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Edna, Edna, what's happened to you?
This is never the girl we knew!
Break the spell of the Goblin Queen,
Climb down out of your limousine!
Come with us, if your heart is weary,
Where youth and hope still rides the ferry!⁵

Thus "Recuerdo," a poem which at the beginning of the twenties was indicative of the spirit of Greenwich Village bohemia, had by 1940 come to be used as a vehicle for political opinion.



LONGFELLOW AND ARCHIBALD ALISON

By MARSTON LAFRANCE

IN 1790, Archibald Alison published his *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*, an aesthetic theory based upon David Hartley's psychology of the association of ideas. Alison, whose theory had considerable effect upon Wordsworth and Bryant, was the most important aesthete of that group of scholars in Scotland — Thomas Reid, Dugald Stewart, Lord Kames, Thomas Brown, Hugh Blair — whose thought collectively formed the so-called Scotch common-sense philosophy. The heart of Alison's theory, as described by Samuel H. Monk, is easily understood.

There are two manners of regarding objects: one may be aware of only the object itself, or the perception of the object may be followed by a train of closely associated ideas that are somehow analogous to the objects themselves. In the second instance, the imagination has been engaged, and "trains of pleasing and solemn thought arise spontaneously within our minds." In the one case, we perceive only the qualities that

⁵ "Break the Spell of the Goblin Queen," Poetry Notebook III, Floyd Dell Papers, Newberry Library. Quoted by Permission of Floyd Dell and the Newberry Library.

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objects present to the senses; in the other, we see the values implied, the experiences to which they are allied, their significance — in other words we see imaginatively (*The Sublime*, New York, 1935, pp. 148-149).

The great popularity which the common-sense school of thought enjoyed in America during the first third of the nineteenth century has been examined by William Charvat in his *Origins of American Critical Thought* (Philadelphia, 1936); and W. P. Hudson, in an article in *American Literature* (March 1940), has discussed Alison's influence upon Bryant. However, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's debt to Alison seems to have been overlooked.

Longfellow, for three good reasons, could hardly have avoided learning the associationist technique by the time he graduated from Bowdoin in 1825. He himself stated, later in life, that his boyhood poems were strongly influenced by the poetry of Bryant. The first American edition of Alison's *Principles* was published at Boston in 1812; and Richard Harwell, Bowdoin College librarian, informs me that the library still has a copy of this original edition. (Charvat states that there were nine American editions of the *Principles*, three of which were published before 1835. Thus, the presence of the first American edition in the Bowdoin library strongly implies that it was available there to Longfellow before 1825.) Finally, according to Randall Stewart's biography of Hawthorne (New Haven, 1948), Dugald Stewart's *Elements of the Philosophy of the Mind* was a required text at Bowdoin during Longfellow's senior year. Longfellow's own writings from 1825 until 1835 — when the emotionally shattering experiences of his second trip to Europe wrought some obvious changes in his approach to life — reveal ample evidence of how very well the undergraduate had learned his lesson.

Some of the best examples of Longfellow the romantic associationist are recorded in the journal of his first trip to Europe, and are readily available in the *Life* by Samuel Longfellow. In speaking of the Roman ruins, Longfellow states that

the great charm of the scene springs from association; and though everything in Italy is really picturesque, yet strip the country of its historic

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recollections, — think merely of what it is, and not of what it has been,— and you will find the dream to be fading away.

This is quite explicit. The “historic recollections” are, of course, the property of the person observing the ruin, not of the ruin itself which merely stimulates the imagination to evoke the train of associated images. However, the act of association itself almost takes place before the reader’s eyes in the following excerpt from Longfellow’s journal of his visit to Spain:

The gradual closing of twilight added enchantment to the scene, and as my companions crossed some eminence in the road and, wrapped in their Spanish cloaks, became relieved against the sky, I could not help fancying them a band of Christian knights bound on some chivalrous adventure to the walls of the besieged city. Behold me, then, in Granada!

In view of these examples of Alison’s theory, it should come as no surprise to the reader to find Longfellow, at the end of his trip, calling himself a traveler “whose heart can whirl away in the sweep of life and the eddies of the world, like a bubble catching a thousand different hues from the sun.”

The articles and essays which Longfellow wrote for the *North American Review* during this period reveal what might be expected of the sensitive traveler whirled away in the sweep of languages and the eddies of literature: an overwhelming preference for the historical and appreciative aspects of criticism, rather than for the judicial and censorious. Also, Longfellow’s *Outre-Mer* (1835) can still be read with a great deal of pleasure if one is aware of the associationist technique. The responsive consciousness of the Pilgrim is quite capable of evoking a thousand different hues from the various stimuli which it encounters; and it is the play of this consciousness as the imagination is engaged by the external objects, rather than these objects themselves, which holds the interest of the modern reader.

Although Longfellow’s career as a poet did not really begin until *Voices of the Night* was published in 1839, his earlier commitment to the associationist point of view is of some importance to an appreciation of his poetry. As I see it, this commitment helped to forge at least three of the distinctive elements of Longfellow’s verse. First, there is Longfellow’s persistent interest in things historical, an interest which first

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revealed itself in his criticism and later in the poetry of Longfellow the American mythmaker. The study of the past is probably the most efficient means of increasing the imagination's stockpile of latent images, and hence is of great value to anyone who would practice the associationist technique. Second, the associationist doctrine that the more simple image is the more effective — in evoking the train of analogous images within the imagination — is perhaps the basis for Longfellow's lifelong preference for simplicity in his poetry. Finally, and most important, the associationist emphasis upon the active role of the beholder, upon man's internal nature rather than upon externalities, probably helped Longfellow realize that man, not external nature, is the only subject worthy of the serious poet's interest. This is explicitly stated in *Kavanagh* (1849); but as early as January 1832, when his review of Sidney's "Defence of Poetry" appeared in the *North American Review*, Longfellow's attention is centered upon man, upon the "national character," and while the particular external environment may help to form this national character, Longfellow does not consider these externalities as poetic ends in themselves.

Thus, a knowledge of Longfellow's debt to Alison both presents an important aesthetic point of view appearing in his writings before 1835, and helps to account for certain fundamental aspects of his poetry.



LOWELL TO CABOT

By RICHARD CARY

THE occasion was convivial. The Midwinter Dinner of Holy Cross Alumni in 1910 had already begotten its quota of scintillant toasts, but not until John Collins Bossidy rose and recited *his* piece did the evening achieve immortality. In ringing tones, he proposed this quatrain, now favored by many ironists and all midwesterners: