3

Drawing the Color Line

Silence and Civilization from Jefferson to Mumford

Reinhold Martin

If, in considering what it has meant for architecture to be modern, we trace a line from past to present, our line must at some point cross, parallel, break, or merge with that traced by what Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno referred to as an implacable "dialectic of Enlightenment," where life-as-imagined meets life-as-lived. Drawn, according to these two thinkers, by capital and its avatars but with programs of racial superiority in close attendance, this dialectic or something like it has directly or indirectly guided many attempts to understand modern architecture's aspirations to emancipation, the tacit subject of which was and remains most frequently white.[1] Predominant among these efforts are accounts that recognize cultural forms as ideological constructions—in a word, myth—the architectural history of which is one of prolonged ruination that culminates, for the European and North American neo-avant-gardes at the end of the twentieth century, in what Manfredo Tafuri memorably called the "ashes of Jefferson."[2]

For Tafuri, Thomas Jefferson was not first and foremost a slave owner, nor was he first and foremost white; rather, he was an abstraction, an allegory of the proto-bourgeois artist-intellectual and a precursor to the Euro-American avant-gardes whose thought and actions, bound to the Enlightenment ideal of reason, were

betrayed from the outset by the antagonism of agrarianism and industrial capitalism into which they were born. Tafuri's racial blindness is itself ideological, and there are other, more complete and subtle accounts of Jefferson's architectural contribution and its contradictions.[3] But as historians come more clearly to understand the racial conflicts that architecture's modernity has long entailed, wherever and whenever that modernity is said to have taken hold, we must come to terms with the conflicted preconditions of our own knowledge. My aim is therefore an object lesson in anachronism, via an alliance of dialectics and discourse analysis, with the former abbreviated to mark Enlightenment's contradictions, and the latter developed in a modified Foucauldian vein with media-theoretical assistance.

Race as History as Civilization

To the extent that it appears at all in the literature on architectural modernism, of which Tafuri's work remains exemplary in its sophistication, race most frequently appears on the ideological plane. Ideologies of racial supremacy join with pseudo-Darwinian scientism, for example, in culturalist paradigms of degeneracy of which the 1937 Nazi purge of *Entartete Kunst* (degenerate art) is exemplary. But race, we must remember, did not always connote socio-biologically. Rather, as Michel Foucault emphasized in his later work, prior to the nineteenth century Europeans understood the races at least in part to refer to warring peoples with different histories, different languages, and different traditions—like the Gauls, the Franks, the Normans, and the Saxons. As subsequent studies of race and racism have shown, the eighteenth century division of the human species into subgroups ("varieties" was a common term) implied hierarchy and thus paved the way for the scientific racism that arose in the mid-nineteenth century, but the two were not identical.[4] The anthropological classification of peoples into physical "varieties" did converge with a philosophical anthropology of "character" that, in turn, flowed into both nineteenth-century nationalisms and racisms. But prior to 1800, although white supremacist ideologies had circulated for centuries, race, even when applied to nonwhite, non-European peoples colonized by European powers, was most commonly understood in civilizational terms that referred to generational lineages more than to physical classifications per se.[5]

As Ann Laura Stoler has shown, Foucault overlooked ways in which the social relations of colonialism shaped European subjectivity, not least with respect to bourgeois sexuality and the "defense" of white patriarchy against perceived internal enemies.[6] Still, Foucault's optic allows us to see how, by the end of the nineteenth century, the concept of race had been adapted in Europe to differentiate the white conquerors from their colonial or enslaved subjects, and internally, Christians from Jews. Before that, Foucault provocatively argued, race struggles of subordinate against dominant groups supplied the paradigm for revolutionary struggles more

generally, including the class struggle. Only later do we see the emergence of what he calls "state" racism, in which the state is called upon to defend itself against an inner racial enemy, of which the German case is paradigmatic but to which we must also add the post-Reconstruction United States under Jim Crow.[7]

It is in this sense that we might think again about the oft-repeated assertion by W. E. B. Du Bois, made in an address to the first Pan-African Conference in 1900, that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line."[8] Knowing well that to ignore or downplay race differentials and what was called "race prejudice" would be to submit to the ruling powers, Du Bois attempted to shape the struggle against state racism as a race struggle in the sense of a struggle among peoples with distinct histories. In other words, he confronted one concept of race with another. Arguing a few years earlier that "we must acknowledge that human beings are divided into races," Du Bois exhorted his fellow African Americans to "rise above the pressing, but smaller questions of separate schools and cars, wage-discrimination and lynch law, to survey the whole question of race in human philosophy and to lay, on a basis of broad knowledge and careful insight, those large lines of policy and higher ideals which may form our guiding lines and boundaries in the practical difficulties of every day."[9] Rejecting biological distinctions as determinant, the young Du Bois nonetheless insisted instead on "deeper differences . . . spiritual, psychical differences—undoubtedly based on the physical, but infinitely transcending them."[10]

Perhaps for tactical reasons, Du Bois echoed the earlier race struggles described by Foucault when he claimed that "the forces that bind the Teuton nations are, then, first, their race identity and common blood; secondly, and more important, a common history, common laws and religion, similar habits of thought and a conscious striving together for certain ideals of life."[11] Race, in other words, was for Du Bois a matter of history much more than it was a matter of biology. It may well be that, as Kwame Anthony Appiah has shown, when Du Bois wrote in 1911 that "we ought to speak of civilizations where we now speak of races" he had not entirely freed himself from what Appiah calls the "illusion of race" from a logical point of view.[12] But neither then nor in his later "Marxist" phase did Du Bois construe race as a mere ideological phantasm; he saw it, instead, as a socially and historically produced ground that had to be remade before it was unmade. Slavery had separated generations from a history that a few decades of freedom were scarcely enough to rebuild. Hence his call, which Du Bois repeated in different forms and put into practice throughout his long life, for "race organizations: Negro colleges, Negro newspapers, Negro business organizations, a Negro school of literature and art, and an intellectual clearing house, for all these products of the Negro mind, which we may call a Negro Academy."[13]

Du Bois spoke these last words at the inauguration of the American Negro

Academy in 1897. On the same occasion, Alexander Crummell, the academy's first president, delivered an address titled "Civilization, the Primal Need of the Race." Crummell, a pan-Africanist minister whom Du Bois eulogized in *The Souls of Black Folk*, was representative of the black intelligentsia circa 1900; as such, his words stand here not so much for a particular doctrine as for the common sense of race counter-discourse as Du Bois also understood it. "Civilization" was, for Crummell, the bedrock of racial being, again in the sense of race-as-history: "To make *men* you need civilization; and what I mean by civilization is the action of exalted forces, both of God and man."[14] Crummell thus understood civilization firstly as a product of the mind that was embodied in European culture by the likes of Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, and Euclid: "For civilization is, in its origins, ideal; and hence, in the loftiest men, it bursts forth, producing letters, literature, science, philosophy, poetry, sculpture, architecture, yea, all the arts; and brings them with all their gifts, and lays them in the lap of religion, as the essential condition of their vital permanence and their continuity."[15]

It is tempting to conclude that Crummell is meeting here the myth of white civilization with a counter-myth, a new Olympus ("the lap of religion"), the groundwork for which the Negro Academy would lay. But more likely, by "civilization" he is referring to what Du Bois called in his remarks the "common history, common laws and religion" from which races are made. Where "race" and "race organizations" are the instruments of what Foucault called a "counter history," a history with which the vanquished confront their conquerors, a history not only of cruelty and injustice, but of achievement and, as Du Bois put it, a "striving together for certain ideals of life." Du Bois would write such a history many times over during the course of his career. Mabel O. Wilson has explained in detail how these and related efforts drew on and contributed to modern forms of public exhibition.[16] In order to take some measure of what this problematic could have meant for modern architecture more narrowly, I want to take up this civilizational understanding of race—of race-as-history—in two contexts that relate to Du Bois's lifelong project. That project is represented here by his support of the American Negro Academy, which was devoted to African American classical education, and thereby to building institutions and a public sphere equal but to some degree opposed to those still rooted in the European Enlightenment.

Technics and Race

A little further on in his remarks, alluding to the still simmering debate between Du Bois and Booker T. Washington regarding black vocational versus collegiate education, Crummell continues: "But civilization never seeks permanent abidance upon the heights of Olympus. She is human, and seeks all human needs. And so she descends, recreating new civilizations; uplifting the crudeness of laws, giving

scientific precision to morals and religion, stimulating enterprise, extending commerce, creating manufactures, expanding mechanism and mechanical inventions; producing revolutions and reforms; manufacturing needles for the industry of seamstresses and for the commonest uses of the human fingers. All these are the fruits of civilization."[17] In the language used by Du Bois and Crummell, one measure of civilization, including that of the diasporic black civitas to which "race organizations" like the Negro Academy were dedicated, was a capacity to convert ideals into instruments. Du Bois rehearsed this principle many times when he argued for prioritizing liberal collegiate education for African American youth, especially those to whom he initially referred as the "talented tenth," over the vocational training advocated by Washington and others.[18] Technics, in this account, followed from civilization and not the other way around. Dialectically, however, the color line is a technological matter as well as an ideological one.

Along with the changing concepts of race alluded to by Foucault, from civilizational race struggle sanctified by the law to scientific racism as bureaucratic normalization, the enforced, mutual constitution of racial hierarchy and universality changed dramatically in the United States during the nineteenth century. This was due in part to the reorganization of knowledge associated with the new research universities and their disciplines. Many of these lent pseudo-scientific support to the new sociobiological racism.[19] What Du Bois called "the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American" resulted in part from the contradiction, and mutual constitution, of race and nation as practiced in these institutions, which put universal and particular into epistemic conflict.[20] In other words, this "double life" belonged to a historically specific "discourse network" (to use Friedrich Kittler's terminology) given to constructing universals—including the category of universal civilization—in a particular way with particular means, rather than simply being an ideologically determined universal in itself.

Du Bois, who maintained a lifelong interest in the political history of the Kaiserreich, was educated in Germany into what Kittler called the "discourse network of 1900." With this terminology Kittler differentiates two post-Enlightenment literary paradigms, classicism-Romanticism and modernism, according to the media complexes that underlie them, "universal alphabetization" and "technological data storage," respectively.[21] His claim is that two starkly different "writing-down systems" (*Aufschreibesysteme*, or discourse networks) essentially wrote "reason" and by extension (and although he pointedly does not use the term) Enlightenment, differently. They thereby shaped, respectively, the European-Germanic "age of Goethe" and what we might call, allowing for modernism's displaced author-function, the later "age of Nietzsche," according to the material specificity of written discourse and its technological infrastructure. Reason, on this account, is an entailment of a specific discourse network, as is its silent partner, race.

Though the Kantian ideal of Enlightenment based on literacy and a community of readers and writers remained very much alive in Du Bois's civilizational-pedagogical program, the "double life" (or double consciousness) to which Du Bois referred was not simply a dialectical inconsistency. It was and remains epistemologically constitutive, as Du Bois recognized in advocating for "race organizations" for the reconstruction and maintenance of black history, or what we can call with Kittler, data transmission and storage, in books, classrooms, and curricula. In other words, the color line is not merely an unfortunate obstacle to the full exercise of reason and its entailments, nor does it simply obscure an underlying class conflict, though the significance of the latter would emerge more fully in Du Bois's later work. Rather, the color line was among the technical preconditions for the Enlightenment public sphere and for the republic of letters. As such, its erasure could not and cannot be based only in universal literacy, as Du Bois recognized. The color line could only be erased by being redrawn as a kind of institutionalized, automatic writing, in a paradoxical doubling and redoubling of the public sphere—white and black—as differential repetition according to the possibilities and limits of what Walter Benjamin might have called its "mechanical reproducibility."

Moreover, anything like universal knowledge or a universally knowing human subject is only thinkable in the first place through very specific intermedial relays. This means that the conception of regulating ideals is itself a technical, practical matter. Like the chain that binds master to slave in Hegel's dialectic and in the process brings both into reciprocal, asymmetrical being, those intermedial relays secure relations of domination and subordination even as they help to constitute the subject of universal knowledge and of universal education.

By the end of the nineteenth century, this was the discursive and political work done by "civilization," understood by intellectuals like Du Bois and Crummell as well as by their white contemporaries to signify a realized set of attributes possessed by all peoples but differently, in consequence of their different histories and traditions. The practical, pedagogical requirement for admission into these histories was therefore not only the alphabetization required by the republic of letters. In the cruelest of tautologies, only an a priori history—a civilizational archive or "data storage"—guaranteed admission into "civilization" circa 1900. We can follow these two steps, of admission into (and exclusion from) the republic of letters and of the technical consolidation of "civilization," through two examples from modern architecture's archive, both of which entail the technological production and reproduction of race differences. In the first, a mechanical device designed by Jefferson stages the master-slave dialectic. In the second, the paths of Du Bois and the cultural critic Lewis Mumford briefly intersect, and the sovereign master dissolves into the bureaucratic matrix of "technics and civilization."

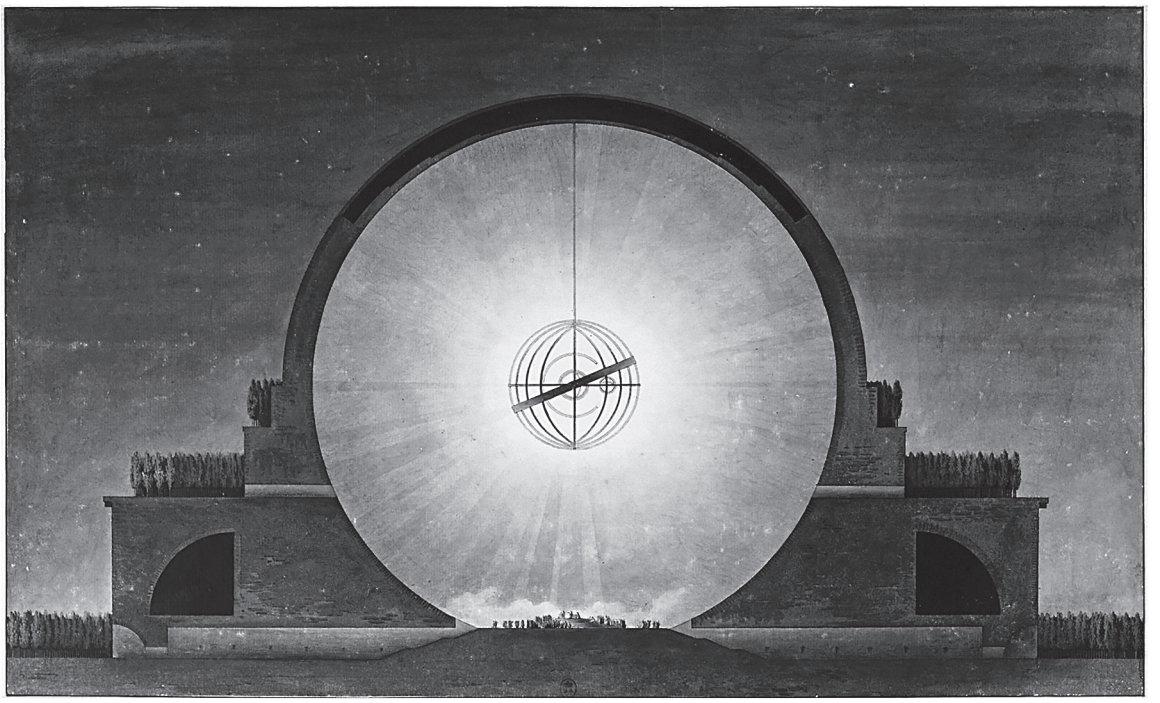

Fig. 3.1 Étienne-Louis Boullée, cenotaph for Isaac Newton (project), 1784. Section. Colored wash. Courtesy of Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

Silence, ca. 1800

Among the most well-known architectural examples of Enlightenment made literal is the French architect Étienne-Louis Boullée's unrealized proposal for a cenotaph for Isaac Newton from 1784, with a central armillary sphere that would periodically light up in a starburst of fireworks that made the Copernican cosmos visible, in a performance of universality compatible with Newtonian physics (figure 3.1). By 1825, Thomas Jefferson had translated this figure, via a series of mediations, into the library rotunda at the University of Virginia, for which he projected an unrealized planetarium (figures 3.2 and 3.3).[22] The University of Virginia was built in part by enslaved people and by their descendants.[23] Jefferson was a slave owner, and the republic of letters that formed there, as well as in the dining room and library of his Monticello home nearby, was built on and by slavery (figure 3.4). In his writings, Jefferson differentiated the enlightened reason allegedly cultivated in that dining room from what he regarded as the inferior faculties of enslaved Africans and, to a lesser extent, Native Americans, both of whom he regarded principally as "subjects of natural history."[24] To that extent, Jefferson's racism participated in a modified version of the civilizational paradigm, by drawing and enforcing a color line that distinguished two histories: one civilizational and one "natural." *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson's guidebook for foreign

Fig. 3.2 Thomas Jefferson, University of Virginia rotunda and lawn, 1826. Engraving by Benjamin Tanner from Herman Boye's *Map of Virginia*, 1827. Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

and domestic visitors, also provided an early textual basis for a biologically and anthropologically formulated state racism, written by a statesman.

Once inside at Monticello, these same visitors were enjoined to participate in reasoned discussions that were frequently lubricated by French wine made available by dumbwaiters connecting the dining room to the wine cellar below, where an enslaved person stood ready to supply the bottles (figure 3.5). As its name suggests, the purpose of the dumbwaiter was to exclude black voices and black ears from the conversation above. The dumbwaiter, then, did not merely regulate the boundaries of a sphere that was reserved, in a Kantian sense, for the public use of reason; it helped to produce that sphere by minimizing interference and distortion, and restricting transmission and communication in a manner that ontically differentiated master from slave.

Like the noise in the channel of a communications circuit, the hearing, speaking bodies of enslaved people were not external to the system of enlightened public reason as practiced at Monticello. Nor were they simply its invisible, silent operators, confined below decks, as Adorno and Horkheimer might have had it, while Jefferson-as-Odysseus strained toward the sirens' enchanting call.[25] They were the entire system's pre-dialectical, constitutive inside, which, like a body's internal

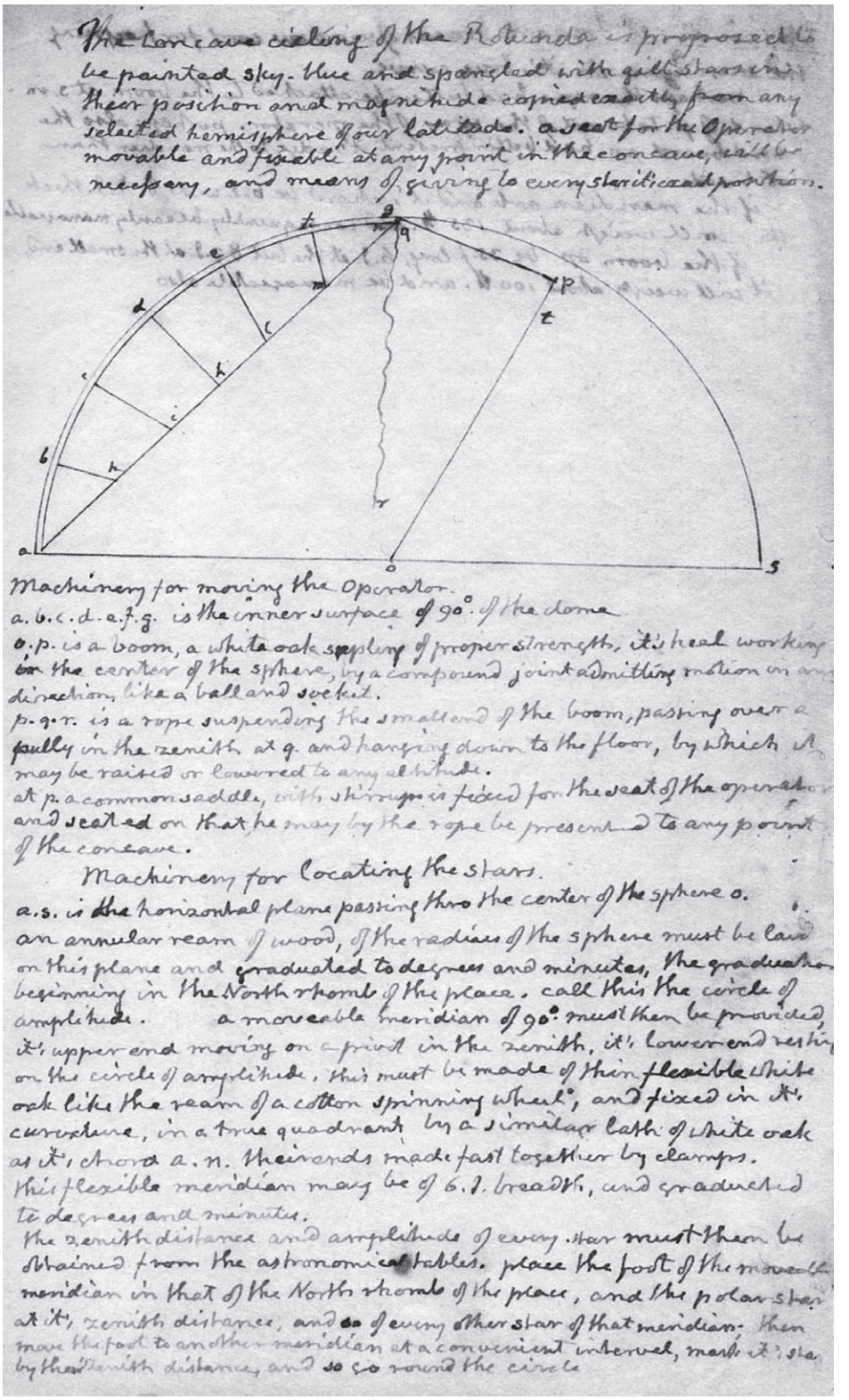

Fig. 3.3 Thomas Jefferson, proposed device for mapping astronomical charts onto the rotunda ceiling, University of Virginia (unrealized). Pocket memorandum book, 1819. Page 2, recto. Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia.

Fig. 3.4 Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, 1770–1809. West facade from the northwest. Historic American Buildings Survey, n.d. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

background noise, had to be made silent with every pull on the dumbwaiter in order for that system to function. Their material silence, which was produced rather than merely enforced by the space and its hardware, was just as integral to the Jeffersonian republic of letters as was the wine in the glasses, the books in the library, the chatter of the dinner guests, and the oral recitations performed by students at the nearby University of Virginia aspiring to a place at the table.

The dumbwaiters that connected the Monticello dining room with the wine cellar below were probably installed sometime around 1809, during the last phase of construction on the estate prior to Jefferson's death in 1826. Their design may have been based on similar devices built into table legs in the Parisian Café Mécanique, which Jefferson most likely visited during his time as minister to France from 1784 to 1789.[26] Monticello's dining room door, which turned on a central pivot, was equipped with shelves on one side so that enslaved people could discreetly ascend the narrow staircase from the kitchen, located in the basement of the southern dependency wing, and deliver plated food without entering the room. Another enslaved person (or perhaps the dinner guests themselves) would then place the dishes on another type of dumbwaiter, which resembled a wheeled cart with a stack of four shelves (and was probably adapted from another French model known as an *étagère*). Wine could be retrieved at any time by the host, a member of his immediate family, or, if necessary, by Jefferson's enslaved personal

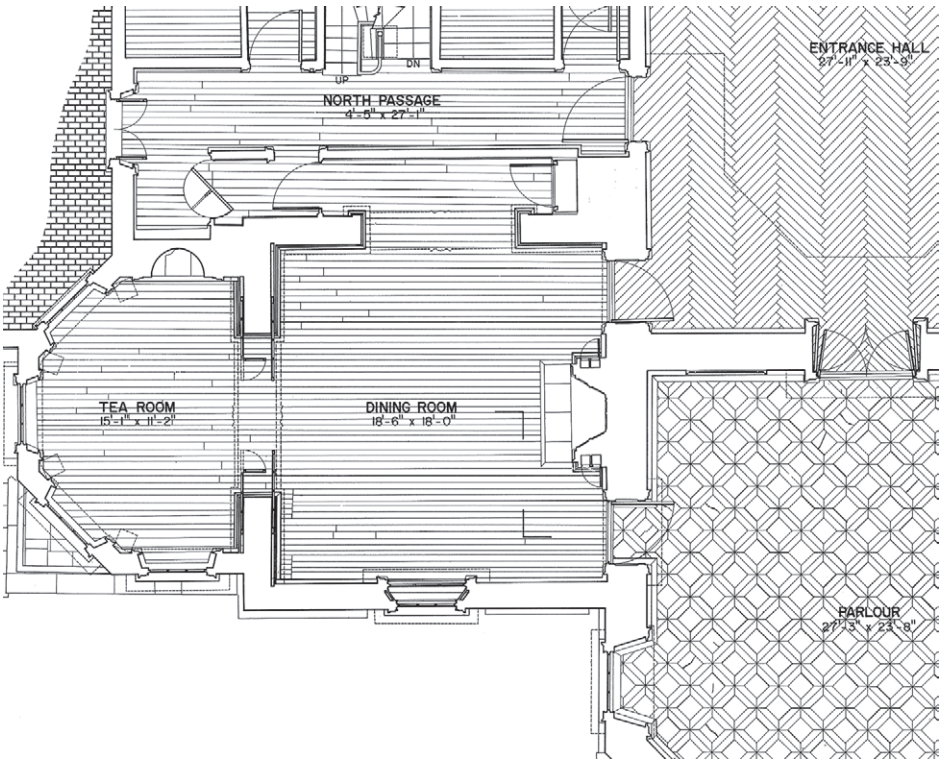

Fig. 3.5 Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, 1770–1809. First floor plan. Detail showing dining room, with dumbwaiters built into the fireplace (*center right*) and the service door (*upper left*). Drawn by Timothy A. Buehner, Isabel C. Yang, Hugh D. Hughes, Sandra M. Moore, and Jonathan C. Spodek, Historic American Buildings Survey, 1989–1992. Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division.

valet, Burwell Colbert (figure 3.6). All of this was designed to encourage in Jefferson's carefully chosen dinner guests something very close to what Immanuel Kant called in his remarks on Enlightenment "the inclination and the vocation for *free thinking*" intrinsic to "man, who is now *more than a machine*, in accord with his dignity."[27]

Among those guests was the literary portraitist of Washington society, Margaret Bayard Smith, who duly reported as follows: "When [Jefferson] had any persons dining with him with whom he wished to enjoy a free and unrestricted flow of conversation, the number of persons at table never exceeded four, and by each individual was placed a dumb-waiter, containing everything necessary for the progress of the dinner from beginning to end, so as to make the attendance of servants [slaves] entirely unnecessary, believing as he did, that much of the domestic and public discord was produced by the mutilated and misconstrued repetition of free conversation at dinner tables, by these mute but not inattentive listeners."[28] It is no small irony, then, that at least one of the moveable dumbwaiters was likely made by an enslaved woodworker, John Hemmings.[29] Much has been written

Fig. 3.6 Thomas Jefferson, Monticello, 1770–1809. Dumbwaiter built into dining room fireplace. Courtesy of Thomas Jefferson Foundation.

about the lives of slaves at Monticello, including those fathered by Jefferson with Sally Hemings (unrelated to John), and several first-person testimonies have survived. In one of them, Isaac Jefferson, a tinsmith and a blacksmith, further associated this white man who was "more than a machine" with mechanically aided reading and writing: "When writing he had a copying machine: while he was a-writing he wouldn't suffer nobody to come in his room: he had a dumb-waiter: when he wanted anything he had nothing to do but turn a crank and the dumb-waiter would bring him water or fruit on a plate or anything he wanted. Old Master had an abundance of books: sometimes would have twenty of 'em down on the floor at once: read fust one, then tother."[30]

This silence of these "mute but not inattentive listeners" casts Jefferson's proposed "Bill for the More General Diffusion of Knowledge" (1779) in a peculiar light.[31] That bill, which was presented to the Virginia legislature but failed to pass, is an important document in the eventual establishment of a public school system in the United States.[32] It describes a whole administrative landscape into which the existing College of William and Mary (where Jefferson studied) and the not-yet-established University of Virginia were—in principle—to be integrated. In Jefferson's proposal, the faculty of the college presides over the public school cur-

riculum, joined by various political bodies at different scales. The republican decentralization of governmental functions that it envisions is based on a division of the land into "hundreds," a unit of territory larger than a town but smaller than a county. In each hundred would be a primary school for both male and female students. These would aggregate into school districts comprising several counties and served by a secondary boarding school, a "grammar school," with ten or twelve (de facto white) male students, chosen by examination, in residence. From there, only the most accomplished students would be given scholarships to study at the college.

In this way, territory, population, and education were organized in an ascending scale into a pyramid of knowledge, at the actual, incomplete apex of which would eventually stand the University of Virginia, with its central organ for managing the attention of young white men, the library. Colleges and universities in Jefferson's day were noisy places, not least because knowledge was frequently reproduced out loud, in the recitation rooms that Jefferson incorporated into the professors' houses that lined the Virginia lawn. Silent reading in preparation for recitations or written exams was done mainly where the books were kept, in the central library rotunda.

This library and its books conjugate with Monticello's dining room; both belong to the material substrate out of which an intergenerational republic of letters was built. Both presupposed an agrarian order of property that included slavery among its conditions of possibility. In the dining room, silence served "enlightened" conversation; in the library, silence anchored the aesthetic education of the white southern gentry. For the library, too, was a spatio-technical device for eliminating noise and other distractions, its "book room" elevated above the lawn and washed from above with a dome of indirect sunlight. Silent reading in this library, which was bound like Boullée's domed cenotaph to the still-glowing embers of Enlightenment, was a precondition for a form of classical learning that was, in itself, a precondition for admission into the public conversation that filled the mediapolitically managed silence of Monticello's dining room.

Thus, the entire library–dining room and university-plantation apparatus belonged to the "discourse network of 1800" that produced sovereign author-reader-speakers, beginning with Jefferson himself. In this, the dumbwaiter drew one of countless color lines, or lines of racial subjugation as exclusion. During Jefferson's presidency, the United States sought to contain the slave uprising in Saint-Domingue that led to the establishment of Haiti as a sovereign nation, fearing that the uprising would spread to the American South. As state policy, this fear indicated that the chain that binds master to slave, which included instruments designed to secure the slave's silence, implicitly recognized the race struggle, which was not a struggle against racism per se (although racist discourse was

abundantly present even among "enlightened" figures like Jefferson) but against forcible, racial subordination. Along this axis, from the anti-colonial revolt in Saint-Domingue to the antislavery struggles that led up to the American Civil War, to the anti-colonial struggles of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, figures like Du Bois forged counter-institutions and a counter-history, within a discourse network in which history, or "data storage," correlated with civilization.

Civilization, ca. 1900

When Lewis Mumford published *Technics and Civilization* in 1934, by many accounts he dramatically transformed the historical study of technology, or what Mumford suggestively called "technics," in scholarly or semi-scholarly circles.[33] Less clear are the book's effects on the study of "civilization." Mumford has surprisingly little to say on this topic, despite the term's prominence in his title. What he does say is concentrated in an early chapter on mechanization, when he describes "The Profile of Technics." The "civilization" to which Mumford refers there, which arises between the tenth and the eighteenth centuries, is explicitly Western and is technologically defined: "Indeed, the age of invention is only another name for the age of man. If man is rarely found in the 'state of nature' it is only because nature is so constantly modified by technics." This Mumford summarizes with the "valley-section," an idealized landscape running from mountains to river valley, borrowed from the Scottish geographer Patrick Geddes: "In a figurative sense, civilization marches up and down the valley-section."[34] Civilization here is technological culture, from mines and quarries at the mountaintops, with the associated arts of refining, smelting, smithing, and casting, to hunting in the surrounding forests with weapons that also enable war, to forestry, milling, and woodworking, which eventually yield the mechanical lathe, to herding and agriculture below the wood line, and with these, textiles and tents, to, finally, a river-borne and seaborne fishing and boating culture bound together by nets and baskets.

From "the order and security of an agricultural and pastoral civilization" born in Neolithic times comes, says Mumford, "not merely the dwelling house and the permanent community but a cooperative economic and social life, perpetuating its institutions by means of visible buildings and memorials as well as by the imparted word."[35] This is Mumford's working definition of civilization: a material environment through which life is sustained and meaning is transmitted. Mumford occasionally attaches ethno-racial characteristics to this definition, for example when contrasting premodern stereotypes, as in "the polite and pacific cultures of India and China, and the mainly urban culture of the Jews."[36] But by and large, the idealized "valley-section" guides him "from the dawn of modern technics in Northern Europe" during the Middle Ages through the two great techno-cultural

"phases" that he also borrows from Geddes, the "Eotechnic" and the "Paleotechnic." Optimistically, Mumford thinks he sees a third, "Neotechnic" phase emerging around him in the New Deal–era United States and, more ominously, in a Europe where mechanized, industrial war clouds have visibly begun to gather.

When race appears in *Technics and Civilization* it is in the sense of a universal "human race" or in the sense of rival civilizations discussed above. Only occasionally is there a hint of racial hierarchy, as when, during the nineteenth century, "coal-industrialism" drives a European nationalist bourgeoisie to pursue "imperialistic policies of aggression among the weaker races."[37] Or when the same period witnesses "the misapplication of the Malthus-Darwin theory of the struggle for existence, to justify warfare, the nordic race, and the dominant position of the bourgeoisie."[38] But this latency comes to the fore in two episodes from within Mumford's own civilizational habitus and, eventually, refracts back upon his history of technics when he comes to assess Thomas Jefferson's standing as an architect.

The first of these two episodes involves the 1922 publication of *Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by Thirty Americans*, which was edited by the journalist Harold E. Stearns and conceived within the New York literary circles in which Mumford was a key figure.[39] The omnibus volume, a compendium of the times in the spirit of the French encyclopedists but much abbreviated, could not disguise its contributors' impassioned disappointment with their subject. "We wished to speak the truth about American civilization as we saw it," wrote Stearns in his preface, "in order to do our share in making a real civilization possible."[40] Contributions ranged from politics (H. L. Mencken) to "the intellectual life" (Stearns) and "the literary life" (Mumford's friend Van Wyck Brooks), from "radicalism" (George Soule) to "sport and play" (Ring W. Lardner). None ventured to define the term "civilization" itself, although its de facto whiteness is made plain by a careful, lengthy essay on "racial minorities" by the historian Geroid Tanquary Robinson, a Europeanist by training who later became a specialist on Russia and the Soviet Union. Stearns writes in his preface that "whatever else American civilization is, it is not Anglo-Saxon," and Robinson duly lists "the Indian, the Jew, the Oriental, and the Negro" as "the country's most important racial minorities."[41] Rejecting claims of biological hierarchy, Robinson calmly inventories the social and economic dimensions of "race-prejudice" in America, stressing the underlying role of economic competition, and concludes that as long as recognizable differences remain, so will racial prejudice exist among the majority. The horizon of his analysis is assimilation, from within which perspective "the cultural shipwreck of the Negro on the American shore has thus placed him more completely at the mercy of the majority than the other minorities have ever been."[42]

Mumford's entry on "The City," which opens the volume, makes no mention of

race but aims instead at the perceived inhumanity of "metropolitanism," or a "metropolitan civilization" concentrated in cities with a population of 500,000 or more, of which by 1920, according to Mumford, there were twelve.[43] Here already is Mumford's advocacy of the regionalism he had learned from Geddes, and his chief concern lies with those forces that "drain money, energy and brains" from regional centers into those twelve engines of commercialism and of industrial capitalism.[44] What would become known as the "Great Migration" of rural African Americans to northern cities had begun, if slowly, but where Robinson saw and noted racial segregation, Mumford saw only "the long miles of slum that stretch in front and behind and on each side" of New York's theater district. For Mumford at this point, urban inequality was primarily existential rather than economic or racial: "In spite of the redoubtable efforts of settlement workers, block organizers, and neighborhood associations, there is no permanent institution, other than the public school and the sectarian church, to remind the inhabitants that they have a common life and a common destiny."[45] This sentiment rhymes with Stearns's prefatory observation that "it is curious how a book on American civilization actually leads one back to the conviction that we are, after all, Americans."[46]

Among the other contributions to *Civilization in the United States* was an entry on "scholarship and criticism" by Mumford's close friend, the former Columbia University literary scholar Joel E. Spingarn. At the time, Spingarn, who like all of the volume's other contributors was white, chaired the board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an organization to which he had belonged since its founding in 1911.[47] In 1916, following his dismissal from Columbia over a dispute concerning academic freedom, Spingarn hosted a gathering of NAACP leaders and associates at Troutbeck, his family estate in Amenia, New York.[48] Du Bois, who attended, wrote of the gathering that "we ate hilariously in the open air with such views of the good green earth and the waving waters and the pale blue sky as all men ought often to see, yet few men do. And then filled and complacent we talked awhile of the thing which all of us call 'The Problem,' and after that and just as regularly we broke up and played good and hard."[49] Spingarn had first invited Mumford to Troutbeck in 1921, after which Mumford and his wife Sophia Wittenberg would regularly spend summers there and would eventually go on to make Amenia their family home.[50] By 1933, when Spingarn (who was by then the organization's president), Du Bois, and their increasingly conflicted colleagues at the NAACP decided to convene a second "Amenia Conference" at Troutbeck, Mumford was a close neighbor.

On August 20, 1933, Mumford wrote to Catherine Bauer, with whom he was in the midst of an intimate relationship, that "yesterday, at Spingarn's invitation, I went to Troutbeck Lake, where Joel is secretly entertaining a secret conference—placarded by signs along the road: 'This way to the Amenia Conference: Amenia

Conference 1 Mile'—of young Negroes, thirty-three of them, chiefly between twenty-five and thirty-five years of age: the coming leaders of the race."[51] Though Mumford did not participate in the conference, he spent an afternoon and evening among the guests, all of whom could be counted among Du Bois's "talented tenth," including Du Bois himself. But if what Du Bois euphemistically called "The Problem"—in other words, the color line—was the first Amenia conference's principle concern, Mumford found Spingarn's African American guests "tussling with the eternal dilemma of all intellectuals today: how to be a communist without wilfully [*sic*] swallowing the fierce ignorances, the blind hatreds, the wilfull [*sic*] dogmatisms of the orthodox revolutionists who are preparing for a final pitched battle between communism and capitalism."[52] Like the NAACP itself, the second Amenia conference was riven by tensions between reformist and socialist or Marxist factions, the latter of which Du Bois had come to represent. By no means, however, did these ideological struggles overshadow a mutual concern with "The Problem." On the contrary, as in Du Bois's earlier and ongoing work on black institutions, they were driven by it, and Du Bois among others at the conference advocated black nationalism within the framework of class solidarity.[53] Mumford, though clearly taken by this debate, was unable fully to assimilate its terms, noting even decades later that his friend Spingarn did not share Du Bois's "communism."[54]

In 1932, the year before his brush with black nationalism at Amenia, Mumford had contributed a catalogue essay to an exhibition that would come for generations to define "modern architecture" in the United States and well beyond. "Modern Architecture: International Style," cocurated by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, ran from February 10 through March 23, 1932, at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. Two years later and immediately following a relationship with the black café singer Jimmie Daniels, Johnson would turn decisively toward racist-populist and fascist politics, a turn that culminated in his enthusiastic presence—at the invitation of the German Propaganda Ministry—at the annexation of Poland by the German Wehrmacht in September 1939.[55]

Mumford's essay addressed the 1932 exhibition's ancillary survey of mostly European experiments in mass housing, a project assembled by Bauer, Clarence Stein, and Henry Wright with limited input from Mumford, and shown separately from Johnson and Hitchcock's influential interpretation of modern architecture's formal attributes.[56] Echoing the tone of *Civilization in the United States*, Mumford began in stride: "The building of houses constitutes the major architectural work of any civilization"; and again: "The house cannot remain outside the currents of modern civilization"; and again, later: "the typical American house is a disgrace to our civilization."[57] He was writing *Technics and Civilization* at the time, and so unsurprisingly automobiles, airplanes, telephones, power lines, and large scale

bureaucracies join central heating, refrigerators, radio, and "the near prospect of television" as the technological a priori of modern housing. Again race is absent from the text, although Johnson's imminent political commitments bring it implicitly closer to the exhibition's frame. Seen in this retrospective light, the absence is a presence. In this essay as in his contemporaneous writings, Mumford subsumed a racial politics represented shortly thereafter by Du Bois on his left and Johnson on his right into a techno-politics of "civilization" where technological systems, including mass housing, played an intermediate, enabling but not determining role: architecture as technology as civilization.

Color Lines

In 1941, Mumford delivered a series of four lectures at Alabama College published as *The South in Architecture*, the second of which was dedicated to "The Universalism of Thomas Jefferson." Mumford's Jefferson was an exemplary amateur, an "all-round man" or "Renaissance gentleman" who embodied the "many-sidedness of the pioneer."[58] Acknowledging those eighteenth-century institutions including despotism and slavery that possessed "an underlying harmony with Roman civilization," Mumford saw in Jefferson's neoclassical designs at Monticello and at the University of Virginia an eloquent anachronism. Wed to a civilizational past (Rome), Jefferson could not, according to Mumford, perceive "that two kinds of universal language were now being spoken: a dead language, that of the classics, and a live language, that of the machine."[59] Like the Cartesian separation of soul and body and despite his ingenious utilitarianism, Jefferson kept the two separate, encasing Monticello's "artful" mechanisms—its "cannonball calendar" and its indoor weathervane, as well as the university's rational planning—within the "dead language" of Latinate classicism. Still, says Mumford, "all these mechanical improvements were fun; make no doubt of that. Some of them were really admirable, like the two-way dumb-waiter, which brought a full bottle of wine up from the cellar to the dining room, while the empty bottle was going down."[60]

As we have seen, the Monticello dumbwaiter was more than merely artful and hardly admirable; using Mumford's language, we can say that it made slavery "modern," in two ways. First, by mechanizing the silence of those supplying the wine. Second, by deploying that silence as a precondition for the cultivation of a republican public sphere populated by reflective, speaking subjects. But we can now also see that the two universalisms, the mechanical and the classical, that Mumford found competing in Jefferson's architecture were really one, that of "technics and civilization," where the former term was a precondition for the latter. The only problem was, in Mumford's eyes, that the two were out of sync.

If, in 1900, Du Bois prophesied that "the problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color-line," by 1800, when Monticello was well under construc-

tion, we can already see that line being drawn, not by what Mumford regarded as the civilizational anachronism of slavery, but by the mechanization of silence and universality that he mistook as an incomplete avatar of modernity. This was the function of "civilization" in *Technics and Civilization*: to convert the technologically and environmentally borne particular into a universal. For the relevant dialectic was not only one of master and slave but one of silence and voice. Like slavery itself, this line underwrote the contradictory alliance of reason and capital that preoccupied Horkheimer and Adorno, and Tafuri after them, if only because it so easily slipped out of sight for those moderns who, from Jefferson to Mumford, found it difficult to see the color of their own skin.

For Mumford, civilization was stored in history, which was in turn stored in an environmental technics that ranged from the "valley-section" to modern housing, with race appearing only in faint outline. Like Tafuri's, his Jefferson was obsolete, if only because Jefferson's architecture failed to reproduce artistically the mechanical universality of his household gadgets. But what therefore appeared to Mumford as a mismatch between technics and civilization, a dumbwaiter in a Roman ruin, was the technical a priori of the color line. This was Rome—or Enlightenment—not as ideology per se but as the discourse network of republicanism and literacy called civilization; not slavery as unfortunate imperial residue, but as precondition: the middle passage as a historical-technical delinking from "civilization" (Africa, the valley-section, environment) that Du Bois, Crummell, and countless others sought to rebuild, essentially, as Rome with "Negro institutions." Both Mumford's universalism and Du Bois's particularism were thereby elicited by the vast, sociotechnical apparatus to which Jefferson's dumbwaiter belonged, which deracinated, subordinated, and effectively silenced an entire population. The difference between the two turned not on whether but *how* that population, understood by the Euro-American nineteenth century as a race, could or should be considered in civilizational terms. Or, to put it differently, whether "race" and "civilization" were universals or particulars.

In 1928, as Mumford was beginning the work we have considered, there appeared in New York an English translation of *Moderne Rassentheorien* (*Modern Racial Theories*, 1904), under the title *Race and Civilization*, by the Austrian sociologist Friedrich Hertz. The treatise explicitly challenged scientific racism, or what Foucault would later call "state racism," on the basis of environmental rather than biological factors. Hertz's preface to the English translation echoed the argument of his opening pages: "Race has become a political slogan. Pan-Slavism and Pan-Germanism have played a fateful part in history, and already we are hearing of Pan-Islamism and a Pan-African race movement. It is not difficult to see the close connection between the race argument and national antagonism. . . . In nationalistic ideology almost everywhere belief in race is a dominant factor. Its emergence

has caused the intensification of national antagonism which has become such a danger to our civilization."[61] This was not what Foucault described as a society defending itself against perceived racial enemies, but against the enemy of "race" as such: it was civilization against race, including the racial emancipation sought by Pan-Africanism as well as Pan-German race hatred. In this respect, the discourse of "civilization" to which Mumford's belonged drew a line different from that drawn by the sociobiological apparatus of state racism. The new line retraced the older one drawn by the civilizational understanding of race, but it did so in order to wage war against race in the name of civilization. In architecture this line, which was traced out of Enlightenment thinking, was called "modern." But if Mumford saw it tentatively sketched by Jefferson's dumbwaiters, the persistent silencing and subordination of those below by those above had already been converted into a new form of bondage, which Du Bois recognized as the twentieth century's "color-line." If, as Mumford argued, civilization was technics, the question posed by Du Bois was whether this line could be made redundant, not by erasing it but by reproducing it. Whether, that is, those below could join those above by cutting the chain of "civilization" that bound them.