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Rewriting the Medieval Framed Tale for America: Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn*

Abstract
Longfellow with his academic and literary training, his travels to Europe and long stay in Europe studying languages and literatures, was well rooted in European literatures and traditions. His *Tales of a Wayside Inn* is highly inspired by the medieval framed tale, especially Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* and Boccaccio's *Decameron.* Similar to these medieval framed tales, Longfellow brings together a group of narrators, who meet at a specific location and tell tales in keeping with their characters although there is no journey motif or a poetic competition. The tales are preceded by a prelude which serves as an introduction, similar to the medieval European ones; there are comments and interactions between the narrators. With his European heritage, Longfellow seems to be creating a literary heritage for America, with strong ties to Europe and European literary traditions. He borrows all his tales from Europe, except for the last one which is his original creation, his narrators are from America with real American citizens. Similarly, the setting is still an identifiable specific American setting.
Keywords: Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, medieval framed tale, rewriting

Longfellow'un *Tales of a Wayside Inn* Eseri: Ortaçağ Hikâye içinde Hikâye Geleneğini Amerika için Yeniden Yazmak

Öz
Longfellow, aldığı eğitim, edebiyat alanında yaptığı çalışmalar, daha sonraki akademik hayatı, Avrupaya yaptığı seyahatler ve orada kaldığı sure içinde Avrupa dilleri ve edebiyatları ile ilgili yaptığı çalışmalar dolayısı ile Avrupa dilleri, edebiyatları ve edebi gelenekleri ile ilgili geniş bir bilgiye sahipti. *Tales of a Wayside Inn* eserini yazarken özellikle Ortaçağ'da yaygın olan hikâye içinde hikâye geleneğinden, özellikle de Chaucer'ın *Canterbury Tales*'inden ve Boccaccio'nun *Decameron* eserinden esinlenmiştir. Bu eserlerdeki gibi, Longfellow şanseseri, bir handa bir araya gelen yedi kişiyi tanıtır, bu kişiler belli bir düzen içinde hikâyeler anlatırlar. Anlatılan hikâyeler karakterler ile uyum içinde olacak şekilde düzenlenmiştir. Ama diğer eserlerde gözlemlenen yolculuk motifi ve bir yarışma motifi kullanılmamıştır. Diğer Ortaçağ Avrupa hikâye içinde hikâye geleneği örneklerinde sıklıkla görüldüğü üzere, eserin başında bir giriş/Prelüd bölümü vardır, hikâyeler arasında anlatıcı ve dinleyicilerin konuşmaları, yaptıkları yorumlar bulunmaktadır. Longfellow, adeta geniş Avrupa edebi gelenekleri bilgisi ışığında Amerika için geçerli olacak ve Avrupa gelenekleri ile bağ kuracak bir eser yaratmaktadır. Hikâyelerden sadece sonuncusu özgündür, diğeri Avrupa edebiyatlarından alınmıştır, fakat anlatıcıların hepsi Amerikalıdır, çoğu da gerçek kişileri yansıtmaktadır, mekan da Amerika'da bilinen gerçek bir mekandır.
Anahtar Kelimeler: Longfellow, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Ortaçağ hikâye içinde hikâye geleneği, yeniden yazım

Introduction

Longfellow's background, upbringing, scholarly work and teaching positions he later held at educational institutions had a great influence on his poetry. He was born in New England Portland, Maine in 1807, to a well established and educated family who had immigrated to America from York, England, three generations before. As Arvin states, he was in the midst of "an early, expansive and culturally most vigorous period" and location (4). Portland was "a small, busy, active and prosperous sea port, its streets and wharves lively with the coming and going of sea captains and sailors" (Arvin 4). This setting is similar to Chaucer's childhood London which was not only the administrative seat and one of the biggest cities of its time in Europe, but it was also a very active port, where people of many different walks of life came together; it was a meeting place for people from different countries and backgrounds. This location with its hustling and bustling community, with its more than fair share of travelers must have provided very enriching and colorful experiences that Longfellow used in his poetry. The presence of the family library and the encouragement of his mother made his wide reading possible. He attended a private school in Portland and later Portland Academy. His schooling was primarily focused on literature and the classics (Arvin 11).

Longfellcu, studied as a postgraduate at Harvard till 1822, concentrating on general literature and gaining knowledge in French and Italian. When Bowgoin established a Chair of Modern Languages he was appointed there. He took this post when he was 18 years old. Upon this appointment he took his first trip to Europe, namely, France, Spain, Italy, and Germany (1826), where for three years he learned or improved his skills in these languages, and studied the literatures and cultures of these countries. During his stay at these countries he did not have a formal education but he attended lectures and he did not limit himself to learning the literature and the language but "immersed himself in the culture" (Arvin 24). Arvin emphasizes the fact that no other writer did this, and that this led to the "fusion of the native and the foreign" (22). On his journey back he visited London, and he was in contact with some literary figures and sailed from Liverpool to America.

In 1834 he was offered the Smith Professorship of Modern Languages in Harvard which he accepted a year later. He was offered a year and a half's study at Europe, in Northern Europe and Germany, studying German and Scandinavian literatures and languages (Arvin 30). He was familiar with some of the literary figures of his time and on his way back he stayed with Charles Dickens for a time.

Longfellow's Use of the Framed Tale

Longfellow was not only well read in English and European literatures but in various specific poems he expresses his admiration for the past and contemporary poets, for example he has written poems entitled "Chaucer" (315,322), "Shakespeare", "Milton", "Keats" (315-16), "Wapentake", "Tennyson" (323) from Britain and others from Europe, as well as referring to them in the *Tales of a Wayside Inn.* He refers specifically to the *Canterbury Tales* in "Woodstock Park" and states how inspiring it is:

> Here Geoffrey Chaucer in his ripe old age
> Wrote the unrivalled Tales which soon or late
> The venturous hand that strives to imitate
> Vanquished must fall on the Unfinished page. (*Complete Poetical Works* 322)

Although he shows great respect and admiration for the old masters in Europe, and with humility states that, in this case Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, they cannot be imitated, he succeeds in his venture in creating his version of the framed tale collection which was specifically designed for his time and audience.

In his Italian sonnet entitled "Chaucer" he depicts the poet in a medieval setting which is also his study, and states the master's important role: "He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote/ The Canterbury Tales, and his old age/ Made beautiful with song" (*Complete Poetical Works* 315). As both Calin (202) and Tenfelde (107) comment, Chaucer is depicted as a poet paving the way with his contributions that would provide a fertile ground for the future generation of poets by transmitting the poetic legacy. Longfellow felt that he also could be a poet of the dawn, that he could do for America what Chaucer had done for England by bringing in European culture-a literature and a past which were lacking in the New World. (Calin 202)

His wide reading and knowledge in various European literatures, and his roots in the classics and Western literature is clearly evident in his work. *Tales of a Wayside Inn* is a work in the tradition of the framed tale which Longfellow is well acquainted with. His work received mixed criticism. He has been accused of having produced a "dusty forgery" by the Italian critic Gabriele Baldini (qtd. in Arvin 204) and has been criticized for imitating the European poets by some American writers of his time (Kennedy 265). However, the work became quite popular in his time. In fact, he is writing in a well established European medieval tradition that stretches back not only to antiquity but even to Eastern sources such as the *Thousand and One Nights* and *The Seven Sages* (Katherine Slater Gittes "Arabic Frame Tradition" 237). The medieval practitioners of the framed tale tradition were not few, and if we are to name the most popular ones, they were Boccacio with *Ameto, Filocolo*, *Decameron* and Chaucer with his *Canterbury Tales*. The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries saw the development of a new phase in the framed tale convention (Boitani 114, Cooper "The Frame" 1). Therefore, it would not be fair to label what Longfellow sets out to do as plagiarism or "forgery," because the tradition of the framed tales was based on bringing together of tales which were borrowed, translated or retold (Bryan and Dempster *passim*). Moreover, Longfellow is fully aware of this aspect of the well known tradition and he is rewriting the framed tale for America and an American audience of his time. As an anonymous critic stated "he was a mediator between the old and the new; he translated the romance of the past into the language of universal life" (qtd. in Kennedy 261).

His *Tales of a Wayside Inn* owes much to the two of the most well-known framed tales of the European Middle Ages, namely Boccacio's *Decameron* (Pratt and Young 9 ff) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales.* As Helen Cooper defines it, the framed tale convention embraced the following qualities, most of which are applicable to Longfellow's work (*The Structure* 9-10). She says it is:

> A collection of separable tales compiled or written, or more probably re-written, essentially by a single author; and it circulates in a recognizably coherent form. It is different, from an anthology or a manuscript miscellany, or from a collection of separate works by a single man, where the different items do not necessarily belong together. (*The Structure* 9-10)

She also classifies these stories under three groups according to their structural ordering: “those that consist simply of tales, with no enclosing material at all; . . . those that have a prologue and sometimes an epilogue but no linking material between the tales: . . . and some that have a fully developed framework enclosing and connecting the stories (*The Structure* 9-10).

Longfellow’s *Tales of a Wayside Inn* are of the third group according to this classification, and the work has a fully developed enclosing frame, a general prologue and introductory prologues to each three sections. There are connecting interactive sections between the narratives, and an epilogue. Longfellow’s work is a collection of verse narratives told by seven narrators, on three consecutive days which add up to twenty-two tales that are grouped under thee parts, one for each session. The work begins with a Prelude, and after each narrator tells his tale there is an interaction scene where a discussion or comment on the tale told is made by some of the narrators to lead to the next tale. These interactions not only are functional in leading to the next tale, but they also add variety and dramatic action and prevent the monotony that may be caused by the tales following each other. The work ends with an epilogue entitled “Finale.” Longfellow’s work is meticulously planned and follows the “complete model” of the framed tales. Boccaccio in the *Decameron* presents ten tale tellers both male and female, who narrate these stories over ten days, while seeking refuge from the plague in an Italian villa. Chaucer in the *Canterbury Tales* presents twenty-nine pilgrims who have come together at the Tabard Inn before they set out on a journey to Canterbury. Similar to Longfellow’s narrators, it is a group that has been formed by chance. They are entertained at the dinner in the Inn by the Host, and they get acquainted with each other. The story telling competition is designed by the Host Harry Bailly. According to this arrangement each pilgrim was to tell four stories, two on the way to Canterbury and two on the way back, and the Host proposes to reward the best moral tale with a free meal on their return to the Tabard Inn. As Helen Cooper points out, this poetic contest among the pilgrims is unique to Chaucer (“The Frame” 18). However, Chaucer’s work is open ended and incomplete in structure, and it has survived in fragments.

There is also another European framed tale, Giovanni Sercambi’s *Novelle* (Bryan and Dempster 33-81), where a group of male and female travelers set on the road from Lucca in Italy to escape the plague which was composed at a later date than Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (Robert M Correale and Marry Hammel eds. Preface I, Helen Cooper “The Frame” 2). There is no clear evidence that Longfellow may have had access to it, but since he was studying the medieval Italian works in Italy he might have had access to it. In this framed tale for their journey, the group of travelers elect a leader and storyteller who narrates all the tales. The first two examples seem to have provided the main inspiration and model for Longfellow as they have multiple narrators. The narrators of Longfellow meet at “an ancient hostelry, The Red Horse Inn, in Sudbury, not far from Boston-as natural a gathering place for nineteenth century Americans as the inn at Southwark had been for Chaucer’s men and women” (Arvin 204). In fact, Longfellow at first had thought of entitling his work as *Sudbury Tales*, but later he gave up the idea as it would be too close to Chaucer’s title (Arvin 206). There is not a pilgrimage, travel or tale telling competition motif in *Tales of a Wayside Inn,* and the tale telling and other interchange of ideas, dialogues and activities take place mostly by the fireside. They have come to the Inn to spend some pleasurable time in a peaceful rural autumn setting, away from the busy life of the town and contemporary issues. The Red Horse Inn is very reminiscent of The Tabard Inn where Chaucer’s pilgrims meet and are greeted and introduced

by the Host. Similar to the Host, the Landlord in *Tales of a Wayside Inn* presides over the story telling and very similar to Chaucer's General Prologue, where each pilgrim is introduced in detail, the narrator in the Prelude introduces the seven story tellers (205-207). Although these portraits are not as colorful and detailed as the ones Chaucer depicts in detail, they present the characters sufficiently. The General Prologue was an invention of Chaucer that contributed to the framed tale tradition, although various character sketches were known in the Middle Ages such a presentation of a collection did not exist. As most critics point out, Chaucer provided quite a good sampling of almost all estates of medieval society in his portrait gallery. As Wimsatt aptly puts it, the General Prologue is a mirror of the society in Chaucer's time (163,165). Longfellow follows in his footsteps; however, he is not only setting the tales in America but he is rewriting it in a fashion more suitable to American values and customs. Boccaccio and Chaucer's works are the closest analogues to *Tales of a Wayside Inn* as these are the framed tales where the participants all narrate tales and interact with each other. In the other similar framed tales these qualities are lacking.

Narrators

In comparison to the framed tale of Chaucer, Longfellow in Calin's words is "more realistic" (200) as he narrows down the number of narrators, keeps the tale telling activity in the parlor, and casts the Landlord "not as a judge but democratically, as a fully accredited teller" (200). The narrators and the Landlord figure of Longfellow are all drawn from American associates and colleagues as the poet himself stated. The seven storytellers of Longfellow are the Landlord, the Student, the Young Sicilian, the Spanish Jew, the Theologian, the Poet and the Musician. The real characters that provided the basic model for the characters of Longfellow are as follows: Landlord- Lyman Howe was the owner of the Red Horse Inn in the seventeenth century, the Student was based on Henry Ware Wales who was a Harvard man, the Sicilian- was based on Luigi Monti who was exiled after the 1848 revolution, the Spanish Jew is said to be most probably Isaac Edrehi who lived in Boston, the Theologian was modeled on Daniel Treadwell- Rumford who was a professor of physics at Harvard, the Poet is said to be Thomas William Parsons (Arvin 208, *Tales of a Wayside Inn*, Introduction 204).

These characters who form the group and the narrators of the tales, have been fictionalized, and they roughly have similar social status. The Theologian, the young Poet, the Student and the Landlord are all Americans, and except for the Landlord the other three are literary or academic figures which results in most of their comments being quite academic and moral. The other three narrators who can be classified as the non-Americans are the Musician from Norway, the young Sicilian- a political exile and the Spanish Jew are quite likely to be in this American setting. The narrators of Boccaccio belong to the same class, and they all talk about love. The number being ten, three gentlemen and seven ladies. Each day one of them presides over the story telling, and in ten days the stories amount to a hundred. Chaucer's design shows more variation, some of the characters are reflections of real persons in his medieval community. Chaucer following the traditions and classifications of his time adheres to the three estate classification and its divisions, and provides samples from almost all the important sections of medieval society (Wimsatt 165). Moreover, he also makes use of the estates satire tradition and provides "a satiric representation of all classes of society" (Mann 1ff). The Knight is at the top of the medieval social hierarchy and the lowest rank of the society are represented by the Plowman and the Parson, which all add up to twenty-nine pilgrims both from secular professions and clergy, including three tale teller

female characters: the Wife of Bath and the Prioress and the Nun. The narrators of Longfellow are more limited, have less variety and there are no women participants. Longfellow draws his characters from American life and society, from the close community he lives in, and following the social mores of his times, he does not include any female participants or narrators as it would not be appropriate to include women into this framework (Arvin 207). As it can be deduced from this brief outline, although Longfellow stands in the long tradition of medieval framed tale, he is rewriting and remodeling it according to his time and the specific location. As Calin puts it, Longfellow "adopts him [Chaucer] to the horizon of expectations of a nineteenth-century English speaking public" (198).

Tale Telling

Although the method of variation in the tale telling is quite fixed in the *Decameron*, Chaucer has brought in a plan that is later disrupted very realistically and breaks the monotony of the flow and allows for lively interaction and dialogues. According to the initial plan set by the Host of the Tabard Inn, the story telling was to follow the medieval hierarchy of class and estate, and the Knight was asked to tell the first tale to be followed by the Monk to form a descending order. However, the drunken Miller intervenes and insists that he will tell a better tale and proceeds. Afterwards, the story telling continues in a fashion of interaction and response to the former tale. Moreover, the tale telling takes place on horseback, on the way to Canterbury and back. This setup brings variety and drama although most of the critics agree about "horseback narration" not being very realistic. As Calin presents in detail and very aptly puts it, the frame is very important in the *Canterbury Tales;* it is so weighty, so rich and problematic, and so meaningful in terms of psychology and human relations (including gender), that we have to acknowledge its importance and accord it the same attention that we grant to the tales themselves (205).

The conflicts between the tellers and their own statements and remarks in Chaucer's work provide not only dramatic action and break the monotony of the story telling, but also give an idea about the tellers' condition, social class and religion. Additionally, they provide insight into the tales as Calin emphasizes (205). Moreover as Helen Cooper asserts the "connections of theme and motif between the tales" is an efficient device to keep the diverse tales connected ("The Frame" 12).

Longfellow seems to be inspired by Chaucer's model, but he develops the application in a more organized and limited manner. *Tales of a Wayside Inn* consists of three parts, one allotted to each session, where every storyteller was supposed to tell one tale. The story telling is actualized according to plan the first evening; the stories follow each other as a confirmation of or as a reaction to the preceding one. The second part narrates the tales told on the second day which is a rainy and unpleasant autumn day. The narrators meet in the morning and after breakfast the story telling begins by the fireside. However, when they begin they see that the Landlord is missing, and the Student is asked to tell a second tale. Similarly, in the third section, the Jew is also allotted two stories. Hence, the rigidity of the finely constructed structure is broken. The monotony of the tale telling is also disrupted by various activities such as the reference to the sword on the wall of the Inn, the musician's playing of the violin and later his dismay when one of its strings are broken, the description of the story tellers that come down to the dining hall in the morning, each displaying a different personality and mood. There are also comments and discussions sometimes revealing conflict of ideas and opinions. These all add dramatic liveliness to

the work. In this aspect Longfellow comes closest to Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, but as Calin has aptly illustrated, in Chaucer these activities are much more layered and functional, and form an essential part of the work, whereas Longfellow's interludes do not function in the same manner (204). In the *Canterbury Tales* the narrators interact more harshly and in an intense manner, they tell tales to discredit each other, and there are also passing remarks to specific locations on the way to Canterbury which breaks the monotony. Additionally, two new pilgrims the Manciple and his Yeoman join the group on the way. In the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* during the second evening the tale telling resumes and each teller narrates a tale, and the next day the tellers all part their ways never to meet again.

Tale-Teller Relationship

Another point that Longfellow follows the framed tale convention is the tale-teller relationship he sets up, and the suitability of the tales to the narrators. In a way, the tellers being allotted tales in keeping with the tellers' characters becomes an extension of the characterization, which is again reminiscent of Chaucer's method. The Landlord tells tales from New England which are stirring and sometimes humorous; the Theologian tells tales which are religious; the Musician, who is a romantic Norwegian narrates Norse sagas and a Danish ballad and plays his music in between; the Spanish Jew tells tales from the Talmud which have a dark mood; the Student tells well wrought entertaining tales from Europe (Arvin 208).

The framed tale model generally is a compendium of tales belonging to many different genres. Longfellow provides a great resource in this aspect. His tales are drawn from far and wide, geographically stretching from the East to Europe and to America as their sources. Genrewise, he provides almost more variety than his predecessors in medieval Europe including ballads, Nordic sagas, romance, fabliaux, horror stories, exemplum, parable, novella, colonial historic story, stories from the Talmud to name some. Chaucer is the medieval master who sets example for Longfellow. Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales,* even in its fragmented and incomplete form, provides examples from almost all medieval genres. The genre represented are: romance, fabliaux, saint's life, exemplum, Breton lay, burlesque, beast fable, medieval tragedy, moral tale in prose, folk tale, fable, sermon. However, Longfellow chooses the tales that befit the values of his time, for example, when he writes fabliaux he avoids the bawdy ones but chooses the humorous, satirical more modest examples of the genre. In the interactions and activities referred to in between the tales in Longfellow's *Tales of a Wayside Inn* the only music heard is the dignified and romantic music played by the Musician on his violin, while Chaucer's pilgrims are led by the churl Miller playing his bagpipes with much sexual implications (Ross 39). The Miller leads the company of pilgrims in the world of temptations on their journey which is also the journey of life.

As for the art of versification, Longfellow provides the greatest variety among the practitioners of the framed tale. He varies the stanza format, the meter and the rhyme and rhythm, and skillfully varies the flow and the musical quality of each tale including the twenty-two short tales of the "Saga of King Olaf." He offers two types of ballad stanza, free verse, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 line stanzas, couplets and a variety of rhyme schemes. He almost provides an anthology of genre and versification techniques that were used in his time.

Five of the twenty-two tales in the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* are of America or of American origin (Paul Reeve's Ride, The Birds of Killingworth, Lady Wenworth, Elizabeth, Rhyme of Sir Christopher). The rest are drawn from various international sources; fourteen being from Europe and three from the East, interestingly enough as Calin draws attention Longfellow "turned to the continent, not to the Anglo-Saxon motherland", and he privileges the medieval as the age of a cultured past and story telling (202, 203). These aspects of Longfellow's work provoked a contemporary debate about what the duty of the poet in America is. Longfellow being aware of this, brings this issue up in three instances. He uses the Student, who seems to be closest to his heart, and is very similar to Chaucer's Clerk of Oxford, who is well educated and has a love of books and learning, to defend the "wide" approach. The Student defends the use and the necessity of former traditions and writers as a source of inspiration. When the Theologian criticizes the Student's Italian tale he replies by saying

> One should not say, with too much pride,
> Fountain, I will not drink of thee!
> Nor were it grateful to forget
> That from these reservoirs and tanks
> Even imperial Shakespeare drew
> His moor of Venice, and the Jew,
> And Romeo and Juliet,
> And many a famous comedy. (*The Complete Poetical Works* 213)

In the second part, the Musician tells a tale, and in the interlude the Poet says "These tales you tell are one and all /Of the Old World" criticizing their oldness and questioning their value upon which the Student replies by stating that the value lies not in their oldness but in their quality, and criticizes the unquestioning quest for the new regardless of the quality:

> …
> Be discreet;
> For if the flour be fresh and sound,
> And if the bread be light and sweet,
> Who careth in what mill't was ground,
> Or of what oven felt the heat,
> Unless, as old Cervantes said,
> You are looking after better bread
> Than any that is made of wheat?
> You know that people nowadays
> To what is old give little praise;
> All must be new in prose and verse;
> They want hot bread, or something worse,
> Fresh every morning, and half baked;
> The wholesome bread of yesterday,
> Too stale for them, is thrown away,
> Nor is their thirst with water slaked. (*The Complete Poetical Works* 255)

In part three, after the Musician's Tale, the Theologian comments on the tale, the Student in the interlude takes up the discussion of native tales and foreign tales. The Student again emphasizes the necessity of seeking inspiration from all sources and not limiting oneself to only native stories and culture:

… "Yes;
All praise and honor' I confess
That bread and ale, home-baked, home brewed,
Are wholesome and nutritious food,
But not enough for all our needs;
Poets—the best of them—are birds
Of passage; where their instinct leads
They range abroad for thoughts and words,
And from all climes bring home the seeds
That germinate in flowers or weeds.
They are not fowls in barnyards born
To cackle o'er grain of corn;
And, if you shut the horizon down
To the small limits of their town,
What do you do but degrade your bard
Till he at last becomes one
Who thinks the all-encircling sun
Rises and sets in his back yard?"

The Theologian said again:
"It may be so; yet I maintain
That what is native still is best;
And little care I for the rest.
'T is a long story; time would fail
To tell it, and the hour is late. (*The Complete Poetical Works* 284)

At this point the assertion of Calin rings true about the similarity of the function and intentions of both Chaucer and Longfellow. He summarizes Chaucer's mission as follows:

> One purpose (among many) of the *Canterbury Tales*, as of Chaucer's entire corpus, was to transmit French and Italian culture to England or, rather to English . . . to compose in English contemporary texts comparable to or mirroring the best of recent and contemporary literary production. (201)

Similar to Chaucer, Longfellow seems to have set out to provide a European legacy and literary heritage for America. As Longfellow had cast Chaucer in his sonnet as the "poet of the dawn", he expresses his wish to be a poet of the dawn also. The last two lines of the sonnet describe Chaucer's poetry, where he says: ". . . from every page /Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead" (315). In fact, Longfellow is employing the same metaphor in the sonnet also. The "poet of the dawn" has tilled the field ready to sow many "seeds" from diverse sources which will yield fruit and feed the people or the field has already bloomed with a variety of flowers. Calin, after analyzing in detail the work of Longfellow and his explicit medievalism and inspiration drawn from Chaucer, states the driving force behind Longfellow by stating that "He wishes to be the Father of American Poetry just as Chaucer had been the Father of English Poetry" (202).

Conclusion

Tales of a Wayside Inn is defined as the major achievement of Longfellow as a poet by some critics. Longfellow in this work not only displays his wide knowledge of the European and classical heritage but executes a very masterful rewriting of the medieval framed tale genre, adapting it to the American audience of his time. His work not only displays a very tidy and well worked out example of the genre, but it embraces a great variety in the types of tales narrated genrewise and in versification. He displays great skill in the art of brevity in skillfully turning long narratives into compact ones. His versification techniques in aspect of stanza format, meter and rhyme display great variety almost forming an anthology of poesy for his time. While he brings European heritage to the New World he also includes five American narratives, one being original, but he also makes his choices to suit the American morals and tastes of his time. In the words of Stephen Burt as very well illustrated in the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* "Longfellow undertook to make his poetry both international and American without trying to make poetry itself new" (191). The following observation made by a critic aptly summarizes Longfellow's position and contribution to American poetry: American life was prosaic; and, before it could feel the glow of its own poetry, it must know something of the poetry of the past. This was Mr. Longfellow's first service to his countrymen: he was a mediator between the old and the new, he translated the romance of the past into the language of universal life. (Kennedy 261).

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