RACE AND MODERN ARCHITECTURE

A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present

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RACE AND ORGANICISM

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> The various stages in the slow developments of civilization from barbarism are marked
> by a corresponding series of visible monuments, in which may plainly be read the
> character and quality of the social conditions out of which they grew. The true value
> and significance of these almost ineffaceable records have never been duly recognized.
>
> **Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West" (1889)**

The best critical surveys of modern architecture tend to credit the birth of American modernism to a series of transatlantic disciplinary exchanges between professional architects in the United States and western Europe.[1] This literature celebrates the writings and buildings of figures such as Henry Hobson Richardson, Frank Furness, John Wellborn Root, William Le Baron Jenney, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright for producing an indigenous style of modern architecture—an American architecture—that equaled the rigor and sophistication of Continental architectural styles while representing the social and political realities of life in the States. The international frameworks of these studies successfully recover the European pedigree of this national building style by characterizing its development as a synthesis of the socially progressive ideas of European theory and the pragmatic realities of domestic building culture. Yet an outward focus on European trends unduly masks some of the key domestic influences that determined the practical reality of architectural practices in the United States. This is especially the case when one considers the ways in which architectural styles were used as political tools to legitimize particular strands of cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century. Even the best historical surveys have failed to expose the white

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nativist associations that bound period definitions of American character that underwrote the meaning of American architecture. When leading architects used the label "American architecture" to identify an indigenous style of building, who did they believe this style was indigenous to in the States? What definitions of racial and ethnic identity most informed their conceptions of American character? And were these definitions broad enough to encompass the racial diversity present at that time? It is only by situating a disciplinary history of American architecture within the political contexts of the nineteenth century that we can fully interpret the tacit associations this movement accrued in the past.

The dialectics of race and nationalism within American architectural theory were an inherent aspect of political control as exercised through the competition for land ownership and the control of local resources. A popular narrative to emerge in defense of an exclusively white Christian nation was the credo of Manifest Destiny, which pitted white colonial settlers against indigenous peoples, formerly enslaved Africans, and other migrant laborers of color. The dispossession and redistributions of Native lands was a routine aspect of wealth building in North America, but a physical record of this exchange was not always preserved within the land itself. Architecture was often tasked with providing a symbol of the desired course of civilizational change for successive generations. This chapter analyzes the ideological function of American architecture in promoting an exclusively white definition of American character. It uses the writings and buildings of Henry Van Brunt, the Beaux-Arts-trained American architect who moved his Boston architectural practice to the Midwest to complete a series of signature commissions for the Union Pacific Railroad in the 1880s and '90s, as a period case study of the political functions of architectural style. Van Brunt is an ideal choice here because his career is representative of the types of cultural distinctions and the avant-garde positions on architectural style taken by elite designers then practicing on the East Coast: his exposure to and emulation of the principles of architectural organicism from Continental Europe and the US reflect his critical engagement with the notion of a living architecture shaped to reflect present conditions. A close reading of the developmental models that emerge from his theory of organic architecture will uncover the racialist discourses that subtended the politicization of architectural style theory as it migrated from the East Coast to the developing Midwest.

Van Brunt's relocation to the center of the country was characteristic of a broader professional migration of elite architects westward, either in person or through the opening of satellite offices. The local conditions of the Midwest prompted many of these professionals to struggle with their aesthetic dependence on European revivalist styles to visualize the essence of American character. A lack of urban density in comparison to what they were used to back east was accom-

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panied by a rougher physical terrain that required extensive leveling, dredging, and irrigation. For some, these conditions suggested a different formal approach to city building. The subsequent search for an autochthonous national building style that replaced the former use of revivalist styles raised certain contentious questions about the ideal racial constitution of the nation, something that has yet to be widely recognized in contemporary architectural historiography. As Martin Berger notes in his book *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture*, the aesthetic practices of white cultural elites were an important indicator of what made them different and therefore worthy of leading the country. These aesthetic distinctions naturalized their grasp on power by codifying and disseminating elite ideas about space, dress, and politics among people of a different social class and race.[2] If these views were adopted as social norms, then it became that much easier to see elite notions as normal for all people. During the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, different racial and ethnic groups migrated to North America to settle in the territory that was later identified alternately as the American West, the Middle West, or the Midwest. In the inevitable competition for political influence that ensued between white settlers, indigenous peoples, and other nonwhite groups, romantic portraits of whiteness from paintings of settler culture to distinctive portraits of Gilded Age elites served an instrumental political function. One example is the Hudson River school painters who led the way in creating a visual and material matrix for representing the norms of whiteness in aesthetic fields such as landscape painting and architecture.[3] Wealth and privilege had a face, and the racial identity of this face was very important. Architectural style and material culture became emblematic of specific racial and ethnic groups, either as a natural product of their experimentation or as an aspirational statement on how things should be. Van Brunt's writings and buildings served a similar function in early America as his work emerged alongside the divisive rhetoric of Manifest Destiny and the rejuvenating cultural potential of frontier life.

During the three decades that Henry Van Brunt lived in Kansas City, Kansas, he completed a series of speeches, papers, and essays in trade journals and popular magazines that outlined the generative principles of an autochthonous American architecture. He intended these writings to serve as a practical guide for both architects and business elites in channeling the future trajectory of building culture in the Midwest. The historical timeline he created to explain the evolution of architectural style advances along a progressive and teleological model of vernacular development that begins with the material culture of white settlers and ends with the birth of a unique American architecture. Van Brunt considered himself to be situated somewhere in the middle of this trajectory, but moving toward the completion of a new stylistic expression. He praised the structural clarity of the "temporary makeshifts" of "border life" that followed the universal laws of nature,

which he believed provided the true basis of all beauty in art.[4] Yet he did not consider the rudimentary architectures of frontier settlements to be sufficient to reflect the full range of needs and values that were emerging from the increasing modernization of the country. Instead, he hoped that avant-garde constructions in the American frontier would precipitate a new wave of design standards for contemporary users that would elevate the fine arts in America. This theory of architectural style is notably influenced by the racialist thinking of the French architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc who wrote ethnographic histories of architectural style in the 1860s and 1870s.[5] Van Brunt not only read the French architect's theories in their original language, but he later produced an authoritative English translation and critical introduction to Viollet-le-Duc's collection of essays, *Discourses on Architecture*, for American audiences.[6] The racial conflicts between white and nonwhite groups that fueled the progression of building culture in Viollet-le-Duc's historiography provided a structural parallel for Van Brunt's consideration of life on the frontier.

Van Brunt's designs for a regional station on the Union Pacific Railroad took shape in a social and political context mired by the nativist ideologies associated with nineteenth-century railroad culture. Local boosters such as William Gilpin encouraged the construction of a transcontinental railroad in a grand effort to promote the geographical expansion of "Aryan" culture in the United States. Since this expansion was reliant on the dispossession of Native lands and the relocation of nonwhite groups, Gilpin's theory made the transcontinental railroad a physical emblem of white cultural nationalism in Kansas City and of white colonialism abroad. The clearest illustration of this potential global infrastructure is Gilpin's drawing of the "Cosmopolitan Railway," which shows a winding ribbon of railroad tracks moving through the most developed predominantly white nations of the earth. According to Gilpin, this rail line would take occasional forays north and south of the central meridian through these countries, guaranteeing an efficient route for the future colonization of less developed peoples (figure 5.1). The cultural pedigree and evolutionary rhetoric of Van Brunt's architectural theory likewise elevated the symbolic status of railroad culture as a visual sign of American progress. For example, Van Brunt's teleology of form naturalized the proprietary standards established within the Union Pacific Railroad, which gradually increased the durability of local railroad stations as they became important nodes in its infrastructure. This cost-saving measure essentially began each node on the rail line with the construction of a makeshift station that emulated the simplicity of construction used by white settlers in surrounding territories (figure 5.2). In many cases, these structures were carried directly on railroad cars to their local destinations. As time progressed, the more important nodes were expanded as the local population grew, and in the cases of the most important sites, new and opulent

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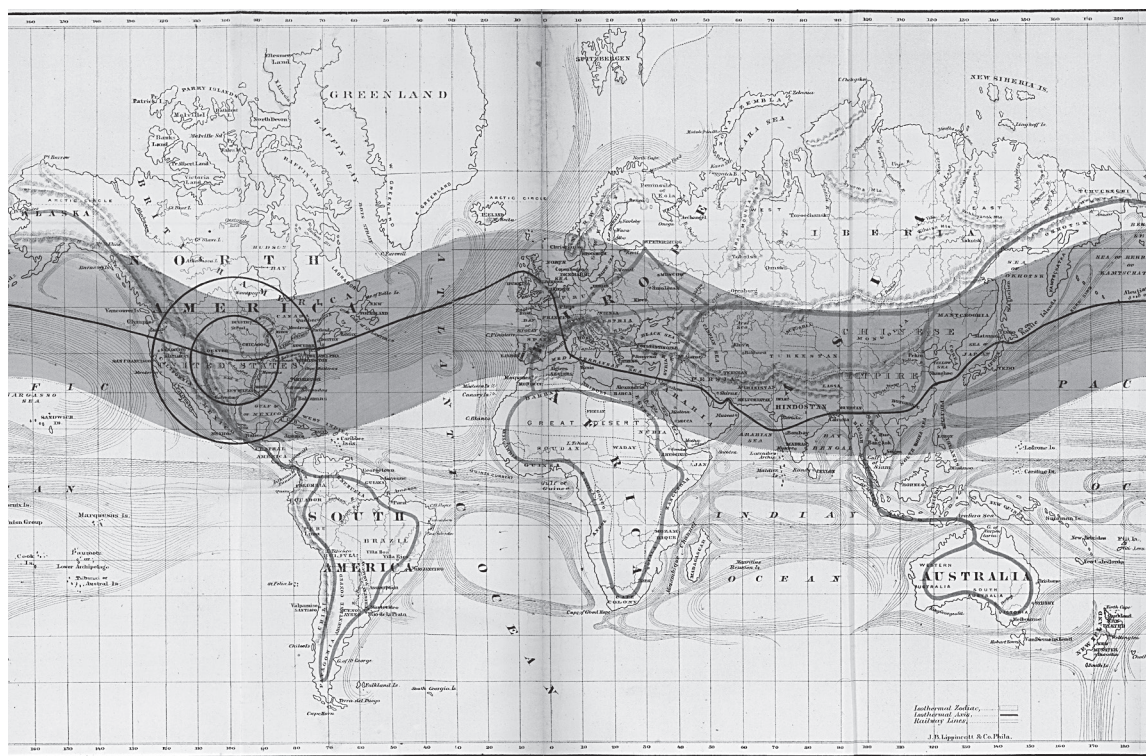
Fig. 5.1 "The Isothermal Zodiac and Axis of Intensity Round the World; and the Line of Cosmopolitan Railway and Its Longitudinal Feeders," in William Gilpin, *The Cosmopolitan Railway* (1890). Courtesy of David Rumsey Map Collection, Stanford University.

buildings in a modern or urban style were erected in their place. Van Brunt's modernist style for depots that reached the most advanced stage of circulation dramatized in his evolutionary narrative for American architecture—a trajectory that was didactically illustrated by the naturalisms of his masonry materials, which communicated the rising city's deep and abiding relationship with nature. He completed designs for the most important regional depots of the Union Pacific line, such as those located in Cheyenne, Wyoming; Ogden, Utah; and Portland, Oregon (figure 5.3).

Racial Interpretations of Place in the Midwest, ca. 1860–1900

A brief survey of nineteenth-century literary and artistic conceptions of white settler culture demonstrates the importance of architectural imagery for romanticizing the white domestication of the midwestern landscape. From Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* to D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation*, romantic portraits of America's racial origins popularized the notion that white immigrants provided the best racial stock for breeding a democratic culture that would flower around the country. In and around Kansas City, local writers and artists used at
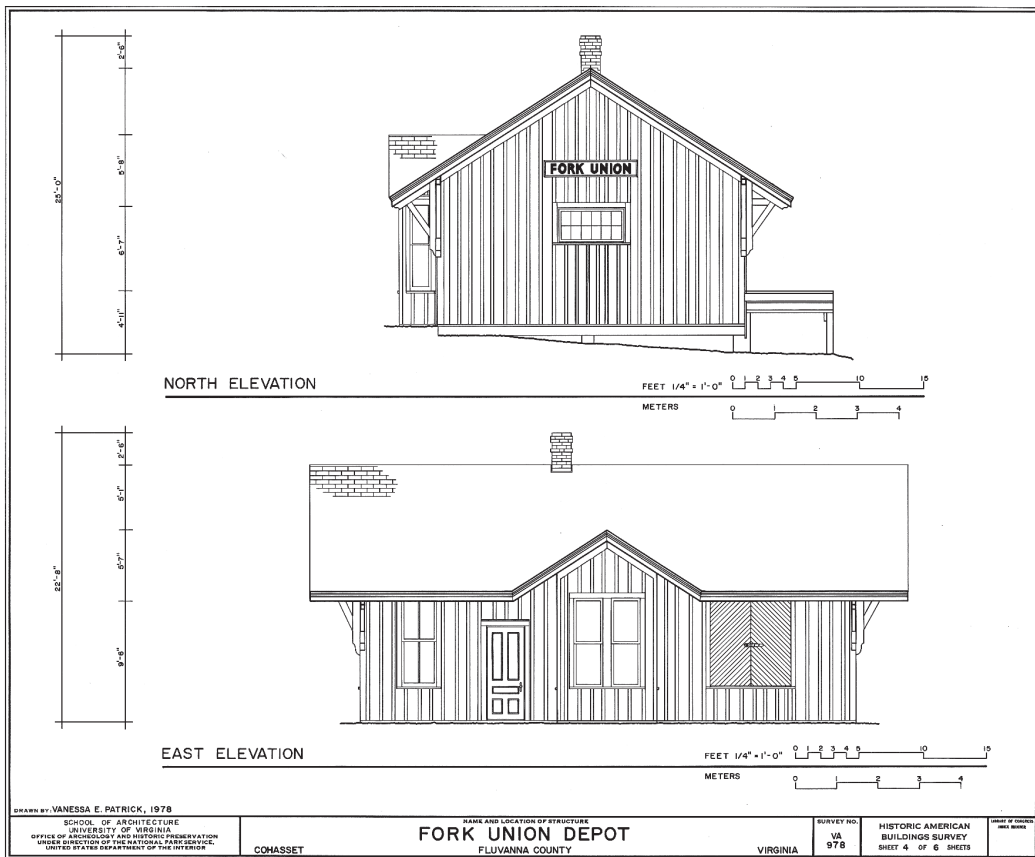
Fig. 5.2 North and east elevations–Fork Union Depot, State Route 6, Cohasset, Fluvanna County, Virginia (1908 construction). Drawings from survey HABS VA-978 (1933). Courtesy of Library of Congress.

least two rhetorical strategies to legitimize white settlers' claims to indigenous lands. The first consisted of the mechanization of Native American material culture in novels and films that demonstrated the settlers' ability to advance beyond the current state of indigenous vernacular culture toward a more modern ideal. One common trope of this mechanization took the form of the "iron horse," or the steam-powered railcar that replaced the horse-led hunting and gathering culture of the Plains Indians. A second strategy employed a climactic argument that extended the latitudinal area bounding the so-called temperate zones of western Europe across the globe to suggest that white migrants would also establish a civilized culture in the New World. In both of these strategies, the intercontinental railroad proved to be an important infrastructural component for spreading white civilization.

Novels such as Robert Michael Ballantyne's *The Iron Horse; or, Life on the Line* (1871) first popularized new labels for steam-powered trains nearly a decade before railroads finally came to Kansas City.[7] In the chapter entitled "History of the Iron

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Fig. 5.3 Union Pacific Railroad Depot building, Cheyenne, Wyoming (1876). Courtesy of *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*.

Horse," Ballantyne establishes the European origins of rail technology by describing the transatlantic path of innovations that contributed to the growth of rail travel. He uses two principal phrases—the "steam wagon" and the "iron horse"—to suggest the mechanization of the dominant forms of manual travel: that of horseback and stage coach travel. This tradition of mechanization continues in American films such as John Ford's *The Iron Horse* (1924), which became an archetypal visual representation of the racial dynamics of western expansion. The bicoastal geography indicated by the subtitle of Ford's film, *A Romance between East and West*, summarizes the racial tensions operating within the wake of railroad expansion: in order to connect the physical extents of the continental railroad, the Native American culture of the Plains had to be replaced. In filmic representation, this nonwhite indigenous culture was attacked on two fronts—through the local threat of white settler culture and the national threat of railroad expansion. In one famous poster for *The Iron Horse*, we see a Native American perched on a rock looking out over the plains below. In the distance is the iron horse, intruding upon his territory. The clouds overhead form the shape of dancing bison—a fundamental component of Plains Indian life as a source of food, shelter, material for religious culture, and so on. This imagery stages a standoff between the natural life of the plains and the territory's eventual mechanization. In a second poster, we see the same scene from

the perspective of the Euro-American settler. Standing aloft on the right side of the frame is the central character of the film, Davy Brandon, a Pony Express rider who dresses like a lost member of the Lewis and Clark expedition. All of the comforts of settler life are poised behind him, ready to move westward. The iron horse in this image magically skips over the divide of the broken hillside on the back of a colorful rainbow.

The colorful rainbow of Ford's film recalls another image that employs a climactic argument to legitimize the settler control of indigenous lands. This image, which emerged in Kansas City, originated from local booster William Gilpin, the former territorial governor of Colorado and a self-proclaimed "mountain man" of the Midwest.[8] The central image of Gilpin's 1890 treatise *The Cosmopolitan Railway* is an "international" rainbow whose trail expands the latitudinal bands of European nation-states to new territories in the Midwest—suggesting that whites would prosper in the New World as they had in the Old World. Gilpin's theory of white urbanization (the eventuality of frontier settlement) was predicated on the vast global dissemination of railroad infrastructure.[9] Despite the seemingly inclusive sound of the subtitle of his book, *Compacting and Fusing Together All the World's Continents*, Gilpin identified this international travel route as an efficient means of extending the colonial efforts of so-called Aryan nations. He outlines this exclusive racial ideology in chapter 7, entitled "Race Problems and Proclivities," in which he associates Aryan man with the doctrine of scientific progress: "During the last five hundred years, the races that have acquired new territory and have planted new colonies, that have made grand discoveries in the scientific world and have invented machines, that have written books which the world will not willingly let die and have collected the wisdom of the ages in vast libraries, are all members of the great Aryan family of nations."[10] In addition, Gilpin plainly states the important role of European immigration in this march toward progress, which the railroad can only accelerate at the global scale: "The migratory propensity of this race is one of its dominant characteristics. It has, of course, its periods of repose as well as its periods of progress. Doubtless the discovery of America, which afforded the Aryans such vast fields for colonization, retarded the reclamation of Africa and Asia. But a new migratory wave within the last decade has swept over Arya. . . . What the old Roman roads and aqueducts were to the greatest of ancient empires, the railroads and the systems of irrigation are to the Aryans of the nineteenth century."[11] These arguments are imbued with the exclusive racial rhetoric and divine ordinations of Manifest Destiny that propelled white Christian migrations into the Midwest. However, in Gilpin's mind this was only the first step. Outlining what he called the "Indo-European Monroe Doctrine," he proposed the forceful dispossession of nonwhite indigenous territories and the re-enslavement of Africans in the New World, which was to be followed by the

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complete colonization of Africa and Asia; the railroads were to serve as a vital infrastructure for this new regime. His plan was to connect all of the lands held by Aryans on each continent in a region that he called the "Isothermic band" of the globe. This area was demarcated by the geographical origins of the most prosperous white peoples who ever lived in one comprehensive graphic. The racial outliers were clear insofar as the natives of Africa, Australia, and South America were outside of this barrier, and the European territories to the north were characterized as less vigorous than those lying within the band. Gilpin added a circle, or target, over the midwestern territories of the United States since he believed that the most advanced developments of Western civilization were going to take place in that region (see fig. 5.1).

While Gilpin's racial ideology made up one of the most extreme and explicit theories of white cultural nationalism created in the States at the time, its general principles echoed the racialist models of history outlined in European and American histories of architectural style. During his move to the Midwest, Van Brunt took the opportunity to document the local vernacular culture then emerging in the Midwest in speeches to the American Institute of Architects as well as in published essays. His articles and speeches are some of the most representative interpretations of American architects looking to build up the West at this time. Architectural historians have tended to credit Van Brunt with being a successful popularizer of avant-garde theories of architectural style while chiding him for merely imitating the most popular design approaches of his day. It is these very qualities that make him an ideal case study for examining the dominant strains of American architectural discourse.

Van Brunt's Evolutionary Model of Vernacular Development in the Midwest

The clearest summary of Henry Van Brunt's thinking on American architecture appears in a series of essays published by *Atlantic Monthly* in the years leading up to his move to Kansas City to manage the construction of the Union Pacific's midwestern depots. Two essays from this period—"On the Present Condition and Prospects of Architecture" (1886) and "Architecture in the West" (1889)—demonstrate the increasing prominence that Van Brunt placed upon the vernacular architectures of white settlers.[12] Before his move to the Midwest, Van Brunt is clear that the precedents for American architecture are not likely to be found in the historical styles of western Europe. Yet it is not until after he arrives in the Midwest and has more intimate experiences with its local culture that he specifically cites the material culture of white settlers as a new origin point for domestic developments.

Van Brunt begins his outline of an evolutionary model of vernacular development in "On the Present Condition and Prospects of Architecture," which was

published three years before his move to the Midwest. He opens this essay by describing the polarities recorded in a literary review of translated Arabian poetry that he found fitting to describe the gap that separates the architectural designs of "primitive races" from those of "modern architects" of the nineteenth century.[13] While the modern architect is relatively advantaged by a "far more learned and versatile" historical record of the past, the growing complexity of Western civilization places him in "an atmosphere infinitely less favorable to purely artistic achievement."[14] This creative poverty forces designers to develop the rigorous science of history to recover the epistemological basis for architectural design that primitive race groups instinctively used to solve their problems: "Those were days when styles were visibly unfolding toward perfection; when the practice of architecture broadened from precedent to precedent without distraction or bias; when temple followed temple, church followed church, chateau followed chateau, in a reasonable development and natural growth of architectural forms, confined within practicable limits. The study of the architect was limited to a type which all understood, and there was an orderly, intelligible, and harmonious evolution of styles."[15] According to Van Brunt, it was an intuitive conception of architectural typology that provided the epistemic basis for primitive man to produce new building precedents in history. This language was not accidental as researchers in the natural sciences used type theory to demonstrate the underlying unity within variety that connected all organic life. This theory of nature posited that the physical variations of all organic species—from microscopic life to animals and human beings—were predicated on the gradual transformation of a fixed set of archetypal forms that adjusted themselves to fit their surrounding contexts. Thus, at a structural level, Van Brunt's evolutionary model of vernacular development extends the universal basis of form generation in nature to a modern process of architectural design.

The scientific framing of "On the Present Condition and Prospects of Architecture" establishes an inherent relationship between the essential qualities of race and style, which become clearer when we examine Van Brunt's strategic use of the term "character." Van Brunt undertakes a comparative analysis of "French character," "English character," "Italian character," and "American character" to describe the essential qualities of the national architectural styles produced by the most prominent Christian and liberal nations of his day.[16] His timeline places all four national building styles at the apex of Western civilization, which he sites as beginning with the pagan architectures of Egypt, Greece, and Rome before transitioning to basilican churches and cathedrals. The individual character of each style was achieved by making a series of gradual changes to domestic architectural forms that better aligned them with the social aims of each group. This process made each national style "an exponent of [local] manners and

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customs."[17] The specific motivation driving the formation of national character was, respectively, political conquest in England, a "brilliant court culture" in Italy, religious revolution in France, and political liberty and commercial experimentation in the United States. According to Van Brunt, architectural character was organically connected to the social conditions of each group. For example, French architectural style, with its formal principles, when used outside of France became "an unfruitful exotic" that "degenerates into cold conventionalism. Its blossoms invariably die in crossing the English Channel, and when imported to this side of the Atlantic there is nothing left of it but branches and withered leaves."[18] This was an important principle for Van Brunt because he believed that when it came to the birth of an American architecture, stylistic revivalisms were a dead end.[19] The unique national culture of the United States nearly mandated that the architect should abandon his reliance on European historical precedents for a renewed emphasis on local and domestic productions.

After Van Brunt arrived in the Midwest in 1889, he turned his eye more pointedly toward the vernacular structures of white settlements. Written the same year, his essay "Architecture of the West" extends the general characterizations of his earlier timeline of domestic vernacular developments, citing "the emergencies of border life" as a starting point in midwestern developments that would crest with the innovative and pragmatic commercial structures being completed by avant-garde architects in Chicago and Minneapolis.[20] Van Brunt's conception of American architectural development had become more Darwinian as is evident by his explicit references to the relative "fitness" of architectural forms: "Like all other experiments in the evolution of forms, only the fittest remain."[21] He also cites the racial composition of the nation-state as one of the most prominent social factors influencing architecture: "The common and distinctive architectural forms in these older communities of the world are the results of established customs and ancient traditions, which have their roots not only in characteristics of politics, race, and religion, but in the soil itself, which has furnished the materials of building, and, through these, has dictated the forms by which they are most readily adapted to meet the wants of mankind."[22] Van Brunt's essays from the mid- to late-1880s suggest that he wished to measure American progress alongside that of other white Christian nations, presumably because the political structures of these cultures paralleled the grand ideals of American democracy. He also believed that the most transparent expression of American culture—its architecture—would likely emerge from the local conditions of white ethnic migrants settling in the United States. According to Van Brunt, American building style would constitute a "complicated organism," capable of adjusting its form to fit its regional environment.[23]

During the late 1880s and '90s, Van Brunt wrote an essay crediting American

architect Henry Hobson Richardson with developing a completely unique aesthetic interpretation of the Romanesque that renovated the latent potential of this lost historical style in novel ways.[24] While Richardson's eclectic approach did not constitute the independent growth of a national style that Van Brunt desired, its singularity made it an appealing first step. Van Brunt's architecture builds upon the "Richardsonian Romanesque," experimenting with its tectonic and spatial features—with its rustication, modern yet Gothic-influenced articulation, and use of local materials—to produce a mature style of building that could be used in growing cities of the Midwest. What is most interesting about his approach, however, is not what he copied from Richardson but how he modified the style for the Midwest. James F. O'Gorman has summarized the visual typologies that Richardson originally established in order to visually and materially adapt his designs to the urban, suburban, and rural contexts of the nineteenth century.[25] In the dense urban fabric of Boston and Chicago, Richardson created taut rectilinear masses for buildings that reflected the capitalist division of land into regular, individual parcels. By contrast, he replaced the smoothed lines of his urban masonry detailing with the aggregation of rugged stones in an irregular geometry in order to respond to the wide-open spaces found in suburban and rural contexts.

Richardson's approach to urban form is perhaps most clearly visible in his design for the Marshall Field's Wholesale Store (1885–1887) in Chicago, Illinois. Although located in the Midwest, Chicago had become a center of a new national architectural style by the late 1880s. Richardson's choice to create minimal rectangular forms of monumental scale and symmetry reflects the formalism of the urban grid that gave the city its rhythm. Van Brunt and his business partner Frank Howe followed Richardson's monumental style in several of their designs for Kansas City, such as the Emery Dry Goods Store (1899). Yet many of their works also deviated from Richardson's by employing more picturesque massing to acknowledge the relative lack of density that was still a fundamental part of Kansas City's urban landscape. Examples of this include works such as the Gibraltar Building (1888) and the Kansas City Club (1888). The sculptural character of these freer-formed buildings, with their rounded projections and rusticated crowns, reveals a material and aesthetic playfulness that Richardson usually reserved for his suburban projects, such as the Oakes Ames Memorial Hall (1881) in North Easton, Massachusetts.[26] Yet this sculptural character was also present in early examples of white settler culture. Because Van Brunt drew on the norms of Richardson's architectural practice, many architectural historians have labeled him, perhaps unfairly, as a timid purveyor of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. This judgment is usually justified by Van Brunt's inability to properly imitate his peer's style directly or to emulate his rigorously structured plastic sensibility for aligning architectural forms with their immediate surrounding contexts. However, a more

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positive view of Van Brunt's work emerges if one analyzes his designs for the ways in which their picturesque formal qualities reflect the current state of urban culture in the Midwest and transform their central motifs to channel the potential of their future developments. He was not looking at what was, but at what things might become.

One of the building typologies that Van Brunt brought from the Northeast to the Midwest was that of the railroad depot, and he borrowed much from Richardson in many of his most spectacular designs. However, he also attempted to innovate the contextual use of this kind of building in a way that transcended that of his peer. For Richardson, who designed railroad depots for freight and commuter trains outside of the city limits, this typology was primarily a suburban building form. He drew sketches of depots with domineering rooflines that emulated the character of surrounding forests while matching the datum line of the ground that elevated passing trains. In these compositions, the roofline provided a steady linear reference against which people would move back and forth as they exited and entered the train. As Janet Greenstein Potter notes in her study of midwestern train stations, this spatial organization was common to the modest train stations that made use of rustic materials such as unfinished lumber to create one-story "shacks" that contained a ticket office and freight storage.[27] Van Brunt inverted the urban-suburban typologies of Richardson's practice when designing plans for major depots in the Midwest, even when the cities associated with these stations were not yet very dense. The most spectacular of these projects is his design of a Union Pacific depot in Cheyenne, Wyoming—which was still a small town in the 1880s. For this project, Van Brunt transformed Richardson's prominently used hip roof to bring a more civic type of architecture to suburban depots.[28] This approach freed him to create a more picturesque profile along the roofline to articulate the functional spaces lying behind each volumetric projection in the facade. His aesthetic formula was usually accompanied by a highly projecting bell tower that served as a beacon within the urban landscape.[29] Van Brunt's formal treatment of this typology departs drastically from the vernacular detailing and modest scale of outlying junction stations for freight trains by anticipating the larger scale and complex interior organization that would come to mark future commuter stations. His didactic visualization of the future of American architecture was not limited to the building's exterior scale but extended to his treatment of the interior, as well. The first depot that had been built in Cheyenne, which was completed in 1865, consisted of a series of supporting wood-framed structures with board and batten siding (see figure 5.3). The utilitarian character of buildings of this type was so prominent that an 1865 editorial in the *Cheyenne Daily Sun* compared it to a modest cattle shed.[30] Yet Van Brunt maintained a physical memory of this structure in his final design—suggested by the way that the exterior facing

Fig. 5.4 View of east wing, south-southeast side (track side), Union Pacific Depot, Cheyenne, Wyoming (1887 construction). Drawings from survey HABS WYO,11-CHEY,5–16 (1974). Courtesy of Library of Congress.

of the building seems to engulf the window mullions, which are scaled to the iron and wood frame within (figure 5.4). In a tectonic sense, Van Brunt's design for the Cheyenne depot literally demonstrates how one transforms the structural logic of a post-and-lintel-framed building into one that is more appropriate for a rising metropolis. The interior lodging spaces of the original 1865 building gave way to dedicated office spaces in the 1887 design, around the time when dense urban centers began to accommodate visitors in stand-alone hotels of their own.[31]

When it suited him, Van Brunt could apply Richardson's organic design principles to allow for a more picturesque assemblage of programmatic elements to hang over the street, rise above the roofline, or cut into the mass of a building to emulate the sparse and rambling condition of a growing urban context. By contrast, when Van Brunt wished to express the monumentality of a civic program he could resort to Richardson's urban language, even when such a structure was surrounded by nothing but open landscape. The clearest example of this can be found in his design for the Spooner Library (1894), which was constructed on the periphery of land set aside for the completion of the University of Kansas (figure
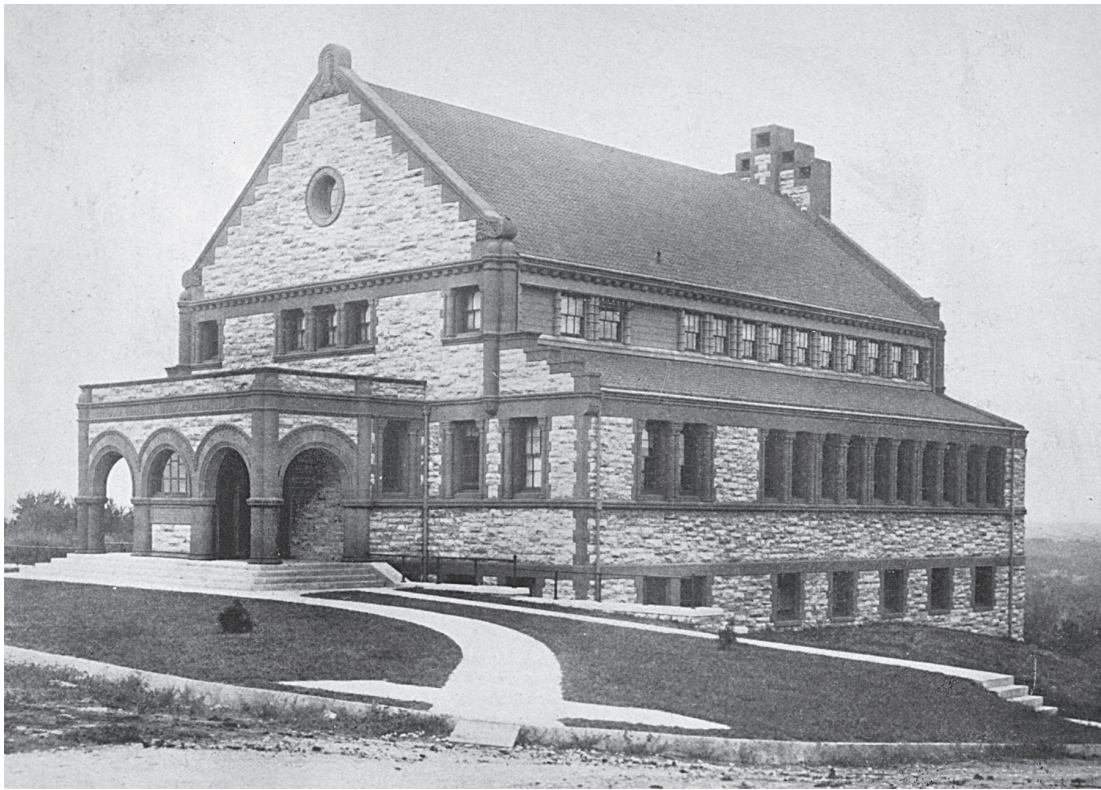
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Fig. 5.5 Spooner Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas (between 1894 and 1910). Courtesy of Library of Congress.

5.5). Although the institution's surroundings were rural, Van Brunt imagined a time when the university would become as complex as a city in its own right. In light of this, he used Richardson's language innovatively to create architectural forms that established a projective dialogue with their contexts. Never completely suited to merely respond to existing or normative patterns of density, Van Brunt was decisive in setting a standard for leading his peers in future aesthetic and formal development.

Despite the fact that the racial discourses of Manifest Destiny radically conditioned the production of nineteenth-century American art and architecture, architectural historians have only recently begun to account for these influences in their critical histories of modern architecture. There exists a need to examine the political function of national architectural styles in territories where competition between white settlers and nonwhite peoples inherently colored the ideological function of architectural form.[32] This chapter uses Henry Van Brunt's writings on architecture in the Midwest to analyze the ways his evolutionary theory of vernacular development legitimized the white hegemony of the Midwest. A close reading of Van Brunt's writings reveals the increasing importance of white material culture in his conception of American architecture during the 1880s. This shift

occurred as he relocated his architectural firm to Kansas City to complete a series of depot commissions for the Union Pacific Railroad. The literal function and institutional history of the railroad likely contributed to Van Brunt's ideals. He inherited a racialized conception of midwestern culture in the form of popular writings and illustrations of American railroad culture, which associated the "iron horse" with a mechanization of white vernacular cultures around the world. This ethnographic theme was evident in local booster theories such as William Gilpin's *The Cosmopolitan Railway* as well as European theories of architectural organicism that Van Brunt translated from French to English. The proprietary standards for gradually improving rail depots within the Union Pacific Railroad also seemed to naturalize Van Brunt's evolutionary thesis of vernacular development by expressing a stylistic teleology that moved from simple and modest forms to monumental structures. By the 1890s, Van Brunt's Richardsonian designs for train depots at Cheyenne, Wyoming, and Ogden, Utah, represent a didactic mode of design that was intended to elevate public taste in the Midwest. These structures created a synthetic architectural form that combined the simple tectonic detailing of utilitarian structures of white settler colonies with a monumentalizing masonry shell that pointed toward a new and modern architectural style.

As train travel caused Kansas City to grow between 1890 and 1910, new architectural programs emerged to commemorate the wide range of vernacular cultures that were lost to new patterns of industrialization. These institutions consisted of formal and informal cultural clubs that produced a comparative analysis of the spiritual and aesthetic ideals of world cultures, annual festivals that memorialized the importance of natural resources for the growth of the city, and an explicit ethnographical display of the Native and white settler cultures that had been displaced by recent rail travel and economic development. All of these elements maintained the public perception that the vernacular roots of American democracy were still present despite the increased mechanization of frontier life. Shortly after Van Brunt arrived in Kansas City, he was asked to lend his support to the creation of a historical society that would establish a collection of primary artifacts dedicated to local culture.[33] An 1896 article in the *Kansas City Daily Journal* notes the general theme of the collection—"the History of this Vicinity and the West"—which was meant to house all forms of vernacular culture in the region, past and present. The collection was to contain "the scattered relics of Spanish, Mexican, and Indian domination" that had been displaced by the territorial annexations resulting from Manifest Destiny, as well as the "relics of jayhawkers and bushwhackers" and other elements of "border ruffianism" that had been displaced by the industrial trajectory of the state. This narrative parallels the evolutionary model Van Brunt describes in his architecture theory, although it is more expansive by including both white and nonwhite vernacular cultures. It is interesting to note

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that the curators of this potential collection chose not to celebrate the white fron-
tier culture with phrases such as "mountain men," as had been popular during the
1860s and '70s. This marks a distinct shift in attitude toward the immediate past
as local leaders hoped to shed certain attitudes toward settler culture during these
booster years. Such an attitude would continue throughout Van Brunt's time in
the city and would not change until nearly two decades after his passing. In this
sense, the architect's progressive narrative for the cultural evolution of the region
was matched by a social, economic, and political aspiration to continue modern-
ization in every respect.

Van Brunt's architectural designs helped to secure the longevity of white settler
culture in the region, even as he hoped to elevate it to a new cultural plateau. As
we witness contemporary revivals of white cultural nationalism in the United
States, it is important to remember that the defense of and legitimation of white-
ness is a consistent theme of American culture. While progressives tend to focus
on the most negative forms of racial pride in the figural representations of Civil
War heroes and the preservation of Confederate street names, it might be more
beneficial to remember that the built environment contains a wide range of mate-
rial evidence of our nation's experimentation with Anglo-American racial identity.
Reconsidering the history of modern architecture through the lens of its racial
ideologies will enable us to speak more intelligently about the long-term material
legacies of such thinking in the present.

Mankind, trans. T. O. Churchill (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), xxiv, xvii–xxi, 99, 103; and Johann Gottfried von Herder, *On World History: An Anthology*, ed. Hans Adler and Ernest A. Menze, trans. Ernest A. Menze and Michael Palma (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1997), 231–34.

35. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Lectures on the Philosophy of History" [1822–28], in *Race and the Enlightenment: A Reader*, ed. Emmanuel Chukwudi Eze, 110–11, 121, 143–46. This same supposed isolation was seen as an asset in the Jesuit era; see Porter, *Ideographia*, 47–48, or Chambers's discussion in the *Designs* of how the Chinese "formed their own manners."

36. See Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race*, 69–90. On trade ambitions, see Porter, *Ideographia*, 245.

37. Dawson, *Chinese Chameleon*, 65–71.

38. Johann Gottfried von Herder, *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man*, trans. T. O. Churchill (London, 1800), 296.

39. Robert Fortune, *Three Years' Wanderings in the Northern Provinces of China* (London: J. Murray, 1847), 5; G. N. Wright, preface to *The Chinese Empire Illustrated* (London: London Printing and Pub. Co., ca. 1858), n.p.

40. See Porter, *Ideographia*, 240.

41. McGhee, *How We Got to Pekin*, 283–89; and Attiret, "Description of the Emperor of China's Gardens," 181, 185. McGhee's account does not describe him as directly participating in any arson or looting. However, even if he only served as a witness, he might still be viewed as a participant for his role in providing support to the soldiers who set the fires.

42. Fortune, *Three Years' Wanderings*, 9.

43. Fortune, 280–83, 287–88; and Herder, *On World History*, 235. Wolseley would become famous for leading the Third Anglo-Ashanti War (1873–1874), which involved the similar burning of Kumasi.

44. See Ringmar, *Liberal Barbarism*, 9, 82.

5. Henry Van Brunt and White Settler Colonialism in the Midwest

Epigraph. Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1889, 772.

1. Previous studies tended to use European architectural theory as a starting point for constructing a narrative of the growth and development of a bona fide indigenous style of modern architecture in the United States. See, for example, David Watkin's early monograph *A History of Western Architecture* (London: Laurence King, 2015); Alan Colquhoun's *Modern Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Kenneth Frampton's *Modern Architecture: A Critical History* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1985); and Panayotis Tournikiotis's *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

2. Martin Berger, *Sight Unseen: Whiteness and American Visual Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

3. Berger, *Sight Unseen*, 42–80.

4. Henry Van Brunt, "Architecture in the West," in *Architecture and Society: Selected Essay of Henry Van Brunt*, ed. William A. Coles (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969), 181.

5. Viollet-le-Duc pioneered an ethnographical history of architectural style in the 1870s; his *Histoire de l'Habitation Huamine* (1876) illustrated the parallel historical development of racial typologies and vernacular typologies through time. This narrative visualizes the physiognomic effects of the universal principles of nature that Viollet-le-Duc believed structured the evolution of all vernacular forms in cultural history. See Charles L. Davis, "Viollet-le-Duc and the Body: The Metaphorical Integrations of Race and Style Theory in Structural Rationalism," *Architectural Research Quarterly* 14, no. 4 (2010): 341–48.

6. Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc, *Discourses on Architecture*, trans. Henry Van Brunt (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1875).

7. See Charles N. Glaab, *Kansas City and the Railroads: Community Policy in the Growth of a Regional Metropolis* (1962; repr., Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1993); and Terry Lynch, *The Railroads of Kansas City* (Boulder, CO: Pruett Publishing, 1984).

8. Thomas L. Karnes, *William Gilpin: Western Nationalist* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 104.

9. William Gilpin, *The Cosmopolitan Railway: Compacting and Fusing Together All the World's Continents* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890).

10. Gilpin, *Cosmopolitan Railway*, 125.

11. Gilpin, *Cosmopolitan Railway*, 127.

12. Van Brunt's essays discussed in this chapter have been reprinted in Henry Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society: Selected Essays of Henry Van Brunt*, ed. William A. Coles (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969); "On the Present Condition and Prospects of Architecture" (1886) appears on pages 150–58; "Architecture of the West" (1889) appears on pages 180–94; and "Two Interpreters of National Architecture" (1897) appears on pages 359–73.

13. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 158.

14. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 159.

15. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 160.

16. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 160–66.

17. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 160.

18. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 161.

19. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 164: "These revivals, as I have said, have found

a large and by no means an unintelligent expression in the United States. But the national genius of our architects and their freedom from the tyranny of historic precedent have encouraged them to a far wider range of experiment in architectural forms. Out of these experiments hitherto there have as yet come no definite promises for art."

20. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 181.

21. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 181.

22. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 182.

23. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 187.

24. Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, 176. Van Brunt suggests that Richardson's interpretation of the Romanesque style departed from any known European style of the day. He states, "He was fortunate enough to hit upon an undeveloped style, full of capacity, picturesque, romantic; its half-savage strength beguiled by traces of refinement inherited from the luxury of the late Roman Empire."

25. James F. O'Gorman, *H. H. Richardson: Architectural Forms for an American Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

26. Thomas Hubka, "The Picturesque in the Design Method of H. H. Richardson," in *H. H. Richardson: The Architect, His Peers, and Their Era*, ed. Maureen Meister (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999), 2–35.

27. Janet Greenstein Potter, *Great American Railroad Stations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1996), 9–13.

28. See a description and illustration of this station in Potter, *Great American Railroad Stations*, 326–27.

29. The placement of a clock tower was especially prominent in Van Brunt's design for the Ogden, Utah, station; the only other high point in the town was a clock tower at city hall.

30. "Our New Depot," *Cheyenne Daily Sun*, June 14, 1885.

31. See William John Hennessey, "The Architectural Works of Henry Van Brunt," PhD diss., Columbia University, 1979, 188–213.

32. See Joanna Merwood-Salisbury, "Western Architecture: Regionalism and Race in the Inland Architect," in *Chicago Architecture: Histories, Revisions, Alternatives*, ed. Charles Waldheim and Katerina Ruedi Ray (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 3–14.

33. "A Historical Society," *Kansas City Journal*, December 27, 1896, 3.

6. The "New Birth of Freedom"

1. Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3.

2. Melissa Dabakis, "Ain't I a Woman? Anne Whitney, Edmonia Lewis, and the Iconography of Emancipation," in *Seeing High and Low: Representing Social Conflict in*