

## CHAPTER FOUR: COPYISM

*Every object has its roots in central nature, and may of course be so exhibited to us as to represent the world.* Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Essay on Art."

### Introduction

Like grammar, metaphysics structures and divides experience. Theory uses that grammar to formulate a purpose and a direction within the resultant ordered landscape. One could define theory as the promise of direction enveloped within a compelling view of the world.

A theory of architecture to some extent reflects a personal understanding of the world and its processes and Garbett's theory is no exception. The *Treatise* assimilates the laws which Garbett understood to govern the natural creation to those physiological and psychological processes he identified as responsible for artistic creativity. Somehow, nature's purpose was seen as equivalent to artistic intention. The same analogy but then inverted stood at the basis of contemporary

natural theology. William Paley's watch, made by human hands for a specific purpose, demonstrated design, that is, purpose. A logical extension of that way of reasoning could be applied to the human eye, the bird's wing, etc., which ipso facto became indicative of a divine design, that is, the analogy implied a conscious *maker of the universe* and a consequent *universal purpose*.

An investigation of the basic assumptions on which Garbett's logic is constructed and the manner in which that logic is related to explanatory and procedural traditions in nineteenth century thought is the main theme of this chapter. Each of the three separate sections take as their starting point a particular issue discussed in the preface to the *Treatise*. It is here that Garbett formulated the rules of his understanding, setting in place the axioms which determine the metaphysical landscape on which he intended to build his theory. These axioms are concerned with establishing how artistic creativity is

ordered through the smooth mechanics of genius, principles and taste.

A significant role in that process is played by language. Language is not only the medium to communicate among ourselves. It is a medium between us and experience. It serves as a monitor regulating a proper interpretation of nature. In this way language becomes the ultimate factor in the resolution of every conflict. The following two chapters are both concerned with a particular aspect of Garbett's theory of language. This chapter starts off with one end of the spectrum, namely intellectual sloth. The next is concerned with the concept of genius. It is appropriate that both extremes of the creativity, that is slavish copyism and pioneering genius, are represented as being mute.

### **Echo and Narcissus: Copyism**

Garbett opens his book by launching a crisis:

*Two widely different arts at present bear the name ARCHITECTURE... The more common of them may be defined as the art of clothing or masking buildings, of whatever class, with scenic representations of the features of a superior class, erected in some past age. The merit of these works is of course to be estimated by the fidelity with which they adhere to the peculiar marks of the period chosen, and avoid those belonging to any other period or country. This art has now arrived at great perfection, in consequence of the many fine archaeological works in which specimens of the building styles of various ages and nations are delineated. Indeed, few things can be easier than this is now rendered by such engravings; in the absence of which, of course, verbal directions on this art would be useless, and whose presence renders them needless. With this art, therefore, the present little work has no concern.<sup>1</sup>*

Semantic bifurcation forces the reader to make a clear choice between, to use an appropriate biblical metaphor, the narrow, steep and difficult road to good architecture and the broad and easy road to complete dissolution. In fact, the last sentence is no more than a rhetorical ploy; the theme of copyism constitutes the woof

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1. *Treatise*, p. iii.

of the book's fabric, it runs through every chapter and justifies every harangue against the perpetrators of contemporary copy-book architecture. The copy-books themselves, the *books of examples*, or *fine archaeological works* and the printing industry which supports them become icons of the mindlessness which pervades contemporary architecture; their only effect being to reduce the process of design to a form of asexual reproduction, tracing features regardless of their appropriateness to contemporary desires and concerns. Garbett accuses the writers of such books of encouraging a mute architecture, helping to reduce artistic activity to the sounding of a continuous echo and severely limiting the scope for communication, expression and signification. What scope there is for communication, he considers to be negative, derivative and parasitical. An architecture that is merely concerned with surfaces and formal resemblances cannot be fully rational, cannot erupt as a self-consistent system from reason, cannot be

*deduced*. It is for this reason that there are so few illustrations in his book, they would discourage reasoning and allow copyism. An architecture that can only be copied from previous architecture becomes inbred, narcissistic and stale:

*Nothing is beautiful which is without motive.*<sup>2</sup>

With this Garbett means to say that antiquity or the mere quest for novelty cannot be admissible as sound motives for the adoption of a particular form. The adoption of antique forms merely because they are old, without also adopting the conditions under which those forms were necessary, is wrong. Copyism is wrong because it refuses to inquire into the structural or optical causes of forms.

The analysis of antiquity for the deduction of architectural principles is heartily approved of by Garbett. Age is a vindication of the thing aged, it demonstrates stamina:

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2. *Treatise*, p. 253.

*Though age affords no reason whatever for the adoption of any thing, it gives every reason for its examination and study.*<sup>3</sup>

Garbett's promise was to deduce the principles of architecture from nature and show how the best architects in history caused their architecture to erupt spontaneously from the laws of nature. This necessitated the attitude that form and content are intimately related and completely dependent on one another, that in fact they cannot be separated.

The rationale of copyism, on the other hand, is confined to the systematic tracing of outlines and tries to separate content from form.. Copyism negates the causal principles of form and by doing so generates a surrogate and false content which feeds on the success of others. If that success is expressed in terms of age, copyism tries to make new buildings look old. One side-effect of this way of

reasoning where everything in a building should be intimately or organically interrelated, is that architectural ornament is not allowed to be appreciated independently. To be distinguished from sculpture, Garbett argues that ornament must be causally related to the building as a whole.

All this is not to say that Garbett is against eclecticism, or indeed against historicism as such. It means that he wants to promote an architecture where each formal element has not been severed from its structural or distributive *raison d'être*. It is with this in mind that he wants to contrast two forms of architecture. One of these, we already know, was copyism, the other is its ideological opposite:

*There is another art, however, of the same name, more ancient, yet less known and practised at present, because more difficult and troublesome. This is the art of building Well, -well as regards every purpose intended in building or its parts to their*

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3. *Treatise*, p.253-254.

*several purposes, but also the fitness of their appearance thereto...*<sup>4</sup>

A detailed analysis of Garbett's definition of architecture has to be reserved for a more appropriate moment. It is possible to anticipate that discussion by noting the functionalist course which his contrasted definition of good architecture would appear to be taking. Good architecture links purpose with appearance. The main function of the preface, however, is to set the negative, or reformist theme of the book. The preface should be seen as a call to arms in the fight against copyism. That call becomes increasingly and nauseatingly emphatic as the *Treatise* runs its course. In the end Garbett convinces himself that mindless copyism, as encouraged by the enormous strides in printing techniques and the industry of dissemination, is somehow symptomatic of the threat to the English nation as a whole. Mindlessness may be the most common characteristic of every

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4. *Treatise*, p. iii.

nation, he argues, but it is only in England where that characteristic now constitutes the nation's identity by being encapsulated in its most prominent buildings.

### **Copyism and the Gothicity of the English Parish Church**

Copyism versus its various opposites such as originality, proper imitation and systematisation had been a favourite subject of discussion since the beginning of the century.<sup>5</sup> That discussion must be seen as a necessary by-product of the philosophical concern with imitation. That concern goes all the way back via Quatremère de Quincy, Lessing, Laugier and Winckelmann to the theorists of the Renaissance and ultimately to its classical roots in Plato's *Republic*. This is not the place to discuss imitation and its exact relation to copyism. The aim here is to investigate the rhetorical role of copyism in Garbett's *Treatise*.

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5. Roger A. Kindler (1974) 22-37. and Pevsner (1972) pp. 222-237.

During the nineteenth century Copyism constituted a general, somewhat elusive evil. That elusiveness caused each theorist to redefine the enemy in his own terms. On the basis of a philosophical re-assessment, partly referring to a previous polemical tradition on copyism and partly based on the theorist's own experience, the theorist was able to decide on a strategy and choose his weapons. Garbett, as we have seen, chose the current popularity of antiquarian pursuits and the industry producing countless books of architectural examples as his enemy. Gothic archaeology was dominated by wolves in sheep's clothing:

*Since our fancied revival of Gothic architecture, Garbett writes, ignorance of its principles, and the consequent necessity for amassing voluminous collections of examples and precedents, have led to the egregious error of supposing that our 9,000 parish churches contain an exhaustless fund of such 'precedents,' on whose genuineness and consequent infallibility we may rely, and rest from the weary search after truth; for, to save ourselves the labour of*

*thought, is the real object of all this industrious measurement and delineation, and bustle of endless research.*<sup>6</sup>

This sarcasm was very probably directed at the Ecclesiologists.<sup>7</sup> They had, after all, compiled the famous questionnaire to help the amateur enthusiast draw up an inventory of the peculiar features of his or her local parish church. The Ecclesiologists had also advised the architect to take specific parish churches as universally applicable models.<sup>8</sup> They had promoted

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6. *Treatise*, 238-9.

7. Enthusiasts could, according to a specially devised questionnaire, note down all the remarkable features of their local church. An example of this taxonomic system was published at the end of *A Few Hints on the Practical Study of Ecclesiastical Architecture and Antiquities for the use of The Cambridge Camden Society*, 4th ed. Cambridge 1843; See also F. White (1962) p. 231.

8. J.F. White (1962) pp. 178-197.

an historicism which, as far as Garbett was concerned, simply did not allow the nineteenth century enough room to develop its own identity. But Garbett's concern is at the same time more general.

Copyism releases independent thought from any involvement with its own processes and denies purposive movement. It is intellectually impotent and as such copyism comes to stand for a more universal vice, like it did in Plato's *Republic*. Copyism stands for intellectual sloth, breeding a mindless society of which a mindless architecture is but one of the symptoms. With reference to Cartesian ontology of which the slogan *cogito ergo sum* still enjoyed considerable popular validity in the nineteenth century, mindlessness (and therefore copyism) stands for the moral and physical negation of identity. In contradistinction to the Ecclesiologists, Garbett wanted to promote an energetic and radical individualism in architecture. This policy is even echoed in the title when he speaks of the Greek and Gothic *architects* rather than of Greek and

Gothic styles, architecture or whatever. The Ecclesiologists had a far less Protestant view of things, placing their emphasis on obedience to edicts from a central authority: their own institution. Garbett -in the *Treatise* at least- demanded a personal interpretation of experience, a personal struggle with truth, which would achieve a valid and increasing level of intersubjectivity as soon as the only arbitrary element in the process was sufficiently standardised: language.

The motto for the whole book, therefore, is that *there is no substitute for thought*:

*All the ponderous tomes of examples, specimens, &c., from Adams and Stuart downwards, have been intended, or received, for this purpose; and, as such, are not only totally worthless, but extremely prejudicial; though invaluable as materials for analysis, free criticism, and search into principles.*<sup>9</sup>

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9. *Treatise*, p. 253.

The moral or procedural code Garbett advocates for architectural development is related to a personal ethic which prescribes an interpretation of experience where truth is held to be self-evident and will reveal itself automatically to those who look for it earnestly.<sup>10</sup> In Garbett's eyes the Ecclesiologists had become all too successful in establishing a central authority with the power to pre-digest the division between good and bad for others. Basing themselves solely on the authority of past models, the Ecclesiologists instituted a process of design which Garbett felt to be stifling and mindless. He envisioned the consequence of this approach to be a parasitical society, completely and destructively dependent on its history or that of other countries.

To avoid such a reliance on a central and catholic authority, to point out the dangers of a blind and thoughtless following, Garbett wrote something which

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10.cf. Willey (1946) p. 141.

caused a lot of bad feeling among his public. Ultimately this assertion may even be identified as the main reason for his sporadic and uncertain influence on English architectural theory. He was never forgiven for appearing to attack just that aspect of English pastoral culture of which the nation was perhaps most proud: the parish church. The parish church, more than anything else, gives the English countryside its tremendous sense of comfort:

*Now, the fact is, that our old "Gothic" parish churches are, for the most part, Gothic indeed;-the work of illiterate rural masons, totally ignorant of the principles of that or any other architecture; repeating as well as they could the mere details, empty forms, or clothing, of the only architecture they saw,-that of the scientific fraternity of Gothicists,-without the remotest conception of its meaning, motive, or principles. They admired the cathedrals and abbeys, as all admire that which is consistent, united, and true, though they cannot see what constitutes the consistency, cannot discern*

*the one motive that gives unity, cannot state the truth.*<sup>11</sup>

This sentence caused Garbett's critics, always eager to find the most negative interpretation of anything ambiguous, to accuse him of being a traitor to his country! Eventually Garbett's ideas about the proper role of the parish church were even echoed by such prominent architects as G.E. Street.<sup>12</sup> At the time, however, many felt that the most glorious part of the English heritage was being slandered.

If one re-reads the passage carefully, one can see that this was not the case at all. Garbett was only concerned with the delineation of *pure Gothicity*. Because the Ecclesiologists recommended the parish church as a universal model for architects, Garbett accused them of doing nothing

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11. *Treatise*, p. 239.

12. Germann (1972) p. 132.

less succumbing to the Platonic nightmare, making copies of copies.<sup>13</sup>

Most builders, Garbett argued in a fashionably deterministic fashion, lack the knowledge of what ideas constitute the *principles of true architecture*. Were they to know what that meant, they would not be content to copy the mere visual details of a particular style. Instead they would want to follow out the process of design, which starts with a problem or need and ends with an appropriate solution. They would want to use the underlying principles, *the axioms of architecture*, which, by necessity, give

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13. Garbett uses the term copy of a copy in a derogatory way: *Novelty-hunting, and the false use of precedent, are the Scylla and Charybdis between which, the many, and the architects of the many, are forever destined to be wrecked* and in a note to this passage: *Thus at present (as nothing can be real) even our novelty is only sham novelty, -a copy of a copy, -mason's whims or blunders, raked out from the corners of Italy.* In: *Treatise*, p. 253

rise to the visual details they desire. Visual forms which are worked out in that way, exhibit the stylistic and conceptual unity which is the immediate effect of the consistent application of principles. Architects should copy the principles rather than the resultant image. They should examine the cathedral, its material, its construction, the conditions under which the building was erected, rather than copy the diluted forms of the cathedral's illegitimate offspring, the English parish church.

Related to the Platonic theory of Forms this would translate into a precept in which Garbett demands of the architect not to copy *the table*, but to refer back to *the idea* of a table. As Laugier had already observed, however, there is no direct model for architecture in nature. Garbett therefore desires the architect to consider those things in nature which perform the same function as particular elements pertaining to a building and analyse them with reference to the need that has to be resolved.

**Lot in Sodom: The few against the thoughtless multitude.**

By the end of Garbett's *Treatise* it is evident that the book, which appeared to start so innocently with a relatively mild rejection of copyism, was in fact conceived as a response to what Garbett saw as a general crisis in society. The crisis in architecture had to be related to the more profound social and moral problems facing England at the time he was writing. Architecture was seen by him as a symptom of society, responding directly to shifts in society's structures and hierarchies. The predicament of English architecture around 1850 could therefore be blamed, directly and indirectly, on such historical factors as the rise of the middle and lower classes, the processes of industrialisation (especially with regard to the dissemination of opinion) and the changing morality which made these developments possible by providing them with a justification.

The distinction between the few and the many thus acquired apocalyptic

connotations. Garbett saw a polarised society, a cultivated and refined elite up against a thoughtless, uncritical and numbed multitude.<sup>14</sup>

*There is something ominous, writes Ruskin, in the light which has enabled us to look back with disdain upon the ages among whose lovely vestiges we have been wandering. I could smile when I hear the hopeful exultation of many, at the new reach of worldly science, and the vigour of worldly effort; as if we were again at the beginning of days. There is thunder on the horizon as well as dawn. The sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar.*<sup>15</sup>

These are the foreboding and at the same time hopeful last lines of Ruskin's *Seven Lamps*. Well-worn themes of misguidance and neglect combine to plot the imminent self-destruction of a society from which Lot was allowed to escape by virtue of his

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14. Raymond Williams (1984) p. 48 ff. on the distinction between the mob and the cultivated, the public and the people.

15. John Ruskin, "The Lamp of Obedience," *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, ad fin.

personal integrity. The quote about the sun being risen as Lot entered into Zoar is broken off to heighten the dramatic effect of the warning it contains. The words immediately following were apocalyptic indeed: *Then the lord rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire* (Genesis, 19,24).

Garbett was similarly apocalyptic in his outlook. He also talked of a thoughtless multitude blindly pursuing their false and hollow "progress" to inevitable self-destruction. Garbett also contrasted the many with a small group of survivors who, by virtue of their earnest endeavours, would have the chance of salvation. But Garbett goes even further than Ruskin. The distinction between the few and the many is by Garbett made axiomatic to his prescriptive theory of architecture:

*Some regret that we have (as they think) no national style. Alas! the woe is that we have a national style,-a national shame, as all national styles ever will be,-a disgrace from which our sole hope of escape is in other*

*nations acquiring (quickly let us hope) styles as national, and therefore as vile and depraved. We are perhaps the only nation that has a national style, certainly the first in history that has had one; for, observe, none of the styles of old were national,- they were the styles of classes, priesthoods, and corporations: they attained their purity, I doubt not, precisely at the times when the many, the nation, knew least, talked least, and cared least, about architecture. This was the very essence of their success,- that they were the exclusive production of the thinking few, uninfluenced by the thoughtless multitude; though universally admired, yet totally unpopular, un-national.*

<sup>16</sup>

The concept of nation is here reduced to no more than the sum of its inhabitants. When Garbett was writing the *Treatise* it was 1849, a year after the publication of the communist manifesto by Marx and Engels, a year after the general

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16. *Treatise*, p. 249.

revolutionary movements throughout Europe. The Reform Bill of 1832 had already helped to consolidate the shifting of social categories which had become unstable as a result of the economics and politics of progress. The Reform Bill has, with its role as historical centre-piece holding an enormous symbolic content, has come to stand for the whole age in many histories of the period, even though its mechanical effects were limited. <sup>17</sup> But reform was accompanied by ideals which went much further in their wish to right wrongs. The most obvious example of this is the burgeoning of socialism as manifested in the rise of the

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17. David Thomson (1985) pp. 57-58 & esp. 73-76. On the idea and process of reform: Ian Newbould (1990). For a generalised backdrop see Eric J. Evans (1989) And for a detailed account of the political events: Michael Brock (1973) The classic statement on the period as seen from the idea of reform is Llewellyn Woodward (1962). A curious account of the period is given in O.F. Christie (1927).

trade union movement, the co-operative movement of Robert Owen, and radicalism of the Chartists which reached its crescendo at around the time Garbett was writing. England was perceived to be involved in a slow but irrevocable process of social inversion. The natural hierarchy of a ruling elite was being turned upside down. The mindless multitude was threatening to gain hegemony. As Garbett considered the health of a society's architecture to depend on which particular section of society was in charge, the possible consequences of this social inversion were considered to be catastrophic:

*...suppose an intelligent person, well acquainted from history with the comparative characters of the ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Medieval clerics, Arabs, and Hindoos, but having never seen any of their architecture, would he have any difficulty in identifying the productions of each? Well our present style, being more national, is more full of character than any of these. More distinctly than the Egyptian piles speak of tyranny, slavery, and priestcraft;- more fully than the Greek express intellect, polish, and refinement;- more loudly than the Roman proclaim ambition and general*

*energy;- more truly than the Gothic embody a religion, or rather a romantic devotion;- more than all, does every form and feature of the modern English style express fickleness, low cunning, hollow affectation, simulation, servility, and thoughtflying hurry. What! are these then our national characters? No; but they are the characters of the many, in every nation; and we are as yet the only nation that have a style of the many. I appeal to all who have ever returned to our shores, after a long absence, to say whether they could shut their eyes to the hateful expression that met them in every building whether they could at first walk our streets without being disgusted, and, if of a sensitive temperament, almost sickened, by the intensely marked character of the architecture.<sup>18</sup>*

This passage starts off from the assumption that specific sections of society can be isolated and classified. Each has its own value-system and each performs its own rituals on the basis of those values. That is the circle which makes them, and by extension the products which are peculiar to that section of society, acquire a special character. According to Garbett architecture acquires the character of that section of society which is responsible for a

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18. *Treatise*, p. 251.

building's realisation. These are generally the owners, or, as he calls them, the style-formers. The values and operations which characterise the dominant section of society are indelibly impressed on its public architecture. In this way a society's social structure is confirmed and even enforced by its architecture.

Garbett's concept of architectural character approaches that of the concept of national character. Take for example Burke's definition of nationhood. Burke sees a nation as the accumulation of *the peculiar circumstances, occasions, tempers, dispositions, and moral, civil, and social habitudes of the people*.<sup>19</sup> The only modification needed to make these words into a definition of architectural character sympathetic to Garbett's theory, would consist in exchanging the word *people*

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19. Edmund Burke, "Reform of Representation in the House of Commons," *Works*, VI, 147. The definition was first brought to my attention through Raymond Williams (1984) p. 30.

used by Burke, to those whose character by whatever reason has become attached to the building in question:

*...alas! not only can no man or set of men build unarchitecturally or without a style, -but neither can they avoid stamping their mind thereon, and leaving the indelible impress of the characters of the styleformers; i.e. not always the designers, but the majority or most influential part of those who have affected the style, by example, by infection, contagion, or mere proximity.*<sup>20</sup>

An architectural theory which proposes moral icons such as honesty, truth and purity as its aesthetic ideal, is forced to relate its aesthetics to the more general moral standards of society. Architecture's crisis, stated by Garbett in terms of the thoughtlessness of copyism, must therefore be related by him to the moral condition of society as a whole. Architecture thus becomes a symptom of the health of a society generally.

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20. *Treatise*, p. 251.

Both Ruskin and Garbett believed they were witnessing an inversion of society. Ruskin probably identified himself with Lot, abandoning the architectural establishment as beyond salvation and turning to a fresh and uncorrupted public (as yet innocent in matters of architecture) for support. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* was specifically directed at a broader public. A little earlier in the Lamp of Obedience, Ruskin hints at the burgeoning of a social theory which he was eventually to work out in *The Nature of Gothic* and which was to dominate his later writings. It is no coincidence that this social theory began with a preoccupation with architecture. The seeds for an equation between social and architectural health were sown much earlier in Ruskin's *Poetry of Architecture* where he allowed the themes of architecture, national character and landscape to entwine.

Garbett would also have found comfort in the image of himself as Lot. He however uses different imagery to explain the crisis of

contemporary architecture. Garbett's Burkean despair at the inversion of the natural pyramidal hierarchies dominating society is represented by the image of the printing press. Dissemination is dissolution:

*Pure taste in architecture (or any other art) is a thing of much thought, owing all its value to that thought, and therefore inaccessible and utterly unintelligible to the hurried, the gross, or the thought-grudging. (...) Pure art, then, ever has been (in every nation), is, and (under the present dispensation) ever will be, the exclusive and inalienable property of the few, the thoughtful, the earnest. If it ever became the only art, that was because these few contained only artists, nay more, the judges, the only dilettanti. Such a state of things can never occur again while the printing-press exists. The many now have a voice in art. Therefore most art is, and ever will be, art for the many and of the many; and as long as the many (in every nation) are vulgar, gross-minded, and thought sparing, so long must every national style,*

by an indispensable necessity, be a national disgrace.<sup>21</sup>

In an earlier passage, Garbett prepared the reader for this extraordinary assertion by dividing history into an old and a new society with the invention of the printing press as the point dividing the two:

*Attention to the effect wrought on Fine Art, by the great change from old (i.e. printless) to modern society, will guard us against the dreams now indulged in by some, respecting possible new schools, and period of pure taste. The thing is impossible. There will never again be a period of pure taste. There will never be another Periclean age, nor another thirteenth century. But there may be another Pericles. Observe the difference. Though general or national taste will always be depraved, there need not therefore be total depravity of all taste. Though purity can never be prevalent, it need not therefore be absent.*<sup>22</sup>

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21. *Treatise*, p. 249.

22. *Treatise*, p. 248-49.

Far from educating the public, the printing press fills people with more false ideas than they started off with. The printed book dissolves the ability to discriminate, in most cases it is nothing more than a platform for the many to indulge in their vulgarity, expounding their thoughtlessness to all who care to hear it. The book has the power to dislocate a natural hierarchy in society and invert it. The invention of printing thus symbolises the point in time where that inversion began on its irrevocable course. That point in time is just about where the Renaissance took over from a tired, degenerate but one-time glorious Gothic.

The paradoxical nature of Garbett's own status as the author of a book in a series which was published with the intention of educating the public, is easily overcome by an immovable faith in his own probity: Garbett is quite sure that he is not one of the many.

One question remains to be asked. Is there hope? is there an architecture of the few? Garbett had anticipated this question:

*But where, it will be asked, is the architecture of the few, the thinking, the truth-seeking? There is none; it is swallowed up, and mostly indistinguishable from the mass; for, observe, though a majority, or an independent body, cannot build without expressing their true character (however they may cheat or simulate in any thing else, they can never give a false expression,) it is otherwise with a minority. With all their efforts to express themselves truly; inexpertness in the language, want of technical culture, want of union, an eye deadened by long use to ugliness of the prevalent expression, -all these causes may conspire to render their most earnest endeavours unavailing to free themselves from the influence of the general corruption, which will thus often overrun and falsify the expression of their works. To obviate this is now the true office of architecture. The general taste can never*

*improve. Pure taste can never again prevail; but it can fight. Ever in the minority, it nevertheless need never be extinct. It can only exist, indeed, by fighting every inch. This is its glorious destiny, to wage a perpetual war against falsehood; perpetual, because it ought never to yield or relax, yet can never hope to conquer; glorious, if maintaining its ground, from that very hopelessness.<sup>23</sup>*

Should this be interpreted as a political gesture to those, like him, who consider themselves belonging to the few? Does this passage allow these dispersed and lonely Lots to extricate themselves from blame by pleading ignorance and urging them, so to speak, to travel to Zoar too? If it is, it is also more than that. A more attractive side-effect of the opposition between the few and the many is that Garbett uses that duality to launch a self-conscious and vigorous individualism. Garbett hinted at such an attitude earlier when he wrote that

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23. *Treatise*, p. 252.

there would never again be a Periclean age but there would be a Pericles. Garbett's politics of radical individualism resurfaces at several points during the *Treatise*, even in the title. Its significance for the argument presented here is that such a view is intimately connected with the way Garbett visualises the mechanics of artistic progress.