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WASHINGTON ALLSTON: EXPATRIATE SOUTH CAROLINIAN

JOHN R. WELSH *

In the Caroliniana Library at the University of South Carolina is a copy of Washington Allston's *Monaldi: A Tale,* published at Boston in 1841, in which in a meticulous and precise handwriting is inscribed, "To Robert F. W. Allston, with the affectionate regards of the author." The author, who neglected to sign his name, was South Carolina born Washington Allston, a prominent early nineteenth-century painter and writer. Allston's influence in both the English and American romantic movements was substantial, though today scant attention is paid him and little is known about him, even by scholars of American arts and history.

Washington Allston was born November 5, 1779, in the Carolina lowcountry, probably at Brookgreen Plantation on the Waccamaw River, according to family tradition.[1] His birth date is definite; his father, William Allston, recorded it in the family Bible,[2] but neglected to mention the name of his plantation or the place of birth. His failure to do so has allowed the rise of varying speculations as to Allston's birth place. Edgar P. Richardson, Allston's only modern biographer, accepts family tradition and states that Allston was born at "Brook Green Domain on the Waccamaw River." [3]

It would indeed be gratifyingly romantic to state, as his biographers Flagg and Richardson do, that Allston was descended from a baronial English family and that his ancestor John Allston was a follower of the Duke of Monmouth who fled to Carolina after the unsuccessful rebellion of 1685.[4] Baronial family or no, the first Allston in Carolina was John Alston, who came from London in 1682 as an apprentice to James Jones, a Charleston merchant, eventually became a merchant himself, married Mrs. Elizabeth Harris, a widow, and with her was the progenitor of the

* Dr. Welsh is a Professor of English at the University of South Carolina.

[1] *See* Susan Lowndes Allston, *Brookgreen, Waccamaw in the Carolina Low Country,* Charleston, 1935, p. 19; and *Rice Planter and Sportsman: The Recollections of J. Motte Alston, 1821-1909,* ed. Arney R. Childs, Columbia, 1953, p. 105.

[2] Allston, *op. cit.,* p. 13.

[3] *Washington Allston: A Study of the Romantic Artist in America,* Chicago, 1948, p. 10. Allston's place of birth could have been the plantation of his mother's family, in view of the fact his father may have been away in service when Washington was born.

[4] *Ibid.;* and Jared B. Flagg, *The Life and Letters of Washington Allston,* New York, 1892, p. 1.

> be the first to tell who it was; and if you forbid him, he might as well hold a live-coal of fire in his mouth, as keep that or any other secret.[27]

As Burke was at that very moment in November 1788 in the midst of a campaign to win a seat in the new national House of Representatives, he was more cautious than usual. Perhaps he also realized that his style was now unmistakable. Anonymity would be impossible.

Burke, however, did not give up the fight. He was the principal opponent of the ratification of the Constitution in South Carolina, and once a member of Congress he was a critic of the Hamiltonian program. Burke saw looming up behind both the Constitution and the program of Alexander Hamilton the gray eminences of the British merchants.[28]

From the story of Aedanus Burke and his pamphlets, of Nathanael Greene and Anthony Wayne, it is apparent that the British merchants came through the Revolution as a group still active in South Carolina affairs. After the Revolution, they were, however, a distinct group—no longer easily blending with their Carolina counterparts. There is a great measure of truth in Burke's suspicions — that this group used its influence to support the ratification of the Constitution and the program of Alexander Hamilton. Burke fought on against the Hamiltonians and lived to see the victory of Jefferson in 1800. Burke died in 1802, but by his will he left a brace of pistols to Aaron Burr,[29] the vice president of the United States.

[27] Burke to Wayne, November 21, 1788, Greene Papers, WLCL.

[28] *See* Aedanus Burke to John Lamb, June 23, 1788, quoted in Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

[29] Will of Aedanus Burke, Charleston County, XXVIII, Book A (1800-1807), pp. 285-287.

Allston and Alston families. He died in 1719, leaving a good estate and six children, one of whom, John II, was the grandfather of Washington.[5]

William Allston—"Gentleman William," as he was known—the son of John II, married first Ann Simons, by whom he had two children, and after her death Rachel Moore, evidently against her wishes but at the insistence of her family. William and Rachel had three children: Mary, born in 1778; Washington, in 1779; and William Moore, in 1781. In the Revolution William Allston was a captain. He rode home from the Battle of Cowpens a sick man in 1781 and died shortly thereafter of a mysterious illness, believed poisoned by a trusted servant.[6] He left to his son Washington three tracts of land, of 385, 384, and 110 acres, in addition to a young Negro.[7]

His widow Rachel in December 1784 married Dr. Henry C. Flagg, formerly of the medical staff of Greene's army and son of a Newport, Rhode Island, shipping merchant. This time the marriage was against the wishes of her family, but she is reputed to have stated that she had married once to please her family and was now determined to please herself.

Dr. Flagg took an interest in his step-son's education—at least an interest which removed him from the family. Young Washington commenced his schooling in Charleston at the age of five or six at Mrs. Calcott's school. When he was seven and one-half years of age, he was sent, in the spring of 1787, to Newport, Rhode Island, in charge of his maternal uncle, John Elias Moore. In June he was placed in the family of Robert Rogers to he prepared for college. So began Allston's divorcement from Carolina, in which he was never to live again for any length of time, in fact, was not even to visit again until after his graduation from Harvard in 1800.

Allston became a New Englander, more than he was anything else, at least by training, marriage, and preference. At Newport he met his future wife, Ann Channing, and her brother and his own close friend, William Ellery Channing. His natural inclination to the arts asserted itself during his school and college years. By 1795 he was using oil paints, and at Harvard, under the influence of Malbone, who was in Boston at the time, he attempted miniatures. The pictures of Pine in the

[5] A. S. Salley, Jr., "John Alston," this *Magazine,* VI (July 1905), 114-116. The apprenticeship indenture is reprinted therein.

[6] Flagg, *op. cit.,* p. 4.

[7] Allston, *op. cit.,* p. 13.

Columbian Museum of Boston were his first models, he said.[8] At Harvard Allston undoubtedly did a good bit of painting, wrote some poetry, and came to the resolute conviction that he was destined to be an artist.

Immediately upon leaving college Allston went to Newport. In December 1800 he left for his only visit to Carolina. In Charleston he won a family agreement to an artistic career and sold his inheritance in order to finance his studies abroad. With his friend Malbone, by then a Charleston resident, he sailed in May 1801 for England. Never was he to see Carolina again, but he had taken the first step into the career and travels that were to bring him early fame and the admiration and friendship of a number of the great talents of the age.

He studied for two years in the school of the Royal Academy, London. In 1802 he had his first public exhibition—three paintings being displayed at the British Institution, Somerset House. The Louvre in 1803 afforded him the study of masterpieces he had craved. The years 1804 to 1808 were spent in Italy, chiefly in Rome. Again he studied great art works and also kept himself at his painting. It was in Rome in 1805 and 1806 that Allston met Irving and Coleridge for the first time, commencing friendships that were to last for years.

Allston left Rome in 1808 for Boston and marriage. He returned to America with "as extensive a knowledge of what painting had been and could be as the Old World then afforded."[9] He married Ann Channing, spent three years in Boston, during which he painted about fifteen pictures, and wrote much of the poetry that was to appear in his single separate volume of verse, *The Sylphs of the Seasons,* which was published in London and Boston in 1813.

In 1811 he sailed with Mrs. Allston and Samuel F. B. Morse for England, to remain this time seven years. He renewed the friendship with Coleridge and Irving; knew Wordsworth, Southey, the poet laureate, and Sir George Beaumont; and became friends with John Howard Payne and the painters William Collins and Charles Leslie. His reputation as an artist in England was enhanced by the paintings "Jacob's Dream" and "Uriel in the Sun." He was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy in 1818. These English years, however, also brought trouble: he had an illness in the summer of 1813 from which he never

[8] Moses F. Sweetser, *Allston,* Boston, 1879, p. 19. Robert Edge Pine (1730-1788), the English portrait and historical painter, was a strong supporter of the American Revolution and removed to the United States in 1784.

[9] Richardson, *op. cit.,* p. 84.

Courtesy Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

SELF PORTRAIT
ROME 1805

Allston was, to the Boston-Cambridge community, the sage, the versatile man of culture and gentility, the American link with Europe and the great works of the past. As a matter of fact, he was this to most literate Americans. More than this, he was a bulwark to the American inferiority complex in matters cultural-intellectual. A man whose paintings and poetry were praised by Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Southey [12] provided hope for the barbarians of the "colonial" frontier.

Most important of all, Allston was an influence. He was a catalyst, a stimulator of creative minds, and often served as a link bringing or holding them together. Channing, for instance, met Coleridge because of Allston, and Channing became one of the founders of New England Transcendentalism. In one way or another, Allston influenced writers. Coleridge's essays "On the Principles of Genial Criticism Concerning the Fine Arts," of which the author spoke as the best things he had ever written, were begun as a boost for and discussion of Allston's Bristol exhibition of 1814.[13] Wordsworth wrote to Allston that the painting "Jacob's Dream" had strongly influenced the imagery of his poem "Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendor and Beauty." [14] And Southey, the poet-laureate, in his monumental poem, "A Vision of Judgment," wrote of Allston,

> . . . who, returning
> Rich in praise to his native shores, hath left a remembrance
> Long to be honored and loved on the banks of Thames and of Tiber:
> So may America, prizing in time the worth she possesses,
> Give to that hand free scope, and boast hereafter of Allston.[15]

The Allston influence was not less on American writers. Irving's story "The Wife" in *The Sketch-Book* was based on Allston's married life.[16] Hawthorne's The Artist of the Beautiful" had its genesis in Hawthorne's equating Allston's death and the great unfinished painting "Belshazzar's Feast" with the thought that life is always too short for the genuine creator-artist.[17] Emerson adverted to Allston again and again

[12] *See* Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-7.

[13] *Biographia Literaria,* ed. J. Shawcross, Oxford, 1907, II, 304-305.

[14] Richardson, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

[15] *The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, Collected by Himself,* London, 1838, X, 239.

[16] Stanley T. Williams, *The Life of Washington Irving,* New York, 1935, I, 182, 429.

[17] *The American Notebooks,* ed. Randall Stewart, New Haven, 1932, pp. 100, 101; and *Mosses from an Old Manse,* in *The Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne,* Boston, 1882, II, 526-527.

in his *Journals* and *Letters,* and the first issue of *The Dial,* the Transcendentalist organ, carried three items concerned with Allston or his works.[18]

As a painter Allston was undoubtedly the first American to perform competently in a variety of genres. A qualified modern student of the arts summarizes his accomplishments thus:

> He was the first painter to work in this country (twenty-nine of his forty-three years as a painter were spent here) who knew the full scope of the art of painting and used it as an imaginative language. Before his time painting in the United States had meant portraits. He was the earliest American artist to do not only portraits but monumental painting (altar-pieces and large murals), narratives and genre (men's actions and emotions), landscapes (the life of nature of which man is only a part), satire and humor, and, included in these, still life and architecture (the details of nature and of man's man-made setting). . . . He thus has the historical interest of being the first artist in our national life who established the art of painting on its full imaginative and figurative scale, covering substantially the range of experience it had covered in the life of other countries in the past.[19]

Allston did not go without praise in the nineteenth century. Mrs. Jameson, the English critic and writer on art, perhaps went a little far in her estimate written after his death: "It seemed to me, that in him America had lost her third great man. What Washington was as a statesman, Channing as a moralist,—*that* was Allston as an artist." Mrs. Jameson found that Americans were proud of Allston's European reputation, competed to buy his pictures, and bragged of his paintings that were in the palaces of English nobles.[20] Research definitely substantiates Mrs. Jameson. American journals, during Allston's life—in fact, throughout the nineteenth century—are sprinkled with laudatory comments about his painting and writing, his urbanity and general culture, his character as a man. The young Samuel F. B. Morse wrote to his parents from England in 1813 of *The Sylphs of the Seasons:* ". . . there is no doubt they will forever put at rest the calumny that America has never produced a poet." [21] C. C. Felton, a Harvard president, summarized a general attitude when he wrote: "We feel, as Americans, no small pride in Mr. Allston's genius and fame. It is part and parcel, and no small part, of

[18] *The Dial,* I (July, 1840).

[19] Richardson, *op. cit.,* pp. 174-175.

[20] Mrs. A. B. M. Jameson, *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature, and Social Morals,* London, 1846, pp. 167, 205.

[21] *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals,* ed. Edward L. Morse, Boston, 1914, I, 110.

our national reputation." [22] And Rufus Wilmot Griswold, who through the sheer force of energy and anthologizing became a sort of literary dictator of the time, dedicated his *The Poets and Poetry of America* to Allston, calling him "The eldest of the living poets of America, and the most illustrious of her painters." [23]

Although he never lived in South Carolina after his early years, Allston never forgot the state and throughout his life maintained some relationships with it. First of all, it should be noted that his expatriatism, unlike most of the modern variety, was not a conscious break engendered by active dissatisfaction or disgust. Sent away as a child and schooled in New England, he naturally became a New Englander.

He remembered, though, his early years in Carolina. He told William Dunlap that one of his favorite haunts as a child was a forest spring where he played and caught minnows, and added, "at this moment I can see that spring." [24] He recalled that he used to draw before leaving Carolina and also that he loved to play around the roots of a large tree where he made miniature landscapes. The young Allston, to use his own words, "delighted in being terrified by the tales of witches and hags, which the Negroes used to tell me; and I well remember with how much pleasure I recalled these feelings on my return to Carolina; especially on revisiting a gigantic wild grapevine in the woods, which had been the favorite swing for one of these witches." [25] Allston's perception of nature was no doubt affected by these early years, and his liking for the marvelous manifested itself in some of his paintings and his extreme fondness for Gothic tales. His own *Monaldi* is a Gothic story with the exception only of the supernatural element.

Allston's return to Carolina in December 1800, after his Newport and Harvard years, brief though it was, afforded him pleasant memories. Although he returned with the objective of convincing his family of his artistic destiny and getting the wherewithal to pursue his studies abroad, he found amiable companions in Charleston: "Malbone, and another friend and artist, Charles Fraser, who, by the bye, now paints an admirable miniature. My picture manufactory still went on in Charleston until I embarked for London." [26] During this time he painted Judas Iscariot and the head of Saint Peter.

[22] *North American Review*, LIV (April 1842), 397.

[23] Philadelphia, 1843, p. iii.

[24] William Dunlap, *A History of the Rise and Progress of the Arts of Design in the United States*, Boston, 1918, II, 301-302. This was first published in 1834.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 297.

[26] *Ibid.*, p. 301.

Allston kept fond recollections of an older friend of this period, a Mr. Bowman, whom he described as a native of Scotland but long settled in Carolina. With Malbone and Fraser he was a frequent guest at Bowman's table. Bowman took an interest in Allston's college verses and his painting of Saint Peter. Bowman insisted that Allston accept from him a hundred pounds a year to study abroad, but Allston refused adamantly and limited the gift to Hume's *History of England* and a novel. In May 1801 Allston and Malbone sailed for England. Malbone, because of engagements in Charleston, returned in about five months. Allston never did, but he later wrote of this Carolina interlude: "With youth, health, the kindest friends, and ever before me buoyant hope, what a time to look back on!" [27]

As for family and friends, there was first of all his mother, with whom he kept in touch, though he never visited her. She lived almost as long as he—she died in 1840. Of especial interest is a letter to her of July 14, 1839, reporting the success of his Boston exhibition of that year. He noted that the number of paintings and their elaborate finish surprised the public, and added: "Many could not help expressing their surprise at my industry." This was gratifying to Allston in that he would be, he thought, "no longer misjudged in this respect." He also commended the kindness of the Boston people and remarked that the net profits would be about $1,500.[28]

Robert Francis Withers Allston,[29] who on occasion visited his uncle Washington, was the kinsman to whom the afore-mentioned inscription in *Monaldi* was made. Sweetser tells the story that Robert wanted—and persisted in asking—his uncle to paint his picture, to which Washington replied, finally, "Robert, I must paint for money." [30]

Allston's home city was not unaware of his talents. In 1833 a Charleston committee of William Drayton, D. E. Huger, and Benjamin F. Pepoon requested Allston to do a historical painting for "public pur-

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 303. This was John Bowman, planter on the Santee River, fourteen miles from Georgetown, who would have entertained George Washington in 1791 except for an attack of the measles. Archibald Henderson, *Washington's Southern Tour, 1791,* Boston, 1923, pp. 124-125.

[28] Flagg, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-301. Allston had bitterly resented Dunlap's charge of laziness against him. *See* Dunlap, *op. cit.* II, 333-334; and for Allston's letter of remonstrance, *ibid.*, pp. 334-335.

[29] The son of Washington's half-brother Benjamin and Charlotte Ann Allston, the daughter of the second William Allston, Sr. R. F. W. Allston (1801-1864) was a West Point graduate, president of the South Carolina Senate, 1847-1856, and governor, 1856-1858.

[30] Sweetser, *op. cit.*, *p.* 98.

poses," of large size, price no object. The subject desired was the scene of the American ambassador in Mexico overawing an armed mob with the American flag. The committee hoped, it wrote, that such a painting would aid in inducing more "national" feeling in a troubled time. Allston courteously declined on the grounds of imperative engagements, but added a bit of advice to the gentlemen of the nullifying state: "I see also, as you must, that the safety and dignity of each individual State depends upon the union of all." Fearing, perhaps, that this was too Yankeeish an exhortation for Carolinians, he tried to remove the sting: "Though my lot in life has been cast in other lands, I have never forgotten that of my birth. I cannot therefore but attach a peculiar value to any mark of regard from that portion of my country." [31]

A prominent Charleston friend, already mentioned, was Charles Fraser, three years Allston's junior, and undoubtedly influenced by him. The two were constantly together during Allston's stay in Charleston, and the friendship was continued afterward. Allston wrote to Fraser in August 1801 telling him of different artists he had met, advising him to cultivate his own talents, and above all, to beware of love: "Love in its place I revere; but it is not at all times to be indulged. There are many beautiful girls in Charleston, but Raphael and Michael Angelo are still more beautiful than they." [32] Fraser later resided for a while in Boston, and of course visited his old friend. Lacking formal training in art, Fraser sustained himself through the practice of law until 1818, when he commenced full-time miniature painting and was, according to Dunlap, fully employed.[33] He went on to become Charleston's most prolific miniaturist. In 1857 a collection of 313 of his miniatures was exhibited in the city. He lived until 1860, and after the death of Allston paid tribute to him in a letter to Richard Henry Dana, who projected a biography that never materialized: "I hope that his fame may ever be such as his genius and attainments justly entitle him to. His was a life of thought, feeling, sentiment, rather than action. All his views were philosophical." [34]

Allston's New England protegé and life-long friend who ultimately deserted art for invention, Samuel F. B. Morse, provided another connection with South Carolina. The young Samuel Morse begged his parents to allow him to go to England and study painting with Allston,

[31] Flagg, *op. cit.*, pp. 265-267. The American ambassador was Joel Roberts Poinsett. An engraving of the scene desired is in J. Fred Rippy, *Joel R. Poinsett, Versatile American*, Durham, 1935, facing p. 128.

[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

[33] Dunlap, *op. cit.*, II, 294.

[34] Flagg, *op. cit.*, p. 377.

finally won his battle (thereby escaping apprenticeship to a bookseller), and sailed with the Allstons in 1811 to England, where he studied for nearly three years. He praised Allston's great kindness to him and the excellence of his instruction, both practical and theoretical.[35]

Young Morse made his way to Charleston in January 1818 and set up as a portrait painter. Within a few weeks he had engagements to do 150 portraits at $60 each. For more elaborate ones he received more. He went north in June, married, and returned to Charleston in November. On March 1, 1819, the Common Council of Charleston commissioned him to do a likeness of President Monroe at $750. In the early summer he traveled north again, went to Washington late in the year to paint Monroe, then came on to Charleston, probably early in 1820. He had a difficult time with a Mrs. Ball, whose portrait he painted and who owed him $400 balance, and finally had to take less than agreed on in order to settle the matter. Colonel John A. Alston, though, redeemed Charleston liberality by paying him $200 more than he asked for a painting of Alston's daughter Sally.[36]

The spring of 1820 found Morse again in the North, but by fall he was back in Charleston. The portrait market was evidently glutted, for in January he wrote to his wife of his discouragements: diminished fees, no new commissions, and little attention paid him.[37] So Morse ended his in-and-out game with Charleston and made a final departure in March 1821.

Allston's closest Charleston friend of his later years, through whom his influence on the arts was most felt in Carolina, was the lawyer, public official, sculptor, and painter, John Stevens Cogdell.[38] Cogdell was admitted to the Bar in 1799, but on an eight-month voyage to the Medi-

[35] *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals,* ed. Edward L. Morse, Boston, 1914, I, 83.

[36] *Ibid.,* pp. 231-233, 214, 215. The lady is identified only as "Mrs. Ball." John A. Alston, a friend and patron of Morse during the Charleston sojourns, was the son of William Alston of Clifton, the captain in Marion's Brigade who dropped one "l" from the name to avoid being confused with Washington's father, also a captain under Marion. *See* S. L. Allston, *op. cit.,* "Genealogical Chart."

[37] *Samuel F. B. Morse: His Letters and Journals,* ed. Edward L. Morse, Boston, 1914, I, 235.

[38] Edwin G. Nash, "John Stevens Cogdell," *DAB,* gives his birthplace as Charleston or Georgetown in 1778. A graduate of the College of Charleston, he served in the South Carolina House of Representatives intermittently between 1810 and 1818, was comptroller general of the state in 1818, naval officer of the Custom House from 1821 to 1832, and president of the Bank of South Carolina from 1832 until his death at Charleston in 1847.

terranean his imagination was fired by the art works he saw in Italy. After his return to Charleston he began to do portraits of his friends as gifts, though he continued to practice law. While in Boston in 1825 he was persuaded by Allston to model in clay. In 1826 he again visited Boston and was encouraged by Allston to continue. Thus Carolina acquired a sculptor at a time when the art was little practiced anywhere in the country. Cogdell, on his return to Charleston, did a bust of General Moultrie, a cast of which was presented to Congress and placed in the Congressional Library. Afterwards, he modelled not only busts, but also full figures.

The Allston correspondence with Cogdell indicates a close friendship—one so intimate that they could upbraid each other. It reveals the continuing influence of Allston on Cogdell's art. On the other hand, Allston could unburden himself to Cogdell about the unfinished painting that was his nemesis; he could write about "Belshazzar's Feast" to Cogdell, though he could not bring himself to discuss it at home. In December 1828 he wrote that he hoped to see Cogdell in Charleston that winter, though it would be later in the season than he had calculated, for " 'Belshazzar,' though near a close, is still unfinished in spite of all my efforts." [39] Allston wrote indignantly in February 1832 in reply to a reprimand from Cogdell. Professing hurt at Cogdell's strictures that the painting was still unfinished, Allston stated flatly that it had not been in his power to complete the work. His debts pressed upon him, he wrote, and he labored to be free of these that he might do justice to his engagement.[40] In January 1841 he again explained the unfinished painting:

> Neither shall "Belshazzar" leave my room until I have done my best on it. This is not the way, some artists might warily think, to get rich. I knew that, however, more than twenty years ago; yet I have never swerved from this course; for it is better to be poor in a course which I know to be honorable, than to be rich in any other. This, with the love of my art, has for so many years enabled me to endure poverty without repining.[41]

Allston, in other letters, gave news of himself and advice on art. A letter of July 25, 1831, advised Cogdell to study the catalogues of the Royal Academy and other London exhibitions to find suitable materials. Hagar and Ishmael was particularly recommended as a good

[39] Flagg, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260.

[41] *Ibid.*, p. 308.

subject.[42] This recommendation was taken, for an October 1838 letter contained technical advice on "Hagar and Ishmael," on which Cogdell had begun work.[43] On the other hand, Cogdell's opinion was of some importance to Allston, as is seen by an 1835 letter in which Allston went to the trouble of strongly defending himself against Dunlap's charges of laziness.[44]

As a friend, Cogdell performed a number of favors. One letter of Allston's thanks him for sending news of a death in the family; another expresses gratitude for kindnesses to his mother, whom Cogdell had evidently aided in securing a pension. His mother, Allston wrote, sometimes referred to Cogdell as her son Cogdell. It was Cogdell who had the sad duty of informing Allston of his mother's death, to which Allston replied, on January 12, 1840, with thanks and the remark: "I cannot tell you, Cogdell, how I loved my mother; she herself never knew all the love I bore her." Cogdell also took care of other matters for the Allston family, especially legal affairs, as other letters indicate.[45]

Allston reciprocated in his way. A December 1839 letter advised that he was sending two plaster casts of his bust, one for his mother and one for Cogdell. On November 14, 1841, Allston wrote that he was sending a copy of *Monaldi,* which, he added, is published "not with the pretensions of a novel, but simply as a tale." Allston's last letter to Cogdell, written on June 29, 1843, shortly before his own death, lamented the death of a fellow South Carolinian of national eminence, Hugh Swinton Legaré.[46]

Through Allston's friends, Cogdell and Morse, Charleston had a short lived academy of the fine arts. Morse conceived the idea and talked with Cogdell. A meeting was called in early 1821; Morse moved that Joel R. Poinsett take the chair; this was passed; then Cogdell was elected secretary and Charles Fraser a director. So was born the South Carolina Academy of the Fine Arts, which, Cogdell reported, "was allowed, from apathy and opposition, to die." [47]

So it was that Allston's influence, despite his absence, was still felt in Charleston through his friends. There were, for the remainder of his connections with his native state, notices of him and praise of him

[42] *Ibid.,* pp. 250-253.
[43] *Ibid.,* pp. 296-297.
[44] *Ibid.,* pp. 286-287.
[45] *Ibid.,* pp. 293-295, 306, 321-322.
[46] *Ibid.,* pp. 303, 313, 326.
[47] Dunlap, *op. cit.,* III, 58-59.

there and here in South Carolina or other Southern publications. His friend Fraser, for example, praised his technical skill as an artist, especially his ability to portray character, in *The Magnolia* in 1842, and lauded the painting "Spalatro," which was among the pictures on exhibition in the Hall of the Apprentices' Library Society in that year. Fraser gave this picture first place among all those on display, saying ". . . we know of no picture ever painted in this country, that has concentrated, in a greater degree, the delight and admiration of the intelligent." [48]

The Southern Literary Messenger, in the same year, printed an article identified only as coming from some one at "Cheraw, S. C." This writer, who claimed to have seen Allston's famous Boston exhibition of 1839, described it as "the works of one whom it is bare justice to call the master of his art in our day." He went on to praise Allston as a writer, saying of *Monaldi* that it had "genius and taste enough displayed in it, to have made a dozen ordinary novelists." [49]

It remained, though, for South Carolina's—and the South's—leading man of letters, William Gilmore Simms, to make the truest appraisal of Allston, especially of his talents and performance as a writer.[50] Writing shortly after Allston's death, Simms accorded him the highest laurels as a painter and commended the prose work *Monaldi;* but in contrast with the New Englanders who had extravagantly praised Allston's poetry, gave him little credit in this field. As a painter, said Simms, Allston had the highest ability—that of the dramatist to unfold individual character—but he was not a poet at all in the highest sense of the term. The poems, he said, are the products of an accomplished and educated gentleman, but they do not represent the overflow of a swelling imagination. Simms left no doubt, in other words, that in spite of certain poetic talents Allston was, in this field of art, a dilettante who carried on a rather sporadic flirtation with the muse. A truly professional man of letters who spent his life working for Southern excellence and the recognition of Southerners in the arts, Simms unhesitatingly claimed Allston for Carolina. He wrote, in a sense, from patriotic motives:

> We, who are his immediate countrymen, may well pay this tribute of acknowledgement now. . . . It comes late,—and were it not a proverbial reproach, in the case of genius, we might acknowledge the compunctious

[48] *The Magnolia; or, Southern Apalachian,* I (September 1842), 171-172.

[49] *The Southern Literary Messenger,* VIII (April 1842), 287-288.

[50] "The Writings of Washington Allston," *Southern Quarterly Review,* IV (October 1843), 363-414.

visitings of shame, that this notice of his fame and virtues, should be deferred, in his birth-place, to a period, when its censure or its praise must fall equally unheeded on the dull cold ears of death.[51]

The *Charleston Courier* of July 15, 1844, carried a most unusual tribute to Allston. Briefly mourning his loss and cherishing his memory, the writer then entered upon a long plaint that the life of the artist in America, to which Allston's was no exception, was rigorous and unrewarding—"such is the unequal compensation of society."[52] South Carolinians might take wry pleasure in the fact that here, at least, New England, and not the South, must stand trial for neglect of art and failure to reward the artist.

Though Ludwig Lewisohn, a one-time Charleston resident and College of Charleston student, in 1909 described Allston as "one of the most considerable writers of verse in the Southern literature of the early nineteenth century,"[53] Allston in reality was no more Southern than T. S. Eliot was Midwestern, if a comparison with a modern expatriate be allowed. In fact, his closest friends and in-laws in New England were liberals who, when not actively anti-Southern, were nevertheless firmly opposed to everything the South advocated. Richard Henry Dana, Jr., for example, was an energetic defender of fugitive slaves and refused any pay for his legal services.[54] A more than casual acquaintance was Charles Sumner, who was later to be anathema to the South. Allston himself was a strong Union man and anti-Nullifier. In fact, cosmopolite that he was, he seemed to be devoid of sectional feelings and to eschew controversy in the matter.

Logically, then, the question to be asked is, "What did he retain of his South Carolina background?" Most noticeably, Allston kept always his personal pride that usually marked the Southerner of good family, and his social views were always conservative, so much that Dana recorded of him: "He is less of a Republican than ever, and says that if

[51] *Ibid.*, p. 365.

[52] The article, signed "V. D. L.," was written by John Vanderlyn (1775-1852), American artist whom Allston had known abroad. Ultimately forced to portrait painting in order to make a living, Vanderlyn became embittered, as his article on Allston reveals.

[53] "Washington Allston," *Library of Southern Literature,* Atlanta, 1909, I, 87.

[54] This is not to imply that one who opposed slavery was necessarily anti or non-Southern. The point is that these New Englanders, by whom Allston was schooled and among whom he lived most of his life, had no conception of or sympathy with the South. They were often vitriolic toward it. *See,* for instance, Emerson's diatribe in his *Journals,* ed. Edward W. Emerson and Waldo E. Forbes, Boston and New York, 1909-1914, IV, 312-313.

things go on as they promise now, 'in eighty years there will not be a gentleman left in the country.' He says that the manners of gentility, its courtesies, deferences, and graces are passing away from among us." [55] Allston's conception of nature acquired in his Carolina childhood undoubtedly influenced his imagination all his life, and he had a love for the wild and magical that derived from the stories of the Negroes. He had, in large degree, the charm of manner attributed to the aristocratic Southerner. Beyond these qualities Carolina can claim little of him. He was, in fact, through the medium of such friends as Cogdell, Morse, and Fraser, more of an influence upon the state than the state was upon him. The extent of his expatriatism is revealed by the significant fact that among all the paintings and writings of this most versatile and influential native-born Carolinian there is—regrettably—not one that portrays anything distinctively Southern.

[55] Quoted in C. F. Adams, "Allston and His Unfinished Picture," *Atlantic Monthly*, LXIV (November 1889), 637.