVS/NEQUE MOERENS NEQUE GAVDENS NEQUE FLENS HANC/NEC MOLEM NEC PYRAMIDEM NEC SEPVLCRM/SED OMNIA/S cit. ET NES cit. CVI POSVERIT / (Elia Lelia Crespi, neither man nor woman, neither androgynous nor maiden, neither young nor old, neither chaste nor prostitute, but all of them; neither instigated from hunger nor from sword or from poison but from all of them; she lies neither in heaven nor in the waters, nor on earth, but everywhere, Lucio Agato Prisco, neither husband nor lover, nor relative, neither afflicted nor joyous, nor crying, this [tomb] neither mausoleum, nor pyramid, nor sepulcher but all of them. [Lucio] does not know for sure to whom he dedicated it.)

39 James Stevens Curl, op. cit., 75.

40 Eugenio Bonvicini, op. cit., 242.

41 Lynn E. Roller, *In Search of God the Mother: The Cult of Anatolian Cybele*, (Berkeley: University of

instituted in Phrygia in honor of Attis, the lover and son of Cybele were but a modification of the Eleusinian and Isaic mysteries. Thus, like Isis and Ceres this goddess was associated with initiation rites.

Following the path towards the river there was a Labyrinth. At the entrance there were two busts of Fortune and Repentance, the latter represented by Marsya. The interior was divided into four parterres with flowers and four busts representing the four seasons. At the center was a statue of Diogenes. Nearby an inscription said: NATURA VICTOR HUMANA (nature defeats humanity). On the pillars at the exit of the Labyrinth there were two statues of Hercules and Paris, indicating that death doesn't make a distinction between the strong and the weak (at least according to the Countess's interpretation). To the west of the labyrinth there were two sarcophaguses, one with representations of Theseus's history and a sphinx, and another with a statue of St. John the Baptist.

The statue of St. John is a reference to the lodge Querini belonged to. This lodge, "La Fidelité", belonged to the Chapter of St. John. Both St. John the Baptist and St. John the Evangelist were venerated as patron saints of the Masonic Craft.⁴² In the eighteenth century in all continental lodges, the prologue of St. John's Gospel was recited to open the lodge meetings.⁴³ Most probably this is the part of the garden that could have been used as an initiatory path by Querini and his circle of friends. Cybele, Janus, the statue of Time, sarcophaguses, the broken column, Young woods and the Labyrinth were all symbols of death and transition. The woods were a memorial to Edward Young (1683–1765) the poet and author of *Night Thoughts*. Young was a melancholy poet who dwelt on the macabre and on death.

The tombs and sarcophaguses may be read by Freemasons as a reference to the Hiram legend. According to this legend, Hiram, the builder of the Solomonic temple, was murdered by three masonic workers who wanted him to reveal the Master's Word, and they buried him clandestinely. Hiram was reburied in the Temple and Solomon punished his murderers. The initiate to the third degree of Freemasonry embodies Hiram, and the raising of his body from the first grave signifies the rebirth to a new enlightened life. The labyrinth of Altichiero's garden could have been as an initiatory path, as the idea of labyrinth is associated with that of the initiatory cave used in the ancient Mystery cults to evoke the descent into the land of death, and rebirth as new individuals. Besides, in the Masonic temple perambulation, the candidate should follow the sun path starting from the *winter* solstice corresponding to the South under the astrological sign of Capricorn to the *spring* equinox in the East under Aries in order to reach the *summer* Solstice to the North under Cancer where the ascending movement of the sun ends and the descending movement starts continuing to the autumn Equinox in the West under Libra.⁴⁴ The perambulation starts from the South towards the East and symbolizes the ascending movement of the sun, the path from darkness to light. It forms a square inside the Temple, which evokes the seasons: Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn. According to Rosenberg, Altichiero's labyrinthine path led through four parterres representing the four seasons, and only after passing through those and other tortuous paths would one reach the center, where there was a statue of Diogenes holding a lantern.

Diogenes (412B.C.E.–399B.C.E.), the Cynic Greek philosopher who avoided earthly pleasures, and criticized the artificiality of much human conduct, became for eighteenth century intellectuals a symbol of reason against prejudices, liberty, and antidogmatism. According to D'Alembert, the French philosopher, Diogenes was a true life model

California Press, 1999), 230–231.

42 James Stevens Curl, op. cit., 30.

43 Eugenio Bonvicini, op. cit., 229.

44 Eugenio Bonvicini, op. cit., 237.

representing the power of free criticism and the equality of natural status.⁴⁵ His placement at the center of the Labyrinth could represent the candidate's overcoming of errors throughout his life and his final awakening as the honest man Diogenes was looking for with his lantern. At the same time Diogenes was an example of free thinking and liberal enlightened ideas.

The Countess's itinerary through the garden ends in Young's woods. The allegorical compositions and numerous inscriptions that Rosenberg describes demonstrate a specific plan carried out by Querini in the garden of Altichiero. Everything had a meaning and was created to convey a message. The garden, his life's work, was the image of Angelo Querini, of his classical and modern culture, of his archaeological interests, of his political battles and enlightenment ideas and of his Masonic creed. It was a multifaceted portrait of the owner whose presence was revealed at each step. At the same time, the mythological deities and archaeological finds from Egypt, Greece and Rome, and the Labyrinth, together with the so-called "Young's woods," conveyed also another message to the Querini's Venetian brothers who were able to read Altichiero's hermetic symbolism. To them, this garden represented an initiatory space where they could meet and express in secrecy their *avant garde* enlightenment ideals.

45 Anna lo Bianco, "L'antico come citazione filologica e movente etico di Ghezzi pittore" in *Piranesi e la Cultura Antiquaria*, Università degli Studi di Roma, Istituto di Storia dell'Arte, Atti del Convegno 14-17 Novembre 1979, Anna lo Bianco, ed., (Roma: Multigrafica Editrice, 1985), 195-202.