

<AT>Longfellow, Tennyson, and Transatlantic Celebrity

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<HDA>Abstract

Exploring the celebrity culture and lion-hunting associated with Alfred Tennyson and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, this article argues that while both poets experienced enormous literary fame during their lifetimes, the celebrity culture surrounding them might have been a motivating factor in their subsequent decline in popularity, and the Modernist depreciation of nineteenth-century poetry. Exploring the ways in which Longfellow courted celebrity culture, the article turns to the lion-hunting exploits of Edward Bok, a Dutch-American magazine editor, to demonstrate the desire of Longfellow's readers to physically encounter him. Examining the intense media coverage attending Longfellow's travels to Britain in 1868–69, the article underlines his status as the ultimate American literary celebrity of the period, but also positions Longfellow as a 'lion-hunter' by focusing on his meeting with Tennyson on the Isle of Wight in 1868, and on the way in which their encounters in person and in print reveal contrasting attitudes to celebrity.

<FL>One of the most incongruous sights in Westminster Abbey's Poets' Corner is the bust of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Installed in 1884, just two years after Longfellow's death, it stands testament to the poet's popularity in the nineteenth century, not least in Britain. Yet to students of poetry now, Longfellow's name is nearly obscure – his poems occupy just six

pages of the current edition of the *Norton Anthology of Poetry*, and only one full-length biography of him has been published in the last fifty years,¹ with critical attention similarly scant. This biography's title, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (2004), along with those of other recent studies of the poet (*Longfellow Redux* (2006), *Reconsidering Longfellow* (2014)) demonstrate a desire to challenge his obscurity, as well, perhaps, as an insecurity about providing titles which do not acknowledge it. In the nineteenth century he was widely held to be the American equivalent of Tennyson, in terms of popularity and quality; both have seen their stars fade a good deal since the height of their eminence.

This is in part a legacy of the Modernist approach to Victorian literature and culture, which was largely hostile and disparaging. The first issue of *Blast* (1914) took aim at the 'years 1837–1900', urging its readers to 'wring the neck of all sick inventions' of the period.² One such 'invention' that other writers of the time saw as problematic was the multi-volume biography, and the Carlylean idolization of 'great men' which spawned the form.³ The Modernist response to this is perhaps best located in the short, satirical sketches of Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918), and the fictionalized life writing of James Joyce and of Virginia Woolf, who in *To the Lighthouse* (1927) has Mr Ramsay (a version of her father, Leslie Stephen) blunder around his garden childishly seeking attention from a family to whom his 'greatness' means little. This reaction against the Victorian tendency towards veneration of the 'great' is linked to the equally Victorian interest in celebrity.

Both Longfellow and Tennyson were 'great men' in the Carlylean tradition, with multi-volume memoirs of their lives, edited inevitably by their children, to demonstrate this, and yet they have both recently been reassessed as innovative figures in terms of their approach to celebrity. Kathryn Ledbetter, for instance, in 2007 described Tennyson as the first 'media poet' (just as Victoria was a 'media monarch');⁴ Longfellow was described in the same year as 'America's first "pop" poet' by Christoph Irmscher.⁵ Both Irmscher and

Ledbetter, in *Longfellow Redux* and *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals* respectively, present their chosen poets as actively involved in the creation of their public persona. This has been developed further still in the case of Tennyson by, among others, Charlotte Boyce, Páraic Finnerty, and Anne-Marie Millim in *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson's Circle* (2013), which contains detailed reconsiderations of Tennyson and his friends in relation to their status as Victorian celebrities. Boyce, in particular, has noted the similarity between the British and American press in their approach to writing articles about Tennyson at home – invariably finding the Laureate initially unreceptive, but, ‘after proving themselves intellectually worthy of the poet’s regard and winning his trust by degrees’, authors of such pieces typically end up establishing themselves as insiders to the ‘warm and convivial’ Tennyson, to the benefit of their readers, who will never be able to spend an afternoon with the poet at his Isle of Wight home, Farringford.⁶ These writers, who typically denounce the high level of public interest in Tennyson while at the same time attempting to satisfy it, demonstrate the considerable public demand for ‘virtual literary tourism’ in the period. This article will consider points of connection, in terms of their attitudes to fame, between Tennyson and Longfellow, the two most famous and indeed most celebrated poets of their day in their respective countries, culminating in a study of Longfellow’s visit to Britain in 1868 which included various media events, including an encounter, and the founding of a friendship, between the two men.

A consideration of nineteenth-century literary celebrity cannot avoid ‘lionism’, a characteristic idea of the period. The final entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for ‘lion’ (the definition for ‘a person of note or celebrity who is much sought after’) is from Thomas Adolphus Trollope’s series of memoirs, *What I Remember* (3 vols, 1887–89). It refers to the ‘poet’s penalty of being made the lion of all the drawing rooms that were fortunate enough to capture him’, and is a reference to Longfellow’s winter in Florence in

1868 (which followed his tour of England, to be discussed later); Longfellow is thus indelibly associated with the idea of the nineteenth-century ‘lion’ (*OED*, entry 4 b). Yet recent studies of ‘lionism’ suggest that the examples of Longfellow and Tennyson might be used to separate ‘lions’ from figures whose fame stemmed from forms of social patronage, but became more centrally bound up with networks of mass-media communication. Richard Salmon has described lionism as ‘the quintessential mode of nineteenth-century celebrity, a cultural practice which is virtually coterminous with the century itself’, and notes the etymology of the term, which in the early nineteenth century meant ‘entertaining sight or spectacle’.⁷ His observation that the concept of lionism is a uniquely nineteenth-century phenomenon is based on the idea that, by the beginning of the twentieth century, it was ‘reminiscent of a culture of social patronage increasingly bypassed by the channels of mass-media communication’.⁸ He identifies lionism as essentially cyclical, with most lions failing to preserve their lofty status for too long: ‘the cultural practice of lionism signals the fungible status of modern authors, each successive “lion” replacing the temporary renown of his predecessor’.⁹ This article will demonstrate that when Longfellow met Tennyson in 1868 it was an encounter between celebrities, as Nicholas Dames has defined them:

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Celebrity is a term that is absolute (in contrast to the relativism of popularity) and expressive of a certain passiveness (as opposed to the active quality of ‘lionizing’). Someone who is a celebrity to one person or group is, within a mass culture, a celebrity to all, and even if the mark of celebrity has been lowered from Napoleon to teenage authors of scandalous novels, that is no reason why the celebrity of the latter cannot eventually equal the celebrity of the former.¹⁰

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In a consideration of Thackeray's attitude towards celebrity, Dames notes a difference between the 'lion', whose fame was potentially 'not tameable', with 'celebrity' status suggesting 'no threatened demise at the hands of lionhunters, no fear that these lions pose any ethical or even criminal questions'.¹¹ While his quarrel with the term 'lion' takes perhaps too little account of the etymology which Salmon subsequently investigated, Dames's qualification here offers a fruitful way of comparing figures such as Longfellow and Tennyson as distinct from other nineteenth-century 'lions'.

It would seem that in 1920, when the aforementioned reaction against Victorian life writing was in full swing, that publishers and critics alike still thought lion-hunting of great interest to readers. This is clear from the awarding of the Pulitzer Prize in 1921 to an autobiography which focuses on a European who embraces American literary (and indeed celebrity) culture, *The Americanisation of Edward Bok*, by the titular Dutch-American journalist, who had edited the *Ladies' Home Journal* with great success from 1889 to 1919. The story told in the autobiography is unusual, which might account for its acclaim; we learn that, having arrived from Holland as a child and having endured severe poverty on arrival, the scant leisure time he had in his early adulthood was spent lion-hunting. Following a spell working at a bakery, his next job (at the age of thirteen) was as an 'Office Boy' at Western Union, and the first book he bought in his self-described 'Hunger for Self-Education' was *Appleton's Cyclopaedia of American Biography*. This choice was apparently inspired by his encounters with the famous at Western Union, which sparked a desire to 'study the lives of successful men and women'.¹² Such encounters led him to begin writing to the figures in *Appleton's*, sending them questions which varied from requests for clarifications of fact to questions about the rationales behind particular decisions. It is a testament to the nineteenth-century convention for responding to letters, that he received many replies:

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General Grant sketched on an improvised map the exact spot where General Lee surrendered to him; Longfellow told him how he came to write ‘Excelsior’; Whittier told the story of ‘The Barefoot Boy’; Tennyson wrote out a stanza or two of ‘The Brook’, upon condition that Edward would not again use the word ‘awful,’ which the poet said ‘is slang for “very”, and “I hate slang”’. (Bok 18)

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While Bok evidently did not always meet with success – one letter to him from Longfellow replies, in the negative, to a request for Tennyson’s autograph – his correspondence with Jubal A. Early was his most profitable in many ways. The retired confederate general provided Bok with the real reason he ordered the burning of Chambersburg, and this caught the eye of a friend of his father’s, who suggested submitting it to the *New York Tribune*, who published it and subsequently sent a reporter to see this unusual correspondent. That, in turn, led to Bok’s profiting from his autograph collection and becoming, if not quite a celebrity, at least a person of more interest than others to the ‘successful men and women’ from whom he had previously received letters, as they began inviting him to meet them when they visited New York. Following soon after this account of his early correspondence is a chapter entitled ‘Going to the Theatre with Longfellow’. Though he does not give a precise date, this encounter seems to have taken place when he was still quite young, thus in the very late 1870s (Bok was born in 1863 and began working at Western Union in 1876; Longfellow died in 1882). It is clear just how much this encounter meant to Bok (as well as the interest in it his intended readers should take) not only from the chapter title and focus but also from the tone: ‘When Edward Bok stood before the home of Longfellow, he realized that he was to see the man around whose head the boy’s youthful reading had cast a sort of halo’ (Bok 41). In an autobiography full of lucky coincidences, the Longfellow encounter is characteristic – the

poet discovers by chance Bok's Dutch heritage and asks him to read from a recently published translation of his own work, before taking him to the theatre in the evening and introducing him to Wendell Phillips. The chapter ends:

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He had breakfasted with Oliver Wendell Holmes; dined, supped and been to the theatre with Longfellow; and to-morrow he was to spend with Phillips Brooks.

Boston was a great place, Edward Bok thought, as he fell asleep. (Bok 47)

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Bok's desire to meet his chosen 'successful men and women' is a literal manifestation of the popular desire for 'brushes with fame' and for articles on encounters with such figures in late nineteenth-century journalism, and it is striking that this seems to have been greeted with readerly enthusiasm in the early twentieth century. Longfellow's status in the U.S.A. in the nineteenth century – the 'halo' is not surprising – was of something close to a national laureate, perhaps as a result in part of his *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855), one of the most successful poems dealing with Native American themes, as well as stirring verses such as 'Excelsior' (1841). He was regularly asked to provide words on national themes, for example being asked, too late, to name the state which eventually became Idaho.¹³ Yet he secured his initial fame less through his verse, and more from his 1833 book *Outre-Mer, A Pilgrimage Beyond the Sea*, which details his travels in (primarily southern) Europe. This connection with other cultures was reinforced by his appointment to the Smith Professorship in Modern Languages at Harvard in 1834,¹⁴ as well as his later editing thirty-one volumes entitled *Poems of Places* (1876–79), which presented poems about specific locations in places such as Italy and England.

Yet as the poem progresses, it becomes clear that these voices are made up not just of imagined readers but of:

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Kind messages, that pass from land to land;

Kind letters, that betray the heart's deep history,

In which we feel the pressure of a hand, –

One touch of fire, – and all the rest is mystery! (Longfellow 1850, 1)

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The idea of a physical ‘touch of fire’ within a letter demonstrates Longfellow’s idea of writing *being* speech, where books ‘are to us as if a living tongue / Spake from the printed leaves or pictured faces’ (Longfellow 1850, 1). The idea of communication via the written or printed word is elevated in the ‘Dedication’ to a status potentially preferable to an actual meeting:

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Perhaps on earth I never shall behold,

With eye of sense, your outward form and semblance;

Therefore to me ye never will grow old,

But live forever young in my remembrance. (Longfellow 1850, 3)

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It is not hard to see from lines such as these how Longfellow’s readers might have been encouraged to send him letters, and indeed to try to visit him in person. His public status as a Harvard professor, as well as the many articles in the press about his home (which could hardly avoid mentioning its history, as George Washington’s headquarters during the Siege of Boston), meant that it was not difficult to track it down. In later years Longfellow would write in his journals – never *quite* complaining – of his popularity, noting on 9 October 1879:

‘This forenoon fourteen callers; thirteen of them English’.¹⁸ He was, for instance, visited by Oscar Wilde in 1882, the final year of his life.

If Longfellow partially encouraged interaction with his readers, his English equivalent, Tennyson, surely did not. While Longfellow attached the aforementioned ‘Dedication’ to his 1850 collection, Tennyson published *In Memoriam* anonymously that year, and Longfellow was eager to stress the significance of this decision. In a letter to James Thomas Fields, who was readying the poem for U.S. publication, Longfellow noted that Fields had added Tennyson’s name in pencil to the title page:

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I hope you do not mean to print it so. Respect the sacred silence he imposes on himself. He has some reason for not giving his name to this work, which you should respect. I would have your edition an exact reprint of the English.¹⁹

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This concern for Tennyson reflected Longfellow’s longstanding admiration for his works. He discovered the English poet early – in an 1837 letter he said that ‘He too is quaint, and at times so wondrously beautiful in his expressions, that even the nicest ear can ask no richer melody: – and the most lively imagination no lovelier picture, nor more true’.²⁰ Tennyson was hardly high profile at that stage of his career – it was the 1842 collection *Poems* which really made his name – yet the association with Longfellow was cemented in the U.S. press by Edgar Allen Poe’s repeated claims that Longfellow’s ‘Midnight Mass for the Dying Year’ (1839) plagiarized Tennyson’s ‘The Death of the Old Year’ (1832). Longfellow vehemently denied the accusation, going as far as to claim that he ‘did not even know that he had written a piece on this subject’.²¹ The affinity Longfellow felt for Tennyson meant that when the American visited England in 1843, he wanted to visit the poet, perhaps feeling an impulse similar to those described in the later ‘Dedication’. He complained in letters that Tennyson

was out of town when he was in London, and in a letter to John Forster, whom he did manage to meet, he regretted not having seen Monckton Milnes:

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and Tennyson, too, a more mystic master of the lyre, why did I not see him? And Marston? And Taylor? I sympathize with these men. I should have been delighted to see them. And Talford, likewise; and – but enough! I saw you and Dickens and to see the others can wait for another visit.²²

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Despite authoring books about the delights of European travel, Longfellow here seems to remember his trip to Britain in terms of celebrity, in a manner reminiscent of the way Nicholas Dames has discussed nineteenth-century ‘brushes with fame’, where an encounter with a celebrity:

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replaces or displaces memories more familial, possibly more traumatic, and certainly more personal. Put another way, the allure of a public world of fame extends its reach into and over a realm of memory and desire that is only putatively private.²³

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The overlap between the public and the private is clear from many of Longfellow’s own ‘brushes’ with fame. Literary Americans often relied on letters of introduction, along with their own reputations, to gain access to European ‘lions’, but this did not always work – in 1835 Longfellow arrived at Edward Bulwer Lytton’s home in the morning, armed with a letter of introduction, only to be told to ‘come back some other morning’.²⁴ The letter to Forster demonstrates that Longfellow was seeking out the literary celebrities of the day, apparently as a result of a feeling of ‘sympathy’ with them, part of the kind of friendship

envisaged in 'Dedication'. Longfellow's sympathy for Tennyson can perhaps best be identified in his letters, where he frequently quotes the English poet in reference to his own feelings – for instance, just over a month after his wife has died in a freak domestic accident, he expresses his grief to her sister, Mary Appleton Mackintosh, by quoting from *The Princess* (1847): 'Truly do you say there was no one like her. And now that she is gone, I can only utter a cry "from the depth of a divine despair"'.²⁵ He continued occasionally to voice his thoughts through Tennyson's words in letters until his death; clearly he felt a sense of communication with Tennyson of the type described in 'Dedication', 'softened by the distance'.

It has already been mentioned how eager Longfellow was for a meeting with Tennyson in 1843, and for similar reasons to those expressed in fan letters to the American poet. Longfellow's 'sympathy' with Tennyson, from one poet to another, is matched by the many poets, professional or amateur, British, American, and from other parts of the world, who wrote to him also claiming kinship (and frequently requesting advice on writing). Longfellow's correspondence, however, contains evidence of a physical connection with the poet, even before their meeting. Longfellow and his wife were pleased in 1859 to receive 'jessamine from Tennyson's garden' – a souvenir sent by James Thomas Fields, and possibly an anticipatory token, endorsed by the Laureate, of the later encounter at Farringford between Longfellow and Tennyson.²⁶ The two poets, once they had eventually met, went on to trade garden cuttings in their subsequent letters. Tennyson says, 'You have sent me a Christmas greeting: more than that, a Christmas gift in the shape of a very perfect flower from your own spacious garden: wherefore I exult and stick it in my cap and defy my foes'.²⁷ The association of poetical kinship and cuttings from plants and poets was stressed, in semi-public fashion, at the time of Tennyson's funeral in 1892, where a branch of laurel from Delphi was placed inside Tennyson's coffin. Two months after the funeral, Alfred Austin claimed that

the sprig had been cut for him, and that he had then sent it to the Tennysons on news of the Laureate's death, hinting at a desire to be associated with the poet not only through writing accounts of their friendship but also in a physical manner.²⁸

Austin's behaviour in print at the death of Tennyson is a fairly brazen example of a Victorian poet attempting to self-publicize; yet many poets of the period, whether consciously or otherwise, reinforced their own identity through a combination of their poetry and their public persona. This is clear from the gift Longfellow chose to send Tennyson in 1867, a Native American 'red stone pipe of peace', admitting in a subsequent letter that 'I fancy it can never be of any practical use. But it is pretty'.²⁹ That Longfellow, the author of *The Song of Hiawatha*, should choose this gift demonstrates his own self-identification with that poem and thus his own willingness to self-identify as its author (the pipe is now on display at the Tennyson Research Centre in Lincoln). These exchanges of souvenirs also provide a distinction between unique, elite celebrity objects, often ephemeral, and the ubiquitous mass-market paraphernalia. Another act of self-identification came late in Longfellow's life, with the composition of his poem 'Wapentake. To Alfred Tennyson'. This poem was included in Longfellow's *Kéramos, and Other Poems* (1878), having previously been published in the *Atlantic Monthly* (December 1877). Longfellow also transcribed it for Tennyson in a November 1877 letter:

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Poet! I come to touch thy lance with mine;
 Not as a knight, who on the listed field
 Of tourney touched his adversary's shield
 In token of defiance, but in sign
 Of homage to the mastery, which is thine,
 In English song; nor will I keep concealed,

And voiceless as a rivulet frost-congealed,
 My admiration for thy verse divine.
 Not of the howling dervishes of song,
 Who craze the brain with their delirious dance,
 Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!
 Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
 To thee our love and our allegiance,
 For thy allegiance to the poet's art.³⁰

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The shift here from the first person singular to first person plural performs a similar shift in the narrative persona – from the individual, who did indeed ‘touch lances’ with Tennyson and addresses him as a personal friend, to the collective, presumably representing American poetry-lovers in general (though, following Longfellow’s logic, the two are in a sense interchangeable); perhaps even fulfilling the role as a poetical ambassador for his nation. It might also be noted here that Longfellow associates Tennyson with the Arthurian, in reference to *Idylls of the King*; and he does indeed call the Laureate ‘King Arthur’, seemingly without irony, in a letter.³¹

This performance of reverence for Tennyson is in keeping with Longfellow’s outward-facing declarations of admiration. For example, on reading the first four of Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King* in 1859, he wrote to Fields:

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The Idyls [*sic*] are a brilliant success. Rich tapestries, wrought as only Tennyson could have done them, and worthy to hang beside The Faerie Queene. I believe there is no discordant voice on this side the water.³²

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In his journals for July 1859, however, Longfellow expressed slightly less joy than in this letter (whose recipient, while a friend, was Tennyson's publisher in the U.S.):

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19th. Get from the publisher Tennyson's new poem, Four Idyls [*sic*] of the King. Eagerly devour the first of them, which is charming, – reminding one of Chaucer's 'Griselda'.

20th. Finished the Four Idyls. The first and third could only have come from a great poet. The second and fourth do not seem to me so good.³³

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This is not to suggest a lack of sincerity on Longfellow's part – he was clearly a great admirer of Tennyson from the earliest days. Yet there is, here, a difference between the private journal and the public voice of the letters, even when the recipient is a close friend.

Tennyson always affected a lack of concern for what people thought of him, and books reminiscing on the Victorian period often included anecdotes to this end. One such apocryphal story can be found in Charles H.E. Brookfield's 1902 *Random Reminiscences*. This mentions Brookfield's father, who was 'dining at the Oxford and Cambridge Club with George Venables, Frank Lushington, Tennyson, and two or three others. After dinner the poet insisted on putting his feet on the table, tilting back in his chair *more Americano*.' This led to widespread objections, which Tennyson ignored, until "Alfred," said my father, "people will think you're Longfellow." Down went the feet.'³⁴ According to William Allington, the Laureate also raised what he saw as shortcomings in Longfellow's verse with the American when he visited Farringford in 1868: 'Longfellow – I didn't compliment him – told him I didn't like his hexameters: he rather defended them'.³⁵ If this exchange did take place, it did not stop Longfellow recounting his visit to Tennyson in glowing terms as one of the highlights of his trip to England in 1868:

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I have so many, many things to tell you, that there would be no end, therefore there shall be no beginning. Among them is Tennyson's reading 'Boadicea' to me at midnight! A memorable night!³⁶

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The fact that this experience above all others on the tour was singled out for praise demonstrates both Longfellow's admiration for Tennyson and his desire to emphasize it in accounts of his time in England, which was somewhat frantic until his arrival on the Isle of Wight. Allingham reported Tennyson's thinking Longfellow 'tired' and this is no surprise given his itinerary – and the fact that almost everything he did in England became a media event.³⁷ This also indicates that insiders such as Allingham considered Freshwater a retreat, for celebrities, from the prying eyes of admirers.

Editors of regional newspapers throughout the British Isles clearly assumed their readers' interest in Longfellow; the following section refers to a wide range of such periodicals to demonstrate this. The first reports of Longfellow's visit to England circulated in the press in May 1868 (see for instance the *Glasgow Herald* of 15 May 1868), and as time went on, more details were added – for example the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* on 25 May informed its readers that the poet would spend 'a few days in the English lake district'.³⁸ Reports of other plans followed; for instance, the *Essex Standard* on 29 May noted that he would be receiving an Honorary LL.D from Cambridge University.³⁹ This is testament, in part, to the unedited reproduction of news from London papers in the regional press, but also potentially to the readers of these papers having an interest in the activities of Longfellow. Equally, his own activities as a celebrity overlap with his tour of famous English sites (and sights) and his own encounters with English celebrities, indicating that British culture was inescapable. That he had a wide readership in Britain is certainly true, and many Victorian

writers, as well as more recent critics, have suggested that this was in part a result of the lack of copyright for American writers in Britain (and, vice versa, of British writers in America), meaning that Longfellow's works frequently sold for less than, say, Tennyson's, in Britain. Yet there must surely have also been something of the 'fireside', welcoming nature of Longfellow that appealed. Either way, the widespread reproduction of a gushing *Express* article on Longfellow in 1868 demonstrates the extent to which editors believed in his popularity:

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A guest is approaching our shores, or has already landed, whose name is a household word to the English people. No poet of our own or any other land is so widely known and appreciated by strangely various classes of society as the author of 'Hiawatha' and the 'Psalm of Life'. In farmhouse parlours and London drawing-rooms, on cottage bookshelves and in students' desks, at schools, from the pulpit, and in the streets may evidence of Longfellow's enormous popularity be traced. He is not less the poet of the people than a chosen companion of the cultured and refined; and his words are in the mouths of thousands to whom our own Tennyson is only partially familiar and to whom Browning is an unknown name.⁴⁰

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This article ended with a hope that Longfellow might be afforded a welcome comparable with that of Dickens in America, and also included a moralistic and nationalistic reason for the public interest in his visit: 'Longfellow has claims on us independently of his verse. He is essentially a many-sided man, and his is a character and a career appealing to many English sympathies.'⁴¹ The above quotation might also contain a coded critique of the two English poets mentioned, with Longfellow able to reach audiences who are unaware of his

transatlantic counterparts. His widespread popularity is echoed in certain accounts of his visit, not least that of Queen Victoria, who hosted him at Windsor Castle. The Queen expressed surprise that her staff:

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so generally understood who he was. When he took leave, they concealed themselves in places from which they could get a good look at him as he passed. I have since inquired among them, and am surprised and pleased to find that many of his poems are familiar to them. No other distinguished person has come here that has excited so peculiar an interest. Such poets wear a crown that is imperishable.⁴²

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Though Longfellow travelled widely in England in 1868 (and also in Scotland, on his return from mainland Europe, in 1869), press interest in his trip was focused on a few incidents in addition to his visit to Windsor Castle. The first took place soon after his arrival, when he travelled from Liverpool to the Lake District and then to stay with an acquaintance near Carlisle. The *Pall Mall Gazette* report of his arrival there, where he was ‘cheered by a large crowd at the station’ at half past nine at night, was widely reproduced, as was the short account of his reception the following day at the Carlisle Mechanics’ Institute.⁴³ His subsequent trip to Cambridge was also noted in many newspapers, right down to the time of the honorary degree ceremony, two o’clock (as stated in the *Newcastle Journal* of 16 June 1868), along with details of the ceremony.⁴⁴ Other notable events mentioned in the press included his attendance of speech day at Harrow (again reported in meticulous detail), and his lack of attendance at an honorary degree ceremony in Oxford the day after the one at Cambridge, eventually explained as the result of a problem with his train. The most widely

reported incident, however, was a dinner held in his honour at the Langham, the hotel at which he was staying. As the *Tralee Chronicle* reports:

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A grand banquet was given at the Langham hotel last evening, to do honor to Professor Longfellow. 86 noblemen and gentlemen were present, including the Duke of Argyle, Lord Houghton, Mr Gladstone, Sir H. Bulwer, Mr Cardwell, Mr Coleridge, QC, Mr T. Hughes, Sir E. Landseer, Mr Robert Browning.⁴⁵

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It had been suggested in the run-up to this that Tennyson would attend, but this did not prove possible; however, readers of the *Isle of Wight Observer* soon learned that the two poets would, in fact, meet:

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Mr Longfellow left London on Friday for the Isle of Wight, on a visit to Mr. Tennyson. Subsequently he will proceed to Switzerland and Italy, and is expected to return to London in May of next year.⁴⁶

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Tennyson had postponed his departure from Farringford in order to host Longfellow, who spent two days in Freshwater. The visit itself was not, it would seem, widely reported on, but it was still a local event, as recounted in Ann Thwaite's biography of Emily Tennyson: 'As many as forty' people were invited to tea on the lawns with Longfellow, who was monopolized by the men of the party to the extent that the women were vocally unhappy. Emily Tennyson solved the problem by 'putting her arm within Longfellow's and telling him "the ladies were dying to shake hands with him"... and she took him round the lawn with an appropriate word to each'.⁴⁷ The two poets remembered the visit warmly in their letters, and Longfellow's letters from the Isle of Wight reflect a relaxation that was impossible earlier on

his trip, when he rushed between towns and engagements. This sojourn on the Isle of Wight also produced what is probably the most famous image of Longfellow – the photograph by Julia Margaret Cameron. Longfellow visited Cameron, who lived next door to Tennyson, briefly with the Laureate (who apparently told him, ‘I will leave you now, Longfellow. You will have to do whatever she tells you. I will come back soon and see what is left of you’), and the American also seems to have returned to her house for an hour (presumably to be photographed again) later in his stay.⁴⁸ Charles W. Mann describes Cameron’s photograph of Longfellow as an image ‘of an angry old man, with a head resembling the crest of a stormy wave; emotional, strong, raw, and indisputably great’.⁴⁹

Notwithstanding the quality of this image, or indeed Longfellow’s British popularity, Sylvia Wolf notes that when Cameron gave her photographs prices in 1868 the autographed image of Longfellow cost ten shillings – that of Tennyson cost twenty.⁵⁰ This might demonstrate that her target audience for the Tennyson portrait was somewhat richer than the majority of Longfellow’s admirers, but it might also show that, for all his popularity, Longfellow was less of a celebrity than Tennyson. With that said, he was still considered worthy of Cameron’s focus, and it is clear that he was as ‘well received, and hospitably lionized’ as the ‘London correspondent’ of the *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette* desired that he might be in June 1868.⁵¹ That Longfellow thrived in this atmosphere is clear, and this might also be connected with his image as a paragon of distinguished virtue. Indeed, William Michael Rossetti suggested that this might be reason enough for his commemoration in Poets’ Corner: while voicing scepticism about whether Longfellow was ‘supereminently great’, he donated a guinea to the cause because ‘I like the project as a tribute to a distinguished & excellent man, & as an act of international courtesy’.⁵²

One of Tennyson’s letters to Longfellow, sent shortly before this visit, observed that ‘We English and Americans should all be brothers as none others among the

nations can be, and some of us, come what may, will always be so, I trust'.⁵³ The popularity of Longfellow in Britain seems to have, in part, been motivated by a desire of his English readers to see themselves reflected in America, and of his to emphasize his affinity with Europe and indeed with England. A poem in *The Times* written to commemorate his visit articulates this in its opening six lines:

<PTY/>

Welcome to England, thou whose strains prolong
 The glorious bead-roll of our Saxon song:
 Ambassador and Pilgrim-bard in one,
 Fresh from your home – the home of WASHINGTON.
 On hearths as sacred as thine own, here stands
 The loving welcome that thy name commands.⁵⁴

</PTY>

The poem is attributed to 'C. K.', who has been identified as either Charles Kent or Charles Kingsley. These opening lines emphasize the link between England and America, and identify Longfellow as not only a poet but also a representative of his nation (the 'home' referred to here is literally Longfellow's house in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which was previously inhabited by George Washington, but can also be taken to mean the entire U.S. nation). The poem also potentially presupposes biographical knowledge on the part of its readers, while the reference to 'hearths', too, emphasizes again the 'fireside' nature of Longfellow's poetry.

The conflation of the man and his work, which was evidently actively encouraged by Longfellow, is clearly manifested in the English response to his visit in 1868 but in English appreciation of his work more generally, Longfellow's celebrity as a 'pop poet' was a reality in Britain and yet was also generated by the press, which simultaneously

catered to the desire of its readers to get ever closer to him while also generating this desire through its coverage. This celebrity status culminated, somewhat paradoxically, in his meeting Tennyson in a private setting, the Isle of Wight location underlined by Cameron's photographing him and then selling copies, albeit expensive ones, of his image. Longfellow and Tennyson were active participants in Victorian celebrity culture, however willing, and the former in particular encouraged a personality-driven reception of his work. This conflation of the personality and the work, and the proximity of these high-minded ideals to the 'lower' ones of celebrity culture, must surely have had a part to play in subsequent Modernist disparagement not only of the culture of 'great men' but of Victorian culture, not least poetry, *per se*.

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<HDA>Notes

¹ Charles C. Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2004).

² 'Manifesto', *Blast* 1 (1914), 18.

³ Samuel Smiles's *Self-Help* (1859) was one of the most significant manifestations of this wider tendency.

⁴ Kathryn Ledbetter, *Tennyson and Victorian Periodicals* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 100.

⁵ Christoph Irscher, *Longfellow Redux* (Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 6.

⁶ Charlotte Boyce, 'At Home with Tennyson', in Charlotte Boyce, Páraic Finnerty, and Anne-Marie Millim, *Victorian Celebrity Culture and Tennyson's Circle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 25.

⁷ Richard Salmon, 'The Physiognomy of the Lion: Encountering Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century', in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture, 1750–1850*, ed. Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 60, 65.

⁸ Richard Salmon, *The Formation of the Victorian Literary Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 27.

⁹ Salmon, *The Formation of the Victorian Literary Profession*, 27.

¹⁰ Nicholas Dames, 'Brushes with Fame: Thackeray and the Work of Celebrity', *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 56, 1 (2001), 33.

¹¹ Dames, 'Brushes with Fame', 32, 33.

¹² Edward Bok, *The Americanization of Edward Bok* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1922), 17–18. Subsequent parenthetical references will refer to this edition.

¹³ Imscher, *Longfellow Redux*, 11.

¹⁴ Longfellow travelled in Europe for two years after the appointment, working on his German, before returning to Harvard as Professor.

¹⁵ Imscher, *Longfellow Redux*, 26.

¹⁶ Kirsten Silva Gruesz, 'Feeling for the Fireside: Longfellow, Lynch, and the Topography of Poetic Power', in *Sentimental Men: Masculinity and the Politics of Affect in American Culture*, ed. Mary Chapman and Glenn Hendler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 52.

¹⁷ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Seaside and the Fireside* (Boston: Ticknor, Reed and Fields, 1850), 2. Subsequent parenthetical references will refer to this edition.

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- ¹⁸ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Final Memories of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, ed. Samuel Longfellow (London: Kegan Paul Trench, 1887), 290.
- ¹⁹ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *The Letters of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 6 vols, ed. Andrew Hilen (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967–1983), 3: 262.
- ²⁰ Longfellow, *Letters*, 1: 48.
- ²¹ Longfellow, *Letters*, 2: 215.
- ²² Longfellow, *Letters*, 2: 510.
- ²³ Dames, ‘Brushes with Fame’, 24.
- ²⁴ Calhoun, *Longfellow: A Rediscovered Life*, 98.
- ²⁵ Longfellow, *Letters*, 4: 242.
- ²⁶ Longfellow, *Letters*, 4: 144.
- ²⁷ *The Letters of Alfred Lord Tennyson, Vol. 3, 1871–1892*, ed. Cecil Y. Lang and Edgar F. Shannon Jr (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 151.
- ²⁸ Alfred Austin, ‘Tennyson’s Literary Sensitiveness’, *National Review* 20 (December 1892), 460.
- ²⁹ Longfellow, *Letters*, 4: 139.
- ³⁰ Longfellow, *Letters*, 6: 317.
- ³¹ Longfellow, *Letters*, 5: 309.
- ³² Longfellow, *Letters*, 4: 143.
- ³³ Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2: 339.
- ³⁴ Charles Brookfield, *Random Reminiscences* (London: Edwin Arnold, 1902), 5.
- ³⁵ William Allingham, *William Allingham’s Diary, 1847–1889* (London: Centaur, 2000), 183.
- ³⁶ Longfellow, *Letters*, 5: 259.
- ³⁷ Allingham, *William Allingham’s Diary, 1847–1889*, 182.

³⁸ *Glasgow Herald*, 15 May 1868, 4; *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 25 May 1868, 3. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>.

Accessed 20 August 2015.

³⁹ *Essex Standard*, 29 May 1868, 2. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴⁰ *Western Daily Press*, 11 June 1868, 3. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴¹ *Western Daily Press*, 11 June 1868, 3.

⁴² Irmscher, *Longfellow Redux*, 12.

⁴³ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 12 June 1868, 8. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴⁴ *Newcastle Journal*, 16 June 1868, 2. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴⁵ 'General News', *Tralee Chronicle*, 10 July 1868, 3. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴⁶ *Isle of Wight Observer*, 18 July 1868, 3. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁴⁷ Ann Thwaite, *Emily Tennyson: The Poet's Wife* (London: Faber & Faber, 1997), 443.

⁴⁸ Helmut Gernsheim, *Julia Margaret Cameron: Her Life and Photographic Work* (London: Gordon Fraser, 1975), 35. See Longfellow's letter to Cameron, 23 July 1868. Longfellow, *Letters*, 5: 255.

⁴⁹ Charles W. Mann, 'The Poet's Pose', *History of Photography* 3, 2 (1979), 126.

⁵⁰ Sylvia Wolf, "'Mrs Cameron's Photographs, Priced Catalogue': A Note on her Sales and Process", in *Julia Margaret Cameron's Women*, ed. Sylvia Wolf (London: Yale University Press, 1999), 211.

⁵¹ *Oxford Chronicle and Reading Gazette*, 13 June 1868. British Library's British Newspaper Archive <<http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/>>. Accessed 20 August 2015.

⁵² Clarence Gohdes, *American Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 126.

⁵³ Longfellow, *Letters*, 5: 108.

⁵⁴ Longfellow, *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*, 2: 104.