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## THE BULLETIN: EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to Issue Nineteen of the *Birkbeck Early Modern Society Bulletin*. This edition continues with the usual mix of a wide and lively range of articles, reviews and forthcoming events.

The Summer is with us again and the newspapers are full of reports of droughts and water restrictions yet as I write this the rain is beating down upon the roof of my new conservatory and it seems more like April than June. Incidentally, the conservatory is the work of a fine building firm called Deodar Associates. This is the second time that I have used them and I strongly recommend them.

This year the AGM will be held in the Autumn and with a number of committee members standing down from either the offices of the Society or from the committee itself it is vital that Society members put themselves forward to take their place. Please give serious consideration to putting yourself forward, including for the position of editor of the Bulletin.

I hope that you enjoy this issue and I look forward to seeing you at one of our events in the near future. The next issue will be out in the Autumn of 2011.

John Croxon

Editor

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## **VISITS**

### **Tewkesbury Battlefield**

#### **Gloucestershire**

A tour of the battlefield at Tewkesbury was organized by the Battlefields Trust, a marvellous organization that comprises of a number of regional groups with the aim of preserving Britain's battlefield sites that are constantly under threat from developers, landowners and local councils.

Tewkesbury is one of the battle sites under the most threat and has already lost one section while activists and concerned locals are constantly fighting off plans to cover the site in concrete.

Tewksbury was fought in May 1471 and was one of the most important battles fought on British soil. It saw the triumph of Edward IV and the House of York and the eclipse of the House of Lancaster.

The walk was split into two parts, held on successive weekends, and I will very briefly mention the first before concentrating upon the second. The first concerned the Yorkist march from the small village of Tredington where Edward had made camp on the night prior to the battle. There are two possible routes for the march and we took one route out to Tredington and returned to Tewkesbury via the other. Both routes took us across fields and it is likely that it was our outward journey that reflected the route of the Yorkist march as it crossed the flood plains and so would have been good marching terrain. The charming village of Tredington contained some lovely old houses and a beautiful small church that the Yorkist leaders probably prayed in on the night prior to battle. We only numbered about eight on this walk, plus a dog, but it was most enjoyable and set us up nicely for the following week, and a tour of the actual battlefield.

The second walk attracted a large number and we all squeezed into the ground-floor room of Tewkesbury Museum to witness the unveiling of a new painting of the battle which was well received. We then all made our way upstairs where we were shown some artefacts of fifteenth-century warfare, including a helmet and a sword. Then the organizer of both walks, Steven Goodchild, talked us through the background to the Wars of the Roses and the approaching weeks to Tewkesbury and then the battle itself, before leading us all outside for the start of the walk.



Tewkesbury Abbey

Steve led us past the Abbey, crossing over the Swilgate into the Vineyards, which are now used as a recreational ground. The ground rises up and at the top of the field there is a low obelisk erected in 1932 that commemorates the battle. From this point there are spectacular views of the Abbey and one can visualise it in 1471, big, colour-washed, and with a spire on top of the tower reaching another one hundred feet higher. It must have been seen miles away and would have created a huge impression on approaching soldiers.

We then took a footpath which ran between a Victorian cemetery and a modern housing estate, the latter an unwanted encroachment upon the battlefield. The land before us was part of the Gaston Fields. A short walk along a lane brought us to a main road (not there in medieval times) which we crossed and entered meadow land. This was just as it was in the fifteenth century and we could now look at a scene that was not too dissimilar to that which the two armies viewed in 1471.

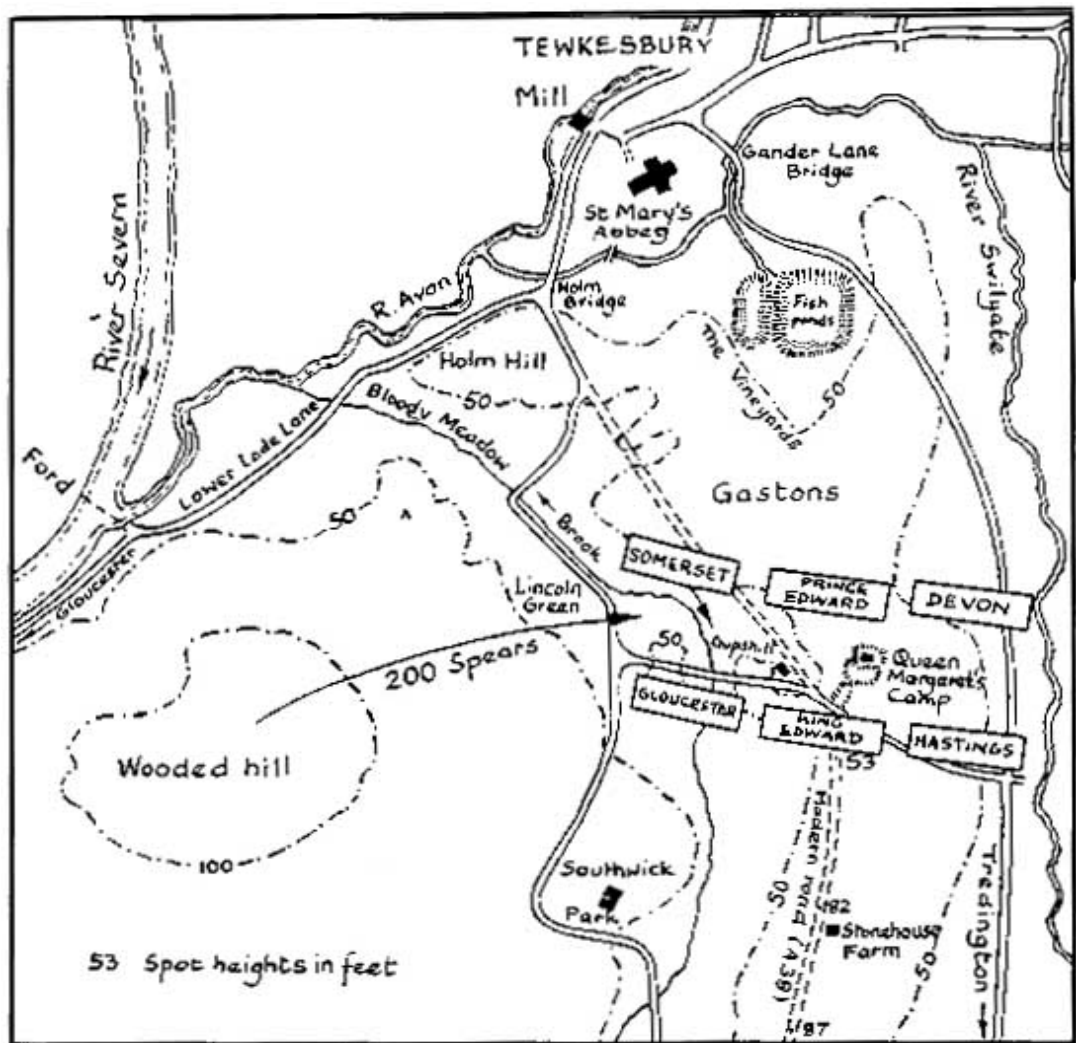
The Lancastrians, commanded by the duke of Somerset, lined up in a defensive formation behind hedges waiting for the Yorkists approaching from Tredington. The battle opened with an exchange of artillery fire which the Yorkists had the better of but Somerset, on the right of the Lancastrian line, had devised a plan to attack the Yorkists behind their left flank, commanded by Richard, duke of Gloucester. Leaving a front line of men to screen his movements, he led the remainder along narrow lanes, obscured from the enemy by trees, to the base of a hillock to the west of the Yorkist left flank. Here they would have taken the Yorkists by surprise and at the same time as they attacked, Lord Wenlock, who commanded the centre Lancastrian battle, was also to have launched an assault. However, unfortunately for Somerset, Edward had perceived the danger of an ambush from the woods in the deer park on this side of the field and had despatched two hundred cavalry to keep guard.

We walked part of the way along Lincoln Green Lane, Somerset's 'secret way'. Amazingly, Tewkesbury Council has allowed someone to build a huge house next to the lane, right in the middle of the battlefield. However, one can still see the hillock down which Somerset charged.



Lincoln Green Lane

Somerset launched his attack upon the surprised Yorkist left flank, but they recovered quickly and pushed back. The men hidden in the woods in the deer park now joined the attack upon Somerset. In addition, the expected attack from Wenlock, which would have distracted the Yorkists efforts, failed to occur. Somerset was pushed back and his troops then broke and fled, some across the park and some across what is now known as Bloody Meadow. Somerset escaped and returned to his lines, where he is said to have angrily berated Wenlock accusing him of treason and beat his brains out with a battleaxe. Now leaderless in the centre, suspicious of treason and heavily pressed by the Yorkists, the remaining troops broke and fled.



The Battle of Tewkesbury 1471

We walked down the lane, past the entrance to the grounds of a large hotel which now occupies the site of the ancient deer park and across the road and into Bloody Meadow, a long narrow field, with hedges on either side. It was here that the fleeing Lancastrians were pursued to the town and it was the scene of the fiercest slaughter as many were cut down, while others drowned in their attempts to cross the River Swilgate. Amongst those killed was the only son of Henry VI and Queen Margaret, Edward, Prince of Wales. It is easy to see how the fleeing Lancastrians would have been slowed and trapped in this area. The ground would have been more boggy then and they would have been pushed together by the shape of the field with no obvious route of escape. Some did get away and Somerset sought refuge in the Abbey but was taken, tried and executed along with a number of other leading Lancastrians in the days following the battle.



### Bloody Meadow

On the road back from Bloody Meadow to the town, there is a pumping station where, in the nineteenth century, excavations to improve the town's sewerage system uncovered human bones buried in mass graves. Undoubtedly from the battle, the bones were reburied but the new location was not recorded.

I really enjoyed this walk. Our guide, Steve, was absolutely first class and painted a vivid picture of the battle. He managed to make it interesting, informative and enjoyable and ensured that whether one was well versed in the events of the battle or a newcomer to the Wars of the Roses, a good time was had by all.

For those interested, Steve has written an excellent guide to the battle '*Tewkesbury: Eclipse of the House of Lancaster – 1471*', published by Pen and Sword.

John Croxon.

# ARTS REPORT



## THEATRE

### Cardenio

#### The Swan Theatre

#### Stratford-Upon-Avon



Oliver Rix as Cardenio and Lucy Briggs-Owen as Luscinda

This is the fiftieth year of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the first since the refurbishment of the Swan Theatre and the re-development of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre. To mark this auspicious year the RSC is staging what they describe as Shakespeare's 'Lost Play' Re-imagined. Just how much belongs to Shakespeare is open to question. But what we get is a powerful piece of theatre, adapted and directed by Gregory Doran from a variety of sources, that had the audience completely enthralled from start to finish.

The play has a complicated history: In 1605 Cervantes' *Don Quixote* was published and three years later it was adapted for the stage by Guillen de Castro focusing upon one part of Cervantes' tale. Then, a play called *The History of Cardenio*, attributed to Fletcher and Shakespeare and just like de Castro based on the story of Cardenio within *Don Quixote*, was performed in 1613. However, the play was not included in any folio. In the following century a play called *Double Falsehood* written by Lewis Theobald, based on the lost Shakespearean manuscript, was played at Drury Lane in 1727.

The director Gregory Doran has spent years investigating the matter, and now, with the assistance of the Spanish dramatist Antonio Alama, has merged the various versions of the Cardenio story to produce what he feels is close to what the Fletcher/Shakespeare play was like. What emerges is a coherent, enthralling, and moving drama.

The crux of the play is the false friendship as embodied by Fernando, the lascivious younger son of a powerful Duke who, besotted by Dorotea a farmer's daughter, first comes close to raping her before gaining her consent by pretending to marry her. He then abandons her in order to wed Luscinda who is the intended bride of his friend Cardenio. Luscinda enters a nunnery to escape Fernando, Cardenio, half-mad, wanders the woods and Dorotea disguises herself as a shepherd boy to pursue Fernando. Fernando's elder brother, Pedro, then takes charge and the play ends with a double-marriage and on a tide of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Shakespeare's hand is certainly evident in some of the work, particularly in the second half when Fernando feels sickened by his double betrayal of Dorotea and Cardenio, but it is clearly Fletcher who provided the major contribution. But what matters is that the play works superbly. Set in the sizzling heat of Andalucia, this wonderfully crafted production contains Catholic ritual, dance-filled fiestas, evocative Spanish music, sex, violence and male friendship betrayed.

A marvellous RSC cast produces some glorious acting. Alex Hassell brilliantly combines menace with comic stupidity as the impetuous libertine Fernando, Oliver Rix has a strong, natural acting style and handles superbly the change in Cardineo from the position of impending marriage and preferment at court to betrayed

derangement. Lucy Briggs-Owen gives a highly moving performance as the faithful Luscinda, Pippa Nixon is a determined Dorotea and Christopher Godwin gives a strong cameo performance as Don Camilo.



Oliver Rix as Cardenio

Doran has produced a wonderfully exciting and engrossing theatrical event. The lighting and music are used to great effect and the play sweeps along at a terrific pace, combining humour with moments of deeper feeling and drama such as when Luscinda defies suitor and father to remain true to her love, and in the rape scene when sections of the audience actually gasped at the intended violence.

Cardenio may not be a lost masterpiece but it is a worthy member of the Jacobean theatrical canon that offers a spirited, entertaining and moving experience. This is a brave experiment that works marvellously well and Gregory Doren and the RSC must be congratulated for the decision to stage it.

John Croxon.

# OPERA

## **‘The Damnation of Faust’ Hector Berlioz**

## The Coliseum



Peter Hoare as Faust

The current fad by English National Opera for using celebrity directors has proved in the past to be misguided, they do not necessarily know how to handle the peculiarities of staging an opera and often seem to make the music secondary to other aspects of the production. In Terry Gilliam, however, an exception can be said to have been found. *'The Damnation of Faust'*, less an opera than an oratorio, is a difficult piece to stage and Gilliam has managed not only to provide an interesting interpretation of the work's theme, but also one that is in harmony with Berlioz's music.

Gilliam chose to set the work in Germany during the late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. Faust, led by Mephistopheles, watches as the crowned heads of Europe carve up the world between them – perhaps fortunately the only obvious piece of Pythonesque humour in the production. Faust then enters the carnage of the First World War as a surgeon, experiences the emergence of the Nazis, before falling in love. It comes as little surprise when his love, the blonde-haired Marguerite starring in a pastiche of a Bayreuth opera performance, turns out to be dark haired and Jewish. They become lovers as *Kristallnacht* takes place outside – very inventively depicted by Gilliam. It is only a matter of time before Marguerite is arrested and there is a truly moving scene as she, and others, sit amongst their luggage waiting to board a train clearly bound for a concentration camp. In his desperate attempt to save her Faust is bound for the abyss of hell and Mephistopheles triumphs.

Christopher Purves plays a seductively wicked Mephistopheles, a puppet-master convincing in his evilness. Peter Hoare's Faust was a well-constructed blend of innocence, arrogance and intelligence, and it was unnecessarily cartoonish to give him bright red hair stood straight on end. Christine Rice portrayed a complex Marguerite caught up in events – her aria of love for Faust whilst waiting to be transported was one of the highlights of the evening. ENO's orchestra brought the music to life, and Berlioz himself would have been delighted to have seen the undoubtedly enthusiastic reception of his work compared to the response to its initial performances which led him to write that 'it [Faust] might have been the most footling opera in the company's repertory'.

Sue Dale

## ART EXHIBITION

### EARLY MODERN INDIA OR A BRIEF GUIDE TO MUGHAL ARCHITECTURE

Salman Rushdie's novel, *The Enchantress of Florence*, is about a Florentine at Fatehpur Sikri and a Mughal princess in Florence, both in sixteenth-century situations fraught with potential for Rushdian explorations of cultural misunderstanding. Let us imagine for a moment an analogous, equally surreal, senario in which the so-called founder of (Western) Art History, Giorgio Vasari, 1511-74, finds himself in Mughal India. More specifically let us imagine that he begins his contemplation of Indian art and architecture not at the Mughal court but instead on his way there, say from landing at Surat on the west coast, as he might have, and moving inland through Ahmedabad, not even if at all a full Mughal possession until 1573, near the even of Vasari's life. Strangely Ahmedabad was later to be the venue of iconic later Western works such as Le Corbusier's Mill Owners' Building (now the ATMB, Ahmedabad Textile Mills Building) and Louis Kahn's Indian Institute of Management (IIM). I have chosen this city not quite at random but because one of its mosques looks so like a sixteenth-century Florentine market hall that at first glance it might be thought to be the work of a Western or Western-trained mid to late nineteenth-century historicist architect who had the restraint to avoid the prevailing Indo-Saracenic manner. It also has the advantage of not being one of the standard items on the tourist circuit the town being well off the circuit

The Sidi Sayyid Mosque is in fact a sixteenth-century building, 1572-3, which has sculpted trees on two of the jalis (lattice screens) on the second and fourth bays of its rear (west) wall.



The Sidi Sayyid Mosque with tree jalls

These trees have become virtual symbols of this town, made prosperous in the nineteenth century by the realization that the milling, as opposed to the growing, of cotton, did not have to take place only in the industrialized West. India could have industry too. The mosque is a three by five bay structure with pointed arches. The arches would have bothered Vasari, as would the forms of the vaults,



The vaults of the Sidi Sayyid Mosque

which have more variety than he would have found acceptable but in some instances come close to a Florentine dome on pendentives with added decoration. We will continue the fantasy about Vasari to the point at which back in Florence and having undergone grim purges to get his humours back in balance, after the havoc wrought by Delhi Belly, he added a brief postscript to “Le vite de’ più eccellente pittori, scultore e architettore” on the Art of the “Indies”. (Strictly speaking this is impossible as Vasari was seriously aging before construction of the best architecture of his lifetime at Akbar’s unique new capital of Fatehpur Sikri had got very far, while at the Sidi Sayyid work began a little later than on the new city. A magic carpet would be needed.) He would have been scathing about cluttered Hindu temples and mosques that have many Hindu characteristics such as the Qutb Minar complex in South Delhi, begun 1193 with the Quwwat-ul-Islam (Might of Islam) Mosque, or the Jami Masjid in Ahmedabad itself, completed 1424, a later and more sophisticated version of the same tradition. A huge late version of this type is at Fatehpur Sikri. Western denigration of Indian architecture has a long history up to Lutyens. “...I do not believe there is *any* real Indian architecture or any great tradition. There are just spurts by various mushroom dynasties with as much intellect as there is in any other art nouveau” (Volwahren, “Imperial Delhi”, p. 25), and this is one of his more measured comments.

Vasari’s particular venom, however, would have been reserved for the Sidi Sayyid because it came so incredibly close to the “right” style that the lapses would have seemed to him to be especially deplorable. The closeness to the Florentine market model would have been emphasized by the presence in such an establishment of some religious imagery, such as a shrine to the patron saint of the merchants trading in the market. There is a model of just such a building in Vasari’s painting “Cosimo de’ Medici and his Artists”, Florence, Palazzo Vecchio, Sala di Cosimo I”. Or San Michele, the great municipal grain store, has a shrine at ground floor level and the niches in which some of the greatest Renaissance sculpture by Ghiberti, Donatello and Verocchio was placed to supply a religious element.

Even Vasari would have recognized the beauty of the jali trees while bemoaning the infidel’s (and the alarmingly similar Calvinist’s) prohibition on figurative art especially sculpture. He would have applauded the turrets from ground to roofline at

the ends of the façade, which come very close to mimicking the effect of a giant order framing a smaller order carrying arches. We cannot rule out the possibility that prints or other representations of Western architecture could have found their way to Ahmedabad. Western figurative prints were glued into Mughal albums. There is in fact a far more successful proportional relationship in the Sidi Sayyid between the internal order and the framing one than on earlier mosques, such as the earlier Jami Masjid in Ahmedabad where the huge bulges from the façade are more like bastions than engaged giant columns. Those at the Sidi Sayyid are relatively as big or bigger but better integrated. In the extreme example of the Qutb Minar in South Delhi, the internal two story pillars jar with the great iwan pointed arches and seem to clutter up what should be free space. The structures in the interior have intercolumniations smaller than the grand arches, which is disconcerting and makes the interior, as in the Ahmedabad Jami Masjid, for all its ingenuity, something of an anti-climax. The pillars in the prayer hall and the courtyard in such structures are often reused, or imitation Hindu temple pillars which are small and ineffectual in the context of the great arches. The same disparity of giant external “order” and arches in the absence of an internal one is found in the Tin Darvaza, 1423, also in Ahmedabad.

There is a striking similarity in these disparities to those in the Emperor Constantine’s monumental basilicas in which the triumphal arches soar over the spolia columns, often not even selected for compatibility with each other, and looted from the pagan monuments of Constantine’s imperial predecessors. There is in fact an uncanny convergence of the propaganda in Constantine’s new Christian churches and in the first Islamic shrines on the subcontinent. Both serve a newly triumphant sect by making trophies looted from the holy places of an old religion subordinate to huge arches. The Quwwat-ul-Islam Mosque, the core of the Qutb Minar complex, is supposed to have been the first mosque in India following the serious Muslim conquests in the centre of the subcontinent leaving aside what is to be found in such peripheral earlier conquests as Sind. By no means as developed as the Renaissance Western theory of the orders, Indian interest in this feature was considerable. A concern with self-consciously repeated engaged columns on walls occurred simultaneously in India. Related to the whole, not pillars distributed about incongruous interiors that are too big for them as before, these columns became a

feature of the architecture of the reign of Akbar (1556-1605). By that time the columns were meant to harmonize with the building, not cower under it.

What makes the Vasari/Akbar period so interesting as we look back from our own time, in which political correctness demands a celebration of multi-culturalism, is the degree to which the interpenetration of ideas and artistic motifs by mutual consent took place between what we might think of as distinct cultural areas. For instance somewhat earlier minarets, not very well disguised, appear on the palace of Federigo da Montefeltro in Urbino, ca.1464, defining a stack of single arch loggias. In something very close to the pure Ottoman type, there are more minarets flanking the dome of Palladio's Il Redentore in Venice, 1577-92, where they are bell towers. The then relatively newly conquered Ottoman capital of Constantinople celebrated the ruling dynasty's aspirations to rule the entire Mediterranean by a revival of the Christian architecture of Justinian, reigned 527-65. Justinian recovered almost the entire Mediterranean coastline for the Late Roman Empire. The Justinianic architectural revival reached its climax in the work of Sinan Pasha, 1491/2-1588. The Popes were at the same time pursuing a Renaissance revival of the architecture of Constantine and emperors even further back from Justinian. Among the formal problems their architects had to overcome was a desire for a far more harmonious re-employment of Constantine's spolia in the new St. Peter's. These columns again needed a new home after the destruction of the old St. Peter's by Julius II. In various designs a way was found to do this that made the trophy-like displays of old material in the old basilica (or the Qutb Minar) seem crude. It is interesting that Palladio's patron the Venetian diplomat Marc Antonio Barbaro may have been in touch with Sinan while in Constantinople as a diplomat, and wrote about this architecture in surviving dispatches back to his government. As we will see Sinan's influence may have extended even further in the opposite direction.

Cultures overlap in ways that break down conventional distinctions to such an extent that the multitude of influences can become bewildering. As a result in retrospective writings allegedly more important influences follow each other like fashions. We have touched on the concept of the Classical Mediterranean, which in its most extended form lasted well into the Late-Roman/Early Byzantine period. In the context of sixteenth-century India we need to consider another and in some respects more

extensive cultural region, though this does not mean direct European/Indian contacts can be ignored. Persian culture covered an even wider area than the lands around the Mediterranean or Catholic and Protestant Christian Europe. Not only did the Mughal conquest of Northern India extend this Iranian area well to the East, but also in the West Ottoman court culture celebrated Persian literature and manuscript illumination. This culture extended in its fuller manifestations to Edirne (Adrianople) in Thrace, still today just in Turkey, the Ottoman summer capital, though Byzantine influences are also very much present, the summer palace destroyed by the Turks themselves retreating before a Russian advance in 1878. Here the literary culture would have been centred on Persian poetry. Persian was an Ottoman court language read and written amidst garden pavilions that fused Persian and Byzantine modes as can still be appreciated at the Topkapi complex in Istanbul. From the early Caliphate Byzantine and Islamic court cultures (the latter largely derived from Persia) had influenced each other.

The other end of the Persian cultural area stretched at least as far to the east as Agra, one of the Mughal capitals. The dynasty had emerged in Central Asia and Afghanistan, themselves culturally influenced by Iran. Persian was a Mughal court language and Persians were leading civil servants and ministers. A reinforcing of the link came with the long middle years of the reign of the second great Mughal, Humayun when he lost his empire and spent years wandering in Persia. The most uncompromisingly Persian buildings in India are the gateway and other corresponding pavilions on the cardinal sides to the garden around Akbar's tomb at Sikandra, now a suburb of Agra. They have the polychrome tiling that is usually omitted in other Persian-type buildings on the subcontinent in which the surface cladding is usually more completely Indianized. The major exception is Akbar's son's tomb in Lahore where there is moderate polychromy. Humayan's tomb in Delhi and that of his great grand-daughter-in-law, the Taj Mahal, express Persian shapes without having Persian surfaces. In the former this is done in red sandstone with white marble trim and in the latter in white marble with very restrained polychrome inlay. To point out that in Agra and Delhi local materials and in Istanbul Justinianic forms were used, is not to undermine the claim that in the 1500s Persian culture had a reach greater than the borders of the empire of Darius and Xerxes. The identity of the architect of the Taj, if there even is a single master, is uncertain but plausible candidates are Ustad Isa

Afandi, either a Turk or a Persian from Shiaz or Ustad Ahmed from Lahore. The architect of the earliest large Mughal monument, Humayun's Tomb in Delhi, Mirak Mirza Ghiyas was of Persian descent.

Added to the Persian miniature tradition in India were Western imports. A Raphael now lost is reproduced in a Mughal miniature, while Western putti frequently flutter into other miniatures and at times there are approximations of Western perspective and landscapes. Rushdie has been mentioned and we should add a note of caution about Ohran Pamuk's brilliant and readable "My Name is Red" on the infiltration of Western conventions of representation into the highest reaches of Ottoman culture. In fact, despite the far lesser distances from the West, Ottoman illustrations remained more Islamic than their Mughal counterparts in spite of the Justinianic, and therefore ultimately Christian, component in Ottoman architecture. Not all elements that got into the Mughal's books fit together successfully in every case. There was at this stage direct contact with the Portuguese established on the coast and primarily in conflict with the natives of South India, not yet within the grasp of the Mughals. Reciprocal Indian influence in Europe is less extensive but can be traced in the architectural sculpture at Batalha, after 1500, and a famous chapter-house window at Tomar, ca.1510-4, both in Portugal the country that "rediscovered" India. The Tomar window is close to the niches in the antechamber of the Shabistān-i-Iqbāl/Jodh Bai's House at Fatehpur Sikri.

It is not acceptable these days to make claims that one culture is "better" than another and it is very difficult to balance plausibly equivalent failings and successes against each other. For instance, it is certainly true that the internal spaces of Humayun's tomb are relatively small and disconnected compared to those of St. Peter's (Julius's II mausoleum), but in contrast Humayun's son Akbar, reigned 1556-1605, encouraged a religious tolerance and syncretism that makes the squabbles of more orthodox Islamic and Christian rulers of the period seem obscurantist to us. One must set against this what may have been a megalomaniac Akbar's quest for a semi-divine status for himself and the present Hindu dominated, but officially secularist, Indian state's admiration for a ruler who was tolerant towards Hindus and the emerging Sikh religion. This is not the place to examine the extent to which an Akbar, almost too good to be true, was trying to set up new religion suitable to his diverse realm.

Adherents seem mostly to have been in his inner circle. Monotheisms and other entrenched orthodoxies had probably advanced to the point at which a politically motivated imperial cult could not compete in the long term.

It may not be established beyond doubt that Akbar sat on the platform atop the central column of his Diwan-i-Khass (Hall of Private Audience) at Fatehpur Sikri listening to Christian, Jain, Hindu and Muslim theologians arguing their respective cases. They are supposed to have sat in the bulging out quarter circles in the corners, one per religion, of an otherwise narrow continuous balcony.

The ‘pulpits’ for each sect over multiple many layered brackets, quarter versions of the supports for Akbar’s platform, were connected by bridges with the full circle of this central platform at the same level.



A bridge and ‘pulpit’ in the Diwan-i-Khass

The courtiers would have sat below listening one imagines somewhat bemused by the discussions wafting down from above. The column under Akbar's platform is believed to have bands of decoration with motifs of the art of the four faiths allegedly in verbal contention above. The central obstruction, the vault above the four-way symmetry and the bridges has a certain resemblance to the far larger and earlier stair hall at Chambord, begun 1519.

The visual arts can sometimes give us the best insight into past cultures and to this basic assumption I shall add the occasional speculation on how Vasari and other visually aware Europeans, such as Palladio, 1508-80, might have responded to Akbar's buildings. There are three main sites for appreciating the unorthodox emperor's architecture. Part of the Red Fort's palace structures in Agra, misleadingly now called the Jahangiri Mahal after Akbar's son Jahangir, reigned 1605-27, was built by Akbar early in his reign atop the vast red sandstone walls he had commissioned. Much of his work in the fort was destroyed by his successors to make way for their constructions. (This Red Fort should not be confused with another Mughal headquarters, the Red Fort in Delhi.) Also in Delhi is the second major Akbar period building, the tomb (fig.) of his father, Humayun, reigned 1530-40 and 1555-6, the second great Mughal who spent more time off the throne, and much of it in exile, than on it. Credit for this structure often goes not to Akbar himself but to Humayun's most significant widow. She was not Akbar's mother, Hamida, but Haji Begum, so-called because she had been on the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca, where she would have had direct experience of Ottoman culture, if not in its metropolitan form. Later we will see just how aware of the latest Ottoman architectural developments the tomb's designer may have been. Haji Begum could merely have been following the dynasty's established preferences for the first Mughal ruler, Babur, reigned 1526-30, is supposed to have recruited pupils of Sinan Pasha, then just getting started in architecture, and skilled workers from Constantinople (Davies, "Monuments of India" vol. II, p. 52). Finally there is Akbar's most extensive creation, the new capital, Fatehpur Sikri, 23 miles to the southwest of Agra, which was abandoned in 1585 after about fifteen years for reasons that are still disputed. Modifications to some of the buildings after the court left may suggest that the desertion was far from total at the beginning.

A fourth monument, Akbar's huge tomb at Sikandra, before 1605-13, started in his lifetime but finished in altered form, after some demolition of completed work, by his son Jahangir, is a serious disappointment and will not be extensively discussed here. There is no dome and it might be taken for a palace. It looks as though something went badly wrong. Akbar's heresies and wars between father and son in the elder man's last years may have made him something of an embarrassment to his successor, who was himself not really orthodox. Aside from the solecisms the materials used on the tomb building are not of the quality of those in Humayan's tomb, the Taj Mahal, or the tomb of Jahangir's minister and grandfather of Mumtaz Mahal (see below), Itmad-ud-Daula, a structure also known as the "Baby Taj" in Agra. Clearly not enough lakhs (100,000s) of rupees were expended at Sikandra. Jahangir was not very interested in architecture, preferring gardens and miniatures. His effectiveness in all areas was compromised by serious substance abuse encompassing wine, spirits and opium. A curious aspect of the stacked up open verandahs of the upper tomb structure is the resemblance, not only to the Panch Mahal at Fatehpur Sikri, but also to the exterior and hall of the Jacobethan/Scottish Baronial Viceregal Lodge in Shimla. Old Hindu trabeated (post and lintel) construction, has a way of reappearing, thinly disguised, in the works of those who must have admired it (Akbar) and those who despised it (nineteenth-century Englishmen).

In layman's terms Humayun's tomb is an earlier, less compact version of the later Taj Mahal. The bulk of the tomb is in the local red sandstone later used for the walls of the Delhi Red Fort and in Lutyen's and Baker's New Delhi. It has a more disparate complex interior than its successors and the internal use of layer on layer of jalis between the spaces, seen in the gloom against distant light sources invokes infinity. A stunning feature again glimpsed through jalis from certain vantage points on the outside is the way what seems to be a solid core of enclosed spaces is seen to have a channel of space running through it dangerously close to the dome. This is seen through the lateral upper windows in the iwans, or great exedrae, in the centre of each façade. Some aspects are daringly new. There is a flattened version of Muslim honeycomb in the iwans, on the outside but so flattened as to seem like a composition of planes not quite aligned with each other rather than deep hollows. The simplicity and near flatness of this is in stunning contrast to the deep relief of Hindu temples or most earlier Indian Islamic structures. The marble inlay is very restrained. An austere

style had been coming into existence for some time especially under Sher Shah Sur, reigned 1540-5, who until his death occupied the throne from which he had ejected Humayun. Sher Shah Sur's Sher Mandel in Delhi is anticipation of the early Mughal style, particularly the corner pavilions of Humayun's Tomb while his administrative reforms laid the groundwork for Mughal and British practices. Ironically Humayun died as a result of a fall on the steps of the Sher Mandel where he had installed his library.

A most surprising feature of Humayun's monument is the freely arranged clusters of pinnacles and little domes on pillars, or chattris, which compose and recompose themselves in different combinations when seen from different angles. Earlier Delhi tombs such as those of Isa Kahn, 1547, near Humayun's Tomb, two of the tombs in the Lodi Gardens in Delhi, those of Muhammad Shah, 1450, and Sikander Lodi, 1517-8, and that of Sher Shah Sur, the victor over young Humayun, at Sasram in Bihar, 1540-5 (Davies, "Monuments of India" vol. II, ill. p. 271) have all their little projecting structures seen against the main dome or sky arranged as radiating from the centre. Humayun's Tomb in this respect is comparable with the erratic shapes of the great curtain wall of St. Peter's by Michelangelo or the cluster of three types of cross arms and the Ottoman minaret/bell towers on Palladio's Redentore, 1577-92. An Indian example is on the unusually close square precinct wall around Sher Shah Sur's Tomb where the corner chatris escape the radiating pattern of those on the octagonal core. The asymmetries reach a climax at the Taj Mahal when it is seen behind flanking buildings. The strange asymmetries and the sudden plunge through enclosed space in what should be solid wall in Humayun's Tomb may lie behind what was being attempted in the abrupt diminution in scale over the ground floor at Sikandra, but what I suggest could have been a splendid surprise was perhaps made the basis of a disastrous change of plan.

One further feature of the Mughal dynasty's only tomb building in Delhi, where later princes and princesses were buried, must be mentioned. The interior spaces are contrasted and bold as in hardly any later tombs but totally unobstructed by freestanding columns. This spatial monumentality not so much of size but of conception was not achieved even in Akbar's somewhat later congregational mosque at Fatehpur Sikri, where the forest of pillars lacks a relationship with the three high

domes. Monumental uncluttered space in a mosque would only come with such mosques as that at the Taj Mahal (and the duplicate structure on the other side of the tomb building oriented the wrong way and therefore not a mosque) and in the Jami Masjid in Delhi, 1644-58. The spatial maturity of Humayun's tomb interior does not mean that there are no columns. There are little engaged columns placed strategically at the corners both inside and out and on the podium.



A ground floor column at Humayun's Tomb

On the outside they are in red sandstone and inside of marble. Most of the external ones on the main building are at the bottom of successive stacks of white marble engaged columns with capitals, or in Western classical terms acroteria at the top and

bottom of each of almost identical design from the third “order” up at the top and bottom of each shaft. The ground level columns and those above are not as perfectly aligned as on a Western building with successive orders. The centre line of all the shafts above the lowest are slightly displaced from it in a manner familiar in Gothic architecture. The edges of the iwan of Sher Shah Sur’s Qual’a-i Kuhna Mosque, Purana Qual’a, Delhi, 1540-5, is a possible source for both the forms and colours, but the latter are inverted.

There is also no strict proportional scheme to the Humayun columns in part because there are too many “stories” of columns (more than of the levels of fenestration) for this scheme to be read easily. Moreover one story, disrupted by the horizontal articulation that intersects with the columns, is noticeably longer than the rest. There does seem to be a desire to give a measured vertical definition to the whole façade, which is thus related to the combined units of the shafts and to the blocks and decorations between them and to carry this system to the bottom stage of the interior. This is so like the European notion of an all-encompassing scheme of the orders that one wonders if some version of this could have reached Delhi via the Qual’a-i Kuhna Mosque. The architect would then have made a valiant attempt to translate this to his Indo-Islamic terms of reference, which he himself had done so much to alter. Later on the main iwan to the Mosque at Fatehpur and on the Buland Darwaza or Lofty Gate into the Mosque precinct there the stacked multiple orders seem to be trying to become more assertive and differentiated. On outer edges of both the mosque iwan and the outer side of the Buland Darwaza the orders are made to seem larger where they run up against a related vertical band of Persian type of blind arched cubby holes. In the former case there are five “orders” to seven cubby holes and in the latter there are six orders and six cubby holes but each cubby hole appears smaller as it is perched over a square panel. Other features complicate the context. Another Akbar period structure in which there are similar experiments with “orders” is the outer face of the middle portal of the southernmost or Amar Singh Gate of the Red Fort in Agra.

The trend toward something Vasari might have recognized as being near the orders is reversed at the Taj Mahal, 1631-48, subsidiary buildings finished 1653, where the corresponding elements are spindly. The Taj was dedicated to his late wife Mumtaz Mahal by Akbar’s grandson Shah Jehan. Shah Jehan reigned 1628-57, but only died in

1666, after being deposed by his son Aurangzeb, reigned 1658-1707, who had seized power in a period of chaos when his father was struck down by a seemingly fatal illness. Having shown his hand and killed two of his brothers, another having conveniently disappeared, the successor couldn't take any risks. "A tear suspended from the face of eternity", in the words of Ravindranath Tagore, the Taj was commissioned by Shah Jehan, to commemorate the woman who bore him fourteen children, the last birth having killed her. It really must be a monument to True Love as by the end, given this reproductive history, she surely cannot have been much to look at.

The Taj, achingly beautiful as it is, represents from some points of view the beginnings of a decline. The basic form is taken not just from Humayun's Tomb alone but is conflated with the main gate of Sikandra, a lesser form and like the Taj compromised by full minarets, in this case perched on the roof. The detail of the Taj does not seem to me to be as at Humayan's Tomb to be either perfect or, alternatively, tentative and capable of more development. Instead it veers between, on the one hand, fleshy Baroque, as in the designs on the undersides of the minaret balconies and, on the other, the attenuated to the point of vanishing in for instance the Koranic inscriptions around the iwans. Perhaps the grieving, besotted emperor's obsessive attention somehow kept the unravelling style from disintegration. His huge Jami Masjid in Delhi, 1644-58, the largest mosque in India, also displays the signs of "decline", such as the bulbous columns flanking the iwan. Within such a huge building the individual cases of over assertiveness are subsumed in the whole as they are not always in the garden pavilions of the Delhi Red Fort. The Jami Masjid iwan at its edges has in contrast to those at Humayun's Tomb and the Mosque at Fatehpur Sikri has a mere two "orders" below the "pinnacles". In fact they are minor minarets and seem more in tune with the major minarets than with smaller features such as arches. More importantly the hierarchy of flat roofed halls, coved bays and full domes, all relatively open to each other finally reconciled the conflicts among a forest of columns, pointed large arches and domes that had persisted in major mosques as recently as that at Fatehpur. After this accomplishment did Mughal architecture have no more challenges? Perhaps if there is one it was confronted in the Badshahi Mosque in Lahore built by Aurangzeb in Lahore, 1673-4, a heavier version of the Delhi Mosque. It is an under statement to point out that mausoleum built by Prince Azam

Shah and designed by Ata Aula for Aurangzeb's wife in the South at Aurangabad, 1678, is usually regarded as clumsy compared to the Taj Mahal or Humayun's Tomb, the family's two other domed monuments. Another successful tomb with a high visible dome in Delhi is that of the courtier, general and poet Abdur Rahim Khan-i-Khanan, died 1626-7, son of an even more important courtier and virtual regent for young Akbar. It is of almost imperial pretensions and another model for the Taj. It is structurally intact but very dilapidated.

Another feature of Humayun's Tomb, the entrance stairs, has a possible Ottoman connection if not one with still more occidental architecture. Ottoman architecture of this period was a kind of Late Antique revival and might have seemed to Indians to be "Western". At the later Taj Mahal there were also to be stairs to the podium around the domed tomb. They were to be in two flights parallel with the only garden façade and be hidden behind a wall. They followed the pattern of Sher Shah Sur's tomb where they are on every side but exposed to be seen across the surrounding lake. The Taj would be at the far end of the garden not the middle. The other sides facing the mosque, the pseudo-mosque (the mirror image of the mosque), and the River Jamuna, would lack stairs. Humayun's monument is in the exact middle not an end of its formal garden. The stairs in the centre of every side penetrate the podium wall through a central arch and proceed, via the uncomfortably large steps the Mughals always preferred, straight up, facing the middle of each façade. This is an almost literally "in your face" dramatic approach. There is one very obvious parallel: Sinan Pasha's Mehmet Sokulu Pasha Cami (Mosque) at Kadirgalımani in Istanbul, begun ca. 1567-8, on steeply rising ground over the Bosphorus. There the stairs rise from the outer perimeter façade on lower ground than the mosque and again point straight at the main façade across a very truncated courtyard rather than on each side of an all round pedestal. This is a less deep building than the tomb with only one façade, and the dome is very effectively brought into play in the view from the stairs. Sinan was responding to what for a lesser artist would have been a very difficult hillside site. Humayun's Tomb was begun either in 1565 or in 1569 ("Humayun's Tomb", based on the text of S. A. A. Naqvi, p. 26). If the later date is right the architect might have tried to impose a very up-to-date drama imitated from what was planned at the New Rome with its seven hills on the flat Delhi plain. It cannot be completely excluded that the influence was in the opposite direction.

Fatehpur Sikri is one of the most impressive sites in India. All but a few of its most formal parts lack the rigorous symmetry of Humayun's Tomb and instead seem to be designed with a kind of deliberate informality that anticipates Modernism. Spaces flow into each other and are partly screened off from each other by walls or colonnades – very definitely not arcades. These colonnades (usually strictly pillarades) have huge monumental brackets on pillars looking like erratically cusped arches but structurally being very different. The brackets converge and almost touch but don't. Arches are reserved almost exclusively for the congregational mosque at one end of the complex. The brackets with what look like partial almost animal forms are not new appearing, sparingly, on the Bara Gumbad Mosque and Tomb, 1494, in the Lodi Gardens in Delhi. They are used at Sikri with great insistence and repetitiveness. There is only one fully, consistently enclosed palace courtyard the so-called Shabistān-i-Iqbāl or Jodh Bai's Palace, in this context an aberration (Rushdie who is familiar with Fatehpur Sikri treats Jodh Bai, given alternative spellings, Jodha, Jodhabai [“The Enchantress of Florence”, p. 57], as a figment of Akbar's imagination, necessarily better than the other wives, but very real as a part of his personality.) Even this building has strange asymmetries on the entrance side where original “accretions” disrupt the entrance façade, itself closely related to those of Humayun's Tomb but not here left as a perfect monument but enmeshed in a “messier” reality. The wings that project from the façade present their open sides at right angles to the frontage facing outwards are not identical, while one side of the forecourt of which they are an outer part is disrupted by a one-off small pitched roofed building. The entire Fatehpur Sikri complex is littered with little structures that don't quite fit in like the small Hindu shrines scattered throughout the Indian countryside. One of the most spectacular of these is the so-called Astrologer's Seat affixed to a corner of the Ankh Michauli, sometimes thought to be the Treasury. Roofing is another area in which incompleteness almost appears to be an objective.

Fatehpur Sikri is a place we know remarkably little about. The Delhi Red Fort was occupied by the court of an increasingly feeble and shadowy state, the façade behind which East India Company rule operated, until the Mutiny/Uprising in the mid-nineteenth century. The close similarity of this Red Fort to that at Agra and the imperial complex at Lahore, not to mention written accounts, elucidate the functions of many of the buildings. Sikri, leaving aside the mosque, where modifications were

made to the tomb of Sheikh Salim Chihsti at various times as late as the early-nineteenth century, is an archaeological site and there are many questions about how the buildings in it were used. Rather disappointingly, for instance, the Lower Haram Sara huge with stone rings, once thought to have been a vast stable, perhaps even an elephant stables, is now believed to have been the quarters of lower status women serving the court. The rings would, according to the new thinking, have tethered hangings not huge animals. Hangings recalled the Mughal's nomadic past in tents and without these adornments we have an almost monochrome (red) image of Fatehpur Sikri.

Some structures can be identified but the exact use of others remains speculative. The names and uses given here are merely for purposes of identification. The informality however extends to parts the exact official function of which is known. The imperial loggia part of the court of the Diwan-i-Am is compared to those at Agra and Delhi very modest. In fact the line of descent for these two later huge loggias can be traced back to the outer loggia part of the Daftar Khana or imperial records office at Sikri, a very different building possibly used by Akbar's chief minister, and behind the emperor's presumed residence. The Sikri Diwan-i-Am loggia is almost domestic and is linked in the most direct way to the walkways of the lower buildings that almost enclose the court and which have significant stone awnings.

Stone awnings, or chhajjas, are an important feature of Indian architecture. They keep direct sunlight off walls. This is one aspect of the local architectural vocabulary that a visiting Vasari would have understood. In Italy too it is vital to protect walls from heat by overhanging roofs. Vasari's best known architectural creation the Uffizi in Florence culminates in just such a roof of terracotta tiles supported on wooden struts. The building which begins at ground level with robust Tuscan columns and answering piers and in a typically Mannerist way runs out of energy as it rises to the utilitarian overhang but does so through a studied progressive demonumentalization at each level. The present glazing on the top floor, not originally planned, exacerbates this trend, reduces the impact of the top floor columns and deprives them of the shadowy recesses that should emphasize their spindly form. Vasari understood how to deconstruct the grand classical manner as the anti-climactic conclusion of a progression.

He would, however, have found the treatment of the Sikri stone overhang disturbingly erratic. His demonumetalizations involve whole consistent stories contrasted with more 'complete' ones, not one-off oddities. The court of the Diwan-i-Am is on a gentle slope. What we might call the cloister walk, so unassuming is it, around the space undergoes changes of level as it follows the contours of the ground.



A change in the level of the Diwa-i-Am cloister and accompanying variation in the roof

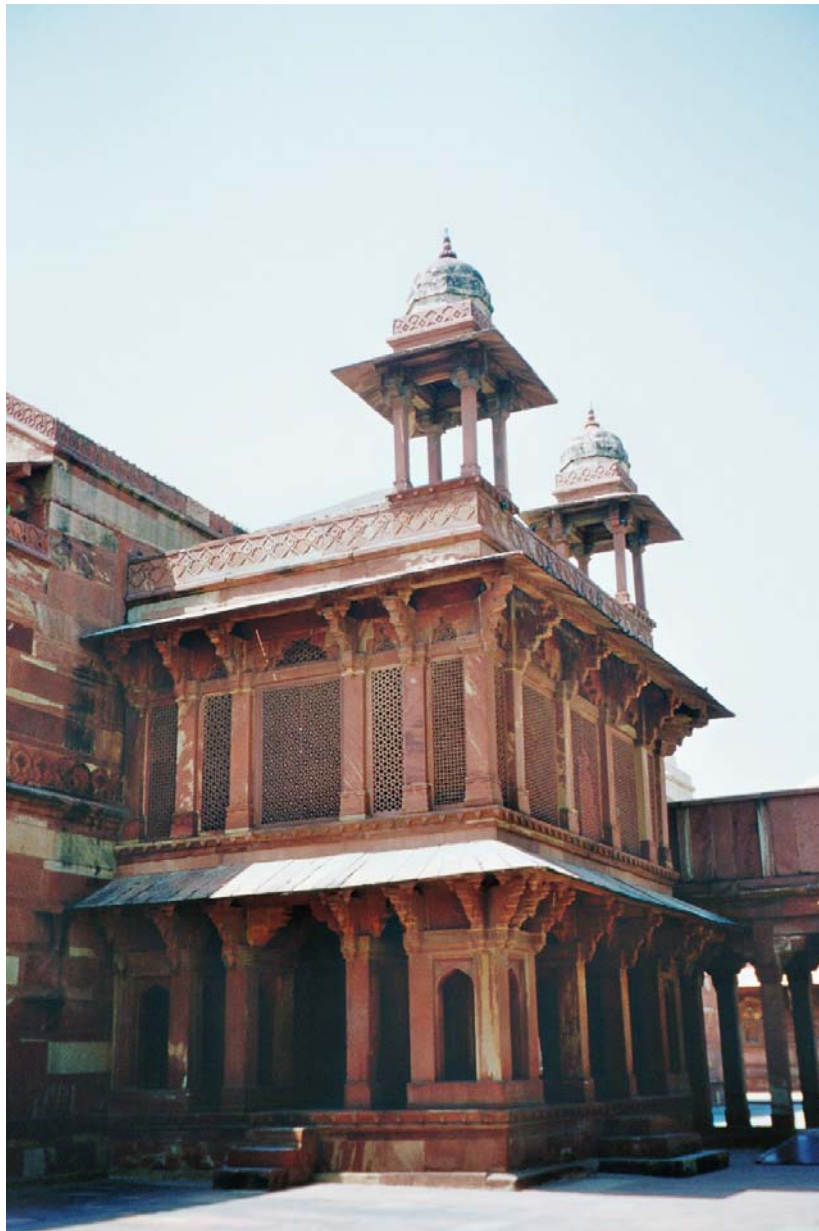
The cloister has two gaps not symmetrically arranged. These unroofed interruptions may have given access to the state elephant one of whose functions, so the ubiquitous guides who attach themselves to visitors and Rushdie claim, was to squash recalcitrant malefactors. Another change in roofing occurs where the imperial loggia rises in the middle of, and somewhat above, a long side of the court. This Diwan-i-Am has its own roof in stone tiles but it was decided to raise the awning to almost the level of the flat cornice around the bottom of the Diwan roof, binding it into the articulation of the rest of the courtyard. Behind and above the cloister chhajja at all its levels is a parapet with decorative frieze. At the points at which the chhajja becomes vertical on either side of the Diwan the frieze turns corners as around Humayun's Tomb's iwans and the closely related main façade of the Shabistān-i-Iqbāl/Jodh Bai's Palace. Secular

and religious motifs emulate each other in a way that may suggest a sacralization of imperial authority. Reappearing over the core of the Diwan the parapet is omitted where it would cross the shed roof of the Diwan's peripteral loggia.

There was the usual motivation in wanting continuous shade but bringing even the special Diwan structure nearly within the common vocabulary of roofing must also have been an important factor. In both types of situations of changing roof levels, in the court within the cloister and where cloister and Diwan meet there is an impression of incompleteness, irresolution and just making do. The overhang simply becomes vertical to connect upper and lower stone awnings and the linking flap is at right angles to the wall unlike the diagonal chhajjas. The simple suspension of the roofs at both levels without a considerable overlap would have let in slanting rays of sunshine. This looks like an improvisation rather than what we would expect on grand architecture. Elsewhere the Hawa Muhal and raised walkway are close: two chhajjas are located one above the other and not just for a short overlap. In this case there seems to be overkill as opposed to minimalist improvisation. The Diwan-i-Am roofing device seems to be employed less in later Mughal architecture. It does appear on the outer façade of the surviving Akbar period court the Agra Red Fort, the so-called Jahangiri Mahal, 1565, and in a very late example on the inner side of the main gateway to Safdarjang's Tomb in Delhi, 1753-4, not for a member of the imperial family, and a complex generally considered to be a last gasp of the grand manner there.

Stone awnings that turn up and down are by no means the only aspects of Fatehpur Sikri Vasari would have disparaged. As the creator of the Uffizi and the Palazzo delle Loggette in his native city of Arezzo, both inserted with great skill in complex and intractable medieval town centres, he might have had some difficulty understanding how anyone would chose to plan a new town so full of irregularities as Sikri. Another relevant European example is the centre of Venice, an evolved and irregular creation, again began to take on its almost definitive form around existing features in Vasari's lifetime as planned by Jacopo Sansovino. A Sikri building that on some level Vasari would have appreciated was the Hawa Mahal, a wing added to one side of the Shbistān-i-Iqbāl. It loses energy as it rises not in response to a flat utilitarian roof as in the Uffizi but because the first floor has to be surrounded in almost continuous jalis so

the ladies of the court could remain decently in purdah while looking out. At ground level it has to be open to provide a shady refuge in one of the city's streets. This it does through a combination of piers and pillars,



The Hawa Mahal

which follows the same rhythm as that at the ground of Vasari's Uffizi. In fact it goes further: Vasari's piers had niches, probably meant to be left vacant to receive an abstract interplay of light and shadow, but now full of nineteenth-century statues of famous Florentines. The piers of the Hawa Mahal are completely penetrated through to the far side by rare instances of real, structural, pointed arches in the palace area. The basic rhythm of the uprights is similar. At times it seems difficult to avoid the

conclusion that there were very real connections across the swathe of territories that run from the Atlantic to the Gangetic plane.

The list of instances of informality in planning at Fatehpur Sikri could be extended almost indefinitely. Two really outstanding examples are so systematically informal that they deserve particular attention. The combination of structures at the upper end of the more or less open great precinct is believed to have been Akbar's own lodging, the combined Diwan Khana-i-Khass and Khwabgah. What I call the great precinct may have been more divided than now before collapses by covered walkways and can be read as a complex of three or four spaces as well as one. The unity would have been more apparent from the upper levels of the lodging. In fact the lodging consists of several disparate structures, which from a distance can be read as one. The more monumental pillars of the core structure are to some extent hidden by the structure in front which presents a two storied porch to the precinct sloping down to the freestanding Diwan-i-Khass but the view is partly obstructed especially from ground level by colonnades and pavilions that intrude erratically into the space even today. The two-storied outer lodging structure in obscuring the bigger pillars violates a basic rule of western architecture, that a giant order must not be obscured by smaller ones in front of it. The interior space is similarly divided by a stone platform strung between pillars where Akbar is supposed to have consulted advisers. Exceptions to the Western rule include Hadrian's Temple at Cyzicus and implicitly in the side views of Palladio's churches.

Perhaps the most surprising instance of cut off or strangely altered roofs, of which the Diwan-i-Am Court is a modest example, is found in the in some senses jarring incongruities of the so-called Turkish Sultana's Pavilion (fig.). This significant structure is located at one corner of the tank, the Anup Talao. It is an elaborately decorated pavilion with an exquisite ceiling and patterned walls that may have had mirrors or I suggest mother-of-pearl at the back of the repeating recesses. It is close to the half of the Diwan-i-Am that bursts through the wall behind the cloister into the garden part of the great precinct and has a tiled roof like it does. Other tiled roofs are found on the high side pavilions of the fully enclosed Shabistān-i-Iqbāl. Could these be a reflection of Chinese practice by a patron who claimed descent from Genghis Khan and was therefore distantly related to Kublai Khan? The way in which the paved

and nearly monumental great precinct has a garden at the edges is yet another instance of the informal intruding on the monumental.

The back and most of the lateral sides of the Turkish Sultana's Pavilion have a Diwan-i-Am type loggia tiled roof, the top resting against a parapet rising over the wall of the interior room. These roofs are bumped into by walkways at the corners of the front (West) and South sides. The exact parts affected are the outer ends of the west and south sides when seen ideally from the Diwan-i-Khass/Khwabgah so that the differentiated walkways frame a corner of the tank, or Anup Talao, with the Sultana's House jutting outward into the concave angle. On the south side the bold but simple frame of the parapet over the starkly post and lintel walkway covering merely clamps onto the cornice of the outer and bottom end of the tiled roof and its bottom fascia. The differentiations of the pavilion roof are however not made symmetrical around the corner in the middle of this composition but designed instead, as it appears from the ideal vantage point, as though the west face and the roof round the corners next to it were unobstructed. Therefore the roof of this façade consists of a chhajja on exactly the same gradient as the tile roof and descending from the same level but cut off at its lower edge well above the bottom of the tiled section. (As a result roof types that are carefully segregated on the Diwan-i-Am are conflated here.) The chhajja runs just round the corner being made structurally possible by the radiating plans of its thin red sandstone slabs as they round the angle, a widespread phenomenon at Sikri. As the outermost angle of a consistent full, pitched tiled roof is cut away there are no corner piers at the southwestern extremity (see below for the north-west). The piers to the middle of the West side also have to be retracted back from the edge of the chhajja. The traditional usage for a chhajja dictates that it is unsupported at the front so that in this case the piers are so far back in fact that they are under the parapet over the "interior". It is now realized that what might have seemed at first glance a parapet over a square plan interior is rectangular and that part of the West loggia behind the chhajja is within the space circumscribed by the crowning parapet.

What could have been taken to be a muddled hodgepodge of disparate bits subtly breaks down categories and conventions in a way not unlike European Mannerism that was flourishing at the same time, but more dramatically. The rear (east) side of the Sultana's House, considered on its own or the now isolated so-called Tansen's

Baradari, outside the palace area, show what a structure completed to one set of rules would look like. The effect of the retracted stone awning seems to give you a glimpse into a semi interior inexplicable in the loggia. The layering of spaces has a certain resemblance to an Ottoman mosque's double porch with inner vaulted and outer shed roof layers but this is much more compact and one hardly knows what is what. A good contemporary Ottoman example is the Nurbanu Sultan Cami in Üsküdar, 1571-86, near exactly contemporary with the period Sikri was consistently occupied. On leaving the vaulted porch arcade one is surprisingly still inside if under a wooden roof.

We still have not considered the other colonnade (technically pillarade) that collides with the northwest corner of the Sikri pavilion. This covered walkway has its own chhajja and parapet at 90° to that of the Sultana's façade and it too is cut back from its own standard lower ledge as it approaches the façade so it does not too completely obscure the pavilion's pier capitals and brackets. Never the less the upper part of the walkway's stone awning slides under that of the façade in a variation on the overlapping chhajjas already noted where the Hawa Mahal and bridge nearly touch where they are parallel with each other. The walkway parapet converging on the Sultana's building also like the chhajja stops more or less in parallel with the roof cut back to ensure that it does not quite collide with the outer rim of the façade chhajja. The two chhajja cut backs rhyme and suggest an alternative symmetry around not the façade but the pavilion's southwest corner, a design concept which we have seen was not pursued in the most obvious one based on symmetry around the pavilion corner between the colonnades. In a sense this other alternative was employed but as a subtext of a more complicated alternative in which a design more appropriate for a detached structure was collided with other buildings to produce a dense implosion of options. The pavilion could have been an incident in an "L" shaped feature to frame part of the Anup Talao as seen from what may have been Akbar's possible lodging in the Khwabgahor, or could have been an object in its own right with subsidiary wings. Instead it is a bit of both.

The fusion of lower and higher spaces, pavilion loggia and corridors, recalls the Western basilica while the combination of a porch before a centralized building between cloister walks recalls the Pazzi Chapel in Florence. However this single or

rapidly evolved creation is more picturesque and dynamic than the more slowly evolving Italian work. We can only speculate about the intellectual climate that allowed such extreme freedom. It was hardly destined to last and in a sense Rushdie is right to make its setting, Fatehpur Sikri as a viable city, disappear in a magician's spell. Much though not all to improvisatory spontaneity seemed to have not yet been discovered at the time Akbar built the so-called Jahangiri Mahal, 1565, in the Agra Red Fort, which appears to date from before Fatehpur Sikri.

Even in this part of the Agra Red Fort, however, though the decoration is in places fussy, the obvious is avoided. Some of the inner lateral chambers are not aligned in rectilinear ways and amidst the winding passages there are several anticipations of Maryam's House at Sikri. The north hall of the Jahangiri Mahal off the main courtyard, perhaps in a sign of things to come, makes the connection between confronted brackets facing each other and nearly joined across an intercolumniation and full arches. The aisles there on three sides have pointed Islamic transverse arches while on the long north wall arches of this shape are employed as arcade arches facing the central space but concealed behind the usual confronted but totally separate brackets which mimic the approximate shape of the arches in a laboured way. In later Mughal architecture more freely flowing cusped real arches would become the device preferred to the more effortful and less resolved confronted brackets. Vasari too could carry out demonumentalizations and combine juxtaposed, unresolved alternatives but of a less erratic nature than those done for Akbar at Fatehpur Sikri or the Jahangiri Mahal. Vasari's buildings do not look like collided bits, especially of roofing, from which sections have been taken away or erratically put together. It was noted above that the Sidi Sayyid Mosque had by his standards too many variations in the vaulting.

Whereas in Europe where possible, or in the formal Mughal gardens, strict axial alignments prevailed they did so far less at Fatehpur. There are near misses, for instance, the axis leading from a small portal to the upper third of the great precinct and ultimately to the street ending in Birbal's House. It goes through Maryam's House, up a few steps and in and out of doors, but not on a perfect alignment of house to the rest. Instead visual correspondences are employed often linking balcony chatri canopies of what might be called the stretched pyramid type. The apex is a line not a mere point. In later Mughal architecture these features would have had an externally

expressed vault of hump-backed design. Akbar's buildings have more austere forms just as they lack the bulbous column shafts that were to come later. Examples of the stretched pyramid include a group include that visible over façade of Maryam's House, one behind it on the structures clustered around the great precinct and two not seen against the sky but as balcony roofs projecting from a wall on the Shabistān-i Iqbāl. The closeness of the relationship of these similar but by no means identical objects depends on the vantage point and almost requires the visitor to do his own composing from the shifting material to hand rather than accepting a definitive statement from the architect.

Domes are used in a similar way. From the courtyard pavement of the Shabistān-i Iqbāl the two domes, strangely placed in diagonal alignment on the rectilinear Birbal's House are except in one corner invisible. From this corner and from higher vantage points the two erratic domes of another structure combine with the more staid arrangement of the four domes on the corners of a more conventional courtyard. As has already been pointed out this is almost the only enclosed courtyard on the complex. Given the intellectual restlessness of the patron and responsive architects a challenge has to be made to its normality. More generalized analogues in roofing can also be traced. Behind the Turkish Sultana's Pavilion on a hammam (bath house) a deep, supported pitched roof and chhajja, where it is not continued, mostly at right angles to it but turning a corner to it do not quite join in a common plane as on the pavilion. The similar features are surely meant to be read together. The improvisatory form of the Sultana's pavilion receives some confirmation from the echoes behind it, but only for the more clued-up viewer. In a sense Rushdie may have been right to suggest that Akbar tried to get beyond the dull, repetitive mechanics of the standard exercise of power through dominance. He was also right to imply as allegory that a terrible price, the end of Fatehpur Sikri, had to be paid for the experiment or for not taking it too far.

Vasari is not the only Western artist we have mentioned. Sinan Pasha, perhaps to an Indian of the period virtually Western, and Palladio have also been mentioned. Palladio, 1508-80, comes to mind in connection with one of the most widely known buildings at Fatehpur Sikri a small, now after alterations, entirely white marble building in the courtyard of the Jami Masjid.



Shrine of Shaikh Salim Chihsti

The combination of a sloping roof and a dome on the Shrine of Shaikh Salim Chishti has very direct analogues with Palladio's almost exactly contemporary Redentore. In both diagonal roofs are brilliantly used to relate lower vertical flat planes to the culminating dome. The Islamic dome of the shrine with its conical apex makes the connection clearer while the projecting porch brings a dome-sized unit down to the lower, otherwise proportionally disconnected larger base. The Shrine has been changed: Jahangir's foster-brother, Qautbuddin Khan Koka, added the jalis. The red sandstone parts were all replaced by white marble, but not all at once. In its white and red phase before it was all marble the shrine would have had a colour scheme like the combination of terracotta coloured stucco and white Istrian stone on main part of the Redentore where the dome was leaded. What Palladio would have made of the unique serpentine brackets with bits of "jalis" the concaves and a diagonal strut running through the whole can barely be imagined. However, small unobtrusive "jalis", derived from Ottoman sources, can be found in Palladio's buildings. Again we are reminded that in the sixteenth century much of the old known world was a series of interlocked, sometimes slightly, sometimes dramatically, differentiated zones.

A building that in style and location is between these two monuments is Sinan's Şemsi Ahmed Pasha Cami (Mosque), 1580-1, in Üsküdar (Scutari) on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus. It is a low centralized building. The transition from small porch to

wider body is also present here. The porch sized echo of the central dome and preparation for it over the wall is achieved through the concave/convex/concave “Mansard” porch roof. A bit of the square central structure and the octagonal drum of the low but continuously rounded dome are between porch and dome. Located on the water’s edge the building is a little Redentore but on two sides has a precinct of full arcades recalling the great mosque courtyard in which the Chihsti saint’s tomb sits. It was built during the early stages of the construction of the Venetian church, which cannot have been unknown to Sinan. If somehow Palladio had been totally unable to appreciate the shrine at Sikri Sinan would have admired both it and the Redentore. It was the Persians with their tiled surfaces who to some extent seem to have not understood the play of light on bare wall.

Two cultures ‘East’ and ‘West’, or a series of bands in between, in the mid-to-late-sixteenth century were able to exchange ideas from positions of equality. This equality did not last. The Mughal Empire disintegrated, and especially under Aurangzeb reverted to strict Islam, alienating much of the population, while the Western powers, particularly England so far as India is concerned, continued the exploitation of the non-European world aided by technological innovations and liberation, if uneven, from religion. In a period of personal rule by sovereigns their personal inclinations still mattered especially in an autocracy as well as larger trends. To the modern mind Akbar seems to be the best of his line. The relative standing of the great Mughals today is suggested by the state of their tombs, the public, symbolic tomb usually well above the real one. After initial burial in Agra, Babur’s remains were returned to Kabul the site later being embellished by his descendents and finally protected by a construction like Mussolini’s over the Ara Pacis in Rome. How much has survived the turmoil? Jahangir is buried in Lahore in Pakistan. His tomb building is a larger version of that of his favourite wife’s grandfather and his chief minister Itimad-ud-Daulah, the so-called Baby Taj in Agra, but has lost the pavilion on the terrace. Aurangzeb’s remains are in the far south, which he conquered tenuously. He was an austere fundamentalist and the tomb is open to the sky so there is not much to neglect.

Humayun’s splendid tomb’s interior is as bleak as one would expect in a secularised, nationalized monument visited by relatively few. Shah Jehan’s tomb is next to

Mumtaz Mahal's, which is lower but in the central position of honour as the Taj was built for her and she got there first. Hoards of tourists circulate endlessly. The deposed and then imprisoned ruler it has been suggested may have wanted to build a black Taj across the Jamuna from his wife's white monument but if so failed to do it in time. A sanctuary lamp donated by Lord Curzon to replace a lost original hangs over them lit by a coiled energy saving bulb. Akbar's tomb has more atmosphere. The tomb for display is in a roof level courtyard open to the sky. The tomb over the burial is in a dark large crypt approached through tunnels, lit by a single opening high above with, at least sometimes, a discrete garland at the foot end of the cenotaph and a couple of sticks of incense burning in a brass pot on the plinth. The emperor who may have considered himself as semi-divine is the only one of the dynasty to have traces of a cult in his mausoleum.

If there is a flaw in this essay that the author has been able to detect it may be in the assumption of rise, zenith and decline, a model taken from Vasari and from Winkelmann who applied it to new material. These ideas of ascent and descent are subjective but may have some objectivity beyond an individual's preferences if the actuality of trends is detached from notions of good and bad or up and down. One person's decline into Baroque excess may be another person's liberation from pointless formal inhibition. The notion of transition may remain valid. What is up on one person's line on the graph may be down on another's and mere flat lining on yet another's. The wiggles may remain while the paper rotates. Combinations of forms make sense from one location at Fatehpur Sikri but fall apart when viewed from another. This abandoned city may tell us how the human mind operates.

Timothy Alves

## Film Review

### *Burke and Hare* (dir. John Landis)

When I first heard this film was being made, I was delighted. When the film came out, I considered going to see it in the cinema. After all this was a sure fire hit. Wasn't it? John Landis directing. Top British talent acting.<sup>1</sup> A notorious crime to base the story on. Edinburgh as the set. And Ealing Studios! Surely this would be on a par with the great Ealing Comedies. I could hardly wait. Then I read some reviews. What had gone wrong?

Almost everything as it turns out. *Burke and Hare* is meant to be a black comedy. The problem is that it tries too hard to be funny. Jokes are signposted and there's a real feeling of 'Hey! That's (e.g.) Stephen Merchant! He's funny! Gosh, there are a lot of funny actors in this!' or 'Oh look! It's Ronnie Corbett! In a uniform with a big hat!' Nothing has a chance to breathe and the film tries too hard to be zany at the expense of plot. If you think having Dr Munro (Tim Curry!) say to Dr Lister that he has bad breath is funny ('Lister! Listerine! Geddit!') By the way, Lister was not born until 1827 so it is unlikely that his infant self would have been involved in the conversation) then you will enjoy this film more than I did.

Another problem is in the use of location. The real Edinburgh does occasionally appear but at other times exteriors and interiors that clearly are not in Edinburgh are used. It is impossible to suspend disbelief when there are so many cameos, so many errors of place, and so many mistakes in fact. Some facts and names were changed for no apparent reason (e.g. the Solicitor General was not called 'Lord Harrington' in the late 1820s and Dr Knox did not name the 'photograph' which would probably not have existed in Edinburgh in 1828 anyway). A bizarre and pointless love story was added. Burke certainly did not commit his crimes 'for love' and it is highly unlikely that he funded a theatrical production of an all female version of *Macbeth*. The overall effect is lazy. Having a historian look at the script might have helped. This is not the statement of a pedant: Burke and Hare's real story has plenty of potential without adding anything to it.

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<sup>1</sup> David Tennant was reportedly cast for one of the lead roles but had other commitments. Or maybe he simply took the time to read the script before signing a contract.

*Burke and Hare* is based on the true story of Edinburgh's West Port Murders of 1827 to 1828 and so is just outside the scope of a normal piece for the *Intelligencer*. The Burke and Hare story is a staple of Edinburgh's ghost-tour industry. Bodies were regularly delivered by unemployed Irish immigrants William Burke and William Hare to Dr Robert Knox for use in his extramural anatomy school. The first couple of deliveries died of natural causes but Burke, Hare and their accomplices soon saw the money making potential of supplying corpses. Grave robbing, however, was a dangerous business (and, by the way and with a sigh, Greyfriars Bobby postdates the West Port Murders by about fifty years). The rest of the bodies were victims of Burke and Hare who murdered them so that they could sell their corpses for profit. Burke and Hare committed at least fifteen murders. They developed a technique for killing without leaving marks on the bodies. 'Burking' involved one partner suffocating the victim by blocking his or her nose while the other partner in crime sat on the victim. Falling victim to burking became a great fear in the urban centres of the late 1820s and early 1830s after the crimes were known. In the film, Christopher Lee's ex-soldier is one of the victims who meets this fate. (Christopher Lee!)

It is not that I dislike the idea of using comedy to tell a dark tale. Done well, as in a Tim Burton style (such as *Sleepy Hollow* or *Sweeney Todd*), horror and comedy can suit each other well. The grim violence of the story might have suited Guy Ritchie who would at least have employed CGI to get the city right, as he did to great effect to recreate London for *Sherlock Holmes*. There was definitely potential here. Maybe going full on and making a musical would have saved it. What is doubly disappointing is that so many of the actors involved have script-writing experience and have done better writing than this. One gets the impression that everyone was carried along by the excitement of the project and the momentum that that generated. I'm not sure if this was a case of 'too many cooks' or of too much respect for the script as it stood.

The reviews when this film was released were correct. Do not waste your time on this film. The real story is much better.

An Outraged Edinburger

# ***FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS***

***Events 2010-2011***

***All events start at 6.30p.m. unless otherwise stated, and are followed by refreshments and questions***

Prof. Stuart Carroll (University of York), 'The Duel', Thursday 23 June, 6.30 pm, room B36, followed by our end of year party in room B02

For further information on membership and activities contact the secretary, Anne Byrne: Membership is £5 for the year. Non-members may attend events at a cost of £3 each.

# FORTHCOMING EVENTS

This section concerns those events staged by other societies which we feel might be of interest to our membership.

The Wellcome Library invites you to the 2011 Roy Porter Lecture

'The Decline of Magic: Challenge and Response in Early Enlightenment England', by Prof. Michael Hunter, Birkbeck, University of London, on Monday 20 June 2011, 18.30-19.30, at Wellcome Collection, 183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE. To be followed by a drinks reception in the Wellcome Library, 19.30-20.30.

RSVP to Tracy Tillotson: [t.tillotson@wellcome.ac.uk](mailto:t.tillotson@wellcome.ac.uk) or 020 7611 8486.

'Francis Barlow, Painter of Birds and Beasts' Exhibition at Clandon Park, 10 May - 24 June 2011

Prof. Michael Hunter and Nathan Flis of St Catherine's College, Oxford, have curated an exhibition at Clandon Park of printed images produced by Francis Barlow (c.1626-1704). This is the perfect setting because the house contains a number of important paintings by Barlow including *The Decoy*, and *Landscape with Birds and Fishes*, and so it is a real treat to see the prints alongside the paintings. The exhibition features Barlow's printed images of exotic animals, hunting, hawking, and fishing, hounds and hares, as well as political prints produced to support the Whig cause during the Restoration period. The images of the natural world are especially interesting as they tell us much about the new seventeenth-century intellectual culture of curiosity. The exhibition is accompanied by an informative and nicely illustrated book which argues that Barlow was the most significant native-born English artist before Hogarth: if you're less familiar with Barlow's work than Hogarth's, then go and see this exhibition and be prepared to be persuaded!

Clandon Park, West Clandon, Guildford, Surrey GU4 7RQ. Tel: 01483 222482. House open 11-5 Tues, Wed, Thurs, Sun, admission £7.70.

# **BOOK REVIEW**

## **NON-FICTION BOOKS**

I hope that many of you will send in your reviews of newly published books and the occasional old book. The only criteria being that it deals with a subject within the Early Modern period, roughly from the Renaissance (the middle of the fifteenth century) through to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and that the book is still in print.

John Croxon

### **The Last Days of Richard III**

**By John Ashdown-Hill  
(The History Press)**

In recent years John Ashdown-Hill has been most productive, writing a number of thought-provoking books and articles on late-fifteenth-century life. Each year sees more books published on the last Plantagenet king, some are worthy additions yet many of these revisit the same old arguments without adding anything new. In this his latest book Ashdown-Hill tackles the final months of the life of Richard III and what happened to his body following Bosworth. The final part of the book deals with the fascinating story of how he discovered the DNA of Richard III in Canada. This is without doubt one of the best books on the subject for many years. After all this time I thought that I knew almost everything about Richard III but John Ashdown-Hill has presented fresh evidence that I was unaware of that dispels some old myths.

The first half of this book looks in detail at the last one hundred and fifty days of Richard's reign, starting on Friday, 25th March 1485 until his death at Bosworth on Monday, 22nd August 1485. The aim is to present this period as Richard and his contemporaries would have seen them, and not in the light of hindsight.

The book starts off with the deteriorating health of Queen Anne and her death on Wednesday, 16th March 1485. Ashdown-Hill shows clearly that it was a close marriage. At a time when spouses from the nobility usually had separate bedrooms,

the fact that the Crowland Chronicle tells us that on medical advice they did no longer share a bedroom, must mean that up to then they had done so.

Although this is expressly not a book about the ‘princes’, Ashdown-Hill does allude to further evidence of Richard’s innocence in this matter when in Coventry at the Corpus Christi celebrations he was presented with pageants that included the massacre of the innocents which, as the author states “carried no special significance to Richard’s ears nor to those of the citizens of Coventry who watched the pageant with him that summer”. This is another indication that rumours of the deaths of the princes was not current until after Richard’s death for certainly no town would present such a play to a reigning monarch if there had been whisperings about his culpability in the deaths of his nephews.

Almost all books on Richard III are dominated by Bosworth and therefore views are coloured by the death of the king. Following the death of first his only legitimate son and then of his wife, some historians have been tempted to see a death wish in Richard’s fatal charge across the battlefield. Ashdown-Hill dismisses this viewpoint completely and with detailed analysis of the period from late March to August 1485 shows clearly that far from anticipating a defeat, Richard was looking forward to defeating Henry Tudor, ending the threat of rebellion, and reigning for many years to come. With the loss of his queen and his heir, Richard was vulnerable, and so he was busy planning ahead for the future, with an agreement with Portugal to marry the Infanta Joana of Portugal or, if that failed, with the Infanta Isabel of Castile. Either of these marriages would have combined Yorkist claims to the throne, as represented by Richard, with those of the legitimate Lancastrian claimants of the Portuguese and Spanish royal families. The author also punches a hole in the old story of Richard scheming to marry his niece, proving that the marriage alliance with Portugal was to be a double agreement with the marriage of Elizabeth of York to Prince Manuel, duke of Beja.

The records also show that Richard spent much of his time waiting to do battle with Henry Tudor on a hunting trip in Sherwood Forest. This is hardly the behaviour of a man who is worried about the anticipated encounter with his adversary. Similarly, the author’s research into the archives reveals that Richard was concerned with the day-

to-day policies of government. The Richard that emerges is therefore no passive victim, awaiting defeat and death, but a king actively pursuing his own policies and agenda.

At this point in the book the author explains the day-to-day activities which would have kept Richard busy, thus offering a valuable insight into medieval life. He points out that, contrary to the claims of supporters of foxhunting, it is not an ancient or traditional pastime at all as the fox was considered an unsuitable quarry for a gentleman, and far beneath the notice of aristocratic huntsmen.

Many historians have presented Richard at Bosworth deserted by the nobility, leading a desperate and doomed charge across the battlefield. Worn down by rebellion this beleaguered king heads into the midst of battle caring not whether he lives or dies. How this utter rubbish continues to be written is beyond me. Here, Ashdown-Hill poses two possibilities for Richard's fateful charge; one is to place it in keeping with the actions of chivalric traditions while the other possibility is that he was suffering from the sweating sickness and therefore not thinking straight, a theory that would tie in with the story of Richard spending a sleepless night on the eve of battle. What is clear is that Richard was not losing the battle when he charged and would have probably eventually succeeded due to his greater numbers. What we also must remember is that it very nearly worked with Richard unhorsed just yards away from his quivering quarry.

The second half of the book deals with events after Bosworth and here, unexpectedly, Ashdown-Hill is positive about Henry Tudor. He attempts to dismantle two accounts about the alleged disreputable behaviour of Henry Tudor after the battle. The first is the claim that Henry tried to pre-date his reign to the 21st August 1485, suggesting that there is no evidence for this. It is also clear that Tudor always acknowledged Richard as king, as otherwise he could not have claimed the throne by conquest.

The second is the alleged dishonorable treatment of Richard's body after his death on the battlefield. The basic information we have from the chronicles led to widespread ideas that Tudor was particularly barbaric after the battle. However, Ashdown-Hill

proposes that far from treating the body shabbily, it was actually treated with as much respect as was possible following a battle.

The author analyses the surviving information about the tomb which Henry Tudor had erected for Richard in the grounds of the Greyfriars in Leicester in the summer of 1494. Cecily Neville, Richard's mother, who had been on very good terms with her youngest son until his death, found the men responsible for this project so trustworthy that she named them as executors of her will the following year. Ashdown-Hill suggests that the reason that Tudor commissioned the tomb at this moment was not through any sense of decency but because it coincided with the threat posed by the Yorkist claimant Perkin Warbeck. The author stresses that the claims of Richard III and the sons of Edward IV are mutually exclusive. Either Richard was the rightful king, because the boys were bastards and thus barred from inheriting the throne or if they were not bastards then Richard would have been a usurper. So facing a threat from someone claiming to be the younger prince, Tudor calculated that it was a better to support Richard, who was unquestionably dead, as the rightful king. Once Warbeck was executed Tudor had no more need of Richard and it was from then that the stories about Richard killing his nephews started to be circulated. Following the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, Ashdown-Hill dismisses the old stories of Richard's body being dug up and thrown in the River Soar and instead concurs with recent thinking and concludes that it is probably still in the ground where it was originally buried in August 1485, an area of Leicester that is today covered by a car park.

In the final part of the book the author explains how particular DNA is passed on exclusively through the female line, and he tells of how his research managed to trace Richard's DNA to a woman living in Canada descended from Richard's sister.

John Ashdown-Hill has produced a stimulating and thought-provoking account of the end of Richard's life. Readers new to the events of the late-fifteenth century will find it absorbing, while those familiar with this king will discover a new and fascinating picture of him that will banish old truisms, and help in the continued progress in our understanding of this fascinating period of English history.

John Croxon.

## FICTION BOOKS

The criteria for fiction books is the same as that for non-fiction book reviews; that it deals with a subject within the Early Modern period, roughly from the Renaissance (the middle of the fifteenth century) through to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and that the book is still in print.

John Croxon

### **Kenilworth**

**By Sir Walter Scott**

**(London: Dent, 1968)**

Sir Walter Scott's *Kenilworth* is chiefly remembered for the magnificent portrait of the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth I, although she makes quite a late appearance in the novel, in chapter XV. The occasion is marked with a well-remembered and loved episode in history, when Walter Raleigh, then an obscure person, flings his cloak at her feet to cover the muddy ground, thus earning the affectionate nickname from the Queen, "Sir Lack-Cloak." Indeed, Scott's novel is interspersed with many such memorable events and well-known celebrities. Even Will Shakespeare makes a brief appearance as a player in one of the scenes. However, the pageant of famous historical personages is not the only thing that makes it a great historical novel of adventure and romance. It is the obscure folks, the maid, the innkeeper, the rough soldier, the sailor or the clown that makes this star-studded novel richer and more credible as an authentic portrayal of the golden age in England under Elizabeth.

The story starts at an inn, in the peaceful village of Cumnor that acquaints us with the quiet charm of rural England of the sixteenth century, so far away from the hustle and bustle of the court, its triumphs and catastrophes. We are also intrigued by the hint of a beautiful lady being held captive, the secret wife of Lord Leicester, Amy Robsart.

Soon she begins to occupy the position of a captive princess of the fairy tale, except that the gallant who comes to deliver her is not a prince but a humble squire who really commits a colossal blunder in mentioning to Queen Elizabeth the plight of this lady held in Cumnor Place under duress, causing great grief to her father, Sir Hugh Robsart. It is Tressilian, the entirely disinterested, honest and devoted suitor of Amy who finally sets in motion a chain of events that leads to the heroine's ruin and destruction. There are of course other, humbler folk who also contribute to the plot, either in rescuing Amy or leading her to the path of destruction, wittingly or unwittingly. The ones most fully drawn are Amy's maid Janet, Tony Foster, Mike Lambourne, Wayland Smith, the boy Dickon and also Walter Raleigh, an entirely unknown figure at the moment when the novel's plot unfolds.

As readers, we enjoy the play of episodes even more because the great secret, Amy's marriage to Earl of Leicester, is known to us but unknown to almost all the characters in the novel except Richard Varney, that arch fiend who is as Machiavellian a schemer that Scott ever painted. Often a romance novel hinges on one key mystery, for example, the secret engagement of Frank Churchill and Jane Fairfax in Jane Austen's superbly crafted novel, *Emma*. We, the readers, guess at it but are not sure so we are driven to read on. Scott's craftsmanship makes clear to the reader at the very beginning, the central mystery in the novel, the secret marriage. However, since it is not known to all the other characters in the novel, we watch, sometimes with amusement as well as anxiety, all the havoc that ensues.

The greatest dupes are of course Elizabeth and Tressilian. Both in fact, in their own ways, are completely innocent about this deception and they win the reader's sympathy. Elizabeth, in the scene of confrontation with Amy Robsart comes out best, showing how just and fair-minded she is; it is Amy's own hysterical behavior that finally convinces the Queen that Amy is insane, thus unleashing a chain of events that move towards the inevitable, tragic ending. Indeed, as the novel progresses, Elizabeth proves herself to be a shrewd yet just sovereign, not merely a wily woman who manages to play her favourites against each other, and thus keep herself secure in her position by the principle of "divide and rule."

Indeed the gross flattery of the sycophantic courtiers, Raleigh, Sussex and Leicester in particular, present them in their least attractive light, whereas Elizabeth's diplomacy and shrewdness inspire awe. It shows what a precarious course she had to take throughout her career as a monarch, thus justifying the epithet: "God, when he gave her the heart of a woman, gave her the head of a man to control its follies." Moreover, the many references to the reigns of her father, Henry VIII and her half-sister, Mary I, show what dangers she had to steer through as an heir to the throne who faced much distrust and disgrace.

It is not merely the great personages that are so vividly drawn that makes this novel one of Scott's best. There are the inns and villages, the nights of celebration and festivals, and the progress of the court, from one noble's domain to another, marked by magnificent feasts and pageants, that make it a splendid spectacle. But there are also fine pictures of the rural humble folk, like the boy Dickon's mother and tutor, who present a comic interlude in this otherwise charged, fast-paced novel filled with intrigues and catastrophes. And there are also references to the distant colonies in America and the East, especially when described by the prodigal nephew of the innkeeper, Mike Lambourne. His descriptions seem to paint for us vessels sailing away on distant seas to faraway lands from which treasures are brought to enrich the coffers of England, and to prove how hazardous yet thrilling are the voyages that brave sailors like Raleigh and Tressilian undertake. It is as if that backdrop of azure oceans seems to add a new dimension and colour to the dazzling and splendid court of the Tudors in sixteenth-century England.

Bansari Mitra

## **Scottish Historical Fiction: Two Recent Early Modern Heroes**

**Shirley McKay, *Hue and Cry* (Polygon, 2009) and *Fate and Fortune* (Polygon, 2010)**

**Shona Maclean, *The Redemption of Alexander Seaton* (Quercus, 2009) and *A Game of Sorrows* (Quercus, 2010)**

There has been a recent Renaissance in Scottish historical fiction writing - especially if you like your historical fiction to have more than a hint of who-done-it. Two authors' books that I have come across recently on the shelves of the Edinburgh Central Public Library have started entertaining series featuring likeable early modern protagonists. Hew Cullen, the hero of Shirley McKay's novels, and Alexander Seaton, the hero of Shona Maclean's novels, are both well educated young men who are sorting out their lives and careers against backdrops of murder and mystery. Both characters inhabit worlds of richly researched period detail.

We meet Hew Cullen of *Hue and Cry* when he returns to St Andrews after his legal studies in France in 1579. Cullen should be ready to move to Edinburgh so that he can fulfil his father's wish that he be called to the Bar but Cullen is not so sure that he wants to be a lawyer. He does, however, have a strong sense of justice and a desire to put wrongs right. When one of his friends is accused of seducing and murdering a potential student for the university, Cullen is determined to find out what really happened. When his friend falls ill and goes into a coma, Cullen is left with few clues and he needs to work out the motivations of the killer. As he works out the details, he fills in for his friend as a university regent (teacher) and he hits upon the perfect method for clearing him of the crime. The young king, James VI, is due to visit the university and a play has been commissioned for his entertainment. Cullen writes a play that portrays the recent events that have stunned St Andrews – sort of Shakespeare meets *Crimewatch* – and has his students perform it. Has he done enough to prove his friend's innocence and to gain the king's favour?

Cullen returns for a second adventure in *Fate and Fortune*. This time he travels to Edinburgh after his father's death to settle his legacies. Cullen makes the acquaintance of a lovely young widow who runs the printing house which it seems his father owned without his family's knowledge. One of the matters Cullen needs to sort out is the publication of his father's book, *In Defense of the Law*, a treatise composed primarily for Cullen's benefit since he has still not resolved his feelings about legal practice. A friend of his father is on hand to help him sort things out – and to force him to continue his legal training. Cullen gets some experience at the Bar when he represents his new printing-house friends. There is a darker side to Cullen's second story too, as he finds himself working out who committed crimes ranging from kidnapping to murder.

Alexander Seaton, like Cullen, has an adventurous life. His story begins in *The Redemption of Alexander Seaton* which is set in 1626. We meet Seaton as a washed-out school teacher who has failed to achieve his dream of becoming a minister because of the political influence of the powerful father of the woman he loves, but who has been forced to marry another. Seaton comes of a humble family: his father was a blacksmith and his mother an Irish immigrant. Seaton's Irishness makes him the 'other' in his hometown of Banff. He has few friends and he is carefully watched by the Kirk officials because of his post-failure propensities for drunkenness and fornication. His life is bleak until Banff is rocked by tales of spies and witches. The murder of an apothecary's apprentice, whose body ends up in Seaton's schoolhouse, sets the events in motion that allow Seaton to reclaim his life. As he regains his self-respect, he regains the trust of others. He travels to Aberdeen to find out facts and when he returns to Banff he finds chaos. The Kirk officials have burned a suspected witch. Will Seaton be able to work out what is really going on before there are more deaths?

Seaton returns for a second adventure in *A Game of Sorrows*. Two years after his redemption, Seaton's life is good. He is working as a regent at the University of Aberdeen, he is thinking of proposing to the lovely Sarah whom he met in his first adventure, and he is so well regarded that the University wants to send him to Poland to check the qualifications and suitability of potential preachers there. This all changes when his cousin Sean unexpectedly arrives with a request for Seaton to return to

Ireland with him to lift a curse that a poet has put on their family. Seaton is propelled into a world where poets' words matter, where his grandmother rules her family, and where the old faith which he thinks he finds repugnant holds sway. His resemblance to his cousin causes confusion. Seaton's Ulster experience lets him explore the relationships between the Irish, Scottish and English communities in a world where not everyone is who he or she seems. The body count rises as revenge and vendetta are played out as the results of heritage, history, and obsession. Seaton may question his faith but he always knows that his life is in Scotland. But will he survive long enough to go home?

McKay and Maclean have created two memorable early modern characters. Cullen's latest adventure, *Time and Tide*, has just been published. Seaton's next instalment, *Crucible of Secrets*, will be out in August 2011. If you are looking for some summer reading, these are well worth checking out.

Karen Baston

## THE SUMMER QUIZ

1. Who made the decisive breakthrough into the town at the first battle of St Albans on the 22nd May 1455?
2. Where was the duke of Somerset killed during the first battle of St Albans?
3. Who became king of France on the 22nd July 1461?
4. Which future queen of England was born at the Alcala de Henares Palace on the 15th December 1485?
5. Who sacked Rome on the 6th May 1527?
6. Which antiquarian and historian was born in London on the 2nd May 1551?
7. Who was executed in Edinburgh on the 2nd June 1581 after being found guilty of the murder of Lord Darnley fourteen years earlier?
8. Who was the first Romanov Tsar elected in 1613?
9. What happened to the inhabitants (mainly English settlers) of Baltimore in West Cork, Ireland on the 20th June 1631 when attacked by Algerian pirates?
10. In which battle was the royalist Sir Bevil Grenville killed?
11. What was the nickname of Major General Richard Browne who switched his support from Parliament to King and was jailed in 1648?
12. Which royalist officer, killed in 1645, was nicknamed 'Jesuit'?
13. What did the House of Commons vote to burn on the 20th May 1647?
14. Who was assassinated by royalist agents at The Hague on the 12th May 1649?
15. Who captured Kilmeadan Castle in Ireland on the 2nd December 1649?
16. Whom did Cromwell describe as his "noble friend" and who died on the 10th December 1649?
17. Which marriage treaty involving an English king was signed 23rd June 1661?
18. Which Parliamentarian officer who died in 1691 was nicknamed 'Idle Dick'?
19. What was the Regicide Sir John Burchier referring to on his death bed in 1660 when he claimed that "It was a good act... good men will own it"?
20. Whom did Wellington describe as "a brave young man but that's all"?

Answers on the following page

## ANSWERS TO THE SUMMER QUIZ

1. The earl of Warwick (The Kingmaker)
2. Outside the Castle Inn (legend is that it was prophesised he would die at a castle)
3. Louis XI
4. Catherine of Aragon
5. King Charles V of Spain and Holy Roman Emperor
6. William Camden
7. James Douglas, 4th earl of Morton
8. Michael I
9. They were carried off to be sold as slaves
10. Battle of Landsdown in Somerset on the 5th July 1643
11. 'Faggot-Monger'
12. Colonel Sir Henry Gage
13. The Leveller tract '*The Large Petition*'
14. Isaac Dorislaus
15. Oliver Cromwell
16. Michael Jones, a Parliamentary officer
17. Charles II and Catherine of Braganza
18. Richard Norton
19. The death warrant of Charles I
20. The Prince of Orange

# **THE BIRKBECK EARLY MODERN SOCIETY**

**FOUNDED 2006**

This society was founded in the belief that more study, discussion and interest in the Early Modern period is required. The society aims to promote, encourage and stimulate new research and discussion into a wide range of themes, including art and images, consumption, gender roles, literature, magic, politics, religion, science, music, sexuality and, travel and exploration.

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