

Open Inquiry Archive

ISSN 2167-8812
<http://openinquiryarchive.net>
Volume 3, No. 1 (2014)

An Intellectual Life **Horatio Greenough and His Florentine Circle**

Elise Madeleine Ciregna

As America's so-called "First Sculptor," Horatio Greenough's life and work in Italy between the years 1825 and his death in 1852 have been the focus of scholarship on the artist, including Greenough's influential published writings on art. While most biographical information concentrates on Greenough's commissions and correspondence with American patrons and friends, especially Washington Allston and James Fenimore Cooper, little attention has been paid to Greenough's larger social circle of friends during his years in Florence, and the influence of the city in which he lived and worked for most of his adult life. This essay seeks to begin to trace out the extensive web of Greenough's acquaintance during the years he spent working professionally in Florence between 1828 and 1851.

While Greenough always maintained that he worked to advance the cause of American art, particularly sculpture, he did not isolate himself from Italian intellectual life or Italians themselves, but instead formed friendships with significant Italian figures, commented on Italian politics, and worked on commissions from Italian patrons. In fact, Greenough was at the center of a large and varied social circle of Anglo, American and Italian admirers, friends and patrons, while his social life and work coexisted harmoniously and seamlessly. Working from Greenough's extensive correspondence published in two different collections, which include nearly all known

surviving letters from him, as well as several biographies and Greenough's own published writings, this essay examines Greenough's relationships with the Marquis Gino Capponi and other Florentines, as well as the network of Anglo-Americans who formed part of Greenough's social circle, including the writer James Fenimore Cooper and the artist Washington Allston.

Horatio Greenough was born in 1805 into a comfortable and well-connected Boston family, the second of eleven children born to David and Elizabeth Greenough (two of whom died in infancy). David Greenough had made a fortune in real estate development in Boston during the late eighteenth- and early nineteenth centuries. Horatio's sister-in-law Frances Boott Greenough stated "at one time [David Greenough] owned the greater part of Brattle Street, the Province House estate, and parts of Chestnut, Summer, and other streets." She also noted that of several houses built by David Greenough in Colonnade Row, one "was his home for some time, afterward inhabited by Amos Lawrence for many years" (F.B. Greenough 14), firmly establishing the Greenough family's social and economic status in Boston and Cambridge society. Following the War of 1812 several unfortunate investments drove David Greenough into bankruptcy, a situation he eventually recovered from, although the family's fortunes would thereafter fluctuate significantly through the years. Neither parent seems to have displayed much interest in art, but David Greenough's involvement with the construction of several architecturally significant buildings in early nineteenth century Boston may have given him at least a passing interest in architecture. In any case, of the nine surviving Greenough children, seven were either artistic or literary, displaying talents in painting, architecture and architectural theory, writing, and sculpture (Wright, *Greenough* 19-21). As a young boy Horatio Greenough was fascinated by a marble sculpture in his father's garden, a copy of the antique Greek statue of Phocion, and amused himself by carving figures in chalk and other media, including wood and beeswax (Craven 101). He also molded a head from a Roman coin in plaster.

The young boy's passion and obvious dedication to his work eventually caught the eye of Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Boston's "Merchant Prince," when Greenough was about twelve. History does not record how this meeting came about, but the oft-repeated tradition has it that Perkins was so impressed with Greenough's chalk copy of a bust of John Adams by the French sculptor J. B. Binon that Perkins arranged for young Greenough to be introduced to William S. Shaw, the librarian of the Boston Athenæum, one of the first private libraries in the country, and one of the earliest institutions to collect and display paintings and sculpture. Even as a youth, Greenough was articulate, charming and intellectually curious well beyond his years. Greenough was given access to the library's collection of plaster casts of antique sculpture to study, a unique privilege for anyone but especially unusual for such a young person. As an adolescent Greenough also received lessons in carving from Solomon Willard and Alpheus Cary, two prominent Boston artisans, and from Binon himself, who spent several professionally disappointing years in Boston between 1818 and 1820.

Although the young Greenough knew early on that he wanted to pursue sculpture as his vocation, the uncertain future of an aspiring artist in America caused his father to insist that his son first receive a proper education. Witty and handsome, Greenough was a popular student at Harvard College (1821-1825), where he excelled in studies of classical literature and mythology. It was during his years at Harvard that Greenough made the acquaintance of the much older Washington Allston (1779-1843), the celebrated painter, a friendship that would have a profound influence on Greenough. Despite the disparity in their ages, Allston became a lifelong friend and admirer of Greenough; the two men would keep up a lively and extensive correspondence with each other throughout the rest of their lives.

During his college years, Greenough submitted an entry into the intense and protracted bidding process for the Bunker Hill Monument, a prestigious and early commission for a Boston landmark. Instead of submitting a design for a column, which the committee had already agreed upon, Greenough drew on his extensive knowledge of ancient civilizations and art and submitted a design for an obelisk, along with a lengthy and detailed explanation of the superiority of the obelisk design. Greenough lost the competition—although ironically, the Bunker Hill Monument that was eventually built was in the form of an obelisk. Greenough soon embarked for Italy, leaving before formal graduation ceremonies at Harvard. The decision to go to Italy was momentous, and would influence the next two generations of American inspiring sculptors, many of whom would follow Greenough's example.

Washington Allston, Greenough's friend and mentor, originally suggested Italy to Greenough in part because his own career in painting had benefited from his years of study there (Greenthal et al 5). For an aspiring sculptor in particular there were many good reasons to choose Italy. The superb art collections of ancient Greek, Roman and Renaissance sculpture provided unlimited opportunities for study. The great masters of Europe, the Italian Lorenzo Bartolini in Florence and the Danish Berthel Thorwaldsen in Rome, were settled permanently in Italy, accepting promising students into their workshops. Other practical reasons for choosing Italy abounded, including the availability of the fine white Carrara marble, and Italian workmen to carve the marble. Unlike the artisan stonecutters of America, Italian stonecutters were highly proficient technicians, known as boasters, who could be relied on to carve the final version of a statue. The sculptor was primarily encouraged to express his creative "genius" through his modeling of the malleable clay into its final form. Not necessarily trained to carve in stone or marble, a sculptor would then have his Italian boasters take over cutting and carving the final version. Working from the plaster or clay model, the boasters used the age-old system of pointing to mechanically transfer a design into marble.

Horatio Greenough arrived in Italy as an energetic and ambitious young man brimming with confidence and excitement about his professional endeavor. Having spent the first two decades of his life in the quaint city of Boston, Horatio would later complain to his brother Henry of Boston's—and by extension, America's— provinciality, stating—"there is no atmosphere of art" (FB Greenough 29). Italy

represented an ideal locus of art, beauty, antiquity, architecture, history, and civilization, all of which overwhelmed Greenough, but also inspired him.

In Rome, Greenough began to study in earnest. Thorwaldsen's greatest rival, Antonio Canova, had died in 1822, leaving little competition for the celebrated artist. Thorwaldsen's works tended towards larger and more rugged topics, while Canova's style had established a fashion for sentimental and highly polished works (Wright, *Greenough* 39). Working under Thorwaldsen's guidance Greenough modeled a number of works in clay and sculpted several ideal works, including statues of Abel and David. He planned to remain in Rome indefinitely.

Greenough and another art student, the painter Robert Weir of New York, took rooms together in a house in which the celebrated seventeenth-century French painter Claude Lorrain had once lived; a fact that added to the romance of the setting. The house was known as "*Tèmpletto*," [sic] or "little temple," in homage to its Doric portico. Greenough and Weir became close friends. The following year Weir and Greenough each found cheaper accommodations, but when Greenough became seriously ill—probably from a combination of overwork and "Roman fever," or malaria—Weir moved in to care for Greenough. After a long and slow recovery, the young sculptor took the advice of his physician and set out on a trip to Naples. In Naples, he exhibited for the first time signs of the mental illness, or "mania," that would shadow him the rest of his life. After having been confined to an insane asylum for a short time, Weir again came to the rescue and accompanied his frail, sick friend over the long sea voyage back to America (Wright, *Greenough* 45-47).

Historians have long pondered the exact nature of Greenough's "mania." As a youth, his intensity and intellectual curiosity were apparent. As an adult, this intensity seems to often have taken the form of crippling despair and depression. Nineteenth-century terminology for mental illnesses tended toward the unspecific, using general terms such as "mania" and "melancholia" to describe a wide variety of conditions and illnesses. Today, many of those "manias" can be clinically diagnosed as specific illnesses, including various forms of depression, manic depression, and bi-polar disease. Based on Greenough's known symptoms, he most likely suffered from some form of manic depression. Convinced that "his goal [of becoming a great sculptor] was infinitely farther beyond his reach than he had thought," (Wright, *Greenough* 39) and overwhelmed and terrified at the unthinkable possibility of failure, Greenough's confidence had faltered almost immediately. During his time in Rome he had worked himself to exhaustion and then collapsed—a cycle that would repeat itself throughout his professional life.

Greenough arrived home in Boston in May 1827, fully rested and recovered. He kept busy sketching, modeling, reading and writing. Anxious to promote his work he traveled to Washington D.C. where he acquired letters of introduction to then president John Quincy Adams and received permission to model his bust. Greenough already planned a return to Italy and hoped by producing a successful bust of the president, to obtain patronage in America, and possibly a commission from the American government. Relying on his own already well-formed opinions about realism in

portraiture, the artist described his technique to his brother Henry: "Mr. Adams gave me his first sitting yesterday morning. A President is a man, you know, and so I put him in. He is much fallen away in flesh since Cardelli modelled him, and the character of his head is improved by it" (FB Greenough 25). Greenough's refusal to romanticize the aging and careworn president's features met with approval from the sitter. Adams was so pleased with Greenough's work he commissioned a portrait bust of his father John Adams, the second president of the United States.

Despite this success, Greenough received no hoped-for commission from the federal government—the construction of the Capitol, which had employed a number of Italian sculptors, notably Luigi Persico, was drawing to a close—though he modeled several busts and secured a commission from one of the country's most prominent art collectors, Robert Gilmor of Baltimore, for a sculpture to be made once Greenough was again working in Italy.

Greenough returned to Italy in 1828, taking the unusual step of first spending several months in Carrara to learn firsthand about the "different qualities of marble yielded by the quarries," and to further his carving skills. Greenough resisted the practice of relying on boasters, feeling that "in translation," the end result had usually lost much of the emotive qualities of the sculptor's original conception. An additional lure was the relatively cheap cost of marble and assistants.

By late October Greenough was in Florence, the city in which he would spend most of the rest of his life, and where his own art matured and flourished. Greenough's reasons for choosing Florence over Rome were practical: the relative proximity to Carrara, a healthier climate, and above all, the art collections, which Greenough considered as unrivaled. Just shy of his twenty-third birthday, Greenough described his joy to Allston about being in Florence: "I will not try to tell you my feelings at finding myself again in this city which seems and always seemed to me the most inspiring place in the world" (HG to WA, October 10-17, 1828, Wright, *Letters* 18). There were other likely, although unstated, reasons for choosing Florence. Greenough's recognition of the immense task he had set himself—to become America's first celebrated native sculptor—and the pressures of working in Rome, where he had not quite found the right intellectual or artistic environment for his interests and ambitions, had been major contributing factors to his depression and manic drive to succeed. Between the time he had left Rome and his arrival in Florence, Greenough had matured significantly, developing more confidence and independence in his own thinking (Saunders 21).

Florence, in fact, would prove to be the ideal setting for Greenough not only to practice his art, but also to become part of a large international circle of cosmopolites, intellectuals, writers, artists and politicians, Italian and expatriates, all living under the liberal government of the Grand Duke Leopold II of Austria during the period known as the *Risorgimento*. The long process of unification of the various states in Italy had started in the eighteenth century and took most of the nineteenth century to accomplish, but during the late 1820s and 1830s, Florence attracted many of the era's most notable European artists, writers, and intellectuals. Although few Americans lived in the Tuscan capital at the time, foreigners and expatriates abounded—including

numerous English citizens and members of the French Bonaparte family, sisters and brothers of Napoleon I, providing Greenough with the exhilarating freedom of the exchange of opinions and ideas on topics ranging from art and aesthetics to political processes. Florence was likely the only foreign city that could have accommodated Greenough's rapacious intellect and wide-ranging interests. Having left the artistically comparatively provincial and conservative cities and towns of his homeland behind, Greenough was free to engage with members of the aristocracy and nobility of various countries, as well as the many expatriate writers and artists who also called Florence home. He was also free to engage with ordinary Florentine citizens in debates and discussions on matters of art and aesthetics, something that had not been possible in conservative American circles. As an American Democrat of the early nineteenth century, Greenough "did not feel the arts had to be exclusive or representative of aristocracy" (Schneider 147).

Greenough had already met the celebrated sculptor Lorenzo Bartolini (1777-1850) during his previous stay in Italy, on his way to Rome. At that time he had not been impressed with Bartolini's sculpture, looking ahead instead to working with the celebrated Thorwaldsen. In the intervening years, however, Greenough had grown to admire Bartolini's naturalistic approach to modeling and carving. As he explained to Allston, he saw Bartolini's work "with an eye altogether different from that of 3 years since when I visited him for the first time" (Wright, *Letters* 19). Bartolini was the acknowledged Florentine leader of the early nineteenth-century naturalistic movement in sculpture, prioritizing nature as the most beautiful of forms. That style was in many ways a rejection of the more severe classicism of the Roman school (Saunders 22). Similarly, the native Tuscan artist was taken with Greenough, and not only provided him with instruction, materials, and workmen for assistance, but for a time, also with lodging at his own studio in Borgo San Frediano. In a letter to Robert Gilmor, Jr. dated May 16, 1829, Greenough gratefully noted that Bartolini "did me the honor to offer me the advantages of a pupil, i.e. the use of his studies, the loan of instruments and workmen and the sight of his pensioned models...which will save me much money" (Wright, *Letters* 32).

Within weeks of his arrival in Florence Greenough met the American writer James Fenimore Cooper, who had recently moved with his own family to Florence. The American consul in Florence introduced the two men, who immediately became fast friends. In Cooper, Greenough found not just a friend and admirer who could provide the kind of mentoring and encouragement that Allston had provided in Boston, but also a patron. Cooper's friendship and patronage would provide Greenough with one of his most important early commissions, as well as another encouraging and influential older mentor. Of Cooper, Greenough wrote Washington Allston on 18 April 1829: "In him I have found a man who understands perfectly what my aim is and who seems to have gradually become thoroughly interested in my success...I believe I am beginning to find again the thread which fell from my hands in Rome so suddenly and so fearfully but it sometimes seems to me that art is a true Will o' the Wisp" (Wright, *Letters* 28). In Greenough, Cooper found a young man who shared his own democratic

ideals, and someone who had the intellect, drive and ambition to move the progress of American art forward. Cooper almost immediately commissioned Greenough for a portrait bust.

Cooper was an important friend to Greenough, but he was certainly not alone. Soon after arriving in Florence, Greenough was able to report to Allston that he already had “many acquaintance[s] among the first conversazioni of artists and dilettanti,” most of them involved in the Tuscan *Risorgimento*, introduced to him by Bartolini, including the Marquis Gino Capponi, Jean Pierre Vieusseux, the Swiss *littérateur*, and the poet Giuseppe Giusti (Wright, HG to WA, October 10-17 1828, *Letters* 22-23). Over the following months Greenough continued to meet many of Florence’s noted artists, including the Italian painters Pietro Benvenuti (who would become Director of the *Accademia di Belle Arti* in Florence) and Giuseppe Bezzuoli, the Italian sculptors Stefano Ricci and Luigi Pampaloni, and the English painter George Augustus Wallis (Wright, *Greenough* 63-64). In April of 1829 Greenough wrote Allston, mentioning several of these in the same letter. Giving a sense of the frequency of running into acquaintances, whether in cafes or at dinner parties, Greenough described his meeting with Wallis, and wrote:

I was in a coffee house...when an English gentleman to whom I had been hastily introduced the evening before entered and seating himself near us commenced a conversation...At a pause in the conversation he asked me suddenly if I knew Mr. Alston [sic] – Yes very well – Do you indeed how is he? ...I asked his name—twas Wallis!! (Wright, *Letters* 28-29)

Later in the same letter Greenough casually mentioned that he had been “in the study of Benvenuti the other day,” and had had an opportunity to examine the artist’s collection of Venetian master paintings.

Of this sampling of new acquaintances, Capponi was arguably the most impressive to the young man from provincial Boston. The Marquis was a member of an old and illustrious Florentine family, a bibliophile and patron of the arts. Despite Greenough’s modest means and relative inexperience as a sculptor, the older Capponi—similar to Allston and Cooper—was drawn to the intelligent and erudite American who was trumpeting a way forward for American arts. Although little correspondence exists between Capponi and Greenough—most of their interactions through the years would have taken place in person—the two men held similar liberal political views and enjoyed a close, warm friendship based on mutual respect and admiration for the arts. Perhaps inspired—or impressed—by Capponi’s library, Greenough formed his own library consisting primarily of literary tomes, histories, and science, philosophical and political works. Indeed, he presented himself to the world as more than a sculptor. As one biographer noted, it was “chiefly as a scholar and gentleman” that “Greenough became more intimately acquainted in various Florentine circles” during the late 1830s and 1840s (Wright, *Greenough* 219).

Soon after their meeting, Cooper commissioned a portrait bust from Greenough, and not long after that, Cooper commissioned of Greenough his first “ideal” work, a sculpture eventually known as *The Chanting Cherubs*. “Ideal” sculpture was the work that separated the merely proficient sculptor from the artist of true “genius,” and the type of commission that was highly coveted. Distinct from portrait busts, public monuments, and genre pieces, subject matter for ideal sculpture was drawn from history, literature, the Bible, or mythology (Kasson 1). The training of an aspiring sculptor in Italy typically meant learning first how to produce copies of classical Greek and Roman sculpture, one of Greenough’s main objections to his training in Rome. An artist was considered to have reached his early maturity as a sculptor when he finally produced an entirely original sculpture, by taking a moment, event or figure from a literary or historical source and interpreted it for the first time, or in a way no other artist had before. Although portrait busts provided all-important steady “bread and butter” work for the professional sculptor, the constant commissions for these could leave an especially successful sculptor creatively unfulfilled. In later years, having found professional success, Greenough would find the financial necessity of taking on portrait busts a nuisance. He complained to his brother Henry about the endless portrait bust commissions from Americans on the Grand Tour, commenting: “I have refused to make busts at less than one hundred napoleons [about \$500.00]. I care not if I never get any more orders of that sort. Our good folk think statues can be turned out like yards of sheeting” (FB Greenough 129). As an older man, nearly doubling his price for a bust was one solution for uninteresting or routine projects. Commissions for portrait busts from friends, however, were always an honor.

Therefore, Greenough’s *Chanting Cherubs* was an exciting commission for his first major ideal work. At Cooper’s request—causing Greenough some reluctance—the work was a copy from a painting in the Pitti Palace entitled the *Madonna del Baldacchino* by Raphael of a detail in the picture, a pair of singing *putti*. The completed work arrived in America in 1831, and was Greenough’s first ideal work to be displayed publicly, first in Boston, then in New York. The sculpture received a mostly tepid response. Viewers objected to the nudity of the little boys and requested they be covered (in Boston the cherubs were finally outfitted with small aprons); others were chagrined to find out that the sculptures didn’t actually sing. Greenough was dismayed to hear of these episodes, particularly the nudity—he “had thought the country beyond that,” he wrote Allston (Wright, *Letters* 92). The planned third venue for the *Cherubs*, Washington, D.C., was canceled. Despite this disappointment, however, the piece had received praise from numerous artists and commentators during its run—Washington Allston and Robert Weir included—and had inspired poetry and several flattering articles about Greenough. Cooper himself—the original patron—was unfailingly supportive of Greenough, and regretted only that he didn’t have the financial means to give the artist more commissions. Yet, the two men remained close friends even after Cooper returned to America permanently, and corresponded frequently. Greenough always retained his admiration for Cooper, and was sensible of the importance of this friendship in his life. After Cooper’s death in 1851 he wrote the writer’s daughter, expressing his grief: “Dear

Miss Susan, your father was my instructor—he finished my education and he was my ideal of an American gentleman" (Wright, *Letters* 422).

Greenough continued to hope for a commission from the American government, specifically a public monument to George Washington, which he proposed several times over the years, to no effect. The sculptor's star was rising, however, and during these years in Florence he was extremely productive, executing orders for portrait busts and small figural and ideal works, for clients in America, Italy and France. The commission he had received from Robert Gilmor of Baltimore several years earlier, in 1827, also finally came to fruition with another ideal work, a sculpture of the figure of the dead *Medora*, from Lord Byron's 1814 poem *The Corsair*. Byron, who had lived in Florence and who had been sculpted by Bartolini as well as Thorwaldsen, was at the height of his popularity. Completed in 1832, *Medora* was Greenough's second major ideal work, and his first female full-length figure.

In 1832, having begun to establish his reputation as America's foremost sculptor, and through the tireless lobbying efforts from friends and admirers such as Allston and Cooper, Greenough finally received a coveted commission from the American government for a monumental statue of George Washington to be placed in the center of the rotunda of the Capitol, the first such commission ever awarded to an American artist (Craven 106). It was a work that would take him nearly ten years to complete. Throughout the long process of its initial design, planning and creation in Florence, many friends and acquaintances viewed, reported, and commented admiringly on the developing monument, including Capponi, who "embraced Greenough upon hearing that Columbus was to be represented on [Washington's] chair;" Luigi Sabatelli, then head of the Academy of Fine Arts in Milan; and American patrons and friends such as Thomas Handasyd Perkins, Charles Sumner, and Edward Everett, among others. The completed monument was publicly exhibited for the first time in January 1841 in a space adjoining the church of San Giovanni dei Cavalieri in the Via San Gallo (Saunders 38). Greenough's Florentine friends and acquaintances praised the work as an original, beautifully conceived and executed. His friend Capponi even reserved one of the exhibit's nights just for Capponi and his friends, and was so enamored by the finished monument that he ordered a miniature copy for one of his daughters (Wright, *Greenough* 134). However, the sculpture evoked a very different response in America, where critics as well as the general public ridiculed the neoclassically represented, nearly nude Washington in Roman sandals, and savaged the piece in local newspapers. The disastrous reception of Greenough's colossal *Washington* in the United States—unlike *The Chanting Cherubs*, which had elicited only a mild response—was a huge professional disappointment for Greenough, but his admirers and friends in both America and Italy posited only that this was a confirmation that America was not yet ready for "serious" sculpture, and convinced Greenough that he should remain in Florence. His Florentine circle of friends, in particular—sophisticated, well-traveled, knowledgeable about art, and admiring of the Bostonian's ambition and obvious intellectual gifts—provided Greenough with the steady encouragement and admiration he needed for his career to flourish.

Despite his usually boundless energy and outgoing nature, Greenough may have sometimes felt his social life in Florence was led at a dizzying pace. In November 1835 he wrote to an acquaintance, Richard Henry Wilde, using self-deprecating charm to apologize for having missed him recently, and promising to see him later in the day:

I must call on the Channings tonight but will join you in the course of the evening...I hasten to inform you that I left the theater only long enough to smoke half a cigar and that I was when you left it standing immediately behind the prompter—Mr. Thompson's [sic] servant told me as I came out that your man had been looking for me...a theater in Florence is an antidote to unholy passions—I have sometimes found great relief in this way from the ballet, but sometimes find that each successive year it is necessary to go a little nearer—I'm now as I said right behind the prompter—the next year will take me behind the scenes and what will be requisite after that God knows.

(Wright, *Letters*, 192)

This passage also points out the fluidity of the lines between Greenough's social and professional lives. "Mr. Thompson" referred to Colonel James Thomson, a New Yorker who lived in Florence, and who provided Greenough with several commissions over the years. Greenough's social life may have been busy, but he also recognized it provided a much-needed break from his own tendency towards overwork, and an occasion for sociability—among the friends he also called patrons.

During the 1830s, with Greenough's star in the ascendant, he stayed busy with commissions and kept up his unceasing social schedule, often combining the two. It was a social life that he still lived as a well-to-do bachelor until 1836, when he met Louisa Gore, a young Bostonian travelling through Florence with her mother. After a brief courtship, the couple were married in Florence by an English clergyman, and settled into their new large apartment in the Palazzo Bacciochi on the Borgo Pinto, centrally located. By the late 1830s the Greenoughs were sufficiently part of Florentine society to participate in the seemingly endless round of concerts, balls, parties and diplomatic events (Wright, *Greenough*, 219). The Greenoughs attended the opera regularly, where they had a box in the second row. Several times a season they attended balls at the Pitti Palace. They also attended parties at Emmanuel Fenzi's home, and at the home of the aforementioned Thomsons, who lived in the Palazzo Ximenes. As a couple the Greenoughs began to attract society to their dinner parties, invitations to which increasingly became sought-after, especially as Greenough continued to collect honors and commissions from American and foreign patrons.

One particularly impressive and special honor was that bestowed on Greenough in 1840 when numerous Italian friends and fellow sculptors including Emilio Santarelli, Luigi Pampaloni, and Emilio Demi sponsored his nomination to the *Accademia di Belle Arti* as a member and as Professor of Sculpture. The vote was unanimous. Greenough's talent and intelligence, his easy charm and facility for languages—particularly Italian—had left little question for his peers (Crane 111-12). As other scholars have noted,

Bartolini was not involved in this honor. By this time his friendship with Greenough seems to have frayed or ended completely; historians have noted this was a pattern for the mercurial Bartolini, who may have become jealous at his onetime student's success and celebrity. Greenough never commented negatively on his former mentor, or discussed any rupture in their relationship.

With Greenough's success came even more celebrity. When the indefatigable English writer and social commentator Frances Trollope visited Greenough's studio in 1841, the Greenoughs held a dinner party for her. Trollope was at this point primarily famous for having published in 1832 her famously caustic *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, in which she described her travels through America and several years of residence in Cincinnati, then still a frontier town. Trollope had mostly found Americans to be boorish, unmannered, and uncouth; the book had been a sensation on both sides of the Atlantic. Whether Greenough was determined to sway Mrs. Trollope's opinions of Americans, or was simply pleased to honor his famous guest with a dinner party, is unknown, but Mrs. Trollope was clearly charmed and impressed. Noting that among the guests was the eminent and recently retired Governor of Massachusetts and statesman, Edward Everett—another Bostonian and friend of Greenough—Trollope noted that “the conversation at table deserved the name much better than is often the case....The [discussion regarding the superiority of ancient over modern art] was long dwelt on, and handled with considerable taste and *savoir*” (Crane 112). Coming from the often acerbic Trollope, this was high praise indeed. Trollope's opinion of the backwardness of American art may have softened in the face of Greenough's erudite conversation and charm, but her earlier criticism still stung; in 1843 Greenough still noted that his native country had been “taunted” by European elitists for being slow to encourage the fine arts (Schneider 147).

Greenough's friendship with Capponi also continued through the years. It appears to have been a warm and personal relationship. In November 1837, while Capponi was out of town, Greenough felt comfortable asking his friend for a personal favor, permission to show a visiting acquaintance part of Capponi's extensive art collection: “Mr. Gibson an English Sculptor of celebrity who is at present in Florence, having expressed a wish to see the beautiful drawings by Sabatelli in your possession, I am induced to trespass on your kindness for a permission to that effect.” Greenough also thanked the Marquis for having sent “a fine bust of Lorenzo dei Medici which was left here with your name several days since” (Wright, *Letters* 220). Why Capponi was sending Greenough a bust is unknown; Greenough's language indicates the bust was not a gift, but more likely a loan. If Capponi was lending Greenough a bust, he may have had several reasons in mind. The first was the recent death of the eminent Italian historian Carlo Botta; Greenough had either already started modeling a bust of Botta, or was contemplating doing so. When the Botta bust was completed, both Capponi and the poet Luigi Niccolini—then the Secretary of the *Accademia di Belle Arti*—received copies of the bust (Crane 96). The other possibility was that Capponi had already discussed a commission with Greenough of his own portrait bust, a commission that Greenough completed in 1839. Possibly the “loan” of the bust of Medici was meant to

relay some particular details that Capponi liked and wanted to see replicated in Botta's or his own portrait; or possibly Greenough had simply asked to borrow it for study.

In any case, the mens' friendship continued unabated through Greenough's professional triumphs and disappointments. His correspondence to his close friends—Allston, Cooper, and his brother Henry—is peppered with casual mentions of Capponi, such as his letter to "Harry" on February 1, 1840: "I dined a few days since with Capponi, in company with Count Seristori, a celebrated statistical writer, Boccella of Lucca, a Swiss *littérateur* [most likely Vieusseux], and a Piedmontese nobleman. I have nearly finished Capponi's bust; it is my best." Greenough continued with a brief accounting of his recent social whirl: "We have been more gay this winter than usual; twice to Court, at Lord Fox's, the British Minister's, Fenzi's [Emanuele Fenzi, Greenough's banker, was another friend], and several times at Mrs. Thomson's, whose parties have been voted the pleasantest in town" (FB Greenough 132).

Even potential rivals were welcomed into Greenough's inner circle. Both Thomas Crawford and Hiram Powers, two men from relatively humble backgrounds—Crawford the son of an Irish immigrant formerly of the gentry class, and Powers the son of a Vermont farmer—had followed in Greenough's footsteps, securing patrons to help them make their way to Italy for study and work. Along with Greenough, these three artists formed America's first "triumvirate" of important sculptors, and were befriended by the man who had provided the inspiration for their artistic aspirations. Before ever even meeting Crawford, Greenough, writing to his friend George Washington Greene, the U.S. Consul in Rome in March 1839—where Crawford had settled—ended his letter thus: "Pray give my love to Mrs. Greene & to Mr. Crawford who must be a good man since you all love him" (Wright, *Letters* 248). The two eventually met and became friendly; Greenough had nothing but praise for Crawford's work.

Greenough's relationship with Hiram Powers was much closer, probably because Powers chose to live and work in Florence. Within several months of Powers' arrival in Florence in 1837 he and Greenough were in regular touch. In a February 1838 letter to Allston, Greenough mentioned "Mr. Powers [is] now fairly settled here and is doing himself great honour in his busts" (Wright, *Letters* 228). Hiram Powers was already proving himself a huge talent; if Greenough ever felt any trepidation at Powers' success, or envy at the ease with which Powers was gaining celebrity—due in no small part to Greenough himself having forged the initial path for American aspiring sculptors—he never expressed it. Instead, he was unfailingly admiring and encouraging.

Powers seems to have sought his new friend's help in urgent personal matters as well. When his young son became gravely ill within days of the above-referenced letter, he apparently wrote Greenough in distress, seeking advice. Greenough responded with alacrity, nearly as anxious as Powers himself, but trying to remain calm: "Dr. Andreini was not at home. I have sent for him—I have thought as coolly as possible on my way here of your situation." Greenough added comfortingly, anticipating an unhappy conclusion: "If your child dies under Dr. Andreini's treatment he will have died easily,

of disease, and you cannot reproach yourself with a decision formed in ignorance of what course to pursue" (Wright, *Letters* 231). Despite Dr. Andreini's best efforts Powers' five-year old son died within hours. Ten years later, it was Greenough's turn to seek urgent help from Powers: "My Dear Powers – My wife is in labor and will probably be delivered in the course of 2 hours – It is highly important...that there should be proof of the child's being born alive if such should be the case – May I ask of you the favor to hold yourself in readiness to come to me when I shall send for you? Don't leave your work but send a verbal answer" (Wright, *Letters* 376). The artist's anxiety was understandable; his wife had already suffered at least four miscarriages during their marriage. All went well in this instance, however: Louisa and Horatio Greenough's daughter Mary Louise was born, healthy and alive, on July 25, 1848. Greenough and Powers corresponded with each other throughout these years on all matters professional and personal, forming an unusually close relationship with never a hint of competitive jealousy.

Greenough's social circle also included friends and acquaintances who make only brief cameos in his correspondence. After carving a marble portrait of his dog, an English greyhound named *Arno*—an obvious homage to the sculptor's adopted city—Greenough received another commission for a dog portrait, from the family of his old friend and longtime supporter, Thomas Handasyd Perkins of Boston. Casting about unsuccessfully for a live model—Greenough, inspired by Bartolini and by his own convictions, insisted on working from a live model whenever possible—Greenough grumbled amusingly to his brother Henry: "I have begun Perkins's dog, and have had the very deuce of a time for want of a model. Madame Catalani's is dead and buried, and that of the Grand Duke dead and stuffed, and I don't know which is most entirely out of my line. I am going to send to Paris for a good lithograph, which, with a St. Bernard specimen, must answer" (FB Greenough 169). "Madame Catalani" referred to a popular opera singer, and the "Grand Duke" referred to the Austrian Grand Duke Leopold II, the head of state of Tuscany. That Greenough was acquainted with their dogs and would have asked to borrow them for his work if they had been alive and available indicates he had a sufficient level of familiarity to even consider doing so.

Greenough took up the threads of Bartolini's principles in his essays and wove them into his own theories on American aesthetics, art and architecture. Published between 1843 and 1852, when the essays were collected into a volume entitled *The Travels, Observations, and Experiences of a Yankee Stonecutter*, Greenough outlined his philosophies on everything from "Aesthetics at Washington" to "Bank Note Typography." Opinionated, articulate and confident, Greenough was the first American artist to articulate the theory that "form follows function." A mantra of sorts for followers of early modernist architecture, the phrase is usually attributed to American architect Louis Sullivan (1856-1924), and is still identified with American architectural history today. Greenough's theory relied on the study of forms, particularly animal forms, created by Nature as ideals of perfection, representations of the only possible examples from which to learn. It was Greenough's style of *verismo*, or

naturalism, that guided his work, even if the result was not always well-received or successful by contemporary standards.

At the height of his fame and creative output, Horatio Greenough returned with his family to America in October 1851, to avoid political unrest in Italy. Once settled back in Boston, he hoped to earn several important commissions, including a memorial to his friend James Fenimore Cooper, who had recently died. Greenough traveled to New York and Washington, where he waited for his latest monumental work, *The Rescue*, to be delivered and installed. New acquaintances such as the American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow commented on the forty-six-year old sculptor's energy and vitality: "A fine, hearty, free cordial gentleman is Horatio Greenough...A tall, handsome fellow he is; full of fire and vigor and excitement. The climate acts on him bravely, and braces him like an athlete" (Wright, *Greenough* 265). This impression was not destined to last. In early December he suddenly took ill and became delirious. Taken to the nearest hospital in the middle of the night, McClean's Asylum in Somerville, Greenough died there on December 18, still in an incoherent state. The cause of his death was attributed to "brain fever," a nineteenth-century term that covered many unknown ailments and diseases. After Greenough's death several acquaintances remembered occasions or events during which he had displayed moments of incoherence or had experienced hallucinations, including the episode in Naples. An obsessively driven and ambitious man, it may be enough to state that Greenough's work ethic, the nearly impossible ideals he set for himself, the pressures of public professional disappointments and increasing competition from other sculptors, and mental instability finally led to illness and extreme fever, causing the delirium that accompanied him to his death (Crane 131-33). But it was a tragic loss: at forty-seven years old, Greenough was at the height of his artistic and creative maturity.

Horatio Greenough was buried in the family lot at Mount Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge, Massachusetts. A simple stone and plaque bearing only his name and dates of birth and death, and those of his wife Louisa, mark his grave. As plain as his burial arrangements may have been, Greenough was extensively memorialized in America and Italy as a pioneer of American art and as an intellectual. Even as he was mourned, however, Greenough's friends and contemporaries recognized that he had not achieved a harmonious balance between his theories on art and his sculpture. Greenough's friend Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote to a friend that Greenough's "tongue was far cunnier in talk than his chisel to carve." One obituary noted that his sculpture was "in execution unequal to [its] conception....We cannot point out any masterpiece, as showing an entirely satisfactory fulfillment of his own desires, but his whole career was an example in the right direction" (Wright, *Greenough* 300-01). Greenough's greatest legacy to the world of art, however, was his gift for friendship and his generous spirit—his personal qualities of *verismo* that found their full flowering in the city of Florence, in his own Florentine circle of friends.

Works Cited

Crane, Sylvia E. *White Silence: Greenough, Powers, and Crawford: American Sculptors in Nineteenth-Century Italy*. Miami, FL: University of Miami Press, 1972.

Craven, Wayne. *Sculpture in America*. New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968.

Greenough, Frances Boott, ed. *Letters of Horatio Greenough to his Brother, Henry Greenough*. Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1887.

Greenough, Horatio (writing as "Horace Bender"). *The Travels, Observations, and Experience of a Yankee Stonecutter* (1852). Gainesville: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1958.

Greenthal, Kathryn, Paula M. Kozol, and Jan Seidler Ramirez. *American Figurative Sculpture in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*. Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1986.

Huntington, David Carew. *Art and the Excited Spirit: America in the Romantic Period*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Museum of Art, 1972.

Hyland, Douglas K. S. *Lorenzo Bartolini and Italian Influences on American Sculptors in Florence, 1825-1850*. New York: Garland Publishing, 1985.

Kasson, Joy S. *Marble Queens and Captives: Women in Nineteenth-Century American Sculpture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

Saunders, Richard H. *Horatio Greenough: An American Sculptor's Drawings*. Middlebury, Vermont: Middlebury College Museum of Art, 1999.

Schneider, Erika. "Starving for Recognition: The Representation of the Struggling Artist in America, 1800-1865." Diss. Temple University, Philadelphia, 2007.

Wright, Nathalia. *Horatio Greenough: The First American Sculptor*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963.

Wright, Nathalia, ed. *Letters of Horatio Greenough, American Sculptor*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1972.