

“O carve not ... nor draw no lines”
On the Stones of Shakespeare (1564-1616)
[The Subversion of Fertility]

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The Sonnets

Shakespeare's Sonnets can be understood as many elegant literary arabesques and grotesques, like the parterres in Renaissance gardens, reworking received antique and medieval world views, centring on fertility themes, and giving these renewed force.¹ Shakespeare, however, seems not content to simply accept traditional themes.² He has the intent and capability of distilling his own age, defining its course by means of a chilling deconstruction of the antique-medieval world view. I will seek to amplify this by examination of his references to stone in Sonnets 52, 55, 65, and 94 and reference in *The Sonnets* to building generally.³

There are three uses of the word stone in the 154 sonnets (i.e. 2156 lines) which otherwise employ a wide range of imagery. Two of these uses of stone occur in the context of building.

There are four uses of associated words, marble, masonry, and rock, and four of glass.⁴ There are approximately twenty uses of words about building, its ruin and types and references to metals—brass, steel and lead—in the context of building, but rarely if at all to wood in building, let alone wattle or thatch. Wood could be implied sometimes in the word fuel, but that is usually stated to be coal, the new fuel of Shakespeare's period. I will be saying therefore, a great deal about that which Shakespeare in *The Sonnets* says little. His comparative silence on the subject will also be subject to scrutiny.

Shakespeare is compelled by his age, but he appears to go further, whether by accident or design, I cannot be certain. He is not a visionary, he does not describe that which is to come. He tends not to imitate anyway, but rather to use. In the 94th Sonnet he makes use of stone, rather off-handedly, modestly, or at least in an understated manner, as the great sometimes do, as his earlier 16th century contemporary Süleyman the Magnificent (1494-1566) chose to dress.⁵ In this sonnet Shakespeare makes a contextual shift. Stone, distilled from an older, now deconstructed context, is shifted into another new one. And meaning therefore changes. No longer negative, stone becomes again a positive force with new meaning, defining a new context as it does so, a new sense of the sublime that will sweep away the old parterres and the sonnet form itself.

I suggest there are three sets of attitudes towards stone operating in *The Sonnets*. The first set of attitudes, familiar, traditional, concerns the building vernacular. The second concerns a contemporary, transitional, reappraisal of building, destructively so, particularly building in its full glory. The third set concerns the formulation of new attitudes which embody a distinctive architectural aesthetic.⁶

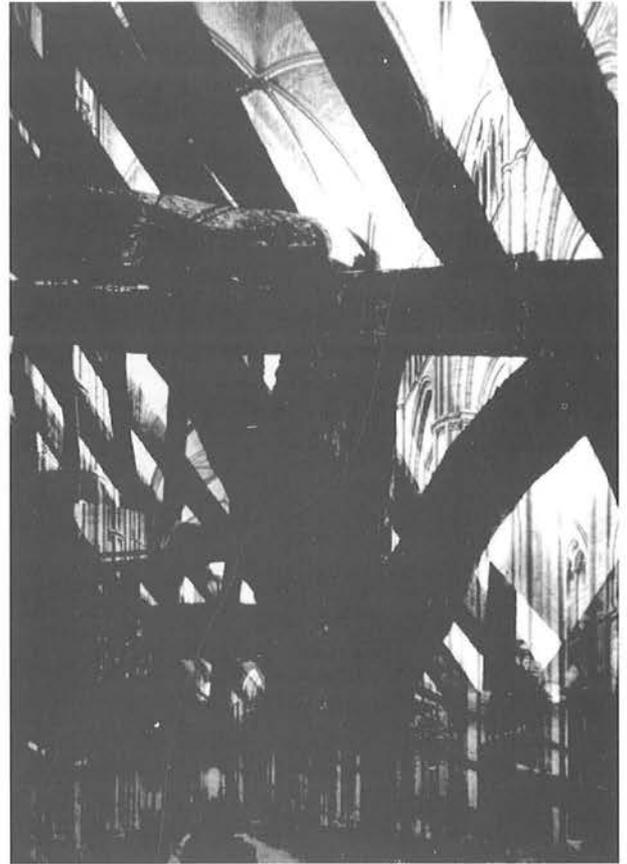
The 16th century can be seen as a period of transition from the point of view of building stone. A Gothic climax of soundly built perpendicular artistry, built up from a Saxon revival of the Roman stone industry⁷; with impetus in the Crusade period from Continental, Syrian,

Restoration of a timber roof at Canterbury overlaid with the nave of St. Etienne, Bourges, 1120.

Spanish, and Byzantine sources⁸; had been followed by its collapse with the Protestant revolt; with the dissolution of monasteries (1535-40)⁹ and the abandonment of medieval fortifications. In England stone had only occasionally been used for other building, notably, the few town houses and palaces of the rich. The building vernacular had generally been timber, wattle, plaster, and thatch.¹⁰

There begins in the late 16th century what Muir calls "*the Great Rebuilding*" of England in masonry.¹¹ Stone is reduced on two fronts, that of its glory, and impregnability. These come to be seen as show, pretension, and sham. From its transcendental Gothic heights, stone is reduced to a building vernacular. Throughout England from the 17th century, in town and country, houses and churches are rebuilt in brick and stone, accelerating with an increase of the middle classes and new building types such as offices, factories, and public buildings. From the beginning this gave opportunities for building patents and monopolies; in the manufacture of bricks for example; as had been enjoyed by the rich in the Roman and Byzantine worlds.

The ruin becomes commonplace. Roman ruins had long since been recycled and rehabilitated, and Saxon stone buildings had likewise in turn been absorbed into later Norman and Gothic works. Recycling becomes again a common procedure. Ruin and repair feature in Shakespeare's reference to building.¹² In the 16th century ruins appear as evidence of ridicule and imprudence. It is too soon in the 16th and 17th centuries to anticipate the impact of this great rebuilding, but not perhaps for its impulse to be understood and de-



fined. Stone becomes a "new-fangled" garment¹³, smooth, plain cut, embodying a new aesthetic, of which the classic English country house is the outstanding example.¹⁴ Shakespeare documents this astonishing change of attitude to stone, and his comparative silence about it presumably reflects the gap between two great periods of stone building.

I have formed the impression that Shakespeare is rather ignorant of the subtlety of stone as a material in itself, and in building. Even making allowance for his tendency not to describe, but rather to imply and use, stone appears to be largely outside his experience. So he makes poor reading in this respect.¹⁵ Shakespeare's interest in building, apart from eventually settling into a fine house emblazoned with his family's coat of arms in Stratford, may well have been largely financial, as his being a co-proprietor of the Globe theatre indicates. He certainly makes free use of legal and financial terms in *The Sonnets*, obsessively so—terms such as: patent, legacy, profit, usurer, sum, audit, executor, loan, lease, rent, cost, losses, interest, possession, penury, charter, bond, gift, mutual render, impeached, mortgage, debtor, suit, receipt, ransom, statute, and so on. This may well reflect his preoccupation with his audience and patrons, who could have been stock market cronies.

Nevertheless the use Shakespeare invariably has for these terms concerns finance as a form of increase, that is I suggest, as an image for the traditional concern with fertility. It must be mentioned here that printing, another obvious obsession of Shakespeare's, and also a financial one no doubt, is also used by him as an image for increase and immortality. Perpetual reproduction of the 'copy' guarantees this, so long as men have breath for speaking and eyes for seeing the black ink on the printed page, as Sonnet 81, one of many with this theme, vividly declares: "*Your name from hence immortal life shall have,... Your monument shall be my gentle verse,/ Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,/ And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,/ When all the breathers of this world are dead,/ You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)/ Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men.*" (lines 5, and 9-14). Presumably many of the 46 sonnets (no's 127-152) addressed to the dark, or black lady, are further arabesques

on this theme. And there are amongst them startling grotesques concerning this capability of black ink.¹⁶

It can readily be observed that the four uses of stone in *The Sonnets* are not repetitive. That is to say, stone is not employed in each case with the same assigned meaning. On examination, each reference, remembering they are few in the context of the collection of 154 sonnets as a whole, appears to employ stone intentionally from a different, specific point of view. Stone is presumably selected in each case because it is thought to possess these peculiar, different capabilities. Shakespeare's interest in stone is primarily semantic. The three sonnets no's 52, 55, and 65 are relatively close in the overall sequence, and if we accept Harrison's analysis of thematic development,¹⁷ they occur after initial declaration of a youth's beauty, love, and beauty's use, amongst sonnets indicating increased intimacy and emotional disturbance, occasioned by jealousy of the youth's relationship with Shakespeare's mistress, and awareness of aging. Sonnet 94 is further into the sequence, in a context of rebuke, followed by concluding reconciliation, before the last 46 sonnets addressing a dark lady.

In Sonnet 52 the word stones as "*stones of worth*" is used meaning precious stones. The words "*treasure*" and "*jewels*", are also used in the sonnet. Stones of worth, says Shakespeare, are thinly placed, just as his references to stone in the collection of sonnets are few. In this sonnet Shakespeare distils the generality of stone, passing over its occurrence in nature and in building, to salvage the jewel, as an image for his beloved's worthiness. Shakespeare does not say what kind of jewel this stone is.

*"So am I as the rich whose blessed key,
Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure,
That which he will not ev'ry hour survey,
For blunting the fine point of seldom pleasure.
Therefore are feasts so seldom and so rare,*

*Since seldom coming in the long year set,
Like stones of worth they thinly placed are,
Or captain jewels in the carcanet.
So is the time that keeps you as my chest,
Or as the wardrobe which the robe doth hide,
To make some special instant special blest,
By new unfolding his imprison'd pride.
Blessed are you whose worthiness gives scope,
Being had to triumph, being lack'd to hope."*

Sonnet 55 is concerned with stone in glorious building, that is, as marble, but it is no sooner introduced in association with princes, than it is reduced to "*unswept stone besmeared with sluttish time.*" Statues are overturned. Masonry is rooted out. This swift destruction of princely pretension by time, war, and death, destroys glorious building with it, but not Shakespeare's own rhyme, and the eyes of those who read it. This reference to eyes surely refers back to jewels in Sonnet 52, and reconfirms the salvaging of stone's essence despite its apparent destruction.

*"Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of Princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme,
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than unswept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword, nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death, and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth, your praise shall still find room.
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So till the judgement that yourself arise
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes."*

Prominent in this reappraisal of masonry building are attitudes toward building in the full glory of all its manifold crafts, as in Gothic cathedrals. These are understood to have been, in their own time, greatly wondered at, but this implies their passivity and suggests the view

of a later age. Gothic building is surely an active phenomenon, not unlike gunpowder exploding.¹⁸ In Chaucer's time cathedrals were places of pilgrimage. Later their nobler qualities were perhaps better moved to a more appropriate setting. Thus, in the context of naval architecture, such qualities were more beautiful, and certainly of more use. Here tallness continues to be admired.¹⁹ This shift to the ocean triggers the sublime.²⁰ Sensual enjoyment of building is transferred to an antique context.²¹ These contextual shifts of the medieval to the antique, and the medieval to far off oceans, are presumably occasioned by Protestant abhorrence of popish fertility themes. The far off Orient is an insistent Renaissance theme. The Orient's absence is vividly present in Shakespeare's imagination.

Shakespeare gives the Protestant voice full scope. Pretension of the gilded tomb (Sonnet 101) is his key architectural example. The tomb is the test case of monumental building. Intent on renewal its pretence can be measured by the old-world fertility view, intercepting the natural process of burial whereby the tomb becomes the womb. Shakespeare links these two words, tomb and womb, for the rhyme at least, adding the word come (pronounced *coome*²²), and for reference to the old fertility scheme, whereby we are back in the arms of the old earth goddess. In four sonnets (no's 17, 81, 86, and 107) referring to tombs, and in many others, fertility is appropriated by printing through which Shakespeare's verses become tomb, inscription, and monument.²³

Shakespeare thus seeks a closer alliance with the processes of fertility and renewal than gilded building can claim. If architecture once (as mother of the arts,) with all its associated crafts, seemed to teem with creature life. If in its incipient decay and inevitable rebuilding, as with the building vernacular, it seemed perpetual. If once in its gilded splendour it was raised to a pitch of excitement and fulfilling ecstasy that seemed the very act of creation itself; as with the sunburst, rose, vase and stem motifs and arabesques, in antique, Gothic, and Islamic design. Architecture in Shakespeare's time is spent.

Cognisance of building's decay may seem merely a continuation of the antique view.²⁴ With Shakespeare one senses discontent with this view. He does not seem to believe it, not trust in it. Shakespeare puts nature down. And with it all craft, for craft is nature's child. Mistrust passes between them. Craft is held up to scorn. Here is the issue of the "*painted process*,"²⁵ an idiom for deceit, whereby all craft is seen to be show. Like the ephemeral in nature, craft fades. All livery, the gaudy, all colour ornament, painting, drawing, carving, each in turn, is held to be deception. Not only, with Protestant ruthlessness, are the obvious representational crafts considered counterfeit, implying Plato's argument, but also the light of the sun, gilding, and transparency. And too, the dark of night, for it hides the truth, and thus misleads.²⁶ In short the entire medieval episode is reduced to a parlour game whereby its "*monkish piles*," like Ferdinand's pile of a thousand logs, are to be lugged away and subjected to scrimmages amongst court favourites.²⁷

Although war and politics are obvious agents in creating the ruin, one senses for Shakespeare the processes of nature, in their capacity for testing and purifying building, have greater fascination, as declared in Sonnet 65 which restates this theme of time's decay more explicitly. Black ink shines bright because of love being in it. This essence is distilled from stone, huge and hard, in nature, and in castle building, together with steel. These give way to time and mortality. The constancy and impregnability of castles is seen as an illusion. Guardianship of beauty passes from the castle, with the jewel, to black ink.

*"Since brass, nor stone, nor earth, nor boundless sea,
But sad mortality o'ersways their power,
How with this rage shall beauty hold a plea,
Whose action is no stronger than a flower?
O how shall summer's honey breath hold out,
Against the wrackful siege of batt'ring days,
When rocks impregnable are not so stout,
Nor gates of steel so strong but Time decays?
O fearful meditation, where alack,
Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?*

*Or what strong hand can hold his swift foot back,
 Or who his spoil of beauty can forbid?
 O none, unless this miracle have might,
 That in black ink my love may still shine bright."*

Elsewhere Shakespeare seems pleased to fortify nature with some of his most succinct images of the grotesque. In Sonnet 5, "*hideous winter*" is prelude to "*summer's distillation*." In Sonnet 27, "*ghastly night*" accompanies a jewel. And in Sonnet 34, the horror of base clouds hide his love in their "*rotten smoke*." Shakespeare is clearly, with this use of the grotesque, intent on the exquisite. With the grotesque we detect Shakespeare's deeper interest, that of distillation. There is respect for building whose fabric survives testing, and for the processes of repair and husbandry which attend it.²⁸ Shakespeare rehearses the process of distillation over and over again. As perfume is to the flower; as wine is to the grape;²⁹ as crystal to stone; and the age's lust for treasure of gold and silver; all are part of the repertoire of the Orient, so that the essence becomes the absent.

Ornament is distinguished from essence which does not suffer the charge of deceit. If ornament is seen to celebrate fertility, treasure is fertility raised to a higher power. For Shakespeare the black ink of printing is a distilled essence, an elixir of immortality. An essence distilled can be transferred elsewhere, as a ship takes treasure in plunder, or as goods and money pass in a business transaction. Shakespeare's often used reversal technique is such a transaction whereby nature's effects come from the beloved, from whom birds learn their song (Sonnet 78), the sun and stars their light, and spring and summer their green. Shakespeare thinks of his friend, Kerrigan writes, "*in violently reversed metaphors, subduing the nature of things for the sake of his beloved's particularity and being.*"

These techniques of distillation and reversal are transitional devices because they continue to rely on an old context for meaning. A swinging pendulum, of scorn perhaps, can as easily swing back. There will be Gothic revivals. And in the 17th century there will be ornament

again. But Shakespeare cuts free of the old context. Stone is reduced to what appears to be a rather sorry state. Deprived of its own vitality, stone is viewed negatively, as the fallen are, in pity and shame. Thus in two sonnets both the glamour and practical utility of stone building are disposed of in favour of poetry and printing. Even the distillation of stone's essential worth, as jewel, in Sonnet 52, is let go in Sonnet 65.

In Sonnet 94 stone, stripped of its pretensions and illusions, is unnerved. Compared with the glamour, vitality and versatility of its undone use, stone now appears inert, lifeless and negative, as in the fourth line: *"Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow."* But unexpectedly, by reason of these very qualities, stone *"inherits heaven's graces"* and becomes *"Lord of its own face."* Suddenly stone is positive again.³⁰ Its immobility, coldness, and non-expressiveness are seen shrewdly as assets of inestimable worth. Stone is lord of its own façade.

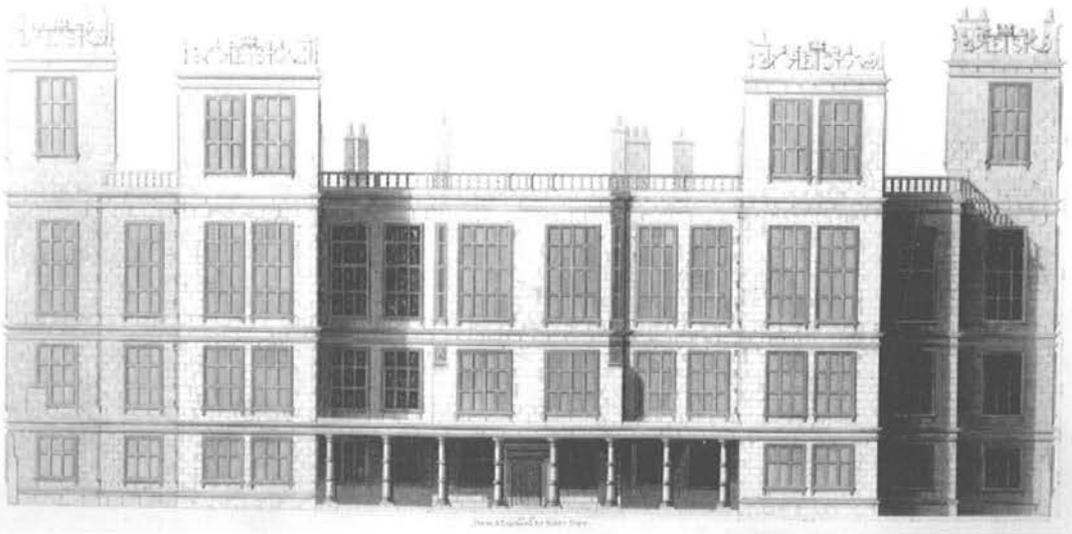
*"They that have power to hurt, and will do none,
That do not do the thing they most do show,
Who moving others, are themselves as stone,
Unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow:
They rightly do inherit heaven's graces,
And husband nature's riches from expense,
They are the Lords and owners of their faces.
Others, but stewards of their excellence:
The summer's flower is to the summer sweet,
Though to itself, it only live and die
But if that flower with base infection meet,
The basest weed outbraves his dignity:
For sweetest things turn sourest by their deeds,
Lilies that fester, smell far worse than weeds."*

This expectation of stone appears to be a distinctly new attitude which Shakespeare was either compelled to adopt by the momentum of his age, or which, of his own accord, tinkered to our effect. In relation to stone and architecture this attitude formulates an entirely new aesthetic. There now seems little hope of intimacy with a material with which stillness

had always been associated; little hope of it being tickled into response, or rattled, or glitterised or even instructed by a lover. Stone, here, seems as it has always been, yet is unloved; as its own essence, yet without force, now eluding evaluation. Stone seems to possess qualities which place it outside the antique and medieval scheme; qualities which don't really place it at all, for even the reference to outside fails. Stone has not moved there nor anywhere. It seems to embody the new science's objectivity, and the new humanism's censure. Unlike Chaucer's brass horse, in *The Squire's Tale*, that "stood in the courtyard still as any stone," stone does not have a pin which can be twirled, so that the secret of its response is found out.³¹

The smooth self possession of stone, like that of his beloved, disturbs Shakespeare. It is the theme of his first Sonnet: "*But thou contracted to thine own bright eyes,/ Feed'st thy light's flame with self-substantial fuel,*" lines 5-6. In the 94th Sonnet and the 93rd Sonnet before it, Shakespeare focuses on the face, and for this reason refers to stone. In Sonnet 94 we appear to be at the threshold of the perception which would project ideal qualities onto stone. In this sonnet, I believe, we are entering the world of the sublime; as a child perhaps. Shakespeare is obsessed with presentment of his beloved's beauty being marred by age, particularly his brow. Sonnets 2 and 63 have this theme: "*When forty winters shall besiege thy brow,/ And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,/ Thy youth's proud livery so gazed on now,/ Will be a totter'd weed of small worth held.*" (Sonnet 2, lines 1-4); "*Against my love shall be as I am now,/ With Time's injurious hand crushed and o'erworn;/ When hours have drain'd his blood and fill'd his brow/ With lines and wrinkles, when his youthful morn/ Hath travell'd on to Age's steepy night,*" (Sonnet 63, lines 1-5) Shakespeare's desire for his beloved's beauty to live on, in his black printed lines, may be an image for his beloved living in his own aged self. I am connecting here, the printed lines with the lines of age in Shakespeare's own brow. Certainly the relationship between the beauty of youth, and its perception by the old, is a mystery. Sonnet 19, from which the title of this paper is taken, seems to imply this theme: "*O carve not with thy hours*

my love's fair brow,/ Nor draw no lines there with thine antique pen,/ Him in thy course untainted do allow,/ For beauty's pattern to succeeding men./ Yet do thy worst old Time, despite thy wrong,/ My love shall in my verse ever live young." (lines 9-14) Smoothness linked with youth strengthens the tabula rasa meaning here. Stone's senselessness becomes its virtue. Gothic design is all wrinkles, contortions of emotional intricacy, and ugliness. Not so, the clean cut ashlar stone façade.



Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire, completed soon after 1597 for Elizabeth Shrewsbury. Engraving from P. F. Robinson, Vitruvius Britannicus, London, 1835.

Hardwick Hall

The smooth stone façade is under way in the 16th century, as Elizabeth Shrewsbury's new house, Hardwick Hall (1576-1597) shows. Its smoothness, both inside and outside, is astonishing, giving stone, glass, and plaster, one face. What a refreshment of spirit that old wrinkled lady must have endured within starched ruff, black gown, and this extended

architectural facial.³² Nigel Nicolson observes of this exterior; *"There is not much surface decoration. The Tuscan colonnade between the two wings and the roof balustrade above it are the only concessions to classical fashion."* And of the interior: *"The staircase is built of stone. It has no mouldings, no carpet, and the mere pretence of a banister ... Sacheverell Sitwell has called (The High Chamber) 'the most beautiful room not in England alone, but in the whole of Europe.'" The proportions are extremely simple, a rectangular box extended on one side... The ceiling is quite plain without even the simplest cornice."* (pp. 88-93). He notes how this smooth overall form was exploited by its owner: *"Elizabeth Shrewsbury signed the house with her initials in fretted stone against the skyline."* (p. 88) Christopher Simon Sykes detects a 16th century contextual shift implied by the design of Hardwick Hall and also by its siting: *"High above the M1 motorway Hardwick Hall dominates the Derbyshire countryside like a great galleon."* (p. 202)

Shakespeare notices that building can of itself harness forces that would purge it. Thus fire, which previously had the power to destroy wooden building, transformed building. For example, the new fuel coal, invading houses which developed many fireplaces and chimneys in new brick, in the new style, for the new rich, disturbs the old view, and Shakespeare senses this, causing Capulet to call *"And quench the fire, the room is grown too hot."* (*Romeo and Juliet*, Act 1 Scene 5.) Fireplaces become grotesque elements in interior design. Shakespeare's fascination for lead suggests, I suspect, all the new lead flashings around these chimneys. Weight, like fire, becomes self-possessed by building. *"I have a soul of lead"* Romeo declares precociously (Act 1 scene 4). Grotesque fireplaces, composed of slabs of stone and a variety of geometrical stone forms, are a feature of Hardwick Hall.³³

Buildings now disturb also in their alliance with light and air. Windows and doors are often used as images by Shakespeare, but the age's fascination with glass goes beyond traditional complicity of building with nature. Vast planes of smooth glass encompass Hardwick Hall on all sides.³⁴ Much of the disturbing aspect of these examples of fire and light is in the apparent re-assertion of the old order, of nature, and craft, even when these forces are

enslaved. This struggle is depicted in *The Tempest* by means of Prospero's control of natural forces. Prospero's control of these forces is based on his recognition of them, as when he identifies Ariel and Caliban with their respective elements of air and earth. But as useful as these natural forces are, tamed or otherwise, the new architectural aesthetic is not concerned with such complicity.

Venus and Adonis

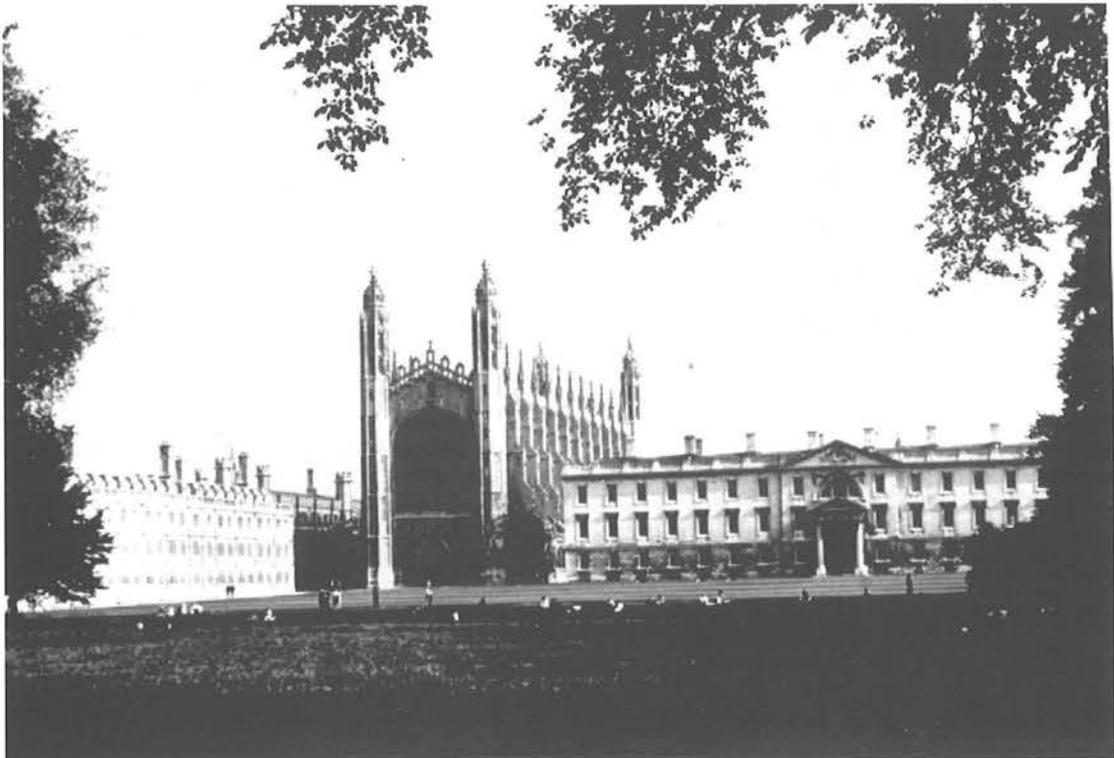
Kerrigan sees the young man addressed by Shakespeare in *The Sonnets* as "a god, an Adonis comprising the world's fertility as well as a Helen possessing its beauty."³⁵ In Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* the conventions of love and fertility are ridiculed, by way of Adonis appropriating Venus's own role.³⁶ Shakespeare and Venus argue increase. Both Adonis, and Shakespeare's love, are "unmoved, cold and to temptation slow." Adonis pleads underage. His self-possession is terrible centring on his face.³⁷ His first response expresses his concern: "Fie, no more of love! The sun doth burn my face, I must remove." (lines 185-6) Adonis's disdain unhinges Venus. She understands that he is not, as we have seen, even like stone which can over time be worn away and caused to respond: "Art thou obdurate, flinty, hard as steel?/ Nay more than flint, for stone at rain relenteth." (lines 199-200)

In the poem Venus is content to relate to Adonis, either as slave, or mistress, or both. It's all the same to her. Life and death, love and war, growth and decay, all declare one world.³⁸ She commends her smooth brow and hands to Adonis: "Thou canst not see one wrinkle in my brow/...My smooth moist hand, were it with thy hand felt,/ Would in thy palm dissolve, or seem to melt." (lines 139 and 143-144) And having to no avail cited the flowers about them: "Witness this primrose bank whereon I lie:/... Be bold to play, our sport is not in sight./ These blue-veined violets whereon we lean/ Never can blab, nor know what we mean." (lines 151 and 124-126), she

suddenly with inspired impatience exclaims: *"I'll be a park, and thou shalt be my deer."* (line 231).

Thus a smooth park-like surface displaces the medieval garden, with its intricate flower beds, compartments, and water-works. Smooth grass, and continuous space, form the park. But Venus subverts the park, with arabesques of fertility: *"Feed where thou wilt, on mountain or in dale;/ Graze on my lips and if these hills be dry,/ Stray lower, where pleasant fountains lie./ Within this limit is relief enough,/ Sweet bottom grass and high delightful plain,/ Round rising hillocks, brakes obscure and rough,/ To shelter thee from tempest and from rain:/ Then be my deer, since I am such a park./ No dog shall rouse thee, though a thousand bark.* (lines 231-240.) And

*King's College Chapel 1446-1515, and the
Fellows' Building 1724, by Gibbs, at Cambridge*



Shakespeare subverts Adonis' face in turn with the tomb: "*At this Adonis smiles as in disdain/
That in each cheek appears a pretty dimple;/ Love made those hollows, if himself were slain,/ He might
be buried in a tomb so simple,/ Foreknowing well, if there be cause to lie,/ Why there love liv'd, and
there he could not die./ Those lovely caves, those round enchanting pits,/ Open'd their mouths to
swallow Venus' liking;/ Being mad before, how doth she now for wits?/ Struck dead before, what
needs a second striking?/ Poor queen of love, in thine own law forlorn,/ To love a cheek that smiles
at thee in scorn!*" (lines 241-252).

Conclusion

If as C.S. Lewis has implied, Shakespeare's imagery and technique are largely a continuation of the medieval-antique world, my attempts to draw attention to any departure from this may well be forced. It is obvious that in *The Sonnets* neither stone nor building is a subject in the way that time, beauty, and love are. And I have given these scant attention. But then I didn't want to beg the question of what Shakespeare's subjects are. There is novelty in discovering others do not share one's own interests, as Shakespeare declares himself in Sonnet 91 "*every humour hath his adjunct pleasure wherein it finds a joy above the rest.*" And one may well agree that the particulars I have discussed are not, by any means, Shakespeare's measure.

Of the four sonnets which particularly employ imagery concerning stone, only the 94th furnishes imagery that can match Shakespeare's confidence in his own printed rhyme, and a newborn child, for depicting his subject, at least his love. Jewels (Sonnet 52), gilded tombs (Sonnet 55), and castles (Sonnet 65), fall short. Yet in Sonnet 94 stone remains "*unmoved, cold, and to temptation slow,*" as if his love is unrequited. Shakespeare's rhyme does not give a detailed image of his beloved, as a child would. It is possible that the new aesthetic in

architecture gives clues as to what Shakespeare did admire in his beloved's figure, and gives also some idea of his conception of beauty. Perhaps this is what the preceding Sonnet 93 is saying: "... *the false heart's history./ Is writ in moods and frowns and wrinkles strange.*" This could imply a dismissal of the Gothic age. And the last two lines may well evoke the new building aesthetic, with immediate concern that it may not be authentic: "*Whate'er thy thoughts, or thy heart's workings be,/ Thy looks should nothing thence, but sweetness tell./ How like Eve's apple doth thy beauty grow,/ If thy sweet virtue answer not thy show.*"

But in 1616 when Shakespeare died it was too soon to tell. We have seen how sympathy with a familiar, inherited, old-world view of fertility and decay, has tended toward its subjugation, by means of reversal. And with its abstraction, through distillation, its de-contextualisation has been achieved. There remains a self-contained plane of non-expressiveness, indifferent to collusion with natural forces, of which the smooth, ashlar, stone façade, and park, are exponents. Indifference to scorn, and violence, with which realisation of this aesthetic concurred, defines an age's conception of beauty. In architecture we have thus an unforgettable likeness of the youth whom Shakespeare loved.³⁹

Notes:

- 1 I have selected *The Sonnets* as a text because of my current interest in the traditional themes of fertility and renewal in architecture and its ornament, and also in the use of stone in relation to these themes. I have recently examined these themes in Islamic architecture focusing on medieval Cairo. Thus *The Sonnets* attracted my attention, particularly the first seventeen, the so-called "breeding sonnets" in which Shakespeare urges a youth to reproduce his own beauty biologically, to thus make use of time, rather than let his beauty suffer time's inevitable devaluation and extinction. The same arguments are presented in Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* and by Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593) also in *Hero and Leander*.
- 2 C.S. Lewis, *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century (Excluding Drama)* (Oxford, 1954), has drawn attention to the lively and emphatic assertion of old concepts in 16th century

literature. He warns this is not Gothic lag but reinforcement of the medieval view. But not it seems, for its own sake any more. In *The Sonnets*, nature and time; seasons, elements, wind, rain, night and day, stars, sun, moon, cloud, growth, buds, leaves, flowers, earth, worms, decay, all are present. Shakespeare experiments with new ways of using these elements, presumably, thereby engendering increase of another kind.

- 3 All quotations of the Sonnets are from G.B. Harrison, ed., *The Sonnets, and a Lover's Complaint*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1938/1964).
- 4 Shakespeare's poem *Venus and Adonis* of 1194 lines, makes use of the word stone twice, and flint and flinty three times.
- 5 Esin Atil, *The Age of Sultan Süleyman the Magnificent*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), p. 195.
- 6 This seems to accord with Fox's (1988) analysis of a branch of English humanism, which includes Shakespeare and Marlowe, concerning classical and native traditions and the propagation of a revitalised new kind of literature. Alistair Fox, 'Chaucer, More, and English Humanism,' *Parergon*, Bulletin of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, New Series No. 6, 1988, pp. 63-75.
- 7 Richard Muir's outline of the history of stone building in England is a helpful introduction to the subject. R. Muir, *The Stones of Britain. Landscapes and Monuments, Quarries and Cathedrals* (London: Michael Joseph, 1986). Also L.F. Salzman, *Building in England Down to 1540. A Documentary History*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952). And for the Saxon stone industry in particular—E.M. Jope 'The Saxon Building-Stone Industry in Southern and Midland England' in *Medieval Archaeology*, VIII, 1964, pp. 91-118.
- 8 Rather more is known about these sources than about their influence on English architecture. Richard Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965).
- 9 James Lee Milne, *Tudor Renaissance*, (London: Batsford, 1951).
- 10 Richard Muir, op. cit., quotes William Harrison writing in the late 16th century: "The greater part of our building in the cities and good towns of England consisteth onlie of timber, for as yet few of the houses of the communaltie (except here and there in the Welsh countrie towns) are made of stone ... The ancient manors and houses of our gentlemen are yet, and for the most part of strong timber. Howbeit such as be latelie builded are commonlie either of bricks or hard stone." p. 259.
- 11 Muir, op. cit., pp. 259-260. Muir is quoting W.G. Hoskins.
- 12 Sonnet 73, "...cold/Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang." Sonnet 10, "Seeking

that beauteous roof to ruinate,/Which to repair should be thy chief desire"; and Sonnet 119, "And ruined love, when it is built anew,/Grows fairer than at first, more strong, far greater." Some ruins from this period have survived as such. They are often famous for their association with the picturesque and romantic impulses of later centuries. Examples are William Wordsworth's "Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798," with its echo of Sonnet 104; also David Hockney's photographs 'My Mother. Bolton Abbey. Yorkshire. November 1982' and 'Ian. Fountains Abbey Yorkshire January 1983' in Lawrence Weschler, *David Hockney Cameraworks* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1984).

13 Sonnet 91.

14 Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the English Country House*, (New Haven: Yale, 1983).

15 Shakespeare's contemporary Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593), by contrast, demonstrates an impressive knowledge, perhaps first hand experience, of stone and marble in antique and Byzantine building. So I don't think its just the age, that is, accidents of history and geography that have contrived Shakespeare's ignorance. Chaucer (c.1340-1400) having travelled to Italy, to Florence, and Siena perhaps, would undoubtedly have seen a range of impressive works in stone and marble. From what we know of him, if *The Canterbury Tales* are a measure, he was curious about such matters in antiquity, aware of contemporary practice, on account of his being in 1389 put in charge of "repair of walls, ditches, sewers, and bridges between Greenwich and Woolwich and of the fabric of St George's Chapel at Windsor." Nevill Coghill, trans., *Geoffrey Chaucer. The Canterbury Tales*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), p. 14. Also John Gardner, *The Life and Times of Chaucer* (Paladin, 1979), p. 191.

16 "In the old age black was not counted fair... But now is black Beauty's successive heir... Therefore my Mistress' eyes are raven black," Sonnet 127. "If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head." Sonnet 130.

17 Harrison, op. cit., p. 14.

18 Muir op. cit., p.252, quotes from William Langland's (c.1332-c.1400, a contemporary of Chaucer) *Crede of Piers Plowman*, a description of a "wonderly wel-y-bild" church: "With niches on everiche half,/ And bellyche-y-corven;/ With crochetes on corneres,/With knottes of gold,/With gay glittering glas/ Glowying as the sunne..." Muir contrasts this contemporary description with John Evelyn's 17th century summing up of the medieval legacy: "a certain fantastical and licentious manner of building: congestions of heavy, dark, melancholy, monkish piles, without any just proportion, use or beauty." (253.)

19 Marlowe in his poem *Hero and Leander* would have this new context as a "majestical ocean" thus dressing it in the guise of the old. Here, "a stately builded ship, well rigg'd" echoes Langland's "wel-y-bild" church: "Nor heaven, nor thou, were made to gaze upon;/ As

heaven preserves all things, so save thou one./ A stately builded ship, well rigg'd and tall,/ The ocean maketh more majesticall:" 1:lines 223-226. E.D. Pendry and J.C. Maxwell, ed., *Christopher Marlowe, Complete Plays and Poems* (Everyman, 1983). Shakespeare too, respects tall building of goodly pride, and like Marlowe shifts this image out to the wide ocean. But in that Sonnet 80 of jealousy, he abandons such construction. In the new context he mocks the pretension of its fine qualities, clinging rather to his own "saucy bark." It is a complex sonnet with contextual shifts; with ironies expressing hurt, scorn, impudence, and conceit; and, I suspect with bawdy undertows: "O how I faint when I of you do write,/ Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,/ And in the praise thereof spends all his might,/ To make me tongue-tied speaking of your fame./ But since your worth (wide as the Ocean is)/ The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,/ My saucy bark (inferior far to his)/ On your broad main doth wilfully appear./ Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,/ While he upon your soundless deep doth ride,/ Or (being wrack'd) I am a worthless boat,/ He of tall building, and of goodly pride./ Then if he thrive and I be cast away,/ The worst was this, my love was my decay." This sonnet is Shakespeare's saucy equivalent to Marlowe's description of Neptune's rape of Leander.

- 20 I am indebted to Dr Jonathon Lamb's discussion of Longinus for reference to ocean vastness as an image for the sublime.
- 21 Shakespeare does not as Marlowe gush with images of gorgeous building. In *Hero and Leander* these range from Thetis's glassy bower (2:204) to Neptune's ocean-floor azure palace: "*Leander striv'd, the waves about him wound,/ And pull'd him to the bottom, where the ground/ Was strew with pearl, and in low coral groves/ Sweet singing mermaids sported with their loves/ On heaps of heavy gold, and took great pleasure/ To spurn in careless sort the shipwrack treasure./ For here the stately azure palace stood/ Where kingly Neptune and his train abode.*" (2: 159-166.) In his description of Venus's temple, Marlowe significantly retains Langland's sensual enjoyment of building, but transfers this to an antique context: "*So fair a church as this Venus had none;/ The walls were of discoloured jasper stone,/ Wherein was Proteus carved and o'erhead/ A lively vine of green sea-agate spread;/ Where by one hand light-headed Bacchus hung,/ And with the other, wine from grapes outwung./ Of crystal shining fair the pavement was;/ The town of Sestos called it Venus' glass./ There might you see the gods in sundry shapes,/ Committing heady riots, incest, rapes:/ ... And in the midst a silver altar stood.*" (1: 133-157.) Marlowe clearly knows about antique and Byzantine building, and with his Asia Minor theme concerning Venus's priestess Hero, and Leander, he understands the religion of this old earth goddess whose "veins and sinews", Colin Thubron writes in his account of Lebanon in *The Hills of Adonis. A Journey in Lebanon* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), "*were the fields and vines of men.*"
- 22 Kerrigan notes the rhyme may be that of the short 'u' or long 'oo'. John Kerrigan, ed., *The Sonnets and a Lover's Complaint*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986), pp. 195 and 319.
- 23 "*Who will believe my verse in time to come/ If it were fill'd with your most high deserts?/ Though yet heaven knows it is but as a tomb/ Which hides your life, and shows not half your parts:"* Sonnet 17, lines 1-4; "*The earth can yield me but a common grave,/ When you entombed in*

men's eye shall lie./ Your monument shall be my gentle verse,/ Which eyes not yet created shall o'er-read,/ And tongues to be, your being shall rehearse,/ When all the breathers of this world are dead,/ You still shall live (such virtue hath my pen)/ Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men. "Sonnet 81, lines 7-14; *"Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,/ Bound for the prize of (all to precious) you,/ That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,/ Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?"* Sonnet 86, lines 1-4; *"My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,/ Since spite of him I'll live in this poor rhyme,/ While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes./ And thou in this shalt find thy monument,/ When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent."* Sonnet 107, lines 10-14.

- 24 Horace sees even the great pyramids of Egypt - the tomb writ large and tall - succumbing to nature's inevitable processes of demolition although this has yet to occur for the great pyramids of Khufu, Khafre, and Menkaure. He reserves nature's process of renewal, the "green and growing," as an image for his own lasting reputation. Shakespeare does not say his rhyme is green and growing; although he does say his beloved is "still green;" but rather he rejoices grotesquely in black ink, black as the eye's pupil. Kerrigan points out that Shakespeare seeks immortality for his verses and lover, not for himself. Horace does not share Shakespeare's conception of printing. Horace's thought is wholly, explicitly, within the old fertility view, seeing architecture's decay as part of the natural world: *"More durable than bronze, higher than Pharaoh's/ Pyramids is the monument I have made,/ A shape that angry wind or hungry rain/ Cannot demolish, nor the innumerable/ Ranks of the years that march in centuries./ I shall not wholly die: some part of me/ Will cheat the goddess of death, for while High Priest/ And Vestal climb our Capitol in a hush,/ My reputation shall keep green and growing."* Horace, Odes 111 30, 1-9, James Michie trans., *The Odes of Horace*, (Penguin, 1964/1978), pp. 206-207.
- 25 Fox, 68, and Sonnets 16 and 67.
- 26 Sonnets 30, 33, 34 and 35.
- 27 In *The Tempest* Shakespeare appears to make use of the parlour game employing a log. Ferdinand has to lug and pile some thousand logs together, at Prospero's command. This wooden slavery he is happy to endure for love of Prospero's daughter Miranda. Inevitably a scrimmage betwixt Ferdinand and Miranda occurs as they argue over the task and Miranda grabs Ferdinand's log - the one he is carrying at the time.
- 28 As in Sonnet 13: *"Who lets so fair a house fall to decay,/ Which husbandry in honour might uphold,/ Against the stormy gusts of winter's day/ And barren rage of death's eternal cold?/ O, none but unthrifths, dear my love, you know/ You had a Father; let your Son say so."* lines 9-14.
- 29 *"But flowers distill'd, though they with winter meet,/ Leese but their show, their substance still lives sweet."* Sonnet 5, lines 13-14. *"Then were not summer's distillation left/ A liquid prisoner pent in walls of glass,"* lines 9-10.

- 30 *"This elusive poem "* Kerrigan comments *"is perhaps the most discussed in the collection."* Kerrigan considers this sonnet fraught with uncertainties *"Its ironies are almost inordinate, an ebb and flow between approval and disapproval ambiguating the text, whose iterative patterns ... offer a security which, in reading dissolves."* He notes the *"thorough going self possession"* evoked in the sonnet (pp. 290-2), and Shakespeare's use of stone as an image of unrelenting indifference.
- 31 *"Sir, there's nothing to explain/ But this; if you would ride it far or near,/ Just twirl this pin that's standing in its ear,/ ... To make him move or seek some other place/ Twirl this pin and he'll vanish into space,/ Yes, disappear completely out of sight,/ Yet will return... To you alone..."*
- 32 Girouard, op. cit., pp. 143-163. Also Christopher Simon Sykes, *Ancient English Houses 1240-1612*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1988), and Nigel Nicolson, *Great Houses of Britain*, (London: The National Trust and Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1978).
- 33 Girouard considers that Hardwick Hall's detail is taken from Flemish Pattern Books. He also observes that the gallery chimney pieces are taken from Serlio's 7th Book. (pp. 146-7.) C. Simon Sykes illustrates the chimney piece and doorway by Thomas Accres in the Green Velvet Room which incorporates alabaster, blackstone, and other Derbyshire marbles. (pp. 206-7.)
- 34 *"the importance and wealth of its owner is shouted to the world by the almost relentless use of the most expensive material available at the time—glass ... the result is breathtaking, and inspired the now celebrated piece of doggerel—'Hardwick Hall, more glass than wall.'* C. Simon Sykes, op. cit., p. 210.
- 35 Kerrigan, op. cit., p. 31.
- 36 In this poem Shakespeare presents a horse, a hare, and a boar, as creatures active, and forceful enough, to make one gasp. But the boar is ridiculed by Venus in this parody of heterosexual love. The horse behaving on cue runs off in lust for a mare. And the hare becomes an object of pity.
- 37 Venus remembers him thus after his death: *"Bonnet nor veil henceforth no creature wear:/ Nor sun nor wind will ever strive to kiss you/ Having no fair to lose, you need not fear./ The sun doth scorn you, and the wind doth hiss you/ But when Adonis liv'd, sun and sharp air/ Lurk'd like two thieves to rob him of his fair./ And therefore would he put his bonnet on,/ Under whose brim, the gaudy sun would peep:/ The wind would blow it off, and being gone,/ Play with his locks; then would Adonis weep,/ And straight, in pity of his tender years,/ They both would strive who first should dry his tears."* Venus and Adonis, lines 1081-1092.
- 38 The god Mars is her chief example; her most successful, best behaved lover, as she explains to Adonis: *"I have been woo'd as I entreat thee now,/ Even by the stern and direful god of war,/ Whose sinewy neck in battle ne'er did bow,/ Who conquers where he comes in every*

jar;/ Yet hath he been my captive and my slave,/ And begg'd for that which thou unask'd shalt have." Venus and Adonis, lines 97-102.

39

Sonnet 55 with the theme of marble monuments ceding to Shakespeare's rhyme, and with its reference to his love's presence on the Day of Judgement, makes fascinating comparison with the Taj Mahal, built within two decades after Shakespeare's death. Wayne E. Begley, 'The Myth of the Taj Mahal and a New Theory of its Symbolic Meaning,' *The Art Bulletin*, 61, 1979, pp. 7-37, links the form of this building, begun in 1632, with Islamic and Christian, iconography, and texts. The cenotaphs of Shah Jahan, and his consort Mumtaz Mahal, follow Mughal convention with symbolic references to pen and tablet respectively. He argues a context - the larger composition of the Taj and its garden—with allegorical reference to the Day of Resurrection, and the Divine Throne of Majesty. As with Shakespeare, the pen and tablet both anticipate, and are, the means for creation, the prescription of human destiny, and final judgement. As a sheet of paper can be an image for a cosmological tablet, so also a plain stone façade, upon which a new conception of architectural beauty is impressed.

A continuation of the 16th century architecture of the smooth façade includes The Fellows' Building (1724) by Gibbs on the west side of the Great Court at King's College, Cambridge, and facing the smooth lawn sloping to the river Cam. This smooth ashlar building, together with the Chapel of King's College and the lawn, forms one of the renown prospects of England.