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### “Send Me a Nice Little Letter All to Myself”: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s Fan Mail and Antebellum Poetic Culture

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#### Recommended Citation

Anderson, Jill E., "“Send Me a Nice Little Letter All to Myself”: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s Fan Mail and Antebellum Poetic Culture" (2007). *University Library Faculty Publications*. 111.  
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“Send Me a Nice Little Letter All to Myself”:  
Henry Wadsworth Longfellow’s Fan Mail and Antebellum Poetic Culture

MS submitted

April 2007

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In 1856, Samuel Austin Allibone, a literary acquaintance of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's, persistently requested the replacement of a pencil he claimed that Longfellow had given him one afternoon—a pencil Longfellow had used in “writing out the far-famed Hiawatha.” Though he hoped to find the gift “in some of one of my vest pockets,” Allibone asked, in June 1856, “May I be so bold, as to ask you to send me per mail another one of the pencils so employed?”<sup>1</sup> After a gentle reminder from Allibone the following October—“I should be really obliged to you for a pencil which was employed in the same good service”<sup>2</sup>—Longfellow sent the desired relic to Philadelphia in January 1857 with a brief note apologizing for his delay and expressing his pleasure at hearing of the progress of Allibone's revision of his *Critical Dictionary of English Literature, and British and American Authors*, where Longfellow's name and extended literary biography would appear in 1858.<sup>3</sup>

By 1856, two years after he retired from Harvard, Longfellow was, in effect, a household name. Spurred by numerous editions of single- and multiple-volume collections of his poetry, by printing and reprintings of his poems in a broad range of periodicals, and by his popular narrative poems *Evangeline* (1848) and *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), Longfellow's reputation had spread across the nation and abroad. But a decade and a half earlier, Longfellow had been an emerging poet, with two rapidly-selling single-volume collections to his name (*Voices of the Night*, published in 1839, and *Ballads and Other Poems*, published in 1841). In the late 1830s and 1840s a ‘star system’ of poets emerged in American literary culture, supported by the rise of periodicals willing to pay both male and female poets increasingly significant amounts of money for their emotionally charged works. This development coincided with Longfellow's own emergence as a poet.<sup>4</sup> Although as a student in the 1820s Longfellow had published several poems in the short-lived *United States Literary*

*Gazette*, Longfellow first made his mark as an American poet in the late 1830s, with a series of “psalms” published first in the *Knickerbocker Magazine*.

In *Voices of the Night* and *Ballads and Other Poems*, Longfellow first compiled the poems that had appeared in periodicals into a volume that clearly linked the poet’s name to the uplifting psalms that, according to the magazine’s list of “Agents,” had ranged via the *Knickerbocker* as far afield as Savannah, Georgia; Nashville, Tennessee; Bloomington, Indiana; Ypsilanti, Michigan; St. Louis, Missouri; New Orleans, Louisiana; Key West, Florida; and Montreal.<sup>5</sup> As he made the transition during the 1840s and 1850s from emerging to established poet, Longfellow drew on his fan mail as evidence of his widening reputation.

As Christoph Irscher has recently argued, the emotional presence readers sensed in his poems and the accessibility of his poems encouraged Longfellow’s contemporary readers to identify with him on a personal level and, consequently, to correspond with him in a particularly familiar way. To the historian, and to Longfellow himself, Longfellow’s admirers’ letters attest to the success of these sentimental transactions. Functioning both as evidence of reader response and as evidence of one poet’s need for a demonstrable audience, Longfellow’s fan mail, carefully preserved by himself and family members, offers insight into the cultural significance American readers attributed to poetry and to their popular poets. Yet Irscher focuses heavily on letters written to and by Longfellow as an older man, letters directed to the beloved “Poet of the Heart” photographed by Julia Margaret Cameron in 1868. In her work on the schoolroom poets’ reception in the postbellum decades, Angela Sorby cogently argues that Longfellow’s reputation reached its peak after the Civil War, in direct relation to the diffusion of his poetry in schoolroom anthologies and texts which found in Longfellow a genteel and democratic figure easily assimilated for instructional and Americanizing ends because of the highly accessible vagueness of his injunctions to action.

By the postbellum decades, Longfellow had become a highly recognizable institution buttressed by a substantial body of work.<sup>6</sup>

Letters written to Longfellow during the 1840s and 1850s, the early decades of the early development and consolidation of his reputation, attested to the growth and expansion of his reputation. Given their willingness to read Longfellow's poems as sources of character development and uplift, one could assume that the readers who chose to write to Longfellow were members of the middle or upper classes. However, with Harper Bros. publishing a cheap fifty-cent edition of Longfellow's poems in 1846 and a similar sixty-two cent edition in 1849, print version of his poems almost certainly reached a broader audience by the end of the 1840s.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, in 1845 and 1851 Congress passed measures reducing letter postage and simplifying postage rates, based on distance and letter weight; in 1851, domestic correspondence could be sent at the flat rate of five cents for a half-ounce letter traveling up to three thousand miles within the United States, with a discount for prepaid postage. These developments made frequent letter-writing an option for more and more Americans.<sup>8</sup>

As William Decker, and more recently, David Henkin, have noted, the letter as document bridges spatial and temporal gaps between writer and intended recipient while also highlighting those distances. Emphasizing 'real' rather than expressly fictional letters, Karen Lystra has described Victorian love letters as connecting documents but also as repositories of personal information and performances of the individual or romantic self, intended for the beloved (or future beloved) reader; Henkin has argued that the dominant relationship enacted by letter-writers in mid-nineteenth-century postal culture was familial, rather than romantic. Generally, historians have written most often about letters as they function within existing relationships, most likely begun in person and with a basis outside the framework of letter-writing: letters which maintain relationships. Notably, though, Henkin and Scott

Sandage have also written about various subspecies of mail addressed to recipients personally unknown to the writers—circulars and scams in Henkin’s case, begging letters in Sandage’s. Fan letters, however, carried the hope of triggering a response and, with luck, a relationship with the object of the admirer’s affection that would extend beyond a one-way correspondence.<sup>9</sup>

Readers who chose to write to Longfellow identified him as a likely source of guidance, influence, or information. As his work reached a growing audience, Longfellow’s admirers requested tangible evidence of relationship with the poet: a letter, lines of poetry, or some other memento which would both symbolize and stand in for Longfellow’s physical presence.<sup>10</sup> These letter-writers hoped to create a relationship with Longfellow, in many cases a personal relationship, but in some cases they also sought to create a kind of professional relationship, through requests for evaluation which strongly carried the hope of critical approbation. A good number of these letters went beyond mere praise, offering Longfellow the back-handed compliment of requesting, if not insisting, that Longfellow to read *their* poetry and call it good. These admirers presented themselves to Longfellow as hopeful poets, yearning for Longfellow’s critical blessing and recognition of themselves as brother or sister poets.

Such letters attested to Longfellow’s standing as a man of letters—a man who knew quality literature and was in a position to determine what was and was not “good enough.” Clearly demonstrating the breadth of Longfellow’s reputation, such requests also stood increasingly as acknowledgments of his own skill as a poet and as a cultural arbiter. Though Longfellow the poet remained based in Craigie House in Cambridge, during the early decades of his career as a poet, his influence as poet and, implicitly, as critic, extended across a nation of readers. By writing favorable and favor-seeking letters, his admirers

simultaneously attested to that growing influence and sought to benefit from it. If these letters represented their authors' hopes of establishing a correspondence with a beloved poet, they also represented, to that poet, tangible evidence of an audience of individual yet aggregated readers. If the letters demonstrated readership and interpretation of Longfellow's poems, they also reflected, to the emerging poet, the existence of an increasingly national readership and marketplace.

"You will I have no doubt, be surprised on opening this note and wonder who the \_\_\_\_\_ (I won't say that naughty word) this can be from," wrote Ada Forsyth of Toledo ("a Buckeye girl born and bred") to Longfellow in August 1859.<sup>11</sup> Many of Longfellow's fans began their letters by identifying themselves as strangers, then immediately attempted to erase that lack of relationship by asserting that they did "know" Longfellow, through his poetry. Speaking for many others, in 1855, S. R. Phillips, possibly a bank clerk, wrote from Kenosha, Wisconsin that "I cannot consider you as a stranger, for I have perused you [sic] writings so often that you almost seem like an acquaintance."<sup>12</sup> Shared emotion, suggested an unidentified "Miss Oakes," bound her to Longfellow:

I am writing to a friend, whom I regard and respect for loving dearly the music of words which you send from your heart to bless the world, cheered by that music, in many an hour, when darkness and gloom slung over life's pathway, and illness lay her heavy burden upon drooping shoulders—blessed by it when the clouds were gone and brightly the sun shone where tears had fallen—how can you be a stranger to me?<sup>13</sup>

Others expressed their sense of relationship based on responses to particular poems.

Chauncey T. Gaston of Chicago sent a printed "Memorial" from his son's funeral; the sheet reprinted Longfellow's poem "Resignation" with minor alterations made to fit the poem to the Gastons' circumstances. Wrote Gaston, "If, as I suppose to be the case, you are a parent, you will ask no long apology for my thus laying open to you this fireside scene in my family

circle. My wife also joins with me in grateful remembrance for the service you have rendered us.”<sup>14</sup> The service in question was the writing and publication of the poem itself and not, as a casual reader might assume, Longfellow’s actual attendance at the funeral.<sup>15</sup>

Others wrote with more tangible ends in sight. In addition to Samuel Allibone’s persistent desire for a pencil used in writing *Hiamatha*, letter writers requested items ranging from locks of hair to likenesses of Longfellow. In her 1859 letter Ada Forsyth wrote: “I have read and reread your works till, what wonder, that my mind has wandered from the writings to the writer. --- Pls. Mr. Longfellow dare I: dare I ask you for a little tiny likeness of yourself (on leather) for my own selfish self that I may keep and look at whenever I please And compare the real with the ideal poet,”<sup>16</sup> as if the likeness would stand in for the presence of the poet more authentically than his poetry could. Susan S. Williams has written thoughtfully about the tension authors and viewers perceived between written description, painted portraits, and daguerreotypes; in this case, by expressing her desire to see the “real” poet, Forsyth seems to be requesting an accurate likeness of Longfellow. By 1859, however, engraved images of Longfellow had been in circulation for years—in its April 1843 number, for example, *Graham’s Magazine* ran an engraving of an 1839 portrait of Longfellow by Willem Hendrik Franquinet.<sup>17</sup> Also, by 1859 Longfellow could conceivably have sent her a *carte de visite*; the Longfellow National Historic Site includes in its collection one dated c. 1858 and one dated c. 1859, both taken at Silsbee’s studio in Boston.<sup>18</sup> Forsyth, however, had been clear in her letter about the medium she hoped for: a miniature on leather, a more expensive and less easily circulatable portrait. More significant, in an era when authors’ images were beginning to appear in conjunction with their works, is Forsyth’s request that Longfellow himself provide the image. She asked that a gift—figuratively, of himself—be given to her from his own hands.<sup>19</sup>



Other fans requested copies of Longfellow's poems, or excerpts from poems, written in Longfellow's own hand. Such requests are examples of the same desire for tangible symbols of the poet's regard reflected by Samuel Austin Allibone's persistent hunger for a Hiawatha pencil. Yet Allibone's request, along with demands for lines written in Longfellow's hand, also reflected readers' awareness of the material processes of poetry writing, and suggested an emotional privileging of manuscript writing over print. Responding to Longfellow's works in print, these letter writers desired the greater intimacy of manuscript.<sup>20</sup>

Handwritten correspondence linked the poet with, literally, his writing. Readers requesting objects or written lines from Longfellow also hoped that a personal letter from Longfellow would accompany the desired object. In one highly poetical epistle, Henrietta A. Smith of New Brunswick, New Jersey wrote to Longfellow of a misplaced letter. Her diction seems intended to suggest a shared poetical nature:

It came to me, a gentle wanderer, toilworn, with drooping wings and its bright robes stained with the rain and dust of earth. It found a joyous welcome. . . . It told me whence it came, whither it went and having found in me a mutual friend, it murmured against you. . . . I think you may expect its coming very soon—if you keep the secret.<sup>21</sup>

And then, in smaller letters, Smith wrote, "Please answer."<sup>22</sup> Others were less roundabout in their requests for correspondence; in 1856 N. T. Rosseter, "the happy possessor of a copy of 'The Song of Hiawatha'" which brought him (or her) "emotions of sincere delight & gratitude," stated: "I dare to ask for such simple recognition of my gratitude from your own hand, as shall visibly identify 'The Song', with its illustrious author."<sup>23</sup>

Return correspondence which included a literal re-writing of poetry drew the connection between poet and reader even more strongly. Anyone could clip a verse from a newspaper or magazine, and after 1839, when *Voices of the Night* first appeared, anyone could

buy a volume of Longfellow's poetry. Only the select few could boast of a copy of a well-known poem in its author's hand. Such requests highlight the extensiveness of Longfellow's circulation, based as they usually were on encounters with his printed poetry, through individual or collective reading. Indeed, admirers' frequently mentioned described a family or other small group listening as an individual read Longfellow out loud; Charles Baldwin Sedgwick of Syracuse wrote to Longfellow describing reading "The Courtship of Miles Standish" to a class of "about twenty young ladies," a regular salon established by his wife for "all the young people sufficiently interested to attend."<sup>24</sup> At the same time, requests for manuscript lines also emphasized the transition from manuscript into print enacted in publication. A poem in print was a commodity; and one way or another, consumption of a printed poem usually involved money exchange, whether at the point of purchase or at various other moments in the publication process. A poem in manuscript (while also salable in the separate context of collecting), to these letter writers, was a sign of intimacy, by virtue of having been produced by the hand of the poet himself without the intermediaries implied by publication.

Predictably, Longfellow received numerous requests for autographs, with 410 known simple requests for autographs arriving between 1844 and 1865.<sup>25</sup> Autograph collecting became a common hobby in the United States in the 1830s, with several notable collectors amassing huge collections. Collectors studied their holdings for signs of individual genius and character, thought to be revealed in the remarkable individual's handwriting.<sup>26</sup> The Houghton's holdings of letters merely requesting Longfellow's autograph are separate from the general Longfellow correspondence, and many of these letters contain only one or two sentences identifying the writer as a collector and requesting Longfellow's autograph. Occasionally, however, the request included by more extended praise or more information

about the letter writer; the line between these letters and those catalogued with the general correspondence can be thin. However, requests for recopied lines of a poem, or for a return letter, differ from simple requests for an autograph since, particularly in the case of a letter, such a response demonstrated—and demanded—more conscious effort from the celebrity being addressed. Emily Allibone, eight-year-old daughter of Samuel Austin Allibone, wrote to her father’s colleague in 1859, informing him of her particular favorites among his poems and, referring to the many letters “papa” was receiving from authors, exerted a bit of peer pressure on Longfellow by informing him that: “Mrs. Sigourney wrote to me and I do wish you would please answer this.”<sup>27</sup>

A letter or lines from Longfellow, signifying that connection, could serve as a kind of social currency. In 1855, Lucia Alden wrote from Bridgewater, Massachusetts asking for a letter from Longfellow to secure a place in her academy’s ‘in’ group. The “great girls” at her academy were collecting autographs, and had told “we little ones” that they couldn’t get any autographs.<sup>28</sup> Determined to prove the older girls wrong, Alden asked for Longfellow’s, and added: “And I wish instead of sending me something you have written before, you would send me a nice little letter all to myself. . . . I want some of your writing, for a person writing seems more like them than anything, I think don’t you?”<sup>29</sup> While Alden desired something in Longfellow’s own hand, her knowledge of him as her would-be correspondent and source of status was based on his writing—in print form. She asked for his autograph, plus: not merely his signature, which “all the great girls” could get, but something extra, “a nice little letter all to myself,” manuscript and content to be treasured, and, significantly, displayed to those “great girls.”

Similarly, in an undated letter, Eugenia Potter of Lancaster, Kentucky, a would-be poet and proud recipient of a letter from Longfellow, reported a conversation with her

friend Dr. Smith, who had brought his autograph collection for her to examine. “Among others,” wrote Potter, “was ‘Henry W. Longfellow’, which he displayed with great pride. ‘Oh!’ said I ‘that’s nothing. I have a whole letter from him!’ ‘A letter!’—he exclaimed—‘Let’s see it.’ I produced it and he forthwith regarded me with envy.”<sup>30</sup> A letter suggested conscious composition beyond the mere automatic signing of one’s name; a letter could stand as acknowledgment of the requestor’s individual worthiness of the poet’s effort. To these letter writers, a communication from Longfellow could establish or shore up their own immediate social relationships.

A line from Longfellow could even, apparently, further courtship. In February 1858, Malcolm MacEuen, the son of an acquaintance of Longfellow’s whom Longfellow had assisted previously, wrote that the previous evening “a very charming young lady expressed in my presence a strong desire to have your autograph, and written by you, the two verses beginning: ‘Lives of great men all remind us’ and ‘Footsteps which perhaps another’ [from ‘Psalm of Life’],” adding

I can only plead as my excuse for plaguing you the charms of the young lady, and the inducement held out by your kind compliance with all my former requests; on the same principle that induced a poor devil of a German here to infer, that, because Papa lent him some money to get out of a scrape once, it gave him a prescriptive right to come and borrow money whenever he wanted to, a mode of argument, which, in the German’s case at least, proved woefully [sic] fallacious.<sup>31</sup>

MacEuen wrote two more letters during 1858 making the same request and helpfully providing the verses in question; on 17 December 1858 MacEuen wrote simply, “Please send me those verses, and I’ll never forget you.” His next letter to Longfellow, dated 23 December, thanked him for the “second copy” of the lines.<sup>32</sup> In one case, a fan hoped his letter would lead to a more direct form of courtship. Several months after writing to Longfellow asking to meet with him to discuss his hopes of publishing a book about army

life, Asa Mitchell wrote the following to Longfellow in 1861: “Sir. I am desirous of getting married. I believe you have a daughter of a suitable age for marriage. From the necessity of her parentage she must be a lovely girl,” and asked for permission to court the girl.<sup>33</sup>

Along with requests for autographs, letters, or lines of poetry, readers wrote to Longfellow hoping that he would read their poetry, either in manuscript or in print form, and pronounce them to be poets. If many of these letter writers identified Longfellow (unilaterally) as a friend, frequently the object of this friendship was literary patronage, defined in terms of influence rather than income: some admirers wanted Longfellow to use his reputation and poetic authority to further their own literary careers. These hopeful poets were looking to be discovered by Longfellow, whose publication and broadening circulation identified him as a poet able to fuse cultural and economic success. Simultaneously, they hoped to be raised by Longfellow to the status of peer and personal friend. This was suggested by the desire for manuscript and especially by the requests for ‘personal’ letters, which could be both a sign of favor and the crucial first step to the road to a more tangible relationship.

Miss Oakes followed her assertion that she ‘knew’ Longfellow with the following request:

[T]ell me what you think of the lines I send to you—have I talent enough to go before the public and succeed? Interested and loving friends are not safe judges. . . . I send only a few lines for I fear I am doing wrong to thrust myself or my affairs upon the notice of one whose time is so precious, but I long for the sincere opinion of one whom I can trust.<sup>34</sup>

In a similar vein, in 1856 John Flavel Mines of Middletown, Connecticut, “dared to come” to Longfellow for advice. Wrote Mines: “I have written, partly, a Poem—in silence, & secretly. . . [and] to your leniency I would submit it, that I may have your encouragement, or that I may know that the remembrance of it is hidden where it will not be brought up in

judgment against me.” Invoking time and effort put into composition (“these precious hours of bending over & perfecting a sculptured sculpturing a grand thought till I can hear it speak to me”) Mines’ language suggested the influence of Byron: “It is either a Poem—or it is—nothing.” Mines concluded, “It is a great favor—but—pray, grant it—it will add more to the gratitude which I, with the whole world, owe Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.”<sup>35</sup> Longfellow seems not to have answered this impassioned plea; we know this, because three weeks later Mines sent another—briefer—letter, pleading: “I scarcely know why but I cannot help u<r>ging the request—again let me beg you to consider me less importunate than in earnest.”<sup>36</sup>

Like Mines, many of these letter writers hoped that Longfellow would recognize them as a fellow poet. Sallie Ada Reedy’s 1856 letter from Mississippi speaks for many; she wrote: “You are a poet—you know the spirit of true genius wherever you meet it. . . . Will you, at leisure, tell me if Laughing-Eye was written under the true poetical inspiration?”<sup>37</sup> In a similar, if humbler, vein, Lester A. Miller of Vermont wrote in 1860 that he would

respectfully, but with diffidence, place before you, for your criticisms and suggestions, the accompanying lines, written a few weeks since. They are not, probably, of sufficient merit to warrant any elaborate attention, and I would not ask that of you.<sup>38</sup>

Miller continued, self-effacingly, “Suffer me to disclaim heliocentric [?] aspirations, for I well know that my abilities and advantages are not of a character to allow me to quaff from that inspiring fountain.”<sup>39</sup> Claiming diffidence and the fear of publicizing poetry which posterity might ridicule (but also eager to demonstrate the extent of his reading, quoting Pollok in the letter), Miller nevertheless sent Longfellow the poem, which now resides in a folder bearing his name in the Longfellow Papers at the Houghton Library—not, apparently, returned. James Cocke Southall of Charlottesville, Virginia, wrote requesting Longfellow’s opinion of a poem he claimed had been accepted by the *Knickerbocker* “but owing to an accident not

necessary to be gone into” had instead appeared in the August 1854 number of the *National Magazine* (New York). Claiming that his own poetical work had been inspired by Longfellow’s, Southall concluded, pragmatically and self-protectively:

I think the sooner one learns he ain’t a poet the better: & there are a plenty other paths of ambition without his being disturbed at making the discovery. The specimen enclosed is almost the only thing I ever attempted, & I am therefore so uncommitted, that I am at any time ready to let the matter drop.<sup>40</sup>

In his postscript Southall added: “I think the changes introduced by Mr Stevens were not in good taste—but of this you will judge.”<sup>41</sup>

In a similar vein, in 1846 William Henry Rhodes of Cambridge sent Longfellow a published volume of his poems in hopes that Longfellow would pronounce on the work’s value and write a favorable notice.<sup>42</sup> Rhodes claimed that if he did not get such an estimate, he risked “swallowing the criticism of some poetical quack;” yet Rhodes also felt sure that if he asked for Longfellow’s opinion he risked—through Longfellow—public ridicule for productions which might otherwise have “passed quietly to the undisturbed refuge”<sup>43</sup> of the top shelf of a young men’s or circulating library. Yet, Rhodes reasoned:

[I]t is hardly too much to expect, that one who possesses the key to the interior, should either introduce <me> to its outer Halls,—for here my ambition at present halts—or give his reasons to the public, whose high Priest he has become, why I may not be admitted.<sup>44</sup>

Aware of the indifference or even ridicule a volume of poetry by an unknown poet could meet in the American literary market, Rhodes sought to increase the chances of the volume’s successes by asking this increasingly well-known poet—“one who possesses the key to the interior”—to “introduce” him to the literary world.<sup>45</sup> It is worth reiterating that Rhodes wrote in reference to a volume which had already been published; what he sought was Longfellow’s guidance and influence in the presentation and marketing of the volume. His letter concluded, “I have full confidence, that you will put into practise the golden rule, ‘Do

unto others as you would, that they should do unto you—” a statement which neatly highlighted the potential for moral coerciveness in that golden rule.<sup>46</sup>

Longfellow’s fan mail did not often register the commodification of poetry. Outside of several requests for commercial endorsements, of the letters I have seen asking for recognition as a poet, only a handful explicitly mentioned the hope of money as a motivating force behind poetry writing. In one of those, a woman who identified herself as Elvira Perkins wrote to Longfellow from East Boston asking for his assistance, claiming herself to be “surrounded by a numerous family, with a husband in feeble health and depressed spirits, [and feeling] it her duty to make an attempt to aid in their support and education of the family.” Yet she justified her choice of Longfellow as potential mentor by using the language of sentiment: based on her belief “that you of all the poets I have read would best understand me—would use the most candor—that . . . while you will find many imperfections in the style and <many> verbal inaccuracies there is that earnestness and depth of feeling in your own productions, that would lead you to look more at the spirit, the soul of a work more than at its outward dress.”<sup>47</sup> In her letter, Perkins subsumed her economic hopes into the emotional bond she hoped her letter, and the shared sensibility it demonstrated, would create with Longfellow.

It is entirely possible that “Elvira Perkins” was in fact the Judith Grant Perkins, who in 1858 published a volume *Harp of the Willows* under the pseudonym “Elvira.” The copyright page of this volume lists copyright as being in the name of “Mrs. Perkins.” The publication of this volume may have represented Perkins’ real goal in writing to Longfellow. She may have hoped for support for a project she contemplated putting into print, perhaps a review or a blurb by the well-known poet to help promote her volume.<sup>48</sup>



Some readers also alluded to the political utility of Longfellow's work. William Marsh, writing in 1856 from Greenville, North Carolina, declared:

Together with thousands of other citizens I have perused with much gratification your beautiful Poem—Hiawatha. Sir I think the Union is indebted to you for this great national Bond, for such I concur [sic] it to be and of more force in binding together the different parts of the Nation than may compromises—or high sounding state papers. . . . It is to be hoped that our literary men may long continue to occupy their present high, and exalted position as patriots—who love their whole country—and the union of the States.<sup>49</sup>

In fact, Longfellow rarely made explicit political statements in his poetry. Poems like “The Arsenal at Springfield,” “The Jewish Cemetery at Newport” and “The Building of the Ship” stressed peace, harmony, and union among differing groups, a theme echoed in *Hiawatha*. Although his close friend Charles Sumner and others urged him to take a more directly active role in politics, Longfellow's one foray into controversial subject matter, the publication of his *Poems on Slavery* (1842-3) first as a standard edition and then as an authorized tract published by the New England Anti-Slavery Tract Association (1843), in addition to two, more veiled, antislavery poems published in the 1845 and 1846 numbers of the antislavery annual *Liberty Bell*, was the limit of his direct political activity.<sup>50</sup> Yet Marsh's letter, composed in North Carolina, suggests the broad appeal—and uses—of Longfellow's diffused unionism during the political turbulence of the 1850s. Nevertheless, Longfellow's primary poetic goals involved emotional and moral, rather than explicitly political, service to his readers.<sup>51</sup>

Letter-writers' use of explicitly economic language to describe their “debts” to Longfellow implied more contractual relations, but in reality adhered more closely to patronage models, since clearly these admirers did not expect to pay off the cultural debt they claimed to owe Longfellow. Charles Augustus Pairs of New York wrote to Longfellow in 1855:

I feel unwilling to allow the year to close without paying off (to the best of my ability) all obligations I am under to others—and I find in looking over my “bill book” that I stand largely indebted for a very large share of real gratification to “Hiawatha[.]” Will you allow me to offer you a partial payment in the shape of a grateful expression of sincere thanks for the pleasure you have afforded me in that beautiful production.<sup>52</sup>

Others acknowledged similar obligation, but, ironically, attempted to put themselves even further in Longfellow’s debt, asking for autographs or other favors as described, neatly following the pattern of MacEuen’s “poor devil of a German.” Fans wanted to continue to be in Longfellow’s debt—that is, to be the recipients of his poetry. In some cases, fans seem to have believed themselves to be discharging that debt through their expressions of gratitude.

The imbalance of this ‘debtor’ relationship is captured in L. M. Greene’s 1840 request for a copy of Longfellow’s “little poem on Human Life” for a lady, who, according to Greene,

can only say, that if you can find a production of hers which you admire as much as she has admired th[is] [s]he will confer the like favour on you with pleasure. . . . and she thinks that if you knew how much pleasure it would give her to see it as it first emanated from your pen, you could do no less than transcribe it for her.<sup>53</sup>

Since it was unlikely that Longfellow would find (or look for) a poem of the lady’s that he would admire as much as she had admired his, Greene was really requesting that Longfellow provide a manuscript copy of the poem solely for the pleasure it would provide a reader—placing both Mr. Greene and the lady even further in his debt. Mr. Greene’s debt, Mr. Pairs’ debt, the ‘debt’ readers claimed to owe Mr. Longfellow, would never be paid. Yet, Greene’s letter, from Boston, arrived early in Longfellow’s public career as a poet, close on the heels of the publication of *Voices of the Night*. As the spokesman for at least one admirer and likely also for himself as well, Greene’s letter attested to the poet’s growing reputation.

In his journal, Longfellow occasionally complained of incessant letters, and some of his complaints directly related to unsolicited poems he had received. In an December 1845 entry where he recorded his pleasure at Carey & Hart's intention at putting out a second printing of his collected poems only ten days after the first printing's appearance, Longfellow wrote, "Also a letter from Mr. Tracy of Buffalo, asking my opinion of a poem of his called 'The Rhyme of the Tempest Fiend'. Hardly fair, that; as I do not know him."<sup>54</sup> Yet, he sent Tracy a brief response, calling the poem "a very clever one in its kind," identifying its main weakness as "a little want of finish or, to use a longer word, *elaboration*."<sup>55</sup> The following October he complained: "All my hours and day go to perishable things; and no line is written that may last. College takes half the time; and other people with their interminable letters, and poems, and requests and demands, take the rest."<sup>56</sup> Fan letters stood for the press of the market: faceless readers made demands on the literal persons of the authors themselves—demanding time, energy, handwriting, locks of hair, even daughters.

Michael Newbury has written perceptively about the author's sense of 'enslavement' to the mass reader; Richard Brodhead has noted the real intrusiveness experienced by Louisa May Alcott at the hands of her fans, recorded in her novel *Jo's Boys* (1886). The fan letters included in Fanny Fern's novel *Ruth Hall* have their counterparts in Longfellow's real fan mail. Fern's heroine is shown chuckling over her fan mail and, rather good-naturedly, refusing to respond to the more egregious demands. Yet Ruth is also moved to tears by letters testifying to the uplifting moral effect her works have had on a given reader; upon reading one of these, Ruth concludes: "This will repay many a weary hour."<sup>57</sup> Fan mail offered both frustration and reward to the author.<sup>58</sup>

Susan S. Williams has argued that readers' fan mail compelled Susan Warner to continue writing in the sentimental domestic mode, when she might have preferred to try

other keys. Williams' analysis points to an important aspect of reader response: the Warner sisters' economic need, which spurred them to write, kept them in a kind of thrall to their readers. Admirers praised, but also instructed, the Warners. Their letters stood as signs of purchase, and, if their injunctions were obeyed, as promises of future purchases.<sup>59</sup>

Longfellow, who was Smith Professor of Modern Languages at Harvard from 1836 until his retirement in 1854 and who also, after his remarriage in 1843, had a substantial income from his second wife's family, did not experience the economic urgency the Warner sisters did. Yet his personal account book showed his awareness of the money-making potential of his work. In his listings of income from 1841 through 1844, underneath the total income, he subtracted his Harvard salary, and, in 1843 and 1844, his wife's income, and recorded the remainder: the amount he had earned through his belletristic writing.<sup>60</sup> Though conscious of his ability to profit from his poetry, Longfellow did not need this income in the way the Warners did, and consequently could afford to be less driven by his fans' responses.

But Longfellow framed his goals in terms of moral utility, preferring to downplay his interest in profiting from his poetry. During the antebellum decades, critics, poets, and readers repeatedly identified poetry as the highest form of art and placed it above of the dust of the marketplace. Like fiction, though, poets and poetry functioned within the rising literary market. Eliza Richards' image of the male poet as the 'public private man,' who displayed what we might call his emotional intelligence for consumption, was both an economically and emotionally charged figure. And the emphasis poets and audiences alike placed on the moral and emotional service provided by poetry obscured the price placed on each giftbook or single volume of poetry: when N. T. Rosseter proclaimed himself a "happy possessor" of *The Song of Hiawatha*, someone, somewhere, if not Rosseter himself, had purchased that volume.<sup>61</sup> Scholars have pointed to Longfellow's strategic management of his

poems and the means of their production—his purchase of his poems’ stereotype plates in 1845, his willingness to experiment with a range of venues and editions to maximize distribution—all of which suggest his willingness to view his poems and their finished forms as commodities.<sup>62</sup>

If fan mail represented the presence of the market, it also stood as a tangible record of reading and of a work’s emotional effectiveness. Longfellow himself believed the highest achievement for poetry was the emotional or moral service it provided to its readers. In March 1839 he recorded his friend’s wife’s reaction to the poem which would become “Footsteps of Angels”:

[F]inished a Third Psalm of Life, which I began long ago, but could never rightly close and complete till now. . . . In the afternoon carried it to Felton and left it with him. He came up in the evening. Said he read it to his wife, who “cried like a child.” I want no more favorable criticism than this.<sup>63</sup>

If, as Matthew Gartner and others have argued, as both poet and translator, Longfellow wanted to be seen as teacher and paternal guide to the wider world of European languages and letters, he also sincerely wanted that instruction to work on and through the hearts, as well as the minds, of his readers.<sup>64</sup>

The letters also indicated to Longfellow the increasingly national character of his audience. As the newspapers, magazines, and books carrying his poetry made their way across the country, letters came to him from greater distance, attesting to the spread of his work. In 1840, early in his poetic career, Longfellow wrote to his father announcing that *Voices of the Night*’s second edition had gone into press, and mentioned that Jared Sparks had shown him a letter from a Mr. Longworth of Cincinnati, “showing the real effect of these little pieces, and how they work in some minds.”<sup>65</sup> In 1856 young Ethel Grey wrote to Longfellow from Monticello, Illinois, praising *Evangeline* and proclaiming, before asking for his autograph, that

When you least expect it, from the dim shadows of a western Forest, where the Mocking Bird and Whip-poor-Will, sing undisturbed, and wild flowers of every form and hue look up to God, there comes to you, from a young trembling Poet heart an earnest thank offering *that you have lived*.<sup>66</sup>

In 1858 Longfellow received a flowery letter from Sallie Alexander of Helena, Arkansas expressing her sympathy with his characters and the general sentiment of his poems—“Mr. Longfellow, you are such a Heart-Linguist—you find words to make happiness happiness.” Continued Alexander: “Authors are unknown beings to me, a western girl whose thoughts move as untutored as the winds through her western home’s wilds—but I have such a deep admiration for the earnest in purpose, the brilliant in execution, that I could not refrain from wishing, that I might send my love and admiration.”<sup>67</sup> S. R. Phillips, writing from Kenosha, Wisconsin, praised *Hiawatha*, stating that the long poem “deserves a wide circulation, especially in the United States, and be assured it will receive it in this part of the Country, where more than in the New England States it is known to be ‘true to Nature’, where the ‘red man’ still lives in his natural state.”<sup>68</sup> Phillips bragged that his copy, sent to him by a cousin in Chicago, was the only copy in Kenosha, and was “much sought after, by the admirers of the ‘first of American poets’”—a statement which blended praise for the poet with the hint of a marketing opportunity: get more copies to Wisconsin.<sup>69</sup> In February 1846, Longfellow wrote to publisher Abraham Hart about his desire to get out a cheap edition of his works as quickly as possible, and to have it “sent into every nook and corner of the country.” He added, “I have lately had letters from strangers in Texas and the Rocky Mountains; and I want to have my poems in such a form as that they may go as far as these regions.” Letters from far-flung strangers stood as both evidence of Longfellow’s extended readership and as indicators of a potential market.<sup>70</sup>

If circulation indicated sales, sales also indicated circulation, and circulation meant, in theory, moral and emotional effect. What Thomas N. Baker has described as the

“sentimental commerce” between N. P. Willis and his female admirers was a two-way exchange.<sup>71</sup> If he did not face the same economic need the Warners did, Longfellow’s systematic retention of these letters suggests his own ongoing need for evidence of his influence which went beyond indications of market value. Like his admirers, Longfellow carefully retained letters; like his admirers, Longfellow could boast of his letters, which he saved in addition to saving reviews of his works.<sup>72</sup> Even his complaints to friends and in his journals, sincere as they may have been, pointed to a certain willingness to share his awareness of his reputation as it increasingly extended across the nation. Although Longfellow clearly understood that such letters could contain more flattery than truth—reporting on the Longworth letter to his father in 1840, Longfellow had added, “as the letter was not intended for my eye, I take his opinion as sincere, and hope it may not be too exaggerated”<sup>73</sup>—he also valued the emotional and intellectual response to his work shown by Longworth’s letter, and over the years, by other such letters. Fan mail charted responses to Longfellow’s poetry and hinted at, rather than stated blatantly, sales figures. Keeping his fan mail allowed Longfellow to see himself as he wanted to be: the friendly, instructive poet in a reader’s pocket or library, with the price tag removed.

At the same time, the fact that Longfellow kept his fan mail also gives literary historians a valuable means of assessing his influence on a segment of his actual readers (or at least on those who were moved to contact him). In these letters, expressions of hope for connection with the ‘real’ Longfellow, including requests for relics, are blended with requests for patronage and career assistance. Would-be poets presented themselves to Longfellow as would-be protégés; some, as in the case of Sherwood Bonner, who would become Longfellow’s amanuensis a few years before his death, reached those ranks.<sup>74</sup> Most of the others did not; yet their requests and the poems they sent attest to the ubiquity of poetry and

of poetry writing in antebellum American culture. For every letter thanking Longfellow for expressing an admirer's own inexpressible sentiments, there were others asking Longfellow to assess the writer's attempts at self-expression. Reading Longfellow's fan mail, then, provides insight into reader's beliefs about the relationships between a poet and his audience, about Longfellow's own complex need for evidence of the cultural and emotional work done by his poetry in light of its increasing commodification, and, finally, about the broader cultural desirability of the title "poet" during this period.



## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Austin Allibone to HWL, 3 June 1856, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Papers, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass. (hereafter referred to as HWL Papers).

I have presented earlier versions of this article at the 2001 American Studies Association annual conference, at the University of Virginia's New Frontiers in Early American Fiction Conference in 2002, and to the University of Virginia Early American Seminar, chaired by Peter Onuf, in 2004. I thank everyone whose comments and insights have contributed to the current incarnation, especially Martha J. King, Mary Kelley, Thomas Augst, Emily Todd, Robert Gross, Jay Fliegelman, Aaron Wunsch, David M. Henkin, Leon Jackson, James Sidbury, and David Petruzelli. Special thanks to Martha J. King and Donna K. Anderson for their research assistance.

<sup>2</sup> Allibone to HWL, 18 October 1856, in HWL Papers.

<sup>3</sup> HWL to Samuel Austin Allibone, 9 January 1857, in *Letters*, 4:6-7. See S. Austin Allibone, ed., *Critical Dictionary of English Literature, and British and American Authors, Living and Deceased, from the Earliest Accounts to the Nineteenth Century*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1858, repr. 1886), 1:1123-30. The second volume of Allibone's dictionary appeared in 1870.

<sup>4</sup> Eliza Richards, "Poetic Attractions: Gender, Celebrity, and Authority in Poe's Circle" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1997); on the marketing of emotion, see also Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, Ideas (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, Inc., 1987). For discussions of Longfellow as a celebrated 'public private' (to use Richards' phrase) poet, see Avril D. Torrence, "The People's Voice: The Role of Audience in the Popular Poems of Longfellow and Tennyson," (Ph.D. diss., University of British Columbia, 1991), esp. pp. 1-247; Eric Haralson, "Mars in Petticoats: Longfellow and Sentimental Masculinity," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 51 (Dec. 1996), pp. 326-55; Matthew Gartner, "Public Obligation and Poetic Vocation in the Poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow" (Ph.D. diss., City University of New York, 1999); William Charvat, *The Profession of Authorship in America, 1800-1870*, ed. Matthew J. Bruccoli (1968; repr., Social Foundations of Aesthetic Forms, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), pp. 100-76, esp. pp. 116-40.

<sup>5</sup> Locations taken from the back cover of *Knickerbocker Magazine*, 12, no. 3 (September 1838), Clifton Waller Barrett Library of American Literature, Special Collections, University of Virginia Library, Charlottesville, Va. Longfellow's "Psalm of Life," unsigned, appeared on page 189 of this number of the *Knickerbocker*.

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<sup>6</sup> Christoph Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), pp. 7-17, 23-45, 50-71, esp. pp. 12-14 for Irmscher's analysis of the Cameron image; Angela Sorby, *Schoolroom Poets: Childhood, Performance, and the Place of American Poetry, 1865-1917* (Durham, N.H.: University of New Hampshire Press, 2005), pp. 1-34, esp. 24-34. On the end-less labor in Longfellow's "Psalm of Life" and other early psalms, see also Jill E. Anderson, "'Be Up and Doing': Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and Poetic Labor," *Journal of American Studies* 37 (April 2003): 1-15.

<sup>7</sup> Charvat, *Profession of Authorship*, pp. 162-163; Torrence, "People's Voice."

<sup>8</sup> On the development of the U.S. mail system during the antebellum period, see Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal System from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995); David M. Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2006), esp. p. 22 for the 1851 rate changes.

<sup>9</sup> William Decker, *Epistolary Practices: Letter Writing in America before Telecommunications* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Henkin, *Postal Age*, esp. 153-158; Scott A. Sandage, "Gender and the Economics of the Sentimental Market in Nineteenth-Century America," *Social Politics* 6 (Summer 1999): 104-30.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Timothy Morris' concept of the "poetics of presence," in which nineteenth-century poetry was valued by the degree to which it seemed to carry the presence of its creator. Timothy Morris, *Becoming Canonical in American Poetry* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), pp. 1-53.

<sup>11</sup> Ada Forsyth to HWL, 16 August 1859, in HWL Papers. Forsyth is unidentified.

<sup>12</sup> S. R. Phillips to HWL, 10 December 1855, in HWL Papers. The 1858 *Kenosha City Directory* lists a Smith Phillips, "teller Kenosha County Bank." *Kenosha City Directory* (Milwaukee: Smith, Du Moulin & Co., 1858), n.p.; <http://www.rootsweb.com/~wikenosh/citynz1858.htm> (accessed 18 December 2005).

<sup>13</sup> [Miss] Oakes to HWL, 9 October 1865, in HWL Papers. Oakes is unidentified.

<sup>14</sup> Chauncy T. Gaston to HWL, 3 September 1850, in HWL Papers. Gaston is unidentified.

<sup>15</sup> On presumed intimate knowledge and the opportunities it could provide for manipulation, see Richard H. Brodhead, *Culture of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), pp. 69-70; Sandage, "Gender and the Economics of the Sentimental Market."

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<sup>16</sup> Ada Forsyth to HWL, in HWL Papers.

<sup>17</sup> HWL described the original portrait in a letter to his father in November 1839. HWL called the later engraving a “caricature,” and resisted its publication, but was overridden by *Graham’s* editor Rufus W. Griswold. HWL complained to his father that “[Graham’s] forty thousand subscribers and hundred thousand readers” would form a “disagreeable” impression of him from the image. Nevertheless, the figures he cited suggest that he understood the power and potential breadth of the image’s circulation. HWL to Rufus T. Griswold, 10 January 1843, in *Letters*, 2:498-9n1; HWL to Stephen Longfellow, 16/23 April 1843, *Letters*, 2:528.

<sup>18</sup> Anita Israel, Archival Specialist, Longfellow National Historic Site, e-mail message to author, 15 September 2004. See Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (New York: Dover Publications, 1938; repr., 1964), pp. 139-40.

<sup>19</sup> See Susan S. Williams, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum American Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997).

<sup>20</sup> Meredith McGill has argued that the landmark copyright case *Wheaton v. Peters* established the moment of publication—the text’s movement from manuscript into print—as the moment in which a text became public property and thus under only limited control by its author. I suggest here that HWL’s admirers, by treating examples of his handwriting as relics, hoped to fuse the private nature of manuscript with the publicity of print while also privileging manuscript as a sign of intimacy. See Meredith L. McGill, *American Literature and the Culture of Reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), pp. 45-75; see also Tamara Plakins Thornton, *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 73-88.

<sup>21</sup> Henrietta A. Smith to HWL, [1847], in HWL Papers. Smith is unidentified.

<sup>22</sup> Smith to HWL.

<sup>23</sup> N. T. Rosseter to HWL, 16 January 1856, in HWL Papers. Rosseter wrote from Middleburgh, N.Y. An unidentified typescript at the Cobleskill (N.Y.) Public Library includes the following entry: “N. T. Rosseter & J. B. Hall buy Schoharie Republican and call it the Democratic Republican; first issue under new management was December 6, 1854.” Unpublished undated typed manuscript found at Cobleskill Public Library, Schoharie County NYGenWeb Site, Schoharie County Miscellany, comp. Joseph R. Brown Jr., transcribed and submitted by Roger Smith, <http://www.rootsworld.com/~nyschoha/miscell2.html> (accessed 18 December 2005).

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<sup>24</sup> Sedgwick went on to state, “if you should ever be banished to the west & find yourself in this City of Salt on a Saturday evening you shall be as cordially welcomed as was your book last night.” Charles Baldwin Sedgwick to HWL, 17 October 1858, in HWL Papers. That year Sedgwick was elected Republican Senator for New York’s 24<sup>th</sup> District on the basis of his anti-slavery (though not abolitionist) beliefs, serving two terms, from 1859 through 1863. Sedgwick’s wife, the former Deborah W. Gannett, also held strong anti-slavery beliefs. Earle Field, “Charles B. Sedgwick’s Letters from Washington, 1859-1861” *Mid-America* 49 (April 1967): 129-130.

<sup>25</sup> Andrew Hilen, “Introduction: Longfellow as Letter-Writer,” *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, vol. 3: 1844-1856 (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Thornton, *Handwriting*, pp. 86-88.

<sup>27</sup> Emily Allibone to HWL, 5 July 1859, in HWL Papers.

<sup>28</sup> Lucia Alden to HWL, 26 September 1855, in HWL Papers. Possibly this letter was from Lucia S. Alden, daughter of Henry P. Alden of Duxbury and descendant of the original John Alden and Priscilla Mullins—the subjects, of course, of Longfellow’s own *Courtship of Miles Standish* (1858). The Alden House Historic Site’s website lists her birth date as 1838, which would make her around 17 at the time she wrote this letter, so perhaps she was not as “little” as she claimed to be. It is also possible that the “academy” she refers to was the Bridgewater Normal School, established in 1840. Alden House Historic Site, <http://www.alden.org/aldengen/pafg492.htm> (accessed 18 December 2005).

<sup>29</sup> Alden to HWL, 26 September 1855.

<sup>30</sup> Eugenia Dunlap Potter to HWL, [n.d.], in HWL Papers. Potter is unidentified. In the final paragraph of her letter, Potter requested: “Now if, after you have read my first efforts at authorship, you discover merits enough to overbalance blemishes, you will kindly encourage me by an avowal of such opinion I will trespass no more upon your valuable time but remember you always as now.”

<sup>31</sup> Malcolm MacEuen to HWL, [25 February 1858], in HWL Papers. Longfellow’s letter to MacEuen is unrecovered. According to other letters in the MacEuen folder, Longfellow had met the MacEuen family in Madrid, and had assisted in Malcolm’s acceptance to Harvard in 1851. MacEuen would later publish *Celebrities of the Past and Present: chiefly adapted from Sainte-Beuve* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1874). John Foster Kirk, ed.,

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*Supplement to Allibone's Critical Dictionary of English Literature and British and American Authors* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1891, reprinted 1908), 2:1045.

<sup>32</sup> MacEuen to HWL, 23 December 1858, in HWL Papers.

<sup>33</sup> Asa Mitchell to HWL, 29 November 1861, in HWL Papers. Almost two years later Mitchell wrote from Washington, DC to Longfellow asking Longfellow to find Mitchell a “clerkship with a small salary” which would keep him from being “at the mercy of politicians who want to make a tool of me.” Announcing, “I don’t want to go into society — I don’t want to make any new acquaintances,” Mitchell hoped that the “large hearted” Longfellow would have “charity for such eccentricity of feeling.” Mitchell to HWL, 30 September 1863, in HWL Papers; ~~strikeout~~ in original. Mitchell is otherwise unidentified.

<sup>34</sup> Miss Oakes to HWL, in HWL Papers.

<sup>35</sup> John Flavel Mines to HWL, 17 May 1856, in HWL Papers; ~~strikeout~~ and emphasis in original. John Flavel Mines, an 1857 graduate of pan-Anglican Berkeley Divinity School, went on to publish, anonymously, a volume titled *The Heroes of the Last Lustre* (1858), a would-be heroic epic treating a pestilence that swamped Norfolk, Virginia in 1855. According to the dedication, Mines’ own father died of this illness. In his “Apology,” Mines claimed that much of the poem had been written two years earlier and that “causes beyond control have latterly delayed the publication of a song not then intended for the world.” [John Flavel Mines], *The Heroes of the Last Lustre, A Poem* (New York: Daniel Dana, Jr., 1858), n.p., pp. 133-5.

Mines went on to a somewhat checkered career as chaplain of a Maine regiment in the Union army. He was captured on the Manassas battlefield while giving comfort to the wounded; after having been released on parole, the Confederates rearrested him after hearing him speak in favor of secession’s illegality. Mines invoked a relationship with Confederate chaplain Quintard, but, after his release he gave up the cloth and served the Union as a lieutenant colonel in 1865. Following the Civil War, Mines published several whimsical guidebooks to New York under the pseudonym of “Felix Oldboy.” Kirk, ed. *Supplement to Allibone's Critical Dictionary*, 2:1118; Charles Todd Quintard, *Doctor Quintard, C.S.A. and Second Bishop of Tennessee: The Memoir and Civil War Diary of Charles Todd Quintard*, ed. Samuel Davis Elliott (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2003), p. 19, 19n

<sup>36</sup> Mines to HWL, 7 June 1856, in HWL Papers; emphasis in original.

<sup>36</sup> Mines to HWL.

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<sup>37</sup> Sallie Ada Reedy to HWL, 25 December 1856, in HWL Papers. Reedy's poems were included in Mary Forrest's 1859 anthology *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature*; according to the editor Miss Reedy's poems had appeared "in the various periodical issues of the South" and were scheduled for publication as a book in 1860. In a later anthology published in 1870, where Reedy appeared under her married name of Vance, the editor noted that the outbreak of the war had caused her to postpone publication. Mary Forrest, ed., *Women of the South Distinguished in Literature* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859), pp. 435-438; Ida Raymond, ed., *Southland Writers: Biographical and Critical Sketches of the Living Female Writers of the South* (Philadelphia: Claxton, Remsen and Haffelfinger, 1870), 2:609, University of Michigan, Making of America, <http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=moa;cc=moa;q1=sallie%20ada%20vance;rgn=full%20text;view=image;seq=00000001;idno=AAM8267.0002.001;didno=AAM8267.0002.001> (accessed 18 December 2005).

<sup>38</sup> Lester A. Miller to HWL, 5 March 1860, in HWL Papers. Two poems by Miller, "A Little Girl" and "An Orison: Prov. 18: 22" appeared in Abby Maria Hemenway Miller, ed., *Poets and Poetry of Vermont*, rev. ed. (Boston: Brown, Taggard & Chase; Brattleboro, [Vt.]: W. Felton, 1860, p. 330; University of Michigan, Making of America, <http://www.hti.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/pageviewer-idx?c=moa;cc=moa;sid=4baf416c3fa5961a2f836bde2f1c940b;q1=lester%20a.%20miller;rgn=full%20text;idno=AFW1370.0001.001;view=image;seq=00000334> (accessed 18 December 2005). In this anthology Miller was identified as a resident of Woodstock, Vt.

<sup>39</sup> Miller to HWL, 5 March 1860.

<sup>40</sup> James Cocke Southall to HWL, 27 December 1854, in HWL Papers. Southall received an M.A. from the University of Virginia in 1846, and following a brief legal career, spent years in self-directed study ranging from theology to the sciences before beginning a second career as a journalist in 1860. In 1874 he began his major work, *The Recent Origin of Man*, an anti-evolution work which he published in 1875, followed by a condensed revision, *The Epoch of the Mammoth* (1878). A[rmistead] C[hurchill] G[ordon], Jr., "James Cocke Southall," *Dictionary of American Biography*, ed. Allen Johnson and Dumas Malone (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 17:409-10; Kirk, ed., *Supplement to Allibone's Critical Dictionary*, 2:1368.

<sup>41</sup> Southall to HWL, 27 December 1854.

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<sup>42</sup> The volume was probably Rhodes' *The Indian Gallows, and other Poems* (New York: E. Walker, 1846), published shortly after Rhodes' graduation from Harvard. Rhodes had published several poems in the *Southern Literary Messenger* during his studies. Rhodes, whose father was U.S. consul to the Republic of Texas, practiced law in Galveston before following the gold rush to California in 1850, where he practiced law and continued to write under the pen name "Caxton." His writings include two stories "The Case of Summerfield" and its sequel, "The Summerfield Case Again," published in the 13 May 1871 and 10 June 1871 numbers of the *Sacramento Union*, two apocalyptic short stories which set off a panic in California when they were published. Rhodes' writings were collected posthumously in *Caxton's Book* (1876). Sam Moskowitz, "The Science Fiction Hoaxes of William Henry Rhodes," in W. H. Rhodes, *Caxton's Book: A Collection of Essays, Poems, Tales and Sketches*, ed. Daniel O'Connell (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft, 1876; reprinted with new intro. Sam Moskowitz, Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1974), pp. [ii-iii]; William S. Powell, "William Henry Rhodes," in William S. Powell, ed., *Dictionary of North Carolina Biography* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 5:208-9.

<sup>43</sup> William Henry Rhodes to HWL, 31 May 1846, in HWL Papers.

<sup>44</sup> Rhodes to HWL.

<sup>45</sup> Rhodes to HWL. As a younger man Longfellow himself had been aware of the dangers of early volume publication. In 1829 his friend George Washington Greene had written to Longfellow praising the poems Longfellow had published in the *United States Literary Gazette* as a student but urging him not to publish early, warning: "No country has produced more young men who at twenty have promised great things and have failed to justify the expectations formed of them from too great a hurry to be known." Longfellow reassured Greene that "If I ever publish a volume it will be many years first." George Washington Greene to Longfellow, 16 April 1830, in HWL Papers; Longfellow to Greene, 27 June 1830, in *Letters*, 1:343.

<sup>46</sup> Rhodes to Longfellow, 31 May 1846, in HWL Papers.

<sup>47</sup> Elvira Perkins to HWL, 6 September 1857, in HWL Papers; emphasis in original. Perkins' mention of her family's poverty and her need to earn money from her poetry echoes the justifications of women's writing described in Mary Kelley's seminal *Private Woman, Public Stage* and Susan Williams' more specific discussion of the Warner sisters' adult careers. Kelley's discussion of these women's anxious statements about publicity has more recently been challenged by Paula Bennett and others as too easily accepting these statements as truthful and not as strategic means of working around proscriptions against women writers. There is a productive

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tension, however, between these two positions, as there almost certainly were women—like Perkins and the Warners—who struggled with both the need to earn money *and* the desire to write, a desire Kelley’s work brings to the surface in her discussion of the girlhood dreams of many antebellum women writers. Mary Kelley, *Private Woman, Public Stage: Literary Domesticity in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984); Paula Bernat Bennett, *Poets in the Public Sphere: The Emancipatory Project of American Women’s Poetry, 1800-1900* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); Susan S. Williams, “Widening the Wide World: Susan Warner, Her Readers, and the Assumption of Authorship,” *American Quarterly* 42 (December 1990): esp. p. 531; see also Cheryl Walker, *The Nightingale’s Burden: Women Poets and American Culture Before 1900* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982); Richards, “Poetic Attractions.”

<sup>48</sup> [Elvira] Judith Grant Perkins, *Harp of the Willows* (Boston: published for the author by G. C. Rand & Avery, 1858). I am grateful to Martha J. King who graciously provided access to Princeton University’s copy of this volume.

<sup>49</sup> William T. Marsh to HWL, 7 April 1856, in HWL Papers. Marsh is unidentified.

<sup>50</sup> “The Norman Baron,” in *The Liberty Bell* (Boston: Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Fair, 1845), pp. 31-35, and “The Poet of Miletus,” in *The Liberty Bell* (Boston: Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Fair, 1846), pp. 23-5. “The Poet of Miletus” is a gentle outcry against restrictions of freedom of speech, with only a passing reference to the issue of slavery.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Gartner, “Public Obligation and Poetic Vocation;” Robert A. Ferguson, “Longfellow’s Political Fears: Civic Authority and the Role of the Artist in *Hiawatha* and *Miles Standish*,” *American Literature* 50 (May 1978): 187-215.

<sup>52</sup> Charles Augustus Pairs to HWL, 29 December 1855, in HWL Papers. Pairs is unidentified.

<sup>53</sup> L. M. Greene to HWL, 20 October 1840, in HWL Papers. Greene is unidentified.

<sup>54</sup> HWL, *Journal* [1 Oct 1845-28 Feb 1847], 23. Albert Tracy had written to Longfellow on 28 November 1845:

I use the freedom to enclose you a copy of verses written by myself, and to solicit your opinion of their merits. To one of your own attainments as a scholar, the effusion will, without doubt, appear sufficiently crude; but I do not send ~~them~~ so much to ask whether it is at all perfect, as to enquire whether considered in the whole, it would *warrant* me a regular and systematic study of poetical composition. Nor do I presume upon your courtesy to say simply what you may approve, but would like have [sic] you point out at once any errors of any description.

A very few lines on this subject, addressed to me at this place, would be esteemed an invaluable favor...



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Albert Tracy to HWL, 28 November 1845, in HWL Papers; strikeout and emphasis in original. The Hilen edition identifies this correspondent as the Albert Haller Tracy of Buffalo, N.Y., who served in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth federal Congresses (1819-1825) as a Representative from New York and later was an unsuccessful Whig candidate for the Senate in 1839. In the same folder at the Houghton is a letter in a different hand, signed “Albert H. Tracy” and dated 1856, praising *Hiawatha*. Albert H. Tracy to HWL, 26 March 1856, in HWL Papers. Since the former Representative had a son also named Albert H. Tracy, it is possible that one letter was written by the father and one by the son. Internal evidence (including a reference to a “justly long life”) suggests that this letter may have been written by the father.

<sup>55</sup> HWL to Albert Haller Tracy, 3 December 1845, in *Letters*, 3:92; emphasis in original. The letter is in Samuel Longfellow’s hand; HWL mentioned in a postscript to this letter that his eyes were “very bad.”

<sup>56</sup>[HWL], *Journal [1 Oct 1845-28 Feb 1847]*, p. 253, in HWL Papers.

<sup>57</sup> [Fanny Fern], Sara Parton Willis, *Ruth Hall and Other Writings*, ed. and intro., Joyce W. Warren, American Women Writers Series (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), p. 183.

<sup>58</sup> Kelley, *Private Woman*; Michael Newbury, *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters*, pp. 69-70; [Fern], *Ruth Hall*, pp. 134-137, 163-166, 180-183, 187-190.

<sup>59</sup> Williams, “Widening,” esp. pp. 572-575.

<sup>60</sup> [HWL], *Personal Account Book*, in HWL Papers, pp. 3-6.

<sup>61</sup> N. T. Rosseter to HWL, in HWL Papers.

<sup>62</sup> Charvat, *Profession of Authorship*, pp. 100-167; Torrence, “People’s Voice,” pp. 50-68, 589-90.

<sup>63</sup> HWL, *Manuscript Gleanings, and Literary Scrapbook* (London: J. Poole, [n.d.]), pp. 24-25, in HWL Papers. HWL transcribed this statement into this commercially printed commonplace book. Internal evidence indicates that HWL presented it to his second wife Frances Appleton Longfellow in 1846.

<sup>64</sup> On HWL as paternalistic instructor, see Gartner, “Public Obligation and Poetic Vocation,” pp. 85-116; Christoph Irmscher, “Longfellow Redux,” *Raritan* 21 (Winter 2002): 100-29; Angus Fletcher, “Whitman and Longfellow: Two Types of the American Poet,” *Raritan* 10 (Spring 1991): 131-45; Virginia Jackson, “Longfellow’s Tradition; or, Picture-Writing a Nation,” *Modern Language Quarterly* 59 (December 1998): 472-96.

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<sup>65</sup> HWL to Stephen Longfellow, 22 March 1840, *Letters*, 2:221; emphasis in original. Hilen identifies Longworth as Nicholas Longworth (1782-1863), a lawyer and horticulturist in Cincinnati. *Letters*, 2:221n2.

<sup>66</sup> Ethel Grey to HWL, 10 September 1856, in HWL Papers; emphasis in original. Ethel Grey (c1833-?) had published a volume of poetry titled *Sunset Gleams: from the City of the Mounds* in 1852, with a preface/dedication dated “St. Louis, Mo. Oct. 6 1851.” In her introduction to the volume, Grey refers to having “seen but eighteen summers die, and eighteen years have been a *life* to me,” *Sunset Gleams*, p. 14; emphasis in original. In this volume, Grey’s poem “Laborare est Orare” includes an epigraph of the four lines from HWL’s “Psalm of Life” beginning “Let us then be up and doing,” credited only as “From Psalm of Life.” *Sunset Mounds*, 122. Ethel Grey, *Sunset Gleams from the City of the Mounds* (New York: John F. Trow, 1852), n.p., pp. 14, 122. I am grateful to Donna K. Anderson for her thoughtful reading of the copy of this volume held at the Special Collections Library, University of Missouri–St. Louis, St. Louis, Mo.

<sup>67</sup> Sallie Alexander to HWL, [1858], in HWL Papers. Alexander is unidentified.

<sup>68</sup> S. R. Phillips to HWL, 10 December 1855.

<sup>69</sup> Phillips to HWL.

<sup>70</sup> HWL to Abraham Hart, 4 February 1846, *Letters*, 3:99. The letter from the Rocky Mountains is unidentified. The letter from Texas was from Lieutenant Colonel Ethan Allen Hitchcock, was dated Corpus Christi, Texas, and asked HWL for his opinions on Gabriele Rossetti’s *Discourses on the antipapal spirit* (London: 1834).

Hitchcock is identified in *Letters*, 3:97n1 (1798-1870) as “professional soldier, Swedenborgian, and author of volumes on philosophy, literature, and military adventures” serving in the army of occupation in Texas.

Longfellow sent Hitchcock a polite, thoughtful response and referred him to a discussion of Rossetti’s theory published several years earlier in the *Foreign Quarterly Review*. ). Ethan Allen Hitchcock to HWL, 5 January 1846, in HWL Papers; HWL to Ethan Allen Hitchcock, 30 January 1846, *Letters*, 3:96-7n1.

<sup>71</sup> Thomas N. Baker, *Sentiment & Celebrity: Nathaniel Parker Willis and the Trials of Literary Fame* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 90-6.

<sup>72</sup> [HWL], [*Scrap Book—Criticism—1833-1839*], clippings pasted inside [HWL, comp.] *French Exercises, Selected Chiefly from Wanostrucht and adapted to the Elements of French Grammar by M. L’Homond* (Portland, Maine: Samuel Coleman, 1830), in HWL Papers; [HWL], *Scrap Book, 1839-1850*, in HWL Papers.

<sup>73</sup> HWL to Stephen Longfellow, 22 March 1840, *Letters*, 2:221, 221n2; emphasis in original.

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<sup>74</sup> Lisa Pater Faranda, "A Social Necessity: The Friendship of Sherwood Bonner and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow," in *Patrons and Protégées: Gender, Friendship and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Shirley Marchalonis (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1988), pp. 184-211.