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Introduction: Rethinking the American Renaissance

by H. HORATIO JOYCE

ABSTRACT

This introduction to the special collection begins with a historiographical overview of the American Renaissance. Here we will see how both popular perception and academic study of the subject have been affected by wider forces, including the advent of modernism, the emergence of the preservation movement and the increased attention given to social inequalities in public discourse today. This is the context in which the articles in the collection are situated and introduced. The final section considers aspects of the subject requiring further work, in particular the American Renaissance as a transnational phenomenon linked to the notion of the 'Angloworld'.

The great divergence is how economic historians have long described Britain's industrial take-off in the early nineteenth century. Recently, however, they have needed to distinguish it from what some are calling the second great divergence: the acceleration of the United States economy around the turn of the twentieth century — a divergence as dramatic as the first.[1] This special collection is devoted to bringing this and other recent developments from outside the discipline of architectural history into conversation with US architecture of the time — and in particular with its pre-eminent expression, the American Renaissance.

If the origins of the American Renaissance are difficult to discern, its moment of crystallisation is clear enough. The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1893 (delayed a year owing to strikes) was conceived as both a celebration of the 400th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in the Western Hemisphere and a calling card for the arrival of the US on the world stage (Fig. 1). It brought together nearly all the principal players of what would soon be called the American Renaissance, including the architects Daniel H. Burnham (who led the project), Richard Morris Hunt and Charles F. McKim, as well as painters and sculptors such as Kenyon Cox and Daniel Chester French. Another, the neoclassical sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, was said to have remarked to Burnham during a planning session, 'Look here, old fellow, do you realize that this is the greatest meeting of artists since the fifteenth century!'[2]

Saint-Gaudens's view was by no means exceptional. There really was a feeling widespread among artists as well as the public (who visited in their millions) that the Italian Renaissance had been reborn in the US, as shown by the uniform neoclassicism and whiteness of the fairgrounds and the collaboration of architects and artists in their production. But it was not only the alliance of the sister arts that made the exposition

Fig. 1. *Court of Honor at the World's Columbian Exposition, view from the roof of the Manufacturers Building, photograph by C. D. Arnold, 1893 (Chicago History Museum)*

paradigmatic of the American Renaissance. It was also the alliance of capital, culture and the state that had made the fair happen: the moment when elite culture became official culture and architects acquired a rare celebrity and wider authority, which they would use to design Gilded Age palaces and colossal government buildings and to disseminate the design philosophy of the exhibition in the form of the City Beautiful movement (Fig. 2).[3]

Until now the main work on the subject has been the 1979 Brooklyn Museum exhibition and its accompanying catalogue, *The American Renaissance 1876–1917*. The point of the exhibition, its principal curator Richard Guy Wilson recalls in his article in this issue, 'was the creation of an American identity'.[4] He and his collaborators wanted 'to wake America up'.[5] And in a great many respects they did. The show re-examined in a positive light and brought new insights to a period that was generally regarded in negative terms, as a historical cul-de-sac responsible for delaying the rise of modernism in the US by at least a generation.

In recent years, however, American historiography has transformed our under-standing of the period 1880 to 1920, offering fresh insights and methodologies for architectural

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historical scholarship. Once 'the flyover country in American history', it is now seen as a pivotal moment in global as well as national history, the point at which the US left behind all rival economies in terms of output and wealth, cemented the emergence of a national upper class and became an extra-continental empire with island colonies in the Atlantic and Pacific.[6] How do these things change our understanding of the American Renaissance? And in what ways does architectural history add to or modify our understanding of the period? These are some of the major questions guiding this collection.

This introduction to the special collection begins with a historiographical overview of the American Renaissance, before and after the 1979 Brooklyn exhibition. Here we will see how both popular perception and academic study of the subject have been affected by wider forces, including the advent of modernism, the emergence of the preservation movement and the increased attention given to social inequalities in public discourse today. This is the context in which the articles in the collection are situated and introduced. The final section considers aspects of the subject requiring further work, in particular the American Renaissance as a transnational phenomenon linked to the notion of the 'Angloworld'.

THE 1979 EXHIBITION, BEFORE AND AFTER

In 1921, for the sixth edition of the *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*, the British architect and historian Banister Fletcher revised his 'Tree of Architecture' frontispiece (Fig. 3).[7] Originally, as prepared for the fifth edition in 1905, the uppermost row of illustrated branches had depicted Renaissance buildings of half a dozen European countries all on the same level, none higher than the others. This new version, however, introduced modern American architecture above them all, literally crowning the tree, the culmination of more than two thousand years of architectural evolution, going back through European history to ancient Greece and Rome. Representing US architecture was a skyscraper resembling Burnham's 1902 Flatiron Building in New York. The message was clear: American architecture had outdone itself — and everyone else.

This was hardly a controversial interpretation. Ever since the American Renaissance began taking shape in the late 1880s, critics on both sides of the Atlantic had praised the movement. Certainly there had been sceptics, even detractors, such as Montgomery Schuyler and Louis H. Sullivan, who felt that architectural mimicry was an inappropriate expression of, and setting for, modern life.[8] On the whole, however, these voices had been drowned out by critics such as Henry W. Desmond, Herbert Croly, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer and Royal Cortissoz, and by the architects Charles H. Reilly, Donn Barber and Harold Van Buren Magonigle, among others, who lauded the academic discipline, high artistic standards and sheer consistency of American Renaissance architecture.

But within a few years of Fletcher's revised 'Tree of Architecture', the mood began to change. A modernist sensibility for which the American Renaissance was anathema took hold. One of its earliest and most influential proponents was Lewis Mumford. In his 1924 *Sticks and Stones: A Study of American Architecture and Civilization* — the first survey of US architecture ever written — Mumford argued that, in the decades after the civil war (1861–65), there had been genuinely creative forces at work within the

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Fig. 2. *The Senate Park Commission's central plan for Washington DC, aerial view by Francis L. V. Hoppin, 1901–02, watercolour, 86.4 × 182.9 cm (US Commission of Fine Arts)*

nation's architecture, but that these had been stifled by the alliance forged between American Renaissance architects and Gilded Age plutocrats, beginning in the 1880s.[9] He portrayed McKim and Burnham, two of the movement's founders, as subservient to capitalism and agents of imperialism. They 'divined that they were fated to serve Renaissance despots and emperors with more than Roman power' and accordingly 'worshipped most whole-heartedly at the imperial shrine'.[10]

In promoting this view, one of the most important historians was Henry-Russell Hitchcock. Working in the increasingly Europhile academy of the 1930s and 1940s, Hitchcock presented the US architect H. H. Richardson (1838–86) as the homegrown precursor to European modernism.[11] According to Hitchcock, Richardson had crafted something original and authentically American in the final decade or so of his life, working from a combination of Queen Anne revival sources from England and building traditions from the US, only to have this stubbed out by the next generation, many of them his own students, including the partners of McKim, Mead & White and Peabody & Stearns.[12] It was not until the twentieth century, according to Hitchcock, that the seeds Richardson had planted bore fruit in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.[13]

This line of thinking was taken further by the Yale historian Vincent J. Scully. In his doctoral dissertation, supervised by Hitchcock and later published as *The Shingle Style: Architectural Theory and Design from Richardson to the Origins of Wright* (1955), Scully offered a persuasive account of the rise and fall and revival of what he called the 'Shingle Style', but what, as Wilson points out in this collection, contemporaries commonly called 'Modernized Colonial' — a term no doubt less appealing to Scully's readers.[14] Shingle style or modernised colonial, it was essentially what Mumford had earlier deemed good: country houses like Richardson's Watts Sherman House in Newport, Rhode Island (Fig. 4), with its freedom of massing, openness of plan, and respect for the

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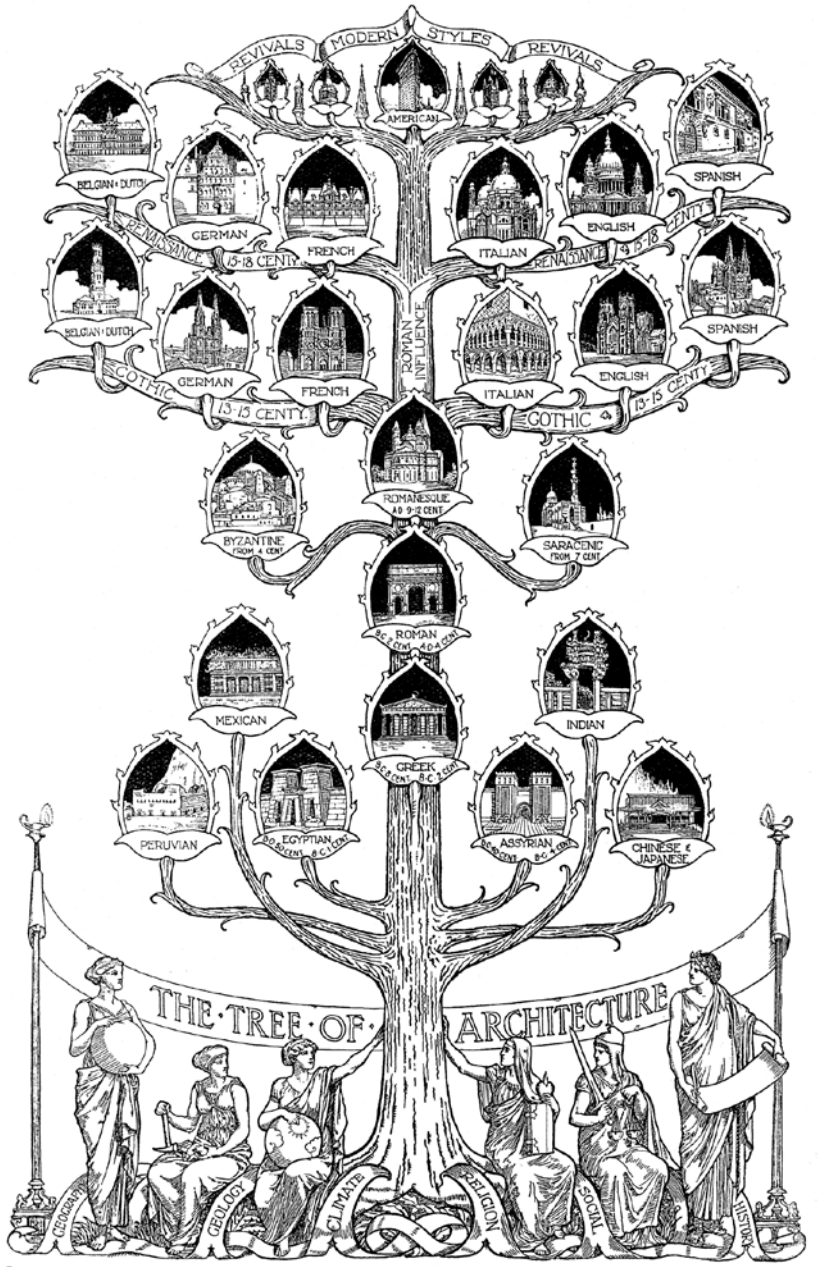

BANISTER FLETCHER, INV.

This Tree of Architecture shows the main growth or evolution of the various styles, but must be taken as suggestive only, for minor influences cannot be indicated on a diagram of this kind.

Fig. 3. *Banister Fletcher, 'The Tree of Architecture', from the sixth edition (1921) of* A History of Architecture on the Comparative Method *(RIBA Collections)*

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Fig. 4. *Watts Sherman House, Newport, Rhode Island, photograph after 1930 (Historic American Buildings Survey/Library of Congress)*

site and natural textures of the materials, as exemplified by the shingle cladding on the exterior (timber shingles being a cheaper, local alternative to the clay tiles used for the Queen Anne revival in England). Scully applauded the shingle style for its inventiveness and originality, something he feared was slipping in the architecture of his own day, in the work of Mies van der Rohe, Philip Johnson, Louis I. Kahn and others.[15] Indeed, implicit in the story of *The Shingle Style* was a warning against the movement towards the heroic and the monumental in mid-twentieth-century modernism.

Scully had very little to say about why the shingle style transmogrified into the American Renaissance (a term he never used). He noted only that one of many strands at work within the shingle style, antiquarianism, eventually came to dominate over the rest, nurtured by the ascendancy of a new business class who were image-conscious and the growing desire on the part of architects for a formula that, unlike the finickity and demanding shingle style, could turn out consistently good (although uninspired) designs relatively quickly.[16] What really interested Scully was how Wright became Richardson's creative heir, which is where he picked up the story again in his final chapter, all but skipping over the American Renaissance. The partisan narrative of *The Shingle Style* continues to inform the interpretation of turn-of-the-century US architecture to this day.[17]

The 1970s and 1980s brought a reprieve for the American Renaissance. The international reaction against the demolition of cherished buildings from the nineteenth and

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early twentieth centuries had galvanised preservation movements across the west, with the foundation in Britain of the Victorian Society in 1958 and the Victorian Society in America in 1966 — sister organisations with overlapping founders (Hitchcock among them). The fierce and long-drawn-out public controversy over the demolition in 1963–65 of McKim, Mead & White's 1910 Pennsylvania Station (Fig. 5) lodged the American Renaissance at the centre of the preservation movement in the US. And the mostly underground station that replaced it helped soften public opinion, eliciting the famous quip from Scully: 'You once entered New York City like an emperor; now you slither in like a rat.'[18]

By the 1970s, full-blown heritage movements were taking shape in Europe and North America. In no small measure they were fuelled by a new and emerging genre of museum exhibition, focused on the preservation of 'architectural and urban art […] outside the walls of the institution'.[19] In Europe, the Victoria and Albert Museum in London showed *The Destruction of the Country House* (1974) and *Change and Decay: The Future of Our Churches* (1977), and the Venice Biennale had Vittorio Gregotti's 1975 exhibition *A Proposito del Mulino Stucky* (on the threatened industrial landmark on the Giudecca). In the US, the coincidence of the nation's bicentenary in 1976 gave such exhibitions a peculiarly nationalist flavour. In 1970, *The Rise of American Architecture* opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art; in 1977 came *200 Years of American Architectural Drawing*s at the Cooper Hewitt Smithsonian Design Museum; and in 1985, the National Building Museum (itself created in 1980 following a preservationist campaign to save Montgomery C. Meig's 1887 Pension Building) held *Building a National Image: Architectural Drawings for the American Democracy, 1789–1912*.[20]

While these and other surveys helped stir popular interest in US architectural history in general, the period around the turn of the century had special appeal. Undoubtedly, for the baby-boom generation, the colourful stories and decidedly unconventional private lives of American Renaissance designers such as Stanford White and Elsie de Wolfe formed part of the attraction. They were the subject of a major motion picture, *The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing* (1955), as well as an award-winning novel and a number of popular histories ever since.[21] The period acquired additional appeal as a refuge from the apparently endless string of national disasters in the 1970s — the atrocities of the Vietnam war, the Watergate scandal, the economic convulsion triggered by the 1973 Arab-Israeli war. There was a feeling in those years that the country had somehow lost its way, 'its sacred position among nations', as a character in Tony Kushner's 1991 play *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* puts it. The world seemed 'in decline, horrible, hopeless, full of unsolvable problems and crime and confusion and hunger and …'.[22] The jingoism and ostentation of the American Renaissance was a welcome respite.

Further encouraging interest — as well as making the subject easier to research and teach — was the growing availability of original source material, which in these years was coming out of copyright and being reprinted, often as inexpensive trade paperbacks. *A Monograph of the Works of McKim, Mead & White*, originally published between 1915 and 1920, was a surprise commercial success, with the 1973 Benjamin Blom edition, collecting into one volume the original four, being followed by cheaper paperback editions from Arno, the Architectural Book Publishing Company, Da Capo and

Dover.[23] Alongside the *Monograph*, these and other presses built impressive catalogues of reissued and anthologised texts and images from the American Renaissance. These ranged from Dover's 1982 republication of all the illustrations from George William Sheldon's *Artistic Country Seats: Types of American Villa and Cottage Architecture with Instances of Country Club-Houses* (1886–87), which had been a key source for Scully in his work on the shingle style, to the volume of collected essays by the architect Henry Van Brunt, *Architecture and Society*, published by Harvard University Press in 1969, which was used by the curators of the Brooklyn Museum show.[24]

After decades of either denigration or neglect, it seemed that the American Renaissance was being celebrated again. An early indication came from James Marston Fitch, the founder of Columbia University's preservation programme (who earlier in life had renounced his *beaux arts* training and become an ardent modernist).[25] In 1966, he produced a second edition of *American Building: The Historical Forces That Shaped It*, originally published in 1947, in which he doubled the space given to American Renaissance practitioners such as Hunt and dropped pejorative statements about their buildings. In the 1947 edition, the caption to an image of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 told readers that the 'Imperial pretensions of the Fair […] marked the eclipse not only of the century's most progressive aesthetic but of native Midwestern liberalism as well' — the view of Mumford, Hitchcock and Scully.[26] In the 1966 version, this was replaced with an upbeat line about 'the excitement caused by the landscaped splendor' being 'the first great display of outdoor electric lighting'.[27] Even more explicit was Wayne Andrews in 1979. 'Perhaps we should stop scolding our grandfathers for spending money which after all was theirs to spend,' he suggested in the popular *Architecture, Ambition, and Americans: A Social History of American Architecture.* 'Pageants have their place, and America without a palace would be as poor a thing as a parade without a banner.'[28]

Also significant in this transformation was the Brooklyn Museum's show *The American Renaissance 1876–1917* (Fig. 6).[29] Through the exhibition, its catalogue and subsequent publications by the curators, Wilson, Dianne H. Pilgrim and Richard N. Murray, a number of figures regarded as only loosely related were shown to have coalesced around a shared commitment to developing a national identity in the arts, at a time when the country was becoming self-conscious of its newly acquired status and power.[30] They belonged to something that in every sense deserved to be called a movement — and in naming the exhibition the curators gave this movement a name, a term that had been used in the past but had fallen out of use.[31]

The 1979 exhibition was seen nationally, in Washington DC, San Francisco and Denver as well as New York, and spawned several smaller exhibitions in the next decade, at the Boston Athenaeum and the Detroit Institute of Arts among other places.[32] Yet the American Renaissance never fully took off as a subject for scholarly monographs; and as the exhibitions that had prompted much of the attention declined in number, the subject fell out of favour. One reason was that, while popular with museum audiences, the subject was out of step with developments taking place in academia and especially in American history.[33] In the 1970s and 1980s, growing attention was being given to writing history from below, moving away from the prevailing focus on elite culture — of which the American Renaissance was a prime example — to focus instead on the

Fig. 5. *Pennsylvania Station, entry hall and ticketing office, photograph of* c. *1910 (New-York Historical Society)*

cultural worlds of the marginalised. This new scholarship was especially interested in conflict at the turn of the century, whether in labour relations, feminism or race, for the lessons it could teach about civil rights movements of the late twentieth century.

But over the past two decades, the rich and powerful have returned to centre stage in American history writing. Scholars are challenging the prevailing free-market ideology of neoliberalism, the notion that markets are somehow moral or natural and have developed free of human intervention.[34] They are seeking to trace the historical roots of the extreme inequalities that characterise contemporary society. This has often brought them to focus on the first Gilded Age and the elite social milieu closely associated with the American Renaissance — the financiers, corporation presidents and lawyers who patronised and helped shape the movement.[35]

More recently, questions about the creation and perpetuation of social inequalities have been taken up by architectural historians as well. In 2019, the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, Virginia, presented an exhibition on Jefferson and Palladio that had originally been created in 2016 at the Palladio Museum in Vicenza. But whereas the original exhibition focused on a transatlantic architectural relationship, based on a group of impressive new architectural models, the US version, *Thomas Jefferson, Architect: Palladian Models, Democratic Principles, and the Conflict of Ideals*, took a

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very different view. It recognised that 'the creation of these monuments [designed by Jefferson] was founded on the economic and social institution of slavery' and it presented the founding father as an enslaver as well as a democratic thinker and architect.[36] Architecture was to be understood in the context of the power relations and social inequalities — particularly racial inequalities — that Jefferson helped create. In a similar vein, in February 2021 the Museum of Modern Art in New York put on the exhibition *Reconstructions: Architecture and Blackness in America*, in which a number of contemporary architects were asked to consider what it would mean to deconstruct racism in the built environment.[37] They worked at a variety of scales, from playgrounds and housing segregation to an imagined alternative history of New Orleans as the capital of a Black nation state. Given the continuing weight of the social conflicts that have given rise to such exhibitions — particularly the legacies of slavery and the Black Lives Matter movement — it is to be hoped that these perspectives will fundamentally inform architectural historical scholarship in the years to come.

THE NEW HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN RENAISSANCE

Such was the context when in 2018, as an SAHGB PhD scholar, I was approached by the president of the society, Neil Jackson, with an interesting proposal. Would I be interested in pitching an Anglo-American subject for the session to be sponsored by the SAHGB at the 2019 Annual International Conference of the (American) Society of Architectural Historians in Providence, Rhode Island? I was, and 'Fantasies of Aristocracy: England and the American Renaissance' was the result. It was one of those rare standing-room-only sessions, and one of the most popular at the conference that year. Clearly, we had hit on something that resonated.

The original presenters from the session —Wilson, Patricia Likos Ricci, Laura C. Jenkins, Tamara Morgenstern and Katherine Solomonson — have all stayed with the project, but in the intervening period their papers, covering architecture, interiors and infrastructure, have developed considerably. They now take in Europe as much as England and consider categories of power other than class. To take in the broader environmental impact of the American Renaissance in landscape design and city planning, two further scholars — Keith N. Morgan and Daniel Immerwahr — have provided contributions to the collection.

If one theme connects these articles, it is complexity. The American Renaissance was a movement, not a style. In fact, it encompassed many styles. And yes, while it was American, it was also intensely, almost obsessively at times, transnational and cosmopolitan in outlook. The Italian Renaissance was its most obvious non-American source; but, depending on the need, designers happily ventured across the European continent, including to France, Germany and over the channel to England. Likewise, while it is true that, in the US, the movement had its roots in the Northeast — in the seaside resort of Newport, Rhode Island, above all, because of the building boom in vacation houses for Gilded Age elites — its impact was seen right across the North American continent, and beyond, for purposes of business and empire-building.

In the first article in the collection, 'Reflections on *The American Renaissance 1876–1917* exhibition', Wilson looks back to the 1979 Brooklyn Museum exhibition and recalls

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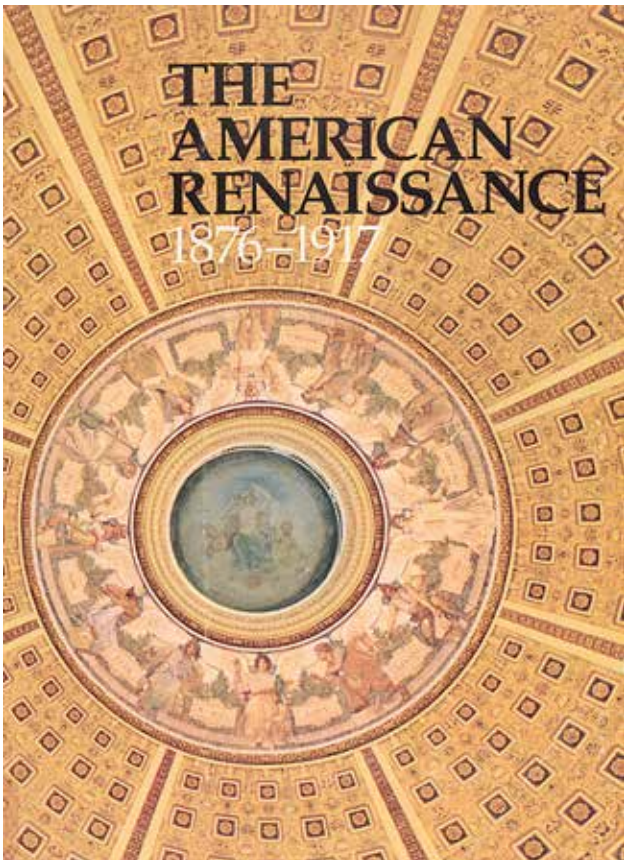

Fig. 6. The American Renaissance 1876–1917 *exhibition catalogue, 1979 (Brooklyn Museum, Robert Lautman Photography)*

his own journey to the American Renaissance. Good exhibitions do not pop out in a month or even a year, he tells us, and he traces the genesis of the exhibition from his LA childhood, raised by two avowed modernists (in a custom-designed R. M. Schindler house, no less), to a serendipitous port call in Newport while he was in the navy. Along the way, Wilson fleshes out the story of the American Renaissance, the etymology of the term and the currents of modernist historiography that nearly submerged it beyond the reach of the team behind the 1979 exhibition.

Ricci explores further the origins of the American Renaissance. Her article, '"Who is this Renaissance? Where did he come from?": Englishness and the Search for an American National Style, 1850–1900', challenges the notion that the movement sprang *sui generis* from the ashes of the civil war, fuelled by Gilded Age wealth. Starting with the debates over the design of the Capitol in Washington DC in the years leading up to the civil war, Ricci shows how the writings of English authors — John Ruskin, Walter Pater, Herbert Spencer and, above all, John Addington Symonds — were fundamental to the development of thinking in the US, eventually nurturing the nation's self-conception of itself as heir to Renaissance culture and western civilisation, as proclaimed at the 1893 exposition.

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While the spirit of the Italian Renaissance may have been reborn on the North American continent thanks to English inspiration, attention soon turned, especially for interiors, to France. The styles of Louis XIV onwards in particular, Jenkins tells us in 'The Gilded Interior: French Style and American Renaissance', were sought after by patrons for their artful integration of comfort and elegance, their connotation of wealth and privilege dating back to the *ancien régime* and purported 'feminine' character. The consequences of this, as Jenkins shows, included the development of a vibrant trade in antique furniture and interiors, and the installation in US cities of French decorators and their assistants competing directly at times with native-born American Renaissance architects.

But it was not just buildings and interiors that the American Renaissance claimed; it was the views out of the windows, too. In 'Learning from the Landscape: The European Tours of Charles A. Platt and Charles Eliot', Keith N. Morgan breaks with the tradition of single-architect studies to demonstrate the very different lessons that could be drawn from a study of European exemplars — Italian gardens in the one case, the English picturesque in the other — and their contrasting impact on the American landscape. Even for practitioners with similarly privileged backgrounds and overlapping experiences, Morgan shows, practices could differ widely — and yet both can be accommodated under the umbrella of the American Renaissance.

The next two articles, by Morgenstern and Solomonson, shift attention from designers to patrons, and from the customary focus on the Northeast homeland of the American Renaissance, showing how it became a powerful agent in the twin enterprises of business and imperial conquest of the North American continent that took place at this time. In 'Flagler's Whitehall: Beaux-Arts Grandeur in the American Tropics', Morgenstern reconstructs the making of modern St Augustine and Palm Beach in Florida as a 'winter Newport' by Henry M. Flagler, the industrialist who with John D. Rockefeller had created Standard Oil. Flagler had a keen sense of the business value of American Renaissance architecture and employed its many stylistic expressions — Spanish style, Italian Renaissance, Moorish, Italian Romanesque and colonial revival — in developing the 'Flagler System' of railroads, hotels and other businesses along the east coast of Florida, thereby turning the region into the winter retreat it is today.

In 'The American Renaissance in the West: Capital, Class and Culture Along the Northern Pacific Railroad', Solomonson explores the prototype of the American Renaissance business patron and moves attention even further away from its traditional geographical bounds. Focusing on the business pursuits of the German-born financier Henry Villard and the construction of the first northern transcontinental railroad, the Pacific Northwest, Solomonson explores how American Renaissance architecture served as a powerful mechanism for US colonial settlement in the region. Villard's savvy use of American Renaissance architecture helped establish a local elite in the Pacific Northwest that was nonetheless linked by sensibility and aesthetic to the emerging national upper class.

While the American Renaissance was heavily reliant on private patrons such as Flagler and Villard, the US government also played its part in the American Renaissance. In its early stages, as Ricci shows, the construction and decoration of the Capitol in the 1850s was a key staging post in the creation of the Renaissance aesthetic. In 'The Iron Hand of Power: US Architectural Imperialism in the Philippines', Immerwahr shows how,

half a century later, the lead architect of the Columbian Exposition of 1893, Burnham moved on from Chicago and Washington, his two best-known urban planning projects, to produce city plans for both the new US imperial capital in Manila and a new summer capital in the hills at Baguio. In so doing, Immerwahr enlarges the geography of the American Renaissance still further and reminds us that its reach, and federal patronage of the City Beautiful movement, extended beyond Washington DC, to other countries and other continents.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Is there more to done? Certainly. The issue of race is an open question. The American Renaissance was predicated on a racialised society in which, more often than not, white people (predominantly of English descent) gave instructions and Black people and immigrants from Asia and Europe did the hard graft; but how this division affected design thinking and the organisation of buildings, landscapes and cities has only just begun to be considered: as has the lasting influence of these projects — for instance, on how we define architecture (as against 'ordinary' or vernacular buildings) and the architect (as a person estranged from building labour) today. Anyone looking to disentangle architecture and white supremacy will need to engage with the American Renaissance.

The issue of gender likewise largely remains to be explored. As Jenkins shows, in the Gilded Age gender characteristics were attached to specific rooms and styles of decor ('masculine' Tudor versus 'feminine' Louis XIV, and so on), but surely there was more to it than that. There were prominent women connected to the American Renaissance: architects such as Julia Morgan, in 1898 the first woman to gain acceptance to the architecture programme at the École des Beaux-Arts and best known for Hearst Castle in California; a larger number of interior decorators including Elsie de Wolfe, the protégée of Stanford White, who is widely regarded as America's first decorator; an even more sizeable cohort of critics and commentators such as Edith Wharton and Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer, the author in 1888 of the first book on H. H. Richardson; and a long list of clients such as Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, the rich and flamboyant patron of Hunt in the 1880s and 1890s who, early in the next century, helped bankroll the Feminist Apartment House in New York based on the ideas of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.[38] Still, given the building boom in these years and the mushrooming size of the profession, one might ask why more women were not active in the movement.

One possible explanation for this is the increased professionalisation that attended the American Renaissance, owing to the concerted efforts of Burnham, McKim and others, as presidents of the American Institute of Architects and founders and supporters of the American Academy in Rome, among other educational institutions. That this coincided with new and aggressive forms of masculinity and institutional patriarchy in the US — increasingly well documented by historians — begs the question of whether the culture of the American Renaissance worked to masculinise the architectural profession to the detriment of women, with consequences that are still with us today.[39]

A rather different area for further work is the transnational dimension of the American Renaissance. Quite apart from the obvious debt to Italy, the influence of

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Fig. 7. *Robinson Hall (Harvard Architectural School), photograph of 1904, from* A Monograph of the Works of McKim Mead & White, 1879–1915, *1973*

England (Ricci) and France (Jenkins), the role of transatlantic education (Morgan) and its deployment for European-style colonisation (Immerwahr) all prompt the question: was the American Renaissance really so oriented around the creation of an *American* architectural identity? Might there have been another aspect, a transatlantic, even trans-imperial, one?

The future of the nation state was not so certain a thing then as it seems now. The electrical telegraph, improved steamship service and other novel technologies galvanised thinking about new types of polities at the end of the nineteenth century, among them global communities based on a shared linguistic or racial identity. According to the political historian Duncan Bell, transnational whiteness and Anglo-Saxonism in particular 'were among the most prominent of numerous attempts to rethink the norms, values, and territorial patterns of the global order'.[40] The notion of combining Britain and the US into some greater Anglo-American union or possibly an 'Angloworld' with Britain's settler colonies — Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand — attracted a number of weighty figures from the business and intellectual elite, notably Andrew Carnegie, Cecil Rhodes and H. G. Wells. The recent

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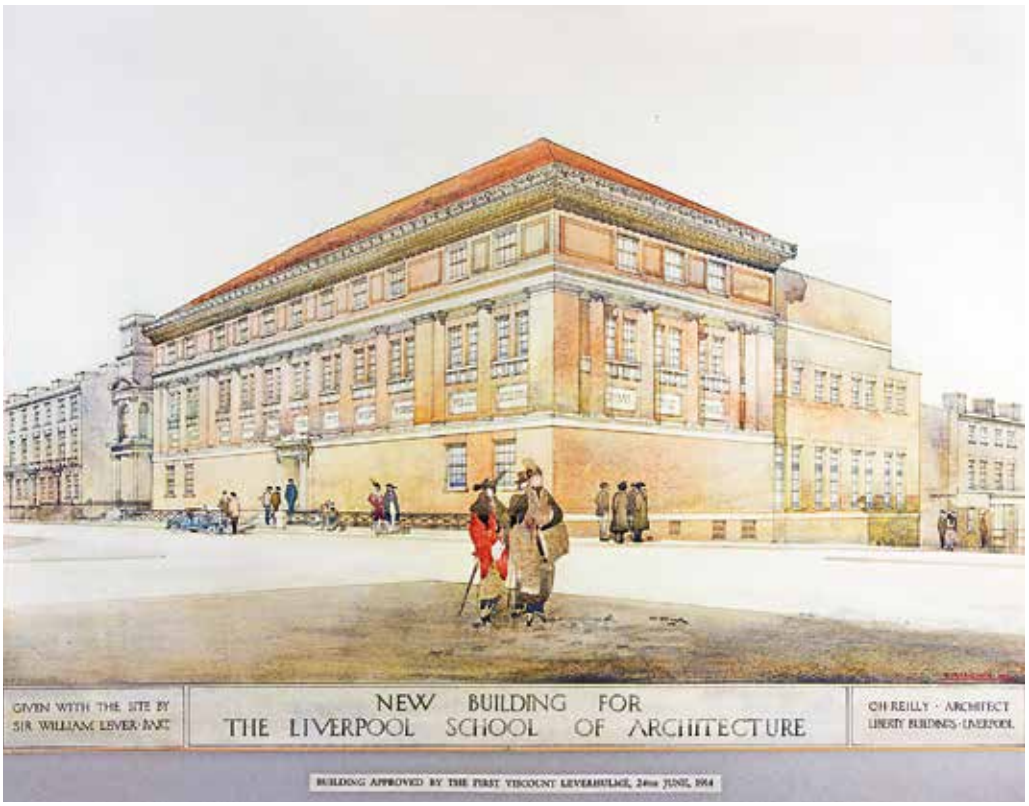

Fig. 8. *Design for Liverpool School of Architecture by C. H. Reilly, perspective drawing by Harold Chalton Bradshaw, 1914, 64 × 86 cm (Victoria Gallery & Museum, University of Liverpool)*

work of Bell and others in identifying the cultural alliances formed in these years by those supporting Anglo-American union raises the question of whether the American Renaissance was in some part the architectural counterpart of this.[41]

In addition to a fundamental belief in the superiority and destiny of the Anglo-Saxon race, Anglo-American unionists argued their case by pointing to the growing economic interdependency of Britain and the US. For most of the nineteenth century, the latter had been an economic backwater, but the incredible growth of industry between 1880 and 1920 catapulted the nation to first place among industrialised powers (the second 'great divergence'). By 1914, the manufacturing capacity of the US exceeded that of Germany, France and Britain combined.[42] Much of this had to do, as Morgenstern and Solomonson trace in their articles, with the colonisation of the North American continent, leading to an integrated national economy, followed by US imperial conquest overseas, creating a global network of raw material supplies, as Immerwahr explores in his contribution. While this may have elicited anxiety in other nations, for some in England the response was different: after all, so the thinking went, American pre-eminence was really just another example of Anglo-Saxon ingenuity.

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Fig. 9. *Wetherald House, Deerfield, Massachusetts, mid-eighteenth century, photograph of 1920* (The White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs)

Anglo-American unionists generally agreed that US culture lagged behind the country's advances in industrial and military might. For architecture, this view began to change with the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago of 1893. Until then, architecture in the US had been admired for its technical prowess, less so for its artistic merit. The 'White City' on the banks of Lake Michigan changed that. A major figure in this reassessment was the English industrialist William Hesketh Lever (later Viscount Leverhulme), the founder of the eponymous soap business (now part of the multinational conglomerate Unilever) and benefactor of the Leverhulme Trust. In 1892, on a world tour of white settler countries — which he published on his return as *Following the Flag: Jottings of a Jaunt Round the World* — Lever spent several days visiting the exhibition. Although the fairgrounds were still under construction, Lever was certain that it would be 'the finest exhibition the world has ever seen'. In addition to the great size, 700 acres in all, the fair's 'picturesqueness of situation, beauty and extent of buildings, arrangement, conception and general execution' left him deeply impressed.[43] On his return to Britain, he was keen to spread the word, happily using his enormous fortune to do so.

One of the beneficiaries of Lever's largesse was the Liverpool School of Architecture (still housed in the Leverhulme Building) and its hyper-energetic professor of architecture, Charles H. Reilly. In 1909, financed by Lever, Reilly undertook a tour of the US, visiting the New York offices of McKim, Mead & White and Carrère & Hastings. In an article published on his return, 'The Modern Renaissance in American Architecture' (1910), Reilly justified his tour on the grounds of the country's startling economic rise and its undisputed leadership of western civilisation. America 'had seized the lead', he stated, establishing 'an architecture that is the conscious heir, as ours, let us hope is the yet unconscious, of those forms and thoughts […] born in Greece more than 2000 years ago'.[44] In Britain, Reilly did his best to recreate the American system of architectural education, transforming the Liverpool School of Architecture into the pre-eminent centre of American *beaux arts* design outside the US, and in 1914 designing a building for it based on McKim, Mead & White's 1904 architecture school at Harvard (Figs 7 and 8).

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Fig. 10. *Long Cottage, Christchurch, New Zealand, J. S. Guthrie*, c. *1917 (Stuff Limited)*

Particularly influential was the study abroad programme, which gave the best Liverpool students an opportunity to work in large American offices such as McKim, Mead & White, producing architecture which combined 'all the breadth of the French with the refinement of the Italian' while still remaining 'wonderfully Anglo-Saxon'.[45]

The ideas that Reilly brought back to Britain from the US created a degree of continuity between the built environments of the two countries, not least in the axial planning and neo-Georgian idiom of the housing estates built by the US government during the first world war and, on a far larger scale, by British towns and cities in the 1920s and 1930s.[46] Reilly educated students from the British empire as well as from Britain, many of whom went on to serve in the colonies, among them government architects in Iraq, Egypt, Zanzibar, India and Ceylon.[47] By spreading American Renaissance principles across the world, Reilly and those he had educated helped achieve for the built environment the kind of unity of the Angloworld to which politicians, capitalists and writers aspired.

Besides Reilly and Liverpool, New Zealand and Australia also found direct inspiration in American Renaissance architecture. New Zealand was particularly drawn to the colonial revival (indisputably part of the movement, as Wilson shows), which spoke to the origins of the US as Britain's first settler colony and maintained its Anglo-Saxon tradition in its purest form. While New Zealand architects such as J. S. Guthrie designed houses bearing a striking resemblance to eighteenth-century clapboard dwellings in New England (Figs 9 and 10), others such as Cecil Wood designed ones with a debt to the contemporary work of US firms such as Delano & Aldrich and Hoppin & Koen.[48]

As New Zealand and Australia began redefining their imperial relationship with Britain in the early twentieth century, it was increasingly to the US that they looked for inspiration, both political and architectural. After all, the US was a prosperous former English colony with, in their eyes, exemplary democratic institutions (in which suffrage was largely restricted to adult white males). Hence, when Australia sought a model for both its political federation and a plan for its new federal capital at Canberra, it was to the US that it turned.

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Fig. 11. *Federal Capital City competition, Australia, 1911–12, winning entry by Walter Burley Griffin, site plan drawing by Marion Mahoney Griffin (National Archives of Australia)*

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The Canberra competition was won by the Chicago architect Walter Burley Griffin (Fig. 11). Together with his wife Marion Mahony, who was responsible for the competition drawings, Griffin had worked for a number of years with Frank Lloyd Wright during his Prairie School period, and in the US it was for his Prairie houses that Griffin was best known. For the Australian government, however, Griffin's connection with America's homegrown modernist was irrelevant. In his proposal, Griffin evoked the theory of Anglo-Saxon racial destiny:

> Experience from the beginnings of architecture has demonstrated that the simplest and most formal style has evolved with the completed civilization of each race as its ultimate development. Our civilization is tending that way, though by no means near the finality in rehashing the completed Roman expression of that of any other historical epoch.[49]

This was pure American Renaissance talk. Likewise Griffin's design, with its miles of broad streets and colossal public buildings, carried forward the precepts of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In Australia, quite rightly, the new federal capital of Canberra was seen as the successor of the City Beautiful movement and the twentieth-century heir of Washington DC.[50]

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BIOGRAPHY

H. Horatio Joyce is the Andrew W. Mellon Curatorial Fellow in the Department of Drawings and Prints at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. In 2015–18, he was a PhD Scholar of the SAHGB while working on his doctorate under William Whyte at Oxford University. His publications include 'Disharmony in the Clubhouse: McKim, Mead & White and the Making of Harmonie Club of New York' (*Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, December 2019); and 'New York's Harvard House and the Origins of an Alumni Culture in America' in the volume that he co-edited with Edward Gillin, *Experiencing Architecture in the Nineteenth Century: Buildings and Society in the Modern Age* (Bloomsbury, 2018). Email: horatiojoyce@gmail.com

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