

empires with a focus on the role of women and their cultural practices. *British Women* is structured through three sections on ‘Travel’, ‘Collecting’ and ‘Administering’, with a thoughtful and detailed introductory chapter by the editors to articulate their vision for the volume. The introduction indicates that the volume does not aim to be comprehensive but rather ‘seeks to begin the work of exploring practices at the disposal of women through which they expressed their responses to imperial sites in Indian, the Caribbean, America, Canada, Australia and Zanzibar’ (p. 3) and in doing so it aims to interrogate a range of sources that exist beyond the colonial archive. Given this volume is published under Bloomsbury’s Visual Arts division, there is a strong emphasis on art historical approaches and creative methodologies in dissecting white women’s collecting and musing on their experiences in various colonial contexts. The chapters’ focus on material ranges in date from Coltman’s discussion of a journal describing a journey from Scotland to the West Indies, North Carolina and Portugal (1770s) through to Filor’s study of Mina Malcolm’s cottage from the 1790s to 1970s, and so deftly deals with the enduring material nature of empire.

The volume takes a case-study approach to its subject by allowing each chapter to explore particular colonial contexts – such as Longair’s study of professional women’s lives in 1930s Zanzibar – or particular material forms – such as Jordan’s discussion of colonial women’s sketches of Aboriginal people in nineteenth-century Australia – and in doing so reveals a rich array of subject areas and material approaches. The volume explicitly rejects what they see as previous problematic approaches of portraying white women as either solely victim or aggressor or downplaying the role of race in how they, and by comparison colonised women, navigated the colonial world. This nuanced approach is welcome and has resulted in a number of extremely interesting chapters that reveal that in moving beyond the colonial archives of the traditional historian we are able to reveal ‘interconnection, permeability, mobility and hybridity’ (p. 5) to better understand not just people but collectives and place in the colonial world.

This volume engages meaningfully with the material remnants of women’s cultural practices and reveals that they often imbued meaning through negative comparisons to the imaginary of ‘home’ and their ideals of domesticity that contrasted with the colonial spaces they lived in and travelled through. The inclusion of contextual insights regarding degrees of privilege due

to class, connections and ability to navigate specific colonised spaces ensures that the chapters do not absent the colonised people who were often the background and backdrop of these white women’s cultural products. In this way the volume acknowledges the specificity of status, time and place in shaping white women’s experiences alongside highlighting the power imbalances that often left colonised people as the misrepresented and obscured subject of the women’s colonial gaze.

While this collection does not aim to be comprehensive, its case-study approach does leave some unavoidable gaps and skews that may have been touched upon in more detail in the introduction. For example, the ‘British’ women who make up the bulk of the chapters are English or Scottish, with little reflection on whether Welsh and Irish women had different experiences, although there is a fleeting reference to Lady Dufferin (p. 33). There is also little explicit consideration of the role of women in Empire who were associated with gendered religious institutions – such as missionaries or nuns – nor those white women who may have been forcibly moved as working-class women and children to provide manual labour and possible offspring to white men. While enduring material outputs probably survive in more quantity from the upper classes, absences or skews due to the case-study approach would have been usefully articulated in order to indicate where future work could most productively focus. Overall, *British Women* is a fascinating and rich collection that provides a range of material culture-focused approaches that allow us to better understand colonialism and its legacies through a gendered lens. The volume allows for deep and detailed engagements with specific contexts, which are important studies in their own right, but also provides inspiration for further extending material-based approaches in future.

Laura McAtackney 

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Robert Adam and His Brothers: new light on Britain’s leading architectural family. Edited by COLIN THOM. 280mm. Pp ix + 269, 184 figs (many col). Historic England, Swindon, 2019. ISBN 9781848023598. £65 (hbk).

This rewarding and attractive book is the first comprehensive appraisal of the work of Robert

Adam since David King's *Complete Works of Robert and James Adam* (1991; he is a contributor to the volume under review). Like many architectural histories nowadays, the volume under review is a multi-authored work arising from a conference and organised by the Georgian Group in 2015. As director of the Survey of London (now at the Bartlett School of Architecture), its editor and contributor, Colin Thom, has considerable experience knitting the work of different scholars together into a seamless whole and the book benefits from that expertise. His introductory essay sets the scene. It is an authoritative overview of the work of the brothers Adam and one that should be recommended reading on university courses, or indeed for anyone who has a serious interest in the topic. In his other essay, Thom draws on the important work he does at the Survey, opening up a whole new chapter in the Adam urban-planning oeuvre, the design of Portland Place. That ambitious scheme, little of which survives, has been overlooked in favour of Adelphi development. We now have a more complete picture of the Adama brothers' work as urban developers.

Different contributors combine to capture the lively relationship within the family (see Alistair Rowan's contribution on the eldest brother) and how they worked together practically and in many areas, for example, in the collecting of antiquities. Jonathan Yarker's chapter on this topic is eye-opening. Naturally, the focus returns to the most talented in the family, Robert Adam himself (or 'Bob' as he was known familiarly).

The trend in scholarship since 1991 has of course been away from traditional visual analysis, but the work of Adriano Aymonino and Miranda Hausberg demonstrate how careful art historical analysis yields genuine insights into the cultural achievement of Robert (albeit always in one way or another assisted by his brothers, and indeed others). This reviewer found Aymonino's analysis of the antique sources for the famous Adam style of decoration compelling. We learn not just about its sources, but also why the style was so popular in its day among a certain class of patron. Essentially, and working with talented draftsmen, the Adam style turns out to have been a kind of souvenir of the Grand Tour, its ornamental citations equivalent to poses struck by wealthy grand tourists in emulation of the Apollo Belvedere. Then there is Hausberg's linkage of Adam's interior architectural style (which relied on movement and subtle contrasts of form and

plane) to theatre design, drawing a new social context into our understanding of this major architect's work. At the same she enables us to see the familiar interior ensembles at Syon and Osterley with fresh eyes and so come to a fuller appreciation of their aesthetic intention.

Similarly, Marikka Trotter sets the Adams' castellated style in an intellectual context that ties it to the Scottish enlightenment and the beginnings of geology as an independent discipline. Peter Lindfield's insightful essay on the late Scottish castles makes us see them not just as simply another variation of 'Gothick'. They emerge from his analysis as the skilful adaptation of classical fortifications for a Scottish landscape context, in other words an early instance of the eclecticism we associate with Victorian practice. Again, this is new terrain that changes the way we appreciate what we have grown used to thinking of in a certain way.

There is also here a lot of information on the more practical side of late eighteenth-century architecture and in particular the organisation of the Adam office, a complex collaboration across individuals and disciplines that is so often overlooked. Long before the Victorians were building large architectural practices, Adam and William Chambers had developed recognisably modern office practices. Alistair Rowan first explored this topic in detail, and that story is here expanded in several contributions. Conor Lucey's exploration of Adam's Headford House in County Meath is particularly illuminating because it demonstrates how a high architectural standard could be achieved without either the main designer or indeed anyone from his office ever visiting a site. This work reminds us that architecture and construction were highly organised businesses in the eighteenth century, and international to some extent.

In that regard, the reader will enjoy understanding how talent and business moved between Scotland and England in this period. This topic, which recurs in other chapters, feels particularly timely in the light of our current debate about Scottish independence and nationalism. Yes, the political changes of that earlier time enabled movement north and south (and obviously also much more widely across the globe), but that makes us easily forget the differences between the two places, and how clever, nimble professionals in any period can overcome not just physical but cultural distance in the pursuit of their vision and of course their livelihood.

Finally, I must mention the very high production quality of this book. This is the standard of publishing that Historic England (the Secretary of State's statutory adviser on the historic environment) has achieved over the last two decades in a truly impressive and important catalogue of work that in itself deserves praise.

King, D 1991. *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, Butterworth Architecture, Oxford

CHRIS MIELE