EARLY CIVILIZATION AND THE AMERICAN MODERN

Images of Middle Eastern origins in the United States, 1893–1939

EVA MILLER

UCL PRESS

Early Civilization and the American Modern

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Images of Middle Eastern origins in the United States, 1893–1939

Eva Miller

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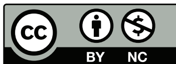

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For my parents

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List of abbreviations

Archival citations are abbreviated. After initial uses in each chapter, frequently discussed buildings or institutions are abbreviated.

Archives

AAA	Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
BGG	Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue
CFA	Federal Commission of Fine Arts, Washington, DC
CoP	Century of Progress International Exposition Publications, Crerar Ms 226, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library, Chicago, IL
DC	Directors Correspondence, ISAC, Museum Archives, Chicago, IL
FHB	Frances Hart Breasted
GEH	George Ellery Hale
GEHP	George Ellery Hale Papers, California Institute of Technology Archives and Special Collections, Pasadena, CA
HBA	Hartley Burr Alexander
HBAP	Hartley Burr Alexander papers, Ella Strong Denison Library, Scripps College, Claremont, CA
HM	Hildreth Meière
HMP	Hildreth Meière Papers, 1901–2011, bulk 1911–1960, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC
ISAC	Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, West Asia and North Africa, Museum Archives, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL
JHB	James Henry Breasted
JHBP	James Henry Breasted papers, ISAC, Museum Archives, Chicago, IL
LL	Lee Lawrie
LLP	Lee Lawrie Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC
NAS	National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC
NCC	Nebraska Capitol Commission, Lincoln, NE
NRC	National Research Council, Washington, DC

Preface: Language, influences, relevance

This is a book about how Americans over some fifty years of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries imagined the beginnings of their own national story as a part of a much longer world history, a history of human civilization. A study of this type, a history of histories, must find a way to discuss the ideas it investigates without reproducing certain concepts as if they are obvious or unproblematic. Should I, as a modern scholar, use terms and categories that reflect how my subjects thought? These can be troubling or downright offensive. Yet applying other terms and categories can fail to capture what is at stake. Then again, anachronistic analytical terms are not without value: categories that would have made little sense to the people whose works I write about can also contribute to a clearer understanding of their ideas if it helps us, as modern observers looking back, to name and organize what we see in the past. I have tried to balance these concerns throughout the book and have come up with different solutions for different cases.

Let us start with 'civilization', a word which appears in the title of my book. The sources I examine use it in various ways. One is to refer to the culmination of a development that societies, individually or on a world scale, go through over a period of time. This was explicitly defined in anthropological schemes in which civilization came at the end of a period of progress through savagery and barbarism. It is also used to refer in a more general way to what we might also call, depending on circumstance, 'cultures', 'nations' or 'peoples'. Drawing on all these connotations, 'American civilization', as used in the sources I explore, might refer to modern America as a social, political or cultural enterprise: one which stood at the end of a development of civilizations within the wider progress of *world* civilization.

In my own understanding of the past, I do not believe that civilization is a useful concept, either as a means of differentiating an 'advanced' stage of development from a 'primitive' one or as a way of essentializing certain groups or places. Yet I use the term throughout this book. The term 'civilization' cannot be discarded because of the number of my sources which are only legible when we agree to consider this concept, as it was constructed by their authors.

A different problem was posed by how to refer to the geographical region where 'early civilization' was imagined to have arisen. Here I have chosen a term that will aid modern readers, though it is rarely used in my sources: 'Middle East'. This is the most familiar modern term for the area under consideration: today's Egypt and Iraq most frequently, but also sites in Turkey, Iran, Israel, Palestine, Syria and Sudan. I want a familiar term to aid the reader – mindful of a dynamic that Zainab Bahrani has expertly parsed, in which, through the use of 'Middle East' only for the present and never for the past of early civilization, 'a distinction came to be made between the region before and after the advent of Islam that implied the death of one civilisation and its replacement and eradication by another'. As she shows, this was part of a project of appropriating what was valued about these regions – as the so-called cradle of *Western* civilization – for the West (see Bahrani, 'Conjuring Mesopotamia', 165, 162–72; see also Scheffler, '"Fertile Crescent"'). This book will provide ample evidence for just the process or appropriation Bahrani identified. While I explore that process, I want an external term for the region it focused on to remind us of the real existence in geographical space of the places at issue; I have chosen 'Middle East' because of its modern familiarity in colloquial speech (no one would casually discuss MENA, 'Middle East and North Africa', or WANA, 'West Asia and North Africa', even if those terms are used in certain scholarly fields or political contexts).

While 'Middle East' is a term that is useful for my own analytical orientation, it is basically exogenous to my late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources, which employ 'Orient', 'Near East' or simply 'the East' most frequently. And so, at times I echo that terminology. It is my hope that I have not used these terms except where it is abundantly clear from context that they are used to paraphrase the ideas in my historical sources, or the categories they created ('Oriental' architecture, 'Oriental' despotism, 'Eastern' wisdom).

'Oriental' and 'Orientalist' have had complex implications ever since the 1978 publication of Edward Said's landmark work *Orientalism*. Said defined Orientalism, a term previously applied to artistic movements and scholarly fields, as better understood as 'a set of constraints upon and limitations of thought than it is simply as a positive doctrine', the essence of which was 'the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (42). It was a way of describing the world that was inseparable from a Western (specifically in the sources Said focused on, European) project to know and dominate the Middle East. Because of the implications of Said's work, 'Orientalism' is today often used as

synonymous with Western xenophobia or racism against the East. It also continues to be used as a descriptive term for certain genres of art or aesthetic and cultural tendencies – not necessarily implying moral condemnation when used in this sense, but also not entirely neutral, unavoidably raising the spectre of Said's analysis of Orientalist representation as a carrier of ideology. It has more or less completely fallen out of usage as a description of a scholarly field of expertise, except in certain frozen forms which are themselves disappearing (more on that in a moment). The slippages and confusion caused by these overlapping senses is meaningful and useful. As Said identified, it is difficult to separate Orientalism as an artistic or cultural mode, or a scholarly specialism, from the wider recent history of Western domination over the East. These senses are inextricable.

My own doctorate was awarded, officially, in 'Oriental Studies'. The faculty in which I earned it, the Oriental Institute at Oxford University, has since discarded the term; it is now the Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies. The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago founded by James Henry Breasted, the institution of the greatest importance to this book, whose archives were essential to my research, is also no more. It is now the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, West Asia and North Africa. Only the incised gothic lettering to the right of the main entrance to the 1931 building remains to testify to its former name.

'America' too needs some apology: I use it to refer to the United States of America specifically. As this Modern Americas series itself indicates, the US is not the only American nation. It is, of course, in large part its immense cultural and political power that leads to this conventional usage, as if the US is always the default, unmarked America. But since I only rarely discuss other countries of the Americas, there is little risk of confusion in using this abbreviated form; I use 'US American' only where that specificity is required for clarity. 'America' and 'American' are also important terms for the sources I consider, while 'United States' is used much less frequently. I use both 'Indigenous' and 'American Indian' to describe the Indigenous peoples of North America. The latter term was preferred by the largest number of those who self-identified as part of this group in a census in the mid-1990s ('Native American' was the second most popular), although this will certainly have changed over the last thirty years, with self-identification with 'Indigenous' clearly rising (see Peters and Mika, 'Aborigine, Indian').

Finally, I employ the term 'Mesopotamia' to designate the region that is now mostly today's Iraq, where ancient Assyrian, Babylonian

and Sumerian sites are located. This term is unsatisfactory both because it was rarely used in my late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sources, where either 'Assyria' or 'Babylon' usually served to describe all the cultures of ancient Iraq, and because it too is, as Bahrani has argued, another term which distances the ancient history of the region from its present reality. But since Iraq became a nation midway through the period I study, 'ancient Iraq' also presents problems since it would sometimes be anachronistic to my period of interest and sometimes not. I have thus chosen the clearer anachronism of 'Mesopotamia'.

This book is a work of modern American history and it is in dialogue with other works in that field. But it is also part of a project of critical reception studies of the Middle Eastern past. The parameters of critical reception studies are wide, encompassing topics within the history of archaeology, elite and popular culture, imperialism and nationalism, and historiography. At the root of many of these studies have been the observations made by Said, which have been critiqued, nuanced, and expanded in the years since his *Orientalism*, but which remain foundational to studies of how Western knowledge of the East has been constructed and what purposes this knowledge has served.

Over the last few decades, the field of critical reception of ancient Egypt and Iraq has been a productive one. Zainab Bahrani, Frederick N. Bohrer, Kevin McGeough, Stephanie Moser and Donato Esposito have produced essential critical studies of Western constructions and 'reconstructions' of Assyria, Babylon and Egypt in art and culture. Elliott Colla, Christina Riggs, Alice Stevenson and Mirjam Brusius have considered how Egyptian and Iraqi artefacts have been recovered, displayed and interpreted for particular ends, a process Colla terms 'artefaction'. Donald Malcom Reid, Lynn Meskell and Zeynep Çelik have explored the heritage politics of Egypt and the Ottoman Empire, with trenchant insights into the new art and architecture these politics have produced. Felix Wiedemann, Agnès Garcia-Ventura and Debbie Challis have exposed the entanglement of Orientalist disciplines with the construction of modern notions of race, nation or gender. Scott Trafton's work on Back American histories of Egypt and Priya Satia's study of British imperial historical consciousness have illuminated the power of history, as much as archaeology and collecting, in shaping the politics and identity of modern actors. These scholars' works reveal the imbrication of the scientific study of the ancient past with imperial and national projects, and demonstrates how the study of the ancient Middle East has been informed by, and informed, broad cultural paradigms for conceptualizing self and other in various times and places. Some of these scholars are cited relatively infrequently

in this book, especially compared to those working on American intellectual or cultural history, because my own topic here touches theirs only at points. Nonetheless, their scholarship shaped how I approached writing this text in a larger sense and how I thought about its place in a project of critical interrogation of the construction of the ancient Middle East in the modern West by academics, artists and their publics; through scholarly and popular works; through material objects and ideas; and in the field, the museum, the civic building and the private home.

While I keep my analysis within the period 1893–1939, until departing from that period in the epilogue, the attitudes to the past that I explore here will feel familiar from our own time. At the time of writing, the teaching of American history is a political flashpoint in the United States. Republican lawmakers in many states have put forward legislation to restrict the teaching of historical subjects and perspectives associated with anti-racism and limit perspectives from historians and historical figures of colour. In some states, this legislation is already law. While the anxieties that have provoked these laws generally concern much more recent history than the beginning of civilization, they nonetheless zero in on origins in another sense. Republican politicians have focused with particular vehemence on the *New York Times*' 1619 Project, a long-form journalistic endeavour led by journalist and academic Nikole Hannah-Jones, named for the first year in which enslaved Africans arrived in the British colony of Virginia. A 2021 book published out of the project, edited by Hannah-Jones, bears the subtitle *A New Origin Story*. During the Republican administration of Donald J. Trump, a presidential advisory commission on 'patriotic education', convened in direct response to the 1619 Project, was named 'The 1776 Commission', reasserting the 'traditional' understanding of America's birthdate.

Recent years have also seen renewed controversy around public monuments in the US. When I began researching this book, the American Museum of Natural History in New York City greeted visitors with a statue, commissioned in 1925 and unveiled in 1940, of former US President Theodore Roosevelt on horseback, flanked by two men on foot: an American Indian and a Black African. The sculptor James Earle Fraser described the figures as 'guides, symbolizing the continents of Africa and America', which 'may stand for Roosevelt's friendliness to all races'. Most observers, I think, would read the statue differently, as I did when I first saw it: Roosevelt as the leader, ushering these two figures forward, towards civilization. This implication, the clear racial hierarchy communicated by the arrangement of figures, and the exotic fetishization of nameless, partially clothed others representing entire continents

while Roosevelt alone is a named individual, all contributed to public sentiment against the statue, and the decision by the museum's trustees to remove it, in January 2022.

Within the museum, Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Hall and Rotunda remains a veritable shrine to the former president, with aphorisms from his writing adorning the walls in enormous bronze letters ('Aggressive fighting for the right is the noblest sport the world affords') and another, friendlier statue of Roosevelt, seated on a bench 'as he looked during a famous 1903 camping trip to Yosemite with naturalist John Muir', such that you can sit beside him and join him in vigorous contemplation of nature ('There is a delight in the hardy life of the open,' say the walls).

The stories that Americans told themselves about their own history, and particularly the manifestations of these stories in public space, is the focus of this book. Most of the works of public art I look at are still present, and in a real sense, still part of the world that Americans inhabit. Today, as in the 1890s–1930s, these stories matter a great deal to living people; the scholar Philip Deloria, a member of the Dakota Nation, described a feeling of pain generated by viewing the American Museum's Roosevelt statue. As this book explores the public histories of our own recent past, we should recognize ourselves and a process of negotiation that is, by its nature, ever ongoing.

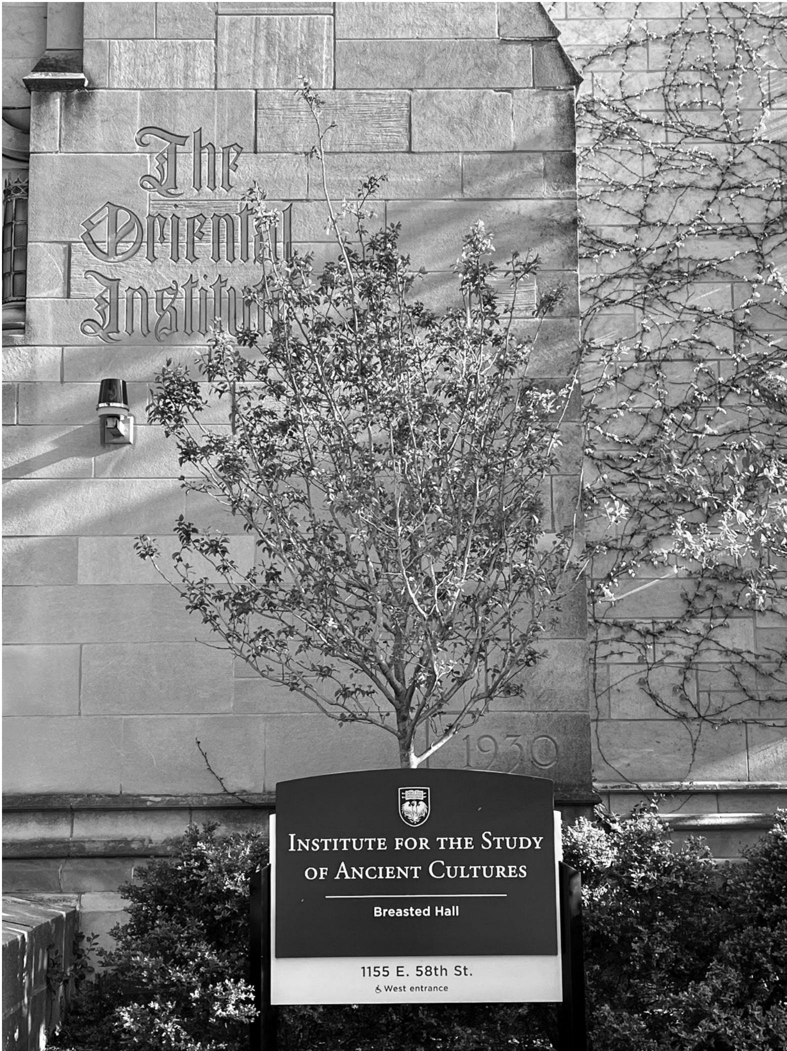

Figure 0.1 The Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures at the University of Chicago, photographed soon after this name was adopted. Photo credit: Jana Matuszak.

Acknowledgements

This book was part of a transition from my training in the study of ancient history to a focus on modern history, which required learning an entirely new set of research skills, in the archive rather than the museum collection. Anne Flannery and Jeff Cumonow at the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, University of Chicago, Karen Wagner at the Nebraska State Capitol, Daniel Barbiero at the National Academy of Sciences, the staff of the Archives of American Art, the Library of Congress manuscripts division, and the Avery Art and Architecture Library, Columbia University, all have my sincerest thanks for helping me, a newcomer to the world of modern archives, find my footing. I am also grateful to Jeffrey Abt for sharing his unparalleled expertise in Breasted and the (former) Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The Dunn family, Louise Dunn, Hilly Dunn and Anna Kupik, descendants of Hildreth Meière, spoke with me about Meière's life and work; I am exceedingly grateful to them and to Kathleen Skolnik. Their work for the International Hildreth Meière Association has created an indispensable resource for any scholar, and their approach should serve as a model for anyone interested in preserving art and architectural history.

Discussions with numerous friends and colleagues have helped me refine my ideas and have been essential in shaping this book. Particular thanks go to Frederika Tevebring, Matthew Vollgraff, Sria Chatterjee, Jana Matuszak and Guillemette Crouzet. Eleanor Robson and Paul Collins have been invaluable as advisors and mentors in my research. I am grateful to the editors at the Modern Americas series and UCL Press, including Elliot Beck and Chris Penfold for all their work on this manuscript.

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fellowship that has allowed me to pursue my own research unimpeded and to my own work–life schedule, during a period of my life in which I took two maternity leaves and have been working part-time. It should not be a difficult thing to start a family and care for young children during the early stage of an academic career, but too often it is, so I must consider myself fortunate not to have encountered unnecessary barriers. The British Academy's clarity about policies around caring responsibilities and the support that all the Academy's administrators have given throughout is much appreciated.

I am grateful to Elya and Wren for giving me a good reason to stay focused on writing during my working hours, so that I could spend all the rest of my time with them. Despite their shared ambition to sleep as little and unpredictably as possible, I also greatly enjoyed working on parts of this book all around the coffee shops of London (and DC, Chicago, New York and Ann Arbor) while they napped next to (or on) me. My entire family have been helpful at various stages of planning, writing and proofreading. Special thanks go to my parents for instilling a curiosity about history in me and for numerous kinds of continued support: my father, William Ian Miller, read portions of the manuscript in draft stages, and my mother, Kathleen Koehler, accompanied me and my family to the locations of various archives and artworks around the US. Most of all, I am grateful to Ben Brock for being an unfailingly supportive partner, a truly equal partner in parenting and the best person to talk with about ideas. Hearing his thoughts about the subjects in this book has helped me refine numerous aspects of my research.

1

Introduction: American apotheosis

In the 1890s, the eccentric American businessman Franklin Webster Smith proposed grand new 'National Galleries of History and Art' for Washington, DC. A rendering of his imagined project has the vertigo-inducing scale of the architectural proposal that was destined from its inception to remain unrealized (Figure 1.1). Imagine that you stand at the head of a vast avenue of orderly pavilions, each in a markedly different historical style, disappearing into the distance. Here you are at history's beginning, flanked by two pavilions that evoke the great monuments of ancient Egypt and Assyria. Stroll along and you will ascend to history's culmination: an 'American Acropolis', the centrepiece of which would be 'an American Walhalla', the Memorial Hall of Presidents, an exact replica of the Parthenon – but 50 per cent bigger than the ancient Greek original.[1] This last touch can be taken as characteristic of a certain American relationship to the past: an urge to emulate and celebrate antiquity, to connect it to the American story, even while the forms of the past were found not quite adequate to the civilization being created in the modern United States of America.

This grandiose reconstruction was mandated in part by what America lacked. 'In oceanic separation from the remains of historic nationalities,' Smith wrote, 'the American people are deprived of the objective illustration available to European nations.' Yet, he continued, 'the wealth of the United States, greater than of any other nation, should create an institution, surpassing all others, for illustration of human progress and civilization'. The whole of it was to be cast in sand-concrete, a simple building process with good value for the dollar: 'Roman columns, imperishable, are cast for $20.00 each, which in stone would have cost $300.00.'[2] Modernity might take the shape of antiquity,

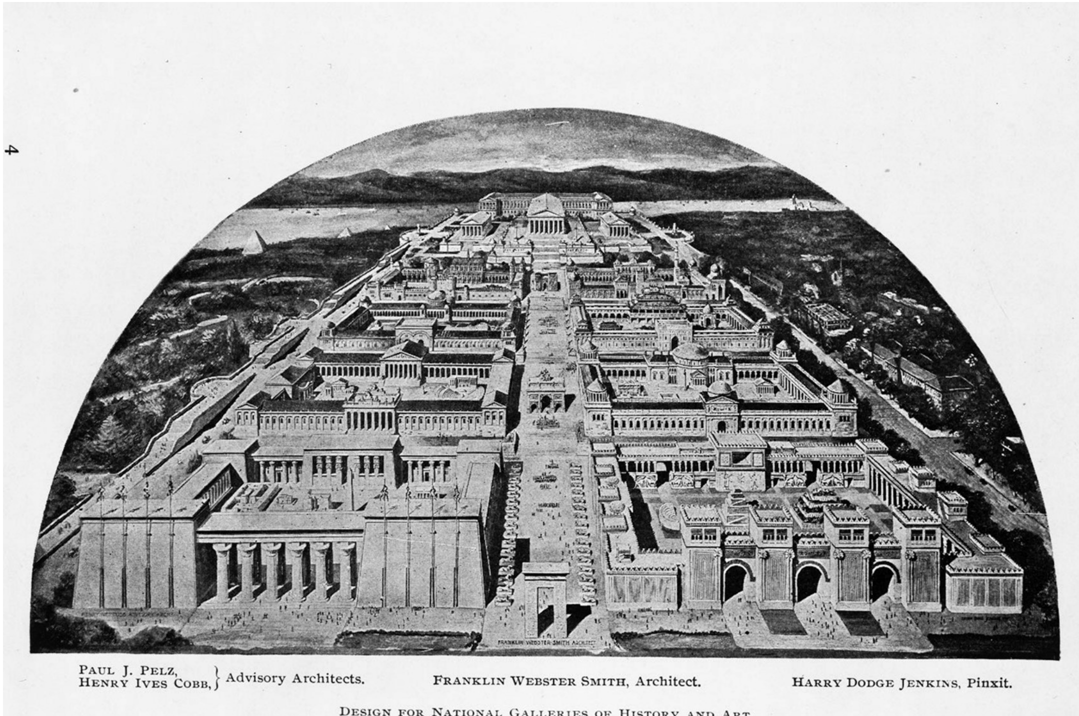

Figure 1.1 'Design for National Galleries of History and Art' from Franklin Webster Smith, *National Galleries of History and Art* (1900). Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by the National Building Museum.

but it offered superior technology for achieving the same results, at better prices.

In retrospect, it is impossible not to see Smith's plans through the lens of kitsch, a precursor to the postmodern playgrounds of Disneyland or the Las Vegas Strip. Yet Smith's proposals were taken seriously by significant figures in architecture. He listed the eminent architects Paul J. Pelz (who would later design the 1897 Library of Congress) and Henry Ives Cobb as advisory architects. The plan's greatest champion was the respected Gothic Revival architect James Renwick Jr., who had designed the Smithsonian Castle for Washington (1855) and St Patrick's Cathedral in New York City (opened 1879). The firm of Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell produced illustrations for Smith's 1891 *Design and Prospectus*. Smith's proposal also found supporters in the United States Senate. Republican Senator George Frisbie Hoar of Massachusetts submitted Smith's petition for the creation of the galleries into the congressional record. The petition called for the National Galleries to 'utilize the revelations of archaeology and transfer to the Western World, in simulation, all desirable relics of ancient art and all remains illustrative of ancient life that have filled the museums of Europe at great cost: these reproductions being in every way as valuable for education as originals, but at a very small fraction of their cost'.[3]

Smith's plan would have created a clear progressive narrative of artistic and civilizational development. Within its historical hierarchy, Assyria and Egypt have the honour of being the first, yet also therefore the least advanced, stages of ascent; America, the fulfilment of history. As host of this world historical microcosm, America would also be the only civilization to have everything every previous civilization had, all at once. Smith's project was a fitting monument for the capital of the first nation to dare to ask: what if the Parthenon had been even bigger and made of concrete?

Yet, in the visualization produced for Smith's petition, it is the beginning, with Egypt and Assyria, sitting side by side, to the left and right of the grand boulevard, which are by far the easiest to make out, much more visually prominent than any of the succeeding stages. A position at the beginning of the promenade and the beginning of civilization, might leave them the furthest from history and art's culmination on the American Acropolis, but it also focuses a viewer's attention on these originals.

Smith's unrealized dream effectively says the quiet part out loud, making subtext, text. Smith shared with many of his contemporaries the belief that American modernity, rendered through new technological

processes and benefiting from modern city planning, would need to tell a story about world history and 'the United States as the final and most glorious product of the ages'.[4] In this story, 'early civilizations' of the ancient Middle East represented the first step on the way to American modernity, and therefore part of its civic and national identity. Smith's vision did not come to pass, but his wider claims for America's role in history, its relationship to the past, and the narrative of its origins would be a significant way in which many Americans explained their country in the decades of and following this proposal. It is precisely this explanation of world history's beginning and end, and its rendering in public space through art and architecture, that this book explores.

What is early civilization?

This book investigates a historical discourse that identified an ongoing tradition of universal, 'world' civilization beginning in the Middle East. This discourse took a more established American tradition of tracing its own 'civilization' back to Greece and Rome and proposed earlier origins, farther east. For American scholars and publics, a narrative of 'Western Civilization' that began in the Middle East provided an appealing symmetry to America's own geographical extension of 'Western' or 'European' civilization. Civilization had begun *farther* east, in a more distant past, and moved *farther* west.

A key figure in promoting this understanding of civilization's beginnings was the University of Chicago academic and public intellectual James Henry Breasted. For James Henry Breasted, the study of early civilization was the missing middle ground between the scientific disciplines investigating the prehistoric past and history as it was conventionally conceived.[5] Breasted called the region that he studied by many names – including 'the Orient', in the name of the Oriental Institute, the faculty he established at the University of Chicago. The two areas within that region to which Breasted most often gave the starring role in the rise of civilization were Mesopotamia, which is mostly contiguous with today's Iraq, and Egypt, particularly the land around the Nile River and Nile Delta. He disseminated his vision of civilization's story in articles in academic journals and popular magazines, in public lectures, in one documentary film produced on the Oriental Institute's dime (*The Human Adventure* (1935), put together by his son Charles Breasted) and in his books. The most influential of these, to which I will refer most often, was his 1916 high school textbook *Ancient Times: A history of the early*

world: An introduction to the study of ancient history and the career of early man. This work reached beyond its nominal audience of school children, finding success with a learned, adult public. Breasted successfully promoted his version of ancient history as modern and innovative, relying on cutting-edge discoveries and methods and correcting a myopic historical focus on Europe alone. In his approach and his attitudes, he shared sympathies with proponents of the New History, particularly Columbia University's James Harvey Robinson (with whom Breasted shared author credit on textbooks covering ancient and modern history).[6]

While Breasted's efforts defined the concept of 'the early world' as the first post on a human career, he was far from the first person to suggest that the Middle East was an important part of visualizing America's identity or its place in world history. Franklin Webster Smith's proposal above demonstrates as much. Smith and his supporters considered it obvious that world civilization, given form through art and architecture, began in Egypt and Assyria. In significant pieces of public art for the Library of Congress (1897), which prided itself on a decorative scheme incorporating new knowledge gleaned from ethnology and anthropology, Egypt appeared as the beginning, or as a crucial turning point in an evolutionary historical framework.[7] While this concept of civilization's origins was already around in the 1890s, Breasted would do more than any other scholar to strengthen that position for Egypt and the rest of the Middle East. He would introduce numerous readers of his books, and the wealthy and powerful from whom he sought funding, to the idea that the 'Orient' deserved to be studied precisely because of its pivotal role as the starting point for the 'rise of man', a rise that achieved its apogee in their own time and place.

This book largely concerns itself with narratives generated by and appealing to White, elite Americans, often as part of a wider programme of forging an appropriate, unified American civic and national identity amidst anxieties about new arrivals to the country, and the existence of a heterogeneous racial and religious populace. Such American elites had a disproportionate impact on narratives in civic space and in the popular imagination. This was, of course, not the only way that Americans, in all their cultural variety, understood history or the origins of their own society. And other origin stories filled a similar function in American life at the time. There was the familiar historical idea that American culture originated either in ancient Greece and Rome or with the authors of the Hebrew Bible and later, of the New Testament. New discoveries about the origins of humans also seemed to have important implications for understanding modern society. In the next chapter we shall see that even

discussions of the origins of the universe or life on earth could employ the same paradigms as historical narratives: evolution and progress.

But wherever they suggested the story should start, all these accounts of America's historical lineage shared the basic premise that beginnings are immensely important. As Brian Regal explains in his recent study *The Battle over America's Origin Story*, which examines varying answers to the question of who first 'discovered' America, 'The story of the discovery of America is not about the past, but about the future.'[8] The same can be said of questions about origins of civilization on other shores. Understanding where America came from is presumed to tell us something about where it should be going. Examining the expression of this particular discourse around Middle Eastern 'civilizational' origins then also reveals much bigger, much more pervasive attempts to understand world history and America's place within it – a project that is, of course, still ongoing.

Egypt and Mesopotamia as origins

The idea that civilization began in Egypt and Mesopotamia resonated with American audiences in part because their role in the story of humanity was already well documented in two familiar historical traditions: the classical and the biblical.[9] Classical sources, like the histories of Herodotus, represented Babylon and Assyria as great empires that preceded the Greeks as great world powers, centred around wondrous, monumental cities. Greek authors were also fascinated by the antiquity of Egyptian culture and discussed it as a source of their own knowledge.[10]

Perhaps even more significant was the role these regions played in the Hebrew Bible. Mesopotamia was the location of the Garden of Eden, where humankind originated, and later the homeland of Abraham, the first patriarch of the chosen people. Egypt was also transformative: the narrative of the Israelites' enslavement and escape from it, leading to their wandering through the wilderness and their receipt of the Mosaic Law, is the subject of four of the five books of the Pentateuch. Mesopotamia was where all people and then the chosen people first appeared, while Egypt was the crucible in which a divine plan for this chosen people was forged. The biblical authors also lived in a world shaped by powerful Egyptian and Mesopotamian states. Even sceptical readers of biblical history, then, could recognize that it provided evidence for the important role these cultures had played in antiquity. Biblical and classical authors agreed on

their significance as purveyors of 'early civilization' and major players on history's stage.

The 'world civilizations' narrative of history that Breasted promoted, and which appealed to American civic sensibilities during this period, was distinguished by a 'reasonable', historicizing approach to the Bible. Israelites were one among many antecedents of American civilization: Egyptians and Babylonians belonged alongside Moses in the American story as well. At the same time, the Bible's position as a foundational text in American life meant that the very fact that it assigned such importance to Egypt and Mesopotamia was part of why these places were interesting in the first place, and why they seemed at home in positions of honour in modern, scientific history.

Western rediscovery and appropriation

Long-standing historical memories of Egypt and Mesopotamia as 'originary' were supplemented by a parallel narrative of scientific investigation and reconstruction, understood by its participants and their publics as a heroic act of salvage and recovery. This was the story of how White, Western gentlemen (and sometimes gentlewomen) penetrated the wild and dangerous lands of Islamic North Africa and West Asia, discovered extraordinary objects and texts and brought the knowledge of them back to readers and museumgoers in Europe and North America. The grand opening of this particular adventure narrative in most tellings was Napoleon's military expedition to Egypt in 1798–1801, a campaign aimed, ostensibly, at defending French trade interests and pursuing scientific knowledge; 167 French *savants* were attached to the expedition for the latter purpose. Although there had been European antiquarian interest in Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia in the preceding centuries, this imperial venture elevated antiquarianism to the level of a major state concern.[11] It resulted in the publication of the multivolume *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–21), which sought to catalogue the ancient monuments of the region alongside its flora and fauna (Figure 1.2). Edward Said has famously described this publication as 'that great collective appropriation of one county by another', and argued that the Napoleonic campaign in Egypt and the scholarly apparatus it produced, 'gave birth to the entire modern experience of the Orient'. The *Description* displaced 'Egyptian or Oriental history as a history possessing its own coherence, identity, and sense,' instead identifying the history of the Orient it created 'directly and immediately with world history, a euphemism for European history'.[12]

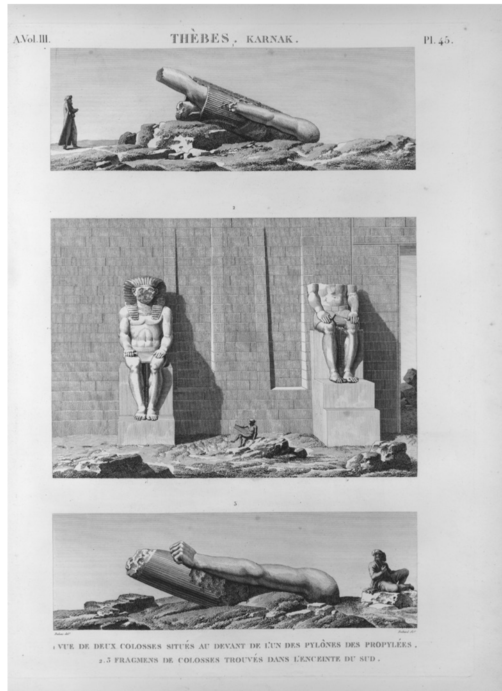

Figure 1.2 *Description de l'Égypte*, A.Vol. 3 (1812), pl. 45, showing various scenes from the Karnak Temple complex at Thebes (modern Luxor, Egypt). Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

The British Navy defeated the French forces in a series of confrontations in Egypt, forcing its final capitulation and withdrawal in 1801. Egypt remained free of direct European colonial control. While officially still subordinate to the Ottoman Empire, it was in reality an independent state, under Viceroy Muhammad Ali Pasha (who ruled from 1805 to 1848, and whose dynasty was to remain on the Egyptian throne until the revolution of 1952). The British and French continued to fight for imperial influence in the territory – including over its antiquities. At the final capitulation of Napoleon's army, the British seized from French forces the greatest physical prize of their 'scientific' expedition: the Rosetta Stone, which the French had taken from the Egyptian port city of Rashid, ancient Rosetta. Dating from 196 BCE, this large granodiorite block was inscribed in triplicate with a proclamation of the pharaoh Ptolemy V in Greek and in ancient Egyptian, in hieroglyphs and in the demotic script. It was the object which ultimately made decipherment of ancient Egyptian writing possible. Today, as any visitor to the British

Museum can confirm, the stone bears a fourth inscription, in English, in Roman script: ‘Captured in Egypt by the British Army, 1801’.

During the 1840s, British and French civil servants, diplomats and adventurers began to excavate ruin mounds near Mosul in Ottoman-controlled territory, today’s Iraq (Figure 1.3). In local memory, these sites had long been identified with the ancient Assyrians, familiar from biblical and Greek sources. The race to return excavated monumental art, and later clay tablets inscribed with cuneiform writing, to their respective national museums became another contest of imperial influence among these European powers.[13] Meanwhile, in Europe, the recovered antiquities of Egypt and Mesopotamia became a part of the aesthetics of empire, while the ancient history for which they served as sources became a means of reflecting on modern imperialism.[14]

By the late nineteenth century, American academics and elite funders were attempting to effect a belated entry into this prestigious game of rediscovery and appropriation. US expeditions focused initially on Mesopotamia and only later on Egypt, as did academic departments in the US.[15] American academic interests also paralleled an elite and popular fascination with the arts and images of those regions. Many collections in American museums, and often the museums themselves, owed their existence to wealthy patrons whose enthusiasm for ancient art allowed them to assemble collections of monuments and texts of

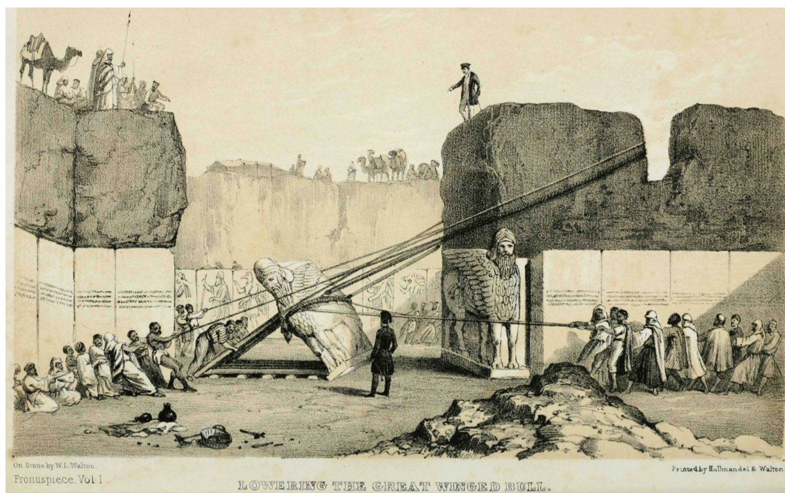

Figure 1.3 W. L. Walton, ‘Lowering the Great Winged Bull’, frontispiece in Austen Henry Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, vol. I (London: John Murray, 1849). Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by University of California Libraries.

significance, even if they never really came to rival those that British and French institutions, working as arms of the state, had amassed decades before.

This explains why it was that images of early civilization felt simultaneously ancient and modern in America in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although in fact archaeological excavation and removal from Egypt and Mesopotamia had been going on for many decades, it was a relatively new endeavour for American universities, museums and historical societies. Furthermore, it was not only new images and objects that were emerging from the deep past, but new ways of thinking about them.

Bruce Kuklick has comprehensively charted the development of the American field of 'ancient Near Eastern studies', tracing various complicated transitions in scholarly approaches as American institutions professionalized and institutionalized the subject. One trajectory that Kuklick traces is the movement away from a strictly biblical focus in the study of the civilizations of the ancient Middle East, already underway in the later decades of the nineteenth century. The study of civilization as Breasted promoted it frequently reflected cultural biases around the place of the Bible, and specifically Christianity, in the evolutionary progress of civilization, but it was also appealing precisely because of its possibilities as a secular alternative to biblical narratives. It was understood as sophisticated, scientific and ecumenical, suitable to a pluralistic American landscape (at least as far as the elites who constructed it understood pluralism).[16]

The past was a terrain, like the future, which was still being shaped. What explorers and scholars discovered was a history that brought to life the stories of the Bible and classical histories while also offering something more. As Suzanne Marchand explains, there was a growing sense that 'the once familiar biblical world had been swallowed up by an Orient that was deeper and more strange'.[17] This was history not as your grandparents knew it. Yet, at the same time that these discoveries felt (and perhaps especially *looked*) strange and exotic, they also confirmed a long-standing assumption that history really did begin where the Bible said it did.

The histories of Egypt and Mesopotamia

What were these ancient civilizations that emerged from Western investigation, if not merely the Great Nations of the Bible or Wonders of the

Greek world? In Mesopotamia, nineteenth- and early twentieth-century archaeology contributed to the reconstruction of an entire historical sequence of numerous city-states and territorial empires, which we can define best by their shared use of the cuneiform writing system, a script in which wedge-shaped signs were impressed into clay or carved into stone, metal or wood. From the earliest development of proto-cuneiform in the late fourth millennium, some form of this writing system was in use for just over three thousand years. The two cuneiform-using cultures whose history and aesthetics most interested American publics were Assyria, specifically the Neo-Assyrian Empire of the ninth to seventh centuries BCE, and Babylon, specifically the Neo-Babylonian Empire of the sixth century BCE. Both were familiar from the Bible and classical sources in their role as powerful nations with grand ancient cities: Nineveh, Nimrud, Khorsabad and Assur in Assyria, today northern Iraq, near Mosul, and Babylon itself, some 100 kilometres south of Baghdad.

Assyria and Babylon used cuneiform to write texts mostly in the Semitic language Akkadian, related to familiar Hebrew, Arabic and Aramaic. This language was successfully deciphered by the mid-1850s. But scholars soon realized that some texts were written in a different language which used the script in a very different way. After much scholarly debate, this was eventually identified as a linguistic isolate, Sumerian. The earliest cuneiform texts were written in this language. Textual sources and material culture allowed scholars to assemble a picture of the history of the region in antiquity, and to reconstruct its culture, religion and literature. While early scholarship in Assyriology derived from an interest in biblical history, these texts also revealed a deep historical record that had nothing to do with the biblical narrative. It was possible now to talk about societies that had existed long before the Israelites, that used different, entirely forgotten languages and that had their own sense of the deep past.[18]

Just as useful in reconstructing these 'lost civilizations' and establishing their place in a canon of world history, was monumental art and architecture (Figure 1.4). The monumental art of Assyria had far more immediate impact when its discovery was publicized to European audiences by British and French excavators in the 1840s than any texts discovered there. In America, museums looked to amass collections of Mesopotamian art through purchases of antiquities and later through excavation. American audiences would have known what the art and architectural remains (and reconstructions) of these civilizations looked like through popular books and reproductions in magazines

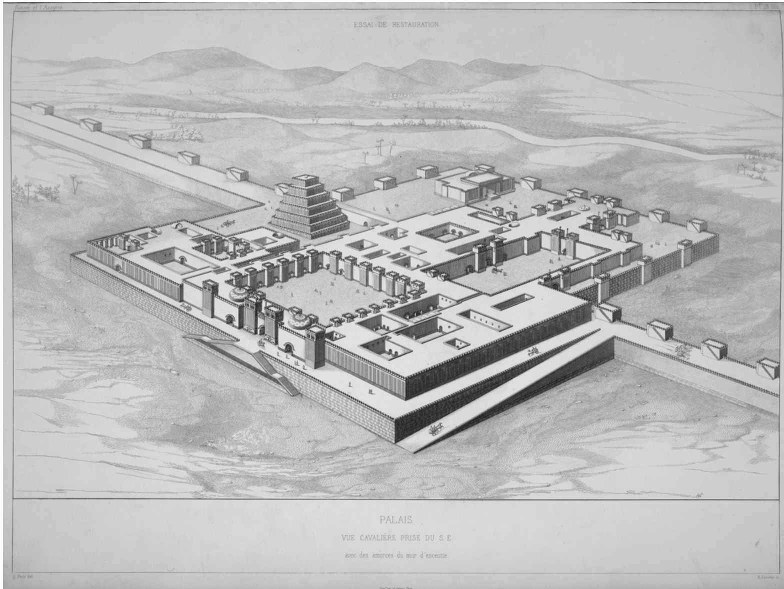

Figure 1.4 E. Petit, 'Proposed Restoration' of an Assyrian palace in Khorsabad, Iraq (ancient Dur Sharrukin), in Victor Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie, avec des essais de restauration par F. Thomas*, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1867), pl. 18. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

and newspapers (Figures 1.5 and 1.6). By the 1920s, they would have recognized Assyrian *lamassu* (colossal winged-bull guardian figures) from their appearances in Hollywood spectaculars and in modern architecture. Babylon was less influential for American visual culture, though its excavation by German archaeologists between 1899 and 1917 turned up a remarkable urban fabric and led to the spectacular reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate in Berlin, completed between 1928 and 1930 (as Can Bilsel argues, an 'imaginative reconstruction,' best understood as a 'constellation' of ancient fragments and the aesthetic preoccupations of art nouveau).[19]

The 'ancient Egypt' that appealed to modern Americans had a similar time span and was reconstructed from a similar range of sources. Unlike the many city-states and nascent empires of Mesopotamia, 'Pharaonic' or 'dynastic' Egypt seemed pleasingly consistent for some 3,000 years, with its own canon of visual icons: pyramids, pharaohs, obelisks, mummies, lotus columns (Figures 1.7 and 1.8). Over millennia, Egypt of course changed greatly and went through numerous political arrangements, but it is true that certain symbols and traditions had a remarkable staying power and this

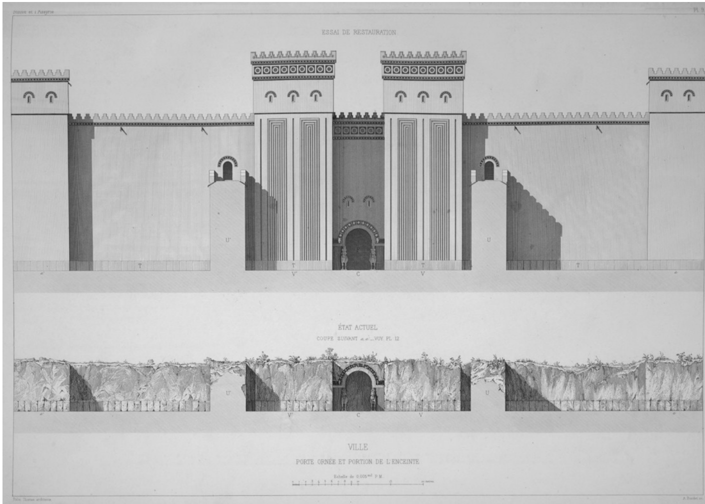

Figure 1.5 Félix Thomas, attempted restoration of gate at Khorsabad, Iraq (ancient Dur Sharrukin), and its present-day state, in Victor Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie, avec des essais de restauration par F. Thomas*, 3 vols. (Paris: Imprimerie impériale, 1867), pl. 9. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

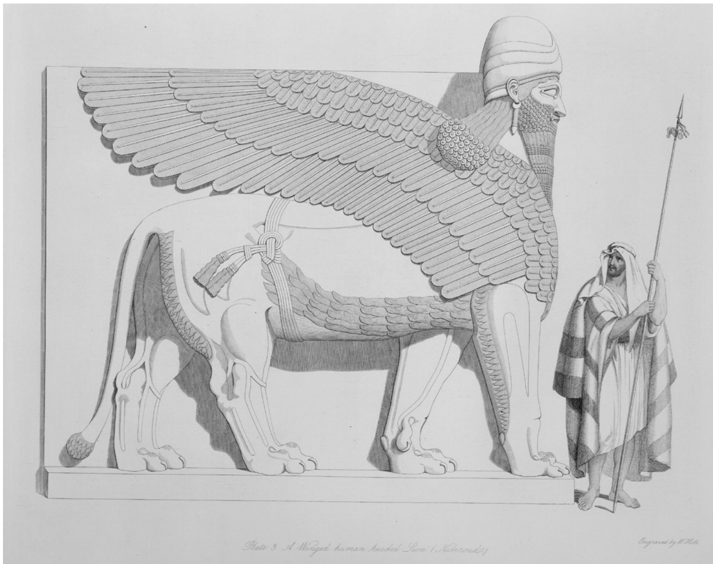

Figure 1.6 Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh: From drawings made on the spot* (1849), pl. 3, showing a 'winged human-headed lion' at Nimrud, Iraq (ancient Kalhu), with an unremarked local excavator, to indicate scale. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Figure 1.7 Johann Jakob Frey, illustration of the Gizeh, Egypt, pyramid group, in Karl Richard Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, vol. 1 (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849–56), Abth.1.Bl.19. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Figure 1.8 Drawings of columns in the great temple at Karnak, Thebes (modern Luxor), Egypt, in Karl Richard Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, vol. 2 (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849–56), Abth.1.Bl.81. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

is what modern audiences recognized. To an untrained eye, the pharaoh looked like the same pharaoh across thousands of years (Figure 1.9).

Egypt too had a history that was reconstructed through monuments and texts following the decipherment of an ancient writing system.[20] Hieroglyphs, like cuneiform, originated in the late fourth millennium and were in use for a similar length of time, to write the Afroasiatic Egyptian language. Hieroglyphic texts were made legible to European and American scholars following the decipherment by the French scholar Jean-François Champollion in 1822. As in Mesopotamia, texts allowed the study of history in a grand sense – the deeds of kings, warfare, dynastic struggles. As they did for cuneiform-using cultures, they also made it possible to understand ancient life in a wider sense – religious beliefs and practices, literature, science, medicine and even daily life (from both Egypt and West Asia, numerous letters of official administration and private business have survived, such that it is possible to learn about the petty family arguments and minor money troubles of individuals more than four thousand years ago).

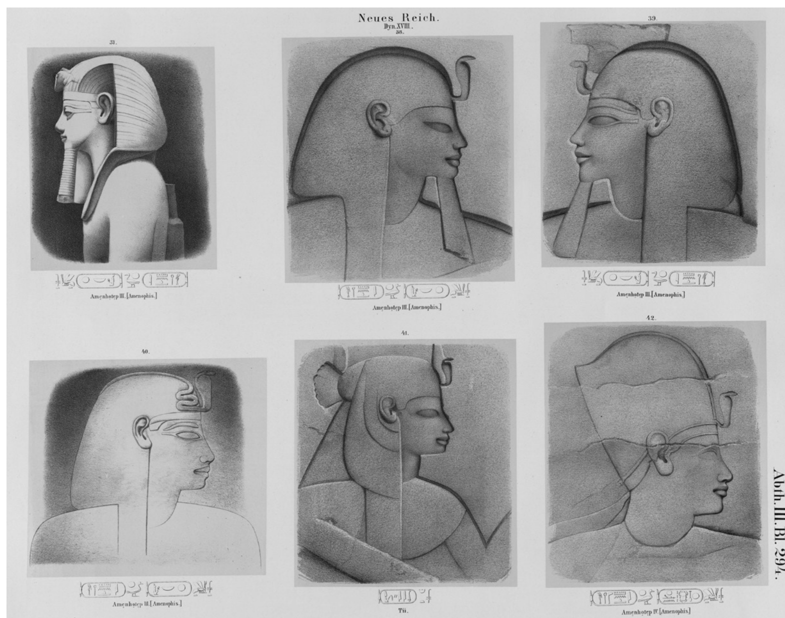

Figure 1.9 Drawings of different ancient images of Eighteenth Dynasty pharaohs Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV (Akhenaten) and Queen Tiye, in Karl Richard Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien*, vol. 8 (Berlin: Nicolaische Buchhandlung, 1849–56), Abth.3.Bl.294. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Egypt, even more so than Assyria or Babylon, was also associated with monumental art. Egyptian monuments spoke to mystery, mortality, power, even despotism (Figure 1.10). On the other hand, Egyptian minor arts like furniture, jewellery and vessels, usually recovered from tombs, were often interpreted as part of a luxurious everyday (often ignoring their funerary contexts). For this reason, ancient Egyptian motifs became common in Western consumer goods and advertising to convey luxury and promise sensory pleasure (Figure 1.11).[21]

While the pyramids of Egypt's very earliest dynasties were unrivalled as visual icons of the region (the Great Pyramid of Giza likely dates to about 2600 BCE; in his time, Breasted put it earlier, at about 2900), the art and culture of the Egyptian New Kingdom of the sixteenth to eleventh centuries BCE was especially appealing to modern artists seeking references for their own work. Much of that appeal derived from historians' identification of the New Kingdom as a political peak for ancient Egypt, a time of imperial power and expansion in an international scene that modern scholars identified as similar to the world of international political intrigue in which they lived.[22] Biblical traditions were influential here too, since it was during the New Kingdom that the events of the biblical Exodus were supposed to have taken place. In the wake of the discovery of the spectacular tomb of New Kingdom pharaoh

Figure 1.10 Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Bonaparte before the Sphinx* (1886), originally exhibited under the title *Œdipe*, referencing the myth of Oedipus and the Sphinx. The painting was acquired in 1898 by American publishing tycoon William Randolph Hearst and is today still in the collection of Hearst Castle, San Simeon. Photo credit: Public domain, painting in the collection of the California State Parks, Hearst San Simeon, object number 529-9-5092.

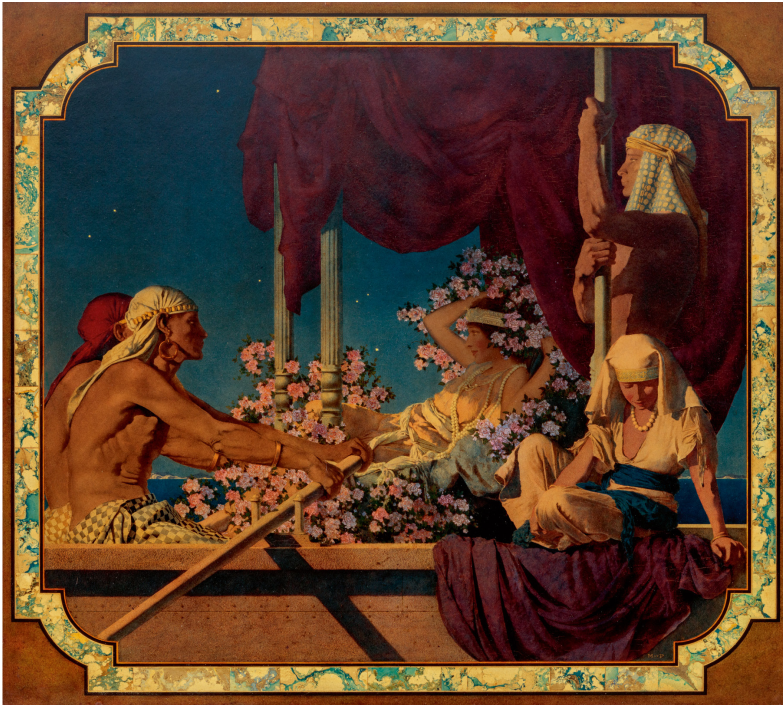

Figure 1.11 Maxfield Parrish, *Cleopatra* (1917), oil and collage piece for reproduction by the Crane Chocolate Company. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, digitized by Sotheby's.

Tutankhamun in 1922, artefacts from the period became even more established as the highpoint of Egyptian art in modern imagination.[23]

Other civilizations of the ancient Middle East sometimes provided visual references and occupied places in American narratives of world civilization. There were, of course, the Israelites, seemingly well known from the Bible, although proving rather disappointing materially, and other Levantine cultures, like the Phoenicians, associated with commerce, seafaring and the alphabet.[24] The Hittites in Anatolia were, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sources of strange monumental art and surprising historical connections. The monumental sites of the Persian Empire in what is now Iran had long captivated Westerners in a similar way that the monuments of Assyria did, sharing some of their iconographic motifs and a sense of overwhelming imperial grandeur. The long and varied history of a large and varied region provided an array of visual references for imagining a monumental 'early civilization'.[25]

Early civilization and progressive historical consciousness

A civilization can be 'early' only in relation to what comes later. In Chapter 5, I will explore anthropological theories that sought to delineate the relative status of civilizations through an understanding of evolutionary stages that societies would pass through on the way to achieving the end status of civilization. Yet civilization was itself not static. The civilizations of the ancient Middle Eastern past were understood to have disappeared or declined – which might suggest some sobering truths about the fate of societies. As will be explored in Chapter 3, American scholars in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries largely saw history as cyclical, with decline an inevitable part of any society's lifespan. Dorothy Ross argues that there was a shift to a progressive historical consciousness, complete by the later nineteenth century, in which decline could itself be consigned to the past.[26] Progressive historical narrative on a world scale, rather than a national one, could account for the historical trope of 'decline' while maintaining that, overall, civilization went upwards. America could represent an apotheosis of a *world* story; decline happened off-stage or to predecessor civilizations, while America stepped in late in the story and went ever upwards. The possibility that America was *not* the 'apotheosis', as Franklin Webster Smith had imagined it, was a disturbing one, a threat that reared its head when American society seemed to be moving in the wrong direction.

When James Henry Breasted started his Oriental Institute, he positioned it as part of a wider project of a progressive world history.[27] The work of the institute as he conceived of it, and sold it to funders, was to contribute to the study of the 'rise of man'. He might be sending scholars out into the field or supporting them in a museum or office to work through arcane and obscure details of ancient manuscripts, but the overall purpose within the institution was for each of these pieces to contribute to a grand endeavour: assembling the archive that would reveal the whole human story to the historian's gaze.[28] This story was distinguished by its temporal orientation towards the present, towards understanding the 'before' to today's modernity.

Most of the works that interest me in this study reflect an American cultural attitude that was earnest, optimistic, self-regarding and self-confident. Modern America was presented in historical context as the best of all possible worlds, in the best of all possible times, having benefited from all the civilizational development that had ever happened

in the world before it. It was a grateful and respectful child to its predecessors, while improving on their achievements (think Smith's concrete columns at a fraction of the cost of Roman-style stone). Yet this earnest triumphalism was always complicated, not only by the many practical complexities of satisfyingly positioning America within a world historical progress of civilization, but also by anxieties about the social and political realities of modern American life. For instance, what would America look like in the absence of a frontier? This was the question the great progressive historian Frederick Jackson Turner first asked at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition, when he argued that the frontier was the force that had most shaped American character, and also declared it now 'closed', westward expansion complete.[29] Americans might worry about whether their country would be able to lead on a world stage, both before and after the civilizational cataclysm of the First World War. Americans would repeatedly come back to the question of what kinds of people were really part of the American project. In a unidirectional history of 'the rise of man', where did American Indians fit? What role did government or private capital have to play in funding, maintaining and guiding American civilization? What did America owe to the past and what was in its future? In the rest of this book, we will see examples of how Americans wrestled with these questions. Just because America was the pinnacle of world civilization did not mean it could rest on its laurels. A continual process of self-regard and self-examination seemed to be part of maintaining its position at the top, breaking free of historical forces of decline and decay.

It was also possible to see America's relationship to the ancient past in another way: rather than opposite ends of a progressive timeline from origin to culmination, perhaps American modernity and early civilization were doubles. Early civilizations might be uniquely relevant – more so than Greece and Rome, mediaeval or Enlightenment Europe or any other stopping-off points in the evolutionary process stretching between them. This doubling had various implications. Perhaps the aesthetics of early civilization were better suited to an American modernity that was to be fundamentally different from its immediate European predecessors and competitors. Then again, perhaps the ancient East was not aspirational: perhaps American civilization was heading into its own age of despotism. The ancient East became a way of defining the modern US, both in opposition and in identification.

Race and a 'universal' origin for the United States

While a narrative of civilizational progress through inheritance from one region to the next often seemed to circumvent narrowly racial explanations for human cultural achievement, proposing that civilization moved through the transfer and preservation of knowledge, practices and ideas, from one group of people to the next, race also played a significant role in delineating the boundaries of civilization. Race was an overwhelmingly important category for understanding cultural differences and qualities throughout the period I focus on. As the next chapter will explore, the prestige of race science, and the success of eugenics and immigration-restriction activism inspired by it, peaked in the early 1920s, though it continued to shape American perspectives on history, art and culture across scholarly and popular venues in the decades afterwards.

In the 1935 revision of his school textbook *Ancient Times*, Breasted explained his story of civilization by who it excluded: the two 'clearly distinguished races' in the territories neighbouring where civilization arose, 'the Mongoloids on the east and the Negroes on the south', who 'occupy an important place in the modern world', but 'played no part in the rise of civilization'.[30] In other words, the eastern side of Asia, anything beyond what is now Iran, and most of Africa beyond the area around the Upper Nile, were excluded from a place in the history of *world* civilization – let alone the Indigenous peoples of the Americas, Australia or Oceania. Whatever they had been achieving all their years on earth, it was not *history*, not part of the genealogy of civilization.

This kind of gentle dismissal of a large part of humankind from the central narrative of history was not unique to Breasted's writings. Yet, even excising such vast swathes of humanity from the narrative, an account of civilization with Western Asia and parts of North Africa as its origin still admitted ancient peoples who presented a puzzle in racial categorization. Ancient Egyptians, Babylonians and Assyrians were highly racially ambiguous in modern American terms, not easily mapped onto identifiable modern types. Perhaps the peoples of these regions could be conceived of as 'Mediterranean' in a broad sense, a racial category about which true Nordic supremacists were withering (discussed further in the next chapter), but which was generally understood as a part of the European sphere. Think of the Asian and African sides of the Mediterranean as Europe's cousins just across the bay. Alternately, they could be understood as 'Semites', like modern-day Jews or Arabs, or as something else entirely; the race of the ancient Egyptians in particular, was then, as it is now, a subject of controversy. Any of these ancient

peoples' otherness could be played up or down. Donald Malcolm Reid points out the significance of the pale white skin on a representative Egyptian in Edwin Howland Blashfield's *Evolution of Civilization* (1897) mural for the Library of Congress, part of a process Reid describes as 'whitening the Egyptians' (Figure 3.3).[31] Yet in the same building, John White Alexander depicted a pair of ancient Egyptians for his *Evolution of the Book* (1895–6) with roughly the same honeyed colouring as the Indigenous Americans Alexander featured in the same sequence, who parallel them compositionally (Figures 5.4 and 5.5).

But in a work of art, what did bronzed skin and dark hair indicate? Was a strong nose a sign of 'Semitic' racial allegiance, or a stylistic quality common to the Art Deco face? For that matter, scholars of the time debated, was the so-called 'Semitic nose' really *not* Semitic, but an inheritance of the Hittites, understood as ancient Indo-European Caucasians – a theory of nasal origins Breasted promoted?[32] The ambiguity of such racial markers, and the uncertainty of how ancient peoples mapped onto moderns, was especially striking in a country in which the racialization and oppression of Black Americans and the genocide of American Indians overwhelmingly informed racial thinking. Because the presumed progenitors of civilization were not obviously either Black or 'red', while still not appearing to be clearly white, they occupied the malleable, shifting middle ground of the American racial landscape. This was perhaps a useful ambiguity, allowing racialized interpretations of early civilizations to be taken up or dropped, as suited a particular circumstance.

The notion of Egyptian and Mesopotamian origins for a unified 'American civilization' was constructed, in the examples I take up, by elite, White Americans, and often served their particular interests. Admittedly, one of these purposes was an ideology of harmonious pluralism, which cast America as a historically unique immigrant nation. This was part of what David Glassberg describes as the attempt to 'forge a public historical consciousness from a multiplicity of available traditions and images in the early twentieth century'.[33] For Americans who occupied ambiguous positions with regards to a normative White American Protestant identity, this discourse had potential upsides. For instance, Jews could benefit from an emphasis on civilizational origins potentially understood as 'Semitic', although this was by no means guaranteed.[34] Jewish scholars of the ancient Middle East still dealt with the institutional antisemitism of the American university system. As Bruce Kuklick documents, antisemitic concern about the role of Jews in academia and other institutions influenced not only the careers of

Jewish academics, but the overall field of Middle Eastern studies. Some elite universities were anxious to avoid investigating topics that might seem 'too Jewish'. The New York Jewish financier and philanthropist Jacob Schiff noted with irritation that Harvard University assumed that he would, and should, fund their investigations of ancient Israelites with no matching contributions from the local 'Boston Christians'. Yet, as Kuklick puts it, 'the lure of Harvard was so great that Schiff (and to a lesser extent his New York associates) inevitably footed the bills in Cambridge, no matter what the gentile response'.[35] Schiff's continued generosity perhaps reflected a belief that for Harvard, bastion of White Anglo-Saxon Protestant privilege, to investigate the history of the ancient Israelites, or even other cultures of the ancient Middle East was, broadly speaking, 'good for the Jews'.

The most striking demographic exclusion from the dominant American narrative of world civilization was Black people. This is an especially significant omission, given the long tradition of identification with ancient Egypt among Black Americans.[36] Many Black thinkers and artists of the 1890s–1930s toyed with the idea of a Black origin for world civilization, or of a separate and continuous Black civilization, which needed no White approval. As Tunde Adeleke explains, the fact that White, Eurocentric historical tradition had consistently 'nullified African history and culture and mandated Europeans to lead Africans and diaspora Blacks toward civilization, historical and cultural rebirth' leant historical studies a unique power among an emerging Black intelligentsia in the nineteenth century, inducing 'a determination to resist with the weapon of history'.[37] Black visual artists also participated in that resistance and reshaping of historical consciousness. Meta Vaux Warrick Fuller, a leading figure of the Harlem Renaissance, connected Black racial awakening in her own time to a glorious North African past in her sculpture *Ethiopia Awakening* (1921). The bronze statue showed a woman in a pharaoh's headdress, her lower body wrapped in the style of a mummy, her torso twisting into life. The piece evokes the Greek legend of Galatea, the statue whose sculptor Pygmalion made her so vivid she came to life, a subject that had long appealed to artists as a means of reflecting on their own powers of creation. Yet Fuller was interested in the vitalizing power of art for a much grander social purpose. The still bound feet of Fuller's mummy woman posit antiquity as both a source of pride and yet perhaps a straitjacket from which Black people must break free to be reborn.[38]

The same year, Langston Hughes staked an even bolder historical claim in his poem 'The Negro Speaks of Rivers':

> I bathed in the Euphrates when dawns were young.
> I built my hut near the Congo and it lulled me to sleep.
> I looked upon the Nile and raised the pyramids above it.
> I heard the singing of the Mississippi when Abe Lincoln went down to New Orleans, and I've seen its muddy bosom turn all golden in the sunset.

Hughes' bold equation of the Euphrates and Nile, rivers by which civilization allegedly arose, with the huts of the Congo and finally with the American river which had facilitated forced movement of enslaved Black people frames Black historical experience as encompassing multitudes. Hughes' poem evokes a powerful sense of the continued presence of the past, in the landscape and in the Black body ('my soul has grown deep like the rivers'), whether unmeasurably ancient (the Euphrates reference draws on its association with the Garden of Eden) or very recent.

The work of Black thinkers and activists, from the early nineteenth century onwards associated with the Abolitionist movement, can be seen as a sort of invisible groundwork for reformulating Egypt as the place of origins, one that the mainstream, elite, White American 'universal' narrative of world civilizations appropriated and then erased. American universalism ignored Black ideas about the African past, while purporting to represent a unified American identity.[39] In fact, of course, the universal identity represented by these stories was only universal for some.

Meanwhile, as will be discussed in Chapter 4, real people continued to live in the regions where civilization arose, and people from these regions also formed increasingly sizeable immigrant communities in the United States. An early twentieth-century racial analysis of history might conclude that these were the heirs of the ancient people who once built great monuments and forged the arts of civilization on this same Middle Eastern soil. If that were the case, however, how could Americans, with no racial connection, explain their own appropriation of Middle Eastern heritage? In response to this difficulty, Americans evoked the paradigms of decline and disconnection to sever modern Middle Eastern peoples from the ancestors they wanted as their own. Those living in the countries in which civilization originated did not particularly benefit, and often suffered, from America identifying itself as the true descendant of Middle Eastern ancestors.

The presence of the past in the American Modern

This book spans a period of almost half a century between the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the New York World's Fair of 1939. The period encompasses the end of the Gilded Age and the Progressive Era, the First World War, during which American isolationism eventually ended and the nation assumed a new role in global politics, the prosperity and apparent technological acceleration of the 1920s, the catastrophic economic crash of 1929 and the Great Depression, ending on the cusp of the Second World War. It goes without saying that many things about American self-image and historical consciousness changed across these 50 years. Nonetheless, certain underlying themes remained fairly constant – among them the belief in a unique historical role for the United States.

The earlier part of the period I propose to explore overlaps what Richard Guy Wilson dubbed the 'American Renaissance', which he put between 1877 and 1917. This description grew out of an exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum in 1979, curated by Wilson, Dianne Pilgrim and Richard N. Murray, who together produced its catalogue.[40] Wilson drew on writing of that period comparing America with the Italian Renaissance and identified a movement to create 'an iconography that would represent their nation as the rightful heir to the great themes of civilization'.[41] Wilson is an architectural historian, but he defined the American Renaissance not by specific styles or movements in architecture or art, but rather by its attitude towards the past, in particular a sense that America revived the spirit of Renaissance Italy and, by extension, of ancient Greece and Rome. Yet the ideology of the American Renaissance was also self-consciously modern, fascinated with the idea of progress and with new ideas about evolution as the mechanism of historical change. I would argue that the attitude towards the past that Wilson describes was operative not only in the part of our period that falls within his so-called Renaissance, but into the 1920s and 1930s, even if 'the past' was increasingly broadened beyond the touchstones of classical Greece and Rome and Renaissance Italy.

While there is consistency in the attitude to the past across the decades I consider, and an enduring faith in the power of public art, the preferred style of that art underwent a much more noticeable transformation between the late nineteenth century and the 1920s. The aesthetics associated with modernity changed across this period, without the underlying progressive vision of world history necessarily changing beneath it. The works of art I discuss in the greatest detail, from civic,

educational and government buildings of the 1920s, look immediately strikingly different from the murals and sculptures of the Library of Congress, the premier American Renaissance structure. The National Academy of Sciences in Washington, DC, the Nebraska State Capitol in Lincoln and the Los Angeles Central Library, all designed by the architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, as well as the 1930s Century of Progress fairs in Chicago and New York City, do indeed look, from our vantage point today, 'modern' in a way that Progressive Era civic classicism simply does not.

This transformation in the aesthetics of modernity is noted by Sally M. Promey, in her study of John Singer Sargent's *Triumph of Religion* (1890–1920) mural sequence for the Boston Public Library, another building in Wilson's canon of the American Renaissance. Promey explains how Sargent carefully planned the stylistic variety of his evolutionary sequence of religious development to match the progress he was portraying. As such, the evolution of religion from primitive and hieratic, bound to institutions and ritual, to a subjective and personal religion befitting the modern day and the United States, was reflected in a changing *style*: from stylized, iconographic antiquity to modern-day naturalism. Yet, Promey points out, in the decades that it took Sargent to develop his mural sequence, the meaning of Sargent's chosen final, 'most evolved' style changed: from signalling modernity in the 1890s, the painterly naturalism in which Sargent so excelled had now come to look 'conventional' and old-fashioned. Meanwhile, precisely the qualities that Sargent placed at the very early stages of religion's development (stylization, simplicity, abstraction) now looked 'modern' and 'advanced'.[42] Panels installed in 1895 entitled *Israelites Oppressed* (Figure 1.12) and *Pagan Gods: Astarte* and *Pagan Gods: Moloch* (Figure 1.13) featured iconography derived from Assyrian, Egyptian and Phoenician art. Borrowing the motifs, as well as some of the stylistic features, from this 'hieratic' early art was intended to provide an aesthetic parallel to the role these panels played in Sargent's account of religious evolution. Non-Israelite religion in the Middle East was the most primitive, morally unenlightened phase of religion, and it was intended to look like it. Yet by the time Sargent abandoned his scheme (officially it was unfinished when he died in 1922), this part of the sequence now appeared, stylistically at least, ahead of its time. And as historical references, Egypt, Mesopotamia and other ancient 'Eastern' references also constituted a cutting-edge focus on new, archaeologically recovered information about the material world of antiquity – in contrast to the classicism, filtered through centuries of different European revival styles that often infused civic art of the 1890s.

Figure 1.12 John Singer Sargent, *Israelites Oppressed* (1896). Mural on the north wall of Sargent Hall in the Boston Public Library. Photo credit: Sheryl Lanzel.

Figure 1.13 John Singer Sargent, *Pagan Gods* (1896). Mural on the ceiling of Sargent Hall in the Boston Public Library. Photo credit: Sheryl Lanzel.

Wilson ended his American Renaissance with the entry of the United States into the First World War. The 'Great War' was widely understood in European culture as, in the assessment of Paul Fussell, 'a hideous embarrassment to the prevailing Meliorist myth which had dominated the public consciousness for a century. It reversed the Idea of Progress.'[43] Yet for some American thinkers, as horrifying as it was to see the Europe they knew seemingly fall apart, it was also possible to derive a different message from this collapse. Perhaps *European* civilization had collapsed, undoubtedly a shocking and disturbing development for an America in which high culture, not to mention educational and artistic training, was still so strongly associated with Europe. But this development also opened the way, perhaps, for America to assume the leadership the world needed: in civilization, arts and architecture, archaeology, and diplomacy. US President Woodrow Wilson's decisive role in the creation of the League of Nations proposed to enact this transfer of civilizational custodianship on the world stage, while American institutions were finally breaking free not only from dependence on European training, but also perhaps from an inferiority complex about the superiority of European culture. As we shall see in the final chapter of this study, it was not the First World War, but rather the anxieties raised by the Great Depression that had the most dampening effect on this particular American narrative of historical progress.

The aesthetic quality of modernity

The discussion above has traced some of the ideas that shaped the sense of the United States' place in history and its modernity in relationship to the past. These ideas found concrete form in public art and architecture. It might seem appropriate to go further and offer my working definition of 'the American Modern' up front. It is a term I use both in the aesthetic sense, and in the sense of 'modern American civilization', as Breasted and other historians of the day would have framed it. Yet, as the rest of this book will explore, determining the American Modern was an ongoing process, to which a clear answer might never emerge. As we proceed, an outline of American modernity will emerge, in all its contradictions and complexities. In lieu of a clear definition, then, here I will merely suggest some qualities and images, recurring tropes we can expect to find repeatedly associated with modernity in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America.

America's modernness encompassed elevated domains of investigation like 'science' and organizing concepts like 'progress'. It took concrete

form in icons of invention and technological achievement, such as the aeroplane, the tall building, the automobile and the telephone. It was disseminated through new technologies of reproduction, mechanical or automatic, and associated streamlining. Streamlining was an aesthetic of the 1920s and 1930s, but it was also a business ethos, a modern efficiency identified as distinctly American, exemplified by the Ford Motor Company above all, but also by the speed with which information could be disseminated, images reproduced and ideas communicated. American modernity also involved negotiating a civic arena that was uniquely heterogeneous and diverse in its civilizational influences – although exactly how heterogeneous America could be while retaining a distinctive identity, and exactly which kinds of people were welcome, was a source of disagreement.

As we shall see, some qualities of the American Modern were shared with the ancient world of early civilizations. Modernity, like the earliest antiquity, was also associated with (among other things) light, monumentality, planned architecture and decoration, aesthetic simplicity, the leadership of powerful men and the aesthetic appreciation of an unclothed or thinly clothed body (female or male, in Grecian robes or athlete's belts, or in Egyptian-style shift dresses revealing slim Art Deco curves).

Furthermore, scientific investigation of antiquity was itself very modern, casting light on the dim, unknowable recesses of the past, closing the gap between what is known and comprehended and what lies beyond. Being able to truly see the past was the rare privilege of the citizens of modernity, who might flock to exhibitions and delight in popular works that displayed dinosaurs, early mammals, early humans and ancient urban monuments. Media technologies made it possible to see images in one's own home, in public displays, on screens, in magazines, newspapers and popular books or in lantern slides of visiting public lecturers. The inclusion of exhibitions focusing on the ancient past at world fairs are excellent illustrations of the way 'new' ancient images, artefacts and recreations took their place among celebrations of modern technological and industrial progress, the stated purpose of such fairs.

Being modern also involved understanding and appreciating the weight of the past on the present. Wise moderns understood that investigating human beginnings would be essential to determining how modern humans should live. Breasted repeatedly made this point to justify the importance of the historical project of the Oriental Institute. 'The scattered fragments of man's story,' he explained, needed to be 'brought together by some efficient organization and collected under one

roof before the historian can draw out of them and reveal to modern man the story of his own career.'[44] To know himself, 'modern man' must know his own origins.

Visual culture and the images as arguments

This book explores how the relationship between early civilization and the American Modern was *envisioned*, in a very real sense: in public art and visual culture. The images in public spaces that I explore in this book were (and largely still are) lived with and within, forming the backgrounds to pursuits of lawmaking, commerce and knowledge-sharing. Such images contributed to a discourse about what American modernity should look like and what kind of aesthetics and subjects were appropriate to it. As we shall see, concerns about artistic style were informed by debates about America's relationship to the past.

Art, architecture and visual images in general also played an active role in interpreting and shaping historical and scientific discourse. In this study, I follow premises articulated, with greatest relevance to this situation, by Stephanie Moser regarding the central role of images in making scientific arguments.[45] Writing about archaeology, Moser notes that it has always been an explicitly 'visual science', and explains that representations (specifically of early humans, though the same could be said for any image) 'make arguments in a distinctly visual manner, in a way that verbal text cannot'.[46] Work by Martin Rudwick on reconstructed scenes of the 'deep time' before humans elucidates a similar dynamic. Images became an essential way of making arguments and of communicating them to professional and lay publics.[47] As both Rudwick and Moser stress, visuals had a role in imagining and reconstructing the past that could not be filled by verbal arguments. Images were not extraneous, decorative extras in scholarly texts; they constituted the work of scholarship in themselves.

Disciplines like archaeology, geology and palaeontology might seem to have a very different relationship to the visual than history, and the images I look at are mostly not explicitly technical or scholarly in the way images examined by Moser and Rudwick were. Nonetheless, the same dynamics they identify are evident. Decorative art in civic space was explicitly intended to be educational as well as emotionally and intellectually pleasing. Images of early civilization as part of America's historical lineage functioned as part of wider intellectual discourses around history and identity. They did not merely reflect or take up existing academic

ideas, they were themselves arguments about history and science. This book explores what such images have to say, what arguments they make and what effects they produce.

Images expressed the perspectives of their authors and their commissioners, while also leaving themselves open to diverse readings by the various publics which might encounter them. I am interested both in meanings that were intended by an image's makers and those that arose through other processes as they were created and received. As Constance Clark has argued with regards to scientific illustrations and museum displays, viewers' misinterpretations and 'creative misreadings' are highly illuminating.[48] Unintended meanings might be taken to reflect assumptions held by the artist who created an image, perhaps not a stated intention, but a manifestation of something important: racial hierarchies in images that their authors explicitly avowed as merely showing racial diversity, for instance (as was the case with James Earle Fraser's statue of Theodore Roosevelt on horseback flanked by half-nude American Indian and African men on foot, which until recently stood outside the American Museum of Natural History). Leaving aside unacknowledged assumptions on the part of the creator, meanings also arise through the process of audience reception. These meanings too reflect wider cultural knowledge, but might also incorporate readings that arise from accidental juxtapositions, from contexts that have arisen or continue to arise since works were created. Rudwick describes how, regardless of the original intent of their creators, the 'genre' of a chronologically arranged sequence of images from the past 'later became a powerful and explicit form of visual rhetoric in the service of evolutionary theories; and it has continued to be used for that purpose throughout the twentieth century, in popular science books, television programs, and museum displays'.[49] As Rudwick shows, this is in part because such sequences made it possible for people to understand and accept the idea of evolutionary change over time. Images led the way. Monique Scott's penetrating study of how museum audiences in the early twenty-first century interpreted exhibitions on human evolution indicates that the narrative power of such sequences is now difficult to escape. Visitors to the American Museum of Natural History's exhibition on human origins, 'with few exceptions', read dioramas showing early humans as a narratives of progress and advancement – not only from ape to human, but 'from humanity's darkest origins in Africa to humanity's culturally sophisticated peak in the Nordic features and superior cave art and artifacts of European cultures' – even while curators claimed they intended no such meanings and did not intend the separate dioramas to form a narrative.[50]

We have already seen an example of an image whose intentional and unintentional implications are equally valuable in Franklin Webster Smith's rendering of his proposal for an aggrandized Washington. While I am interested in Smith's project as he understood it, and as it was received at the time, in my own analysis of this architectural rendering, I pointed out the unique prominence and clarity of the Egyptian and Assyrian pavilions. This element of the image is essentially accidental, a mere byproduct of a practical decision about architectural perspective. Yet it is nonetheless relevant to our understanding of how origins and earliness become significant in the discourse around civilization. The artist may not have intended to make any special point about Egypt and Assyria themselves, but that point found its way into the image regardless – at least as I, coming to it with my own research agenda, read it. The image leads the way to a historical interpretation in which Middle Eastern origins are highly visible and uniquely important.

The status of public art

The above discussion indicates that images deserve to be taken seriously as part of a larger historical discourse. This would not have been a controversial assertion to the people who created the images in this book. Most of the works I look at here were taken very seriously in their own time. In the 1890s–1930s, public decorative art had a high status as a practice of special intellectual substance and civic importance.[51] Once again, Promey's work on John Singer Sargent's *Triumph of Religion* mural in the Boston Public Library provides a useful illustration. Promey shows that Sargent believed that executing such a commission would raise his, already very high, critical reputation. Sargent shared with his critics the sense that decorative mural painting was both more worthy – the creation of American 'monumental civic art', as Promey puts it – and more intellectually rigorous than the kind of painting Sargent usually did.[52] While decorative artists below the rank of established masters like Sargent sometimes suffered from anonymity, the substance of their work was not considered frivolous.

This is a perspective that might surprise us today, when there is perhaps a note of unintentional kitsch in this art of a bygone era with different architectural and civic priorities. Sargent's murals for the Boston Public Library are considered a rather odd footnote in his career, while his portraits are among the leading treasures of the museums and galleries that hold them. The elaborate didacticism of civic art, its

laboured symbolism or overly literal narrative sequences, today may seem unsophisticated and painfully earnest. But in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, decorative art for public buildings was a serious task, a contribution towards the construction of civic identity. As Sargent saw it, it was also intellectually respectable because it required serious research, as well as artistic skill.

For my purposes, the significance of visual sources is also enhanced by the importance that was assigned to *ancient* art and architecture in the history of civilization. In many accounts, monuments seem to encapsulate in themselves 'civilization': they are the concrete form that civilization takes. In progressive accounts of civilizational development, producing art and architecture, particularly on a monumental scale, was taken as a sign that an advanced state of civilization had been achieved. Given this association between art and architecture, and Civilization with a capital C, it is easy to see why public art being created for modern American monuments also mattered so much.

Art that illustrated America's role in world history was also of *moral* importance – as indeed was the study of history more broadly. History, in educational contexts and beyond, was considered to bestow moral benefits on those who studied it.[53] The mechanism by which history did this did not necessarily need to be elaborated; it was widely accepted. Learning history shaped character, private and public, personal and national. The famous aphorism of the Spanish American philosopher George Santayana of course springs to mind: 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'[54] But sometimes the goal *was* to repeat the past: its glories, its great men, its great art and architecture. History could teach how certain predictable historical processes might work – evolutionary and progressive history, which dominated in American institutions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, especially so. Societies, peoples, civilizations, ran along predictable paths.

Furthermore, being aware of America's place in history was part of an education for citizenship. As the country and its civic leaders grappled with the question of how to 'Americanize' the many immigrants who came to its shores in the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, civic education was promoted as a remedy for potentially dangerous heterogeneity. Shared historical touchstones, shared public witnessing, a heritage that was simultaneously universal and uniquely American, could unite an increasingly diverse populace.[55] A successful modern society would be improved by its knowledge of the past, whether or not it was possible to pinpoint specific lessons from

history it must learn. It would also be united by sharing a vision of history (one largely drafted by White, Christian elites).

Art in civic institutions, for public displays and reproduced on the page was understood as having not only a responsibility to educate, but also a special facility for the task. As Victoria Cain has explored, early twentieth-century theories of visual education emphasized the value of the eyes as a more direct conduit to the brain, and promoted the benefits of the concrete over the abstract as teaching aids.[56] Such theories, and practices that derived from them such as 'picture study' and 'object lessons', held immense sway among professionals in education, as well as museum and gallery administration.[57] Influential psychologists like G. Stanley Hall, who in 1900 announced that the United States was in a 'picture age', argued for the value of images as a means of educating the public, youthful and otherwise.[58] The 'picture study' movement in schools was immensely popular from the 1890s through the 1920s. Mary Ann Stankiewicz argues that a number of factors led to the rise of this movement, including concerns about educating increasing numbers of immigrant children in the public school system.[59] While the picture study movement was concerned specifically with cultivating art appreciation and appropriate aesthetic taste, its basic principles spread beyond the study of art. As Hall emphasized, pictures could be used to teach any subject – history, science and literature included.[60]

Under these theories, we can also see public art as uniquely democratic, more easily understood than literature, immediately effective in the viewer's brain and potentially available to a wide general public. Writing on 'The Museums of the Future' in 1889, G. Brown Goode, assistant secretary at the Smithsonian Institution and museum director at the US National Museum, posited that: 'The museums of the future, in this democratic land, should be adapted to the needs of the mechanic, the factory operator, the day laborer, the salesman, and the clerk, as much as to those of the professional man and the man of leisure.'[61] Goode reminded his audience of 'an Oriental saying that the distance between ear and eye is small, but the difference between hearing and seeing very great'. Under the conditions of modernity, this proverbial wisdom was truer than ever:

> In this busy, critical, and skeptical age, each man is seeking to know all things, and life is too short for many words. The eye is used more and more, the ear less and less, and in the use of the eye, descriptive writing is set aside for pictures, and pictures in their turn are replaced by actual objects. In the school-room the

> diagram, the blackboard, and the object-lesson, unknown thirty years ago, are universally employed. The public lecturer uses the stereopticon to re-enforce his words, the editor illustrates his journals and magazines with engravings a hundred-fold more numerous and elaborate than his predecessor thought needful, and the merchant and manufacturer recommend their wares by means of vivid pictographs.[62]

The eye was a democratic organ of knowing, and modern technology and cultural practices meant that the average person's vision was better honed than ever through extensive practice. Franklin Webster Smith, with whom we began this chapter, quoted at length from Goode's vision of the future museum in his *Prospectus* for his National Galleries. Throughout the text, he repeatedly reminded his readers (US Senators receiving his petition) of the educational value of his galleries by referencing the presumably well-known power of sight. His galleries would fulfil 'the demands of modern education for *object teaching*' and 'fill an absolute void in the educational resources of the citizens of the United States'.[63] He shared with many other administrators, architects and politicians the belief that civic space should provide citizens with opportunities to learn.

My focus on visual sources is justified, then, not only by their inherent interest for intellectual and cultural history, or their aesthetic value and interest as art, but also by the perception at the time these works were created that such sources did indeed constitute especially significant interventions in public life and space. Works that I consider in this book were understood as aesthetically and intellectually elevated, a valuable part of creating civic identity, and an especially successful, immediate and intuitive means of educating a wide public in America's national story.

The central characters

In order to pursue the themes articulated above, I focus on the work of a small number of individuals. Central to this study is James Henry Breasted, whom I have already introduced as the author of a particular definition of early civilization. Breasted was born to a middle-class family in the small town of Rockford, Illinois, in 1865. Clearly brilliant in a range of academic areas, he tried various educational routes before finding his way to Berlin, where he earned a doctorate in Egyptology in 1894. Returning to the US, he became the country's first professional

Egyptologist at the newly founded University of Chicago. Although he built his career on close, careful study of ancient Egyptian texts, travelling down the Nile to copy inscriptions directly, he found his true metier as a public intellectual and institutional founder. His 1905 *History of Egypt* was a dense scholarly work that nonetheless made the subject more comprehensible than most equivalent treatments and solidified his place as an expert of unique standing in American academia. His greatest work of popularization, which we shall turn to many times in this study, was *Ancient Times*, published in 1916, as already mentioned, a textbook for high school students that became a crossover hit with the adult public. It found fans particularly among notable wealthy and powerful Americans, including the various officials of the Rockefeller foundations and John D. Rockefeller Jr. and his wife Abigail Rockefeller themselves. The admiration for the book from these powerful quarters, and the sweeping yet accessible vision of the ancient Middle Eastern and Mediterranean world it offered, was the reason the Oriental Institute was funded. From its founding in 1919 until his death in 1935, Breasted nurtured the work of the institute to recover the traces of 'mankind's rise' and produced more influential accounts of human history, notably *The Dawn of Conscience* (1933), which concerned itself with the spiritual and moral development of civilizations.[64]

Breasted's best friend, confidante and mentor in the ways of academic politics was the solar astronomer George Ellery Hale. While Hale's career had little to do with history or early civilization, he played an important role in establishing progressive history within scientific institutions, part of a career-long interest in forging deeper connections between the sciences and humanities. A scion of wealth and privilege, Hale was born in 1868 to a Chicago elevator tycoon, a boom business in the great skyscraper city. Hale is a major figure in the history of astronomy, having founded a series of observatories, each at the forefront of international science then and ever since (Yerkes in Wisconsin, opened in 1897, and Mount Wilson in 1908 and Palomar in 1928, both in California). He had a genius for institution-founding and a talent for eliciting philanthropic contributions from the upper echelons of the American elite. He passed his tips for pursuing these goals onto Breasted. The two commiserated over professional and academic setbacks and delighted in each other's academic work. Like many Americans, Hale was fascinated by ancient Egypt, and travelled to Egypt multiple times, including as part of tours intended to improve his fragile mental health. Because of his connections with Breasted, Hale was present at the opening of one of the chambers of Tutankhamun's Tomb in 1923.[65]

In their role as founders and promoters of educational institutions, Breasted and Hale both worked with the architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, whose buildings in Washington, DC, Nebraska and Los Angeles is another axis around which this study revolves. Goodhue has long been recognized, if perhaps popularly under-appreciated, as a key figure in the development of American modernism.[66] Born in Pomfret, Connecticut, in 1869, he traced his ancestry back to the *Mayflower*. Raised in slightly reduced circumstances by artistically inclined parents, he became an architect through apprenticeship to the firm of Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell (as a young draughtsman there, Goodhue prepared many of the illustrations that appeared in Smith's imaginary Washington). After his apprenticeship, Goodhue established himself as a leading architect of the Gothic Revival in his Boston- and later New York-based partnership with Ralph Adams Cram, which began in 1893 and lasted roughly through 1914. In Boston in the 1890s, he and Cram were part of a young bohemian set, the Boston Visionists, who worshipped at the altar of William Morris and pursued printing, photography, literature, art and architecture.[67] Over the decades, Goodhue became a respected, much honoured establishment architect even as his style became ever more daring and unconventional. His architectural approach reflected his interest in history and travel, and his talent for decoration, drawing and detail. When his career was cut short by an untimely heart attack in 1924 (the very evening he had dinner with Howard Carter, excavator of the Tomb of Tutankhamun, passing through New York on his American lecture tour), he was in the process of establishing an inventive new style which would profoundly shape American Art Deco; it is his works in this style which I will discuss in detail in this book.

Goodhue engaged seriously with the question of how historical precedent should be employed to establish an appropriate architecture for America, avoiding mere revivalism, yet respecting fundamental principles apparent in antiquity. One of the principles he took from ancient architecture concerned the central importance of decoration. For this purpose, he considered his decorative artists true collaborators, rather than employees. His two great associates in this regard were the sculptor Lee Lawrie and, on his last few commissions, the muralist Hildreth Meière.

Lawrie was born in 1877 in the most straitened circumstances of any of the figures considered here, the poor child of a single mother who emigrated with him from Germany to Chicago when he was four. Like Goodhue, Lawrie learned on the job, serving from the time he was a young teenager in sculptors' studios in Chicago and working for whichever

sculptor needed him at the Chicago Columbian Exposition. There he learned from some of the giants of late nineteenth-century civic art and befriended members of the upcoming generation in the profession. From his humble beginnings, he rose to a position as one of the most respected and distinctive architectural sculptors in the country, even as his name remained largely unknown to a wider public – something the retiring, private Lawrie accepted cheerfully as the lot of the architectural sculptor. Lawrie was content to count himself as part of a long lineage of ancient, anonymous craftsmen. He took his responsibilities as a sculptor of civic art very seriously, carrying out extensive research for appropriate historical references, and seeking appropriate symbols and styles that could be transformed for the modern contexts that he worked on. At the peak of his career in the 1920s and 1930s, he was regarded as an especially 'modern' sculptor, making his greatest impact on buildings that defined American Art Deco, including his work with Goodhue and, probably most famously, on Raymond Hood's Rockefeller Center, where his hulking Atlas statue was installed in 1937.[68]

Hildreth Meière was born in 1892, into an artistically inclined family in the Flushing area of Queens, and grew up in New York City and San Francisco. She studied for a while in Paris and then in New York's Art Students League, in Chicago and San Francisco. Her work on Goodhue's National Academy of Sciences and Nebraska Capitol made her reputation, at a relatively young age. As with Lawrie, her confident personal style as an artist was foundational to establishing the aesthetics of Art Deco. She too became a respected, establishment member of her artistic profession, and an innovator of technique, her practice of 'mural' encompassing a range of mediums and materials. Also like Lawrie, she considered historical research a central part of her role as a decorative artist, and thought carefully about how to reconcile artistic precedent with the demands of new kinds of buildings.[69]

These people and the works they created are the core sources for this study, but I shall also explore many other works of American art and architecture, other exhibitions, and other popular and scholarly sources that concern American civilization and its earliest origins.

Structure

In the next chapter of this book, I shall explore theories of origins, inheritance and descent in American scholarship. The idea of a 'civilizational inheritance' from the distant past both echoed and countered

the preoccupations of the eugenics movement and race science. These movements had tremendous cultural visibility and a serious influence in American academic institutions in the early twentieth century. I focus on James Henry Breasted and his best friend George Ellery Hale, whose own concept of evolution influenced Breasted and justified the inclusion of early civilization in institutions of natural science. In Chapter 3, I shall turn from the constitution of ideas in scientific and academic institutions to the visualization of progress, evolution and inheritance in civic art. We shall see how 'American Renaissance' interpretations of America's place in world history remained remarkably consistent through the 1920s and 1930s, as scholars and artists perfected forms I call 'the Progress' and 'the Torch-Passing' to make civilizational development visible.

In Chapter 4, I shall consider how the reality of the lands where civilization allegedly began was encountered by American audiences and scholars as they became more interested in and engaged with the contemporary Middle East, a place which was often imagined as existing 'out of time'. Breasted's exploration of the region for the Oriental Institute, and his involvement in Middle Eastern heritage politics, show how American academic discourse provided a justification for American stewardship of the Eastern past and American appropriation of the legacy of civilization – sometimes over the protests and objections of modern Middle Easterners. Americans had to confront not only the awkwardness of surviving Middle Easterners, dwelling in the lands that were supposed to be, in some sense, America's ancestral home, but with the equally thorny problems of 'survivals' in their own nation. Chapter 5 will consider how White Euro-Americans dealt with the troubling existence of peoples with ancient origins evidently rooted in the North American continent. How were American Indians, a people whom White Americans liked to imagine existed outside of the progress of historical time, to be accounted for in a universal narrative of progressive civilizational rise? Often, I argue, American Indians were associated with the ancient Middle East through elision and comparison – and thus enfolded within a narrative that explained away their continued existence as mere relics of the past.

In Chapter 6, we return to an institution whose importance to American scholarship has already been discussed in Chapter 2, the National Academy of Sciences, whose permanent home in Washington, DC, opened in 1924, after struggles between the architect, Goodhue, and the Federal Commission of Fine Arts to approve his Orientalizing design. The building and its decorations explored the intersection of East and West, locating the invention of modern science in a meeting of

Greek and Egyptian culture. Chapter 7 likewise concerns the expression of American modernity and its ancient roots in a few significant public buildings designed by Goodhue, the Nebraska Capitol and the Los Angeles Central Library. In these structures, Goodhue, Lawrie and Meière, with their collaborator, academic Hartley Burr Alexander, who served as 'symbologist' for these projects, concocted complicated iconographic schemes which masterfully realized the storytelling potential of civic art. Architecturally innovative and drawing on an extensive range of historical and stylistic references, these buildings truly were American monuments: pyramids on the prairie and in the urban landscape.

In the epilogue, I will look at how world fairs in the 1930s introduced dazzling new visions of the future and an ultramodernity that took the concept of sublime simplicity, often associated with the ancient East, to extremes, at the same time that the Great Depression shook the faith of progressive historians like Breasted in America's role as civilization's apotheosis. Finally, the epilogue will consider how these questions of American origins in the ancient past continue to impose themselves in the contemporary world, and the continued conviction that our origins mean something about our present. American institutions, exhibitions and narratives in public space today still reflect the conviction that knowing where the world's civilization began has vital implications for what modern America is.

Notes

1 Smith, *National Galleries*, iv; Smith, *Design and Prospectus*, 29. See Collins, 'Casting the ruins', 309–14.
2 Smith, *National Galleries*, v.
3 Smith, *National Galleries*, ix.
4 Fink, *History of the Smithsonian*, 53.
5 See Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 183–90, 113–14; Ambridge, 'History and narrative', 12–17; Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 213–15, 222–8.
6 Breasted and Robinson, *Outlines of European History*.
7 Moore, 'Our national monument'; Reid, 'Representing ancient Egypt', 205–10. Works from this building are discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.
8 Regal, *Battle*, 4.
9 On the idea of a Western 'dual heritage' from these two traditions, see Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 176–7.
10 Tait, 'Wisdom of Egypt'.
11 See Cole, *Napoleon in Egypt*; Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*; Reid, *Whose Pharaohs?*.
12 Said, *Orientalism*, 84, 86–7.
13 The most comprehensive work on the rediscovery of Assyrian sites is Larsen, *Conquest of Assyria*. For a short overview, see Larsen, 'Archaeological exploration'.
14 On Egypt and Mesopotamia in imperial and European national self-image, Kevin M. McGeough's multivolume *Ancient Near East in the Nineteenth Century* is stunningly comprehensive, covering elite and popular reclamations, receptions and transformations in

Europe and North America. Other key texts on Mesopotamia are Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*; Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*; Brusius, 'Misfit objects'; McGeough, 'Assyrian style and Victorian materiality'; Kertai, 'News from the East'. The aesthetics of Egypt have an even longer relationship to European projections of imperial power. An excellent overview of the phenomenon of Egyptian reception in the West is Moser, 'Reconstructing ancient worlds', 1281–8; see also Hassan, 'Imperialist appropriations', and wider studies of Egyptian reception in Western art and architecture Humbert and Price, *Imhotep Today*; Humbert et al., *Egyptomania*; Curl, *Egyptian Revival*.

15 Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 113–14.

16 Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 184–95. On the construction of this 'positivist' ideology of progress and its role in the 'evasive banality' of nineteenth-century American culture, see Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 7–26.

17 Marchand, *German Orientalism*, 237.

18 Useful resources for understanding the big picture of Mesopotamian history and how it was reconstructed include Van de Mieroop, *Cuneiform Texts*; Collins, *Sumerians*; articles in Radner and Robson (eds), *Oxford Handbook*; Nissen and Heine, *From Mesopotamia to Iraq*; Bahrani, *Mesopotamia*.

19 Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display*, 182–3.

20 Accessible introductory studies to Egypt and the history of Egyptology are too numerous to name. For a sense of Egypt's ancient history and culture and the process of its reconstruction, see various chapters in Shaw and Bloxam (eds), *Oxford Handbook*; Davies and Laboury (eds), *Oxford Handbook*; Baines, *Visual and Written Culture*; Hawass, *Great Book*.

21 Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 84–91; Wyke and Montserrat, 'Glamour girls'; Schnitzler, 'Hijacked images'.

22 See Manassa Darnell, 'New Kingdom'; Tyldesley, *Egypt's Golden Empire*.

23 See Stevenson, *Scattered Finds*, 145–80; Collins and McNamara, *Discovering Tutankhamun*, 62–87; Fryxell, 'Tutankhamen, Egyptomania, and temporal enchantment'; Meskell, *Object Worlds*.

24 Biblical archaeology was especially important in American academia. The archaeology of Israel and Palestine continues to be shaped by how this discipline was formulated in early to mid-twentieth-century American institutions. As Burke O. Long argues, the visual and material product of biblical archaeology was often a sort of geography, a mapping of physical terrain onto historical, literary and theological references. See Long, 'Picturing biblical pasts,' and further discussion in his *Imagining the Holy Land*. See also Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 185–95.

25 It should be noted as a point of interest that many of the visual references that appeared most frequently in modern reimaginings were not, relatively speaking, all that 'early' for the region. Both the Egyptian New Kingdom and the Assyrian and Babylonian empires date from long after the periods that key markers of civilization were allegedly being 'invented' there: monumental architecture, writing, kingship, all of which might more reasonably be associated with the fourth and third millennium.

26 Ross, 'Historical consciousness'.

27 See Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 185.

28 Breasted wrote a number of articles in 1919 and 1920 that delineate his central claims for the importance of his field and his vision of how the study of early civilizations should be pursued. These include his description of his practical plans for the institute, spelled out in a 1919 article, 'The Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago', a three-part series for *Scientific Monthly* on 'The origins of civilization', 'The place of the Near Orient in the career of man and the task of the American Orientalist' and 'The new past'. From a little later, his articles 'The New Crusade' and 'The rise of man' fulfil the same purpose.

29 See White, 'Frederick Jackson Turner'.

30 Breasted, *Ancient Times* (1935 edition), 131.

31 Reid, 'Anxieties about race'.

32 See Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 240–1, and discussion in Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 197, 202. On this 'Hittite face', see Wiedemann, *Am Anfang*, 195–9; Morris-Reich, 'Photography in economies'.

33 Glassberg, 'History and the public', 958.

34 See Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution'.

35 Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 101.
36 Much has been written on this topic, most comprehensively, Scott Trafton's *Egypt Land*. Wilson Jeremiah Moses' *Afrotopia* is another comprehensive history of intellectual currents in Black American popular historical consciousness since the eighteenth century; see especially 23–4, 44–6. Other good starting points, relevant summaries of this tradition or interesting case studies include Howe, *Afrocentrism*, 122–55; Shavit, *History in Black*; Farebrother, 'Thinking in hieroglyphics'; Bruce, 'Ancient Africa'; Marx, 'Forgotten jungle songs'.
37 Adeleke, 'Afrocentric Intellectuals', 206.
38 On this statue, see Ater, 'Making history'; Harrison, 'Diasporadas', 173–5.
39 The very fact that Egypt is in Africa is obscured in the normal treatment of Egypt as part of an ancient East oriented towards the Mediterranean and western Asia.
40 Wilson et al., *American Renaissance*.
41 Wilson, 'Reflections', 69.
42 Promey, *Painting Religion*, 205, see also 53–61.
43 Fussell, *Great War*, 8.
44 Breasted, 'Oriental Institute', 200. When Breasted sought further funding from his patron, John D. Rockefeller Jr., he framed the Oriental Institute's work as equivalent to Rockefeller-funded medical research; 25.10.1935 JHB to John D. Rockefeller Jr., Box 32, JHBP, ISAC.
45 See especially Moser, *Ancestral Images* and 'Reconstructing ancient worlds'; see also Smiles and Moser (eds), *Envisioning the Past*.
46 Moser, 'Visual representation', 184.
47 Rudwick, *Scenes from Deep Time*.
48 Clark, 'Evolution for John Doe', 1278–9 and *God*—or *Gorilla*, 28–30.
49 Rudwick, *Scenes from Deep Time*, 248–9.
50 Scott, *Rethinking Evolution*, 62–70; see also Scott and Giusti, 'Designing human evolution', 50–2.
51 Wilson, 'Architecture', 70 esp. n. 4. He quotes the architect and critic Henry Van Brunt on the positive example of the Chicago Columbian Exposition, positing that 'to decorate architecture has ever been, and must ever be, the highest function of sculptor or painter'; Van Brunt, 'The Columbian Exposition', 584.
52 Promey, *Painting Religion*, 30–6.
53 Regal, *Battle*, 25–8. Steven Conn gives an example of the esteem accorded to history within the arts in the early nineteenth century: 'Students drilling with Charles Peirce's 1811 primer on manners and morals were asked this question: "What are the most esteemed paintings?" and were to give this answer, "Those representing historical events"'; Conn, *History's Shadow*, 37.
54 Santayana, *Life of Reason*, 284.
55 This idea was especially prevalent in writings about public libraries and particularly about immigrant children's use of these institutions. See Promey, *Painting Religion*, 160–4. Photographs from the Los Angeles Public Library's collection, taken outside the Central Library's children's wing in 1928, feature children from the city's many immigrant communities in their respective 'traditional' dresses displaying placards of the languages represented in the library's collections. See the Digital Collections of the Los Angeles Public Library, Eyre Powell Chamber of Commerce Collection, order number 00043248.
56 Cain, 'Direct medium', 288–9; see also Cain, 'Attraction, attention, and desire', and Sommer, 'Seriality', 462.
57 Saettler, *Evolution*, 123–76, see esp. 140–5.
58 Hall, 'Ministry of Pictures', 243.
59 Stankiewicz, 'A picture age'. See also Peter Smith, who calls the movement 'typically American, an attempt to deal with art in a democratic manner', *History of American Art Education*, 79 and 80–4. See also analysis in Promey, *Painting Religion*, 283–7.
60 Hall, 'Ministry of Pictures', 387.
61 Goode, *Museums of the Future*, 432.
62 Goode, *Museums of the Future*, 427.
63 Smith, *Prospectus*, iv, ix.
64 Breasted's life and work has received more attention than most academics of a relatively obscure subject, in part due to the devotion of ISAC (formerly the Oriental Institute) to its own history. Not long after his death, he was the subject of a flattering biography by his son Charles Breasted, *Pioneer to the Past*. The definitive work on his life is the extremely comprehensive

biography-cum-intellectual history by Jeffrey Abt, *American Egyptologist*. Other critical perspectives on his work and his biography are by Lindsay Ambridge, 'History and narrative', a thesis which focuses on his popular books, and Kathleen Sheppard, *Tea on the Terrace*, 121–6 and 173–82, and 'On His Majesty's Service'. Several volumes produced by ISAC in recent years also provide background and context for his work; see Emberling, *Pioneers to the Past*; van den Hout (ed.), *Discovering New Pasts*. Some of Breasted's letters have been published: Larson, *Letters from James Henry Breasted*; Sheppard (ed.), *My Dear Miss Ransom*.

65 See Wright, *George Ellery Hale*; Wright et al., *Legacy of George Ellery Hale*; Kevles, 'George Ellery Hale'; DeVorkin, 'George Ellery Hale's internationalism'; Sheehan and Osterbrock, 'Hale's "Little Elf"'.

66 See Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue* and *Caltech's Architectural Heritage*; Oliver, *Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue*; Whitaker (ed.), *Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue*; Crawford, 'Bertram Goodhue'; Gage, 'Compacting civic and sacred'.

67 See Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue*, 24–37; O'Gorman, 'Either in books'; Ziolkowski, *Juggler of Notre Dame*, 149–87; Gillespie, 'Envisioning the Golden Dawn'.

68 Simard, 'Titans of Rockefeller Center', 151–6. There is surprisingly little work on Lawrie himself. Most studies of Goodhue's buildings, cited above and in relevant chapters later on, include a great deal of discussion of Lawrie's contributions. Lawrie's papers in the Library of Congress include an unpublished memoir, 'Boy wanted', as well as other published and unpublished writings on sculpture and architectural collaboration. On Lawrie himself, see Garvey, 'Lee O. Lawrie'; Harm, *Lee Lawrie's Prairie Deco*.

69 See Brawer and Skolnik, *Art Deco Murals*; International Hildreth Meière Association.

2
Inheritance: how did civilization come to America?

In 1916, Theodore Roosevelt, who was by then seven years out of the White House and four years out of his presidency of the American Historical Association, was raving about two new books that told sweeping tales of human history and its relationship to the modern world. 'It is a capital book; in purpose, in vision, in grasp of the facts our people most need to realize,' he wrote of one.[1] 'The best book of its kind that has ever been written on the subject,' he wrote of another.[2] The first book on Teddy Roosevelt's night table was Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race: or The Racial Basis of European History*, 'an attempt to elucidate the meaning of history in terms of race',[3] a foundational text of American scientific racism and notoriously the occasion for a fan letter from a young Adolf Hitler who allegedly called it 'my bible'.[4] The second was James Henry Breasted's *Ancient Times*: *A history of the early world: An introduction to the study of ancient history and the career of early man*. A high school history textbook, the immensely readable, lavishly illustrated volume was a crossover hit. Both books distilled academic scholarship for the public in accessible language.

Yet they conveyed very different visions of how human history happened. Grant offered a scientific explanation of history as race conflict and modern social problems as entirely racial. Breasted portrayed civilization as that which 'grew out of earlier inventions', each of which 'would have been impossible without the inventions which came before it'. His book was intended 'to tell the story of how mankind gained all these things and built up great nations which struggled among themselves for leadership, and then weakened and fell. This story forms what we call ancient history.'[5] For Breasted, civilization passed through technological and cultural diffusion, not through the passing down of hereditary 'germ plasm'.[6]

And yet, for Breasted himself, Grant's vision was a compelling one: he sent Grant collegial notes for improving future editions of *Passing*, which quibbled with various aspects of Grant's early history but took no issue with the central premises of the study. Grant graciously received Breasted's polite notes; not an academic himself, he was always happy to rely on the expertise of scholars from the many fields his book touched on to present the best possible work he could.[7] As we have seen, for no less a taste-maker than Teddy Roosevelt, both *Passing* and *Ancient Times* were equally exciting works of big picture history. How could such different visions of historical inheritance be enjoyed by the same person? What did these visions have to do with each other?

The fact that both these books were recommended by a former president in the same year may seem like an odd bit of trivia. But in this chapter I will show that it is anything but culturally trivial. Instead it is a telling indication of how much hunger there was among an educated but non-expert reading public for sweeping explanations of the past which contextualized present-day American society. I will consider how Breasted and his friend and fellow academic, the solar astronomer George Ellery Hale imagined the transfer of civilization from the ancient past to the modern world and how this vision overlapped with, contradicted and sidestepped other historical and scientific discourses in vogue at the time. It is necessary to understand the question of civilization's origins and progress in the context of pervasive discussions in the early twentieth century about race and hereditary qualities, and the control of key scientific institutions by proponents of the idea that race explained everything–proponents whose social and professional lives overlapped with Hale's and Breasted's. George Ellery Hale, we must remember, was an astronomer with little professional reason to care about the study of civilization. But as an energetic administrator and a wealthy, well-connected man with a talent for founding and running academic and research institutions, he was a key figure in setting a wider scientific research agenda for the early twentieth-century US. He firmly believed that Breasted's work on 'the rise of man' and the development of human societies should be a part of that agenda and did his best to funnel attention and money towards it.

I will also explore here the ideas and activities of two exemplary figures among the crowd of thinkers for whom human history could only be understood as a story of race: Grant, and his dear friend and colleague Henry Fairfield Osborn, president of the American Museum of Natural History (of which Grant was a trustee) from 1908 until 1933. Osborn wrote extensively about the origins of man and used the exhibitions of the American Museum to promote the idea of race as a significant

explanatory force in the past, and with it his belief in eugenics. We will see how Breasted and Hale understood evolution and civilization in a way that shared much of the same framework and vocabulary with the race scientists while expanding the meaning of these concepts. In the process, they helped to define America as a great melting pot of world (or even universal) history.

Past as prologue: Madison Grant and Henry Fairfield Osborn's history

Grant's *Passing* described itself as a history of Europe, but it was also very explicitly a book about contemporary America. For Grant, past was prologue, and his history, which reached back into the Eolithic, was relevant because of how it illuminated contemporary social problems. Amalgamating previous work on race from the nineteenth century up to his present day, Grant told the story of his 'great race', a subset of the wider European race which he called the Nordics (his own term), characterized by long skulls, impressive cranial capacity and 'splendid fighting and moral qualities'.[8] Nordics excelled in harsh terrain but quickly became enfeebled in the warm atmosphere of the tropics.[9] As Jonathan Peter Spiro notes, they were the greatest and yet also a curiously fragile race, much like the great American elk and bison Grant had spent his earlier efforts as a conservationist campaigning to protect.[10] The Nordic branch was distinguished from and superior to the other European subtypes, the Alpine and the Mediterranean. It was thanks to Nordics that America had developed as it had, since most 'native Americans' (though certainly not, in the contemporary sense, *Native* Americans) were of Nordic blood. Grant positioned America as the last frontier of European civilization and gave explicit arguments for how to stem the 'passing' referenced in his title. At times his pronouncements take on an uncanny note of prophecy. Grant advocated 'a rigid system of selection through the elimination of those who are weak or unfit' from the germ plasm, and foresaw a sterilization programme that could 'be applied to an ever-widening circle of social discards, beginning always with the criminal, the diseased, and the insane, and extending gradually to types which may be called weaklings rather than defectives, and perhaps ultimately to worthless race types'.[11] The book was entered into evidence by the defence at the Nuremberg Trial of Karl Brandt, Hitler's personal physician and head of the National Socialist euthanasia programme, to show that his ideas were widespread and well accepted outside of the Third Reich.[12]

Passing is a history book in the sense that it does concern itself with the past development and triumphs of Grant's 'great race', but it is chiefly about how heredity works and how modern America should react to this new scientific knowledge. The cutting-edge science of human heredity conjured the methodologies and imagery of the ancient historian, specifically the Egyptologist: 'Every human being,' Grant explains, 'unites in himself the blood of thousands of ancestors, stretching back through thousands of years, superimposed upon a prehuman inheritance of still greater antiquity, and the face and body of every living man offer an intricate mass of hieroglyphs that science will some day learn to read and interpret.'[13] The metaphor is suggestive: both ancient inscriptions (which Breasted devoted his field career to preserving before they disappeared from the Egyptian landscape) and modern human bodies preserved messages from the deep past that scholars could learn to decipher.

The prologue to Grant's *Passing* was written by his friend Osborn, one of the most eminent public faces of science in the United States. Osborn's own racism and eugenic views have been widely noted by historians of science, though many of them have seen his friendship with Grant as incidental and his own beliefs as significantly less extreme than Grant's.[14] Grant's biographer Spiro presents a different picture: Grant and Osborn dined together at least once a week and spoke every day for almost all of their adult lives. They were virtual alter egos in many of their professional endeavours.[15] Osborn was trained as a vertebrate palaeontologist but, for most of his tenure as president of the American Museum, he was largely occupied with questions of palaeoanthropology and the origins of man. Like Grant, he saw the ancient past as urgently important to understanding modern American racial problems. Famously, Osborn used the exhibits of the American Museum, especially the Hall of the Age of Man (discussed further in Chapter 6), to promote the importance of race science and argue for the separateness and difference of human races, all in the hope of promoting an uplifting eugenic message.[16] Like Breasted and Grant, Osborn was also an author of popular nonfiction which reached deep into the human and prehuman past to explain the modern world.

For various reasons, Osborn had deduced that the origin of humankind was to be found in Central Asia, most likely the Gobi Desert in Mongolia.[17] As Brian Regal shows, Osborn was not alone here. Theories of Central Asian origins had a particularly long history among German academics, where they accorded with a long-standing scholarly fascination with India and Central Asia.[18] In the early twentieth century, Central Asia had its greatest currency with followers of the spiritual

movement Theosophism, whose founder Helena Blavatsky claimed to have received her revelations from hidden monks in Tibet.[19] Arguably the focus on Central Asia also answered an anti-Semitic desire to divorce human origins from the lands of and the textual traditions of the Hebrew Bible. In the early twentieth-century US, the relocation of human origins from the Middle East to Central Asia also chimed with scientific agendas against Christian fundamentalism that came to a head in the 1920s. Osborn, who maintained a deeply felt faith throughout his life and believed that God was active in human evolution, also held that biblical literalism was an enemy of the public good. Fighting fundamentalism was a major priority for Osborn in the American Museum.[20]

Osborn and the fundamentalists were actually in accord on one point: they both denied the so-called 'apeman' theory of human origins. What Osborn hoped to find in the Gobi Desert, to which the American Museum sponsored a major expedition from 1921 to 1930, was a hypothetical 'Dawn Man'.[21] Osborn believed that humans had diverged from the other primates so long ago that a missing link of the kind so frequently imagined in popular culture and (in less sensational terms) among his fellow scientists was on the wrong track entirely.

Osborn revered the English naturalist and geologist Charles Darwin and made evolution the major theme of the American Museum's exhibitions. Yet, like many scientists in the half century following Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859), he had his own idiosyncratic interpretations of what Darwin's observations really indicated. For Osborn, it was dangerous to imagine a world in which everything that was, became that way only by chance. In 1891, discussing the German biologist August Weismann's disproving of the Lamarckian theory of the inheritance of acquired characteristics, Osborn worried about the impact 'upon the conduct of life'. If Weismann was correct, 'It would follow that one deep, almost instinctive motive for a higher life would be removed if the race were only superficially benefited by its nurture, and the only possible channel of actual improvement were in the selection of the fittest chains of the race plasm.'[22] Without the potential for progress through cultural inheritance, what was the point of anything?

Osborn was to develop two different answers to these anxieties. One answer was positive eugenics which would indeed suggest that the way towards 'race improvement' was selection of those fittest chains of race plasm, something Osborn considered deadening to a higher life in 1891, but would be promoting with an almost religious fervour by the 1910s. Another answer he proposed was a theory of evolution in which hard work and struggle *did* matter. While the inheritance of acquired

characteristics had to be thrown out of any account of evolutionary development, Osborn proposed an explanation of how the germ plasm interacted with environments in a process he called 'aristogenesis'.[23] By the late 1920s, his 'Dawn Man' hypothesis saw humans developing in Central Asia and moving ever west, its most superior subspecies, the Nordics and Anglo-Saxons, ultimately colonizing the American continent.[24] As Brian Regal puts it, this was 'Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis on a planetary scale.'[25]

The comparison is not an idle one: as a historian of modern America, Jackson Turner argued that the unique features of the American landscape were constituent of the American civic character. Meanwhile, Osborn argued that environments shaped the germ plasm and thus racial character. The Turner comparison is also apt because Osborn's description of his ideal evolutionary 'homeland' for the 'higher races of man' sounds much like a description of parts of the American West, a 'relatively open country on the high plateaus and plains'. Under such conditions, 'there were far greater demands upon the native wit of man to overcome natural difficulties by invention and resourcefulness' than there were in the low-browed 'Central Eurasiatic empire of the Neanderthals,' soon to give way under the invasion of the sharper, high-browed Dawn Men.[26] The Neanderthals, of whom Osborn had a very negative view, here sound a little like decadent late imperial Romans, though his 'higher races' are less marauding barbarians than hardy frontiersmen.

Osborn's rise of (Greek) man

Osborn's views on human progress were most cogently presented in two works aimed at a popular audience: the blockbuster *Men of the Old Stone Age* (1915), 544 pages and immensely successful at the time (13 printings in Osborn's lifetime),[27] and *Man Rises to Parnassus* (1927), a slim book based on a series of lectures Osborn gave at Princeton.[28] Mostly telling the story of the Neanderthals and Cro-Magnons, separate races in conflict and each evolutionary dead ends, *Men of the Old Stone Age* established the long-standing separate evolution of races and the importance of inborn racial characteristics – what Osborn would describe as the racial soul: 'the spiritual, intellectual and moral reaction to environment and to daily experience'. Writing in 1927, he explained that 'this racial soul is the product of thousands or hundreds of thousands of years of past experience and reaction. It is the essence or distillation of the spiritual and moral life of the race.'[29]

By the time Osborn wrote *Man Rises*, his evolutionary theories were tipping over from idiosyncratic to embarrassing to a scientific community who found his Dawn Man hypothesis bizarre and obviously flawed. Although *Man Rises* was a less influential book than *Men of the Old Stone Age*, it is especially enlightening on Osborn's conception of how human origins related to the arts and sciences of civilization and to the aesthetics of antiquity.

In it, Osborn explains the rise to Parnassus as 'the principle of the gradual moral, social, intellectual and spiritual development of man'.[30] Parnassus is the mountain in northern Greece which ancient Greek authors identified as the home of the Muses and the court of Apollo (it was also sacred to Dionysus, a clash of Apollonian and Dionysian that Osborn is uninterested in). Each chapter opens with a quotation from Aeschylus' fifth-century BCE tragedy *Prometheus Bound*, which tells the story of how the Titan Prometheus gave fire to humans and taught them the arts of civilization, for which he was punished by Zeus.

The Greek understanding of human development is not only a literary framing device, but also the substance of the first chapter, which concerns Greek interest in human anatomy, identifying Greek science as a form of nascent physical anthropology. This was a career-long preoccupation of Osborn's: his first book had been *From the Greeks to Darwin* (1894). Osborn explains that the Greek anticipation of modern sciences 'classifies the Greeks as men of *western* and *northern* mind and temper rather than of *eastern* or *oriental* mind and temper, the Greek spirit as restive, eager for new truth, progressive; the oriental spirit as docile, stationary or retrogressive' [emphasis in original]. While the Greeks turned to natural explanations for the unknowns in their world:

> The Orientals, on the other hand, were content with supernatural and mythical explanations of human origin. Except for the great intellectual and scientific uprising among the Arabs of the ninth to the twelfth century, to which we owe the preservation of the writings of Aristotle, the spirit of scientific inquiry little troubled the eastern mind. Even today 'Great is Allah!' is the beginning and end of natural philosophy among the Orientals of the Mediterranean borders, and there is scarcely a rudiment of the idea of gradual upward development, of the slow 'rise to Parnassus'.[31]

Excluded from Osborn's account of naturalist curiosity were not only modern-day Muslims but also the authors of the Hebrew Bible. Osborn contrasts Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound* with the biblical book

of Job (whose hero is described as coming from 'the falling city of Ur in Chaldea') as 'products of western and eastern reasoning and imagination', respectively.[32] One brief line in Aeschylus describing earth as 'mother of all' is contrasted with the latter's presentation of 'man as the very handiwork of the Deity and constantly enjoying supernatural favor … there is no semblance of intellectual curiosity; the earth and all its inhabitants, including man, are under incessant supernatural watchfulness and control'. This is an exceedingly odd and selective reading of Job, which has generally found literary and philosophical approbation from modern Western readers as one of the most theologically complex works of the Hebrew Bible. Osborn, however, treats the text as only a straightforward, slavish doxology, ignoring how it wrestles with the complexity of injustice and divine *inconstancy* in the face of undeniable, overwhelming divine power.

In his closing sentiments, Osborn imagines what it would mean to transport the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus to the modern day:

> Let us in imagination escort him through the furnaces of steel, the prophecies of storm and wind, the myriad foes of disease, the wondrous variety of domesticated animals, the ships above and beneath the sea and among the clouds, the libraries stacked with memories of the past and the literature of all time, the towering architecture, the millions of stars and distant universes of astronomy.

We will encounter many of these icons of modernity (the aeroplane, the towering skyscraper, modern medicine, astronomy and the stars it made visible) elsewhere in this book. But Osborn, with characteristic self-regard, also thinks that his own book should be shown to Aeschylus, 'In the pages of this volume let us verify his retrospect of the life of the caves, of the ages of flint, of bronze, of iron.'[33] The technological and aesthetic wonders of modernity are imagined to wow Aeschylus with all that man has achieved since the arts of civilization have been gifted to him. But so too are the discoveries about human origins that would, to Aeschylus, also have been in the unimaginably distant past. Thus knowing and recovering the ancient origins of humans is equated with modern technological achievement, and the wondrousness of both of them mediated through imagining the pleasure they would bring to a fifth-century Athenian. The very ancient and the very modern emerge as doubles of each other.

Breasted's 'Great White Race'

Race also preoccupied many scholars who studied the ancient Near East and Egypt. The pioneering archaeologist and friend of Breasted, William Matthew Flinders Petrie, usually credited with developing a scientific methodology for Egyptian archaeology, was also a major supporter of the eugenics movement in Britain. He used his excavations to contribute data for physical anthropological studies, not only by taking measurements of the ancient skeletons he found but also by analysing the racial characteristics of human figures in Egyptian art, and by taking photographs and measurements of modern Egyptians working on his digs (sometimes without their knowledge or consent).[34] He was a personal friend and devoted admirer of Francis Galton, the founder of the field of eugenics.

Petrie, like Osborn, saw race as the explanation for change and cultural development in the past. His 1895 excavations at Naqada in Upper Egypt led him to propose the existence of a 'New Race' of invaders who were responsible for Egypt's transition from a predynastic to a sophisticated dynastic society, who replaced the previous native population and who were therefore responsible for most of the Egyptian civilization that followed.[35] His analysis of the skeletal remains of this New Race plotted their characteristics relative to modern 'races' for comparison purposes.[36] Petrie saw an unfamiliar form of *material culture* (the New Race were identified based on their grave goods) and presumed it must represent an unfamiliar *race* – a tendency in which he was not alone among scholars of the ancient world. Petrie would ultimately accept, with middling grace, the analysis of Jacques de Morgan, who excavated at Naqada the following year, which undercut his chronology, showing that the finds Petrie assigned to a New Race were actually predynastic.[37] While the New Race proved a mirage, Petrie continued throughout his career to maintain that the rise of civilization in Egypt could be explained through migrations of new races.[38]

Petrie's non-existent New Race only lasted for a few years before it disappeared, but scholars of ancient Mesopotamia would be sidetracked for decades by the so-called 'Sumerian Problem', a problem largely of scholars' own making as they sought a racial explanation for the origins of human society and attempted to shoehorn finds into neat cultural and biological categories. Originally centred around identifying the source of the mysterious Sumerian language (as far as we can determine, a linguistic isolate), the debate equated race and language (an error that even Madison Grant knew well enough to warn against).[39] As spectacular Sumerian art emerged, artistic style, as well as

the representation of the human figure, became the means of identifying and understanding Sumerian and Semitic races.[40] Ultimately physical anthropology, taking measurements of skeletons and ancient statues alike, would also be brought into the debate. 'The Sumerians,' as Paul Collins puts it, were constructed by modern scholarship, 'a people we would like to believe existed – but probably never did.'[41] Breasted too was sidetracked by the question of Sumerian race as the Oriental Institute began to investigate Sumerian sites in the 1930s; race became more important to Breasted's thinking in the final years of his career, at just the same time that it was becoming significantly less credible as a historical category in most areas of scholarship.[42]

But in the 1910s and 1920s, when the significance of race in anthropology and the power of the eugenics movement were at their height, Breasted was amazingly little interested in race, compared not only to the likes of Osborn but also to other scholars of the Orient like Petrie or Leonard Woolley, who excavated the most famous Sumerian site, Ur, in southern Iraq.[43] This is not to say that Breasted ignored race entirely: to do so would have been extremely difficult in a world in which race was such a pervasive means of understanding historical movements, confrontations and cultural characteristics. This also does not mean that racial categories did not have a central influence on his work. Indeed, as we shall see, his account of where civilizations arose overlapped with his conception of where Whiteness could be found. Yet in works like his *History of Egypt* (1905) and *Ancient Times*, race was rarely explicitly evoked as an explanation for historical trends, and mentions of race are surprisingly brief and elliptic. His work speaks, through this silence, to the invisibility of the unmarked, naturalness assigned to Whiteness.

Breasted defined everyone within his sphere of study as members of a 'Great White Race'. As such, any racial contest, such an important way of visualizing past interactions for Osborn, Petrie or Woolley, is only ever intrafamily fighting. Within his Great White Race, Breasted makes the most of two subgroups which he derives through associating language with racial types: the Indo-Europeans and the Semites.[44] The drama of these two sides of the Great White family is visualized in his 'Diagram suggesting the Two Lines of Semitic and Indo-European Dispersion' (Figure 2.1).[45] This diagram uses lines, arrows, text and brackets to convey a highly simplified representation of the Mediterranean world showing the movement of peoples in geographical space while also conveying descent and development over time.[46] Breasted considered this diagram to have unique importance to the book's pedagogy

(remember it was a school textbook). The section in which it appears, on 'The Indo-European Peoples and their Dispersion', occasions the sole footnote in the book which speaks directly to the teacher, recommending that the topic:

> should be carefully worked over by the teacher with the class before the class is permitted to study it alone. The diagram should be put on the blackboard and explained in detail by the teacher, and the class should then be prepared to put the diagram on the board from memory. This should be done again when the study of the Greeks is begun, and a third time when Italy and the Romans are taken up.[47]

Despite Breasted's emphasis on the pedagogical importance of this diagram and the categories of Indo-Europeans and Semites, his treatment of the wider concept of 'the Great White Race' is relatively oblique in the original 1916 edition of *Ancient Times*.[48] As Lindsay Ambridge has noted, one of the most significant changes to the 1935 updated edition of the book was a greater emphasis on race and a clearer definition of the Great White Race. In 1935, Breasted mapped this race geographically in two figures, one a conventional map annotated with racial information and another showing a simplified schematic presentation of what he called 'the Great Northwest Quadrant' (Figure 2.2). This is a geographical designation that unites the two cardinal directions most prized by Grant and Osborn: North, from which the Nordics hailed, and West, which reminds us of the relative nature of terms like 'East' and 'West' even among scholars who understood their own focus as 'the Orient'. Dealing with this diagram in 1935, he explained his terms quite clearly:

> The peoples of the Great Northwest Quadrant, as far back as we know anything about prehistoric man, have all been members of a race of white men, who have been well called the Great White Race. The men of this race created the civilization which we have inherited. If we look outside of the Great Northwest Quadrant, we find in the neighboring territory only two other clearly distinguished races—the Mongoloids on the east and the Negroes on the south. These peoples occupy an important place in the modern world, but they played no part in the rise of civilization.[49]

Although this kind of explanation was never given in the original 1916 edition, Breasted's idea about the relationship between the Great

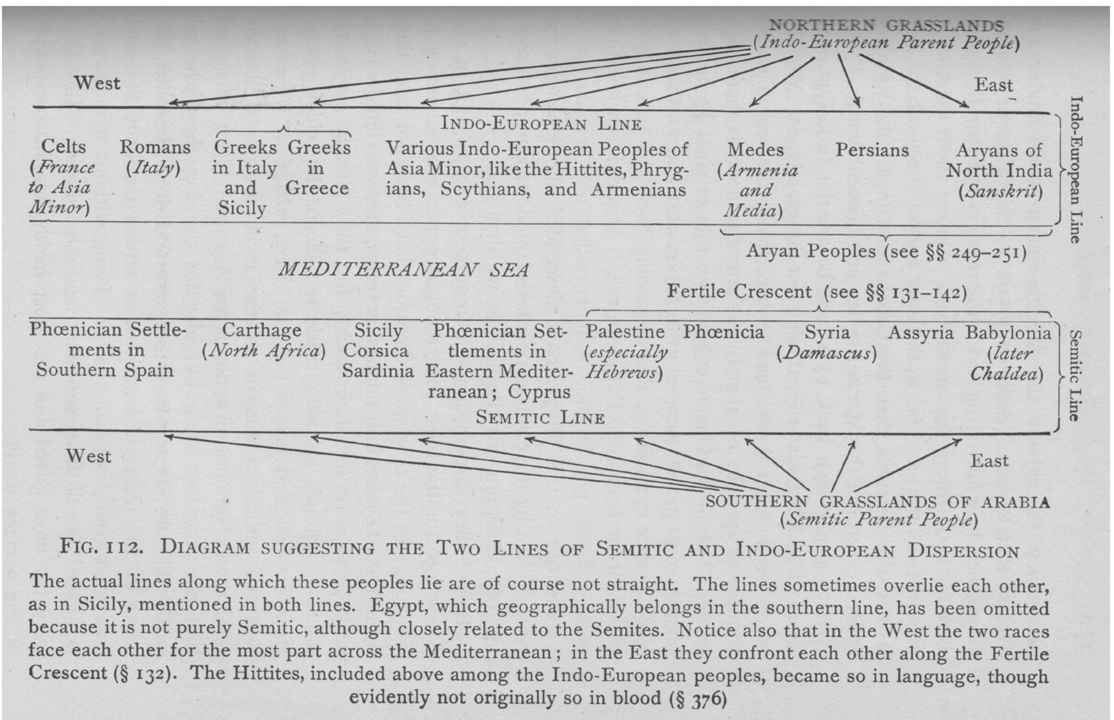

Figure 2.1 ‘Diagram suggesting the Two Lines of Semitic and Indo-European Dispersion’. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A history of the early world* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1916), 173, fig. 112. Photo credit: public domain, author’s scan.

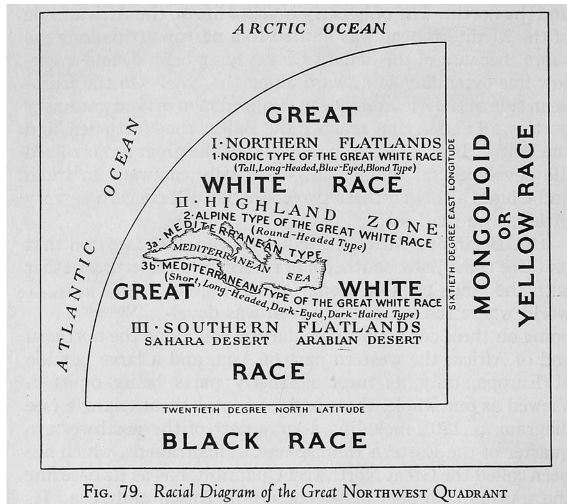

Figure 2.2 'Racial Diagram of Great Northwest Quadrant'. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A history of the early world*, revised edition (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1935), 130. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by University of Alberta Libraries.

White Race and civilization was clearly much the same then. This explanation delineates who is 'in' the narrative of advancing civilization. The sphere of the 'early world' and its present inheritance are both constructed through common membership in this 'Great White Race'.

What did Breasted mean by calling this race 'Great'? It was certainly not the same as what Grant meant, who would not have counted such a crowd of Mediterraneans and Semites within his conception of any 'great race'. In Breasted's case the adjective 'great' does double duty. On the one hand, it should surely be taken in its honorific sense, since in his account it is this race which entirely furnished the development of civilization. However, it is clearly primarily meant to be understood in the more neutral sense of 'large' or 'all-encompassing' since Breasted's concept of a 'Great White Race' incorporates widely dispersed and varied peoples, of what he acknowledges to be many varying skin colours, taking in Indo-Europeans and Semites alike and distinguishing between near neighbours, like Cretans and Greeks, who are different 'White races'. It is then a 'great' umbrella classification with many White races beneath it, and Breasted's terminology is intended to acknowledge the expansiveness of his concept and the variety contained within it.

Beneath Breasted's big tent

Breasted's designation of an expansive White Race encompassing all the peoples of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world allowed many ancient peoples into the 'story of civilization' through access to Whiteness. This assessment of civilization moved away from a starting point with the Greeks alone, the conventional vision that Osborn would present in *Man Rises*. Osborn and Grant were interested in slicing races into ever smaller subtypes, separated by vast chasms between their racial souls. Osborn argued that the Nordic race, to which he belonged, should really be classified as a separate *species* not only from 'Negroes', 'Mongoloids' and Indigenous Americans and Australians, but even from its closest cousins within the European races, the Alpines and the Mediterraneans.[50] Osborn and Grant wanted an exclusive club for their own people, 'the Nordics', to which they admitted almost all the great men of history (just about every hero of the Italian Renaissance was discovered by Grant to be really Nordic, despite dwelling in a region widely populated with Mediterraneans), but few others.[51] In contrast, Breasted sought a different kind of aggrandizement: through inclusivity not through exclusivity. His Great White Race was a broad coalition, and by identifying so many different ancient cultures as modern America's ancestors in the development and transmission of civilization, he could have the Parthenon and the Pyramids, Aeschylus *and* Job.

This trick of expanding the White family was familiar in American life from other participants in the immigration restriction debate of the 1910s and 1920s, from those who opposed Grant and Osborn's efforts to close American borders to almost all comers. As Spiro points out, one way that American Jewish leaders argued for their own rightful inclusion in the American project was through distinguishing themselves from immigrants from Asia, by positioning themselves as part of a broadly White race: assimilation-ready, American-izable.[52] The 'great' as opposed to 'narrow' White race allowed more of the past to be part of the story of civilization or more immigrants to find a home in a White supremacist America, but it still served Whiteness as a concept at the expense of anyone who still remained outside it.

We must remember that Breasted's explanation of the Great White Race and its solo role in the development of civilization came only in 1935. Even if one might come away with the impression that he already saw things that way in the 1916 version, Breasted did not explicitly state the position. Breasted's scholarly works took much the same position as his popular ones, and yet his work proved useful to major Black American

thinkers developing their own racial history. In 1909, Breasted corresponded with Booker T. Washington, leader of the Tuskegee Institute and one of the nation's leading Black intellectuals and advocates of Black racial uplift, sending a copy of his recently published article on the University of Chicago's epigraphic investigations in 'ancient Ethiopia'.[53] Breasted explained in his letter that the ability to use recent papyrus discoveries to decipher the 'Nubian' script (what we now call Meroitic) would enable him to translate the ancient inscriptions his own 1905–7 expedition along the Upper Nile had copied:

> The importance of all this is chiefly: that from these documents when deciphered, we shall be able to put together the only surviving information on the early history of a dark race. Nowhere else in all the world is the early history of a dark race preserved.[54]

Washington responded quickly and with great interest. Though disclaiming much knowledge of the topic, he astutely wondered if the documents that Breasted was translating could be evidence of the long-standing theory, especially popular among Black thinkers in the nineteenth century, that Black West African civilization stemmed from ancient Ethiopia (as applied in these contexts, including an area further east of the contemporary country of the same name, contiguous with the regions of the Upper Nile). Could the documents Breasted was working on, he asked, come from the very civilization that had been theorized?[55]

We do not have Breasted's response, though it is worth noting that Breasted's publications on Meroe reflected his own racist and imperialist conceptions of the relationship between ancient Egypt and Nubia. He argued its inhabitants were a mixed race (perhaps the idea of 'fully Black' people at such a level of advancement was difficult to grasp) and saw influence as flowing from Egypt to Nubia but not significantly in reverse. He might have agreed that Nubia was important to Black West African development but his views about Nubia still assigned its 'civilization' to influence from (Whiter) Lower Egypt.[56]

Nonetheless, Washington found that Breasted's explanations of the past hinted at a deeper and more ancient, natively Black African origin for African civilization. This became an important element of ideas Washington was developing, rather late in his own career, about Black civilizational excellence and the importance of Ethiopia as its distributor.[57] While this was Washington's own spin on Breasted's facts, the nature of their correspondence suggests that Breasted was seemingly friendly to Washington's right to draw his own conclusions from the

Nubian evidence. After all, Breasted had, seemingly of his own initiative, shared with Washington cutting-edge academic material that he suspected would be of interest to him.[58] Even if Breasted did not himself see Ethiopia as the source of everything, he did accord Black Africa its own civilizational greatness in the very ancient past, meaning that Black Africans and their descendants in America could also trace an immensely long line of civilizational excellence back to the ancient world.

It is then easy to understand the appeal, to a Black scholar, of Breasted's respectful excitement about the possibility of uncovering the early history of a 'dark race' combined with his emphasis on Egypt as an originator of civilization (even if he did not see Egyptians as Black and in fact explicitly excluded Black Africans from his account of civilization). This historical narrative was more amenable to arguments for the antiquity, and integrity, of Black African civilizations than accounts that began with marble-White Greeks. Characteristically, W. E. B. Du Bois had his own thoughts on the usefulness of scholarship like Breasted's. In 1946, in the aftermath of the Second World War (what he called 'this crisis of civilization'), he returned to a project he had been attempting at various intervals in his career: to counter 'the consistent effort to rationalize Negro slavery by omitting Africa from world history, so that today it is almost universally assumed that history can be truly written without reference to Negroid peoples'.[59] As far as Du Bois was concerned, Pharaonic Egypt was a part of that history – a position in contradiction to Breasted and almost all other White Egyptologists.[60] Du Bois critiqued the way that European experts in ancient Egypt had ignored Blackness; Breasted is one of his list of Egyptological 'men of highest respectability, who did not attack but studiously ignored the Negro on the Nile and in the world and talked as though black folk were nonexistent and unimportant'.[61] Nonetheless, Du Bois is able to make use of Breasted and other offenders' scholarship, reading between the lines and behind their omissions in his quest to return Africa to the narrative of world history.

Du Bois's ability to take scholarly authorities like Breasted and discover the aspects of history they ignored, and Washington's detection in Breasted's work of the argument for a noble and ancient origin for Black African civilization, reminds us that scholarship on origins, influences and inheritances is open to numerous interpretations. It also shows us how the study of Egypt as an originator of civilization opened up new possibilities for even more disruptive suggestions about where the boundaries of world history could be drawn. Breasted's relatively small interest in race in the first decades of the twentieth century arguably made his work useful for widely varying purposes because of

what he left unsaid or unelaborated. Hence, the presence in his archives of respectful, collegial offers of his expertise for the scholarly projects of Madison Grant and Booker T. Washington alike.

Grant, Osborn and the eugenicists in American institutions

The ideas presented in Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* were at the heart of a wider scientific and political worldview that was at its most influential in the 1910s and 1920s. The most famous consequence of this racialized worldview was the organized eugenics movement, represented by various activist groups, research centres, and in scholarship in widely varying fields. Spiro puts the high-water mark of this movement in 1924. By that time, eugenics activists led by Grant had successfully all but stopped immigration to the United States. They had lobbied to pass sterilization laws that would be ruled in *Buck* v. *Bell* (1927), one of the Supreme Court's more infamous cases, to be constitutional. They had pushed through state laws that protected the (White) 'germ plasm' from further contamination through miscegenation, the most infamous of which was Virginia's so-called 'one-drop law' which redefined Blackness by that miniscule amount of 'negro blood' and Whiteness by its contrasting purity.[62] Far from a crank fringe endeavour, the eugenics movement was embedded in the heart of numerous American scientific and philanthropic institutions, with whom it shared leaders, including notably the National Academy of Sciences and the related National Research Council.[63]

The term 'eugenics' and the scientific research that underpinned the movement originated with the British biologist and statistician Francis Galton of University College London. Galton, excited by his second cousin Charles Darwin's new theories, pursued the study of heredity and argued that a variety of human character traits were heritable, including talent and genius (it did not escape Galton's notice that his own extended family was an excellent example of this).[64] As Debbie Challis has shown, Galton's ideas about race and hereditary characteristics were informed by ancient art, especially the art of ancient Egypt.[65] Like many scholars, he believed that ancient Egyptians were the most reliable documentarians of race in the ancient past. His interest in Egypt was developed in part through his friendship with his colleague at University College London, Flinders Petrie, already mentioned as a scholar who understood ancient material culture through the prism of race.

Galton's scientific observations about the heritability of character seemed to him and many of his contemporaries to warrant action, and he and his fellow leaders in the movement would advocate measures both positive (making it easier for the fit to reproduce) and negative (making it harder, or ideally impossible, for the unfit to reproduce). Early eugenics activism focused on race improvement through the exclusion of unfit breeders. Any race could improve its germ plasm through eugenics and early twentieth-century America saw active movements for Jewish and 'Negro' eugenics and a wide application of eugenic ideas within such communities.[66] But it was no great leap to put eugenic observations together with race science which constructed hierarchies of races. Although the 1921 Second International Eugenics Congress, held at the American Museum, with Osborn presiding as president and Grant as treasurer, received delegates from around the world, this ecumenical approach was not really reflective of the primary agenda of the organized American eugenics movement that Grant, Osborn and many other scientists advocated. By the 1910s, its activities were largely synonymous with the movement to exclude 'inferior races' from participation in American life by keeping immigrants from eastern and southern Europe out of the country, and by naturalizing and extending existing and pervasive Black and Indigenous oppression.[67]

Anyone who had read *The Passing of the Great Race* could be expected to understand the logic behind these tactics.[68] Unceasingly energetic, Madison Grant made himself indispensable to numerous political and social movements connected to eugenics. He founded societies and campaign groups at a dizzying pace, one that perhaps only the similarly energetic George Ellery Hale could have matched. Among the groups that Grant was a founder of were: the New York Zoological Society which created the Bronx Zoo, the model for modern, educative, socially uplifting zoological parks (Grant was secretary of the Society during the notorious period in which Ota Benga, from the Mbuti people in what was then the Congo Free State, was 'exhibited' in the zoo's monkey house); the American Bison Society, which brought those iconic mammals back from the brink of extinction; the Save-the-Redwoods League, which rescued numerous stands of Sequoias from the lumbermill; the National Parks Committee, which led to the creation of Glacier National Park; the Immigration Restriction Society, which successfully lobbied the US Congress for laws that slowed immigration to the US to a trickle by the early 1920s; and, among others, the American Eugenics Society, Eugenics Research Association, International Commission on Eugenics and the Galton Society for the Study of the Origin and Evolution

of Man.[69] Major eugenics research initiatives by Grant and his friends were funded by some of the same philanthropic giants of the day who funded Hale's research in solar astronomy and Breasted's in the career of man: John D. Rockefeller Jr. gave annually to the American Eugenics Society in the latter half of the 1920s and earlier to the Eugenics Record Office, founded in 1910 by Grant's frequent collaborator Charles B. Davenport (an NAS member and friend of Hale's), which also received funding from the Carnegie Corporation.[70]

Almost every civic endeavour Grant was involved in also involved Osborn, and often other prominent scientists. As Spiro details, a third of the members of his exclusive Galton Society 'were members of the National Academy of Sciences, half were members of the American Philosophical Society, and more than half were members of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (three served as its president)'.[71] More innocuously, the Save-the-Redwoods League was cofounded with Osborn and palaeontologist John C. Merriam, another prominent eugenicist, NAS member and friend of Hale's. Always anxious to improve his adopted home state of California, Hale was a major contributor to the League.

This was by no means the only point of contact between Hale and the biggest names in American eugenics. While Hale was himself not involved in eugenics research or activism, the National Research Council that he chaired and the National Academy of Sciences in which he played such a significant role were dominated by scientists who supported the eugenics movement, both personally and in their own research interests. Hale had a particularly strong relationship with Osborn, with whom he corresponded frequently throughout his life; the two men were both scientists who were also administrators of major research institutions, interested in science popularization and, crucially, in the idea of evolution. They were also both energetic men of a similar age from wealthy, respectable, 'Nordic' families.

In 1912, Hale was invited by Osborn to join one of the more exclusive institutions that Grant and Osborn had cofounded, the Half-Moon Club. A supper club for gentlemen interested in science, travel and adventure, this may seem to be a purely social arena. But this meeting of elite men was perhaps the site of a significant moment in the development of race science. Spiro speculates that a Half-Moon Club dinner in February 1908 may have been a turning point in Grant's intellectual interests (and perhaps Osborn's, who switched his focus from palaeontology to palaeoanthropology around 1908). The dinner was addressed by William Z. Ripley on 'The Migration of Races'. Spiro speculates that this talk likely

presented some of the ideas he had developed in his enormous work of physical anthropology *Races of Europe* (1899), in which he identified three main races within the continent: noble Teutons (what Grant would later call Nordics) and the inferior Alpines and Mediterraneans.[72] Hale was not yet a member of the Half-Moon at this point, but he would have had ample opportunity to listen to the latest in race science in the time he was one. In 1921, Osborn was crowing about the club's 'superb voyage … in Central Asia, with Madison Grant as pilot, who showed where our Nordic race originated and how the Mongols have been trying to push us off the map entirely for three thousand years or more'.[73]

Where we find Hale, we can often expect to find Breasted as well, and the Half-Moon was no exception. Just a month after Grant's disquisition on his and Osborn's shared obsessions of Central Asian origins, Nordic heritage and racial conflict in history, the club met again to hear James Henry Breasted take them 'Across Northern Syria' (it is unclear if this means that he was giving an account of his travels in the region in 1919–20 or an ancient history of the region). Breasted 'piloted' a dinner whose 'adventurers' included Hale, Osborn and Grant, but also major philanthropists like J. P. Morgan, Moses Taylor Pine, Cleveland Dodge, Archer Huntington and important figures in the arts, including Charles Dana Gibson and Daniel Chester French. 'Associate' members for the voyage included a crowd of Breasted's influential fans, including John D. Rockefeller Jr. himself and his deputies Frederick Gates and George C. Vincent, the NAS scientists (and committed eugenics activists) John C. Merriam and Vernon Kellogg, the major Orientalists Albert Lythgoe and Herman Hilprecht and various other luminaries like Prince Albert of Monaco and Ernest Shackleton.[74]

One final name on the guest list was architect Ralph Adams Cram, a Half-Moon member and regular attendee, who had been Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's partner for twenty-one years, starting when the two of them travelled together in Boston's artistically innovative Bohemian circles. Cram and Goodhue parted professional ways in 1913 primarily because of increasing disagreements about the division of work and credit in their partnership. As the years went on, it became clear that their artistic visions had diverged: Cram becoming ever more committed to his mediaevalism at just the time that Goodhue was growing from his roots in the gothic into the innovative, nameless modernism we will explore later on. For Cram, the importance of gothic architecture also began to be envisaged in eugenics terms: it promoted the comfort of the Anglo-Saxons and the discomfort of other races.[75] Thus we see how scientific work on race may have found its way into the thinking

of architects no less than other scientists through the overlapping social scene of elite professionals in American metropolises.

Hale and the anthropologists in the National Research Council

Undoubtedly the most significant way that Hale aided the cause of the race scientists (perhaps without being fully aware of it) was in his role as president of the National Research Council, a new governmental advisory body receiving funding from the Carnegie Corporation, the Rockefeller foundations and Half-Moon member Cleveland H. Dodge. The NRC owed its existence to Hale's efforts. When war broke out in Europe in 1914, Hale was upset to see that the National Academy of Sciences, founded to be the official advisory body to the federal government, was being ignored in discussions of American war readiness. His solution was to propose, directly to President Wilson, a new body that would operate as an arm of, but independently from, the NAS (which prized its independence from direct federal control) and which would have a more direct role in advising the government on how American science might contribute to a future war effort. The NRC was officially created in 1915, with Hale as president. His first task was to organize committees for various disciplines of American science and select members.

The most troublesome committee to organize was Anthropology. Already at the Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893, anthropology was riven by conflict between university and federal anthropologists. By the 1910s, a battle was raging for control of the discipline and its institutions. On one side was Franz Boas and his followers, mostly students he had trained since he had taken up his position at Columbia University in 1899. Demographically, many of them were Jews and immigrants; a fair number of Boas's most famous students were women. They shared Boas's interest in cultural anthropology and, broadly speaking, his politics against race prejudice, for which the importance of environment over heredity was a key argument. Over the course of the 1910s and 1920s, they would break down consensus about the fixed nature of racial characteristics, the hierarchies between races and the primacy of nature over nurture.[76] Broadly speaking, Boas's opponents tended to be physical, not cultural, anthropologists (although Boas also used the tools of physical anthropology throughout his career). Demographically, they were far more likely to be 'Nordics'. Many of them were federal, rather than university, anthropologists.

Infighting among these factions was already causing drama in other professional bodies in the field and Boas's opponents were determined not to let the cultural anthropologists seize control of the NRC's considerable resources. Although this fight began during the war, it would continue in various iterations and reorganizations of the committee as the NRC was transferred into a permanent peacetime institution in its aftermath, with controversies over the NRC anthropology committee continuing in some form or another through the early 1920s.[77]

It is unclear how much Hale understood of these internecine disputes which confronted him as NRC president. He originally supposed that Boas would be included on the NRC's Anthropology Committee; Boas is the only anthropologist mentioned by name in Hale's first letter to the chair, William Henry Holmes, a government anthropologist who spent practically his entire career at the Smithsonian (the only exception being a few brief and unhappy years after the Columbian Exposition when he displaced Boas in a Field Museum curatorship to which Boas had desperately been seeking permanent appointment).[78] Why Boas alone was mentioned by Hale may have to do with his relative fame, or with existing knowledge Hale had about Boas's importance to other professional bodies in the field, or even about his controversial status – a preemptive acknowledgement that he was probably too important to leave out despite it. But Hale was wrong in supposing that Boas was an obvious or indispensable inclusion. Anti-Boasians, who had Hale's ear, came out in force to object to his appointment.

The objections raised directly to Hale included aspersions on the Boasians' qualifications to do war-relevant anthropological work (certainly, the anti-Boasians would not like the kind of conclusions Boas or his students might reach if he was allowed to use NRC funds to investigate the modern American nation). Already in 1912 Boas had launched a major volley against the race scientists, and the entire premise of physical anthropology, with his bombshell article 'Changes in the Bodily Form of Descendants of Immigrants', which showed that numerous anthropometric measurements, including the prized cephalic index (skull width to length ratio) changed between first- and second-generation immigrants because of environmental influences.[79] Seemingly more persuasive to Hale than worries about his relevance to war work, were protests about Boas's publicly expressed pro-German sentiments and 'unpatriotic' attitudes to the war effort.[80]

In his role as NRC president, Hale took the side of the anti-Boasians, which meant the side of the eugenicists and race scientists, who happened also to be people he counted among his own social circle.

The NRC anthropology committee up through the early 1920s had a firm pro-eugenics agenda. Nonetheless, Hale's early (naive) assumption that Boas was a natural inclusion for the committee seems genuine, as does his response to one of Boas's only personal communications to Hale preserved in his own archives, in which Boas asks to discuss the NRC agenda for studying 'problems of race mixture and immigration which are of such fundamental importance to our country'.[81] Hale forwarded Boas's letter to a relevant NRC committee and reassured Boas that similar enquiries had already been proposed to that committee by Charles B. Davenport, founder of the Eugenics Record Office, the largest and most important eugenics research organization in the country, and cofounder of the Galton Society.[82] Did Hale realize that the two anthropologists probably had opposite motivations for pursuing this kind of work? If he did, it was still not entirely absurd to suggest they work together: Boas did employ the tools of physical anthropology, and many of his and his students' most effective interventions in the debate about race and heredity were only possible because they met race science on its own terms, taking seriously the methodologies of physical anthropology and rebutting conclusions about race differences through extensive data.[83] Boas also knew, even as he fought bitterly for control of the anthropological agenda, that there were times and places to work with the enemy. At any rate, it was unavoidable since he and his students crossed over in too many institutions with their opponents: Boas, for instance, had briefly worked at the American Museum which had a reciprocal relationship with Columbia, and many of his students did too, including Margaret Mead and Robert Lowie.

Hale was a man who was up-to-date on an extraordinary number of questions, but he could not be an expert in every field that came under the remit of the NRC, and anthropological infighting was so complex, no one could be faulted for not following all its twists and turns. Hale may have more or less incidentally wound up entrenching eugenics in the agenda of the NRC and the NAS by siding with the scholars who were his friends, scholars mostly of the same background and social circle as him. This was not an inconsequential entrenchment: with the NRC's extensive resources, among other things, Charles B. Davenport conducted extensive anthropometric studies on US Army recruits. Published as *Army Anthropology* (1921), the data gave seemingly inarguable statistical proof for the superiority of Nordic types and inferiority of 'Negroes', 'Hebrews' and other recent immigrants – albeit, as Spiro points out, through some creative arrangement of diagrams and measurements to ensure Hebrews wound up at the bottom of every list, Nordics almost always at the top

(where they wound up in the middle, commentary explained that being in the middle was, in fact, the ideal evolutionary place to be).[84] This study was a key weapon in successful lobbying efforts for immigration restriction in the 1920s and fodder for eugenics scaremongering about the decline of the average American male.[85]

It is also hardly pure coincidence that Hale's friends in the anthropological community were eugenicists and 'Grantians' rather than Boasians. It seems likely that Hale was more amenable to their research agendas than to the Boasians', given his own interest in evolution, which eugenicists had largely successfully managed to make synonymous with their own racialized and eugenicized understanding of it, and his promotion of the scientific work of scholars like Osborn, Edwin G. Conklin and John C. Merriam.

Yet Hale's own agenda for the membership of the NRC anthropology committee was very different: in his opening letter to Holmes on the topic of its membership, Hale hoped 'that you will surely add to the committee Dr. J. H. Breasted, who, in my opinion is one of the ablest investigators in this country'. Hale extrapolated at length on Breasted's merits:

> I think his recent book entitled 'Ancient Times', is a model which might well be followed by scientific men in writing books on almost any subject involving evolution. It is marvelous how skillfully Breasted develops his account of the rise of the early civilizations. I hope, by the way, that you will secure his nomination for the National Academy, in the near future. He seems to me a most unusual combination – philological, literary, and scientific.[86]

For Hale, the most important opportunity afforded by the anthropological committee was to get a plum position of influence for his best friend, and (less selfishly) to advance the exciting work Breasted was doing and make use of his unique expertise. Breasted would, in fact, ultimately prepare valuable intelligence for the US and other allied powers on his 1919 Oriental Institute Expedition around the Middle East; like many archaeologists or anthropologists, he was an ideal spy.[87] Although Hale did not succeed in getting Breasted onto the NRC anthropology committee, he would eventually succeed in having Breasted admitted into NAS membership in 1923, and did his best to promote Breasted as a scientist by bringing him into NAS activities, including in a major lecture series that promoted Hale's idiosyncratic vision of evolution.

‘A single great problem’: Hale on evolution

While Henry Fairfield Osborn argued that evolution explained the racial soul, Hale was thinking on an even grander scale. He recognized in Darwin’s theory of evolution a mechanism that could explain not just the rise of man or the evolution of living creatures, but quite literally everything for all time.

Hale’s interest in a conception of evolution that incorporated everything from the origin of the universe to the development of the Pyramids dates back at least to 1907 when he presented a scheme for the ideal education of a young scientist.[88] Evolution, he argued, would serve as an excellent unifying theme for a required course of introductory lectures for all undergraduates because evolution is a force that can be traced within specific disciplines and topics, and also on a macro scale as a unifying tendency of science and history (not really distinguished from one another by Hale). Hale argued that distinctions were too often drawn between ‘organic’ and ‘inorganic’ evolution. Evolution should not be understood as one topic within the field of scientific study, but as the mechanism that drives all periods and processes, natural and otherwise, in human and nonhuman life alike. As an example of a thinker who had fully exploited the exciting implications of evolution as a concept, he cites Herbert Spencer who originated the extremely influential concept of ‘Social Darwinism’ and applied the idea of ‘survival of the fittest’ (a phrase Spencer himself coined) to the realm of human economic and social interaction.[89]

Hale transmuted his idea for an undergraduate course into the programme of a lecture series that ran from 1914 to 1919 at the NAS annual meeting, sponsored by Hale’s own family foundation, established in honour of his late father. The William Ellery Hale lectures in Evolution began with physicist Ernest Rutherford on ‘The Constitution of Matter and the Evolution of the Elements’, and proceeded through geologist Thomas Chrowder Chamberlin on ‘The Evolution of the Earth’, Henry Fairfield Osborn on ‘The Origin and Evolution of Life upon the Earth’, biologist Edwin G. Conklin on ‘Causes of Organic Evolution’ and palaeontologist John C. Merriam on ‘The Beginnings of Human History Read from the Geological Record: The Emergence of Man’. In the final year of the series, Breasted was allocated two lectures on ‘The Origins of Civilization’ (‘From the Old Stone Age to the Dawn of Civilization’ and ‘The Earliest Civilization and Its Transmission to Europe’).[90] (It did not escape the notice of other NAS members that Breasted, the scholar whose work most tenuously related to the scientific remit of the NAS, had

been given such a prime spot at their annual meeting).[91] No fewer than three of these speakers were major figures in the eugenics movement. Osborn, as we have already seen, but also Conklin and Merriam were all affiliated with key societies founded or cofounded with Grant that promoted eugenics, sterilization, immigration restriction and also (because these causes always went hand in hand) preservation of the American landscape and some of its more magnificent flora and fauna. Though Hale saw evolution as meaning something far more general and far more flexible than biological heredity, his lecture series is suffused with the eugenics perspective.

Hale's interest in promoting a broad understanding of evolution went beyond its usefulness to pedagogy or public science. It also provided him with the methodology for studying the universe. The year after he first proposed his evolution course, in his *Study of Stellar Evolution* (1908), he explained:

> We are now in a position to regard the study of evolution as that of a single great problem, beginning with the origin of the stars in the nebulae and culminating in those difficult and complex sciences that endeavour to account, not merely for the phenomena of life, but for the laws which control a society composed of human beings.

He wrote of engaging in 'consideration of all natural phenomena as elements in a single problem'.[92] In Hale's definition, evolution on the stellar level means simply something like 'life cycle'. The clearest explanation of how he proposes to study evolution also sounds like he has learned quite a bit from the developing discipline of scientific archaeology. He imagines the student of stellar evolution as a walker in a forest of oaks who wants to learn what stages those long-lived trees have passed through to reach their present condition, yet who cannot wait to observe these stages directly. By looking at acorns in various stages of sprouting, shoots, sapling, healthy trees, and finally the dead limbs and branches and the fallen trunks of trees, he sees the entire 'evolutionary' cycle of the trees. Just so:

> Scattered over the heavens are millions of stars, each representing a certain degree of development. The cloud forms of the nebulae tell us of stellar origins; the white, yellow, and red stars illustrate the rise and decline of stellar life; and the Earth itself affords a picture of what may remain after light and heat have been extinguished.[93]

The stars of the heavens offer a means of seeing the deepest past and the farthest future of our own planet when the idea of a consistent evolutionary cycle can be applied to the map of the heavens.

The use of 'evolution' to cover change within a single organism's lifetime was extremely common then as it is now. This basic thinking can also be seen in the idea that monkeys 'became' men (the joint bogeyman of the fundamentalists Osborn opposed in the American Museum, and of Osborn himself). Hale's 'stellar evolution' also reflects common and long-standing uses of the term outside of the specific Darwinian 'theory of evolution', to describe various processes of change and development, and he was not the only astronomer to consider it a useful concept. With varying understanding of the word 'evolution', scholars across disciplines found in Darwin's work a model that could be applied to their own area of study. Herbert Spencer, Hale's role model in this respect, was one of the first and most ambitious appropriators of Darwin's model to numerous other domains. His work was arguably more influential than Darwin's own at shaping the popular understanding of what the 'theory of evolution' meant. This is despite the fact that, as T. J. Jackson Lears puts it, rather than 'systematically appropriating Darwin, Spencer drew eclectically on a variety of evolutionary ideas to buttress his essential vision: a lawful cosmos evolving inexorably toward Something Better'.[94] Hale, like Spencer, was interested in the prestige that invoking Darwin's theories afforded his own ideas and the excitement that those theories generated. Evolution became the ultimate scientific metaphor, one that other disciplines were eager to embrace.[95] In Hale's conception, history could be one of those sciences.

Breasted's evolution of the pyramids

Hale's all-encompassing definition of evolution and its role in history would prove amenable to Breasted in his own attempts to make his discipline look more like the natural sciences. Because Hale's highly metaphorical understanding of evolution allowed organic and inorganic entities to take part, Breasted was able to participate in the same prestigious (and relatively lucrative) discourse as Grant, Osborn and other scientists, even without focusing on the biological nature of the peoples involved. His vision of history could employ the same vocabulary as Madison Grant's without agreeing at all on what was evolving, adapting or progressing.

Breasted framed the development of the cultural products of civilization in terms of evolution – monumental architecture, for instance, in

a diagram he created first for an earlier textbook, which he compiled in collaboration with James Harvey Robinson, and then in revised form for *Ancient Times*, 'The Evolution from the Sand Heap to the Pyramid in Two Thousand Years, and the Rise of Stone Architecture in One Hundred and Fifty Years' (Figure 2.3).[96] This is, however, one of Breasted's very few uses of 'evolution' to describe historical development in *Ancient Times*. Evolution would become a more significant paradigm for him in coming years, and largely through collaboration and discussion with Hale.

The evolution here takes place across an elegantly conveyed transition between two developmental states: Barbarism and Civilization. These categories originated in the 1870s in works of two influential anthropologists, *Primitive Culture* (1871) by the British Edward Burnett Tylor and *Ancient Society* (1877) by the American Lewis Henry Morgan. Tylor and Morgan identified three stages that cultures pass through: savagery, barbarism and civilization.[97] Both men were further examples of scholars who found inspiration in the Darwinian theory of evolution, which gave them a model to consider human cultures. This threefold typology became an important and recognized means of delineating historical progress. Breasted applied these categories throughout his work – including in another diagram from the publication of his lectures for the Evolution series (Figure 2.4).[98]

We can read the nature of the 'evolution' in the pyramid diagram in several ways. In one reading, it suggests the same essential object growing and changing over time – as in, for instance, a diagram of a frog's egg growing through intermediate stages to that of a frog or a developing foetus. Alternatively, we can read this diagram as analogous to evolutionary images of humankind showing ancestral and genetic connections of different, related humans over time. Both readings are present in the image. They share one clear message: these structures are part of a chain: the same phenomena manifesting in different, developing forms through time – one object changing over time or one object producing its own descendants.

The image argues for a relationship between seemingly distinct historical phenomena over time. The burial mound produces descendants in a neat, non-branching line ending in the Great Pyramid. The meaning of the pyramid is elucidated in relationship to this ancestral chain: it is an evolved burial mound. Although it is entirely true that pyramids were funerary monuments, this diagram restricts the historical meaning of the Pyramids of Egypt significantly. They are now advanced forms of burial mounds, the essence of the first contained in the last iteration on this chain, rather than a historical phenomenon whose meaning

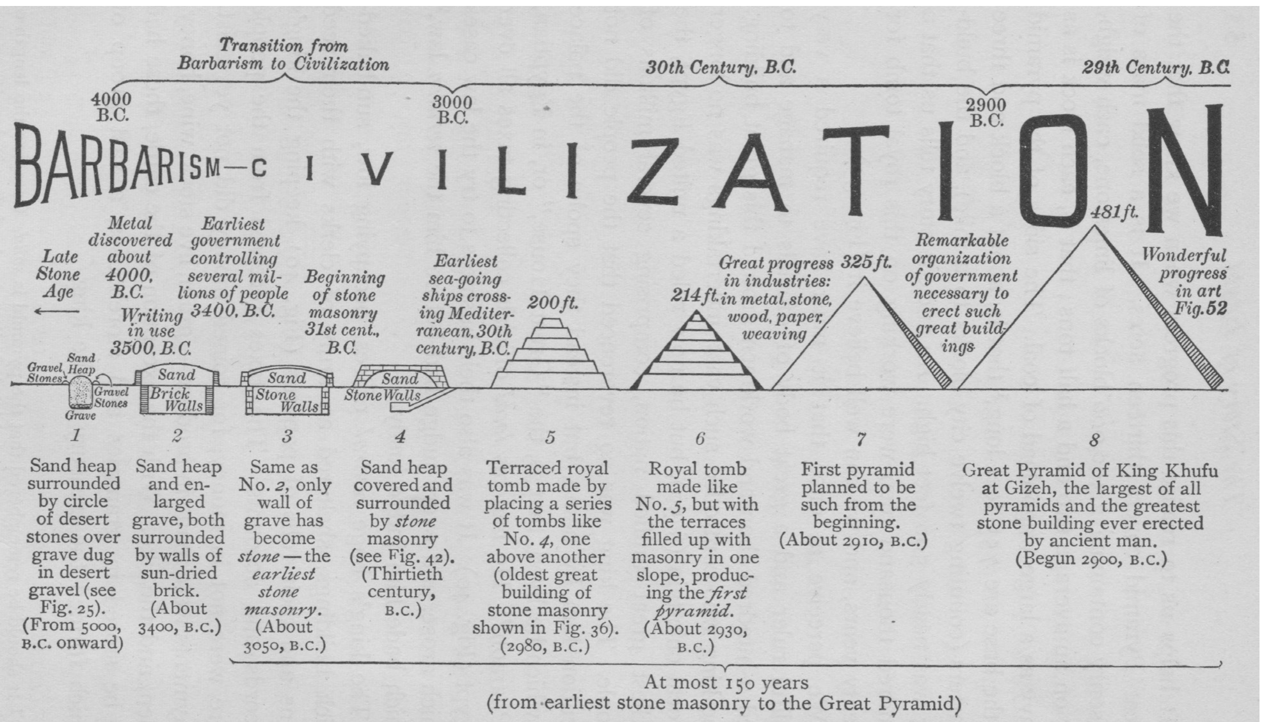

Figure 2.3 'The Evolution from the Sand Heap to the Pyramid in Two Thousand Years, and the Rise of Stone Architecture in One Hundred and Fifty Years'. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A history of the early world* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1916), 54–5, fig. 38. Photo credit: Public domain, author's scan.

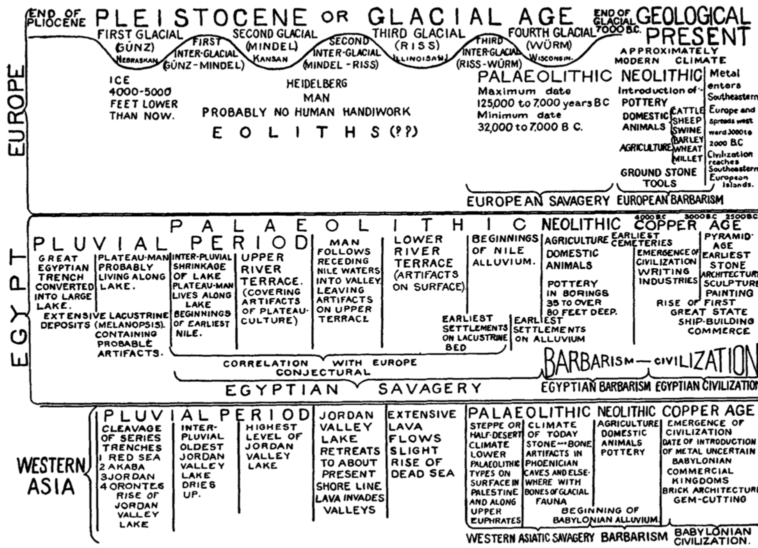

Figure 2.4 'Diagram showing Attempted Correlation of Glacial Europe and Egypt'. James Henry Breasted, 'The origins of civilization', *Scientific Monthly* 9, no. 4 (1919): 296.

also derives from very specific circumstances of their construction and, later on, of their permanence and monumental visibility in the Egyptian landscape.[99] Furthermore, the meaning of the prehistoric burial mound is changed: it is now a proto-pyramid, not a fully realized version of itself, but an un-evolved pyramid.

As the title indicates, the pace of change in this diagram is not constant: the evolution in question happened first very slowly and then quite quickly. The change in the speed of development is not marked in the diagram itself; there is no attempt to convey it visually through use of scale or uneven spacing of the mounds and pyramids. Nonetheless, a general sense of acceleration is conveyed through the lines depicting a transition between barbarism and civilization. The size of the letters decrease on the former and grow on the latter; barbarism reduces, civilization starts small and becomes bigger. We are also thus able to understand these categories as existing along a spectrum. The ascending size of the pyramids gives us momentum in one direction, while the Barbarism-to-Civilization scale above it gives us a different sense of movement, with an off-centre, asymmetrical focus. It is an elegant and dynamic image which shows Breasted's strong sense of design.

It should not escape attention that Breasted, like Hale, saw evolution as a mechanism that explained 'inorganic' change as well as biological change. Breasted was more interested in the transformation of culture, the descent of the pyramid from the stone heap, than in the descent of the Nordics from the Egyptians (or the Egyptians from Petrie's New Race, or any of us from Osborn's Dawn Man or any other favoured 'higher race'). As we shall see in the following chapters, the idea that civilizational inheritance meant the acquisition of artistic and architectural style and structures was pervasive in the work of academics, architects and artists alike.

Conclusion

In what sense were Americans 'inheritors' of a grand tradition of civilization? How had this inheritance come about? In their great 1916 popular books, Madison Grant and James Henry Breasted each had their own answer. For Grant, it was through racial descent and the large proportion of 'native Americans' of Nordic descent. For Breasted, the answer was, essentially, through diffusion, itself a part of the progressive, even 'evolutionary', nature of human societies. The immigrants who came to America carried with them technologies and ideas that had first been developed in the Orient and later in Europe, travelling from the Orient to the Mediterranean world and onwards west. For Breasted, there was also a racial component to this development: all of the civilizational advances he considered part of the 'career of man' were made by what he called the 'Great White Race'. Yet Breasted is remarkably uninterested in race as an explanatory category or a mechanism for civilization. Not for him the eugenic image of the germ plasm of a great race handed down through the production of children. Instead, civilization was the result of a world historical melting pot across times and places – a very American conception, and one that Breasted explicitly evoked in his popular works and an image that would have horrified Grant.[100]

The idea of 'early civilization' in Egypt and Mesopotamia as a predecessor to American civilization offered an alternative perspective to a racially determined theory of human civilization or culture. Rather than arguing that civilization passed only through racial lines, diffusion and 'evolution' could explain America's inheritance of civilization. This explanation had the benefit of increasing the possible status of American culture: as a *telos* of everything before it, through appropriating the achievements of other times and places and constructing an inclusive

vision of American inheritance – though not, as Washington and Du Bois and Boas and his students continued to struggle with, too inclusive.

While the idea that civilizational inheritance was not related to direct ancestral or national lineage undercut the prime importance of biological, racial descent, it existed in a time when the diction and ideas from debates about race and inheritance inevitably informed it. The 1910s and 1920s were a time when eugenicists and race scientists controlled some of the most influential American institutions – the same institutions and private clubs where Breasted and Hale made their professional homes. While the scholarly idea that race, and race conflict, explained human history and society would be chipped away by the Boasians, by the success of the American melting pot and by the disrepute that Nazi Germany would bring on race science in the eyes of many Americans, race remained a fundamental, and very often invisible, category of analysis – as it still is today. In scholarly study of the deep past, race science has re-emerged again and again in new guises, perhaps most recently in the application of population genetics as explanatory of historical change and development.[101] Race has proved a durable fiction. Nonetheless, I would argue that Breasted's presentation of world history ultimately had a more cheerful message for early twentieth-century Americans than the scholarship of the eugenicists and race scientists. Madison Grant envisioned the United States as really only a small sliver of native Americans from a certain racial pool, in decline and under threat. Compared to this, Breasted's vision of history was certainly more optimistic: inclusive (or imperial), progressive (or foolishly optimistic) and entirely confident that America could claim for itself any achievement of civilizations past.

Notes

1 Charles Scribner's Sons, *List of Spring Publication—1917*, 1, quoted in Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 158, see n. 41.
2 Roosevelt, 'Dawn and sunrise'.
3 Grant, *Passing*, xv.
4 Kühl, *Nazi Connection*, 85. See Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 355–83.
5 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 1–2.
6 Ambridge, 'History and narrative', 93–5.
7 At 20.2.1919 Madison Grant to JHB; 12.3.1919 JHB to Madison Grant; 14.3.1919 Madison Grant to JHB; 30.7.1919 JHB to Madison Grant. Box 33, Folder 10, DC, ISAC. On Grant's openness to collegial criticism and assistance, see Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 162–3.
8 Grant, *Passing*, 82.
9 Grant, *Passing*, 34–9.
10 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 145–57, 233; Allen, 'Culling the herd'. On the relationship between eugenics and the conservation movement, see Powell, *Vanishing America*.

11 Grant, *Passing*, 46–7.
12 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, xii, 381–3; Engs, *Eugenics Movement*, 102.
13 Grant, *Passing*, 31.
14 Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 149–53; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 126–9.
15 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 88–92.
16 See Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 169–81; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 102–29; Porter, 'Rise to Parnassus'; Moser, *Ancestral Images*, 157–60; Clark, *God–or Gorilla*, 116–18; Clark, 'Evolution for John Doe', 1294–1303; Haraway, 'Teddy bear patriarchy', 56–8; Osborn, *Hall of the Age of Man*; Sommer, 'Lost world', 325–9; Sommer, *History Within*, 67–92; Livingstone, 'Cultural politics', 211–14; Yudell, *Race Unmasked*, 45–52.
17 Osborn, 'Recent discoveries', 482–8. See also Gregory, 'Is the Pro-Dawn Man a myth?'; Gregory, 'Dawn-Man or ape?'; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 88–93, 168–78.
18 Harpham, 'Roots, races, and the return to philology', 43–4.
19 Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 1–25.
20 See Osborn, *Earth Speaks to Bryan*, 17–31, 49–91; Homchick, 'Objects and objectivity'; Clark, *God–or Gorilla*, 25–40, 107–16; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 31–40, 154–60; Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 130–2, 140–2.
21 On this expedition, see Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, xi–xix, 136–46. Although Osborn's hopes of finding his Dawn Man were not realized, the expedition was spectacularly successful by any other metric; among other achievements, it led to the discovery of the first known dinosaur eggs. The expedition, and the sensational publicity that surrounded it, were, I would argue, undoubtedly responsible for the science fiction writer Jack Williamson's influential early lycanthropy novel *Darker Than You Think* (1948), which concerns an archaeological expedition to Mongolia discovering, not earliest man, but man's earliest predator, *Homo lycanthropus*. The horror derives from having to reconceive of human history through this awful knowledge of a hidden race lurking among *Homo sapiens* society.
22 Osborn, 'Present problem of heredity', 363; see Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 124–6.
23 Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 123–51; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 166–81, 183–5.
24 Sommer, *History Within*, 78–81; Clark, *God–or Gorilla*, 116–19, 125–31.
25 Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 169.
26 Osborn, 'Recent discoveries', 483, 487. See also Osborn, 'Plateau habitat'; Osborn 'Why Central Asia?'; Livingstone, 'Cultural politics', 211–14.
27 Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 145; see also Sommer, *History Within*, 44–66. Spiro argues that *Men of the Old Stone Age* is best read as part one of a two-part survey of the White race's history, with Grant's *Passing*, which effectively picks up the story of human history where Osborn's work leaves off. Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 140.
28 See Sommer, *History Within*, 93–111.
29 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 220.
30 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 16.
31 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 6–7.
32 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 7.
33 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 225–6. On Osborn's famously high opinion of himself, see Rainger, *Agenda for Antiquity*, 73–4; Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 90–1.
34 Challis, *Archaeology of Race*, see esp. 85–106, 129–48. Both Debbie Challis and Kathleen Sheppard have sought to put Petrie at the centre of the development of eugenics ideas, and to show how integral not only his personal activist support but also his scholarly work was in developing the eugenic methodologies of Francis Galton and Karl Pearson, Galton's successor at University College London, more notorious in this regard. The two Petrie works with the most explicit indication of how eugenics informed his thinking about the past and about present society (and the relationship between the study of the two) are *Janus in Modern Life* (1907) and *Revolutions of Civilisation* (1911). See Sheppard, 'Flinders Petrie and eugenics', 25–9, Challis, *Archaeology of Race*, 187–204.
35 Petrie and Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, 61–4; Challis, *Archaeology of Race*, 167–85.
36 Petrie and Quibell, *Naqada and Ballas*, 50–4, pl. 84; on the use of Naqada data in the development of biometrics, see Challis, 'Skull triangles', and significant works she discusses; Petrie, 'On the use of diagrams'; Fawcett and Lee, 'Second study'.

37 Hoffman, *Egypt before the Pharaohs*, 105–9; Challis, *Archaeology of Race*, 175–6.

38 See for instance his treatment of race in *Revolutions of Civilisation*. Petrie specifically believed that race mixture after migration and contact was essential for civilizational development, a different perspective from many eugenics advocates for whom such intercourse between races was always degenerative. Yet Petrie suggested that such mixture would, in an ideal world, need careful control, as he explains in the book's conclusion:

> Yet if the view becomes really grasped, that the source of every civilisation has lain in race mixture, it may be that eugenics will, in some future civilisation, carefully segregate fine races, and prohibit continual mixture, until they have a distinct type, which will start a new civilisation when transplanted. The future progress of man may depend as much on isolation to establish a type, as on fusion of types when established. (Petrie, *Revolutions of Civilisation*, 131)

It must be remembered that this book is a work of history not otherwise concerned with Petrie's beliefs about eugenics, but these beliefs pop up even in such works as this.

39 Grant, *Passing*, xvii.

40 See Evans, *Lives of Sumerian Sculpture*, 15–45; Collins, *Sumerians*, 39–58; Wiedemann, 'Narrating the history', 198–207.

41 Collins, *Sumerians*, 183.

42 Evans, *Lives of Sumerian Sculpture*, 53–6; Ambridge, 'Imperialism and racial geography'; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 66–134, Hirschman, 'Origins and demise', 385–99.

43 Maloigne, 'Striking the imagination', 57–88; Anor, 'Joseph Halévy'; Cooper, 'Sumerian and Aryan'; Cooper, 'Posing the Sumerian question'.

44 'Indo-European' and 'Semitic' were originally philological categories, both of which would become racial categories in scholarship as well, through conflation of race and language. Using language as a proxy for race was especially common in disciplines where texts outnumbered other sources, like human skeletons or ancient art, both of which were also used to understand the races of antiquity. See Harpham, 'Roots, races, and the return to philology', 41–50; Maloigne, 'Striking the imagination', 63–7.

45 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 173, fig. 112.

46 Breasted cautions that the diagram is a simplified representation. Egypt must be left out because 'it is not purely Semitic, although closely related to the Semites', and the Hittites have been lumped in with the Indo-European line because they 'became so in language, though evidently not originally so in blood'. This view of Hittite origins was in flux as it was becoming gradually clearer that the Hittite language was Indo-European, not merely influenced by it. See Özyar, 'Anatolian civilization', 54–9.

47 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 171.

48 Ambridge, 'Imperialism and racial geography', 22–7.

49 Breasted, *Ancient Times* (1935 edition), 131. See Matić, *Ethnic Identities*, 19–20; Matić, 'De-colonizing historiography', 31. Breasted's threefold typology of 'White, Negro, and Mongoloid' was a common one. Breasted is not here explicit about whether these are the only three races.

50 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 198–204.

51 Grant, *Passing*, 190–1.

52 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 222–4.

53 Breasted, 'Recovery and decipherment'.

54 At 29.4.1909 JHB to Booker T. Washington. Box 13, Folder 37, DC, ISAC. See Williams, *Rethinking Race*, 71–2; Davies, 'Egyptological conversations'. It is unclear if, during his travels along the 'Nubian Nile', Breasted was aware that Washington had sent five Tuskegee students to Zeidab, Sudan, quite near to the city of Meroe, where Breasted's expedition spent two weeks in 1907, and that they established a colony there. Jeremy Pope has theorized that some contact with the students from Tuskegee in Sudan may have been behind Breasted's seemingly unsolicited contact with Washington about his finds. Pope, 'Hands unto Ethiopia', 8–9, 22; see also Harlan, 'Booker T. Washington', esp. 442.

55 At 6.5.1909 Booker T. Washington to JHB. Box 13, Folder 37, DC, ISAC.

56 See Breasted, 'Recovery and decipherment', 376 ('their meager civilization was rapidly Egyptianized'), 378–80 ('the Egyptian veneer slowly wore off as this kingdom of the upper

Nile was more and more isolated from the civilization of the north, and it was thrown back upon the barbarism of inner Africa').

57 Williams, *Rethinking Race*, 54–72, esp. 72; Harlan, 'Booker T. Washington'.

58 Breasted was also interested in Washington's ideas as an educator and advocate for his race, and thought that they could be applied to colonial projects in Egypt. In a letter to his wife, he recounts a meeting with the British Lord Allenby, recently made Special High Commissioner for Egypt and Sudan, with whom Breasted had a friendly relationship and to whom he often gave advice as an expert on Egypt. He suggested Washington's Tuskegee Institute as a model for education for native Egyptians: 'I told him about Booker T. Washington's ideas of training for such a people, and suggested that a series of Tuskeegees [*sic*] up and down the Nile would be of great value to the people. He agreed.' It is unclear if Breasted's interest in Washington's ideas indicates that he and Washington had any further correspondence, or if Breasted later knew about the Tuskegee students' colony at Zeidab. See 19.12.1919 JHB to FHB. JHBP, ISAC, printed in Larson, *Letters*, 118.

59 Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 4.

60 Vanessa Davies discusses how Du Bois also corresponded with W. M. Flinders Petrie on the question of racial problems in Egypt and America, considering him a valuable colleague even as he also publicly rebuked some of his perspectives as examples of 'self-righteous Europe'; see Davies, 'W. E. B. Du Bois, a new voice', 22–8.

61 Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 5.

62 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 328–9. See Kline, 'Eugenics in the United States'; Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally*, 140–53; Dorr, *Segregation's Science*, 70–106.

63 Yudell, *Race Unmasked*, 57–74; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 111–14.

64 Challis, *Archaeology of Race*, 45–65; Bland and Hall, 'Eugenics in Britain'; Fancher, 'Scientific cousins'. See also McEnroe, 'Unfit for society?'.

65 Challis, *Archaeology of Race*, 85–106.

66 See Falk, 'Eugenics and the Jews', 463–5; Hart, *Healthy Jew*, 105–42; Hart, 'Racial science', 268–82; English, *Unnatural Selections*, esp. 16–24; Robinson, 'Battle for respectability'; Sherman, 'In search of purity'; Overbeck, *At the Heart*, 23–54. See also Bashford and Levine, *Oxford Handbook of Eugenics*, with numerous articles on eugenics in a huge range of national contexts.

67 See Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 220–33; Ludmerer, 'Genetics, eugenics'; Allen, 'Eugenics Record Office', 247–50; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 88–106; Anderson, *From Boas to Black Power*, 28–30.

68 Because of the thorough discrediting of Grant's racist ideas since the 1930s, his lack of formal qualifications as a scientist (he had a Yale law degree) and his own preference for a behind-the-scenes role, he has been treated as a marginal figure in much scholarship, even on the eugenics movement, let alone on American science more broadly. See Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 288–9; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 75. Spiro's thoroughly researched biography of Grant offers a corrective to this view and places Grant at the centre of American civic and intellectual life in the first few decades of the twentieth century and among the patrician, elite society he would have defined as the greatest of his 'Great Race'.

69 See Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, Appendix A.

70 See Allen, 'Eugenics Record Office', 234–6.

71 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 307–8.

72 Ripley, *Races of Europe*, 103–30. Ripley is thanked for his important reference work in Grant's foreword to *Passing*, xxi.

73 At 25.3.1921 Henry Fairfield Osborn to GEH. Box 69, Folder 1, GEHP.

74 At 20.4.1921 'Thirty-Fourth Voyage of the Half Moon'. Box 69, Folder 1, GEHP.

75 Duke, *Importing Oxbridge*, 50–2; Ziolkowski, *Juggler of Notre Dame*, 231, 402–3. Cram's work for the Rice Campus included a series in which Francis Galton featured among 'founders, leaders, and pioneers' of different domains of knowledge, passing 'from the ancient enterprises of humane learning to the modern endeavors of scientific exploration' (Lovett, 'Edgar Odell Lovett', 70–1).

76 See Williams, *Rethinking Race*, 1–53; Anderson, *From Boas to Black Power*, 60–89; Baker, 'Franz Boas out of the ivory tower'; Baker 'Cult of Franz Boas'; Baker, *Anthropology and the Racial Politics of Culture*, 6–30; Barkan, *Retreat of Scientific Racism*, 66–134; Yudell, *Race Unmasked*, 47–9.

77 Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution*, 270–307. See Browman, 'Spying by American archaeologists'; Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 308–27; Caspari, 'Race, then and now', 925–8; Little, 'Physical anthropology'.
78 At 16.1.1917 GEH to W.H. Holmes. Box 21, Folder 25, GEHP. See Meltzer, 'When destiny takes a turn'.
79 Boas, 'Changes in the bodily form'; see Baker, 'Franz Boas out of the ivory tower'.
80 At 9.2.1917 Edwin G. Conklin to GEH; 15.2.1917 GEH to Edwin G. Conklin. Box 11, Folder 24; 9.2.1917 Cary T. Hutchinson to GEH. Box 23, Folder 1; n.d. (confidential) W. H. Holmes to GEH; 25.1.1917 GEH to W. H. Holmes, agreeing about the worrying 'German tendencies' of Boas. Box 21, Folder 25; 27.12.1919 Charles D. Walcott to GEH; 9.1.1920 Charles D. Walcott to GEH. Box 42, Folder 3. All above GEHP. See Browman, 'Spying by American archaeologists', 13–16.
81 At 7.12.1916 Franz Boas to GEH. Box 4, Folder 25, GEHP.
82 At 20.12.1916 GEH to Franz Boas. Box 4, Folder 25, GEHP.
83 Williams, *Rethinking Race*, 4–36; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 134–8.
84 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 312–13. See Davenport and Love, *Army Anthropology*.
85 See Cogdell, 'Future perfect?', 244–59; Lawrie, *Forging a Laboring Race*, 71–108.
86 At 16.1.1917 GEH to W. H. Holmes. Box 21, Folder 25, GEHP.
87 See Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 228–48; Emberling and Teeter, 'First expedition'; Gelvin, 'Middle East'.
88 Hale, 'Plea for the imaginative element'. Hale was speaking with reference to the educational programme offered at his alma mater, Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Hale's plans for a more liberal technical education were something he was able to develop at Caltech. See also Reingold, 'Disappearing laboratory', 83–4.
89 Spencer's Social Darwinism was embraced by American businessmen like Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller Sr. and their foundations, the major funders of Hale and Breasted's institutional endeavours. See White, 'Andrew Carnegie and Herbert Spencer'; Ghent, *Our Benevolent Feudalism*, 28–30.
90 Published as Breasted, 'The origins of civilization'.
91 Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 225–6.
92 Hale, *Study of Stellar Evolution*, 3.
93 Hale, *Study of Stellar Evolution*, 8.
94 Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 21.
95 Another particularly inventive example of the kind of big history Hale was interested in is Henry Robert Knipe's *Nebula to Man* (1905), which tells this long span of history through the concept of evolution, in heroic couplets and with lavish illustrations. See also Somerset, 'Telling the story of life'; Moser, *Ancestral Images*, 143–5.
96 Breasted and Robinson, *Outlines*, fig. 13; Breasted, *Ancient Times*, fig. 38, 54–5. See Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 189–206.
97 See discussion in Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, 28–9.
98 Breasted, 'Origins of civilization I'; Breasted, 'Place of the Near Orient'. See Hersey, 'Lewis Henry Morgan'; Stocking 'Cultural Darwinism'.
99 No other form of architecture gets quite the same treatment in *Ancient Times*, but other images also trace relationships between 'early' and 'late' forms and suggest a process of evolution or direct descent through ancestry, all of them taking place through diffusion. See Breasted, *Ancient Times*, fig. 167 (showing diffusion and development of column styles from Egypt to Greece), fig. 248 (Roman triumphal arch and 'its oriental ancestors'), fig. 272 (Christian church spire and 'its oriental ancestry').
100 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 202.
101 For examples of this approach, see Haak et al., 'Massive migration'; Armit and Reich, 'The return of the beaker folk?'. Issues around this revival are critiqued or commented upon in Frieman and Hofmann, 'Present pasts'; Hakenbeck, 'Genetics, archaeology and the far right'; Booth, 'A stranger in a strange land'. See also Saini, *Superior*; Lewis-Kraus, 'Is ancient DNA research revealing new truths'.

3
Progress: making sense of history through art

Like the academics we considered in the previous chapter, artists also contributed to discussions about American inheritance. Through their integration into significant American institutions, artistic representations of civilizational progress became important means of disseminating ideas about the relationship between the past and the present, America and its predecessors and America's role at the pinnacle of world history. Art in public buildings instantiated certain truths in the very fabric of these structures.

Theories of visual education in the early twentieth century argued that looking was an especially powerful means of absorbing information.[1] This premise informed explicitly didactic visual culture, like museum and fair displays. Those involved in major civic architecture projects also considered their work as having a mission to educate and inform. Architects and decorative artists, when they explained their own theories of decoration, often emphasized this responsibility (and often linked it to the artistic traditions of the ancient past).[2] Between the 1890s and the early 1930s, it was *de rigueur* for any prestigious building to have a decorative programme that would contextualize and celebrate its purpose, generally through some combination of allegory and historical narrative. Although there were major changes in the most popular styles across this period, the basic significance of narrative and symbolic decoration did not change. In the 1920s and 1930s, artists working in the Art Deco idiom excelled at updating the themes of Gilded Age and Progressive Era decorative schemes for modernist contexts. While the popularity of certain themes and stylistic techniques changed over this period, the importance of architectural decoration as a significant means of public communication did not.

In this chapter, I will consider two important kinds of representation of how civilization was passed on, forms that I call 'the Progress' and 'the Torch-passing'. After some discussion of nineteenth-century representations of historical change, I focus on early twentieth-century works by Lee Lawrie on buildings designed by Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, and other works by artistic colleagues with whom they collaborated (including on projects that involved Breasted, Hale and their own colleagues in the NAS and at the University of Chicago). Through exploring a number of examples and considering themes that recur across them, we will gain a better understanding of what public art had to say about the United States' inheritance and the progress of history.

The Progress as an artistic form

The term 'Progress' as I will use it can be applied to any unified narrative work or linked sequence that depicts the development of a certain topic, usually in chronological time. Progresses were extremely flexible in form and content, but united in their central assumption that different historical manifestations of some chosen subject can be understood as part of one narrative artwork. This might be expressed through a series of linked scenes in narrative sequence, or through processions of human figures or objects. Such processions may be literal, with human figures depicted in profile, striding forwards, or they may be lined up at attention, facing a direction of travel or looking out at the viewer. They may be in contact with one another as if they occupy one physical space, or isolated and iconic. The style within a Progress may be uniform, or it may transform to suit each new participant in its procession.[3] We will see examples of all these variations. These decisions answered both to artistic requirements and to ideological subtlety.

Progresses were common decorative features in Beaux-Arts, Gothic Revival and Art Deco and other modernist architecture alike. In all contexts they provided a sense of historical grounding while also associating the historical past with progress, change and dynamism: onwards and upwards to the present (or the future). Their popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century is a sign of how thoroughly a progressive vision of historical change had been integrated into American public life. While these were not a uniquely American architectural form, American Progresses are often especially wide-ranging and ecumenical, reflecting a conviction that America needed to be understood within a 'world historical' rather than national or regional tradition.

A noble visual procession of advance could illustrate the history of just about any topic you might select. In 1949, at the tail end of the popularity of this kind of elaborate narrative sculpture, Lee Lawrie designed a history of corn cultivation for a laboratory building of the Corn Products Company in Argo, Illinois. One scene showed a boy throwing his cap in the air 'rejoicing over the discovery of hybrid corn'.[4] Hybrid corn might be a less elevated subject and not so foundational an aspect of civilization as those Lawrie dealt with in Progresses of law, writing or scientific men for the Nebraska Capitol and the National Academy of Sciences, but business leaders also wanted the prestige of conceiving of their endeavours as part of the rise of civilization.

Early nineteenth-century historical consciousness: *The Course of Empire* (1833–6)

Before we explore examples of early twentieth-century Progresses, let us first consider a sequence of images that predates the period we are interested in by many decades, which expresses a very different sense of history than the progressive or evolutionary narrative. Between 1833 and 1836, Thomas Cole, founding figure of the Hudson River School of landscape artists, painted *The Course of Empire* for his patron, the New York city businessman Luman Reed. Intended to frame a fireplace in Reed's home, it is a five-painting series showing the same imaginary landscape at different stages of civilizational development: *The Savage State*, *The Pastoral or Arcadian State*, *The Consummation of Empire*, *Destruction* and *Desolation*. Like the landscape, the architecture in each painting is a pastiche, with Cole drawing on different references for its different states: as Steven Conn points out, the hunters in the first canvas dwell in what appear to be skin tipis, indicating that Cole was thinking about American Indians as models for his Savage State, while the second painting features a structure that looks like Stonehenge, drawing on images of the European Neolithic.[5] A mishmash of classical styles from Greece and Rome define the consummation stage, and are seen burning and crumbling into ruins in the final two paintings.

Despite Cole's use of Greek and Roman architectural references, *Destruction* (Figure 3.1) strongly reflects the influence of the popular English painter John Martin's scenes of catastrophic destruction in the ancient Middle East, *The Fall of Babylon* (mezzotint 1831) (Figure 3.2), *Belshazzar's Feast* (mezzotint 1826), *The Fall of Nineveh* (mezzotint 1829) and *Moses Evokes the Seventh Plague* (mezzotint 1832).[6] Cole was a great

Figure 3.1 Thomas Cole, *Destruction* (1858), from the series *The Course of Empire*. Photo credit: Public domain, collection of the New York Historical Society.

Figure 3.2 John Martin, *The Fall of Babylon; Cyrus the Great Defeating the Chaldean Army* (mezzotint 1831 by Martin, after himself, 1819). Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by the Wellcome Collection.

admirer of Martin's, whom he met while in London in 1830, when he was also able to see his large-scale works in person.[7] Even prior to this visit, Cole had clearly studied Martin's bombastic, dramatic compositions, which were widely circulated as mezzotints that Martin made himself (some of Martin's

works were painted canvases which he reproduced as mezzotints while other compositions began their life as mezzotints).[8] These works preceded the rediscovery of Assyrian capitals in the 1840s, so Martin's Nineveh and Babylon are also, like Cole's cities, architectural fantasies. Nonetheless, while Cole's empire is unmistakably classical in aesthetics, the genealogy of his *Destruction*, and of empire in decline, includes Martin's visions of Babylon, Nineveh and Egypt. His reliance on these works expressed the strong association in the early nineteenth century between these Middle Eastern places and apocalyptic, city-annihilating destruction: with decline and decimation, and not with progress.

For Cole, it was not merely human political entities that were fragile, it was the very existence of human works in the world.[9] Inevitably, the natural world would reassert its power. Describing the final painting in the series, showing the desolate ruins of his triumphal fantasy Graeco-Roman city at twilight he explained how, 'violence and time have crumbled the works of man, and art is again resolving into elemental nature'.[10] Art was often regarded as the most important marker of human civilization, and its most enduring. But for Cole, even art came from dust and would return to dust.

Cole was ambivalent, not only about the staying power of man's works, but even about the project of civilization in the first place. He was an early mourner of the vanishing American wilderness.[11] 'In civilized Europe the primitive features of scenery have long since been destroyed or modified,' he explained:

> And to this cultivated state our western world is fast approaching; but nature is still predominant, and there are those who regret that with the improvements of cultivation the sublimity of the wilderness should pass away: for those scenes of solitude from which the hand of nature has never been lifted, affect the mind with a more deep toned emotion than aught which the hand of man has touched.[12]

Cole's series shows us a conception of historical development as cyclical and inevitable, the fall no less than the rise of civilizations subject to immutable law.[13] It was also a work about contemporary American society as much as it was about the grand span of human history. As Angela Miller argues, Cole's deep 'cultural pessimism' was in part a reaction to the politics of Jacksonian democracy, about which he was deeply suspicious.[14] Although Cole intended his pessimistic series to serve as a warning, he feared it would be misinterpreted, and he was

right (Reed, who had commissioned the paintings for his private home, died in 1836; his family allowed the series to be exhibited to the public).[15] Viewers already embracing the progressive, rather than cyclical, historical consciousness that would dominate the rest of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, ignored Cole's doom-mongering and instead filled in their own imagined final scene, around them, outside of the canvas: America triumphant, having broken the cycle, the end of history. The United States was on the cusp of new ways of thinking about progress, in which the kind of civilization-wide *memento mori* that Cole was trying to give his viewers did not resonate. To some viewers, America seemed to have broken free from the inevitable trajectory towards decline and decay. In this reading, Cole's five scenes have to be read in terms of a sixth perspective: their display together in a new American metropolis, able to consider the past without being beholden to it, learning from without repeating history.

Jumping forward to a time when progressive historical consciousness was firmly embedded in American life, we can consider an example of a Progress no longer haunted by the spectre of decline in a Beaux-Arts setting, in the Library of Congress Thomas Jefferson Building, built between 1890 and 1897 to a design by the architect Paul J. Pelz, first in partnership with John L. Smithmeyer and then Edward Pearce Casey.[16] The sumptuously decorated building celebrated the knowledge housed within through a lavish decorative programme largely overseen by the Librarian of Congress, Ainsworth Rand Spofford.

For the collar and lantern of the dome of the central reading room, mural painter Edwin Howland Blashfield created a circular *Evolution of Civilization* (1897) (Figure 3.3).[17] Donald Malcolm Reid describes it as prefiguring 'the basic outline of what would later be canonized in American colleges and universities as the Western civilization survey'.[18] The mural depicts twelve different cultures of the past as embodied, winged human figures, some female and some male, each of which has contributed some key element to modern civilization. The choice of cultures are quite varied: 'Islam', a religion spanning a huge part of the globe and more than a millennium is one, as is 'the Middle Ages', a time period (it is clearly the European Middle Ages), and so again is 'Germany', an only recently united nation. The goods they contribute to civilization are also widely varied: the Greeks offer 'philosophy', while Germany contributes 'the art of printing'. Indeed, the most unified feature of all these participants in the pageant of civilization is that they are all very beautiful, a parade of bachelors and bachelorettes for every taste.

Figure 3.3 Edwin Howland Blashfield, detail from *The Evolution of Civilization* (1897), for the collar of the Library of Congress main reading room dome. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, detail from photograph by Carol M. Highsmith LC-DIG-highsm-02071.

The figures are arranged in chronological order, but because they are oriented around a dome, this order loops back around with the latest comer, America, a handsome, masculine worker (his face based on Abraham Lincoln's) whose contribution to civilization is 'science', sitting next to the pale-skinned Egyptian pharaoh who long ago contributed 'written records': as Reid puts it, Egypt as 'dawn' and America as 'culmination' of civilization.[19] The point where these two figures meet introduces a tension between past and present – and resolves that tension by the seamless, unremarked transition between the two. Because the loop is closed, it would also be possible to read this image without direction or hierarchy: America is no better nor worse than any other figure represented. Yet because America alone, as the youngest of the procession, has a chance to benefit from all the goods before it, there can be no doubt that he is the favoured youngest child, the 'most evolved' civilization, staring sideways into a future he will dominate through technology and education and a past that he has already bested.[20] Next to him, the Egyptian faces outward, as if he is looking forward into the eternity that comes after him – and down on the citizens of the American nation educating themselves in the new national public library below him.

Lee Lawrie's Progresses

Progresses remained popular in early twentieth-century civic buildings, answering to the ongoing desire to understand America's role at the top

of a long historical rise. Progresses, and similar sequences of scenes, integrated the past into decorative programmes that nonetheless oriented their viewers towards the future. In the Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue-designed buildings that the sculptor Lee Lawrie worked on in the 1920s, Progresses of one kind or another were everywhere. This was in keeping with the pair's interest in developing serious, historically engaged iconography and rich symbolic programmes, and was usually what their clients expected. We find examples throughout the National Academy of Sciences, the Nebraska Capitol, the Los Angeles Central Library and the University Chapel of the University of Chicago. The themes that these sequences took up suit the elevated purposes of these buildings: law, religion, wisdom, writing, science. These scenes were created in some cases in concert with Breasted and Hale (on the NAS) or through consultation of Breasted's works (in Nebraska).

Law was the subject of two different kinds of Progresses at the Nebraska Capitol. Like all the iconography of the building, these sequences were worked out between Lawrie and Goodhue with a third equally important author, the polymath philosopher Hartley Burr Alexander, then at the University of Nebraska, who also served as symbologist on the Los Angeles Library (and later moved to Scripps College in Los Angeles), and advised Hildreth Meière on her work for the Rockefeller Center. Together Goodhue, Alexander and Lawrie planned a procession of figures emerging from the walls of the building called 'The Lawgivers' and a series of scenes for 'the Progress of Law'.

Lawrie's Progress of Law scenes ranged chronologically from Moses' reception of the biblical law at Mount Sinai to the admission of Nebraska into the United States (arguably, events not quite of equivalent world historical importance). These two panels each appear on the north side of the building, at opposite ends, the most ancient and most modern scenes looping back around and meeting.[21] As Eric McCready has observed, Lawrie used artistic style as a means of indicating chronological (and arguably, civilizational) advance: a chunky, 'archaic Assyrian' style for his biblical scenes, a smoother 'classical Greek' style, 'narrative Roman' and 'simplified naturalism' for scenes depicting events within the history of the US.[22]

Lawrie's lawgivers are also arranged chronologically. A run of figures along the south wall begins with Hammurabi, the eighteenth-century BCE king of Babylon (then believed to have reigned in the twenty-third century) whose famous stele containing a code of laws had been discovered in 1901–2 excavations at Susa in Iran.[23] An accurate cuneiform inscription from his code is inscribed next to him (discussed

further in Chapter 7).[24] Beyond him are Moses and Akhenaten, part of the Hebrew text of the Decalogue between them, Solon, Solomon, Julius Caesar, Justinian and Charlemagne. Part of the same sequence but sculpted along the court and not the south wall are the bookends, the two truly earliest and latest: Minos of Crete, a figure of classical legend who later became judge in the underworld, and Napoleon.[25] This sequence is biased towards antiquity, the great lawgivers are foundational figures mostly associated with a very distant past, Napoleon the only modern figure.

Lawgivers in the US Supreme Court

Lawrie's work on lawgivers for the Nebraska Capitol was probably an influence for his colleague Adolph Alexander Weinman's *Lawgivers* for Cass Gilbert's US Supreme Court Building (1932–5) (Figure 3.4).[26] Weinman's sequence of lawgivers, a frieze for the South and North walls of the Court Chamber, reflects to some extent the sequence of the same subject worked out by Lawrie for the Nebraska Capitol, which was also copied in other government buildings at state and federal levels.[27] The Supreme Court frieze shows a chronological sequence of great men, beginning on the South Wall and ending on the North Wall. The figures in the first face left (towards the east). A left-to-right movement takes us forward in time, from the earliest to progressively later figures. On the North Wall, figures face right (also towards the east) and the chronological progress moves from right to left. The historical figures are interrupted occasionally by standing or seated allegorical figures: Fame, History, Liberty and Peace and Philosophy bracket the two friezes, while Authority, Light of Wisdom, Equity and Right of Man, stand among the groups of lawgivers. The personifications of these values are conventional neoclassical human figures in flowing drapery. The historical figures are more stylistically varied, reflecting the style and iconography of their own historical periods (or those most associated with them: Weinman's Moses looks like a Renaissance painting or statue). Even their poses are dictated by these historical references: a figure of Confucius, for instance, stands with his hands clasped in front of him, facing forward and angled very slightly towards one side, a pose Weinman would likely have encountered in Chinese portraits of the philosopher from various periods.

The most dynamic figures are Weinman's two earliest: the Egyptian pharaoh Menes, traditionally credited as the first pharaoh of the First Dynasty of united Upper and Lower Egypt (*c*. 3200 BCE) and Hammurabi

Figure 3.4 Adolph Alexander Weinman, South Wall Courtroom Frieze, *Lawgivers* (*c*. 1931–5) for the US Supreme Court courtroom, Washington, DC. Photo credit: Collection of the Supreme Court of the United States.

again. Their postures draw from ancient Egyptian and Assyrian images of human figures striding with legs akimbo. They are the only lawgivers who appear to be marching rather than hanging around. In an unexplained and slightly out-of-place touch of Orientalist exoticism, a sinuous big cat peers around the Pharaoh Menes' muscular legs.[28] A less dynamic group trails along after these first two lawgivers, from east to west along the wall: Moses, Solomon, Lycurgus, Solon, Draco, Confucius, Octavian. On the North Wall frieze, the chronological progression continues: Justinian, Mohammed (an image that has been a source of controversy with American Muslims),[29] Charlemagne, King John, Louis IX, Hugo Grotius, Sir William Blackstone, John Marshall (the only American) and Napoleon.[30]

Gilbert left the planning of this and other decorative sequences to Weinman, who carried out extensive research on his historical figures.[31] But while he avoided micro-managing the subject matter, Gilbert was very concerned with ensuring a decorative programme worthy of his final great project. Gilbert had strong feelings about the overall purpose the decorations must serve and the public educational value of visual art properly planned:

> The poor man cannot fill his home with works of art. The State can, however, satisfy his natural craving for such things in the enjoyment of which all may freely share, by properly embellishing its public buildings and particularly its state capitol. There the rich and poor alike may find the history of the state and the ideals of its government set forth in an orderly and appropriate way in noble inscriptions, beautiful mural paintings and sculpture and in the fine proportions and good taste of the whole design.
>
> It is an inspiration to patriotism and good citizenship, it encourages just pride in the state and is an education to oncoming generations to see these things, imponderable elements of life and character, set before the people for their enjoyment and betterment. The educational value alone is worth to the state far more than its cost – it supplements the education furnished by the public school and the university – it is a symbol of the civilization, culture and ideals of our country.[32]

Gilbert was only expressing ideas that most civic architects and artists would have agreed with: decorative art in public places was an important educational tool, and a means of creating a collective civic identity and promoting civic virtues. Both the beauty of such images and their 'orderly and appropriate' presentation were essential.

Lee Lawrie and Ulric Ellerhusen's *March of Religion*

For the University Chapel at Chicago (1928), the artistic programme could aspire to equally uplifting ends, in a slightly different domain. Rather than a patriotic education for citizenship, it should inspire a spiritual connection to the divine and a sense of communal belonging to the university. The University of Chicago was founded in 1890 by Baptists, but it never had a formal sectarian affiliation. As a home for its entire student body, its chapel was to be welcoming to a range of denominations, if still obviously Christian and Protestant. The chapel was originally designed by Goodhue, who was hired in 1918, but completed under the direction of Charles R. Coolidge and Goodhue's successor firm Mayers, Murray & Phillip. It opened in 1928, four years after Goodhue's death.[33] Lawrie and his collaborator Ulric Ellerhusen, another sculptor of German origin who trained in Chicago, under Lorado Taft, together created the sculptures for the chapel.[34] Lawrie, the more experienced of the two, largely worked on the sculptures at a lower, more visible level, while Ellerhusen created the sculptures above 30 feet, in consultation with Lawrie. It was Ellerhusen then who was primarily responsible for the *March of Religion* sculptural group that runs along the Chapel's south gable (Figure 3.5).[35] A figure of Christ is in the centre, at the highest point of the sequence. The statues fanning out around him reflect a Christian religious orientation, though with a few universalist, non-Christian inclusions. From west to east, it features figures of the Hebrew Bible, Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah; 'pagan' figures Zoroaster and Plato; and New Testament and later Christian figures, John the Baptist, the apostles Peter and Paul, and Christian theologians or saints Athanasius, Augustine, Francis of Assisi, Martin Luther and John Calvin. While undoubtedly Western, Christian and Protestant-centric, like Lawrie's and Weinman's series of lawgivers, it nonetheless makes a place for 'outsiders' (men of the Middle East, Pagans) as part of 'our' tradition.

In its architectural style, as requested by the university, the chapel was to evoke the gothic of mediaeval Europe with unique American twists. As Stephen Gage shows, working out an acceptable position with respect to tradition and innovation was important to university leaders.[36] While proud of how their chapel respected the historical architectural form of the Gothic Cathedral, the university's leaders nonetheless employed a typically American boosterism about the features of their new chapel that were uniquely American. Situated on Frederick Law Olmstead's Midway Plaisance, a legacy of the Chicago Columbian Exposition, it benefited from wide-open vistas unknown in European cities: 'There will

Figure 3.5 Lee Lawrie and Ulric Ellerhusen, *March of Religion* (1928) for the University of Chicago University (Rockefeller) Chapel (1928), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, completed after his death by Mayers, Murray & Phillip. In full, the sequence features Abraham, Moses, Elijah, Isaiah, Zoroaster, Plato, John the Baptist, Christ (elevated, in centre), Peter, Paul, Athanasius, Augustine, Francis, Martin Luther and John Calvin. Photo credit: Author.

be found in the neighborhood of the Cathedral on the Midway, a striking combination of beauty and architectural effectiveness seldom found in England or France.'[37] Furthermore, the university's press department boasted, it was a cathedral as good as the wonders of mediaeval Europe, created with that most 1920s of values: efficiency. 'Modern methods,' an official press release explained, 'have made possible the financing and construction of a structure with all the magnificence, mass and beauty of the great Gothic cathedrals of Europe, in a short span of time, and without the sacrifices which they required'.[38] Progress was a wonderful thing.

The *March of Religion* is in keeping with the building's approach: a respectful aesthetic form with novel iconographical content that marks the importance of tradition at the same time that it does something entirely new. It was not the only place in the chapel where unexpected individuals appeared in the gothic idiom: statues of former presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, bearing the arms of their respective *alma maters* Harvard and Princeton, flank the east tower entrance (Figure 3.6).[39] In the spandrels of the arch to left and right are two great cities of learning, old and new: Athens and Chicago.

Figure 3.6 Ulric Ellerhusen, models for sculptures for the east tower entrance door of the University of Chicago University Chapel (1928). They depict US Presidents Woodrow Wilson (l) and Theodore Roosevelt (r), and the cities of Athens (l) and Chicago (r). Photo credit: University of Chicago Photographic Archive, apf2-06950–1, Hanna Holborn Gray Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

An abbreviated two-part Progress which, like the longer and more elaborate ones discussed above, connects the past and the present, a comparison that aggrandizes a modern American city.

Family trees and relay races: interpreting the relationships in Progresses

Simply by putting figures or scenes together in certain combinations, Progresses create a visually coherent sequence out of something that might be far less coherent in narrative explanation. But they are also ambiguous on certain points – like the relationships between the different figures in Progresses. How closely connected are they? How does progress from one figure to the next actually happen?

Let us turn to Lawrie's lawgivers of Nebraska again. They are arranged in a rough chronological order which suggests a linear development over time, but the relationship of any given figure to the others is clearly not the same in all cases. An argument could certainly be made for the eighteenth-century Babylonian king Hammurabi as

a real historical influence on Moses, who stands next to him in the sequence; the similarity between Hammurabi's 'law code' and the Exodus Covenant Code was arguably the most exciting aspect of this find to scholars in the wake of its discovery.[40] But can we really detect any direct or indirect line of influence between Moses and the seventh–sixth century BCE Athenian Solon a few places along? And does Hammurabi have any special relationship to Akhenaten, the fourteenth-century BCE heretical pharaoh whose nascent 'monotheism' (as Breasted would have it) explains his inclusion in the lawgiver sequence? Or are these two first figures unrelated 'parents' of modern law, each contributing a different aspect? As part of an artistic sequence, these inconsistencies in relationships among the separate figures in the sequence are subordinated to a much more important argument: that the significant thing about these lawgivers is our ability to read them together in a progress that ends where the artwork stands today, in the Nebraska State House, having carried the ideas of all these great men of the Eastern and Western past to the Great Plains, to a new house of government there.

If we were to try and deduce just how law, art, writing or the cultivation of corn have progressed from one incident or one figure to the next in any given Progress, the most defensible explanation would usually be diffusion: ideas passing through cultural contact from one figure to the next, one advance inspiring the next, not just within a coherent tradition (cultural, national, racial), but from one time and place to often very different 'successors'.

Hartley Burr Alexander, the philosopher and literary scholar who served as 'symbologist' for both the Nebraska Capitol and the Los Angeles Library explained the role of diffusion in a specifically American context:

> Our history does not begin with this age of migration, majestic as it is, but reaches back into all the ancestral lands of all our varied groups. We are of England, but we are also of France and Italy, and of great Slavonia and of the ancient East. Every land has given something to our making, and all comers bring with them heritages which can become ours only by being prized.[41]

For Alexander, the diversity of America as an immigrant nation was a cultural benefit, making it uniquely rich as a nation. Every culture of the past, he argued, would be needed for the United States to be equal to the challenge and opportunity presented by the American landscape (although, in a further discussion, he focused almost exclusively on the influence of European cultures).[42]

Another reading might remove the teleology entirely and consider the chronological order to be incidental, just one way of arranging a depiction of universal human connectedness across time and palace. Despite the title *March of Religion* for the statues that appear on the front of the University Chapel, is there really a march forward, or even necessarily a connection among all the spiritual figures there? Or are each of them manifestations of a universal human urge towards something higher, a periodic breaking-in of the divine into the historical and human realm? Certainly the fact that they cluster around the figure of Christ complicates the notion of progress as mapping neatly onto linear chronology: the high point is the chronological as well as the spatial middle, where Christ appears.

Because this example is found on a chapel, it seems reasonable to read the connection between these figures not in terms of ancestry, diffusion or communication, but rather that all are alike manifestations of something eternal and unchanging, outside of chronological time: the divine. With human figures facing outwards, not in contact with each other, the composition of the work supports such an interpretation. While an explicitly religious work of art is especially amenable to such an interpretation, other Progresses could equally be read in a similar way: expressing different manifestations of forces that assert themselves throughout human history. The available explanations for such manifestations may be various, ranging from the truly mystical (maybe Moses and Zoroaster really were in contact with God; maybe all art really is an expression of the divine), to the only pseudo-mystical (maybe the human genius for art or urge for justice cannot be repressed for long and emerges separately in many times and places, an expression of innate human nature, or as Henry Fairfield Osborn would have it, of an innate 'racial soul').[43]

Finally, despite the linear composition of most Progresses, it is nonetheless possible to read them as more like a branching family tree, even if that branching shape is not visually present. Perhaps the procession of lawgivers in Nebraska or on the US Supreme Court is a series of isolated figures who gain relationship with one another only through their shared influence on Americans in the modern day. In that case, they are most like a family in which great-grandparents who never met are connected only by a relationship that occurs far in their future. America, melting pot of history, unites ancestors who would otherwise have had little to do with each other. We can imagine a Moses gazing in horror at Solon, like two sets of relatives at a wedding amazed to find themselves in conjunction through their wayward children, a

Hammurabi baffled at just who Chief Justice John Marshall might be (US Supreme Court), Zoroaster awkwardly trying to find a point of common interest with Martin Luther (University of Chicago Chapel).

Furthermore, if world history gains coherence only through its golden child descendant, it becomes especially clear that the United States is the *point* of history, the ending that ties it all together: the real, true American grandchild which all the struggle upwards from savagery and barbarism has been for, the civilization at the end of it all. While America was generally Nordic-White in these visual imaginings, this was a narrative that might nonetheless have appealed especially strongly to more recent American immigrants (including those like Lawrie, Ellerhusen and Weinman, all of them German-born). History not only gains coherence through tracing relationships *between* ideas or technologies, but specifically through tracing their relationship *to* modern America. Once again: American society is not just the most recent stop in a chronological progression but the *telos* of the entirety of world history. We might return to Madison Grant's description of the human body and apply it here to American society: 'unit[ing] in himself the blood of thousands of ancestors, stretching back through thousands of years'.[44] Among nations of 'the West', only America unites all these influences. These images are celebrations of the melting pot conceived not just as a metaphor for American immigration, but for the unique nature of American society and government. America is not just a melting pot of new immigrants, but of the Great Men of the past and the arts of civilization they have conceived miles away and years before.[45]

Prometheus and the torch of civilization

Another way of visualizing America's inheritance of civilization took the form of a single scene. Instead of watching civilization evolve and grow gradually, this form visualizes it as a package that can be passed on in one fell swoop – in the most common visual metaphor, like a torch.

A popular reference in both visual and written descriptions of human civilizational inheritance was the Greek myth of the archetypal culture hero Prometheus. We have already seen how the Prometheus myth structured Henry Fairfield Osborn's 1927 book *Man Rises to Parnassus*, serving there as the metaphor for human cultural evolution. Osborn was not the only modern scientist to find the story of Prometheus meaningful. The Building Committee of the National Academy of Sciences building, opened in 1924, commissioned a large mural by Albert Herter to grace

Figure 3.7 Albert Herter, Prometheus mural for the Great Hall of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC (1924), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: Mark Finkenstaedt, courtesy of the National Academy of Sciences.

its Great Hall, showing Prometheus, with the goddess Athena's help, stealing the flames from Hephaistos' chariot (which brought the dawn), in order to give it to humans (Figure 3.7). Below it is a long passage from Aeschylus' *Prometheus Bound*, from a speech of Prometheus describing the sad state of humanity before he brought it fire and taught humans other essential technical skills:

> until such time as I taught them to discern the risings of the stars and their settings. Aye, and numbers, too, chiefest of sciences, I invented for them, and the combining of letters, creative mother of muses' arts, wherewith to hold all things in memory …. Twas I and no one else that contrived the mariner's flaxen-winged car to roam the sea …. If ever man fell ill, there was no defence, but for lack of medicine they wasted away, until I showed them how to mix soothing remedies wherewith they now ward off all their disorders. [Ellipses in NAS quotation]

All of these arts, the quotation concludes, came from Prometheus.

The idea of modern American science as the continuation of the Promethean gift was one that the NAS took seriously. In his dedication address, Building Committee chair, the engineer Gano Dunn, explained that not only the NAS as an organization, but its new Goodhue-designed building, was part of Prometheus' legacy:

> this building is more than a building, it is a great instrument, firing the ideals of science as well as feeding its resources, a great organ for the taking of that divine fire which Prometheus first stole,

preserving its sacred continuity and transmitting its infectious blaze through the land for the benefit of the people.[46]

The metaphor of civilization as fire, passed onwards and maintained by its modern guardians, is also found in a Lee Lawrie frieze for the Los Angeles Central Library of two riders on horseback, in the moment that a torch transfers between their outstretched arms (Figure 3.8). The two men are nude, their helmet and hairstyle and the treatment of their bodies and faces reflecting Lawrie's Greek inspiration; the composition is clearly modelled on a famous segment of the Parthenon friezes depicting two riders taking part in a procession to honour Athena. The rear rider extends his arm to hand a blazing torch to the other who reaches back to receive it. The horses are headed towards a setting sun. This relief sits directly above the Flower Street (west) entrance to the library and links two sculptures carved into the pylons on either side, depicting Phosphor and Hesper, the Greek personifications of the morning and evening star. These figures are in a style that Lawrie applied throughout the building which borrows from archaic Greek sculpture, filtered through a modernist geometry. Each figure holds a scroll, Phosphor, 'Wisdom of the East', and Hesper, 'Wisdom of the West', with a list of thinkers beneath each title. Those of the East are much more wide-ranging than we find

Figure 3.8 Lee Lawrie, sculptural group for Flower Street entrance of the Los Angeles Central Library (1926), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Michael Jiroch.

in Progresses in which only the 'Near Eastern' Egypt, Mesopotamia and Israel are included as bases for later Western ideas: Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Lao Tse, Hillel, Avicenna, Al Gazali and Badarayan. The inclusion of Chinese, Indian, Islamic (not only Mohammed who also featured in Weinman's Supreme Court frieze, but also the Persian philosophers Avicenna (980–1037) and Al Gazali (*c*. 1058–1111)) and Rabbinic Jewish thinkers makes for a much more diverse and broader image of the East, chronologically and geographically. The unusually broad range of thinkers for the East may reflect a greater comfort with associating 'Wisdom' with the cultures of the East than more 'rational' concepts like Law. The idea that Wisdom is a particularly 'Eastern' attribute is suggested in another Lawrie sculpture, for the Nebraska Capitol, where allegorical figures of four 'Constant Guardians of the Law' above the north portal main entrance personify Wisdom as Oriental (and female), an association indicated through style and iconography alike, in contrast to a Greek Justice (male), Roman Power (male) and a Christian Mercy (female).[47]

Meanwhile, the wise men of the West (all are men, on both lists) run from the classical world (Herodotus, Socrates, Aristotle, Vergil), through early Christian philosophers (Augustine, Aquinas), to include Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers of Italy, Britain, France and Germany (Petrarch, Bacon, Descartes, Kant). Given that the latest figures named on the Eastern side lived in the tenth and eleventh centuries CE, they can hardly have passed their wisdom to Herodotus, the first figure on the Western side, who lived in the fifth century BCE. This chronological overlap suggests a more complicated relationship of either region to the present-day American library they adorn than a simple, linear diffusion. East and West here have ongoing, parallel traditions not necessarily reducible to one line of progress.

And yet the torch-passing frieze between these parallel figures would seem to undercut this message. Although the two riders are not described in official explanations prepared by Lawrie and symbologist Hartley Burr Alexander as themselves representations of East and West, their placement between Hesper and Phosphor make this interpretation difficult to avoid. This entrance has it both ways. East and West have both produced important thinkers and sages down the ages. The rise of the Western intellectual tradition was not, as in many accounts of progress, necessarily accompanied by a decline in the East. And yet it is hard not to read from left to right and discern a movement from East to West, dawn to evening. Enhancing this perception is the Latin quote that runs above the entire entrance, the final lines of a passage of first-century BCE

philosopher-poet Lucretius' *De rerum natura*: 'and like runners, they pass on the torch of life' (*et quasi cursores / vitai lampada tradunt*). The preceding lines, not included in the inscription here, tell us that it is 'races' and 'tribes' between whom this torch passes (in Alexander's translation, and his explanation of the inscription's intent): 'Races of men increase and races fade, / and in brief space tribes fare their mortal way.'[48]

'East Teaching West': the Oriental Institute tympanum

An elaborate architectural celebration of civilization passing from East to West sits above the door of the 1931 Oriental Institute building (today the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures). This building was the realization of James Henry Breasted's decades-long quest to construct a 'historical laboratory', in some form or other.[49] The Oriental Institute had existed as a project since 1919, when John D. Rockefeller Jr. first granted Breasted's application for funds to carry out a University of Chicago survey expedition in the Middle East. In 1928, Rockefeller told Breasted that he would agree to fund a building for the institute on the University of Chicago campus. The building itself is in the prevailing campus gothic style. It was designed by Goodhue's successor firm, which primarily completed projects that were already in the works when Goodhue died, first named Goodhue Associates and later Mayers, Murray & Phillip.[50] The possibility of an Oriental Institute building postdated Goodhue's death so he never completed any preliminary plans, but as part of the University of Chicago's coherent gothic environment, it was obvious that the building should be planned by the same firm overseeing the implementation of Goodhue's plans for the University Chapel, right next door.[51] They employed as their sculptor Ulric Ellerhusen, who had worked with Lawrie on the University Chapel sculptures.

The sculptural programme for the new Oriental Institute building was planned by a symbological committee, who selected great ancient works for Ellerhusen to recreate along the side of the building and decorative motifs for the interiors. Recreations of Assyrian lions found at the Ishtar Temple in Nimrud (Figure 3.9), in the British Museum collection since 1851 (BM 118895), served as balustrades for the interior staircase (Figure 3.10). Although the building as a whole was a fairly generic example of a 'stripped' collegiate gothic, the sculptural programme was a love letter from the scholars of the ancient Middle East to the art of their research subjects.[52] But the tympanum over the entrance, the most ideologically important work in the new building, was

Figure 3.9 Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh, Including Bas-reliefs from the Palace of Sennacherib and Bronzes from the Ruins of Nimroud* (London: John Murray, 1853), pl. 2, showing a colossal lion from the entrance to the Ishtar Temple at Nimrud, modern Iraq. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

Figure 3.10 Ulric Ellerhusen, lion sculptures for Oriental Institute, University of Chicago, interior staircase (*c*. 1931), based on lion statues for the Ishtar Temple at Nimrud, *c*. 860 BCE. Photo credit: Author.

Figure 3.11 Ulric Ellerhusen, Oriental Institute tympanum frieze (1931). Photo credit: Author.

not a mere recreation of an ancient model (Figure 3.11). It was designed by Breasted himself, working in conjunction with Ellerhusen.[53] It had such personal significance to Breasted that a drawing featuring a version of the design was turned into his personal bookplate.[54]

In the large panel above the two double doors of the building's main entrance on 58th Street, it depicts 'the transition of civilization from the ancient Orient to the West', also described by Breasted as showing 'East Teaching West'.[55] At its centre are two male figures, standing beneath an Egyptian sun-disk, one in the style of a skirted ancient Egyptian and the other a barely clothed 'vigorous and aggressive figure of the West'.[56] In a clever twist on the torch-passing concept, the Egyptian passes to the Western figure a piece of inscribed architectural sculpture.[57] It suggests the purely metaphorical bequest of civilization and its goods, and the physical title to archaeological artefacts, especially those ancient inscriptions which the Oriental Institute would decipher and preserve.

Two great animals recline before each human figure, their heads turned out towards the viewer. The lion, modelled after the New Kingdom Prudhoe Lions (in the British Museum, EA 1–2), stands in for the East. This reflects the special role that Egypt played in Breasted's understanding of early civilization as the most important location for origins, edging out Mesopotamia, Anatolia, Iran or the Levant, the other regions the Oriental Institute investigated. While Egypt is the greatest

of the Eastern originators, it is clear which country is the greatest of the Western inheritors: the animal before the human figure representing the West is an American bison. By choosing the bison as symbol of the West, the tympanum specifically identifies the guardianship of 'Western civilization' as vested in the United States, perhaps even more specifically in the American West.

Yet the choice of the bison also signals the fragility of the civilization it protects, for the bison was itself in need of special protection from the advance of that very civilization. Fortunately, it had a dedicated protector: that great popularizer of scientific racism, Madison Grant, whose quest to arrest the passing of his great Nordic race had a model in his successful efforts to stop the passing of these great American mammals. In 1905, Grant was a founding member of the American Bison Society (ABS), along with other leaders in the conservation movement, including most notably Theodore Roosevelt. With a logo by the great illustrator Maxfield Parrish depicting a lone bison standing atop a mountain peak against one of Parrish's typically magnificent sunsets, the ABS succeeded in identifying the bison with American heritage and custodianship. The ABS was a model conservation effort, successfully rescuing the bison from extinction through methods including the first ever animal reintroduction in North America, facilitated by Grant's New York Zoological Society and Bronx Zoo.[58] By the early 1930s, as the tympanum was being created, the bison was no longer on the brink of extinction. The ABS disbanded in 1935, recognizing its mission to save the bison as complete. The tympanum's use of the animal certainly suggests the nobility of the West, yet it also suggests that civilization in the West was no less fragile than the ruins of the ancient East, requiring constant, vigilant protection. Just as the ideas behind nature conservation had arguably inspired Grant's concerns for preserving the Nordic race, they could also provide a model for preserving the artefacts and the writing of early civilizations.

Behind the two symbolic central figures and their animal patrons, great men of the two regions look at each other across the gulf of time and place. The great men of the East are all rulers, in the institute guidebook's terms, 'firsts' in various fields: 'Zoser of Egypt, the first great builder; Hammurapi of Babylonian, the first great lawgiver; Thutmose III of Egypt, the first empire builder; Ashurbanipal of Assyria, who collected the first great library; Darius, the great organizer; and Chosroes of Persia' (the latter, a great sixth-century CE king of the Sasanian Empire, the last pre-Islamic empire in Iran). The great men of the West are, initially, Great Men too: the 'father of history' Herodotus, Alexander the Great,

Julius Caesar. But then specific individuals give way to generic representations: a mediaeval crusader, a field archaeologist and a museum archaeologist.[59]

Finally, civilization is also represented by the great architecture of each region. This follows a general trend towards elevating architecture, especially monumental architecture, as a metonym for civilization itself: great buildings are what civilization *looks like*. When found in a work of architectural sculpture, this trope is also a natural way for sculptors to emphasize and celebrate their own form. The East's great architecture is represented by the Egyptian Great Sphinx and the Pyramids at Giza, both from the mid third millennium, and the ruins of the fifth-century BCE Achaemenid capital Persepolis, in southwestern Iran. The architectural best of the West is represented by the fifth-century BCE Athenian Acropolis of Greece, the twelfth–thirteenth-century CE Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris and, perhaps surprisingly, Goodhue's 1928 Nebraska Capitol. Mogens Trolle Larsen and Geoff Emberling both explain this inclusion by the generational connection between the architects of the Oriental Institute and the Nebraska Capitol.[60] As we have seen, the firm who are credited as architects for the Oriental Institute, Mayers, Murray & Phillip was simply Goodhue's firm, renamed after Goodhue's death. Given also that Ellerhusen had worked on the University Chapel and Goodhue's Christ Church Cranbrook with Lawrie, this was also undoubtedly more than just a self-referential glorification for the institute's architectural antecedents, but a case of Ellerhusen seizing an opportunity to pay tribute to someone on whose projects he had honed his skills, and to memorialize Goodhue's crowning achievement.

It should also be noted, however, that in 1931, the idea of the Nebraska State Capitol as one of the pinnacles of Western architecture was perhaps not so strange or surprising a claim as it might seem now. As we will explore in Chapter 7, Goodhue's Nebraska Capitol was widely understood in the architectural press and by other professionals as a structure which expressed the aims of civic Deco at its finest and an important new precedent in American modernism. It was also a distinctively American, even 'middle American' building, a skyscraper on the prairie. Indeed, the institute guide identified it generically as 'a modern skyscraper tower'.[61] Such a structure unites American pride in urban modernity and its great architectural form, born in Chicago itself, and in the conquest of a glorious, wild, Western landscape by this new monumental form. Once again, civilization's contemporary placement is not just in the West, but in the United States, where the Oriental

Institute was being established to outshine the great European centres of Orientalist, archaeological and museum expertise.

This tympanum is hardly subtle. Yet, because it makes explicit certain assumptions that are not always presented with such clarity, it is a useful piece of evidence. It is an image which portrays an imperial and appropriative model of cultural interaction as a friendly gentlemen's agreement, in which the West inherits through freely made bequest the legacy of the East, where civilization was born and grew. Nonetheless, when we look at it closely we see perhaps a more complicated picture, in which civilization emerges as triumphant yet fragile, in need of careful and constant stewardship. There is a tremendous ego in equating the modern-day field and museum archaeologist to the kings of the ancient past. The professionals toiling within this new building could feel flattered, but perhaps also intimidated, by the august company among which they were depicted. The tympanum might more justly have made room among its Western great men for a different modern figure: John D. Rockefeller Jr., perhaps a more appropriate analogue to its ancient kings of the East. After all, it was his money that would ensure the Oriental Institute could carry out its mission to preserve and interpret the origins of civilization and their transfer to the West.

Conclusion

In both ancient Egypt and later in Assyria and Babylon, a ritual existed for 'opening the mouth' of certain images. Although the scope and precise meaning of this ritual changed over time, as did the targets it was applied to, it is clear that in all contexts its basic underlying purpose was in some sense to 'animate' a constructed image.[62] The existence of this ritual makes it clear that some images could, in a very real sense, become living. Yet it is widely agreed that even without the ritual, many elite images in both Egypt and Mesopotamia were understood by their creators and receivers to take an active, participatory role in the world. From small clay mould-produced figures of supernatural creatures buried under the thresholds of palaces in Nineveh, to the ubiquitous ushabti figurines which would serve an Egyptian tomb owner in the afterlife, to the images of Egyptian pharaohs and Assyrian and Babylonian kings carved, centuries apart, into the same cliff-face at Nahr el-Kalb in modern-day Lebanon, images were active agents in the world.[63] What is more, they had powers that things that were not constructed images did not necessarily have. They might be more eternal. They could unite

different times in one place. They could portray a perfected world, a world the gods would delight in viewing.

Anthropologists of art, following Alfred Gell, might point out that all images have social agency and participate in a social world.[64] Yet, when we consider how creators and receivers understood their images, it is perhaps easier to buy the idea that an ancient Egyptian believed in the magical agency of images than a modern Nebraskan. The ninth-century Assyrian king Shalmaneser III surely believed that he was doing something magically powerful when he wrote his name and engraved his image into the rockface at the 'mouth of the Tigris', near modern-day Diyarbakır, Turkey. This was an event so important that he also depicted it being done in another work of art and wrote of it in royal inscriptions.[65] Did a Nebraskan statesman feel that he too had achieved something magically powerful and consequential to the landscape when he saw images of Columbia receiving two White Nebraskan settlers into the Union, at the end of a long progress of law from the giving of the Ten Commandments by Moses, on plains that had once been occupied only by American Indians? Or did he, possessed of that vaunted modern Western rationality, understand that there was nothing magical in the act, that these were just beautiful pictures with only symbolic, not active, significance?

Is the difference so important? When an image on the Supreme Court depicts everyone from the founder of Egypt's first pharaonic dynasty down to the hundred-years-dead Napoleon on the walls of the chambers where its judges deliberate, that image does something. It makes these figures of diverse times and places part of the American story, by definition, in the act of placing them there. Would Menes or Napoleon want to be there? As the youngest child of history, America does not have to trouble itself with that question. Surely, their predecessors should feel honoured. When a visitor to the University of Chicago Chapel encounters Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson in stone, they might question whether these recently ex-presidents really belong on the doors of a house of worship, but they cannot argue against the simple fact that there they are: literally of the same standing as images of long-ago religious leaders and biblical characters, in the same style, on the same building. Progresses of the type we are considering make powerful arguments about human history simply by existing where and when they do.

The artistic narratives of civilizational progress and inheritance we have explored reflect the idea of historians and scientists who saw historical development as progressive and argued that a responsible

understanding of the present required an appreciation of the past. Yet I would argue that there is also an important relationship in the other direction: from artist to historian. The artistic conventions of the Progress and the Torch-Passing constituted a significant influence on how everyone who saw them came to understand historical relationships – from members of the general public who encountered such images as they moved through public space to individuals with special affiliations to those spaces, whose own sense of professional identity was reflected in what they saw. That included scholars who wrote popular and academic histories, who also encountered history communicated in this powerful, immediate form in libraries, institutes, chapels and government buildings. In images in these spaces, America and Egypt, Moses and the settlers of Nebraska, rested comfortably in their symmetry.

Notes

1 Cain, 'Direct medium', 288–9.
2 From among figures discussed in this chapter, see: Lawrie, *Modern Mural Sculpture*; Alexander, 'Nebraska Capitol', 43–4 (discussing Goodhue's stated aims for decorative art in his work); Gilbert, 'Greatest element'; Blashfield, *Mural Painting*, 309–12; Blashfield, 'A word for municipal art'; Blashfield, 'Address given at Annual Meeting', cited in Samuel, 'Mural painting', 55. For further discussion of Goodhue and Alexander's aims for decoration, see also Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 141.
3 For identification of a similar 'genre', see Promey, *Painting Religion*, 113–14 on the artistic 'Triumph'.
4 Document concerning Lawrie's work included among draft papers for Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 46, Folder 6, LLP.
5 Conn, *History's Shadow*, 26–31.
6 Some of Martin's mezzotints, including *Moses Evokes the Seventh Plague* and other images of the destructive sublime, for instance in the story of the biblical deluge, were published between 1832 and 1835 as Martin, *Illustrations of the Bible*, collected and republished in full in 1838 by the publisher Charles Tilt.
7 Barringer, 'Landscape and the problem of history', 135–7; Wallach, 'Thomas Cole', 215–16.
8 Bindman, 'John Martin, Thomas Cole, and deep time'.
9 See Hay, *Postapocalyptic Fantasies*, 106–8.
10 Cole, 'Fine arts', 630.
11 Nash, *Wilderness*, 78–82, 97–9. See also Hay, *Postapocalyptic Fantasies*, 18–20, 123; Schuyler, *Sanctified Landscape*, 37–45.
12 Cole, 'Essay on American scenery', 5.
13 Ross, 'Historical consciousness', 912–13.
14 Miller, 'Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America'; see also Barrett, *Rendering Violence*, 16–37.
15 Conn, *History's Shadow*, 29–30; Miller, 'Thomas Cole and Jacksonian America', 80–1.
16 See Cole, 'Main Building'.
17 Murray, 'Painted words'; Small, *Handbook*, 71–6. On Blashfield and Egypt, where he travelled in the 1880s, and the *Evolution of Civilization* work, see Samuel, 'Mural painting', 60–2, 70–3.
18 Reid, 'Representing ancient Egypt', 205 and 204–9. On the mural's similarity to Breasted's later presentation of Egypt and America's relative roles in human history, see Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 97–9.
19 Reid, 'Representing ancient Egypt', 205; Small, *Handbook*, 76–7.

20 On this sequence's relevance to questions of nation-building, masculinity and American anxieties about the closing of the frontier and the need to seek a destiny on the world stage, see Moore, 'Our national monument'.
21 Zabel, 'History in stone', 301.
22 McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 384–5; see also Zabel, 'History in stone', 299.
23 de Morgan, *Histoire et travaux*, 118–19; Roth, *Law Collections*, 71–142.
24 Arp, 'Eye for an eye'.
25 Zabel, 'History in stone', 346–54; McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 453; Haller, 'Drama of law', 5.
26 Lawrie and Weinman worked on the same projects at various points in their careers, including on the Louisiana State Capitol and, as young apprentices, at the Columbian Exposition. They briefly overlapped as members of the Federal Commission of Fine Arts in 1933. See Garvey, 'Lee O. Lawrie', 238–42; Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 46, Folder 1, LLP.
27 See Miller, 'From Mesopotamia to Nebraska', 84–9. The Nebraska Capitol was considered a triumph and given glowing write-ups in architectural and general journals. It is impossible that a sculptor planning work on a major federal government building would not have known about it.
28 Possibly a reference to the fantastical snake-necked serpopard beasts on the Narmer Palette, a First Dynasty stone cosmetic palette, discovered in 1898–9 at Hierakonpolis; Narmer is thought by many Egyptologists to be the same person as Menes.
29 Resnik and Curtis, *Representing Justice*, 119–21.
30 Roussin, 'Temple of American Justice', 68; Office of the Curator, 'Courtroom Friezes'.
31 Resnik and Curtis, *Representing Justice*, 119–20; Miller, 'From Mesopotamia to Nebraska', 88. See Adolph A. Weinman Papers, Reel 5890, Frame 946: 39 of 96, notes, undated, AAA.
32 Gilbert, 'Greatest element', 143–4. See also Blodgett, 'Cass Gilbert', 633–4; Roussin, 'Temple of American Justice', 58–9.
33 Gage, 'Compacting civic and sacred', 129–30.
34 Lawrie and Ellerhusen (sometimes spelled Ellerhausen) also worked in concert on another Goodhue project completed after his death, Christ Church Cranbrook in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Their styles were relatively harmonious.
35 Goodspeed, *University of Chicago Chapel*, 23.
36 Gage, 'Compacting civic and sacred', 132–4.
37 Dickerson, 'Cathedral on the Midway', quoted in Gage, 'Compacting civic and sacred', 136, as part of a fascinating discussion about the university and local press's framing of the 'Cathedral on the Midway' as a civic project for all of Chicago.
38 University Press Release for Chapel Cornerstone Laying, 10.6.1926, in The Journal, in Archival Buildings File (Folder 161). Quoted in Gage, 'Compacting civic and sacred', 136. See also Gage, 'Gray city', 131–5.
39 This is another modern American twist which nonetheless respected architectural traditions, the two former presidents not unlike the kings or donors who could appear alongside saints and biblical figures in mediaeval cathedrals.
40 See, for example, Duncan, 'Code of Moses'; Price, 'Stele of Hammurabi'; Vincent, 'Laws of Hammurabi'.
41 Alexander, 'Americanization', 368. See Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 149–52.
42 Most of the Progresses discussed above celebrate a Eurocentric and Western supremacist interpretation of human development. Even when they are 'universal' in orientation, there is a clear inequality in how frequently individual cultures are represented and at which time periods – for example, Middle Eastern cultures appearing at the 'origins' but rarely in any other spot. Such arrangements suggest that not all cultures had contributed ideas of equal value to the American project or still had ideas of value to contribute.
43 Osborn, *Man Rises*, 220.
44 Grant, *Passing*, 31.
45 Gano Dunn dedication address, 'for release' 28.4.1924. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
46 Gano Dunn dedication address, 'for release' 28.4.1924. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
47 See Haller, 'Drama of law', 13 n. 19.
48 Alexander, 'Story of the inscriptions', 20. See the description in Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 108–9, 149–50. The Latin text reads in full: *augescunt aliae gentes, aliae minuuntur, / inque brevi spatio mutantur saecla animantum / et quasi cursores vitai lampada tradunt* (Lucretius, *De rerum natura*, Book II, l. 77–9).

49 Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 345–9.
50 On the history of its design and construction, see van der Meulen, 'Architecture of the OI'; Teeter and Schramer, 'Some decorative motifs'.
51 Funds for the Oriental Institute building were officially approved by the Rockefeller foundations shortly after the dedication of the new chapel by John D. Rockefeller Jr. in 1928; during Rockefeller's visit to Chicago for the dedication, Breasted was able to further his pitch for the institute building grant. See 28.10.1928 JHB to James Henry Breasted Jr; 25.11.1928 JHB to James Henry Breasted Jr. Box 20, JHBP, ISAC.
52 Teeter and Schramer, 'Some decorative motifs'; van der Meulen, 'Architecture of the OI', 51.
53 For analyses of this work, see Larsen, 'Orientalism', 229–31; Emberling, 'Views', 34–5; Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 349–53; Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 100. See also Breasted, *Rise of Man*, 427–8.
54 Scalf, 'Kind of paradise', 143–5; Jones, 'Bookplates of scholars'.
55 Breasted, *Oriental Institute*, 103; Emberling, 'Views', 35.
56 *The Oriental Institute*, 10.
57 The inscription reads, 'I have beheld thy beauty,' a quotation drawn from a Fifth Dynasty temple. *The Oriental Institute*, 10.
58 Spiro, *Defending the Master Race*, 61–7, 83–4; Allen, 'Culling the herd', 36–45.
59 *The Oriental Institute*, 10.
60 Larsen, 'Orientalism', 229–31; Emberling, 'Views', 34–5.
61 *The Oriental Institute*, 10.
62 In Egypt, the ritual, which was seemingly in use in various forms from the Old Kingdom through to the Ptolemaic period, was used in funerary contexts, primarily to 'open the mouth' of statues or mummies, to make it possible for them to receive and consume offerings in the underworld. In Mesopotamia, the ritual was primarily used to animate cult statues of divinities and other cultic objects (including, sometimes, non-figurative items like a bed or drums, see Porter, 'Feeding dinner'). The ritual was possibly also used on royal statues at times (Winter, 'Idols of the king'; Feldman, 'Knowledge as cultural biography', 48, 55 n. 41). The origins, symbolism and scope of these rituals have been extensively discussed, and are clearly very complex with the ritual having had a diversity of meanings over time and in different places. See Smith, *Liturgy of Opening the Mouth*; Schulman, 'Iconographic theme'; Finnestad, 'Meaning and purpose of Opening the Mouth'; Roth, 'Psš-kf and the "Opening of the Mouth" ceremony'; Roth, 'Fingers, stars, and the "Opening of the Mouth"'; Walker and Dick, 'Induction of the cult image'; Hurowitz, 'Mesopotamian god image'; Hundley, *Gods in Dwellings*, 239–81; Berlejung, 'Washing the Mouth'.
63 See Maila Afeiche, *Le site de Nahr el-Kalb*; Volk, 'When memory repeats', 296–8.
64 Gell, *Art and Agency*.
65 Schachner, *Assyriens Könige*, 206–12, abb. 232; King, *Bronze Reliefs*, pl. LIX.

4

Origins: America in the lands of early civilization

Writing of the British imperial imaginary, Priya Satia describes how travel to the Middle East 'was conceived as a journey into a past that was not merely further back on the secular time scale of history but on a different scale altogether, outside secular time', into a biblical and mythological landscape, whose resonances included the way that it seemed to offer 'the chance to resurrect the cradle of civilization'.[1] American scholars and travellers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries clearly shared this sense. For American archaeologists, and their sponsors, the Middle East seemed to provide true access to the past, and offered the chance to obtain texts and artefacts from the ancient world. These sources could then be taken back to American collections or, at the very least, incorporated into American narratives of world history.

Representations of the region by scholars and other travellers for audiences back home promoted the idea of the contemporary Middle East as a land that existed, in some sense, in the hazy past of the Bible or at civilization's origins. This relegation of the entire region to a sort of living museum begged the question of what relationship, if any, the peoples of the modern Middle East had to its ancient past. If America was the true heir of the civilization which began there, were the peoples now living there simply squatters among the ruins?[2]

This chapter considers how American scholarship about early civilizations worked to shape perceptions of the contemporary Middle East towards a view of the region as simultaneously unchanging, in a real sense preserving its own ancient past, and yet as divorced, in its contemporary incarnation, from its own heritage. James Henry Breasted's own involvement in the heritage politics of the region serves as my lens for exploring these questions. His role as a trailblazer for American

archaeologists and academics in the post-First World War Middle East makes him an excellent case study of how American scholars and funders sought to secure a foothold for themselves as stewards, in real terms, of the artefacts of early civilization. Breasted's involvement in the region both reflected and bolstered the wider perception of the contemporary Middle East as a place in need of Western stewardship, and open for cultural appropriation.

Susan Nance has rightly cautioned against reading later American imperialist agendas in the Middle East back into the Orientalism of the nineteenth- or early twentieth-century US. She assembles compelling evidence for the cultural potency of 'playing Eastern' in individual Americans' self-fashioning from the earliest days of the republic up through the 1930s. But she argues that this significance was, in some sense, precisely because the Middle East was 'the exact portion of the globe in which most Americans had no imperial aims and the U.S. government and American business little influence'. This distance made the Orient an appropriate lens for exploring and understanding Americans' own society – specifically, she argues, the promises of American consumer capitalism.[3] Nonetheless, in the case of American archaeology, it is not anachronistic to say that the 1890s–1930s represent a crucial period for US expansion. Breasted's own agenda, to exploit the archaeological possibilities of the region in pursuit of the origins of the civilization was a very conscious attempt to secure American dominance in the field – over European rivals, but by extension over Middle Eastern governments' antiquities services. Backed by Rockefeller money, it also formed part of the Rockefeller foundations' move to expand the influence of US philanthropy on the international stage. While we need not draw a direct line between these private scholarly endeavours and later US political ambitions and military destruction in the Middle East, there is no doubt that American archaeologists were early representatives of an American soft power agenda in the region.

The lure of the East

The development of an American academic field devoted to the ancient Middle East involved, inevitably (and some of its less adventurous practitioners clearly felt, unfortunately), travel to and knowledge of the Middle East as it existed in the present day. As Bruce Kuklick chronicles, archaeological excavations by American institutions were often beset by troubles: inexperienced or poorly trained excavators, unfamiliarity with

and difficulty navigating bureaucracy and the conditions of living and working in the Middle East and the difficulty of communication between funders and scholars in the States and excavators in the field.[4] Kuklick focuses his study on the 1889–1900 Penn expedition to Nippur, modern Nuffar, near modern-day Baghdad, but he documents similar problems with expeditions planned by other institutions, including the University of Chicago in the early 1900s. The poor fortunes of a 1903–5 expedition to Bismaya, in southern Iraq, spearheaded by Edgar James Banks, a former American consul in Baghdad with a track record of dubious respect for Ottoman antiquities laws, led Chicago to abandon excavation in the region until after the First World War, when Breasted crashed back in with his ambitious Oriental Institute itinerary.[5]

Troublesome as such endeavours could be, the 'adventurous' nature of expeditions to the contemporary Middle East also surely enhanced the popular appeal of the scholarly study of its past.[6] Reports by scholars on their archaeological digs or reconnaissance missions delighted lecture audiences and readers with an image of lands burgeoning with ancient monuments and texts, ready to be recovered through the latest technology and requiring heroic, masculine feats of endurance to penetrate. Interest in recovered antiquities was also intertwined with popular fascination with the Middle East, both as an exotic, mysterious, barbarous region, and in its more salubrious incarnation as 'the Bible Lands'.

Popular Orientalism between the 1890s and 1930s often equated the exotic beauty and excitement of the ancient East with the mediaeval or modern, Islamic Middle East in one attractive melange of the 'unchanging Orient'.[7] Americans in these decades sat among Islamic-inspired 'Moorish' architecture in shops, hotels and gardens. It was a fair bet that a minaret on the skyline of an American city in 1930 was not a mosque, but a cinema, perhaps also incorporating references to ancient, pre-Islamic iconography: Assyrian *lamassu*, Egyptian sphinxes.[8] Within such film palaces, American cinemagoers made a star of the Sicilian immigrant Rudolph Valentino for his smouldering embodiment of the hero of one of the most popular romance novels of the day in *The Sheik* (1921, based on British author Edith M. Hull's 1919 novel of the same name), which suggested an erotic encounter with the racialized Arab other as the ultimate romantic adventure (before pulling back from the brink of miscegenation by revealing that the titular Sheik is really by birth a respectable Anglo-Spanish aristocrat, adopted by his desert tribe). A few years earlier, audiences for the epic *Intolerance* (1916) had been equally captivated by D. W. Griffith's images of ancient Babylon as a city of sumptuous monumental architecture and barely clothed dancing

girls – and relatedly of America's own Hollywood as a site of extraordinary technical achievement in set design and cinematography, as well as a well-known location of scandalous misbehaviour.

Americans bought prints by Maxfield Parrish or L. Goddard showing Oriental scenes of turbaned Islamic mystics and kohl-eyed Cleopatras, leaning into the easy pleasures of poetry, music and food (Parrish's Orientalist fantasies adorned the covers of luxury chocolate boxes; see Figure 1.11).[9] American lovers courted each other with British author Edward FitzGerald's 1859 *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, a translation and adaptation of works by the mediaeval Persian polymath and scholar of the title, perhaps in the 1884 edition with sumptuous illustrations by American Symbolist artist Elihu Vedder.[10] They might find spiritual revelations and poetic beauty in the work of Lebanese-American author-artist Khalil Ghibran, whose *The Prophet* (1923) was an enormous success in the decade it came out, and remains one of the best-selling books of all time.[11] Americans of various social backgrounds, and at varying locations on the spectrum of Bohemianism to Babbitry, dabbled in mystical orders or respectable clubs which linked their traditions to Egypt or Persia, and styled their meeting houses in Egyptian Revival. Wealthy businessmen opted for Pyramid tombs over Greek mausoleums; in Chicago's Graceland Cemetery, Chicago School architects Dankmar Adler and Louis Sullivan, and Richard E. Schmidt created notable examples for, respectively, Midwestern lumber baron Martin L. Ryerson (completed in 1889) and brewer Peter Schoenhofen (completed in 1893).

In short, the Middle East, ancient and modern, had great popular and aesthetic appeal to millionaire and modestly provisioned Americans alike as a location of fantastic identification. Americans could cast themselves in its spaces and its costumes – Nance's 'playing Eastern'. Claims that America was the custodian of a world civilization that began in Egypt and Mesopotamia, while taking a much more high-minded tone than many expressions of popular Orientalism, in some ways represents the same sort of activity of identification and appropriation.

The Chicago Columbian Exposition and popular Orientalism

One of the most telling indexes of American enthusiasm for an 'Exotic East' is found in the programme of the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition, an event which also illustrates the ambiguous values associated with

'Orientalness'. At the fair, Orientalist representations of a beautiful, dangerous, timeless, yet vaguely mediaeval-to-modern Middle East were plentiful. The most famous of these was Cairo Street, one of the for-profit concessions along the Midway, the mile-long strip of land which came under the control of the Fair's Department of Ethnology.[12] Modelled after the Rue du Caire at the Paris 1889 Exposition Universelle, the concession was the brainchild of the Smyrna-born, Cairo-based bank manager George Pangalo, whose mixed ancestry (English, Greek, Italian) led the ethnographically minded souvenir book *Portrait Types of the Midway Plaisance* to describe him as a 'forerunner of that final race who are to possess the earth when all the nations of globe shall be of one blood'.[13]

Pangalo secured the support of Egyptian notables, including the Khedive Abbas II Hilmi himself and the architect in charge of conservation of mosques for Cairo, Hungarian-born Max Herz, for his plans to remove pieces of authentic Cairo architecture. He arranged the round-trip passage of several hundred individuals from North Africa to staff the concession.[14] Like other attractions on the Midway, it was under the overall control of 23-year-old Chicago-born Jewish-American budding impresario and future long-time New York congressman Sol Bloom, who had also been inspired by the Oriental displays at the Paris Exposition Universelle, and personally managed another Orientalist feature, the Algerian and Tunisian Village.[15] Cairo Street was the most popular attraction on the Midway, drawing an estimated 2.25 to 2.5 million visitors and pulling in the largest profit of any concession.[16] The Midway also featured many other 'Oriental villages', purporting to offer visions of different cities and regions within the Ottoman Empire, French North Africa or Persia.[17] These attractions traded in exotic, Orientalist stereotypes, offering a mixture of purportedly ethnological education and pure pop entertainment. Among other things, Cairo Street promoted itself with the 'Arabian Riff', as 'The Streets of Cairo, or the Poor Country Maid', the song today probably most familiar in the version whose lyrics begin, 'There's a place in France …' Various 'Oriental villages' at the fair also popularized the 'Hoochy Koochy' or *danse du ventre*, danced by various women, most famously Farida Mazar Spyropoulos, who performed as Fatima or 'Little Egypt' (one of several women to assume the stage name).[18] The ethnographic stylings and the educational exoticism associated with this style of dance were just respectable enough to raise it above vice, while allowing the chance to see a largely unclothed woman dancing seductively.[19]

Meanwhile, the official Ottoman and Turkish Pavilions within the exposition itself (that is, not part of the ethnological Midway) displayed

the Ottoman Empire as a modern, technologically advanced nation which also boasted a venerable, unique, Islamic architectural tradition.[20] One American account of the official Ottoman efforts expressed qualified approval, its praise nonetheless indicating the extent to which Orientalist stereotypes might shape American perceptions of the largest Middle Eastern political power. 'Strange as it may appear,' the author of a photographic chronicle of the fair noted, 'this semi-oriental nation was the first to complete her exhibits at the Fair.' Remarking on the surprise of finding within a pavilion which 'reminds one of a Tartar tent', an enormous, modern torpedo, he notes that it 'looks like anything but the offspring of the somnolent Orient'.[21] For this commenter, technological 'progress' and efficiency struck a surprising, and perhaps discordant, note within an 'Oriental' pavilion.

Back on the Midway, where somnolence was celebrated for its picturesque appeal, representatives from the Middle East ran and staffed various concessions, realizing a profit on playing to expectations, rather than subverting them. Meeting audience expectations often involved a degree of *mis*representation. Cyrus Adler, a young Jewish-American academic with a doctorate in Semitics from Johns Hopkins University, who was assistant curator of Oriental Antiquities at the Smithsonian, had been placed in charge of recruiting for the fair from various territories of the Middle East. As he travelled around looking for participants (merchants and businessmen to run the attractions and coordinate travel to the US, as well as staff who would double as picturesque attractions themselves), 'Adler actively "networked" with Jewish communities' in the cities he visited, 'and assigned most of the concessions accordingly.'[22] Observant visitors, Steven W. Holloway documents, noticed that large numbers of those appearing at various Oriental concessions, represented to the public either explicitly or implicitly as Muslims, were either Middle Eastern Jews or Americans, recruited as needed.[23] This was seen as a cheat by some, but others considered the presence of so many Oriental Jews among the commercial exhibits as itself an authentic representation of the Orient, reflecting 'the wonderful fertility of the Jewish mind and the power of the Jew to adapt himself to any environment, and to utilize every opportunity for pecuniary gain and personal advancement'.[24]

At the same time, as Holloway shows, Adler sought to prevent Jews from appearing *openly* as themselves on the Midway. The Midway, as has been often noted, established a hierarchy through the siting of its ethnographic displays, with African villages placed furthest from the White City of the exposition itself, German and Irish villages closest to it, and the lands of the Middle East occupying a large amount of the space

in between. The Midway's ostensible anthropological mission and clear hierarchical arrangement of 'primitive' to 'civilized' villages along its mile-long length automatically reduced any culture exhibited there to a lower rung on the civilizational ladder than the apotheosis of civilization represented by the White City itself.[25] Instead, Adler oversaw a presentation of Judaica as part of the Smithsonian's Religious Ceremonials Exhibit, a comparative religions exhibit within the Government Building, in the White City. Holloway explains that Adler's carefully curated selection of Judaica and illustrations of North European Jewish communities, 'adroitly furnished Judaism in the United States Government Building with an impeccably middle class, Western European locus'.[26] This removed Jews not only from the Midway's disreputable garishness, but also from its ethnological presentation of social evolution. It was an act of racial management by Adler, an educated, assimilated Jew with German immigrant parents. His Smithsonian exhibit sought to divorce Judaism both from the new class of poor, apparently backwards East European Jewish immigrants who troubled more assimilated American Jews of West European background, and from the spectre of 'the Orient' as it appeared on the Midway. For Adler, Ottoman Jews, in disguise as Muslims, were appropriate representations of the Orient, relegated to the ethnographic context of the Midway, while Western or Westernized Jews, presented as themselves, were invited into the White City – under the sheltering wing of the US Government Building, no less.[27]

Adler's apprehension of the dangers of allowing American Jewry to be associated with the modern Middle East were not ill-founded. Americans might have made Cairo Street one of the most successful attractions at the fair, but clearly, part of the appeal of visiting this and other Orientalist attractions was the conviction it offered, reinforced by the layout of the Midway and the White City, that America represented a more advanced stage of civilization (if perhaps a stage not so much fun as one equipped with camel rides and beautiful dancing girls).

Yet what of the Orient's *earliest* civilization? While Cairo Street drew its inspiration from the Islamic Middle East of the mediaeval period down to the present day (suggesting there was little to distinguish these time periods), it also incorporated the ancient, featuring as an ancillary attraction, a recreation of the 'Luksor Temple' with reproductions of pharaonic mummies within (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).[28] While this feature was less popular than the street itself (recreations of mummy bodies could not compete with the bared abdominals of Little Egypt), it too drew healthy audiences.[29] It was part of a general tendency for Egyptian attractions at world's fairs, including official, non-commercial

Figure 4.1 A view of Cairo Street on the Midway of the Chicago Columbian Exposition, 1893, with the first Ferris Wheel, designed by George Washington Gale Ferris Jr. as a centrepiece for the Midway, behind it. The 'Luksor Temple' is visible on the lower right. Photo credit: Public domain, photographed by C. E. Waterman 1893.

Figure 4.2 The 'Luksor Temple' at Cairo Street, 1893. Photo credit: Paul V. Galvin Library Digital History Collection.

pavilions, to feature recreations of ancient monuments.[30] An advertising bill described its royal mummy recreations through their connections to biblical stories (one was 'sister-in-law' to King Solomon). Advertisements and souvenirs also emphasized the approval of the Khedive of Egypt.[31] Souvenirs available at the temple there included scarabs with the name of the fair rendered in hieroglyphs.[32] Obelisks outside were carved with a hieroglyphic inscription, which translated into the ancient script the name of US President Grover Cleveland.[33]

Within the complicated scale of kitsch to high culture, no less than within the ethnological and racialized hierarchies represented at the fair, ancient civilizations of the East occupied an ambiguous space: related to the reality and historical solidity of the Bible, yet also proximate to the popular, but rather disreputable, Orientalist ethnographic peepshow. American academics studying early civilization also had to negotiate these ambiguous associations: with the Hebrew Bible, with modern 'exoticism' and between the Middle East of the contemporary world and the Middle East of antiquity.

Americans discover the Middle East

Fantasy aside, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the contemporary Middle East became more real to many Americans as it became easier to travel there for tourism, missionary work and increasingly for other American soft power initiatives. American Protestants in the nineteenth century travelled, missionized and schemed for the Holy Land itself, then a province of the Ottoman Empire (the *mutasarrifate* of Jerusalem), and other 'Bible Lands': places like Egypt, the wider Levant and Mesopotamia, which played significant roles in biblical narratives. At home, there was an appetite for accounts of these travels, which often mixed a pious wonder at the possibility of entering the real space of the Holy Land with a prurient fascination with the present sorry condition of its inhabitants.[34] Christian missionaries particularly promoted the narratives of a degenerated, degraded or backward Holy Land that needed both the practical benefits of modernization and often a re-proselytizing, in line with American Protestant interpretations of Christianity.[35]

It was not only Christian missionaries who brought back reports of the Middle East. Istanbul, Jerusalem and the Nile especially could become optional extras for Americans who wanted a more adventurous version of the European Grand Tour. In 1867, Mark Twain visited Egypt

and various provinces of the Ottoman Empire, including 'the Holy Land', as part of a wider tour that also took in Europe. He wrote of his adventures there for American audiences in the enormously popular *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), his best-selling book in his own lifetime.[36]

For artists and architects, the Middle East might be incorporated into professional travel. In the 1890s, John Singer Sargent's work on the *Triumph of Religion* mural for the Boston Public Library incorporated images he had seen while travelling down the Nile. Edwin Howland Blashfield, who depicted Egypt at the beginning of his *Evolution of Civilization* for the Library of Congress in 1897, had also travelled in Egypt and made extensive sketches of its landscape and monuments. Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue was greatly influenced by a tour he took as a guest of his millionaire friend James Waldron Gillespie to the Mediterranean, Persia, Russian Turkestan and (especially adventurously) India. In Persia they visited the cities of Isfahan and Shiraz and the ruins of Persepolis, and in Russian Turkestan, Samarkand, a city continuously inhabited since the mid-first millennium BCE. Gillespie had commissioned Goodhue to design a house for him in Montecito, California, which he called 'El Fureidis' (1906), a name derived from the Arabic for 'Little Paradise'. The tour the two friends took was also a journey as architect and client, intended to provide inspiration for Goodhue's design. Goodhue applied the lessons he learned on the journey to other projects later in his career, particularly those in which he developed his unique modernist style. Most obviously, stepped reflecting pools for the National Academy of Sciences and the Los Angeles Central Library derived from his fascination with this technique in Persian architecture, and with a wider assessment of Persian architecture's intelligent manipulation of landscape.[37]

While travel to the Middle East had become increasingly accessible to well-off Americans from the 1840s onwards, especially after the US Civil War, as tourist infrastructure became more developed in the region, it was still an expensive and difficult activity.[38] But there were also ways for Americans to experience the Middle East from the comfort of their own home, ways that went beyond even the offerings of illustrated travel accounts. In 1905, the same year that his mammoth *History of Egypt* was released, Breasted also finished a long-gestating project with the Underwood & Underwood Stereograph Company.[39] Underwood & Underwood, founded in Kansas but based in New York from the 1890s, produced a device called a 'stereoscope' and cards for viewing through it. The cards contained images taken with a stereoscopic camera, whose double lenses took two photos simultaneously

from roughly the same distance apart as the human eyes. Reproduced next to each other on a card and viewed through the stereoscope, an illusion of seeing a scene in three dimensions was produced. Underwood & Underwood had started offering what they described as a system of 'stay-at-home travel': sets of cards which were keyed to elaborate tour materials authored by an expert.[40] The optical illusion of the stereoscope was thus enhanced by this more imaginative illusion of travel in space.[41] The company engaged Breasted to 'lead' an Egyptian tour, meaning he would produce a general introduction, detailed explanations for each stereograph card and a labelled set of appropriate maps to which each 'view' could be keyed. Although Breasted employed some images already in the Underwood & Underwood archive, most of the photographs in the set were specially commissioned. Photographers for the company were sent to Egypt with detailed instructions from Breasted on where to stand to produce the best views, creating more than a thousand stereoscopic photographs, for an eventual set of a hundred cards in the Egypt tour.[42]

Equipped with *Egypt through the Stereoscope: A journey through the land of the pharaohs*, 'conducted' by Breasted, viewers could settle down in their own living room while imagining themselves in a different geographical space. Breasted began his 'itinerary' with instructions to his reader: 'Together we are about to make the tour of a remarkable river valley, more thickly strewn with monuments of early civilization than is any land in all the world.' Although we are not, he explains, to enter the country 'in the body', through the technological marvel of the stereoscope, and buoyed up by Breasted's commitment to the conceit, 'you will be making the tour of the country with very many, if not all, of the experiences which you would gain by an actual visit'.[43] The stereoscope user could experience even the hassles of travel down the Nile: Jeffrey Abt discusses one example in which Breasted ruefully considers some 'native' figures in front of the ruins of Medinet Habu, who will undoubtedly soon be bothering the travellers for money in exchange for a drink from their water bottles.[44]

Yet this playful example is, as Abt points out, the rare occasion where Breasted calls our attention to the modern Egyptians who appear in many of the stereograph scenes. The use of human figures to convey scale was a common convention of archaeological or tourist photography; usually local people appeared in this role, since they were seen to add 'exotic' detail (Figures 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). Yet in Breasted's very thorough captions for the stereograph cards, these figures are rarely remarked upon. As Abt explains, 'Breasted neither pandered to

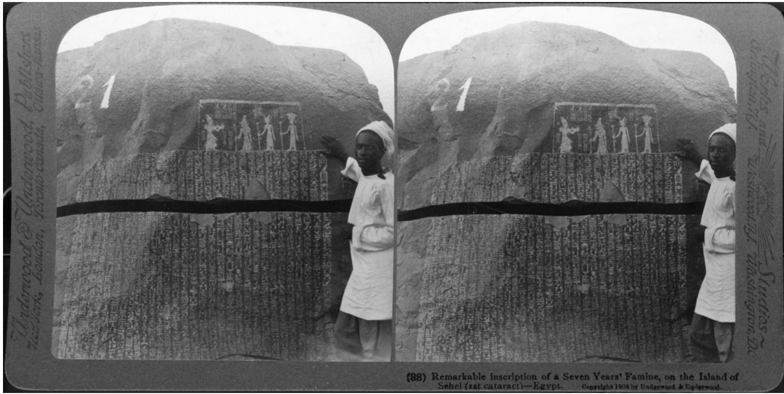

Figure 4.3 James Henry Breasted, *Egypt through the Stereoscope* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1905), stereograph 88, an inscription in the Egyptian landscape, with a man next to it for scale. Photo credit: Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, CC BY-NC-ND.

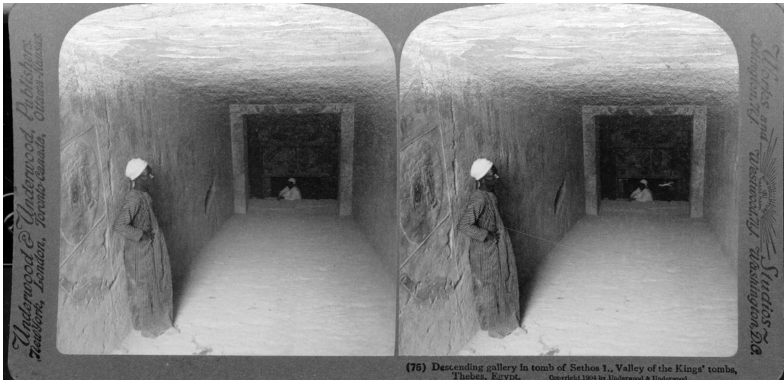

Figure 4.4 James Henry Breasted, *Egypt through the Stereoscope* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1905), stereograph 75, in which two Egyptian men are posed to provide a sense of scale and depth within a tomb. Photo credit: courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, CC BY-NC-ND.

contemporary Western taste for the Orient's apparent exoticisms nor raised the subject of contemporary Egypt to the level of more sober and probing inquiry.'[45]

This tendency can be detected not only in this stereoscope tour but in his general attitudes to the modern inhabitants of the regions where civilization began, most notably in 1916's *Ancient Times*, in which he employs a similar narrative device of asking the reader to imagine themself taking a journey through contemporary Egypt, from which they

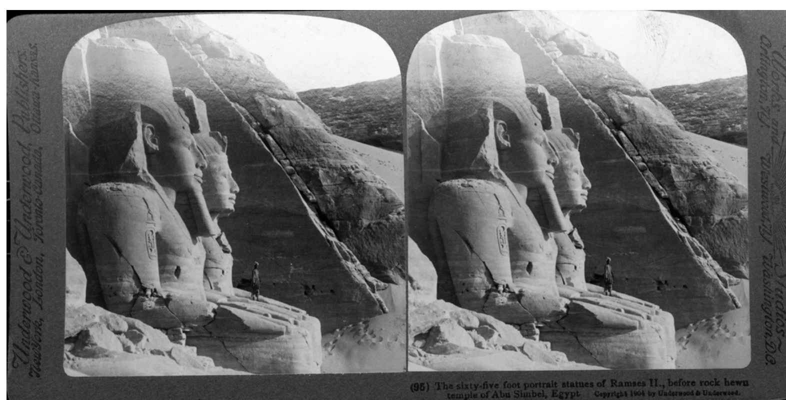

Figure 4.5 James Henry Breasted, *Egypt through the Stereoscope* (New York: Underwood & Underwood, 1905), stereograph 95, showing colossal statues at Abu Simbel with a human figure standing in their lap. Photo credit: courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, CC BY-NC-ND.

should enter another layer of fantasy that they are travelling back in time through the ancient history of Egypt. The framing device maintains an appropriate distance from total immersion in the past at the same time that it brings us close to it. It allows readers to play the role of scholar-travellers like Breasted, and evokes the romantic associations of tourism in contemporary Egypt.

Thus in *Ancient Times*, he begins his section on *ancient* Egypt with an account of the paradigmatic *modern* travel experience: 'The traveler who visits Egypt at the present day lands in a very modern-looking harbor at Alexandria. He is presently seated in a comfortable railway car in which we may accompany him as he is carried rapidly across a low, flat country stretching far away to the sunlit horizon.'[46] He describes the landscape outside the traveller's sealed train, noting irrigation canals and 'brown-skinned men of slender build, with dark hair' along their banks, 'swaying up and down as they rhythmically lift an irrigation bucket attached to a simple device exactly like the well sweep of our grandfathers in New England'.[47] Ancient and modern, Egyptian and American, are remarkably coterminous: the 'early' Orient is entered through present-day Egypt, among the modern comforts of an international harbour and railway conveyance, from which we view brown-skinned peasants who remind us, perhaps surprisingly, not of their own ancient Egyptian forebears (a connection drawn obliquely in a caption to the images of this 'oldest' method of irrigation), but of 'our' own nineteenth-century grandparents in New England.

In the stereoscope tour too, Breasted begins in Alexandria, before moving to Cairo where he points out notable Islamic sites, invites us to appreciate the romance of Cairo ladies stepping out of their camel-drawn palanquin (faces shockingly unveiled), and leads us through the modern Cairo Museum. But the overwhelming bulk of the tour is concerned with ancient sites of Pharaonic Egypt. This reflects Breasted's own expertise and interests, but also the real itinerary of Western tourists in Egypt, which his system reproduces. Through this focus on ancient monuments, the stereoscope tour elides travel in exotic locales in the present with a journey into the past, promoting the widespread sense, so well described by Priya Satia, that a journey to the Middle East in some sense involves movement in time. Underwood & Underwood promised that through modern technology, both kinds of travel – in time and in space – could be enjoyed from American parlours. For the 14 January 1922 cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*, Norman Rockwell depicted just such a journey, with an illustration of a young boy, his eyes obscured by a bulky stereoscope, gasping in wonder at an encounter with a stereograph card labelled 'Sphinx', discarded doubled images of pyramids and monuments fluttering at his feet.

Degeneration and decline

In *Ancient Times*, Breasted closed his chapters on the Middle East, before moving onto archaic Greece, with an 'estimate of Oriental Civilization'. Its 'leadership' as a world civilization, he explains, declined around the late first millennium BCE.[48] In his book, the region is largely ushered off-stage at this point: its time in the spotlight is over. Decline and degeneration were significant concepts for Americans looking at the Middle East, whether they were Christian missionaries, ancient scholars or consumers of popular media. The region might have been the staging ground for biblical events, the origin place of civilization and its attendant benefits: monumental art and architecture, technological innovation, writing. But it was now in a degraded state, having declined right around the time that the West rose to prominence as torchbearer of civilization. Usually a handover was understood to begin around the middle first millennium BCE as the mantle of civilization was assumed by the Greek world. The rise of Islam from the seventh century CE represented a *terminus ante quem* for the identification of the wider Middle East with the heritage of the West.

The contrast between the imagined ancient cultures that foreign explorers came to pillage in the region and the region's current state was

often commented upon in scholarly and popular accounts, becoming one of the most enduring clichés of the popular archaeology and adventure genre.[49] Austen Henry Layard, the British traveller and excavator of Nineveh and Nimrud, in his 1849 popular account of his excavations *Nineveh and Its Remains*, noted how Assyrian monumental art 'had awed and instructed races which flourished 3000 years ago. Through the portals which they guarded, kings, priests, and warriors, had borne sacrifices to their altars, long before the wisdom of the East had penetrated to Greece.' Here they were again,

> stood forth once more in their ancient majesty. But how changed was the scene around them! The luxury and civilisation of a mighty nation had given place to the wretchedness and ignorance of a few half-barbarous tribes. The wealth of temples, and the riches of great cities, had been succeeded by ruins and shapeless heaps of earth.[50]

While the presence of picturesque ruins of a once great civilization provided elegiac beauty, ruins as inhabited and useful contexts for native living were disturbing to European and American travellers. One decorative native guide in a European painting or providing a sense of scale in a photograph enhanced the sense of the desolate sublime; living, ordinary communities ruined the picture.[51] Such communities' presence near sites of interest to Westerners was marshalled in Western commenters' arguments that Middle Easterners could not be trusted as stewards of their own heritage.

The idea of a degenerated Middle East with no interest in its ancient material heritage, except perhaps as objects of fear or superstition, or inappropriate resources for ordinary living, helped to explain and justify both Western archaeological and military-imperial interventions. In his thorough study of the politics of Egyptian archaeology, at home and abroad, from the end of the Great War to the end of British colonial presence, Donald Malcolm Reid assembles a bevy of quotes from American and European scientists that attest to this attitude in the early 1920s, as Egypt was on course to win its independence from Britain.[52] Here, for instance, is George Reisner of Harvard, Breasted's usually (paternalistically) Egypto-philic colleague and rival, observing that the Egyptian people were 'still a half-savage race' who 'have been held in check by force since the days of Mohammed Ali (or more correctly Menes)'.[53] Menes was the late fourth-millennium, semi-legendary founder of Egypt's first pharaonic dynasty (the first figure in Adolph Alexander Weinman's US Supreme Court *Lawgivers* frieze).

In this view, the bulk of the people of Egypt had never been torch-bearers of civilization, even if some of its early rulers may have been. Indeed, by this logic, some of what enabled great rulers to arise in the early days of civilization was perhaps the innate backwardness of its people: the peoples of the ancient Middle East required a strong hand, a stern ruler, a father. That this cohered well with Western colonial and imperial ambitions is clear. It also explained how it could be that the Middle East may have been the right sort of place for an earlier stage of civilizational development, when the strong hand of the rare, wise autocrat was necessary to manage the mass of people, while being ill-suited for self-rule in the modern day – let alone for the leadership of civilization as a whole.[54]

Zainab Bahrani, writing of the study of ancient Iraq, has observed how the very terminology that shapes the study of the ancient Middle East does imperialism's work, severing the ancient past of the region referred to as 'Mesopotamia', never by its contemporary incarnation as 'Iraq', 'from any geographical terrain in order to weave it into the Western historical narrative'. Its place in that narrative is at the beginning: as the cradle of Western civilization. The consequences of this temporal framing are clear: 'If Mesopotamia is the cradle of civilisation, and civilisation is to be understood as an organic, universal whole, then this Mesopotamia represents human culture's infancy.'[55] Ancestors, elders, the peoples of the Middle East might be, but they were also eternal children, ever stuck in the 'cradle'.

As Bahrani further explores, this framing mediates two seemingly contradictory narratives about the lands of 'the Orient'. On the one hand, we have the idea of Oriental timelessness, in which the region is an unchanging land characterized in all periods by the same cultural and political dynamics and by an enduring material culture, a fantastic and exotic Orientalist melange. On the other hand, there is the sense of a complete severing of the ancient, pre-Islamic past of Egypt and Mesopotamia from its present.[56] These competing narratives (nothing has ever changed in the Middle East; the East has declined and degenerated since the torch of civilization passed to Europe) nonetheless can work together to establish the backwardness of the contemporary region. They share one common core assumption: that the modern Middle East is, in some sense, *belated*, simultaneously ancient and ever trapped in childhood, both parent and ward.

When James Henry Breasted visited southern Iraq some eighty years after Layard gazed upon its 'desolate' ruins, he noticed a similar contrast between ancient achievement and modern reality. Yet he

evoked this contrast between elevated ancient and degraded modern East for rather different ends than Layard's elegiac meditations on the passing of greatness. 'I was once trudging across the vast ruins of ancient Babylon when a native returning from work with a donkey dismounted and insisted that I mount the animal in his place,' he recounted. He determined that the 'poor little boy' (his age is entirely unclear) could not tell the time, nor read and write, for there was no school around where he could have learned to do so:

> He was standing at the moment, as I have said, within the ruins of ancient Babylon, one of the oldest centers of learning and science in the world. Up the Euphrates a few miles from the spot where we were standing one may still enter the walls of a school house where the boys and girls of Iraq learned to read and write in the days of Hammurapi four thousand years ago. But within the walls of Babylon which Hammurapi himself first made a great center of power and civilization there is today no school house where this bright-faced little fellow might have learned to read.

This anecdote was not, however, meant to induce despair or poetic reflections on the fate of great cities or empires. The passage above was part of a pitch to the Rockefeller foundation executive Raymond B. Fosdick for Rockefeller investment in the Iraq Museum and in training programmes for Iraqi natives, such as this illiterate descendent of the ancient boys and girls of Hammurani's Babylon. 'To what better purpose could the wealth of the West be turned than to the recovery and preservation of those surviving evidences by which we may follow man's rise from savagery to the discernment of those noble ideals of altruistic living toward which we of today are still striving?' he asked Fosdick. Such an investment would of course benefit Breasted and his American scientific colleagues, but it could also involve the Rockefeller foundations playing Hammurabi to the boys and girls of today's Babylon, educating native scientists in the young country. Breasted assured the Rockefeller executive that 'the educated native citizens of Iraq are men of a high grade of ability', friendly to American academic institutions, while 'the young people of Iraq possess an unusual measure of intelligence'.[57] It was planned, he reported, that these young people in many of Iraq's schools were to be taught from Breasted's own *Ancient Times* in Arabic translation.[58] For Breasted, the bright but untaught modern-day Babylonian was raw material, just waiting to be developed by American money.

Breasted in the Middle East

Breasted was, when he wrote this letter, already employing Rockefeller funds in his ongoing quest to make America the leading nation in the 'recovery and preservation' of humankind's progressive rise. It was a project in which America was playing catch-up to European nations with much longer archaeological and academic presences in the region, not to mention an enduring imperial role in its administration, even as that role was meant to be coming to an end.

In 1919, the 54-year-old Breasted launched the newly named Oriental Institute, funded by an initial pledge of $50,000 annually for five years from John D. Rockefeller Jr. (who, unbeknownst to Breasted, was also matching this gift with additional funds straight to the University of Chicago), with an expedition to the Middle East. The purpose of this first mission was to survey potential sites for excavation, and purchase new objects for the University of Chicago's collection.[59] Breasted had proposed an ambitious programme for the institute to recover 'the most important missing chapters' in the story of man's career, 'which will reveal to us the earliest transition from the savagery of the prehistoric hunter to the social and ethical development of the earliest civilized communities of our own cultural ancestors'.[60] Sites were to be carefully selected to offer a cross-section of that picture, picking out key times and places. As he began his journey through the Middle East, visiting what is today Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Palestine, between roughly November 1919 and June 1920, Breasted was surveying the present world with an eye to a long time span of the past.[61]

The timing, he explained, was right:

> The ancient lands of Western Asia, where civilization and the great world-religions were born, have been emancipated from the tyranny of the Turk, and for the first time since the rise of modern science have been rendered safe and accessible to research and investigation. Here and in Northeastern Africa lie the unexplored areas of history. The study of these lands is the birthright and the sacred legacy of all civilized peoples. Their delivery from the Turk brings to us an opportunity such as the world has never seen before and will never see again.

Among 'civilized peoples', now was also the perfect time for America to take the lead: 'In so far, moreover, as the financially overburdened governments of Europe may feel themselves obliged to curtail their

former subventions for research in the Orient, the opportunity and the obligation is correspondingly greater for us in America.'[62]

On his great Middle Eastern expedition, Breasted was, then, also surveying the political climate of a region that was emerging from the First World War in a very different state than when it had gone into it. The Ottoman Empire, long derided as the 'Sick Man of Europe', with European powers eyeing up its holdings, was no more. In its wake, it left behind a number of new territories and ultimately, by the early 1920s, new nations. Egypt, which had already long been, in effect, and, as of 1914, finally officially, independent of Ottoman control, was especially resentful of continued British intervention. After extensive nationalist protests, the British unilaterally declared Egypt independent in 1922, while retaining a large degree of influence and 'reserving' rights for itself in regards to four (extremely significant) areas: communications security of the British Empire, defence of Egypt against 'all foreign aggression or interference, direct or indirect', the protection of foreign interests and minorities in Egypt, and the control of the Sudan.[63] This incomplete independence continued to be contested by the new Egyptian government over the next several decades.

Meanwhile, after waging military campaigns against victorious allied occupiers, the modern Republic of Turkey came to control most of Anatolia, and embarked on an ambitious modernization programme under its first president Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Much of the rest of the former Ottoman Empire's territories were to be administered by the League of Nations, through a system of 'Mandates' to be applied to territories formerly under a defeated power, 'which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. Accordingly, 'the tutelage of such peoples should be entrusted to advanced nations who by reason of their resources, their experience or their geographical position can best undertake this responsibility'. The article of the Covenant of the League of Nations, Part I of the Treaty of Versailles, which established this system continued:

> The character of the mandate must differ according to the stage of the development of the people, the geographical situation of the territory, its economic conditions, and other similar circumstances. Certain communities formerly belonging to the Turkish Empire have reached a stage of development where their existence as independent nations can be provisionally recognised subject to the rendering of administrative advice and assistance by a Mandatory

> until such time as they are able to stand alone. The wishes of these communities must be a principal consideration in the selection of the Mandatory.[64]

The hierarchy displayed on Chicago's Midway in 1893 was alive and well: Ottoman lands in the large, semi-civilized middle of that hierarchy, given more respect than former colonies in Africa, but still children, unable to stand among the grown-ups of the League of Nations. In accordance with this provision, Britain received a mandate for Mesopotamia, covering three former Ottoman vilayets (Mosul, Baghdad and Basra), and a mandate for Palestine (creating the Emirate of Transjordan, which was under British mandate until 1946, and Mandate Palestine, under British mandate until 1948), while France received one for Syria and Lebanon (administered until 1946, split into various subdivisions of governments and territories).

Anger at what was perceived as European imperialism by another name led to widespread protest and revolt in various regions placed under mandatory control. A wide and multifaceted Iraqi revolt broke out in 1920, uniting different religious and ethnic constituents of the mandatory region in their discontent. It led ultimately to the creation of the new Kingdom of Iraq, which remained under British mandate until 1932. Its first ruler was the third son of the Emir of Mecca, King Faisal I, of the Hashemite Dynasty, a favourite of the British administration. He had led the Arab Revolt of 1916–18 against the Ottoman Empire on the promise of British support for a unified Arab kingdom under Hashemite rule stretching from Aleppo in Syria to Aden in Yemen, a promise the British reneged on; kingship in Iraq was his consolation prize. Iraq's antiquities were under the control of the British explorer-archaeologist-diplomat Gertrude Bell.

On this first expedition of the institute, Breasted was taking the temperature of the relationships he could expect with the colonial mandatory powers and the antiquities personnel in charge in these nations. His findings were mostly encouraging. Where the British had influence, certainly, the Oriental Institute was welcome. As he explained to Hale, 'I got into close touch with the British authorities throughout the Near East in ways that were most interesting and profitable.'[65]

Breasted was travelling not just as a historian, but also as a representative of American capitol. His trip furthered American interests and the larger cause of international Western control of archaeological sites in the former Ottoman territories. Breasted formed a cordial friendship with Lord Allenby, Egyptian High Commissioner until 1925, with whom

he was able to share his thoughts on antiquities policy and other political matters.[66] In both Egypt and Iraq, Breasted was able to travel in British military aeroplanes (Allenby saw that fees were waived for him to do so in Egypt). He could take photographs and survey the landscape from above, an extraordinarily rare opportunity at the time.[67]

Breasted as peacemaker in the Tomb of Tutankhamun

This first expedition had not only served as a first volley for the Oriental Institute's ambitious archaeological programme, but also gave Breasted a chance to test the waters in a changed Middle East. His skills as a political wheeler-dealer, and his special status as an American expert, truly came to the fore a few years later, during the excavations of the Tomb of Tutankhamun. Breasted was in Egypt in late 1922 when the extraordinary discovery of a new, mostly intact, royal tomb was made by the British archaeologist Howard Carter, digging in the employ of the English nobleman Lord Carnarvon, who had the concession to excavate in the Valley of the Kings. The tomb was soon identified as that of the 'boy pharaoh' Tutankhamun, an Eighteenth Dynasty ruler whose reign came not long after the pharaoh Akhenaten and his consort Nefertiti, already one of the most recognizable icons of Egyptian art, and a great focus of Breasted's own Egyptological scholarship. Because this tomb had been only minimally disturbed in antiquity, most of the grave goods, and the mummy, were intact. It thus fulfilled the ultimate archaeological fantasy: stumbling upon a sealed time capsule from the ancient past, gazing upon a face not seen for 3,000 years. Not only that, but the tomb was replete with astonishing amounts of gold.[68]

The sensation that the discovery caused among the public in the West and in Egypt alike has been extensively catalogued.[69] Today, the Tutankhamun finds continue to have a special patriotic character in Egyptian culture, images of the most famous pieces, especially the vital, bright-eyed mask of the pharaoh, serving as visual icons of the nation. Today, images of the tomb are not only what most popular audiences probably picture when they picture 'Egypt', but also when they picture 'archaeology'. This was in part due to the role that photography and carefully crafted and managed media promotion played in tomb excavations.[70] Breasted was not above exploiting the boom in interest, though he respectfully and collegially avoided stepping on Carnarvon's and Carter's toes.[71] At Carter's request, Breasted assisted with the translations of inscribed artefacts in the tomb during

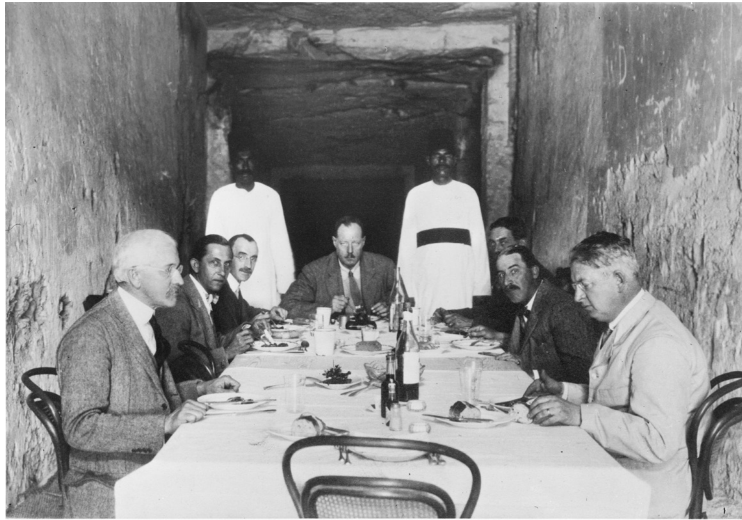

Figure 4.6 James Henry Breasted dining in the Tomb of Ramesses XI during 1923 excavations of the Tomb of Tutankhamun. Breasted is at the far left, Howard Carter is second from right. The photo may have been taken by Lord Carnarvon. Photo credit: Griffith Institute, University of Oxford.

early excavations (Figure 4.6); Carter was an archaeologist, not an Egyptologist or a historian, and was unable to read or interpret the texts himself.[72] Breasted's connections undoubtedly helped George Ellery Hale secure the ultimate tourist experience of the early 1920s, a spot at a Tutankhamun chamber opening. Hale took personal stereograph photographs of finds emerging from the tomb, candid, unposed counterpoints to the Metropolitan Museum photographer Harry Burton's iconic, carefully managed photographs which manufactured some of the most enduring iconography of archaeological heroism and of Western scientific penetration into the mysteries of the ancient East (Figure 4.7).[73]

Yet the question of Western access to the new finds quickly became a subject of major political controversy between the British and the Egyptian independent, nationalist government. The tomb was the first major discovery to be affected by a new antiquities law which gave the Egyptian Antiquities Service, headed, as it had always been, by a French national, Pierre Lacau, greater shares of archaeological finds. Under this new law, the Tutankhamun finds would wind up staying together in the Cairo Museum.

The always contentious question of partage of finds was the context but not the precipitating incident of a dispute that temporarily stalled Carter's excavations over the 1924–5 season. At the start of the year, the

Figure 4.7 George Ellery Hale, stereograph showing excavations in the Tomb of Tutankhamun in February 1923. Photo credit: Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, CC BY-NC-ND.

Egyptian Antiquities Service moved to restrict access to the site during the excavations, limiting the number of permitted visits by outsiders. This move was in part about ensuring work could proceed uninhibited, and in part about asserting some measure of control over Carter's great media show, to his umbrage. In February 1924, when the Antiquities Service intervened to cancel a special viewing of the just-opened sarcophagus for excavators' wives, it was the last straw for Carter. He responded dramatically, by going 'on strike', locking up the tomb, leaving the sarcophagus lid dangling perilously, and posting a public notice in the grand Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor announcing that: 'Owing to impossible restrictions and discourtesies on the part of the Public Works Department and its Antiquities Service, all my collaborators in protest have refused to work any further upon the scientific investigations of the discovery of the tomb of Tut.ankh.amen.'[74]

The Egyptian government, headed by Prime Minister Saad Zaghloul of the nationalist Wafd Party, which had just swept to power in the first elections under a new Egyptian constitution, responded by cancelling the concession to excavate and forbidding the striking Carter access. The Antiquities Service cut through Carter's locks, secured the sarcophagus and locked the tomb themselves. Many other Western archaeologists saw the initial actions of the Antiquities Service as a deliberate provocation, petty territory-marking by the French Lacau and the nationalist Egyptian government. But support for Carter fell away rapidly. An extremely difficult character with a talent for taking and causing offence, Carter prolonged the conflict, choosing to sue the government in the colonial-era

Mixed Courts, reserved for disputes involving foreigners, to be named the sequestrator of the tomb. The British administration was unsupportive of his claim, which was causing needless friction in an already fraught political situation with the new nationalist government.

As this conflict dragged on (the closure of the tomb ultimately lasted for ten months), Breasted was deputized to act as an intermediary between British and Egyptian sides, in his role as a national of neither country, with a flair for negotiation and people-pleasing. While Breasted strongly disliked both Lacau and the Egyptian government and had agreed that their restrictions on visitor access were absurd, he found Carter's actions typically aggressive and undiplomatic. Breasted was amazed to find that Carter had chosen as his representative in court against the Egyptian government, British lawyer F. M. Maxwell, who, in 1919, had prosecuted for treason Egypt's now minister of Public Works, Morcos Hanna, an extremely powerful politician whose ministry controlled the concession – seeking the death penalty (Hanna was ultimately sentenced to seven years in prison, commuted to eight months). 'I was expected to sit down with this lawyer and the man whose condemnation to death he had secured, and begin negotiations for a friendly settlement of Carter's case! Naturally I shied at this proposal,' he recounted incredulously to Hale.[75] Breasted struck many Europeans in the field as a boorish, entitled American abroad, with more Rockefeller money than he knew what to do with, but at least (he could have countered), unlike his British colleagues, he had the good sense to realize that someone you had once attempted to sentence to death might, justifiably, resent it.

A comment in court by this very lawyer, Maxwell, comparing the Egyptian government to 'bandits' threatened to destroy relations between all Western scientists and the Egyptian administration, and Breasted responded immediately by tendering assurances to Hanna that he and other archaeological colleagues dissociated themselves from the remarks. (For this, Breasted was briefly threatened with a defamation suit by Maxwell.) During the dispute with Carter, Breasted was himself offered the concession to excavate the tomb on multiple occasions by the Egyptian government, an opportunity he turned down, weighing collegial loyalty as greater than his concern that the great scientific work in the tomb be continued as soon as possible.[76] The dispute was resolved eventually with a whimper when Zaghloul was ousted as prime minister and replaced by King Fuad I with the Palace-approved prime minister Ahmed Ziwar Pasha. Under British administrative pressure, Carter dropped his lawsuit and agreed to continue excavating more or less on the terms the Antiquities Service wished.

Breasted and the museum that never was

While Breasted played the role of the sensible American with clean hands and no political baggage in these negotiations, his own overconfidence and cluelessness about the motivations of the Egyptian government would sink the next great archaeological affair he tried to involve himself in. Starting in 1924, Breasted worked diligently to facilitate a donation of $10 million US to the Egyptian government for the construction of a new Cairo Museum and associated research centre.[77] For Breasted, this was giving back what America owed to Egypt, as originator of civilization: America playing spry, young son taking on the care of an elderly parent now in their dotage. As he explained when framing the project for the benefit of Rockefeller foundation trustee and advisor, Raymond B. Fosdick, the gift would be:

> a powerful illustration of the new mission of America and American civilization. Here in this ancient valley where the men of the Nile first taught the world to use metals and to build sea-going ships, the wealth wrung from a new continent by these very means will return to its ancestral shores to raise a shining symbol of western enlightenment and friendship.[78]

Not everyone was so convinced, however; Breasted was deeply frustrated by the obstruction he felt that he and the efficient, generous Rockefeller men were meeting at every turn. First, the British refused to make available the site of some of their old military barracks as a location for the lavish new museum, leading Breasted to some of his harshest condemnation of British stewardship of civilization in Egypt:

> The British are breaking their pledge of honor to the Egyptians, and at the same time losing a rare opportunity for Anglo-American cooperation. They are likewise continuing their unenlightened policy of the last fifty years, of occupying a country like this and doing nothing, absolutely nothing for its monuments or for science,–or what is worse actually obstructing a great American effort on behalf of civilization.[79]

Even the difficulties generated by the 'heathen darkness of the Egyptian mind' could be traced to a British origin, 'for *that*, the insufficient educational advantage available here under British control for the last fifty years, is in no small measure due'.[80] For Breasted,

the Middle East's heritage needed rescuing, not only from the Turks or the Egyptians, but also from the Europeans who had had their chance at carrying the torch of civilization and proved lacking in key areas. These were just the areas that America in the 1920s might be expected to excel in: efficiency, energy, initiative and the democratic fair-mindedness that would give even an Egyptian a chance at an education in running Egypt (someday).

Yet even Breasted's fellow scientists were insufficiently appreciative of the extraordinary opportunity for science and civilization that the Rockefeller plan represented. It was no shock that the French director of antiquities, Breasted's old enemy Lacau, would be against a gift that would potentially decrease his own prestige and control, but Breasted was disappointed to find that even his chief rival for preeminence among American Egyptologists, Harvard's George Reisner, was talking down the plan in public, describing it as an attempt to control the entire antiquities service, and 'drastically unfair' to the Egyptians.[81]

The question of Egyptian involvement in the project was never on the agenda during the planning phase of the Rockefeller project.[82] Confident in the desirability of their benevolent gift, Breasted and various Rockefeller officials drew up plans for the museum and associated research institute as they thought would be most useful to Western scientists (thus fulfilling their debt to 'civilization'), then presented the proposed gift in a lavishly printed pamphlet to the Egyptian King Fuad I, certain he would be flattered and delighted and immediately announce it to his people as a *fait accompli*.

They were in for a rude awakening. 'Imagine my amazement,' Breasted told his wife shortly after his meeting to give the pamphlet to the king in January 1926, 'when he received what I had to say with the utmost indifference, coldness, even rudeness. He took the magnificent red Morocco leather bound copy of the brochure and laid it on one end of his desk and did not even open it!' This magnificent brochure about the planned museum had been calculated to appeal to what Breasted assumed would be an Oriental monarch's taste for opulence. Analyzing the king's response, Breasted again sought recourse to stereotypes of the Oriental Despot:

> We cannot fathom wholly what he was after. Two motives are fairly clear: averice [*sic*] and disgust that he was not to get a single finger on the funds; pique and annoyance at a project which took for granted that the Egyptians had nobody who could do this thing. Probably also he realized that the Americans had discerned

> a magnificent opportunity, of which he should himself have taken advantage.[83]

Fuad referred the matter to his prime minister, Ahmad Ziwar Pasha, a figure relatively friendly to Western powers. Fuad and Ziwar began a series of counter-negotiations aimed at increasing Egyptian control and expertise in the new institutions proposed. Contra Breasted's description of the king as bafflingly, selfishly petty, clearly both Fuad and Ziwar were cautiously weighing up how the plan would play in a country with continued widespread support for the nationalist Wafd Party and a looming parliamentary election. As Jeffrey Abt's definitive analysis of the politics of the gift shows, Fuad and Ziwar made every effort to reach an accommodation that they could sell politically, but they could not be seen to be capitulating to Western interests at a time when their opponents already tarred them as weak in the ongoing struggle for real Egyptian independence from British control.[84] As Abt succinctly summarizes the situation: 'To propose an Egyptian museum, which in fact would have been a western intervention on Egyptian soil, was to offer Egyptian leaders something that, to their countrymen, would have been a high profile symbol of foreign domination.'[85] Counter-negotiations about the museum proposal continued into the spring of 1926 and the Rockefeller side agreed to a revised version of the proposal. Yet the Egyptian government surprised the Rockefeller representatives by rejecting even this revision for not going far enough. The king allegedly called it an infringement of Egyptian sovereignty.[86] Rockefeller's offer was withdrawn and would not be revived.[87]

Breasted and the Rockefeller trustees had dramatically underestimated how much native control mattered to Egyptian officials, and how well they understood the strings that could come attached to American philanthropy for a new nation struggling to exhume itself from a complicated patchwork of European imperial claims and influences. As we see in Breasted's remarkably shallow, apolitical analysis of the potential reasons for the king's cold response, Breasted refused to take the Egyptian interest in controlling its own antiquities seriously, or even to think much about how Egyptian politicians had to manage real, public interest among the country's electorate in the nation's cultural heritage. He and the Rockefeller men would forever frame the failure of the project in terms of baffling Egyptian pettiness, and a capricious, avaricious absurdity on the part of the king and his prime minister, rather than a well-considered response to what these leaders knew sentiment in their country would bear.[88]

While Breasted's Americanness made him useful in a situation like the Tutankhamun affair, where he benefited from being neither British, Egyptian nor French, nor an internationally disgraced postwar German, there were serious limitations to his usefulness as an agent of American soft power and cultural imperialism. He accomplished impressive things for American archaeology, but his failure to grasp the sincerity of, and his utter disrespect for, nationalist sentiments in Egypt was his undoing when it came to influencing antiquities administration within that country. Even faced with the proof that Egyptian leaders assessed the control of their own heritage at a higher price than $10 million of American money, he failed to believe that anyone but Westerners could truly appreciate the significance of Egypt's ancient civilizations.

Conclusion

From the late nineteenth century, American popular Orientalism, ethnographic exhibitions and travel writing exoticized the Middle East at the same time that they also invited Americans to play at being part of it. This kind of identification often involved a conscious entrance into fantasy. In contrast, the scholarly image of the Middle East of early civilization could be appropriated through a linear narrative of historical descent: (seemingly) no fantasy required.

Yet how could the origins of such key traditions as law, writing, art, architecture, government and moral sentiment lie in the same place that was now 'half-barbarous', as Austen Henry Layard had observed in 1849? How had the subsequent fortunes of the area fallen so far? The idea of an 'unchanging Orient' supported a number of perhaps contradictory imaginaries which responded to this puzzling circumstance. On the one hand, there was the image of the Middle East as a land in which antiquity was still accessible, where a visitor could time travel to the remote past. This quality was wondrous, valuable and instructive, and provided the justification for archaeological expeditions. Yet the presence of the past in the modern Middle East was also part of a wider Eastern belatedness, related to the stagnancy, somnolence and backwardness of the modern Easterner. While a certain out-of-time-ness was beautiful when it came to gazing at a semi-ruined landscape or unsealing a remarkable tomb, it was deplorable when gazing at the dwellings of living locals, or considering their apparently inadequate national museums and education systems.

In the career of James Henry Breasted, whose Oriental Institute revived dormant American archaeological ambitions after the end of

the First World War, the strange status of the Middle East as ancient and yet still 'unable to stand on its own' had implications for American involvement in its heritage politics. Breasted repeatedly described his scholarly mission, to funders and in official publications, as an act of stewardship on a world civilizational scale. America's own position as the new leader of civilization made it incumbent upon it to manage the antiquities of the Middle East: in recompense for what the Middle East had started, and in recognition of the sorry state it was in now, through a combination of Oriental decadence and European imperial mismanagement. Breasted's actual effectiveness at realizing his aims in the Middle East was mixed, and certainly limited by his complacency and dismissiveness of the region's contemporary residents and politicians. Yet his presentation of the region to Americans back home was certainly effective in promoting the concept that modern America was the true culmination of the Middle East's glorious ancient civilizations. In his work, these claims came dressed both in the impeccable garb of the modern scientist and the authoritative, dusty burnoose of the well-travelled, on-the-ground expert.

Notes

1 Satia, *Time's Monster*, 156–7, 174.

2 Mehiyar Kathem and Dhiaa Kareem Ali put it wonderfully in their discussion of this tendency in recent scholarly writings and exhibitions on the site of Babylon in Iraq which construct Babylon 'as an ancient culture extracted from its social, political and cultural environment' and instead connected to the wider history of the West, 'in ways that relegate people altogether to mere bystanders who just happen to live in Iraq'; 'Decolonising Babylon', 834–5.

3 Nance, *How the Arabian Nights*, 4–13.

4 Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*.

5 Kuklick, *Puritans in Babylon*, 109–11; Crossen, '"The Sting" at Adab'; Haque, '"The Frame" at Adab'.

6 Breasted himself noted this tendency and resolved that his pitches for funding for his epigraphic missions should always include some reference to excavation plans as well, as 'a concession to popular interest'. At 24.6.1915 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.

7 For a starting point on American Orientalism in these years, see Edwards, *Noble Dreams, Wicked Pleasures*; Nance, *How the Arabian Nights*; Ackerman, *American Orientalists*.

8 Some examples of Orientalist movie palaces include the 1927 Missouri Theater in St Joseph, Missouri, designed by the Boller Brothers, which has a Moorish façade and Neo-Assyrian-inspired sculpture within, and the spectacular 1922 Grauman's Egyptian Theatre in Los Angeles by Meyer & Holler, its inspiration entirely ancient. Joseph Roth noticed a similar dynamic in Berlin, as he wrote in 1925: 'I had long ago set aside the habit of seeing in every Berlin mosque a Muhammadan house of worship. I knew that the mosques here are movie theaters and the Orient is a movie' (*What I Saw*, 167).

9 In the late 1910s, Parrish created Orientalist illustrations for the Ohio-based Crane Chocolate Company (run by the parents of poet Hart Crane), *The Rubaiyat* (1916), *Cleopatra* (1917) and *The Garden of Allah* (1918).

10 In Evan S. Connell's 1959 novel of bourgeois WASP repression *Mrs. Bridge*, this book forms part of the earnest romantic armoury with which Mr. Bridge pursues his future wife in 1920s

Kansas City: 'He spoke of Ruskin and of Robert Ingersoll, and he read to her that evening on the porch, later, some verses from *The Rubaiyat* while her parents were preparing for bed, and the locusts sang in the elm trees all around' (3). The same volume appears once more in the novel, many years later, when the middle-aged Mrs. Bridge's attempt to complete a self-improving vocabulary workbook loses momentum until it 'died on a shelf between T. E. Lawrence and *The Rubaiyat*' (60). The evidence of Mrs. Bridge's failed attempt at personal growth is nestled between two equally neglected works signalling a slightly earlier American age's fascination with the adventures and romance of the Middle East.

11 As a teenage boy in Boston, Ghibran was taken up by the photographer F. Holland Day as an artistic protégé and a photographic model. Day was part of the group of Boston Visionists with which the young Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue was associated.

12 For an exhaustively researched account of the Cairo Street concession, see Ormos, *Cairo in Chicago*. Ormos has also given a good brief summary of interesting aspects of the concession in Ormos, 'Cairo Street'.

13 *Portrait Types*, unpaginated, caption for plate 'Mr. George Pangalo'. On this book, see Boyle, 'Types and beauties', 16–17. On the Egypt at the Paris Exposition, see Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 1–33.

14 Ormos, *Cairo in Chicago*, 75–92; Hinsley and Wilcox, *Coming of Age in Chicago*, 60–1.

15 Bank and Hecht, 'Entertaining people'.

16 Ormos, 'Cairo Street', 189; Bolotin and Laing, *Chicago's Grand Midway*, 64; Hinsley and Wilcox, *Coming of Age in Chicago*, 60.

17 See Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 80–8.

18 In *Portrait Types*, it is instructive to compare photographs and captions of a few dancers. 'Sofia Ziedan (Bedouin Dancing Girl)' is photographed fully clothed and described as 'a modest little woman', whose dance derived from the time of the biblical King David and 'had none of the objectionable features which were urged, not improperly perhaps, against some of the other exhibitions on the Midway'. Meanwhile 'Amina (Egyptian)', an 18-year-old who appeared in Cairo Street, appears in a low, scooped-neck top. Her *danse du ventre* is described in terms of the scandal and debate it inspired about its appropriateness and educational value. 'Rahlo Jammele (Jewish Dancing Girl)', from Jerusalem, who danced a sword dance at the Moorish Palace, is described as practising a serious cultural art whose chief appeal, nonetheless, is its familiarity to Western tastes (particularly male erotic desires). Her turban has a suggestion of 'coquettishness' about it, and 'unlike the Egyptian Persian or Turkish dancers, these Jewish girls moved with a willowy grace in dancing which to Western eyes, trained to the habit of admiring steps in which the feet and ankles play the prominent part, was most pleasing'. A better illustration could hardly be found of the intermediate position occupied by Oriental Jews on the Midway.

19 See Racy, 'Domesticating otherness', esp. 203–5, 215–16; Boyle, 'Types and beauties'; Nance, *How the Arabian Nights*, 173–204.

20 Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 95–137; Yıldız, 'Ottoman participation'.

21 Shepp and Shepp, *Shepp's World's Fair*, 482–3.

22 Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution', 104.

23 Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution', 102–6.

24 *Portrait Types*, photo and caption of R. J. Levi, concessionaire for the Turkish Village and Theatre; see also the caption for the photo of Rebecca Meise Alithensii which remarks that, 'Whether in Palestine or America, in the Tenth Century before or the Nineteenth Century after Christ, the Jew shows the same physical characteristics, slightly modified by his surroundings, and the same intellectual acumen and business capacity that have made him the most successful financier in the world.'

25 See Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 81–3; Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution', 99–100. See Rydell, *All the World's a Fair*, 5–8, 19.

26 Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution', 113.

27 Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution', 101–18.

28 Bolotin and Laing, *Chicago's Grand Midway*, 87.

29 Ormos, *Cairo in Chicago*, 143.

30 See Çelik, *Displaying the Orient*, 37–9, 111–19.

31 Bolotin and Laing, *Chicago's Grand Midway*, 35, 80–2; see Holloway, 'Smithsonian Institution', 101, esp. n. 19.

32 Bolotin and Laing, *Chicago's Grand Midway*, 87.
33 Stevenson, *Scattered Finds*, 73. While this touch, and the temple recreation in general, may seem like it can be classed as kitsch, in the 1890s, recreations and casts were not necessarily 'low' culture. They were, in some situations, considered to be more educationally valuable ways of learning about the past than 'authentic' artefacts. The relative value of recreations was in fact a subject of debate among museums and educational professionals at the time. See Collins, 'Casting the ruins', 306–9; Promey, *Painting Religion*, 283–7.
34 Saliba, 'Travel literature'. See Long, *Imagining the Holy Land*, for a comprehensive account of the Holy Land in nineteenth-century American culture.
35 Rogers, *Inventing the Holy Land*; Davis, *Landscape of Belief*; Murre-van den Berg, 'Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions'; Talhamy, 'American Protestant Missionary Activity'; Obenzinger, 'Holy Land Narrative'.
36 See Morris, *American Vandal*, 49–61; Obenzinger, *American Palestine*, 161–274; Shamir, 'Encounters'.
37 Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue*, 38–51; Oliver, *Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue*, 40–4.
38 Nance, *How the Arabian Nights*, 34–40; Finnie, *Pioneers East*; Steinbrink, 'Why the innocents went abroad'.
39 See Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 84–91.
40 While it might have been cheaper and easier than physical travel to Egypt, it was still a pursuit limited to the financially fortunate. As Abt has calculated, this was an expensive journey: the 'travel set' which included a viewer, stereographs, guidebooks and case, retailed for $19 in 1908, the equivalent of more than $600 in 2023.
41 For a comprehensive analysis of the means by which a user is immersed in a virtual environment through the Underwood & Underwood system, see Klahr, 'Travelling'.
42 Underwood & Underwood's stock of negatives were later bought out by the Keystone View Company, which stayed in touch with Breasted. In 1923, when Keystone was looking for stereoptic images of the Tutankhamun Tomb, Breasted recommended that Hale get in touch with them: Hale had taken images with a stereoptic camera on the spot, and was probably the only person in possession of stereoptic negatives at the time. At 9.8.1923 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.
43 Breasted, *Egypt through the Stereoscope*, 21.
44 Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 90.
45 Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 91.
46 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 35.
47 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 35–6.
48 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 217–20.
49 See Silberman, 'Promised Lands', 251–6; Silberman, 'Desolation and restoration'; Larsen, 'Orientalism'; Bahrani, 'Conjuring Mesopotamia'.
50 Layard, *Nineveh and Its Remains*, 70.
51 Brusius and Rico, 'Counter-archives'; Colla, *Conflicted Antiquities*, 34–5. A particularly interesting case study is Tadmor/Palmyra in Syria, from which a large community was removed in the 1920s by the French mandatory administration, to an entirely new settlement. This local community also contributed archaeological labour and knowledge at the site. Attempts to claim the ruins as the heritage of the 'world' following destruction and violence against civilians at the site by Daesh in 2015, and to identify it historically as strictly 'Roman', have been much written about. The recent history of displacement and erasure of local communities attains new significance in light of these claims. See Baird et al., 'Knowing Palmyra'; Mudie, 'Palmyra and the radical other'; Elcheikh, 'Palmyra', 165–7, 171–2; Al-Manzali, 'Palmyra and the political history of archaeology'; Kamash, 'Postcard to Palmyra'. The representation of locals as dangers to the cultural heritage they lived near sits especially uncomfortably with the important but under-recognized role that locals played, and continue to play, in excavations across the Middle East. See Quirke, *Hidden Hands*; Riggs, *Photographing Tutankhamun*, 141–72; Mickel, *Why Those Who Shovel*; Doyon, 'On archaeological labor'; Carruthers, 'Introduction'.
52 Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 59–61.
53 Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 60; citing Boston Museum of Fine Arts, Reisner, Correspondence, Box: Reisner 1900–26, Folder 7, 'Memorandum on the Alexandria Massacre of May 1921'. On this recurring narrative in Egyptology, see Carruthers, 'Rise and fall'.

54 Reid also cites the opinions of Breasted's son and assistant, Charles Breasted, who described the Egyptians as an 'ignorant, decadent, mongrel people, totally unfit for self rule'. The 'mongrel' epithet casually reflects an idea that, racially, the peoples of Egypt now were not necessarily the same as the people of Egypt in the ancient past, having become mixed through a long history of conquest and migration. The race of the Egyptians in antiquity and in the present was then, as it continues to be, a divisive and contested issue that I will not go into here. But it is worth noting that the attempt to dismiss Egypt as a site of civilizational prominence in the modern day could also casually invoke racialized discourses of decline and degeneration. Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 72, citing a quote in Goode, *Negotiating for the Past*, 81.
55 Bahrani, 'Conjuring Mesopotamia', 162.
56 Depicting the modern Middle East as Muslim, which it was in overwhelming majority despite many surviving minority religions, made it easier to disconnect it from ancient peoples who had worshipped animal-headed gods or enormous idols at the top of ziggurats. Nonetheless, even these religious traditions could be conflated: the common depiction of Islam as slavishly god-fearing could be seen as another manifestation of a tendency towards ancient Oriental despotism. When Henry Fairfield Osborn compared Greek scientific curiosity to the lack of the same in the ancient Middle East, he associated Islam with the same tendencies: 'Even today "Great is Allah!" is the beginning and end of natural philosophy among the Orientals of the Mediterranean borders'; Osborn, *Man's Rise*, 6–7.
57 These and all quotes above, 16.2.1927 JHB to Raymond B. Fosdick. Box 111, Folder 12, DC, ISAC.
58 C. Ernest Dawn argues that Breasted's *Ancient Times*, in its Arabic translations, was influential in the mid-1920s in the development of Pan-Arab ideology, contributing to the idea of a 'nuclear Arab homeland' defined in terms of Breasted's concept of the Fertile Crescent; 'Formation of pan-Arab ideology', 69.
59 See Abt, 'Seeking permanence'.
60 Breasted, 'Oriental Institute', 200.
61 On this trip and the institute's foundation, see Emberling, *Pioneers to the Past*; Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 228–48; Sheppard, 'On His Majesty's Secret Service'.
62 Breasted, 'Oriental Institute', 196.
63 'Declaration to Egypt by His Britannic Majesty's Government' (28 February 1922), collected in Blaustein et al., *Independence Documents*, 204–5.
64 League of Nations. 'The Covenant of the League of Nations (Including Amendments Adopted to December, 1924)', 1919, Article 22.
65 At 9.11.1920 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.
66 At 30.12.1919 JHB to FHB. JHBP, ISAC, printed in Larson, *Letters*, 125–6.
67 At 15.1.1920 JHB to FHB. JHBP, ISAC, printed in Larson, *Letters*, 135–8; on aerial images, see Emberling and Teeter, 'First expedition', 52–4; Teeter, 'Epilogue', 104–6; Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 233–40, see fig. 6.9.
68 Carter and Mace, *Tomb of Tut·ankh·Amen*, 95–6; see discussion in Dobson, *Writing the Sphinx*, 21–58.
69 The most penetrating work on photography of this tomb is Riggs, *Photographing Tutankhamun*. Her account of the mythmaking more broadly around the tomb, *Treasured*, is also useful. Other useful accounts of the images of discovery and their reception include Dobson, *Writing the Sphinx*, 28–31. See also Stevenson, *Scattered Finds*, 145–80.
70 See Riggs, *Photographing Tutankhamun*, 105–40, 173–206; Riggs, *Treasured*, 54–81. A very clever parody of the tomb's presentation and reception is Macaulay, *Motel of the Mysteries*.
71 A personal account of his involvement, for public consumption, is Breasted, *Some Experiences*.
72 While the principals in the discovery were British, American archaeology was involved from the beginning. The staff of the Met Museum also assisted Carter's excavations, in part on the promise of some objects for their collections. See Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 65–6.
73 Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 57.
74 Reid, *Contesting Antiquity*, 69, quoting Carter, *Tut.ankh.amen: Statement*. See Sheppard, *Tea on the Terrace*, 171–81.
75 At 22.3.1924 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.
76 At 22.3.1924 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.
77 For a thorough account of this project, see Abt, 'Toward a historian's laboratory'.
78 At 8.2.1926 JHB to Raymond B. Fosdick. Box 111, Folder 12, DC, ISAC.

79 At 26.11.1925 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.
80 At 18.12.1925 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.
81 At 7.3.1926 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.
82 Abt, 'Toward a historian's laboratory', 175–6.
83 At 13.1.1926 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.
84 Abt, 'Towards a historian's laboratory', 184–7.
85 Abt, 'Towards a historian's laboratory', 187.
86 Abt, 'Towards a historian's laboratory', 184.
87 The Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem was essentially an outgrowth of this failed endeavour, so the project was incarnated, in a sense, elsewhere. Breasted also assisted with the establishment and control of the Jerusalem Rockefeller Museum, though he was not as powerful in its administration as he was in the never realized Cairo plans.
88 Breasted had a far higher opinion of the government of Iraq, which he described as composed of able and intelligent men; in general, the 'Asiatic' Middle East seemed to him to set a good example for the Egyptians. Crucially, Breasted felt that Iraq was sufficiently populated with politicians who actively wanted to see Western money funnelled into the country. He tried, without success, to interest Rockefeller officials in ambitious investments there. The most remarkable scheme Breasted proposed would have involved the Rockefeller foundations purchasing in full the site of the Neo-Assyrian capitol Kalhu, modern Nimrud, for $1 million US; see 30.5.1928 JHB to Raymond B. Fosdick; 16.2.1927 JHB to Raymond B. Fosdick. Box 111, Folder 12, DC, ISAC.

5

Parallels: American Indians and the ancient East

A teleological narrative in which the torch of civilization passed from the ancient East ever farther westward had to confront an obvious challenge. What role in this teleology was played by the Indigenous peoples of the American continent into which civilization must march? Whether conceived of as a significant obstacle (the antimatter to civilization's matter) or a nonentity (ignored entirely or treated as mere curiosities), the existence of American Indians was at the very least a challenge to narrative unity. They were certainly not the heroes of civilization's story. For White Euro-American scholars, it was hard to conceive of how they might even be part of the great chain of events that composed world history. Who, then, were they? How did they relate to civilization?

American Indians, though seemingly outside of the narratives of historical progress, were nonetheless also an important part of the American past, and a part that was unique to the Americas among representatives of the West. For Euro-Americans in the United States, the Indigenous people of the continent could be predecessors in the sacred custodianship of a vast continent, predecessors who might be understood as spiritual forefathers at the same time that they were also figured as a relic of the past that needed to be swept away.

It should already be obvious from this framing that I am interested in this chapter in the way that elites working on academic and civic narratives saw Indigenous Americans, their ultimate 'other', rather than how American Indians saw themselves. This chapter is, however, by no means a comprehensive attempt to explain the role of American Indians in Euro-American historical consciousness, a huge topic and one that has been written on from many perspectives.[1] Instead, I want to focus here on one historical and artistic tendency in the framing of American Indians:

a discourse in which American Indians were understood as, in some way, relevant to the early Middle East – or vice versa. This connection could be variously framed in terms of historical connection or similarities, or because of coincidental but pleasing aesthetic overlaps. This constituted an 'Orientalizing' of American Indians and a consequent imagination of Indians as windows onto the ancient Middle East.[2] I will consider various ways in which this idea manifested, in scholarship and public art, and what it did for a sense of mainstream American identity, and the sense that America had a right both to the legacy of world civilization and the whole of the American continent.

American Indians as displaced Easterners

From the very first, the Indigenous people encountered by Europeans in the New World were, to some extent, Orientalized; the famous story of Columbus's mistaken belief that he had arrived at the end of the East Indies generating the name 'Indian' is widely known, one of the great myths of early American exploration.[3] This familiar story can remind us how early European explorers, colonizers and settlers of the New World, naturally, sought to understand what they were encountering through familiar categories. Through a combination of geographical mistake and, perhaps also, through a deeper sense that there was a coherence between the 'others' of the Far East and the new 'others' they met, European settlers literally mapped existing knowledge about 'the East' onto New World encounters.

As Europeans wrestled with the meaning of this new land and its people, yet unaccounted for by history or science, it was often to a Middle Eastern source that they turned: the Bible. The theory that American Indians might be descendants of the 'Lost Tribes' of Israel, deported after the Assyrian conquest of the northern kingdom of Israel in the eighth century BCE, was reiterated and considered compelling, or at least plausible, for centuries, by Christian and Jewish authors, and sometimes by American Indians too.[4] As Elizabeth Fenton explains, 'although the idea of American Hebraism encountered scepticism from the moment it emerged, it persisted across centuries, evolving and reforming as historical circumstances changed'.[5] Instead of an utterly new and mysterious kind of human, American Indians could be explained as ancient Easterners displaced. Works promoting this theory were published by the mid-seventeenth century and continued to appear regularly until the mid-nineteenth century, citing one another and

sharing many of the same arguments from authors with varying degrees of authority to speak about Indians, or Jews.

In 1775, the Irish historian James Adair, who had traded with and lived among the Chickasaw for decades, published a 23-item proof of the similarities between Jews and Indians (beginning with 'their organisation into tribes').[6] Various sources promoting the Lost Tribes theory quoted the observations of Pennsylvania's Quaker founder William Penn in a letter to a friend noting of the natives of his new territory that: 'I found them with like countenances with the Hebrew Race; and their children of so lively a resemblance to them, that a man would think himself in Duke's place or Barry street, in London, when he sees them.'[7] It was not only then some much transformed version of the ancient Israelites that Indians might evoke, but the more familiar modern-day manifestations of those Israelites: an Orientalist association filtered through the familiar topography of a much nearer East, the streets of East London.

This idea of 'Jewish Indians' or 'Indians as the Lost Tribes' lived on into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries among various fringe groups and, more notably, in today's fastest-growing American religion, the Church of Latter-day Saints (LDS), founded in the late nineteenth century by Joseph Smith, currently with about 16 million worldwide followers.[8] The LDS Church continues to hold, officially, that American Indians are descendants of a people called the 'Lamanites', which Smith's *Book of Mormon* (1830) tells us came to the New World from Jerusalem in the mid-sixth century BCE, following the invasion of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar II.[9]

For Christians or Jews devoted to the biblical account of the world, no less than for Mormons, there were, of course, theological reasons to prefer an origin for Indians that did not contradict the biblical narrative of human history and creation. If humans were created once, in the Garden of Eden, located, according to Genesis, between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers (in today's Iraq), then the people of the New World must, like all peoples, ultimately trace their origins to this creation.[10] But a Middle Eastern origin was not only a theory popular with those who wanted to take their Bibles literally. As scholars of natural sciences debated the possible origins of different human races, the Middle East was one apparently plausible offering among other suggested Old World connections.[11] From the 1860s onwards, the publication of Darwin's theories of natural selection and the dawning awareness of the tremendous antiquity of humans offered new paradigms for understanding human origins.[12] While these new paradigms offered a serious challenge to a biblical history of humankind, in one important respect,

they agreed with the biblical account. They implied a single origin for all humans, monogenesis, against the increasingly untenable position that humans of different regions had been created or originated separately, polygenesis. The latter had been a theory especially popular in American scholarly circles through the mid-nineteenth century, in part because of how it could be deployed to support the enslavement of Black people and the genocide of American Indians.[13] As the nineteenth century wore on, scientific knowledge suggested that a relationship between Indians and some previously known peoples must exist, even if divergence had happened in the unimaginably distant past.

Indians as anthropological displays

As Steven Conn argues in his study of American Indians in White Euro-American historical consciousness, over the course of the nineteenth century, questions about Indians and world history were increasingly giving way to other kinds of academic questions. He traces a significant shift mostly complete by the century's end, in which the study of American Indians moved from the realm of history to anthropology.[14] The anthropological understanding of American Indians repainted them, as Conn puts it, as 'a people with a past, but without a history'.[15] It removed them from the world historical story and segregated their own past in anthropological time (or timelessness). As a parallel, we might think of Breasted's blithe dismissal in his 1935 edition of *Ancient Times* of 'Negroids' and 'Mongoloids' from 'ancient history': 'These peoples occupy an important place in the modern world, but they played no part in the rise of civilization.'[16] Whatever Indians had been doing for thousands of years, it was simply not a part of history unless or until Europeans touched their lives.

Common to historical and anthropological perspectives was the belief that Indians were a doomed race. Displaced in time, something ancient that had survived into the modern world, their encounter with Euro-American modernity, with 'civilization', would inevitably be fatal. This assumption crossed ideological, historical, moral and political positions. There were various ways that this extinction could be imagined: literal genocide or a transformation through absorption into Euro-American civilization, or some combination of the two.[17] Across centuries, there were many White Americans who greatly admired Indigenous cultures and considered it tragic that they were doomed, and many White Americans who dissented from forms of violence and aggression

against American Indians. But very few of them ever questioned whether there was perhaps an alternate possible present or future, in which the Indigenous peoples of the continent could continue to grow, thrive or dominate the North American continent.

This pervasive sense of the Indians as a doomed race was expressed in public art of the period, such as the immensely popular sculpture by James Earle Fraser, *The End of the Trail*, exhibited at the Panama–Pacific Exposition in San Francisco in 1915, where it won Fraser a gold medal (Figure 5.1).[18] Fraser explained that it was inspired by a boyhood encounter in what was then Dakota territory, today the state of Nebraska, where he spent his early childhood with an old Dakota Indian who told him that Indians would someday be pushed into the Pacific Ocean.[19] In this anecdote, even the Dakota man of Fraser's memory shares the sense of his race's own inevitable doom; albeit a fatalism that we can imagine he might have explained in a different way than White settlers would have explained it. Fraser's sculpture was inspired by this remembered encounter with an Indian man mourning his people, and was meant to express sorrow and evoke pathos. His Indian is broken and exhausted but noble, in the tradition of classical sculptures depicting wounded or dying noble warriors. But a certain inevitability is also perhaps what makes it tragic, and from its tragedy comes a kind of beauty that resonated with White American viewers.[20] As if by natural

Figure 5.1 James Earle Fraser, *The End of the Trail*, bronze copy (1929), created by Fraser, of his plaster original (1915), in Waupun, Wisconsin. Photo credit: Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-12431 DLC.

law, the encounter between the past and present was one in which the present would always win out. This is only one of many popular works of art which took up the theme.[21]

We could perhaps detect some interesting resonances between the romantic archaeological discourse of the artefact exhumed that crumbles before the very eyes of the excavators, as Breasted once described happening in the Tomb of Tutankhamun, and the anthropological encounter with Indigenous people.[22] A wondrous specimen appears before you and then disappears just as quickly. American anthropologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were anxious to scribble down as many notes, take as many photographs and measurements, obtain as many pots and baskets as they could before it was too late.[23]

As many scholars have explored, the Chicago Columbian Exposition, marking 400 years since Columbus's arrival on American shores, was a staging ground for different contested stories about how American Indians related to US American modernity. There, Frederick Jackson Turner declared the frontier closed at the Pacific, anticipating the ideas in Fraser's *End of the Trail*: Indians might still exist on the continent, but they were no longer its masters. Yet, at the Columbian Exposition, Indians were an unavoidable presence, a pervasive feature of its visual repertoire and clearly, therefore, a significant part of how US Americans celebrated 400 years of European presence, how they understood their own identity.[24]

The fair also put on display the tension between American federal government policies which officially mandated American Indian assimilation and scholarly interests in preserving specimens.[25] The Smithsonian, US Bureau of Ethnology and US National Museum exhibit, directed by Major John Wesley Powell, arranged displays of Indian technology evolving in civilizational complexity and set up a model school, where Indian pupils were asked to demonstrate how well they had absorbed American modernity.[26] University anthropologists, including the head of the fair's Ethnology Department, Harvard University's Frederic Ward Putnam, and his assistant Franz Boas, meanwhile collected measurements, artefacts and living people, some of whom became part of living displays of Indians in their 'pre-contact' state. For this, they asked participants to play the roles of essentially, their own ancestors: uncorrupted specimens, having tried to unpick from contemporary Indian practices those that were 'untainted'.[27] Meanwhile, outside the Exposition proper and even beyond the Midway, denied permission to officially participate by officials aiming for a high tone, Buffalo Bill ran his own

'Wild West' spectacular, in which numerous, mostly Lakota, people participated, sometimes playing themselves or other real-life historical figures as they re-enacted scenes of the very recent Indian Wars.[28]

In all these events, there was of course room for Indian participants and attendees to make their own perspectives known, and to resist top-down messaging about their place in the modern world. Melissa Rinehart provides a fascinating anecdote detailing one such small act of resistance from someone who helped organize the ethnological displays of Indians, Antonio Apache, an Apache Indian assistant to Putnam. Apache had procured long wigs to make short-haired participants in an Indian pageant he was organizing look less 'civilized', but threw them out in anger after listening to a group of tourists' derogatory comments about himself (made in his hearing, since they assumed he spoke no English). As Rinehart points out, his initial impulse to appease White expectations disappeared in the face of this encounter and provides one example of the many ways that 'Native Americans responded to and resisted scrutiny from fairgoers and other personnel in their own ways at the World's Columbian Exposition.'[29]

While visitors could marvel at the carefully curated 'pre-contact' antiquities in ethnological displays, they could also see White artists' perspectives on American Indians in the Palace of Fine Arts, in sculptures and ephemera.[30] Many artists brought to the fair pre-existing images with Indian themes, a popular subject in 1890s art. Other artists at the fair used the presence of real Indigenous people as a chance to create new work with documentary authenticity. Lee Lawrie, writing in his memoirs many decades later about his time there as a young apprentice, remembered guiding one of the Indian participants in Buffalo Bill's show to pose for the sculptors working at the fair.[31]

It is worth noting that visitors to this exposition might well have visited these various manifestations of American Indians on the same trip in which they experienced Cairo Street, discussed in the previous chapter.[32] Of course, by their very nature, world's fairs put diverse times and places into proximity ('all the world is here', boasted the Columbian Exposition's motto). Ethnological displays, Buffalo Bill's shows and Cairo Street were all especially likely to have been seen by people together simply because they were especially likely to be seen at all: 'Indian displays' (especially Buffalo Bill's unofficial offering) were some of the few rivals to Cairo Street for popularity. Fairgoers knew which parts of 'all the world' they liked looking at best.

Indians as historical examples

Just because, as Conn tells us, the study of American Indians had moved from history to anthropology did not mean that Indigenous peoples had lost relevance for historians of the 'civilized' world. One reason anthropological study and documentation of American Indians before they disappeared was so important was that, under a social evolutionary understanding of their position in time, they could provide a window onto the 'Old World' past. Lewis Henry Morgan, a foundational figure in American anthropology, had made this clear with his fieldwork among mostly Iroquois peoples, from which he developed grand theories about the development of human societies.[33] Morgan proposed, more or less at the same time as the British founder of cultural anthropology Edward Burnett Tylor, a threefold typology of savagery, barbarism and civilization through which all cultures of people passed in a relatively predictable pattern, though at very different rates.[34] Each of these stages had low, middle and high versions, marked by predictable technological innovations which also tended to be accompanied, inevitably, by corresponding social changes.[35] As he explained in his seminal *Ancient Society* (1877), which introduced this schema: 'Two families of mankind, the Aryan and Semitic, … were the first to emerge from barbarism. They were substantially the founders of civilization,' with, he elaborated, the central threads of progress gradually assumed by the Aryan family alone.[36]

Morgan had become an expert on *ancient* society through field work studying *modern* Iroquois. For Morgan, American Indians offered a window on stages of savagery and (mostly) barbarism through which the peoples of Europe and the Middle East had passed long ago. Since societies developed along fundamentally predictable lines, studying modern-day Indians was the closest one could come to conducting fieldwork in a prehistoric European village.[37] When James Adair in 1775 looked at Indians, he saw similarities to ancient Israel, which to him meant a direct historical connection through literal, familial descent. A century later, when Morgan looked at Indians, he observed the same kinds of similarities but assigned them a different role in his own scholarly arguments. Indians were not descendants of ancient people but analogues.

Breasted adopted Morgan's highly influential categories of civilizational development in his own work on early civilization and the 'rise of man'.[38] Like Morgan and numerous historians and anthropologists since him, Breasted believed that American Indians offered valuable data to

the scholar of ancient history. In *Ancient Times*, the first two images in the book (after an initial coloured plate) are both of contemporary people: 'Fire-making without Matches, by Modern Natives of Australia' and 'A Group of North American Indians making Flint Weapons', drawn with a photographic degree of realism (Figure 5.2).[39] Present-day Indigenous people bring a prehistoric past under the purview of a documentary, photographic gaze. Later, in Breasted's account of the development of writing in late fourth-millennium Egypt, he twice pairs early Egyptian hieroglyphs with recent Dakota sources.[40]

Breasted's own encounters with Indigenous Americans as part of the US tourist circuit reinforced his belief that he could see in these peoples aspects of the past he studied. He wrote to Hale about a trip to the American south-west:

> we have staid [*sic*] on to see something of aboriginal American life, with which I have never had a chance to get acquainted. I am finding it fascinating. Yesterday we drove sixty miles down to Santo Domingo Pueblo [New Mexico] to see the annual corn dance. In the Roman Catholic Church at one end of the pueblo, I found a shrine of the virgin decorated with paintings of corn stalks and sunflower stalks, perfect symbols of Osiris and Re; and the really beautiful dance outside was a ceremony which the Egyptians must have practiced for thousands of years before they ever learned to

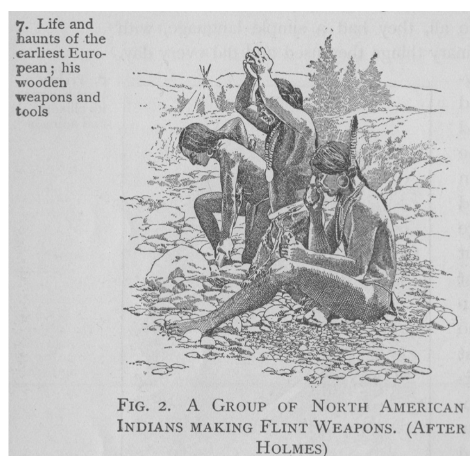

Figure 5.2 Illustration of 'A Group of North American Indians making Flint Weapons', accompanying the section on 'the earliest Europeans'. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A history of the early world* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1916), 4, fig. 2. Photo credit: Public domain, author's scan.

> write and were employing symbols to express their ideas of the gods exactly like those of these Pueblo Indians. So one finds here stages of human advancement so remote that the Egyptians passed through them in distant ages of which we shall never have any written records, but must fill the gap by the study of such modern survivals as I saw yesterday.[41]

Breasted witnessed modern people engaging in a modern ritual, a ritual which reflected awareness of tourists like him who were economic benefits to the community, as well as the personal faith of its participants, who were celebrating the feast day of Saint Dominic and performing the Green Corn Dance.[42] Breasted was in a setting and watching a ritual that unambiguously indicated that the performers were not unchanged from antiquity: after all, they were performing their traditional dance to celebrate a Roman Catholic saint's day. But in Breasted's view, scratch the Catholic and there's an Indian underneath, and that Indian is an Egyptian in 4000 BCE.

He expressed a similar sentiment about Indigenous Alaskan peoples he observed on a cruise with his daughter a few years later, describing the transformation of these people's mode of subsistence from hunting to herd management as a 'modern social experiment' recreating 'just what must have happened for the first time in the human career, in Western Asia and Egypt'.[43] Again, Breasted sees this transformation not as a consequence of the ways that these peoples, like him, are part of the same modern economy. Living people like those Breasted observed in New Mexico and Alaska became artefacts, living fossils, which – like archaeological artefacts excavated in the Middle East – allowed access to the earliest stages of the 'career of man' in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

American Indians in depictions of civilization: the US Capitol and the Library of Congress

The scholarly fascination with Indians and their ambiguous position in regard to White, Euro-American history, was matched by a corresponding artistic obsession with Indians as subjects. We have already seen examples of this in the art of the Columbian and Panama–Pacific Expositions. Visual depictions of American Indians concerned themselves with the same questions that bedevilled historians and anthropologists: how did Indigenous North Americans fit into historical consciousness? Into modernity? Into the development of a US American sense both of

other and of self? American Indians were of artistic interest for their fascinating, exotic difference, and could figure as the antithesis of American civilization. In this role, their alterity could be an important means of delineating Euro-American identity. The assumption of the continent from them, and the bringing of civilization to them were important parts of a historical narrative of US origins, the foundation and growth of American civilization. Yet the image of the American Indian was a significant part of Euro-American identity, not only as an opponent, but also as an avatar. Indigenous North Americans could become, by an elision of self and other, representatives of White, Euro-America itself. Two federal government buildings in Washington, DC, offer examples.

On the pediment over the Senate doors on the East Front of the US Capitol, Thomas Crawford's *Progress of Civilization* (1854–63) offered a vision of US civilization as a defeat of Indigenous America (Figure 5.3).[44] Surrounding a female allegorical figure of America in a liberty bonnet, the 'early days of America' are represented to the right by 'woodsman, hunter, Indian chief, Indian mother and child, and Indian grave'. To fit within the descending angle of the pediment, the Indian figures become smaller and more physically constrained, until they are literally extinct. To the left the 'diversity of human endeavour' is represented by 'soldier, the merchant, the two youths, the schoolmaster and child, and the mechanic'.[45] A hierarchy of arrangement places Indians at the bottom, and in the past, while further embedding a hierarchy of man, woman and child, all dominated by civilization and the progress of time. And the whole Indian family is implicitly headed towards death. The male Indian, slumped, already pressed upon by the pediment above him, rests his head on his hands thoughtfully and turns away from civilization. Crawford created a separate free-standing piece showing this Indian figure and titled it *The Dying Indian Chief, Contemplating the Progress of Civilization* (1856).[46]

It is instructive to compare this work to Fraser's much later *End of the Trail*. Both show a slumped American Indian man giving way before the advent of White America. But this one does not complicate his defeat with tragedy. Aesthetically, too, they could also not be more different. Crawford's neoclassical figure becomes 'Indian' through his nudity and his feathered headdress. Entirely absent from Crawford's work is the later interest in the physical body as an arena for racial differentiation, coinciding with (though arguably also distorting) an interest in more closely observed naturalism, which is visible in Fraser's work and most later nineteenth- and early twentieth-century depictions of Indigenous

Figure 5.3 Thomas Crawford, *The Progress of Civilization* (1863), pediment over the east entrance to the Senate wing of the US Capitol, Washington, DC, architect William Thornton. Photo credit: Architect of the Capitol.

subjects. Nonetheless, with very different emotional and moral cadence, and very different artistic styles, Crawford's work shares assumptions with Fraser's *End of the Trail*: whether we see it as a cause for mourning or for triumph, it is inevitable that American Indians will give way before the progress of White America and a future in which there is no place for them.

A less triumphant, and much less historically specific, take on Indians' role in American civilization can be found in the 1897 Library of Congress, whose *Evolution of Civilization* we have discussed already in Chapter 3. Another series, by the painter John White Alexander, consists of a sequence of lunettes depicting the *Evolution of the Book* (1895–6). The fourth episode, *Picture Writing* (Figure 5.4), shows a nude Indian man with a brush poised over an animal skin. It is preceded by the (presumably significantly chronologically earlier) scene of *Egyptian Hieroglyphs* (Figure 5.5). Of all the separate pieces in the sequence, these two are the most similar in subject matter and composition. Both show a male writer-artist, poised at the moment of creation, watched by an

Figure 5.4 John White Alexander, *Picture Writing* (1896), from the series *The Evolution of the Book*, in the East Corridor of the Great Hall, Library of Congress. Photo credit: Architect of the Capitol photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-07357.

Figure 5.5 John White Alexander, *Egyptian Hieroglyphics* (1896), from the series *The Evolution of the Book*, in the East Corridor of the Great Hall, Library of Congress, Washington, DC (1897), architects Paul J. Pelz, John L. Smithmeyer and Edward Pearce Casey. Photo credit: Carol M. Highsmith, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-03146. Photo credit: Architect of the Capitol photo courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, LC-DIG-ppmsca-07356.

adoring, recumbent woman in the bright open air. Indians and Egyptians alike have pale brown skin, shining black hair and expose (most of) their nudity. The bodies on display are also similar: the male bodies strong, muscular, yet lithe and slim; the female bodies soft, supple and pliant. Once again, we find that gender hierarchies are intertwined with and exist within sequences that establish civilizational or racial hierarchies. Egyptians and Indians may be at early stages of literacy, but they already know that men should act and women observe.

Sarah Moore argues that Alexander's depiction of Indians reflects what Thomas P. Somma describes as the American Renaissance assumption that 'modern civilized institutions are rooted in the cultures of aboriginal peoples and that the entire human family has contributed to the general progress of civilization'.[47] While this is certainly an ecumenical, all-embracing story of literacy, it is also one which categorizes certain peoples as manifestations of more 'primitive' stages of culture. It is a

Morgan-ian anthropological perspective, in which American Indians are windows onto the oral or picture-writing 'stage' of human cultures (which are presumed to have universal trajectories), but not direct influences on civilization. Analogues to our ancestors, not ancestors themselves.

American Indians occupy a similar anthropologically informed position in Olin Levi Warner's bronze lunette *Tradition* (1896) (Figure 5.6) for the north door of the main entrance (the first part of an evolutionary series moving onto *Writing* and *Printing*, completed by Herbert Adams following Warner's death in 1896). An allegorical woman in the centre speaks to a child clutching her legs while four seated male adults look on, 'typical representatives of the primitive peoples whose entire lore was kept alive by oral tradition': an American Indian, a Norseman, a prehistoric man and a shepherd 'standing for the nomadic, pastoral races'. Herbert Small's guidebook quotes an approving critical assessment of the landscape background's successful 'sense of prehistoric vastness and solitude', while noting that 'the face of the Indian is understood to be a portrait of Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce tribe from a sketch made from life by Mr Warner in 1889'. Chief Joseph was the English name of Hinmatóoyalahtq'it, who, after leading his people in resistance to relocation onto a reservation, had surrendered to the US Army in 1877.[48] A person available for life studies, nonetheless, the guidebook tells us, at home in the shadowy vastness of prehistory.[49]

Figure 5.6 Olin Levi Warner, *Tradition* (1896), bronze lunette above main entrance doors of the Library of Congress. Photo credit: Carol M. Highsmith, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-03146.

Anthropological interest in Indians also extends to the series of 33 'ethnological heads', 'chiefly of savage and barbarous peoples' (note Morgan's terminology) which ring the building's exterior. Sculpted by William Boyd and Henry Jackson Ellicott, each detail down to the precise scientifically accurate skull measurements for the statues, was overseen by the Smithsonian's curator in ethnology, Otis P. Mason. A Pueblo and Plains Indian are represented. Middle Eastern subjects grouped together include, adopting the terminology of Herbert Small's guidebook: Semite or Jew, Arab, Turk and modern Egyptian (Hamite); a Persian, an Abyssinian and a Sudanese are associated with other regions.[50]

Finally, the building featured Indian iconography as a means of identifying the American continent, for all intents and purposes as the civic 'self'. This was a common iconographic tendency in European and American depictions of the four continents, usually as allegorical women. Marble sculptures for the Great Hall's staircases by Philip Martiny follow this tradition with a twist: the continents are male putti, America a chubby baby wearing a feathered headdress and beaded necklace (Figure 5.7). Unlike the depictions of Baby Asia and Africa, in which facial features are racially differentiated through crude caricature,

Figure 5.7 Philip Martiny, putti representing America and Africa, Library of Congress Great Hall staircase. Photo credit: Carol M. Highsmith, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-01759.

this costume is the only symbol to differentiate this American toddler from its European counterpart.[51]

This brief, incomplete survey of Indian presence across these two important civic buildings in the nation's capital shows the range of ways that Indian images were made a part of representations of American nationhood: as the savage other that it displaces or violently subjugates, as people stuck in an interesting earlier stage of our own universal culture, or, through cutesy costuming, as the American self, in opposition to the other corners of the world.

The Nebraska Capitol and Nebraskan violence

In the public art that Lee Lawrie and Hildreth Meière created for Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's two great modernist masterpieces, the Nebraska Capitol and the Los Angeles Central Library, imagery of American Indians not only occupies an ambiguous position between self and other, it also does it in parallel to a similarly ambiguous role played by early Egypt and Mesopotamia. I will discuss these two buildings in greater detail in Chapter 7, but for now I want to look only at examples of how they presented American Indians in parallel to, or through the aesthetic filter of, the Orient.

In the decorative programme for the Nebraska Capitol, narrative sequences of progressive historical development, a rise of civilization from the East to modern America, are balanced by static and ahistorical representations of Indian life on the Great Plains before the arrival of White settlers. From this emerges one of the building's most interesting stylistic choices: the use of specifically Assyrian imagery as a parallel to or stand-in for American Indians. These connections do not make any kind of explicit historical argument. Instead they create an unremarked association through imagery and aesthetics.

The presence of American Indian iconography in the building was an obvious choice for the state of Nebraska. The settlement of Nebraska by White farmers, supported and encouraged by the Homestead Act of 1862, involved the forcible displacement of Indian Tribes from territories that had formerly been under their control.[52] This was something that tribes in the area, and throughout the Great Plains, resisted vigorously and, for a time, effectively. During the 1860s and 1870s, both before and after the granting of Nebraskan statehood in 1867, Indian tribes in the Great Plains waged a series of military campaigns against the US government. The Nebraskan-born Red Cloud led a coalition of Lakota,

Northern Cheyenne and Northern Arapaho against the US in what is known as Red Cloud's War, fought primarily in Montana and Wyoming. This conflict was effectively ended by the 1868 Treaty of Laramie, which established the Great Sioux Reservation, partially located within Nebraska (though mostly in Dakota territory), and designating other areas, including in Nebraska, as 'unceded Indian territory', which White settlers would need Indian permission to occupy. The terms of this treaty were repeatedly violated by the US government, and the territory initially won for these tribes chipped away. The Great Sioux War of 1876–7 was fought by some Lakota and Cheyenne bands with less success than in the 1860s. Over the course of the 1880s and 1890s, Indigenous groups in the Great Plains were increasingly forced onto reservations and the total territory under Indian control was steadily made smaller.

When looking at images of American Indians in the Nebraska Capitol, it is important to consider that some of the most brutal massacres of Indigenous people, including noncombatants, by the US Army were carried out in these decades in the Great Plains, as well as some of the most effective military resistance by American Indian fighters. This history of violence and resistance formed part of the repertoire of US American and American Indian art. In an 1897 painting, the immensely popular Western artist Frederic Remington depicted in vivid, bloody detail the aftermath of the 1879 Fort Robinson Massacre, which took place in northern Nebraska, in which a band of Northern Cheyenne, led by Dull Knife, fleeing brutal conditions under captivity in Fort Robinson, Nebraska, were hunted down and murdered by the US Army.[53] Indian artists also documented these kinds of historical events. Howling Wolf, a witness to the Sand Creek Massacre of 1862 in southern Colorado, produced drawings of this event, as well as of later military encounters with the US Army.[54] Indian artists depicted the notorious 29 December 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre in South Dakota, during which somewhere between 250 and 300 Lakota refugees were murdered by the US Army.[55] The aftermath of the massacre was also documented by commercial photographer George E. Trager, whose photographs of dead Lakota bodies lying in the snow and of the US Army burial detail putting corpses into a mass grave were, 'widely circulated and collected in the manner of contemporary trading cards', as J. Marshall Beier explains. He argues that these photographs 'expressed an epic confrontation between "civilization" and "savagery" shot through with constructions of a valorized moral Self as against a fearsome, and depraved Other'.[56] Trager knew immediately that his photographs were a potential money-spinner. An advertisement published in a local newspaper of Chadron,

Nebraska, on 16 January 1891, just over two weeks after the massacre, promised photographs of the dead bodies of famous Lakota leaders, 'Views of the Ravine from which None escaped Alive', and suggested that 'there are a number of beauties among them, and are just the thing to send to your friends back east'.[57]

Assyrian bison in Nebraska

When the Nebraska Capitol's decorative programme was being planned in the 1920s, its American Indian references included no acknowledgement of these kinds of very recent, bloody conflicts between Indians and the US government. Instead, the building celebrates Indians as noble, ahistorical, nameless predecessors, and ignores the bloody, difficult and very recent process by which this part of the West was won.

The Nebraska Capitol's symbologist, University of Nebraska philosophy professor Hartley Burr Alexander, who worked closely with Goodhue, Lawrie and Meière on the design programme, had been researching Great Plains and Southwest Indian ritual, myth and religion since the 1890s.[58] As a young student, he had written poems inspired by the horrors of the Wounded Knee massacre, repudiating the celebratory discourse around it. One vividly describes the body of a massacre victim, clearly directly inspired by the Trager photographs, titled with bitter irony 'The Only Good Indian is a Dead Indian'; another addressed 'To a Child's Moccasin', 'looted from the body of an Indian child killed at Wounded Knee', also invokes the triumphal circulation of images and objects by the massacre's perpetrators.[59] His scholarly work promoted American Indian culture as offering serious, intelligent, aesthetically valuable contributions to myth, philosophy, theology and art.[60] In the Nebraska Capitol, he encouraged the development of Indian iconography and pressed Lawrie and Meière to create works that he felt respected the forms and symbolism of Indian culture.[61] His desire for a certain kind of 'authenticity' in the Indian iconography was sometimes at odds with Lawrie and Goodhue's inclinations towards Oriental models.

As will be discussed further in Chapter 7, in the dramas of law and lawgivers that adorned the outer walls of the building, Lawrie used Assyrian iconography and style in the service of a historical narrative, to indicate place in time and space through authentic imagery and aesthetics. But Lawrie's most inventive and original revival of Assyrian motifs is found in his design for four relief panels depicting bison on the balustrades of the staircase leading up to the north portal, the main

entrance to the building (Figure 5.8). As the first element encountered on the way to the Capitol's front entrance, the stairway establishes American Indian culture as foundational to and yet outside of the state itself. A step on the way to the building, proper, excluded from the narratives of progress that Middle Eastern civilizations form an early part of, excluded even from the realm of the human, set within the realm of the (vanishing) natural world (represented by animals, not people).

Lawrie's bison however are aesthetically interconnected with his narratives of history and civilization through their style, which is immediately recognizable for its Assyrianizing tendencies. His bison are strongly indebted to the most famous of Assyrian art and architectural objects, the *lamassu*, the human-headed, colossal winged bulls which adorned and supported doorways and gateways of Assyrian citadels and palaces (Figure 5.9). The *lamassu* immediately became the most recognizable symbol of Assyria. In British excavator Austen Henry Layard's publications of his excavations and adventures in Nineveh, illustrations dramatize the movement of the *lamassu* from their original position and across continents. The *Illustrated London News* celebrated the arrival of *lamassu* at the British Museum and their display to a curious public. In political cartoons of the 1850s, Layard as or with *lamassu* variants was a

Figure 5.8 Lee Lawrie, frieze of American bison for the exterior staircases of the Nebraska State Capitol (1928), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. LC-G612-T-21794.

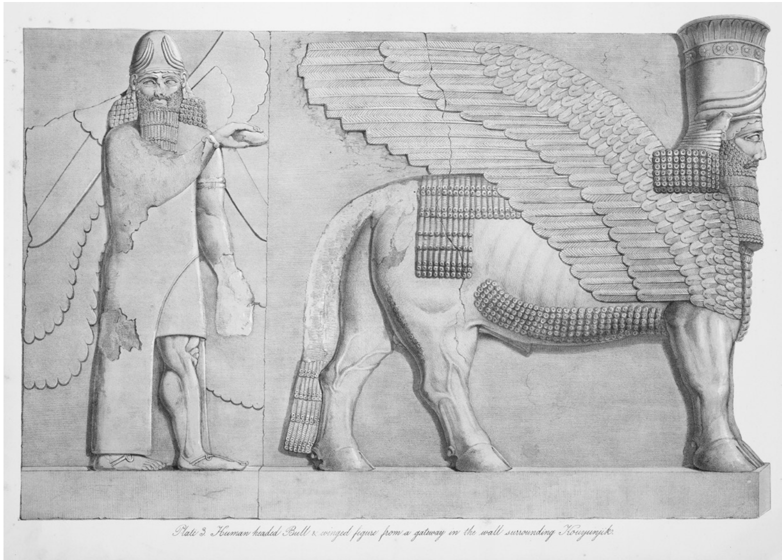

Figure 5.9 Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh, Including Bas-reliefs from the Palace of Sennacherib and Bronzes from the Ruins of Nimroud* (London: John Murray, 1853), pl. 3, showing a 'human-headed bull' and a winged figure from a gateway in the wall surrounding Kouyunjik, ancient Nineveh, Iraq. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

recurring theme.[62] *Lamassu* make appearances in Orientalist paintings of the nineteenth century, in the Assyrian pavilion of the 1854 Sydenham Crystal Palace and in museum souvenirs of the Victorian era (and of the modern day).[63] They adorned the covers and frontispieces of various publications about Assyria, including numerous successive editions of Layard's various bestselling books on Nineveh.[64] Lawrie would also feature *lamassu* in his designs for the entrance to the Sterling Memorial Library at Yale (by the architect James Gamble Rogers, taking over from an initial design by Goodhue), the decorations around his Bronze Doors for the Library of Congress Annex (by architect Paul Cret), and for the 'Statue of Civilization' for Goodhue's Los Angeles Central Library, discussed further in Chapter 7.[65]

In fact, Lawrie and Goodhue's original plans for the bison called for them to be even more obviously Assyrian: they wanted them to have wings, and also initially imagined them as being integrated into the architectural mass of the building as an Assyrian *lamassu* was, not as the relief panels along the staircase that ultimately emerged, but with the sculpture of the bison forming the balustrade of the stair

itself.[66] Alexander was unhappy with the winged element and persuaded Goodhue and Lawrie to change the plans. He argued that a winged bison was inappropriate for the Nebraskan setting, a figure inauthentic to the mythology of the region's Indigenous tribes.[67] He warned Goodhue:

> The winged bull will fairly bellow from the portal, not in the sense of the passing of the bison, as you mean it, but as a dead thing out of Ninevah [*sic*] or Persepolis. It is a symbol of a faith that is not only dead, but was never native; and it will leave with me, and I believe with the future, a feeling of sadness and failure, —like a Saint Sophia with Arabic prayers replacing Christian icons.[68]

As both 'symbologist' and resident 'local expert', Alexander's judgement won out, though Goodhue continued to feel ambivalent about the changes.[69] Ultimately Lawrie's toned-down, unwinged bison reliefs are nonetheless still strongly recognizable as Assyrian-inspired in their style and iconography (which in this case are one and the same). From the tight, stylized spiral curls of the hair to the representation of a ruff that runs in a distinctive band under the animal's stomach, the bison are very clearly 'Assyrianizing' in style.

But why, in the first place, was such strongly Assyrian-inspired imagery considered suitable to a sculptural programme whose symbolism Alexander explained as 'primarily Indian'?[70] Each of the four bison is engraved with a quotation chosen by Alexander from his interpretations of different Great Plains and Southwest Indian songs and lore, and above each bison's head is inscribed the names of tribes resident (or formerly resident) in the Great Plains. The engraved quotations are placed across the body of the bison, in an arrangement that Goodhue specifically described as inspired by Assyrian *lamassu*, which are inscribed over the body.[71] American Indian culture is then represented by the bison, reflecting the perceived status of both bison and Indigenous human as pseudo-mythical, now mostly vanished predecessors of the White settlers who built the Nebraskan State.[72] The Assyrian inspiration in this piece has a very different meaning than in the panels that integrate Assyrian style into a historical progress of civilization, associated not with a chronological point in (ancient) time, but with a static, prehistorical – though in fact incredibly recent – past. In 1934, on a visit to the Nebraska Capitol, James Henry Red Cloud, grandson of the Red Cloud who had led his people in battle against the US Army and later through the transition into reservation life, was photographed standing beside one of Lawrie's bison friezes, as if this

strange hybrid of North American animal life and ancient Assyrian aesthetic tropes is his natural background.[73]

Nebraska's Oriental and American Indian parallel doors

The equation of Assyria with Indigenous America continues on two striking interior chamber doors, leading from the Rotunda into the East and West Legislative Chambers, which were designed by Lawrie and Meière respectively. Here it is Meière whose work shows Assyrian influence. Lawrie's door, to the East Chamber, was created first (Figure 5.10).[74] It features a Plains Indian man and woman standing on either side of a cross-shaped thunderbird motif which bisects the door horizontally and vertically. The thunderbird's wings end in stalks of corn and fertility symbols abound.

Meière's door, painted on leather, was created after Lawrie's was completed, and needed to parallel it visually. Alexander suggested an outline, with a central 'Gothic-arched tree pattern':

> On each side, we should have a figure, an Adam and an Eve. I think, however, that I should not make of them nude figures, but with Oriental tasseled garments, such as the old designs show … For the top of the pattern, I think a winged disk, as symbol of heaven would be very good. You could give the disk, which would divide into hemispheres where the doors open, a more brilliant color or at least a solid color, which would make it carry as an abstraction, while the wings would be very ornamental.

He cautioned: 'Do not make it too Assyrian, but enough to give the Mesopotamian suggestion'.[75] But Meière ignored this last instruction, as well as his call for a 'Gothic' design, in favour of a fully Assyrian look (Figure 5.11). She followed very closely the iconography of what is now most commonly called the Neo-Assyrian Sacred Tree and its attendants (Figure 5.12).[76] In *Ancient Times*, Breasted described this tree as a 'Babylonian Tree of Life', thus relating the imagery to biblical ideas (scholars are now much more cautious about how to interpret the meaning of this iconography, though it is widely recognized as a highly symbolic, mystical image).[77] In Meière's door, two figures, a man and a woman, stand to either side of the stylized tree, the man holding a hoe in hand, the woman a vessel (presumably of water). These practical agricultural tools take the place of the cultic cones and buckets, items

Figure 5.10 Lee Lawrie, Nebraska Capitol East Legislative Chamber doors (*c*. 1928). Photo credit: Image courtesy of the Nebraska Capitol Collections, Sid Spelts photographer.

associated with ritual purification, that appear in attendants' hands in Assyrian images; Assyrian esoteric symbolism replaced with a more down-to-earth celebration of human invention and control of the natural world. Above the tree, forming part of an ornamental border is a winged solar disk, inspired at least in part by Egyptian imagery but also by Assyrian depictions of the Sacred Tree in which the god Assur hovers above in a winged disk.[78] Like the American Indian couple flanking their thunderbird across the Rotunda, the imagery seems to speak of

Figure 5.11 Hildreth Meière, Nebraska Capitol West Legislative Chamber doors (*c*. 1932). Photo credit: Image courtesy of the Nebraska Capitol Collections, Sid Spelts photographer.

agricultural origins, on the Great Plains and in the Middle East.[79] Ancient 'Oriental' culture, represented through Assyrian style and iconography, is equated to Indigenous American culture through the close parallelism of place, design and symbolism to Lawrie's door, as predecessors or originators of a civilization culminating in White settlers' tilling of the Nebraskan soil.

Neo-Assyrian sacred trees are always flanked by attendees of identical or nearly identical types. The throne room image which is

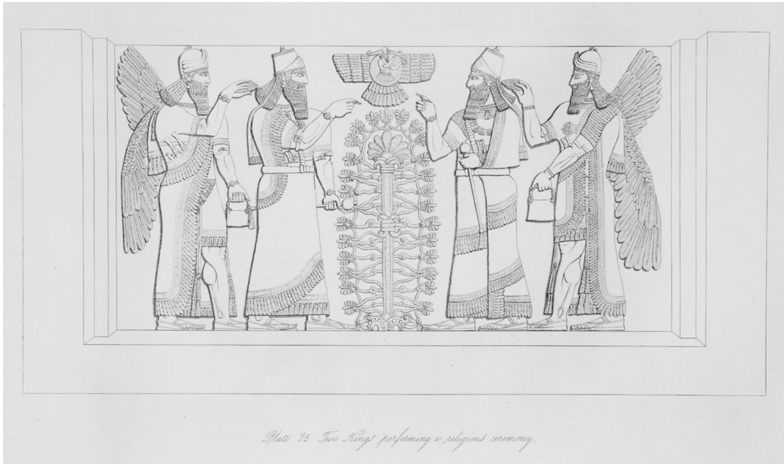

Figure 5.12 Austen Henry Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh: From drawings made on the spot* (London: John Murray, 1849), pl. 25. Photo credit: Public domain, digitized by New York Public Library Digital Collections.

most likely to have served Meière as inspiration features the same king, Ashurnasirpal II, depicted twice, from different angles, flanked on each side by winged human genies. The king is the only human figure in Assyrian relief iconography to occupy this place around the tree. More frequently, the tree is flanked by two genies, winged supernatural creatures. These genies may be bird-headed or human (almost always male, though a few examples feature beardless, apparently female genies), but whatever the case, two figures of the identical type always flank one tree. In Meière's door, however, this sort of symmetry and similarity has been replaced by a gendered complementarity which mirrors an overall theme throughout the building of heterosexual reproductivity and nuclear family. In Nebraska, the king and his genies are superseded by the productive ancient Middle Eastern heterosexual couple: inventing agriculture and the frontier family.

This parallelism positions the very real Indigenous Americans who still lived in Nebraska in large numbers closer to the ancient Orient than to the modern day. The art of the Nebraska Capitol suggests that part of what makes Nebraska unique and special is its American Indian heritage, but it never questions that it is the land's historical destiny that the Plains Indians must disappear, like actors stepping off a stage, joining the ancient Mesopotamians in the deep past, to make room for modern White Nebraskans farmers and the US governmental institutions they bring.

American Indians as 'West' in Los Angeles and Chicago

A parallelism between American Indians and ancient Middle Easterners is also visible in Lawrie's sculptures for Goodhue's Los Angeles Central Library, part of a decorative programme that was largely drafted by Lawrie and Hartley Burr Alexander after Goodhue's death. In two guardian figures Lawrie created for the children's department, in the east wing of the library, Indians are appropriated into modern Western identity, constructed in opposition to the ancient East.[80] The guardians for the entrance are female figures, one broadly Egyptian in iconography, the other a Plains or Southwestern Indian maiden (Figure 5.13).[81] Above the door, an inscription reads 'The world is my book', beneath a tympanum showing a globe and symbols associated with world travel.

Accepting the absolutely pervasive use of the American Bison as stand-in for American Indigenous humans, as in the Nebraska bison friezes, we might also compare this association between American Indian

Figure 5.13 Lee Lawrie, sculptural group for the Children's Wing entrance (1926), since relocated to the entrance of the Mark Taper Auditorium. Photo credit: Robin Walton.

iconography and the West to Ulric Ellerhusen's Tympanum for the Oriental Institute, discussed in Chapter 3 (Figure 3.11).[82] There too Indigenous American imagery is placed in opposition to Egyptian imagery to identify West and East: the bison is the animal guardian of the West, in opposition to the East's lion, modelled after the New Kingdom Prudhoe Lions. When the ancient Middle East is 'other', the iconography of Indigenous America can sometimes be 'us'.

Yet these Los Angeles guardian figures are part of an overall sculpture for the door that celebrates the access knowledge gives to the entire world. In this context, both guardian women are ambiguous in their relationship to the building's civic identity. Nothing is truly 'other' if the whole world is ours. Thus both Egypt and Indigenous America are simultaneously self and other, each a part of our own culture (and fantasies available in the library's collection). The exotic appeal of these cultures' aesthetics is surely part of why America might want to claim their image as its own. The excitement, mystery and nobility in their exoticism can become a part of American civic identity, in the right amount and subordinated to White American aims: the conquest of the West, America's civilizational supremacy and the associated movement of the American Indian from the Great Plains (let alone further East) to the Pacific Ocean, at whose edge James Earle Fraser had so vividly imagined his Indian warrior posed.

Stepped pyramids and chunky sculpture: aesthetic resonances between Indians and Orient

The examples above show how Lawrie and Meière integrated Assyrian, Egyptian and Plains Indian iconography into aesthetically coherent wholes. For early twentieth-century artists and publics, American Indians and early Easterners were alike in an important way: both produced nonclassical, unfamiliar, beautiful forms of art.[83] Arguably an especially strong aesthetic resonance was detected between ancient Oriental cultures and the Indians of the southernmost end of the North American continent, Mayans and Aztecs, a major focus of US American anthropological and archaeological endeavour in this period. These peoples were, like Egyptians and Mesopotamians, characterized in the archaeological imagination by monumentality: massive pyramids and chunky stone friezes. While, aesthetically, US American Indians were synonymous with the natural world and the sweeping, unsullied American landscape, the Indigenous peoples to the south were associated with vast, imposing ruins, reclaimed

by White scientist-explorers from the harsh climates that threatened to bury them – associations also invoked by Middle Eastern antiquity, though it might be sand and mud rather than jungle that overwhelmed their material remains. Art Deco Mayan Revival was quite similar aesthetically to Assyrian Revival, both relying on stepped pyramidal forms and heavy sculptural elements. We can compare, for instance, Detroit's Guardian Building (Wirt C. Rowland, 1929), Los Angeles' Ennis House (Frank Lloyd Wright, 1924) (Figure 5.14) and the Mayan Theater (Stiles O. Clements, 1927) (Figure 5.15), to the Samson Tire Company (Morgan, Wall, and Clement, 1929) (Figure 5.16) or the Missouri Theater (Boller Brothers, 1927). I suspect casual observers might struggle to identify the former group as Mayan-inspired and the latter as Assyrian.

Mayans and Aztecs never had the same significance for US American identity that Indians resident in the territory of the United States itself did, for obvious reasons. But as far as aesthetics goes, the enthusiasm for Mesoamerican art and architecture was of a piece with the larger interest in Indian art, one which often overlapped the interest in Oriental art. Excavations of Mayan and Aztec sites were also examples of US anthropological and archaeological triumphs. The early decades of the twentieth century saw a proliferation of expeditions from US institutions, including the very well-funded efforts of the Carnegie Institution at Chichén Itzá and other sites in Mexico, led by Sylvanus G. Morley. Mayan hieroglyphs were still poorly understood, and would be for many decades, representing an intriguing (and beautiful) mystery.

Figure 5.14 Ennis House, Los Angeles, California (1924), architect Frank Lloyd Wright. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Balthazar Korab Collection, LC-DIG-ppem- 00687.

Figure 5.15 Mayan Theater, Los Angeles, California (1927), architect Stiles O. Clements of Morgan, Walls & Clements. Photo credit: Photographs in the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-pplot-13725-01380.

Figure 5.16 The former Samson Tire and Rubber Company Building, Los Angeles, California (1929), architect Morgan, Walls & Clements. Now Citadel Outlets, photographed in 2009. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Prayitno.

At the 1933 Century of Progress Fair in Chicago, the organizers arranged for archaeologist Frans Blom of Tulane University in Louisiana to prepare casts for a full-scale reconstruction of a late first-millennium CE monumental structure, the so-called 'Nunnery' of Uxmal, on Mexico's Yucatán Peninsula, where Blom ran an expedition. It was one of the largest and most impressive historical replicas at the fair (Figure 5.17). Blom disliked the final result, whose colours he found too stark, and whose eventual reduced scale disappointed him (the grand conception of a full replica of the building was a casualty of the Great Depression).[84] But visitors were certainly happy with the result: more than four million passed through the replica. Postcards and photographs from the fair show the building as a more or less fully Art Deco construction, its smooth lines and bold colours right at home among the many modernist structures of the fair.[85] A series of chrome railings running along the monumental staircases undoubtedly answered to practical necessity, but also completed the transformation of the building into something distinctly modern.[86] In this streamlined incarnation, it makes an especially fitting aesthetic

Figure 5.17 The reconstruction from casts of the Mayan Temple of Uxmal at the Century of Progress Fair, Chicago (1933). Photo credit: COP_17_0009_00292_006, Century of Progress World's Fair digital image collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

companion to the fair's Social Science Hall, which also used polychromy to enliven its monolithic façade (Figure 5.18). The Mayan Temple was flanked to one side by the Chrysler and General Motors pavilions, and by various North American Indian-themed attractions, to the other.

It was in the Social Science Hall that Breasted would arrange for the Oriental Institute to display early Sumerian sculptures excavated at Tel Asmar, Iraq (though only during the fair's 1934 season), as will be discussed at greater length in the epilogue. As a major event occurring right in Chicago, the fair was, of course, of interest to Breasted, the Oriental Institute and the University of Chicago more generally. During its early planning stages, Breasted made various suggestions for possible exhibitions. One possibility Breasted raised with Rufus C. Dawes, president of the Century of Progress Corporation, was the transfer of some of the Tell Halaf sculptures, Syro-Hittite works dating from the tenth to ninth century BCE, from their excavator Baron Max von Oppenheim's private Berlin museum to Chicago for display at the fair.[87] These sculptures had been excavated in digs

Figure 5.18 Hall of Social Science exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition, Chicago (1933), architect Raymond Hood. Photo credit: Kaufmann & Fabry, COP_17_0002_00024_003, Century of Progress World's Fair digital image collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

privately funded and led by the massively wealthy von Oppenheim, of the Jewish Oppenheim banking dynasty, in Ottoman and later French Mandate Syria in the 1910s and 1920s.[88] These were produced by one of the group of Luwian-Aramean polities which emerged in the wake of the collapse of the Hittite New Kingdom in the twelfth century BCE. They incorporated motifs and stylistic peculiarities that would have been familiar from Hittite art excavated in Turkey at Boğazköy and Yazılıkaya, and the art of early first-millennium provincial states excavated at Zincirli, as well as from Assyrian excavations in northern Iraq. But they also modified those forms, such that these sculptures looked like nothing else. Particularly striking was their materiality: carved from a shell-pocked, heavy, pitted sandstone. The roughness of this material perhaps forced or inspired a rather brutish, 'primitivist' style which fascinated receivers (Figure 5.19).

Breasted had his information about their potential availability from Chicago's German consul, who had been contacted by von Oppenheim about the possibility of displaying some of his sculptures in the US (probably with the aim of selling some of them and recovering some of his depleted fortune, a motivation that Dawes himself guessed at).[89] Talking up the sculptures, Breasted commented: 'It would undoubtedly form an impressive feature and would be in harmony with the Maya sculpture adorning the Uxmal building, which I understand is to be reproduced in replica at the exposition.'

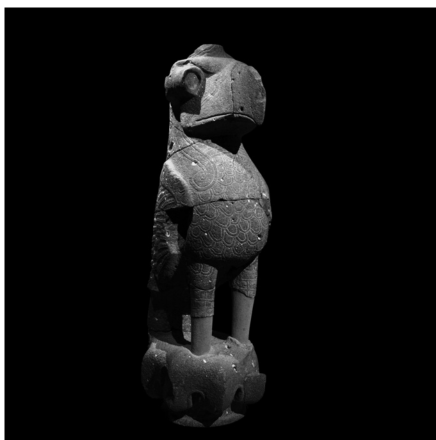

Figure 5.19 Basalt column capitol depicting a bird of prey, dating from the tenth to ninth century BCE, found at Tell Halaf, Syria, during Max von Oppenheim's excavations, now in the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin (VA 08979). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Rama.

Why, we might wonder, would an exhibit of early Iron Age Syrian statuary be in harmony with Mayan sculpture? Perhaps the two cultures, late classic Mayans and Syrians of some two millennia before, were at similar points of civilizational development. If civilizations evolve and develop along predictable lines, from savagery to barbarism to civilization, displaying these geographically and temporally distant finds together could make sense. Each would also be examples of wonders recovered (or reconstructed) by archaeology. But I suspect that what Breasted also meant to suggest was simply that the two would *look* good together – which, it is true, they probably would have (the Tell Halaf sculptures never came to the fair and the proposal was seemingly never pursued seriously). Not only that, but both Mayan architecture and Tell Halaf sculptures would look right at home among the architecture and sculpture of the Century of Progress. Just as the American continent had, so it was often implied, always awaited the arrival of White settlers, classical Mayan temples and Iron Age Syrian sculptures had always awaited their proper moment, and their true aesthetic home as exhibits in just such a context celebrating American modernity.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the existence of a discourse that simultaneously othered and appropriated the cultures of both the ancient Middle East and modern American Indians, and equated the latter to the former. Historical and later anthropological research into American Indians made these comparisons logical, and artists elaborated on it and on its meaning for White America's self-image. The treatment of Indians as analogues to ancient Middle Easterners was separate from, yet worked in concert with, the concept of a world civilization that had passed from its starting point in Egypt and Mesopotamia, through Europe, to the new, American continent. On that new continent, a historical narrative had to be worked out that would explain how this story of the rise and rise of civilization from East to West could incorporate the peoples already present in the place to which civilization was travelling. The vague and yet pervasive association of American Indians with the early stages of that world civilization looped them into the story; it tied up the loose narrative threads that had bedevilled early Euro-American studies of Indigenous peoples.

Just as the progressive narrative of world civilization allowed modern America to claim the pyramids and ziggurats as part of its own

achievements, incorporating Indians into the narrative – albeit through allusion, parallelism and anthropological example-making – allowed modern Americans to claim what it wanted from Indian culture as its own – most importantly perhaps, the simple achievement of occupying American land. American modernity could also claim the aesthetics of Indian art and iconography. Like Egyptian and Assyrian art, it was exotic, unfamiliar, yet strikingly beautiful. Indeed, US America could never claim a venerable past available to the archaeologist or antiquarian unless it made American Indians its own.

At the same time, bringing Indians into civilization's narrative through analogy and parallels to ancient peoples firmly fixed American Indians in the past – a politically useful and morally soothing historical perspective. It was safe to admire Indians' noble faces, their beautiful craft traditions, their spiritual connection with the environment, even to grieve their displacement and mistreatment, secure in the knowledge that the American Indian was like the ancient Egyptian figure on the Oriental Institute Tympanum: stepping off-stage, while handing over what was his, as a gift to history's rightful heir.

Notes

1 See, for instance, Conn, *History's Shadow*; Klein, *Frontiers of Historical Imagination*; Pagden, *Fall of Natural Man*, and *European Encounters*; Blackhawk, 'American Indians'. On the centrality of Indians to US identity, see Berkhofer, *White Man's Indian*; Deloria, *Playing Indian*.

2 There are significant resonances here with a related and overlapping process that Richard Francaviglia has identified, of Orientalizing the entire US Western landscape and its peoples (new and old). See Francaviglia, *Go East*.

3 See Knopp, 'Critical thinking and Columbus', 50–3. On the origins of the Columbus mythos, see Regal, *Battle*, 31–52; Paul, *Myths That Made America*, 43–87.

4 For good overviews, see Fenton, *Old Canaan*; Shalev, *American Zion*, 118–50; Watts, *Colonizing the Past*, 54–94; Sanders, *Lost Tribes*, 363–76; Conn, *History's Shadow*, 12–20. On some key early publications of this theory, see Cogley, 'Ancestry of the American Indians'; Cogley, 'Some other kinde'; Segev, 'Sephardic *Conquistadores*'. For the relationship of the theory to Jewish and Indian identities and politics, see Koffman, *The Jews' Indian*, 1–14; Imhoff, *Masculinity and the Making of American Judaism*, 128–54; Imhoff, 'Wild tribes and ancient Semites'; Fenton, *Old Canaan*, 85–112; Zuck, 'William Apess'.

5 Fenton, *Old Canaan*, 12.

6 Adair, *History of the American Indians*. See Fenton, *Old Canaan*, 55–84.

7 Smith, *View of the Hebrews*, 119; Lewis, *Light and Truth*, 268; Finley, *History of the Wyandott Mission*, 27.

8 Fenton, *Old Canaan*, 113–41. Whether 'Israelite' and 'Jew' were necessarily interchangeable categories was up for debate. Not all theories of Indians as 'lost tribes' necessarily understand this as a kind of Indian 'Jewishness', and what they mean by it when they do is variable. Indeed, explaining her decision to avoid the term 'Jewish Indians' to describe versions of this theory, Elizabeth Fenton writes that 'most – though, importantly, not all – of the authors associated with it had very little interest in and even less knowledge of actual Judaism and Jewish people'. Fenton, *Old Canaan*, 4.

9 See Duffy, 'Use of "Lamanite"'; Mauss, *All Abraham's Children*, 114–57; Mauro, *Messianic Fulfillments*, 125–66.

10 That is, unless one subscribed to a theory of 'pre-Adamic' peoples from whom they and other 'inferior races' derived; this was a popular theory among many American scholars through the eighteenth century, and one with serious political implications for the morality of slavery and Indian genocide. See Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*, 19–20, 65–9.
11 See Conn, *History's Shadow*, 122–3.
12 See Manias, 'Contemporaries of the cave bear'.
13 See Livingstone, *Adam's Ancestors*, 1–25; Grayson, *Establishment of Human Antiquity*, 139–98; Bieder, *Science Encounters the Indian*, esp. 55–103, 188–9; Esposito and Delgado, 'History of the "Red Man"'; DiPiero, *White Men Aren't*, 143–9.
14 Conn, *History's Shadow*, 1–34. See also Regal, *Battle*, 29.
15 Conn, *History's Shadow*, 21.
16 Breasted, *Ancient Times* (1935 edition), 131. Breasted does not elaborate on his definitions, but adherents of the threefold typology of races generally had to consider American Indians part of the Mongoloid group or abandon the purely threefold division.
17 On this trope and its resistance, see Dippie, *Vanishing American*; O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting*; Kauanui and O'Brien, 'Jean M. O'Brien on tracing the myth', 242–52; Maroukis, *We Are Not a Vanishing People*, 3–16; Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 71–94.
18 On its reception there and its part of a wider narrative of White racial triumph, see Markwyn, *Empress San Francisco*, 34–7.
19 Clark, 'Indians on the mantel', 49–50. Fraser spoke often, in slightly different versions, about this sculpture's inspiration and other reasons for his interest in the sad fate of the vanishing Indians, whom he remembered in better days during his boyhood. See, for example, Percoco, *Summers with Lincoln*, 156–8. Fraser created the Indian Head nickel (1913), an excellent example of US federal power identifying itself with the iconography of 'Indianness'.
20 It is worth noting that this sculpture has been interpreted and modified in various ways by the public, by scholars and by activists. See Büken, 'Construction of the mythic Indian', 50–1; King, *Inconvenient Indian*, 32–4, Huhndorf, 'Picture revolution', 369–74.
21 On this sculpture and other art evoking the trope of the 'vanishing Indian', see Egan, 'Yet in a primitive condition'; Dippie, 'Photographic allegories'; Edmunds, 'Native Americans, new voices', 717–19; Powell, *Vanishing America*, 119–57; Bungert, *Indianer*, 120–44. On a slightly different topic but incorporating observations on how anthropological and racial theories informed artistic depictions of American Indians, see also Somma, 'Myth of Bohemia', 26–34.
22 Breasted, 'Some experiences', 13.
23 See Redman, *Prophets and Ghost*, esp. 17–43; Rizzo-Martinez, *We Are Not Animals*, 222–6. In America, anthropology and archaeology as disciplines were inextricably linked to the academic study of American Indians living and dead. To the extent that the study of 'early civilization' was part of an anthropological project, because Breasted moved among anthropologists, for instance in the National Academy of Sciences, 'early civilization' as a concept was inevitably shaped by observations about Indians.
24 Dillon, 'Indians and "Indianicity"'; Beck, *Unfair Labor?*, 3–28.
25 Davis, 'Hegemony and resistance', 37–41; Fagin, 'Closed collections'; Zumwalt, *Franz Boas*, 211–39.
26 Trennert, 'Selling Indian education'; Green, 'Stage set for assimilation'.
27 Beck, *Unfair Labor?*, 16–22, 29–48, 83–101; Bank, 'Representing history', 592–5.
28 Warren, *Buffalo Bill's America*, 418–21; Dillon, 'Indians and "Indianicity"', 113–17; Bank, 'Representing history'; Moses, 'Indians on the Midway'.
29 Rinehart, 'To hell with the wigs', 403–4. See also Davis, 'Hegemony and resistance'; LaPier and Beck, *City Indian*, 17–33; Moses, 'Indians on the Midway', 214–15; McNenly, 'Foe, friend, or critic'.
30 Dillon, 'Indians and "Indianicity"' 108–13.
31 Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 46, Folder 1, LLP. Lawrie remembered this model as 'Red Cloud', which would have been Jack Red Cloud, an Oglala Lakota leader and son of the Red Cloud who had famously led a coalition of tribes against the US government during Red Cloud's War (1866–8). He was posing for Alexander Phimister Proctor; see Beck, *Unfair Labor?*, 165.
32 Ormos, 'Cairo Street', 189.
33 On Morgan's scholarship and its significance, see Moses, *Promise of Progress*; Service et al., 'Mind of Lewis H. Morgan'; Hersey, 'Lewis Henry Morgan'. Morgan was highly influential on

American scholarship but also on European thought, not least through his importance as an authority in the works of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who adopted his approach to using Indigenous peoples as windows onto the past development of human societies.

34 See Engelke, *How to Think*, 56–82; Turner, *Philology*, 328–56; Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 71–94.

35 See Moses, *Promise of Progress*, 232–40; Hume, 'Evolutionisms'; Haller Jr., 'Race and the concept of progress'.

36 Morgan, *Ancient Society*, 39–40.

37 Morgan was basically uninterested in the Middle East in this text; *Ancient Society* barely mentions Egypt and has only one footnote reference to Babylon.

38 Breasted applied these terms throughout his work. For an example of how they structure his progressive and comparative history, see Breasted, 'Origins of civilization', 296, fig. 6.

39 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 3, fig. 1, 4, fig. 2.

40 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 40, fig. 27, 46, fig. 32.

41 At 4.8.1933 JHB to GEH. Box 31, JHBP, ISAC.

42 Santo Domingo Tribe, 'Our history'; Laubin and Laubin, *Indian Dances*, 227–8.

43 At 2.10.1934 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.

44 Other works of art in the Capitol also presented US identity in terms of dominance and defeat of Indigenous people. Notable in this regard are two sculptures commissioned as a pair in the 1830s and erected outside the building: *The Discovery of America* (1837–50), by Italian American sculptor Luigi Persico, which depicted a cowering, bare-breasted Indigenous woman shrinking away from a figure of Christopher Columbus, standing tall, eyes staring into the distance, as he raises a globe aloft; and *The Rescue* (1837–50), by American sculptor Horatio Greenough, which showed a towering frontiersman defending his wife, who shields a baby beneath her from a bare-chested Indigenous man while the faithful family dog circles. As Greenough explained, it 'commemorat[ed] the dangers and difficulty of peopling our continent'. As Vivien Green Fryd points out, American Indians are not, in this explanation, people, only a 'danger'. The political import of these works in the context of ongoing Jacksonian Indian Removal policies was apparent to viewers at the time, as was their larger argument about White and Indian destinies. These works were highly controversial from soon after their installation, with Indian and many White viewers alike finding their message offensive. Although House Resolutions calling for their removal and destruction failed in 1939 (sponsored by White Rhode Island Republican, Clark Burdick) and 1941 (sponsored by White Montana Democrat, James Francis O'Connor), they were ultimately removed without public debate in 1958 and placed into storage. The proposal of Omaha Indian activist Leta Myers Smart, who had waged a long and active campaign against them throughout the 1950s, that they be replaced by works by an Indian artist was never taken up. See Fryd, *Art and Empire*, 94–103; Fryd, 'Two sculptures', 17, 37, nn. 1–5; Boime, *Art in an Age of Counterrevolution*, 527–8; Genetin-Pilawa, 'A curious removal'; Cohen, 'Preservation dilemma'.

45 See terminology in, 'Progress of Civilization Pediment', on the Architect of the Capitol website.

46 Now in the New York Historical Society (accession number: 1875.4), donated in 1875 by Frederic De Peyster.

47 Somma, 'Sculptural Program', 248; see Moore, 'Our national monument', 341–2.

48 All these quotes are from Small, *Handbook*, 18–19.

49 Warner created a bronze disk showing Hinmatóoyalahtq'it in profile after meeting him in 1889; see Met Museum 06.313.

50 Small, *Handbook*, 12–17; See Wayne, 'Jefferson Building's keystone heads'; Wayne, 'Headhunting'.

51 Cooper, 'Of female allegories', 24–9.

52 Wilm, 'Indians must yield'.

53 This work is variously titled and dated. It was painted after 1900 and is most often referred to as *The Battle of War Bonnet Creek*; see Sweeney, 'Racism, nationalism, and nostalgia', 70–1.

54 Szabo, *Howling Wolf*, 88, 178.

55 Bad Heart Bull and Blish, *Pictographic History*, 42, 409–14. See in the Smithsonian Museum of the American Indian, 'Painting depicting the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre', collected by George H. Bingenheimer, catalogue no.: 12/2248.

56 Beier, 'Grave misgivings', 251–2.

57 Carter, 'Making pictures', 50–1.

58 Alexander, 'Life and work of Hartley Burr Alexander'. See some of Alexander's scholarly work: *Religious Spirit of the American Indian*; *Mythology of All Races, Vol. X: North American*; *The Mythology of All Races, Vol. XI: Latin-American*; *World's Rim*; and his book of poetry inspired by American Indian lore, *God's Drum*.
59 Alexander, *Mid Earth*, unpaginated.
60 Alexander was also an important figure in bringing Plains Indian ledger drawings to a wider American audience. As the supervisor of the scholar Helen H. Blish, he supported and encouraged her collection and eventual publication of the Lakota ledger artist Amos Bad Heart Bull's ledger drawings. See Bad Heart Bull and Blish, *Pictographic History*; Alexander (ed.), *Sioux Indian Painting*.
61 Brawer and Skolnik, *Art Deco Murals*, 73–8.
62 Brusius, 'Misfit objects'; Malley, *From Archaeology to Spectacle*, 119–25.
63 The Crystal Palace was initially erected at Hyde Park for the Great Exhibition of 1851 but was relocated to a permanent home in Sydenham Park in 1854, where it stood until the building burned down in 1936. The Nineveh Court was introduced only to the 1854 version. A periodical a few years after it opened instructed visitors to marvel and learn from it:

> It is but a few years since the originals, serving as models for this Court, were discovered; consequently these sculptured tablets, winged bulls, symbol painted walls, and extraordinary effigies of combined human and brute beings, are facsimiles of newly resuscitated remains of the past; displaying likewise remarkable architectural and sculptural features, previously unknown to man for ages anterior to the Christian era. Examine them well, for they will impart to you many new and valuable ideas. ('A day at the Crystal Palace', 635)

For more on the Nineveh Pavilion, see Thomas, 'Assyrian monsters', 897–901; Wyatt, *Views of the Crystal Palace*, 20–1; Layard, *Nineveh Court*.
64 *Lamassu* are an element of the monumental sets for D. W. Griffith's *Intolerance* (1916), but with surprisingly little emphasis, only just visible in certain shots. They are more prominently featured in Michael Curtiz's (then working as Mihály Kertész) *Sodom und Gomorrha* (1922). For images and discussion of the set of the latter, see Heilmann, '"That Old Time Religion"'; Kümmel, 'Millionen kleiner, wechseinder Gesichter', 408.
65 Yale University Library, '*Yale University Library Gazette*', 81; Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 104–5.
66 In Lawrie's papers, unlabelled drawings of bison as free-standing sculptural elements are preserved; see Folder 'Miscellaneous Drawings', Box 53, LLP. Early drawings of the North Entrance with bison as frieze panels but still sporting wings can be seen in a 1926 publication put out by the Nebraska Capitol Commission (see Nebraska Capitol Commission, *The Nebraska Capitol*, 7). Yet another version, a photograph of a clay model in which the bison figure forms the balustrade of an external staircase, can be seen in Alexander, 'Nebraska's Monumental Capitol', 114.
67 Haller, 'Drama of Law', 4.
68 Preserved in a letter of 2.12.1923 BGG to LL, incorporating copies of correspondence between Goodhue and Alexander for Lawrie's benefit. Box 35, Nebraska State Capitol Building Correspondence, LLP.
69 At 6.7.1921 BGG to William E. Hardy. NCC, cited in McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 360, 367–8. See also Zabel, 'History in stone', 297.
70 Alexander, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 4, cited in Garvey, 'Strength and stability', 163.
71 Alexander writes to Goodhue: 'In our first conversation you suggested permitting the inscription to sun [*sic*] over the shoulder or body of the buffalo, in Assyrian style'; Goodhue suggested that he wanted to keep this idea in revised, unwinged versions of the sculpture. Preserved in letter of BGG to LL, 2.12.1923, incorporating copies of correspondence between Goodhue and Alexander. Box 35, Nebraska State Capitol Building Correspondence, LLP.
72 Discussing this iconography, Alexander speaks of the 'vanished life of the Indian', Alexander, 'Nebraska's monumental Capitol'.
73 See the digital collections of History Nebraska, under the identifier 101345 and image title 'Chief James Red Cloud on Steps at Nebraska State Capitol'.
74 Now the Warner Chamber, it is no longer used for legislative purposes after a shift from a bicameral to a unicameral system.
75 At 8.7.1932 HBA to HM. HBAP. Cited by the International Hildreth Meière Association, at https://www.hildrethmeiere.org/commissions/nebraska-state-capitol-house-of-representatives-entrance-doors (accessed 8 April 2024).

76 At the time, detailed illustrations of Assyrian Sacred Trees could have been found in numerous publications of remains from Nimrud particularly, where the tree with two attendants features in numerous reliefs, the most famous and widely disseminated being the throne room relief of Ashurnasirpal II (883–59 BCE; the relief is now in the collection of the British Museum). Meière's bright colours actually serve to give some indication of what an Assyrian Sacred Tree might have looked like when painted. Recreations of painted reliefs and imagery were common in books from the 1840s onwards; Layard's reimagining of an Assyrian palace interior of Ashurnasirpal's II Northwest Palace at Nimrud features a colourful Sacred Tree. Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh: From drawings made on the spot*, pl. 2; see also Cohen and Kangas, *Inside an Ancient Assyrian Palace*.

77 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 149–50. The most comprehensive recent study on the Sacred Tree, with careful attention to the history of interpretation, is Giovino, *Assyrian Sacred Tree*.

78 Breasted describes the Assyrian winged disk of Assur as derived from the Egyptian solar disk, clearly the interpretation Alexander and Meière worked from, *Ancient Times*, 149.

79 This is how the door is explained on the official website of the Capitol: 'The leather doors of the West Chamber show the agricultural foundation of Western Civilization in the ancient middle eastern region. With the Assyrian man and woman planting a tree of life under an Egyptian sun'; 'West Chamber', Nebraska State Capitol.

80 These sculptures were moved to the entrance to the Mark Taper auditorium in the Richard J. Riordan Central Library's Tom Bradley wing in the 1990s; Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 112.

81 Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 111–13.

82 On bison identification with Indigenous people, see Dippie, 'Flying buffaloes'. A notable example is James Earle Fraser's Indian Head nickel (1913), which has a bison on the reverse side. Lawrie employed the bison as a symbol of Indigenous culture, not only in the Nebraska friezes discussed already, but also in the *Statue of Civilization* (1930) for the Los Angeles Library, discussed further in Chapter 7.

83 On modernist passion for 'Indian' arts and crafts, see Hutchinson, *Indian Craze*, 91–129; Hopkins, 'Native décor'.

84 Leifer et al., *Restless Blood*, 157–62.

85 One postcard by the Max Rigot Selling Company misidentifies the period of the nunnery as 1200 BCE. See Mayan Temple, from the Chicago World's Fair series (PC225-1); Jefferson R. Burdick Collection, Gift of Jefferson R. Burdick Accession Number: Burdick 435, PC225-1.29. Met Museum.

86 This is not to say that anything untoward has happened in the process of constructing the replica, only that such endeavours very often wind up reflecting contemporary art trends, an aspect that is often easier to spot in retrospect than it might have been at the time. An interesting comparison to this project would be the reconstructed Ishtar Gate in Berlin's Pergamon Museum. Like the Uxmal endeavour, this was a painstaking project that emerged from archaeological excavations in which individual bricks excavated at Babylon, Iraq, were transported back to Berlin. Can Bilsel has argued that:

> Against common wisdom, we need to accept that the reconstructions of the Processional Way and of the Ishtar Gate in the museum are not antique 'original' in the limited, mid-twentieth century definition of the term, but a fascinating constellation of antique fragments: an ornamental pattern that is more aligned with the *fin-de-siècle* preoccupations of *Jugendstil* and Art Nouveau. (Bilsel, *Antiquity on Display*, 182–3)

See also Brusius, 'Field in the museum'; Córdoba, 'Walter Andrae'; Polaschegg, 'Auferstanden aus Ruinen'. It is also worth considering why certain archaeological remains strike observers as especially beautiful at certain times and how these judgements both shape and reflect modern artistic and architectural tastes. On this topic, see also Gere, *Prophets of Modernism*, 105–39.

87 At 5.5.1932 JHB to Rufus C. Dawes. Box 106, Folder 6, DC, ISAC.

88 The first excavations at the site were conducted illegally by von Oppenheim in 1899, when he was travelling in the region scouting routes for the planned Berlin–Baghdad railway. For a detailed biography of von Oppenheim's very eventful life in archaeology and diplomacy, see Gossman, *Passion of Max von Oppenheim*; see also Melka, 'Max Freiherr von Oppenheim'. On the Tell Halaf excavations, see Cholidis and Martin, *Tell Halaf und sein Ausgräber*.

89 At 6.5.1932 Rufus C. Dawes to JHB. Box 106, Folder 6, DC, ISAC. See Gossman, *Passion of Max von Oppenheim*, 151–7.

6
Science: East and West meet at the National Academy of Sciences

There is only one project on which all five of the figures whose work interests us here worked together in a significant capacity. That project was the National Academy of Sciences building, opened in 1924, more than a decade after it was first a gleam in George Ellery Hale's eye (Figure 6.1). A 'temple of science' in the nation's capital, its decorative programme took as its theme the *history* of science, which it portrayed as virtually synonymous with the history of civilization itself.[1] Through both subject matter and style, its artistic programme located the birth of science and civilization at a meeting point of ancient Orient and modern Occident.

The NAS building was a permanent home for the preeminent organization of 'scientific men' in the United States and an important contribution to the architectural landscape of the nation's capital. The images on the NAS walls represent the stories that the organization's Building Committee considered most important to tell in a venue dedicated to solidifying their own professional identity. The creation of the NAS building was also part of a project to bring American science into a position of world historical leadership: the academy at the end of a procession of scientist predecessors who flanked its doors beginning with Thales of Miletus in the sixth century BCE and ending with the most recently deceased luminary to join the ranks of the scientific heavenly chorus, the founder of eugenics Francis Galton.

Although Hale was officially only one member of the Building Committee, he was the presiding genius of the project, over which he maintained a remarkable degree of personal control. Hale himself selected Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue as architect, with whom he was already working on buildings for what would become Caltech.

Figure 6.1 The National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC (opened 1924, photographed 2019), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: Author.

The decorative schemes the Building Committee approved reflected many of Hale's own preoccupations within the history and practice of science. It was because of his close friendship with Hale that James Henry Breasted was given entrée to the inner circle of NAS design planning, despite having become a member only in 1923. On the creative side, Goodhue, Lawrie and Meière interpreted their academic clients' instructions in line with their own responsibilities to artistic integrity and creativity. The creation of the NAS decorative programme was itself an act of scholarship and interpretation of the past, one that expressed both the singular visions of a few of its leading authors and the creative potential of collaboration and compromise.

Hale's vision of the Academy tradition

Established by Abraham Lincoln in 1863, the National Academy of Sciences was intended to serve as an official, independent advisory body on scientific matters to the federal government. When George Ellery Hale was elected to its membership in 1902, at the age of 34, it was doing little serious advising. It was a body not unfairly characterized by its detractors as devoted chiefly to bestowing the honour of its membership on eminent

scientists, whose chief occupation as members was to write obituaries for each other.[2] With an energy he had already brought to transforming the field of astronomy and astrophysics, Hale ultimately devoted himself to the revitalization of the NAS and with it the fortunes of American science.[3] In his long-time role as foreign secretary of the organization (1910–21), he devoted himself with special zeal to the cause of international academic cooperation.[4] But his other great priority was more concrete: a dedicated academy building. His early articulation of his own vision for what a rejuvenated NAS should look like – figuratively and literally – firmly guided the form the NAS building eventually took.

It was characteristic of Hale to take matters in his own hands and get results. He was possessed of a manic energy, almost a mania for founding institutions and an unparalleled talent for convincing rich benefactors to give money to his endeavours. Hale had commissioned his first made-to-order scientific building as a teenager: a private observatory attached to the family home in Kenwood, Chicago. Between 1897 and 1928, he established the three successively largest telescopes in the world and their associated observatory buildings (Yerkes, Mount Wilson and Palomar). While the NAS was being built and planned, between 1918 and 1924, he was (among other projects) simultaneously turning the small Throop College in his adopted home of Pasadena into the California Institute of Technology and persuading streetcar tycoon Henry Huntington to establish the Huntington Library in the same city.[5] He was also suffering through recurring bouts of the 'nervous depression' that had plagued him for decades, with intervals of medically advised rest and travel interrupting his considerable responsibilities. He resigned the directorship of the Mount Wilson Observatory in 1923 in deference to his medical needs, and would ultimately find himself unequal to the strain of speaking at the inauguration of the NAS building in 1924, the culmination of so many years of lobbying on his part.[6]

In 1915, stung by the way that the NAS had been overlooked as the federal government started worrying about matters of war readiness, Hale conceived of the idea of the National Research Council, a sort of sibling of the NAS that would function alongside it, with a more direct relationship to the government. This would allow the scientific elites of the NAS to have the influence and oversight in government that the NAS charter suggested was its due (and significant new funding), while keeping federal authority at arm's length from the NAS itself. His idea for the creation of the NRC, sent directly to President Woodrow Wilson, was actioned almost exactly as he had proposed.[7]

Even before the First World War demonstrated to Hale the urgency of reviving the NAS as a significant force in American research, he had laid out a blueprint for a regenerated NAS in addresses published in a series of articles in *Science* in 1913–15 as 'National Academies and the Progress of Scientific Research'. A core proposal in this series was that the NAS, which then occupied office space in the Smithsonian, be given a permanent home, which Hale argued was essential to the promotion of cooperation, collaboration and collegiality.

Hale began his assessment of the NAS with a chronological overview of the development of academies in Europe, which he argued began with Plato but were first truly institutionalized in Alexandria, the famous Egyptian city of Hellenistic learning, in the great museum founded by Ptolemy I Soter in the early third century BCE.[8] From this ancient meeting point of Hellenistic culture and Egyptian traditions, his account jumps to Renaissance Italy and the establishment of the Accademia dei Lincei in Rome, and then to Enlightenment France and the Académie des Sciences in Paris, the Royal Society in Britain and the Berlin Academy in Germany.

These predecessors constituted a tradition of scientific standard-bearing that the NAS stood within. They also provided different possible models for the NAS in the future, to which Hale turned in his final two articles. One of the central questions the NAS needed to decide with reference to its predecessors was what scope its membership should take, specifically what relationship should exist between sciences and humanities. Hale clearly distinguished these domains, even as he emphasized the relationship between the two. He contrasted science as it is understood in America with German *Wissenschaft*, a much broader term which explained the Berlin Academy's joint sponsorship of astronomical catalogues and Egyptian dictionaries (a project which Breasted worked on, likely the reason it occurred as an example to Hale).

Though the NAS was not yet ready for Berlin's broad approach, Hale favoured an expansive vision of its remit incorporating what we might now call 'social sciences' and 'humanities' through gradual expansion of the areas in which it was already strong. He cited archaeology as the first discipline for expansion. This suggestion might follow from Hale's arguments about the wisdom of gradual expansion, but Hale clearly also had a purely personal interest in recommending the expansion of this subject: he wanted Breasted, his best friend, who shared his visions for the future of research across sciences and humanities, to join him in the NAS and help forward his agenda there.

In April 1914, Breasted, who had been sent drafts of Hale's *Science* articles, developed a plan, for Hale's potential use, for a dramatic

expansion of a 'Historico-Philosophical' section of the NAS.[9] It would have added 13 new members, 9 of them within the disciplines closest to Breasted's interests: history, archaeology and philology. After publication, Hale circulated his own articles and a survey to the wider NAS membership, and found that feeling was largely in favour of expansion beyond the 'natural sciences'.[10] This aspect of Hale and Breasted's vision would never be fully realized. While Breasted was admitted to the NAS in 1923, in the Anthropology wing, he remained an outlier there, the only member who could be classified as a historian, the only Egyptologist and the only scholar of the ancient Old World (the other anthropologists largely studied American Indigenous cultures). However, despite his marginal relevance to the wider remit of the academy and his late inclusion among its members, Breasted's ideas about human civilization would play a significant role in the visual programme of the academy. He did, in this one area, serve as the ally Hale hoped for when he suggested this convenient expansion.

The National Academy takes shape

Hale had concluded his series of speculative articles with a discussion of what form the academy might take in a more literal sense: in its embodiment in a dedicated building designed to foster new collaborative research and public appreciation of science. This goal was soon within reach. In 1919, Hale secured a grant for the construction and endowment of the NAS building from the Carnegie Corporation. Hale's grand vision of big, cooperative, interdisciplinary science was just what the board of the Corporation was looking for. His ideological commitment to funding research through wealthy philanthropic elites, ensuring a minimum of government interference in this quasi-governmental body, also put him in sympathy with the politics of the Corporation. Hale was friends with various board members, notably its chairman Elihu Root, former US Secretary of War and Secretary of State and senator from New York. Root, upon whose advice Carnegie had established the Corporation, actively supported Hale's NAS plans before they were formally accepted.[11]

Although early advice and speculative designs for an NAS building had been provided by the architect Charles A. Coolidge,[12] Hale had a new man in mind for the commission: Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who was brought on board in 1918 when the prospect of the Carnegie grant was in sight. Hale had first encountered Goodhue's work at the 1915 Panama–California Exposition in San Diego where Goodhue was

supervising architect. Hale immediately decided he was faced with an architectural genius, the perfect man to come to Pasadena and design the new campus for Throop College, soon to be reborn as the California Institute of Technology (Caltech).[13] Goodhue was at work on the Caltech campus while he planned the NAS, communicating with Hale about both projects sometimes simultaneously. Goodhue was a fitting match for Hale's energy, and the two were not only client and architect, but soon became quite good, if never intimate, friends.

Although the Goodhue of the 1890s, a leading light of Boston's bohemian artistic scene, might not have seemed an obvious match for the young Hale, by the 1910s the two were both temperamentally and socially well matched. In the ways that counted, they were men of similar stock: born of good families (Goodhue's especially venerable but relatively poor, Hale's rich but less blue-blooded), leaders in their professional fields, both members of New York's elite Century Club, a social and dining club for men of arts and letters, taking the same European tours and sharing mutual friends and pastimes. They were both polymaths with interests outside their official job description who clearly enjoyed each other's company. Around their professional discussions, they made plans to overlap on summer trips to Europe and exchanged book recommendations and family news.[14]

For Goodhue, the NAS project, the last he lived to see completed, was a frustrating but arguably improving one. Although significantly less striking and exciting than his masterpieces in Nebraska and Los Angeles, or his masterful never built design for the Kansas City War Memorial, many scholars of Goodhue's work now agree that the NAS deserves to be understood, with the Nebraska and Los Angeles commissions, as part of his late career peak.[15] More modest and conventional in its aims, it was nonetheless the project with which Goodhue achieved a successful realization of his ambitions for a reconciliation of modernity and tradition, and even, as Richard Oliver has argued, the linchpin project which allowed him to work out a successful integration of classical principles with his own desire for artistic innovation.[16] This is both despite and because of constraints that the Washington setting put on Goodhue's own deeply held artistic principles.

In his long and varied architectural career, the most coherent aspect of Goodhue's architectural vision was his antipathy to classicism, as he repeated frequently during the process of designing the NAS building. However, any Washington building would have to be neoclassical in style, a mandate that had been officialized with the creation of the McMillan Plan in 1902, and to oversee adherence to its principles, the Federal Commission

of Fine Arts (CFA) in 1910. The ongoing construction of the Lincoln Memorial (1911–22) particularly constrained the NAS designs; with a site chosen on B Street (over Goodhue's objections), the NAS would be one of the first structures built in direct line of sight from it. This meant that the CFA was especially unforgiving when it assessed Goodhue's proposals.[17] Goodhue's earliest proposed design already constituted a compromise with the Washington aesthetic (and with a smaller budget than Hale had initially suggested was possible).[18] He was blindsided by an initial CFA refusal and discouraged by a convoluted series of subsequent miscommunications and misunderstandings which delayed further planning between spring 1920 and late 1921. Goodhue revised the design to secure CFA approval, while the NAS negotiated the authorization of additional funds from the Carnegie Corporation to cover revised plans and various unrelated engineering difficulties. Hale's friendships with Goodhue and with various members of the Carnegie Corporation board helped keep relations among the principals collegial even with these difficulties.

Decision-making and NAS 'authorship'

Decisions on behalf of the NAS were officially under the aegis of the Building Committee, headed by the engineer Gano Dunn, another close friend of Hale's.[19] Dunn was extremely efficient and managed competing demands to the general satisfaction of both the clients and the architect and designers.[20] Hale was, of course, a member of the Building Committee and, as the author of the entire plan, a driving force behind most of its decisions. He also had unique experience instructing architects in the design of specialized buildings that supported his research and scientific needs. When taking design decisions, Hale and Dunn carefully balanced the need for consensus with the danger of inviting too many academic opinions (sometimes even cutting out the rest of the Building Committee), lest infighting and disciplinary rivalries arise.[21]

A 1923 letter from Breasted to his eldest son Charles describes the atmosphere in which NAS decisions were taken. While in New York, Breasted was invited by Gano Dunn to a dinner he was giving at the University Club, whose other guests would include Hale and various NAS and science establishment luminaries William Henry Welch, Michael Pupin, Frank B. Jewett and John J. Carty. Having spent the first half of the evening in examination of an ancient Egyptian astronomical instrument Breasted had brought along for inspection by Hale and the others, they got down to business:

> The second half of the evening we had to spend on the fundamental questions of the new Academy building, and the relation of the Academy to the National research Council [*sic*], about which I could write you for an hour or two, but I will spare you. Hale is the dearest fellow. When I came in, you see, it was the first time that I had ever sat in at a confidential session of the leading members of the Academy talking over the questions of policy which are really decided by this group, the members of the Academy being graciously allowed to go through the motions of voting after this group of leaders have decided what ought to be done. Hale put his hand on my shoulder and said to the rest: 'I want you all to understand that he belongs to us now'.[22]

Such an approach suited Hale's temperament and philosophy, which might fairly be described as undemocratic. He was criticized on this score by certain scientists who resented his obvious attempts to dictate the course of American science through his ambitions for the NAS, notably the cantankerous Columbia and University of Pennsylvania psychologist James McKeen Cattell, editor-publisher of *Science* and active member in the American Association for the Advancement of Science. Cattell widely publicized his opposition to Hale's vision for the NAS, most notoriously in a scathing piece in *The Scientific Monthly* (another journal he edited). Cattell spoofed Hale as an enthusiastic autocrat having taken the reins of the Washington institution in order to seduce and deliver scientists into the pockets of Carnegie and Rockefeller, in exchange for the 'marble mausoleum' under construction.[23] 'It may in the long run be safer and even more profitable for men of science to be free from the charity and control of the classes of privilege and sell their services to the people for what they are worth,' Cattell suggested.[24] Hale and his allies laughed off Cattell's incisive attack, certain that they were doing right by American science.[25]

An 'Alexandrian' academy

Elegant in its simplicity, Goodhue's ultimate design for the NAS building constitutes what Richard Guy Wilson has described as 'stripped down' classicism (Figure 6.2).[26] Another term was applied to the NAS by its creators: 'Alexandrian', referencing the Ptolemaic city of learning, which Hale had identified as the originator of the academy tradition. This descriptor makes its most significant appearance in a 1923 memo written

Figure 6.2 The National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC (opened 1924, photographed 1934), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, photograph by Harris & Ewing, LC-H2- B-6231 [P&P].

by Dunn for the Carnegie Corporation funders. He explains the logic of Goodhue's design:

> The practical requirements are so various and modern that it seemed inadvisable to attempt the style of any one historic period … little enough of Alexandrian civilization and practically nothing at all of its architectural style is known, so perhaps it is safe to class the National Academy-Research Council building as Alexandrian.[27]

This is a bizarre syllogism. Whether we read Dunn's explanation as playful or as a hastily formulated attempt to justify a controversial (within Washington) style to the funders, it is nonetheless an appropriate description of the building's relationship to historical precedent.

The term 'Alexandrian' most likely originated with Goodhue himself, as Wilson presumes. Wilson suggested that Goodhue's use of the term was 'satiric'. It helped reconcile his designs to the CFA while also mocking their desire for historicism (perhaps simultaneously daring them to call his bluff on the nonexistence of an Alexandrian architectural style). It was also strategic. It reconciled the necessary 'Washington Classic' with Goodhue's own leanings towards Persian and Egyptian features by giving the building an entirely imagined but ostensibly

respectable historical precedent, without being beholden to strict historical reference, since nothing to reference survived.[28]

Playful or satiric as his intentions might have been, the concept of Alexandrian style was clearly taken seriously by Goodhue, and his artistic collaborators. Hildreth Meière, who served as the building's muralist, her first major decorative project, wrote of the Alexandrian idea:

> This freed him [Goodhue] from precedent just for precedent's sake, and removed the work from the realm of archaeological reconstruction into one of pure creation. Not that he treated the Alexandrian style lightly. He took infinite pains to reason out what Alexandria must have been and how the fusing of later Grecian traditions with the influences of Egypt and North Africa, and the Byzantine impulse which was probably already stirring, must have made of that great city a place of beauty and splendor.[29]

Whatever use Goodhue and Dunn may have made of the Alexandrian designation, the concept also clearly owes a great debt to Hale, either directly or through osmosis of his account of the academy tradition as originating in Alexandria.[30] The Alexandrian term then did double duty: as an invented architectural style that sounded appropriate to funders and committees, and as another way of emphasizing the NAS's inheritance of a scientific academy tradition that originated at a historical and geographical meeting place of Orient and Occident. Its use is an excellent illustration of the various interactions governing the rhetoric around the NAS design. External pressures from funders and the CFA constrained how the NAS could present itself. Yet at the same time, new creative possibilities arose from the dialogue between Goodhue as architect and Hale as academic. Hale's historical narrative about the origins of academies and the scientific tradition furnished the language to contextualize Goodhue's original reworking of Washington classicism.

The design programme for the NAS

Early proposals from Hale that the NAS building might contain laboratory space never found much support.[31] Nonetheless the building was conceived of by its Building Committee as a building with scientific work to do: an architectural structure that was also a machine for creating and disseminating knowledge. As Gano Dunn put it in his address at the NAS dedication ceremony, already quoted in Chapter 3:

> this building is more than a building, it is a great instrument, firing the ideals of science as well as feeding its resources, a great organ for the taking of that divine fire which Prometheus first stole, preserving its sacred continuity and transmitting its infectious blaze through the land for the benefit of the people.[32]

The decorative scheme was also a part of the machinery, not merely giving the institution an identity but actually facilitating the kind of science that could happen within, not just through the direct means of providing inspiration and collective purpose, but also in some more numinous, almost magical sense ('sacred continuity', 'infectious blaze').

For the decoration that would celebrate the centrality of science in human civilization, Goodhue brought with him to the project his most trusted collaborator, Lee Lawrie, to provide sculptural details, mostly in bronze. Muralist Albert Herter produced important commissions in the Great Hall and the meeting room, including one of Prometheus which inspired Dunn's references in his dedication (Figure 3.7). For the most striking and distinctive feature of the building, the dome of the Great Hall, Goodhue enlisted Hildreth Meière. He had already selected her as muralist for the Nebraska Capitol project, a major commission for the young artist, and was so satisfied with her preliminary designs that he gave her the NAS commission as well in 1922, when she was just 30. Though she had no experience with projects on this scale, Meière had a clear and coherent aesthetic vision, as Goodhue recognized immediately. Goodhue viewed his decorative artists as true collaborators; he sought an artist who shared his aesthetic values and could be trusted to work out their own solutions to his building's problems in harmony with his architectural ethos. For the NAS dome, Meière worked from instructions of the Building Committee on subject matter and under Goodhue's guidance, but she was given a great deal of freedom in executing her designs and overseeing their installation.[33] Together with the Nebraska Capitol project, Meière's NAS work made her name and initiated a long and successful career.

The history of science in and outside the NAS

The grand theme of the NAS decoration was the history of science and scientists. This might seem like a slightly peripheral concern for the sciences now but, as Peter Dear argues, 'for most scientists at that time [1913], much more so than is the case nowadays, the past of their

disciplines was an integral part of the science itself'.[34] The act of looking backwards to scientific predecessors, he argues, was not an extraneous bit of self-regard, but the basis for new scientific development and the presentation of new findings. In the 1910s and early 1920s, history of science was only just starting to coalesce as an independent discipline in the United States, largely thanks to the efforts of George Sarton, the Belgian scholar, himself trained as a mathematician and in the natural sciences, who founded the history of science journal *Isis* in 1912 and, to oversee it, the History of Science Society (HSS) in 1922. Sarton communicated regularly with Hale. The pair had recognized their mutual interest in the development of history of science as both a core part of a scientists' worldview and a subject worthy of serious regard in itself. Both Hale and Breasted were founding 'patrons' of the HSS.[35]

Sarton dreamed of a 'New Humanism' which would show that 'the real purpose [of human existence] is the creation of new values, intellectual values; the gradual unveiling and unfolding of the harmony of nature, the development and organization of what we call art and science. All other activities are subordinated to this great purpose of the race.'[36] He was evangelical about the necessity of uniting the domains of sciences and humanities:

> I do not know who is the poorer: the old humanist without understanding of science, or the scientist without appreciation of beauty, without urbanity, without reverence. I do not know which is worse: idealism without knowledge, or knowledge without idealism. We need both equally in order to go forward and prepare the dawn of a new age,—the age of a New Humanism.[37]

As part of this project, knowing the past was essential:

> At all times there have been 'moderns' who could not help thinking that their ways as compared with those of the 'ancient' were almost final. One of the main functions of the history of science is to correct such mistakes and to give us, who are the 'moderns' of to-day, a less conceited view of our share in the total of human evolution.[38]

As a prominent promoter of awareness of the debt moderns owed to the ancient, Breasted agreed. He too corresponded regularly with Sarton, who greatly admired his work, and served as the HSS's second ever president.[39] For Breasted, history of science presented an opportunity to get closer to the scientific community whose prestige could rub off on the

study of the ancient world. By being involved in this emerging discipline, he could also ensure that the earliest origins of scientific thought were acknowledged to precede the ancient Greeks.

Sarton was Breasted's ally in promoting that perspective. For one thing, like Hale, he was a scientific man with a special interest in the ancient Middle East. So much so, of course, that he named his journal for an Egyptian goddess. In 1953, he reflected on that decision in an article succinctly called, 'Why Isis?' In it he first gives the flippant answer that the name was short and had not been used as a journal's name before (a point on which, he acknowledges, he later learned he was mistaken), but then proceeds to a psychological study of the origins of his 'subconscious' choice, and his early and ongoing fascination with the East, first Egypt and Babylon, and later the Far East.[40] In particular, Sarton's fascination was with the art of these regions, so much so that at one time he seriously wavered between devoting his energies to establishing the history of science and participating in the growing 'scientific' study of the history of Oriental art. One consequence, he writes, of his whim to give his journal an Egyptian patron was ongoing confusion about its subject matter. *Isis*, he acknowledges, conjured for many thoughts of freemasonry, Theosophism or Egyptology (a 'more honourable' misunderstanding).[41]

Sarton's passion for the East was not merely dilettantism, dabbling in the discipline that got away. He also came to conceive of the East as an essential part of the history of science and his works sought to position it as such in the definitive world history of science (which he was by far the most influential figure in shaping in this era). Like Hale and Breasted, he believed that the Middle East was an important origin point for the history of civilization.[42] Sarton's conception of science reflected the same convictions evident in the NAS decorative programme that a history of science was contiguous with a history of civilization.[43] An illustrative book title was Sarton's 1948 collection of talks and essays, *The Life of Science: Essays in the History of Civilization*.

Sarton's interest in Eastern scientific traditions went beyond these early origins. He contributed in significant ways to the recognition in the English-speaking world of the importance of mediaeval Islamic science in any history of modern knowledge and learnt Arabic in order to read primary sources himself.[44] He saw material for his history of science not only in the texts of the ancient world, but also in the Oriental art that had first caught his attention. In a short contribution to *Isis* in 1934, Sarton explores evidence from Assyrian palace reliefs for scientific date palm cultivation.[45] These esoteric, magical images depicted genies around fantastical trees, but for Sarton even obviously nonrealistic imagery like

this could be a window into ancient knowledge, indicating something about the universe as ancient artists understood it.

While Sarton's publications fought to centre the Middle East in the history of early and mediaeval science, he believed that the future of his ambitions for the 'New Humanism' lay in the anglophone world, and specifically in 'young' countries like the US, Australia, New Zealand and Canada.[46] As a scholar whose career path had been fundamentally determined by the First World War, which forced him to flee his native Belgium, there were clearly personal reasons for feeling a disillusionment with Europe and an optimism about his adopted home. As Sarton worked to establish history of science in the American academy, and his New Humanism as a broader intellectual approach, Breasted and Hale were among his supporters. The NAS's visual narratives promoted many ideas Sarton shared – about science and civilization, the importance of science's history and the harmony between the domains of science and visual art.

The Progress of scientists

The NAS's most straightforward scientific historical narrative is found in the series of bronze panels Lawrie designed for the exterior, depicting great men of science, in procession, the oldest nearest the doors, fanning out in chronological order (Figure 6.3). These panels posit the history of science as a story of great men working in concert, across time. Their position around the entrance makes the NAS visitor a part of their project.

As an example of a Progress, however, it is slightly perfunctory in iconography and design. The figures for it were chosen in consultation with the NAS membership. Only men with European backgrounds appear, the earliest Greeks of the sixth century BCE. It is a Progress in its most chronologically straightforward format: the connections between the great scientists in this parade are only of the most general kind. Lawrie's composition here is rather static, not helped by the way that the brass panels constrain his composition. As mere excrescences on the marble building, albeit built into and connecting the bronze window frames above and below, they also fail to achieve the integration of architecture and sculpture that Lawrie did achieve in the interior of the NAS, and that he and Goodhue would master in the Nebraska Capitol. Of the various decorative elements, they have the most obvious traces of design by committee – not only the Building Committee, but also the various other NAS members whose disciplinary pride the committee were anxious not to upset.

Figure 6.3 Lee Lawrie, one of six bronze panels for the National Academy of Sciences exterior (1924), showing great scientists. This one depicts some of the earliest scientists: (l–r) Galileo, Leonardo da Vinci, Hipparchus, Euclid, Democritus and Thales. Photo credit: Author.

Undoubtedly to forestall controversy, it was agreed that no living scientists would be eligible for inclusion in this procession. This stricture excluded a popular suggestion from the scientists whose opinions Hale solicited, Thomas Edison (several correspondents pointed out that he would bring an American into the procession, in a building in which actual Americans or American iconography of any sort was quite surprisingly underrepresented).[47] With Edison out, the most recent inclusion was the founder of eugenics, Francis Galton, who had died in 1911 (Figure 6.4). We have already seen in Chapter 2 that the eugenics

Figure 6.4 Lee Lawrie, one of six bronze panel for the National Academy of Sciences exterior (1924), showing great scientists. This one depicts some of the most recently deceased scientists: (l–r) Francis Galton, Josiah Willard Gibbs, Hermann von Helmholtz, Charles Darwin, Charles Lyell and Michael Faraday. Photo credit: Author.

movement had a great stake in the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council. Galton would be an utterly uncontroversial inclusion among NAS membership, an excellent example of the cutting edge of science and of the potential for scientific ideas to improve human life.

The origin of civilization, between East and West

For the most part, the NAS building's evocation of civilizational origins in the Middle East is implied in its style and aesthetics. It is a subtext to a narrative in which Greek imagery is much more explicitly linked to the history and origin of science: the Prometheus mural, a quote by Aristotle on the exterior, the many Greek scientists at the beginning of sequences in these bronzes and on the exterior doors. Yet the *meeting* of East and West, and a transfer of science through this meeting, is a central theme of the building's decorative symbolism, expressed in style and subject matter alike.

An undercurrent of the Orient, especially Egypt, suffuses the building: as already discussed, in its architectural style which imagined a classicism more Alexandrian than Athenian, but also in many of the sculptural pieces Lee Lawrie produced for the building. For a spectroheliOSCOPE, an instrument of Hale's invention which would sit in the middle of the Great Hall, he designed a bronze case which placed Egyptian and Mesopotamian deities in proximity to those of Europe and the Americas (a design idea that originated in Goodhue's office, rather than with the Building Committee) (Figure 6.5).[48] In his bronze exterior doors for the building and in bronze grilles for the lobby, Egyptian and Assyrian imagery mingled with Greek (Figure 6.6). The bronze lobby grilles take the zodiac as their theme, celebrating the universe itself and the long history of its observation, what Lawrie described as 'man's interpretation of natural phenoma [*sic*] before the ages of scientific investigation and understanding'.[49] The zodiac is indeed an excellent illustration of knowledge sharing between Mesopotamia, where the zodiac we know first took shape, Egypt and Greece, and the survival of ancient ideas in our own time.[50] Lawrie's design gives us a Leo derived from Neo-Assyrian art, surrounded by Egyptian human figures, and Greek horses and chariots. The overall effect is, like the building as a whole, a stylistically unified but utterly unplaceable historical mélange.

The most extensive celebration of Oriental origins is a mantelpiece that Lawrie created for the reading room depicting the history of writing

Figure 6.5 Lee Lawrie, bronze spectroheliosope case for the National Academy of Sciences Great Hall (1924). Photo credit: Author.

(Figure 6.7), from cave paintings through Egyptian hieroglyphs and Mesopotamian cuneiform (in early and later forms), the Phoenician alphabet, then-undeciphered Mycenean Linear B, the later classical world, right up to Gutenberg's printing press. The registers rise chronologically

Figure 6.6 Lee Lawrie, detail from bronze interior door grilles, National Academy of Sciences (1924). Photo credit: Author.

from earliest to most recent, bisected by an Egyptian obelisk, crossed by an Assyrian *lamassu* and a Phoenician galley. At the base of the obelisk, an Egyptian sculptor crouches, finishing off the obelisk's carvings. He is a playful stand-in for Lawrie himself, the actual sculptor, in whose account writing begins as mural art with the earliest cave paintings (unlike the other early examples, European in origin). The idea for this mantel originated with Lawrie himself, who took his historical research extremely seriously.[51] Yet Breasted's hand hovers here as well. Lawrie was already consulting *Ancient Times* for background research on other pieces for both the NAS and the Nebraska Capitol, so its lucid account of writing's early development, and illustrative examples, was likely a major source here.[52]

Yet, overall, there is an important distinction in how West and East are represented within the building. The procession of great scientists and representations of individual discoveries and inventions

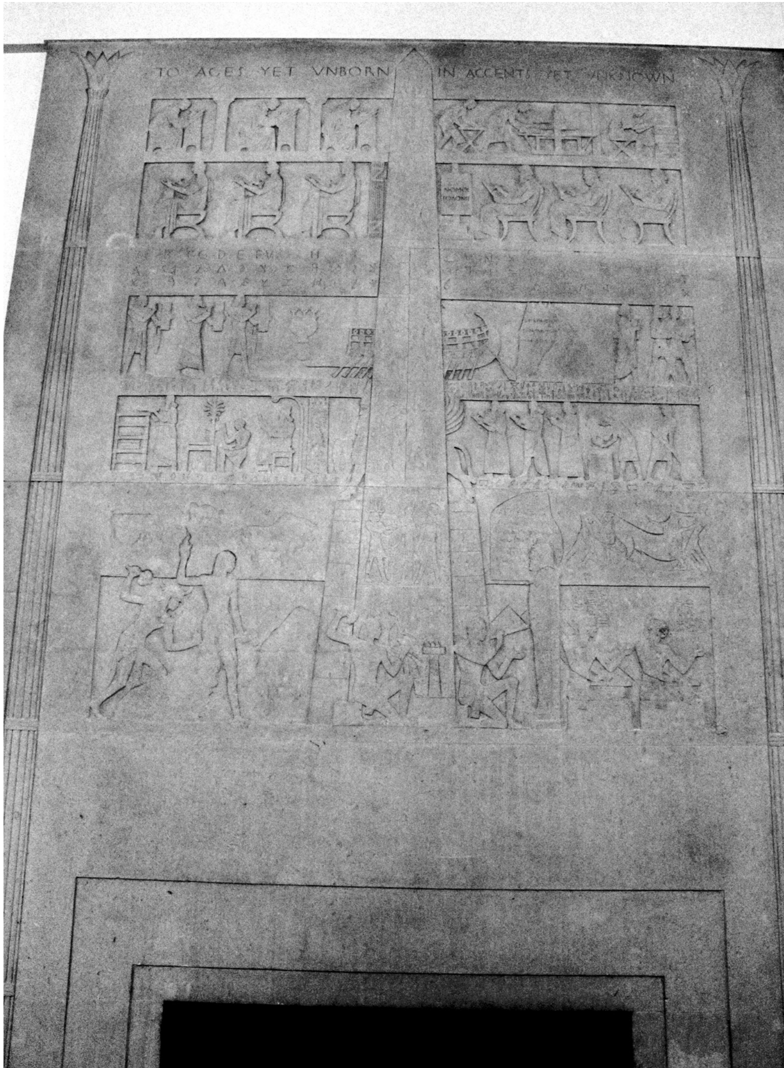

Figure 6.7 Lee Lawrie, 'History of Writing' mantel for the reading room of the National Academy of Sciences (1924). Photo credit: Author.

are overwhelmingly of the West. Egypt and Babylon do not produce great men with names and achievements, only the stratum on which the earliest, Greek scholars stand. The Orient is present as a prehistorical, protoscientific spirit, in images of gods and fantastical creatures, in zodiac figures and in stylistic details.

Hale's preoccupation with Egypt

While Hale allowed the Orient to fade to the background here, in private contexts, he was much more willing to identify Egypt as part of scientific history proper. Poetically, he considered the fourteenth-century BCE pharaoh Akhenaten and his (likely) grandson Tutankhamun as well as the 'astronomer priests of Thebes' as his own predecessors in solar astronomy.[53] Akhenaten was a shared fascination of Breasted and Hale. This pharaoh's controversial introduction of the exclusive worship of the Aten, a manifestation of the sun god as the solar disk, was understood by Breasted as the earliest historical instance of monotheism. Breasted's doctorate in Berlin was an edition of Akhenaten's solar hymns.[54] His writings on Akhenaten as early monotheist and, according to his 1905 *History of Egypt* 'the first *individual* in human history' were extremely influential.[55]

For Hale, always happy to discuss the pharaoh with his expert friend, Akhenaten's obsession with the unique properties of the sun as a physical body made him not only a theological innovator, but an early enthusiast for naturalist observation and investigation. An astronomical instrument of Tutankhamun which Breasted's son acquired from the London auction house Spink's led Hale to suspect that the boy king whose tomb was the most sensational archaeological discovery of the early 1920s had shared Akhenaten's interest in the stars.[56]

Hale's personal affinity for Akhenaten and his entire dynasty was so strong that he later commissioned Lee Lawrie to sculpt a bas relief panel of the pharaoh for his private solar observatory in Pasadena (architects Johnson, Kaufman & Coate), showing the pharaoh 'rising in his chariot towards the life-giving sun' (Figure 6.8).[57] Rare among Lawrie's works and at Lawrie's own suggestion, the relief was to be painted (in 'the Egyptian manner').[58] A copy of a real Akhenaten frieze was positioned above the building's entrance (Figure 6.9). Hale kept a copy of the famous bust of Akhenaten's queen Nefertiti (discussed further in Chapter 7), now in the Ägyptisches Museum, Berlin (Nr. 21300), in his private study (Figure 6.10).[59] A pattern of blue and gold for the study ceiling might reflect any number of schemes that combine the two colours in an approximation of the heavenly vault, but would surely have reminded Hale of blue-and-gold starred ceilings in Egyptian tombs; he explained that the entire colour scheme was guided by the colours on his Nefertiti bust.[60] For Hale, the wonder he felt in observing and studying the physical properties of the sun was similar to the religious wonder described in Akhenaten's extraordinary art and texts. The pharaoh's spirit was appropriate to suffuse his own scientific observatory.

Figure 6.8 Lee Lawrie, mantel for study of Hale Observatory (1928, photographed in 2009). Photo credit: Scott Kardel.

Figure 6.9 Hale Solar Observatory in Pasadena, California (1924, photographed 1931), architect Johnson, Kaufman & Coate. Photo credit: Observatories of the Carnegie Institution for Science Collection at the Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

Figure 6.10 George Ellery Hale's private study at the Hale Observatory, photographed in 2009; note Nefertiti bust on bookshelf. Photo credit: Scott Kardel.

In the NAS, Hale did not promote these admittedly very personal interpretations, probably because he recognized the necessity of conveying a narrative that, however ambitious and modern in its breadth and depth, was nonetheless acceptable to the scientist academicians he consulted.[61] Would they accept a fourteenth-century BCE heretical pharaoh as a protoscientist? It must have seemed unlikely. Still, Hale's own office in the NAS, he happily informed Breasted, put him above the earliest figure on Lawrie's panels, the Greek philosopher Thales 'flanked by three pyramids to suggest the source of his science – on the bronze window panel to the left of the main entrance'.[62] Within a building that presented a conventional narrative of the first great scientific men as Greek, Hale's choice of office still allowed him a personal connection to the Egyptians whom he placed before them.

From nebula to pyramids: an unrealized dome

Beyond the entrance, a visitor passed through a lobby into the Great Hall which was to be used for large meetings (a function now taken over by a large auditorium behind it, a later addition). It was, architecturally and academically, by far the most important space in the building.

The hall was cruciform, the dome eight-sided with pendentives set among four arched soffits. Each of these segments required a subject for decoration. The Building Committee reached a decision in May 1923 that the dome segments would be devoted to eight different branches of science, selected by Hale: mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, geology, zoology, botany and anthropology.[63] The four elements and scientific phenomena associated with each would serve for the four pendentives. A little later it was agreed that for the soffits, the four great predecessor academies, the Museum of Alexandria, Accademia dei Lincei in Rome, Académie des Sciences in Paris and the Royal Society in London (following Hale's account of the academy tradition in his *Science* articles), would serve as subjects – a decision that dissatisfied Goodhue who found the 'heraldic' imagery required for their seals too fussy for designs that had to be legible from 40 feet below.[64] The central dome would thus serve as a history and a snapshot of scientific activity across subjects and periods, a historical context for the presentation of new research that would take place beneath it.

Goodhue had pushed for these decisions to be finalized in early 1923, worried about the time necessary to execute the ambitious design programme. He would continue to chase the Building Committee for guidance on scientific subject matter over the final months of NAS construction. Meière was already at work on cartoons for a dome representing eight disciplines of science, as agreed, when Hale and Breasted came up with a new decorative scheme, much more ambitious in scope, and more reflective of their shared personal interests in history and science.

In June 1923, the two friends were staying together at the Villa Palmieri outside Florence, guests of the Chicago industrialist James Ellsworth. It was an interlude that both would subsequently look back on as one of the most enjoyable they ever spent in each other's company, an emotionally and intellectually regenerative respite in their busy lives, coming at a time when both were overworked.[65] Hale in particular was struggling at the time; he was travelling on doctors' orders, trying to alleviate his mental health troubles.[66] Breasted wrote to his wife of the idyllic atmosphere of intellectual cooperation between himself and Hale:

> We breakfast together in my room, with these lovely gardens all around us, and the song of the nightingale in our ears. We have endless things to talk about, – not mere swapping of experiences, but plans and projects innumerable, especially the superb new

building of the National Academy at Washington which is now up and will be ready for occupancy next October. It is a work of art, – the finest academy building in the world.[67]

Days later, the NAS was still their chief topic of discussion, and the chief news to relay to his wife:

> Hale has spent a great deal of time on the details of the new building of the Academy in Washington. He says that as a new member, I am in duty bound to help, so I have been much interested in helping him, especially in the symbolic subjects to be inserted in the decorative scheme of the dome over the main entrance hall. It will be a beautiful thing. Both the architect and the decorative artists are almost geniuses, they are so gifted, and the whole will be an ideal work of art.

Giving his wife a detailed description of the dome as it was being planned, he reflected on his pride in drafting inscriptions for it: 'I am glad to have even so slight a contribution of mine go into the beautification of this superb home of science at the national capital … Of course these things take time and discussion, but they are really a great pleasure.'[68]

Clearly Hale, supposed to be on a rest holiday for his health, was ignoring the instructions to relax from all work. He and Breasted hastily jotted down instructions for their new dome design, 'a series portraying in successive stages the progress of evolution'.[69] These plans Hale dispatched to Dunn back in the US, with a letter describing the logic of their new scheme:

> I have long wanted to embody in the Academy building some epitome of evolution, and it struck me that the decoration of the dome might afford one opportunity, to be followed up later by a suitable exhibit. The enclosed scheme, which we [he and Breasted] have worked out together, seems to us much better suited to aid in accomplishing the purpose for which the building was erected than any enumeration of different branches of science could do.[70]

Their proposal, presented in full in Table 6.1, was extraordinarily sweeping in scope, beginning with the origin of the universe and ending with 'earliest civilization' in the Orient. In the process, it passes through the domains of a range of disciplines represented in the academy: astrophysics, geology, palaeontology and ultimately anthropology.

Table 6.1 Hale and Breasted's handwritten plan for an 'evolution' theme for the National Academy of Sciences dome. Box 55, Folder 1 GEHP.

Suggestions for Decorations
Of the Great Hall of the national Academy Building

Dome –

X. Sun burst (golden rays) as proposed.
Y. Inscription relating to evolution.
Z. Inscription (aspects of science).

Slots in Dome

A scheme representing the evolution of the earth and the rise of man.

E. Spiral nebula
   1. Globular star cluster
   2. Nebula
F. The sun
   1. Jupiter
   2. Saturn
G. The Earth (eastern hemisphere, where civilization arose).
   1. Volcano (As agency causing development of earth's face).
   2. Ocean and river, or tornado (as another such agency).
H. Carboniferous forest.
   1. Tree or flower. (Carboniferous)
   2. Tree or flower.
I. Prehistoric animals (Triassic or Jurassic)
   1. Prehistoric animal
   2. [ditto]
J. Paleolithic man (group making flint implements; see cut in first five or six pages of Breasted's "Ancient Times").
   1. Stone axe
   2. Bow and arrows.
K. Ice age (man at mouth of cavern, glacier in background).
   1. Mammoth
   2. Reindeer
L. Earliest civilization. The Pyramids
   1. Babylonian temple tower (see "Ancient Times")
   2. Egyptian clerestory hall (Karnak, see enclosed sketch).

This dome scheme had an earlier antecedent. It was a precise visual reimagining of the William Ellery Hale Lectures in Evolution which Hale's family foundation had sponsored at NAS meetings between 1914 and 1919, for which Breasted had given the final two lectures. We have discussed this series in Chapter 2, and its position as part of Hale's larger career-long interest in evolution as an overarching concept applicable to all branches of science and history. Seeing it as a script for a visual narrative gives a new sense of this idea. Had their plan been realized, the dome would have moved in scale from the unimaginably vast and distant down to the scale of human (and plant) life, and finally back to

the monumental (if not quite on the scale of a nebula or even a volcano), with pyramids and ziggurats.

The dome as realized

When Hale and Breasted drafted their plan for the evolution dome, Hale was confident enough that the proposal could replace the previously agreed eight scientific disciplines scheme that he instructed his staff at Mount Wilson Observatory to prepare visual reference material to send to Goodhue before receiving any confirmation his idea was accepted. With time pressing in, Goodhue's response to this unsolicited offer was rather curt. It was not possible to change the dome subject since, as had been agreed with Dunn, Meière was already at work on the eight disciplines plan.[71] The 'obsolete symbolism' of the four elements (as Hale described it) would remain too.[72] Goodhue never responded substantively to Hale's proposal and the Building Committee does not appear to have ever considered the change.

Some elements of Hale and Breasted's proposition of June 1923 did make their way into the building. The inclusion of anthropology within the eight subject branches was already being actioned, something Hale's letter reiterated as important in the event it was not possible to abandon the eight disciplines design. Most importantly, Breasted's 'proposed inscription relating to evolution' for the dome was adopted even though evolution itself was not the theme: 'Ages and Cycles of Nature in Ceaseless Sequence Moving' ('which will be hard to beat', Hale commented). Breasted, a new member with marginal qualifications in the 'natural sciences', not even a member of the Building Committee, was literally writing the message that the NAS conveyed to its members and visitors in its most prestigious and public interior space.

Under the design for the eight disciplines scheme that Goodhue and Meière concocted, subjects would be set within circular or hexagonal surrounds, separate icons united by decorative motifs. Meière was left to oversee the installation herself, in which she took an active role.[73] In contrast to the proposed evolution plan, Meière's work is essentially directionless and nonnarrative, arguably more appropriate to orientation around a dome which serves as the central focus of the cruciform Great Hall. Although nonlinear, a history of science is still suggested through the inclusion of important scientific firsts (Lavoisier's flask, Watt's steam engine) and through the academy-themed soffits.

Great care was taken to ensure that the acoustics of the hall would support its purpose as a lecture room for the presentation of new scientific research.[74] The central dome was constructed of the Guastavino Tile Company's newly invented Akoustolith tiles, which limited sound reverberations. Goodhue and Meière together devised an innovative method of decoration for it: rather than inlaid coloured tiles, Meière's designs would be laid on in painted gesso.[75] In order to preserve the acoustic properties of the tiles, no more than half the available surface could be covered. Although Goodhue was not optimistic about this strange new method, this approach produced a dome of extraordinary beauty and clarity. The dome now also served to showcase scientific advances, an engineering marvel only possible because of new technologies and careful acoustic calculations.[76]

Meière's work on the dome is extraordinary in its care and detail (Figure 6.11). Across more than sixty separate icons, tied together with a variety of organic and geometric decorative motifs, Meière applied apt, though often unexpected, symbolism. She maintained stylistic coherence across scales, subject matter and period: everything from trilobites to pyramids (though not in the honoured place of evolution's culmination, still included in the academy of Alexandria soffit) to teapots (an application of the element of Fire). Hale had worried that the scheme of the eight disciplines would lead to too many underwhelming objects like this last one, but Meière made a virtue of the strange mixture of subjects: artistically unified yet substantively varied, they map science's domain as all-encompassing.

Meière's style for the dome is, like the building as a whole, 'classic' in a general way: 'semi-Greek' in Goodhue's words.[77] Goodhue suggested that Meière start by looking at Greek vase painting. 'So I looked and looked at Greek vases and copies and traced until I thought I had the spirit,' she remembered. 'Then I looked at Egyptian and contemporary art, as their colouring seemed appropriate. Then, disregarding most of my researches, but being influenced by them, I started designing.'[78] This process resulted in work which does indeed evoke both Greece and Egypt without recognizably following either model while displaying a confident personal style. The elaborate 'Egyptian and contemporary'-inspired polychromy on the dome emerges as a wonderful surprise beyond the neoclassical white marble exterior.[79]

Figure 6.11 The Great Hall of the National Academy of Sciences, Washington, DC, architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, decorations by Hildreth Meière, executed by Mack, Jenny & Tyler (1924). Photo credit: Mark Finkenstaedt, courtesy of the National Academy of Sciences.

Meière's history of man

Anthropology was the newest and most contentious subject to feature on the dome, the place at which the NAS was pursuing its goal of integrating disciplines beyond the traditional remit of the 'natural sciences'. It is also the closest the finished dome comes to 'embodying some epitome of evolution', as Hale had wished.

On the dome, each of the eight scientific disciplines is represented by a muscular, brown-skinned, black-haired man, semi-clothed in some arrangement of drapery. The style and iconography is largely classical. Each dome section includes two smaller circles which refer to elements of that discipline's study: tools of work, objects of study, products of invention. Meière's anthropology figure is, like all the other central figures, a well-muscled man with a classical body, beardless and long-haired, a colourful scarf thrown back across his shoulders, a thin laurel crown on his head (Figure 6.12). He crouches backwards

Figure 6.12 Hildreth Meière, anthropology section of the National Academy of Sciences Great Hall dome (1924). Photo credit: Mark Finkenstaedt, courtesy of the National Academy of Sciences.

on his heels, considering the skulls of two hominids: a modern human and *Pithecanthropus erectus*, the type specimen of *Homo erectus*. This particular fossil was discovered in 1891 in Java (then the Dutch East Indies, now Indonesia). At somewhere between 700,000 and one million years old, it was the oldest hominid fossil known at the time. The pose evokes thoughts of *vanitas* paintings and of Hamlet considering Yorick's skull. It hints that anthropology is freighted with philosophical import, its scientific investigation echoing the questions about human life that philosophers, artists and great figures of literature have asked for centuries.

The two smaller icons in this section show 'Ancient Man' and 'Modern Man' as heads in profile. These are the only humans to feature as scientific subjects on the dome, rather than allegorical representations of disciplines or elements. Meière's Ancient Man is a representative of the earliest anatomically modern humans to settle in Europe, around 48,000 years ago, then called 'Cro-Magnon', after specimens discovered in the Cro-Magnon rock shelter in Dordogne, France, in 1868 (now called 'European Early Modern Humans'). Her painting gives him brown skin, black shaggy hair, a prominent brow ridge and broad nose and mouth. Set against the impossibly ancient *Pithecanthropus* skull, the Cro-Magnon seems a close cousin, the ancient human with which contemporary scientists felt the most sympathy, often cast in contrast to and conflict with bestial Neanderthals.

Nowhere was this elevation of the Cro-Magnon more apparent than in the American Museum of Natural History. Under the guidance of Henry Fairfield Osborn, that committed eugenicist and friend of both Madison Grant and George Ellery Hale, the exhibits at the American Museum's Hall of the Age of Man reflected Osborn's portrayal in his popular book *Men of the Old Stone Age* (1915) of the Cro-Magnon as a sensitive, intelligent cousin (though not, importantly, a direct ancestor) of modern humans, his soul bursting with artistic fervour. The Cro-Magnons' overwhelming 'art impulse' was proof of 'unity of heredity' and the significance of innate racial characteristics: 'It is something which could not pass to them from another race, like an industrial invention, but was inborn and creative.' Osborn accorded this race of artists the highest compliment he could offer: 'These people were the Palaeolithic Greeks; artistic observation and representation and a true sense of proportion and of beauty were instinct with them from the beginning.'[80]

In Osborn's idiosyncratic view of human evolution there was no relationship between Cro-Magnons and modern humans, whose 'Dawn Man' ancestor Osborn was sure still awaited discovery. The exhibits of

the Hall of the Age of Man were designed to promote the idea of the essential separateness of races, an educational message that Osborn saw as linked to the goals of the eugenics movement. Yet the organization of exhibits and educational art in narratives of progress could not help but suggest connections and teleological direction in the appearance of his separate races of hominids.[81] Those Cro-Magnons lived and died that the artistic soul might awaken for the first time in history: the Palaeolithic Greeks before the Greeks.

Meière's Cro-Magnon would likely not have met with Osborn's approval: too dark-skinned and sloping browed. At the American Museum, the Cro-Magnon was depicted as a handsome man, not really distinguishable from a modern (apparently White) human in reconstruction busts by J. Howard McGregor (Figure 6.13), zoologist at Columbia, and most famously in one of three murals completed by the great palaeoartist and Osborn's most trusted visual educator, Charles R. Knight, for the Hall of the Age of Man.[82] Knight's Cro-Magnon mural, falling chronologically between one of Neanderthal flint-workers and modern human 'Nordic' stag hunters, shows a group of Cro-Magnon men (the only mural not to also show women and children), lit with Caravaggian drama by their own cleverly constructed lamps, creating cave paintings of mammoths (Figure 6.14). These Cro-Magnons are enviable physical specimens, and like Knight himself, great mural artists with a flair for animal pictures. Osborn's *Men of the Old Stone Age* was quite explicit in its designation of the Cro-Magnon artists

Figure 6.13 J. Howard McGregor, reconstructions of (l–r) *Pithecanthropus erectus*, Piltdown Man, Neanderthal and Cro-Magnon men (1920, photographed 1931 by Hugh S. Rice). Originally displayed in the Hall of the Age of Man, American Museum of Natural History. Photo credit: 313682, American Museum of Natural History Library.

Figure 6.14 Charles R. Knight, *Cro-Magnon Artists of Southern France* (1920). Canvas originally displayed as a wall mural in the Hall of the Age of Man, American Museum of Natural History. Photo credit: ptc-5375, American Museum of Natural History Library.

as, essentially, gentlemen colleagues. In the frontispiece to the book, following Osborn's own extensive qualifications as author, credit for illustrations is assigned to, 'Upper Paleolithic artists / and / Charles R. Knight, Erwin S. Christman and others', almost as if the publishers were cutting the Upper Paleolithic Cro-Magnons royalty cheques. Not only are these prehistoric artists credited as scientific illustrators, but great emphasis is placed on their powers of natural observation of animal anatomy and distinctive physical characteristics.[83] The qualities that are valued in prehistoric art are the same qualities that Osborn sought in his own palaeoartists. As Osborn saw it, Cro-Magnons may not have been our hereditary ancestors, but they were spiritual ancestors, artists and observational scientists like Knight and Osborn.

On Meière's dome, the Cro-Magnon is nonetheless placed in contrast to the Modern Man. Looking towards his Cro-Magnon counterpart to the left, Modern Man has very pale, nearly white skin, striking in contrast to his Ancient counterpart. The pair participate in a pervasive artistic trope in images of early humans, where evolution in the human past mirrors contemporary White supremacist notions of racial and colour hierarchy, humans becoming lighter as they become more modern.[84] Modern Man, unlike his early counterpart, also possesses culture. Styled as an ancient Roman, he wears his medium-brown hair in a Caesar crop, topped by a laurel wreath, and holds an eagle standard evoking the Roman *aquila*. Drapery across his chest suggests a toga, though, as on the central figure above him, it seems to be more of a hastily tossed scarf.

Meière's decision to make Modern Man belong to the classical past is interesting. She was not averse to including imagery that evoked the mundane modernity we live in now (for instance, that teapot, representing fire), so it would not have been out of keeping with the iconographical tone to cast in the role either a neutral, anatomically modern but otherwise unplaceable figure, or even a suited and hatted 1920s cosmopolitan.

Meière's Modern Man is then not modern in a colloquial sense but in a more specialized one that makes the same connections between antiquity and modernity we find elsewhere in the building. Just as Breasted and Hale's never-realized plan for the dome located modernity not in the contemporary world but in the beginnings of monumental architecture in ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, Meière too signals modernity through representative iconography of the ancient past. It is a collapse of millennia that can only make sense in the far larger timescale at work: in this case, from the earliest premodern human ancestors in the *Pithecanthropus erectus* skull to anatomically, if not sartorially, modern humans. The distinction drawn between Meière's Ancient and Modern Men is between a pre-civilized human and civilized man, a transition Meière portrays as complete in the classical past, an ancient world that is nonetheless 'modern' because it is, in the context of such a massive timescale, effectively 'us'.

Returning to the allegorical figure of anthropology holding his skulls, we should note that, positioned between the two smaller figures of Ancient and Modern Men, he emerges as an aesthetic compromise between the two. While his facial features are closer to those of Modern Man, his colouring exactly reproduces the Cro-Magnon to his other side: medium-brown skin and shaggy black hair. While this colouring is the same in all the central disciplinary figures, in the context of this panel, skin colour takes on additional significance. The anthropology figure, with his classical drapery but his Cro-Magnon-like colouring, unites the two images to either side of him and suggests the influence of two different heritages in the modern anthropological observer: a heritage of civilization, linked among other things by a broadly classical style, and a deeper, biological heritage still present in the scientific investigator today. Meanwhile, colour disappears as a meaningful distinction in the two humanoid skulls which are identically blanched in death. Here alone in Meière's illustrations of scientific investigation has man turned his gaze on himself and found his own evolutionary origins still alive inside.

A coda: the evolution themes resurface

While the nebulas-to-pyramids dome Hale and Breasted proposed late in the day was not to be, a very similar iconographic scheme did appear above the entrance to the building entrance, in a marble pseudo-pediment of Lawrie's design (Figure 6.15).[85] The pediment's subject matter was set slightly before Breasted and Hale dreamed up their evolution dome scheme; it is detailed in a printed memo to the Carnegie Corporation signed off by Gano Dunn on 31 May 1923. Dunn describes how 'the Sculptor has portrayed the elements with which Science and Scientific Research deal – Earth and Cloud through the various forms of the Vegetable and Animal kingdom to Man. At the apex is the sun – the source of warmth and light'.[86] Lawrie's design does indeed portray this range of elements, moving inwards towards Man the Hunter, bow raised against a stag. Its arrangement however does not merely suggest a neutral parade of elements, but speaks of evolution. Clouds and fire at the outside left and right, followed by prehistoric animals, pterosaur and trilobite, curling plant and advancing range of mountains, man and his prey, met under the sun. Beneath this parade, a hand holds a sphere from which rises a figure of man, arms to his side, facing outwards.

This pediment features a significant number of the same iconographical beats that the dome plan called for: the clouds and fire at the

Figure 6.15 Lee Lawrie, pseudo-pediment for the exterior door of the National Academy of Sciences (*c*. 1923). Photo credit: Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-HS503- 2796.

outside seem to suggest the earliest, most fundamental forces of earth formation; prehistoric creatures; plants and mountain formations; the arrival of human life represented by bow and arrow. It seems reasonable to see some relationship between this pediment and the unrealized dome scheme. Perhaps the pediment, planned a little earlier, set the idea of an evolutionary scheme percolating in Hale's mind. Perhaps the pediment design was modified slightly from a generic array of elements to an image that would celebrate origins and evolution after the dome scheme was drafted. Hale would later describe it, more or less in passing, in his contribution to Goodhue's memorial volume, as 'symbolizing the evolution of man'.[87]

The bronze doors over which the pseudo-pediment stands, also a Lawrie piece, depict eight scientific luminaries, from Aristotle and Euclid, through Galileo and Isaac Newton, to Charles Lyell, Charles Darwin, James Watt and Louis Pasteur (Figure 6.16). Lawrie's intricate border designs for each of the eight panels feature numerous motifs representing cultures around the world, from an Indian elephant to Lawrie's standard symbol for America, the bison. Artistic elements in these motifs crib directly from Egyptian, Assyrian, Persian, Minoan and classical Greek sources. In this entranceway, then, we have three tendencies prominent in the building. In the door there is the recurring emphasis on the great, named scientific men of the West, usually shown

Figure 6.16 Lee Lawrie, bronze exterior doors of the National Academy of Sciences (1924), partial view. Photo credit: Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-13760 DLC.

in the rather undynamic act of pondering something, and also the vague, unelaborated suggestion of some affiliation between science and ancient art, Eastern and Western. In the pseudo-pediment, Lawrie's image of, to paraphrase Dunn, the elements with which science concerns itself, is organized along a chronological and developmental axis which suggests science not merely as the study of the various constituent parts of the universe, but also as the organizer of a progressive historical narrative that begins with the basic constituent matter of life and culminates in Civilized Man.

Conclusion

When Lee Lawrie visited the NAS some time in the 1950s, he was disappointed to find that much of the work he and his colleagues had produced was inaccessible: his bronze entrance doors were stuck open and unviewable (pocket doors lodged in their pockets); Herter's Prometheus mural for the Great Hall and his own 'History of Writing' mantel were covered with charts and 'figuring'.[88] 'The necessities of a nuclear age do not seem to leave room for art,' Lawrie concluded. 'I recognize that when the emphasis is on survival, the scientists cannot be expected to be concerned with much else.'[89] These elegiac comments reflect a change in one lay person's optimistic image of science in the aftermath of the Second World War, but also constitute perceptive observations about a changing *aesthetic* of science, and of civic architecture more widely. The NAS is a text of a very particular time, reflecting a period when history of science was not yet peripheral to scientists' self-conception, and when symbolic and narrative decorative art was an important component of any work of grand public architecture. Lawrie looked back appreciatively to the scientists he had worked with, praising Hale, Breasted and Gano Dunn, all of whom had come to his studio and worked with him to ensure a building that was beautiful and meaningful.

A century on from its construction, it is hard to comprehend how Goodhue's design ever bothered the Commission of Fine Arts, so much at home does it look in Washington. This is in part because the type of stripped classicism it pioneered had captured and helped shape a zeitgeist, and would itself provide one of the models for so many other Washington buildings in the decades to come, particularly in the massive boom of federal construction during the 1930s. It is a building that has spoken and continues to speak to numerous visitors in and out of the sciences, just as Hale intended.

The form the National Academy took was shaped to a great extent by compromise and consensus-seeking, as is inevitable with a large project in which many sides have an interest. Hale's plans were modified by contact with outside forces: tight deadlines, funding constraints, the rubber stamp of the CFA, the need to please a body of eminent scientists. Just the first of these factors was enough to put paid to Hale and Breasted's enthusiastic plan to embody the 'epitome of evolution' in the dome, and led to some less than inspired sequences, as in Lawrie's rather static bronze panels of uncontroversially great scientists.

If these were restraining pressures, there were also compensations in the collaborative process, particularly the benefit of the reciprocal creativity of the NAS's architect and artists. Goodhue, Meière and Lawrie were, like Hale and Breasted, interested in connections between ancient past and present, and between East and West. They seized an opportunity to develop their own artistic styles that bypassed classicism to find inspiration in a deeper, stranger antiquity. Hale's elaboration of the Alexandrian origin of the academy tradition undoubtedly inspired Goodhue's invented 'Alexandrian' style. Supported by Hale's historical account, this label gave Goodhue cover to develop a classicism that respected tradition without hidebound historicism, a project that would inform the designs for the Nebraska Capitol and Los Angeles Central Library, which he was at work on at the same time. We have also detected traces of Breasted's ideas about human development and Oriental origins in Lee Lawrie's writing mantel, and in his incorporation of Egyptian and Mesopotamian imagery alongside the Greek on his bronze grilles and spectrohelioscope case. Finally, we see Hale and Breasted's interest in evolution and ancestral connection come out in Meière's treatment of Ancient and Modern (Roman) Man and their anthropological observer, presented as inheritor of two different kinds of human antiquity, and in Lawrie's pseudo-pediment, with its clear organizing principle of progressive advance through prehistoric creatures to Man the Hunter.

While its decorative programmes and its style were both significantly less bold and explicit in the claims they made for the Eastern origins than either Breasted or Hale might personally have liked, it nonetheless suggests the possibilities that this conception offered for modifying broadly classical designs and broadly conventional histories. The way that the building is interlaced with references to ancient Eastern art in unexpected places suggests that, in a building which equates science with civilization, civilization should look like Babylon, Assyria and Egypt.

Notes

1 Gano Dunn dedication address, 'for release' 28.4.1924. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
2 Kevles, 'George Ellery Hale', 427–9. See also Kevles, 'Not a hundred millionaires', 37–46.
3 Kevles, 'Hale and the role of a central scientific institution', 273–81; Kevles, *The Physicists*, 109–38; Wright, *George Ellery Hale*, 285–317; Tobey, *American Ideology*, 21–30.
4 Thackray, 'Pre-history of an academic discipline', 466–7.
5 See Wyllie, *Caltech's Architectural Heritage*; Kargon, 'Temple to science', iv–31; Goodstein, *Millikan's School*, 41–87; Scheid, 'Pasadena's civic center', 389–412; see also Kevles, 'Into hostile political camps', 47–60; DeVorkin, 'George Ellery Hale's internationalism', 153–60.
6 See Sheehan and Osterbrock, 'Hale's "Little Elf"', 93–114, a penetrating analysis of Hale's mental health troubles, their treatment and his own understanding of what he was experiencing. The authors retrospectively diagnose Hale as suffering from Bipolar II; despite the problematic nature of retrospective diagnosis, their larger point that Hale's periods of energy and productivity were intimately connected to his periods of depression and lethargy is supported by his own understanding of what he was experiencing.
7 Kevles, 'George Ellery Hale', 431–2.
8 Hale, 'National academies', 14 November 1913, 682–4. The Ptolemaic Dynasty originated with one of Alexander the Great's generals, Ptolemy I Soter, who inherited control of Egypt after Alexander's death. The dynasty lasted through the reign of Cleopatra VII and her brother Ptolemy XIII, when Augustus conquered Egypt and incorporated it as a Roman province in 30 BCE. Under the Ptolemaic Dynasty, Egypt's elite culture blended the Hellenistic culture of its rulers with the existing elite culture of Egypt. This hybrid is apparent in the art of the period, from which one might reasonably extrapolate a corresponding 'fusion' in architecture. A good example of fusion between Greek and Egyptian art *and* science can be found in the stunningly beautiful late Ptolemaic Dendera Zodiac (Louvre D 38/E 13482).
9 At 7.4.1914 JHB to GEH. Box 31, JHBP, ISAC.
10 See Reingold, 'Case of the disappearing laboratory', 82–6.
11 At 20.10.1917 GEH to Elihu Root. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP. See Lagemann, 'Politics of knowledge', 215–16; Wright, *George Ellery Hale*, 307–14; Kevles, *The Physicists*, 112–17; Kevles, 'George Ellery Hale', 430.
12 Hale 1914: 14, fig. 2; 27.11.1914 GEH to Charles A. Coolidge; 7.12.1914 Charles A. Coolidge to GEH. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP.
13 Wyllie, *Caltech's Architectural Heritage*, 31–66; Hale, 'National Academy of Sciences', 45–6.
14 Hale, 'National Academy of Sciences', 46. See 28.5.1920 GEH to BGG. Box 18, Folder 17. 23.5.1922 BGG to GEH, Box 54, Folder 4. 25.1.1923 BGG to GEH; 28.6.1923 BGG to GEH; 27.10.1923 GEH to BGG. Box 55, Folder 1. GEHP. That last letter from Hale to Goodhue thanks him for sending an unnamed book. Hale says: 'I am no philosopher, and therefore may not go clear through, but I am curious to become acquainted with the ideas of a man who has attracted you so strongly and whom I hope to meet some day'. The book in question must surely have been the British architect William R. Lethaby's *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (1891), which certainly was formative to Goodhue in just this way, and which he would likely have felt would help Hale understand the process of commissioning and overseeing new buildings.
15 For general overviews of these projects and their design, see Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*; Luebke, *Harmony of the Arts*; McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol'. We could also include among his late career modernist triumphs his never built design for the Kansas City Liberty Memorial; see Grossman, 'Two postwar competitions'.
16 Oliver, *Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue*, 176–85, esp. 184; Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue*, 176–82; Wilson, 'Modernized classicism', 272–303.
17 At 11.6.1918 Goodhue to Hale. Hale archives. See Kohler and Scott, eds, *Designing the Nation's Capital*.
18 An undated drawing discovered by Richard Guy Wilson in the NAS archives probably represents an earlier, very sketchy idea, that Goodhue dropped because of budgetary constraints and stylistic imperatives. This drawing shows a much more 'Persian' treatment, with a more dramatic massing and a dome visible from street level. See Wilson, 'Modernized classicism', 276; Dreller, 'Bertram G. Goodhue's "Alexandrian" Style', 42–3; Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue*, 176–7; Central Policy Files 1914–1918, Property & Equipment: Real Estate, Buildings, NAS-NRC proposed Architect's Sketch, 1918, NAS Archives.

19 The membership of the committee changed slightly between its formation in 1919 and the final stages of building. Hale, Dunn, John C. Merriam, Arthur Amos Noyes and Robert Millikan were on it throughout. Charles D. Walcott and James R. Angell were on the committee early on, and Vernon Kellogg, H. E. Howe and Augustus Trowbridge joined it later. Henry S. Pritchett sat on it as the representative of the Carnegie Corporation. See 23.5.1923 Michelson to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
20 At 15.3.1922 BGG to GEH. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP.
21 At 7.2.1922 GEH to John C. Merriam; 3.6.1922 Gano Dunn to GEH, Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP.
22 At 20.9.1923 JHB to Charles Breasted. Box 18, JHBP, ISAC.
23 The Rockefeller foundations had nothing to do with the building but contributed towards endowing fellowships.
24 Cattell, 'Organization of scientific men', 576–8; on this dispute see Sokal, 'Promoting science', 69–71; Tobey, *American Ideology*, 39–41.
25 At 3.6.1922 Gano Dunn to GEH. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP. Cattell courted fights everywhere he went and Hale was hardly alone as a target of his ire. See Sokal, 'James McKeen Cattell'.
26 Wilson, 'Modernized classicism', 273.
27 At 31.5.1923 Gano Dunn, 'Memorandum to the Carnegie Corporation of New York on the Building Designed by Bertram G. Goodhue for the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council and the Progress of its Construction'. Central Policy Files, Executive Board, Committee on Building, 1922–1923, NAS Archives.
28 Wilson, 'Modernized classicism', 278; Dreller, 'Bertram G. Goodhue', 12–14.
29 Meière, 'Distinguished artist', 10.
30 Dunn cannot, however, have run his memo by Hale because his understanding of the historical period in which Alexandria was a centre of learning is wildly off base: 'Between the erection of the buildings of the Tomb of Cecilia Metella in Rome [first century CE] and those of the Byzantine period, lies a time that may be classed as the Alexandrian period.' Hale would have known better.
31 Reingold, 'Case of the disappearing laboratory', 85.
32 Gano Dunn dedication address, 'for release' 28.4.1924. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP. This line was directly addressed to 'Mr. President', Calvin Coolidge, who was present and also delivered an address.
33 Brawer and Skolnik, *Art Deco Murals*, 43–58; Meière, 'Distinguished artist', 10–11.
34 Dear, 'History of science', 89.
35 Thackray, 'Pre-history', 458–65.
36 Sarton, 'New humanism', 13.
37 Sarton, *History of Science and the New Humanism*, 58.
38 Sarton, *History of Science and the New Humanism*, 60.
39 See Sarton, 'Fourth preface', a memoriam of Breasted. Breasted's Egyptological work included translations of an important medical papyrus, his *Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus*, a significant contribution to early history of science. This was really the only traditional Egyptological endeavour Breasted worked on in the 1920s. See Sarton, 'Review of the Edwin Smith Papyrus'; Sarton, 'Review of the Edwin Smith Surgical Papyrus'. In the publication of his 1931 lecture on the importance of the East as the originator of Western civilization and science and the two regions' continued imbrication, he namechecks Breasted's *Edwin Smith* volume as one that has 'more than fulfilled our expectations'; Sarton, *History of Science and the New Humanism*, 70.
40 Sarton, 'Why Isis?'.
41 Sarton, 'Why Isis?', 237–8.
42 See Sarton, *History of Science and the New Humanism*, 59–110; Sarton, *A History of Science*, 19–129.
43 Gerald Holton sees this change taking places in the editorial slant of *Isis* soon after the founding of the History of Science Society; Holton, 'George Sarton', 82.
44 Sarton, 'Why Isis?', 236–7; see Glick, 'George Sarton', 495–6, esp. n. 18.
45 Sarton, 'Artificial fertilization'.
46 Sarton, 'War and civilization', 321. See Thackray, 'Pre-history', 465–6.
47 An attempt to forestall this criticism was a mural by Albert Herter for the NAS Board Room, showing Abraham Lincoln chartering the academy with great scientists of its early membership grouped around him. This was an imaginary scene; such a meeting never really took place. The image, perhaps accidentally, speaks to this fact in its cut-and-paste composition. It is an odd

piece, out of keeping in both style and subject matter with the rest of the building, including with Herter's own much more dynamic and stylized mural of Prometheus. See 8.12.1923 Gano Dunn to GEH; 15.12.1923 Gano Dunn to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.

48 At 26.3.1924 BGG to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP. Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 47, Folder 23, LLP; 16.3.1924 LL to BGG. Box 8, LLP.

49 Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 47, Folder 23, LLP.

50 Rochberg, *Heavenly Writing*, 15–29, 237–86; Koch-Westenholz, *Mesopotamian Astrology*, 130–6.

51 At 13.2.1924 LL to BGG. Box 35, NAS folder, LLP.

52 Haller, 'Drama of Law', 4; on Breasted's personal advice to Lawrie, see Miller, 'From Mesopotamia', 87–8.

53 30.8.1926 GEH to JHB. Box 31, JHBP, ISAC. See also Hale, *Study of Stellar Evolution*, 29, with an account of astronomers' descent from Chaldean, i.e. Babylonian, 'seers and soothsayers'.

54 Breasted, 'De hymnis in solem'.

55 Breasted, *History of Egypt*, 356–64; Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 91–3. See Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 3–5, 98–113; Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, 5–6, 21–6; Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 108–12, and 375–9.

56 At 22.6.1924 GEH to JHB; 30.8.1926 GEH to JHB. Box 31, JHBP, ISAC. 7.8.1923 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP. In a strange coincidence, the Tomb of Tutankhamun excavator Howard Carter was dining with Goodhue the very night that the latter was suddenly taken ill and died. Carter was on his 1924 lecture tour of the United States, when he would have been a highly sought-after dinner guest (a few days later, he would be meeting President Coolidge). I would suggest that Goodhue's introduction to Carter must have been effected by Breasted or Hale.

57 At 4.10.1927 GEH to LL. Box 26, Folder 17, GEHP.

58 At 12.5.1928 LL to GEH. Box 26, Folder 17, GEHP.

59 At 24.11.26 GEH to LL; 26.11.26 GEH to LL, in which he recommends Lawrie use *Ancient Times* for photo references; 4.10.27 GEH to LL; 12.5.28 LL to GEH; 22.5.28 GEH to LL; 18.7.28 LL to GEH; 2.8.28 GEH to LL. Box 26, Folder 17, GEHP. 19.4.1928 GEH to LL. Box 8, LLP.

60 At 22.5.1928 GEH to LL; 2.8.1928 GEH to LL. Box 26, Folder 17, GEHP.

61 Hale blanketed scientific friends and Carnegie Corporation board members with an identical request for suggestions for great scientists to include in Lawrie's bronzes. See, e.g., 23.7.1921 GEH to John C. Merriam; 1.8.1921 W.W. Campbell to GEH; 5.8.1921 James R. Angell to GEH; 6.8.1921 Charles G. Abbott to GEH; 10.8.1921 F.B. Jewett to GEH; 11.8.1921 J.J. Carty to GEH. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP.

62 At 20.4.1924 GEH to JHB. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.

63 At 16.5.1923 Gano Dunn to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP. This is one of many examples of Hale ruling unilaterally on design decisions, with Dunn's blessing and without apparent consultation of the rest of the committee.

64 At 7.11.1923 BGG to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP. Hale's articles had devoted a great deal of attention to the Berlin Academy as a model of forward-thinking research. Its exclusion from this quartet has two likely justifications: first, it was (though just barely) a more recent foundation than the other four, so lost out on seniority. Second and probably more decisively, it was a casualty of a general anti-German sentiment in the aftermath of the First World War. Germans are notably underrepresented among the procession of great scientists in Lawrie's bronzes, a fact that was commented upon by at least one of the scientists' whose opinions Hale solicited; 6.8.1921 Charles G. Abbott to GEH. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP. The German background of one of the engineers bidding for work was also investigated before he could be considered. These are interesting examples of the way that highly specific historical circumstances of the early 1920s affected the 'universal' narrative of science and civilization in the NAS. 4.7.1924 GEH to Paul Brockett; 10.7.1924 Brockett to GEH; 22.7.1924 Brockett to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.

65 At 22.6.1923 JHB to GEH; 8.12.1923 JHB to GEH; 9.8.1924 JHB to GEH. Box 5, Folder 7, GEHP.

66 Sheehan and Osterbrock, 'Hale's "Little Elf"', 108.

67 At 28.5.1923 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.

68 At 7.6.1923 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.

69 At 7.6.1923 JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.

70 At 3.6.1923 GEH to Gano Dunn. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.

71 At 3.7.1923 Walter S. Adams to BGG; 13.7.1923 BGG to Walter S. Adams. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.

72 At 3.6.1923 GEH to Gano Dunn. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
73 Brawer and Skolnik, *Art Deco Murals*, 55–7; Meière, 'Distinguished artist'.
74 At 22.7.1921 GEH to BGG. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP.
75 At 15.12.1922 BGG to GEH. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP; 25.1.1923 BGG to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
76 At 4.9.1922 Dayton C. Miller to BGG; 12.9.1922 Gano Dunn to Dayton C. Miller; 13.9.1922 Dayton C. Miller to Gano Dunn. 29.9.1922 Gano Dunn to Building Committee. Box 54, Folder 4, GEHP.
77 At 25.1.1923 BGG to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
78 Meière, 'Distinguished artist', 10.
79 In antiquity, polychromy was a feature of most Greek art, including the art that later solidified the white marble ideal, but the reality of Greek polychromy has had less influence on modern 'classicism' than the blanched ideal.
80 Osborn, *Men of the Old Stone Age*, 315–16.
81 On this kind of perceptive 'misreading', see Clark, 'Evolution for John Doe,' 1275–1303. See also Sommer, 'Seriality', 471–8.
82 Osborn, *Hall of the Age of Man*; Clark, 'Evolution for John Doe', 1299–1303; Clark, *God–or Gorilla*, 116, 209–12; Moser, *Ancestral Images*, 156–60; Semonin, 'Empire and extinction', 178–80; Sommer, *History Within*, 84–92; Cain, 'Direct medium', 292–8.
83 Osborn, *Men of the Old Stone Age*, 320–30.
84 McMahon, *The Races of Europe*, 1–6, 203–5; Manias, *Race, Science, and the Nation*, 212–30.
85 I have been unable to find any correspondence relating to this lintel; it may be lost or it may have only been discussed in person, perhaps between Goodhue and Lawrie, or between Dunn or Hale and Lawrie directly.
86 At 31.5.1923 Gano Dunn, 'Memorandum to the Carnegie Corporation of New York on the Building Designed by Bertram G. Goodhue for the National Academy of Sciences and the National Research Council and the Progress of its Construction'. Central Policy Files, Executive Board, Committee on Building, 1922–1923, NAS Archives.
87 Hale, 'National Academy of Sciences', 49.
88 This, it must be noted, is in strong contrast to the NAS today, whose excellent cultural programmes could provide a model for how institutions can act as careful stewards of their own architectural and artistic heritage.
89 These two comments come from different drafts of Lawrie's unpublished autobiography. Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 47 Boy, Folders 11, 25, LLP. Lawrie also describes Hale as 'president' of the NAS, a post he never occupied; it is telling and unsurprising that Lawrie remembered him this way.

7

Modernity: the Nebraska State Capitol and Los Angeles Central Library

In 1929, the year after architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue's new State Capitol at Lincoln, Nebraska (Figure 7.1), opened to the public, the Nebraska-based journal *The Prairie Schooner* published a seven-page poem by a certain Rosemonde E. Richards, called simply 'The Nebraska State Capitol'. In striking, ecstatic ekphrasis, the poet indicated her appreciation for the building's cutting-edge, modern design, a towering skyscraper rising from the prairies, and for its elaborately planned sculptural programme celebrating the state, the family, agriculture and the sublime:

> Over the shadowed door
> And around the whole monument,
> Egypt and the Orient, Greece and Rome,
> And all nations of the world
> Have come to merge in one great architecture.

These antecedents appeared again throughout the poem:

> In the sloping walls
> We fashioned a building of the Pharaohs.
> But this is America,
> And the times that go together
> Have different ways.
> The dignity of Morning shines over our souls,
> And the long night of first Creation is ended.[1]

Figure 7.1 Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska (opened 1928), south façade, architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, LC-G612- 21788 [P&P].

This amateur poet had identified a feature of Goodhue's building that struck many observers: its simultaneous integration of the ancient and the modern, the civilizations of the past and the American present.

In this chapter, we turn to the building which most extensively explored the relationship of a new American modernity to ancient Oriental predecessors, the Nebraska Capitol, and, somewhat more briefly, its stylistic companion, the Los Angeles Central Library. I will consider the role Eastern precedents played in allowing Goodhue, the architect for each, to formulate the new 'lack of style', which capped his career. As we shall see, the 'Eastern-ness', 'ancientness' and the simultaneous modernity of this style was perceived and celebrated by Goodhue's collaborators and by receivers in the specialist and mainstream press. These two buildings also boasted elaborately planned, intellectually complex decorative programmes which told stories about civilization, past and present. Perhaps nowhere else do we find so explicitly articulated the sense that there was a special connection between a distant, monumental past and the requirements of the contemporary United States.

Making the Nebraska Capitol

Goodhue's design for the Nebraska Capitol was selected through an architectural competition, first mooted in 1919 and ultimately decided in 1921 by a panel including Nebraska's then governor Samuel R. McKelvie and under the professional advice of Omaha-based architect Thomas Kimball, then the head of the American Institute of Architects.[2] Goodhue's plan stands out with almost comical boldness among various neoclassical domes submitted by other architects.[3] Goodhue's design for Nebraska was the daring experimentation of an architect secure in his reputation and his ability to work across styles – and ready to try something new, perhaps bolstered by the challenges of developing his 'Alexandrian' style for the NAS. The Nebraska Capitol has been widely considered the masterful culmination of his career's seamless movement from inventive, imposing Gothic Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival to the spare, monolithic modernism represented in Nebraska's prairie skyscraper. Even more so than the NAS, the last building Goodhue lived to see finished, it also became an inadvertent memorial to his achievements when he died unexpectedly after a heart attack in 1924, before the building was completed.

When Goodhue submitted the successful bid for the capitol he already intended that Lee Lawrie would provide its sculptures, and angrily fought against an attempt by the Capitol Commission to put the sculptural work out to a general bid, which he described as an insult to Lawrie who had been 'my collaborator and not my employee in any sense on the competition drawings'.[4] Lawrie's rise to prominence as a public sculptor was inseparably linked to his working relationship with Goodhue. Their partnership reflected both men's conviction that sculpture needed to be an integral part of planning a building, and never an afterthought, following what they saw as ancient models. In buildings Lawrie and Goodhue worked on together, the distinction between architecture and decoration is blurred. Together they created structures that emerged as one 'sculpted mass', in the expressive phrase of David Frazer Lewis.[5]

For interior work, most of the decoration was in the hands of Hildreth Meière, who designed a dizzying array of mosaics, stained glass, paintings and even a large rug. Meière had been selected by Goodhue for the Nebraska commission before he chose her for the NAS, though she wound up completing the NAS work first. The NAS was her training ground in Goodhue's ideas and methods. On the Nebraska commission, she mostly worked with the building's final artistic overseer, University

of Nebraska philosopher-anthropologist Hartley Burr Alexander, after Goodhue's death.

Alexander served, officially, as 'symbologist' on the project. He was there to help Goodhue ensure that the building's decorative programme would fulfil the Commission's brief to create:

> An inspiring monument worthy of the State for which it stands; a thing of beauty, so conceived and fashioned as to properly record and exploit our civilization, aspirations, and patriotism, past, present, and future.[6]

Alexander would prove to be a major influence on the final form of the building, both before and especially after Goodhue's premature death, working closely with Goodhue, Lawrie and Meière to produce an exquisitely planned and obsessively detailed iconographic programme. The experience for Alexander was a formative one. His role as symbologist became one that he would play on other buildings and exhibitions, including Goodhue's Los Angeles Central Library, discussed below, the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago and New York's Rockefeller Center.[7] Robert E. Knoll describes this role as Alexander's 'invention of a new profession'.[8] In 1927, he was made an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects because of his work as a symbologist, more or less a unique figure among their ranks.

Ultimately, this group produced an iconographic programme of extraordinary complexity and scope, incorporating the human, natural and supernatural worlds, celebrating everything from the abstract 'geniuses' of the four elements to the Nebraskan prairie schoolmarm. Several themes dominate the iconography, all of them successfully perceived by Rosemonde E. Richards in her poem quoted at the beginning of this chapter. Progression through time from an antiquity, prehistoric and historic, to a culmination in the present is the most pervasive organizing principle. In this contemporary culmination of history, we find the state, the White prairie family and the civic activity of Nebraskan life (schools, churches, builders). Before the arrival of the White settler family in Nebraska, American Indians and the natural world of the Great Plains exist in a timeless, expectant stasis, waiting in patient nobility to host the Nebraskan state and the civilization it represents.

These iconographic schemes interact with the space of the building such that historical narratives move through or around the building while allegorical abstractions serve to orient the viewer. For instance, Meière's mosaic for the floor of the building's Rotunda features a central medallion

depicting 'Mother Nature Enthroned between Agriculture and Industry', surrounded by four medallions showing allegorical figures, geniuses of the four elements (Figure 7.2). These images are encircled by guilloche bands looping around the central medallion and twisting to surround each cardinal medallion. Within these bands are processions of plant and animal life on the Great Plains moving forward through time in evolutionary order from the earliest prehistoric to the relatively contemporary, the creatures around each medallion reflecting also their respective identifications with the four different elemental geniuses.[9] Because the region had proved a rich source of paleontological remains, the procession was able to create a detailed evolutionary sequence while using only prehistoric specimens that had been found in the former Nebraska territory (somewhat larger than the state). The most up-to-date scientific knowledge, and detailed reconstruction drawings, were supplied to Meière by the director of the University of Nebraska State Museum and State Geologist, Erwin H. Barbour.[10] Like the treatment of ancient civilizations, the prehistoric creatures represent an impossibly ancient antiquity which simultaneously proclaims the building's modernity: cutting-edge scientific understandings of the past and its connection to the present.[11]

Figure 7.2 Hildreth Meière, 'Mother Nature Enthroned with Agriculture and Industry', surrounded by 'Geniuses of the Waters, the Fire, the Earth, the Air' (1927), mosaic for rotunda floor of the Nebraska State Capitol, photographed from above. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, LC-G612- 21861 [P&P].

Within the elaborate symbolic schemes of the Nebraska State House, Oriental and Orientalizing imagery serves several primary purposes: to anchor the building's historical narratives to the earliest periods of a linear history of man and mankind, a starting point for narratives of law, government and agriculture; and to speak to a timeless agricultural and pastoral life – the latter connecting Assyrian imagery in unexpected ways to the building's American Indian imagery and themes, as we have seen in Chapter 5. Here we will focus primarily on its treatment of the East as part of the long progressive development of civilization in edifying historical sequences.

Assessing the building's 'New Style'

Richard's poem has provided one example of how ordinary, educated citizens responded to the building: with great fervour and, at least in Richard's case, serious engagement with the building's symbolic aims. The architectural press was, though content to express their appreciation in mere prose, essentially in agreement. The building was widely recognized as a crowning achievement of Goodhue's career and a significant moment in American civic architecture. From the time that it won the design competition in 1921 up through the mid-1930s, the building was frequently cited in the press as a standard bearer of modern design.[12]

As McCready explains, observers have long struggled to define the style of the building and its sculptures.[13] The architect Sidney Fiske Kimball, writing in 1927, referred to 'Assyrian and Moorish' elements of the interiors.[14] Shortly after the original plans won the competition, the *American Magazine of Art* explained: 'Mr. Goodhue is chiefly associated in the public's mind with work in the Gothic style, but his design for the State Capitol of Nebraska follows no definite style … The design is essentially original and unique.'[15] Symbologist Alexander himself, writing of the building while it was in progress in the *Nebraska State Journal*, spoke of 'the Asiatic suggestion more or less conveyed by the whole form of the building', intensified in Lawrie's highly Assyrian buffalo-themed entrance. 'However,' he wrote, 'his buffalo is splendidly autochthonous, conventionalized in a mode as new as the architecture itself.' Lawrie's sculptural work is 'Asiatic without being Asian,' as well as 'Heraldic without being European,' Greek and mediaeval without being either in style. 'He is doing precisely what Mr. Goodhue has done with the building as a whole: he has drawn from every source without adopting

the formalisms of any of them, and he has fused all into a new and living style,' Alexander proclaimed.[16] Writing shortly after the building was formally opened in 1928, the *American Magazine of Art*, which had earlier praised the competition entry's uniqueness, now confirmed that: 'its style is essentially its own'.[17] The publication quoted in full a brochure issued by the Nebraska Capitol Commission: 'Inspired by the ancient structures of Asia, of Greece, of Egypt, of Spain, and of the south-western American states, the architect has conceived something that is distinctly American.'[18]

More recently, writing in 1991, Philip Larson referred to it as 'somewhat Assyrian-Babylonian', and a building which 'broke the chokehold of classicism'.[19] Writing in 1981, Orville H. Zabel stressed that the period was an exciting time for archaeological rediscovery of the ancient past and suggests that, 'It is not surprising, then, that Goodhue incorporated much of the new, but, actually, very old, artistic styles into the Nebraska capitol.' Zabel understands the building's architectural form, not just its decoration, as incorporating significant Assyrian influences, as well as Egyptian and Byzantine. He includes a plate from French excavator Victor Place's 1867 publication depicting the Dur-Sharrukin (modern Khorsabad) central palace gate.[20] Against the plans and images of the Nebraska Capitol, the archaeological reimagining of Dur-Sharrukin looks right at home.[21]

In summary, we see that many writers, at the time and more recently, have noted the building's ability to incorporate various 'influences' while emerging as distinctly 'modern' and also distinctly 'American'. The 'Asiatic', 'Oriental' or 'Assyrian/Assyrian-Babylonian' are recurring descriptors. What exactly was it in the building's design that evoked these frequent comparisons to such a range of different predecessors? There is nothing obviously or uniquely Assyrian, Babylonian or Egyptian about Goodhue's skyscraper. If the sloping walls, as Richard's poem notes, do have a bit of Egypt in them, there are also features that can be identified as emerging from Goodhue's Gothic sensibilities, features that have a Romanesque quality, and even the lessons he had learned in designing the NAS in using classical principles, particularly around symmetry and balance, in ways that suited him. The skyscraper and its domed top might have a 'Moorish' quality, but it is quite un-Assyrian, Babylonian or Egyptian. Whatever influence Goodhue found in ancient Assyrian, Egyptian or other Oriental or 'Asiatic' styles, his design is nothing like the kitschy Assyrian Revival of the 1929 Samson Tire Company building in Los Angeles, with its spiky crenellations and ziggurat-esque central mass (Figure 5.16), or Egyptian Revival works like the 1927 Pythian Temple in New York City

(by architect Thomas W. Lamb). It is even less obviously 'Eastern' than his slightly later Los Angeles Central Library design, discussed below, whose crowning pyramid unambiguously speaks of Egypt.

As Zabel's parallel to the Dur-Sharrukin central gate suggests, the most characteristically Assyrian-informed element of the architecture is found in the wide, low arches around the building's entrance, which do indeed echo archaeological and art historical drawings of the reconstructed façades of Assyrian palaces, walls and gates. In this respect, it is important to consider the influence of academic *re-imaginings*, much more than drawings of photos of archaeological remains themselves, in influencing the styles of architects who saw them.[22] Furthermore, the sparse, clean style of some of these reconstructions, born of various practical considerations (to make images that could be mass-produced while retaining clarity for academic understanding, to not overstep or speculate too wildly where there is an absence of surviving detail), perhaps came to be read as *aesthetically* desirable.[23] Place's reconstruction of Dur-Sharrukin features a beautifully blank, texture-less stretch of (no longer surviving) upper wall (cf. Figure 1.5) which might be the sort of thing that impressed Goodhue for his Nebraska design in which large stretches of smooth stone present a monolithic and imposing spectacle, particularly striking in the prairie setting. Indeed, as Richards' poem again illustrates, it is perhaps this very monumental quality that most evoked thoughts of Assyria, Egypt and Babylon. Monumentality was understood as a key attribute of the architecture of these ancient cultures, perhaps even something that they had achieved with a special perfection.

Goodhue and Lawrie on the lessons of antiquity

For Goodhue himself, the past was an ambiguous reference point. It could be rifled for principles and ideas, but what one found must be modified, for the new realities both of modern construction methods and of America's unique identity: 'Art is racial,' Charles Harris Whitaker quoted Goodhue as saying. 'What the art of the great melting-pot of the different people called the United States some day may be, we do not know; but we may be certain it will not be that of any dead or alien past.'[24]

Lee Lawrie saw his work with Goodhue as having a blueprint not so much in the forms, as in the *ethos* of antiquity.[25] Lawrie understood sculpture as integral to a structure, a concept he thought had been better understood in times past:

> On buildings, the sculptor's object is not to make an outstanding detail as much as it is his job to help complete the building … The sculptures of Babylon, Egypt, Greece, and even of the Middle Ages were made almost entirely for and on buildings. The art museum is a recent invention … sculpture in the early days was done for a reason.[26]

As he reflected on his work towards the end of his life, he reiterated this same set of beliefs:

> The ancients' work was for the glorification of their gods or their people, their country. While I have not been conscious of having a credo, I have felt a sculptor should reflect the stage of Civilization at which we have arrived. I have felt that a sculptor should not work with the museum as his objective. I think it is more likely to be wanted some day by a museum if a sculptor's reason for working is a great one.[27]

Elsewhere he explained the ancient lineage of the sculptor as: 'the earliest of the architectural craftsmen … he carved the winged bull and other gods in Assyria'.[28] Lawrie was then not only respectful of ancient aesthetics, but also of what he understood to be ancient ideals of sculpture as an active and meaningful part of a building's existence. Lawrie's understanding of architectural sculpture as an inherent part of the structure is reflected stylistically in his preference, shared with Goodhue, for integrating sculptural forms directly into the mass of a building.[29]

Lawrie not only saw the ethos of the ancient sculptor as a model for imitation, but also the style of the ancient East. 'Of all the historic styles of sculpture,' he wrote, 'perhaps the Egyptian and Assyrian would look more nearly appropriate on a modern building,' which he felt 'calls for directness and simplicity of sculpture – a sculpture unencumbered with mannerisms'.[30] Lawrie wrote of his friend's work on his final masterpiece:

> The walls of Nebraska have a majesty that suggests Babylon, Persepolis, Egypt. The faintest hint of the Renaissance, the smallest suggestion of a French touch in carving or color would conjoin ill with the character of the building. Here for whatever pattern is used, Simplicity and Directness rule … It was the Nebraska experience that led Goodhue to believe that the beauty of a building increased in ratio to its justified simplicity.[31]

‘Simplicity and Directness’ (here, proper nouns) are associated with the great powers of the ancient East, and antithetical to the Renaissance or French aesthetic influences that would have defined civic architecture of the American Renaissance.[32]

For Lawrie, the journey towards simplicity was associated with Goodhue’s movement backwards in his influences – from the Gothic to the truly ancient, a journey forwards into modernism and simultaneously backwards in time to a period of purer, simpler, more harmonious integration of art and architecture, form and purpose.[33] For Goodhue and Lawrie, the aim was not to find the specifically Assyrian or Egyptian or Gothic style that suited, risking a mere kitsch revivalism, but to get at an essence of sublime simplicity that both detected in the ancient world.

Egypt and America: first and last

Contemporary responses to the Nebraska Capitol express a widespread sense that an ancient ‘Eastern’ style was appropriate to the modern United States, a pyramid on the plains the right form for a uniquely American building. This special relationship between modern America and early civilization is also strikingly reflected in a pair of figures which frames the central tower at the north (primary) entrance. This entrance is overloaded with sculptural commentary (Figure 7.3). Directly above the entryway, Lawrie created four allegorical figures of ‘Constant Guardians of the Law’: a personified female Wisdom, male Justice, male Power and female Mercy. Alexander explained that style and imagery render Wisdom as Oriental, Justice as Greek, Power as Roman and Mercy as Christian, indicated both by Lawrie’s style and by the symbolism of a lamb that she carries.[34] The entrance itself features Lawrie’s frieze of pioneers, pushing westward.

Higher up and further back, the subjects of the tower sequence ‘represent the genius of human civilizations, as embodied in typical heroes of its great epochs’.[35] The geniuses:

Pentaour (‘The Dawn of History’)
Ezekiel (‘The Cosmic Tradition’)
Socrates (‘The Birth of Reason’)
Marcus Aurelius (‘The Reign of Law’)
St John the Apostle (‘The Glorification of the Faith’)
St Louis IX (‘The Age of Chivalry ’)
Sir Isaac Newton (‘The Discovery of Nature’)
Abraham Lincoln (‘The Liberation of Peoples’)[36]

Figure 7.3 Nebraska State Capitol main (north) steps and entrance. Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, LC-G612- 21816 [P&P].

Pentaour, the earliest (and, as Zabel comments, most obscure) figure included, was the scribe of an important Egyptian papyrus describing the battle of Kadesh between the New Kingdom Egyptian and New Kingdom Hittite Empire rulers in about 1274 BCE. Although scholars have since come to understand that scribal colophons on Egyptian texts are not indicative of 'authorship' in a modern sense and do not mean that Pentaour originated the composition, in the early twentieth century, Pentaour was assumed to be not merely the scribe of this particular papyrus but the author of this historical document: the first historian.

Because of the circular arrangement of the figures, Pentaour forms a pair with Abraham Lincoln, an accidental meeting of ancient East and modern West at the primary entrance to the building (Figure 7.4). Initially it was intended that each figure would be accompanied by an inscription. These were drafted but were not part of the final design. The one for Pentaour reads: 'EVEN OF OLD MAN REMEMBERED HIS PAST / HE BETHOUGHT HIM OF LETTERS / HE RECORDED THE DEEDS OF HIS FATHERS.'[37] For Lincoln, the inscription would have read: 'STRONG IN THE LOVE OF LIBERTY / HE DEMANDED FREEDOM FOR ALL MEN / THAT HUMANITY MIGHT REIGN IN THEIR SOULS.'[38]

We can think back to a similar juxtaposition in Edwin Howland Blashfield's *Evolution of Civilization* for the Library of Congress,

Figure 7.4 Nebraska State Capitol north tower transept sculptures by Lee Lawrie showing 'geniuses of human civilization', Egyptian scribe Pentaour and US President Abraham Lincoln (*c*. 1926). Photo credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Gottscho-Schleisner Collection, LC-G612- 21813 [P&P].

discussed in Chapter 3. Whereas Blashfield's Egypt and America are allegorical figures (though the latter modelled on Lincoln's face), here we have two real historical figures, positioned as equals and of equal importance: a virtually anonymous Egyptian scribe and a recent (within living memory), transformatively important US president. In the 3,000 years between them, they have moved from thinking about and recording the past, to acting for liberty, freedom and humanity. On the one hand, these are simply expressions of different domains of genius. But we can also read here a progressive connection: knowing about the past somehow leads, at the meeting point of this historical loop, to liberation.

Lawrie's biblical scenes

In Chapter 3, I mentioned Lawrie's work on the development of law, including a sequence of scenes, frieze panels, that run around the walls, 'The History of Law'. Planned by Lawrie and Goodhue, later modified through suggestions from Alexander, the panels are located around the

entire building.[39] There is a vague chronological logic to their placement, but this arrangement is not strict and often overtaken by thematic concerns (for instance, on the building's south side, scenes showing the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the drafting of the US Constitution form the wings of a triptych around a scene of English King John signing the Magna Carta).[40] The earliest three scenes are moments in the Hebrew Bible, before the sequence moves on to incidents from classical Greek history. Although there are no scenes from Egypt or Mesopotamia, the iconography and style with which Lawrie renders his biblical world makes it part of the wider ancient Middle East, through direct references to ancient Assyrian and Persian art.

As several observers have noted, Lawrie allowed his style in these scenes to be guided by his historical subject matter, employing different styles for different historical periods. McCready describes these styles as: 'archaic Assyrian, classical Greek, narrative Roman, and simplified naturalism (applicable to panels dealing with historical events in the United States)'.[41] Lawrie used style, then, to inscribe symbolic meaning. Style serves as a measure of chronological advance (and relatedly, civilizational advance) and differentiates each scene not only through identifiable subject matter but also through aesthetics, so that the ancient Orient is immediately visually distinguished from the ancient West, later European and American scenes.

Lawrie employed his 'archaic Assyrian' style, and specific references to Assyrian relief imagery, in two of the three panels narrating 'biblical law', the most ancient scenes included in the sequence. Biblical scenes were perhaps the most common site for the revival of Assyrian motifs, across fine art, decorative arts and book illustration.[42] The assumption that Assyrian imagery was an acceptable stand-in for Israelite imagery was axiomatic.

The first of Lawrie's biblical panels depicts a scene from Exodus, Moses' presentation of the Ten Commandments on stone tablets (specifically his abortive first attempt in Exodus 32, indicated by the presence in the scene of a Golden Calf inspired by fifth-century BCE Persian imagery from the site of Persepolis) (Figure 7.5). The second scene shows Deborah, Israelite leader in the book of Judges, listening to the pleading of a nude young girl and clothed elderly woman, manhandled by Assyrian-style male guards (Figure 7.6). A third scene of the Judgement of Solomon (1 Kings 3:16–28) is not noticeably Orientalizing; it follows Lawrie's somewhat chunky, Assyrian-derived style, but without the obvious Assyrian iconographic references of the other two biblical panels.

Not only stylistically inspired, Lawrie's scenes of Moses and of Deborah drew very direct iconographic details from Assyrian imagery

Figure 7.5 Lee Lawrie, frieze showing Moses bringing the tablets of the law down from Sinai, from 'History of Law' series (*c*. 1928), north-west corner of the Nebraska State Capitol. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Ammodramus.

Figure 7.6 Lee Lawrie, frieze showing Deborah judging Israel, from 'History of Law' series (*c*. 1928), north-west corner of the Nebraska State Capitol. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Ammodramus.

in ways that suggest that Lawrie carried out extensive research to find inspiration from ancient sources. The Moses scene features Moses and Aaron in the style of Assyrian kings and crown princes, pervasive imagery that could have been derived from any publication on Assyrian palace art. The Golden Calf is imagined as a Persepolis bull column. These same columns inspired Lawrie's bull column capitals in the building's

vestibule, with their own Nebraskan twist: ears of corn added between the bulls. Reaching for more obscure source material, Lawrie gave his Moses scene an altar which borrows its iconography from the depiction of the throne of Sennacherib from Nineveh's Southwest Palace Lachish Reliefs, exhibited in the British Museum since the 1850s (BM 124911). A similar degree of research and attention has been paid to Deborah's throne, where Lawrie has faithfully created in great detail a throne derived from Ashurbanipal's Nineveh North Palace Garden Scene, in which it is occupied by his queen, Liballi-sharrat (BM 124920).

What can this tell us about Lawrie's relationship to Assyrian imagery? Certainly, Lawrie was interested in historicizing and historical accuracy as a positive goal in itself, although he was flexible in that respect (as we see in his introduction of Persian and Greek motifs to the scene). But unlike Orientalist history paintings of the nineteenth century, historicism was not necessarily mandated by the form. Throughout the Capitol, and as explicitly indicated in Alexander's suggestions and explanations, the historically contingent is subordinated to the expression of abstracts and everything aims at that 'new style' the building was so praised for. So far as Lawrie did let historicism guide his work it was, as McCready has pointed out, mostly reflected in his overall style and not in the sort of minor historical details that interested nineteenth-century Orientalist painters. The only compelling explanation for Lawrie's careful integration of these minutely detailed depictions of Assyrian thrones is that they appealed to him aesthetically, that he found in his ancient source motifs that suited his modern project.

Lawrie's lawgivers

For Lawrie's series of 'Lawgivers', the Nebraska design team cast their eyes beyond the Hebrew Bible, including figures from the Near East and Egypt as part of a procession of the development of the legal tradition that Nebraska has inherited. These lawgivers, like the historical sequences, are arrayed at various points around the structure (Figure 7.7). The chronologically earliest lawgiver is a figure of myth rather than history, Minos of Crete. His position in the sequence is liminal, not visible with the rest of the sculptures along the south side. Although Minos is most familiar as a fully mythical creation, his inclusion here probably reflects the intense historical interest in the Late Bronze Age archaeology of Knossos, excavated by the British Archaeologist Arthur Evans between 1900 and 1931. Evans named the civilization he was uncovering at

Figure 7.7 Lee Lawrie, sculptural figures from the series of 'Lawgivers' (*c.* 1926), Hammurabi, Moses, Akhenaten and Solon. Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Ammodramus.

Knossos 'Minoan', after the legendary Minos, and consistently interpreted the remains he found in line with the Greek myths of Minos, his daughter Ariadne and his labyrinth.[43] Minos' inclusion in this historical sequence was surely informed by Evans' work, which brought myths of Crete to bear on the emerging archaeological record.

Minos is followed by a figure of Hammurabi, the old Babylonian ruler whose so-called 'law code' was at the time widely described as the first true law code in history: a natural origin point. The famous Stele of Hammurabi, inscribed with this 'code' was discovered in 1901–2 excavations led by Jacques de Morgan at Susa in modern-day Iran and taken to the Louvre (Figure 7.8).[44] Hammurabi had ruled a territorial

FIG. 93. THE LAWS OF HAMMURAPI, THE OLDEST SURVIVING CODE OF LAWS (2100 B.C.)*

Figure 7.8 The Stele of Hammurabi as the 'Oldest Surviving Code of Laws'. James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Times: A history of the early world* (Boston, MA: Ginn and Company, 1916), 132, fig. 93. Photo credit: Public domain, author's scan.

empire from the city of Babylon, in what is now central Iraq, in the early to mid-eighteenth century BCE. Hammurabi is followed immediately by a figure of Moses and bracketed on the other side by Akhenaten, the Egyptian pharaoh also often imagined to have a special relationship to Moses.

Let us turn to Hammurabi first. In the 1920s, he was thought to have reigned significantly earlier than we now (very securely) believe. Writing in *Ancient Times*, which Lawrie, Goodhue and Alexander consulted while planning the Nebraskan decorations, Breasted dates his reign to around 2100.[45] Breasted acknowledges that Hammurabi's Code is not the first such document:

> With his eye thus upon every comer of the land, alert, vigorous, and full of decision, the great king finally saw how necessary it was to bring into uniformity all the various and sometimes conflicting laws and business customs of the land. He therefore collected all the older written laws and usages of business and social life, and arranged them systematically. He improved them or added new laws where his own judgment deemed wise, and he then combined them into a great code or body of laws.[46]

For scholars like Breasted and the public he spoke to soon after the discovery of the stele, Hammurabi's Code shed new light on biblical traditions. There were clear similarities between Hammurabi's Code and biblical 'Codes' in the Pentateuch (especially Exodus's 'Covenant Code'), in format and genre, and even in the wording and principles of certain individual laws. Its discovery thus generated not only scholarly interest, but lively public excitement. Hammurabi's Code was also seen as remarkably 'modern' in its concerns and was often described using contemporary legal terms to explain the unspoken principles that governed decisions.[47] These associations are why Hammurabi was selected to begin the Nebraska procession of historical lawgivers.

Lawrie's Hammurabi is a severe figure, carved in the chunky, squared style Lawrie often favoured, with the same exaggerated brow and firm nose of *The Sower*, the statue that adorns the Nebraska Capitol's tower, and Lawrie's 1937 Rockefeller Center Atlas. The figure clearly references Hammurabi's image at the top of his Stele, copying the king's rounded cap and relatively nondescript draped robes. The folds of these robes melt into the balustrade. The figures of Lawrie's lawgivers are especially good examples of his devotion to architectural sculpture as an integral part of a building.

Most intriguingly, there is an Akkadian cuneiform inscription in the balustrade below Hammurabi, and it is relatively accurate and carefully chosen.[48] The inscription recreates what we call 'Law 196':

> *šumma awīlum īn mār*
> *awīlim uḫtappid īnsu uḫappadu*
>
> If an *awīlum* ['noble man'] should blind the eye of another *awīlum*, they shall blind his eye.[49]

The reasons for choosing this law are clear: it has strong cultural resonances that suit the idea of a 'progression' in which Hammurabi is in direct contact with the modern civilization of Nebraska. Moreover, it suggests a progression in which modern civilization is not just a neutral inheritor, but a moral improver on what came before. The law was immediately striking when the Code was first translated for its similarity to the 'eye for an eye' phrase that appears in several places in the Hebrew Bible (Exodus 21, Leviticus 24, Deuteronomy 19), famous enough to be a familiar proverbial saying in English. It is given most succinctly in Leviticus (24:19–20):[50]

> And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbor; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him: breach for breach, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; as he hath caused a blemish in a man, so shall it be rendered unto him.

In analysis of the time, it would have been understood that the Mosaic version of the talion 'advanced' the Hammurabi formulation, limiting punishment to the body of the wrongdoer (Hammurabi's version allowed for children to be taken in punishment for a father's crime), thus, in the interpretations of the time, developing the sense of 'the individual'.[51] Breasted assesses Hammurabi's laws in light of this evolutionary sense, as an admirable but imperfect first step:

> Hammurapi's[52] code insists on justice to the widow, the orphan, and the poor; but it also allows many of the old and naive ideas of justice to stand. Especially prominent is the principle that the punishment for an injury should require the infliction of the same injury on the culprit – the principle of 'an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth'. Injustice often resulted.[53]

What replaced this 'old and naive' idea? The Hammurabi and the Hebrew Bible 'eye for an eye' laws would also have immediately called to mind

the New Testament 'Sermon on the Mount' in Matthew 5:38–9, which also has given rise to an instantly recognizable proverbial phrase:

> Ye have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: but I say unto you, Resist not him that is evil: but whosoever smiteth thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Jesus's teaching rejects the 'barbarism' of the Hebrew and Mesopotamian formulation in favour of mercy, 'turning the other cheek'. The thread of connection is clear, as is the 'upwards' moral trend, from Mesopotamia to the Israelite law and finally to Christian mercy.

To Moses' other side we find another 'parent' of his biblical law: the fourteenth-century pharaoh 'Akhnaton' (as spelled on the capitol, today most often spelled 'Akhenaten'). The figures of Moses and Akhenaten are virtually intertwined as one sculpture. While the team decided to ignore Breasted's instructions to spell the pharaoh's name 'Ikhnaton' ('Please goodness, Dr. Breasted never sees the building itself!' Goodhue remarked),[54] Breasted's larger interpretation of Akhenaten clearly informed his inclusion here. Reigning in the mid- to late fourteenth century BCE, when the Egyptian New Kingdom was one of a small group of powerful great kingdoms in the wider Middle East, Akhenaten came to the throne as Amenhotep IV, but changed his name as his promotion of the worship of the Aten, the deified sun-disk, became ever more central to his kingship. He initiated iconoclastic campaigns against the names and images of other gods and promoted the worship of Aten alone. The meaning of Akhenaten's 'Atenism' continues to be intensely debated today. What he thought about other gods and how much his reforms impacted anyone outside the elites in the priesthood and at court is still uncertain. Nonetheless, his Atenism is clearly a unique episode in Egyptian history, the new capitol city he founded at Amarna a unique place and the art of his reign extremely distinctive, clearly expressing a distinct ideological perspective.

Dominic Montserrat, in a masterful study of the pharaoh's interpretation and reception, describes Akhenaten as 'the first ancient Egyptian celebrity, born from a union between archaeology and its presentation in modern mass media'. Excavations at Akhenaten's abandoned capitol city Akhetaten, modern Tell el-Amarna, revealed it as the 'the "lost city" *par excellence*, waiting to be rediscovered by the western archaeologists who are the only ones who "know" ancient Egypt'. A series of discoveries there kept it continually in the public eye between 1887 and 1936.[55] These included stunning works of art in a very distinctive style depicting the pharaoh and the women of his family.

The most famous work of Amarna-era art is also one of its more unusual: the polychrome bust of Akhenaten's consort Nefertiti, discovered in excavations by the German Egyptologist Ludwig Borchardt in 1913, and first displayed in the early 1920s in the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin, where it remains today.[56] It is today a modern cultural icon, rivalled among Egyptian antiquities only by the noseless Great Sphinx and the golden face of Tutankhamun's sarcophagus. The sculpture appealed to modern preferences for realism – its Nefertiti looks almost uncannily like a real woman, a human face from the past come to life – while simultaneously embodying an ethereal ideal of feminine beauty. Her looks certainly accorded with popular taste in the 1920s, and her brand of aquiline-nosed, high cheek-boned imperiousness has rarely been out of style since.[57] Most finished works of Amarna art tend to be much more stylized in their treatment of the human form, with various features of faces and bodies highly exaggerated. A commitment to the idea of Amarna-era 'naturalism' in art, which the mid-twentieth-century Egyptologist Cyril Aldred identified with Akhenaten's morality and rationalism, has played a part in these depictions being read oddly literally, with observers seeking medical explanations for features like elongated skulls among Akhenaten's family members, and his own wide hips.[58] The Nefertiti bust exhibits some of these exaggerated tendencies in a much more subtle form.[59] In an elegant 1933 poster (Figure 7.9), released to coincide with

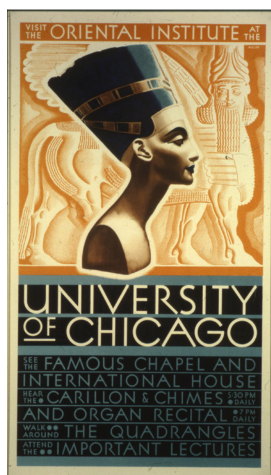

Figure 7.9 W. P. Welsh, poster advertising the Oriental Institute and the University of Chicago, released in anticipation of the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition (1932). Photo credit: Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, CC BY-NC-ND.

the traffic to Chicago for the Century of Progress Exposition, the Oriental Institute lured visitors with this famous face (which one would actually have needed to travel to Berlin to see in the simulated-flesh).

Breasted's 1905 *History of Egypt* and, later on, his *Dawn of Conscience* (1933) shaped popular and scholarly understandings of Akhenaten in extremely significant ways. He gave the public a pharaoh for the modern era, promoting this pharaoh as a key figure in moral history through his alleged development of a monotheistic conception of god.[60] Akhenaten's famous 'Great Hymn to the Aten', which had been the subject of Breasted's dissertation in Berlin, seemed to Breasted to anticipate the ideology of a single, omnipotent ruler responsible for all creation:

> How manifold are all thy works
> They are hidden from before us,
> O thou sole god, whose powers no other possesseth
> Thou didst create the earth according to thy desire
> While thou wast alone:
> Men, all cattle large and small.
> All that are upon the earth,
> That go about upon their feet;
> All that are on high,
> That fly with their wings.
> The countries of Syria and Nubia,
> The land of Egypt;
> Thou settest every man in his place.[61]

Breasted was the first scholar to connect this hymn to the biblical Psalm 104, and to describe Akhenaten's religion as a key step in the invention of monotheism.[62] In this judgement, he was joined by other influential Egyptologists, notably the English scholars Arthur Weigall and W. M. Flinders Petrie.[63]

Among those who found Breasted's portrait of the pharaoh compelling was Sigmund Freud, who relied extensively on Breasted's work for his final book, *Moses and Monotheism* (1939). In this text, Freud proposed that the historical Moses had been an Egyptian, a priest of Akhenaten's new religion, who imparted its innovative moral and theological concepts to the Israelites as they left Egypt and was later murdered by them. Freud's interpretation here was based on wild speculation deriving from his belief that the collective unconscious of a people could be interpreted by the same techniques applied to one of his analysis clients.[64] While such a direct association between Moses and

Akhenaten was unusual, Freud's work solidified a general perception that the similarities between Akhenaten's solar hymns and later biblical doxologies must be more than coincidence. It had a major influence on subsequent studies of historical memory and the invention of monotheism in many fields.[65] While more recent popular receptions of Akhenaten, since the mid-twentieth century, have often read in him a pathological psychology or sexuality, or celebrated him as an icon of campness or queerness, few scholars detected this unwholesome potential in the 1920s.[66] Nebraska's Akhenaten is not the later twentieth-century's Oedipal deviant, decadent or queer icon, but Breasted's Akhenaten: a visionary moral leader, a lawgiver of the spirit.

In this sequence of lawgivers, his position after Moses is, as Lawrie would surely have known, chronologically complicated. Although Moses' precise historical dates were a matter of debate, almost everyone would have placed him after Akhenaten.[67] Breasted, upon whom the team relied for historical information, did. This is one of many times in Lawrie's historical narratives when a strict chronology gives way instead to artistic or thematic considerations. Rather than representing the precise order in time in a linear sequence, the arrangement frames Moses between his two different kinds of parent: stern Hammurabi who contributed a systematized legal framework, and visionary spiritual leader Akhenaten who contributed the moral framework of monotheism and divine omnipotence that would give new weight to Hammurabi's sometimes harsh legalism.

After this trinity, the progress then proceeds to the Athenian lawgiver Solon, before returning to the Middle East for the biblical king Solomon, styled in vaguely Assyrian terms and holding a model of his temple, its three-tiered stepped construction clearly informed by images of Babylonian and Assyrian ziggurats, before moving on to Caesar, Justinian, Charlemagne and Napoleon.[68] It is notable that the lawgivers here are heavily tipped towards the ancient past, Eastern and Western, indicating more interest in origins than in developments since (unlike Lawrie's scenes of the Progress of Law, which is more evenly balanced across periods). As a sequence it also masterfully integrates its Eastern lawgivers with a more familiar tradition, through the arrangement and use of accurate cuneiform quotation that emphasizes the relationship of these Eastern predecessors to the familiar biblical tradition.

A final question must be answered: how did Lawrie come to this cuneiform quotation, accurately conveyed and so carefully chosen to speak to the building's narratives of progress?[69] Surviving documentation unfortunately offers no direct answer, but I would suggest that the most likely answer is through Breasted's Oriental Institute. As discussed

earlier, Breasted's *Ancient Times* was used by Alexander, Goodhue and Lawrie as the source for the history of ancient law. Breasted was also a personal correspondent of the trio throughout the process, since the early stages of Nebraska's planning overlapped with the period during which he was advising directly on the NAS decorative programme. In that capacity, Breasted visited Lawrie's studio in October 1923 alongside astronomer George Ellery Hale and the head of the NAS Building Committee Gano Dunn. In the course of this meeting, Lawrie and Breasted began discussing the Nebraska 'Lawgivers' sculptures. Breasted asked Lawrie to delay drafting his Akhenaten figure until Breasted could provide a better photographic model than Lawrie then had available, and expressed concern about the spelling of the pharaoh's name.[70] Lawrie's report on this visit, and later memories of the project, indicate that *a propos* of this small matter, Breasted was put in touch with Goodhue and Alexander directly; Lawrie refers to a multipronged back-and-forth correspondence between Breasted and the Nebraska team; Goodhue of course already knew Breasted socially from the NAS process.[71]

Breasted also brought in another academic colleague to advise. Lawrie corresponded with Caroline Ransom Williams, the first woman to qualify as an Egyptologist in the United States, one of Breasted's favourite former doctoral students. She sent Lawrie images of Amarna sculpture and (presumed) Akhenaten and Nefertiti sculptures in the Ägyptisches Museum in Berlin, including the famous Nefertiti head. She also averred an interest in his final results; academics had good reason to be excited about the elevation of their subject area through inclusion in important works of public art.

Lawrie's final Akhenaten shows minimal inspiration from Amarna-era statuary; it is significantly less anatomically stylized and exaggerated than most actual art of Akhenaten's reign.[72] Although the surviving documentation only concerns discussions of Egyptian imagery, Breasted or his colleagues were well placed to advise on anything to do with the ancient Orient. It is certainly possible that Breasted, or someone else at University of Chicago (such as the Assyriologist Daniel David Luckenbill), was asked to provide the cuneiform inscription for Lawrie's Hammurabi and to give advice on Mesopotamian imagery.[73]

The Los Angeles Central Library

The Los Angeles Central Library, opened in 1926, is an obvious companion to the Nebraska capitol, a Goodhue building designed shortly afterwards

and while early stages of Nebraska planning were ongoing, which Goodhue understood as the second example of the new style he was developing (Figure 7.10). He explained in a letter to the British architect and theorist William Lethaby, whose architectural writing had profoundly influenced Goodhue, how his work had evolved. Thinking clearly of his recent work on the NAS and Nebraska, he wrote, 'my Gothic is no longer anything like historically correct, and my Classic (my formalistic friends deny me the use of this term) is anything but book classic'. He continues, 'at Los Angeles, I have a Public Library in the same strange style, or lack of style, I have been telling you about'.[74]

Goodhue's design was selected at the end of a long campaign for a new central library for Los Angeles, which was lagging well behind other major American cities in the provision of a grand public building. The Los Angeles Library had been founded in 1872 and had never had a purpose-built home. When the East Coast-born and -trained Everett Robbins Perry took over as its director in 1911, and relaunched a stalled campaign for a more suitable building, the central branch was renting several floors in the Hamburger Department store – hardly the Temple of Learning Perry

Figure 7.10 Los Angeles Central Library (1926), Los Angeles, California (photographed *c*. 1935), architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue. Photo credit: UCLA Charles E. Young Research Library Department of Special Collections.

dreamed of. After a long campaign, voters approved a bond measure to raise funds for a library building worthy of a great metropolis – despite a rather uninspiring location on a lot crowded round by other buildings, a far cry from early speculative proposals for the library to form part of a grand, City Beautiful scheme.[75]

Goodhue's original design, selected in 1921, was much more conventional than the final product. It was a building in the mode of his Spanish California Revival works for the 1915 Panama–California Exposition in San Diego, with Churrigueresque decoration and a domed top.[76] The Municipal Commission was unhappy with his first design, and he undertook several revisions. Finally, he completed a very different, much more radically modern design in late 1923, making the building sparer and more monolithic and replacing the central dome with a pyramid, with boldly coloured mosaic tiles over its face, at the top of the structure.[77] Architecturally, the structure, like the Nebraska Capitol, demonstrates an unplaceable combination of historical influences. Goodhue promised that it would be 'Spanish in style – at least in spirit,' and publicity from the time of its opening in 1926 describes it this way.[78] Yet most modern observers see an Egyptian note as predominating (not least because of the central pyramid).[79] The sloping walls of the exterior are especially pronounced, and, as in Nebraska, large, monolithic areas of blank stone wall are crowned by Lawrie's integrated sculpture which seems to grow out of the mass of the building. Interior decorations were executed by artists Julian Garnsey and Dean Cornwell.

As in Nebraska, the academic Hartley Burr Alexander played an important role in drafting the design programme. Goodhue had created preliminary plans for major decorative elements, but only just lived to see ground broken on the project. The building was opened in 1926, two years after his death, and some key decorative elements were not finished until the end of the decade. Given that Goodhue's decorative plans were less developed for Los Angeles than for Nebraska at the time of his unexpected death, Alexander was especially significant in guiding the decorative scheme. This was planned in deference to Goodhue's early ideas, to what his architectural design warranted and in collaboration with Lawrie, who could be trusted to understand especially well what Goodhue's intentions might have been.[80] Architecturally, the completion of the project was overseen by Goodhue Associates, with the West Coast-based Carleton Monroe Winslow, who had started out in Goodhue's employ, as principal architect.[81]

The theme for the decorations, agreed between Goodhue and Alexander, was the 'light of learning'. This subject lent itself to celebrations

of a range of historical and cultural achievements: great literature, philosophy, religious wisdom, science.[82] More than in the government building of Nebraska which suggested that, through its various influences, the United States had arrived at the best possible system of government or the NAS which depicts science as always building upon itself to ever greater heights, the Los Angeles Central Library programme is more interested in the diverse manifestations of wisdom and knowledge in many times and places. The library, it stressed throughout, provided access to all these times and places, not merely to their culmination.

This reflected Alexander's own, rather less triumphalist, beliefs about America's relationship to the past. In an essay on 'Americanization' published in 1919 in the popular magazine *The Nation*, Alexander offered a nuanced perspective on America's unique responsibilities and privileges. Alexander, a liberal and unconventional thinker, was responding to political anxieties about immigration and the rise of jingoistic, and meaningless, 'propaganda' about Americanization. He urged a more complex understanding of what Americanization might mean: not a burden to be placed only on aliens, but a process for every American and, more importantly, for the country as a whole. America was a unique combination of antecedents, and 'every land has given something to our making'.[83] Despite this bold, universalist claim, his article deals concretely only with America's inheritance of *European* culture. He acknowledges that this inheritance is worth protecting, but stresses the necessity of recognizing that America was not, and never would be, merely the latest step in the European story:

> Until today we have been but an episode of European history; a millennium hence Europe will be but an episode of our history, though ever an unforgettable episode. For we shall have drawn from every European culture, and we shall have been colored by every European epoch; perhaps, indeed, it will yet be ours to realize here, in North America, that unity of European civilization which Europe itself has been unable to compass.[84]

In the years immediately after the First World War, a statement like this carried special weight: much of Europe was in very bad shape and the continent had only recently been tearing itself apart.

For Alexander, the cultural influences that immigrants had brought with them would also be transformed by an entirely different active force: the American continent. 'Man is dust and into dust his bones fall, and in the end it is that soil whence he is born and to which his body returns

that makes fertile his creative powers and nourishes his most intimate ideals,' he wrote, before concluding that, 'Only out of a soil where generations have been bred can a pure nativity be achieved; and in the end only America can Americanize.'[85] There were vital elements 'cached in the ancient being of our continent, much that we must discover and use if we are still to live'.[86] To achieve this, America should learn from the traditions of the 'first-dwellers, the 'earlier American[s]', the Indians.

He closed the essay with a myth of the Quiché Indians (a Mayan group) of how the world was populated by successive races, upon each of which there eventually rose a new sun. The present race, according to this myth, had not yet had their sun rise. His article concluded: 'We, too, are of this race, and we, too, keep vigil, abiding our dawn.'[87] Far from a culmination of history, America has not yet been born. Alexander was more interested in the nation's unique position as a uniter of diverse strands in a particular time and on a particular soil than in its position at the top of a unidirectional rise. America was in its infancy, and it would need to be adaptable to new influences and elements. And it had a long way to go to fulfil its promise.

This perspective on history was in harmony with Goodhue's ecumenical tendencies and his belief in the importance of a diversity of architectural influences. On the Los Angeles project, such a broad and nonhierarchical perspective suits the aims of a library: to provide the widest possible access to the widest possible range of sources. Breadth, diversity and variety are the institution's strengths.

Lawrie's goddess of Civilization

Nonetheless a hierarchical and progressive perspective is still present in the building in various places. In Chapter 3, I discussed Lawrie's sculptural group for the Flower Street (west) entrance featuring the wisdom of East and West, and a torch passing between two riders (Figure 3.8). It is clear from the arrangement that, despite the celebration of a wide and chronologically expansive array of both Eastern and Western thinkers above, the general direction of civilization is Westward.

A similar ranking emerges in two guardian figures for the Hope Street (south) entrance, one a Greek man in iconography (at the western side), described as a 'Thinker', the other (at the eastern side) an Egyptian man, a 'Writer'. They represent respectively 'Reflective Thought' and 'Expressive Thought' (Figure 7.11).[88] Here too, both East and West, Egypt and Greece, are suggested as important and noble predecessors,

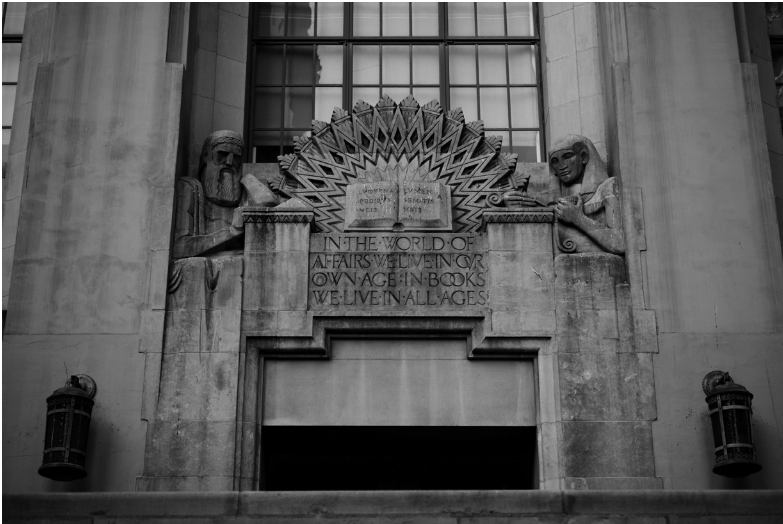

Figure 7.11 Lee Lawrie, 'Thinker' and 'Writer' for the Hope Street entrance of the Los Angeles Central Library (1926). Photo credit: Wikimedia Commons, user Levi Clancy.

equally 'ours'. They are a pair, in complete architectural and iconographic equality. Yet the association of Egypt with writing as against Greek thinking also suggests a progressive development. In the East, traditions of early civilization like written records and history arose, but it took the Greeks to reflect on higher, more abstract things.[89] Thus although the two are paired as equals, architecturally, there is surely an inequality in their associations. Writing is the most essential technology a library contains, but it is also the most basic. That technology, which the Egyptians are here associated with originating, exists really for the ideas which came later and which now fill the library's shelves (in practice, mostly 'Western' ideas).

We find a clearly progressive, if unusually ecumenical, image of civilization's origins in Lawrie's *Statue of Civilization* (1930), created for the north stairwell (Figure 7.12). Civilization is personified as a woman which Goodhue suggested should be a Pallas Athena, 'localized' to the Los Angeles setting.[90] Lawrie's realization of this initial idea is a stern, spare, stiff figure rendered in a range of beautiful colours deriving from the different materials he has used: yellow Italian marble, bronze and copper.[91] The goddess stares outward in the fixed gaze of archaic Greek statuary, an influence on Lawrie's figures elsewhere in the building, for instance in the Hesper and Phosphor for the Flower Street entrance.

Figure 7.12 Lee Lawrie, *Statue of Civilization* (*c*. 1930), Los Angeles Central Library. Photo credit: The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-24073.

Archaic Greek iconography has very different resonances than classical Greek imagery, speaking of a stratum of Greek (pre)history that, like the emerging world of the ancient Middle East, was strange and mysterious.

This embodiment of civilization wears a crown of the library building in miniature, topped by a bear for California and two angels for the city of Los Angeles. Down the front of her robes runs a band of copper, on which a course of civilization is traced from earliest to latest, symbols representing different cultures rising from bottom to top in linear progression. At the base is a 'blank for the unknown ages of man', then the earliest civilizations to emerge from prehistory: the pyramids for Egypt, a *lamassu* for Babylon,[92] a Phoenician galley and the Tablets of the Law for Biblical Israel.[93] This sequence uses similar iconography and ideas to Lawrie's 'History of Writing' mantel for the National Academy of Sciences, which also features Egypt (an obelisk), a *lamassu* and a galley in sequence. As in other progresses that we have explored, Israel and the biblical tradition are integrated with other early Middle Eastern civilizations. They may have an honoured part in this history, but not a unique one. Israel is historicized and treated as one among many important civilizational predecessors.

In this account of civilization, those predecessors are especially wide-ranging. Following these earliest, most foundational Eastern civilizations, is the Lion Gate of Mycenae, the Parthenon of Athens, and Romulus and Remus sucking from a wolf. Next comes a dragon representing China, and a Shiva for India, before the narrative returns from the 'Far East' to Europe, with a representation of Notre-Dame Cathedral. The focus next shifts from the Old World to America, with a Mayan plumed serpent. Clearly, the account of civilization in this statue does not involve a straightforward chronology, nor a literal diffusion. From here, the final three icons concern the evolution of civilization in the territorial United States: a bison, a covered wagon and finally the Liberty Bell. These final three signs recapitulate the iconographic emphases of the Nebraska programme: Indians as the ur-residents and keepers of the land, settlement by rough pioneers and finally the American state. American Indians, represented by the bison, are alone in their representation by the natural world, rather than technology or art.

This statue defies a straightforward progressive or chronological reading. Instead, it is best understood as several separate modules of influence and development. Yet there can be no doubt that the placement of the United States of America at the top is meaningful beyond chronology. The final three icons are a tale of progress and

development from one thing to the next. The same can be said for the early, Middle Eastern icons. Emerging from the blank, vast emptiness of prehistory is civilization, represented by monumental architecture and art, the technology of trade and communication, and the establishment of moral law.

Combining these smaller narratives of development in different regions, we can detect the same points that Alexander made in his article on Americanization. Whatever the separate values of diverse cultures of many times and places, America is unique in sitting at the top of all of them, the only nation in the right place in time and space to enjoy all their influences. Lawrie's linear arrangement might be better read if we mentally reconfigure it as the roots of a plant with Middle East, Europe, East and South Asia all coming together in a united stem: the Liberty Bell.

The form of the goddess also sends its own message: civilization, personified, is still Greek (even if archaic, rather than classical). Yet this picture is expanded somewhat by the statue's two attendants, which were made as companion pieces, flanking it to either sides: two sphinxes which combine Greek references with Egyptian and Assyrian. They are identical except for inscriptions on the books they prop open before them which feature different quotations from the Greek Historian Plutarch. The imagery and inscriptions evoke the Greek concept of the sphinx as a guardian of mysteries, and long-standing Western associations deriving therefrom of the sphinx with esoteric knowledge. Although this has made the sphinx a popular mascot of occult and esoteric orders, the implication here is more wholesome. The Los Angeles Central Library sphinx offers the secret knowledge that can be probed by anyone with a library card.

Lawrie's sphinx mixes iconographic features of Greek and Egyptian versions of the mythical creature (Figure 7.13). It is represented in a pose inspired by the Egyptian sphinx, its body fully leonine, and wears Egyptian-style drapery and necklace. Like the Greek sphinx of myth, however, it is a woman. The shape of the crown, as Kenneth Breisch suggests, reflects influence from Assyrian models. It looks somewhat like those of *lamassu* (minus the stacked horns that usually adorn the core). It could also have been inspired by the crowns of three minor gods, three of the seven *Sebettu* (the deified embodiment of the constellation we call the 'Pleiades') in a relief from the seventh-century Assyrian king Ashurbanipal's North Palace, which Lawrie may have encountered during his clearly extensive research on Assyrian models in the course of looking for inspiration for Nebraska, the NAS and Los Angeles sculptures.[94] Lawrie adorns the sides of the crown with figures of the Roman pantheon;

Figure 7.13 Lee Lawrie, *Statue of Civilization* with surrounding guardian sphinxes (*c*. 1930), Los Angeles Central Library. Photo credit: The Jon B. Lovelace Collection of California Photographs in Carol M. Highsmith's America Project, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, LC-DIG-highsm-24072.

in composition and concept, these figures are very similar to the sun gods which ring his bronze spectrohelioscope case in the NAS.

While Lawrie brings all these inspirations into play, the design of the creature is entirely his own, not only in his inventive treatment of drapery and decoration, but also in his stylized treatment of this fantastical anatomy (a hyper-elongated neck and torso), and finally in another inventive mixture of materials, black marble and brass. His medley of influences makes Egypt and Assyria part of the 'look' of civilization and knowledge. As with everything in the library, however, the very fact of its location in a magnificent new Los Angeles building, its style evoking all at once the Spanish heritage of the state, the innovations of modernism and the much deeper heritage of world history represented by these Egyptian and Assyrian elements, is itself a representation of how all of world civilization has been Americanized.

Conclusion

In his designs for Nebraska and Los Angeles, Goodhue developed the tentative 'Alexandrianism' of the National Academy of Sciences into a modernism that truly achieved his aims, as reviewers repeatedly noted, of integrating diverse influences, including a strong note of the

ancient Middle East, into a style that suited modern America. Early Middle Eastern iconography also appeared in decorative sequences that responded to the purpose of each building and the regional context. These symbological schemes were worked out in fruitful collaboration between Goodhue, Lawrie and Hartley Burr Alexander, with recourse to popularizing academic work like Breasted's. In historical decorative sequences, Assyrian, Egyptian and other Middle Eastern imagery was used to historicize the early steps in a rise of law, learning, wisdom, government or agriculture. Yet Assyrian and Egyptian imagery was not only valuable for the ideas it evoked, but because of its stylistic and aesthetic qualities: monumental, spare, with architecturally integral sculpture.

In the Nebraska design especially, ancient Middle Eastern influences were explicitly recognized by sculptors and architects, architectural press and the general public. We find praise for the antique or Oriental aspect of Goodhue's design and its integration with American modernity in journals and even, as the poem that opens this chapter indicates, in literature. Notably, the influences from ancient Oriental cultures were understood by all as an aspect of what made the building 'modern'. This is the central, paradoxical appeal of 'revival' in Art Deco art and architecture: something that is simultaneously more ancient than could have been imagined before archaeological discoveries of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – and thereby utterly modern.

Notes

1. Richards, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 83–4.
2. McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 330–1.
3. As Elizabeth G. Grossman points out, the only other proposal that tried something a little different was by Paul Cret, who proposed an Italian-esque piazza; Grossman, 'Two postwar competitions', 255–6. For an analysis of the competition, see in full Grossman; Stillgoe, 'Modern design competitions'. The two competitions Grossman looks at, the Nebraska Capitol and the Kansas City Liberty Memorial, were both for large civic buildings in Middle American states, and both set standards for cutting-edge architectural work, as did, even more famously, the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition in the Midwest's largest city, one of Stillgoe's case studies. In the 1920s, the most exciting architecture was often being executed in Middle America, often in mid-sized cities and often through highly publicized competitions in which local civic or business leaders deliberately courted the best and most exciting architectural ideas. The attraction of such competitions to leading architects was perhaps in the chance to literally put these cities on the architectural map, to create something that would define the identity of growing cities whose physical fabric was still highly mutable.
4. At 14.6.1921 BGG to William E. Hardy, Goodhue Correspondence in NCC. Quoted in Zabel, 'History in stone', 289.
5. Lewis, 'Ideal of architecture'. Lewis is interested in British architecture of the period but cites Lawrie and Goodhue's collaborations as influential on British architects striving for this ideal.

6 The Nebraska Capitol Commission, 'Final Stage of Competition for the Selection of an Architect to design and supervise the construction of a Capitol for the State of Nebraska'; published as Appendix II in McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 433.
7 See Bruegmann, *Art Deco Chicago*, 51; Buxton, *Patronizing the Public*, 27–30; Buxton, 'Imagining Rockefeller Center'.
8 Knoll, *Prairie University*, 71.
9 Brawer and Skolnik, *Art Deco Murals*, 65–8.
10 Two excellent resources on these designs, the science behind them and the collaboration between Barbour and Meière have been produced for the University of Nebraska State Museum: Diffendal, 'Fossils on the floor'; Monks, 'How dinosaurs came'.
11 In 1922, Nebraska also briefly became the putative home of North America's first anthropoid ape and one of the earliest human specimens ever discovered when Henry Fairfield Osborn, following the report of American Museum subordinates William K. Gregory and Milo Hellman, identified a tooth discovered there in 1917 as belonging to a new species *Hesperopithecus haroldcookii*, 'Nebraska Man'. In his announcement of the discovery, Osborn connected the find to his ongoing public battle over evolution with William Jennings Bryan, Nebraska's most influential national politician:

> It has been suggested humorously that the animal should be named *Bryopithecus* after the most distinguished Primate which the State of Nebraska has thus far produced. It is certainly singular that this discovery is announced within six weeks of the day (March 5, 1922) that the author advised William Jennings Bryan to consult a certain passage in the Book of Job, 'Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee,' and it is a remarkable coincidence that the first earth to speak on this subject is the sandy earth of the Middle Pliocene Snake Creek deposits of western Nebraska. (Osborn, '*Hesperopithecus*, the First Anthropoid Primate', 246)

However, Bryan had the last laugh: the identification of this new species had to be retracted in 1927 as it had become clear that the tooth belonged to an extinct pig. See Gregory, '*Hesperopithecus* apparently not an ape'; Wolf and Mellett, 'Role of Nebraska Man'; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 146–51, 160–1. In fact, this was the second specimen termed 'Nebraska Man'; a skullcap discovered by a University of Nebraska team including Barbour caused excitement in 1906. Osborn came to the state to examine it and published an excited announcement of the find. This one proved a disappointment much more quickly, after being identified by the Smithsonian's Aleš Hrdlička as modern bones. See Osborn, 'Discovery of a supposed primitive race'; Regal, *Henry Fairfield Osborn*, 93–5.
12 See, for instance, the assessments in Dickerson, 'University of Chicago Chapel', 684; 'North Dakota's new Capitol', 143. When Goodhue soon after was selected as the architect for the Los Angeles Central Library, his unbuilt, winning Nebraska competition entry was praised by the committee, and cited as already a crowning achievement justifying his selections; see Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 24. On Lawrie's Nebraska sculpture as a gold standard within American architecture, see Agard, 'American architectural sculpture', 209–10.
13 McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 363.
14 Fiske Kimball, 'Goodhue's architecture', 538. No relationship to Thomas Kimball, who served as the professional advisor to the Nebraska Capitol Commission.
15 'Two notable works in architecture', 355.
16 Alexander, 'Nebraska's monumental Capitol', 6.
17 'The Nebraska Capitol', 3.
18 'The Nebraska Capitol', 4.
19 Larson, 'Cass Gilbert', 124.
20 Zabel, 'History in stone', 296–7; Place, *Ninive et l'Assyrie*, pl. 21.
21 Against these interpretations of the building's radical newness, Luebke sees Goodhue's design as fundamentally conservative at heart, preserving Progressive Era ideals of Beaux-Arts symmetry and proportion while stripping away unnecessary details. Luebke, 'Progressive context', 229–32.
22 The relationship between archaeological reconstruction and architectural drawing emerges especially strongly in the publications produced from German excavations at Babylon and Assur in the early twentieth century. A number of the archaeologists working at these

sites had originally trained as architects, including Walter Andrae who led the Assur excavations and took over Babylon excavations from Robert Koldewey, and who oversaw the reconstruction of Babylon's Ishtar Gate in Berlin. As Brusius argues, Koldewey and Andrae were interested in the entire context of the site and saw each object as valuable, in contrast to German Orientalist colleagues whose obsession with cuneiform tablets frustrated them. The German excavations were the most 'scientific', state-of-the-art excavations and publications of their time, and the training excavators had in producing architectural plans informed how they approached documenting the site. It also surely informed their approach to the sites as significant spaces in total, and not simply a resource for cuneiform texts or displaceable art objects. See Brusius, 'Field in the museum'. For more on this subject, see Córdoba, 'Walter Andrae'; Micale, 'European images of the ancient Near East'; Pedde, 'Assur-Project'.

23 Not all reimaginings have this characteristic stylistic sparseness, however. Austen Henry Layard's 1849 collection of plates *Monuments of Nineveh*, one of the earliest disseminations of Assyrian imagery to a wider British public, opens with the author's watercolour reconstruction of an Assyrian throne room which is densely, elaborately detailed and very speculative; among other things, it fills in a very grand, very Victorian ceiling; see Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh: From drawings made on the spot*, pl. 2. This highly influential reconstruction has been the subject of a short, incredibly thorough study, Cohen and Kangas, *Inside an Ancient Assyrian Palace*. The authors consider the importance of this one Layard reconstruction to the history of the discipline, and as a window into the Victorian imagination of the ancient world. Also highly influential was an equally sumptuous, and fanciful, watercolour reconstruction of the palaces and ziggurats of ancient Nimrud rising above the Tigris in the sequel, Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh, Including Bas-reliefs from the Palace of Sennacherib*, pl. 1.

24 Whitaker, 'Biography', 28; see also extensive quotes from Goodhue on his own philosophy in this essay, esp. 14, 17–26.

25 Lawrie, 'Sculpture'.

26 'Lawrie's creed', 29.

27 Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'; closing pages for one draft of this unpublished memoir. Box 48, Folder: Draft 'Boy Wanted' (25). Lawrie papers.

28 Lawrie, *Modern Mural Sculpture*.

29 This tendency was often remarked upon, as both a positive and a negative aspect of his work in the architectural press of the time. One assessment vacillated:

> None of them [other leading sculptors] has collaborated more sympathetically with architects than Lee Lawrie. Perhaps at times he has been willing to subordinate his sculpture overmuch, and he has certainly been too dependent on the Egyptian tradition .... But great praise must be given him for the sculpture decorating the Nebraska State Capitol'. (Agard, 'American architectural sculpture', 210)

See also Cross, 'Sculpture for Rockefeller Center', 2.

30 Lawrie, untitled draft. Box 46, Folder 4, LLP.

31 Lawrie, draft headed, 'Suggestion for a more intimate cooperation among architect, painter, sculptor'. Box 46, Folder 3, LLP.

32 See Wilson, 'Architecture and the reinterpretation of the past'.

33 Lawrie, 'Sculpture', 36.

34 The idea was Alexander's revision to Goodhue's original suggestion for eight explorers; see Haller, 'Drama of law', 13 n. 19, also 5, table 1.

35 From a document produced by Alexander in 1926, 'Synopsis of decorations and inscriptions', version in the Nebraska State Building Division, quoted in Zabel, 'History in stone', 355. See also McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 173, and for wider context appendices to the same article, 451–8.

36 Zabel, 'History in stone', 356–64.

37 Zabel, 'History in stone', 356.

38 Zabel, 'History in stone', 363.

39 Haller, 'Drama of law', 4.

40 For the clearest overview of the placement of various sculptural elements around the building's exterior, see the diagrams in Zabel, 'History in stone', 301–4.

41 McCready, 'Nebraska State Capitol', 384–5. See also Zabel, 'History in stone', 299.

42 See Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture*, 84–97, 191–206, 256–71; Esposito, 'Dalziels' Bible Gallery'; Miller, 'A new look', 41–3.

43 On Evans' interpretations, and the importance of this site in modernist imagination, see Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, 75–139.

44 It had been taken from a temple in Sippar, a city in what is now central Iraq, to Susa as booty when the Elamite king Shutruk-Nahhunte sacked Babylon in 1155 BCE.

45 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 128. On the use of this volume by the Capitol team, see Haller, 'Drama of law', 4, esp. n. 3.

46 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 130–1. In the various revisions of our understanding of this text and other ancient Near East 'law codes' over the course of more than a century, scholarly consensus now holds that such texts were not used in any real sense as codes of government. They should be understood as literary royal inscriptions, and the tradition of copying and transmission as part of the Babylonian scribal curriculum. For a succinct overview of some of these issues, see Roth, 'Mesopotamian legal traditions', 13–39.

47 For scholarly reactions to the Stele of Hammurabi in the United States shortly after its discovery, see Duncan, 'Code of Moses'; Price, 'Stele of Hammurabi'; Vincent, 'Laws of Hammurabi'.

48 Don Arp points out certain mistakes in the cuneiform inscription, some of them caused by joins in the stonework which have interrupted signs. Arp, 'An eye for an eye'.

49 Roth, *Law Collections*, 121.

50 Quoted in the American Standard Version, published in 1901 and used frequently in seminaries and in many American congregations since, the antecedent of today's New Revised Standard Version; used here because it would have been perhaps the most likely familiar, modern translation in circulation in the 1920s. See also Exodus 21:22–5, Deuteronomy 19:21.

51 These claims for the moral superiority of the Israelites over earlier Babylonians had to ignore that these same biblical codes still differentiated between slaves and free and Israelites and strangers, as Hammurabi's did between social classes, and that there are other reasons, beyond the moral, why different societies might understand social status or family relationships differently.

52 'Hammurapi' is in fact a more accurate rendering of the Akkadian. I use 'Hammurabi' because it is more recognizable to non-specialists, and because it is used on the Nebraska Capitol itself.

53 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 131–2.

54 At 11.8.1923 BGG to HBA. HBAP, Nebraska State Capitol; quoted in Haller, 'Drama of law', 19 n. 3.

55 Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 7. See also Stevenson, *Scattered Finds*, 145–80.

56 Egypt has sought repatriation since the 1920s, querying the division of finds that led to its transfer to Berlin; Breger, 'The "Berlin" Nefertiti Bust', 285–9.

57 On this work, see Breger, 'The "Berlin" Nefertiti Bust'; Seyfried, *In the Light of Amarna*; Arnold, *Royal Women of Amarna*, 65–84; Tyldesley, *Nefertiti's Face*.

58 Aldred, *Akhenaten and Nefertiti*, 79. For an overview of these kinds of interpretations, see Manniche, *Akhenaten Colossi*, 135–48; Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 42–8.

59 Ludwig Borchardt believed that the piece must have been a sculptor's model, rather than a finished piece, based on its 'unfinished' sides and the absence of adhesive traces in the missing left eye, which he suggested therefore never existed. Its relative 'realism' would make sense if it was intended to serve only as a basis for later pieces that might exaggerate its features. This interpretation was very influential and still has supporters, although more recently it has been suggested that it may have been a piece created for private ancestor worship. See Arnold, *Royal Women of Amarna* 65–7.

60 See Breasted, *History of Egypt*, 355–78; Breasted, *Development of Religion and Thought*, 312–70; Breasted, *Dawn of Conscience*, 272–332.

61 Breasted, *History of Egypt*, 373–4. For a more modern translation of the same passage, see Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 98.

62 Breasted, *History of Egypt*, 371. On the Psalm 104 connection, see also Day, 'Psalm 104'; Smith, *God in Translation*, 69–76.

63 See Hornung, 'Rediscovery of Akhenaten', 46–7; Assmann, *From Akhenaten to Moses*, 61–3; Franklin, *Spirit Matters*, 141–63. See Weigall, *Life and Times of Akhnaton*; Petrie, *History of Egypt*, 205–33.

64 See Assmann, 'Freud, Sellin, and the murder of Moses'; Weitzman, *Origin of the Jews*, 174–206, esp. 183–90; Slavet, *Racial Fever*, 31–67; Gere, *Knossos and the Prophets of Modernism*, 153–60.

65 The most serious Egyptological treatment of these ideas, in a modified form, is that by Jan Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*. See also Britt, 'From distortion to displacement'.
66 See Montserrat, *Akhenaten*, 29–32, 168–82.
67 In many years of modern biblical studies and Middle Eastern archaeology, no evidence to support the historicity of Moses or the events of the Exodus has ever stood up. Attempts to situate Moses chronologically then are not about fitting historical evidence into an existing chronology but about trying to match a literary narrative with the chronology that it imagined, or with the chronology that is most amenable to modern readers' attempt to situate that narrative in historical time.
68 Zabel, 'History in stone', pl. 9.
69 The presence of this inscription also shows the care put into the building at every level: the inscription would have been incomprehensible to its creators and visitors (barring the few Assyriologists scattered around the country at a few academic institutions), but Alexander and Lawrie still clearly carried out extensive research to choose an inscription with meaning. Like other features in public buildings, it also indicates the extent to which architects, artists and clients cared about the prestige associated with official handbooks they could produce explaining their buildings, which would be discussed in specialized and sometimes popular press.
70 At 13.10.1923 LL to BGG. Box 35, Nebraska State Capitol Building Correspondence, LLP.
71 See, for instance, 25.1.1923 BGG to GEH. Box 55, Folder 1, GEHP.
72 At 13.6.1924 LL to Caroline Ransom Williams. Box 35, Nebraska State Capitol Building Correspondence, LLP.
73 A cuneiform inscription also appears on the Lawrie-designed sculpture above the Sterling Memorial Library entrance at Yale University, another late, Goodhue-initiated project (completed by Yale's presiding architect, James Gamble Rogers). In this case, the cuneiform passage comes from an Ashurbanipal inscription (r. 668–627) and was selected by Raymond P. Dougherty, curator of the Yale Babylonian Collection from 1926 to 1933. Yale University Library, 'Yale University Library Gazette', 82.
74 At 7.3.1924 BGG to William Lethaby. Box 8, Folder 5, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue architectural drawings and papers, 1885–1926. Department of Drawings & Archives, Avery Architectural and Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.
75 See Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 40–59; Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 12–31.
76 On this style See Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue*, 75–7; Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 36–41.
77 See Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 72–95; Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 32–43. The design incorporated ideas for a pyramid tower he had proposed for the Chicago Tribune competition, an entry that lost out to John M. Howells and Raymond Hood's gothic skyscraper. See Tribune Company, *Tribune Tower Competition*, pl. 97; Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 53–64.
78 See Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 74–6; Hyers, 'New library'.
79 See, for example, Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 52; Los Angeles Public Library, 'Early history, design and construction'.
80 Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 141–4.
81 Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 44–51. Wyllie, *Bertram Goodhue*, 76, 186.
82 It also meant a significant overlap with Masonic symbolism, with its emphasis on mysteries and hidden knowledge. In general, both the architecture and the decoration of the Library have inspired the suspicions of Masonic conspiracy theorists. The use of Egyptian styles and iconography are particularly incriminating in these theories. See Central Docents, 'Are there hidden Masonic symbols', parts 1 and 2; Vigilant Citizen, 'Occult symbolism'.
83 Alexander, 'Americanization', 368.
84 Alexander, 'Americanization', 368
85 Alexander, 'Americanization', 368.
86 Alexander, 'Americanization', 369.
87 Alexander, 'Americanization', 369.
88 Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 153.
89 We can think back to the many examples we have seen of Egypt, as earliest of early civilizations, being associated specifically with writing or record-keeping: Blashfield's *Evolution of*

Civilization for the Library of Congress, where Egypt contributes 'written records', for instance, or Lawrie's Nebraska Pentaour statue, just discussed, associating Egypt with the beginning of history-writing.

90 His original idea was for a version 'unlike her Athenian prototype' dripping with verdant fruit, presumably celebrating the Dionysian side of civilization and the verdancy of Los Angeles. This was not a conception Lawrie followed. See BGG to HBA, 1.3.1924. HBAP, Thematic Design Project Files, LA Public Library, Correspondence, 1924–29, 1934, Box 16, Folder 3. Cited in Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 189 n. 90.

91 Schwartzman and Gee, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 104–7; Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 119.

92 The *lamassu* Lawrie uses is Assyrian, not Babylon, but these two cultures of Mesopotamia were usually equated in popular imagination.

93 See discussion of source in Breisch, *Los Angeles Central Library*, 189 n. 94. This wording originated with Lawrie and was used in some Library guides and marketing materials.

94 BM 124918, see Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, 48, pl. XXXVIII.

8
Epilogue: the future

Forty years after the Columbian Exposition brought the world to Chicago, Chicago was planning to do it again, with another great fair scheduled for 1933. Although it had been many years since he had left for the sunnier shores and clearer skies of Pasadena, George Ellery Hale still had a native's interest in his hometown, and despite his withdrawal from the limelight as his mental and physical health struggles became more acute, he still had an uncanny talent for arranging things, and a passion for suggesting themes, slogans and guiding words. In 1928, as early plans for the event were underway, Hale met with Rufus C. Dawes, the Chicago-based businessman heading the new fair corporation, and suggested a theme: A Century of Progress, looking back on the past 100 years in which Chicago had gone from a small frontier fort to a city of skyscrapers, a transformation celebrated in the letterhead of the Century of Progress corporation for 1928, showing the very different skyline in these two eras.[1] This 100 years in which Chicago had grown upwards led to a larger theme celebrating the extraordinary acceleration of scientific progress in that period; as Dawes put it, 'the progress of civilization during the hundred years of Chicago's existence'.[2] Dawes solicited the National Academy of Sciences to put together a committee of advisors, and deferred to their suggestions throughout planning. As Lisa D. Schrenk points out, this kind of unified theme was new; previously, American expositions 'despite often being held to commemorate a specific event, typically projected a jumble of messages and ideas to fair visitors'.[3] Scientific advance was sufficiently broad to encompass just about anything, but unified everything under one rubric. Hale drafted the fair's official motto, the distinctly ominous 'Science Finds – Industry Applies – Man Conforms'.

Of course, neither Dawes nor Hale foresaw that the 1933 fair would take place in straitened financial circumstances, four years into the Great Depression, when the country's economy was, by various metrics, at an absolute low point. As a result, the budget for the fair was constrained and various grand plans had to be scaled down. The eventual Century of Progress Exposition, held in newly reclaimed land on the near South Side, in Burnham Park (named for the architectural director of the Columbian Exposition, Daniel Burnham), would not be as grand as that predecessor. Yet, despite the inauspicious economic circumstances in which it took place, it was the first international world's fair to pay for itself (and more) – in part because of phenomenal success with audiences.[4]

And, in some ways, the straitened financial circumstances fit the aesthetics of the fair, which were to be 'modern'. The heads of the architectural commission were Paul Cret and Raymond Hood, two modernists with whom Lee Lawrie had experience, friends of Goodhue, and two of the most influential visionaries of what 'modern' meant in 1920s America. The planning board asked Lawrie not only to do some work for the fair himself, but to take on a supervisory role of the sculptural programme, because, as he later remembered, 'at that time, I was regarded as being very modern' (since, he somewhat ruefully noted, 'the influence of Picasso and Henry Moore had not yet spread over our land'). Lawrie soon discovered that this was a thankless task. Sculptors remembering the 1893 Columbian Exposition did not understand that both the ethos of modernity and the 'rubber dollars' with which he was expected to execute the sculpture (i.e. dollars that had to stretch) limited the 1933 fair's sculpture programme by comparison.[5] The high modernism that had replaced the neoclassicism of the Columbian Exposition's White City left much less work for the sculptor. As Cret and Hood intended, the architecture of the fair presented a significant contrast to their predecessor's Beaux-Arts classicism, and arguably marked the high point for American Streamline design.

In many ways, architecture served as the most compelling witness to the premises put forward by Hale and his fellow scientists about the accelerating rate of technological innovation. One guidebook explained that, in the fair's buildings, 'the art of lighting had reached such an advanced stage of development that sunlight actually was excluded from the interior of the exhibit buildings as being too inefficient'. Not only had the sun been bettered, but the same guide explained that 'ten brand new colors' were invented just for the 1934 season's decorations.[6] The windowless rooms that resulted from an artificial light that overpowered even the sun freed architects to think in bold,

monolithic terms. Vast stretches of utterly blank walls painted in the never-before-seen colours offered themselves to view. Every building could now present the same grand, blank, monolithic face to the world that the windowless pyramid, ziggurat, obelisk or pylon of antiquity had.

Sculptures were picked out only at strategic locations. A number of them celebrated the way that science had harnessed eternal natural forces; it was not only mankind that conformed to science, but the very elements. Gaston LaChaise's monumental frieze above the Communications Building showed 'The Conquest of Time and Space' (the progress of time began with two dinosaurs, raising their heads upwards towards a pyramid and a Greek temple). Leo Friedlander created genies of fire, light, night and storms for the Social Science Hall. Ulric Ellerhusen depicted a female Stellar Energy and a male Atomic Energy as dynamic nude bodies, bursting with power, as panels for the Electrical Building.[7] Lee Lawrie designed two monumental pylons for the Electrical Building's 'Water Gate' (Figure 8.1), facing the lake,

Figure 8.1 Lee Lawrie, 'Water Gate' (1933), outside the Electrical Building, architect Raymond H. Hood, Century of Progress Exposition, Chicago. Photo credit: Jewett E. Ricker, *Sculpture at A Century of Progress, Chicago 1933*, Box 6, Folder 14, CoP.

representing light and sound, harnessed through electrical invention. Each pylon featured its own trinity of grotesques: the sun and the moon, grouped with artificial light on one side; thunder and music with 'the telephone' on the other. At the base of each pylon sat an identical sphinx, Greek in iconography, though with wings undoubtedly reflecting Lawrie's familiarity with the *lamassu*.

The utter modernity of the buildings and sculpture, and their embrace of a futurist admiration for the transformative powers of science, did not mean that there was no place for the ancient past at the 1933 fair. The theme of progress leant itself to exhibitions that strayed beyond the designated timeline of the last century. In the Social Science Hall, University of Chicago anthropologist Fay-Cooper Cole oversaw anthropological exhibits for the fair, and produced a short popular book branded with the Century of Progress's space-age logo, *The Long Road: From Savagery to Civilization*. It was illustrated with reproductions of vivid murals 'illustrating the rise of mankind' from the Logan Museum of Beloit College, Wisconsin, which were temporarily displayed in the Social Science Hall.[8] Even the commercial pavilions evinced an interest in ancient history.[9] The Albert Kahn-designed Ford Motor Company pavilion's 'Drama of Transportation' traced the 'evolution of passenger vehicles from ancient Egypt to today'. Betraying a slight bias in its historical emphasis, it included every model of the Ford car yet built.[10] The Sinclair Oil Company took an even longer view, multiplying the official timescale of the fair by a million. Enormous dinosaurs (the logo of the company), recreated in steel, rubber and plaster, with 'electric motors for brains', had a starring role in 'The World 100 Million Years Ago'.[11] The same exhibition also featured Ice Age mammals and an actor portraying a Neanderthal woman. In distinct contrast to the image of the brutish, stooping Neanderthal that Henry Fairfield Osborn and Charles R. Knight had concocted for the American Museum of Natural History, this commercial exhibit anticipated today's more positive image of this early human, positing that Neanderthals (the female ones, at least) practised body-hair removal and an early form of hair-waving (Figure 8.2).[12]

We have also already seen a somewhat more respectable recreation of antiquity in the reconstruction of the classical Mayan Temple of Uxmal, rebuilt from casts taken by the archaeologist Franz Blom, a project commissioned directly by the fair (Figure 5.17). I suggested in Chapter 5 that the appeal of the Mayan Temple was in part found in its resonance with the architectural styles elsewhere in the fair. As redone in Chicago, it was straight out of the event's wider streamline look-book. Like other displays of archaeological reconstruction, it too celebrated the wonders

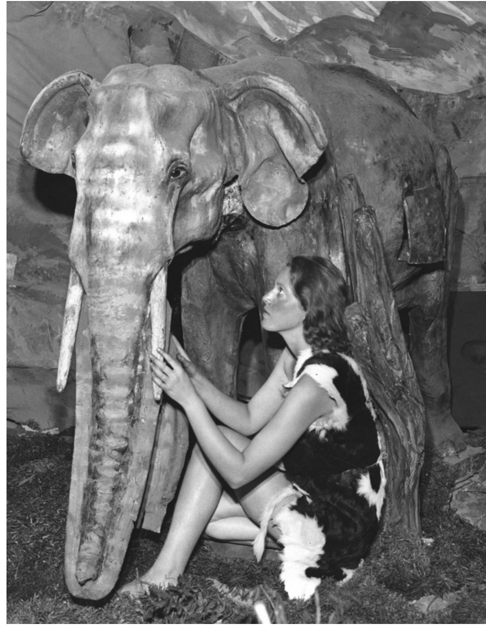

Figure 8.2 Actor Edyth Arlen portrays a Neanderthal in the Sinclair Oil Company's 'World a Million Years Ago' exhibit at the Century of Progress Exposition, Chicago. Photo credit: Kaufmann & Fabry, COP_17_0003_00067_001, Century of Progress World's Fair digital image collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

of modern science, through the ability of American archaeology to materialize a distant past, in full colour.

The sculptures at the fair also blended the aesthetics of modernity with ancient references. As we might expect, broadly classical references were much in evidence, interspersed with machine age iconography. Lawrie's Water Gate, for instance, took inspiration from Greek vase painting and Greek and Egyptian decorative motifs. In Louise Lentz Woodruff's sculpture for the Science Fountain, *Science Advancing Mankind*, Science was embodied as 'a robot', a blocky Machine Age creature who guides two human figures, nude except for small bits of drapery (Figure 8.3). With their straight bowl cut and bob, there is at least some Egyptian influence on the two figures, especially in the woman figure. Their hands are raised in the cautious pose of one groping in the dark, but in a way that also echoes a pious gesture familiar from the corpus of Egyptian art. We could read this couple as ancient peoples at the dawn of humankind's progress, science leading them on their

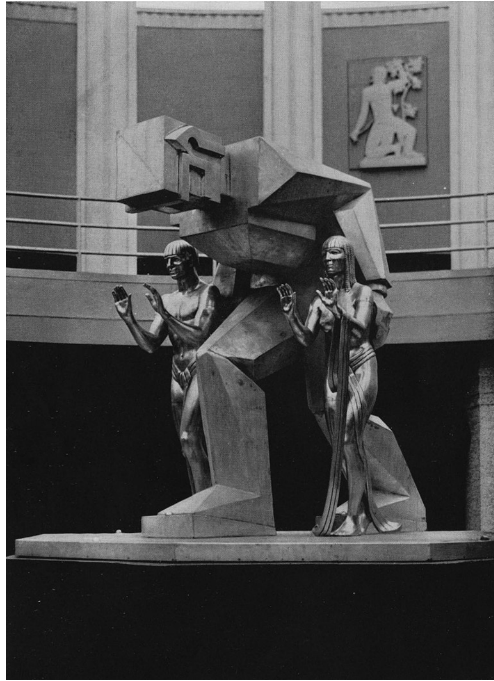

Figure 8.3 Louise Lentz Woodruff, *Science Advancing Mankind* (1933). Photo credit: Jewett E. Ricker, *Sculpture at A Century of Progress*, Chicago 1933, Box 6, Folder 14, CoP.

first tottering steps towards civilization. The vaguely Egyptianizing imagery perhaps evokes, like those Assyrians Hildreth Meière created in Nebraska, 'an Oriental Adam and Eve'. Yet this relationship with Science is also an eternal dynamic; not only the people of our distant past, but all of us in all times and places are mere children next to the towering Robot Science, who will always have us by his paternal hand. The vaguely Egyptian cast to the two figures, then, does not locate them historically: Egyptian style is used, as classical imagery so much more often is, for the universal.

James Henry Breasted was not one to let such a major event happening in his own city get by without representation for the very place where civilization, whose progress was being celebrated in its Chicago culmination, first arose. In 1928, he had suggested to Dawes a programme for a History of Science exhibition in the fair's Science Building (for obvious reasons, given the theme, perhaps the premier exhibition space).[13] Like Breasted's plans to facilitate the display of Max von Oppenheim's Tell Halaf sculptures at the fair, this never went

anywhere. The fair opened in 1933 with no Oriental Institute display, the institute having judged the prices for renting space far too high. Yet in 1934, as the fair prepared for a second season, an extension prompted by its incredible success with the public, they offered the institute space in the Social Science Hall, rent-free.[14] The Oriental Institute took them up on the offer and mounted a display showcasing some of its most impressive recent finds (Figure 8.4). The centrepiece of the installation was a long photographic representation of the grand stairway at Persepolis, which an Oriental Institute team funded by the American millionaire Ada Small Moore was excavating at the time, under the direction of German Jewish archaeologist Ernst Herzfeld.[15] The true stars of its exhibit, however, were the newly excavated Sumerian sculptures from the Iraqi city of Tell Asmar, in the Diyala Province, dating to the first half of the third millennium BCE. Upon discovery by a team led by the Dutch archaeologist and art historian Henri Frankfort, these blocky sculptures presented a challenge to art history, and to the tastes of observers.[16] To some, they appeared 'primitive' and odd; to others they appeared to anticipate cutting-edge trends in sculpture.[17] A fair photographer, undoubtedly with an eye for the comic, captured an

Figure 8.4 View of Oriental Institute displays in the Hall of Social Science at the Century of Progress Exposition, 1934 season. Photo credit: Courtesy of the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures of the University of Chicago, CC BY-NC-ND.

Figure 8.5 Fair patrons look at Oriental Institute displays of Early Dynastic (*c*. 2900–2550 BCE) statues excavated at Tell Asmar, Iraq, during the Oriental Institute's 1933 season. The two patrons are identified in the photographers' records as 'Miss P. McLaughlin, Cincinnati artist, and L. Stienes, of Fairmont, Nebraska'. Photo credit: Kaufmann & Fabry, COP_17_0003_00087_002, Century of Progress World's Fair digital image collection, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Illinois at Chicago.

image of two patrons face to face with these small, rotund human figures from almost 5,000 years before (Figure 8.5). The man and woman look a little like Grant Wood's 1930 *American Gothic* couple dressed up for a day out in the city. It seems made for a cartoonist's captions. 'But is it art?', the same question the hick observer might ask when faced with the ultra-modern, supplies itself naturally.

Living under the American Pharaoh

Yet at the very moment that Breasted made his Persepolis expedition the centrepiece of his display, the institute's excavations there were endangered, and it was clear to both Breasted and Hale who was at fault: Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a dictator 'wrapped like an ancient Pharaoh in his desires for immortality and political glory', as Hale put it.[18] In the summer of 1935, Breasted learned that the wealthy Mrs Moore

would not be able to continue her support for the expedition, in light of Roosevelt's 'soak-the-rich' tax policies.[19]

As far as Breasted was concerned, this was bad enough for the cause of ancient Middle Eastern archaeology and the collections of the Oriental Institute. But he was even more worried that these tax policies threatened 'far-reaching effects on civilization as a whole in the United States'. He was positively despairing over the 'desolating experience' of finding that 'the head of our nation is the most serious danger that now confronts us'. In a letter to his son, he explained that, in contrast to Europe, where government supported academia, 'in this great new Western World, it has been the glory of America that the homes of culture and science have been built up and supported by our enlightened business men'. 'Let us by all means,' he conceded, 'look after the forgotten man, but it is not necessary to cripple and paralyse our great wealth winners in order to make life easier for "the forgotten man", who has never done anything for civilization and never can.' He was disgusted that funding for social programmes might be dispersed by an 'unwieldy committee' (the democratic institution of the US Congress) rather than a wise steward like his patron John D. Rockefeller Jr., whose philanthropic foundations had done so much good for the world. If Roosevelt was not restrained, 'American civilization is doomed'.[20]

Like an Egyptian scribe of old in a work of Egyptian wisdom literature, Breasted had the chance to speak truth to Pharaoh in December 1934 in a lecture at the semi-centennial celebration of the American Historical Association. In 1912, Breasted had attended the AHA's annual meeting when that year's AHA president, Theodore Roosevelt, delivered the keynote, and to Breasted's delight, cited him as an example of a historian successfully executing 'History as Literature'. Scholars with Breasted's skill as writers, Theodore Roosevelt said, made a happy contrast to history as mere funereal catalogue:

> Minute descriptions of mummies and of the furniture of tombs help us as little to understand the Egypt of the mighty days, as to sit inside the tomb of Mount Vernon would help us to see Washington the soldier leading to battle his scarred and tattered veterans, or Washington the statesman, by his serene strength of character, rendering it possible for his countrymen to establish themselves as one great nation.[21]

Egypt and the US: doubles once again. Breasted noted at the time that he was one of only two Americans cited as examples of current historians

achieving the kind of vivid historical writing Egypt and Washington alike deserved – the other was James Harvey Robinson, Breasted's collaborator on the textbook, *Outlines of European History*, which served as a dry run for Breasted's *Ancient Times*.[22]

In 1934, the roles would be reversed: Breasted on the podium and a President Roosevelt in the audience, only this time it would be the far less congenial Franklin.[23] Breasted's address on 'History and Social Idealism' condensed ideas he had presented in his 1933 book *The Dawn of Conscience*, his major late-career work. He argued first that two familiar traditions, that of the Mediterranean, in which Western culture was steeped, and that of the ancient Hebrews, really derived originally from Egypt. Specifically, the tradition of 'social idealism' originated there, some 4,000 years ago. Not at all coy about the contemporary relevance of this claim, he explained he could demonstrate that 'the New Deal is *not new*', for 'the social tractates of Egypt 4,000 years ago, preached help for the "Forgotten Man" and proclaimed the "New Deal"'. Yet, he continued, 'we are almost as far from any permanent New Deal as the social sages of Egypt were'. The present New Deal architects, he argued, were 'misguided' and ignorant about how change could be effected, for 'underlying any such effort must be the attitude of the human spirit, and that is a factor which moves so slowly that any advance is almost indiscernible'. This is in part because moral advances and new ideas cannot be passed on as 'red hair or black skin' can. Changes to the human spirit 'have been temporary emotional manifestations, which have survived into the next generation only as they have found permanent expression either in written form or in works of art, or have been brought to bear upon the next generation by oral admonition'. While this might seem to suggest that an active effort by a powerful American administration was worth attempting, Breasted revealed that history indicated otherwise: 'We may hope that the right kind of education will accelerate the advance, but the effort to perpetuate idealistic sentiments by legislation or by government action has been shown by history to be futile.'[24]

This amounts to a kind of fatalism at odds with the mood of the Century of Progress Fair in which he had been happy to participate. But as Breasted aged, and as his work became more than ever devoted to the topic of the development of conscience, idealism and morality, his perception of historical processes was slowing down. There was still an unbroken thread of continuity between early civilization, a steady 'rise of man', but the development of conscience was perhaps less given to acceleration than the development and transfer of technology. This was how he had once conceptualized history. In 1916, he opened *Ancient Times*

by invoking the incredible technological leaps that had taken place just between 'our' grandparents' age, when no one had ever seen an aeroplane, and our own.[25] In his 1933 *Dawn of Conscience*, he instead began by painting a picture of the banks of the Somme in France, where an archaeologist could find nestled together the stone axes with which 'our earliest *savage* ancestor could crush in the skull of his enemy', and the fragments of shells from the World War, with which 'his *civilized* descendant is accustomed to blow his enemy into bits'.[26] So much for Lewis Henry Morgan's framework of evolutionary social progress.

Breasted would not live much longer to see how American civilization turned out. He died quite suddenly, although after many years of intermittent bouts of serious ill health, in December 1935, at the age of 70. Shortly before his death, he had sent yet another grand plan to his chosen American Pharaoh, John D. Rockefeller Jr. The Oriental Institute was coming to the end of its current round of generous support from the various Rockefeller foundations, anticipating a precipitous drop in its annual budget that would mean an end to most of its ambitious archaeological expeditions. From Memphis, Egypt, to which he had just returned after a brief visit to inspect the progress of installations at the new Rockefeller Museum in Jerusalem, Breasted wrote to Rockefeller as a friend and mentee. Ostensibly it was not yet a pitch, but only a pitch for a pitch, in which he sought a permanent endowment of $15 million for the Oriental Institute, which he hoped might be provided either by Rockefeller himself or by one of his foundations, so that the institute could live on into the future, expanding human knowledge of the earliest past.[27]

He never lived to read the testy response from Rockefeller, an unusually harsh rebuke from a usually tolerant patron. In it, Rockefeller admitted a sense of bitterness at the misinterpretation of his original interest in supporting Breasted's individual projects. 'I did not for a moment assume I was putting myself in the position of becoming the patron of the vast enterprise that has since developed,' he wrote.[28] Rockefeller regretted his harsh words when he learned of the sudden death of such a 'very dear and valued friend'. 'Few men have I found myself drawn to as closely as to him,' he mourned.[29] Breasted's son Charles assured Rockefeller that his father had not read this final letter before his death (and though Charles professed that he agreed with Rockefeller that the institute needed to learn to live within its means, he counted this a lucky thing, since it would indeed have crushed his father).[30] Ultimately, Rockefeller's foundations had endowed the institute with enough to keep it going in perpetuity, though its budget

was never again as lavish as during the years when the sun of Rockefeller's personal interest had shone on Breasted.[31]

George Ellery Hale died not long after his great friend, in 1938, also after years of poor physical and mental health. The institutions he established continued to play pivotal roles in the development of American science. Caltech would serve as host to the earliest version of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory, later incorporated into NASA, the key research laboratory in developing American travel beyond the edge of the Pacific, to a new final frontier. Meanwhile, observations and calculations made by Hale's friend and colleague Edwin Hubble at Mount Wilson Observatory in the 1920s and 1930s provided the strongest observational evidence yet assembled for an expanding universe. Today, Hubble's work at Mount Wilson is usually enfolded within the narrative of the discovery and acceptance, by the mid-1960s, of the 'Big Bang' theory of the universe's origins. Sudden, explosive change, in contrast to a 'steady state' model, really was the order of the day.[32] The vision that Hale and Breasted had once concocted for the National Academy of Sciences ceiling, of evolution that began in a nebular galaxy and ended in a pyramid, could be revised with an even more dramatic opening image – though how any artist, even the inventive Hildreth Meière, could have concocted the appropriate symbolism for such an event is difficult to imagine. Science had revealed origins that might exceed the reach of art.

New York's World's Fair 1939

Yet as the Great Depression dragged on through the 1930s, change sometimes seemed stalled, especially for decorative artists. Lawrie and Meière lamented how slowly the architectural trade was reviving. They, and all their colleagues, were struggling. As it seemed had been the case for the artists of the ancient Middle East, the Pharaoh was the best patron: getting commissions from the Works Progress Administration was a life raft for many struggling artists and decorators. In 1936, another bright star appeared on the horizon: New York would host its own fair in 1939, an event that promised work for sculptors and muralists. Lawrie was put in charge of sculpture policy and was soon dealing with an avalanche of begging letters from old friends and cold-calling hopefuls. As in 1933, Lawrie had to manage expectations from his colleagues: this too was a 'Modern' fair, and that meant limited and strategically placed sculpture only. Hildreth Meière was in a happier position, because while sculpture was still out, murals were in. As in Chicago in 1933, modern exhibition

architecture entailed huge expanses of uninterrupted walls, but in a conscious contrast to the Chicago exposition, it was decided that mural-decorated, as opposed to solid-colour, walls would be a feature of New York's World's Fair 1939.[33]

Meière herself had 11 major commissions to execute, for four separate pavilions. One commission for the AT&T Building, *Communication of Thought by Sound and the Spoken Word*, featured a male figure in Neo-Assyrian robes raising a shofar and a shouting man in Egyptian loincloth, alongside 'primitive' drummers and a modern, suited man before telephone equipment. For the Medicine and Public Health building, designed by Mayers, Murray & Phillip, Goodhue's successor firm, she received six separate commissions. Executed in terracotta, *Civilized and Primitive Man* revived some of the imagery she had employed in the National Academy of Sciences ceiling, showing a sloping-foreheaded early human slumped on the ground and above him, in the contrapposto pose of a classical Greek statue, 'Civilized Man', hand raised, looking outwards (Figure 8.6). A stylized tree branch links the two, a minimalist reference to the 'family tree' connecting these very different

Figure 8.6 Hildreth Meière, *Civilized and Primitive Man* (1939). Terracotta mural for the Medicine and Public Health Building, New York World's Fair, architects Mayers, Murray & Phillip. Photo credit: Manuscripts and Archives Division, New York Public Library Digital Collections, 1935–45.

humans. For a curved wall that faced an inner courtyard, she designed an enormous, 150 foot long, painted mural *Man Between the Past and Future* (Figure 8.7). A colossal female figure, hair streaming behind her, reaches an arm towards the 'ever-advancing lamp of knowledge'. A tiny human figure bobs below her, caught between the nearly 4,500-year-old Great Sphinx and a wave representing the momentum of the future.[34]

As in Chicago in 1933, the fair looked back on the past through its own (slightly arbitrary) Century of Progress, but turned even more decisively towards the future.[35] Perhaps the most famous and influential contribution to it was polymath designer Norman Bel Geddes' collaboration with General Motors: the Futurama, which offered the chance to experience a glorious future city.[36] Spectators rode a conveyor belt over Bel Geddes' scale model that simulated the view from a low-flying aircraft (which would be plentiful in the future city). Below them, vast highways were filled with streamlined, gleaming silver General Motors cars.

Along with this influential vision of the urban-suburban future, the most iconic structures of the fair were the Trilon and the Perisphere, stars of its visual branding, their instantly recognizable outlines reproduced on souvenirs and incorporated in a succession of official fair letterheads. Monumental sculptures-cum-buildings, they were an extreme version of the essential simplicity that Goodhue had once sought for modern

Figure 8.7 Hildreth Meière, *Man between the Past and the Future* (1939). Mural for the Medicine and Public Health Building, New York World's Fair, architects Mayers, Murray & Phillip. Photo credit: Courtesy of the Hildreth Meière Family Collection.

architecture. Within the hollow Perisphere, visitors could look down on yet another scale model of a future city, the Democracity. In keeping with the fair's themes, the installation emphasized the interconnectedness of all people, and the dream of a World of Tomorrow engineered and planned for peace and harmony. According to an official booklet for the attraction, such a world would come into being 'as soon as men recognize their interdependence, one on the other'. It continued: 'The New World … it has always been the name for America … here the New World of Tomorrow naturally is born' (ellipses in the original).[37] This time, America would be the place of origins.

The immediate future, however, looked ominous. There was no New York rematch of the famous confrontation at the 1937 Paris World's Fair between the monumental pavilions of the Third Reich and the USSR, because the Third Reich was sitting the New York fair out, despite assiduous courting from the organizers.[38] The Soviets, however, did take up the invite. Their pavilion, if not quite on the order of their iconic Paris one, was similarly eye-catching, with a colossal worker raising a red star at its centre. It won the fair's design prize and represented the largest expense by any foreign nation exhibiting at the fair. Hildreth Meière was no fan of its message or its aesthetics: 'Russia has no modern art, and the murals in the Soviet Pavilion, if that is what those large canvases could be called, were deceptions as to propaganda, and beneath contempt as paintings.'[39] Meière had visited Germany in 1934 and in 1936, to attend the Berlin Olympic Games, and came away from both visits with a highly favourable impression of the Third Reich; on both occasions she joined throngs to see Hitler himself. Four months into the fair's six-month run, war broke out in Europe. The objects displayed at the Polish Pavilion never went home; they were donated to the Polish Museum in Chicago, where they remain today.[40]

As such, the gleaming Tomorrow that the fair offered was a future that transcended the immediate political landscape. Perhaps Breasted's late-career fatalism was still relevant and it would be further aeons before 'universal togetherness' was a possibility (or at least until 1964, when another New York World's Fair, in the midst of the Cold War, would take up the same theme on the same site). The future was a strange world exemplified by the baffling abstraction of the Trilon and Perisphere. Yet even these forms were not without some historical precedent. For what was the Trilon if not a futuristic reimagining of various quintessentially Egyptian forms: the obelisk, the pyramid, the pylon (which its name referenced)? The future, in so many ways, was like the ancient past: distant, dazzling, bursting with potential, and ambiguous, yet insistent,

significance. But like the ancient past, it might prove as ultimately inaccessible, even as it sometimes seemed just as immanent in modern American life, manifested in fantastic artistic scenes, and occasional traces in the material world.

Images of Middle Eastern origins: some conclusions

In this study, my primary concern has been to consider the strange and unpredictable ways that the idea of ancient origins in the Middle East were understood as somehow linked to American modernity. At the simplest level, a historical narrative in which civilization originated in Egypt and Mesopotamia and then passed through intervening cultures to reach its greatest height yet in the United States of America, provided a compelling way of understanding America's place in history. It played on much better-established narratives of the rise of civilization which began slightly later, in classical Greece in the mid-first millennium. This new narrative simply pushed things farther east and earlier in time, starting the story in North Africa and West Asia in, roughly, the late fourth millennium. Because European and American narratives of a unified civilizational rise had to contend with a perceived 'dual heritage' through not only the classical past but also the cultures behind the Hebrew Bible, a Middle Eastern 'predecessor' to both was welcome. It united a dual heritage into one, pleasing story.

But this straightforward historical narrative, promoted in popular histories which informed public narratives in civic spaces, was not the only way that the ancient Middle East inserted itself in American life. Instead, these Middle Eastern origins often appeared especially *present*, more so than nearer, intervening historical periods. They could provide a better model for American art and architecture than the familiar classical world and the long tradition of European imitators. They seemed to have living parallels in modern-day Americans including (disconcertingly) America's original natives. These early civilizations offered a possible source of solutions to problems of modern life and its social and governmental complexities. At times the proximity of this ancient past was worrying: heralding a potential return of despotism, or the prospect of a civilization that had advanced more slowly than we might hope. At other times it was comforting: suggesting the possibility of sharing enthusiasms with individuals long past, and through these shared human experiences, of gaining a certain sense of eternity – perhaps enjoying the same art, the same experience with the natural world or the same creative potential.

Origins today

This book has taken its start and end dates from prominent fairs that overlap the careers and interests of Breasted, Hale, Goodhue, Lawrie and Meière. In this period, knowledge of the Middle Eastern past greatly increased with new excavations and translations. The US became more involved in the Middle East, politically and archaeologically, through an alliance of private money, dispersed through capitalist ventures and philanthropy alike, and government activity. Educational, cultural and civic institutions in the US also exploded in number through a similar mixture of private, philanthropic and civic funding. Immigrants poured into the country then, just as abruptly, virtually stopped in the wake of immigration restriction acts passed in the early 1920s, in the shadow of fears about dysgenics and race mixing. The economy boomed and busted and ultimately all but broke. Public and civic art and architecture went through an extraordinary transformation, becoming (often) significantly taller as towering skyscrapers rose across the US and, at the cutting edge, much more devoted to the virtue of simplicity, even as it maintained many of the same iconographic preoccupations.

Yet, as in any periodization, there is something arbitrary in my selection of these start and end dates. Americans may no longer decorate new civic buildings (which do not, of course, go up with anything like the regularity that they did in the 1920s) with high-minded, sometimes oddly literal friezes of unbroken chains of historical progress, but they still cannot stop looking to the ancient past for the explanation of their present or future, or wondering about the origins of their country, culture or 'civilization'. They may use slightly different terms, and may search now in DNA, in evolutionary psychology, in popular histories that call on readers to rethink the origins of civilization, but images and narratives often reiterate similar ideas to those of a hundred years ago.

Today the term 'progress' would be rarely used by historians unless they were discussing the Progressive Era, or the curious historical fantasies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. One would certainly not find the same number of scholars interested in the concept at the American Historical Association as during the early decades of the twentieth century. Yet we must always be suspicious of how it continues to structure the way we think about the past or our relationship to it. Certainly, popular histories that reiterate a narrative of upward civilizational progress still find an enormous audience. We might think of the works of Stephen Pinker, which combine an evolutionary psychological approach with progressive history in the Breasted vein,

and in which we learn why and how we have, in fact, ascended morally and socially. Perhaps the most successful practitioner of the unified historical narrative is Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari, who has spun his histories of humankind from primate origins to the future into a career as a sort of social prophet.[41] Both of these authors, like the original practitioner of the modern 'grand narrative' popular history, the biologist Jared Diamond, position their work as offering unexpected twists on conventional wisdom, even as their work reflects comfortable narrative frameworks. In the early twentieth century, Breasted excited learned lay readers by informing them that there was ancient history earlier than classical Greece, early civilizations that had actually originated much of what we consider the classical tradition, civilizations which had produced incredible art and architecture, science and even moral philosophy. Furthermore, this antiquity explained the present day. The New Deal was *not new*, and its inevitable unhappy result would be revealed if only Roosevelt and his cabinet would read some Egyptian history. This model – the exciting twist, the new discoveries of old truths, the contemporary relevance – continues to serve authors who want to maximize their cultural impact.

Most recently, *The Dawn of Everything* by the late American anthropologist and anarchist activist David Graeber and British archaeologist David Wengrow, sets itself explicitly against the historical paradigms of history writers like Pinker, Harari and Diamond. Jettisoning deterministic narratives of 'the origins of inequality', in which progress and historical forces act upon helpless humans, it instead emphasizes human societies' flexibility, creativity and capacity for social experimentation. It argues against the validity of any predetermined linear trajectory in human social or political development. It has been marketed as, essentially, the left-of-centre reader's alternative to the usual fare in the grand narrative history genre. Upon its release in late 2021, the book reached the number two spot on the *New York Times* bestseller list. But in this riposte to the usual popular work of 'big history', an underlying, shared premise is intact: that the way things were very long ago, at the beginning of everything, can, and should, tell us something about how things are now, and how they should be. Marketing copy for *The Dawn of Everything*, paraphrasing a favourite, mock-serious phrase of Graeber's, proclaimed: 'it's time to change the course of human history, starting with the past'.[42]

As in the 1890s to 1930s, the ancient Middle East is only one possible location for America's or 'world civilizational' origins. The scientific consensus that modern humans almost certainly arose not, as

Henry Fairfield Osborn would have hoped, in Central Asia, but in the Horn of Africa has also recast Africa as a place of primordial origins. As with the Middle East, discussed in Chapter 4, this has not always been to the benefit of living Africans or to those who might count themselves part of its diaspora. Research by Monique Scott has shown that the perception of Africa as the 'cradle of humanity' has often tended to fix its residents, and those associated with them, as themselves living specimens from the past, or as relics from the childhood of humanity – a similar dynamic to the one that Zainab Bahrani identified with Mesopotamia's role as the 'cradle of civilization'.[43]

In 1946, W. E. B. Du Bois had lamented that 'today it is almost universally assumed that history can be truly written without reference to Negroid peoples'.[44] His own attempts to correct that oversight were only the beginning of a long tradition of Black American scholarship that has centred the role of Africa in 'world history' and 'world civilization', as well as simply a subject worthy of historical study in and of itself. Yet despite this long and varied tradition, and particularly the development of Afrocentric approaches to history in American universities beginning in the 1960s, many American institutions and certainly many popular understandings of the African place in world history still reflect the assumption Du Bois was working against in 1946. The concept of Africa as a significant region in the development of 'civilization', ancient history or early societies, rather than merely in the evolution of the earliest humans, continues to be the stuff of political consciousness-raising and, academically, still most often a counter-narrative positioned in the context of continuing institutional oversight, except within Black or Africana studies programmes. Outside of such programmes, Egypt, meanwhile, continues to be widely understood as somehow separate from the continent of which it forms a part, as reflected in how its treasures are displayed within major museums, and which departments teach its courses in universities. This is despite efforts by many Egyptologists for decades now to emphasize that Egypt is indeed in Africa and to link its study to the wider study of ancient Africa.

In 2021, the Metropolitan Museum launched a temporary exhibition in their Egyptian galleries called 'The African Origin of Civilization'. The exhibition takes its title, and its starting point, from the 1974 English translation of previous works by the polymath Senegalese scholar Cheikh Anta Diop. Diop was a foundational figure in the development of Afrocentrism (though a descriptor he never used himself), and of theories of African cultural unity. His work on the topic began with Egypt, which he argued was a Black civilization. This had historical and

political implications. 'The history of Black Africa will remain suspended in air and cannot be written correctly until African historians dare to connect it with the history of Egypt,' he argued.[45] Although Afrocentric scholarship has focused on the full array of precolonial African cultures, the 'Africanness', and relatedly the Blackness, of Egypt has consistently served as a foundational claim for Afrocentric understandings of world history, as it did for Du Bois and Booker T. Washington in the early part of the twentieth century.

The Met exhibition does not wade into debates either about the race of Egyptians or the influence of ancient Egypt on later African cultures. Its publications position it as an exercise in perspective-altering. 'Despite their creators' shared African origins, the landmark cultural achievements by ancient Egyptians and by artists from an array of traditions that flourished to the south have, for the most part, long been categorized by the West as unrelated bodies of work,' its curators, Diana Craig Patch and Alisa LaGamma, note.[46] They recognize that the Met has participated in perpetuating this separation. The exhibition paired works from the Egyptian collections with complementary works from its West and Central African art collections, picking out common themes, materials or functions. It is a striking 'intervention', yet it says as much about the staying power of established narratives of world history as about how these narratives might be overturned. The presence of disruptive objects in the gallery offers a compelling illustration of how public display manifests historical narratives in civic space.

The African artworks in the Met's collection date from significantly more recent periods, roughly the sixteenth through the mid nineteenth centuries CE, than the Egyptian antiquities on display, which primarily date from between 4000 and 400 BCE. Although gallery text emphasizes extremely broad formal or material similarities, rather than making any claims about influence, the juxtaposition almost cannot help but reinforce the idea that the sub-Saharan Africa of very recent years has more in common with the very ancient past than the present. Even as this elevates African art to the status enjoyed by ancient Egyptian art, whose canonical popularity and artistic quality is now uncontroversial, it also suggests other conclusions. In Chapter 5 we saw how anthropological understandings of the development of societies cast contemporary American Indians as windows onto the past, and relatedly as a doomed race. A similar discourse is perhaps conjured, unintentionally, in these confrontations.

Though the exhibition is centred in the Galleries of Egyptian Art, it spills over into other galleries. In the Ancient Near Eastern gallery

(itself due for a renovation, which will merge it with the Cypriot galleries and emphasize cultural connections between Western Asia and the Mediterranean), a basalt statue of the late third millennium BCE ruler Gudea, purchased on the art market likely after early twentieth-century looting in Tello, Iraq, is juxtaposed with an early nineteenth-century CE wooden statue from present-day Angola of a Chokwa chief, which the Met describes as 'collected in Angola by Count Admiral Francisco Antonio Gonçalves Cardoso (1800–75), Governor of Portuguese Angola (1866–69)'. African objects are also given temporary pairings in the galleries of European and American art, in this case with works that are of a similar age. Here the status of African objects as interlopers is both powerful and disconcertingly obvious: for this is not a permanent rethinking of the Met's display strategies. All of these pieces will go back to their permanent home in the museum when it is done being renovated; the disruption caused by the renovation has made the exhibition possible.

That permanent home is the Michael C. Rockefeller Wing, which houses the Met's collections of the arts of sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania and the ancient Americas. The wing was established after a 1969 pledge by Nelson A. Rockefeller, John D. Rockefeller Jr.'s third child, Republican governor of New York from 1959 to 1973, vice president under Gerald R. Ford, and, incidentally, a great collector of 'primitive art'. The core of the wing was Nelson Rockefeller's personal collection, which he moved to the Met from his own private Museum of Primitive Art, founded in 1954.[47] The name of the wing memorializes Rockefeller's youngest son Michael, who disappeared in 1961 at the age of 23 during an art-collecting expedition among the Asmat people in Papua New Guinea. His remains were never found and his death never explained. It is most likely that he drowned or died of exposure attempting to reach help after his dugout canoe was wrecked, though there is some evidence, and extensive speculation, that he met a violent end at the hands of some Asmat men.[48]

Although the catalogue engages thoughtfully and extensively with the history of acquisition, the gallery text of 'African Origin' largely ignores any questions related to how the pieces it displays came to be in the Met, the politics of the art market for 'primitive' art, and the wider politics of Western collecting, of either the African pieces of recent vintage, or the Egyptian pieces they are displayed next to, whether excavated in Egypt or Sudan or likewise purchased on the open market. Finally, there is one foundational contention that the exhibition does not question, and quietly reiterates: that an art museum is a place to learn about 'civilization', and beautiful works of art a clue to its 'origins'.

The past in American civic space

Meanwhile, despite thought-provoking, if fleeting, exercises like this one, Greece and Rome are still overwhelmingly more familiar and more frequent manifestations of 'antiquity' and the origins of world civilization in American media and public spaces. Classicism continues to hold a special place in the art and architecture of public life. During the Trump presidency, this special place was reiterated through a 2020 'Executive Order on Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture'.[49] 'Societies have long recognized the importance of beautiful public architecture,' the text of the order reads. 'Ancient Greek and Roman public buildings were designed to be sturdy and useful, and also to beautify public spaces and inspire civic pride.' Understanding this, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson 'sought to use classical architecture to visually connect our contemporary Republic with the antecedents of democracy in classical antiquity, reminding citizens not only of their rights but also their responsibilities in maintaining and perpetuating its institutions'.

The federal government since the 1950s had, however (the order goes on to explain), been commissioning modernist buildings that no one but architects and architectural critics liked, which did nothing to evoke these democratic origins in the classical world. Going forward, the order specified that federal buildings under the management of the General Services Administration should exhibit 'classical and other traditional architecture'. The same strictures that Goodhue chafed against when he designed the National Academy of Sciences were being reiterated. Though he, and the Federal Commission of Fine Arts of 1919, which staunchly refused to approve his original designs for the National Academy of Sciences building, would have been surprised to find included among the styles encompassed by 'classical' architecture, 'Art Deco'. The term would not have been familiar to any of them in 1919, but by a decade later it would come to describe what Goodhue was calling his 'lack of style', germinated with the NAS design and put into practice in Nebraska and Los Angeles – certainly not what the Commission of Fine Arts of 1919 considered classical. But then, the classical has always had a remarkable ability to adapt to the times.

In 2017, as White supremacists marched around the Thomas Jefferson-designed early neoclassical buildings of the University of Virginia in Charlottesville at the 'Unite the Right Rally', chanting a message that was little changed since the immigration restriction debates of the 1910s, 'Jews will not replace us,' and White supremacist group Identity Evropa peppered US campuses with flyers depicting

classical and Renaissance statues in white marble behind slogans like 'Protect Your Heritage' and 'Our Future Belongs to Us', academic scholars of Classics rushed to critique.[50] Some classicists or art historians developed a strong sideline in explaining to the wider public the long history of classical imagery in White supremacist visual discourse, and, more insidiously, the role of neoclassical architecture and art in generating messages about who was welcome in a certain space.[51] Some scholars combined these explanations with a desperate plea to learn better history. They offered a chance to see the Greek and Roman worlds differently: perhaps as diverse, multicultural societies in which modern concepts of race, 'Europeanness', or 'Western' identity would have had no meaning, or perhaps as dystopias run by slavers and misogynists rather than ancestral utopias.[52] Those attempting to correct the record and change the narrative about the classical world, must, nonetheless, confront the fact that those White supremacists deploying the concept of a classical antiquity to which only some Americans are heirs understood their history, their historiography and their public art all too well.

In the early twentieth century, as we have seen, the long-standing association between classicism and Western identity that these groups are evoking was something that enthusiastic academics and modernists alike sought to disrupt – incompletely, clearly. This incompleteness is not surprising: the aesthetic urge to find new sources of inspiration, and the historical interest in earlier, preclassical antecedents modified, but did not overturn, the paradigm that established classicism in this privileged role. In the preceding study, we have seen numerous examples of attempts to reframe rather than refute the basic premise that underlies the idea of a classical heritage in the West: Western Civilization *does* exist, it *does* culminate in America, it *is* the end of a noble manifest destiny, a westward movement of the frontiers of human society. It is simply an even more sweeping story than we once thought, beginning at the very beginning of writing, monumental art and architecture, and science in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Today, just off the Midway Plaisance which once hosted the Columbian Exposition's popular Cairo Street, Breasted's Oriental Institute is no more – in name at least. After years of branding itself as simply 'the OI', it finally unveiled its new name in April 2023: the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, West Asia and North Africa. The name change is an attempt to shed the image associated with 'the Orient', a term that few would want to use without inverted commas since Edward Said rendered Orientalism a description not just of an academic field, but

of the process by which that field propped up Western hegemony in 'the East'. (Official explanations of the name change pointed out that it was also confusing, since most visitors would associate 'Oriental', when used in a museum, with collections of Far Eastern art.)

Meanwhile, much of Breasted's vision remains intact at the renamed ISAC(WANA). In January 2020, when I first visited to look at Breasted's archives, posters outside the institute, part of its centenary celebration, lured visitors in with a seductive promise: 'Somewhere, in 10,000 years of our history, are answers' (Figure 8.8). Answers to what? The visitor is left to decide, but I think we can guess what questions they might want to ask. Where did we come from? Who are we? Where are we going? What should the society that we participate in be like? The institute is still offering the same possible method for investigating these questions that Breasted sold the great men of the Rockefeller foundations: 'our' history in the ancient past, the cradle of civilization, the place where 'man first struggled up from stone age savagery'.[53] As ever, the precise methodology by which this course of study will provide us with answers

Figure 8.8 A poster outside the Oriental Institute Museum, photographed in March 2023, just before the name was changed to the Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures, West Asia and North Africa. Photo credit: Author.

to these questions is not specified. But here we are some 100 years on from the institute's founding, asking the same questions and looking in the same places for their answers.

Notes

1 Rufus C. Dawes was one of three scions of a powerful Ohio family; his brother Charles was the Dawes of the Dawes Plan for German reparations to the Allies after the First World War; Rufus was an adviser on the plan. On the Century of Progress organizers, and Hale's role, see Rydell, 'Fan dance'.
2 At 21.8.1928 Rufus C. Dawes to George K. Burgess. Central Policy Files 1924–1931, Executive Board, Committee on Chicago World's Fair Centennial Celebration: Advisory 1928–1929, NAS Archives.
3 Schrenk, *Building a Century of Progress*, 23.
4 Ganz, *1933 Chicago World's Fair*, 152.
5 Lawrie, 'Boy Wanted'. Box 46, Folder 1, LLP.
6 *Guide to World's Fair*, 12, 10. The colour scheme was overseen by innovative architect and set designer Joseph Urban; see Ganz, *1933 Chicago World's Fair*, 80; Tozer, 'Century of Progress', 80–1; Charles J. Stahl, 'Lighting enhances architecture at "A Century of Progress"'. Box 7, Folder 46, CoP.
7 Ricker, *Sculpture at A Century of Progress*, 12–14, 18–21.
8 'The Logan museum, Beloit college, Beloit, Wisconsin'. Box 11, Folder 10, CoP.
9 As Lisa D. Schrenk explains, the Chicago Century of Progress represented a new level of integration of the commercial with the exhibition itself. Private pavilions of corporations were an extremely important part of the fair, and demonstrated an unprecedented degree of harmony and integration with the design aesthetics and ideological messaging of the fair's 'official' pavilions. Schrenk, *Building a Century of Progress*, 19–46.
10 *Guide to World's Fair*, 54–5. See *Official Guide Book*, 137; 'Ford exposition, A Century of Progress', 1934. Box 16, Folder 17c, CoP.
11 Sinclair Refining Company, 'Sinclair Dinosaur Exhibit'.
12 See Semonin, 'Empire and Extinction', 176–8; Barrett, 'Picturing a crude past', 416–19.
13 At 15.3.1930 JHB to Max Mason. Box 92, Folder 11, DC, ISAC.
14 At 6.5.1934 JHB to James Breasted, Jr (Jimmie). Box 20, JHBP, ISAC.
15 See Mousavi, 'Persepolis in retrospect'. Herzfeld, who was of Jewish background and whose understanding of Iranian history angered National Socialist officials and archaeologists, became a target of political intrigue in the early 1930s which eventually forced him from his position when the Oriental Institute agreed to the Iranian government's demands that he be dismissed; see Jenkins, 'Excavating Zarathustra', esp. 24–6. On the institute's Persepolis excavations more generally, see Alizadeh and Stolper, 'Past and present', 274–83.
16 See Evans, *Lives of Sumerian Sculpture*, 46–75; Collins, *The Sumerians*, 98–101.
17 Bahrani, *Infinite Image*, 15–48.
18 At 21.8.1935 GEH to JHB. Box 31, JHBP, ISAC.
19 At 13.8.1935 JHB to GEH. Box 31, JHBP, ISAC.
20 At 11.6.1935 JHB to Charles Breasted. Box 19, JHBP, ISAC. This long harangue was not solely an exercise in letting off steam; Charles was just marrying the daughter of independent-spirited Democratic representative for Arizona, Isabella Greenway, who was an old friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, a bridesmaid at her wedding to Franklin and godmother to Franklin and Eleanor's daughter. Greenway broadly supported the New Deal, but broke with the president over certain policies, and clearly would have had the chance to pass on Breasted's concerns for American civilization had she wished; Breasted suggested that Charles might relay these critiques to her.
21 Roosevelt, 'History as literature', 484–5.
22 See Breasted and Robinson, *Outlines*. Teddy Roosevelt was also warm and complimentary when Breasted briefly schmoozed him in person, and Breasted heard from attendees that the president had spent the Association's dinner the next evening praising Breasted and enquiring

after his educational background. At 28.12.1912 JHB to FHB; 29.12.1912, dated 4.30am, JHB to FHB. Box 16, JHBP, ISAC.

23 Breasted was one of many speakers in 1934; he had been president of the AHA himself in 1928 when he delivered the keynote; see Breasted, 'The New Crusade'.
24 All quotations Breasted, 'History and social idealism', 64–5.
25 Breasted, *Ancient Times*, 1–2.
26 Breasted, *Dawn of Conscience*, 1.
27 At 25.10.1935 JHB to John D. Rockefeller Jr. Box 32, JHBP, ISAC. For an overview of the funding situation, see Abt, *American Egyptologist*, 387–93.
28 At 26.11.1935 John D. Rockefeller Jr to JHB. Box 32, JHBP, ISAC.
29 At 5.12.1935 John D. Rockefeller Jr to Charles Breasted. Box 32, JHBP, ISAC.
30 At 11.12.1935 Charles Breasted to John D. Rockefeller Jr. Box 32, JHBP, ISAC.
31 See Kohlstedt, 'From artifacts to people facts'.
32 See Ostriker and Mitton, *Heart of Darkness*, 52–88; Gott, *Cosmic Web*, 1–27; Fernlund, 'To think like a star'; Meserve et al, 'Universe is stranger'; Hetherington, 'Theories of an expanding universe'.
33 'On the New York World's Fair from the Artist's Angle, circa 1939', Box 4, Folder 64, HMP.
34 Mural description, 1939 New York World's Fair archives, New York Public Library. See Brawer and Skolnik, *Art Deco Murals*, 184–5.
35 See Luckhurst, 'Laboratories for global space-time'; Kargon et al, *World's Fairs on the Eve of War*, 57–82, esp. 73–8.
36 Morshed, 'Aesthetics of ascension', 83–94; Morshed, *Impossible Heights*, 153–220.
37 *Your World of Tomorrow*, not paginated.
38 Fortuna, 'Fascism, National Socialism'.
39 'On the New York World's Fair', Box 4, Folder 65, HMP.
40 See Duranti, 'Utopia, nostalgia', 671.
41 Examples of these authors' works in this genre include Pinker, *Better Angels* and *Enlightenment Now*; Harari, *Sapiens*; Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*. For critiques, see Dwyer and Micale, eds, *Darker Angels*; Gray, 'John Gray: Steven Pinker is wrong'; Giridharadas, 'What to do when you're a country in crisis'.
42 See Schuessler, 'What if everything you learned about human history is wrong?'
43 Scott, *Rethinking Evolution*; Scott 'We grew up'; Bahrani, 'Conjuring Mesopotamia'.
44 Du Bois, *World and Africa*, 4.
45 Diop, *African Origin*, xiv. The book translated and edited excerpts from Diop's earlier books, *Nations nègres et culture* (1955) and *Antériorité des civilisations nègres* (1967).
46 Patch and LaGamma, 'African origin', 5.
47 See LaGamma et al., 'Nelson A. Rockefeller vision', 4–17.
48 Most recently, the evidence for a violent death was presented by journalist Carl Hoffman, *Savage Harvest.* See Campbell, 'Review of *Savage Harvest*'; Milam, *Creatures of Cain*, 47–8.
49 Executive Office of the President, Exec. Order No. 13967 (Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture), 85 Federal Register 83739-83744, 18 December 2020. The order was repealed soon after Joe Biden took office in early 2021. See Executive Office of the President, Exec. Order No. 14018 (Revocation of Certain Presidential Actions), 86 Federal Register 11855–11856, 24 February 2021.
50 Although in this instance, the 'Jews will not replace us' phrase refers not to imagined waves of poor Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, but to powerful Jews who White supremacists fantasize are engineering the replacement of 'White natives' with racialized non-White immigrants from Mexico, South America, Africa or Asia. See Hills, 'You will not replace us'; Davis 'White nationalism's new love of art history'.
51 See McCoskey, 'Beware of Greeks'; Morse, 'Classics and the alt-right'; Monteiro, 'Power structures'; Davis, 'White nationalism's new love of art history'; Zuckerberg, 'How the alt-right is weaponizing the Classics'. See also Adler, *Classics, the Culture Wars, and Beyond*; Zuckerberg, *Not All Dead White Men*.
52 Bond, 'Why we need to start seeing the classical world in color'; Mackay, 'Colonialism is built on the rubble'; Zuckerberg, 'How to be a good classicist'.
53 At 25.10.1935 JHB to John D. Rockefeller Jr. Box 32, JHBP, ISAC.

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MODERN
AMERICAS

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, a particular story about the United States' role in the long history of world civilization was constructed in public spaces, through public art and popular histories. This narrative posited that civilization and its benefits – science, law, writing, art and architecture – began in Egypt and Mesopotamia before passing ever further westward, towards a triumphant culmination on the American continent.

Early Civilization and the American Modern explores how this teleological story answered anxieties about the United States' unique role in the long march of progress. Eva Miller focuses on important figures who collaborated on the creation of a visual, progressive narrative in key institutions, world's fairs and popular media: Orientalist and public intellectual James Henry Breasted, astronomer George Ellery Hale, architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, and decorative artists Lee Lawrie and Hildreth Meière. At a time when new information about the ancient Middle East was emerging through archaeological excavation, ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia appeared simultaneously old and new. This same period was crucial to the development of public space and civic life across the United States, as a shared sense of historical consciousness was actively pursued by politicians, philanthropists, intellectuals, architects and artists.

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