

GEOFF QUILLEY. *British Art and the East India Company*. Worlds of the East India Company. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2020. Pp. 370. \$120.00 (cloth).
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Geoff Quilley opens his latest book, *British Art and the East India Company*, with a bold claim: “the East India Company, far from being disconnected from the visual arts, can be seen as possibly the single most important influence on their production, formation and development in Britain during the period from around 1760 to 1840” (12). For this argument to be true, art historians of the period cannot simply limit their vision to works of art formally commissioned by the East India Company. The coastal views and chimney pieces that adorned East India House scarcely compete with Royal Academy exhibitions. But as Edmund Burke noted, the East India Company was “a state in the disguise of a merchant” (13), and it is the hybrid nature of the East India Company, both public and private, that makes it an invaluable test case for understanding British art in the period.

British Art and the East Company belongs to a shift in the field of British art that could be termed *the imperial turn*. Around the year 2000, art historians began to question the insularity of British art-historical narratives, and they interrogated how and why slavery, militarism, exploration, and colonialism went largely unmentioned in narratives of the period. Quilley has played an important role in that reconsideration, co-organizing a major international conference at Tate Britain, “Art and the British Empire”; publishing pioneering research on William Hodges; and recovering the significance of maritime painting to British art. With *British Art and the East India Company*, Quilley synthesizes two major strands of British art history. The private-public nature of the East India Company suggests the need for art historians to reconcile British art’s dual investment in commerce and empire. When Quilley refers to the cultural influence of the East India Company, he refers not simply to the company’s footprint in Calcutta and Canton, but also to its economic and political power in the City of London: “the narrative of eighteenth-century British art can be made more complex, insofar as art can be seen to be intertwined not just with commercial ideology, but with commerce as distinctly identified with the City” (46). Quilley encourages scholars to “move away from conceptualizing empire as some teleological entity and state-controlled and legislated project, and [see it] instead as protean, opportunistic, localized, and extemporized; and to think of art’s relation to empire not as secondary and illustrative of a given imperial history, but as involved in the same processes of encounter, exchange, movement and flow” (49).

Over the course of six chapters Quilley examines what this private-public partnership looked like in practice, and how it established a set of ideological norms for art that was both commercial and imperial. In chapter 2, Quilley notes the high percentage of East Indiamen in maritime art, and he asks what kind of work these representations were doing in British visual culture. Quilley explores fierce debates within the East India Company over smuggling. It was common knowledge that East India Company commanders made significant profits by secret-ing away private goods in the hulls of their ships—space that was supposed to be dedicated to the use of the company and its shareholders. Paintings of East Indiamen sail right through these debates to offer a gilded image of East India Company success and its contribution to national power and influence.

Chapters 3, 5, and 7 relate to India, with each focused on a different representational strategy. In chapter 3, Quilley examines landscapes that William Hodges produced under the patronage of William Hastings. Playing down associations with the picturesque, Quilley insists on Hodges’s naturalism, which “provided a form of imagery that was peculiarly sensitive to, and informed by, the ambiguities, disingenuousness and double-speak of the Company claims to territory and sovereignty in India” (94). In chapter 5, Quilley examines Arthur William Devis’s ambitious series of paintings dedicated to the “arts, manufactures, and

agriculture of Bengal” (207), which he produced in the 1790s. He shows us in India a progression that will play out in other parts of the empire: visual representation begins with landscape and then progresses to costume, manners, crafts, and the like as colonial agents bring additional “aspects under observational scrutiny and taxonomic classification, for the purposes of the exercise of Company control over its peoples” (241). In chapter 7, Quilley provides a glimpse into the ways that objects collected in India were gathered in English collections, either folded into national collections or sequestered in private collections.

Two other chapters deal with the East India Company’s investment in China and Southeast Asia. In chapter 4, Quilley takes the fascinating story of the Pacific Islander Lee Boo as an opportunity to consider the East India Company’s focus on Indonesia in its attempt to expand the China trade. Chronologically, the company’s engagement with Palau and Indonesia falls between the celebrated Cook voyages and the Macartney Embassy to China and therefore fills an important gap in the visual culture of exploration and the Asian trade. In chapter 6, Quilley engages in a close reading of George Chinnery’s group portrait, titled *On Dent’s Veranda*, c. 1842, which also appears on the book’s cover.

With *British Art and the East India Company* Quilley makes another major contribution to scholars’ understanding of art and empire. The study offers productive ways to meld polite and commercial narratives with the growing literature on slavery, exploration, and empire. I suspect that many will be unpersuaded by the strong form of Quilley’s argument. For the East India Company to be “the single most important influence on their [visual art’s] production, formation and development in Britain” (12), a number of arguments still need to be made or strengthened. How, for example, does the mainline tradition of English landscape painting relate to the stories and aesthetic prerogatives presented here? And yet Quilley problematizes and historicizes terms central to art history: fine art, culture, civilization, and corporate responsibility. If corporate responsibility feels like an outlier on that list, this book suggests otherwise.

Douglas Fordham
University of Virginia
df2p@virginia.edu

EPHRAIM RADNER and DAVID NEY, eds. *All Thy Lights Combine: Figural Reading in the Anglican Tradition*. Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2022. Pp. 447. \$32.99 (cloth).
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“Figural reading” in the works of a wide historical range of voices within the Anglican tradition connects the varied essays in the engaging *All Thy Lights Combine: Figural Reading in the Anglican Tradition*, edited by Ephraim Radner and David Ney. Radner and Ney are right, early in their introduction, to explain what is meant by “figural reading,” as the overlapping interests of readers—history of exegesis, literary theory, practical theology, the role of the Bible in Anglican history and practice, convictions about authorial intent and fixed meanings versus the reciprocal nature of textual engagement—may allow for some false starts. Radner and Ney take a generous approach: “figural reading” includes both the premodern senses of scripture and the theological perspective that scripture can reveal a certain wholeness to God’s world and the givenness of life. This is broad indeed and yet allows a capacity for a diverse array of essays to contribute to a conversation whose surprising harmony—perhaps intentionally?—reflects the subject at hand, that all the “lights” (all the stories and characters of scripture) combine into a seamless whole. The title is a nod to this very claim made by George Herbert in one of his poems. The fifteen authors and their prosopographical subjects, beginning with Thomas Cranmer and William Tyndale and concluding with C. S. Lewis and