

Jeff Rosen, *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Colonial Shadows of Victorian Photography*. New Haven: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art and Yale U P, 2024. 282pp. ISBN 9781913107420

Jeff Rosen's multifaceted study marshals Julia Margaret Cameron's aesthetic legacy, along with the oft-eclipsed elements of colonialism and nationalism, to undertake a fully-fledged contextualisation of the nineteenth-century photographer. *Julia Margaret Cameron: The Colonial Shadows of Victorian Photography* is a striking interdisciplinary examination of the photographer that filters her work through the lens of the British colonial project, particularly in nineteenth-century India and including the Uprising of 1857. By situating explorations of her photographs alongside contemporary nineteenth-century poetry, cartoons, novels, and other artists, Rosen reveals how cultural fault lines reinforced Britain's imperial vision.

The private, pictorial, and political are explored in the introduction, where Rosen discusses the death-bed photograph of Adeline Clogstoun, the granddaughter of Cameron's sister. Rosen reasserts the interplay between the personal dimensions of familial bonds, grief, and innocence with the military reinforcement of British governance in India. He demonstrates how the reproduction of Orlando Norie's watercolour of Adeline Clogstoun's father, Captain Herbert Clogstoun, leading the charge against the so-called rebels at Chichumbah, anchors Cameron and her family circle to political and cultural developments in Victorian-era India. He questions the "self-reflexivity and maternal identification" stressed in previous scholarly readings of this photograph, and how the "visual and textual markers" placed by Cameron have been overlooked (14). Rosen observes that such photographs were created amongst a deep-rooted colonial project in India, and Cameron's own Anglo-Indian identity and experience indelibly mark her work. It is this sustained analysis of Cameron's work alongside socio-political contexts that lends Rosen's book a fresh and lucidly conveyed narrative, facilitated by the conceptual and chronological organisation of chapters.

In the "Outposts of Empire" section, Chapter One outlines the close ties between the mechanisms of colonial administration in British-controlled India and Cameron's husband, Charles, who was a driving force in establishing the Indian Civil Service and English-language-led education. The chapter examines the deeply embedded, imperial-driven mentalities and motivations within their social, familial, and professional circles. Rosen's discussion reveals that while Cameron was shielded from the violent realities of colonial conflicts, her correspondence reveals active participation in diplomatic manoeuvres. For example, after the capture of the Kabul fort in 1840 by Afghan forces, Cameron advocated for Major George Broadfoot of the East India Company's Madras army, despite the army's failure, by speaking with the Governor-General, Lord Ellenborough. Broadfoot was eventually promoted in 1844 (33). This chapter also casts domestic and cultural spaces as opportunities to introduce and reinforce civilising missions.

Further chapters in Rosen's 'Outpost of Empire' section envelop Cameron's staging and orchestration of her photographs with potent indicators of cultural history mediated through the imperial prism. Cameron employs an "iconographic signpost" in photographs of her husband, showcasing how genealogies of Western civilisation and culture take shape through her lens, and how the Anglo-Indian community understood and contributed to this discourse. Rosen notes how the presence of John Milton's bust in a photograph of Charles Cameron reflected his efforts to align the Indian curriculum with British and wider Western cultural landmarks (53). Such analysis helps to complicate the boundaries between the imperial centre

and its peripheries through the art, literature, and education systems that circulated in colonial India.

In Chapter Three, “Letters to Juley,” Rosen identifies how Cameron was drawn towards photography as a way of giving the past an afterlife with palpable immediacy. For Cameron, Rosen explains, “photography became the expressive vehicle by which she could come to terms with the gap between the colonial mission and the repressive regime in India” (83). The discussion interweaves and unveils Cameron’s performance of modernity through her subjects and their representation in the Herschel Album’s portrait photographs. For instance, William Holman Hunt’s orientalist masquerade in Eastern costume in Cameron’s photograph makes apparent the pair’s complicity in constructing British imperialist discourse. Holman Hunt expresses his “colonial agency” as he witnesses shifts in time from the Crusader-states of the Holy Land to the contemporary nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire (85). As a Western subject, he retains his modernity and is an observer beyond the vagaries of geopolitical changes in the East.

Historical narratives burnished with nationalistic heroism are threaded through the next phase of the book in “Cross-Cultural Encounters.” Here, Rosen outlines the fusion of historical, literary, and legendary figures that gives rise to an “allegory of national triumph” as the struggles in India evoke binaries of heroism and villainy (99). Cameron’s letters to her daughter, Juley, dwell on the suffering of women and children at Cawnpore, echoing contemporary newspaper reports. The same intermingling of heroism and pathos is present in the portraits from this period that were inspired also by Tennyson’s *Idylls*, which further helps to reflect Cameron’s nationalistic myth-making through photography. Dualities persist in Rosen’s examination of subjecthood in the portrait of Iqbal al-Daula, exile of the Awadh throne. Rosen observes that Cameron’s choice to jettison her subject’s name and instead use his social status in the descriptor of the photograph is significant in expressing al-Daula’s “simultaneous identity as both deposed sovereign *and* British subject” (129).

In the final section, “Allegories of Empire,” Rosen illuminates Cameron’s intersections of commemoration, allegory, gender, and nationalistic triumph in photographs linked to the events of the Uprising. Rosen identifies how a discourse of collective memory underpins the photograph, *Farewell*, 1864, which mourns and memorialises the Cawnpore siege, while investing the photograph with gendered signifiers, such as the white widow’s cap associated with younger mourners (181). In 1867, the image was retitled *At the Well, A Farewell*, which, Rosen argues, foregrounds the well and events at Cawnpore unambiguously through its conspicuous relationship to the mourning figure. Such reorientation towards markers of imperial experience emerges in Rosen’s conclusion, focusing on how Cameron’s photograph, *Iago, Study from an Italian*, 1867, circulates through Victorian viewers’ imaginative paralleling of Othello’s Venice and understanding of the British Empire.

Signalling the breadth and scope of the book, Rosen acknowledges that “the cacophony of history” does not lend itself to a smoothly delineated understanding of Cameron and her art (3). However, it is this complexity and intricacy of the connections between social, domestic, and political spheres that enliven Rosen’s study. He succeeds in guiding the reader through the labyrinthine discourse of Cameron’s experiences and artistic practice, interweaving the political and cross-cultural with personal and aesthetic motivations, thereby strengthening and diversifying our understanding of Cameron’s life, career, and impact on photography.

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