

## **ET IN ARCADIA EGO. THE MAUSOLEUM AT CASTLE HOWARD**

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The unique landscape surrounding Castle Howard, peopled with built works, was the joint creation of the architects of the main building, John Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor, and its owner Lord Carlisle, it is doubtful whether we can separate their shares. Nevertheless, the Temple and the Mausoleum, - the most important elements after the house itself - were the last works of their respective designers, Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor, and were finished posthumously. John Vanbrugh, who was born in 1664, died in 1726, while Nicholas Hawksmoor, born in 1661, died in 1736. Lord Carlisle was eight years younger than Hawksmoor and five years younger than Vanbrugh. The garden works at Castle Howard also include a small rusticated pyramid set on a high base, and an object known as "The Four Faces", a sort of obelisk similar to those pinnacles placed on the parapet of the Castle. It is also known that there were originally more objects than there are today. Kerry Downes, the author of Vanbrugh and Hawksmoor's monographs quotes a poem describing the buildings at Castle Howard landscape "the Obelisk, Temple, Mausoleum and Pyramid" as of "Grecian, Roman and Egyptian Form" without saying which is which. Downes adds that while the obelisk and the pyramid are obviously of Egyptian form, it is not easy to find a specifically Greek or Roman character in the other two buildings, due to the dubious ideas over Greek architecture at that time and the desire of the poet to conceive the buildings as examples of the three great styles of Antiquity.

The English Baroque is a widely and deeply researched period. The monographs on its more outstanding architects have become documents of great importance within architectural historiography. But the 18th century in England is mainly discussed as an epoch in which an attempt was made to imbue architecture with a different identity derived from a new conception of landscape. Classical buildings were located in a landscape in an attempt to emulate the true order of nature and evoke in themselves a sort of Golden Age in which men, guided by their own natural faculties, lived in direct contact with the natural world. Thus, both Vanbrugh's Temple and Hawksmoor's Mausoleum depend on the conception of the whole landscape where they are placed and their architectural nature rests on their particular site and their language. That is, both elements are monumental constructions, not mere buildings, and they contribute to state a specific idea of landscape. All the built works which people the garden of Castle Howard in an apparent hazardous way are always placed on small hills or ground elevations so that they can be permanently observed, more than being themselves sites designed to observe the surrounding territory.

They are receptive to sight instead of origin of sight, and their outlines appear in the horizon in an effective and also in an emotional way. This fact is especially relevant in the mausoleum, which surpasses the temple in its architectural rotundity. Indeed, it achieves a total surrender of landscape to an absolute independent and original piece of architecture with its own rules.

The purpose of Hawksmoor's circular construction, and its condition as a place to be inhabited by the dead seem to be indispensable when considering more precisely its architectural nature. The mausoleum is a building with a specific use, the burial of dead people. But rather than a simple grave, tombstone or pantheon, it is a real habitable and inhabited building where the immense interior and empty space contrasts with the smallness of the coffins attached to the walls - the real homes of those resting there. The proper funerary precinct does not even allow us to imagine living people wandering about its inner space, as the spatial disclosure serves the immaterial presence of the dead alone. Nevertheless, it is not a dark and cave-like space, the light spreading windows, the slender Corinthian columns, and the overall decoration covering from the ground floor up to the dome make it rich and utterly well lit. The mausoleum is a circular precinct which may host a refined and pleasant life which, nevertheless, should remain wholly enclosed within its own walls without interfering with the exterior. The fact that Hawksmoor's Mausoleum becomes the spatial and temporal culmination of the series of buildings surrounding the main house at Castle Howard is very important, because it means that the highest rank corresponds not to the living but to the dead, and also because the architectural strength of this home of the dead goes far beyond its mere monumental condition.

In his essay published 1955 "Et in Arcadia Ego. Poussin and the Elegiac Tradition", Erwin Panofsky discussed the meaning of this Latin phrase. For him it referred to a present happiness menaced by death, instead of involving a retrospective vision of a distant past, only kept alive by memory. Panofsky literally translates "Et in Arcadia Ego" as "Death is even in Arcadia" instead of "I, too, live in Arcadia" as many German and French authors had in his opinion mistranslated before. On the other hand, the inscription "Et in Arcadia Ego" had often appeared in the works of some painters. It was always written over a tombstone located in the landscape and surrounded by shepherds. Panofsky also states that the famous phrase comes from painting, from which it will pass into literature, and that the Italian painter Guercino produced the first pictorial rendering of the Death in Arcadia theme. This picture was painted in Rome between 1621 and 1623 (now preserved in the Galleria Corsini) although Giulio Raspiglioni, a humanist and poet (later Pope Clemente IX) may even been the real inventor of the famous phrase. The presence of death in Arcadia, the fact that the real subject of the reflection contained in

the phrase "Et in Arcadia Ego" is death, according to Panofsky's interpretation, allows us to find out the role played by Hawksmoor's Mausoleum within the whole landscape of Castle Howard. This funerary building, set on a ground elevation and over a pedestal, rather than being a mere monumental landmark, aims to be observed by anyone that wanders around the garden of the house. It asserts the presence of death as an essential part of the pleasant and life-enjoying environment intended for such privileged place. In some way, it establishes a sort of dialectic between the call for life represented by Vanbrugh's Temple, its mundane and active character, and the solemnity and stillness of the Mausoleum - home of the dead. In this comparison, the latter claims itself as the most important building among those built in the landscape of Castle Howard, as the end of a hypothetical path that runs along the garden from youth and life to decline and death.

Considering the landscape as a whole, the different works that surround Castle Howard, in spite of being independent entities, construct a non-hierarchical sequence that affects the garden itself and its broad open green areas. The obelisk and the pyramid, both set on square bases, are placed on the open space. They define two orthogonal axes and look onto the four cardinal points. We cannot properly refer to these cases as buildings, as they are monuments deprived of inner space. The square-base pyramid and the obelisk known as "The Four Faces" are both stable forms and indifferent to the position of an observer, who always sees the same identifiable outline. On the other hand, there is certain classicism in the situation of these monuments on ground elevations to preserve the perception of their neat contours against the horizon. On the contrary, the temple and the mausoleum are real buildings that represent life. They are frames for the life of men, and the life they evoke with their peculiar language is at the same time that of the present and that of the past. This fact bears a difficulty to the architects that must make a no longer existing way of life likely and credible through architecture but it is shared in the present. Nevertheless, the temple and the mausoleum relate to the life of men in different ways. We could even say that they represent two absolutely opposite vital and architectural options.

Let us consider in the first place Vanbrugh's Temple, a building based on Palladio's Villa Rotonda with four identical porticoes placed on the four sides of a square house covered by a hemispherical dome. Nevertheless, its small size makes its height seem greater when compared with the plan, and the porticoes deeper than their Italian precedents, while the central cube is extraordinarily simple. Kerry Downes points out that Vanbrugh's Temple imbues the Yorkshire scenery with a Virgilian quality, evoking a Roman field or a Claude painting. More attached to utility than the other monuments of the park, the temple is conceived as a place to talk, read or even eat and drink, as some villas or belvederes in the Antiquity. Hawksmoor worked out two alternative schemes for this temple. The

first is a simple pavilion square in its plan and with a dome, the second design was an octagon-plan building with concaved-sided walls and with a language which obviously owned a lot to Baroque architecture.

The most distinctive quality of this temple is the sharp contrast between the abundance of exterior space and the smallness of its unique interior room. The small dimensions of the construction favours the importance of the four porticoes, the stairs and the bases, while the central domed hall is reduced to a minimum and has no content at all. The temple exterior is inhabited, one can move around and watch it from the outside. There is nothing in the building that invites us to enter the hall, and from any of the four sides our sight can easily wander through its inner space to immediately exit from the opposite side. The temple is a construction that spreads from a center towards the exterior and looks onto the landscape with identical intensity from its four sides. But, at the same time, it draws the sight of the distant wanderer to itself with the same compelling force as it will to anyone who approaches its walls in search of a place for meditation, conversation or repose. Vanbrugh's Temple presents a careful equilibrium between the horizontal solid base on which the building is placed and the vertical columns, the circular dome, the figures and other decorative features crowning cornices and pedestals.

Hawksmoor's Mausoleum is also set upon a square podium, although the staircase was a late addition, it was not intended by the architect who has designed steps within the podium invisible from the outside. Due to the circular plan and portico, the mausoleum is an hermetic and inaccessible building, with small openings in the base, the central masonry cylinder and the clerestory. Nobody seems to be invited to ascend and penetrate the inner space of the mausoleum, as it is a construction not for the living but for the dead. Even our sight is captured by the thick colonnade surrounding the circular building, undoubtedly the most astonishing and original architectural feature of the mausoleum. Lord Burlington had criticized the narrow intercolumnation as, in his comment to Carlisle, it had no Antique precedent. The spaces between columns used by Hawksmoor corresponded to a diameter and a half of the Doric column. Answering to Burlington's critique Hawksmoor wrote to his client that the dimensions of the available stones allowed no wider spacing and that the building was far too advanced to make any alteration. Kerry Downes, on the other hand, points out in his book on Hawksmoor that the architect was more concerned with the emotive power of architecture than with language correctness, and that the effect produced by the colonnade is so crowded, as if the columns were a fence to keep the living out and the dead within. Although closed and hermetic, the mausoleum does contain a real inner space, a space which is totally isolated from the exterior and modelled according to its own rules. These rules correspond to a space strongly enclosed

by its peripheral bastion-walls and scarcely lit from above. The mortuary niches and the blind doorcases produce a sense of disorientation and enclosure which is intensified by the walls that press inwards between the columns towards the center of the building.

Both from a literal point of view - as a physical experience - and from a symbolic perspective, anyone walking around the gardens of Castle Howard will always maintain a certain distance from the objects built in it, especially from the most purely monumental, the obelisk and the pyramid. And although the temple and the mausoleum are real buildings with an inner space, they also maintain a distance between the subject and the object of sight. On the other hand, this experience is sensuous rather than intellectual and relates to an inactive, contemplative, idle mood of inhabiting the landscape rather deprived of energy and adventure. The aesthetic experience is thus produced by letting our mind wander freely and create associations between past and present situations. This is the reason why historical styles are so important in these constructions beyond their language accuracy, they awake echoes in the consciousness of the observer that are to be mixed with the materials taken from his own time. The objects which people the landscape thus become windows to look upon the life of the past and to activate the imagination of the observer through the eye.

As an artificial construction, the garden itself promotes an idle mood and a meditative attitude of those walking around it, because it allows a certain separation from the world of conflict and chaos. All time and space is momentarily one and the same thing. On the other hand, the garden of Castle Howard is not the enclosed, remote edenesque garden separated from reality, but an open territory that assumes the limited nature of men and the temporal sequence from life to death. The garden is especially sensitive to daily and seasonal change, movement and change portray this landscape more than the stillness and permanence of the Earthly Paradise. Besides, time has also a distinguishing role in it, as it is located between city and wilderness, between the natural and the dreamed, rather than in a distant past or in an attainable future. This garden maintains a balance between usefulness and pleasure, and is peopled with more variety than the original couple Adam and Eve. The society that inhabits the garden is a simplified society, which Northrop Frye identifies in the literary field with the base of the pastoral convention.

Pastoral style in literature involves two main principles, which could in some way be translated into architecture. On the one hand, a simple and concrete description that conveys vitality and variety to the narrative, on the other, its enclosure within a framework that defines its themes and separates it aesthetically from the world of random, chaotic experience. The first relates mainly with character, evolving from the vital activity and the interest of man in

the transformation of the natural world, the second with the limits derived from temporal changes, defeats and even death. In Castle Howard, Vanbrugh's Temple is more attached to activity, to conversation or even the rest of the walkers, while Hawksmoor's Mausoleum stands for the last stage - at the same time culmination and final point of man's vital activity.

If the monumental impulse tends to enhance the rank of things, to make small thing great, monuments at Castle Howard garden seem to respond to the opposite impulse, as they reduce the size and even the importance of their original models. Moreover, there is no need for a monumental work to dominate over the others, as a more equalitarian scheme of different themes is developed throughout the different works. So the humblest construction, the pinnacle known as "The Four Faces" achieves its monumental character by simply disengaging from the building system to which it belongs (the surrounding wall of the main house, there is no doubt on this point), and becoming an independent entity, the real size of which may be accurately appreciated now that it stands over the ground. The different languages and decorative elements can also be more intensely appreciated when seen from a close distance. Nevertheless, it is difficult to fix the real size of the pyramid from afar, but in any case, it can be considered a reduced version of the Egyptian models that have been totally deprived of any funerary purpose.

The utilitarian character of the temple makes a strong contrast with the mausoleum, a building with no particular use modelled with abundant matter and a profuse language. Although neither matter nor language so emphatically exhibited in the mausoleum are its most important architectural features. The architecture of the mausoleum is defined as a sort of relationship between an enclosed compact form and a peripheral limit that allows us to observe the building with identical intensity from any location. The ring of Doric columns allows us to see, but not to enter or leave the building that it surrounds, the flat dome appears also as the evidence of the enclosure of the cylinder, which can hardly look through the windows of the clerestory located over the colonnade. Once again, the narrow intercolumnation, so strongly criticized by purists, states itself as an essential decision for the final shape of Hawksmoor's building. In spite of the reasons he argued, the architect never thought that this decision was accidental or purely practical.

The mausoleum is more than a pavilion or a mere landmark, as it is the case of the other constructions at Castle Howard landscape. The mausoleum is the culmination of an itinerary running over all of them, at the same time it is the counterpoint to the main house that served the daily life of its inhabitants. The presence of death in the rural setting of the English scenery, both as a chronological closure and terminus of the whole environment of Castle Howard, makes Hawksmoor's building an entirely original piece of funerary architecture, beyond the architectural

characteristics of the Castle itself. However, it is not only a funerary, but an entirely original architecture; devoted to the dead and not to the living, it can neglect the certain practical needs to radicalize both its spatial concept and its external form. Also, in spite of leaving aside any utilitarian requirement, the building has still the power to suggest a behavioural pattern, more concerned in this case with the spirit than with the material body of its hypothetical inhabitants. Doors are doors, though false doors, niches are windows, though blind windows, and the peripheral corridor is a walkway that nobody can walk through. Death states its presence in this architectural ghost that captures the whole surrounding landscape from its privileged location attracting any sight towards its definite round shape.

Nicholas Hawksmoor's architecture culminates the vital itinerary in the landscape of Castle Howard through the various pavilions that punctuate its open space with this funerary building, and also makes the house of the dead the most active and vital form among them all. We could think that a building devoted to the burial of the Howard family would show a melancholic and depressive character, that even it should comfort us with allusions to afterlife, but in this case the romantic sense is substituted by power and material tension immediately transmitted to the observer both from afar and from a close distance to the mausoleum. Architecture closes itself and closes all its voids, establishing a strong tension between matter and void, between the object enclosed and the enclosing form. Classical language, evoking in the other pavilions the utility and the pleasure of a relaxed and idle life, is used by Hawksmoor

in this mausoleum to achieve just the opposite, the recognition of the leading role of death in the vital cycle of man and its indispensable presence, as stated by Panofsky, in any Arcadian landscape.

But we can make a further reading of the mausoleum itself, complementary to the role played in the landscape where it stands. For this purpose, let us consider the building as a cage in the strictest sense. The mausoleum is a cage because its fundamental architectural feature is the limit, a peripheral fence enclosing something in its interior that can be observed from the exterior, and because this limit has been shaped as a series of vertical elements, here stone columns, close enough to prevent an eventual crossing from the interior to the exterior. It is a cage because its domed roof does not raise upward, and is rather a simple cover that encloses an hermetical interior. Furthermore, the architectural form of the building is unique, unable to be divided or composed as an addition of parts, it is an entity in itself. Lastly, it is a cage because the entire building is independent of the ground on which it stands, as the strange base proofs, so it could be easily conveyed unchanged from one place to another. In fact, Hawksmoor's Mausoleum is a cage for the dead laying in it, so that they can safely travel to another place while the living can contemplate death as an active entity to be protected and cared, more than symbolized or celebrated through architecture. The inconsistencies in the classical language exhibited in this building, more radical than in the other pavilions, indicate the distance between the mausoleum and the other built works at Castle Howard. Paradoxically this

house of the dead becomes the most utilitarian building and the most demanding in its material condition.

Utility is surely the quality less attached to a funerary building, and matter is not used in buildings dedicated to the dead in a literal sense but to evoke the permanence or even eternity intended in this kind of monuments. However, this is not the case of Hawksmoor's Mausoleum, as it shows an interrelationship between use and matter that arises from a physical need, not from symbolism or a desire of exhibition. Its energy-loaded interior space actually demands a material counterpoint to balance its expansive potential so that the first of the two spatial limits of the building, the stone wall of the central cylinder, is a mere skin wrap that defines the content of the building, its inhabitants. The second limit, the colonnade, is the true architectural limit of the mausoleum, the fence or stockade that encloses the inhabitant that can be observed from the exterior. He preserved in his security and integrity, can never trespass the border with the exterior world where the observer stands. The mausoleum is so the building most fully inhabited among those existing in the Castle Howard environment and also the most spatially qualified, the closest and the emptiest, the most inaccessible and the nearest of them all. This circular construction can actually be apprehended emotionally from afar, but at the same time it invites us to approach its limits and look through the narrow voids of the colonnade. Then we can even physically experience the vitality inhabiting the interior of that stone cage, reminding us that, as stated by Erwin Panofsky, death is the only true subject that exists in an Arcadian landscape.