

important in women's history are puzzlingly omitted, especially Scandinavia, which was central to women's early access to architecture, as well as eastern Europe and southeast Asia, key sites of women in modernism. However, women who shaped the built environment in the global context remain underrepresented in mainstream and even feminist histories, which makes this volume and its strong in-depth transnational accounts not only welcome but important.

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G. A. Bremner, *Building Greater Britain: Architecture, Imperialism, and the Edwardian Baroque Revival c. 1885–1920* (London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2022), 356 pp. incl. 298 colour and b&w ills, ISBN 9781913107314, £50  
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*Reviewed by* MARK CRINSON

At the end of his first book, *Imperial Gothic* (2013), Alex Bremner closed the door firmly on 'the somewhat disabling dichotomies established (and perpetuated) by post-colonial theory'. What he offered instead, and has developed further in his new book, is an approach that links Britain to its colonies, asserting their special relationship in a 'planetary' sense of British history. It is an approach that seeks to problematise 'colonial agency and [its] internal conflicts', finding more complexity in the relation between architecture, the work and ideas of colonists, and forms of imperialism. Bolstering and justifying the approach are extensive engagements with the so-called new imperial history, as well as related enquiries into matters such as networks, technology and communications. Certain long-familiar frameworks of architectural history such as style and an emphasis on architects are retained, now accompanied by more acute historical contextualisation, notably in administrative, legal and financial terms.

*Building Greater Britain* is an account of baroque revival architecture in Britain and the white settler areas of the British empire. It is an impressive, even formidable work. As well as the extent of its treatment (architecture in six countries beyond Britain is considered), it is monumental in its scholarship and physical heft (adding to the debt that British architectural historians owe the Paul Mellon Centre). Previous scholars, among them Alastair Service, understood the importance of the baroque for Edwardian public buildings, especially for its nationalist associations, and placed it as one among several competing styles of the time. Bremner is less interested in the latter aspect (and in the inventive versions of baroque practised by Lutyens) and far more concerned with the baroque as a widely disseminated and pointedly imperial phenomenon. This was an ambitiously history-minded architecture, led by the theoretical writings of architects such as John Brydon, Arthur Blomfield, John Belcher and Aston Webb, and Bremner is always perceptive on how these related to other aspects of the period's intellectual history.

For such a big and wide-ranging book, it is remarkably well organised. Its eight chapters are largely pitched around thematic issues: analogies with language (English as 'vigorous') and gender (virility) through connections with the English Renaissance buildings of Jones and Wren; efficient organisation in municipal and national state buildings; the baroque as a means of asserting 'Greater Britain' through public buildings in the dominions; and the binding force played by the architecture of legal institutions. Other chapters focus on the ideas behind Herbert Baker's work in South Africa; the commemorative functions of the style (again with Baker's work as a primary example); the apparently very different role of the baroque in relation to 'gentlemanly capitalism' (a subject persuasively informed by historians' arguments about the significance of capital flows to and from the City of London to the patriotic duty of expanding empire, and one where Baker's new Bank of England is to the fore); and finally a fascinating chapter on how the antiquated imagery of the baroque both housed and symbolised the empire's communications infrastructure.

Larger questions are raised, however, by an account of imperialism in which indigenous cultures are so marginal. How were these buildings used by indigenous cultures? How were their spaces or zones racialised? The illustrations are telling. The book's cover (a photograph of the Flinders Street station in Melbourne) is just one of a torrent of perspective views, whether drawn or photographed, of these buildings (I counted 123 out of 298 images in total). These endow their subjects with a firmly planted majesty; they give ideal views of the piled-up, look-at-me elements typical of the baroque. Dominating their raking views, these placidly intimidating buildings are pictured in such a way as to be uninformative about their local sites and physical contexts and yet made available for rapid comparison across continents. The 'planetary' is thus distinctly a privileged and selective view.

The new imperial history emerged out of a sense that old imperial histories — nationally centred, focused on policy-making and territorial acquisition, even nostalgic — were simply too complicit with empire. What emerged instead was a far wider and more disputatious range of approaches, including many deeply informed by postcolonial theory (a good sample of this variety and these debates is found in Stephen Howe's edited volume *The New Imperial Histories Reader* of 2009). Bremner's interest in anxiety and identity — the first unconvincingly explained as a 'certain psychic frailty' generated by Great Power rivalry and imperial decline; the second as about 'an enduring vision of a Greater British world, both physically and mythically' — would have benefited from those versions of new imperial history that have taken seriously the psychological and dialectical complexity brought to these issues by postcolonial theory.

A related question raised in reading *Building Greater Britain* is how far any account of architecture and imperialism should be an account of how architecture relates to colonial dispossession. More than its concern with the dichotomies sustaining imperialism, postcolonial theory (and decolonial theory more recently) emphasised its violence, its state of constant crisis, and the cultural forms of dissensus and resistance against its power. This emphasis is found also in a whole area of new imperial history that *Building Greater Britain* is untouched by, including the work of Walter Rodney, Richard Price, Priyamvada Gopal, Benedict Anderson and Richard Gott. Herbert Baker's importance

to Bremner's book is relevant here, as it is central to the book's interest in 'hard displays of imperial power'. While there is justification for the careful attention given to such a major work as the Union Buildings in Pretoria, at the same time to call southern Africa a 'happy hunting ground' for Baker, whose career was shaped by patronage from the white supremacist Cecil Rhodes, begs questions about historical perspective and whether architectural historians need to work in ways that upset the architect-client axis in such settings.

There is a paradox here. The Edwardian baroque in its greater British formulation played up to what Bremner calls 'a trope of national virility'. And this is the politics of the style — to establish a linkage, a set of unchangeable characteristics, and to repeat or play variations on it endlessly. On the one hand are the sealing off of the view and its filling with the trappings of baroque, the associations with efficiency and memory, the pretend consensus behind it; on the other hand, however, all these things crowd out the matters that make empire, notably the marginalised agency of indigenous people, the appropriation of land and the incorporation of labour. The more the first is described, the less the second is accounted for. Dichotomies are not so much dissolved as one side of them is reasserted at the expense of the other.

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Jonathan Adams, *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Defiance* (Cardiff: Royal Society of Architects in Wales / Cymdeithas Frenhinol Penseiri yng Nghymru, University of Wales Press 2022); 408 pp. incl. 67 colour and 143 b&w illustrations, ISBN 9781786839138, £25  
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*Reviewed by* ELIZABETH GREEN

In *Frank Lloyd Wright: The Architecture of Defiance*, Jonathan Adams gives us a detailed and diligent exploration of the influences on Wright's philosophy and approach to architecture provided by deeply held beliefs instilled in childhood and inherited from his Welsh ancestors. Shifting back and forth in time, but gathered into thematic chapters, this study couples episodes from Wright's ancestors' lives with those from his own, thereby establishing connections and threading them into his work. It opens with the harrowing journey to the United States by Wright's maternal grandparents, Richard Lloyd Jones and Mallie Thomas, and their young family in 1840, leaving their lives in Ceredigion, southwest Wales, to establish a Welsh Unitarian community in what became known as the Jones Valley near Spring Green, Wisconsin.

The Jones family was rooted in an area on the border between Ceredigion and Carmarthenshire, centred on the villages of Alltyblaca, Brondeifi, Bwlchydfa, Ciliau Aeron, Llandysul and Pantydefaid. Referred to by opponents of Unitarianism as 'Y Smotyn Ddu' ('the Black Spot') during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries,