

Shakespeare, King of What? Gender, Nineteenth-Century Patriotism, and the Case of *Poet-lore*

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Abstract

This essay contextualizes Thomas Carlyle's "King Shakespeare" in the context of women's nineteenth-century patriotism and the journal *Poet-lore*, which was co-founded by Charlotte Porter, the editor of *Shakespeareana*. Lootens uncovers the ways in which a "cosmopolitan, feminist" Shakespeare emerges in the nineteenth century through female editorships and women's reading circles, often in opposition to the imperialistic, English Shakespeare championed by Carlyle. American women's reading circles explicitly connected female education with active citizenship, idealizing the Shakespearean heroine as a "New Woman" as they did so. *Poet-Lore's* 1896 section on new readings of *The Taming of the Shrew* is exemplary in this regard, attempting to recuperate Katharina's final speech as an expression of ethical and personal reform. The essay concludes by observing that although *Poet-Lore's* racial politics can oppose white American civic womanhood to "foreign, ignorant voters controlled by demagogues," it nonetheless engages Porter's own assertion that a cosmopolitan or multicultural influence was not only desirable but also necessary for the full development of American civilization.

Introduction

In 1860, in the Preface to her notorious *Poems before Congress*, Elizabeth Barrett Browning suggested that if the passionate political poetry of that volume "should appear to English readers too pungently rendered to admit of a patriotic respect to the English sense of things," this was because such readers misunderstood patriotism. "What I have written," she asserted, "has simply been written because I love truth and justice *quand même*, — more than Plato and Plato's country, more than Dante and Dante's country, more even than Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country." For "if patriotism be a virtue indeed, it cannot mean an exclusive devotion to our country's interests, — for that is only another form of devotion to personal interests, family interests, or provincial interests, all of which, if not driven past themselves, are vulgar and immoral objects" (Browning

1900, 3:314-16; 314, 315).¹ Even today, these are fighting words.² From a woman who had only recently been termed England's Queen of Song, however, such language was — and was clearly meant to be — particularly shocking. For as E.B.B. insists upon an adamantly cosmopolitan patriotism, defending women's writing of poetry concerned with affairs of state as well as personal or domestic interests, she does even more than openly criticize "Shakespeare's country";³ she seems to suggest that "truth and justice" might, and perhaps even do, go against Shakespeare. Not surprisingly, however, "seems" turns out to be the operative term: this was, after all, the woman who had once asked a friend whether she wouldn't "climb your ladder ten times" just "to catch the color" of Shakespeare's "garters" (Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Letter to Mary Russell Mitford, 15 July 1841, in Browning 1983, 1:234-37; 234). As E.B.B. proceeds to envision an ideal future, Shakespeare, or rather Shakespeare's specific form of glory, is at once recuperated and extended. "I dream of the day," she continues, "when an English statesman shall arise with a heart too large for England." Only then, she predicts, "shall the nation be glorious, and her praise, instead of exploding from within, from loud civic mouths, come to her from without, as all worthy praise must, from the alliances she has fostered and the population she has saved" (315-16). Implicitly returning Shakespeare's country to the spirit of "Shakespeare," Barrett Browning thus shapes her diplomat-hero to look revealingly like a mid-century poet-hero. That is, like King Shakespeare himself, the statesman of whom she dreams will embody quintessential British glory precisely by being too great to be contained by Britain.

If Barrett Browning's credo ends with the evocation of imaginary praise for Shakespeare's country, however, some sense of aftershock remains. Once raised, after all, the possibility that one might, at some point, have to choose between Shakespeare and "truth and justice" cannot be so easily laid. And indeed, if there is a ghost haunting Europe's cosmopolitan Shakespeare, poetic justice surely plays out in this specter's emergence in *Poems before Congress*: that is, within a volume dedicated at once to a patriotism too large for single countries and to the passionate defense of Italian nationalist struggles.

As that great early celebration of "King Shakespeare," Thomas Carlyle's *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* famously demonstrates, nineteenth-century celebrations of Shakespeare take form through the uneasy, shifting interplays of cosmopolitanism, nationalism, and imperialism, the implications of whose literal terms may change almost from moment to moment. "Will you give-up your Indian Empire or your Shakspeare, you English; never have had any Indian Empire or never have had any Shakspeare?" Carlyle asks — only to answer, "Indian Empire will go, at any rate, some day; but this Shakspeare does not go, he lasts for ever with

us; we cannot give-up our Shakespeare!" (Carlyle 1969, 113). Who are "we?" one might ask this text in turn. By 1840, when Carlyle first gave his lectures on hero-worship, King Shakespeare's subjects were clearly international. After all, as Richard Foulkes notes, "Shakespeare in the age of Empire" inspired a burgeoning "global" performance "network," as "actors of many different native tongues" made names for themselves, not merely in English or in bilingual performances, but even, in some cases, in their native tongue (Foulkes 2002, 4).⁴ And indeed, in crowning King Shakespeare, Carlyle, like his 1827 correspondent Goethe, clearly celebrates the incipient literary triumph of "what is universal in humanity"(7). Nonetheless, when Carlyle says "we," he also means the British. "We" possess an Indian empire, after all; and that is only the beginning: "In America, in New Holland, east and west to the very Antipodes," Carlyle predicts, "there will be a Saxondom covering great spaces of the Globe." To unify that "Saxondom," it will take "an English King, whom no time or chance, Parliament, or combination of Parliaments, can dethrone!" And hence, of course, Carlyle's famous figurative crowning of the Bard: "This King Shakspeare," Carlyle continues, "does not he shine, in crowned sovereignty, over us all, as the noblest, gentlest, yet strongest of rallying-signs?" (114).

Only an early nineteenth-century writer could have hoped to enlist imperial "Saxondom" under the gentlest of all rallying signs.⁵ As heirs to what Eric Hobsbawm and others have characterized as late nineteenth-century patriotism's shift to the right, we may be tempted to read Carlyle's Saxon "King Shakespeare" as a figure for imperialist ethnic nationalism; and if so, we are right (Hobsbawm 1987, 143). Jingo Shakespeare is real. Still, as I hope to show here, much like other early nineteenth-century celebrations of world citizenship, the dream of King Shakespeare as a gentle rallying-sign was both complex and resilient; it could serve at once as cover and as counter to the overtly imperial Bard. Enlisted though he might be in service of "Anglo-Saxon" imperial supremacy, Carlyle's King Shakespeare remained closely aligned with other less frightening, if still somewhat disquieting, patriotic Bards. As late as 1888, in *The Secret Drama of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, for example, British poet Gerald Massey could still contrast "our" Elizabethan "Prince of Peace" not only to mortal monarchs, but to Christ, explicitly awarding highest glories to Shakespeare's nonviolent "Throne" in "the heart of all" (untitled poem, in Hughes, ed. 1904, 209). An Englishman whose throne of the heart was too large for England, a "race" model whose power belonged not to one nation, but to the human race, Shakespeare could thus help define British patriotism in terms of transcendence. What such transcendence meant, however, tended to remain up for grabs. Was it, for example, the transcendence of "Saxondom" as the racial royalty of humanity? Or that of British constitutional monarchy as an evolutionary (inter)national ideal

toward which all "less developed" nations should (perhaps futilely) strive? Or was it, rather, a liberal, Enlightenment transcendence, whereby Shakespeare, as the speaking soul of one among many great "races" — as a national voice rising in harmonious unison with other such voices — issued a Mazzinian rallying cry for cosmopolitanism? All of these possibilities were alive at the century's end; and our understanding of each stands to gain from recent investigations into cosmopolitanism, both as a "plural, particular" ideal and as one whose tense, intimate, and various relations to nationalism may be grasped, if at all, only in highly specific contexts.⁶

Shakespeare and Feminist Patriotism

Here, I want to explore one such context: that is, Shakespeare's powerful, disputed role in the complex process of conceiving feminine patriotism and "race" patriotism in the United States at the end of the century, as played out within a constellation of texts devoted to civic "Shakespeare study." In *Shakespeare and the Politics of Culture in Late Victorian England*, her study of the "late Victorian popular" and pedagogical "obsession" with *The Merchant of Venice*, Linda Rozmovits explores how fin-de-siècle British Bardolatry, having "put all" its moral "eggs in Shakespeare's basket," confronts the simultaneous challenges both of a feminist or proto-feminist "cult of Portia" and of the ways in which Henry Irving's more complex, sympathetic portrayal of Shylock reverberated through a culture increasingly shaped by Jewish public power (Rozmovits 1998, 3, 57, 69; see 62-79). Often, Rozmovits suggests, conflicts over "race," religion, or ethnicity in the *Merchant* seem to be displaced — or perhaps, better said, dissembled and occluded — by questions of gender politics.⁷ In one sense, her point may well hold in the very different context of Shakespeare studies in the United States: certainly, to consider questions of nationalism, ethnicity, and cosmopolitanism in the late nineteenth-century U.S. is inevitably to address questions of gender. In another sense, however, in an American context, relations between "race" studies and guides to womanhood may be at once closer and more open. Consider, for example, the following passage from an 1897 *Shakespeareana* article on "Shakespeare as a Text-book," in which Charles F. Johnson speaks against teaching from expurgated editions:

[I]f there were young women in the class the case might be different . . . but that any sane man can be hurt by the Shakespearian frankness is . . . preposterous. . . . As a moral teacher Shakespeare is based on sound ethical principles, and interprets chastity, honor, motherhood, loverhood, friendship, as our race has always interpreted them in its healthy developments. We are not Arabs nor Hungarians nor Frenchmen, and the moral standards of alien races should not be held up before our young men. If that is done, moral growth may be distorted. It is not so much that we are better, as that we are other. Shakespeare is

closely akin to us, and, as the creator of Imogen and Miranda, is one of our moral teachers. (Johnson 1897, 496-97)

Safe for sane men, if not for young women and the unbalanced masculines, Shakespeare teaches a separate and surely, ultimately, unequal "American" "race" morality; and he does so, specifically, as creator of Imogen and Miranda. Lest this seem idiosyncratic, one need only turn to two essays by that much-published educator William Taylor Thom, "The Introduction of Shakespeare into the Schools" (1883-84a) and "Shakespeare Study for American Women" (1883-84b). Eccentric only in its explicitness, the cognitive dissonance of these essays clearly prefigures canon debates to come. If the "American people" is to remain "true to its origin and worthy of its heritage from the race of Shakespeare," Thom argues, the nation's youth must study the Bard. For such reading will awaken "ancestral instinct and passion for general and individual freedom" which is "the greatest contribution of the Teuton to modern civilization" (1883-84a, 11; emphasis in original). Interestingly, in girls, that instinct manages to be fully compatible with the life-goal of attempting to please men by imitating fictional heroines. "If . . . the women of our race would know and be what the men of our race love as their ideals," Thom urges, "let them study Shakespeare and be what he makes his women" (1883-84b, 101). To be Shakespearean is to be sacred, is to be Teutonic: "True to his race, with whom love of true womanhood is a sort of religion," Thom's Shakespeare "supplements" even "the Good Book itself" by revealing "the Teutonic mind in contrast with the Hebrew mind." "To the Jew," Thom explains, "woman was an inferior; to the Teuton, she is a friend and consort" (1883-84a, 101).⁸

That all this may seem in some sense painfully predictable should render it no less painful. What follows, however, may come as a slight surprise. "The Italian, the Welshman, the Pole, the Frenchman, the Irishman, the Hun, the German, the Anglo-Saxon, and the omnipresent Jew are with us and of us," Thom asserts. "They represent the various branches of the great, conquering, civilizing Aryan family of peoples. Their stock is Sklavonic, Keltic, Latin, Teutonic, with all that those names imply of deed and thought in ages past. The union of these races should give the good qualities of all in the resulting predominant type." Suddenly, the association of "Teutonic" or "Aryan" ideals with racial purity might seem to fall away, making room for some new version of Carlyle's King, albeit a more republican leader, stripped of material Saxon genealogy and moved from the British empire to the U.S. Echoing Carlyle, Thom asserts that "all these branches of humanity" must be "made to conform to a standard flexible enough — human enough — to permit and produce unity amid variety. Such an agency we have in the infinite humanity of our greatest poet, 'Nature's darling.'" Thus, Shakespeare emerges as the controlling monarch of the Teutonizing,

Christianizing melting pot: "Think of the future of a nation with such elements as ours," reads the closing peroration, "conformed to the sturdy Anglo-Saxon type, nurtured in the morals of the New Testament, and bred upon the free human spirit of Shakespeare!" (1883-84b, 102).

If "Teutonic" and "Aryan" do not mean quite what we might expect here, they nonetheless clearly mean something.⁹ And in fact, as a footnote makes clear, full access to such "breeding" through Shakespeare's "free human spirit" is to be explicitly limited to Euro-Americans. Granted: African Americans, too, must learn the "terse, nervous speech of King James's Bible and Shakespeare" if they are to "become and remain good American citizens"; but they are to do so in "hope" of learning "to solve the knotty problem of their relations toward the masterful, superior white race, of whom one of them said recently, with a ludicrously pathetic wisdom of mistake: 'Taint no use talkin'; dem Angry-Saxons is boun'ter rule anyway'" (Thom 1883-84b, 98).¹⁰ For some Americans, it would seem, the point of Shakespeare study was to ensure training in civic silence.

From *Shakespeariana* to *Poet-Lore*

Thom's essays appeared in 1883 and 1884 in *Shakespeariana*, a journal published by the Shakespeare Society of New York. There is some irony in that venue. For *Shakespeariana*'s editor at the time was a woman named Charlotte Porter;¹¹ and after Porter left *Shakespeariana*, she was to co-found *Poet-lore*, a journal whose editorial policies were often to provide powerful critical resistance to positions such as Thom's. Dismissively characterized by one twentieth-century critic as having "served, at first," as a mere "newsletter for Browning and Shakespeare Societies in the U.S.A." (Peterson 1969, 89), *Poet-lore* did indeed devote a great deal of space to detailed reports of Shakespeare study, both within and beyond the classroom; and it generally did so in a spirit of strong commitment to what its historian Melvin H. Bernstein has termed "the Browning-Shakespeare touchstone" (Bernstein 1966, 18). Consider, for example, the journal's cover art for 1895 (figure 1). At top, draped from the strings of what is surely a lyre, stretches a banner. One side, in quaintly archaic printing, reads "Shake-Speare"; the other, "Browning." Need one say more? Perhaps — and not merely because the banner in question runs under a line that reads: "Devoted to the Appreciation of the Poets and to Comparative Literature." For Shakespeare's and Browning's names hardly stand alone here. From Hafiz to Hitomaro, to Puskin, Heine, "Sophokles," Hroswitha, Caedmon, Corneille, Catullus, Cervantes, Gorki, Tagore, Turgenieff, Homer, and Bhavabhuti — such "lore" scarcely seems to fit a mere newsletter. However idiosyncratic or comically chauvinist the details of *Poet-lore*'s celebratory wreath may be — how did Bayard Taylor slip in between Chaucer, Milton, and Ariosto, for example? — the range of writers thus honored remains striking.

Apparently, the "Browning-Shakespeare touchstone," "adventurously" applied, allowed for many sorts of literary appreciation (Bernstein 1966, 18). And in fact, the journal, which was early in its defense of Whitman and praise of Blake, celebrated an American poetry created not only by, say, Emerson or Whitman, but also by the likes of Emma Lazarus, Paul Laurence Dunbar, and Emily Dickinson. Through *Poet-lore*, a wide American audience apparently received its first exposure to writers such as Ibsen, Strindberg, Hauptmann, Gorki, Tagore, Schnitzler, and Maeterlink (McHenry 1980, 73).

Shakespeare, then, stood in varied company here. Still, he retained pride of place. Indeed, Shakespeare studies stood at the origin of *Poet-lore*: for it was through *Shakespeareiana* that co-editors Charlotte Porter and Helen A. Clarke first met. The two women's critical and scholarly collaboration, which formed part of a lovership sealed by the exchange of rings, began when Clarke submitted to an article on Shakespeare and music for Porter's approval; it ended only with Clarke's death in 1926.¹² Pioneers in women's formal education — Clarke studied at the University of Pennsylvania and Porter at Wells College and the Sorbonne — Porter and Clarke were also deeply devoted to a grassroots study-circle culture within which women's literary self-education meant education for active citizenship.¹³ Indeed, to turn, in particular, to the study-guide sections of the early years of *Poet-lore* is to see how the mid-century activist feminism of Seneca Falls or Britain's Langham Place group survived and thrived within the sorts of reading circles in which so many women's suffrage supporters seem to have found cultural homes (Scheil 2012). It is also to be reminded of connections that trace even further back, to those precise interminglings of conceptions of "national literatures," feminine patriotism, and cosmopolitan Shakespeare reading which shaped the writings of Germaine de Staël and her admirer Anna Jameson. For even as love of Shakespeare first introduced these two influential New Women to one another, so Porter and Clarke sought to effect ties between King Shakespeare and certain highly particular versions of that other great, ambiguously cosmopolitan fin-de-siècle figure, the New Woman. In fact, as Bernstein puts it, "to read" this particular "monthly magazine, twenty-five cents per copy, which, according to its cover page was 'devoted to Shakespeare, Browning, and the comparative study of literature,' was to collaborate toward the creation of a new world of emergent women, positivism, beneficent Social Darwinism, a vague liberalism, and an understanding of the supranational art of literature" (Bernstein 1966, 14).

Drawn through the likes of *Poet-lore*, then, the lines between Jameson and the ground-breaking feminist Shakespearean criticism of the latter years of the twentieth century may be shorter than we often tend to think. Certainly the true woman — including the Shakespearean women — often

appeared here as a New Woman. "Shakespeare!" wrote Alice Groff in 1898, for example, glorifying "the prophet and herald of the 'new woman' of every stage of social development, even to the *fin de siècle* type of our own day." "Shakespeare," she continues, "with a divine disregard of all social ideals, has given us the human woman, not only in her actuality, but in her possibility, and in such variety that he seems to have run the whole gamut of human variability, — with the exception of *one* type. He has given us not one single specimen of the domestic, home-sphere-bound woman" (Groff 1898, 248-49; emphasis in original). Continuing earlier traditions of politicized (and essentialized) readings of "Shakespeare's heroines" which had begun in the 1830s with Jameson, *Poet-lore* writers often sought, to quote Vida D. Scudder in 1890, to reconcile the feminine "ideal of the sixteenth century and that of the nineteenth" — the alleged Shakespearean reverence for women as "things ensky'd and sainted" with Browning's idealized Victorian visions of female "suffering human souls" (Scudder 1889, 465, 461). "Can you worship a fellow-worker as you worship a saint?" asks Scudder. Yes, the answer comes — as long as that fellow worker's "essential womanhood" expresses itself through her abstract, public passion for "universal righteousness" (462-63). Just as one might be most English by being more than English, it seems, one might be most womanly by being more than "womanly."

Reconciling Shakespearean heroines with "emergent women" could take quite varied forms. In the essay quoted above, for example, Scudder falls back on familiar ground. If one attempts to look "back along the ages" for "women with characters so varied and clear, with souls as deeply true" as those of Browning's heroines, she writes, one wanders "through a waste of arid satire, of light persiflage" — until, "through the vista of centuries, gracious forms appear; the forms of Portia, of Virgilia. The smiles of Rosalind and Beatrice flash upon us, the saintliness of Isabel shines radiant and pure" (Scudder 1889, 453). This is invocation, not analysis. Blithely disregarding differences not only among Shakespeare's female characters, but also among such heroines' previous nineteenth-century critics, Scudder claims to follow Jameson, Ruskin, and Dowden in glorifying Shakespeare's women as both "absolutely good" and as possessed of a complete and "crystal-clear" simplicity as fixed and flawless as that of jewels (455-56).¹⁴ On one level, such heroines stand no chance against Browning's "eager, complex figures, capable of growth, liable to fall"; on another, these same modern heroines represent merely a "correction and expansion of the old ideal" (461, 465). For the "essential sanctity of the woman" remains intact: "in the world," as once only in private, women must still "uplift and soothe, as in the days of Shakespeare" (462, 465).

Alcestis' Silence

Scudder's mythologizing heroine-study stands in instructive relation to Charlotte Porter's 1891 "Old and New Ideals of Womanhood: The Iphigenia and Alkestis Stories" (1891).¹⁵ Here, the focus lies on literary accounts of the "sacrifice of woman by man for his own and the public good." More specifically, Porter attempts to trace the historical development of those "notions of social duty and decorum" which "exact" sacrifice; of conceptions of sacrifice's "real value" and relations to "the unknown powers"; and of the level of "consciousness, willingness, or weighing of the whole deed on the part of the victim" (Porter, Charlotte 1891, 269). At issue, explicitly, is the assumption of the "sacrificers" that while "the man's interest lies united with that of the public, the woman's lies "necessarily apart and altogether separable from it" (270). From Aeschylus through Sophocles to Euripides, and then to Goethe, Porter traces shifting accounts of Agamemnon's doomed, sacrificial slaughter of his child Iphigenia, in pursuit of the Trojan War. Aeschylus, Porter writes, opens the way for an account capable of stressing three points: the "wrong" done Iphigenia's mother Clytemnestra and her child through Iphigenia's sacrifice "in the name of the public good"; the power of "the fight of the human will against destiny"; and "the leading of the gods to understanding under the law of sore experience." Whereas Sophocles underplays these moments, she suggests, Euripides explores them, developing a new "conception of the claims of womanhood as being part of the social body" (273, 274). Indeed, Euripides exalts Iphigenia's transformation into a patriotic heroine who stands forth to die for Greece; and though this newly heroic account eventually falters, Goethe's *Iphigenia in Tauris* succeeds where Euripides failed, dramatizing its heroine's higher "moral insight and action" through her conscious defense of personal integrity and self-respect (275).¹⁶

From here, Porter goes on to trace a similar line of development, beginning with Euripides's *Alkestis*. Chaucer, she writes, was "an heir of all the intervening time, in that he takes the standpoint of the woman" in his own Alkestis figure, Hypermnestra. Still, his "child-like" tone, which renders him "in a way, younger than all the Greeks," nonetheless fails to achieve accord with "the temper of Euripides' subtle treatment of the Alkestis story" (Porter, Charlotte 1891, 276-77). That honor goes instead to "Shakespeare's portrayal of the calm fortitude of Hermione" (277). For like Euripides' Alkestis, who offers to die in place of her (ambiguously portrayed) husband Admetus, Shakespeare's Hermione proves herself "serenely capable of the perfect fearless service of love" (278).¹⁷ Possessed of "the utter calm of wise sight" — not to mention married to "lords" who resemble one another in their dubious "exercise or use of what they conceive to be their due," Alkestis and Hermione "are much alike." And so, too, Porter notes, are their fates: both "die," leaving behind penitent husbands who are nonetheless tempted toward second marriages;

both appear, miraculously returned to life, to claim the honor they have earned. (Shakespeare's Paulina, Porter notes, "can work wonders as well as Herakles" [279].) Not surprisingly, this line of development ends with the "last version of the Alkestis story," which "Browning puts in the mouth of his 'lyric girl' Balaustion" (278).

The result of all these readings is indeed a form of "poet lore," at once created and found. "These ideals all tally well with each other," Porter's article concludes: "The Iphigenia of Goethe differs from the highest reach of the Iphigenia of Euripides in counting as true service of love and only worthy the doing that which does her higher independent self no wrong. The clearest illustration in Shakespeare and in Browning of the old Alkestis story sets the limit of the good of self-sacrifice this side of self respect . . ." (Porter, Charlotte 1891, 280).¹⁸ Dramatically different from the Scudder piece in its literary and political ambitions, Porter's article, too, thus turns Shakespeare study to the celebration of women's expanding public duties. Here, too, moreover, "the development of the ideal woman implies . . . a more highly evolved ideal of love." For Porter, however, what matters is less the survival of eternal femininity than the critical understanding of loving femininity's right relations to civic duty. "Development in the ideal of womanhood," we learn, "lies parallel with the development of the ideal of patriotic service." Both expect reciprocity; both require a certain level of clear-sighted detachment: "the chief end of the sacrifice of the heroine or the self-forgetting labor of the patriot" is not "to secure the special temporary good of the loved one, or of the state, but to lead the way to the good of good" (280).

Recuperating the Shrew

To be sure, here as in the rest of this discussion, I am attempting to trace a drift — or, with luck, a discourse — rather than a homogenous, programmatic stance. Not every analysis of female Shakespearean characters in *Poet-lore* supported New Womanhood; not every reading that praised those characters cast them as civic models. Still, even in articles with quite different concerns, the impulse to conceive Shakespeare in cosmopolitan, feminist terms often continues to make itself felt. Consider, for example, the journal's 1896 three-part section entitled "New Views of Shakespeare's Shrew." Arthur S. Way's "Kate the Curst as an Elizabethan 'New Woman,'" which opens the section, initially casts Katharine, much like a Jameson heroine, as a sympathetic figure "who might under other conditions have become the brilliant leader of a *salon*, like Mme. de Staël, or a power in stirring times, like Madame Roland, a girl of swift perceptions and ready wit, a red-hot Beatrice" (Way 1896, 171).¹⁹ Very quickly, however, Way's Katharine takes on a different guise: that of an Elizabethan counterpart to the excessively independent women of Way's own time. The "New Woman," he suggests, was "a feature of the close" of the sixteenth as well as the

nineteenth century; and since "citizen and courtier alike might be inclined to fear that the New Woman was becoming too self-assertive," they "might thus have welcomed" *The Taming of the Shrew* as "an object-lesson on the wisest, kindest, and most effectual way of curbing her" (172). Certainly, Way seems to do so — as well as to take the word "curb" fairly literally. For though he disavows the use of "coarse brutality" or "cold-blooded grinding tyranny" as un-English, he insists that Katharine must be reclaimed, as "a beautiful wild creature may be tamed for man's service" (172, 171). Saved "from herself," in part through the deployment of "suffering, . . . cold, hunger, and sleeplessness" to counteract her "too redundant vitality," Way's Katharine does come to relish obedience, even in "the dreaded yet inevitable scene in which she will have to show herself submissive": for she "regards" her performance here "as a piece of concerted acting . . . in which she is to take her cue" from Petruchio, so that they can "amicably play into each other's hands" (171, 178, 180). After all, she receives her reward for submitting to Petruchio: that is, the power to domineer over other women. Like a "mutinous rabble" transformed into "a disciplined army" — or, perhaps, a wild stray transformed into a well-trained herd dog — Katharine has become "stronger" through disciplined obedience (181). Driving "the rebel brides like sheep before her," she proves her "imperious" strength by enacting her master's will (180). Tellingly, she points out first that disobedience is "'bad form,'" then that it is "unreasonable and ungrateful," and finally that it is "futile." Eventually, led forth by Petruchio "not as a captive at his chariot-wheels, but as a fellow victor," she can savor "the sweetness of triumph in submission" (181).

From his initial evocation of a thwarted Staël or Mme. Roland, Way thus shapes a fairy tale of joyous, sexy submission. Indeed, Way ends his account, "They lived happily ever after" (1896, 181). Such a reading's attractions for a journal like *Poet-lore* seem clear: for even if certain aspects of Way's account seem designed to preclude later feminist readings, other aspects surely prefigure them. The section's second essay, by W. J. Rolfe, goes further, devoting similar passion and far greater precision to its reading of the play's sexual politics. A Shakespeare editor who had already published his own edition of *The Taming of the Shrew*, Rolfe is no teller of fairy tales: he adamantly locates his own reading within specific contexts of scholarship and performance (Rolfe 1896, 184). At stake here is an argument concerning Shakespeare's treatment of his presumed source materials, and more specifically, his elevation of Katharine and Petruchio's characters to what Rolfe terms "a higher plane of humanity" (184). Indeed, to Rolfe's mind, the very word "taming" requires scare quotes (185, 188, 190). Explicitly rejecting suggestions that Petruchio tames his wife "as he would break a vicious horse," Rolfe presents instead the successful "homeopathic treatment" of a willing patient — indeed, of a "true woman" (185). Petruchio's "purpose throughout," Rolfe asserts, "is to show Katherine [*sic*] an exaggerated reflex of herself, and to make her feel how

unreasonable and unworthy such a character is; but he does it in a thoroughly good-natured way." When Katharine ceases to resist, then, it is because she has been "compelled to say to herself, 'This is what *I* am coming to, if I go on as I have begun: let me endeavor to reform myself first, and then my husband, for we are a couple of wretched fools'" (188; emphasis in original). Shakespeare's "'taming' process, all through," in short, "is marked by a certain refinement, in spite of its outward" — and inherited — "coarseness" (184, 188). The play must thus be acted with great "delicacy and discretion"; otherwise, it ceases to be fully Shakespearean, devolving instead into something akin to that original "rude and vulgar farce" which the Bard took such "pains to elevate and refine" (188).²⁰ And this necessity extends, of course, to the final scene. For by this point, having already learned to meet Petruchio's most absurd demands with "merry irony," Katharine has been "bright enough to suspect that some trial of . . . conjugal obedience is going on" and to enter "into it with a spirit of hearty enjoyment" inspired by recognition of Petruchio's "devoted service" rather than any submission to "the supposed superiority of sex" (190-91, emphasis in original). In her speech to the wives, properly understood, "there is little that should offend our modern taste": for if the husband is "represented as *sovereign*, he is also *servant*." As to Katharine's move to lay her hand under her husband's foot — well, Rolfe suggests, that part was surely added by someone other than Shakespeare (191).

Less optimistically, though no less suggestively, the final "new shrew" reading, Ella Crowell's "Shakespeare's Katharine and Ibsen's Nora" (1896) returns to storytelling mode. Here, however, the subject is difference, whether between heroines or periods; and the model for reading Shakespeare seems to come closer to, say, the novels of George Eliot than to fairy tales. In her historically "premature" "restless thirsting for liberty and her blind, indefinite conception of a wrong done her by society," Crowell's Katharine risks "deeper unhappiness, and perhaps insanity" (Crowell 1896, 193). When her "spirit is broken and she finally surrenders, she forms for herself a code of ethics and turns her conquered strength to the pursuance of duty." Here, the struggle of the play is primarily internal: Katharine's "surrender is not so much a sudden yielding to Petruchio's firm purpose, impetuous audacity, and strong will, as it is the climax of exhaustion which her fiery spirit has brought upon itself" (194). Only "after recognizing the hopelessness of her struggle," does she give in; and thus, rebellion as well as submission teaches "her deep, earnest, passionate nature" to comprehend "all that is best in the life which the spirit of the times has prescribed for women" (193). Katharine, Crowell makes clear, is a stronger, more admirable character than Nora; but thanks to the advance of civilization, "higher education," and "the diminution of war, and physical perils," as well as to "the growing prestige of intellectual over physical attributes," Nora can and must

strike out to develop "her deeper nature" as Katharine dare not (193, 195). Were Shakespeare's "shrew" a nineteenth-century woman, her "married life" with Petruchio might garner condemnation as "superficial in its quiet happiness." As it is, through willing submission to historical limitations, catalyzed by a "change . . . rudely thrust upon her," Katharine achieves a married life that is "deep, true, and real" (193, 194, 193).

Conclusion

While those critics who published in *Poet-lore* might not agree about either New Womanhood or the claims of artistic cosmopolitanism, they tended to conceive of Shakespeare studies in terms of both international literary relations and the contemporary politics of gender. Indeed, from the perspective of Shakespeare studies, such emphasis may partly explain the insistence with which *Poet-lore* aligns Shakespeare with Robert Browning. As we have seen, such pairing was far from absolute: in practice, Shakespeare's female characters might easily be paralleled to those of Euripides, Goethe, or Ibsen. Still, Browning claims top banner-status; and he does so, I suspect, for at least two reasons. In the first place, what Robert Sawyer terms the "Shakespeareanization" of Robert Browning was a two-way process: that is, even as Browning gained literary authority through his association with the Bard, so, too, the Shakespeare of *fin-de-siècle* readers like Porter and Clarke might take on certain political meanings — including a more intimate relationship to American literature — through his association with Browning (Sawyer 2003, 84-113). Thus, for example, *Poet-lore* seems concerned at points to demonstrate the difference between speaking for the "English," as a "race," and speaking as a successor to the Bard.²¹ When, for instance, George W. Alger's 1896 "Tennyson as Poet of the English People" anoints Britain's Poet Laureate as the first genuine "Poet of the English Race," Alger does more than praise Tennyson's "essentially" English conservatism and respect for law; his representation of the "slow, deep feeling of his race"; and his capacity to remain "uniformly sane, even in his deepest passion" (Alger 1896, 329, 327, 328).²² He also ensures that Tennyson's new title as "greatest national poet" precludes its possessor from standing as a true heir to Shakespeare. There is little use in turning to Shakespeare, Alger argues, if one seeks to understand "the spirit of the English people": for "Shakespeare's men and women are too much 'citizens of the world' to be of aid in studying England merely." Not surprisingly, another poet shares this backhanded compliment: "Browning," too, proves to be an unsuitable guide to the "English race" "because he was too busy telling the world what all men and women thought and felt, to pay much attention to what the English people were or did" (329).

To the extent that Shakespeare is an "English race" man, then, he might find an heir in Tennyson; to the extent that he belongs to the world, his heir must be Browning (and, perhaps,

Browning's own heir, Ibsen). If the honor thus accorded the former Poet Laureate of England seems slight, it may grow more attractive in comparison to Poet-lore's treatment of that celebrated, if unofficial, "Poet Laureate of Empire," Rudyard Kipling. After an invidious comparison of Kipling's "Song of the English" to "one of Shakespeare's loudest strains of patriotism" in *King John*, for example,²³ a review of Kipling's *Seven Seas* volume notes that the "material dominion" Kipling praises is "as nothing compared with the subtler expansion of the influences of the English or any other racial genius, keeping no bounds of colonies or dependencies, nor to be marked and owned like a branded sheep. Beside such Imperial Dispersion, Imperial Dominion is a puny temporality" (P. [Charlotte Porter] 1897, 292). Thus implicitly posed in opposition to Carlyle's King Shakespeare, Tennyson's most popular patriotic successor appears as anything but a credit to his "race." Rather, he is that worst of late-century creatures, an "atavism"; and he is so, in great part, by right of his fixation on "mere racial unity" (293). "Kipling's much-talked-of-virility," the review predicts, "is of the sort to become superannuated. The pith and marrow of his song is the grandiloquent, but gross, 'Pride of Race' — the Enthusiasm, as he phrases it, in his 'Song of the English,' for the 'Blood that is slower to bless than to ban" (292). Given Kipling's "inmost core of aristocratic conservatism and Anglomania," he is no fit "heir of the great English bards," even in a limited sense (294).

Worth noting here is the emphasis on Kipling's virility, which extends to a contrast between the "flabby" virility "of muscle," on which Kipling seems to rely, and that genuine "virility of spirit" which seems to belong to a Shakespearean empire of influence (P. [Charlotte Porter] 1897, 292). For much as proclaimed affiliation with Browning could help ratify Shakespeare's status within a heroic tradition of literary cosmopolitanism, so, too, could Shakespeare's identification with Browning — or perhaps better said, with "the Brownings" — act as a useful fulcrum upon which Poet-lore's connections among Shakespeare, cosmopolitanism, and civic feminism might be made to turn. I say "the Brownings" in part because that reverence with which so many *Poet-lore* writers approached Browning seems to have sprung in part from awareness of the poet's famously happy marriage. Within Britain, Sawyer notes, competitive Browning societies seem to have drawn on this marriage in glorifying their Victorian bard for unimpeachably heterosexual masculinity (Sawyer 2003, 113). In the context of *Poet-lore*, praise for Browning's romantic life seem to have carried a different valence. Browning and Barrett Browning's working, companionate romantic partnership could serve, after all, as biographical confirmation of the poet's literary support of what Bernstein terms "emergent women" (1966, 14) — where "emergent" refers not merely to female activity within what we often call the public sphere, but also to that form of cosmopolitan

patriotism upon which Barrett Browning calls in imagining the statesman with a "heart too large for England." To anyone familiar with the careers of *Poet-lore's* editors (or, perhaps, any very careful reader of footnotes), this will, of course, come as no surprise. For though Barrett Browning's name may be tucked into a bottom corner of the 1895 *Poet-lore* cover, that name looms large in Porter and Clarke's current claims to fame. Few scholars, surely, have reason to consult their editions of Shakespeare and Browning; but until the completion of an ambitious recent textual project, to seek a scholarly edition of the complete poems of Elizabeth Barrett Browning will still be to rely upon the work of Porter and Clarke. There are good reasons, then, for hearing strong resonances between the introduction to *Poems before Congress*, with which I opened, and *Poet-lore's* "Shakespeareanizing" of civic feminist cosmopolitanism. For partly through Porter and Clarke's editorship, the promise to "love truth and justice" more than "Shakespeare and Shakespeare's country" became, paradoxically, proof of loyalty to the true — because truly cosmopolitan — Shakespeare himself.

This is not to suggest, of course, that *Poet-lore* could or did lay to rest the specter that E.B.B.'s preface raises. "Truth" and "justice" are far from the only values to which cosmopolitanism — including a cosmopolitan Shakespeare — may be devoted, after all. From a current vantage point, for example, *Poet-lore's* definitions of what Porter terms the "good of good" often seem less than persuasive. The same Shakespeare who serves as what one 1898 article terms a "herald of the new woman," for example, also expresses "race ideals"; and here as elsewhere, for example, the New Woman's supporters proved perfectly capable of elevating (implicitly white, "native") female prospective voters over "foreign, ignorant voters controlled by bosses and demagogues" (Michael 1897, 227). Nor are the journal's discussions of, say, Othello particularly uplifting. Just as, in a British context, glorifications of a Shakespeare who transcended Englishness and military Empire proved vulnerable to service as evidence of British moral supremacy, and thus, ultimately, as justification for imperialist military interventions, so, too, could American visions of transcendent national literary power. For American admirers of Shakespeare, even the drive to claim literature as something more than what one writer termed a "paltry, hostile trophy of mere national greatness" could never entirely escape the desire to inhabit (and police) some "grand and spacious Saxon Cathedral of English Literature" (Schelling 1889, 213). Still, within the irretrievably problematic late-century discourses of literature and "race," *Poet-lore* often succeeded in countering what Porter once termed "racial imperialism," invoking instead an argument that "no one race can attain unto quite as rich a development if self-debarred from the counter-influences reacting upon it from other developing races" (Porter, Charlotte 1901, 440, 443). *Poet-lore* thus stands as a significant index to the conflicted process whereby Shakespearean criticism not only negotiated the patriotic demands

of shifting gender politics and of cosmopolitan responses to ethnic nationalisms, but also explored the promising, deeply problematic intersections between the two.

If debates over these issues have not yet disappeared, neither has *Poet-lore*. According to its Website, having outlasted not only the heyday of Shakespeare and Browning societies, but also that of the literary historiography that gently mocked its early ambitions,²⁴ Porter and Clarke's journal remains the oldest continuously published poetry magazine in the United States.²⁵

Notes

1. Many thanks to Monica Smith for her assistance in researching early volumes of *Poet-lore*.
2. See, for example, Robbins and Cheah, eds., 1998, and Robbins 1999.
3. Indeed, as Maura O'Connor powerfully demonstrates, Barrett Browning joins an entire generation of ambitious middle-class women for whom criticism of British foreign policy with respect to Italy played a powerful role in the development of British national identity. See O'Connor 1998, 92, 93-115.
4. See also Kujawinska-Courtney and Mercer, eds., 2003. As Foulkes underscores, such internationalism involved its own conflicts: see, for example, in British terms, Moody 2003.
5. For a discussion of how late-century Saxon racialism helped shape popular conceptions of those other great, quintessentially British heroes, Robin Hood and Arthur, see Barczewski 2000, 127-61. Barczewski argues that early nineteenth-century writers tended to focus on "British" superiority as an effect of the amalgamation of "races," including Normans, Saxons, and Celts. Late-century writers, she asserts, celebrated instead "English," "Anglo-Saxon" racial purity (161).
6. Robbins, "Introduction, 1," in Robbins and Cheah, eds., 1998, 2. See also Pheng Cheah, "Introduction, 2," in Robbins and Cheah, eds., 1998, 21-32, especially 21-30.
7. "The single most striking feature of many of the essays, articles, and schoolbooks" that focus on Portia, Rozmovits notes, "is the extent to which they construe *The Merchant of Venice* to be a play primarily about Portia, her wealth, her marriage, and her day in court," with "a subplot about a Jewish moneylender hovering in the background" (1998, 5-6). On Portia and British gender politics, see Hankey 1994.
8. See also the lengthy footnote insisting that "the Jewess Mary" became the supreme feminine ideal only when outfitted with Teutonic, Christian virtues (Thom 1883-84b,101).
9. For an invaluable contextualization of such positions, in terms of British/American cultural relations, "American ethnogenesis and the cult of Anglo-Saxonism," see Sturgess 2004, 106-18.

- Never an entirely comfortable construction, the "Teutonic" Shakespeare was, of course, to become even more problematic over time. See, for example, Habicht 2001; and Hinojosa 2003.
10. On the more general construction of an aggressively white "Anglo-Saxon" and/or "Anglo-American" identity, see, for example, the 1861 *New York Herald* article which asserts that the U.S. population "is the Anglo-Saxon race, absorbing the Celtic and all other nationalities except the African, and assimilating them into itself. There is one language, the English, that which the immortal Shakespeare wrote" (quoted in Sturgess 2004, 113, 120 n. 58; see also 115-16); for African-American and American Indian resistance to such ideas, see 154-58. On the force of exclusionary attempts at the homogenizing Shakespearian education of immigrants, even within reformist institutions such as settlement houses, see Babb 1998.
 11. On the larger context of Porter's work, see Thompson and Roberts, "Mary Cowden Clarke" (2003), 170-89, 185, 189, n. 24; "Clarke, Helen Archibald (1860-1926) and Porter, Charlotte Endymion (1857-1942)," in McHenry 1980, 73-74. See also Thompson and Roberts, eds., *Women Reading Shakespeare* (1997), 160-62.
 12. The article appeared in *Shakespeareana* in 1888. See "Clarke, Helen Archibald (1860-1926) and Porter, Charlotte Endymion (Helen Charlotte Porter; 1857-1942)," in Hogan and Hudson, eds. 1998, 137.
 13. See, for example, how a brief "Book Inklings" column opens with a review of Mary R. Silsby's *Tributes to Shakespeare* and ends by noting a manual created by the "president of the 'Boston Political Class.'" Harriette R. Shattuck's *Woman's Manual of Parliamentary Law. With Practical Illustrations especially adapted to Woman's Organizations* garners strong praise as a "little arsenal of organization" ("Book Inklings" 1892, 528-31). On the limits of formal education for women, see, for example, "Notes and News" 1890, 666-68.
 14. In practice, these critics agree neither with one another nor with Scudder. See Lootens 1996, 45-115, especially 77-115; and Hankey 1994.
 15. Comparisons between classical and Shakespearian plays were popular: see, for example, Sheldon, "The Antigone of Sophocles and Shakespeare's Isabel" (1892).
 16. In Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Porter writes, Iphigenia's "sudden flower of voluntary sacrifice" fails to bear fruit: here, rather than display a heroism worthy of her earlier transformation, Iphigenia seeks to evade danger by exploiting her position as priestess (Porter, Charlotte 1891, 275). Goethe's *Iphigenia*, in contrast, "dares at all odds the open fight with fate" (276).
 17. In Euripides, Apollo has brokered a bargain with the Under-Gods to save Admetus if someone will volunteer to die in his stead. After Admetus' friends and parents refuse to do so, his

wife Alcestis steps forward; and as the play opens, Death is arriving to claim her. She dies; and when the remorseful Admetus blames his father, Pheres angrily reproaches his son with shameless cowardice. The play ends more or less happily: Admetus' friend Heracles attacks Death, wresting Alcestis from his grip; and returns her, veiled, forcing Admetus to accept her (in violation of his own mourning) before revealing her identity. As the play ends, Alcestis remains silent, awaiting divine purification.

18. See also P.A.C. [Porter and Clarke?], "A Study of Shakespeare's 'Winter's Tale.' Considered in Connection with Greene's 'Pandosto' and the 'Alkestis' of Euripides" (1892), which lists Alcestis stories by William Morris, Emma Lazarus, Browning, and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, as well as several *Poet-lore* articles on the Alcestis figure (P.A.C. 1892, 518). One "Proposition for Debate" reads as follows: "Development in literature of the ideal of womanhood is away from self-sacrifice and toward self-development" (518). Another suggests that Shakespeare's "way of telling 'The Winter's Tale' indicates the passing away of aristocratic and the formation of democratic ideals, and the dawning change in the *status* both of woman and of commoner" (521, emphasis in original).
19. For British contexts for the "new shrew," see Carlson 1998; and Mangan 2003.
20. Rolfe can be quite explicit in his performance suggestions. Even the delivery of a single word, he stresses, can help "elucidate and illuminate" a work that he argues is most often "degraded, obscured, and caricatured" on stage (Rolfe 1896, 190).
21. As Sturgess (2004) discusses in some detail, this is part of a longstanding process.
22. To be fair, such praise is not quite absolute: a "foreigner," for example, might "meet with some things in 'Maud' . . . which would lead him astray" as to the English character (Alger 1896, 329). On late-century British attempts at furthering Tennyson's alignment with Shakespeare, see Decker 2003.
23. P. [Charlotte Porter] 1897, "Kipling's 'Seven Seas' an Atavism." The Shakespearean lines in question are, "This England never did, nor never shall, / Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror" (P. 1897, 291; quoting *King John*, in Shakespeare 1997, 5.7.111-12).
24. Besides Peterson 1969, see Greer 1952, which terms the journal merely "a convenient clearing house for whatever was going on in the Browning world" (170). To be fair, in contrast to Greer, who writes that *Poet-lore* "invariably represented" the societies' "adulatory attitude" toward Browning (Greer 1952, 182), Peterson notes the journal's "shrewd" editorial suggestion that perhaps the British Browning Society would have been longer-lived, had it been more successful at moving beyond reverence into critical analysis (Peterson 1969, 113).

25. This information can be found at the Poet-lore site, <http://www.writer.org/poetlore/> [cited 10 October 2013].

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