Clubwomen and Time: An Examination of Temporality in American and British Women's Literary Clubs

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Abstract

This thesis connects women's literary clubs in America and Britain from 1850 to 1900. It specifically looks at Shakespeare Clubs and Robert Browning Clubs in America, and The Pioneer Club, named for Walt Whitman's poem, in Britain. The thesis looks at articles, club documents and journal reports printed by and about the clubs, to demonstrate a common theme between them. It further examines original writing left behind by the Shakespeare Clubs as examples of fanfiction. The thesis posits that these clubs represent a separate sphere of women's time, forming spaces of temporal reclamation. All three club movements existed in a period when women's time was meant to be spent on prescribed activities, centred around home and family. Woman's designated sphere was the domestic space of home, in a society built on the ideology of separate spheres. This thesis suggests that the clubs, which were generally home-based and built around and within woman's existing sphere, were spaces where women reclaimed some of the temporal autonomy denied to them in society. While critics have explored the idea of women having a different experience of time, there has not been a study which views these literary clubs as a separate experience of women's time. The thesis will use evidence from primary and secondary sources to demonstrate that the clubwomen viewed their activities as separate from, and time intentionally claimed from, prescribed temporal pursuits. This was time claimed purely for leisure and self-serving, which was not an accepted or prescribed way for a woman with or without family responsibilities to spend her time. This thesis will claim that women used their clubs as spaces for exercising temporal autonomy.

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Introduction: Women's Literary Clubs and Temporality in America and England from 1850-1900

The Woman Reader

The image of the woman reader is one that pervades any transatlantic academic investigation of nineteenth-century society. An equally persistent fascination for the Victorians and their American counterparts was time, and the experience of it. While the woman reader and the phenomenon of time have been subject to intensive analysis by critics, there does not seem to be a critical intervention that studies the connection between them. This thesis will consider the intricacies of the spaces created in the form of Shakespeare Clubs, Browning Clubs, and the Pioneer Club (named for the Whitman poem) by the women readers in nineteenth-century America and England. Throughout this thesis, I present the idea that the women readers who formed parallel women's literary clubs in nineteenth-century America and England were creating spaces where they exercised a form of temporal autonomy, within a society where their time was regulated and controlled.

Catherine Golden confirms the visible and significant presence of the woman reader during this time, writing that "she became a topic of debate in a wide range of contexts, including periodicals and magazines, advice manuals, novels, verse, paintings, photographs, book illustrations, and educational and religious tracts" (2). She documents that concerns about women reading were raised in both America and England, as "numerous (British) advice books and tracts that condemned women's reading found their way to America" (5). However, rather than deter women readers, this period in the history of both countries was marked by a particular literary phenomenon – that of the founding of women's clubs, formed around literary figures.

In this thesis, I look at three of these clubs – Shakespeare Clubs and Robert Browning Clubs in America, and the Pioneer Club in England, named for Walt Whitman's poem "O Pioneers". These clubs constituted a separate sphere outside the bounds of prescribed society, and I draw from primary and secondary sources to analyse how the women viewed their clubtime spent in reading, writing, listening, presenting, and performing as time that they were claiming from their prescribed roles and associated chores of being wives and mothers.

While scholars such as Karen J. Blair and Katherine West Scheil have delved into women's clubs before, Blair approached them from a perspective of clubs providing women with leadership positions, "by offering them opportunities for private reading and public speaking" (66-67). Scheil has written extensively about American women's Shakespeare Clubs and women's reading practices, and she looks at them from the perspective of how they helped shape Shakespeare's position in America. She also looks at Shakespeare Clubs as sites for self-improvement for women who lacked access to formal methods of education. Scheil writes, "For many American women…the Shakespeare Club was a crucial site for intellectual growth and independence, especially for women in small towns" ("Private and Public Reading" 42).

Elizabeth Long delves into the idea of the "invisible group of readers" when she writes that, "Theoretically, the trope of reading as a solitary activity locates it strictly in the realm of private life. It has helped frame our understanding of the cultural world so that the importance, both historically and in the present, of groups of readers and their modes of textual appropriation has been invisible to scholarship" ("Textual Interpretation" 107-111). This invisibility has extended into other areas of

critical enquiry regarding reading groups, and this thesis attempts to address one such exclusion, where the clubs have been left out from critical interventions regarding women's time.

I begin the Introduction by tracing the history of the Women's Club Movement in America and Britain to explain the place of literary clubs in this setting. I delve into their formation and proliferation and consider several examples from clubs across the country to explain their general membership, club sizes, methods of working, and what time spent within the club entailed, to provide a picture of the history of these clubs and their use of clubtime. I examine how the Pioneer Club was different from other British Women's Clubs of the time, and how it aligned itself more with contemporary American Clubs. I explain what archival material I have been able to access in order to provide information about all three clubs. I then provide a brief history of Shakespeare in America from the 1600s to the twenty-first century, to both locate women's reading clubs in this history and point out how they have been largely excluded from most critical interventions into Shakespearean history. I then delve into critical studies of gendered time and establish how these three transatlantic clubs form a paradigm through which to explore the temporal concept of clubtime.

The Place of Literary Clubs in the Larger History of Women's Clubs in America and Britain

Civil War and Women Organising for the Greater Good in America

In America, the years from before the Civil War to the end of the nineteenth century and carrying on into the twentieth were marked by a particular phenomenon, that of the country's women organising to form unions, clubs, societies and

associations in a wave which critics call "The American Women's Club Movement."[1] The first impetus for extending women's sphere outside the home was built on extending their natural place as providers of care, comfort and moral superiority within the home to the larger society. In 1853, activist and editor of *Godey's Lady's Book* Sarah Josepha Hale writes in her "Editor's Table" column, "Home is woman's world; the training of the young her profession; the happiness of the household her riches." However, Hale also recognised that women were increasingly in need of supporting their families, so she writes that, "Any indoor employment such as type-setting and waiting on tables, as it was sufficiently akin to home" can be considered an appropriate profession for a woman. This notion carried through to the Civil War and the years following it, as every time women stepped into the public sphere or formed associations, the same idea was repeated, that any public presence of women needed to expand domestic ideals to serve the societies they lived in.

The Civil War would see the largest public mobilising of women in America. Glenna Matthews and Margaret Wineland document this, as Matthews writes that during the war, "women were urged to form soldiers' aid societies under the direction of the Sanitary Commission" to extend their natural properties of being carers and nurturers to those in pain (*Public Woman* 126), and Wineland reports that "after 1850, many women supported the Civil War effort through work with the Sanitary Commission, a non-profit to help and lobby for conditions for wounded soldiers" (11). By 1863, so many women had joined the efforts of the Sanitary Commission that its

[1] Patricia Dawn Robinson writes, "clubwomen organized themselves before and after the Civil War, at first locally, in many different clubs, associations, and societies that pursued a diverse array of goals, purposes, and ideologies" (iv). Christine Woyshner writes, "In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a multitude of diverse women were members of clubs and associations. By the turn of the twentieth century, over two million women were members of clubs" (11-12).

President, Henry Bellows, wrote that the time would come when “the great uprising of the women of America, their systematic organization and co-operation in a common work will be regarded as the most marked social feature of the war, the most splendid achievement on record of spontaneous humanity.”[2] Henry Bellows commends the women on organising for a common humanitarian cause, and while women were organising throughout the North, even demanding better supplies and care for wounded soldiers and speaking at public forums about the war, it was all done to serve others.

This trend continued into postbellum America. Mary Beth Norton writes that “women had a special role to play because they were defined as uniquely capable of larger social sympathies. Thus, it was entirely appropriate for beings previously lacking an extra-domestic role to organize for the relief of social problems” (617). Women were allowed, even encouraged to associate as long as the beneficiaries of their associative activities was the society and community they lived in. Further manifestation of this kind of activism, expanding the women’s domestic role of moral superiority and upholding of values was seen in the creation of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in 1874, to combat the detrimental influence of alcohol on the wellbeing of the family structure. This Association was also built through the authority of women’s moral superiority since “women claimed the moral authority to control male drinking behavior—and did so on the basis of the female role in the home” (Matthews *Just a Housewife* 67). The leader of the WCTU, Frances

[2] Henry Bellows to Jane Hoge and Mary Livermore, Oct 29, 1863, USSC Documents, vol. II, no. 63. (Chicago Office of the Sanitary Commission).

Willard, expressed this sentiment directly, when she said that the WCTU was built on the idea of "making the whole world homelike" (Buhle Quoted in Matthews).

Even when women's associations moved on to the issue of suffrage, they continued to justify women's right to be involved in political decision making as an extension of them being moral caretakers, this time of the whole country, which was portrayed as one big home. This sentiment was reiterated by Willard and the WCTU when they formally endorsed women's suffrage, which they did by asking for the Home Protection ballot in 1877, by arguing that because it was "the woman's duty to protect her home and so women should be able to vote on the distribution of liquor licenses in their communities" (Schmidt). Matthews notes that this tactic was not without its merits, as it suggested that "women might be unable to defend their homes without political rights" (*Just a Housewife* 86-87).

Even clubs and associations formed explicitly to advocate for women's suffrage adopted this route of portraying women's political activities as an extension of her domestic duties. In 1852, Hale writes in *Godey's Lady's Book*:

> Give women some pursuit which men esteem and see if their work is not well done, provided they are suitably trained. Now we do not desire to change the station of the sexes, or give to women the work of men. We only want our sex to become fitted for their own sphere. But we believe this comprises, besides household care and domestic duties, three important vocations…as teaching, preserving and helping, under which rubric was included a call for women physicians. ("Editor's Table")

The year after (1853), she went even further by stating that any indoor employment would be akin to home and thus appropriate for a woman who needs to support herself. More than 30 years later, even when women's suffrage (which Hale did not support) was an undeniably public movement, some of the most visible figures repeated these sentiments, that all claims for women's associations were based

upon a natural extension of their domestic duties. They reaffirmed that any public or communal pursuit that the women took up would serve their homes and societies, and it was never represented as serving themselves. They characterised the nation as an extended home and portrayed themselves as caretakers and nurturers of the country, which could only be achieved through giving women the vote.

Two examples of women who posited this ideology are Lucy Stone and Julia Ward Howe, women's rights activists and co-founders of The American Woman Suffrage Association in 1869. Stone started a suffragist magazine named the *Woman's Journal*, and in a January 1881 article she deplored the widespread indebtedness among Massachusetts cities and asserted, "This is very bad housekeeping", the solution to which was of course to give women the vote and make them the housekeepers of the state. Just towards the end of the nineteenth century, this idea was still asserted. In 1899, Julia Ward Howe writes about her thoughts on the battle between "domestic and literary occupation" (*Reminiscences* 217). She advises what can be achieved, if there are a certain number of hours that women can claim for themselves:

> I endeavored to formulate the results of my own experience as follows: If you have at your command three hours *per diem*, you may study art, literature, and philosophy, not as they are studied professionally, but in the degree involved in general culture. If you have but one hour in every day, read philosophy, or learn foreign languages, living or dead. If you can command only fifteen or twenty minutes, read the Bible with the best commentaries, and daily a verse or two of the best poetry. As I write this, I recall the piteous image of two wrecks of women, Americans and wives of Americans, who severally poured out their sorrows to me, saying that 'the preparation of three square meals a day, the washing, baking, sewing, and child-bearing, had filled the measure of their days and exceeded that of their strength': And yet, each said, 'I wanted the Greek and Latin and college course as much as anyone could wish for it'. But surely, no love of intellectual pursuits should lead any of us to disparage and neglect the household gifts and graces. (217)

Howe's reference here to "literary occupation" most likely points to the parallel phenomenon discussed in the following section, which was that of the creation of literary clubs by women that had accompanied the establishment and rise of women's associations aimed at public good. Howe, Stone, and the public women who precede them insist on not disrupting family routines and advise on what can be achieved only *if* there is time to be spared, without it affecting the service of the home. They do not advocate taking time for themselves or claiming time regardless of the demands of "three square meals, baking, sewing and child-bearing" placed upon them. In the following sections, I lay out how the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs were distinct in this regard.

Howe would also be making her personal stance clear, as discussed in the following section, as she founded a women's club which did not have literary aims but was built upon philanthropy and public good. The origins and aims of women's literary clubs are discussed in the following section.

The Founding of Sorosis and The Spread of Literary Clubs

In America, literary clubs exclusively for women began appearing soon after the Civil War was over. Karen J. Blair's 1980 book *The Clubwoman as Feminist* traces the literary club movement from the founding of the club Sorosis in New York by journalist Jane Cunningham Croly in 1868, to the establishment of The General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC) in 1890.

Jane Cunningham Croly was a journalist in New York in the 1850's, writing for the *New York Sunday Times* and *Noah's Weekly Messenger*, where she started using the pen name Jennie June. By 1857, she was a syndicated columnist

appearing in newspapers in New Orleans, Richmond, Baltimore, and Louisville ("Jane Cunningham Croly"). In April 1868, the New York Press Club held a dinner at Delmonico's Restaurant to honor Charles Dickens. Croly attempted to purchase a ticket, but the Press Club refused to allow her or any woman to attend the event. Three days before the event, the Press Club relented on the condition that the women must sit behind a curtain, unseen and unheard. Croly refused, and in turn declared that "we will form a club of our own. We will give banquets to ourselves, make all the speeches ourselves and not invite a single man." While women had organized in the past, Croly insisted that her ladies would not "darn socks for soldiers or bake cakes for church socials" (Gourley 11-12). Instead, Sorosis would be a club where women would, in Croly's own words, "focus on self-improvement, learn how to work together for general objects, with no bent towards charity or social uplift or moral housekeeping" and would "help women to bloom by presenting lectures and discussions on the arts and education" (Croly 13).

Accordingly, Croly set out to realise her idea of a club "composed of women only, that should manage its own affairs, represent as far as possible the active interests of women, and create a bond of fellowship between them" (Croly 12). She approached Mrs. Charlotte B. Wilbour, Miss Kate Field, Mrs Henry M. Field and Mrs Professor Botta. On the first Monday in March 1868, a meeting was called at the residence of Mrs Croly where Wilbour, Botta, Field and Kate Field were present. They named their club Sorosis and its charter membership had 14 names including the poet Alice Cary as its first President. Mrs Croly outlines the purpose of the club as existing to "supply the want of unity and secular organization among women. The club must be hospitable to women of different minds, degree, habits of work and

thought and all classes of women – the idea of clubs being to rid them of the system of exclusion and separation" (Croly 13). At this period, not one of those women connected with the undertaking, "had ever heard of a "woman's club," or of any secular organization composed entirely of women, for the purpose of bringing all kinds of women together to work out their own objects in their own way" (Croly 15).

There was a second all-women club formed in May 1868, two months after Sorosis. This was the New England Women's Club in Boston, established by Julia Ward Howe, Harriet Hanson Robinson, and Caroline Severance. However, it differed greatly from Sorosis as according to Olive Thorne Miller, "since their focus was still on philanthropic lines and of philanthropic workers, it did not emphasize the club thought and therefore never met the opposition of its New York sister" (31). Since Sorosis was the first secular all-women club which explicitly stated their focus was on women's sphere, and was built upon lectures and discussions for women's self-improvement, it is accepted as being the first women's literary club in America.

Following the founding of Sorosis, more all-women literary and self-improvement clubs made an appearance all over the nation. Margaret Wineland and Anne Firor Scott document this phenomenon, where Wineland writes that, "By the time the (Civil) war ended, the experience of organizing left American women primed for the foundation of the thousands of study clubs that followed" (11) and Scott affirms that "the (Civil) war was barely over when ladies' literary societies…began appearing in various parts of the country. In time, the 'clubs', as they began to call themselves, became formidable educational enterprises reaching beyond the women themselves" (111). This movement took on a life of its own, and particular clubs dedicated to individual authors became more widespread,

particularly Shakespeare and Browning Clubs. Wineland writes that following the “rash of study clubs for women to educate themselves, ‘department clubs’ (dedicated to individual authors) sprang up across the nation before 1905. These clubs were set apart from earlier women’s organizations in that they were not built around a common (philanthropic or social betterment) purpose” (2-3). Later in this chapter, I examine how the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs and the Pioneer Club embodied this particular spirit.

Critics have looked into what caused this immense wave of women’s clubs at this particular time. Miller writes that “woman formed her club inspired by the conviction that she too was an individual and it was the first conspicuous departure from the secluded home life” (16-17) and Wineland points out that “a vacuum was created in women’s lives when their role shrank to Homemaker; in earlier times, participating in benevolence groups had helped to stave off the inevitable ‘mental starvation’ that awaited women” and as a result, “study, current events, or Shakespeare Clubs cropped up naturally” to fill the hunger for education (13). Professor Theodora Penny Martin also asserts that these study clubs maintained their aims of being strictly for themselves as individuals, and “refused to alter their mission even when the trend towards social service dominated the club movement” (12). Before education was widely accessible and acceptable and woman’s sphere expanded outside the secluded space of home, “a group of women was a place to safely and privately discuss women’s issues and offered the women camaraderie, depth of experience and mutual encouragement which bonded them together for over a hundred years in the Women’s Club Movement” (Wineland 14). The extent of

the club movement would become more obvious in 1889, when Croly decided to approach the idea of forming a National Federation of clubs.

The General Federation of Women's Clubs and State Federations

Until 1889, no central organizing body governed or united the newly formed department clubs in America. This would change when Mrs Croly, who was now President of Sorosis, suggested that, in recognition of Sorosis' twenty-first year of existence, they host a convention with all the known women's clubs at that time. Accordingly, in January of 1889, Sorosis sent out ninety-seven invitations for a March convention in Madison Square Theatre in New York City. Sixty-one clubs responded by sending delegates from all parts of the country and six letters of regret were received from other clubs (Wood 31-32).

It is proof of the proliferation of women's literary clubs, that in the two decades following the founding of Sorosis, there were ninety-seven known clubs to send out invitations to. Further evidence that all of these invited clubs were literary clubs comes from a report from Ellen M. Henrotin who had served as President of Sorosis for four years. She confirms that, "until 1894 the General Federation was an organization of literary clubs" (ix). It represents the growth and popularity of literary clubs, and also speaks to existing informal communication networks that would have existed, as Sorosis knew about the other clubs.

At the convention in March, a constitution for the GFWC was ratified and the conditions for membership were laid down as, "for a club to be a member of the GFWC, it would have to show that no political and sectarian test is required (for a woman to become a member) and that its purpose is not philanthropic or technical

but (its) chief object is literary, artistic, or scientific culture" (Croly 99). This is an important point of distinction as I discuss later with the Pioneer Club, which was built upon the same ideas of not restricting membership and was the sole British club to be a GFWC member. The convention also featured speeches given by women who were members of various clubs. Mrs. Ella Dietz Clymer, a member of Sorosis, came up with the slogan that would become the GFWC's motto – "Unity in Diversity", when she declared that "We look for unity, but unity in diversity" meaning that each club had its individual purpose, mission, and bylaws, but that together they would strengthen and support each other (Croly 90). Mary F. Eastman, a member of the New England Women's Club, gave a speech where she spoke of "the clasp of hands" in which she had rejoiced, and how glad she was that "we clasp hands so widely and now begin to understand each other" and declared that she "feels the great love, we must learn sympathy, learn unity, learn the great lesson of organization" and that "these clubs have made a new world" for women, beyond anything they had ever dreamed of (Croly 90). The GFWC's first convention closed with Mrs Croly declaring it "the most wonderful of experimental gatherings" (94) and it became a growing institution to which literary clubs including foreign clubs continued to apply for membership, and which met every two years (Croly 102). The founding of the GFWC also inspired states to form their own federations and Henrotin states that by 1898, twenty-three State Federations of Women's Clubs had been formed, in states as far apart and diverse as Vermont, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Washington and Ohio (x). This language of "clasping hands" and "unity" is echoed in several of the Pioneer Club's records, particularly in reference to Mrs Massingberd, and will be examined in the Pioneer Club chapter. Later in this chapter,

I also examine correspondence between Croly and the founder of the Pioneer Club, Mrs Emily Massingberd. The image of clasped hands and unity in diversity is reminiscent of the first GFWC convention, and since Mrs Massingberd was corresponding with Mrs Croly, it is a tenable position to consider that she made the deliberate choice to repeat the language used to describe the GFWC's vision and she saw her club as aligning with her American counterpart's vision.

History of British Women's Clubs and The Place of the Pioneer Club

In 1898, *Lady's Realm* reporter Evelyn Wills deems the explosion of women's clubs in London with their accompanying opportunities for social intercourse as "a distinctly latter-day feature." This is because even "Twenty years ago they were practically unknown, today they are to be met with on all sides" (Quoted in Evans). Mary Krout was an American journalist stationed in London from 1895 to 1898, and in 1899 she writes that "The women's club in England is comparatively a new institution. Organizations of women have been either political, like the famous Primrose League (a political organisation dedicated to spreading Conservative values), or religious, under the domination of the church" (79). She details that British Clubs were "in most respects entirely different from those of the United States" (79). This was due to the fact that British clubs were usually formed as exclusive spaces for women fulfilling certain criteria. She refers to some of the most prominent clubs, such as The Alexandra Club which was "for ladies of position only" limiting its membership to women of means from the Upper Classes of society (79). Most clubs had spacious premises with The Alexandra having "reading-rooms, drawing-rooms, dining-rooms and even bed chambers where members may be lodged for a fortnight"

(80). These clubs also had no agenda other than being social spaces exclusively for women.

Other women's clubs, even while not being just social spaces were still exclusive in various ways, such as The University Club which only admitted "medical women and others holding university diplomas" (Krout 79). The Ladies' Athenaeum was founded by Jennie Cornwallis-West (the mother of Winston Churchill) for "ladies interested in politics, arts, literature and music" (Crawford).

Doughan and Gordon note that some women's clubs were even formed because men would not admit women to their clubs or when "men forbade women from joining the established clubs" (44). This included the "Ladies' Automobile Club which was founded because of the refusal of the Royal Automobile Club to admit women members" and women's sporting clubs such as "The Bath Club at 34 Dover Street with an emphasis on sport, particularly swimming" (Crawford). Some clubs were formed to be spaces where women could encourage and help each other with professional ambitions, such as "The Writers' Club which was founded in 1892 by female journalist Frances Low, seeking to provide a social and working space for women writers. Membership was open to all women who devoted themselves full-time to their authorship, whether their writing appeared in books, newspapers or magazines" (Brady). The Writer's Club was suitably set up as a space where women could pursue their professional demands, with it being located "in the very center of the newspaper and publishing district and furnished with tables and writing materials, enabling them to help each other in the most direct and practical manner. The entire suite is upon the ground floor, and includes a writing room, dining room, a kitchen, a cloak room and two reception rooms" (Krout 82). Even though British clubs were

formed with a purpose and were often composed of women who had independent means, social standing and careers, the clubs still invited scrutiny and derision, for the same reason American women's clubs did, in that clubs were "considered subversive to domestic life" (Krout 80).

The Pioneer Club

The club movement in Britain was transformed by Mrs Emily Massingberd, who founded the Pioneer Club in 1892 in Regent Street, London. Mrs Massingberd wanted to create a space "where any woman could come to meet friends, dine, read and debate the issues of the day, in well-kept and equipped rooms" (Doughan and Gordon 48). The Pioneer Club was different from other British women's clubs in both membership and purpose. The Pioneer had no restrictions on membership, it welcomed women from all walks of life, regardless of profession, social class or even nationality. Mrs Massingberd was so determined to keep her Club democratic and equitable that she employed an unusual system. Krout reports that within the Pioneer Club, in order to "abolish class distinction and promote democracy, names and titles were eschewed and members were designated by number only so that "99" might be a duchess or a post-office clerk" (80). Margaret Shurmer Sibthorp, member and editor of *Shafts* was "number 93" as she records in the February 1897 issue (37). The democratic nature of the Pioneer is particularly laudable as it had several prominent members including novelists Mona Caird, Sarah Grand, and L.T. Meade, and social activists such as Harriet Stanton Blatch (the daughter of Cady Stanton) and Eleanor Marx-Aveling ("Pioneer Club" 2). Krout further notes that it must be acknowledged that the Pioneer "draws together the most heterogeneous audience imaginable — many nationalities, French, German, American and even Indian being

represented" (81). The Pioneer's inclusivity is particularly notable when compared with the secular, yet racially exclusive American Clubs and their General Federation. Mrs Massingberd being the heart and soul of her club, the inclusive ideology had to come from her.

The inception of the Pioneer Club is recorded in the initial issue of *Shafts in* November 1892 in these words:

> Few of the evidences gathering everywhere around us, are so markedly significant of the rapid advance of women into the position befitting them as human beings, as the clubs which they have founded, and which are being successfully carried on. Latest of these, though not the least, is the Pioneer, in the pleasant, cheerful rooms of which women gather to meet each other, to help each other, and to discuss the leading questions and principal progressive work of the day; together with many subjects, practical, scientific, physiological, and psychological; bringing also into notice, and obtaining recruits for, their own special branches of such work or study. (Sibthorp 14-15)

The Pioneers' declaration that their Club was a space to "meet, help, discuss and learn" is very similar to the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs' aims. The club was also different from other contemporary British clubs as it was literary, being named after Walt Whitman's poem "Pioneers! O Pioneers!" The following four individual lines which explain the choice of name and were relevant to the Club's direction and ethos were inscribed on a glass screen within the premises:

> We the route for travel clearing
>
> Pioneers, O Pioneers!
>
> All the hands of comrades clasping
>
> Pioneers, O Pioneers!

This poem was created by rearranging lines from Whitman's original poem. In the original Whitman poem, the line "all the hands of comrades clasping" is line number

35 and the line “we the route for travel clearing” comes later – line number 79. The Pioneer Club poem portrays quite clearly how they must have seen themselves and their purpose – to clear the way for travel first, a first line of defence against all of society’s prejudice and discrimination against women, and their clubs. Their Club was a place where women could freely and openly discuss the issues of the day, where they could step through the doors of the Club and be free of societal impositions. Clearing the route for those who travel behind them also projects the anticipation of hope that they would start something, that they wanted to be an impetus of change for the women who came after them to follow. Once they had managed to cut down their obstacles, they would reach out to their comrades and clasp their hands, guiding them forward too, making it just a little easier for the ones who came after. Also important is the fact that one cannot be a pioneer if one does not strike out on a new path. To call yourself a pioneer, you must do something that has not been done before, you must establish something that no one else has. Only then can you ask people to join you, as the Pioneers did, as Whitman did, by clasping the hands of their comrades.

Carl Najdek writes that “Whitman’s poem revolves around tactile imagery of felling primeval forests and laying the grounds for industrialisation and modernity” (100). Whitman specifically refers to “sharp-edged axes’ in line 3, as the instrument of clearing this path. While the clubwomen had different aims, they also appropriated this symbol to show their own pioneering spirit, as each member wore a brooch “in the shape of a small silver axe” (Croly 205). Mrs Massingberd would pass away unexpectedly and suddenly in 1897, and the March 1897 issue of *Shafts* notes that her ashes were laid to rest at Gunby Hall (her family estate) in an urn within which

was also buried "the silver axe she used to wear in the Club, also a piece of the Pioneer ribbon, with its three colours, white, black and grey" (76-77).

Shakespeare Clubs, Browning Clubs, and The Pioneer Club – Club Format and the Proceedings of Clubtime

Shakespeare Clubs were part of the wave of literary and study clubs that formed following the founding of Sorosis, and they in turn led to the founding of Browning Clubs. Scheil documents that particular to the women's club movement in the mid-to-late nineteenth century was the founding of over five hundred Shakespeare Clubs across the country (*She Hath Been Reading* 2). They established state federations of clubs, and most of them joined the GFWC. In the same period, Browning Clubs made a parallel appearance. The Pioneer Club, though established in Victorian London, also shared several characteristics of functioning with the American literary clubs. Multiple examples drawn from primary and secondary sources are detailed in the next sections to elucidate that these three types of women's clubs also had similar membership and methods of functioning and spent their clubtime in similar ways. The examples also clearly demonstrate that the American clubs, while retaining an all-white membership, did not discriminate among members in any other way such as age, marital status or social standing. Since African American women did have a parallel club movement at the same time, including literary clubs, with aims that were different from their white counterparts, I provide a brief overview of these in Appendix 1. Religious leanings of members are never mentioned, very likely in accordance with the GFWC's policy of keeping literary clubs secular. Each club followed a pattern of learning which included discussion, reading the texts, writing and presenting papers, clearly indicating that

members were expected to find time to both come to the club meetings as well as the time to prepare for the meetings by reading texts and writing papers beforehand.

The Saturday Shakespeare Club of Greensboro, Alabama founded in 1889 reports that it was founded for "the express purpose of reading and studying the writings of the 'Bard of Avon' and limits its membership to twenty-two." While stating that the originators of the club were "two of the most intellectual women in the land – Mrs. T.J. Lawson and Miss Martha Young (writer)", the author is quick to point out that there no members who "are 'new women' in the accepted meaning of that term" (Overstreet 33). The fact that the originators of the club were two women, one of whom was married and one who was not, points out that the marital status of the women was not a factor in being granted membership. The restriction of membership numbers to twenty-two also suggests that the meetings were held in a home. The insistence that they are not New Women while simultaneously admiring the intellect of their founders and the "hereditary influences they transmit to us" (Overstreet 34), also ties into the general functioning of Shakespeare Clubs, which differed from other women's organisations of the time. Even when Shakespeare Clubs had members who were public figures (similar to the Pioneer Club), they still chose to be part of a club, and to engage in camaraderie and intellectual discussion with fellow women without delving into overt activism.

Further clues about the proceedings of all-women Shakespeare Clubs comes from a second club in Alabama named The Shakespeare Club of Montgomery. The writer of the article (who chooses to remain anonymous and signs off as "a member of the club") writes that "the meetings of the club begin with quotations from the play under consideration. The secretary copies these bits of the Poet's wit and wisdom in

her report of the minutes" (*Alabama Women in Literature* 50). Both this statement and one that states that "original criticisms and papers on the times, events, or characters of the play are also read at each meeting" (50) confirm that the women came to meetings prepared with quotations and writing. This suggests that clubtime during meetings was spent on discussion and learning, while written work brought to the meeting would have to have been written already, suggesting that women found time within their domestic existences and duties to write these papers. The Montgomery Club also went beyond the Bard as "collateral studies in History are pursued in connection with the historical plays" (50) confirming the place of these clubs as spaces for education that might have been otherwise unattainable for these women. The writer further reveals that the club restricts itself to twenty-five members, and they have "four officers - a president, a secretary, a dictator (who assigns the work) and a critic" (51). This writer does not describe what a critic's role is, but the following description of the Lebanon, Missouri club also mentions and expands on the Critic's role and refers to it as a "common figure". The fact that Shakespeare Clubs followed similar patterns is confirmed when the article writer sums up with "there is nothing unique in its (the Club's) method of study" (51). Both the existence of the position of the Critic in more than one club and the Montgomery Club stating that their method of study is not unique suggest that the clubs followed similar methods of functioning, probably drawn from *Shakespeariana's* (discussed in a later section) instructional articles or through discussions at their State Federations.

The Lebanon Shakespeare Club of Lebanon, Missouri, was born when Mrs. J. C. Wallace began reading Shakespeare with her daughter and decided to invite other women to "enjoy the benefit with them" (*Shakespeariana* 2 48 Quoted in *She*

Hath Been Reading). In 1885, the Lebanon Club reported to *Shakespeariana* that "we have an enthusiastic Club of about eighteen ladies, in ages ranging from fifteen to sixty". The Lebanon Club "read from 3:00-5:00 p.m. every Saturday, and began by calling roll, then having each member recite her favorite sentiment culled from the lesson" (*Shakespeariana* 2 49 Quoted in Desmet). The Lebanon Club also followed the pattern of time dedicated to both the meetings themselves and the preparatory reading before attending the meeting. They read "*Cymbeline, Troilus and Cressida, Timon of Athens, Julius Caesar*, and *Coriolanus* along with English and Roman History. They also wrote sketches about the characters" (Croly 755). This club only had two officers, "Mrs. Wallace, who has always been our leader, and a figure common to some groups, the 'Critic', who is appointed weekly and comes 'prepared to the best of her ability'" (*Shakespeariana* 2 48-49 Quoted in Desmet).

Quotations from *Shakespeariana* in Scheil's book expand on the role of the Critic. The Critic was the member "responsible for leading the analysis. The twenty-three ladies in the Shakespeare Club of West Philadelphia met each week in the late 1880s for two hours. Every play had an appointed 'Critic' who asked each woman at the end of a scene to explain any obscure passages or allusions" (*Shakespeariana* 3 367). The women in the Lebanon Club also reported to *Shakespeariana* about the responsibilities of a Critic, who they referred to as "the member who focused on 'language and sentiment,' making sure that 'every reference to mythology, science, botany, and historical events is carefully investigated, not neglecting the geography of all places mentioned'" (*Shakespeariana* 2 1885 48-49). The Critic's role was taken in turn by each member, and they served as the person who did in-depth historical and contextual reading about the play that was being considered at each meeting.

The Mount David Shakespeare Club of Maine also used the Critic's role. The club reports that it was "formed in January 1889 by five ladies and it was agreed that membership should be limited to twelve, that each one should perform the duties assigned to her to the best of their ability, and submit unflinchingly to the ruling of a critic" (Croly 563). The club had a mix of both married and unmarried members as the President is named as Miss C.A. Bradford and the Vice-President is named as Mrs M.E. Sabine.

Across the country in Pasadena, California another pair of women – one a Miss Claribel Thompson and one a Mrs Lydia Nash who were both members of the Ladies Aid Society of the First Congregational Church decided to start a ladies' literary society. In 1888, they set a meeting at Miss Thompson's home and invited other women. They named themselves the Shakespeare Club of Pasadena and agreed to have meetings in members' homes following a schedule. Three more women are named as being part of the original membership of twelve - Miss Ellen F. Thompson, Mrs. Ella Allen and Mrs. (Dr.) Page (Campbell 2-3). This club is noteworthy as it was started by women who were already members of a women's organisation. The membership they attracted is also varied, with both married and unmarried women named as members. It suggests that women still wanted an outlet to organise for themselves, even as they were organising for the collective good. They felt the desire to have a space of their own where time was spent in "the education and cultural exposure of its members" (Campbell 3).

Other Shakespeare Clubs followed similar methods of club activities. The Idaho Springs Shakespeare Club was established in 1888 by Mrs Cora Bullis. The Club's membership "is limited to twenty. It does excellent literary and

Shakespearean work every other Saturday afternoon in one of the members' homes" (Croly 371). In Maine, the Shakespeare Society of Rockland was "organized in October 1889 with a membership limited to forty. They usually take three plays each winter, sometimes giving a production of one of the plays, the members taking the parts" (Croly 569). The Stratford Club of New York met weekly from 1894 for nine months of the year "to study three plays within this time. Portions are selected, read aloud and then discussed" (Croly 912). In New Hampshire, the Avon Club which began in 1883 has a "membership limited to sixteen". They spend "at least two afternoons reading a play, with one member serving as critic. Historical papers are written and sometimes a synopsis of the play" (Croly 797). The Shakespeare Club of Gouverneur of New York established in 1894 has as its object "mutual improvement and a united effort toward a broader social and intellectual life. In its weekly meetings, one act of a play is read and then each member gives in her own words the work assigned to her and later follows critical comment and discussion" (Croly 912).

These clubs were united in their purpose of improving the members' intellectual lives. Shakespeare was a means to an end, and they served as spaces where women gathered to encourage and uplift each other. Clubs were also spaces of social gatherings and events for the members. The Anne Hathaway Club of Colorado Springs, for instance, had a members-only luncheon on April 23, 1897 to mark the Bard's birthdate where "the menu was in quotations from Shakespeare, and the invitations in early English. An original poem by one of the members was the feature of the occasion" (Croly 283).

Browning Club records have proven more difficult to find, and I discuss the sources and archives I have been able to access in the next section of this chapter. The examples I have found from both primary and secondary sources point to Browning Clubs having a similar utility for its members as Shakespeare Clubs did.

Croly reports of a Browning Club in Norway, Maine which was “organized one year later than the Barton Club. The work is conducted in very much the same manner, but more attention is paid to the poet in whose honor it is named, interspersed with the study of Shakespeare’s plays.” She clarifies that The Barton Reading Club was organized in October 1892 and held “weekly meetings at the homes of members from November to June to study history, travel and biography with readings from the authors being studied” (557). Since the Browning Club was said to be organized in a similar fashion, it can be reasonably ascertained that they followed the pattern of Shakespeare Clubs, meeting in members’ homes and studying various poems from Browning and texts from Shakespeare.

Poet Lore (discussed later in the Archive section of this chapter) reports that The Browning Club of Meadville, Pennsylvania was founded in 1886 with a membership of twelve ladies. They held “weekly meetings lasting three hours. We have read ‘Pauline’, ‘Paracelsus’, and ‘Strafford’ and are now wrestling with ‘Sordello’”. They also followed the tradition of some Shakespeare Clubs of holding events for their inspirational poet’s birthday. The report states that “the Poet’s birthday on May 7 was observed at the residence of Mrs Joshua Douglas by a literary programme, consisting of readings from Browning, criticisms, an original paper and a song from “Pippa Passes”, followed by lunch, with souvenirs inscribed with quotations from ‘Sordello’. On last year’s birthday original papers were read”

(Volume 1 1889 278). The report does not give the titles of any of the papers, or what verses they chose to inscribe.

Poet Lore also has a report of The Sordello Club which Willa Cather disparages in her article (discussed in Chapter 2). It reports that:

> Eighteen or twenty ladies met from 1885 once a fortnight to form a class that had a Chairman, Secretary, and General Manager and that was to require no papers, and to have no special machinery. Plunging *in medias res* (sic), we began with “Sordello” and discussed, criticized, and admired with great freedom and refreshed ourselves after our labors with a cup of tea. After completing “Sordello” we read “Paracelsus”, “Luria”, “Colombe’s Birthday” and parts of “The Ring and the Book”. We have had few or no papers, but at the close of our meetings this Spring, the Secretary read a paper. (Volume 2 1890 424).

The Club was clearly started with the agreement that there would be no papers, the women seem to have wanted a more collaborative atmosphere as they read and discussed the poems together, without requiring any of the members to come in with prepared reading or criticism, and in their own words, did so “with great freedom” within their club.

One more report of a Browning Club in *Poet Lore* explicitly represents the club as a space where they exercised some form of time spent on themselves, taken from all the demands placed upon their time by the household. The Plainfield Browning Club of New Jersey has “met monthly from November to May from 1887” and the members include “ladies who find time to add the enjoyment of a little poetry to the cares of their households and of society.” These ladies took time for themselves not just at the monthly meetings, but within their daily tasks as “one poem per meeting was to be studied at home and explained or analyzed at the meeting.” One meeting also included a writing session, where members wrote and then shared and discussed their answers to the question: “Wherein does the fascination of Robert Browning’s poetry lie?” (Volume 2 1890 86-87)

While the Pioneer Club functioned as a drop-in space for its members, where they could find quiet and comfortable interiors with access to refreshments, it also followed educational programmes very similar to the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs, hosting lectures and having discussions. Krout records that "The Pioneer Club has been partly educational and has supported various educational enterprises, classes having been formed for study, as in American clubs, and debates, the reading of papers followed by discussion, being a part of the weekly programme" (80-81). They did not draw from a particular author or source, but contemplated contemporary topics such as "vivisection, women's suffrage, theosophy and feminism" ("Pioneer Club" 4). The Pioneer also invited speakers to give talks, including male speakers. For example, the June 1894 and 1895 issues of *Shafts* note that George Bernard Shaw (276) and Tom Mann (35) respectively, were invited to speak to the Club members. One aspect in which the Pioneer differed from both American and British Clubs was that members were allowed to invite men as guests to the Club for tea or to listen to any of the scheduled speeches.

Members of these clubs on both sides of the Atlantic used them as spaces of learning, to make up and achieve the education that they had not been allowed to pursue by traditional means as well as spaces for social connection, performance, and celebration, with clubtime spent enthusiastically on all these aspects of club life.

Shakespeare, Browning, and the Pioneer Club – Scope for A Transatlantic Study of Women's Clubtime

This project was initially conceptualised as a recovery project examining women's Shakespeare Clubs in late nineteenth-century America. As I delved into the various archives about women's literary clubs in general and Shakespeare Clubs

in particular, it became clear that Shakespeare Clubs were inextricably tied to Browning Clubs. They were consistently mentioned together, such as in the works of John Farrell who writes that "in late nineteenth-century America, Browning Clubs had close ties to Shakespeare studies" (233). As explained in the next section on Archive and Methodology, this collaboration became more concrete through the founding of the journal *Poet Lore* in 1889. It was founded by Charlotte Endymion and Helen Clarke as "A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Letters and to the Study of Shakespeare, Browning, and Comparative Literature". The editors had a personal link to Shakespeare Clubs as well, since Charlotte Endymion had been editor of *Shakespeariana* in 1883. *Poet Lore*, like *Shakespeariana,* found "an immediate audience among the proliferating literary clubs across the nation. Its contents faithfully followed the original dedication, leaning heavily on Shakespeare and Browning studies" ("Helen Archibald Clarke"). Browning Clubs functioned on the same pattern and the same utility as Shakespeare Clubs, providing a base from which to build and learn. They used their interest in learning and understanding Browning and turned it into a critical self-education about the world. Browning, like Shakespeare, seems to have provided a beginning which held no boundaries or restrictions and removed the formality of a classroom while retaining its purpose in terms of cultural and literary education.

As the examples I have laid out in the previous section on the proceedings of clubtime and looked at in more detail in Chapter 2 demonstrate, when tracing the histories of Shakespeare and Browning Clubs, their reports always mention some form of time. This includes time taken out of their household duties, time taken from domestic chores and casts their clubs as being spaces of temporal reclamation.

They did this, as detailed in the previous section, through following schedules for learning, social activity, reading and discussion. They kept at these activities even when facing opposition, as an example from the Dallas Shakespeare Club demonstrates. A report from the Club reads: “Its members read Shakespeare for pure enjoyment and then hurried home to reach the fireside before the arrival of their husbands” (*Reading in Everyday Life* 38). These reports are examined in more detail in Chapter 2, and collectively they underline the fact that clubtime was entirely self-serving, that within the space of a club they went against the prescribed activities that their time was meant to be spent on. These clubs were also united by being built upon the GFWC’s requirements of not having political or sectarian discrimination, and not being philanthropic, but having as their primary objective uplift and advancement of its own members through literary, artistic, or scientific culture.

The racially inclusive and socially progressive Pioneer Club of Victorian London from the 1890’s might at first glance seem like an odd choice to fit in with American Shakespeare and Browning Clubs. Their association becomes clearer when reading reports written both by the Pioneer Club, and by Jane Croly. Croly's book includes a section on Foreign Clubs where she describes the Pioneer Club as “the first club (in England) organized upon a broad basis” (205). She explains what the broad basis is, in these words: “the President of the Pioneer Club in London, England, Mrs Massingberd boasts that she had brought together women of all types and kinds, and made them see the good in their opposites” (202). Croly adds that “this is the original recipe for a woman’s club” (202). Croly’s approval of the Pioneer as a fitting companion to the American literary clubs is further strengthened by her writing that “The club grew more upon the lines of clubs of women in America than

most of the women's clubs in England, and became affiliated with the GFWC in 1893" (203). The Pioneer being allowed to join the GFWC establishes that it had passed Croly's test of being a space where the women worked for themselves, for their own upliftment and was a secular and democratic space (even more so than American literary clubs as the Pioneer did not discriminate on the basis of race).

Croly's report about the Pioneer's activities reads in very similar fashion to the proceedings of Shakespeare and Browning Clubs. She reports "The literary and social features of the club were its evening debates, its afternoon teas, its freedom in discussion, and its open hospitality" (202). She underscores this by repeating information about the Pioneer's proceedings as "Each Pioneer wears a small axe, the club badge, and is known by a number, in lieu of her name, as a symbol of perfect equality" (205). Croly has also drawn a sketch of an axe next to her report, but does not elaborate on whether she has seen a photograph of the axe or used her imagination (Appendix 10). The Pioneers also clearly kept up this correspondence with their American sisters, as Pioneer reports in *Shafts* continue to mention American clubs. The March 1893 issue of *Shafts* records that "a most interesting article is contributed under the title of 'Women's Clubs in America' in the Christmas Annual of the Pioneer Club" (9). The June 1896 issue states under a column titled "Pioneer Club Records", "The women of America have told us of their clubs where women of sense and spirit meet to send forth words and thoughts, and to fill the air with a mighty impetus" (68). Unfortunately, I have not been able to recover any of this original correspondence and so have used available archives to prove their transatlantic connection in the next sections.

The Pioneer was a literary club, similar to the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs. This already separated them from contemporary British women's clubs which were formed either as social spaces or for a particular purpose. The three sets of clubs are also linked through their choice for their inspirational literary figure. Shakespeare and Browning were British poets, and Whitman was American, but the clubs inspired by them were not formed on their native soil. While the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs focussed almost exclusively on their source texts for discussion topics, drawing collateral topics from them as well, the Pioneers went beyond Whitman, discussing all kinds of contemporary topics. However, they kept their literary connection to Whitman alive, and continued to be inspired by him and his words. Throughout their existence, they used his symbols and poetry as a source of inspiration and discussion, and to represent their own cause. They used and rearranged Whitmanic words to explicate their ideas, beginning with the words chosen as their motto.

Another example, from the August 1896 issue of *Shafts* is examined below, and a picture is provided in Appendix 6. It was printed under the title "Pioneer Club" and combines lines from three separate Whitman poems. It reads:

> Not a grave of the murdered for freedom, but grows seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,
> Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish.
> Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,
> But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counselling, cautioning (These are verses 9 and 10 of "Poem of The Dead Young Men of Europe, The 72d and 73d Years of These States").
> Of equality—as if it harmed me, giving others the same chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indispensable to my own rights that others possess the same (This is line 19 of "Thoughts").
> Who are you that wanted only to be told what you knew before?
> Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in your nonsense? (These are lines 26-27 of "Poem of Many in One")

No explanation is given for the creation of this poem or its significance, but their using Whitman's words to create new writing is very similar to women in the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs writing papers after having read their namesake writers' works. These lines also contain ideas familiar to the ideology of all three clubs; equality for all without prejudice, and constant personal growth through learning and knowledge. In its short existence, under Massingberd's Presidency, these Whitmanic ideals make constant appearances, cementing the fact that the Pioneers believed and attempted to practice them. They say as much in the November 1892 issue of *Shafts* which states:

> The club is as free from bigotry of class, creed, or party as human nature in its present imperfect condition can pretend to be. The Pioneers do not profess to have yet attained perfection, but that is the name of the goal they see far ahead of them, and to which they direct their steps…Meetings are frequently arranged at the club during the season; and many opportunities offered for mutual improvement. Few subjects are left untouched…Appropriate mottoes abound: 'In great things Unity, in small things Liberty, in all things Charity'; 'Love thyself last'; 'They say – what say they? – let them say!'[3] and others…the most pleasing reflection is that these clubs demonstrate the advance women are making in their determination to obtain their own freedom; the points they have already gained, and their resolve neither to stay nor falter till all be won. What they seek, what they work for, is the welfare of humanity and the highest evolution of the race. (14-15)

The trope of arranging meetings (indicative of requiring the time to plan and attend them), of offering opportunities for mutual improvement, their assertion that the club was a space where "women were attempting to gain their own freedom", and the

[3] This was a riposte to Mrs Grundy who originated as an unseen character in Thomas Morton's 1798 play *Speed the Plough*. She represents an extremely conventional or priggish person, a personification of the tyranny of conventional propriety. A tendency to be overly fearful of what others might think is sometimes referred to as Grundyism.

ideal of "Unity" is reminiscent of the functioning of American literary clubs. While they do not state who or what they were trying to gain freedom from, they also state that they disregard what "they say". It can be reasonably considered that the watching public, which viewed these spaces as detrimental to established social norms and threatening to domestic life, were what they aspired to gain freedom from through their time in the club. It is also important to note that British clubs such as the Pioneer were more visible and public than the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs. They were private in terms of access and membership, and single-sex spaces as men could attend by invitation only, but their premises were in a public setting, and not in a member's home. The Pioneer Club also moved multiple times during its own lifetime, as documented in *Shafts*, due to "great increase in the number of its members, it moved, first, to 22 Cork Street, then to 22 Bruton Street" ("Spring Session" 12).

In Evelyn Wills' article, she further states the clubs were a "sign of the times" that "women have awakened to the fact that they want something outside their domestic and home duties" (Quoted in Evans 142). The trope of women "awakening" to wanting something outside their home duties characterised the opposing concerns that came to the forefront of a society that practised a gendered form of time. A few years after Wills' article, in 1899, Dora Jones writes about the kind of British women who found practical use and intellectual stimulation in these clubs. She says:

> The modern professional woman, be she artist, journalist, clerk, doctor, teacher, or nurse, living as often does in rooms in the suburbs, needs some fairly central haven of refuge where she can drop in, when she has a spare hour, for a rest, a cup of tea, and a glance at the newspapers. She is probably an intelligent woman, with a keen interest in everything that affects the interests of her sex, and she likes to have a place open to her where she may

> have a chance of meeting those like-minded and discussing questions of common interest. (Quoted in Doughan and Gordon 47)

Jones refers specifically to women who are modern professionals, in fields of art, medicine and education, who still desired a "haven" where they could spend a "spare hour". This represents the increasing awareness of women on the claims placed upon their time, and their desire to claim a few spare hours for themselves. The Pioneer was very different in this regard. The October 1896 issue of *Shafts* makes it clear that among the Pioneers are every kind of woman, from every social class and educational background possible. The article refers to "workers for women suffrage, women rich, poor and in between, women who see before them the shining gleam of illimitable distances and women who cannot see beyond tomorrow's dinner" (126). In *Shafts'* very first edition in November 1892, The Pioneer also lays out its purpose as a place where "a lady may wile away an hour, or an afternoon, of waiting in town, in interesting conversation with a friend, or in perusing some of the books, magazines, or daily papers" ("The Pioneer Club" 14) at the club. "Wiling away", "waiting" and "perusing" are all pursuits that require time at your disposal, and only possible in a space where you have determination over your own temporal claims. The Pioneer declares itself as a space where a woman may do that. While it was open to women at all hours and could be treated as a temporal retreat whenever required, unlike the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs which only had scheduled meetings and events, it is still a space of temporal reclamation, as the Pioneer declares that a woman may use the premises to spend her time as she wishes. The Pioneer also makes it clear that it was different from other British Clubs, which as explained earlier in this chapter had specific requirements for membership. Whether they were professionals or seeking a few hours of respite from their domestic duties,

the Pioneer clearly prided itself on being a space where any woman could "wile away an hour" as stated in *Shafts'* opening issue. The Pioneer was open to all, and its primary purpose was to provide a space for time spent in activities of leisure, serving oneself.

Collectively, these three sets of clubs were seen, in their own time, by their members as a direct response to the ideology of separate spheres, which was primarily a temporal ideology, made possible by subsuming of women's time. They were becoming aware that their lives were regulated by domestic importunities placed upon them, and the clubs were seen as the space where their time was spent, not in domestic service, but on themselves. These three sets of clubs stand out because their shared aims were different from other women's associations and clubs they co-existed with. Their particular focus on leisure, on creating a space and a few hours that were completely for themselves, not in service of home, family or society sets them apart from the other forms of women's organisations of the time.

The records of the clubs which are accessible mostly through digitisation and discussed in the following section on Archive and Methodology repeat a common idea – that their clubs and its activities were time that they stole or claimed back from the demands placed upon it. Unlike the other women's associations at the time, even the ones considered militant or subversive, these literary clubs distinguish themselves as spaces of temporal reclamation, taking back some of the time that society had taken from them by filling the measure of their day with domestic duties.

Methodology and Archival Materials

At the very beginning, this was a project about women-only Shakespeare Clubs in nineteenth-century America. As I delved into these clubs, it became a recovery project about women's time which also encompassed Robert Browning Clubs and the Pioneer Club. Initially, Katherine West Scheil's work led me to the primary archival sources such as *Shakespeariana*, but during the course of the project, I uncovered material from a myriad of sources which linked these three sets of literary clubs. My intervention is primarily textual analysis, drawing from diverse sources about these three sets of clubs to posit the idea that together, they represent a form of temporality as yet unexplored in critical work, both about the clubs and about women's time.

In her 1997 book *Intimate Practices: Literacy and Cultural Work in U.S. Women's Clubs, 1880-1920*, Anne Ruggles Gere refers to the cultural work of women's clubs as "a past that can never be entirely recovered" (2). I have found this to be true, as there are archives that are mentioned in various sources that I am unable to access, as well as it becoming obvious through my project that there are records that have either been lost or not kept in the first place.

In pursuing this project, my methodological frame was primarily textual analysis, working with materials both primary and secondary. Almost all of my primary sources have been accessed digitally, through the *HathiTrust, Internet Archive* and *newspapers.com*. Primary material for the Shakespeare Clubs proved to be the most prolific as multiple journals were established between the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to print and promote the work of Shakespeare Clubs.

The foremost among these is *Shakespeariana: A Monthly Magazine Devoted to Shakespearian Literature, Study, News, and Dramatic Criticism* which was published by the New York Shakespeare Society from 1883-1893. While the New York Shakespeare Society was "an all-male organization that took no interest in female members" (*She Hath Been Reading* 4-5), it printed news about the activities of all-women Shakespeare Clubs in a section titled "Shakespearian Societies" that explicated – "The Secretaries of Shakespearian Societies are invited to furnish the minutes of their meetings and whatever is of value and interest in their essays and discussions for publication in this department" (*Shakespeariana* 1 59). All-women Shakespeare Clubs from around the country sent in articles about their activities, performances, and social gatherings to *Shakespeariana*, establishing a national network of clubwomen and creating in effect a shared "virtual club" where they encouraged and responded to other clubs' activities. In 1886, *Shakespeariana* strengthened this reciprocal relationship by starting a column titled "A School of Shakespeare" for "the "large and ever-growing class of students in towns, villages, and home-circles" (*Shakespeariana* II 1886 456 Quoted in Scheil) which printed study guides, quizzes, questions for consideration, and critical writing by scholars, and encouraged clubs to use these to supplement their study practices. Volume 1 (1883) of *Shakespeariana* is available digitally through AMS Press and Volumes 4 – 10 (1887 – 1893) except Volume 5 (1886) are available from *HathiTrust*.

A second primary source is *The American Shakespeare Magazine: Published Monthly in the Interest of Shakespeare Clubs and Societies, and for The Benefit of Teachers and Students in General*, printed from 1895-1898 by the Fortnightly Shakespeare Club of New York. The journal was edited by Anna Randall-Diehl, the

president of the Fortnightly Shakespeare Club of New York City and it published both news about the clubs and a study section for the clubs to find inspiration. In the section titled “Shakespeare Clubs and Societies” the magazine requested “Reports of meetings, copies of papers or lectures, method of study described, any and all Shakespeare news”. The magazine printed reports about club activities such as one report from the November 1895 Volume which states that the Shakespeare Study Group of the Ladies’ Literary Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan has a method of study which comprises “using blank notebooks in which they write upon topics and questions from the play under consideration, which from November 1895 to January 1896 was *Timon of Athens”* (Volume II 1895 10-11).

Under a section titled the “Study Department” the magazine printed questions for discussion which “is found valuable to clubs, school classes, and private students” (*The American Shakespeare Magazine 3* 376). In a speech titled “The Study of Shakespeare” read by Randall-Diehl at the New York State Federation of Clubs at Syracuse in November 1897 and subsequently published in *The American Shakespeare Magazine*, she exhorted her readers to “form a Shakespeare Club if you do not already belong to one” (364). Like *Shakespeariana* before it, *The American Shakespeare Magazine* acknowledged the existence of Shakespeare Clubs, encouraged their work and printed material for their meetings. The *American Shakespeare Magazine* has also been digitised by the *HathiTrust*. I also made use of a later periodical published after the nineteenth century which I used as a reference point to trace the evolution of the clubs. This was *The Shakespeare Association Bulletin* which was printed by Shakespeare Association of America from

1924-1949 and renamed *Shakespeare Quarterly* in 1950. These are available in sections from the *HathiTrust.*

Tracing the archive for Browning Clubs was more challenging. They did not form national or state networks, and despite their strong connection, they do not appear to have shared the same enthusiasm as Shakespeare Clubs to consistently publish news about their activities. I could not find any shared journals or periodicals that they consistently published news in about themselves. The evidence I have been able to gather also suggests that the Browning Clubs were more focused on discussion about the text being studied during club meetings rather than writing or presenting papers. Scheil makes a mention of Browning Clubs to say that despite Robert Browning being "the second-most popular literary focus for clubs, Browning studies did not entail the national and international networks available for the study of Shakespeare" (*She Hath Been Reading* 17).

The most informational primary source I have consulted for Browning Clubs is *Poet Lore*, available through *The Internet Archive* and *HathiTrust.* From its first volume in 1889 to its fifth volume in 1893, the magazine published a column titled "Societies" which carried news of Shakespeare and Browning Societies. They also included occasional reports of societies from foreign nations, Australia and Canada among them. Reports in this column were heavily skewed in favour of Shakespeare societies, and it also printed news about the same societies on repeat. The unequal weightage of news about Browning societies when compared to Shakespeare societies suggests that Browning Clubs did not print news about their activities on a regular basis. In 1894, the column stops with no explanation, but since news about Shakespeare Clubs continued to be printed in *Shakespeariana* and *The American*

Shakespeare Magazine, and there is information about Browning Clubs after this time as well, in other sources, it becomes a lost archive. However, it does mean that I could not find an archive with regular news about Browning Clubs after 1894. I got in touch with the Armstrong Browning Library and all of their records are from the twentieth century and about men's or mixed-gender clubs, all of which are outside of the scope of this project. They also did not have any records on the clubs I found secondary materials on.

As a matter of interest, the only record the Armstrong Browning Library had of the Rochester Club of New York (examined in Chapter 2) is a letter from 1922 from Mrs George Fisher's daughter Sara, written as an evident reply to a letter from Mr A. J. Armstrong (Appendix 9). Sara Fisher writes that since being organised in 1884, the club met every Friday except Good Fridays. She reports that she took over the Club after her mother passed and continued to hold the meetings in her house. Mr Armstrong appears to have asked Sara Fisher for a "booklet which was printed giving the history of the club" because she writes that she will attempt to find him a copy. However, she says the possibility of finding one is small as "It (the Club) became a great feature of life in Rochester and at the close of the season we had some celebrity come for evening gathering to which we invited one hundred guests". She mentions that Mrs Sarah C. Le Moyne had read for the Club once, along with "other well known public characters". Fisher also mentions that in the second year of the club's existence, her mother received a gift of an autographed photograph of Robert Browning.

Sara Fisher's letter points to both the existence of an archive and its inaccessibility which I have encountered throughout this project. Reasonably, a copy

of the booklet, and the photograph, probably exist in the hands of a club member's descendent. Similarly, any primary materials of the Shakespeare Clubs when they do exist have either been lost, are held privately or only held in one location. Scheil documents for instance that the Shakespeare Society of Plainfield, New Jersey, has deposited its materials in Plainfield Public Library, and that the President of the Medford Massachusetts Shakespeare Club mentions that members had kept "irreplaceable papers, pictures, and other memorabilia in attics and closets here and there in the homes of officers and members for a hundred years, before these materials were placed in a special repository at the Medford Public Library" (*She Hath Been Reading 56).* For a remote researcher such as myself who wishes to research these clubs, we would have to rely on the digitally accessible primary materials I have detailed above.

The same proved true when looking for archives and materials for the Browning Clubs. Much like the Rochester Club, the Browning Clubs seem to have become part of their respective cities' histories, as all of the material I have accessed have been newspaper reports which are printed when celebrating a historical milestone or celebration of the city the club was formed in. Hedi Jaouad's book *Browningmania* has been a valuable secondary source on the Rochester Club, and most of the quotations about the Club come from his book. He writes that, while being a mixed club with a woman President, it "only kept records of the male members' names" (Jaouad 83). Information about the Bowling Green Club and Anti-Rust Club have been drawn from limited secondary sources, usually local newspapers that are available in digital form. There is also far less 47igitization of Browning Club records, most still being held only in local libraries. For instance, The

Anti-Rust club of Springfield, Ohio "have kept program booklets going back to their inception; these are housed as part of the Sangamon Valley Collection at Lincoln Library" (Klickna). Similarly, in Kentucky, The Bowling Green Browning Club's minutes, archived in the Kentucky Library and Museum "show the passage of time over the century as they move from handwritten notes, to type and finally to computer printouts" (Nehm 3). Even without the disadvantage of a pandemic, it would be an impossible task to visit each of these local libraries across the length of the United States of America. There is also resistance to outsiders' attempts to access the clubs or information about them, as documented by Ann Dodds Costello in her book *Smart Women: The Search for America's Historic All-Women Study Clubs.* Costello travelled the length of America making a list of study clubs still in existence. She writes that these clubs (including the Anti-Rust Club which is still active) are a "hidden world. These small study clubs, literary societies and Shakespeare Clubs limit their membership, meet in homes or church parlors and conduct business very quietly. They are private (one must be asked to join) and do not advertise their activities" (xii). This also explains the lack of archive and material even from clubs that have survived into the twenty-first century. Costello also makes it clear that a club member would speak to her only if she "had at least one contact in each group" who would have to be introduced to her by someone who personally knew them (252). So, while she was allowed to sit in on meetings and learn information about the clubs, they continue their traditions of remaining private.

The most important primary source about the Pioneer Club is the magazine they printed named *Shafts*, which is partly available in microfilm in Cardiff University Library's Special Collections. All direct quotations from *Shafts* are taken from this

collection. There is also a lost archive about the Pioneer Club as Croly mentions a "Pioneer Book" and Mrs Sibthorp mentions a "Pioneer Christmas Annual", neither of which I have been able to find or trace in any form. Croly writes that "its (The Pioneer Club's) first anniversary was celebrated by the issue of a Pioneer Book, which consisted of contributions by the Pioneers, that had an interest apart from its personal character, and as a literary production, is beyond the average. It was illustrated with portraits of leading members" (202).[4] The March 1893 issue of *Shafts* records that "a most interesting article is contributed under the title of 'Women's Clubs in America' in the Christmas Annual of the Pioneer Club" (9). The literary work by the Pioneers would have provided invaluable insight into the Club and both it, and The Christmas Annual, would have helped strengthen the previous section of this chapter where I explain the justification for this project being a transatlantic study as both these lost archives mention transatlantic connections with literary clubs on the other continent.

Shakespeare Clubs are mentioned in far more secondary material than Browning Clubs, with Katherine West Scheil having done the most work on Shakespeare Clubs and being the beginning point of my project. Other critics have done work on women's clubs in general; these include the works of Karen J. Blair, Anne Ruggles Gere, Theodora Penny Martin, Elizabeth Long and Glenna Matthews. Secondary sources about the Pioneer Club are the works of David Doughan and Peter Gordon. Secondary sources about both the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs also exist in the form of newspaper reports about clubs published in local

[4] It is also notable that I have found more digital resources as I was working on the corrected thesis, such as Croly's whole book now being available in digital format. There exists the possibility that more such sources may be digitised over time and become part of an accessible archive.

newspapers as part of a historical series. The National Trust is also a secondary source about Mrs Massingberd and the Pioneer Club, as Massingberd's ancestral home Gunby Hall in Lincolnshire is now owned by the National Trust. The Pioneer was written about in its own time in varied secondary sources such as Mary Krout and Theodora Such. A blog named *womanandhersphere* run by an independent researcher and author named Elizabeth Crawford prints news and research about women's activism, including clubs.

It is worth noting here that even though both Blair's and Ann Firor Scott's books are explicitly about women's clubs and associations that existed in America from the antebellum period to well into the twentieth century, neither author gives any space to Shakespeare or Browning Clubs. This project has therefore faced several difficulties in working around both a lost and an inaccessible archive. The next section delves into Shakespeare's history in America and the almost complete exclusion of Shakespeare Clubs from this history.

A Brief History of Shakespeare in America

Shakespeare's history in America is well documented and researched by a number of critics. Alden T. Vaughan traces the history of Shakespeare in America beginning with the story of a ship named the Sea Venture. It was the flagship of nine ships that departed England in 1609 expected to sail to Virginia. However, the ill-fated Sea Venture encountered a tempest and was wrecked on the completely uninhabited shores of Bermuda. Eventually, the crew were able to build two new ships and complete the journey to their original destination. A survivor named William Strachey documented the entire experience, and his letter was carried back to England in 1610. Although it was never published, the content "fascinated many

readers, including William Shakespeare" (Vaughan 12). In fact, Vaughan documents that *The Tempest* uses some of Strachey's words and phrases, and "English America had entered Shakespeare's literary source book" (12).

It would still take a while for Shakespeare's works to arrive in (the yet to exist) America, both in print and performance. Kim Sturgess traces the timeline from the first documented performance of a Shakespeare play in America in 1750, to Shakespeare being printed in America by 1761 and the first American-produced copies of his complete works being sold in Philadelphia in 1795 (19).

By the early-to-mid nineteenth century, Lawrence Levine states that Shakespeare was instantly recognised, often presented as parodies or shortened versions and incorporated into mass entertainment (29-39). As Sturgess documents, for American theatres to be performing so much Shakespeare, "there had to be audience demand for the type of entertainment that was provided by his plays and not by other playwrights" (19). James Shapiro also documents that by 1839, schoolchildren were learning Shakespeare as part of oratory. Levine attributes Shakespeare's popularity in America to the audience's ability to identify with his characters and the moral leaning of his plays (39). His plays held personal meaning to a nation that was grappling with its own identity.

There is even the idea that Shakespeare's English was lost on the British themselves but had crossed the seas to America. Kim Sturgess documents a publisher named Grant White who in 1865 wrote that several Elizabethan expressions which had fallen into disuse in England, were still part of speech in America, suggesting that it wasn't just his works, but the very essence for which

Shakespeare was revered: his language, appealed primarily to Americans (22). In Shakespeare, Americans found a kindred spirit who sought answers to the same moral dilemmas they did, explored the questions of the individual's rights and duties, and shared the belief that one's fate was self-determined (Sturgess 40).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth, Shakespeare slowly waned in popularity, all but disappeared from the stage, and was reincarnated as the property of intellectual and educational settings, to be consumed as intellectual material. Levine quotes columnist Gerald Nachman who in 1979 wrote, "Shakespeare becomes theatrical spinach. If you digest enough of his plays, you'll grow up big and strong intellectually like teacher" (24). Levine attributes this shift to cultural changes in American society, beginning with a decline of oratory, and an increase in literacy. In James Shapiro's 2014 Anthology *Shakespeare in America*, he reiterates this shift, by including Shakespeare inspired works from poets, playwrights, even movie scriptwriters. Shapiro's anthology includes work carrying undoubtedly Shakespearian flavours from Langston Hughes, Isaac Asimov, Mark Twain, Herman Melville, even Woody Allen. There would seem to be a general agreement that there wasn't an aspect of American life that Shakespeare didn't influence. This is the history of Shakespeare in America that is to be found in writing over the last couple of decades.

Critical Omissions

It is pertinent to address the absence of critical intervention into these women's clubs, not only from male critics but also from feminist criticism. None of these authors give any space to Shakespeare Clubs, with this omission carrying

through the works of Sturgess, Vaughan and Levine. In what is meant to be a collected tribute to Shakespeare - *Shakespeare in America: An Anthology from the Revolution to Now*, the only mention James Shapiro makes of the Shakespeare Clubs is that until critics such as Katherine Scheil recently turned their attention to it, "their part in the story of Shakespeare in America had been largely forgotten" (282).

As I have detailed earlier in this chapter, these clubs shared space with other, larger women's associations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) established in 1874, the Women's Educational and Industrial Union (WEIU) founded in 1877 and the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) founded in 1890. These associations were public, visible and aimed at individual goals. They had leaders who were easily identifiable public figures, and their demands and activities were aimed at public visibility. In comparison, the Shakespeare Clubs did not have a discernible leader or a public statement of objectives. There are reports of individual club members being involved in suffrage, but the clubs generally were not centres of traditional feminist (in terms of gender equality) or suffrage activity. The women stepping into the public sphere were mocked, ridiculed and even forbidden by men, and women's suffrage and the clamouring for equal rights were historically seen as the beginning of the end of a harmonious family. In this situation, very possibly, the idea of women entertaining other women in their own homes for a few hours (after taking care of the household chores) would have "seemed less threatening to advocates of the doctrine of separate spheres than overt political action" (Pawley "Self Culture" 16). However as discussed later, even without any move towards political action, the act of these women taking a few hours for themselves, hours that were not spent in service to

home and family, warranted enough attention that women's clubs were derided on both sides of the Atlantic. Despite this, mainstream feminist criticism perhaps considers the domestically focused activities of the clubwomen as inconsequential to the women's movement. This creates part of my methodological intervention, as a project of recovery. I have had to create a picture of these clubs from a myriad of sources, and as several of these are secondary, they also serve as an outsider commentary on the clubs, and help to build a picture on why their existence has been largely ignored.

Women and Time

The other defining feature of the epoch was the division, control and experience of time. In America, the women's club movement sits nestled between the Cult of Domesticity and the Progressive Era. Barbara Welter defines the cult of domesticity as "consisting of four cardinal virtues – piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity" (152). The idea of domesticity as the proper place for a woman fed into the idea of separate spheres for the sexes, a social concept based on temporal concerns. Andrea Merrett draws on the works of historians Gerda Lerner and Aileen S. Kraditor to further define separate spheres as "The women's sphere was associated with the home. By contrast, the urban streets could be considered to be public space. Women occupied the private space of the home and men the public realm of politics and business" (3). This separation of spaces for the sexes also existed in England. Jane Purvis writes that (in England) the ideology that "women should be located within the domestic sphere of the home while men were located within the public sphere of work, was upheld as the ideal state" (227). Further, "with the advent of industrialisation, home and workplace became physically separated.

This helped to reinforce the divisions between the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of work" (Purvis 231). Dana Luciano affirms the same social situation in England as "the repetitions and routines of domestic life (borne by women) renewed (men's) bodies for re-entry into the time of mechanized production and collective national destiny" (Quoted in Freeman 5).

The idea of time having a gendered quality and of it being experienced differently by men and women was not invented in the nineteenth century. Most criticism of gendered time all begin at the same point, Julia Kristeva's 1981 essay "Women's Time." Kristeva posits that the gender binary affects the meaning and experience of time. She refers to two divisions of time, one being linear time, which is defined as "project, teleology, linear and prospective unfolding; time as departure, progression, and arrival-in other words, the time of history" (17). This time is experienced by the masculine, as historically they are the ones who determine linear time and its direction. Martha Sharpe draws on Kristeva's essay to state that since linear history has ignored women as subjects, "but relegates them to their reproductive capacity, a description of women's time, if it could be conceptualized at all, would be biologically determined, and, as Kristeva suggests, linked to cycles and repetition" (2). Since time itself is a human construct, Kristeva claims that for women the first stages of the Women's Movement were about "aspiring to gain a place in linear time" (18), by asking for equality on all grounds.

Other critics have expanded on and added to the idea, creating a wider description of woman's time. Martha Sharpe draws on Kristeva's work to link the separation of linear and cyclical time to that of physical separation of public and private spaces, by stating:

> Women's time as cyclical seems incommensurate with the linear time of history and language. Women's time is perhaps more commonly described in terms of space or place due to women's reproductive function, which places them outside politics, history, or the events of linear time, and inside the private space of the home. (175)

This emphasis on the experience of motherhood defines women's experience of time and separates them physically from the masculine time of history and linear progress. The concept of separate spheres is therefore a temporal concept, placing men and women in different spheres, based on their experience of time. Sharpe comments that the result of exiling women from time is "the prohibition of their communication with each other outside of their socially scripted roles, outside of wifedom and motherhood" (176). The way to correct this then, according to Sharpe, is for "individual women to provide themselves with a representation by manifesting their own symbolization in works that depict their own specific experiences" (175). In her essay, Sharpe is referring to the art created by a woman artist as the symbols she uses to represent herself. This thesis takes the stance that through the forming of women's clubs, nineteenth-century American and British women were providing themselves with such a representation. The clubs formed such a space where they stepped outside their roles as wives and mothers. In the clubs, they exercised temporal autonomy as evidenced by the material which I analyse in this thesis.

Others who have added to the critical study of women's time include Silvia Stoller (2011), Ivana Milojevic (2008) and Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth (1989). Stoller opines that an exclusively biological definition of feminine temporality is reductionist, and that it is further influenced by culture, as:

> Women have always been trained to wait – historically, they had to wait until they were allowed to appear in public, or to appear among men, to speak before men and so on. This historical fact of waiting, which is a different sort

> of interaction with time, a different knowledge of time is one of the strongest experiences women have endured and still endure. (81 – 82)

This is one of the notions that I argue that clubwomen repudiated. Throughout the records that the club members left behind, there is a constant reference to stealing or claiming time, for purposes of leisure, self-improvement and community. They constantly refer to taking time back for their own purposes, even while contending with all the existing claims on their time as women.

Milojevic also affirms the cultural dimension of temporal experience by stating that:

> Like anything else humans consider, time does not exist independently of our observations, and specific approaches to time are thus social and human constructs. There is also gendered dimension in how humans approach time, as different genders find themselves positioned differently on time-space-being-movement/change axis. (332-333)

This cultural construct of time and gender is also evolutionary, as it changes with human experience. For the clubwomen considered under the scope of this thesis, their experience of gendered time was finding a few hours for themselves, in a society which had pre-prescribed appropriate activities for women's time.

Ermarth takes up the stance that "clock dominated, industrial, historical time exists in the first place by means of the crucial exclusion or repression of women" (37). This would suggest that men are able to create progress and history through the expectation of repressing women's temporal autonomy, by expectations of how they will spend their time, freeing men to spend theirs. What these critical stances seem to collectively add up to, according to Barbara Adam (1995), is the concept that when multiple times are compared "not all times are equal" and that some temporal modes are "clearly privileged and deemed more important than others"

(94). This idea of the time of one gender being privileged over the other, is also echoed in Victorian England. In an 1888 article, Amy Levy writes about a mixed-gender London club named the Albemarle, which she refers to as “clubland” and terms such clubs “neutral territories” (396), which served as “havens of refuge from the importunities of a family circle which can never bring itself to regard feminine leisure as a thing to be respected” (365). Levy’s reference to a mixed-gender club as a neutral territory which respects feminine leisure, i.e., temporal pursuits serving only oneself, indicates that the rules of gendered time did not apply once within the territory of clubland. Women were free to use their time as they wished, before returning to the presence of the family circle, where this could not happen. For the purpose of this thesis, I have borrowed Levy’s term and use the term neutral territory to refer to American clubs as well.

Over a hundred years later, Barbara Adam echoes the lack of control a woman has over her time, by clarifying that through these importunities of family life, which include “significant amounts of time caring, loving, educating and managing a household which can neither be forced into timetables, schedules or deadlines nor allocated a monetary value, women are familiar with times that operate according to non-economic principles” (95). The allocation of non-economic activities to women’s time would also be what has led to the devaluing of it, and to it being less privileged than masculine time of industry and history. Adam et al are not alone in their thoughts. This devaluing of time is also questioned and criticised in the works of the Pioneer Club members that I analyse in Chapter 1, where they raise questions about who decides that women’s time is worth less than men’s, that a woman’s time is not hers to spend, and what the effects of a lack of temporal autonomy are. Through the

chapters of this thesis which I outline at the end of the Introduction, I explore how the same concept has been raised both implicitly and explicitly by the members of the three club movements.

Feminism and Gendered Time

Kristeva, in her discussion of women's time, points out that the efforts of the early (First Wave) Feminist movement were directed at discovering how the female world has been excluded from the linear time of history (18). Carmen Leccardi draws on this and writes that:

> the dominance of paid working time (and the attendant formulation of 'time as quantity') which is constructed on the basis of male rhythms and needs, has hitherto prevented such alternative (feminine) forms of time from receiving full social representation. Feminist theory is providing a new way of thinking about time, one that speaks not only about women, but also for women, that is, an approach that points to a different conception of the relationship between life and time for both women and men. The women's movement…calls into question the representation of time in a capitalist society. In this way, it offers a basis for both a conceptual and a political critique which takes as its starting point the gendered nature of temporal experience. (170)

Through this thesis, I argue that women were already questioning the gendered nature of time before the women's movement officially began, and that pre-suffrage American and Victorian British women were already aware of the disadvantageous temporal position they occupied. While agreeing with Leccardi that Feminist theory about gendered time has provided the methodological language necessary to examine this phenomenon, this thesis asserts that the questioning of, or awareness about, a disadvantaged temporal existence did not begin with First Wave Feminism. While the members of the Shakespeare, Browning, and Pioneer clubs that I examine did not undertake overt activism or vocal public protests, they claimed back some temporal autonomy through clubtime, and created a neutral territory by stealing back

and taking time for themselves. They represent a separate chapter of women's time, which existed before the Women's Movement questioned the gendered nature of temporal existence.

Thesis Outline

In Chapter 1 titled "Pioneers and Time", I analyse the Pioneer Club through reports from *Shafts*, secondary sources, and through the writing of its prominent members. I establish how this club, which had a non-domestic setting and a very different membership from the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs, still had enough in common with the latter to be considered under the scope of this thesis. I consider the question, what value did a club such as the Pioneer hold for women who were educated public figures and had independent means of income? Since the clubs were the result of women awakening to wanting something "more than their domestic duties", the club can be seen to form a space outside of their regulated time, acting as a liminal space within a society where their other pursuits were controlled and regulated. *Shafts* provides further insight into what the club offered to these women, as its June 1893 edition states "women are awakening everywhere to the demand of their own souls. Few institutions help more to do this work than women's clubs, as in the Pioneer Club, the individual is herself" ("Influential Lives" 62). This reclamation of selfhood and the awakening of the will to follow their own desires is what the club represented. I also examine New Women writing by members of the Pioneer Club to analyse ideas about women's time expressed in their works. I examine L.T. Meade's *The Cleverest Woman in England,* Sarah Grand's *The Beth Book – Being a Study from the Life of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, A Woman of Genius*, and Mona Caird's *The Daughters of Danaus.*

In the second chapter titled “Bardolatry and Browning”, I look at Shakespeare and Browning Clubs, both of which existed at the same time in the second half of the nineteenth century in America. I provide answers to these questions – what did these clubs represent for the women who were members? How did women incorporate club activities into their domestic lives and spaces? What generational impact did these clubs have, as there are records of several clubs with mother-daughter members?

Using the sources detailed in the earlier section on Archive, I am able to draw out a similar pattern that runs through the accessible records, of women becoming aware of the limits placed upon their time through societal restrictions, and the clubs being a space where they claimed back some of their time. Reports range from areas as disparate as San Francisco, where the Shakespeare Class reports under the column *Shakespeare Societies of America: Their Methods and Work* in 1886 that members were “pushed to find time for intellectual work in spite of their domestic responsibilities” for “ladies have so many claims upon their time, material, domestic, and social” (522-23). The challenges of taking time away from prescribed household chores which were considered the domain of women were also shared by club members from Concord, New Hampshire where a member from 1888 reports under the same column that “club objectives were a challenge when twelve of the sixteen members were married with household cares” (30).

These reports imply that women’s time is already claimed, and that any pursuit taken entirely for their own pleasure was time that they had to find, away from all their household chores and other domestic responsibilities. Despite their challenges and possible disapproval from their husbands, the fact that they persisted

on in finding this time is ascertained by an 1886 report from the Dallas Shakespeare Club, quoted by Elizabeth Long in *Book Clubs: Women and the Uses of Reading in Everyday Life*. The report reads: “Its members read Shakespeare for pure enjoyment and then hurried home to reach the fireside before the arrival of their husbands, most of whom had a very decided dislike for any kind of club” (38). Hurrying is a signifier that they had exhausted any temporal claims they could make from the hours of the day, but they persisted in going to their clubs even in the face of opposition, before coming home to their expected domestic demands. The contrast between the club where their activities would have constituted pursuits that were for “pure enjoyment” and “hurrying” to reach home to be present at the fireside for their husbands, demonstrates the value that the clubs held for these women. The report also suggests that the men were aware of the clubs and presents an image of the difference between the leisure pursuits of clubtime versus the demands placed upon women’s time once they re-entered masculine, linear time. These clubs and the pursuits of “pure enjoyment” that clubtime provided meant enough for the women to continue claiming that time for themselves.

Chapter 3, titled “Fanfiction”, explores an additional dimension to the project which is unique to the Shakespeare Clubs. There are multiple reports of the clubs performing Shakespeare plays, either for the private entertainment of the club or to raise funds for charity. One such performance is recorded by Elizabeth Greenfield, whose mother Anna Nelson, was a member of The Shakespeare Club of Great Falls, Montana. She records that the club, which “was strictly for ladies”, staged a production in 1902 of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* (“Shakespearean Culture” 49). These clubs and the women associated with them also wrote original plays and

essays, which other clubs would go on to read at events or perform on stages. I analyse three pieces of writing associated with the Shakespeare Clubs, comparing them to modern examples of fanfiction. I establish how these pieces form indirect sources of information, and a means of gleaning information about the clubs.

These pieces are a play titled *The Ladies Speak at Last* by Mary Porter written in 1877, Mrs Lauch Macluarin's *The Woman Whom Shakespeare Did Not Contemplate* written in 1897, and *The Mistaken Vocation of Shakespeare's Heroines* by Priscilla Leonard, written in 1896.

All three of these pieces can be conceptualised as fanfiction, under today's accepted definitions of fanfiction or 'fic'. *The Ladies Speak at Last* is analysed as an example of speculative fiction, which asks "what-if questions about characters" (Coppa 3). The characters of the play are Juliet, Ophelia and Lady Macbeth who all survive (unlike in the original plays), and Portia who tells her side of the story. We hear the women speak and respond in ways that depart from the lines and characters they are given in Shakespeare's plays, and the play ends with the ladies declaring that they will seek the favour of the world when they "speak at last." The second piece, *The Woman Whom Shakespeare Did Not Contemplate*, printed in the American Shakespeare Magazine in 1897, "was read at the reception given to the board of the State Federation of Literary Clubs, by the Sheakespeare (sic) Club of Dallas" by Mrs Lauch Macluarin (331). This piece is an example of fanfiction "unmaking" something, defined by Juli Parrish as "taking something a text has offered to us as inevitable – a plot, a character trait, a setting – and unmaking it, thereby opening up a different set of possibilities" (1.1). Mrs Macluarin unmakes the idea of Shakespeare as an infallible prophet who has "told us everything, about

everything, that is and was, and is to come" (331) by examining Portia, Shakespeare's model of the businesswoman and finding the faults in his portrayal. The last piece that I consider in this chapter is *The Mistaken Vocation of Shakespeare's Heroines* by Priscilla Leonard, a piece initially conceptualised and written in 1896, as a paper delivered by a lecturer to her sisters (in arms) in a "Twentieth Century Woman's Club" (very likely a Shakespeare Club) (369). Leonard treats all of Shakespeare as one monolithic piece of work, rather than individual plays with no crossovers, similar to modern fanfic writers treating the entire Dr Who universe as one overarching work. Leonard recasts Shakespeare's heroines with more suitable partners, insisting that had Shakespeare followed suit, all of his tragedies could have been avoided.

For the American clubwomen of the late nineteenth century, Shakespeare was their "source product" and while they rallied around him, they found community and structure upon which to stand. Alana Herrnson is of the opinion that "Fandom empowers women specifically through the deeply set sense of ownership that comes hand in hand with engaging in conversations with the text" (5-6). By engaging with, re-writing and re-imagining texts, these women were participating in a form of ownership and creating their own space, a distinctly temporal pursuit. Fanfiction itself was a term coined to differentiate it against "professional fiction" (Coppa 2), i.e., fiction that was not written for professional gain or profit. This makes fanfiction a purely leisure pursuit, and even today the vast majority of fanfic is written by a community for the pleasure of the members that understand and share the interest of the source product. Chapter 3 explores these three aforementioned products as a temporal pursuit of leisure, written, printed and performed by the clubwomen.

Chapter 1: Pioneers and Time

Gendered Time in Victorian England

Victorian England was a society experiencing constant social, political, and cultural change, marked by rapid changes in ideas about gender roles and ideology, and anxieties about the same. One area in which these anxieties manifested themselves most prominently was in Victorian concerns about time. Victorian England was becoming an increasingly time-aware society. Women also became increasingly aware of this gendered nature of time and expressed their views about not having control of their own time through articles and fiction. Looking at the evidence from the writing of prominent women of the time associated with the Pioneer Club, and of a magazine named *Shafts* printed by the Club, this chapter argues that the women's clubs in general and the Pioneer Club in particular, came into existence to answer a pressing need felt by Victorian women – of having access to a neutral territory where they claimed a few hours for themselves, outside of the domestic claims of home and family.

The introduction of Greenwich Meridian Time in the 1880s brought the whole country under the same temporal regime. Industrial floors necessitated time-clocks and time-hours, and the hours of the day were becoming rigidly divided, separated by hours spent at work, hours spent at home, and hours spent for leisure pursuits. While men had designated hours for work, home, and leisure, women seemed to lack any time that could be earmarked for personal use, not in service of home and family.

Kay Boardman (2000), writes that:

> The ideology of domesticity had become so pervasive in the Victorian period, that by the 1850s, debates about domestic ideology permeated literary and visual representational practices at every level. The domestic centred around the concept of separate spheres which inserted women into the domestic space and men into the public. Under these terms the only acceptable work for women was domestic, it was to take place in the home… Whilst men accumulated money, women regulated household consumption, and the ideal domestic woman used all her time to make the home run smoothly. (150)

The ideal of the domestic woman, who spent "all her time" on running her home is similar to the American concept of the cult of domesticity. Victorian England can thus be said to have been a society where Carmen Leccardi's definition of "the gendered nature of temporal existence" which was formulated upon the dominance of "(male) paid working time" (170) was in place. Women and men experienced and regulated time differently, and their time was meant to be spent on different pursuits. It was expected that a woman's time would be consumed by the domestic, and thus maintain the ideology of separate spheres, as men's participation in the linear time of industry is predicated on women's time being spent on maintaining the domestic sphere. This was "upheld as the ideal state", according to Jane Purvis (227). She also writes that, "the development of an industrial, commercial and factory system during the second half of the nineteenth century helped to reinforce the divisions between the private sphere of the home and the public sphere of work" (231).

One of the most significant events that caused a revolution in women's experience of time and blurred these lines between domestic and public space, was the establishment of what Erika Rappaport calls "London's female clubland", a term used by her, to describe the proliferation of women's clubs starting from the 1880's (75). Unlike the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs discussed in Chapter 2, the British

Clubs were often designed as drop-in spaces for the members, where they could find quiet and comfortable interiors and had access to refreshments. The British Clubs were designed less as spaces for following study schedules and tended more towards providing a social space to meet like-minded individuals. Clubs such as the Pioneer still had scheduled talks, discussion forums and opportunities for women to present their work, as discussed in the Introduction.

These differences between American and British Clubs also represent the society that these clubs existed in, as women now had access to university education and gainful employment. Even with the shift in social settings, clubs only rose in popularity, displaying the need that the women felt for these spaces. The commentary on the clubs also shows the political reforms and societal changes that were taking place in society. Laws such as The Education Act were passed in 1870 making it compulsory for both females and males to be given an elementary education, and women were allowed to attend university exams (though not awarded degrees) since 1869. Despite these, there was widespread opposition to women's education, suffrage and inevitably, the women's clubs. Later in this chapter, I will look at some examples of this derision aimed at the women's clubs through cartoons and satire. Victorian England was still a highly gendered society, and while gender ideologies varied between social classes, Jane Purvis (2006) asserts that "masculinity was the superior gender form. Nineteenth-century England was a patriarchal society within which men experienced many advantages" (228). Even as the gender imbalance was changing, progress was slow and faced continued opposition from several fronts, including from prominent and educated men. Some of these examples are examined in the following section.

As Sheila Rowbotham has argued, “though some of the legal power of patriarchy was whittled away during the course of the century, the control of men over women in society was evident in education, work and politics” (50). This control men exercised can be seen in the objections raised towards women’s education, and later, towards clubs. Men with power and standing in society, including academics and medical doctors cautioned against women forgetting their “foreordained task”, that of bearing and rearing the next generation of children, and spoke strongly against any system of education that did not fit them for this purpose. These views stayed across decades, as in Henry Maudsley’s words which endorsed the prevalent ideology of separate spheres. Maudsley was a prominent psychiatrist who in 1874 said of women’s education:

> Before sanctioning the proposal to subject woman to a system of mental training which has been framed and adapted for men, and under which they have become what they are, it is needful to consider whether this can be done without serious injury to her health and strength. In the first place, a proper regard to the physical nature of women means attention given, in their training, to their peculiar functions and to their foreordained work as mothers and nurses of children. Whatever aspirations of an intellectual kind they may have, they cannot be relieved from the performance of those offices so long as it is thought necessary that mankind should continue on earth. It will have to be considered whether women can live laborious days of intellectual exercise and production, without injury to their functions as the conceivers, mothers, and nurses of children. In this relation, it must be allowed that women do not and cannot stand on the same level as men. (202-204)

Maudsley approached the education of women from a medical perspective, as he posits the idea that sustained intellectual effort on the part of a woman would be medically damaging to her foreordained ability to have and raise children. Maudsley is indirectly warning against any efforts on the part of women which would result in the dissolution of separate spheres, as women’s foreordained sphere is one of motherhood, which is primarily situated in the domestic sphere.

These ideas would carry into the next decade of the nineteenth century, as in 1889, Grant Allen, a scientist and proponent of Darwinian evolutionary theory, made similar points about women's education. He approaches the Woman Question from an evolutionary perspective, as he warns that the current trajectory of women's education was upsetting her naturally ordained functions of childbearing and housekeeping. He refers to motherhood as the "prime natural necessity" of women, and warns against any "emancipation" that would "interfere" with this (175). However, current society has apparently made this very mistake. He refers to himself as "an enthusiast of the Woman Question", (176) but states that the current proponents of this have gone about it the wrong way, for "instead of reform taking a rational direction with women being educated to suckle strong and intelligent children, and to order well a wholesome, beautiful, reasonable household" (176), i.e. preparing them better to carry on the separation of the spheres and be better domestic beings, the mistake had been made of "educating them like men" (177). The result of this was that many women "became unsexed in the process, and many others acquired a distaste, an unnatural distaste, for the functions which Nature intended them to perform" (178).Allen's fear of women becoming "unsexed" creatures loath to perform their naturally ordained domestic duties, resulting in the breaking up of families and homes, was also one of the primary fears raised against women's clubs, as is discussed in the later sections of this chapter. Women's clubs were seen as the direct opposites of women's domestic sphere, keeping women from the space and duties where their time should be spent.

To get a better understanding of how women viewed these constraints upon their time, the following sections of this chapter looks at writing from Florence

Nightingale from 1854 to Dorothy Richardson in 1923 to give us an idea of women's perception about time. Barbara Adam writes in 1995 that "when we compare multiple times, we can begin to see that not all times are equal" and that "some times are clearly privileged and deemed more important than others" (94). This plurality of time, with one being deemed inferior to the other is questioned by Florence Nightingale who expressed the same sentiment in *Cassandra* written in 1854, when she queries "is man's time more valuable than woman's?" (211). She pertinently asks this in the context of a domestic setting, as she says that women are never supposed to have any occupation that is important enough not to be interrupted (*Cassandra* 211). She points out that even within the sphere that is meant to be hers, that of her home, her time does not belong to her. No matter what task she may be engaged in, it is expected to be dropped for anything else that asks for her time. Men, however, are not expected to do this as their time is deemed far too valuable. She goes on to say that "Women never have half an hour in all their lives that they can call their own, without fear of offending or of hurting someone" (*Cassandra* 213). Even though she is not speaking of the clubs, her words can be applied to the club context, as later, the criticisms aimed at the clubs would come in the form of the selfishness involved in women taking time solely for her own pursuits, even if it was only a few hours.

She laments that "women have passion, intellect, moral activity, and a place in society where not one of the three can be exercised" (*Cassandra* 205). "Women often long to enter some man's profession where they would find direction, competition (or rather opportunity of measuring the intellect with others) and above all, time" (*Cassandra* 210). For so many women, the clubs served this purpose,

giving women the spaces where they could find the time to engage in intellectual activity. Particular to the Pioneer Club, which existed during Nightingale's lifetime, it presents its purpose as "rooms where women gather to discuss the leading questions and principal progressive work of the day" (*Shafts* March 1893 9).

Nightingale compares women being denied time for themselves to the former practice of Chinese footbinding. She asks, "what form do the Chinese feet assume when denied their proper development?" (*Cassandra* 206). She reiterates the irreparable damage this does, since "later in life, women could not make use of leisure and solitude if they had it, like the Chinese woman, who could not make use of her feet, if she were brought into European life" (*Cassandra* 221). In the same way that a bound foot develops in an irreversibly misshapen form when forced into a space smaller than it requires, when denied being able to spend time for their intellectual development, and curtailed from forming any notion of individuality, "women toil to break down all individual and independent life, in order to fit themselves for this social and domestic existence" (220). She goes on to say that it is only when they (women) have "killed themselves to do so" do they "awaken (too late) to think it wrong" (*Cassandra* 220). However, from the literature about the clubs, both from them writing about themselves and with reporters reiterating that women had awakened to wanting something besides their domestic lives, and even professionally employed women seeking out these spaces for bright social intercourse, it can be seen that the women did awaken to wanting to stake some form of control over their time. Nightingale's parting words of "the time is come when women must do something more than the domestic hearth, which means nursing the

infants, keeping a pretty house, having a good dinner and an entertaining party" (*Cassandra* 229), would come to fruition in the spaces of the women's clubs.

This temporal dilemma raised by Nightingale, of questioning whether man's time is more valuable than woman's, and of warning of the irrevocable damage of prioritising one gender's time over the other, would carry over throughout the century. Nightingale's concerns would be repeated by Pioneer Club members such as Mona Caird and Sarah Grand, who were well-known writers in their own right. Their approach to clubs, marriage and women's space in society is examined in more detail in the later section in this chapter on Pioneer Women's Writing.

Patricia Murphy states that Victorian society, even into the last decade of the nineteenth century, continued to be marked by the valorized masculine time of history posited by Kristeva, which was used to marginalize and restrict feminine time (4).

There was widespread resistance against women forming clubs of their own as well, with the same reasons that men enjoyed their clubs – which was time spent on leisure, without being burdened by family, held against the women when they started creating spaces for themselves. George Augustus Sala expressed this sentiment in 1864 when he wrote "the great complaint against clubs is, that they tend towards the germination of selfishness, that they are productive of neglect of home duties in married men" (*Twice Around* 213). For this reason, he stated, it is a subject "for sincere congratulations that there are no ladies' clubs. We have been threatened with them sometimes, but they have always been nipped in the bud" (*Twice Around* 213). This "selfishness" for which men created and guarded their clubs can be

expressed in an alternative way, it was a space where they were free from any intrusions of domestic concerns, free from wives and children, a space for them to be individuals and meet like-minded people. Men seemed worried (as Hadria's mother in *The Daughters of Danaus* was worried) that if women were to exercise this same "selfishness", it would upset the natural order of their society.

A cartoon expressing similar sentiment was published by George du Maurier in an 1878 edition of *Punch*, titled 'Female Clubs v. Matrimony' (Appendix 5). In the cartoon, a Miss Firebrace asks her friend Mrs Julia Bolingbroke Tompkins, who the cartoon says used to be Miss Julia Wildrake, to join her for lunch at the club along with a Trixy Rattlecash and Emily Sheppard. Mrs Bolingbroke Tompkins "with a sigh of regret for the freedom of Spinsterhood and the charms of Club life," has to refuse because her "sainted old father-in-law's just gone back to Yorkshire and poor Bolly's all alone!" Clearly the establishment of women's clubs, still at a very early stage in 1878, already had several men convinced that the woman who quietly took an hour for herself every now and again while not neglecting her home duties in any way, was still taking an hour too many for herself. Worse, they would make married women regret their choices, and pine for the freedom of spinsterhood. The same anxieties expressed by Maudsley and Allen, that any and all paths to women's emancipation that did not prioritise women's foreordained paths as wives and mothers, repeat themselves here. The clubs, where women sought a few hours of refuge and leisure were dangerous, they gave women ideas that would upset the natural order of society. Society seemed convinced that it was only a matter of time before clubs tempted women away from home altogether, thereby challenging the integrity of married life.

Amy Levy references du Maurier's cartoon in an 1888 article, where she refutes his ridicule and explains what the clubs actually meant to the women who frequented them. She says that what the detractors who condemn the "Julia Wildrakes and Trixy Rattlecashs" and also raise the questions of whether it is "such a beautiful thing that Mrs. Jellaby should absent herself from home at all hours of the day" or to "sympathise with the selfishness of Penthesilea in disregarding the social claims of her family" (366) are missing the point. Levy refutes the claim of selfishness, when she refers to the clubs as "a haven of refuge", and goes on to explain what the club was providing refuge from. She praises the club for providing a place "where we can write our letters and read the news, undisturbed by the family, which can never bring itself to regard feminine leisure and feminine solitude as things to be respected" (365). The clubs then were refuges from domestic life and the demands of a family, which took up all their time, and did not believe in providing women with a few hours for herself. In the same article, Levy writes "how many a valuable acquaintance has been improved, how many an important introduction obtained in that convenient neutral territory of club-land" (396). It is noteworthy that she makes this observation about a mixed club, The Albemarle founded in 1881. Her words imply that set in the neutral territory of a club, the dynamics of gender and expectations of gendered time can shift. In the clubs, women's time was free from the bounds placed upon it by domesticity. Perhaps conscious of the backlash such a statement could create, Levy reassures her readers that "there is no reason to suppose that because she is a member of a club a woman will develop the selfishness of her husband and brother" (399). The difference between men and women and their desire for clubs is marked here. A woman is only seeking a few

hours of her own time, not to dismantle family life which depends on her near-constant presence.

This is almost apologetic, reassuring men and society that while a woman wishes to be an individual for a few hours, and finds pleasure and restoration in it, the purpose is not to dismantle or abandon home and hearth. In fact, Barbara Black (2012) writes that women participating in clublife still had to deal with issues that men did not, such as childcare. She writes, "newly founded women's clubs had to wrestle with the issue of childcare, an issue that men's clubs could easily avoid" (227).[5] Women were not attempting to dissolve the family or abrogate their duties as mothers. For a few hours, they simply wanted the freedom that men enjoyed every day, regardless of marital status, which was "the freedom to be an individual" (Black 227).

Evans (2018) provides further explanation into why the women's clubs became so popular, by differentiating the positions that men and women held, even when both were participants in the professional economy. She says, "Whereas solidarity among men of means was an inherent aspect of their maintenance of political and economic power, women of all classes were expected to be loyal primarily to their families" (146). This means that even the women with access to

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[5] These concerns are still present in society today, where the burden of balancing paid commercial labour with unpaid caring domestic labour still falls to women, and women are the ones who have to deal with the implications that going back to work will have on home and family, particularly children. The pandemic exposed this "invisible work of caring", when men were suddenly home to see it, calling into question the still highly skewed gender balance of domestic life. See Jo Warin: "Who Cares in A Crisis?" *Educational Research*, Lancaster University, 2 June 2020, Kate Power: "The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the care burden of women and families." *Sustainability: Science, Practice and* Policy, vol. 16, Issue 1, 2020 and Terry Gross' interview with Brigid Schulte, "Pandemic Makes Evident 'Grotesque' Gender Inequality In Household Work**",** *https://text.npr.org/860091230*.

independent financial means (Dora Jones' "professional women") were expected to prioritise domestic life and family needs. Further, "The institutionalized promotion of female bonds (through clubs) was not only perceived as unorthodox, it was also regarded as challenging the primacy of the family and of men's wishes in women's lives" (146). Building on Evans' words, the women's club can be cast as an answer to the challenges to female autonomy raised by educators, doctors and evolutionary biologists. Even as the decades brought forth luminary voices continuing to make the case for women to remain secondary and for her temporal existence to remain strictly bound to the family unit, women's clubs became spaces where this temporal tyranny was broken, for a few hours. Most women's clubs also created a physical space inaccessible to men, and therefore symbolically to male control, by refusing to allow men to enter the premises. The Pioneer Club was an exception, in that men were welcome as visitors but only as invited guests of members. When boundaries had been drawn and restrictions imposed upon women's entry into all other aspects of life, the creation of women-only spaces was indeed a means, as Evans puts it, of "challenging the primacy of … men's wishes in women's lives."

To add to the analysis, I would like to consider here two volumes, *Revolving Lights* (1923) and *The Trap* (1935), from Dorothy Richardson's novel series of thirteen volumes collectively titled *Pilgrimage*, as a further secondary source to trace the perception and utility of the women's clubs. Richardson's work provides a retrospective perspective, as she published the volumes well into the twentieth century beginning from 1915, but the story is set between the years of 1893 and 1901. The protagonist of the novels is named Miriam, a woman who works as a teacher and governess, and lives independently. In *Revolving Lights*, as Miriam

walks home to her flat one evening, her walk takes her across Piccadilly Circus, where "the need for thoughtless hurrying across its open spaces" makes her wonder, "why hadn't she a club down here; a neutral territory where she could finish her thought undisturbed?" (*Revolving Lights* 274). In the real world that Richardson inhabited, women had been granted several rights, the women's club movement was much less robust than it had been, and women were freely going to university. However, in her fiction, despite knowing what the world held in its future for women, Richardson focuses on one institution – the women's club. Her heroine not only joins a club In the next novel entitled *The Trap*, but it also comes to be the place where she feels most free. Miriam shares her flat with a Miss Holland (the "trap" of the title refers to her living situation; she does not get along with Miss Holland and considers herself trapped in her own flat). Despite being an employed woman who makes her own way in life, and has her own flat, it is in the club that Miriam feels most free as "the sense of imprisonment she has felt on coming down the street with Miss Holland…vanished altogether in the freedom of the neutral territory" (*The Trap* 418). She referred to the wide staircase leading "easily to the destruction of home-made ideas" where women "represent not names and families but selves in their own right" (*The Trap* 453). Her reference to "home-made" ideas in specific being destroyed within the premises of a club is further affirmation that the demands and expectations of domesticity that exist with a home were lifted within the premises of a club. While Richardson did marry in real life, her heroine remains unmarried and the club represents what could be, a beacon of possible change, a place where women could take up more than the hearth and claim the two hours of solitude which Nightingale dreamed of. The next sections of this chapter delve into the Pioneer Club, a

compelling neutral space where women of all social standing were individuals in their own right.

The Founder of the Pioneer Club – Mrs Emily Massingberd

Emily Massingberd was born in 1847. At the age of twenty, Emily married Edmund Langton, becoming Mrs Langton. After the deaths of her husband in 1875 and her father in 1887, Emily succeeded to the family estate, Gunby Hall in Lincolnshire, and resumed her maiden name by royal licence. From then until her death, she went by Mrs Massingberd, instead of Mrs Langton. She went on to become one of the first women in England to stand for a public election, contesting in the ward of Partney in her right as a landowner and lost by only 20 votes. Massingberd was a passionate worker for both temperance and women's rights, and made speeches in favour of women's suffrage and also held office as Vice-President of the (prohibitionist) United Kingdom Alliance. She founded the Pioneer Club in 1892 as a progressive space serving women's development ("Women and Power"). A fervently discussed aspect of Mrs Massingberd's was what the *Illustrated London News* on February 6, 1897 pejoratively explained in her obituary as an "unfortunate whim to wear her hair short, and a vest loose, 'morning' or evening 'swallow-tail' coat, and untrimmed soft felt hat, just like a man's" (Quoted in Rappaport 91). Massingberd's pictures appear in both the June 1893 and February 1897 editions of *Shafts* matching this description (Appendix 7).

Pioneer Women's Writing

The Pioneer Club set the stage for several of its members to write and publish novels. Multiple well-known Pioneer Club members would write New Woman novels

and articles which continued to question the position of women in society, and the prioritisation and division of gendered time. In this section I examine three novels – *The Cleverest Woman in England* by L.T. Meade, *The Beth Book – Being a Study from the Life of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, A Woman of Genius* by Sarah Grand and *The Daughters of Danaus* by Mona Caird.

The Cleverest Woman in England by L.T. Meade

In the case of L.T. Meade, it was Mrs Massingberd herself who gave her the inspiration for a book. When Mrs Massingberd died, Meade wrote a book titled *The Cleverest Woman in England*, a fictionalised account of both Mrs Massingberd's life and a woman's club. L.T. Meade was already a prolific writer and well-known literary figure in her own time. Beth Rodgers documents that Elizabeth Thomasina Meade Smith was the daughter of a Church of Ireland rector. In her twenties, Meade decided to pursue her writing and left her native Cork to move to England (146). She wrote a staggering number of books, producing over 300 of them on top of short stories and journalistic pieces ("Victorian Fiction"). Most of her writing was mass fiction written specifically for teenage girls (Bittel) and she wrote across a large number of genres, covering sensation, romance and crime (Rodgers 146).

A year after Mrs Massingberd's death, L.T. Meade published a novel titled *The Cleverest Woman in England* which was a distinct departure from the rest of her oeuvre. The novel casts Mrs Massingberd as the protagonist named Dagmar Olloffson who heads the suffragist 'Forward Club'. Dagmar also dies very unexpectedly and suddenly, mirroring Mrs Massingberd's death. Curiously (though there was nothing in Massingberd's life to mirror this), Dagmar marries a man named

Geoffrey Hamlyn who “doesn’t approve of women’s clubs nor of debates committees” (Meade 3). A good part of the book is spent in Dagmar assuring the members of her Forward Club that nothing will change once she marries, and that her husband and she have agreed to keep their views separate, and not let it interfere in their marital happiness. Dagmar makes the statement “the woman must rise, she must repel her unjust encroachment, she must stand for herself and fight her own cause, and the strong woman, above all things, must help the weak”, (Meade 41) a sentiment that Mrs Massingberd preached and practised until her dying day. In a letter penned to the Pioneer Club in January 1897 as she lay on her deathbed, Mrs Massingberd wrote “If it should be that we never look into each other’s faces again here, please work on in the great cause of uniting *all* women in one bond of love and union” (68).

After getting married, Dagmar turns her marital home (much against her husband’s wises and to his increasing displeasure) into a sort of refuge house for abused and homeless women. When questioned by one of the women she helps whether she really has the means and the space to take her in, Dagmar assures her “no woman need despair, if only the cause of the weak was helped on by the strong, there was not a woman in all London who should not find her own appointed niche” (Meade 47). This was always the philosophy of the Pioneer Club’s founder, that no woman should be left behind, and that the Pioneer should be a space that provided welcome and refuge to all women.

Dagmar’s death is sudden and shocking, she contracts smallpox from helping a prostitute after her husband had expressly forbidden her from getting involved with a woman like that. Upon realising that she has caught the disease herself, Dagmar

goes away to face her fate alone, and assigns someone to send word to her husband only once she has died.

Despite the fictionalisation, Meade captures the spirit of Mrs Massingberd through Dagmar when she ends the novel with:

> There are very few Dagmars in the world. Thus her brief life, and all the good she might have done, came to an abrupt end. But all the same, Dagmar's life was not in vain, for she was one of those who leave footprints on the sands of Time, she was one of the pioneers in a great movement; and although her life ceased when her work was hardly begun, there are still some women in London who remember her, and can never forget her. There are weary and despairing women, and brave women whom her example has encouraged, and noble and courageous women who got their first impetus from her, who but for her would not have dared to break through the thraldom of the narrow walls of old prejudice, and those women still in memory hear her voice, and touch her hand (341).

Dagmar's story ends in tragedy, but not hopelessness. Similar to Mrs Massingberd, her life and vision would serve as an impetus for women to come together and discover the possibilities of their own abilities. Dagmar's "Forward Club" and Mrs Massingberd's Pioneer Club became spaces of transformation, and possibility—spaces where existing ideas could be debated and challenged, spaces where women could find solidarity and sisterhood, and a space where they could collectively hope for, and work towards, a better future for themselves.

The image of women marching forward together while *clasping hands*/*reaching out a hand of support to each other* is the indelible stamp of Whitman which runs throughout every existing and surviving representation and record of the Pioneer Club. Few knew better than Whitman the massive power of solidarity, and the same spirit he had transcribed into his poetry, the Pioneers imbued into their lives and actions, none more so than Emily Massingberd. Massingberd was a

pioneer Whitman would have approved of, and even in death she managed to clasp the hands of her comrades*,* as she had inscribed on the walls of the club she so passionately established.

From the lines inscribed on their first premises at Bruton Street to Massingberd's last days and even after her death, clasping the hands of comrades was the purpose of the Pioneer Club's existence. In the August 1894 issue of *Shafts*, Sibthorp writes: "Whatever may be the future of the Club, she (Massingberd) may take to her heart of hearts the joy that is given to those who help as she has helped, who extend to so many ready to faint, the hand that sustains*,* as she has done" (299).

Women needed to stand together and Massingberd's life, the legacy of the Pioneer Club and the works she inspired all bear this message, even after her death. Emily Massingberd passed away in January 1897, and the February and March 1897 issues of *Shafts* were dedicated to her. In the February 1897 issue, Sibthorp writes: "we weep for the touch of a vanished hand" (36) She reminisces that when Massingberd was alive, she would not let Sibthorp write floral tributes about her, saying she (Sibthorp) could do so when she (Massingberd) had passed over. However even "now that she has *passed over*, my pen might be unloosed, but I feel still that her gentle hand checks its ready flow, and I dare not write all I would" (37). At her funeral, the other Pioneer members placed a "floral tribute with the initials E.L.M. and the various mottoes being picked out in violets: …'Love thyself last.' 'One and all.' 'All the hands of comrades clasping. Pioneers! O Pioneers!'" (40). Mrs Massingberd was not just unusual, she was also visionary and open minded, as a woman who inspired such tribute would have had to be.

The Beth Book – Being a Study from the Life of Elizabeth Caldwell Maclure, A Woman of Genius by Sarah Grand

Sarah Grand was born in 1854 under the name Frances Elizabeth Bellenden Clarke in County Down, Ireland. After her father died when she was only seven years old, her mother moved her and her four siblings to Yorkshire. Young Frances felt the injustice of life very early on, as her mother often forced Frances to go without so that her brothers could be raised as gentlemen. Frances took the option of an early marriage to escape her unhappy home, marrying Surgeon-Major David Chambers McFall, a widower with two sons, who worked in a lock hospital where women suspected to have venereal diseases were imprisoned. She was desperately unhappy in the marriage, and anonymously published her first novel *Ideala* in 1888, and used the profits to move to London and pursue a literary career, leaving behind her husband and son. She reinvented herself under the name Madame Sarah Grand and went on to write successful New Woman novels (*Victorian Secrets)*.

The Beth Book is a roman-a-clef, with Grand casting Beth as herself. Beth also loses her father early, has a childhood where she is expected to cater to the happiness of her brother, marries a doctor who (initially unbeknownst to Beth) works in a lock hospital and marries Beth for her inheritance, comes to despise the man and leaves him to move to London and become a novelist. Grand was a Pioneer Club member when she published the book in 1897, as she had been when she published *The Heavenly Twins* in 1893. While I have not found any references in *Shafts* to *the Beth Book*, *The Heavenly Twins* was published with the encouragement and blessing of the Club members. Margaret Shurmer Sibthorp

records in an 1893 issue of *Shafts* that Grand's revision process for her novel *The Heavenly Twins* included reading portions of it to the Pioneer Club; the club members "responded with enthusiastic applause" (Quoted in Mangum 87). Grand described the reading in an unpublished letter to William Blackwood dated June 28, 1892 and held by the National Library of Scotland: "Mrs Massingberd suggested that I should read portions aloud. The first reading with the outline I gave of the whole story, produced such an extraordinary sensation…all these people (club members) are unanimously of the opinion that the book will be an even greater success than *Ideala*. They strongly advise me to publish it" (Quoted in Mangum 242). The book was published in 1893, just a year after the Pioneer members had encouraged her to do so. Grand reading her work to the Pioneers is reminiscent of Shakespeare and Browning Clubwomen reading their original work to their fellow club members. Despite existing contemporaneously, the social setting and personal profiles of these clubwomen were very different. While women in the Dallas Shakespeare Club hurried home to avoid displeasing their husbands, women such as Grand were able to leave unhappy marriages and make their own living. However, their clubs remained spaces where they could speak without fear, express their ideas, and receive support and encouragement for their abilities.

Grand's heroine Beth finds herself at a disadvantage throughout her life, until she chooses freedom and independence. Beth's life is juxtaposed against those of other women in the novel, particularly her mother and her great-aunt Victoria. The novel is narrated through an omniscient narrator, and it describes Beth's mother Mrs Caldwell as "an admirable person, according to the light of her time" (299). Mrs

Caldwell is cast as the victim of her circumstances, as she was “a good woman marred by the narrow outlook, the ignorance and prejudices which were the result of the mental restrictions imposed upon her sex; secondly, by having no conception of her duty to herself; and finally, by those mistaken notions of her duty to others which were so long inflicted upon women” (299). This notion of a life which had been stunted by having mental restrictions placed upon them and not having been given the ability to form a conception of duty to herself, is what most club reports have reported to be rectifying, taking time and creating spaces for themselves, for their own mental and intellectual growth and the development of selfhood. Beth is driven to accept marriage as an attempt at an escape from the stifling environment of a home with a female parent with this disposition.

Beth accepts Dr Daniel Maclure’s proposal on a particularly miserable day. The narrator states that she had done “all her little self-imposed tasks but had reaped no reward” (412). Beth is in a state of reflection, wondering about the direction her life is headed in. She sees a dreadful future for herself, built on the images of the women around her. She shudders as she has a vision of her old age with “no object, and no purpose, as Aunt Victoria did her French” (412). The narrator states that Beth had begun to recognise a thought that had been gradually building inside her mind, that she “must have more of a life than this” (351). Beth however laments that there is nothing she can do towards this as she was tied to “to that stupid place (her home), and without friends to help her” (351). Beth represents the same helplessness that Florence Nightingale and Mona Caird (discussed in the next section) had expressed about women, where their circumstances and lives are curtailed, controlled and regulated, with no opportunities for self-development. Beth’s lament that she “has no

friends to help her" is of particular significance, and links to women's clubs. In her article about women's clubs, Amy Levy writes, "What woman engaged in art, in literature, in science, has not felt the drawbacks of her isolated position?" She writes that women of intellect (like Beth) have the distinct disadvantage of having to "fight her way single – handed" while men have an existing "elaborate social machinery which they regard as a right" (366). Levy affirms that women formed clubs for the same camaraderie and mutual support that men enjoy as a natural right in society, and while Beth does not allude to wanting a women's club, her wish for the support of like-minded friends does connect her to clublife and thought. When Beth does mention a women's club, she does so by connecting it to her great-aunt Victoria, as she observes the empty and solitary life the old woman leads. She says that "nowadays Aunt Victoria would have gone to London, joined a progressive women's club and been a capable woman had any one of her faculties been cultivated to some useful purpose" (209). Beth casts women's clubs as an antidote to the drudgery that is a woman's lifelong companion, even if she is financially well off. Beth views the women's clubs as being spaces where women are not isolated and have the opportunity to pursue productive or intellectual outlets.

This isolation and bleak outlook of her own life, and the fears of it copying her mother and great aunt's, causes Beth to accept Dr Daniel Maclure's marriage proposal, despite knowing him so little that she only learns his full name on her wedding day, having always "heard him called 'the doctor' or 'Dr. Dan'" and without "knowing anything else about him—his past, his family, or his prospects" (355). Beth only learns much later about Dan's ulterior motive of marrying her solely for the inheritance she will receive from Aunt Victoria. She also learns about his work in a

lock hospital much later, much to her horror. Beth tries to make her marriage a happy one, as initially she expects it to give her the space to remedy “the defects of her education” and she think an educated man such as Dan would “sympathise with her in her efforts” (320). However, she soon learns that this is not the case, as Dan scoffs at any of her attempts at self-improvement and refers to them as wastes of time. Beth is driven to find “some corner where she would be safe from intrusion” and goes in search of one within the house. She discovers a small attic space which neither Dan nor she had known about and she sets it up for herself and refers to it as what she had been “pining for most in the whole wide world, a secret spot, sacred to herself, where she would be safe from intrusion”. Ironically, once she has her secret attic set up, Beth says that now she is “at home” (despite the whole house being hers) and refers to it as the space where she can “study, read, write, and think undisturbed” (355-366). Beth’s want for a space of her own where she can nurture her intellect, her desire for a space where she can do so uninterrupted and undisturbed are highly reminiscent of the language used by clubwomen. While neither Beth nor Sarah Grand refers to her attic as a club, the symbolism of a space of one’s own where women are free to “read, write and think undisturbed” reflect the sentiment of a women’s club.

The marriage becomes unsustainable when Beth realises the truth about her husband, and she abandons him and moves to London, to pursue her life as a novelist. She becomes the “woman of genius” in the title and even finds love. While the ending of the novel is fairly cliché, Nathalie Saudo-Welby writes that the character of Beth who makes a terrible choice of husband despite possessing the intellectual qualities she does, “shows the need for women to be educated for other

purposes than marriage and warns about the dangers of sacrificing a girl's education to that of boys" (47). Beth realises how much her education has failed her only after having moved to London. On one of her solitary walks she remembers how she had initially been too afraid to venture far, as "she had always been assured that she had no head for topography and would never be able to find her way" (508). Since she had lived all of her life until that point under somebody else's restrictions, she had also never been able to test the truth of this judgment or thought to question it all. However, now that she was forced to look after herself, she:

> found no difficulty; and this little experience taught her why it is that the intelligence of women seems childishly defective as regards many of the details of the business of life. They have the faculty, but when they are not allowed to act for themselves, it remains imperfectly developed or is altogether atrophied for want of exercise. (508)

Beth is able to test and understand her own intellectual capabilities only when she escapes the bonds of society and family that hold her back. Her realisation about her own capability is reminiscent of Florence Nightingale's words, where she had lamented that women possessed "passion, intellect, moral activity, and a place in society where not one of the three can be exercised" (*Cassandra* 205). Grand situated the female characters in *The Beth Book* in context, as "she does not speak of women in general, but of women as the product of a particular historical conjuncture and she presents their emancipation as being under way" (Saudo-Welby 49). Grand does this by presenting the lives of three generations of women - Beth's Aunt Victoria, her mother Mrs Caldwell and Beth herself, who sees the lives of the women before her and seeks out her own space of freedom, first within the home and then outside of it.

The Daughters of Danaus by Mona Caird

Caird published *The Daughters of Danaus* in 1894, by which point she was already an established writer. Prior to publishing the novel, she had written an article titled “Marriage”, published in *The Westminster Review* in 1888. Caird had called marriage in its current state a “vexatious failure” (187) and a “legalized injustice” (192). Caird (like Grand) proposed a new ideal of true equality and partnership, which would involve women being economically independent (195). She also disputed the prevailing idea that women naturally belonged in her designated domestic sphere and stated that this was in fact a consequence of the circumstances imposed upon her (198). Caird would go on to express these ideas and show the effect such an unjust system had on a woman of talent and capability, through *The Daughters of Danaus.*

Patricia Murphy defines Mona Caird’s 1894 novel *The Daughters of Danaus* as a work that traces “the ruinous effects wrought by a patriarchal culture’s stringent regulation of a woman’s time through numbing domestic routine” (151). The title of the novel comes from Greek mythology, where King Danaus had fifty daughters. King Danaus’ twin brother King Aegyptus had fifty sons, and he asked for his sons to marry Danaus’ daughters, to form alliances and expand his kingdom. King Danaus agreed in order to avoid a war, but secretly instructed his daughters to kill their husbands. Forty-nine of his daughters did so, and for this crime, they were punished after their deaths in the afterlife. Their punishment was to fill a tub which had holes in it using vessels which also leaked, and thus, they would spend eternity carrying pots of water and never achieving the task. The myth represents the futility of a repetitive task that can never be completed (*Greek Mythology*).

Caird draws on this myth to represent the condition of women in Victorian England. Her heroine is named Hadria Fullerton and possesses multiple talents, she is described as a talented dancer who moves with “peculiar spirit and brilliancy” (6) and as someone who possesses extraordinary musical abilities. Hadria is described by her mother as having “ideas” about becoming a musical composer. Hadria and her siblings Fred, Ernest, Algitha and Austin form a secret club named The Preposterous Society, of which she is the President (7). They meet in secret in the attic of their house over a period of five years and hold debates, dance, and freely express their ideas. The fact that the “Society” is kept a secret from their parents because “their mother looked with mingled pride and alarm at these outbreaks of individuality on the parts of her daughters” (12) can be seen as reflective of the criticism faced by the women’s clubs. However, within this secret space, which like Beth’s secret space of solitude is located within an attic, a private space similar to a woman’s club, Hadria speaks on equal terms as her brothers, and one of the debates they have is on whether Emerson is right when he says that “man makes his circumstances” (8). Both Fred and Ernest say that he is, and that there is no circumstance that cannot be overcome. Hadria phrases it in different words, and in an instance of foreshadowing, asks her brothers whether “given great artistic power, given also a conscience and strong will, is there any combination of circumstances which might prevent the artistic power from developing and displaying itself so as to meet with recognition?” (11) Both of her brothers reply that there is no circumstance that can prevent this. However, Hadria disagrees because “the conditions of a girl’s life are absolutely stifling” and neither her brothers nor Emerson could understand that because “Emerson never was a girl!” (14) She despairs about her possible future

and even as she asserts, as Beth did, that “life *must* have something more to offer than this” (19), she wonders if it will ever be possible, for the conditions of a girl’s existence are such that “it is impossible for a girl to occupy her life in the manner she thinks best, because prejudice and custom are against her” as she has to “tear through so many living ties that restrain her freedom” (15) and at the end of it, “a girl was so helpless, so tied by custom” (19) that no amount of talent or intellect could make up for it.

Hadria is probably speaking about herself, because despite possessing a gift for music, she is simply unable to find the time to practise her craft. When a friend of hers asks if she is able to “find time” to develop her abilities” (107), Hadria replies that “in the world I was born into, nothing fits one’s eccentric custom; and everything conspires to discourage it” (108). The “eccentric custom” is simply a woman who wishes to spend her time as she wants to, but as the novel makes clear, that is simply too much for the world Hadria inhabits. She points out that the imbalance of temporal claims has been naturalised to the extent that the world accepts it as a natural state, where “girls are stuffed with certain stereotyped sentiments from their infancy, and when that painful process is completed, intelligent philosophers come and smile upon the victims, and point to them as proof of the intention of Nature regarding our sex” (23). She compares this as being akin to thinking that “performing poodles were inspired from birth by a heaven-implanted yearning to jump through hoops” (23), and that everyone has simply chosen to overlook and forget that this was a trained, and falsely created situation. She finds no sympathy in her home from the authority figures of her parents, as her mother warns her against being “selfishly pre-occupied” with temporal concerns that do not serve her family or society (109).

Desperate to find time for herself and “unable ever to command any certain part of the day” (109), Hadria resorts to staying up at night to practise music. This leads to Mrs Fullerton “wishing to know why Hadria who had all the day at her disposal could not spend the night rationally” (110). The fact that Mrs Fullerton does not seem to see the injustice of the situation, when she is part of the system that forbids Hadria from using her time for her own pursuits, underlines Hadria’s observation of how accustomed society has become to this skewed state. Hadria tells her mother that she “hasn’t all the day or any part of it” (110) but her mother does not understand. Hadria reflects on the bitter truth that the only way she could pursue her dream is if she was willing to “quarrel with mother, and displease father and offend all the world” (110). She knows this is an untenable position for women, and she reflects how “people are surprised that women have never done anything noteworthy in music” (110) but (like her brothers and Emerson) do not possess the ability to see that society is designed such that women can never claim their time to pursue their abilities, and that this circumstance cannot be overcome without irreparable personal cost. This is comparable to the words of Nightingale, who writes that “woman is not allowed to live by intellect, her domestic duties forbid it” (215) and this creates a system which dooms female minds to either “incurable infancy or silent misery” (216) which is the singular reason that there has never been a female Michael Angelo (sic), Pascal or Isaac Newton (215).

Hadria meets Hubert Temperley, who is interested in Hadria but holds back due to recognising her independent spirit. He is however convinced by his sister Henriette “she (Hadria) can’t escape from the conditions of her epoch and it is not possible for any woman to resist the laws and beliefs of society” (135). Henriette

convinces her brother to lie to Hadria in order to win her hand and tells him to "express no opposition to her ideas, no matter how wild" (136), such is Henriette's faith that once Hadria is married, she will succumb to the laws of society as she will be helpless. Hubert manages to be convincing in his deception, as he "shewed (sic) that for a woman, life in her father's house is far less free than in her own home; that existence could be moulded to any shape she pleased" (140). Hadria, unsure of Hubert's sincerity, but drawn by a singular "trembling hope that perhaps this was the way of escape" (141), accepts his proposal and they are married. She soon discovers that the claims upon a wife and a mother's time are no less and Hadria goes away to Paris, leaving Hubert and their children.

While in Paris, Hadria feels free for the first time. She takes up her music again and finds joy in life. Once she is able to step outside the system she has been bound by her whole life, she realises that:

> one begins to learn everything too late. I don't know anything about the world in which I live. The more I see of life, the more hideous seems the position that women hold in relation to the social structure, and the more sickening the current nonsense that is talked about us and our 'missions' and 'spheres'. (306)

Her experience is similar to that of Beth, who discovers her capabilities once she moves to London and understands that she has been held back all of her life. Hadria appears to have found the life she wanted, but the novel has an unhappy ending. Her mother is taken gravely ill, and though until that time she had resisted the beseeching and threats of her family and her sister-in-law to return, she makes the decision that she must sacrifice her life's happiness and go back. She goes back and splits her time between her family and marital homes. Hadria finds her life sadder and more bound than before, as "her time was now filled with more and more detail

since there were two households instead of one to manage" (370). Hadria spends her days in service to both households, and her musical talent and ambitions are abandoned. When she sits at a piano again after a long time, the weight of her loss is too much and she breaks down, as she says:

> We think and aspire and dream, and meanwhile the fires grow cold upon the hearth, the daily cares and common needs plead eloquently for our undivided service…and this and that, and that and this, like the pendulum of the old time-piece, dock the moments of one's life, and lead one decorously to the gateway of Eternity. (480)

Hadria becomes a daughter of Danaus, eternally engaged in a futile task that can never be achieved. Her attempts at severing the bonds that held her back, initially through marriage and then by leaving behind all relations, only make her life worse as they ultimately result in tightening and reinforcing the oppressive conditions of her existence.

The implication of this assertion is clear – Victorian women were acutely aware that they faced a fundamental problem, that of the hours of their life not being theirs to command. They lived under the tyranny of an epoch they could not escape from, whose divisions and duties were dictated to them, and no self-improvement or achievement was possible in these circumstances. They wrote their own commentary on their existence, whether directly stating it like Nightingale does, or metaphorically, in the case of Meade, Grand and Caird. Unlike the women who were members of the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs who remain largely anonymous and had no public personas, the members of the Pioneer Club were established professional writers, earning their own livings through their literary output. The society they inhabited had also progressed to the stage where women could claim a clubhouse in the centre of London's shopping district, and not keep the existence of

the Club or its activities a secret. Yet their basic concerns remained similar: that women lived unfulfilled lives of wasted potential due to the unjust and unfair societal rules set up for them. The domestic routines that overtook their temporal existence, whether as daughters in their own homes, or as wives and mothers in their marital homes, left no possibility for them to ever be individuals, as this required investing time in oneself. For the women, all other claims on their time by others took precedence over any pursuits for themselves, unless they were in fictionalised private spaces carved out from their domestic routines, by seeking secret "attics" and "societies". It is not an unreasonable proposition then, that while not expressly stated, the women's clubs came into existence as a means of levelling this field, where women could dream of seizing equal opportunities in society and politics, and in Nightingale's words "above all, time".

Criticism Aimed at the Pioneer Club

Despite the noble purposes the Pioneers saw for their existence, they were not without their fair share of detractors. The following examinations of criticism and satire aimed at the Pioneers also help establish the contested space occupied by women's clubs. For the women who were inside these spaces, the clubs served a necessary and timely purpose, as spaces of community, and freedom. For the outsiders who could not fathom why women wanted to step outside the domestic sphere, they were spaces to be mocked and ridiculed.

One example of the criticism aimed at the Pioneer and their response to it is recorded by Theodora Such in the June 1896 issue of *Shafts*. She records the experience of a member who had brought a gentleman as an unwilling guest to one

of the debates at the Pioneer. When asked what he thought about the event, his response was that, "what was said was very good, but that he did not like to see ladies speaking and that it sounded very silly to hear them say 'Mrs. Chairman'" (68). The man had taken offence not at the opinions of the Pioneers, but at the fact that they had opinions that they wanted to express at all. Theodora Such continues that the opposition aimed at women doing anything is always the same, which is not that "women *cannot speak* or *women are illogical,* or *women are unbusinesslike* – that they cannot say" (68). Rather, their opposition is just distaste for women speaking or being seen on a platform at all, which, she says, is followed by the thought – "therefore they must not speak or go upon the platform". Such states in no uncertain terms that this distaste from men for women having opinions at all is "one of many other mistakes that The Pioneer Club will destroy" (68). Such portrays the Pioneer Club then as a space where they will refuse the historical silencing of women by men, and destroy the oppositions that has held them silent for so long. It is notable that she says it is the Pioneer Club that will destroy these mistakes, and not she or women in general. It shows the sense of strength that they drew from this club, and the space it gave them to stand against historical mistakes, where men had no real objections to raise to justify their distaste towards women entering the public sphere.

A second example of the kind of ridicule that the Pioneer Club faced is an anonymous poem published in the November 1894 edition of *Punch* magazine. *Punch or The London Charivari* was a British weekly magazine of humour and satire established in 1841 by Henry Mayhew and Ebenezer Landells. This poem was printed in the November 10, 1894 edition of *Punch*, volume 107.

While the poem is an obvious satirical take, the amount of information provided in the poem displays a definite familiarity with the workings of the club. The poem is titled “A Slight Adaptation” with the following description in parenthesis: Suggested by the recent Debate (Ladies only) at the Pioneers (sic) Club on the Shortcomings of the Male Sex. It also states “Nova mulier vociferatur more Whitmanico”. The poem is reproduced in full below:

Come my modern women,
Follow me this evening, get your numbers ready,
Have you got your latchkeys? Have you your members’ axes?
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

To the club in Bruton Street
We must march my darlings, one and all a great ensemble,
We the strenuous lady champions, all extremely up to date,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

O you girls, West-End girls,
O you young revolting daughters, full of manly pride and manners,
Plain I see you West-End girls (no reflection on your features!).
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Have our lords and masters halted?
Do they humbly take a back-seat, wearied out with Madame Sarah Grand?
We take up the dual garments, and the eyeglass and the cycle.
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

From North Hampstead, from South Tooting,
From far Peckham, from the suburbs and the shires we come,

All the dress of comrades noting, bonnets, fashions criticising,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

We primeval fetters loosing,
We our husbands taming, vexing we and worrying Mrs. Grundy,
We our own lives freely living, we as bachelor-girls residing,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Literary dames are we,
Singers, speakers, temperance readers, artists we and journalists,
Here and there a festive actress (generally to be found in our smoking- room),
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

Raise the mighty mistress President,
Waving high the delicate President, over all the Lady President (bend your heads all),
Raise the warlike Mrs. M-ss-ngb-d, stern impassive Mrs. M-ss-ngb-d,
Pioneers! O Pioneers!

It ends with "this sort of thing goes on for about twenty more verses, for which the readers are kindly referred to the original in *Leaves of Grass*. It really applies without any further adaptation".

The poet makes it very clear that, firstly, Whitman's poem needs only a slight adaptation to fit perfectly into the Pioneer Club's female-only discussion space, as well as the spaces that they hoped to create. Secondly, she puts in the disclaimer that her thoughts are shared only by women, in the space they created to discuss the shortcomings of the male sex. Corollary to this can also be read that the Pioneer Club exists because the male of the species does not see their own shortcomings

(either concerning themselves or their views about women), and so the Pioneer Club must exist, in order for these shortcomings that affect them to be discussed, and maybe mitigated.

The poem is also prefaced by the words "Nova mulier vociferator more Whitmanico", which could be translated as: New Women/females shouting/crying out the customs/practices in the style of Whitman. The poet speaks from the persona of one of these New Women, addressing her fellow club members. She addresses her friends as "modern women" and asks if the members have their "numbers", "latchkeys" and "members' axes" ready. The numbers refer to the Pioneer Club's practice of addressing each member by a number, so that their social position was not identifiable, and all were equal. The members' axes are the small silver axe shaped badges that each member wore. In his original poem, Whitman asks the pioneers "have you your sharp-edged axes?" (3) It is most likely that the axe was chosen both as an homage to Whitman as well as a symbolic representation of the hardship that the original Pioneer women would have encountered, and of all the barriers and obstacles that had to be chopped down by them, juxtaposed against the barriers that the members of the Pioneer Club had to "cut down" in society.

The latchkey is curious, and while there has not emerged any other evidence suggesting so, it leads to wonder if each member was in fact given an actual key to the club, to come and go as they please. Massingberd did always intend the Pioneer Club to first and foremost be a space where "the woman who perhaps could only afford to rent a bedroom should yet have at her command something of the rest and comfort of spacious rooms…and bright social intercourse" (Doughan and Gordon 56). A space can only be truly at your command if you have unfettered access to it

at all times of day, without needing to go through anyone else. It is possible as this poem suggests, that Massingberd literally manifested her idea by giving a key to each member.

Lines 4 to 8 call for her fellow members who she refers to as “my darlings” (5) mirroring Whitman, and “lady champions” (7) to march to the “club in Bruton Street” (5). In his poem, Whitman says “We must march my darlings, we must bear the brunt of danger/We the youthful sinewy races, all the rest on us depend/Pioneers! O pioneers!” (5-8). Bruton Street was the third location of the Pioneer Club as its membership grew, and the mental image conjured of “extremely up to date” (7) lady champions marching to Bruton Street is a striking one. Whitman reminds his pioneers that despite the dangers of the task they have undertaken, they cannot turn back because so many others depend on them. This was a motto that the Pioneer Club was built on, that they were the ones who would clear the route so that other women may find the way a little easier.

Line 10 explains this better by referring to “O you young revolting daughters, full of manly pride and manners”. The word revolting can be read both literally and as a pun, as the New Woman was considered revolting because of the mannish way she dressed and acted. Revolting could also refer to the image of the up-to-date pioneers determinedly marching to Bruton Street to discuss the shortcomings of the male sex, revolting against the social norms imposed upon them.

Line 11 lends credence to this image, “Plain I see you West-End girls (no reflection on your features!)”. The poet refers to seeing them plainly, i.e., clearly, and he also explains his choice of words by saying he is not referring to them as “plain”

i.e., unattractive and unwomanly as the men and tabloids of the time did – referring to the New Woman outfitted in her rational dress as an abominable and unsexed interpretation of womanhood.

Lines 13 – 15 read as follows: “Have our lords and masters halted? Do they humbly take a back-seat, wearied out with Madame Sarah Grand?” Sarah Grand was the coiner of the term New Woman, and she is one of only two members mentioned by name, the other being Mrs Massingberd herself. It also suggests Sarah Grand’s popularity at the time, that the “lords and masters” (men) were no match for Grand’s ideas. Clearly, the ideas coming out of the Pioneer Club were also meant to humble men and show them the errors of their ways.

Line 16 says that the women would “take up the dual garments, and the eyeglass and the cycle”. The line exhorts the female pioneers to take up the “dual garments”, a reference to women shifting from uncomfortable and physically restricting garments of the time to rational dress which several women of the club wore. She also refers to eyeglasses and the cycle, both of which were rising in popularity, especially the cycle, with the New Woman in her rational dress on a bicycle being one of the defining images of the epoch (the page on which this poem is printed in *Punch* shows two women wearing rational dress with one wearing a monocle and the other wearing eyeglasses). The bicycle was also a symbol of freedom for women of the time, and dressmakers were catering to women’s demands of clothing that made it easier to cycle.

Lines 21 – 24 shows the poet speaking in the manner of how the women viewed themselves, with the poet writing, “We primeval fetters loosing, We our

husbands taming, vexing we and worrying Mrs. Grundy, We our own lives freely living, we as bachelor-girls residing, Pioneers! O Pioneers!" The call to the pioneers is repeated in every verse as it is in Whitman's poem, and in this verse, her call is clear: loosen all the primeval fetters that hold you back, make your way in the world and live your own lives freely. If that should vex your husbands, so be it, they will be tamed in good time. If not, bachelor life awaits. There is no way of knowing whether this was written by a disgruntled former member or a disgruntled man who had been invited to a debate night and put off, as the man mentioned by Theodora Such was, by women speaking at all. It is noteworthy as well that in all the aims the Pioneer Club stated for itself, so far as I have been able to find, it never made any calls to dissolve families or give up marriages as collateral damage to clubwork. These lines are reminiscent of the satire aimed at them such as in the cartoon by du Maurier, which seemed to suggest that any club at all was a dire threat to domesticity.

Lines 25 – 28 lists the varied membership of the Pioneer Club from "literary dames" to "singers, temperance readers", "journalists" and even "here and there a festive actress". The diverse nature and social standing of the members is why the numbers rather than names system was implemented by Massingberd within the club.

Mrs Massingberd's public persona is summed up in no uncertain terms in the last lines of the poem: "Raise the mighty mistress President, Waving high the delicate President, over all the Lady President (bend your heads all), Raise the warlike Mrs. M-ss-ngb-d, stern impassive Mrs. M-ss-ngb-d, Pioneers! O Pioneers!" It is unclear if the original poet wrote Massingberd's name with the vowels missing, or why he might have done so. This presentation of Massingberd as a mighty

overlord demanding obeisance is very far removed from the presentation of her as a kind and nurturing soul from the recollections of club members in *Shafts*, and Meade's portrayal in her novel. It is obviously ridicule at her outward appearance, of a woman who constantly appeared in rational dress and sported, to a gendered society, what was an "unfeminine" look.

The poem concludes here but the poet adds a footnote: "This sort of thing goes on for about twenty more verses, for which readers are kindly referred to the original in Leaves of Grass. It really applies without any further adaptation". This grandiose representation of the Pioneer Club, its President, and its activities, still has an air of authenticity. Someone had to be involved with or be observing the club very closely to have provided this level of detail, which despite its satire, helps build a picture of what the Club looked like to someone who could not see its value.

In the poem, the poet uses the image of women marching to mock the women and present them as self-important while serving no actual purpose. This can be contrasted with the image presented by an actual member who explained what they were (metaphorically) marching towards. In the January 1896 issue of *Shafts*, A Pioneer writes:

> A woman's club…has a purpose behind it; a goal beyond it; an inspiration within it; a hope to which it lifts its gaze; to which it directs the energies of its efforts; a protest against what has been; a registered resolve as to what shall be. It is, besides, the loadstar of many weary women's eyes, and the groundwork of their hope. What that hope means, from whence it has arisen, what centuries of untold anguish lie behind it could not, need not be told here; the thoughts of the hearts of unnumbered women will emphasise these truths. Why say more when women are pressing onward, when the great march has begun which can only have one ending. (141)

The clubwomen's acute awareness of time, of existing between a history of anguish and a future of hope, and the conviction that their actions in their Club during their present time was vital, is reflected here. For the women who were members of the clubs, the club represented hope. Hope in a future that would not resemble the present, hope in the possibility of change, and hope that other women felt the same way they did, that the historical anguish of these women could be undone by the existence of their clubs. The Pioneer who wrote this paragraph seems convinced that their efforts will bear fruit, that their great march can have only one ending.

Perhaps the purpose of the Pioneer Club is best expressed by its creator. In an 1895 article, Beatrice Knollys quotes Mrs Massingberd as saying: ''Woman has been like the pendulum kept back by ignorance, prejudice or habit, therefore when suddenly she gains her freedom the reaction recoils on the hand that held her too tightly at first" (121). Pendulums have traditionally always been associated with timekeeping, ever since Galileo himself discovered the timekeeping ability of a pendulum and the first pendulum clock came into existence in the 1650's (Marrison). It is fitting that Mrs Massingberd uses the pendulum to refer to women. Once the pendulum of womanhood became aware of being held back by domesticity, and began, through women's clubs, the steady swing of claiming back its time, they started a march towards temporal reclamation. The next chapter explores how these ideas of claiming back time and using their clubs to do so were repeated in the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs of Nineteenth-Century America.

Chapter 2: Bardolatry and Browning

America from 1850 to 1900

1850 to 1900 was a time of large-scale changes in America, marked by the Civil War, Emancipation and the beginnings of the Women's Movement. These events took place in a highly gendered society, which had strictly delineated ideals for gendered space, activity and appropriate pursuits for both genders. They had an impact on existing social norms, particularly within the division of public and private space, the appropriate designated spaces for the genders and on the delineation of domestic roles. This chapter looks at two sets of women's clubs – Shakespeare Clubs and Robert Browning Clubs – as spaces where women exercised a form of temporal reclamation, finding or taking back time for their own pursuits, entirely for self-serving leisure.

This chapter also looks at the history of women reading and critiquing Shakespeare, which served as precursors to women forming clubs to do so communally.

Shakespeare and Browning Clubs

The Shakespeare Clubs and Browning Clubs that existed in America from mid-to-late-nineteenth century and carrying over into the early-twentieth century shared enough common traits to be considered together for the purpose of this thesis. The clubs formed by women around these two male writers operated on a common principle of establishing a liminal space for themselves where they created and practiced a different form of time. The club was a temporal entity that they controlled, while existing within a society which placed limits and restrictions upon

their time and the use of it. I look at Shakespeare and Browning Clubs across the country, using examples from club records and articles to analyse how the women viewed themselves and their clubs.

In order to establish a historical timeline of Shakespeare criticism by women, before they formed clubs, I look at three of the most prominent Shakespeare critiques written by women, starting with Anna Jameson's *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical and Historical*, printed in 1832.

Anna Jameson's *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical and Historical*

Anna Jameson was born in Ireland, the daughter of a miniature-painter named Dennis Murphy, and the family moved to London when she was four years old. She grew up surrounded by art and in addition to being an author, she was also an art critic (Thomas 20). Jameson cultivated a large circle of notable acquaintances including Robert and Elizabeth Browning, and the Shakespearean actress Fanny Kemble to whom she dedicated *Characteristics*. Jameson's book was widely successful, originally published in Britain in 1832, by 1838 she had negotiated a deal to have it published in America. Alison Booth writes that she was one of the first women "to attain international recognition as a critic, and for a period she prevailed as an authority on the woman question" (176). Jameson's book ran through recurrent editions from the original publishing date in 1832 all the way to 1899, through multiple publishers in Britain and America (Booth 369). Jameson's work is an early example of women reading Shakespeare to then tackle more general subjects, and considering the dates in which it was published, it would definitely have been available to Shakespeare Clubwomen at the time as reading and reference material.

Katherine Scheil documents that "many clubs read this work and Jameson's book was included in the program of the Columbus, Kansas Shakespeare Club in 1900" (*She Hath Been Reading* 153). By using Shakespeare's heroines as examples of real women, Jameson criticises society's treatment of women, and advocates for change. This pattern was repeated by the clubs a few decades later, where they would use Shakespeare to discuss larger themes of politics, women's education and others.

Jameson's 1832 *Characteristics of Women: Moral, Poetical and Historical* is a two-volume work which was later re-published under the name *Shakespeare's Heroines*. Cheri Hoeckley comments on the depth of Jameson's analysis by writing, "Jameson reads Shakespeare's female characters with knowledge both of sources and of critical tradition, often creating insightful and sometimes even surprising analyses of previously ignored characters" (11). Jameson discusses a total of 23 women characters, and her approach is one of an author who has an almost worshipful reverence for Shakespeare. Nevertheless, she manages to present a viewpoint of Shakespeare's women freed from both their existence only in association with the male characters of the plays as well as the traditional male criticism of them which had existed until then.

Jameson seeks individual identities for the women characters that she assesses. She divides the women into four categories: Characters of Intellect (Portia, Isabella, Beatrice, and Rosalind), Characters of Passion and Imagination (Juliet, Helena, Perdita, Viola, Ophelia, and Miranda) in Volume 1, and Characters of Affection (Hermione, Desdemona, Imogen, and Cordelia) and Historical Characters (Cleopatra, Octavia, Volumnia, Constance of Bretagne, Elinor of

Guienne, Blanche of Castile, Margaret of Anjou, Katherine of Arragon, and Lady Macbeth) in Volume 2.

She speaks of them as real people, equating them to nineteenth-century women, and using them as examples to critique the position of women in society, and suggest changes. For instance, when describing the character of Volumnia, from the play *Coriolanus*, Jameson refers to her as a "Roman matron" (346) with a strong trait of "aristocratic haughtiness" whose "supreme contempt for the plebeians, is very like what I have heard expressed by some high-born and high-bred women of our own day" (354). By treating Shakespeare characters as representative of the multiple kinds and characters of women, Jameson separates herself from the male critics who have come before her, and asserts that her views are distinct because she is able to view the real motives behind these characters' actions. For instance, she differentiates between women's intellect and men's intellect thus:

> In men, the intellectual faculties exist more self-poised and self-directed — more independent of the rest of the character, than we ever find them in women, with whom talent, however predominant, is in a much greater degree modified by the sympathies and moral qualities needed. It is from not knowing, or not allowing this general principle, that men of genius have committed some signal mistakes. They have given us exquisite and just delineations of the more peculiar characteristics of women, as modesty, grace, tenderness; and when they have attempted to portray them with the powers common to both sexes, as wit, energy, intellect, they have blundered in some respect; they could form no conception of intellect which was not masculine, and therefore have either suppressed the feminine attributes altogether and drawn coarse caricatures, or they have made them completely artificial. (54-55)

This misrepresentation of women and their abilities and characters would carry on to be analysed and criticised by the clubwomen in their writings and discussions, through the medium of Shakespeare. Scheil notes that "through their engagement with Shakespeare, women could discuss such topics as marital relations, political

issues, women's rights, and women's place in society and in the home" (*She Hath Been Reading* 2).

Jameson stages her Introduction as a conversation between a character named Alda, who represents Jameson and expresses her views, and a gentleman named Medon, representing the readers. Alda states that she wrote this book because she believes that:

> The condition of women in society, as at present constituted, is false in itself, and injurious to them—that the education of women, as at present conducted, is founded in mistaken principles, and tends to increase fearfully the sum of misery and error in both sexes; but I do not choose presumptuously to fling these opinions in the face of the world, in the form of essays on morality, and treatises on education. I have rather chosen to illustrate certain positions by examples, and leave my readers to deduce the moral themselves, and draw their own inferences. (14)

This commentary on the state of women is also repeated by the clubwomen I analyse later in this chapter: they speak both of being denied access to a proper education, and of sending their daughters to college, which also ties in with a decline of the clubs, once the women had more opportunities. Jameson appropriates Shakespeare's women into her own nineteenth-century reality, explaining their motives, reasons and actions. She portrays them as familiar characters whose lives can be used as examples to comment on, and perhaps correct, ideas about women and their role in society. Her "collection of studies of dramatic heroines aligns with a larger interest in women's material conditions in the nineteenth century, as well as with the causes of those conditions and the possibilities for improving them" (Hoeckley 11). One of these conditions would be the subject of women's education. Her views on the subject would be a precursor and be repeated in the next few decades. She writes "A time is coming, perhaps, when the education of women will

be considered, with a view to their future destination as the mothers and nurses of legislators and statesmen" (44). While she argues that women have the right to be part of political decisions, she restricts that right to the fact that they are the possible mothers or nurses of future lawmakers, rather than being permitted to take up legislative roles themselves. This sentiment is similar to that expressed in the later decades of the nineteenth century by Hale, Stone and Howe.

Henrietta Lee Palmer's *The Stratford Gallery*

The influence of Anna Jameson's work can be seen in Henrietta Lee Palmer's 1859 work *The Stratford Gallery or The Shakspeare (sic) Sisterhood: Comprising Forty-Five Ideal Portraits*, a book consisting of character studies of 45 of Shakespeare's heroines and plot summaries of the plays they appear in. The book was reissued twice, in 1866 and 1867, and would have been one of the critical Shakespeare texts available for reading to the clubwomen of the time. Palmer's work follows Jameson's, and she often draws from and refers to Jameson's interpretations in her own work. In her preface, Palmer states that she:

> confidently claim(s) the right to speak of these, as one woman may justly speak of another judging them, not with sophisticated research nor oracular criticism, but simply, naturally, sympathetically, as she may regard her fellow-women whom she meets from day to day. (5)

Her critical stance is thus similar to that of Jameson looking at Shakespeare's female characters as women one might encounter in real life, and commenting about them as a fellow woman, and not as an academic or male critic might. She makes direct references to Jameson in the book, and while she places Jameson in a position of reverence, she also disagrees with her analysis of certain characters. On the character of Juliet, she says that "not a detail of the subject has been neglected by

her (Jameson's) sympathetic pen; at the best, we can hope but to repeat her" (Palmer 19). However, she also disagrees with Jameson's interpretation about several characters, including Lady Macbeth, Beatrice, Portia and Isabella. For instance, she does not display any sympathy towards Lady Macbeth, instead she calls her a "hateful accident, a masculine heart, soul, and brain, clothed with a female humanity. Separate Lady Macbeth the individual, from Lady Macbeth the woman, and the mystery of her character is at once cleared – she is woman in her incarnation only" (14). Jameson had however said of Lady Macbeth that the reason she was so evil, was because of "the consistent preservation of the feminine character" (27). Both these critics are early examples of women reading Shakespeare by identifying with his characters, and looking at them critically as women written by a man, even a man such as Shakespeare, whom Palmer calls a "Master-poet" (Preface). In my discussion of Shakespeare fanfiction in Chapter 3, by women associated with the clubs, I will consider how they took this critical movement further, bringing a female perspective to Shakespeare.

Like Jameson, Palmer treats Shakespeare's women as representations of real women, and comments on them as individuals, gives us insights into their inner lives, and compares them to nineteenth-century women, while acknowledging historical differences. The result is to read Shakespeare's women as almost equivalent to nineteenth-century American women, in terms of marriage relationships, women's authority and courage, and women's intellect. This can be seen echoed in the approach of the Shakespeare Clubwomen, who while being denied the credentials of standardised education and critical thought, still made their own space to learn and discuss subjects including Shakespeare.

Mary Preston's *Studies in Shakespeare*

Mary Preston's 1869 work *Studies in Shakspeare(sic): A Book of Essays*, published in Philadelphia, is a collection of fourteen essays on Shakespeare plays. She portrays Shakespeare and his works as a beacon for moral, political and social values which are rapidly being eroded in the society she lives in. She says,

> Shakspeare's (sic) heroines, while they are ever women, tender and true, are also, by their intellectual attainments fit companions and counsellors of great men. All women, then, owe a debt of gratitude to the dramatist who has rescued them from a level with clowns and fools. All women, then, should study the works of a poet who has set their portrait in a fitting case. (72)

Preston joins a line of female critics who believe Shakespeare has written women as intellectual beings who are morally superior to men. She takes this a step further by using the character of Lady Macbeth as a warning to all women not to obey or value their husbands to the point of consuming their own virtues. She says of Lady Macbeth that is an example of the pitfalls that occur when a woman reduces herself and accepts her husband's desires as greater than hers. She states:

> regards her husband's elevation as superior to her own, the woman who, in the fire of a master passion, consumes the virtues of her sex, such a woman may find in Lady Macbeth a lesson to warn her from crime, to lure her to the practice of virtue. (24)

This is a very progressive and practically radical take on marital relations, as even several decades later outspoken women's activists were still warning against any action that would threaten the family unit. She further establishes a dichotomy between modern day heroines who have aimless lives and Shakespeare's heroines who are always "sensible women" (55). Preston personalises her relationship with Shakespeare, using his characters to articulate her concerns about gender, race,

and class. One of these assertions is her views on race, as Preston states she considers it impossible that Othello could have been a black man. She writes that Shakespeare would never have painted him so, for:

> Shakspeare (sic) was too correct a delineator of human nature to have colored Othello black, if he had personally acquainted himself with the idiosyncrasies of the African race. We may regard, then, the daub of black upon Othello's portrait as…one of the few erroneous strokes of the great master's brush, the single blemish on a faultless work. (71)

Preston's statement appears anomalous in a work that otherwise presents as almost revolutionary for the time, particularly when she explicitly warns women against losing their individualities for the sake of marriage. It can perhaps be explained by the fact that Preston was originally from Maryland, and Thompson and Roberts note that "her sympathies appear to be with the Confederacy" (125). Her views are however not solitary, both in the larger national context and in relation to the clubs. In the years following the Civil War (which when Preston wrote her book would have been a very recent event), there was widespread disagreement amongst the suffrage movement as to whether or not to provide African American people the right to vote, and it resulted in a division in the suffrage movement. Particular to the club movement discussed in this thesis, the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs while being spaces espousing fairly progressive ideals, were also racially exclusive, not allowing black women to be members and continuing to hold the view that the races should exist in separate spheres, resisting attempts at integration. It is important to acknowledge this fact when looking at what the clubs did achieve, and remembering that it was a time when undeniably progressive spaces were still holding certain regressive views.

The works by these three women writers were written before the formation of the Shakespeare Clubs, but they still had indirect influences upon them. For instance, Elizabeth Wormley Latimer wrote a series of "parlor lectures for a large and appreciative class of ladies in Baltimore" which she later published as *Familiar Talks on some of Shakespeare's Comedies* in 1886. The attentive group of women would almost certainly have been a Shakespeare Club, particularly as Latimer calls them parlor lectures, and clubs usually met in the parlors of women's homes. Latimer writes that in preparing the lectures, she had "examined great masses of Shakspearian (sic) criticism including Mrs. Jameson's most excellent *Characteristics of Women"* (v). She further writes that what she had attempted to do was "to do for each play as a whole what Mrs. Jameson has done for its heroine" (vi). She adds a noteworthy point that "To the erudite who write for University men, I leave all points of what is called Shakspearian (sic) criticism" (vi). These lines indicate that Jameson's work (and very possibly Palmer's work which drew very heavily on Jameson) were seen as appropriate sources for those who were not "erudite" or "university men" but who were still attempting to read and discuss Shakespeare. It suggests that there was a separate non-university educated female audience who were attempting Shakespearean criticism in their own way and works such as Jameson's were seen as guides on how to go about this. The journals *Shakespeariana* and *The American Shakespeare Magazine* also printed work by several critics, Mrs Jameson among them. The 1887 volume mentions Mrs Jameson's analysis of the character of Constance from *King John* (Volume IV 60) and Scheil writes that "these journals also linked readers to larger traditions and

networks of female intellectuals such as Anna Jameson, whose work numerous clubs consulted" (*She Hath Been Reading* 89).

Thompson and Roberts also report that the journals "published the work of many women writers such as Anna Jameson's *Characteristics of Women"* (240). Since I have not been able to consult all of *Shakespeariana* and *The American Shakespeare Magazine* as detailed in the Archive and Methodology section in the Introductory Chapter, I have not been able to definitively prove that Shakespeare Clubs also read the works of Palmer and Preston. However, seeing as how closely linked they were and the enthusiasm and appetite for Shakespeare, it is not outside the bounds of possibility to suggest that the clubwomen were reading these works. The next section of this chapter moves on to delving directly into the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs.

Browning Clubs and Women

Nancy Glazener writes that one of the reasons for Browning's popularity was the "interest in women's intellectual development and accomplishments that the women's club movement channelled" (140). The reason was that the Browning societies created hope for social transformation, and this included "transformations of gender relations. Robert Browning's treatment of gender was scrutinized by many readers, just as Shakespeare's was, and some readers who homed in on these topics were gathering support for gender equality" (Glazener 140-141). While gender equality was a foremost concern of this time, and there were several societies and movements dedicated to this cause, this thesis takes the route of claiming that these clubs served a different, less overt purpose. A different perspective on the Browning

Clubs can be gained by looking at its detractors. This derision was not restricted to Browning Clubs; the Shakespeare Clubs and women's clubs in general were not without their detractors which included other women. One such example is a scathing indictment written by Willa Cather when she was a Science student at the University of Nebraska in the 1890s. Cather expressed her disdain for women's clubs, particularly the Robert Browning Club which studied the poem "Sordello". She writes in the *Nebraska State Journal* in 1894:

> Ladies' literary clubs are particularly funny. Family matters mix so strangely with Kant's philosophy or Ruskin's theories of art. They read all the driest (sic) books in the world because they are the most scholarly...This world is not a scholarly world, and it is perhaps better that it should not be...If we are the happier for Kant's philosophy, by all means let us have it; if we are not it is doubtful if it is worth while stopping for. Of all the ladies' clubs the Sordello clubs are undoubtedly the funniest. Sordello doesn't seem to mix well with tea and muffins…At any rate he was never a ladies' man and he always appears uncomfortable amid roses and ices and gold-rimmed nose glasses. ("World and the Parish" 116)

Cather's views are an indication of how the clubs would have appeared to outsiders. She scoffs at the mixing of "family matters and philosophy" which is a literal representation of the way these clubs were structured, around women's domestic routines and incorporated into their homes. For Cather, women whose lives were taken up by family matters did not exist in a scholarly world, and she mocks their attempts at self-improvement. This sentiment was not held in isolation, as in both this and the previous chapter, I document the derision women's clubs faced. A frequent reminder issued to these clubwomen was that their time was already spoken for, or as Cather writes, "tea and muffins" should really be their primary concern. This has echoes of the women who wrote to Julia Ward Howe about "washing and baking" that had filled their hours, and of the fictional women from the Pioneer Club novels who also lamented that they had no hours of the day that they

could claim. It makes the time that these women did claim for their clubs, when they faced such criticism and opposition, all the more important. They had to value their clubs very highly to make the deliberate attempt to take the time for them. For a woman such as Cather, “domesticity undermined her career – she certainly did not see women’s clubs in any historical context. She could only celebrate her intellect by her inclusion in a college culture, and by her difference from the ladies who went to Robert Browning Club” (Downs 46). These comments also speak to the exclusion of these clubs from Feminist criticism. These clubs would have been seen as misfits in the definitions of what constituted a “scholarly world”. For the women who were members of these clubs, domesticity was their default, and while the absence of external activism has resulted in them being almost invisible from the historical record, this thesis looks at how their activities still held value.

Neutral Territories and Temporality in Shakespeare and Browning Clubs

Shakespeare Clubs

The records have helped establish the pattern of connectivity that I examine through this thesis: that for the members of these clubs, they served the purpose of temporal reclamation, through clubtime, they were claiming a few hours for themselves, away from their cares and concerns as housewives.

When speaking of the gendered nature of time, Barbara Adam had asserted that not all times are equal, with one time (masculine, industrialised, economic) receiving precedence over the other (feminine, domestic, caring). The Shakespeare and Browning Clubs became a space where this dynamic was upturned, where women prioritised the time spent on clubwork and used those hours entirely in

service of themselves, and in doing so, stepped outside the biological temporal constraints placed upon them. They used the clubs to be more than mothers and wives, to be individuals. Scheil records that:

> In the home, 'Shakespeare' signalled material that was safe and culturally valorizing for women to read and study, allowing them to take time away from their domestic duties and devote their energies to self-education. For individual club members, the generational effects on families were often significant: many clubs had legacies of mother-daughter members. ("Women and Shakespeare Clubs" xiii)

Expanding upon these ideas, the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs become neutral territories, their activities existing outside the prescribed claims on women's time. The following sections of the chapter detail examples of women creating clubtime within their domestic existence, often in the view of their daughters. The examples detail how they managed to claim this time for themselves, despite the pressing needs of domestic duties, and even found ways of blending the two. I also look at the account of one of the daughters of these clubwomen recounting her mother's time in the club, and telling of the value it held for her mother and the other women who were club members.

I will now turn to a few specific Shakespeare Clubs whose records are accessible. One example is from Osage in Iowa, discussed in Christine Pawley's book *Reading on the Middle Border: The Culture of Print in Late Nineteenth-century Osage, Iowa* (2001). Pawley documents that she happened to discover the records of a mixed club named the Shakespearean Class, purely by accident, in a cardboard box in a resident's home (*Middle Border* 224). The Shakespearean Class was founded as a mixed club in 1881. By 1892, the men had all dropped out and the women re-named themselves The Shakespearean Club (*Middle Border* 224). In the

documents, The Osage Club reports that they had a meeting in 1898 to discuss the possibility of re-admitting male members. However, the President's and the Club's conclusion was that the men would not only override the women and take over the club, but that the result would be "the silencing of women" (Pawley "Self Culture" 44). Pawley quoted from a report in the Osage Sun that President Mary Johnson "forecast a dire future for such a mixed-sex group." At the biennial banquet which men could attend as invitees of the club members, President Johnson addressed the men in the audience to forecast a "dire future" for such a mixed-sex group. She said:

> The day we open our doors to you gentlemen, our destruction is sealed...The result would be the silencing of women: It would be remarked that we did not speak loud enough, became confused, failed to properly point our arguments, lacked valid information on public questions, apt to get excited, lost the thread of discourse, got mad, etc., and after due deliberation a resolution would…be passed defining our organs of speech as intended only for the purpose of respiration, mastication and waggin [sic] small talk. In short, it would be committing club suicide to admit you. ("Self Culture" 43-44)

This is a particularly telling account, as the Shakespearean Club of Osage had been a mixed club for nine years and is one of the only clubs I have identified which had this experience. The report gives an insight into what the women felt about their club, having experienced it both with and without the presence of men, who going by the newspaper account must have run things in the early years of the club's existence. Being able to curate affairs and control their own time must have given them a space to speak if they were convinced that letting men back in would result in their "silencing". I am drawing on the report that the club had a meeting to decide whether or not to let the men back in, to infer that when President Johnson did give the verdict, she did so after having consulted with her club members, and was speaking for all of them. The women also seemed to believe that they would be relegated back

to the world of "mastication and small talk", suggesting strongly that in their neutral territory, they had discovered that their "organs of speech" were meant for and capable of much more.

Delving further into how other Shakespeare Clubs affected the domestic life of club members and how study of Shakespeare could help establish a domain for themselves within the home, Scheil says that there are multiple stories of women appropriating a number of domestic practices for their Shakespeare work and in the process merged reading and studying Shakespeare with their household duties (*She Hath Been Reading* 61). In Placerville, California for example, "the men said no to a woman's club…. So, the women decided to start a club to study Shakespeare". This is a revealing account, because one of the major criticisms aimed at women's clubs was "the selfishness inherent in study or self-improvement. Since the ideology of womanhood dominant in the late-nineteenth century counted selflessness a virtue, self-improvement attracted negative attention" (Gere 10). This has echoes of the ideas about "selfishness" inherent in clubwork which was raised by British men's clubs, when women started to form their own clubs, as discussed in the previous chapter. It appears that the idea of a woman taking any time at all for herself to focus on her "self" in any form, was considered a dire threat to society.

In fact, the idea of women taking any time at all just for themselves seems to have been alarming enough for a former President of the United States of America to comment upon it. In 1905, Grover Cleveland who was American President for two terms, the second from 1893 – 1897 published an article titled "Woman's Mission and Woman's Clubs" reflecting his anxieties about women's domestic responsibilities being overshadowed by club life. He refers specifically to the clubs

whose "professed purposes are in many instances the intellectual improvement or entertainment of the women comprising their membership" which were "exacting of time" (161). Cleveland warned that if a woman engages in club work, she "must bear her share of liability for the injury they may inflict upon the domestic life of our land" (162). Cleveland (very likely referring to the intellect-oriented clubs) says that there are clubs that are "harmless in intent, but whose tendency is toward waste of time" (163). The solution, therefore, was to keep women in the home and shelter them from the dangers of the outside world for "the best and safest club for a woman to patronize is her home" (163).

Cleveland's repeated mentions of time and of the clubwomen taking time for themselves represents the general anxiety that surfaced whenever women acted as individuals, taking time for themselves. Cleveland goes so far as to define clubs as "a waste of time", revealing the prevailing idea that any time a woman took for herself, which did not contribute to the home, was considered a waste. This makes a strong case for clubs being an attempt at temporal reclamation, that despite such criticisms, the women insisted that for a short amount of time, they were individuals in their own right, creating a time that they spent as they wished.

The idea of a few hours of claimed time and a few hours for oneself repeats itself in the accounts of other Shakespeare Clubs. Some of these accounts are narrated by daughters of the original clubwomen, when speaking of the influence their club-member mothers had on their lives. One such example of generational effect can be considered through the case of Elizabeth Robins, born in 1862, who would become famous as an Ibsen actress and later as an outspoken suffragist, anti-

slavery advocate, public speaker, author (using the pseudonym C.E. Raimond for a while), and playwright, including writing a play titled *Votes for Women*.

Robins' biographer Angela John documents that Robins had a difficult life beginning with the birth of her brother Raymond, which caused her mother Hannah "severe post-natal depression and thereafter a perilous mental state" (17). In 1872, with Hannah no longer able to care for her children, Elizabeth, then aged ten, was moved from their home in New York to her paternal grandmother's home in Zanesville, Ohio. Elizabeth and her mother would never live in the same home again, and until Hannah's death in 1901, she and Elizabeth communicated through letters. Towards the end of Hannah's life, the letters became particularly world-weary, consistently reiterating her wish for death (John 17-33).

John documents that the young Elizabeth developed a love for the stage. Her performance in two school recitals prompted the local newspaper to "speculate whether she might have a future as a reader. The future actress later commented that Mama had once been considered the finest reader in the Shakespeare Club" (John 18). Considering that Robins had not lived in the same house as her mother since the age of ten, this would be information that was told to her, or a memory. While anecdotal, one can still form the conjecture, that the Shakespeare Club Hannah had been part of must have been a bright spot in her tragic and painful life, and she must have written about it to her daughter – or perhaps her daughter was present at one of the meetings. Elizabeth might even have crept under the table during a meeting, as another woman, Elizabeth Greenfield, whose mother's Shakespeare Club in Montana I discuss in the next section, recounts doing.

In Robins' biography, all of her memories and experiences of her mother are tinged with sorrow and tragedy, which makes this piece of information stand out. Considering the fame that Robins went on to achieve, her career can be considered to demonstrate the generational impact of a Shakespeare Club, the finest reader in one the clubs having a daughter who went on to find fame as an actress, which could be considered a larger manifestation of the public speaking that Hannah would have practiced within her club. One can speculate here about Hannah who had once been celebrated as a reader and a speaker, not a perennially ill woman who would have very little joy for the rest of her life, and the possible impact that this would have had on her daughter.

A different perspective on generational impact of the Shakespeare Clubs is given by Elizabeth Greenfield, whose mother Mrs Anna Nelson "enthusiastically belonged to the Great Falls Shakespeare Club in Montana" ("Shakespearean Culture" 49). Elizabeth recounts that her mother would ask her to run along when they had their meetings, but Elizabeth would "creep under the table" and listen instead ("Shakespearean Culture" 50). Elizabeth tells a story from 1902 of "Mrs Charles Heisey who didn't have the leisure of the others, for she was a busy housewife" and yet wanted to play the part of Hermia in a performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* that the club was staging. Mrs Heisey "had written her lines on sheets of paper and pinned them to her sleeves so that she could learn her part as she scrubbed her kitchen floor" ("Shakespearean Culture" 50). Mrs Heisey, who had no leisure time and seemingly could not take any time for herself other than the few hours she spent at the Shakespeare Club, had yet found a way to learn her lines. Elizabeth notes that it is "her (mother's) delightful demonstration and mother's

frequent re-telling that has kept this memory alive" for her ("Shakespearean Culture" 50). This story builds a revealing picture of the Shakespeare Clubs, of the women finding and claiming a few hours for themselves, but just as important, the daughters who watched them do this. These women were still housewives and mothers, and Mrs Heisey did not let her floors gather dirt until she was done with her performance, which was entirely for her own enjoyment, and contributed nothing to the family. Instead, within her expected task of keeping a clean home, she still found the time for herself to learn lines, to do something entirely for herself and her own delight.

There are still Shakespeare Clubs that meet today, in twenty-first century America, and several of them continue on the legacy of generational members. Ann Dodds Costello documents one of these—the Dallas Shakespeare Club, founded in 1886 which had its original generation of members "hurrying home" to their husbands, and the club in which Mrs Macluarin (discussed in Chapter 3) was a member, is still active. Costello documents that the "Dallas Shakespeare Club is private and one must be asked to join, but the members will readily tell you that it helps if you have a mother, grandmother or mother-in-law who was a member" (46). When Costello managed to receive an invitation to sit in on one of the club's meetings, she "sat next to Marion Exall, the great-granddaughter-in-law of the first president May Exall" (47).

There are several other reports from Shakespeare Clubs spread out around the country. In 1888, members of the Shakespeariana Club of Grand Rapids, Michigan, codified their study practices by specifying a certain amount of time for members to spend on Shakespeare each day: "Every member must agree to take part and to give 15 minutes every day to the study of the play under consideration"

(*Shakespeariana* 5 30). Other accounts note the challenges for married women in particular; an 1887 report from the Stratford Club of Concord, New Hampshire reads, "The members of the club meet and read purely for their own enjoyment and profit. We do not devote our time to increasing the world's sum of knowledge, but solely to making ourselves wiser and better. Twelve of the sixteen members are married and have household cares" (*Shakespeariana* 4 329). It is pertinent that these twelve married women still found this stolen time from "household cares" to spend purely on themselves, by creating a space entirely to make themselves "wiser and better".

A further *Shakespeariana* report from 1886 documents that Miss L. B. Easton, who ran the San Francisco Shakespeare Class, pushed members to "find time" for intellectual work in spite of their domestic responsibilities. Miss Easton remarked on the difficulty for some members of adhering to this demanding schedule: "Married ladies have so many claims upon their time, material, domestic, and social, that one has to handle them very gingerly, in order to obtain any results whatsoever" (*Shakespeariana* 3 522–23). There are several observations that can be made here. In both the Concord and San Francisco clubs, the women who have limits placed upon their time are specifically referred to as married women. In the San Francisco club, the person attempting to get results out of these married women is pointedly, "Miss" Easton. In the Dallas club example, women were hurrying to reach home before their husbands (and not to another male authority figure). The dynamics of these female only spaces become even more pronounced here, where it appears that the unmarried women still hold on to some form of temporal autonomy, and the club was a space where they reminded the married women that they were entitled to time that was not "material, domestic or social." The club seems to have

represented an entirely different sphere of time, one of clubtime, where the women's focus was on themselves. Despite all these "claims upon their time", this neutral club territory which focussed entirely on themselves as individuals must have meant a lot to these women, to find and create the time for it.

Browning Clubs

Looking into the Browning Clubs, we find similar accounts from around the country. As noted in my introductory chapter, the Browning Clubs do not appear to have formed the same networks that the Shakespeare Clubs did, so tracing them has been more difficult.

Nevertheless, based on the few records I have been able to discover, there still exists compelling evidence of the role these clubs played in the women's lives. The Rochester Club established in 1884 by Mrs George W. Fisher is a unique and particular example. Hedi Jaouad has provided the most information about this club, and he reports that the club "was formed to study the works of Robert Browning and other poets and writers and to work for the intellectual development of its members (and others)" (44). Business at the Rochester Browning Club was conducted in an idiosyncratic way, under the leadership of Mrs George Fisher. Despite being founded and helmed by a woman (Mrs George W. Fisher), and despite having no restrictions on women becoming members, the women were "sympathetic listeners (to the discussion that followed a paper presented by a male member), breaking their silence seldom" (Jaouad 83). What makes this club stand out is that women were free to write and deliver papers, they simply weren't expected to comment on a paper given by a man. There is no record on whether the women commented on women's

papers. Even though Mrs Fisher insisted on “parity in membership, inviting equal numbers of men and women” and “it was one of the first clubs to admit men and women on equal footing” (Jaouad 83), she only kept records of male members’ names. The women attended all the meetings, when it was their turn they presented papers, but otherwise, “although active and visible behind the scenes, the female club members remained passive and silent” (Jaouad 84). The club served as an intellectual boon, especially to “married women whose education had been interrupted and who found in the study of Browning a means to sharpen their social and intellectual skills” (Jaouad 232).

The Rochester Browning club is perhaps an extreme example of the territoriality that the women in these clubs practised. If they were “active behind the scenes”, it also implies that they had an inner club of sorts, a world of their own. Perhaps they feared the same thing that the Osage clubwomen did, “the silencing of women” if they did express opinions in a mixed group. What is most revealing here is an article which states that “Mrs. George W. Fisher acted as its hostess until her death in 1908, when her daughter Sara inherited the responsibility” (Hawley 5). The idea of the generational effect of clubs is literal here because Mrs Fisher’s daughter inherits her club. The use of “inherit” suggests ownership, and that there was no vote or discussion as to who the next hostess would be. Despite Mrs Fisher being described as someone who “was blessed with unshakable convictions upon the proper place of women in this world” (Hawley 5), she was also simultaneously priming a future club president in the form of her daughter.

Mrs Fisher appears to have practiced a subtle form of power, controlling the aspects that she could, without attempting to upset existing social norms. The

Shakespeare Clubs that the Rochester club co-existed with also did this by several accounts, such as the Placerville women not insisting upon a women's club when the men vetoed it but settling for a Shakespeare Club. This is still creating space for yourself, perhaps not in the manner that is visible and easily recognised but working within the confines you have to while still seizing space for yourself is a form of empowerment. The Rochester club, like the Shakespeare Clubs also acknowledged how important the time spent at the club was for married women in particular. If the Placerville women were able to compromise and settle for a Shakespeare Club, perhaps the Rochester women viewed their silence as a small price to pay for their chance to better themselves intellectually. Women's lives "behind the scenes" which involve daughters being raised to positions of power co-exist with the space where they keep their opinions silent in the presence of men. The club offered a neutral territory where this was possible, with the time spent there still being of value.

A second Browning club which also had legacies of mother-daughter members is the Anti-Rust Club of Springfield, Illinois. While Anti-Rust did not follow the Shakespeare Clubs in publishing club news in specialist magazines, it did "publish synopses of the papers presented in the newspaper the following day, sometimes even with a listing of who had been in attendance" (Chapin). It was started by Katherine Dresser White in 1894, and according to member Nancy Chapin, "members were often daughters and daughters-in-law of the founding members" (Klickna). The club takes its name from a line of a Robert Browning poem: "Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust/Just so much play as lets the heart expand" (Klickna). To choose a line such as this would require much more than a passing interest in Browning, as the original lines are from his verse novel *The Ring*

and the Book. The full lines from Book 8 of the poem *Dominus Hyacinthus de Archangelis* are:

> Commend me to home-joy, the family board,
>
> Altar and hearth! These, with a brisk career,
>
> A source of honest profit and good fame,
>
> Just so much work as keeps the brain from rust,
>
> Just so much play as lets the heart expand,
>
> Honouring God and serving man,—I say,
>
> These are reality, and all else,—fluff,
>
> Nutshell and naught,—thank Flaccus for the phrase!

By no account of Browning is *The Ring and the Book* considered light reading, or something one might just come across: to have chanced upon just these few lines in a poem that contains 21,000 lines is very unlikely. It is not unreasonable then to imagine that the ladies of the Anti-Rust Club had to have read Browning extensively. It is also telling that they chose their name from lines that begin with "commend me to home-joy, the family board," since most literary clubs were built to function around the home and its responsibilities. However, the part of the poem they chose to name themselves is the part that refers to the brain, that of keeping it from rust. An object becomes rusty when left unused, or uncared for. The Shakespeare and Browning Clubs were built upon the principle of intellectual improvement, particularly for married women. Jessie Lozier Payne (1894) had written that clubs diffused

education and reached women in their homes. She writes, “Through the woman’s club, housekeepers have been brought into the current of affairs—women whose accomplishments have been buried under an avalanche of shirts and puddings. At the club they gain individuality” (8). For the members of Anti-Rust, like the other women’s clubs, it was their space to gain back some of their individuality, particularly as it explicitly states that mothers and daughters were members at the same time. The symbolism of anti-rust is bound in women’s social position at the time, of being buried under “puddings and shirts” and all the other claims upon their time, the club was the one place where their time was spent on themselves, and their intellectual upliftment. The lines begin with commending them to home joys, and it keeps with the larger picture of the clubs, which did not disrupt their family life, but sought “just so much work” (and the time it would take) to keep one’s brain from rust. As of 2005, Anti-Rust was still active, and in Appendix 4 I have included a picture of the members from 1894.

One more club to consider here is the Browning Club in Bowling Green, Kentucky, which was founded in 1895. As of 2011, the club still meets twice a month, and one of their study schedules is included in Appendix 2, and a picture of the members from 1995 is provided in Appendix 3. The purpose of the club, according to the Constitution, was “to enhance the knowledge and scholarship of the members” (Nehm 3). Nehm also reports that unfortunately, “no formal minutes were kept for the club's first half century” (9). While it is thus impossible to know for sure how club activities were co-ordinated or what the club would have meant to its nineteenth-century members, some insight can be drawn from the words of existing members. In 2011, a current member named Ann Fields reports that “the focus of the club has

always been on learning" (Nehm 9). This is similar in aim to all the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs that had come before it, as well as those it co-existed with.

Perhaps one answer as to the purpose of the club lies in Theodora Penny Martin's 1987 book, *The Sound of Our Own Voices: Women's Study Clubs 1860-1910* where she writes, "For the daughters of these women, who had observed their mothers studying Chaucer and writing papers on Egyptian art, who had watched them enthusiastically learning to learn, college education appeared a natural and realistic option as well as a conventional aspiration" (3).

This can be linked to the criticism of a woman such as Willa Cather, who would have been of the generation that had access to avenues of formal education, and thus scorned the activities of the clubwomen at attempting to access this "scholarly world" in their own way. For women for whom this was not an option, even as late as 1895, the clubs would have represented an avenue for some form of informal intellectual pursuits. The criticism that they faced only a decade later from President Cleveland, who cautioned against the waste of time in the clubs also provides insight, for the women the clubs were worth spending time on, to the outsider, they were selfish or alternately, frivolous pursuits. This way of claiming a few hours for the pursuit of it, even as others said they were going about it "the wrong way" is what the clubs represented – an hour of freedom where time was determined by themselves, the usage and value of it was entirely determined by their own choices.

Although my thesis only looks at clubs between the years of 1850 – 1900, women's claims about temporal autonomy was an ongoing concern, even with social

changes to women’s position in society. As late as 1952, a report from the secretary of the Shakespeare Club in Manchester, New Hampshire, Mrs H.B. Roberts, reads: “Now, the Serpent is more subtle than any beast of the field. And he has taken many leisure hours away from woman. But woman is almost as subtle as the Serpent, and now twenty-seven of them steal time to delight their souls in at least two plays a year and write several papers” (*Shakespeare Quarterly* 3 78). The theological implications of the references to the serpent are of course a direct reference to God’s curse upon Eve, who was cursed (among other things) to have doomed all women to be suppliant to their husbands. It would represent that even half a century later, the clubs still served the purpose of allowing women to seek a few hours away from domestic duties.

For the members of these clubs, these spaces represented a neutral territory of their own situated outside their regulated and controlled lives of all-encompassing domestic duties. It gave them an opportunity to steal back a few hours for themselves, in the pursuit of their own betterment and leisure. Some clubs created spaces where some of the members’ daughters viewed and marvelled and inherited either the clubs themselves, or the values they represented—of intellectual betterment and being individuals. The idea of creating a space where they created their own rules of how their time was spent practised by the Pioneer Club, is echoed in the Shakespeare and Browning Clubs.

Chapter 3: Fanfiction and Shakespeare Clubs

As established earlier in this thesis, the historical exclusion of Shakespeare Clubs from academic intervention has begun to be corrected through the intervention of critics such as Katherine Scheil, Elizabeth Long and Ann Dodds Costello. However, one aspect of the clubs remains sparsely studied, which is that the clubs were sites of literary production. In this chapter, I look at various literary pieces written and performed by Shakespeare Club members. These pieces take the form of burlettas, farces, essays and speeches, some of which I have been able to find the full text for, and some which only appear to have survived as mentions in secondary sources. The ephemeral and scattered nature of these pieces appears to have made them uncategorisable, and I have not located a critical intervention which looks at all of them together. In this chapter, I argue that these pieces can be categorised as fanfiction, as fanfiction is defined under current academic parameters.

According to Kavita Mudan Finn and Jessica McCall (2016), “Transformative fiction is also known as fanfiction, fanfic, or, most commonly among those who write and read it, fic” (27). Fic is often considered as a twentieth-century phenomenon, but the object of this chapter is to argue that these clubs wrote and performed fic, well before it became the realm of twentieth-century Science Fiction. Fanfiction has also historically been categorised by its juxtaposition with professional or paid writing. I demonstrate that for the pieces of fanfiction I analyse in this chapter to have been written, the women writing them would have had to dedicate time to studying the entire works of Shakespeare. They are an indirect representation of the temporal

commitment these women made to their clubs, taking hours away from domestic duties to have developed this level of familiarity with the Shakespeare source texts.

Shakespeare Clubs as Fan Sites

In recent years, there has been academic intervention which studies Shakespeare Clubs as fandoms, using modern definitions of fandom and fan clubs. One of the most recent examples is Alana Herrnson (2018) who looks at understanding "Shakespeare's role in the larger conversation of fandom in America" (6). Herrnson's focus is on Shakespeare as the object of fandom, and his use by the clubs as the base for community building, mirroring today's fan communities. She briefly mentions two texts that could qualify as fanfiction – a poem titled "The Seven Ages of Women: Shakespeare Up to Date", which is "a companion piece to the Seven Ages of Man in *As You Like It*, and deals with the issues of misogyny and women's stereotyping through the use of parody" (Herrnson 4). The second piece she mentions is *The Marriage of Falstaff* (1895) a play written by Anna Randall-Diehl who was founder and President of the Fortnightly Shakespeare Club from 1875. The *Marriage of Falstaff* is an example of crossover AU (Alternate Universe) fanfiction, in which characters from more than one work interact with each other in a story different from that which the characters originally derive. The story of the play is set in Hoboken, New Jersey and:

> on the premises of Castle Montague, Falstaff becomes a happy Benedict, accompanied by fellow character Romeo, the gracious host of Castle Montague, a tamed Petruchio and a Kate who did not go to the taming school, and a Juliet who entertains Will Shakespeare's friends and flirts without a balcony. (Quoted in Herrnson 4)

Finally, she also acknowledges that Shakespeare Clubs tried their hands at producing analyses we would refer to today as meta or headcanons, which refers to something that a fan imagines to be true about a character even though no information supporting that belief is spelled out in the text. Fans use headcanons to explain a character's motivations or decisions, and Herrnson provides the titles of examples of headcanons such as "'Is Hamlet Insane?' 'Shakespeare's Use of Eleven', 'Was Oberon a Meddler?'" (Croly Quoted in Herrnson 4). Although Herrnson has made substantial headway into linking Shakespeare Clubs and fandom, through the rest of my chapter, I argue that there is still a gap in the area of Shakespeare fanfiction as related to the clubs. In the next sections, I provide examples and detailed analyses of three written pieces – *The Ladies Speak at Last* (1877)*, The Woman Whom Shakespeare Did Not Contemplate* (1897), and *The Mistaken Vocation of Shakespeare's Heroines* (1896) which can be considered as examples of various kinds of fanfiction. I begin by providing an overview of what constitutes fandom and fanfiction.

Definitions of Fans and Fanfiction

In qualifying Shakespeare Clubs as fan clubs, Alana Herrnson writes "the structures upon which modern fan communities stand are also found in the women's Shakespeare Clubs of the late 19th and early 20th centuries" (1). This is due to the fact that "women utilize specific touchstones in popular culture as a means of forming community, especially in areas where they have been intellectually barred" (7). This ties in to earlier analyses in this thesis of women forming Shakespeare Clubs as means of accessing informal methods of education and self-improvement, when they were barred from the formal avenues of achieving these. This would result in the

creation of transformative works such as *The Marriage of Falstaff,* which is an example of revisionist writing, which in addition to being a creative outlet is also used to "address complex social issues by creating dialogue with the author. In writing transformative works, they facilitated their own empowerment, and in sharing them, they facilitated the empowerment of their communities" (Herrnson 5). This piece, and the three that I delve into later in the chapter demonstrate how they extended this empowerment into what is today defined as "fan activism" – which Henry Jenkins defines as "forms of civic engagement and political participation that emerge from within fan culture; civic (refers to) those practices that are designed to improve the quality of life and strengthen social ties within a community, whether defined in geographically local or dispersed terms" ("Cultural Acupuncture" 1.8).

The countrywide community of Shakespeare fans found each other through their shared interest which created their fan community, and as will be demonstrated in the following sections of this chapter, plays and articles written by one Shakespeare Club were passed on and read and enacted in clubs around the country. This would naturally extend to interaction with other interested parties who were likewise consuming a source text, and the Shakespeare Clubwomen's investment in the magazines and journals that connected them as one community can be seen as a manifestation of this. The far-reaching national Shakespeare publications such as *Shakespeariana* and the *Shakespeare Association Bulletin* held similar goals: the editor of *Shakespeare Association Bulletin* included a supplication at the end of a 1925 issue which read "we are separated geographically by immense distances and only in exceptional instances can we meet face to face, but this is the place where we can talk to each other... Here Shakespeare will introduce us, each to all" ("The

Shakespeare Clubs Forum" 7). This is an acknowledgement of a source text that binds these women together, the journal where they exchanged ideas being the place where they could participate in Shakespeare fandom.

When qualifying what constitutes fans and fandom, contemporary Fan Studies scholars consistently refer to two sentiments – *passionate and affective*. Karen Hellekson offers the following definitions:

> fans are people who actively engage with something – a text, objects such as coins or stamps, favored sports teams – and fandom is the community that fans self-constitute around that text or object…what they all have in common is the desire to share an often passionate, affective response to the item in question with like-minded others. (153)

Hellekson's definition of who fans are can be applied to the Shakespeare Clubs being considered in this project, as there is no denying that they had a passionate relationship to Shakespeare, with a deep affective response to his persona and his works. Henry Jenkins affirms this typification when he writes that "fans are understood as individuals who have a passionate relationship to a particular media franchise, and fandoms whose members consciously identify as part of a larger community to which they feel some degree of commitment and loyalty" ("Meaningful Participation" 166). Fans thus refer to individuals, whereas fandoms are constituted by fans organising to create a community around the object of their affections. These features of fandom hold across fields, whether the object of the fandom's adoration is media persons as explored by Mark Duffett in 2013[6], or contemporary fan adaptations of Shakespeare in media as written about by Jonathan Pope (2019).[7]

[6] In his study on fans of movie franchises and television shows, Duffett asserts that "To become a fan is to find yourself with an emotional conviction about a specific object" (30).

[7] Pope draws from both Jenkins and Duffett, and he reasserts that "fans are passionate…additionally, fans are typically characterized by their emotional investment in the object of their fandom" (5).

By applying these definitions to Shakespeare Clubs, the clubs can be recognised as fan clubs with Shakespeare being the object they were passionate about and had an affective response to. They actively engaged with Shakespeare's texts and created their own writings, discussions and plays out of them. The shared community they generated went beyond their own homes and cities and resulted in the formation of national and state federations of clubs as well, as established earlier in the thesis, and reiterated here by Herrnson:

> new forms of Shakespeare interactions formed to discuss and opine on the clubs… such as a variety of journals, including the *American Shakespeare Magazine*, *Shakespeariana*, the *Shakespeare Association Bulletin*, and its later incarnation, *Shakespeare Quarterly*, which all printed news of Shakespeare Clubs, shared members' personal essays, and encouraged clubs to continue sharing details of their chapters' endeavors in studying Shakespeare. (4)

This practice of engaging with a source text, instead of merely reading it, is one of the defining qualities of fanfiction, which Jenkins defines as "participatory culture" which is "the cultural production and social interactions of fan communities" which makes it different from spectatorship ("Spreadable Media" 2). Participatory culture is thus "a subset of fandom in which the members actively respond to and interact with their source text, developing a community…and feel some degree of social connection with one another" (Jenkins "Confronting" 7). These clarifications from Jenkins also serve as a good way to separate Shakespeare Clubs from other literary or reading clubs, for the scope of this chapter. Whereas I have not found any evidence that members of the Browning Clubs responded to reading Browning by interacting with the texts to write and circulate poetry in the style of Browning, there is definite evidence, examined in later sections, that the members of the

Shakespeare Clubs did not just read the texts; they formed debates and performance around it.

These definitions bring us to the question of what a fan work looks like in the context of Shakespeare. One distinction that is important to make is between an adaptation and a fic. Pope says that what separates transformative fiction from adaptation is the level of familiarity required from the audience, regarding the subject matter being presented to them. He uses the example of the movie *She's the Man* (Director: Andy Fickman 2002) which is an adaptation of *Twelfth Night*, but "does not require the watching audience to have ever read *Twelfth Night* (or any Shakespeare) to follow the plot" (19). Pope contrasts this to Tom Stoppard's 1966 play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* which "largely requires the audience's awareness of *Hamlet*" (19). In short, fic, whether it takes the form of a short story, play or movie, presupposes Jenkins' *participatory culture*, people who have an investment in and knowledge of the source material from which the fic originates, while adaptation is created for a *spectator audience,* who can appreciate the product without needing to have any prior knowledge of the source material. "Fanfiction thus grants readers an opportunity to participate in, play with, and sometimes radically refashion the texts they consume according to any criteria they deem fit" (Pope 99).

The question to be considered then, is whether the piece being considered stands on its own or whether it requires the writer to have an extensive knowledge of the subject matter from which the piece is born, and whether the receiving audience can follow it without sharing the same knowledge. Going by this test, all three of the pieces of writing being considered in this chapter – *The Ladies Speak at Last, The Woman Whom Shakespeare Did Not Contemplate*, and *The Mistaken*

Vocation of Shakespeare's Heroines – can be categorised as fanfiction. They are explicitly participatory texts, where the authors have played with the whole of Shakespeare's plays and ideas, refashioning and reimagining them according to their imaginations.

Douglas Lanier delves into Shakespeare homage, adaptation, and parody in his analysis of Shakespeare and modern pop culture. He says that "one of the more curious phenomena of recent years has been the appearance of Shakespeare fanfiction" (82). While he acknowledges that "this type of adaptation has a long pedigree" (82) quoting an example by a male author from 1611, he does not refer to the Shakespeare Clubs, or any fanfic or adaptations written by women, even in contemporary pop culture. He restricts his analysis and exploration to contemporary fanfiction, calling it a "minor cultural phenomenon" and stating that "(it) nevertheless brings into focus how profoundly popular culture shapes contemporary understandings of Shakespeare" (85). He acknowledges that "Shakespearian fanfiction like all fanfiction…recognizes certain formal and ideological limits of its Shakespearean source (or the limits of how that source has been traditionally interpreted) and seeks to push against those limits, in a spirit of critique, anarchy, pleasure, recuperation, participation" (85). He lays out several possibilities that predominate in fanfiction, of which two – "*reoriented narrative* in which the narrative is told from a different point of view and *hybrid narrative* where narrative elements or characters from two or more Shakespearian plays are combined" (82 – 83) can be applied to the three texts being considered in this chapter. They also display the *participatory* nature of fanfic outlined by Jenkins and reiterated here by Lanier. The only idea to be corrected here perhaps is that Shakespeare fanfiction is a recent

phenomenon. Shakespeare fanfiction is not a recent phenomenon, in fact Shakespeare *fans* are not a recent phenomenon. Well before the language of fan theory and studies existed, these women were getting together and forming what would be deemed a fan club by any current fan theoretician. They engaged with Shakespeare in playful and practically audacious ways, by daring to look beyond the texts that they had built such deep affective and community relationships with.

Further definitions of fanfiction can be drawn from the work of Francesca Coppa, who draws on the work of fanfiction scholar Mary Ellen Curtin, who defines fanfiction as "speculative fiction about character" (Quoted in Coppa 12). Coppa goes on to explain that speculative fiction asks "what-if" questions about characters, often linking characters across franchises or universes, for example "what if Bruce Wayne had gone to boarding school with fellow genius-billionaire Tony Stark?" (13). Or in the case of Mary Porter's Shakespearean fanfic *The Ladies Speak at* Last, explored in this chapter, what if Juliet did not die, but lived to marry Romeo and become Mrs Montague? What if King Lear had had Rosalind for a daughter?

Kavita Mudan Finn suggests that fanfic also carries an advantage over other forms of criticism because:

> even subversive theoretical lenses like gender studies and queer theory…are trapped…by the standards and restrictions that are meant to ensure strong academic rigour but nonetheless silence more radical discourses. Fanfiction resists this restriction because it is paradoxical…Fandom prizes qualities more often derided and refused in traditional academic circles: emotion, self insertion, and subjectivity. (28)

Finn's characterisation of fandom employing qualities of emotion and subjectivity, which would be rejected in academic circles, is a good lens of viewing these pieces, they were produced as a direct result of subjective emotion about the source texts,

and they were written by amateurs and women who did not have recourse to academic rigour.

Their texts carry definite streams of emotions and subjectivity, written as they were in a time and place where their avenues for such subjective expression were limited. Even the texts I have not managed to recover carry underpinnings of these same qualities. I discuss two of these here; both these works were written and performed by the members of The Detroit Training School of Elocution and English Literature established by Edna Chaffee Noble in 1878.[8] Details are taken from *Lest We Forget*, printed in 1904 for the Detroit Training School Alumna. One of these is "a burletta entitled *Shakespeare's Women* (1881), the cast of which included Lady Cawdor Macbeth, Mrs. Portia Bassanio, Princess Ophelia Denmark, Mrs. Desdemona Moor of Venice, and Mrs. Juliet Montague" (42). This would be an example of speculative fiction, as the play has characters such as Juliet and Desdemona who die in Shakespeare's plays, but clearly do not in this one. Another piece mentioned is "What Shall Women Wear?" A Question of the Day Decided by Shakespeare's Heroines" written by Edna Chaffee Noble herself (211). By as much as one can deduce without reading the source material, this play would be an example of the 'self-insertion' which defines fandom, using Shakespeare's heroines to debate or extrapolate their own thoughts about (most likely) the rational dress debate of the 1880's. The next three sections of this chapter will delve into three texts which exist in full, and draw parallels between them and modern-day fanfiction.

[8]A note here that The Detroit Training School was not a club, but it was a woman-only space, created as an alternative option for those women who did not have access to formal education, and taught the same skills that were encouraged by the clubs: extemporaneous speaking, public speaking and performance.

The Ladies Speak At Last

The Ladies Speak at Last is a play by a woman named Mary Porter written in 1884, based on mentions of the play in various American newspapers and magazines. The magazine *Truth* printed on November 23, 1882 refers to “a most acceptable drawing-room play (named) *Place Aux Dames* or *The Ladies Speak at Last* by Mary Porter from New Orleans”. The article goes on to say that the only “property” that the play requires to be staged, is “a table set for afternoon tea” and that “the dresses of the characters are very easily arranged” (746). The mention of it being a “drawing-room” play (rather than a public performance) ties into the set up of the Shakespeare Clubs as they met in domestic spaces, within the drawing rooms or parlours of the members. It also implies that it was a play popular in these settings. The article also calls attention to the ease of staging, citing the simplicity of props and costumes, which would be important to groups that had limited time and resources available. The play appears to have remained popular into the twentieth century, *The Dillon Tribune* from Dillon, Montana published this news on April 27, 1900, under the title “Shakespeare Clubs” – “The Ladies Composing the Shakespeare Literary Club of Dillon…performed a one-act comedy, entitled *Place aux Dames* or *The Ladies Speak at Last*”.

Porter’s play is a parody in which four of Shakespeare’s heroines “speak for themselves.” This play is an example of speculative fiction, where “what-if” questions are raised about characters. Porter’s play asks the following – What if Ophelia and Juliet did not die, what if Lady Macbeth did not make her husband kill Duncan, and what if Portia regretted marrying Bassanio? The play is a reoriented narrative – presenting the views of characters which the original author did not. It is also a hybrid

narrative, as characters from different plays who have never crossed over are brought together, creating an alternate universe.

The alternate universe is set in a in a most incongruous of places, the waiting room of a hydropathy (water-cure) treatment clinic, where the ladies meet and become friends while waiting for their husbands, who are all undergoing treatment. The reoriented narrative occurs because the ladies tell us what would have happened if they settled into ordinary marital life and had husbands with drinking and gambling problems. This is a work of the endings that Shakespeare did not envisage, told to us by the women themselves. While the play is a work of fanfiction, it can be also be considered a counterfactual narrative, as espoused by Amir Khan in his 2016 book *Shakespeare in Hindsight: Counterfactual Thinking and Shakespearean Tragedy*. He speaks of considering alternative possibilities to the accepted linear development of plays and of questioning why Shakespeare would have chosen to end a play one way and not another. Considering that Mary Porter offers alternative endings to Shakespeare's plays, the case can be made that her play fits the counterfactual narrative, well ahead of being recognised as one. Fanfic differs from counterfactual reading in that it does not question why a source text follows one narrative path and not another, it directly produces alternative re-tellings of the source text.

The ladies in question are Mrs R. Montague (Juliet), Mrs Bassanio (Portia), Ophelia and Lady Macbeth. As they wait, the ladies speak to each other about their lives and their husbands. Juliet is the first character to appear, reading a book and speaking to herself. She says she is "buried alive for the second time, just as forgotten as if she had died when she overdosed on morphine" (3). This would

suggest that her story as she tells us begins just after Shakespeare stops his, and unlike in Shakespeare's original play, both Juliet and Romeo lived on. Her choice of words exemplifies the metadramatic language used throughout the play by all the characters, drawing attention both to its title, and to its message – "just as much forgotten." Who has forgotten her and her existence? The answer ties into the stories of all the other women. Juliet goes on to explain how much she's been forgotten by saying that she called on "old Mrs Lear" (3) the other day, and Mrs Lear apparently responded with "who the devil's Mrs R. Montague?" (3). This is a question that has more than its obvious, literal meaning – who *is* Juliet if she takes on her husband's name and forgoes her own identity? Who does she become, if she'd lived, if the play had ended with the star-crossed lovers united? Porter's answer is that she would have been Mrs R. Montague, forgotten and unrecognised. Juliet then comments that no wonder her (Mrs Lear) husband thought that "a low soft voice" an excellent thing in a woman.[9]

Juliet rues the day she stood upon a balcony and made Romeo woo her, the aftermath of it apparently being that she is no longer allowed on balconies by Romeo (3). The balcony comment is ironic – Romeo of all people shouldn't reproach her (since it was the balcony that got them together) but he says the opposite, that he was just the one who should reproach her because he knew that she was "much too good at that sort of thing" (3). There is almost a word of warning here, Juliet appears to imply that men encourage women and their ideas only in so far as it serves a

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[9] A reference to King Lear's remark about Cordelia: "Her voice was ever soft, Gentle, and low, an excellent thing in women" (*King Lear,* 5.3.268-269). All Shakespeare quotations are from *The Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works* edited by John Jowett, William Montgomery, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells, Oxford University Press, Second Edition, 2005.

purpose useful to the men itself. Carrying on her monologue, Juliet regretfully wishes she had known how “addicted” he was to frivolous and superficial remarks:

> And then he cried, “By yonder moon I swear,” and I interrupted him with “Oh, swear not by the moon, the inconstant moon!” only I should have added, “Or by the sun and stars, or the whole universe,” if I had known how extremely addicted he was to that style of conversation. Then I asked him softly if he loved me – just threw myself at his head *he* says; but I didn’t at all; and if I had, ‘twould have served him right for jumping over pa’s wall. (4)

Mary Porter is clearly not impressed by Romeo; unlike the star-crossed lover Shakespeare portrayed him as, Porter seems convinced that he would have made a distrustful and insincere husband. Juliet tells the reader that he is also controlling and demanding, saying that a woman’s first duty in life is to make her husband comfortable and it also angers him if she makes any attempt at self-betterment, such as reading a novel, and she hurriedly puts away the novel she is reading when she hears footsteps (4). Whether unintentionally or otherwise, Mary Porter here creates a scene remarkably similar to the Shakespeare Clubs themselves. Women read their books and plays (which became their attempts at self-betterment) away from their husbands, behind closed doors and they went to club meetings only after they had met all their obligations at home. This is another example of self-insertion in fanfiction, using a character to represent your own thoughts, and creating a subjective scene where the narrative is rewritten to represent the reality that you want it to.

Back in the play, it isn’t Romeo after all, but Portia who enters the scene and they proceed to talk to each other. Portia’s is perhaps the most revealing story, as she is the only heroine who does not die in Shakespeare’s original play, and is shown

by Shakespeare to be a woman who seemingly had agency in life. Portia goes on to inform us, however, that this is not true. Having married a man who has apparently turned out to be a shiftless gambler, she says she should have known that "a man who'd borrow money to get married" really wouldn't turn out to be worth much. He apparently goes about town promising money he doesn't have and has brought them both to ruin (7). As for his friend Antonio, Shakespeare's noble Antonio, it now seems he and Bassanio spend their time gambling away Portia's inheritance, going so far as to lose the wedding ring that she gave him, as she lets the audience know:

> And my easy-going, good-natured husband actually laughs about it now, and thinks it a capital joke – says "Come, old girl! All's fair in love and war." How little I suspected it when he turned with his handsome face and glorious smile awaiting my confirmation of his choice! Proud as a queen, I said… "But now I was the lord of this fair mansion, master of my servants, queen o'er myself; and even now, but now, this house, these servants and this same myself, are yours, my lord: I give them with this ring." That ring! It was gone before night: he gave it to Antonio – Antonio, who quietly settled down upon us and devoured our substance... No sooner does he appear than I hear the ominous "I say, old fellow, can you lend me a thousand ducats?" followed by the inevitable "Oh certainly, certainly! I haven't got it about me, but I've no doubt I can raise it." … And so, between borrowing and lending, mortgaging and selling, we soon found ourselves penniless… (7)

In fact, she and Bassanio are at the hydropathy clinic for Antonio's treatment, which presumably she is paying for (8). We learn two more details: one, Portia refers to her marriage as a "slave auction" and a "miserable swindle" (5). Apparently, her maid Nerissa winked at Bassanio to let him know which the right casket was. Portia's statement of her courtship as "wretched" surprises Juliet, for she says that she thought Portia had her own way from beginning to end, and she (Juliet) had always fancied it "the acme of amatory blessedness" (5). Certainly, to an outsider it must appear so. It is thought-provoking and complex: even as a woman, Juliet the outsider cannot know what is really going on in Portia's life, unless we hear her *speak for*

herself. The message of the play continues, covertly and subtly, that unless women speak for and represent themselves, you will never quite know their truth.

The second revelation is that Bassanio has been disposing of Portia's income piece by piece to pay off debts and to live in luxury and none other than their old nemesis, Shylock, has been buying it up. Now, in a twist Shakespeare would have never seen coming, Shylock has bought her out of house and home. Not even the offer of Bassanio's pound of flesh, "with blood this time", seems enough to get it back.

Meanwhile, (offstage, none of the men are ever seen, just heard) Romeo is constantly calling out for Juliet. Juliet expresses annoyance for his loud calling of her name and Portia says "how silver sweet sound *husbands'* tongues by night! Don't they, Mrs Montague?" (6).[10] This line also displays one of the primary characteristics of fanfiction – a passionate engagement with and knowledge of the source text. Mary Porter has taken Shakespeare's original line "how silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night," and switched 'lovers' with 'husbands' (in this play's script, the word "husbands" is in italics, depicting that it was meant to be noticed). This also represents that this play is a fic, rather than an adaptation, as it would require a *participatory audience* for the jokes about "pound of flesh with blood" and "lovers' tongues" to be understood. Porter also seems to be expressing some derision for how lovers (Bassanio, Romeo et al) who become *husbands* treat their wives. Mary Porter's use of language and her grasp of Shakespeare is notable. She is using the

[10] A twist on Shakespeare's original line, spoken by Romeo: "How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night…" (*Romeo and Juliet,* 2.2.210)

whole of Shakespeare, making characters from one play use lines from another. She also rewrites the lines and keeps creating smaller meta-universes. Porter treats these characters as if they are real people, giving them ongoing lives, and creates relationships between them that do not exist in the original plays. For instance, Juliet going to visit old Mrs Lear suggests a social relationship between the two, from before she marries Romeo, as she seems certain Mrs Lear would have known who she was, if she had introduced herself as Juliet. When Juliet mentions the circumstances by which Portia married Bassanio, and Portia uses a line said to Juliet by Romeo, replacing the word “lover” with “husband,” it creates the idea that there are pre-existing relationships between these characters, a prime feature of fanfic. Porter may also be making a larger point here, by using characters of Shakespeare’s own creation to criticise him – representing that men do not know what they’re talking about and should just let women speak for themselves.

Portia makes constant suggestions that would make it obvious that she’s learnt quite the hard way that men aren’t the charming creatures they seem to be when courting women or, more specifically, when they want something. Portia’s own life demonstrates this best because Bassanio the lover is a very different man from Bassanio the husband. Portia questions what she ever saw in him – perhaps all she saw was what we saw: the man presented to us by Shakespeare, a loyal friend, and an honourable man. Porter imagines Portia’s reality and reveals it to the audience, Bassanio’s eagerness to choose the casket that would win him Portia’s hand in marriage was not because he was overcome with love as she was, but because of “how terribly in debt he was” (7). In fact, he is so penniless that “there isn’t a brigand in all Italy who would take the trouble to stop him” (7). The “perfidious” Nerissa tipped

him off about which casket to choose, ensuring he got all of Portia's wealth to fritter away (7).

In the midst of Portia's lamenting enters the third lady, Ophelia. Her "Ham" (one wonders if this refers to his hammy nature) used to be so gay but is so very melancholic of late and has been "so gloomy of late since the murders" (8). Portia responds to this as a normal person would, startled that anyone could say "the murders" as calmly as saying "the sneezes" (8). To this Ophelia calmly responds, "oh we got so used to them" (8). In fact, there were so many murders, she can no longer remember them all and forgets one as she tries to list them for Portia (8). This can be read as a clever and intense commentary: murder is not something that should happen so often to anyone, that they "get used to it." It is hardly a normal state of affairs, something as gruesome and terrible as murder should not be something you ever describe as a usual fact of your life. One can stop to wonder if Mary Porter intended all these comments as foreshadowing, leading up to another state that all these ladies (and the listening audience) have gotten used to, but should never have, i.e., the state of women in the society this play would have been read and performed in. Women have been represented (or written) by men for so long, that the only way to express themselves is perhaps to step outside the standards and restrictions that academic rigour demands (according to Finn), and use fanfic as a vehicle to express thoughts as fic prizes the qualities "derided in traditional academic circles such as emotion, self insertion, and subjectivity" (28). Porter's play is an emotional one. As it proceeds, the conversations get more heated and the women demand to be heard; this is part of the empowerment that fic can grant its authors and consumers, through fan activism.

This is particularly noticeable in the way Ophelia's character been written in the play. She prefaces or ends almost every sentence with "as Ham says", even when she is speaking to herself. In a play titled "the ladies speak *at last*" it is particularly noticeable. Even though technically she *is* speaking, her words and ideas aren't hers, they are what her "Ham" thinks. In another section of the play, Ophelia sits alone, speaking, seemingly, to herself. She says she hopes that the water-cure will do Ham good, especially since the stupid Danish doctors couldn't figure out what was wrong with him (10). She adds something striking: "they never thought it worthwhile to ask *my opinion* about it. *I could have told them* what the trouble was. We didn't have all those empty bottles lying about the house for nothing" (10, emphasis added). As one infers, Ham has a drinking problem. Ophelia ends her own soliloquy with a reference to Ham's most famous soliloquy – "if only they could hear some of his cheerful little soliloquies when he fancies himself alone – discussing whether it is best to be or not to be" (10). Ophelia stands out from the other protagonists in several ways. She does not (unlike all the other protagonists) ever actually complain about her husband to any of the other women. Whenever she speaks of him to others, it is in high regard, constantly referring to his cleverness and astute observations about life. Yet, when she thinks she is alone, she expresses her displeasure at the state of her life to the listening audience. Mary Porter may have been recreating the situation of the Shakespeare Clubs, where the women often had to contend with disapproving families, and keep the peace in their homes by ensuring their home duties were not neglected, before they could go to club meetings where they could freely express themselves.

Ophelia is the most vocal example of why the play is titled *The Ladies Speak At Last*, as she states that she had never been asked her opinion. She represents the sentiment of real women of the time who have never been asked to speak, not because they have nothing valuable to offer, but because others have pre-emptively decided that they don't. This judgement is not based on earlier conversation or past experience, the ladies simply haven't been asked to speak, so here they are, speaking. Ophelia's misery of not being asked to speak or not being considered to have anything worth saying is continued when she tells us that Ham often says to her "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy, Ophelia".[11] In the original Shakespeare play, this line was never said to Ophelia, nor would she have heard it. Worse, Ham apparently sees ghosts over his shoulder and wants to include them in the conversation. Even a ghost has apparently more valuable things to say that than the lady in his life. The question can be raised here as to how Ham could know what Ophelia's philosophy consists of if he's never asked her.

Lady Macbeth is the final character of this ensemble, complete with Scottish slang and accent. Her husband, she informs Ophelia, is generally a good man but is a little too easy "to be blown about" (12). Lady Macbeth is a self-proclaimed "gude-tempered auld body" despite "the awfu' stories that have been told" about her (12). This is another allusion, that the lady has not been allowed to speak for herself and has been disadvantaged because of it.

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[11] The original line is spoken by Hamlet to Horatio: "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, Than are dreamt of in your philosophy." (*Hamlet*, 1.5.168-169)

Juliet enters the scene and Lady Macbeth asks Ophelia to introduce her, and Juliet is introduced as "Mrs Romeo Montague" (12). Juliet repeats perhaps the most famous line associated with that name, but with a twist- "what's in a name, that which we call a rose by any other name would smell as sweet or *be as surrounded by thorns*" (12).[12] This not very subtle addition suggests that when women are subsumed into men's identities and men's words, the result isn't pleasant, as all of Juliet's troubles began when her name became Mrs Romeo Montague. Further, Ophelia quotes Ham again, and Portia asks her a simple question – "I wonder if you ever know what you are talking about?" (13) Since Ophelia has yet to express an original opinion (out loud to the other ladies), this question is double pronged, as well as being a transparent reminder – if you aren't using your own words, you are a vessel for another's.

Meanwhile, Portia receives a letter from Bassanio, sent through "her old suitor" The Prince of Morocco, no less. The play mentions the Prince of Morocco several times, Portia apparently takes "moonlight drives" with him, and he is "always talking about the beautiful jewels his wife is to have." Portia "sometimes thinks it's because he knows that all of mine are pawned, and he does it to spite me" (9). In Shakespeare's original play, Portia displays her racism behind the Prince's back. In Porter's play, not only is this absent, Portia appears to be going on moonlight drives with him, and bemoaning her misfortune in his having failed the casket test, as any wife of his would have lived in luxury, unlike her. It is the Prince showing her his riches that causes Portia to curse her own lack of practicality in keeping her assets

[12] The original line spoken by Juliet is "What's in a name? That which we call a rose By any other name would smell as sweet." (*Romeo and Juliet, 2.1.85-86)*

secure, as “she was a lawyer, the property all hers, and she did not think to make any settlements” (9).

When the Prince delivers the letter to Portia, she refers to him as “His Moorish Highness” so Mary Porter has not recast the prince as a light skinned person. Portia also sees, from “his little smile” that he has read the contents of the letter, which makes her “so mad, she wouldn’t drive with him” (13). Mary Porter does appear to be making a slight comment about the racism in the original play, by not only refusing to repeat it, but openly stating that Portia would have had a better life if it was the Prince who had won the right to marry her. The contents of the note which made the Prince smile (Bassanio having had the effrontery to send it “on a card, without an envelope”) are revealed - it appears that Bassanio and Antonio have literally lost the shirts off their backs gambling (using Portia’s money). They are now holed up in an inn and Bassanio asks Portia to come bail them out, and to bring a shirt for him with her when she does (14). Portia is furious, but still willing to go get him. Juliet tries to comfort Portia by telling her that she is still better off, Romeo is such a terrible husband that she wishes she could have the “good luck” of having him locked up (14). Also, if it had been Romeo, “her captive lord would wait a long time” before she showed up to bail him out (14).

Lady Macbeth consoles them both and says everyone has their trials, but “so long as ye keep out of Will Shakespeare’s hands, I think it matters little what the Prince of Morocco says” (14). The other women are puzzled, they have never heard of a Will Shakespeare. By including Shakespeare as a character, this play is also an example of Biographical Fiction or biofiction, which is literature with a protagonist named after a real-life person. The author fictionalises that historical figure in order

to show a common theme between otherwise unlike things or to convey a larger meaning, such as for social commentary (Lackey).

Lady Macbeth tells them the tale of this terrible young man who likes to listen to people's private conversations and then spin them into the most slanderous stories. Consider her own tragedy: there was Lord Macbeth waiting in an inn named The Three Witches for a letter from Billie Duncan who later accidentally shot himself while looking down the muzzle of his gun. Into the bar appears Will Shakespeare who offers to buy Lord Macbeth drinks in return for all the news of the land. Whatever stories Lord Macbeth told him, is what the evil Will Shakespeare has turned into a story of murder and treachery featuring Lady Macbeth and her husband (15).

Lady Macbeth says that she could scarcely sleep for a week at the account of her own doings – another reference to women being spoken for, and unfairly represented. She warns the others that since they've heard what this man wrote of her and warns them to be cautious as to what he will say of them (16). It is worth noting here that the play is titled "The Ladies Speak At Last", not "Shakespeare's Ladies Speak at Last". Mary Porter could have written this conversation between any ladies, but the choosing of Shakespeare presupposes the audience would know not just these characters, but their plots and individual dialogues. This lends more value to classing this play as fic, as it presupposes existing knowledge and expects a response to the play, due to its choice of source subject.

Lady Macbeth's worry about being silenced or misrepresented, even being cast as the villain when "Macbeth is the cats' paw" but she "gets the credit of the deed" (16) is shared by the others when Lady Macbeth tells them that she spotted

Will Shakespeare listening to them. The ladies are livid, they each ask, "what will he say about me?" (17) True to their literary manifestations, they determine to write him a strongly worded letter warning him of dire consequences if he does dare to speak for or about them again, because far from being the defenceless creatures that he appears to consider them, they are quite capable of "defending themselves to the last gasp" (17). If the young man is to take no notice of their warning and continues maligning them thus, they will print their own defence. This is quite a dire warning and the play has almost come full circle, after years of being spoken for, if nothing changes, you *will* hear the ladies loud and clear when they speak at last.

At this point, Juliet questions what will happen if the "ever captious world" doesn't listen to them or acknowledge their problems? (19) Don't they need public support to win the cause? Ophelia says they could appeal to the public if they were ever to be maligned again. However, Lady Macbeth says:

> My dear, t'would only scotch the snake, not kill it.
>
> Stand boldly forth, give the young man the lie,
>
> And still the worst he can do defy.
>
> If we've your favor now for all that's past,
>
> We'll trust that favor when we speak at last. (19)

If they are to avoid being maligned, the ladies must simply speak at last, without a male voice speaking for them. The women don't need you to speak for them, or represent them, or defend them, they can do so themselves. Using Shakespeare's women as the mouthpiece for this message, while casting Shakespeare himself as the villain is a way of being noticed, Mary Porter had to know that this was the source

text that would have the most impact. Reimagining Shakespeare's women thus situates it outside academic interpretation, but advantages it through the unique ability that fic provides for irreverent portrayal of a source text.

This message can be extended to all the clubwomen who got together in the name of Shakespeare, the message of all the clubwomen who identified with the play and thought it worth performing to an audience. Knowing that women's clubs on opposite sides of the American map embraced this piece across decades, one can assume that its message of women being able and wanting to speak for themselves, in an atmosphere where this question was being debated in the public sphere, appealed to them. A silent show of support perhaps, for they may not have been allowed to go to a suffrage or women's movement meeting, but in the spaces of their clubs, they could debate these topics. The play ends with the declaration that they will trust the world's favor when "they speak at last". It suggests that the time is not here yet, but it is coming, when they will seek to defend themselves and speak at last, and they trust in the world's favor of supporting them, knowing all "that's happened in the past".

The Woman Whom Shakespeare Did Not Contemplate

Juli Parrish writes that fanfic arises from the point when the inevitability of a text is questioned. This questioning can apply to the whole plot, or even a trait of a particular character. She writes, "Fanfiction springs from a what-if moment. It takes something a text has offered to us as inevitable – a plot, a character trait, a setting – and unmakes it, thereby opening up a different set of possibilities" (1.1). Mrs Lauch Macluarin's *The Woman Whom Shakespeare Did Not Contemplate*, is one such

"unmaking." Little can be unearthed about the author, Ann Thompson and Sasha Roberts' Anthology says that "very little is known of Mrs Lauch Macluarin" (243). The *American Shakespeare Magazine* from October 28, 1897 records that this paper "was read at the reception given to the board of the State Federation of Literary Clubs, by the Sheakespeare (sic) Club of Dallas" (331).

Mrs Macluarin was most likely a member of the Dallas Club. She begins her article with a line that offers a perception that is held as inevitable, that "Shakespeare has told us everything, about everything, that is and was, and is to come" (331). She goes on to say that such an immense message should "naturally include the business woman" and points to Portia as "the rudimentary specimen with which we have bolstered up our theory" (of Shakespeare having inevitably spoken of all things). Mrs Macluarin however, goes on to unmake the inevitability of Shakespeare's wisdom, by saying that "when demanded that they hand over Shakespeare's businesswoman, they had handed over Portia and been told that she will not do" (331). She then levies the following charges against Portia:

> Did Portia make all, or any, of the money which brought adventurers from every coast? We confess she did not make it; her father left it to her. Did she become seized and possessed of Belmont though purchase, or foreclosure of mortgage? She did not; her father left it to her. Was she independent in the choice of a husband? We wish she had been, but admit that fate and her father saw to that matter, too. Did she spend her money like a business woman? Well – hardly. Did she have reason to suppose that Bassanio had a business mind? None that she has stated. (331)

Macluarin here is engaging in what Jenkins calls "textual poaching" where "fans appropriate texts and reread or rewrite them in a fashion that serves different interests" ("Star Trek" 87). In another example of "fan activism", Macluarin goes on to demonstrate how Shakespeare has not in fact, contemplated all things. Continuing

with her critique of Portia, Mrs Macluarin extends it to other Shakespeare maidens. She says that "It is not only with Portia that Shakespeare has missed the opportunity to create the ideal of a businesswoman. With all of his maidens who were out of employment with no way out of distress, he dutifully provided them a husband" (334). She asserts that, time and again, Shakespeare misses his opportunity to turn one of these women into a self-sufficient young woman who successfully turns her life around with a little business aptitude (334). That a woman could go out into the world not under the guise of a man (Shakespeare always equipped her with "doublet and hose and manly tricks") and demand her share of purse and prosperity was unimaginable to Shakespeare. Macluarin questions how he (great man that he was) could have possibly imagined a self-sufficient woman, any more than "he could have imagined the phonograph or the typewriter?" (334). This is Mrs Macluarin unmaking the inevitable, Shakespeare's failing to imagine technology beyond his time also opens up the possibility for fan intervention by stating that there were possibilities that he could not imagine.

This concession she makes to Shakespeare being "a great man" despite his failing carries a double meaning: she is subtly reminding the audience even greatness has its limits, and if Shakespeare could fail at grasping all that women could be, this could also be true of her audience. Women are perfectly capable of making their own way in the world, wearing their own clothes, no less. She also writes that the businesswoman would never (unlike a number of Shakespeare's heroines) "sever her business relation with the world with a knife or a dose of something or the other" (334). She adds that whatever losses or gains the businesswoman makes, there are ways she will never spend her money, one of them

being to bail "any melancholy Antonio or thriftless Bassanio out of his difficulties." Her message is powerful in its boldness, not only does she criticise Shakespeare, she posits an alternative ending. She is doing what, in Lanier's definition, fans do: "recognize ideological limits of source (text) and push against those limits, in a spirit of critique, anarchy, pleasure, recuperation, participation" (85). Pointing out the failings of Shakespeare for limiting all that women could be opens the doors to pushing against these limits. Macluarin concedes that though Portia was a "clever lady of quality" (334) she lacks the qualities (or perhaps, the freedom) which would have made her successful in her own right, a limit which Mrs Macluarin deems as no longer true for her and her fellow women, for:

> having considered Shakespeare's heroines, their manner of life, employment and object, and how essentially they differ from the woman hereinbefore set forth, we are compelled to say that the woman whom Shakespeare did not contemplate is the business woman. (335)

Adding these thoughts to her earlier statements that Shakespeare was limited by his inability to imagine technology beyond his time as well, Mrs Macluarin creates the opportunity here to unmake Shakespeare's inevitable endings for women, to either marry unworthy men or seek solace in death. Mrs Macluarin joins the ranks of women such as Mary Porter who rewrite Shakespeare's heroines to convey alternative ideas of womanhood, outside the domestic sphere.

The Mistaken Vocation of Shakespeare's Heroines

The Mistaken Vocation of Shakespeare's Heroines by Priscilla Leonard is a piece initially conceptualised and written in 1896 as a paper delivered by a lecturer to her sisters (in arms) in a "Twentieth Century Woman's Club" (very likely a Shakespeare Club) (369). Priscilla Leonard was the pseudonym of Emily Perkins

Bissell, a prominent social worker, who was staunchly anti-suffragist. Thompson and Roberts note that Bissell was a social welfare worker, anti-suffragist and initiator of the anti-tuberculosis Christmas seal in 1907. She was also President of Delaware Anti-Tuberculosis Society from 1908-1948. She was chairman of social services for the Delaware State Federation of Women's Clubs and helped secure Delaware's first child labour law and maximum-hour law for women in industry. She was an active opponent of women's suffrage, maintaining it would add to women's burdens and lead to family discord (232).

Leonard's lecturer introduces her paper as a "loud and convincing protest from the progressive Womanhood of this new era against Shakespeare's attitude with respect to his heroines" (369). Shakespeare being "but a man…the masculine conception of feminine character has thus been forced upon us" (369). She asks whether the women will submit to this, and emboldened by the loud disagreements of the listening audience, the lecturer vows to "test the poet by the higher criticism of advanced Womanly thought" (369). She explains the higher criticism she is alluding to, it appears that Shakespeare while "showing a remarkable appreciation of the superlative qualities of woman", has yet performed an act of criminal injustice – "in placing his heroines in every play at a disadvantage, hampered by a tyrannical plot, and bound to uncongenial or overbearing heroes…" (369).

Leonard can be viewed as positing a concept that many fans currently suggest about contemporary franchises, that characters end up with the wrong partners. There is so much fanfiction about pairs that should have ended up together, that these fans are labelled "shippers". This term is short for 'Relationshippers' and

refers to “fans’ support for fictional romantic relationships in television shows, films, or novels” (241).

Leonard goes on to rearrange Shakespeare’s heroines and says who they should have ideally ended up with. In her piece, Shakespeare is considered as *one* monolithic piece of work, rather than individual plays with no crossovers. A contemporary example of this kind of poaching would be the current Doctor Who fans who refer to the entire fandom as a “Whoniverse” (Hadas 333).

Leonard’s lecturer says that she is “prepared to give convincing examples” of what she is suggesting (370). She says that the four great tragedies of *Hamlet, Macbeth*, *Othello* and *King Lear* are tragedies not because of “the nature of the heroes” but because of the “misplacement of the heroines” (370). She suggests that a reworking of the pairings, by placing the capable Lady Macbeth with Hamlet would have had a much more successful outcome, as Hamlet’s “weak resolution would have vanished with that intrepid counsellor by his side” (370). In fact, Hamlet would have killed the king “half an hour after Lady Macbeth came to court” (370). Macbeth on the other hand, “needed a woman like Portia to manage him” (370) and Portia would have been much better served “ruling the Highland clans…than as the wife of a man who had to borrow money from his friend to get married on!” (371).

Similarly, either Juliet’s “undying professions” of love or Beatrice’s “quick wit” would have served better and saved them from death, had they been Othello’s companion (371). A tactful Rosalind would have not only gotten her inheritance from Lear, she would have also swiftly dealt with her scheming sisters (371). Miranda or Ophelia would have married Paris without even the thought of protesting against

their father's choice, and Paris would have made a much better husband than "that notoriously fickle Romeo" (371). Even the great tragedy of Julius Caesar's murder could have been avoided, if only "he had had Brutus' Portia, or even Isabella, to wife, instead of that submissive Calpurnia, would in all likelihood have obeyed her warning and stayed at home" (372).

In short, all these women lost their lives, loves, inheritance or mind, because Shakespeare placed them all in the wrong stories. After describing the unfavourable situations Shakespeare placed his heroines in, Leonard's lecturer urges her audience to see Shakespeare as "well-meaning, but inadequate—blind to the true powers of woman and the illimitable wideness of her sphere" (372). Leonard's piece ends with the words "here the lecture concluded amid continued feminine applause, and cries of 'Down with Shakespeare!'" (372). Leonard being an outspoken anti-suffragist, her paper was in actuality a presentation of her anti-suffrage views. In the setting she conjures of a self-styled "Twentieth Century Woman's Club", a denouncement of Shakespeare would not have gone down well. Leonard's intent, according to Scheil, Roberts, and Thompson, was to get the women to defend Shakespeare. Scheil says that she refers to Roberts and Thompson to show that Leonard's "anti-Shakespearean rhetoric was actually a pose for her anti-suffragette views; Bissell constructed a fake denouncement of Shakespeare to encourage her audience to defend Shakespeare and to endorse a more conservative view of women" (*She Hath Been Reading* 56). However, by defending him they are defending the tragic endings of all the women he wrote into disaster, thereby establishing her real intent: that agreeing with Shakespeare means placing themselves at a disadvantage. This would then endorse a more conservative view

of women, i.e., that if Shakespeare was right, then it was the agency he had granted his heroines that had placed them all in such unfavourable positions, so women shouldn't reach for the same.

Leonard may not have been a fan of Shakespeare, but her choice of source text is still relevant. She would have had a reason for deciding that Shakespeare was the best source text to try and get her anti-suffrage message across to her audience. Even if she did not set out to write fanfiction, her examples still qualify as fic, as she posits changes to Shakespeare's plays such as Caesar not dying and Macbeth not murdering the king, which would then change their endings. Whatever Leonard's original intent might have been, she still appropriates Shakespeare's work to achieve it. Considering that she explicitly references a women's club, and their practice of having speakers present papers to the listening audience, this piece still qualifies as Shakespearean fanfiction. She can be compared to the author who wrote "A Slight Adaptation" about the Pioneers, in *Punch*. While neither Leonard nor the anonymous poet are fans of their source material, their familiarity with the source text, whether it be multiple Shakespeare plays, or the whole poem by Whitman, their rearranging of the content to state their point and the unmaking of the original can all be deemed as fanfiction, even if that was not the intent of either writer.

This community building and avid debates and appropriations of a source text is analogous to the online fan communities that exist today. For the American clubwomen of the late nineteenth century, Shakespeare was their "source product" and while they rallied around him, they found community and structure upon which to stand. Herrnson is of the opinion that:

> Fandom empowers women specifically through the deeply set sense of ownership that comes hand in hand with engaging in conversations with the text…There is strength and power in loving something, and greater strength and greater power in coming together to create that love. Through Shakespeare, American women found community and voice. (5-6)

This delineation can be extended to a reclamation of temporal activity. Developing a sense of ownership over a source product takes time, it requires continuous temporal commitment, and a guarding of that temporal commitment from all other claims upon your time. To understand the references of and perform a play such as *The Ladies Speak at Last,* would require dedicated time kept apart both to read Shakespeare's plays extensively and in depth, and to learn and rehearse Porter's play.

The Shakespeare Clubs, as established in Chapter 2, represent an act of temporal reclamation, with their repeated assertions of how their club activities were time claimed for personal pleasure, not in service of home or family. Valerie Fazel and Louise Geddes write that "Fanfic matters as a vibrant, bawdy, robust opportunity to see inside the head of a contemporary popular Shakespeare audience and experience the adaptive transition that occurs when active participants in digital communities claim Shakespeare for themselves" (283). As established in this chapter, Shakespeare fanfic is not a contemporary phenomenon, or a digital one. The three pieces discussed in this chapter allow us to do just that, "look inside the heads" of Shakespeare's *participatory audience* from the nineteenth-century clubs. We are able to see why they dedicated their time stolen to Shakespeare, what he as a source material meant to them and the possibilities that they were able to see within his works, when they became a participatory audience.

Thesis Conclusion

As I worked through examining the existing scholarly work on women's clubs for the purpose of this thesis, it became clear that while there have been several critical attempts to recover the utility and place of literary clubs within the larger framework of women's clubs and associations, there did not seem to exist a critical examination that explored the shared concerns of transatlantic literary clubs. While scholars have acknowledged that the American and British literary clubs were known to one another, there has not yet been an attempt at establishing a clear transatlantic link that connects the three sets of literary clubs – Shakespeare Clubs, Browning Clubs, and the Pioneer Club, which I have examined in this thesis. While there is growing acknowledgement about the cultural importance of these clubs, this thesis has demonstrated that their historical significance and impact cannot be fully understood without acknowledging their contribution to reshaping ideas about gendered time. The existence of a definite link between American women's literary clubs formed around British authors, and a British Club formed around the distinctly American persona of Walt Whitman is also vastly underexplored in current scholarship. When Jane Cunningham Croly, who is acknowledged as the driving force behind the founding of women's literary clubs in America, asserts that the Pioneer Club is the truest kind of woman's club and best represents that essence of contemporary American literary clubs, that is an undeniable link about shared concerns of womanhood explored in the Shakespeare, Browning and Pioneer Clubs. Either the lack of documentation, the clubs' own insistence on privacy bordering on secrecy, or the lack of a link with visible activist feminism or campaigns of their time

has meant that these clubs have not been slotted in with any others and have been left out of most scholarship

This thesis attempts to address this gap, by considering how literary clubs formed by women in 1850-1900 as single-sex spaces in America and Britain represent an unexplored chapter of women's time. It has looked at three types of clubs in particular, Shakespeare Clubs and Robert Browning Clubs in America, and the Pioneer Club in London. It has shown that these three types of clubs represented an active form of temporal reclamation by clubwomen who lived in societies where their time was regulated and controlled, and was meant to be spent in domestic service.

The introductory chapter established that time, like all things human, was susceptible to culture. It delved into existing critical interventions to demonstrate that time has always been a gendered concept, with separation between the nature and purpose of masculine and feminine time. It established that critics agree that there is a cultural and gendered dimension to the experience of time, creating a disadvantaged temporality which is designated as women's time, a temporal category that was considered subordinate to the superior masculine time. Women's time was meant to be located privately and subordinated to the service of the family, freeing masculine time to pursue individuality in the public space. Critics such as Julia Kristeva, and ones such as Martha Sharpe after her, have posited that in its beginnings, the Women's Movement was as much about suffrage as about women becoming aware of this temporal exclusion, and working towards gaining a place in the linear time of 'his'story. The chapters that follow the Introduction show that women becoming aware of gendered temporality and starting to claim some control

over their own time did not begin with the women's movement, but with the establishment of women's clubs.

The Introduction explored how the image of the woman reader, first as a solitary phenomenon, then in the form of a mass reading culture in the form of women's literary clubs, started to shift the dynamic within gendered time. The three chapters that follow explore how these women's clubs, built around Shakespeare and Browning in America, and around Walt Whitman in Britain, started to create a separate form of temporality, by women claiming a few hours of the day for themselves.

This thesis looks at the historical and social contexts in which these clubs existed and acknowledges the differences between them. The links between a woman's club in America composed of housewives and mothers, and having its "clubhouse" move weekly between the parlours of different members' houses does not at first appear to have any discernible connection to a club such as the Pioneer, situated in lavish central London premises and frequented by women well known in their own time. It draws on primary sources such as club records and club magazines to connect the two and establish what links them is the repeated assertions of the members, of their clubs being spaces where they could pass an hour, undisturbed by home cares. The thesis also draws on secondary sources, both from the same time as the clubs, and later critical work to acknowledge that these clubs have been largely invisible to scholarship, both literary and historical. Among the secondary sources that have been examined are articles and novels by Pioneer Club members, which express their concerns with existing social mores that devalue women's position in society and the damage wrought by such social settings. If we consider

the vast difference in societal settings for the two sets of clubs, that Pioneer members were writing novels about the ruinous effects of a life in which women have no control over their own activities further strengthens the link between these three types of literary clubs. The general invisibility and lack of critical enquiry into these clubs and their activities led to the necessity of this thesis being a project of recovery, drawing on incomplete and scattered archives, including fictionalised accounts, satire and cartoons to build a comprehensive picture of these clubs, their modes of working, their membership, and what they viewed themselves as, as well as how they appeared to the outsider. It created a picture of women who formed and were members of these clubs, with the intent of claiming a few hours of the day for themselves.

At the very beginning of working on this thesis, I had expected it to be a project of linking domestic feminism connected with women's organisations such as the WCTU to mainstream feminism, of expecting the clubs to have formed an unascertained direct link between the two. Recent scholarship into these clubs have looked at them as study clubs, as spaces for community building, and for their part in establishing the legacies of these authors. As I looked deeper into the clubs however, it became clear that they represented not just a separate chapter of women's organisations in general, but also a separate chapter of women's time. Joan Shelley Rubin argues that "the meaning of texts [is] inseparable from the associations, longings, and purposes they acquired in the hands of readers" (2). This thesis makes the argument that in the hands of these readers, in their clubs, these texts represented temporal freedom, hours of the day intentionally, even in the face of disapproval, taken for themselves. By the year the Pioneer Club was established,

while society had made several changes and had undeniably progressed, the opposition that the clubwomen engendered, for creating spaces where women could step away from their home duties for a few hours, continued to endure. The decline in the clubs into the twentieth century affirms this, as women gained the possibilities of expanding their lives beyond the domestic sphere, the need for the clubs declined.

Scheil documents that “even though most of the clubs have been left out of the historical records, they did not disappear” (*She Hath Been Reading* 121-122). The memories of them were kept alive by the historical and generational impact they had, traced through archives and through the female descendants of these women. Chapter 3 analyses fanfiction produced by women associated with the clubs. Just as critics on women’s time have overlooked these clubs as a chapter on women’s time, their literary production has been left out of critical intervention into fanfiction, which is deemed a recent phenomenon. Chapter 3 examined several pieces which were recoverable in their entirety, and the suggestions of others which were only partly recoverable, as examples of Speculative and Biofiction, placing the Shakespearean clubwomen within the category of participatory fan culture. This is also foremost an act of temporal reclamation, as the hours necessary for familiarising oneself with a source text as prolific as Shakespeare would have required dedication and time, and the clubs became spaces where this was possible, for women who could not achieve this through formal channels. Their lack of visibility in both feminist intervention and historical examination has been addressed, and it adds to their invisibility as, if neither the clubs nor their work could be categorised, they would have been left out.

This thesis can be a starting point for those seeking answers about the current relevance of women's clubs, as a large part of their initial utility – serving as sites for self-education, has become irrelevant. Beyond looking at them as historical curiosities, this study reveals these clubs are sites of resistance to social order, which have not been considered in any studies about First Wave Feminism. Ann Dodds Costello refers to women's clubs which are still active, as "self-education groups" which are "highly private and hiding in plain sight" (9). Their willing invisibility has also rendered them absent from studies about sites of women's political activity and activism. Women's literary clubs exercised their own form of power by claiming that which society denied them, and by rewriting ideas about private and public space. The ideas in this thesis also have implications in studies concerning perceptions of gendered reading practices. Men's literary clubs existed without inviting comment or resistance at the same time as women's clubs, and there is scope for studies about why women organising around literary practices is viewed with disfavour. Their literary output has also been largely neglected, or in the case of the Pioneer Club slotted into the short-lived phenomenon of 'New Woman Novels'. This thesis demonstrates that there also exists the possibility for fanfiction from Shakespeare Clubs to be studied in relation to current pertinent questions of updating and re-evaluating the content of texts that have been held as canonical, and the clubwomen's fanfiction stands as examples of this.

Finally, women and temporality is an ongoing question, not restricted to history. Even with choices and control over their time, historically, women have been beholden to concerns that take up their time, which society only appears to become

aware of if drastic measure are taken. From the 1975 “women’s day off”[13] in Iceland to the pandemic, this examination of women’s clubs reveals how the lion’s share of domestic duties and emotional labour of the home is still expected to be a woman’s domain. This makes the clubs remarkable when situated in historical contexts where they faced opposition on all sides for any attempt at claiming time for themselves; in pursuit of self betterment and in being individuals, women still found time and persisted with their clubs. Any transatlantic intervention into the question of gendered time in mid-to-late nineteenth century must include acknowledgement of these clubs as an expression of women’s time.

[13] On 24 October 1975, Iceland’s women called a day off, declaring that for 24 hours, they simply would not do all the things they normally did in a day, either at home or at work. It meant that fathers woke up to screaming, hungry children, all flights had to be cancelled, and men had to go into work armed with sweets and colouring pencils to entertain their children (as most daycares were run by women too). Within five years, Iceland became the first country to democratically elect a female head of state, and Iceland is consistently the world leader of gender equality, according to the World Economic Forum.

Appendix 1: A Note on African American Women's Clubs from 1850-1900

The white women's club movement in the nineteenth century shared space with a parallel movement organised by black women. There is documentation of African American women's clubs having similar structures of membership as the white women's clubs, evidence of them reading Shakespeare and Browning (in some clubs) and forming state and national federations in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. However, their concerns as well as the social and political situation in which they came into existence were different enough to warrant them as a separate study. I made the decision to leave them out of the main thesis and provide this appendix here as a summary and a starting point.

In *Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* editor Nina Mjagkij notes that "By the turn of the twentieth century, African American women had established a plethora of clubs and organizations that engaged in a wide range of self-help, benevolent, social, religious, literary, and cultural activities" (492). They differed from white woman's social and literary clubs in two main aspects. First, "In addition to the specific projects that these clubs supported and pressing social needs that they attempted to fill, black women's clubs served to defend African America womanhood in an increasingly hostile social environment" (Mjagkij 492). The women who formed these clubs were battling against a society that viewed black women as "morally devoid and incapable of upholding marital and family responsibilities" (Mjagkij 492).

Second, "The black club woman's ability to tackle race problems was also nourished by her sense of equality with black men. This sentiment was based on the

knowledge that black women, just like black men, had endured incredible hardships during slavery and that neither sex had gained any advantage in the nearly two and a half centuries of enslavement" (White 251). This is an important distinction between the two sets of women's clubs. Even as African American women formed single sex spaces in the form of clubs, their reasons for doing so were different. They dealt with exclusion from society at the same level their male counterparts did, and the spirit of their clubs reflected this, as they focused on community uplift rather than women's concerns. Fannie Barrier Williams repeated this sentiment in a speech she gave in the year 1900, when she said that "in our development as a race, the colored woman and the colored man started even. The man cannot say that he is better educated and has had a wider sphere. They have suffered the same misfortunes. The limitation put upon their ambitions have been identical" (54). As such, women's clubs formed by African American women had different agendas since their position in society was determined far more by their race, than by male dominance. Black clubwomen thus used activities such as fundraising and charitable work for both racial uplift and to enhance their own standing in the community. The focus of many of their clubs reflect this nexus as "the study of literature and fine arts was conjoined to issues of suffrage, child welfare and community betterment" (Mjagkij 121). Deborah White writes that "Black club women believed they could solve the problems of the race through intensive social service, particularly self-help activity aimed at improving the home and the community" (248). Their clubwork differed vastly from their white contemporaries, with their focus being external, and clubs being focal points for the dissemination of community uplift.

Even when black women did form societies focused on promoting literacy, they did so to "ensure that, as a group, they would not be excluded from the benefits associated with reading and literary study" (McHenry xx). With their opportunities for educating themselves through formal settings being limited, these clubs "provided an alternative and supplemental context in which to acquire and practice the skills they needed to confidently and effectively enter public and organizational life" (McHenry 204). When they did take up studying Shakespeare, he was part of their path to attain "advanced thought and knowledge and progressiveness, and frequently included Shakespeare as part of their educational programs" (*She Hath Been Reading* 95).

Even when they did start a club with the initial purpose of being a reading or study club, it almost always expanded its mission to become a centre for social betterment. One example is The Detroit Study Club which began in 1898, when "six learned African American women gathered at the home of music teacher Gabrielle Pelham to read works by British poet Robert Browning and further educate themselves on cultural and social issues of the time. Soon the scope of the club's meetings expanded and the members created an organization motivated by a desire for self-betterment and to improve their community" (Som).

This pattern follows through on a national scale, resulting in what Gerda Lerner terms an "impulse for organizing." She writes, "Black women organized, throughout the nineteenth century, at first on a local, later, on a state and national level, to undertake educational, philanthropic and welfare activities. The impulse for organizing arose wherever an urgent social need, such as nurseries, lack of local libraries, orphanages and old age homes remained unmet" (Lerner 159). This

organization spread nationally, and in 1896 Josephine St Pierre Ruffin, Maria Baldwin, Ida B. Wells and Margaret Murray Washington formed the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs with the motto "lifting as we climb" (Mjagkij 102). This organization ran parallel to the racially exclusive GFWC.

This was preceded by the founding of The Woman's Era club in Boston in 1894 by Josephine Ruffin (Gere and Robbins 646). The club had the motto of 'make the world better' and it also printed the *Woman's Era* magazine, which said in its initial issue in March 1894 that it was "the first newspaper printed by and for African American club women" ("Woman's Era"). The first edition of *Women's Era* also printed a report about a meeting of the club. It writes that Mrs. Laura Ormiston Chant spoke of clubs as spaces which "make women read and think". The report also contains these words from Florida Ridley (daughter of Josephine Ruffin) "We the women of the Women's Era Club enter the field to work hand in hand with women, generally for humanity and humanity's interests. The oppressed everywhere are subjects for our consideration, not the needs of the colored women, but women everywhere are our interest" ("Woman's Era").

This report of the *Woman's Era* reveals several details about the status and perception of African American women in American society towards the late 1890s. Even as the women dealt with society's prejudices against them, both racial and gender, they still adopted the motto of "make the world better." Despite being at no great advantage to do so, rather the opposite, they were still able to adopt an inclusive approach and to state that their aims were not centred solely on themselves, but on society as a whole. They believed that any uplift work they did within their club, including publishing this magazine would serve to better the lives

of everyone they encountered. It is also telling how close their aims were to the white women's clubs of the time, i.e., not reducing women to wives and mothers, giving women the means and the option to choose their own path in life, and in bettering their societies as a whole, and yet they were denied membership to white women's clubs. Florida Ridley says in her speech that "are so many questions which in their application to the race, demand special treatment," ("Woman's Era") addressing how it was imperative that there be a space for coloured women to consider their issues of the day, even if the necessity for such a separate space was not of their own making. Despite having been excluded by society, they did not feel the need to protect their space for she also says that black women's clubs were open to any woman "black or white who are in sympathy with our cause to unite with us" (Woman's Era"). It is suggestive that these women had realised that separation and distinction within society was not the way forward, and would not fix the problems that they should face together, for the problems concerned the world as a whole, not just black women.

Appendix 2: A schedule from 1961 - 1962, during which the ladies of the Browning Club of Bowling Green, Kentucky studied Nineteenth-Century American literature

September 23	Introduction: The New Nation and the House Divided	Mrs Graves
October 13	Emerson and the Transcendentalists	Miss Hatcher
October 27	James Fenimore Cooper	Mrs Surface
November 10	The Historians	Mrs Duncan
December 5	Nathaniel Hawthorne	Miss Richards
January 12	Longfellow, Whittier, Holmes and Lowell	Mrs Gingles
February 9	Washington Irving	Mrs Dowse
February 23	Herman Melville	Mrs Burford
March 9	Walt Whitman	Mrs Bryant
March 27	Sidney Lanier and Emily Dickinson	Mrs Cheek
April 13	Samuel Clemens	Mrs Parrish Gordon Wilson
May 18	Henry Thoreau	

Appendix 3: 100th Anniversary of the Browning Club of Bowling Green, Kentucky in 1995

Browning Club members at the 100th anniversary celebration on April 25, 1995. Floor: Elsie Hatcher, Linda Surface, Mary Lou Parrish; seated: Gretchen Niva, Doris Hendrick, Bonita Dowse, Martha Jean Clark, Mary Lynn Wigodsky; standing: Carol White, Shirley Holland, Nancy Cheek, Jean Nehm, Ann Fields, and Marge Sagbiel.

Appendix 4: Photograph of the Anti-Rust Club from 1894.

Appendix 5: 'Female Clubs v. Matrimony' by George du Maurier in an 1878 edition of *Punch*

PUNCH'S ALMANACK FOR 1878. [December 14, 1877.

FEMALE CLUBS v. MATRIMONY.

Miss Firebrace. "Send your Horse Home, and stop and Dine here with me, Julia! I've asked Trixy Rattlecash and Emily Sheppard."

Mrs. Bolingbroke Tompkins, née Julia Wildrake (with a sigh of regret for the freedom of Spinsterhood and the charms of Club life). "Can't, my dear Girl! My sainted old Father-in-Law's just gone back to Yorkshire, and poor Bolly's all alone!"

Appendix 6: Poem from August 1896 issue of *Shafts*

August 1896

Pioneer Club.

22, BRUTON STREET, W.

This column is taken by the Pioneer Club for the official announcement of debates, lectures, meetings, and other notices.

Not a grave of the murdered for freedom, but grows seed for freedom, in its turn to bear seed,
Which the winds carry afar and re-sow, and the rains and the snows nourish.
Not a disembodied spirit can the weapons of tyrants let loose,
But it stalks invisibly over the earth, whispering, counselling, cautioning.

Of equality—as if it harmed me, giving others the same chances and rights as myself—as if it were not indispensable to my own rights that others possess the same.

Who are you that wanted only to be told what you knew before?
Who are you that wanted only a book to join you in your nonsense?

WALT WHITMAN.

AUTUMN SESSION, 1896.

Thursday Evening Lectures, Debates, Discussions, etc., 8.15 p.m.

TO BE OPENED BY PAPER OR OTHERWISE.

Reviews,

PHOTOGRA

MANY persons are now interest
are beginning thoroughly to ap
offers. Indeed, amateur photog
everywhere. It is with great
the notice of such, a journal-
monthly, price 3*d*., post free 4
interest and instruction, and co
and pamphlets likely to be usef
the professional photographer-
lished by the firm. A perusal
would-be photographers how v
them in their work. In additio
interest to many because of the
and the constantly increasing
art, and as an aid to science.
for 1895 gave a beautiful and e
great advance made. The
and Catharine Weed Ward, ar
a new work of wonderful intere

Appendix 7: Pictures of Mrs Emily Massingberd

FEBRUARY, 1897. SHAFTS. 35

Pioneer Club Records.

THE STORY OF ONE WHO LOVED AND WORKED COUNTING THE WORLD WELL LOST.

Go to thy rest, from thy long labour cease
Rest on thy sheaves, thy harvest work is done
Go, from the heart of battle in great peace
Soldier, go home, with thee the fight is won.
ANON.

AND in the wind and rain I try to light
A little lamp that may a beacon be
Whereby poor ship-folk striving through the night
May gain the ocean course, and think of me.
BUCHANAN.

PRESIDENT, PIONEER CLUB.

"NO EFFORT FAILS."

NEVER a word is said
But it trembles in the air.
And the truant voice has sped
To vibrate everywhere:
And perhaps far off in eternal years
The echo may sing in our ears.

Never are kind acts done
To wipe the weeping eyes,
But like flashes of the sun
They signal to the skies;
And up above the angels read
How we have helped the sorest need.

Never a day is given
But it tones the after years,
And it carries up to heaven
Its sunshine and its tears;
While to-morrows stand and wait
Like silent mutes by the outer gate.

There is no end to the sky,
And the stars are everywhere,
And time is eternity;
And the here is over there,
For the common deeds of the common day
Are ringing bells in the far away.
ANO

KAPILA, Kapila, so young and true,
I yearn for a glory like thine,
And hail thee from battle to ask anew,
Can ever thy valour be mine?

Kapila sat on his charger dun,
A hero never so grave,
Who loveth all things hath fear of none
'Tis Love that maketh me brave.

Kapila, Kapila, so old and grey
The Queen is calling for me,
But ere I go hence, I wish thou wouldst
How wisdom first came to thee.

Kapila stood in his temple door,
A priest in eremite guise,
It came not to me, as men get their lore

62 SHAFTS. [June, 1893.

Influential Lives.

WHERE WOMEN GATHER.

And in the wind and rain I try to light
A little lamp that may a Beacon be,
Whereby poor ship-folk, driving through the night,
May gain the Ocean course, and think of me.

'TWERE well, surely, that in the midst of our earnest struggles for Justice, Free- lom and Truth, the struggles that line our rows, change our locks to silver, and wear our strength away, we should turn every ow and then to contemplate the doings of rave, true women, who work at our side for the ame ends. Dissatisfied with our own fforts, it ever revives and strengthens s, to view, with the admiration all oble natures feel, the work and aims f others. We see more clearly there, he results we hardly dare acknow- dge in our own case; we are ncouraged therefrom, to turn again ith a will to our own unceasing bours.

Mrs. Massingberd has expressed a ish that no praise should be given r here, for doing, as she puts it, "the tle it has given me so much pleasure do." Truly, too much praise is ful- me, and it can be readily understood at earnest, hardworking reformers, ust often be pained by the constant ans rung out in their favour. There- e, this pen sayeth only this, "Let her n works praise her," also,—among ose who work for social improvement re are few, if any, more beloved than s. Massingberd. True she *catches it* asionally, in the pages of daily news- ers, where people who neither know understand anything of the subject, ctice their skill at sharp-shooting. t a city set on a hill cannot be hid, becomes from its very clearness a sen target for such arrows. So long, ever, as the target—in this instance clothed with the armour woven of the respect and affection of the

mand for freedom, that grandest of all human desires. Especially is this notice- able among women, who, if they have been asleep—which this pen gravely doubts— are certainly awaking everywhere to their own interests, to the demands of their own souls. We cannot but see, if sleep it has been, it has been a sleep through which thought has run; in which action has been mapped out; in which the tactics have been learnt, now carried into practice, in action.

In bringing women of all classes thus to- gether, to meet upon equal terms; their only rank womanhood, their only distinc- tion mental qualities and earnestness of purpose, Mrs. Massingberd has seized upon a splendid idea, and supplied one of the greatest needs of this

and what is ignoble; she is on the watch, her heel ready for the serpent's head and more than a match for his subtlety. The strong cry of the so long imprisoned soul is let loose on the expectant air, and the march to freedom, entire, full, and free, has well begun.

Few institutions help more to this work than do women's clubs; they are a wonder- ful resting place for tired workers; there, is obtained the attrition of mind which en- hances the brightness of each. Women gather there, whose lives are full of activity in all kinds of work, all contributing more or less to the general good. The motive power of the club is universal sisterhood, the destruction of class and sex distinc- tions, the helping of each individual mem- ber in any work for women or the general advance, in which she may be engaged, and the cultivation of a love and charity, embracing all the world. Though no Pioneer would venture to say this has been attained, yet is it the goal which all strive to attain; the end to which all aspire. Mrs. Massingberd has won not only the respect and love of the Pioneers but the appreciation of outsiders, by her frank courtesy and her kind and genial manner to all-comers. Many visitors prove this, by their frequent visits and the interest invariably ex- cited. What will ultimately be the gain to each, by this frequent association of women with each other, can be but faintly conjectured. The club, however, is proving how appropriate is the title it has chosen for itself, as day by day there goes on a striving after self-know- ledge and a knowledge of others, a kin- ship with all humanity which cannot fail to bring its glad reward. Wealth and talent are here brought together to the benefit of both.

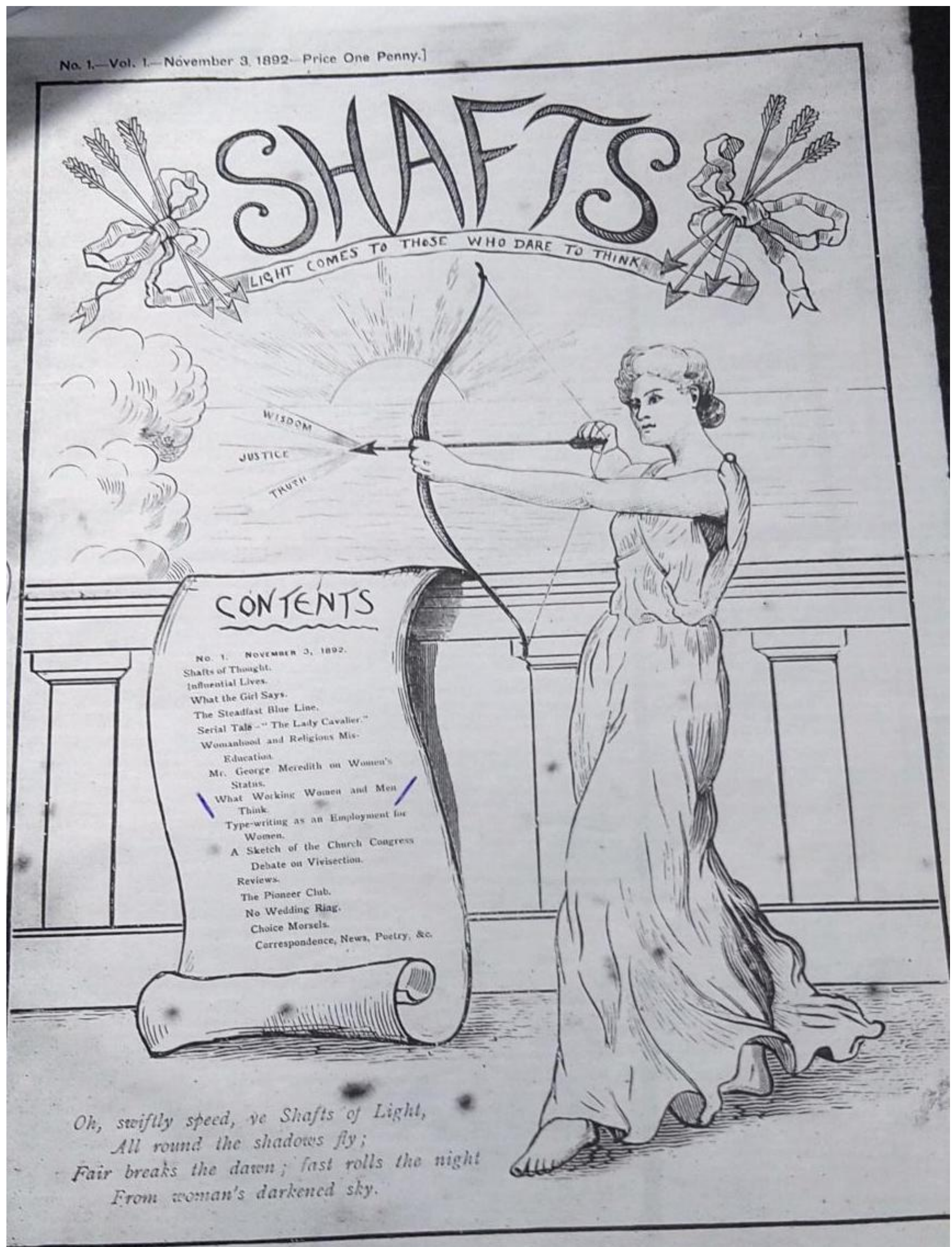
We have many lessons to learn ere we fully understand the relative value of things. It is a lesson much needed, most important to progress, and Mrs. Massingberd has great cause for rejoic- ing, in the fact that the club her wealth, ability, and goodness have called into existence, is proving so good a school for this, as well as many other lessons.

Where women gather for such pur-

MRS. MASSINGBERD.

THE PRESIDENT AND FOUNDER OF THE PIONEER CLUB.

Appendix 8: Front Cover of ***Shafts***



No. 1.—Vol. 1.—November 3, 1892—Price One Penny.]

SHAFTS

LIGHT COMES TO THOSE WHO DARE TO THINK

WISDOM

JUSTICE

TRUTH

CONTENTS

No. 1. November 3, 1892.

Shafts of Thought.
Influential Lives.
What the Girl Says.
The Steadfast Blue Line.
Serial Tale—"The Lady Cavalier."
Womanhood and Religious Mis-Education.
Mr. George Meredith on Women's Status.
What Working Women and Men Think.
Type-writing as an Employment for Women.
A Sketch of the Church Congress Debate on Vivisection.
Reviews.
The Pioneer Club.
No Wedding Ring.
Choice Morsels.
Correspondence, News, Poetry, &c.

Oh, swiftly speed, ye Shafts of Light,
All round the shadows fly;
Fair breaks the dawn; fast rolls the night
From woman's darkened sky.

Appendix 9: Letter from Sara E. Fisher - President of the Rochester Browning Club to Mr A.J. Armstrong

129 S. Fitzhugh St. Rochester N.Y.

Mr. A. J. Armstrong
Waco, Texas

Dear Sir:
Your letter regarding the Browning Club is just received. It was organized in the Spring of 1884, by my Mother, Mrs. Geo. W. Fisher - meeting every Friday afternoon (except Good Friday) for about twelve weeks - Prof. J. H. Gilmore (?) of the Rochester University read the poems to us - for about eight years! He then had an offer to go out of town on that day, and we released him. The Club disliked to forego the delightful meetings, and as the six or eight men in it belonged to other clubs for which they wrote papers, it was voted to be continued - not longer to read Browning though still retaining the name? -

At the close of the 2nd year a photograph of Robert Browning with his autograph upon it, came as a gift to my mother - The meetings were not held in 1895 or 1908 - owing to the deaths of my parents, in February of ~~that~~ those years - We did have a fine celebration for our 25th Anniversary, and I am not sure that an extra copy is left.

I continued the meeting of the club each year - till 32 years were completed. Then an accident in mid winter to my heating apparatus compelled me to close my house - as I thought temporarily - and it has never been re-opened, and within that period many members have died - When I next go to the house I will see if it is possible to find an extra copy of the booklet, which was printed, giving the history of the club -

If so, will send it to you, although it is not at all certain that I can find one - It became a great feature of the life in Rochester and at the close of each season we had some celebrity come for an evening gathering to which we invited about one hundred guests -

Mrs. Sarah C. Le Moyne read for us three times - Miss Louise Hersey (?) once, and other well known public characters -

I shall be sorry if unable to oblige you -

Very truly

Feb. 15, 1922

Sara E. Fisher

Appendix 10: Drawing of the Pioneer Axe by Jane Cunningham Croly in *The History of the Woman's Club Movement in America*

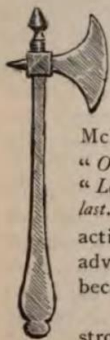
bids fair to cost more. The sooner women realize the fact that they, too, are in fault, the better, and by every means of influence they possess, impress upon the public mind the wickedness of that uncleanliness, which, since it is a direct violation of the Divine laws of health, bears in its train the death penalty."

The officers of Karrakatta are: President, Lady Onslow; vice-president, Mrs. Hensman; corresponding secretary, Mrs. Cowan; recording secretary, Mrs. Alfred Hassell; treasurer, Miss Ferguson.

The chairman of the literary department is Mrs. Burt; hygienic, Mrs. Walter James; artistic, Mrs. Willis; legal and educational, Mrs. Hensman. The dues of Karrakatta are one guinea (five dollars) per annum; half this sum to country members. If a member is absent for a year, her dues are remitted during that time, but she retains her membership. Members are admitted by a majority vote; one blackball in seven being required for a rejection. The elections are annual by ballot, but officers and chairmen of departments are eligible for reëlection.

ENGLAND

The Pioneer Club of London, England, was founded in May, 1892, by two women, Mrs. Massingberd and Mrs. Headlam. Mrs. Massingberd, a woman of wealth, culture, and possessed of great energy, became the president, and Mrs. Headlam, the honorary secretary. The object of the club was "coöperation in any movement for the advancement of women, and to promote fellowship among women themselves." The original committee out of which the club grew contained the names of Lady Harberton, Mrs. Eva McLaren, Mrs. Rose Mary Crawshay, Miss Shannon Crawford, Mrs. Oscar Wilde, Mrs. Frank Snoad, and others equally well known.



"*One and all.*"
"*Love thyself last.*"

The sole qualification for membership was an active personal interest in woman's social, educational, and political advancement. Each member, on joining, received a number, and became known by it.

Among the earliest members were Mrs. Morgan Browne, so strongly identified with the Liberal movement and the labor party in

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