QUESTIONING HORATIO GREENOUGH’S THOUGHTS ON
ARCHITECTURE

by

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Questioning Horatio Greenough's thoughts on architecture

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Submitted to the Department of Architecture on May 8, 1998 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Architecture Studies.

ABSTRACT

Horatio Greenough (1805-1852), the Bostonian sculptor, is an important intellectual of the antebellum United States. The sculptor is renowned for his two colossal pieces that were placed on the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, “Rescue” and “George Washington,” together with his writings on architecture. Greenough’s writings echo the discursive agenda of modern architecture to a surprising degree in terms of truth to material, refraining from ornament, the machine analogy, the building’s adaptation to the site, the organic growth of form and the expression of the inside on the outside. Therefore texts of architectural historiography, especially written during the 1940s and 1950s when functionalism was a strong discourse, regard him as a proto-modernist who influenced the course of 20th century functionalism and modern architecture. However, his sculpture is surprisingly neo-classicist for those who refer to him as a pioneer of modern architecture. This apparent contradiction brings us to the need to understand Greenough’s thoughts better in the context of 19th century architectural theory and the history of functionalism as a discourse.

Thus, this study aims to re-contextualize Greenough’s work to understand his thoughts on architecture. His writings and his sculpture are viewed in the light of his ideological position with reference to its moral, religious, and nationalist constituents. It also questions the perception of architectural theory as a pure and detached body of knowledge, abstracted from the historical context that engendered its formulation. Such an abstraction is the main reason for aesthetic discourses to appear similar. This study also sheds light on the problematic position of the historian in terms of reconstructing history filtered through his own agenda. While it exemplifies this position by Greenough’s case, it reformulates that history through a contextual reading with specific reference to architecture.

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The topic of this thesis emerged out of a discussion with Professor Sibel Bozdogan on the striking similarities of Greenough’s thoughts to the writings of Louis Sullivan, Adolf Loos and Frank Lloyd Wright. She led me to attempt to contextualize Greenough’s thoughts in order to question that similarity.

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QUESTIONING HORATIO GREENOUGH’S THOUGHTS ON ARCHITECTURE:

One of the main theoretical components of modern architecture was, no doubt, functionalism. Functionalism, a richer and more elusive discourse than it is commonly understood, displays a diversity of ideas, when viewed within the historical context that those ideas were produced.¹ Not only from the specific point of view of architectural theory but within a general understanding of aesthetic theories, function as a norm of beauty has played an important role.²

Architectural theory that disseminated from the United States during the 19th century constitutes an inseparable chapter of the history of Modernism and functionalism. Functionalism is almost always associated with Louis Sullivan’s phrase “form follows function.” The strength of Sullivan’s aphorism, being easy to recall and seemingly all-encompassing, threatens the complexity of our understanding of functionalism. The most remarkable figures with reference to American functionalism are Sullivan and Wright; and a considerable amount of historical research has been devoted to them. Their relation to organicism of the nineteenth century, and the transcendentalist philosophy that was influential in their thought have been researched. However, Horatio Greenough who preceded the two with his understanding of

² See De Zurko’s book.
function in the first half of the nineteenth century, has not received such a treatment. It
does not simultaneously mean that his ideas were not recognized or he was left
unnoticed by architectural history; but it is not an aberration to say that the type of
scrutiny with which Sullivan and Wright were treated, was not employed for the case of
Greenough especially with reference to architectural theory and history.

Horatio Greenough was born in Boston in 1805. He was the son of a real estate
merchant and was recorded as the first American to pursue sculpture as a profession.
He was a Unitarian, and was educated in Harvard between 1821 and 1825. Upon his
graduation he went to Rome. A few years later he moved to Florence to develop his
artistic and technical skills further. He lived in Florence until 1851 and visited the
United States only three times between 1825 and 1851. In 1837 he married a Boston
heiress, Louisa Gore. He executed two colossal works for the United States Capitol, a
colossal statue of Washington (1841) and a group called “The Rescue” (1851) together
with several portrait busts and bas-relieves. He travelled extensively and published
several articles concerning aesthetics in journals of his time, some of which had specific
reference to architecture. Before his death in 1852, he was in the process of compiling
his essays in a book named The Travels, Observations and Experience of a Yankee
Stonemcutter.

The aim of my thesis is to go back to Greenough’s life, his work, the intellectual
circle that surrounded him, his ideological position with reference to its moral,
religious, and nationalist constituents. In other words, to re-contextualize what he has
produced with reference to architecture. The emphasis in my opinion should not be put
merely on what Greenough said about function and architecture, but how he had come
to those conclusions and what may have led him to such conclusions. Such an inquiry
demands a broader framework to be established: What constituted the intellectual
milieu of Horatio Greenough? The developments in the intellectual sphere in the first
half of nineteenth century and the echoes of those developments in his life must be
investigated. The prevalence of the theories of evolution both in the science of his day and the order of the society, his almost militant Unitarianism and his consequent attack on the Catholic church, a backdrop of an emergent nationalism in the United States seeking to find its cultural expression, his “seemingly” contradicting views of form in sculpture and architecture, can be brought into discussion to arrive at a better understanding of what he has recorded in his letters, essays and his sculpture.

Greenough’s rhetoric, when his link to the historical context is overlooked, appears to be very similar to twentieth century architectural theory. His recommendation to refrain from ornament, to adapt the building to the site, to develop the design from within as a result of organicist concerns, and to reflect the inside on the outside are all themes that are found in the discursive agenda of modern architecture. Therefore it is a secondary aim of my thesis to show that aesthetic inquiries when represented as pure searches confined within certain disciplinary boundaries, are stripped of their broader cultural contexts. Unfortunately, when the historical context is disregarded aesthetic theories which are formulated with different intentions and in different circumstances appear similar. When the method is accepted as such, the task of the researcher transforms into connecting and comparing aesthetic inquiries such as Greenough’s to what has been done before in the field of aesthetics. A broader inquiry may shed light on the idiosyncrasies in the efforts of those who have attempted to introduce new forms of aesthetic discourse. The reception of Greenough’s ideas in the debate around functionalism in the late 1940s and 1950s bears testimony to the problem I have pointed to above, and it must be noticed that Greenough’s thought has been subjected to several distortions or mediations. He was hailed as a pioneer and as a prophet of modern architecture. Also, judgements of his influence on twentieth century architecture that simplistically credit or discredit him have been made. The

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3 This is especially apparent in Edward Robert De Zurko’s book, where the appearance of function as a norm in aesthetics from antiquity to Louis Sullivan’s writings, is treated as the emergence of the same concept.
contextualization of his thought may shed light on the validity of those judgements as well.

The method I will employ in my research will basically be an analysis of Greenough's work including his letters, essays and sculpture in relation to their historical context. As well, I will try to locate Greenough's intellectual sources in the historical context that surrounded him. I will try to explain the constituents of his thoughts, and the factors that both motivated their origin and shaped them.

There are certain reasons why Greenough did not become a significant figure for architectural history and theory, other than being labeled a precursor of functionalism and someone who remained subject to a later surface-reading of what he has produced. First of all, because Greenough was a sculptor he stayed, to a certain extent, out of the disciplinary boundaries of architectural history. He did not build any significant buildings or simply was not a "genius" of architecture. Because functionalism dominated the interests of the historians of architecture to an important extent during the 1940s and 1950s, the number of books that include Greenough as a precursor of functionalism increase starting from the 1940s. A chronology of these books is useful here to illustrate this interest. Such a chronology also explains why it has remained a task to evaluate the portrait of Greenough engendered by those publications. In 1944, six excerpts from Greenough's writings were printed for private distribution at the University of California Press, which seems to have paved the way for a book of texts selected from the memorial prepared by Henry Tuckerman in 1853.4 The book was titled Form and Function: Remarks on Art by Horatio Greenough and was published in 1947.5 Lewis Mumford's Roots of Contemporary American Architecture, an anthology of texts on architecture which created an American tradition

for Mumford, was published in 1951. Charles Metzger’s *Emerson and Greenough: Transcendental Pioneers of an American Aesthetic* was published in 1954\(^6\) and Edward Robert De Zurko’s *Origins of Functionalist Theory* was published in 1957.\(^7\)

Most of the above mentioned research was done without the awareness of Nathalia Wright’s studies. Wright is an art historian and the sole biographer of Greenough, therefore she puts more emphasis on Greenough’s life as a sculptor. Her biographical book *Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor* came out in 1963.\(^8\) This book can be regarded as a reconstruction of the sculptor’s life, out of Greenough’s correspondence. Later Wright prepared Greenough’s letters for print and *Letters of Horatio Greenough*\(^9\) came out in 1972. In 1975, *The Miscellaneous Writings of Horatio Greenough*\(^10\) was compiled from the unpublished essays of Greenough.

It is surprising that architectural history has not revisited Greenough after Wright’s effort. I benefited in my study from the letters of the sculptor in their entirety and had the chance to compare and evaluate different accounts or judgements made by the above-mentioned historians. Knowing the lack of later interest on Greenough further justified and stimulated my interest in the contextualization of his thought and his contribution to architectural theory.

The contextual links between important historical figures of the first half of the nineteenth century who were within the intellectual circle of Greenough, remain external to the inquiries made by architectural historians, which makes his aesthetic

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\(^8\) Nathalia Wright (1963) *Horatio Greenough, the First American Sculptor* University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.
\(^10\) Horatio Greenough (1975) *The Miscellaneous Writings of Horatio Greenough* (edited and with an intro. by Nathalia Wright) Scholars' Facsimiles & Reprints, Delmar, N.Y.
theory important from the point of view of interdisciplinary developments and a contextual overview of the organicist discourse of his time. Washington Allston, who Greenough called his mentor and who transmitted German idealism and Romanticism to Greenough through his acquaintance with Samuel Taylor Coleridge; Thomas Cole, the famous painter of the Hudson River School who was a roommate of Greenough and a frequent visitor to his later home in Florence; James Fenimore Cooper, his dear patron and the famous novelist; and of course Ralph Waldo Emerson as more of an outsider should be added to that circle. Also the similarity of and the differences between Greenough’s and Emerson’s aesthetic understanding together with their personal affiliation have to be clarified.

Greenough is a seemingly contradictory figure with reference to his ideas vis-à-vis sculpture and architecture. Although he was asking for an American architecture saved from the burden of European influence and demanding a genuine authenticity derived from the qualities of his native culture through his ideas associated with modernist functionalism, he seems to have taken a different path with regard to sculpture. His themes in sculpture have both contemporary and ancient references. In other words, if the theme belonged to American history, its depiction was realized in a model borrowed from Greek classicism since the ideal for Greenough in “his” art was realized by the Greeks. Although he advised architects to apply Greek principles not to ape Greek shapes, he adapted the Olympian Zeus by Phidias to the statue of Washington because he thought the “ideal image” would be lost in contemporary detailing.11 The “functionalist” reading of the sculptor’s thoughts, contradicts with his neo-classicist attitude toward sculpture and that contradiction seems not to have been of interest to historians of architecture. Greenough promoted a theory of form and function where it was legitimate to look at nature, so that “it would disclose a mind richer than ever was dreamed of by the Greeks.” During a time when figural sculpture

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11 By contemporary detailing, I am specifically referring to the depiction of Washington as an equestrian figure, or his depiction as a statesman.
dominated his art, it is surprising that a thorough need of reform in sculpture was not voiced by Greenough in contrast to his “functionalist” thought upheld by architectural historians. Therefore, it is an important question whether a real contradiction did exist in Greenough’s thought. Since the judgement that classifies Greenough a pioneer of functionalism and a prophet of modern architecture rests on the heroism of Greenough’s effort, this issue needs clarification.

In conclusion, I believe that early texts such as Greenough’s need to be reintegrated into the body of the historical and the theoretical background of modern architecture in order to get at a better understanding of its past. Function as a concept is not a remarkably new phenomenon, however the differences between 20th century functionalism and 19th century functionalism can only be clarified by taking their historical contexts into consideration. My study is an attempt to contribute to the debates of functionalism that link the nineteenth century to the twentieth century by studying Greenough's intellectual personality and his written work in the context of American architectural theory and nineteenth century thought.
Chapter 1

THE GAPS OF HISTORIOGRAPHY ON GREENOUGH:

"Greenough is a baffling phenomenon." 12

Nikolaus Pevsner

Pevsner put it strongly: he was a "baffling phenomenon." It was not only Pevsner who came to a similar conclusion about Greenough. Many modernist historians who did a surface-reading of his writings viewed him as a surprisingly prophetic mind. His mainly organicist rhetoric when taken at face-value had many similarities to the rhetoric of modern architecture regarding ornament, the machine analogy, functionalism in terms of the adaptation of form to function, the expression of the interior on the exterior, the adaptation to site, and anti-revivalism. But above all, since he employed the word "function" with the strongest emphasis in his work and the teleology-biased historiography of the 1940s and the 1950s upheld functionalism, Greenough was deemed an early precursor of functionalism. This chapter discusses the reception of Horatio Greenough's architectural thought in those histories, in other

12 See Pevsner's article "Greenough and Garbett" in Nikolaus Pevsner (1972) *Some Architectural Writers of the Nineteenth Century*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p. 188. Although Pevsner thinks Greenough is a baffling phenomenon with reference to the "functionalism" in his thought and the classicism in his sculpture, he does not spend much time on Greenough. He simply refers his reader to the introduction by Erle Loran in Horatio Greenough (1969) *Form and Function: Remarks on Art, Design, and Architecture* (edited by Harold A. Small, intro. by Erle Loran) University of California Press, Berkeley. Pevsner's main reason is that Greenough has been discussed enough. In his article, he does not delve deeper into why Greenough shares the same title with Garbett. It is known that they are contemporaries, and Greenough refers to Garbett's treatise in his essay "Relative and Independent Beauty." This reference seems to have led Pevsner to the sweeping conclusion that Greenough has written his articles after reading Garbett.
words, the distorted picture of Greenough. Its basic goal is to anticipate the discussions in which I will try to fill the gaps or the shortcomings of those histories in the later chapters.

It is debatable whether labelling Greenough a functionalist can be valid since, in my opinion, his thoughts can be considered syncretic and amalgamous. However, situating his thoughts in the tradition of organicism is not discordant with his arguments. The history of organicism has been subjected to a scholarly discussion by Caroline Van Eck (1994) in her book *Organicism in Nineteenth Century Architecture: An Inquiry Into its Theoretical and Philosophical Background.* Van Eck defines organicism as “the metaphorical application to architecture of concepts originally reserved for living nature.” Organicism appears time and again in various different guises in western architectural theory, and it is an elusive theme. Greenough shares a lot of the organicist rhetoric that he has inherited from the resources available to him during his education, and ideas from several disciplines, both established and in constant formation, that circulated around him. The relationship of art to nature is a dominant theme in his writings.

In her discussion, Van Eck refers to a certain trend in twentieth century architectural historiography which she designates as a “teleological modernist bias.” According to her, “only insofar as it seemed to prefigure modernist concerns was organicism considered interesting by modernist historiographers, otherwise it was only a case of fallacious reasoning or historical curiosity.” A majority of articles on Greenough bears testimony to the same tendency by distinguishing Greenough as a pioneer, a prophet, or a revolutionary with remarkable vision of the future. In the first part of this chapter I shall constantly refer back and forth to Greenough’s writings and

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14 Ibid. p.18
their reception in the twentieth century to illustrate the above-mentioned bias or the sharp misunderstanding of some of those historians, and how those inferences were derived out of Greenough’s writings. In the second part, I will deal with Greenough’s thoughts in relation to organicism.

15 Ibid. p.34
part 1

THE RECEPTION OF GREENOUGH’S THOUGHTS:
A “BAFFLING” PHENOMENON

The earliest article that can be found in the bibliographies about Greenough is by Wynne and Newhall (1938) titled “Horatio Greenough: Herald of Functionalism.”16 His status as a prophet heralding the arrival of modern architecture started as early as 1938. Wynne and Newhall state:

…the same man evolved an aesthetic so revolutionary that not until the last few years, through the efforts of such masters of modern architecture as Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, Adolf Loos, Walter Gropius, and Le Corbusier, have its ideals been fully realized. In 1901 Sullivan stated the principle of modern architectural design: “Form follows function.” The aesthetic of the machine was not developed until about 1910. In 1919 Gropius started the Bauhaus where young artists learned to design for machine production. In 1923 Le Corbusier popularized the slogan, “A house is a machine for living.”17

These were seemingly very plausible interpretations of Greenough’s thought; however, plausible because the authors failed to take into account the sculptor’s historical context and the great historical gap that divides Greenough and the mentioned pioneers of the modern movement in their article. Wynne and Newhall continued their article by excerpts from Greenough’s writings that simply displayed the

remarkable similarity of Greenough’s thoughts to the agenda of modern architecture. How modernist historians came to view Greenough needs an explanation.

In August 1843, Greenough had published his essay “American Architecture” in *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* which later appeared in his book *The Travels, Observations and the Experience of a Yankee Stonecutter*. The book was never distributed to bookstores and remained limited to people who had access to the personally distributed copies by Greenough before his death in 1852. In this essay Greenough outlined his thoughts on what American architecture should be. “American Architecture” is a call for a “new style of architecture”, and is about what the American nation was capable of doing to create such a new style.

Greenough first demanded a halt to faulty revivals and a new style developed out of universal principles, rather than forms decided by the authority of the past: “Even where, in the fervour of our faith in shapes we have sternly adhered to the dictum of another age.” A call for an end to revivalism stood at the very core of modern architecture’s polemics and Greenough seemed to be the perfect proto-modernist of the nineteenth century for those who looked for an ideal historical continuity.

It was not only Greenough’s call for an anti-revivalism that captured the attention of the historians who regarded him a pioneer of modern architecture. He also introduced a type of machine-analogy in the same essay: “If we compare the form of a

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17 Ibid. p.12
18 However an edited version of the book by Henry Tuckerman appeared in print in 1853 named *A Memorial of Horatio Greenough, Consisting of a Memoir, Selections From His Writings, and Tributes to His Genius* by G.P. Putnam Co. in New York. Although Tuckerman added three pieces that were not in the book that Greenough intended to print he also took out some of Greenough’s writings, the most important of which were his views on “the Negro” and abolition.
newly invented machine with the perfected type of the same instrument, we observe, as we trace it through the phases of improvement, how weight is shaken off where less strength is needed, how functions are made to approach without impeding each other...till the straggling and cumbersome machine becomes the compact, effective and beautiful engine.” Then he turned to shipbuilding. For him the Americans happened to be very successful in building the clipperships of his youth.\textsuperscript{21} He did not only refer to machines as exemplary manifestations of a design process that may bear fruit for the future, but also made a classification of two building types one of which he named “machines”:

The edifices in whose construction the principles of architecture are developed may be classed as organic, formed to meet the wants of their occupants, or monumental, addressed to the sympathies, the faith, or the taste of a people...the former class may be called machines.\textsuperscript{22}

In explaining the relationship of forms to functions, he turned to the organic metaphor as the chief source of formal development. He sounded strikingly similar to Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. One could even think that Sullivan might have merely paraphrased him in formulating his famous motto “form follows function” which later turned into a catch-phrase of modern architecture both in condemning and praising it:

...let us begin from the heart as the nucleus, and work outward. The most convenient size and arrangement of the rooms that constitute the building being fixed, the access of the light that may, of the air that must be wanted, being provided for we have the skeleton of our building. Nay we have all excepting the dress. The connection and order of parts, juxtaposed for convenience, cannot fail to speak of their relation and uses...so the unflinching adaptation of a building to its position and use gives, as a sure product of that adaptation, character and expression.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid. p.56
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid. p.60
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid. p.65
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid. p.62 (my emphasis)
In these lines Greenough was thought to have uttered what was central to anti-formalism and the development of form according to the program and the site which for modern architecture established key concerns for creating the new architecture for the age.

In “Relative and Independent Beauty”, another essay he included for print in his book, Greenough struck a blow for ornament -- which Adolf Loos decried as ‘crime’ in his famous manifesto of 1908-- albeit in total accordance with his puritan aesthetic which was a direct outcome of his world view. This theological purism was later made clear in the essay but was not emphasized by historians:

I have spoken of embellishment as false beauty...I understand, therefore by embellishment, THE INSTINCTIVE EFFORT OF INFANT CIVILIZATION TO DISGUISE ITS COMPLETENESS, EVEN AS GOD’S COMPLETENESS IS TO INFANT SCIENCE DISGUISED...If I be told that such a system as mine would produce nakedness I accept the omen. In nakedness I behold the essential instead of the trappings of pretension.24

As it can be inferred from the chronology of publications I have given in my introduction, Greenough does not owe his publicity to Wynne and Newhall’s essay of 1938 or Henry Tuckerman’s memorial, but to Form and Function: Remarks on Art by Horatio Greenough.25 “The emphasis of the book”, according to the editor and the author of the introduction, was “in the main...Greenough reads like a progressive contemporary.”26 In his introduction, Loran portrays Greenough’s criticism of the buildings and landscape of Washington as “a severe criticism of the lack of functionalism.” After he quotes Greenough referring to the utilitarian category in his classification as machines, Loran puts forward his diagnosis: “And this was not Le

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24 Ibid., in “Relative and Independent Beauty” pp.73-75. The uppercase lettering is kept the same as the original.
25 In 1969 the book’s title became Form and Function: Remarks on Art, Design and Architecture by Horatio Greenough.
Corbusier talking in 1930, but Greenough before 1850!" Later Greenough is portrayed as an ally of his twentieth century comrades: "To the modern artist and architect, function and organization are either synonyms or firmly interlaced concepts. Now, beauty is a word sparingly used by modern creative men, but Greenough has a definition that is very easy to take: Beauty is the promise of function." 27

At the end of Loran’s introduction Greenough’s writings are appropriated to justify a progressive modernist attitude and Loran scolds the architects in power in the United States for not letting progress in:

The lesson of Greenough has yet to be learned, especially by many architects who still hold power. What a bitter pill it should be for them to know that they are at least a hundred years behind the times, by standards set up by one of our good own ancestors in America! Instead of putting up resistance to the innovations of the Europeans’ International School with its “machines for living”, and to the boldness and rashness of Frank Lloyd Wright, they might all this time turn their fury against the farseeing Horatio Greenough. 28

While the conclusions reached by Small, Loran, Wynne and Newhall formed a picture of Greenough which was obscured and distorted by the authors’ own intentions, Greenough’s thought is thrown into a battleground of functionalism versus anti-functionalism and modernism versus anti-modernism; an alien topography he hardly belonged to. He was misrepresented by the scholarly interest of the time.

Among the architectural historians who found Greenough an important nineteenth century personality one has to give Lewis Mumford a different place than

26 Ibid. vi-ix.
27 Ibid. xiii-xix.
28 Ibid.
The Gaps of Historiography on Greenough

Mumford was more arduous in trying to locate Greenough’s intellectual resources. In his essay “Function and Expression in American Architecture” (1951) he found Greenough perceptive and inspired by the developing technology of his day and the growing science of biology. He thought that Greenough adapted Lamarck’s theory (the inheritance of characteristics in terms of adaptation) into architectural theory and saw function as “a criterion of good form” but not as the sole generator of it. However he seems to have directed his contemporary criticism of functionalism on Greenough’s thoughts. Mumford finds Greenough’s “theory” “incomplete because it failed to do justice to those specifically human values that are derived, not from the object and the work, but from the subject and the equality of life the architect seeks to enhance.”

In his book *Roots of Contemporary American Architecture* Mumford attempts to locate the genuine American tradition in architecture. In Mumford’s construct Greenough is the one who “introduced the essential conceptions of modern architecture to America” (1951), namely one of the pioneers who laid the foundation of that tradition.

Charles Metzger’s *Emerson and Greenough: Transcendental Pioneers of an American Aesthetic* (1954) investigates the similarities and the differences between Greenough’s and Emerson’s thoughts in terms of aesthetics. In Metzger’s conclusion Greenough and Emerson are elevated to the status of pioneers who led the formation of an American aesthetic. Greenough is labelled as “the most eloquent spokesman of Emerson’s aesthetic faith” and enlisted in the transcendentalist camp.

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32. I will elaborate on the differences between Greenough and Emerson under the title “Wholistic Organicism and Greenough’s View of Slavery”.
34. Also see Hanno-Walter Kruft (1994) *A History of Architectural Theory: from Vitruvius to the Present*, Princeton Architectural Press and Robert Schaeffer (1948) “Emerson and His Circle:
Edward Robert De Zurko’s Origins of Functionalist Theory (1957) treats function as a repeatedly emerging concept in the history of aesthetics, from the antiquity to Horatio Greenough’s writings. However, De Zurko repeatedly points to the apparent similarity of aesthetic texts with reference to function, in order to justify that function as a concept is not uniquely modern, but is the result of a rationalist view to arrive at beauty through utilitarian concerns. Therefore his inquiry is totally limited to the domain of aesthetics and generalizing. He fails to distinguish between the appearance of function as a concept in different historical contexts and overlooks the idiosyncrasies of the authors of the texts he deals with.

In the biography, Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor, Nathalia Wright does not expand on Greenough’s architectural thought, although to a certain extent she contextualizes his interest in architecture and she labels him a “functionalist.” Also she does not establish causal links between the several facets of Greenough’s intellectual portrait but merely displays them side by side. For instance, Greenough’s Unitarianism or his Harvard years are part of a mute past where one can derive hints about how Greenough’s thought may have been shaped. However, Wright’s inquiry does not delve into what the relationship between Greenough’s religious belief and his thoughts on architecture or art can be. Nor does she address how Greenough may have adapted theories of evolution into his understanding. The reasons for the conclusions that Greenough has reached are not investigated by Wright.

In the 1940s and 1950s Greenough was not only hailed as a pioneer of “functionalism” but also as someone who spoke the same language of the twentieth century. His being associated with certain currents of his time, in my opinion, has not gone further than establishing apparent and easy links to the historical context. Not surprisingly such interpretations designate an intellectual portrait, which can be

Advocates of Functionalism” Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians vol. 7 no.3-4 (July-December), pp.17-20. Both writers list Greenough within the circle of intellectuals around Emerson
regarded as “a baffling phenomenon” as Pevsner did. When Greenough’s writings are read without keeping in mind that you are reading a nineteenth century intellectual’s thoughts, his sentences may even sound like prophecy.

and therefore see Greenough as influenced by Emerson.
CATEGORIZING GREENOUGH:
GREENOUGH’S THOUGHTS AND ORGANICISM

As I have previously remarked, Greenough’s thoughts are more of a syncretic mixture framed by his nineteenth century intellectual personality and his thoughts on architecture can not be reduced to one dominant trait. The aesthetic he propagates has strong references to his religious view. It also displays his interest in what is going on around him in several intellectual spheres like aesthetic discourses of classicism and German idealism, and the rise of scientific and technological developments. One gets a better picture of his nineteenth century intellectual personality when these idiosyncrasies are observed.

Greenough’s rhetorical strategy can be placed in the tradition of organicism. It is the very nature of organicism that it never became a theory, but stayed a rhetorical strategy of invention and interpretation: “Organicism is based on the conviction, generally held in artistic theory from antiquity to the end of the nineteenth century, that art should imitate nature, not with the aim of producing perfectly faithful copies but with the aim of creating the illusion of life, of conferring the qualities of living nature upon the products of man, in the hope of effectuating a metamorphosis of dead matter into a living being. Since such metamorphosis will never be complete, we have to content ourselves with the use of metaphor: to speak of architecture as if it were part of
living nature, shared her qualities of organic growth and unity and copy her method.”

Since the metaphor, by definition, could take on a multitude of meanings in relation to the context it was framed within, organicism “did not consist in a constant and coherent body of general principles, which would warrant the term “theory.” It is a constantly shifting pattern of thought, opinions and arguments, which has a common element in preoccupation with the relation of the organic in architecture and nature.”

This is the main reason why Greenough’s thoughts on architecture can not be named as theory and hence my title “Questioning Horatio Greenough’s Thoughts on Architecture.” It is neither a theory nor a system but a body of thought carrying several references in terms of its constituents.

Why can Greenough be named an organicist? First of all, the motivation for Greenough’s brainstorming is to come up with a satisfactory and genuine artistic production against the flawed applications of past architectural styles. He builds up a polemical crisis of identity for American architecture and then wants to lead the nation out of this state of crisis. Therefore in “American Architecture” he points to nature’s authority as superior than the Greeks, and takes his place in the organicist tradition. Greenough states:

Let us consult nature, and in the assurance that she will disclose a mine richer was ever dreamed of by the Greeks, in art as well as in philosophy... If as the first step in our search for the principles of construction, we but observe the skeletons and skins of animals, through all the varieties of beast and the bird, of fish and insect, are we not as forcibly struck by their variety as by their beauty? There is no arbitrary law of proportion, no unbending model of form.

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35 See van Eck, Organicism in..., p.18 (italics mine)
36 Ibid. p.25
37 Nathalia Wright refers to Greenough’s thoughts on architecture as a theory of functionalism in the introduction to the essays she compiled for print. See Horatio Greenough (1975) The Miscellaneous Writings of Horatio Greenough, Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, Delmar, N.Y. p.8
Therefore, the main argument in Greenough’s proposal is to justify created form by applying principles derived from nature. Also the principal argument that links the organicism of antiquity to the Renaissance, and the nineteenth century organicism has been stated by Van Eck as “purposive unity.” \(^{39}\) Purposive unity is defined as the relation of parts to the whole and whole to the parts. Greenough rephrases this definition in reference to the beauty of a horse in “American Architecture”:

> It is neither the presence nor the absence of this or that part, or shape or colour, that wins our eye in natural objects; it is the consistency and harmony of the parts juxtaposed, the subordination of details to masses and masses to the whole. \(^{40}\)

There are other facets to his organicist thought that I will be discussing in the proceeding pages of my study. But before that I will try to outline my thoughts on how Greenough can be classified under a certain category with reference to organicism.

Organicism in the United States in the nineteenth century is labelled as “functionalist” by Caroline van Eck and so is Greenough. Greenough is considered as the originator of the “tradition of functionalist organicism” and followed by Leopold Eidlitz, John Welborn Root and Louis Sullivan according to the author. While she finds Greenough’s organicism “too fragmentary and traditional”, the category she classifies Greenough under is misleading. Although van Eck is critical of the teleological bias in twentieth century architectural historiography, she falls into the same mistake by classifying Greenough as “functionalist.” \(^{41}\) In my opinion functionalism as a category obscures Greenough’s thoughts. Still, I find two other categories of organicism established by the same author very helpful both in underlying Greenough’s thoughts and linking him to other intellectual positions: scientific organicism and religious organicism. While the two categories stop short of completing the picture by

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\(^{39}\) See van Eck, *Organicism...* p.21  
\(^{40}\) In “American Architecture” in Greenough *The Travels...* p.137  
\(^{41}\) See “Functionalist organicism in the United States” in van Eck’s book. Ibid. pp.240-255
themselves, both are useful in designating Greenough’s thoughts owing to the character of Greenough’s religious belief: Unitarianism.

According to van Eck “religious organicism” refers to nature as the ultimate creation of God and organic unity as a vehicle for religious experience. For Eck, the proponents of this type of organicism are Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) and John Ruskin (1819-1900). While purposive unity is considered as a revelation of the presence of the divine, the artist, however limited in creative talent with respect to God, benefits from this revelation to create a living unity out of discordant elements.

“Scientific organicism”, is distinguished as the approach to nature in terms of empirical inquiry, which tries to establish scientific principles rather than looking at natural phenomena in metaphysical terms. The developing science of biology in the nineteenth century has produced several theories in trying to come to terms with nature to understand its mechanisms of growth and adaptation to physical conditions. Lamarck’s approach to evolution in terms of adaptation at the end of the eighteenth century, the comparative anatomy of Cuvier and Geoffroy in 1830s France and the “natural theology” of William Paley (1802) in trying to reconcile science and Christianity are important attempts that took place which affected Greenough’s time. The developing concern of “creating new forms for the new age” increased the sensitivity of artists and architects to these developments. Greenough was among these people who benefited from these theories by using them as metaphors for architectural theory and by using the authority of science to justify his religious views.

Under the title “Categorizing Greenough: Greenough’s Thoughts and Organicism”, I specified the reasons why Greenough can be located in the rhetorical tradition of organicism and why functionalist organicism fails to define Greenough. His, is an organicism mainly delineated by the scientific and the religious aspects of his thought in which religion is in control of the scientific aspect. Now I want to shift the
discussion to two important questions: Why was Greenough interested to take the role of a volunteering reformer of art and architecture in the United States? What were the ingredients of the cultural atmosphere that led him to formulate his own rhetoric? The answers to these questions form an inseparable part in understanding Greenough’s effort and in shaping Greenough’s idiosyncratic organicism. One can go back and re-examine Greenough’s organicism in the light of the answers to these questions.
Chapter 2

FILLING THE GAPS: QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY IN GREENOUGH’S THOUGHTS ON ARCHITECTURE

This theory is too lovely not to be hated by those who are not loving and strong-- It is a true theory-- and will do for all structure from a bedstead to a cathedral what the Doric law did for the Parthenon-- It will produce harmony-- for all the machines have a family likeness and blood relations-- It will not be monotonous for the wants on which it will wait are varied. It will be expressive-- for a guillotine or for a rocking chair both speak English-- It will be as much more beautiful, than what we now possess as a naked Apollo is more beautiful than a tattooed and feathered and blanketet Savage--

I wish to strike a blow for this style now because the aesthetical world abhors a vacuum, and ours is fast sucking in hostile elements. I mean the excremental corruptions of foreign and hostile systems-- Horatio Greenough

So was Horatio Greenough’s trust and investment in his theory in a letter to Emerson dated December 28th 1851; almost a year before his tragic death in December 18, 1852. This letter was also Emerson’s first introduction to Greenough’s thoughts

42 Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, December 28th, 1851, in Horatio Greenough (1972) Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor (edited by Nathalia Wright) University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, p. 401. Greenough used to put dashes instead of periods and Wright has conformed to the original in the editing process.

43 Greenough was reported to die of “brain fever” and “nervous derangement” in two different records. His was a mental illness with serious physical complications that took him to death. It is reported by Nathalia Wright, who has written an account of his life in her book Horatio Greenough, the First
on architecture. It leads one to think Greenough's speculation as a striving to reform architecture in the United States; which I believe was the main motive of the sculptor. His works, including his sculpture, essays and letters are not only records of a brilliant intellectual, a strong writer or a prominent artist but are also documents of nineteenth century cultural nationalism inscribed in his personality.

The discussion that follows, basically aims to reveal the ideological content of Greenough's writings and their inherent contradictions especially echoed in his nationalist, religious and consequently anti-revivalist aesthetics in which architecture has an important share. Labels that are used to situate his thought in discourses like organicism and functionalism have become elusive and multivalent. Therefore it is more beneficial to look at Greenough as an individual case situated in cultural history.\footnote{American Sculptor [University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia (1963)], that Greenough suffered from a similar health problem and had to come back to Boston from Florence (where he lived more than 20 years of his respectively short life) in 1827. \footnote{I will basically present a textual analysis. Since this type of study requires extensive quotation to substantiate my arguments in terms of Greenough's voice, I am not going to refrain from lengthy quotes and footnotes.}}

This task includes the sorting out of Greenough's intellectual resources; namely, his thoughts in relation to the fertile soil of nineteenth century cultural history, his thoughts as a reflection of his world-view traced in his upbringing and his artistic maturation, and the cultural atmosphere of nineteenth century Europe and the United States.
What may have stimulated Greenough in his time to produce his literary effort? The reasons why he produced his writings increases the complexity of understanding him together with the cultural atmosphere around Greenough.

As I have noted before, there are several grounds of inspiration and verification that probably had helped Greenough to shape his thoughts. His great interest in human anatomy, the theories of evolution, his idealist Greek classicism, the early but slow technological developments as applied results of Enlightenment rationality should be considered as some of the factors. However, the main reason why Greenough reached out for those sources, forms an integral part of his history and is an important issue to focus on in my study.

Greenough lived his short life (1805-1852) during the heyday of Greek revivalism and during a conscious effort to construct an American national identity which dominated the cultural sphere. While the revolution created a form of national

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45 George Kennedy, in his book *Greek Revival America* gives a rough chronology for the dissemination of the Greek Revival in the United States as 1825 to 1855. Greenough was born in 1805 and he died in 1852. He is considered as one of the first spokesmen against the Greek revival and all other types of pseudo-historical revivals, but the anti-revivalist position owes its existence in my opinion strongly to a certain developing and strengthening nationalism. See Roger G. Kennedy (1989) *Greek Revival America*, Stewart, Tabori & Chang, New York. p. 294
The United States was seeking forms of cultural autonomy after its political independence, which led to a deliberate exploration of "nationally" conscious cultural expressions. Several efforts of constructing identity can be marked in the cultural output of the late eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century: school textbooks such as the Blue-Backed Speller of the 1780s, the American Dictionary of the American Language of 1828, studies of American history and biography, the North American Review, the fascination with the "sublime" American landscape in the paintings of the Hudson River School or the novels of James Fenimore Cooper.

The nationalistic current was initiated and backed not only by the victorious struggle of independence, but also by the several European nationalist struggles of the period. The most important was the Greek struggle of independence in 1824 against the Ottoman Empire or the "Turks." Many intellectuals of the period hailed and supported the Greek struggle as the return of democracy to its birthplace, which the "American" held dear against a considerable backdrop of black slavery especially in the South. Greece, "the mother of all civilization", together with the then-recent findings of archaeology, could be revived in a place where the value systems were founded on the same principle: democracy. The American ideal of democracy and Greek architecture understood as a representation of the ancient age of democracy was an important cause

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46 See for example, Talbot F. Hamlin (1926) *The American Spirit in Architecture* Yale Univ. Press. p.4. Especially the author's remark about the American people believing that it was their revolution that inspired the French Revolution is interesting and revealing.

47 Theodore M. Brown (1956) "Greenough, Paine, Emerson and the Organic Aesthetic" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* vol. XIV, No.3 March. Brown's essay starts to question the nationalism of Greenough's lifetime however the limits of his scope may be illustrated in his sentence with reference to the discussion between Greenough and Emerson: "...implied are some of the scientific, philosophical and even political ideas that conditioned American thought in the early decades of the nineteenth century." (italics mine) However it has to be credited because it is the only paper I came across during my research that tries to look at Greenough and his contemporaries from such a frame of reference.

48 Thomas Cole, the famous painter of the Hudson River School, was a close friend of Greenough's (the two were roommates in Florence), whereas Cooper was his dear patron who recommended him to statesmen for the two biggest commissions of his life: the colossal statue of "Washington" and "The Rescue."
for the adaptation of Greek architecture as the leading stylistic model. However, Greek architecture remained as one of the attempts among others to express the ideals of the American nation throughout the course of nineteenth century with an increasingly conscious search for a national identity.

The most influential person for Greenough is Washington Allston, who introduced him to some of the aesthetic philosophies that were being circulated in his time. Allston used to organize weekend gatherings in his house and several young people like Greenough used to attend. For Greenough, Allston was his mentor, even a father. It is in one of Greenough’s letters to Allston where the nucleus of his effort to formulate a change in architecture is found. Allston was a friend of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and was familiar with German romanticism through him. Greenough shared most of his observations about his travelling experience, rough formulations of his theoretical brainstorming, and his “self-observed” maturation through his correspondence with Allston. It is doubtless that he also exchanged views with several artists in Florence, Paris, Berlin, Washington, and Rome during his interrupted residence in Florence. However, his correspondence with Allston seems to be a revisiting of their Sunday gatherings when they were engaged in a more intellectually-oriented dialogue and Greenough’s thoughts on architecture can be read in his letters to Allston.

In one of these letters, dated Paris, October 1831, one can find Greenough’s early speculations which no historian other than Nathalia Wright has perceived.

49 Greenough wrote three letters to Richard Henry Dana who started to prepare a biography for Washington Allston who died in 1843. Greenough’s praise and admiration can be read in these letters. The letters were written from Paris, Florence and Freiwaldu, Silesia on September 21st, 1843, June 11th, 1844 and September 23rd, 1844. See Greenough Letters... pp. 340-342, 343-345, 348-350.
50 Greenough, Letters.... pp.86-92
51 Nathalia Wright (1963) Horatio Greenough, the First American Sculptor, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p.93. It is interesting that many architectural historians (in fact I came across only one, that is Theodore Brown) did not read Greenough’s letters but read his work from excerpts and reprints of his pamphlet in textual anthologies of American architecture such as Mumford’s Roots of Contemporary American Architecture (1952) and Don Gifford’s The Evolution
Greenough's letter starts with his observations about Genoa and Paris: depictions of the sublime Alps and the ocean on board a steamer, his uneasiness with the Baroque of Genoa, and his fascination with Paris:

...by the size of the city-- its magnificence and luxurious gayness-- (for there is less of what I call elegance here than in Italy) its vast pleasure grounds-- its numerous bridges and their beautiful and scientific construction--

After criticizing the artworks he has seen, evaluating artists with reference to their nationality --e.g. Italians versus French-- and singling out only "the masters"; he introduces his own views on architecture. First he attracts Allston's attention to the reign of the Greek and the classicist claim to universality:

Architecture seems to have been enthralled ever since a claim to universal and indiscriminate admiration has been established by the Greek school.

Greenough, in reverence to his mentor, approves Allston's views on Gothic which for him by "throwing out greek [sic.] canons and recurring to nature to express a new sentiment got a new style". Greenough sees the Gothic as an example that challenged the authority of the past and regards it as a past style that manifested a religious idea:

The Gothic embodied the poetry of religion and triumphed over matter to deify spirit...The Gothic by a mysterious combination of lines seems to lift the spirit from earth and shew her home--
In small but carefully constructed steps Greenough builds his case and condemns the futile search in revivalism: "These spirits in the vasty deep of past epochs will not come when we do call for them." His proposal is complex and composite. It requires a deeper exploration into the principles of the infinite creations of nature and all that God and Reason has equipped men with, owing its legitimacy to the national courage of experimentation. This is a very long quote, but I believe it reveals a lot about Greenough's early search and has to be recorded here at full length (Throughout the whole letter the first plural person is used for "the Americans"):

Let us turn now to Nature the only true school of art-- Has she ever been the slave of any one idea of beauty or of grandeur?... There's scarce a member which may not be found enlarged or annihilated by turns in the animal creation, as the wants of the creature demand...-- We propose then that she be imitated in this important respect more compleatly than has been done, we would recommend the use of combinations we have inherited from the preceding schools whenever they will serve our turn to and harmonize with the plan of our work... Such has been the case with naval architecture-- and he who has seen himself has not been a ship at sea will confess that in that work man has approached nearest his maker--

...We can at least shew that he who condemns us condemns with us the principles of creation-- nor shall we be mortified at not having pleased men whom God himself has not been fastidious to satisfy--...In our political institutions we have dared' to be new-- Can we not shew that art too has a reason as well as government? and that no model of past times when science was less and superstition reigned has a prescriptive right to cramp our convenience or to repress our invention?

...It requires all the knowledge among us-- all the light which can be thrown on the requisites of a building by those who occupy it, all the science of our engineers and mathematicians to find the most direct route of their attainment, all the feeling and imitation of our architect and painters to give a harmonious connection to the parts thus assembled-- that these different bodies of men are equal to it is shewn by what they have already achieved in various departments, for as we are [we] have no reason to decline a comparison with the present nations of Europe as far as taste in Architecture is concerned.55

55 Ibid. p.90-92, italics mine.
This letter at the age of 26, is extremely important when seen against the background of Greenough’s later work. It has remained a goal for Greenough throughout his life to become a nationally renown artist. Thanks to Washington Allston and James Fenimore Cooper’s efforts that recommended him to the government to do a colossal statue of Washington to be placed in the Rotunda of the Capitol, he achieved his goal in 1832. In his sculpture Greenough portrayed Washington in the body of the “Zeus of Phidias” (Figure 2). Greenough’s Washington had a bare chest, right hand pointing to the “heavens”, and the left holding a sword (Figure 3, Figure 4). In the sculpture “Greenough derived the throne, the seated posture, the idealized physiognomy, the classical drapery and sandals, the smooth surfaces, and the clear contours from the famous Greek statue of Zeus.”56 He wrote several letters to the United States about the reasons that led him to portray the important historical figure as such. On January 28, 1834, he wrote to Edward Livingston, the Secretary of the State:

I have not represented any one action of the man, but have given him a movement which seems to me characteristic of his whole life. I wish while I impress the beholder with the idea of Washington, to remind him that Washington was an agent... In the dress I have endeavoured to make the figure decent, dignified and simple. If on the one hand it be not the dress of Washington’s time or the nation, neither it is peculiarly the dress of any age or people. It has not been without much reflection that I have set aside the dress of Washington’s time... I feel that as an honour to his memory it ought to perpetuate all that in his appearance; but it seems to me that fashion of his dress cannot be considered as such and where that fashion would interfere with the main object of the work by calling attention to trifles, I think it should give way to considerations of what is natural and permanent.57

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57 Greenough *Letters...*, pp.173-174
Figure 2.
Quattremère de Quincy’s reconstruction of the Olympian Zeus by Phidias (1815)
from Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire*

Figure 3.
Horatio Greenough’s “George Washington” in the Smithsonian Institution
from Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire*
Figure 4.
Horatio Greenough's "George Washington" in the Smithsonian Institution
from Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire*
We raise this monument because Washington’s face and form are identified with the salvation of our continent. That sword, to which objections are made, cleared the ground where our political fabric was raised...To embody in the work the abstract of a political creed, or the principles of a political party, might ensure protection for my work just now. But just now I can do without it. The time is past when civilized nations are distinguished by their dress. 58

Before his essay “American Architecture” 59 was published, Greenough got another commission from the government for a group called “The Rescue” for the east front of the Capitol in 1837. 60 In this group sculpture, he portrayed a colonizer trying to protect a pilgrim woman and her baby by restraining the tomahawk of a native American. This work created great appreciation for Greenough during the time it was displayed in front of the Capitol. However, in the twentieth century “groups of Indians more than once petitioned Congress to have it removed from the Capitol on the ground that it was a libel on their race.” 61 The discussion that had generated during the 1850’s around Greenough’s composition was exactly about what the native Americans argued against. The theme in the sculpture was interpreted as the white benevolent colonizer stopping his savage enemy in a compassionate and merciful manner, in the very stereotypical argument of white male Christian colonialism (Figure 5). The sculpture manifested “the triumph of Anglo-Saxon civilization over the subservient native population” who were looked upon as a “vanishing race” unable to resist the rising tide of civilization. 62 The native Americans were seen as part of the wilderness to be tamed and exploited by civilization, not as the people who owned and cultivated those lands. Greenough confirms this interpretation in another letter in which he sent his designs to John Forsyth, Secretary of State on Nov.15, 1837:

58 Letter to Samuel F. B. Morse May 24th, 1834 in Greenough, Letters... pp.176-177, emphasis mine.
59 First published in The United States Magazine and the Democratic Review August 1843.
60 See Nathalia Wright’s description of “The Rescue” in Horatio Greenough: The First... pp.163-177
61 ibid. p.177, italics mine.
62 See Fryd’s discussion on Luigi Persico’s “Discovery of America” and Horatio Greenough’s “Rescue” in Art and Empire, chapter 4.
Figure 5.
Horatio Greenough's "The Rescue"
from Vivien Green Fryd, *Art and Empire*
I herewith enclose the design of a second group which I have composed for the platform in front of the Capitol-- in which I have endeavoured to convey the idea of the triumph of the whites over the savage tribes, at the same time it illuminates the dangers of peopling the country.\textsuperscript{63}

Greenough’s “Washington” and “The Rescue” must be viewed as two important pieces of an iconographic program undertaken by the United States government on grounds of the Capitol. As Vivian Fryd noted, the Capitol was viewed as “a national symbol of democracy and liberty” in Greenough’s time. In her book, \textit{Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860} she states that “the art in the Capitol presented a mythologized American history that allowed Americans to believe in their manifest destiny to absorb western lands and relocate Indian tribes to enable frontier expansion and the development of a market economy; it justified, reinforced and promoted white male politicians’ imperialistic ideals and actions. Not accidentally, the art excluded African Americans just as it marginalized, subjugated and dehumanized Native Americans.”\textsuperscript{64}

Greenough’s construction of his “theory” for architecture was not interrupted between 1837 and 1843, and was always a search for “a style for the country.”\textsuperscript{65} In a letter to Charles Sumner, U.S. Senator from Massachusetts who was travelling in Berlin, Greenough asked his impressions of the city and Karl Friedrich Schinkel’s architecture in 1839:

\begin{quotation}
If you should have leisure pray tell me your impression of the works of Schinkel the architect, as regards distribution and adaptation, organization in short. That’s the germ of future architectures-- Science to
\end{quotation}

\textsuperscript{63} Grenough, \textit{Letters...} p.221
\textsuperscript{64} Vivien Green Fryd (1992) \textit{Art and Empire: The Politics of Ethnicity in the United States Capitol, 1815-1860}, Yale University Press, New Haven. p.4
\textsuperscript{65} In December 27\textsuperscript{th}, 1851 in a letter to William Cullen Bryant, he called his style the Yankee Doric. See Greenough, \textit{Letters...} p.399
decide on forms and arrangements of parts-- Taste & fancy in a hand
formed by the exemplaria graeca for the ornament.\textsuperscript{66}

Greenough expressed several similar ideas in his later essays which did not
escape the attention of the historians of architecture who made him into a prophet of
functionalism. But in the same paragraph of the above letter, the conclusion reflects the
reasons for Greenough’s curiosity as well:

…there is an architecture that will require all the lights of this age
to embody it and all the genius of antiquity to adorn it-- \textit{an E pluribus
unum style} sine qua non, [to] have anything worthy of our country--\textsuperscript{67}

Greenough’s accumulating thoughts on architecture and the need of his young
nation for “a new style” blossomed in his essay “American Architecture” published in
the United States Magazine and Democratic Review in August 1843. This essay is the
embodiment of his critique against the then-contemporary conditions of American
architecture and the introduction of his thought to a greater audience. “American
Architecture” is an extremely important essay especially with reference to its inner
contradictions and the underlying idea of a totally “new style” which the United States
had to create.

Greenough, under the pseudonym Horace Bender,\textsuperscript{68} attracts the attention of his
reader to his country’s destiny in his first sentence:

We have heard the learned in matters relating to art express the
opinion that these United States are \textit{destined to form a new style of
architecture}. Remembering that a vast population, rich in experience, the
precepts, and the models of the Old World, was about to erect durable

\textsuperscript{66} Letter to Charles Sumner, November 18, 1839. Ibid. p.268
\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Nathalia Wright states that Bender was Greenough’s mother’s maiden name.
structures for every function of a civilized life, we also cherished the hope that such a combination would speedily be formed.\textsuperscript{69}

However, he laments that the country had never possessed a unified cultural structure. The strongest and dominant integrative cultural ingredient, according to Greenough, had been "Reason". And "Reason" was not enough to produce cultural integrity:

We forgot that we had not [sic.] unity of religious belief, nor unity of origin; that our territory, extending from the white bear to the alligator, made our occupations dissimilar, our character and tastes various...Reason can dissect but cannot originate; she can adopt but she cannot create; she can modify, but cannot find.\textsuperscript{70}

While it is clearly explained by Greenough that a unified cultural production is extremely hard, he is optimistic that it can be possible by "serious application of the mind of the country":

We say that the mind of this country has never been seriously applied to architecture. True it is that the commonwealth, with that desire of public magnificence which has ever been a leading feature of democracy, has called from the vasty deep of the past the spirits of the Greek, the Roman and the Gothic styles; but they would not come when he called them.\textsuperscript{71}

As I have tried to illustrate at length, Greenough is motivated by the effort to construct a national identity for the United States and his struggle to establish a seat of artistic authority among his fellow patriots. While Greenough was busy in trying to concentrate on his country's need for an American aesthetic, his belief in nationalism

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid. p.53  
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid. p55. In comparing this quote with the letter to Allston when he was 26 it is seen that Greenough exactly repeats this sentence "These spirits in the vasty deep of past epochs will not come when we do call for them"(\textit{Letters}..., p.90) Nathalia Wright marks that this sentence is a direct quote
led him to support other developing nationalist struggles throughout Europe. Greenough was especially supportive of the 1848 Italian struggle of independence against the Austro-Hungarian Empire during his residence in Florence. He also wrote letters to American newspapers in defence of the defeated leader of the Hungarian struggle, Louis Kossuth, who had taken asylum in the Ottoman Empire after his defeat. In order to be relieved of the pressure and the discomfort that the Italian conflict created for his household, he even obtained a diplomatic mission --Consul of the United States of Porto Stefano, enough to provide him immunity--\textsuperscript{72}.

In conclusion, Greenough's nationalism motivated and shaped his thoughts about architecture. While his belief in the novelty of the American constitution justified his will to experiment about architecture, it also convinced him about the possibility of a good result before it was at hand. Cultural nationalism by itself justified the need for an aesthetic theory and Greenough provided his personal effort for the fulfilment of the need. The hints to understanding the other facets of his thoughts, demand at least a general overview of the religious belief, in my opinion, that guided Greenough's, like many other Bostonians', views with relation to society, the individual, science and art. The next discussion will introduce the important characteristics of Unitarianism to understand how it affected Greenough's thought.

\textsuperscript{72} See letters to the editor of the Boston Daily Evening Transcript, November 1851 (numbered 211, 213) where Greenough talks scornfully about the Austrian domination and demands asylum for Kossuth pp. 393-395, and the letter to John Gadsby Chapman, July 7th 1848 where he speaks of Italians as "we" pp.374-376, in Greenough, \textit{Letters}...
part 2

THE GUIDELINES OF GREENOUGH'S THOUGHT: UNITARIANISM

A sympathetic interpreter has described Harvard Unitarianism as "a half-way house to the rationalistic and scientific point of view, yet a house built so reverently that the academic wayfarer could seldom forget that he had sojourned in a House of God."73

In categorizing Greenough’s thought, I stated that it is neither simply scientific nor religious organicism. It is an interesting blend of organicism, in which religion prevails over science in the effort to make it acceptable to itself. Such a pragmatic undertaking as the reconciliation of science and religion is a significant problem that post-Enlightenment Christians had to deal with and Unitarianism is an important example of how this problem was handled in Boston.

In the first half of the 19th century, the majority of the Unitarian community in Boston belonged to the upper strata of the society such as bankers, merchants and tradesmen who were committed to capitalism, liberalism and optimism. Unitarianism in the eyes of several Bostonians, was the religion of a wealthy and happy elite. However they were also people of “many paradoxes...Religious liberals and social conservatives, at once optimistic and apprehensive, nationalistic and cosmopolitan...elitists in a land
dedicated to equality, proponents of freedom of conscience who supported religious establishment, and reformers who feared change...who were preoccupied with America’s quest for national cultural identity.”

The social segregation of the Unitarians reflected itself in the institutional developments of nineteenth century Boston. The Unitarians controlled the accumulation of capital by a tight-knit kinship structure, and they dominated the cultural life of the city by controlling Harvard College, the Athenaeum and the printing press.

Greenough’s father, David Greenough, was a real estate merchant who had his ups and downs in business but never really failed. Nathalia Wright notes that while the Greenough family lived in the village of Jamaica Plain in 1818 --in the year of his father’s financial crisis-- “they rented a pew in the First Congregational Society” which was “then Unitarian.” Apart from that they did not “have any official connection with a church during Horatio’s early years, though they may have attended Old South in Boston.” Privileged by being the son of a Unitarian family, Greenough had access to the sculpture casts in the Athenaeum when his talent was observed at the age of thirteen. Greenough was educated in Harvard during the years 1821-1825. At that time Harvard was an institute ruled by Unitarians since 1803 and the policy of education was shaped according to Unitarian philosophy.

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74 Ibid. p.12
76 See the introduction by Francis Greenough, the wife of Henry Greenough who was two years younger than Horatio, in Horatio Greenough, (1887) *Letters of Horatio Greenough to His Brother, Henry Greenough: With Biographical Sketches and Some Contemporary Correspondence* (edited by Frances Boott Greenough) Ticknor, Boston.
77 Wright, *Horatio Greenough: The First...* p.22
Wright also states that “the most important texts at Harvard in his day were the works of the Latin writers of the Augustan Age, Blair’s ‘Lectures on Rhetoric’, Locke’s ‘Essays, Paley’s ‘Evidences of Christianity’ and ‘Natural Theology’, Stewart’s ‘Elements of Philosophy of the Human Mind’, Butler’s ‘Analogy’ and the ‘Federalist’. Altogether they represent the neo-classical taste and the rationalistic and utilitarian thought --the conservative intellectual pattern-- of the eighteenth century.”

Unitarianism was a belief in favour of rationalism and considered that the Bible could be rationally criticized and interpreted, but ultimately accepted as a true account of events. The many materialistic and intellectual challenges that Enlightenment thought had brought to Christianity were pragmatically solved by the Unitarians by accepting the idea that religion was always reconcilable with reason. Reason could study nature to discover basic truths like the revelation of God’s existence from the perfect design of the universe. Unitarianism valued intellectual liberty and social harmony, and allowed reason to judge Scripture. This reconciliation also helped the Unitarians to welcome the developing sciences and the technologies of their time.

Such an overview of Greenough’s belief, I think, is enough for an introduction to the following in which I will try to illustrate the relationship between the above-mentioned issues in relation to Greenough’s thought in specific reference to architecture.

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78 Ibid. p.27
nature: the supreme manifestation of God

...God's world has a distinct formula for every function, and...we shall seek in vain to borrow shapes; we must make the shapes, and can only effect this by mastering principles.79

Horatio Greenough

What did Greenough offer to overcome the crisis of architecture he has diagnosed? If the long quote made from the letter to Allston is remembered, his proposal is a return to nature, in terms of principles that nature displays to man. But this is only the analytical method that Greenough recommends. Greenough postulates a fundamental law that this analysis has revealed to him and would reveal to all who performs a similar analysis. He offers the following law as the fundamental principle to work with in terms of design in “American Architecture”:

The law of adaptation is the fundamental law of nature in all structure.80

However Greenough sees the verification of the same rule in man-made objects as well. Shipbuilding, for him, is a process in which “Nature spoke of the laws of building not in the feather and the flower, but in winds and waves and [man] bent all his mind to hear and obey.”81 The created and the designed have to speak and manifest the laws of nature.

The first problem to be overcome in American architecture is formalist classicism and to achieve organic unity which is the promise of beauty. But what is the

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79 See “Cooper Monument” in Greenough, Travels... p.167
80 Greenough, Form and Function..., p.58
81 Ibid. p.61
method that one has to apply regarding the material nature of design in architecture? In
incorporates Coleridge’s concept of organic form --form which grows from within--
and later justifies it in terms of natural theology:

let us begin from the nucleus and work outward. The most
convenient size and arrangement of the rooms that constitute the building
being fixed, the access of light that may, of the air that must be wanted,
being provided for we have the skeleton of the building. Nay, we have all
excepting the dress. The connection and order of parts, juxtaposed for
convenience, cannot fail to speak of their relation and their uses.82

In nature Greenough sees the supreme manifestation of God and his view
completely in accordance with the teaching of Harvard and the belief that he practised.
In 1832, he expresses his belief in the revelation of God in the created, in a letter to
James Fenimore Cooper.83 After being commissioned by the Congress for the Statue of
Washington, Greenough was extremely excited about his task. He started a very
demanding course of analysis before beginning on his “Washington.” He went to Paris
to find a bust of Washington made by Houdon. The French sculptor was the only
sculptor that could copy Washington’s face from his dead body to execute a cast. The
bust was acknowledged at the time to have an exact likeness to Washington. But
before he began his six-year project, Greenough felt the obligation to analyse the
human figure in its entire construction. In his letter to James Fenimore Cooper,84
Greenough recorded his pride in the commission and his first effort to study the human
body for the statue:

And now sir I’m going to strain every nerve lest this commission
should prove the greatest misfortune that ever happened to me-- I have
always made it a rule whenever a puff of good fortune came to look at the

82 Ibid. p.62
83 Cooper had commissioned Greenough’s first group sculpture “The Chanting Cherubs” in 1829, the
first group modeled by an American. He also recommended Greenough for employment to his friends.
As I have noted before, his and Allston’s efforts made it possible for him to get the commission of
Washington from the government.
84 Letter to J.F. Cooper May 28, 1832, in Greenough, Letters... p.124
timbers in the hole before setting new sail—On this occasion I’ve gone to
the hospital and, for the first time in my life, have dissected the dead
subject… This dissection will hereafter be my constant study in the winter—
*In a couple of hours one sees more of the why of organization and form*
*than in days of lecture, reading or examining the living model. Its effect*
on one is more stirring—*It is as if one follows the knife as if God himself*
*were made visible and audible in the beauty and the strength of our*
*frames.*

Greenough regards adaptation as the fundamental organizing principle in nature
and recognizes the hand of God in all creation. Therefore absolute principles of
function can be deciphered and applied to man-made objects in obedience to those
principles. The better the application the closer man approaches to his Maker:

There is no conceivable function which does not obey an absolute
law. The approximation to that law in material, in parts, in their form, color
and relations, is the measure of obedience to God, in life.

In Greenough’s time natural theology was a powerful discourse. Natural
theology is considered a school of thought that “flourished about 1700 and survived
well into the nineteenth century.” The most important works on natural theology of
the seventeenth century were John Ray’s *Wisdom of God in the Creation* (1691) and
William Derham’s *Physico-theology* (1713). William Paley’s *Natural Theology* (1802),
one of the main sources of Harvard Unitarian education, is regarded as a distillation
and summation of the two books that were mentioned. The fundamental principle of
natural theology is a reconciliation of science and religion. Daniel Howe, in his book
*The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy 1805-1861*, states that “Natural
theology, for centuries a recognized scholarly discipline in the Western world, was the
study of the existence and attributes of the divine creator as those could be inferred
from his works…Sons of the Christian Enlightenment, the Harvard Unitarians were

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85 Ibid., italics mine.
86 Greenough, *Form and Function*… p.85
Los Angeles, California p.53
confident that nature spoke to man of God, revealing a divine order at once intellectually satisfying and morally uplifting.\textsuperscript{88} The main aim of moral philosophy, the fundamental teaching at Harvard, was "to weld into a single philosophy...two not entirely compatible conceptions: one, the idea of nature as a law-bound system of matter and motion, two the idea of nature as a habitation created for the use and edification of intelligent beings by an omnipotent, omniscient and benevolent God."\textsuperscript{89}

Moreover, the central argument that explains the structural variety of natural life is the confirmation of an intelligent Designer's existence. The Designer imposes on every organism, the forms of organs adapted to the functions the organism performs in its everyday life. Hence, it is inferred that the Creator cares for the welfare of the creatures and that every characteristic the organism possesses has a useful purpose.\textsuperscript{90}

Apart from the remarkable correspondence between the arguments of natural theology and the arguments put forward by Greenough, there are other scientific theories about adaptation that were circulated in Greenough's time that may have reached Greenough. Erasmus Darwin, the grandfather of Charles Darwin, is recorded as a deist, who believed that God had designed living things as self-improving through time. He had written his \textit{Botanic Garden} (1791), \textit{Temple of Nature} (1803) and \textit{Zoonomia} (1794-96) in which his thought was put together in the form of poetry. Another important figure of the first decade of the nineteenth century was Jean Baptiste Pierre Antoine de Monet, chevalier de Lamarck, [his main work was a compilation of his earlier work called \textit{Philosophie Zoologique} (1809)] who presumed that organisms adapted to their environments by a certain mechanism which allowed them to inherit the characteristics developed through generations. However Bowler states that

\textsuperscript{88} Howe, \textit{The Unitarian}... p.69
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid. p.71
\textsuperscript{90} Bowler, \textit{Evolution: The} ... p.54
Lamarck's work was not as well known in his own time as it was known later, and it is
doubtful whether Greenough may have heard about Lamarck.91

The debate between Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) and Etienne Geoffroy Saint
Hilaire (1772-1844), leading biologists of the Natural History Museum in Paris, that
took place in the summer of 1830 is also of interest here. James Fenimore Cooper
persuaded his friend General Lafayette to sit for Greenough for a portrait bust.
Greenough went to Paris in the fall of 1831. On the way to Paris Greenough met Baron
Ricasoli, “a student of natural history” who asked him for assistance in getting stuffed
specimens and he may have heard about the debate.92 The central issue that initiated the
debate is Cuvier and Saint Hilaire’s conflicting views of the causality that links
organism’s forms and functions.93 For Cuvier, an organism’s conditions of existence are
the most important constraints that determine its organs’ forms. Saint Hilaire supposes,
in contrast, that all organisms can be linked to a basic type, regardless of any functional
purpose.

Greenough’s thought has similarities to Cuvier’s theory especially in terms of
references to anatomy. There is one evidence that may lead one to link Greenough to
the debate.94 In “The Cooper Monument” essay in his book, Greenough states that “the
most striking feature in the higher animal organizations is, the adherence to one
abstract type” and this sentence expresses Saint Hilaire’s principle.95 In the following
lines of the essay, Greenough turns to arguments expressing his belief in natural

91 Ibid. p.82
92 See Horatio Greenough (1887) Letters of Horatio Greenough to His Brother, Henry Greenough:
With Biographical Sketches and Some Contemporary Correspondence (edited by Frances Boot
Greenough) Ticknor, Boston. p.78
93 See Van Eck, Organicism in... p. 216-227 about the debate and its effects on French architects and
Bowler Evolution: The... p.112-118 about the Cuvier Geoffroy debate.
94 Greenough also refers to Georges Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon; an eighteenth century naturalist
that helped establish the foundations of comparative anatomy, but he does not directly talk about
Cuvier or the debate. See “Fourier Et Hoc Genus Omne” in Greenough’s Travels... (re-titled as
“Social Theories” in Tuckerman’s edition) p.66
95 See Greenough, The Travels... p.162
theology which was an important part of Harvard curricula. He reiterates his view by stating that God’s hand is visible in all creation and ideologically science can only confirm this divine truth that he believes in.
Greenough’s contradictory and pragmatic outlook on science

For these reasons do I mistrust the theorist. Nine times in ten he hath no wholesome, working, organic relation with God’s ground or with his fellow men. Nine times in ten his position in life exceptional not normal...He hath said in his heart, that God’s world, till now, hath been rough draft on slate, and saith that he hath a sponge. Not so brother! This is a fight; come down and take thy side, and do battle for the most right of the two combatants. Thy “virtue” is an elevation on paper, to build it on the ground, we must have “cakes and ale.”

Horatio Greenough

Greenough has a very contradictory and pragmatic outlook on science. He embraces the technological developments that affect the well-being of mankind on earth and is influenced by those developments such as steam-power, clipper ships, bridges of Paris etc. Therefore science is mainly a pragmatic instrument, and is acceptable as far as it manifests its potential in its applications. However its authority is deemed impotent by Greenough no matter how deep it may try to probe into the laws of nature. Nature is always transcendent, and infinitely complicated. For Greenough, the knowledge of the theorist or the scientist is proved insufficient by the able wisdom of a practitioner that has corroborated as a result of the practitioner’s experience. His view does not allow science to question the ultimate truth as a result of his religious view. In his life, instances that have strengthened and shaped his outlook on the relationship between science and God are discernible.

96 Ibid. p.73
97 In his writings, Greenough uses the term “science” both for social sciences and natural sciences, and he does not make any distinction between the two as a direct result of his Harvard education. See, Daniel Howe, The Unitarian...
Greenough displays his scorn for “the theorist” in his article “Fourier Et Hoc Genus Omne” --re-titled “Social Theories” by Tuckerman in the “Memoirs”— and in some of his letters. Greenough refers to the “fruit of science whose seeds are wisdom” as “a forbidden fruit only in its pulp and rind.”

The contradiction in Greenough’s thoughts is well illustrated in the following quote in which he compares the helplessness of the botanist to the Scotch gardener, and the failure of contemporary medicine to the Silesian peasant’s water cure:

Study thou thy botanies; it is well; but still shalt thou make the Scotch gardener smile at thy shortcomings; study thou thy anatomies; it is well; still shall a Silesian peasant cure, while thy utmost book sufficeth to kill…

The Silesian peasant cure has a connection to Greenough’s life which has strengthened his belief in the powers of nature which is hard to overlook. Greenough’s wife Louisa (Gore), had several miscarriages before giving birth to their first child. Although she was treated by several physicians for seven years, she did not benefit from their methods of therapy. Finally, the Greenoughs decided to try the watercure in Grafenberg, Silesia that they had heard about in 1844. In Grafenberg, a hydrotherapeutic treatment plant was established by Vincent Priessnitz, who was a peasant. The therapy basically included strong diets, physical exercise and several cold baths taken every day. On May 11th, 1845 Louisa gave birth to a healthy boy. Hydrotherapy, for Greenough, was a form of therapy that exhibited the power of Nature. His experience of the watercure affected Greenough’s views of medicine and science to an important extent. In a letter to Robert Cassie Waterston, dated March 25th, 1842, Greenough explained what led to his disbelief in medicine and what strengthened his belief in the power of Nature:

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98 Ibid. p.63
The fact is simply this. Seven years' experience had shown me that I had but to go on consulting "the most eminent physicians" in order to see my wife go down to an untimely grave...I resolved letting the plant stay in the green house and calling botany, chemistry &c to explain its drooping, to transplant it to the open field of Nature...If the botanist and the gardener, or the farmer compare ignorances, I am afraid that neither will have much to boast of, but I, as a plant, should rather fall into the hands --not of the botanist. 99

For Greenough, the water cure was a remedy in which only natural means were employed. The watercure had proved itself not as an alternative mode of treatment, but as a new way of looking at the power of nature which was prone to development:

The truths laid bare by the Water Cure are not merely an admirable system of hygiene. They are the basis of a new philosophy—nay the germ of a new civilization—...Man steps and steps slowly, he does not fly—If I have read history aright he has always made faces at his food—nor has he ever digested a system till many years after he swallowed it. 100

When he was in Silesia with his wife, Greenough also wrote a letter to the editor of the United States Magazine and Democratic Review and requested his letter to be published to tell the American public about the benefits of the watercure. 101

In a later letter to Waterston dated July 7th 1845, Greenough's belief in a fate determined by God reveals another aspect of his look at science. For Greenough nothing can act against God's will and God is always observant of man's state of being on earth. Therefore science is only allowed the potency that God permits it to function with:

I remark that God's care for the mass of men is constant and unwearied...I remark that science operates directly on very few human lives and with my principle that God's will is always done I am forced to see in the destruction that does occur only a necessary balance to the

99 Greenough, Letters... p.354, italics from the original.
100 Ibid. p.355
101 Letter to John Louis O'Sullivan May 26th, 1845, in Greenough, Letters... pp.358-361
production that is effected... I feel safer therefore hugging to Mother Earth than in theories. 102

To summarize, Greenough is more interested in the utilitarian results of science than its heroic and revolutionary predictions. He sees an arrogance in sweeping social theories and finds those theories unnecessary and pretentious. If science confirms what is set forth by religion he accepts and employs that confirmation, if it does not he rejects. While Greenough seeks for reconciliation of science and religion, his thinking confirms the latter through the evidence set by the former.

102 Letter to Robert Cassie Waterston July 7th, 1845, in Greenough, Letters... pp.362-365
Greenough’s religious purism and his views on ornament

Modern architecture’s denunciation of ornament was a heroic gesture in an effort to generate a new architectural language. Therefore, texts of historiography that seek to construct origins for modern architecture find a similar point of view in the aesthetic purity reflected in Greenough’s thoughts on architecture. Sound as this may seem, the metaphysical component in Greenough’s thoughts feeds into his views on ornament and must not be forgotten when such references are made.

In Greenough’s letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson, he concludes his synopsis of his “theory” on structure and organization in the following sentences:

...Colour and ornament to be decided on strictly organic laws--having a distinct reason for each decision--The entire and immediate banishment of all make-shift and make believe--

Now I wish you to hear me read what I have prepared on this subject and I beg you in the interim to reflect that this Godlike human body has no ornament for no reason that men do not gild gold--\(^{103}\)

The first sentence of the quotation may lead one to speculate on Greenough’s inspiration from Enlightenment rationality and architectural thought which later became appropriated into the discursive agenda of modern architecture: Truth to material, expression of structure, the frowning on extensive applied ornament and at the very basis “a distinct reason for each decision.” An easy acknowledgement of Greenough’s alliance to Enlightenment rationality and modern functionalism, both of them being highly generic and not explicatory labels, will be the repetition of a mistake that had been done in the 1950s. Such a statement, deprives Greenough’s ideas of their highly religious and political content, and conceals the integral constituents of those ideas. It is

\(^{103}\) Letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson December 28\(^{th}\), 1851, in Greenough, *Letters...* p.401
apparent in Greenough, as I have remarked, that science only reveals, confirms and strengthens God's existence and power. This results in Greenough's criticism of the domination of Enlightenment rationality although he recognizes the progressive side of the natural sciences and the accompanying technological developments.

Greenough views ornament as man's effort to conceal his incompleteness in relation to God:

I have spoken of embellishment as false beauty. I will briefly develop this view of embellishment. Man is an ideal being; standing, himself inchoate and incomplete, amid the concrete manifestations of nature, his first observation recognizes defect; his first action is an effort to complete his being... Now, his best efforts at organization falling short of the need that is in his heart, and therefore infinite, he has sought to compensate for the defect in his plan by a charm of execution... By the sense of incompleteness in his plan, he shows the divine yearning that is in him; by the effort to compensate for defect in plan by any makeshift whatever, he forbids or at least checks, further effort. I understand, therefore, by embellishment, THE INSTINCTIVE EFFORT OF INFANT CIVILIZATION TO DISGUISE ITS INCOMPLETENESS, EVEN AS GOD’S COMPLETENESS IS TO INFANT SCIENCE DISGUISED.

I base my opinion of embellishment upon the hypothesis that there is not one truth in religion, another in mathematics, and a third in physics and in art; but that there is one truth, even as one God and organization is his utterance... I maintain that the first downward step was the introduction of the first inorganic, nonfunctional element, whether of shape or color. If I be told that such a system as mine would produce nakedness I accept the omen. In nakedness I behold the majesty of the essential instead of the trappings of pretension.105

The justification of Greenough's claim lies in his belief. Although he illustrates his "theory" with examples such as the developing machine where the unnecessary is

104 Although there is no historical substantiation and given here just as a footnote, it is interesting to see the similarity between Greenough's rhetoric and Adolf Loos' radical manifesto linking ornament to crime. The way Loos justifies his condemnation of ornament partially on economical grounds has no similarity to Greenough, but the incompleteness argument is very similar.

105 The quote is from Greenough's essay "Relative and Independent Beauty" published in Greenough's Travels... pp. 200-201. Italics and uppercase letters are from the original.
dropped in every stage of the development or the non-existence of the inorganic in all creation, he looks for justification in the abstract completeness of God, and not in the developing sciences and the emancipation of men through knowledge. For him the concrete examples are secondary verifications of God’s omnipotence and the ultimate truth is given in the divine.

It is also apparent that Greenough’s view of “embellishment as false beauty” stems from the puritan teachings of his religion. In his early letter to Washington Allston at the age of 26, Greenough compares the character of the Catholic Italian church to the Protestant New England church. In this comparison, the qualities of space is accepted as the expression of the religious beliefs and practices that govern and differentiate the two:

The attempts in Italy to graft the christian [sic.] sentiment on the greek [sic.] stock-- to expand the Pantheon to hold the Hebrew God, to recombine the greek [sic.] elements into a new form for new worship seem to me to have produced but a bastard result... these churches-- this worship are the product of times in which a corrupt priesthood had engrossed government [,] religion [,] arts, sciences and even society and each of these institutions was promoted and sacrificed as the interests of that priesthood required-- Our religion not only does not ask these sacrifices but forbids them-- Our church is but an oratory, a lecture room-- We do not make it too large to be filled by one human voice-- it possesses but two important features-- the pulpit whence issues the word of God to man-- The organ loft whence earth answers to heaven-- Here is great simplicity of worship yet do I think these elements capable of very grand combinations.\textsuperscript{106}

Greenough’s criticism of the Catholic institution is directed at the architecture of the Catholic church. While the Catholic Church dominates the whole life of the individual to the degree of suppressing his individuality, the New England Church allows the spatial expression of comfortable dialogue for its community in the

\textsuperscript{106} Letter to Allston from Paris, October, 1831 in Greenough, \textit{Letters...} p.89
buildings. The Protestant church is made up of “the necessary” while the Catholic is an extension of the pretensions of the institution.

Greenough takes up his criticism of ornament in his later essay “Criticism in Search of Beauty.” His condemnation of extensive applied ornament turns into a powerful attack against the Catholic Church and the papacy through the emblem of St. Peter’s, one of the grandest monuments of the Renaissance:

What is the real meaning of that vast aggregation of marble and gilding -- of silks and jewels, of glass and metal, of carved and painted embellishment called St. Peter’s church?... the affirmation of the positive in the relative-- a mechanical assertion of the spirit-- an attempt at arithmetical demonstration that Christ’s kingdom is of this world?...To what, at length, is the size of St. Peter’s church related? Is it a lodging for prayer? Christ has recommended a closet. Is it to receive the laity of the earth? All is a temple to him who looks upward. The size of St. Peter’s church is, therefore a pretension... As a result of nearly two thousand years, preaching the doctrine of self-sacrifice and the laying up of treasure in Heaven, it is a reductio ad absurdum.107

While Greenough condemns applied ornament he also asserts his belief in the simple expression of moral and religious ideals. For him, the artist’s duty is to seek “the essential.” Since “the essential” was complete in itself it did not need any extra element to be attached to its unity. Hence, ornament was unjustified. It was the manner of the savage to cover himself up in tattoos, feathers and blankets.108 Also, in a very Hegelian understanding as he himself admits, the ornament of yesterday’s styles could not be organically valid for today, because they belonged to another organic unity, another

107 In “Criticism in Search of Beauty” pp. 159-161 in Henry T. Tuckerman (1853) A Memorial of Horatio Greenough, Consisting of a Memoir, Selections From His Writings, and Tributes to His Genius, G. P. Putnam & Co., New York. Italics are from the original. 108 I want to quote from Loos here merely as rhetorical parallel, but also as a striking similarity: “The Papuan tattoos his skin, his boat, his paddles, in short everything he can lay hands on. He is not a criminal. The modern man who tattoos himself is either a criminal or a degenerate.” Adolf Loos (1984) “Ornament and Crime” in Programs and Manifestoes on 20th Century Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press (originally published in 1908). p.19
age. The organic metaphor was thus transferred from the domain of creation to the
domain of “History.”

The principles of nature when extracted would be sufficient for the inquirer to
recreate the “good.” Through these principles the foreign, the hostile and the
fashionable could all be eliminated and one could build the architecture of tomorrow. In
this way the Yankee farm house could be saved from its contaminated state:

Once adopt the principles by which alone they can be defended, and
there is no bar between you and the prolific silliness of Borromini,
excepting the want of funds. These feats have effected what I once believed
impossible; they have made the sober and the true enamored of the old,
bald, neutral-toned, Yankee farm house which seems to belong to the
ground whereon it stands, as the caterpillar to the leaf that feeds him.109

The “old, bald, neutral-toned” Yankee farmhouse, which was for Greenough an
embodiment of the puritan and simplicity-oriented American identity, had been a victim
of the cultural infiltration of European influences into his country. One of the reasons
for such a deviation from the Yankee farmhouse was “inorganic” ornament.

Greenough’s view of ornament is complicated. In his letter to Emerson, he
explains that ornament and colour have to be decided on organic laws. That leads one
to infer that Greenough acknowledges ornament to be an integral part of the
architecture, and it must not express itself separately from the organic unity. But when
he says that he could “accept the omen” if “such a system as [his] would produce
nakedness” one consequently starts to contemplate the range of meanings “nakedness”
as a metaphor can take on. Here the important question is whether a “naked” style
exists in architecture.

109 In “Criticism in Search of Beauty” by Greenough, see Henry T. Tuckerman (1853) A Memorial
of... pp. 159-161
This style is the Doric for Greenough. In Doric Greenough sees the organic relation of ornament to structure and space; and the demonstration of the principle of adaptation. In his essay “The Cooper Monument,” he states:

It is the confirmation of the doctrine of strict adaptation that I find in the purer Doric temple. The sculptures which adorned certain spaces in those temples had an organic relation to the functions of the edifice....The world has never seen plastic art developed so highly as by the men who translated into marble in the tympanum and the metope, the theogony, and the exploits of the heroes. Why then those columns uncarved? Why, then those lines of cornice unbroken by foliages [sic.], unadorned by flowers? Why that matchless symmetry of every member, that music of gradation, without the tracery of the gothic detail, without the endless caprices of the arabesque?¹¹⁰

This is also the reason why Greenough calls the national-style-to-be for the United States “the Yankee Doric.” Doric principles in fusion with the characteristics that the Yankee possesses could create the culturally right expression for the architecture. It is not surprising that Greenough does not look at the Ionic or the Corinthian order but the Doric. The Doric is relatively the simplest and the purest of the three. The Gothic, which is the embodiment of another age, does not satisfy Greenough. His belief in the Doric, which can also be regarded as the architecture of another age, is justified by his view of the Greek as the highest form of plastic art.

The main reason for Greenough’s choice seems to be his commitment to neo-classicism manifested especially in his sculptures and this neo-classicism is not compromised when the subject matter is architecture. The apparent contradiction between Greenough’s so-called “functionalism” and his neo-classicist sculpture, in my opinion, is non-existent. For Greenough, Greek classicism was the zenith that art could ever reach. Every artistic current that took place after Greek classicism is, for him, a deviation from perfection:

¹¹⁰ Greenough, *The Travels...* p.168
If we compare the simpler form of the Greek temple with the ornate and carved specimens which followed it, we shall be convinced, whatever the subtlety, however exquisite the taste that long presided over those refinements, that they were the beginning of the end... 

In my analysis, that is why Greenough picked up the "Zeus of Phidias" as the main theme to realize his apotheosis of George Washington in the name of the American nation. Consequently Washington, as many contemporaries of Greenough had objected, is dressed in drapery with a naked torso. Although he marked that he is interested in Greek principles not in Greek shapes, in my opinion, he condemned the copying of an ideal architectural model in all its outward expression and inserting another function that the original was not required to perform when it was first built. He did not object to new formulations of the elements which made up past styles. In other words, the buildings could still look Greek, but a principled American Greek. He meant to correct the faulty applications of the revivals by the strict command of necessity. To remember Greenough’s approval of new interpretations of the architectural schools of the past, one has to go re-read the letter he wrote to Allston:

...we would recommend the use of combinations we have inherited from the preceding schools whenever they will serve our turn to and harmonize with the plan of our work. 

Twentieth century historians, who embraced Greenough as a proto-modernist were wrong in their diagnoses that Greenough rejected both ornament and the authority of the past. Both had their specific place in Greenough’s thoughts, however very different than which was imagined by those historians.

\[111 \text{ Ibid. pp.169-170} \]
\[112 \text{ See footnote 45.} \]
wholistic organicism and Greenough’s view of slavery

I am booked up in philosophy sufficiently to admit that a black man fills his place in the chain of being, as I do my own. I only contend that his place is not very near me....Now there is a process, more rapid than geological formation, by which the low, white man can become “nobility and tranquillity.” The black perishes in civilization.\(^\text{113}\)

Horatio Greenough

One shall look in vain for the sentences quoted above in Greenough’s memorial, which was edited by Henry Tuckerman in 1853. A whole essay on abolition and the state of the “Negro” was taken out when Greenough’s writings were re-edited for print. The decision for the exclusion most probably stems from Tuckerman’s effort to make Greenough acceptable to the wider American public as “the artist of the nation,” which was already divided during the pre-war period because of slavery.\(^\text{114}\) As I have mentioned before, the articles in the memorial were selected from Greenough’s book The Travels, Observations and Experience of a Yankee Stonecutter he was preparing for publication. Later in 1958, Nathalia Wright, who had written Greenough’s biography, initiated a facsimile print of Greenough’s book.

Greenough sees the human body as a disclosure of God’s hand in all creation. The principles of such creation, when discovered, can be applied to artistic creation as well. However, Greenough’s aesthetic in terms of organicism is not limited to the domain of the artefact. It is also part of a mindset that has its specific view of the

\(^{113}\) from “Abolition” in Greenough, The Travels... p.74-75

\(^{114}\) Also see Vivian Fryd’s discussion about the exclusion of African Americans from the works of art in the Capitol, because of the threat of disunion from slavery in Art and Empire, chapter 8, “Liberty, Justice, Slavery.”
individual, and the individual’s relation to the society. Although Greenough makes a right diagnosis by saying that there is no cultural unity that integrates the American nation, he offers an aesthetic philosophy that aims to arrive at such a unity. The most interesting manifestation of this facet of his “functionalism” takes place in his correspondence to Emerson.  

A year before Greenough’s death, on December 28th 1851, Greenough asked Emerson if they could exchange ideas on his book. In the letter Greenough included a synopsis of his “theory.” In his reply Emerson was fascinated:

Your letter was a beam of sunlight however and happiest-timed. For I was just now reading Garbett’s little Essay-- Garbett, Ruskin’s scholar, and I find the pupil better teacher than the master-- then I had read the “Seven Lamps”, the “Stones” and I was proud to find that the doctrine they urge with so much energy you had been teaching long already... Well, joy, & the largest unfolding of your theory! which I shall faithfully attend...

Then Greenough sent a copy of his book that came out of print unbound. Greenough and Emerson agreed almost on any point with reference to art and architecture. However he objected to one part of the book: Greenough’s points about the “Negro” or the question of black slavery. Emerson stated:

So right and high minded as it is, I am only the more sorry that it should confound things on the negro question, put weapons on the hands of the base & greedy partisan. That the negro was a preAdamite, I early discovered, but now that he too reads books, the courtesy to present company seems to require that it be a little parliamentarily stated... I require of every Saxon man not to hold slaves or praise the holding-- because he belongs by blood & bone to another party & nature has not a Saxon ounce to spare. There is plenty of Celtic or Roman blood that can hold slaves as innocently as sharks bite & the grand harmonies of nature round them all admirably in: yet we are all pained when either quits his order, when a

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115 A good record of Emerson and Greenough’s correspondence; is in Nathalia Wright (1958) “Ralph Waldo Emerson and Horatio Greenough” Harvard Library Bulletin v. 12. pp. 98-116
116 Greenough himself calls his work “theory” in the letter. Greenough, Letters... p.400
117 Wright (1958) “Ralph Waldo Emerson and Horatio Greenough” p. 100
Turk unturks himself to be a democrat, or a Saxon unsaxonizes himself for accidental sympathy.\(^{118}\)

Greenough thanked Emerson for his overall view of the pamphlet and felt the need to explain his position with reference to the “black” problem. In my opinion, the following sentences are crucial about Greenough’s understanding of the limits of his “functionalism”:

My adhesion to the South is political and is based on a belief that once a ship is at sea we must let her timbers alone...I believe that the example of the north and the growth of the Greek and the German additions to our population will put an end to slavery sooner than any war made upon the South upon moral and Scriptural grounds, precisely because Northern morality coexists peaceably with greater woes other than the woe of slavery...

I am a staunch believer of free discussion & have no objection to any amount of abuse of slavery and slave holders-- provided there be a fair hearing of the defence-- So far as the Negro himself is concerned I fully believe and roundly declare that I believe he can exist here only as a bondsman-- Are we not a little rash in asserting our own freedom? We are parts of an organization-- and being such can have no freedom as I understand that term but by the dissolution of the system of which we are fractional and functional components. Now I believe that our law is not in harmony with God’s law and that therefore the result of our action will be a reductio ad absurdum-- We seek not the law -- we ask for relative success and say one and all-- après moi le deluge. The Homo has yet to seek his mission-- He has condemned his own nature and at the same breath he asserted godship-- One of these dogmas must give way if we are to have other than the see-saw of anarchy and despotism.\(^{119}\)

Greenough’s claim of God’s presence manifested in every natural being is inconsistent on grounds of race, since he sees a certain hierarchy with reference to races in calling blacks “an inferior race.”\(^{120}\) The same understanding seeps into his view of different nations as well, especially with reference to the Orient. While it seems to

\(^{118}\) Ibid. pp. 103-104, italics mine.
\(^{119}\) Ibid. p.106, italics mine.
\(^{120}\) Greenough, *The Travels*... p.82
the observer of the twentieth century a contradiction, in my opinion it is quite in harmony with Greenough’s understanding of function when the framework is enlarged to the realm of politics. While his thoughts on architecture look apparently radical for a man of antebellum America and in comparison to ideas inherent in modern architecture, he is very conservative and aristocratic. It is also clear that he believes in a democracy restricted to the white race in which freedom is a controversial and limited phenomenon. Man cannot seek the law, meaning it is given.

Greenough sees society as an organism. In such an understanding, every part of the organism depends on the other in order to achieve a harmonious society balanced by the proper functioning of its parts. An “organic wholeness” is specified as an aim put forward by Unitarian moralists in Greenough’s time. According to Daniel Howe, “the theme of social interdependence was a favourite one with Unitarian moralists. Biological analogies in sociological discussions were common long before the time of Darwin and Spencer, and the Harvard Unitarians used them often.” Therefore ideological conflicts within the society were regarded as threats to the welfare of the society. As can be inferred from Greenough’s letter to Emerson, “willingness to accept the limitations of one’s rights was a virtue highly esteemed by Harvard moralists.”

For Greenough, slavery would benefit “Negroes”. It was morally justified:

Is it true or is it not true, that negroes were from the first supposed to better their condition by passing from Africa, into the hands of christian [sic.] white men? Is it true that the highest moral and spiritual guidance of the world was from philanthropic theory, favorable to black slavery? It is even so. If, therefore, sin be the intention of evil, black slavery was morally justified at this institution.

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121 See Howe, *The Unitarian*... p.129
122 Ibid. p.126
123 Ibid. p.128
124 Greenough, *The Travels*... p.77
Greenough’s view of slavery is one of the best evidences that bear testimony to the elusiveness of organicism as a metaphor. In Greenough’s thoughts, this metaphor conveys a wholistic meaning; it does not specifically refer to art and architecture. Greenough’s organicism is an all-encompassing structure that includes the Divine, natural beings, and the artificial creations of men. It is the ultimate result man has to strive to achieve. The individual has to accept his or her fate and his place in the society. Neither revolutionary theories nor individuals are capable to change the divine order that God has established on this world. The type of dogmatism that prevails in Greenough’s work, differs from a religious dogma that shuns the existence of a science that serves its own ends, but suppresses the limits of the claims that science can make.

In reference to the slavery question Greenough’s thoughts are in line with the status quo of his time. The conflict between the abolitionists and the anti-abolitionists of the North had divided the Boston society. Greenough took the “anti-” side. The dependence of the northern textile industry on the south meant the dependence of the north on slavery. Theories of a hierarchy of the races and regarding slavery as a missionary service to “Negroes” justified by introducing civilization to the inferior races, were Greenough’s reasons to legitimate slavery as an institution.

At this point, one has to turn to the relation between Emerson and Greenough’s thoughts and Greenough’s link to Transcendentalism. A textual comparison that speculates on the relation of the two with reference to aesthetics had been made by Charles Metzger (1954) in his book Emerson and Greenough: Transcendental Pioneers of An American Aesthetic.\footnote{125 Charles Reid Metzger (1954) \textit{Emerson And Greenough, Transcendental Pioneers of an American Aesthetic}, University of California Press, Berkeley. Such a discussion is not part of my objectives in this study.} Metzger refers to Greenough as “the most eloquent spokesman of Emerson’s aesthetic faith,”\footnote{Ibid. p.67} and someone who accomplished in architectural theory parallel to what Emerson did in literature. For
Metzger, "Emerson’s mind, owing to the vast range of its attention, is a storehouse of raw materials in the form of suggestions, but it contains very little of that finished or near-finished product, the ordered conclusion." He states that when Emerson was exposed to the organic principles of Lamarck, he failed to "apply the Lamarckian conception of organic development to his theory of art."\textsuperscript{127} It was Greenough’s interpretation of those principles that he saw valid, and he was "content to cite Greenough’s specific applications as confirmation of his own more general conviction."\textsuperscript{128} The similarity between Emerson’s and Greenough’s view of nature seems to have led him to such a conclusion. However, Metzger’s comparison does not take into account the separate histories of the two personalities and their relationship. His claim about Lamarck’s theory on evolution is not founded on historical evidence and he does not take into consideration other scientific theories about evolution that I have mentioned.

Also, as opposed to what other historians argue, Greenough’s effort cannot be totally circumscribed within his relationship to Emerson. It is an un-substantiated speculation that Greenough was motivated by Emerson.\textsuperscript{129} Greenough’s short meeting with Emerson in Florence which occurred during his visit in 1833, is regarded as the first exposure of Greenough to Emerson’s transcendentalist aesthetic. However, the only record about this meeting in Emerson’s journal is Emerson’s fascination with Greenough’s proposal of a brotherhood within groups of artists.\textsuperscript{130} Therefore, it has to be noted that Greenough’s theory was in formation earlier in his life (as I tried to illustrate by the letter to Allston in the beginning). If Emerson was aware of Greenough’s thoughts on architecture, neither would Greenough introduce his “theory”

\textsuperscript{127} Ibid. p.59.  
\textsuperscript{128} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{130} cited in Wright, \textit{Horatio Greenough: The First}... p. 105
about architecture to Emerson once again, nor would Emerson reply to him in a surprise in the above-mentioned letter. Therefore such influence is unlikely.

The organic and purist aesthetic is a common feature both in Greenough’s thoughts and in the works of Transcendentalists like Emerson and Thoreau. To understand their difference one must look elsewhere. The Transcendentalist agenda of social and religious reform against mercantile capitalism and Unitarianism was not part of Greenough’s concerns. While the Transcendentalists were strong anti-abolitionists, Greenough even saw benefits of slavery for the enslaved. Another record of what Greenough thought about Transcendentalism is also interesting. Notes in the diary of Mann S. Valentine II,--author and art enthusiast that Greenough met in New York early in 1852--record that Greenough hated Ruskin because he regarded him a transcendentalist. In addition to his thoughts on Ruskin, Greenough remarked that he had “no feeling for the transcendentalists.”

Athenian democracy was the highest form of politics whereas Greek art was the highest form of plastic art for Greenough. Because slavery was an integral part of Athenian democracy it could also be a part of the American democracy, Greenough embraced it as an inseparable part of the whole.


132 Also see the chapter titled “The Organic Principle” for a comparison of Emerson and Thoreau’s thoughts and Greenough’s in F.O. Mathiessen (1941) American Renaissance: Art and Experience in the Age of Emerson and Whitman, Oxford University Press, London.

133 cited in Wright, Horatio Greenough: The First... p. 273
Conclusion

RE-FRAMING HORATIO GREENOUGH

Throughout the pages of my study I have investigated Greenough’s thoughts as a case of 19th century intellectual and cultural history. I have probed deeper into the identity of the intellectual in trying to understand the sculptor and into the factors that had been influential in shaping his thoughts. While I tried to expose the constituents of his identity, through such an exposition, as a secondary aim, I criticized and evaluated the claims of other historians who had looked at Greenough before me.

The constituents of a search for a new aesthetic or a style is not limited by the domain of an artistic discipline, especially for Greenough’s case. Greenough’s effort is informed by several factors, two of which are the cultural atmosphere of constructing a national identity, and the theological basis for his aesthetics. Greenough dedicated his aesthetic to his nation since he was motivated by the aesthetic anomalies that he observed. His aesthetic was deeply mediated by his religious belief which is repeatedly manifested in his writings.

Reading Greenough’s proposal as the basis for a “new” architecture is simply a misreading without the historical context that surrounds it. Although an immediate kinship can be established with twentieth century architectural theory when his readings are taken at face-value, one has to be wary of making such a correlation. The social and political conditions that surrounded the formation of modern architecture and the
aesthetics it embodies are totally different from the classicist aesthetic and the patriotic starting point of Greenough. In his criticism of revivalism, Greenough does not demand an extremely different architecture from the classical, but he challenges the wrong adaptation of older models. For him the adaptation of a model to a different scale, and its construction in different materials and detailing, be the model Gothic, Roman or Greek, is simply a destruction of the spirit it manifests. Greek classicism is the highest authority of plastic art for Greenough. Therefore, he calls for a recombination of the elements that compose an organic unity such as the elements that make up “the purer Doric temple.” When his sculpture is analysed from the same classicist viewpoint, Greenough’s aesthetic understanding of art and architecture is coherent.

In differentiating Greenough from a pioneer of modern architecture, one must not also underestimate his significance. Greenough is a perceptive traveller and a sensitive critic. His travels on sailboats and steamers and his alertness to the developing technology, his observations of the architecture in the cities and the developing metropolitan culture around Europe, and his enthusiasm to learn about the developments around the world bear testimony to such a sensitivity and perception. His mind is constantly occupied with the idea of reform in architecture for the United States. Also Greenough is an interesting example with reference to reconciling science and religion. In his time, while reason was strengthening its authority, religion was constantly being questioned. Greenough, is a nineteenth century intellectual who wants to create a middle-ground for his faith, without ever letting reason challenge its authority.

In my opinion, his so-called “functionalism” is a different form of organismism where function is attributed to every characteristic possessed by a living thing created by God. The intelligent and omnipotent Designer has already exhibited in His creation the path for the designer to follow and it is justified in the law of adaptation. Greenough’s belief in a science that confirms and reveals the existence of God in its
useful application, enables him to see the machine as the exemplary product of such a successful design process. Greenough does not seek for a creative influence in the machine as Le Corbusier did. For Greenough, the machine as a pure utilitarian category justifies his claim that design principles are inherent in nature. His first category, monumental building, is a reaffirmation of his belief in the classical. In allocating the utilitarian category especially for the residential, he allows the building to be flexible according to the needs of its occupants. However, this does not mean that he compromises from the simple and pure aesthetics that the Doric contains.

Another facet of Greenough’s organicism is the inherent wholism. Such an organicism is not restricted within the boundaries of aesthetics; it is equally applicable to the field of politics. Human society and the individual, as well as artefacts and buildings, are God’s creations. The individuals depend on one another in the society and they have to accept their roles to create a harmonious order. Resting on the claim of a hierarchical order of races which was disseminated and justified by theories of evolution in the nineteenth century, Greenough condemns the “Negro” to exist merely as a bondsman in the United States. His belief in Greek classicism is not limited to the art, but extends to the realm of Athenian democracy, hence his acceptance of slavery.

Greenough’s downplay of ornament must not be confused with the 20th century modernist view of ornament. While the modernist could classify tryglyphs and metopes of the Greek temple as ornament, Greenough saw them inseparable from the temple’s organic unity. He simply separated the Doric from the stylistic vocabulary of architecture because of its ornamental simplicity. The tendency of displacing ornament from the architectural vocabulary is not an issue for Greenough. The problem is to achieve purposive unity, the relation of the parts to the whole and the whole to the parts, in which ornament is definitely included.
Greenough’s relation to Transcendentalism is controversial because it is hard to locate a unique aesthetic called Transcendentalist. Furthermore, the exchange between Greenough and Emerson took place in a very short time and the two sound especially similar in explaining the relationship between art and nature. In my opinion, Emerson was not an influence for Greenough but a participant of discussions and most of Greenough’s aesthetic sources were different from Emerson’s. Transcendentalism had created a big controversy among Boston Unitarians and the movement was considered as infidel and impious. As he himself stated, Greenough had “no feeling for the Transcendentalists.” The Transcendentalists were ardent social reformers and abolitionists. Therefore it is not surprising that the main issue of conflict between Emerson and Greenough was abolition and slavery. It is hardly possible to mention Greenough’s name within the Transcendentalist movement.

As a case of historiography, Greenough presents an important lesson. The research produced on Greenough during the 1940s and 1950s reflects the intellectual portrait of Greenough filtered through the historians’ own agendas. It seems that when functionalism was the reigning discourse, it was not possible for architectural historians to view Greenough other than as a precursor of functionalism. Greenough’s organicism was not deeply understood, and the understanding of functionalism itself was limited. Greenough’s intellectual portrait was distorted and reduced to a defender of “functionalism.”

As I have made clear in the introduction, the complexity of modern architecture’s past is enriched by adding the complexities of particular cases such as Greenough’s. This enrichment urges the historian to reformulate his/her position with reference to contemporary debates around modernism and post-modernism. It is definitely the same urge that led me to take Greenough’s thoughts out of the limits imposed on the reception of his aesthetic understanding in the 1940s and 1950s and to situate them in a broader inquiry with reference to their cultural and temporal terrain.
Conclusion

The need for such a re-contextualization stems from a crucial aspect of historiography. The conditions in which architectural theory gets absorbed and the conditions in which it was formulated are not the same because a temporal/historical gap reconditions knowledge. This temporal gap affects our interpretation that distorts, reshapes and blurs the way we perceive what we inherit as historical knowledge. The critical awareness of the gap forces the historian to be open to the multiple constituents of historical knowledge. Such a position, I believe, avoids a reductive scope that erases differences and undermines idiosyncrasies. What is silenced in Greenough’s history, is also what is silenced in the history of functionalism as a discourse and in the history of modern architecture.
Horatio Greenough (1852)
the daguerreotype in Nathalia Wright's collection
from Nathalia Wright, *Horatio Greenough, The First American Sculptor*
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