

‘This Knotty Business’:

The making of Robert Adam’s *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian* (1764), revealed in the Adam brothers’ Grand Tour correspondence

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The publication in 1764 of Robert Adam’s folio volume *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro in Dalmatia* (Fig. 1) was a significant event on several levels. It was one of the pioneering archaeological studies of the period, alongside Stuart & Revett’s *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762), and Robert Wood’s *Ruins of Palmyra* (1753) and *Ruins of Balbec* (1757), and was consciously designed to compete with and outdo those very publications. It also brought a new focus to the Roman imperial remains at Split, confirming the city’s status as a Grand Tour destination, and reinforced Adam’s growing reputation as an artist of knowledge and discernment, and a leading interpreter of antiquity.

As is well known, Robert Adam undertook his survey of the palace site towards the end of his Grand Tour in the summer of 1757, in the company of his instructor and mentor, the French painter Charles-Louis Clérisseau, and two other draughtsmen. But it then took several years for him to bring the book to completion. When he returned to Britain in January 1758, he left Clérisseau in Italy to oversee the engraving of the picturesque views of the palace that Clérisseau had himself drawn, whilst Robert put together a second team of artists and engravers in London, to work on the more conventional architectural illustrations. For a time Adam was beset by doubts about the project, wondering if other Grand Tour publishing plans should take precedence.¹ And there were the complications and delays that naturally arose from relying on two

¹ For Robert Adam’s other (uncompleted) Grand Tour book projects of the 1750s, see Nicholas Savage’s essay on the Adams as publishers in Eileen Harris, *British Architectural Books and Writers 1556–1785*, 1990, pp. 72–4.

separate teams of artists and engravers in Italy and Great Britain, and the sending back and forth of drawings and proofs for checking and alteration.

Whilst on their separate Grand Tours – Robert in 1754–8, his younger brother and architectural partner James in 1760–3 – the two Adam siblings wrote regularly to one another and to other family members back in Britain. This Grand Tour correspondence of ‘Bob’ and ‘Jamie’ (as they usually referred to each other) constitutes one of the last great collections of unpublished Georgian letters, capturing a seminal moment of transformation in eighteenth-century art and architecture, and offering first-hand information about the activities and aspirations of the Adam brothers at the start of their independent careers.

The degree to which the production of the *Ruins* folio in the late 1750s and early 1760s was undertaken via this correspondence – mostly in letters travelling between Robert, then newly established as an architect in London, and James, journeying through Italy on his Grand Tour – has already been acknowledged and investigated by several British Adam scholars, most notably in the 1950s by John Fleming and in the 1990s by Iain Gordon Brown.² [The subject has also been brought to the attention of Croatian readers by historians such as Petar Šegedin and Duško Kečkemet.](#)³

The scanning and transcribing of all the brothers’ Grand Tour letters for a proposed new critical edition [presents](#) an opportunity to [revisit](#) this process of ‘book

² John Fleming, ‘The Journey to Spalatro’, *Architectural Review*, vol. 123, no. 733, Feb 1958, pp. 103–7; Iain Gordon Brown, *Monumental Reputation: Robert Adam & the Emperor’s Palace*, 1992; Iain Gordon Brown, ‘Ruins and Reputation: Robert Adam’s Spalatro’, in *Art Quarterly*, no. 10, Summer 1992, pp. 39–41; [Iain Gordon Brown, ‘Archaeology and Ambition: Robert Adam and Diocletian’s Palace at Split’, *Minerva*, 3, no. 4, July–August 1992, pp. 30–3](#); Iain Gordon Brown, ‘The Picturesque Vision: Fact and fancy in the capriccio plates of Robert Adam’s *Spalatro*’, *Apollo*, vol. cxxxvi, no. 366, August 1992, pp. 76–82; [Iain Gordon Brown, ‘*Spalatro Redivivus*: an Italian Reworking of Robert Adam’s Plates of Diocletian’s Palace, *Apollo*, CXLVII, no. 431, January 1998, pp. 32–6.](#)

³ See, for example, Petar Šegedin, ‘Nekoliko pisama Roberta Adama’, in *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji*, 15 (1), 1963, pp. 163–91; Duško Kečkemet, ‘Diocletian’s Palace and Robert Adam’, in *Review*, 9, 1976, pp. 33–5; and Duško Kečkemet, *Robert Adam. Dioklecijanova palača i klasicizam*, 2003.

production by correspondence'.⁴ This paper looks [again](#) at some of the difficulties inherent in compiling such a book in this way, especially during a major global conflict (the Seven Years' War), and considers the methods used by the Adams for transporting the proofs and engraved copper plates back and forth between Italy and Britain, and at the difficulties and delays that ensued. It also looks afresh at the contributions of the artists and engravers involved, principally Charles-Louis Clérisseau, Francesco Bartolozzi, Edward Rooker and 'Zucchi' – and especially the influence of James Adam, whose role in the creation of his brother's book has generally been undervalued.

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One of Robert Adam's earliest letters about the Diocletian project, sent in August 1758, less than a year after his investigation of the site at Split, to his brother James in Edinburgh, provides our first glimpse of how the book was being put together, and names some of the artists whom Robert had engaged to work on it. Firstly, Bob informs Jamie that he is worried about the slow rate of progress – that the book 'goes poorly on'. A Mr Duff, an associate of the Adams in Venice, has written to Bob saying that without Clérisseau there to keep the engraver Bartolozzi at work, it could take another three years to get the Italian engravings finished.⁵ Clérisseau has even proposed taking on a 'Clever Boy' in Venice 'to engrave the outline' for each illustration, leaving Bartolozzi only to 'fill up the shadows', and thus speed things up.⁶

⁴ This new project, by the author in partnership with Dr Adriano Aymonino of the University of Buckingham's Department of Art History, aims to produce a comprehensive critical edition of the Adam brothers' Grand Tour letters, both online and in book form. The letters provide not only first-hand information about the Adams' activities as art collectors and dealers, but also about Rome in the mid eighteenth century, at the dawn of European Neoclassicism. We are very grateful that this project has the support and blessing of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik, owner of the largest collection of those letters, and also the National Records of Scotland at Register House in Edinburgh, where they are preserved.

⁵ This is presumably 'J. Duff', present in Venice in 1758–9, who was known to the architect Robert Mylne, and who was a correspondent of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. See John Ingamells, *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy 1701–1800*, 1997, p. 317.

⁶ National Records of Scotland, Register House, Edinburgh (hereafter NRS), GD18/4850.

Here is a classic example of the Adams making use of a network of friends, acquaintances and travellers that they maintained in Europe, to keep them informed of latest developments and act on their behalf – in this case a Scottish merchant by the name of Duff, formerly based at Rotterdam. (In a later note James Adam informs his sister Peggy that Duff's real name was Forbes, from a well-known family of Alford, Aberdeenshire, who having been in despair at failing to win the affections of Lady Anne Mackintosh, a Jacobite heroine, had sold his estate, 'turned merchant in Holland, lost all and was obliged to take refuge in Venice'.)⁷ Robert's letter also introduces two of the story's protagonists – his former drawing master in Rome, the French artist and architect Charles-Louis Clérisseau (Fig. 2); and the renowned Italian engraver Francesco Bartolozzi (Fig. 3), who, despite his undoubted abilities, seems to have been an irritation to the Adam brothers because of his erratic productivity and the high prices he was demanding. James Adam was later to write from Italy that, though he was able to cajole the other Italian engravers into making better progress with their work, he found it 'impossible to get Bartolozzi to do anything'.⁸

Robert also tells Jamie what had been achieved so far in England, with the plans of the whole palace, of the Temple of Jupiter and the Temple of Bacchus (also known as the Temple of Aesculapius), all engraved by Patton, '& very neat'. This is Francis Patton (fl. 1745–70), who had trained with the leading London engraver and dealer Gerard Vandergucht (d. 1776), and who was also employed by William Chambers to make sixteen of the engravings for his publication *A Treatise on Civil Architecture* (1759). Patton would later engrave a plan and elevation of Robert Adam's Admiralty Screen in Whitehall, which was published for sale in February 1761 to publicize the architect's first public commission in London.⁹ In addition to Patton's work, which eventually became Plates V, VI, XL and XXVI in the published *Ruins* folio, other plates finished or nearing completion at this date included the elevation of the Porta Aurea (Plate XIII) by Anthony Walker. A Yorkshireman by birth, Walker (d. 1765) has been

⁷ NRS, GD18/4893. A portrait of Forbes/Duff once hung in the Mackintosh family seat of Moy Hall. See Robert Carruthers, *The Highland Note-Book; Or, Sketches and Anecdotes*, 1843, p. 322.

⁸ NRS, GD18/4865.

⁹ *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography: Public Advertiser*, 27, 28 Feb 1761; A. T. Bolton, *The Architecture of Robert and James Adam, 1922*, vol. 2, p. 37.

described as one of the most gifted English engravers of the mid eighteenth century. His speciality was book illustrations, such as those for William Somerville's poem *The Chase* and for Shakespeare's plays, but he was also skilled in topographical views and large single-issue copies after old masters. Like Patton his technique combined etching with pure engraving in the French manner, which gave his work a more informal, lively character.¹⁰ Another engraver at work in England for Robert Adam at this time was James Green of Oxford, best known today for his many excellent views of that city's architecture for the university *Almanacks*.¹¹ A talented artist, Green was preparing plates of the ruinous and restored views of the palace's exterior walls (Plates X, XI), but was obviously considered by Adam to be a bit of a problem. In a later letter Bob tells Jamie that Green has gone off to Oxford, with 'the two outer walls in Ruins, & the entire above', which he had been in possession of for some time, but Bob 'has never heard from him since'. And perhaps never did again, as Green died the following year, aged only 30; and in a later letter of July 1760, Robert explains that these plates were completed by two other engravers, Peter Mazell and Edward Rooker.¹² Mazell (1733–1808), an Irishman who worked exclusively in England, engraved plates for Thomas Pennant's *British Zoology* (1766) and *Tour in Wales* (1778), as well as topographical views for Paul Sandby's *The Virtuosi's Museum* (1788). Rooker (d. 1774) was an experienced architectural engraver who had contributed plates to Chambers's *Civil Architecture* and Stuart & Revett's *Antiquities of Athens*, but he was also an actor at Drury Lane, where his best-known role was that of Harlequin. He was the father of the artist Michael Angelo Rooker.¹³

¹⁰ H. A. Hammelmann, 'Anthony Walker: a gifted engraver and illustrator', *The Connoisseur*, vol. 168 (1968), 167–74; H. Hammelmann, *Book illustrators in eighteenth-century England* (ed. T. S. R. Boase), 1975, pp. 96–101; *ODNB*: Some of Walker's prints for *The Chase* are in the British Museum, Department of Prints & Drawings (Museum nos 1874,1212.279–285), and his series of engravings for *Romeo & Juliet* are illustrated and discussed in Stuart Sillars, *The Illustrated Shakespeare, 1709–1875*, 2008, pp. 99–109.

¹¹ James Green was a brother of the engraver Benjamin Green (d. 1798) and artist Amos Green (d. 1807), and has often been confused with another brother, John Green. See Julian Munby, 'James (not John) Green (1729–59), Engraver to the University', in *Oxoniensia*, vol. LXII, 1997, pp. 319–23.

¹² Munby, *op.cit.*: NRS, GD18/4852; GD18/4866.

¹³ <https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/name/peter-mazell>: *Dictionary of Irish Artists*, 1913; P. H. Highfill, K. A. Burnim, E. A. Langhans, *A Biographical Dictionary of Actors*,

But Robert Adam's real anger was reserved for another engraver, James Basire, who had worked very closely with Adam's rival James Stuart on plates for the first volume of *The Antiquities of Athens* (1762), and whom Adam was convinced had ruined his engraving of the Temple of Aesculapius (Plate XLIII) on purpose, to please Stuart. Here is what Bob told Jamie:

That insignificant triffling ignorant puppyish Wretch Basire has Spoilt me a Plate entirely. it is the outside of the little Sqr Temple, which is hard, ill drawn, of a Bad Colour, in short I have a mind to throw it in his Hands, as unworthy of appearing in my Work I suppose Stuart has bribed him, he's quite a sicofantish creture of his, & I think this will be rather Severe, deeming him unfitt for my work, who has done so much of Stuarts.¹⁴

And Basire did not work on any of the other plates of Diocletian's Palace, suggesting that Adam was not only a hard taskmaster but tended to hold grudges.

This type of correspondence, listing what had been done and what was still to be done, became ever more important as the work advanced in both countries. A letter of July 1760, written by Bob in London to Jamie, who had by then arrived in Venice, is indicative of this (Fig. 4), with long lists of all the intended plates, where they were carried out, and so forth, so that Jamie could get a true sense of progress in 'this Knotty Business'.¹⁵ Bob's first list is of six 'Views from Venice, happily Chez moi'; the next is nineteen views of 'Regular Architecture', also from Venice. There are also lists of 'Views done at Venice but not yet Sent off to England', and 'Views to be done at Venice'; the following page has similar information for the work being carried out in England.

Actresses, Musicians, Dancers, Managers & Other Stage Personnel in London, 1660–1800, Vol. 13, 1991, pp. 86–8.

¹⁴ NRS, GD18/4850. Edward Rooker and Anthony Walker both also engraved plates for *The Antiquities of Athens* but seem to have escaped Adam's fury.

¹⁵ NRS, GD18/4866.

One thing these lists confirm is that, while the traditional plans, elevations and sections – what Robert Adam called the ‘Geometricals’ – were generally supplied by English engravers like Rooker, Patton and Walker, the all-important picturesque views and perspectives (Figs 5, 6), which Adam thought were essential to convey the emotional impact of the remains of Diocletian’s Palace, were engraved in Italy, mostly by Bartolozzi, Paolo Santini and Zucchi.¹⁶ Such plates were usually based on original wash drawings made by Clérisseau, whose contribution in the end went unacknowledged.¹⁷ This emotive, picturesque style of presenting the remains of antiquity – so different from Robert Wood’s drier, more factual approach in his books on Palmyra and Balbec (which Adam found ‘as hard as Iron, & as false as Hell’) – was influenced by the ideas and theories of Clérisseau and G. B. Piranesi, both of whom had mentored and advised Adam during his time in Rome, and shared his more old-fashioned, painterly approach to presenting buildings and archaeological remains in their setting. Robert even considered having Piranesi prepare the book’s *Frontispiece*, which, he thought, ‘Would be Showy & make a puff’ in London, but Clérisseau advised against this, informing Jamie that they could not trust Piranesi, who had ‘always refused to work for others’.¹⁸

The Adams’ assessment of the respective merits of the various engravers in England and Italy seldom remained constant. To begin with Robert seemed confident of the superior qualities of his English artists, such as Rooker. In August 1758 he tried to persuade Clérisseau to send from Venice some ‘outlines’ of Bartolozzi’s unfinished views, so that Rooker and Paul Sandby – who apparently worked for Adam in tandem,

¹⁶ One other artist who worked on the *Ruins* publication in Italy was the printmaker Domenico Cunego, who seems to have been engaged by James Adam in Rome towards the end of the project. He was responsible for Plates XIII (the interior of the Temple of Jupiter) and LXI (the Aqueduct). Cunego also engraved the striking perspective view of Robert Adam’s Admiralty Arch in Whitehall, London, for publication in 1775 in the first volume of the brothers’ *The Works in Architecture* (vol. I, part IV, plate I).

¹⁷ Many of Clérisseau’s evocative coloured wash drawings of Diocletian’s Palace that he made for Adam’s project are now in the Hermitage Museum in St Petersburg. Several of them are reproduced in Valery Shevchenko, ‘Clérisseau, the Main Draughtsman of Adam’s Dalmatian Expedition’, in J. Belmarić and A. Šverko (eds), *Robert Adam and Diocletian’s Palace in Split*, 2017, pp. 225–82.

¹⁸ NRS, GD18/4843, GD18/4866, GD18/4869. In the event the *Frontispiece* for the *Ruins* volume was prepared by Bartolozzi.

Rooker on the architecture, Sandby on the figures – could ‘advance the work somewhat quicker’. He also decided to show off to Clérisseau, who had introduced the engraver Zucchi to the Adam circle in Venice, how much better Rooker was than his man, sending from London a copy of a ‘charming Corinthian entablature’ that Rooker had engraved for William Chambers. He told Jamie: ‘I fancy it will vex him [Clérisseau] to see his Zuchi so much outshone’.¹⁹ But it didn’t take long for Bob to change his mind. Less than a month later he was telling Jamie how ‘dispirited’ he had been made by Sandby telling him that Rooker was an ‘Idle worthless fellow’, who ‘wou’d do nothing’ and leave Sandby directly – ‘for that now the plays begin he will never work an hour in a fortnight’. Once Jamie reached Venice in 1760, he like Clérisseau became a supporter of the Italians. He wrote to Bob of his concerns about the ‘General Plan of the Town’ (Plate II), one of the important early plates in the book that had been assigned to Rooker, whose ‘tediousness’ alarmed him. He told his sister Betty that he should be glad if Bob could arrange instead to have the view done in Venice, ‘where it wou’d be not only dispatch’d, but done to good purpose’. He even suggested that if Bob ‘wishes to have the Admiralty engrav’d magnificently he should send it here’.²⁰

Of course, one of the drawbacks of a team of artists working in Italy on the evocative perspective views, separately from those [preparing](#) the standard architectural illustrations in London, was that occasionally the two did not match. Iain Gordon Brown has discussed this subject in considerable detail in his 1992 book on the *Ruins*, in which he illustrated several early plate proofs from a rare, annotated set in the National Library of Scotland in Edinburgh. In several of these cases Adam spotted discrepancies and demanded changes. For example, the early Venetian proof of Bartolozzi’s engraving of Plate III, the ‘View of the Town’, showed a rather loose grouping of large, round-headed windows about half way up the palace’s east outer wall, which differed considerably from the more accurate geometrical elevation (Plate x), engraved in London by Peter Mazell, which had neat rows of narrower windows ranged along the top of the wall. And so Bartolozzi’s copperplate of the perspective had to be reworked to match ([see Fig. 6](#)). It is important to emphasize here that Adam

¹⁹ NRS, GD18/4850.

²⁰ NRS, GD18/4852, GD18/4864, GD18/4870.

was not particular about reproducing archaeologically correct detail. That was not his intention in the *Ruins* publication, which was conceived more as a modern and picturesque reinterpretation of the Diocletian site. And there are many instances, also noted by Iain Gordon Brown, where major changes were made to Clérisseau's original compositions during the engraving process, simply for picturesque effect – such as adding groups of figures and removing all the non-antique church fittings from his view of the mausoleum, which by then had been reconfigured to serve as Split's Cathedral. But what did concern Adam was that the plates in the book should be consistent as a group. In another case, columns had to be added 'fictitiously' into the elevation of the harbour front in its ruined state (Plate VIII), so as to agree with the perspective view of the Cryptoporticus engraved by Paolo Santini (Plate VII), which it was felt was too good to alter.²¹

Perspective views and subscribers

Bob was keen to have as many of the eye-catching perspective views like the 'View of the Town' (Fig. 6) with him in England as soon as possible, as a means of raising interest in subscriptions from among connoisseurs and the nobility – people who were willing to pay to have their names listed at the front of the book, in return for a copy (or multiple copies) on publication. When he first advertised his publishing proposals for the *Ruins* volume in the London press in January 1760, Robert Adam told potential subscribers that specimens of engravings could be seen at his premises in Lower Grosvenor Street, though at that date most of the best plates and proofs from Venice had still to arrive. The subscription price was three guineas – half to be paid on subscription, the remainder upon delivery – the payments to be received at Adam's

²¹ See Brown, *Monumental Reputation*, pp. 32–46, where inconsistencies in the proofs and plates are discussed as part of the wider question of 'Taste and Accuracy'; the early proof of the 'View of the Town' is reproduced on pp. 42–3. See also Robin Middleton, Gerald Beasley, Nicholas Savage, *The Mark J. Millard Architectural Collection, Volume II. British Books, Seventeenth through Nineteenth Centuries*, 1998, esp. p. 9.

office or at several leading London and Edinburgh booksellers.²² Adam had already been spreading word amongst the *cognoscenti* in London, and making good use of a well-placed friend, Major-General Lord Charles Hay, younger brother of the 4th Marquess of Tweeddale, with whom he had become very close ('[he] has taken such an affection to me, that I am with him 20 times in a day, Scheming new acquaintances & new Introductions'). Robert wrote to Jamie: 'I harangue all my new Nobles about this Work & Lord Chas. Does the same'.²³ But neither was Bob averse at times to using more underhand methods to secure subscriptions. In January 1762 he wrote to Jamie, who was then in Rome, to see if he could entice Hugh Percy, Lord Warkworth, the son and heir to Adam's great patron the 1st Earl of Northumberland, who was then on his Grand Tour, to dip into his and his parents' pockets by 'insinuating' to the young lord that Bob had 'flattered himself' that the Northumberland family 'would have patronized him in that work and that their not doing it had damped him much'. Jamie was also to emphasize the 'curiosity of such a work and that near £1200 was already laid out on the Engravings'. Bob thought that, if this were 'done delicately', then Lord Warkworth 'would probably mention something to his Father' and might even 'push him'.²⁴ And the ruse seems to have worked, as the Earl and Countess of Northumberland and Lord Warkworth all appear in the published list.

As well as the home-based subscribers, Robert also intended to approach some highly placed Continental individuals, for added prestige. These included King Frederick (the Great) of Prussia, a great patron of the arts and the Enlightenment – the 'eclat of his name woud Sell 100 Coppys in the Citty', thought Robert, 'by the assistance of a propr puffed advertisement in Loyds Chronicle'. James Ogilvy, Lord Deskford, heir to the earldoms of Findlater and Seafield, whose family were loyal patrons of the Adam practices in Edinburgh and London, was thought to be the best conduit for an application to the king. Robert also hoped to attract the interest of the

²² For Adam's earliest adverts, see for example *London Chronicle*, 19–22 Jan 1760; *Public Advertiser*, 2 Feb 1760; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 21–23 Feb 1760. The booksellers who originally took subscriptions were: Andrew Millar, and Messrs David Wilson and Thomas Durham, all of the Strand; Robert Dodsley in Pall Mall; and Gavin Hamilton and John Balfour in Edinburgh.

²³ NRS, GD18/4854. It was Lord Charles Hay who introduced Robert Adam to Sir Nathaniel Curzon of Kedleston Hall, one of his most significant early patrons.

²⁴ NRS, GD18/4922.

recently appointed Pope Clement XIII (the Venetian Cardinal Rezzonico), who, as well as having antiquarian interests, was a leading supporter of Adam's friend and mentor Piranesi.²⁵ But Robert failed to succeed with these advances, as neither of these men is listed in the published volume.

James Adam in Venice was much more effective in this regard, persuading some influential Italian nobles and collectors to take up subscriptions. Jamie may not have been as dedicated to his architectural studies in Italy as his brother Robert had been, but he was handsome, charming, always beautifully dressed, and was thought by the Italians to be immensely rich, so large was his retinue of servants and draughtsmen – so he made an effective ambassador for the project. He wrote to Robert from Venice in September 1760 with promises of subscriptions from Francesco Loredan, the Doge of Venice; from the Library of St Mark; and also from Venetian aristocratic collectors and connoisseurs such as Count Antonio Maria Zanetti (Fig. 7), Count Filippo Farsetti, and Count Francesco Algarotti. Algarotti (Fig. 8), an influential polymath and member of Frederick the Great's intellectual circle, was an important catch. Described by James as 'the very pattern of french politesse', his wide-ranging interests and non-canonical approach to art and architecture chimed with those of the Adam brothers, and he also offered the possibility of a renewed application to King Frederick. And what is notable about Jamie's efforts, is that all these names, and several others mentioned in that letter, and in a later one, do feature in the list of foreign subscribers published in the *Ruins* volume (Figs 9, 10). Jamie also asked that their names and titles should not be translated into English, to add a touch of the exotic. He wrote to Bob: 'as people are fond of things misterious it may perhaps be as well to keep them in the original Tongue'.²⁶

Transport routes and delays

²⁵ NRS, GD18/4854. For Clement XIII see E. P. Bowron and J. J. Rishel (eds), *Art in Rome in the Eighteenth Century*, 2000, pp. 29–30. It was Pope Clement XIII's nephew, Giovanni Battista Rezzonico, who commissioned from Piranesi his only executed building – the rebuilding of the Church of S. Maria del Priorato in Rome.

²⁶ NRS, GD18/4874, GD18/4876–7, GD18/4957.

The reason for the delay in the copper plates reaching Robert Adam in London was not simply the apparent lethargy of the Italian engravers, but the painful slowness of transporting the plates by wagon across war-ravaged central Europe, still at the heart of the ongoing conflict of the Seven Years' War. Duff, the brothers' contact in Venice, was told by Robert to send the plates from there to another Adam contact, James Craufurd, a Scottish merchant based in Rotterdam, via Nuremberg in Germany – a similar route, in fact, to that which Robert Adam had taken a few years earlier on his return from his Grand Tour. Craufurd would then send the plates by ship from Holland to England. Jamie visited Craufurd in Rotterdam in May 1760, as he began to make his way across Europe to Italy, but the plates from Venice had not yet arrived. They were still en route through Germany, and by the end of June had only reached Nuremberg, and it was not till mid July that Jamie and Clérisseau in Venice were able to celebrate the news of their safe arrival in England – 'You can't imagine how much Clerisseau & I rejoice', James told his sister Peggy.²⁷

Robert in London was continually worried that the wagons would be 'pillaged by either party in their way through Germany' – 'either party' being the Prussians and their allies, the Hanoverians and British, or the French, Austrians and Russians with whom they were at war. The wagons were extraordinarily slow (Jamie described them as 'very tedious') – so slow in fact that in 1761 Robert admitted that for months he had given up an earlier consignment as lost completely. Duff was able to reassure him that the wagons were unlikely to be attacked by 'out partys', as such vehicles were generally 'looked upon as sacred things that ought not to be touched, lest it put a stop to commerce'. In the summer of 1760 Jamie tried to speed things up by suggesting he give two of the engraved copper plates – the general view of the town (Fig. 6) and the view of the marine wall (Plates III & VII) – to another close acquaintance, a Mr Wright, to

²⁷ NRS, GD18/4852, GD18/4857, GD18/4861, GD18/48465. James Craufurd (d. 1760) was the son of Patrick Craufurd, an Edinburgh merchant (who had become extremely wealthy through trade with Holland), and a brother of the Scots MP Patrick Craufurd of Auchenames (d. 1778), a member of Lord Bute's circle; see History of Parliament online. Jamie met Patrick's son John 'Fish' Craufurd of Errol, Perth (d. 1814) in 1762 in Rome, where he was wintering for the good of his health (NRS, GD18/4923).

carry personally with his luggage on his return to England.²⁸ This was the diplomat Sir James Wright (d. 1803), who had been in Italy since 1758, but who was returning to England, [his wife Catherine](#) having miscarried. The Wrights were good friends of Mr Duff, and were to return to Italy in 1766 when Wright was appointed as the British resident at Venice.²⁹

The other transport method used by the Adams was to have items sent by ship between London and the great Italian west-coast port of Livorno (or Leghorn, as the English called it), where most of the big European powers kept trading houses. Once Jamie had arrived in Rome in March 1761, any new plates or proofs made by Bartolozzi and the others in Venice were sent to him there, and then despatched to Livorno. But of course this route, too, came with its dangers, especially from French and Spanish privateers. Jamie was, at this time, in 1761–2, planning a proposed trip to Sicily, and also to Greece and the Levant, but Robert did not think he could proceed with these expeditions in the current political climate: ‘I don’t believe it will be Practicable to find you a ship ... on any terms, considering how every Hulk will be employ’d against Spanish Merchant ships’. Robert had still heard nothing of his last consignment of *Spalatro* copper plates, ‘which distresses me infinitely ... I thought they were sent, But fancy I am mistaken’, adding, ‘the difficulty and danger from a new War makes me fear some long dellay and great risks in geting them Home’.³⁰ Such were the trials of despatching valuable goods across the English Channel at a time of war, and the worries that could be fashioned for want of reliable information. Jamie’s preferred policy was to have the copper plates sent in a ship heading for London in a convoy, for extra protection, with the captain having been given ‘all necessary cautions’, as well as five guineas, to encourage him ‘to deliver the plates safe’.³¹

James Adam’s role; and the identity of the engraver ‘Zucchi’

²⁸ NRS, GD18/4852, GD18/4863, GD18/4887.

²⁹ NRS, GD18/4861, GD18/4887: Ingamells, *Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers*, pp. 1021, 1022–3.

³⁰ NRS, GD18/4922.

³¹ NRS, GD 18/4869, GD18/4922.

As suggested in the introduction to this paper, James Adam's impact on the progress of his brother's book seems to have been considerable following his arrival in Venice in June 1760. Jamie quickly established a positive rapport with the Italian engravers there, and began taking executive decisions to get the work moving. He wrote to London informing Bob that he had given Zucchi the job of engraving the two sections of the palace and the front of the Vestibulum (Plates XVIII, XIX & XXI), and was keen to know what artists in England were charging for similar work, as he thought Zucchi's fee a little expensive. But Jamie also described some of the other engravings that Zucchi had executed for the brothers – for example architectural details for their intended reissue of Antoine Desgodetz's seventeenth-century classic, *Les edifices antiques de Rome* – as 'the most perfect things I ever saw in that stile'; so presumably he considered Zucchi's work to be worth the extra cost.³²

Before looking further at Jamie's impact on progress, this example raises another question: to which 'Zucchi' is he referring? For there was a whole family of Italian artists and engravers of that name, one of whom, the painter Antonio Zucchi (1726–95), accompanied James Adam and Clérisseau as they travelled across Italy on Jamie's Grand Tour, and later came to England in 1766 as the Adam brothers' chief decorative painter for their architectural commissions.³³ Identification is made all the more difficult because, infuriatingly, most of the time in their letters Robert and James only ever refer to 'Zucchi' by his surname, regardless of which Zucchi it is they are discussing; and 21 of the plates prepared in Italy and published in the *Ruins* folio simply bear the attribution 'Zucchi Sculpt' (see Fig. 11). John Fleming was of the opinion that Antonio Zucchi, the painter, had engraved these plates, as he was in Jamie's entourage at the time; others attribute the work to Antonio's older brother Giuseppe Carlo Zucchi (1721–1805), who came to London with Antonio in 1766 and is known to have engraved some plates for the Adam brothers' later publication, *The*

³² NRS, GD18/4862: Antoine Desgodetz, *Les edifices antiques de Rome Dessines et Mesures tres exactement*, 1682.

³³ For Antonio Zucchi and the Adams see Jerzy J. Kierkuć-Bieliński, 'Context and attribution: Antonio Zucchi's portrait of James Adam, 1763', in Colin Thom (ed.), *Robert Adam and his brothers: New light on Britain's leading architectural family*, 2019, pp. 83–103.

Works in Architecture (from 1773). And there is certainly eighteenth-century documentary evidence to suggest that Giuseppe's employment by the Adams on *The Works* may have been because of an existing arrangement for the *Ruins*.³⁴

However, one snippet of information in James Adam's letters written during his time in Italy refers to a payment to 'Old Zucchi'; and, furthermore, in a list of the engravers who had worked in Venice on the *Ruins* plates, Jamie mentions: 'All the regular Architecture done here F Zuchi Veneto' – [confirming](#) beyond doubt that it was Antonio and Giuseppe's father, Francesco Zucchi, an experienced engraver, then in his late 60s, who provided the several 'Zucchi' plates of Diocletian's palace, [as had been suggested by Iain Gordon Brown in 1992](#). 'Old' Zucchi died in 1764, the year that the book was published, which perhaps explains why the Adams later needed his son and successor, Giuseppe, to engrave for them in England.³⁵

Jamie's increasing commitment to the book, doggedly overseeing production until its completion, can be attributed to several factors – principally to being on hand in Italy at the right time, to encourage the engravers there and manage the transfer to England of engraved plates and other materials, including the very paper that the book was printed on, which was purchased in Rome. But perhaps of even more significance were the changes in Robert Adam's circumstances. During 1758–9, his first two years in independent practice in London, business was slow. The much-hoped-for commissions from the English aristocracy he had cultivated in Italy had failed to materialise, and so there was time enough on his hands to devote to the Diocletian publication. But by 1760 the tide had changed, and important commissions were beginning to come in, including a series of grand town and country houses where Adam's new and sophisticated antique manner reached its first heights. And so it was natural that he should lose some of his previous focus and motivation for the *Ruins* project. In the midsummer of 1761, when Jamie wrote from Rome to tell his sister

³⁴ Fleming 1962, p. 282; Kierkuć-Bieliński, *op.cit.*, pp. 89–90; G. A. Moschini, *Dell' incisione in Venezia*, 1924, p. 63. For example Giuseppe (sometimes called Joseph) Zucchi engraved Plate V in Part II of Volume I of *The Works* (on Kenwood House, 1774), and Plate VI in Part III (on Luton Hoo, 1775).

³⁵ [See Brown, *Monumental Reputation*, p. 31](#); NRS, GD18/4883; GD18/4874.

Jenny, who was living with Robert in London, that the latest set of proofs had arrived from Venice, he made the point that he had heard nothing from Bob in London about how the project was advancing and would be glad of some news.³⁶

In this way Jamie's influence on the project continued to grow, as he took on more and more of the book production duties from his brother. In July 1761 he wrote to tell Bob that he had decided to group some of the smaller plates together on half-sheets, which would not only look better but also help save paper, and prevent the finished book from becoming too bulky. It was also Jamie who finalised all the dimensions for the illustrations. He suggested using feet and inches, rather than the more traditional, classical system of modules and minutes, but in the end opted for a mixture of the two, with some of the larger-scale 'geometrical' plates of architectural details, such as the Order of the Portico in the Peristyle, and the Door to the Vestibulum, bearing measurements in minutes as well as an imperial scale (Plates XXII & XXV, see Fig. 11). By August, Jamie was preparing the [entire](#) book, arranging the plates in their proper order, and adding the dimensions and explanations to the plates, with a view to forwarding the whole lot to England once he had found a suitable traveller to entrust it to. By the dawn of 1762 he was finally sending Bob 'the last words of Spalatro'; 'who cou'd have conceiv'd it wou'd have drag'd on to this time', Jamie told his sister Jenny, and his contribution to his brother's work, though never publicly acknowledged, was undoubtedly considerable.³⁷

Back in England, Robert approved 'much of the order' in which Jamie had arranged the plates, though there was still some uncertainty as to their final number – with Jamie's combining of some smaller images on a page there were now apparently 56 plates rather than the 60 that Bob had advertised in the London newspapers. Jamie suggested perhaps adding a portrait of the king, to make up the numbers, but Bob thought that 'would be vulgar ... Besides if you saw how every print shop at present swarmes with hundreds of Kings and Queens, you would be sick of the very sight of

³⁶ NRS, GD18/4900.

³⁷ NRS, GD18/4905, GD18/4906, GD18/4923; see also [Brown, *Monumental Reputation*, p. 31](#), where James Adam is described as 'Project Manager'.

them'. Had there been any other altars or ornaments to illustrate, Bob was confident 'we could have tickled up 4 plates in a few days'. But the omissions seem to have been simply a case of a miscalculation in the lists, and as published the book in fact comprised 61 plate pages.

Publication at last!

Work on the *Ruins* folio dragged on into the autumn of 1762, when Jamie in Rome showed the book to Johann Winckelmann, the pioneering art historian and archaeologist, who was also the librarian and archivist to the great Roman art collector Cardinal Alessandro Albani. Winckelmann was impressed by the book's 'great intelligence and taste', but unfortunately its completion coincided with the appearance of Stuart & Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens*, which was well received by the British public, and, like Adam's book, contained a glowing dedication to George III.³⁸ So, reluctantly, Robert decided to hold off publication until the excitement surrounding that event had died down. His sister Betty reported to Jamie at Christmas 1762 that Bob was now 'perfectly sick of all publications especially by subscription as he has fully experienced by his own work that people look upon it as picking their pockets which to be sure is not an agreeable way for a gentleman to make money'.³⁹ And so it was not until March 1764 that Robert Adam's great work finally saw the light of day, priced at £3 10s (in sheets), its appearance widely reported in the London newspapers – and perhaps fortunately for him at a time when Spalatro was also in the news because of an outbreak of plague.⁴⁰ The book came out too late, perhaps, to serve its original purpose of helping advance Adam's career on his arrival in London, as by 1764 he was already firmly established as the country's leading architect. But it was still

³⁸ John Fleming, 'Cardinal Albani's Drawings at Windsor: Their Purchase by James Adam for George III', *The Connoisseur*, 142 (1958), p. 168, n22; *Winckelmanns Briefe*, 1824 edn, ed. Friedrich Förster, vol. II (1761–1766), p. 125.

³⁹ NRS, GD18/4950.

⁴⁰ For notifications of the publication of Adam's *Ruins* volume, see for example *London Chronicle*, 17–20 March 1764; *London Gazette*, 20–24 March 1764, *Lloyds Evening Post*, 21–23 March 1764, 12–14 April 1764; *Public Advertiser*, 29 March 1764, 3 April 1764. The plague outbreak in Spalatro was covered by the same newspapers between 24 March and 5 April 1764.

timely enough, and grand enough in its conception and final published form, to consolidate and enhance his growing reputation.⁴¹

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⁴¹ For Adam's motives in publishing the *Ruins* volume, and its place in the context of Scotland's relationship with antiquity and the Grand Tour through antiquarian and archaeological publications, see Iain Gordon Brown, 'Scotland and Italy: Books and the Grand Tour', in Stephen W. Brown and Warren McDougall (eds), *The Edinburgh History of the Book in Scotland, Volume 2: Enlightenment and Expansion 1707–1800*, pp. 233–45 (esp. pp. 244–5).