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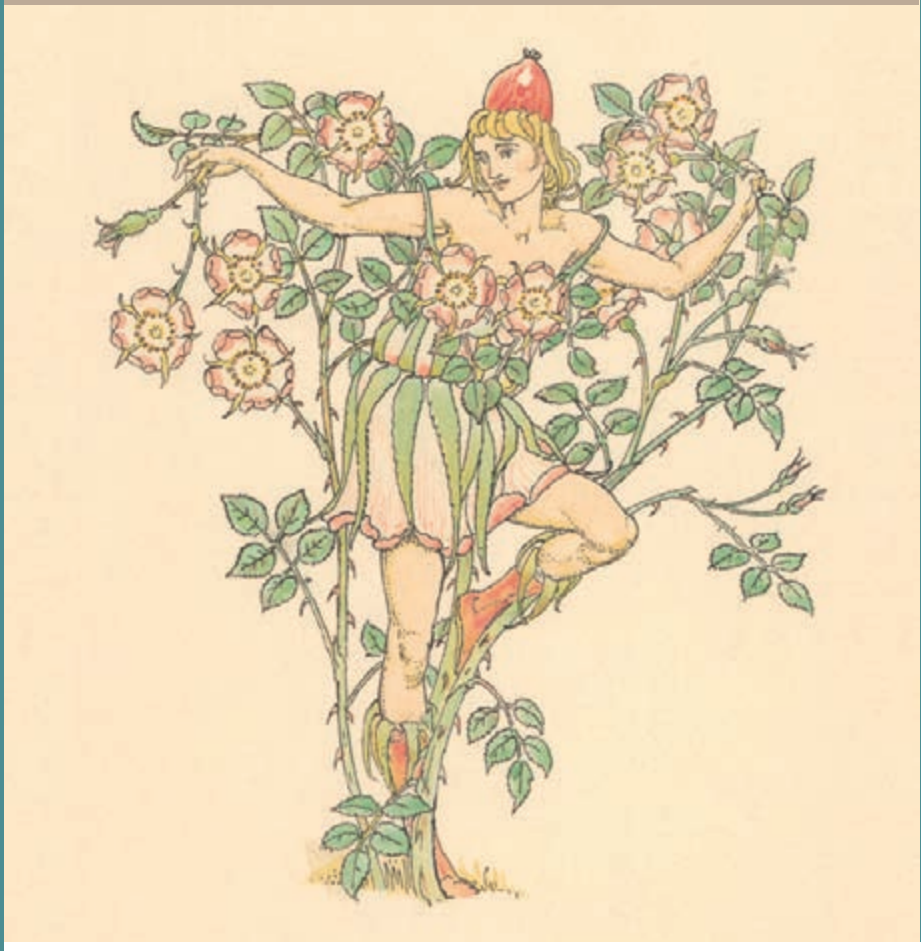

Edited by Susan C. Staub

Shakespeare's Botanical Imagination

Amsterdam University Press

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Environmental Humanities in Pre-modern Cultures

This series in environmental humanities offers approaches to medieval, early modern, and global pre-industrial cultures from interdisciplinary environmental perspectives. We invite submissions (both monographs and edited collections) in the fields of ecocriticism, specifically ecofeminism and new ecocritical analyses of under-represented literatures; queer ecologies; posthumanism; waste studies; environmental history; environmental archaeology; animal studies and zooarchaeology; landscape studies; 'blue humanities', and studies of environmental/natural disasters and change and their effects on pre-modern cultures.

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Introduction

Susan C. Staub

Abstract
This introduction summarizes some of the different ways that plants are enmeshed in all aspects of human life in the early modern period and in Shakespeare's works. It points to the many ways that plants in the period are vital and active, part of a network of meaning that belies our own sense of the word "vegetable." These various interpretations of plants provide context for the essays gathered in this volume. Essays in this collection show the power plants have to interact with and affect humans; how the boundary between plant and human is often blurred; and how considering temporality in conjunction with plants forces a reconsideration both of time and of human life.

Keywords: vitalism, trans-corporeality, indistinction, critical plant studies, ecocriticism

In May 2015, botanist Mark Griffiths ignited a firestorm among Shakespeare scholars with his identification of one of the male figures on the 1597 title page of John Gerard's *Herball, or Generall Historie of Plantes* as Shakespeare. Hailing it as the "literary discovery of the century," the editor of *Country Life*, where Griffiths detailed his rationale for the identification, proclaimed the image "the only known and demonstrably authentic portrait of the world's greatest writer made in his lifetime." "This is Shakespeare in his pomp with a film star's good looks, sharing the company of Lord Burghley, the most powerful man in the land. It changes a great deal of what we know about the Bard," the editor crowed.[1] Claiming to have "cracked the Tudor code,"

1 Mark Hedges, "The Literary Discovery of the Century," 103. Griffiths' discovery also ignited a tweetstorm. In reaction, Stanley Wells tweeted, "So apparently Shakespeare went around in fancy dress holding a fritillary in one hand and a cob of corn in the other." Shakespeare Magazine@ UKShakespeare tweeted an image of the Incredible Hulk in a ruff with the caption, "Incredibly,

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Figure 1: Griffiths' hypothetical Shakespeare figure, circled. Title page. John Gerard, *The Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes*, by John Norton, 1597. Special Collections, Getty Research Institute, J. Paul Getty Trust, Los Angeles. Courtesy of HathiTrust.

Griffiths examined the elements of the image, in particular, the laurel on the man's head, the snake's head fritillary in his right hand and the ear of corn in his left, and the symbol on the plinth underneath the figure, to prove his claim.[2] News of Griffiths' "discovery" quickly spread across the world with headlines heralding the find: "'True face of Shakespeare' appears in botany book," the BBC declared; "William Shakespeare: Newly-discovered image revealed," asserted *The Telegraph* matter-of-factly. A headline in *The Washington Post* was a bit cheekier: "Is this 400-year-old portrait of a hunky corn enthusiast really Shakespeare's 'true face'?" it asked.[3] Although Griffiths' identification has been contested, it is not hard to see why such a claim might be appealing, especially to scholars interested in Shakespeare's botanical knowledge.[4]

Shakespeare has long been praised as the poet of nature—a "natural" genius inspired by the nonhuman world around him and of which he seemed to have intimate knowledge.[5] His plays teem with various kinds of fauna—with lions, and tigers, and bears; with maggots, flies, and worms. Buffeted by storms, devoured by animals, defined by the ebb and flow of

this genuine portrait of William Shakespeare has been hiding in plain sight for four centuries …," to cite just two among other snarky tweets that erupted with the publication of *The Country Life* article.

2 Griffiths, "Face to Face with Shakespeare," 129–30. Griffiths posits that the fritillary references the flower into which Adonis is transformed in *Venus and Adonis*, the corn, Marcus's call for Rome to gather "this scatter'd corn into one mutual sheaf" in *Titus Andronicus*. But as scholars have pointed out, there is disagreement about what flower Adonis's blood generates and the corn referenced in *Titus* is grain rather than maize. After scholars disputed his identification, Griffiths followed up with "Why the fourth man can't be anybody but Shakespeare."

3 Tim Masters, "'True Face of Shakespeare'," BBC News; Anita Singh, "William Shakespeare: Newly-Discovered," *The Telegraph*; Abby Ohlheiser, "Is This 400-Year-Old Portrait," *Washington Post*. Some scholars have suggested Shakespeare knew Gerard; others that he had a hand in writing Gerard's *Herbal*.

4 Although the "science" of botany is usually considered to have developed in the eighteenth century with Carl Linnaeus' *Systemae Naturae* (1735), we can certainly see the beginnings of botany in Shakespeare's time. Leah Knight classifies the use of the word "botany" in the period as a "harmless anachronism" ("Botany," 276). In this volume, I use the word botany broadly to cover anything plant related, including horticultural, gardening, and herbal medical and domestic practices.

5 Samuel Johnson made this assessment of Shakespeare popular in his "Preface to Shakespeare," 1067. By "nature" Johnson meant human life more generally, but this phrase has since been used to suggest Shakespeare's keen interest in the organic world as well. And as Johnson articulates his defense of Shakespeare's less learned writing as compared to other authors, he uses botanical analogies: Shakespeare's plays, he explains, are "a forest, in which oaks extend their branches, and pines tower in the air, interspersed sometimes with weeds and brambles, and sometimes giving shelter to myrtles and roses" (1076).

the Nile River, Shakespeare's characters often seem profoundly aware of the natural realm—not simply of the changing seasons and weather and the natural cycles of life and death they reflect, but also of the disturbances wrought by human intrusions upon that world. And his plays are filled with the language of plants. Writing on the cusp of modern botany and also during the heyday of English herbals and garden manuals in what Leah Knight characterizes as "an English botanical renaissance"[6] (the first original English herbal, William Turner's *A New Herbal* was in progress the year Shakespeare was born, the third volume published in 1568; Henry Lyte's *A Niewe Herball or Historie of Plantes* in 1578; Gerard's enormously influential *Herball* in 1597), Shakespeare references at least 180 plants in his works[7] as well as makes numerous allusions to horticultural and botanical practices such as grafting, pruning, weeding, and coppicing. As he does so, he suggests the intimate interconnectedness between plant and human life that seems to be severed when the human/nonhuman binary is reified concurrent with more scientific studies of the botanical world in the eighteenth century.

Plants have been of interest to Shakespeare scholars at least since the nineteenth century, resulting in a subgenre of collections of Shakespeare's plant references that continues to this day. Studies such as Henry Ellacombe's *Plant-Lore and Garden-Craft of Shakespeare* (1878) and Leopold Harley Grindon's *The Shakespeare Flora* (1883) tended to be encyclopedic in scope, cataloging the plants in alphabetical order, identifying them, and pointing to their specific occurrences in Shakespeare's works or listing and describing them play by play.[8] One need only look at the number of

6 Knight, *Of Books and Botany*, 6. As Knight points out elsewhere, "Shakespeare's life happened to span one of the most productive historical periods in the accumulation of basic botanical knowledge, if not its systemization" ("Botany," 281). *A New Herbal* was published in three installations, in 1551, 1562, and 1568. Earlier herbals, such as Lyte's *Niewe Herbal*, were largely translations. Turner's work differed in that it sought to name and define English plants accurately and to describe them from personal observation (Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names*, 15). Although he has often been accused of being a self-aggrandizing plagiarist, Gerard's influence in the period is indisputable. Knight offers an interesting refutation of the claims made against Gerard, *Of Books and Botany*, 78–83. See also, Sarah Neville, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade*, 244–62.

7 Scholars differ on the exact count. Rydén counts 190 (*Shakespeare's Plant Names*, 20).

8 Ellacombe, *Plant-Lore and the Garden-Craft of Shakespeare* (1878); Grindon, *The Shakespeare Flora* (1883). Other earlier studies include Sidney Beisly, *Shakspere's Garden* (1864); J. H. Bloom, *Shakespeare's Garden* (1903); Esther Singleton, *The Shakespeare Garden* (1922); Frederick Savage, *The Flora and Folklore of Shakespeare* (1923); and Eleanour Rohde, *Shakespeare's Wild Flowers: Fairy Lore, Garden* (1935). Ellacombe's study remains one of the most thorough and useful of these early works. The later twentieth century saw the publication of Jessica Kerr, *Shakespeare's Flowers* (1969) and Mats Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names: Identifications and Interpretations*

Shakespeare gardens the world over for proof of the historic fascination with Shakespeare's plants even beyond scholarship. Nonetheless, only recently, influenced by ecocritical studies, as well as related critical methodologies such as ecofeminism, posthumanism, and new materialism have scholars broadened and complicated the analysis of Shakespeare's botanizing. This recent work has elucidated the cultural, ideological, and material importance of Shakespeare's plant life.[9]

In the last ten years or so, the more general field of Environmental Humanities has likewise witnessed an intensifying interest in plants, what scholars refer to as a "vegetal turn." According to Jeffrey T. Nealon, plants "are becoming the new animals."[10] Many of the debates in contemporary scholarship have been important to the newer field of critical plant studies (CPS) as well. CPS seeks to remedy the Western tendency to devalue plants as merely utilitarian and separate from humans apart from their use value.[11] In

(1978). More recent compilations include Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth, *Shakespeare's Plants and Gardens: A Dictionary* (2014); Margaret Willes, *A Shakespearean Botanical* (2015); and Gerit Quealy, *Botanical Shakespeare* (2017).

9 Although not as vast as the scholarship on Shakespeare's animals, analyses of Shakespeare's plants are growing. Early ecocritical work on Shakespeare such as Todd Borlik's *Ecocriticism and Early Modern English Literature* and Gabriel Egan's *Green Shakespeare* both touch on plants: Borlik on the effects of climate change and Egan on plant-human analogies in several of Shakespeare's plays. In *Wooden Os* Vin Nardizzi considers the material presence of trees in Shakespearean theater and culture; similarly, Jeffrey Theis posits the interplay between deforestation, nation building, and pastoral in several chapters in *Writing the Forest in Early Modern England*. Charlotte Scott's *Shakespeare's Nature: From Cultivation to Culture* offers a fascinating examination of the implications of the language and practice of husbandry in the plays. While not strictly about Shakespeare, Amy Tigner's *Literature and the Renaissance Garden from Elizabeth I to Charles I* considers the varied aspects of the garden, particularly its political meanings in several plays. Victoria Bladen's recent book, *The Tree of Life and Arboreal Aesthetics in Early Modern Literature*, likewise includes a chapter on Shakespeare. Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe have been at the forefront of recovering women's domestic engagement with plants in the period, and their book *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory* includes a provocative section on Shakespeare's plants that reconfigures women and plants as "active, co-creative subjects, not passive objects for male (and 'human' as an extension of dominant male) consumption" (120). Two book length studies are in progress at the time I write: Jessica Rosenberg's book *Botanical Poetics,* forthcoming in 2022, and Bonnie Lander Johnson, *Shakespeare's Plants: Botany and Belief in Elizabethan London.* Other important work on Shakespeare's botany has been published in individual essays in journals and collections too numerous to recount here. In putting together this volume, I've come to recognize the broad, rich, and active scholarly work both in terms of methodology and international range being done on early modern plants that extends far beyond what this volume can cover. Much of that scholarship influences this introduction and the essays gathered here.

10 Nealon, *Plant Theory*, xiv.

11 Matthew Hall, *Plants as Persons*, 8. See also, Michael Marder, *Plant-Thinking*, one of the most influential texts in critical plant studies.

Plant-Thinking: A Philosophy of Vegetal Life, a work that has become one of the seminal texts of critical plant studies and that makes several appearances in this collection, Michael Marder laments the marginal status often accorded to plants, noting that although they are all around us and we depend upon them for survival—for food, clothing, shelter, pleasure—plants tend to exist only in the background for most humans. He contends, "Plants are the weeds of metaphysics: devalued, unwanted in its carefully cultivated garden, yet growing in-between the classical categories of the thing, the animal, and the human."[12] Similarly, Michael Pollan depicts plants as "the mute, immobile furniture of our world—useful enough, and generally attractive, but obviously second-class citizens in the republic of life on Earth."[13] Characterizing plant-life as a blind spot in metaphysics, Marder calls for a reevaluation of plant ontology. Such a rethinking, he argues, would reconfigure the traditional hierarchies of Western thought, a goal articulated by several of the essays in *Shakespeare's Botanical Imagination* as well.

As Hannah Stark explains, "The last few years has seen the eruption of a vigorous and intensifying debate about the place of plants in human systems of meaning, including their cultural life, their discursive framing in academic and popular understandings, and their philosophical meaning."[14] Like animal studies, critical plant studies contests the privileged place of human over nonhuman life as it examines that relationship using a variety of disciplinary lenses. In this scholarship, plants are recognized as having agency, sentience, and even desire, interestingly, harking back to the early modern vitalist beliefs that I will discuss below and that several essays in this collection consider. These arguments seek to counter the long-held interpretation of plants as deficient, an assessment prominent in classical Greek philosophy and developed by Christian philosophers. Critical plant studies scholars are especially interested in the historical and continuing connection of plants with biopolitics.[15] Of particular importance is the emphasis CPS places on the heteronomy of plants, their dependence on soil, sun, climate, animals, humans, etc. for their existence, allowing studies of plants to probe the nested aspect of all of nature, human and nonhuman, that ecocriticism has long emphasized. Furthermore, as it endeavors to bring plants "back into history" and to imagine "a vegetal subjectivity … defined … by collectivity rather than individuality," critical plant studies articulates

12 Marder, *Plant-Thinking,* 90.
13 Pollan, "Foreword," *Brilliant Green,* xi.
14 Stark, "Deleuze and Critical Plant Studies," 180.
15 Catriona Sandilands, "Plants," 157.

a goal similar to that of ecofeminism: to speak "for all marginalized beings as it speaks for plants."[16]

Essays in this collection engage with this scholarship by emphasizing the interdependence and entanglement of plants with humans and human life in Shakespeare's works. As Mats Rydén asserts, "With their virtues and properties (real or imagined) plants were, to an extent unknown today, in the centre of everyone's life."[17] Similarly, as Rebecca Bushnell notes in this collection, discussions of plant blindness often fail to take *early modern* plant-thinking into account. Further, while contemporary culture tends to consider plants as passive, sessile, and senseless, using the adjectives "vegetative" and "plant-like" to connote privation and stasis, early modern notions of plants imagine something significantly more vital.[18] Obviously, plants are fundamental to human survival, but Shakespeare's varied use of them suggests that they represent an essential part of human identity. In our interest in engaging with plants in ways that show their interconnection with human identity as well as in their participation in "networks of meaning that are 'simultaneously real, social and narrated,'" we at least partially diverge from Marder, who posits the absolute ontological otherness of plants.[19]

It is to this network of meanings that *Shakespeare's Botanical Imagination* attends, analyzing both the material, literal plants as well as their symbolic functions in Shakespeare's writings. And as it does so, it takes its cue partly from Feerick and Nardizzi's *The Indistinct Human in Renaissance Literature*, among other scholarship, as it seeks to call attention to the "soft boundary" between the human and nonhuman and to add a few kinks to the Great Chain of Being.[20] Taken together, these essays extend the challenge increasingly being made by animal studies, critical plant studies,

16 Natania Meeker and Antónia Szabari, "Botany," 160. On plant heteronomy as opposed to human autonomy, see Marder, *Plant-Thinking*, 67–74. Curiously, Marder sees freedom in plant dependency.

17 Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names,* 17.

18 Plants actually do move, just not in ways that are immediately noticeable, as Marder concedes, 21; their roots spread, their branches and stems reach upwards; their flowers and leaves turn toward the sun; their seeds scatter; and, as anyone who gardens can attest, they jump all over the landscape. More recent studies have shown that they also react emotionally, such as in distress when insects nibble on their leaves.

19 Boehrer, *Animal Characters*, 186. Boehrer is here answering Erika Fudge's insistence that animals be read as animals rather than symbols.

20 Jean E. Feerick and Vin Nardizzi, "Introduction," *The Indistinct Human*, 3. Once disparaged as too simplistic in its assessment of the hierarchy of nature, E. M. W. Tillyard's Great Chain of Being has been recuperated. See, for instance, Robert N. Watson, "The Ecology of Self in *Midsummer Night's Dream*" and Gabriel Egan, "Gaia and the Great Chain of Being."

and posthumanism about the privileged position of humans in relation to non-human life, a consideration critical to confronting the ecological crises of the Anthropocene. While animals have dominated discussions of the nonhuman, a focus on plants allows us to further recognize the ethical implications of the shared materiality of all animate and inanimate things that Jane Bennett theorizes in her book *Vibrant Matter*.[21] We expand not just the anthropocentric but the zoocentic to include plants, thus further complicating the binary between human-nonhuman creation and interrogating both what it is to be human and narratives of human exceptionalism. This collection, then, develops the kind of "plant thinking" that Brits and Gibson characterize as "an exploration of the paradoxes of human exceptionalism" by refocusing on plants "as more than a backdrop to human action."[22]

Marder points to Aristotle's typology of the tripartite soul (vegetative, sensitive, and intellectual) as the originary source for the denigration of plants as a lesser creation. Since Aristotle, he maintains, plants have been perceived as deficient—lacking eyes, reason, speech, desire; in other words, plants lack agency.[23] Historically, Aristotle's system has been read hierarchically, placing plants at the bottom, above minerals, but below sensitive animals and rational humans. In this schema, however, the plant-soul is characterized by its impulse toward generation, nutrition, and growth, activities that all living creatures have in common. Although humans may claim superiority, or at least uniqueness, because they are animated by all three souls, "all matter is ensouled," as Feerick and Nardizzi emphasize. The higher souls build on each lower one, resulting in what Renaissance natural philosophy dubs "indistinction." Even early modern thinkers who assert humankind's privileged position nonetheless recognize it as contingent and tenuous, particularly in regards to the "'lower' faculties" such as fertility and reproduction.[24] For Galen plants are foundational: "the first principle of all things is that of a plant, which produces artery and vein and nerve, bone also, not from blood, but from seed itself."[25] We might even argue that they are "prehuman," a level of existence that seems to fascinate Shakespeare and that we see in his concern with the boundaries separating human and nonhuman, according to Boehrer.[26] Milton will later take this continuum to its logical conclusion with his suggestion that all of creation derives from

21 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 12–13.
22 Baylee Brits and Prudence Gibson, "Introduction," *Covert Plants*, 16.
23 Marder, *Plant-Thinking*, 20–23.
24 Feerick and Nardizzi, *The Indistinct Human*, 2–4.
25 Galen, *De Semine*, quoted in Linda Deer Richardson, *Academic Theories of Generation*, 65.
26 Boehrer, "Shakespeare and the Character of Sheep," 58.

the same matter, "one first matter all" (5.471). In Book 5 of *Paradise Lost* when Raphael depicts the human ascent to spirituality as a tree, the roots growing into the lighter "green stalk, from thence the leaves / More aery, last the bright consummate flow'r / Spirits odorous breathes," he makes this slippage explicit (5.481–82).[27] The three-part soul schema can thus be reinterpreted as a continuum of lifeforms, a non-binary schema in which humans share characteristics not just with animals but with botanical life, resulting in a disquieting blurring of categories in the *scala naturae* in the period.[28] One need only consider speculation about hybrid plant life forms, what Jean Bodin names "plantanimals," to get a sense of this fluidity.[29] (The vegetable lamb, the barnacle goose, and even the infamous mandrake provide examples of such hybrid forms.) Aristotle's schema of the tripartite soul hovers in the background of several of these essays not only because it points to the permeable boundaries between human and vegetable, but also because plant-soul functions emphasize reproduction, growth, and decay, a focus that at once connects plant life to human generation (discussed in my essay and Claire Duncan's) and that also emphasizes plants as markers of time, an aspect of plant life touched upon by Theis and Hopkins and developed most fully in the essays in Part 3: "Plants and Temporalities."

Discussing nature more generally, early modern ecocritical scholars have long noted the "sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite center or edge" that Timothy Morton argues is necessary to ecological thought.[30] Gail Kern Paster's important work on the humors has elucidated the reciprocal and hence the ecological nature of embodiment in the period in her analyses of the various exchanges between the body and the world.[31] Mary Floyd-Wilson similarly argues that early modern people lived their lives "with the conviction that their emotions, behavior and practices were affected by and dependent on, secret sympathies and antipathies that coursed through the natural world," a system that calls humankind's place in it into question.[32] All matter was vital, animated by a kind of spirit that coursed throughout

27 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, edited by Merritt Y. Hughes.

28 See Bushnell, *The Marvels of the World*, 73–74. See also, Edward J. Geisweidt, "Horticulture of the Head," para. 4–6.

29 Fabrizio Bigotti, "Vegetable Life," 394. Bodin lists the mimosa pudica, also called "touch me not," known for its sensitivity to any kind of touch as an example of plantanimal (394). On the barnacle goose tree and the vegetable lamb, see Whitney Anne Trettien, "Plant→Animal→Book."

30 Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 8.

31 See, for example, Gail Kern Paster, *Humoring the Body*.

32 Floyd-Wilson, *Occult Knowledge*, 1. See also, Tom MacFaul, *Shakespeare and the Natural World*, 1.

the universe. Such vitalist ideas posit a reciprocity among things, "an ebb and flow of exchange" between human bodies and environment where both transform and shape the other.[33] As Leah S. Marcus explains, early modern vitalists believed "in some type of invisible, immanent force or network of forces, whether material or immaterial, that operates within and between things, linking them and determining their relations with each other."[34] Once dismissed as superstition, contemporary scholars such as Jane Bennett have recovered aspects of early modern vitalist thought (now sometimes referred to as neo or new vitalism) as a way to contend with current environmental concerns. The recuperation of vitalist ideas is crucial to contemporary efforts to redefine our relationship with the nonhuman because as Bennett explains, it flattens hierarchical notions of the world and as it does, "the implicit moral imperative of Western thought—'Thou shall identify and defend what is special about Man'—loses some of its salience."[35] Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality—the idea that "all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them"—conveys a similar relationship and provides a useful tool for investigating aspects of Shakespeare's plant thinking.[36]

Shakespeare's Botanical Imagination considers various aspects of Shakespeare's plants: the literal plants in all their materiality; the symbolic meanings of plants; and the ways the rhetoric of plants elucidates human life and social structures. As Leah Knight explains, in Shakespeare and elsewhere in early modern culture, plants were not simply a part of everyday life; they "offered a lexical field to which Shakespeare and his contemporaries knew they could appeal and be largely understood."[37] These essays illustrate how plants are interwoven into all aspects of early modern life—in medicine and domestic life; in folklore; in configurations of class, race, and gender; in monarchical and political rhetoric. Botanical discourse in the period was social discourse; the cultivation of plants was analogous to the cultivation of people. As several recent scholars have shown, botanic language is deeply encoded into the very structures of Renaissance life.[38] In their dictionary

33 Mary Floyd-Wilson and Garrett Sullivan, *Environment and Embodiment*, 4.

34 Marcus, "Why the 'Pathetic Fallacy' Isn't One," 13.

35 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 112. On the recovery of vitalist thought, see Marcus, "Why the 'Pathetic Fallacy' Isn't One," 13.

36 Alaimo, "Trans-corporeality," 435.

37 Knight, "Botany," 281.

38 Charlotte Scott makes this argument about husbandry in the period in *Shakespeare's Nature*. Looking at the rhetoric of gardening and horticultural manuals, Rebecca Bushnell similarly

of Shakespeare's plant lore, Vivian Thomas and Nicki Faircloth provide an apt summary: "Plants were freighted with meaning, spiritual, emotional, and medicinal: they possessed a voice which could be simple and direct, or multivalent and perplexing."[39] It is those multiple plant voices that this collection contemplates.

The thread that runs throughout this collection is the blurring of boundaries—between human and plant, cultivated and wild, magic and science, art and nature; between life and death and between various constructs of time. All of the essays in this collection engage in some way with two overlapping questions central to much current scholarship: what is humankind's relationship to the nonhuman? And, concomitantly, what does it mean to be human? Early modern animal studies scholars have been at the forefront of these conversations for some twenty years now, but only recently have scholars started thinking in similar ways regarding plants. This collection has two main goals: to move plants to the foreground, showing how they are dynamic and vital actors on Shakespeare's stage and to point to the intimate interconnection between humans and plants. Many of these essays also complicate the traditional hierarchy of human-animal-plant.

What makes Shakespeare's moment in botanical history so interesting is its intermingling of older ideas about vegetal life with the nascent scientific interests evident in various botanical writings in the period. Although the focus remained largely medicinal and agricultural (and sometimes economic), attempts to categorize plants systematically and to move beyond classical authorities such as Aristotle, Pliny, and Theophrastus through empirical study and first-hand observation of plants in their habitats point to a growing scientific bent that began in earnest in the sixteenth century.[40] The concern with naming plants and chronicling their usefulness to human bodies that the popularity of herbals indicates suggests the tension inherent in humankind's relationship to plants. While cataloguing and standardizing the names of plants was an essential goal of herbals, they also sought to describe each plant, setting forth its medicinal and other effects on

argues that "the self could be imagined as cultured or cultivated," *A Culture of Teaching*, 81. The growing number of essays on Shakespeare's plays that investigate grafting and its connection to gender, marriage, and race attests to this use of botanical discourse. As Bushnell points out, debates over plant cultivation "were often coded debates about the natural order of human society," *The Marvels of the World*, 74.

39 Thomas and Faircloth, *Shakespeare's Plants and Gardens*, 1.

40 Mats Rydén, *Shakespearean Plant Names,* 13. Peter Harrison suggests that this turn toward more direct engagement with nature was motivated by "a general impulse to reform the spheres of religion and learning," "Natural History," 123.

human bodies, but also indicating how and where each plant grows and in which season. In addition to their "affects and effects," what they refer to as "virtues," herbals chronicle the lifecycles—the seasons and growth patterns as well as the places and environments—the ecoclimates—where certain plants grow, thus creating a temporal and geographic record of vegetal life that offers parallels and tropes with which to interpret human life. Gerard, for instance, always enumerates where each plant grows, when it is in season or when it will flower, speaking in terms of "flourishing and fading." He notes of cowslips, for example, that "they ioie in moist and dankish places," even locating them precisely in "a woode called Clapdale, three miles from a towne in Yorkeshire called Settle." He continues by explaining that they "flourish from Aprill to the end of May, and some one or other of them do flower all the winterlong."[41] He depicts a plant time that is cyclic—recurring and regenerating—and plants that are abounding—spreading roots and growing upwards and outwards.

The descriptions and woodcut illustrations that accompany the plants often anatomize them into parts—leaves, stems, flowers, fruits, roots—in ways that mimic early modern anatomy manuals and thus connect with other scientific endeavors from the period. This blazoning of plant parts in some ways replicates the blazoning of the sonnet lady and to similar effect: dismembering, fragmenting, and potentially silencing its subject.[42] On the one hand, then, Gerard's entries point to a desire to know and control plant growth; on the other, they suggest how embedded plants are both with humans and with their environments. The woodcut images have a curious isolating effect, giving the individual plants status and importance, while simultaneously removing them from their environments. As Laroche and Munroe emphasize, relationships between humans and plants are "at once symbiotic and in tension."[43] This double effect hints at the increasingly vexed relationship between people and plants in the period that becomes exacerbated with the discovery of previously unknown plants in the New World and with other scientific advances such as the Linnaean schema for categorizing plants.[44]

41 Gerard, *The Herball*, 637.

42 Nardizzi calls attention to the blazoning effect of Gerard's descriptions in "Daphne Described," 148–49. On the effect of the blazon in sonnet sequences, see Nancy Vickers' classic essay, "Diana Described."

43 Rebecca Laroche and Jennifer Munroe, *Shakespeare and Ecofeminist Theory,* xv.

44 On the move to a seemingly less anthropocentric classification of plants, one that increasingly values plants for their own sake, see Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World,* 72–78, 178–79.

Curiously, the scientific understanding of plants suggested by the interest in pharmacology and plant morphology coexisted alongside magic and folklore.[45] In his *Herball,* Gerard inadvertently confirms this duality with his insistence on eschewing superstition, what he calls "foolish fansie," while simultaneously recounting the "fiction he denounces," a move Leah Knight describes as "hav[ing] his 'fansie' and mock[ing] it too."[46] The study of botany during Shakespeare's lifetime thus bears witness to Mary D. Garrard's assessment of the period as a moment of transition from an organic perspective "in which humans felt at home and participated affectively in the 'enchanted' world of nature" to "a scientific consciousness, which perceives humans as detached from nature."[47] We can find hints of this tension in various kinds of botanical writing in the period as well as in Shakespeare's works.

One of the places where the interconnectedness of human and vegetal bodies is most explicit in the period is in the doctrine of signatures, a plant cosmology that originated with the Greeks and that was still operative in various early modern natural histories. Often simplified as the premise that a plant's physical resemblance to human body parts indicates its therapeutic value (so for instance, bloodroot with its vivid red sap remedies circulatory problems, eyebright with its resemblance to the eye cures vision problems), it was actually more complex. Plants were also thought to correspond to planets, elements, and humors and to coexist in sympathetic relationship not just with humans but with the macrocosm. These correspondences indicate a plant's curative effects, but also suggest more intricate connections among all living things.[48] Discerning a plant's signatures required examining its taste, smell, and tactile elements (thorniness or stickiness, for example), and demanded human sensory awareness of plant attributes beyond simple appearance. These intimate interactions between plants and humans are largely lost with the decline of vitalist beliefs. While the system of signatures is predicated on individual plants' usefulness to humans and is therefore largely anthropocentric, it nonetheless posits a profound kinship between both human and botanical bodies, and both, in turn,

45 In "Shakespeare and Mandragora" Giovanni Antonini and Gloria Grazia Rosa examine Shakespeare's changing interpretation of mandrakes, arguing that earlier allusions tended to be connected to magic, whereas allusions in the later plays tended to be pharmacological, suggesting a shift to more scientific thinking.

46 Knight, *Of Books and Botany*, 104.

47 Garrard, *Brunelleschi's Egg*, 2.

48 Thomas Efferth and Henry J. Greten, "Doctrine of Signatures." This essay provides a good overview of the doctrine of signatures. See also, Matthew Wood, "The Doctrine of Signatures."

with the entire cosmos. More than simply analogical, systems such as the doctrine of signatures point to the "plenary participation in everything else" that Laurie Shannon finds characteristic of humans in the period.[49] These resemblances are developed in herbals and husbandry manuals, where human anatomy provides analogues for various plant parts. These texts extend the correspondences to social and political structures as well, as Jean Feerick cogently explains in her essay "Botanical Shakespeares."[50]

This vegetalizing of humans and human concepts hardly seems a decentering of the human world but rather a kind of narcissism, as Michael Marder legitimately contends. Other scholars, however, argue that such anthropomorphism might be viewed as "multidirectional," having the potential effect of reconfiguring human/plant relationships in ways that actually revalue plant life. Speaking, for example, of "mother trees" and their "children" serves to "re-place" humans "within nature," Anna M. Lawrence posits, thus conceivably countering "claims to human exceptionalism" because it indicates a willingness "to attach ourselves to the things which plants care about, and which in the end, humans must care about too if we are to build a more sustainable relation to our planet."[51] While the vegetable-human homologies examined in this collection may not always obliterate human distinction, they do point to "an intertwined environmentality" and suggest how complicated attempts to segregate "human and inhuman, culture and nature" actually are, as Cohen asserts.[52]

These various interpretations of plants provide context for the essays gathered here. The collection is divided into three overlapping sections that consider important ways that Shakespeare imagines vegetable life: "Plant Power and Agency"; "Human-Vegetable Affinities and Transformations"; and "Plants and Temporalities".

49 Shannon, "Poor, Bare, Forked," 172. Even plant names suggest their connection to humans. As Foucault points out in *The Order of Things*, plant naming before Descartes made use not just of resemblances and virtues, but of all "the legends and stories with which [the plant] had been involved, its place in heraldry, the medicaments that were concocted from its substance, the foods it provided, what the ancients recorded of it, and what travellers might have said of it. The history of a living being was that being itself, within the whole semantic network that connected it to the world" (140).

50 Feerick, "Botanical Shakespeares." Feerick is especially interested in the ways that human-plant analogies interrogate social hierarchies and racial difference.

51 Lawrence, "Listening to Plants," 636. Here she picks up on the argument Suzanne Simard makes in *Finding the Mother Tree*. Lawrence suggests that rather than recognizing human affinities in plants, we might instead recognize "Them in Us" (636), an idea that Elizabeth Crachiolo similarly considers in her essay in this volume.

52 Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, "Introduction: Ecostitial," iv.

Part 1: Plant Power and Agency

Essays in the first section all discuss plant power (material or metaphoric), what herbals refer to as "virtue," the distinctive effects of a particular plant on the human body. But as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen defines it, virtue is "the substance of the world," the fundamental property of all living things, human and nonhuman. Most basically, virtue is the power to act. Cohen characterizes it as the "most inhumanly powerful word in medieval English," positing that "vertu resides in the substance of the world," with meanings as varied as "energy, might and vitality to potential, magic and force."[53] As Holly A. Crocker puts it, "From heads to hands, and from rocks to plants, virtues suffused all material bodies in premodern England."[54] Plant virtue is also connected to vegetative soul functions, as Cohen suggests when he defines it as "life force: reproduction and vitality, affect and health, that which moves the flesh," thereby suggesting innate capacities experienced by all living beings.[55] Plants, then, act—on human bodies, on the environment, and on the world at large. And they in turn are acted upon. As Cohen sums it up, "humans are merely some actors among many, none of which are exceptional or *a priori* privileged."[56] As essays in this section illustrate, in the early modern period the word "vegetable" signifies vitality rather than the passivity that it frequently connotes now.

The inaugural essay in the volume, Rebecca Bushnell's "Vegetable Virtues," sets the stage for the essays that follow and engages with all three of the foci of this collection, teasing out how plant virtue is entangled with human virtue in Shakespeare's plays. Beginning with an examination of virtue as it pertains to plants, Bushnell emphasizes its instability and volatility, possessing positive and negative potential (both curative and deadly) only realized when it is "brought to bear on a body or the world." Bushnell names this characteristic "vegetable virtue," noting that the word "vegetable" connotes action rather than inertia in Shakespeare's imagination. Building on the dual definitions of virtue as both the inherent power in plants but also as "positive moral qualities" in humans, Bushnell shows how the etymological connection between plant and human virtue complicates both concepts. "[I]n both people and plants, vegetable virtue is never still," but is growing and

53 Cohen continues, "Stones and leaves radiate *vertu* as easily as knights, horses and clerics. Humans may ally themselves with the *vertu* of gems or herbs to accomplish through mineral and vegetal friendship feats otherwise impossible," "An Abecedarium for the Elements," 292.

54 Crocker, *The Matter of Virtue*, 2.

55 Cohen, "An Abecedarium for the Elements," 292.

56 Cohen, "Introduction: Ecostitial," v.

ever changing, a characteristic that points both to the generative power and temporality that are explored in other essays in this volume. Shakespeare's plays use the ambivalence of plant virtue to confound notions of human virtue, particularly in tragedies such as *Hamlet,* Bushnell illustrates.

My essay, "The 'idle weeds that grow in the sustaining corn': Generating Plants in *King Lear*," continues the examination of plant power by examining the rampantly growing, weedy cornfield of Act 4, a space connected with female bodies in the play. In an example of what Cohen calls the "marvelously disruptive emergence … of nonhuman agency,"[57] the weeds in the play seem to have an almost preternatural impulse to grow despite human desires. They, along with the storm, become one of the more potent signs of life and vitality in the play. As such, they offer a striking example of Bennett's "vibrant matter": "the capacity of things—edibles, commodities, storms, metals—not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own."[58] Looking at philosophical, religious, and political interpretations of weeds, I seek to reconfigure Lear's crown as emblematic of his connection with his daughters, his kingdom, and with nonhuman nature.

The final essay in this section, Hillary M. Nunn's "Botanical Barbary: Punning, Race and Plant Life in *Othello* 4.3," turns to the material effects of plants by looking at women's domestic knowledge of the properties of barberries and their everyday uses in culinary and cosmetic recipes. In her analysis of the undressing scene in *Othello,* Nunn points to the linguistic connections and orthographic echoes between the character Barbary and both the geographic place and the common English barberry shrub. Noted specifically for their ability to bleach hair, barberries evoke the period's ideal of beauty, a beauty that is fair and blonde, and thus with their verbal echo of the place Barbary, they problematize the play's geographical and racial classifications. Nunn's essay explores barberries as a way of showing how domestic plant knowledge complicates the cultural geography of *Othello*, shedding new light on the play's anxieties regarding racial categorizations and their connection to female sexuality.

Although this section highlights plant power, all three essays also illustrate the various ways that plants were connected to human concepts in the early modern period—in terms of morality, gender and class, and race and ethnicity; essays in the second section, "Human-Vegetable Affinities and Transformations," interact with this section in their consideration of the

57 Cohen, "Introduction: Ecostitial," v.
58 Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, viii.

interconnections between plant and human life, but they do so by imagining a more direct embeddedness between plants and humans, showing still other ways that plants blur boundaries.

Part 2: Human-Vegetable Affinities and Transformations

While the previous section examined the vital effects of plants on humans, most of the essays in this section point to the creaturely "indistinction" developed in Feerick and Nardizzi's collection, thus challenging "absolute anthropocentrism," the belief that "human beings are radically … different from all other life on earth" and "that this difference renders humankind superior to the rest of earthly creation."[59] We do not have to look through many of Shakespeare's plays to find instances where humans are likened to plants, as I have already pointed out: Perdita is a blossom, Desdemona is a weed, Titus a shrub, Ophelia a rose of May, to cite just a few examples. In her study of Shakespeare's imagery, Caroline Spurgeon long ago noted that Shakespeare "visualizes human beings as plants and trees, choked with weeds, or well pruned and trained and bearing ripe fruits, sweet smelling as a rose or noxious as a weed."[60] Plants are likewise everywhere invested with human characteristics in early modern husbandry manuals and herbals where apples are amorous and mad, wild flowers and uncultivated plants are frequently labeled bastards, sap is blood, trees have heads, arms, even feelings. In his essay, "Daphne Described," Vin Nardizzi even imagines human hands lurking in the illustration for laurel in Gerard's *Herball*.[61] As Jean Feerick explains in her important essay "Botanical Shakespeares," the human and botanical coalesce in botanical literature and throughout Shakespeare's plays. Hands become lilies and tremble like aspen leaves; babies are blossoms. Skin is bark; arms are branches; hands are withered herbs "meet for plucking up" (*Titus Andronicus*, 3.1.178).[62] Similarly, in his analysis of hair, Edward J. Geisweidt argues that "vegetable and human are sympathetically inter-fashioned" in Shakespeare's plays, concluding that "the early modern English were more aware of their vegetable affinities than we have realized."[63] Rebecca Bushnell explains a similar correspondence

59 Bruce Boehrer, *Shakespeare among the Animals*, 6.

60 Spurgeon, *Shakespeare's Imagery*, 19.

61 Vin Nardizzi, "Daphne Described," 151.

62 Feerick, "Botanical Shakespeares," 84–86. Bruno Latour characterizes this melding of the natural and human worlds as a particularly premodern sensibility, as Feerick notes.

63 Geisweidt, "Horticulture of the Head," para. 20, 24.

between gardens and the human mind in humanist pedagogy: "gardens and schoolrooms overlapped most clearly where the human body and mind were understood to emulate or even share a plant's nature."[64] This section considers this murky, often liminal interrelationship between humans and plants.

All of the essays in Part 2 consider some kind of transformation: from human to plant, from place to place, from one time to another, to varying effect. Several essays pick up on the long tradition of human-plant metamorphosis that Shakespeare inherited from Ovid, thus continuing the debates about the ontological otherness of plants compared to humans/animals that concern critical plant studies scholars and that we see complicated in early modern notions of vitalism in the previous section. In these moments of transformation, Shakespeare dissolves the human in favor of something wondrous, resistant, even more than human. Human-plant metamorphosis not only suggests the instability of the human-plant divide, it actually replicates plant life. Unlike animals, plants are characterized by metamorphosis: cotyledons transform into true leaves, buds become flowers, flowers become fruit. Others essays in this section explore the floral analogies traditionally associated with women and the arboreal analogies often connected with kingship and familial relationships.

In the first essay in this section, "Shakespeare's Botanical Grace," Rebecca Totaro contemplates Shakespeare's manipulation of Ovidian human-plant metamorphoses. Looking at those places where verbal botanical tributes substitute for the material flowers that historically have been used to memorialize the dead and give comfort to those who remain, she calls attention to the plague-time context often in the background of Shakespeare's works. These moments, which Totaro characterizes as "pronouncements of botanical excess," occur mostly when other characters eulogize the dead (or perceived dead) as plants: "the sweet marjoram … or rather the herb of grace" that memorializes Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*; the various flowers that blazon Innogen[65] in *Cymbeline*; or Ophelia's transformation into a "metaphorical bouquet" by Gertrude in *Hamlet*, for example. Paradoxically, these transformations of characters into metaphoric plants revalue the individual human lives that have been devalued in the plays, and interestingly,

64 Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching*, 90.

65 There is controversy about the spelling of this name. Although the Folio spelling is Imogen, in her edition of the play Valerie Wayne prefers "Innogen," positing that "Imogen" was a minim error in which "nn" was mistaken for "m" (Arden 3rd series, 71). In this collection the spelling varies based on the edition of the play that the contributor used.

become a compensatory response to human diminishment, the kind of reductive dehumanization Totaro argues happens in plague accounts in the period where humans become mere numbers. Among these tributes, Ophelia's is unique, powerfully exceeding the others Totaro considers, and becomes a moment of "botanical grace," a spontaneous, life affirming moment of recompense—a gift to the audience.

In her essay, Claire Duncan speculates on the unintended effects of analogizing fertile female bodies as flowers. Starting with the premise that Angelo's "garden circummured with bricks" in *Measure for Measure* is the thematic and spatial center of the play's attempts to restrain the fertility of the female body, Duncan examines the garden location of the bed trick in "'Circummured' Plants and Women in *Measure for Measure*." Duncan shows how this garden space is constructed as a *hortus conclusus*, an enclosed, protected site that functions as a kind of fantasy trope for the simultaneously fertile yet impermeable virginal female body. Using early modern horticultural and gardening manuals, Duncan demonstrates that, like the play, these texts conflate the fertile land with the fertile female body, both of which must be managed and checked, a contention that parallels my argument about land in *King Lear*. Examining the play through the lens of early modern gardening manuals illustrates "the material ways that the early moderns attempted to circumscribe the growth of Nature through enclosed gardens." Ultimately, however, the botanical rhetoric joins with "the floral metaphor of deflowered maid" to create "a slippage between the two virginal bodies in the play and the plant matter that makes up the garden." The transformation of Isabella and Mariana into flowers at once reconstructs the bed trick into a flower-bed trick, and, Duncan concludes, opens up the opportunity for the female-horticultural body to become a site of resistance to the masculine imperative to control fertility.

In "*Cymbeline*'s Plant People," Jeffrey Theis examines the intersection of plant and human in order to illustrate the ways that identity formation, both national and individual, is enmeshed with non-human nature in general and with plants in particular in *Cymbeline*. Reading the characters as plants, Theis evokes Stacy Alaimo's concept of trans-corporeality, showing how the characters' plant affinities reflect the instability of identity in the play. Rather than being distinct individuals, each character is "part of a natural world independent from human systems" while also interdependent on each other—a kind of assemblage that is geographically and temporally influenced (in a way that I would argue interestingly replicates the plants Gerard describes in his *Herball*). Posthumus and the kidnapped princes are transplants that flourish or languish in their respective environments.

Plants are connected with humans in other ways as well, where the villainous characters, such as the Queen, are not analogized to plants but instead use plants to assert mastery over nature and other humans. Interestingly, in both Totaro's and Theis's arguments, plants become the measure of the human, rather than the other way around. The romance genre is plant-based as well, Theis argues, where plant time coincides with the long span of time characteristic of romances. In his analysis of the temporal frame of the play, Theis looks forward to the essays in Part 3.

In "'Thou art translated': Plants of Passage in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," Lisa Hopkins is also concerned with the transformative power of plants, but her focus is on the multiple ways that the many plants in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* facilitate transitions of all sorts—from one time or season to another, from one place to another, from one life stage to another, from one color to another, even from one state of mind to another. Shakespeare figures plants as agents of transition and crossover between different domains, Hopkins argues, noting how in perhaps Shakespeare's most magical play, the botanical and folkloric ideas associated with the various plants become a gateway to the realm of magic. Like Totaro, Hopkins is interested in Ovidian transformations as well, particularly when the mulberry turns black in reaction to Pyramus's death and when Daphne is metamorphosed into a laurel tree. Pointing to the traditional association of women and flowers that Claire Duncan also explores in her essay, Hopkins notes how flowers, particularly the rose, mark the passage between virginity and marriage, a passage that supports the play's marriage theme. While the familiar folklore Shakespeare utilizes in the play creates a point of intersection between the supernatural and the natural, Hopkins asserts that it also serves "to figure plants … as agents of change, transition, and mobility," a point that effectively transitions us to Part 3 and its consideration of plant temporalities.

Part 3: Plants and Temporalities

All of creation is affected by time, and yet, as scholars have shown, time is complex. As Mary Wiesner-Hanks argues, "time is an embodied aspect of human existence, but also mediated by culture; experiences and understandings of time change, and the early modern period may have been an era when they changed significantly, with the introduction of new vocabularies and technologies of time."[66] As we have seen, herbals and horticultural manuals are

66 Wiesner-Hanks, *Gendered Temporalities*, 9.

concerned with temporality, and they seem to encode the vicissitudes of plant time into their texts. In what Jessica Rosenberg characterizes as a "rhetoric of anticipation," these manuals fold readers "into the inhuman rhythms of plant time" by teaching that planting is "an environment of risk, promise, investment, disappointment, [and] decay."[67] As Rebecca Bushnell explains in her book *Green Desire*, literary texts as well as garden writings "compared people to plants in their common experience of growing, flourishing, and fading," the unavoidable markers of time.[68] The essays in this section examine various temporal constructs in relation to plant life. They point to the multiplicities of time and show how considering temporality in conjunction with plants (literal or metaphoric) forces a reconsideration both of time and of human life—blurring boundaries of past, present, and future; pointing to other temporal structures—historic, macrocosmic, divine, and ecological; and in places, challenging anthropocentric understandings of time. Thinking through time returns us to the questions posed earlier in *Shakespeare's Botanical Imagination*—what happens when we side-step the comfortable Aristotelian divisions of plant-animal-human, and instead consider Bennett's vibrant materiality as expansive and capacious, including us as well as the plants of the "lower" orders? What happens to our sense of the human when we attend to the affinities between how plants, as well as people, body forth time's progress?

In the first essay in this section, Miranda Wilson ponders the mechanical and the natural as she contemplates "clockwork plants" and other constructs of time in the early modern period in "Clockwork Plants and Shakespeare's Overlapping Notions of Time." Noting the period's sense of the human body as a clock, Wilson shows how timekeeping in Shakespeare allows for an overlap between mechanical technology, the human body, and plant time (the passage of time as understood and experienced through the vegetative world). Starting with Athanasius Kircher's fascinating experiments with his sunflower clock, Wilson points to the varied ways that early modern thinkers imagined organic lifeforms, including plants, as translators of time, thus again, highlighting the shared experience between human and plant: "men as plants increase," as Shakespeare reminds us in Sonnet 15. And as Wilson puts it, "the temporal processes that we observe in plants also drive our animal lives." The human body, then, becomes a site where multiple forms of time telling converge, again disrupting the comfortable separation of the living and non-living, plant and animal. But unlike mechanical time telling, the watches and clocks that seem to click off the inexorable moments

67 Rosenberg, "Before and After Plants," 467.
68 Bushnell, *Green Desire*, 136.

towards decay and death, "plants reveal the connections between matter and place, as well as the forces that shape them both." Wilson concludes that the human experience of plant time in Shakespeare creates a "temporal communion" that moves our awareness from the "microcosm of the lost minute" to "the macrocosm of divine and universal patterns."

In "The Verdant Imagination in Shakespeare's Sonnets," Elizabeth D. Gruber likewise considers the temporal materiality of plants and their engagement with time and death, but unlike Wilson, she finds the Sonnets' evocation of plant time alienating. In her ecocritical reading of the Sonnets, Gruber examines the conjunction of the organic and the symbolic in order to show how Shakespeare transfers the traditional vegetative powers of regeneration and growth from plants to poetry, "ultimately yielding a new ecopolitics of regeneration." Providing a counterargument to this collection's other discussions of the affinities between botanical and human bodies, she posits that human-plant indistinction does not represent a consoling egalitarianism but rather ignores the unique psychological needs of humans. Whereas Totaro and Theis discover something positive, even comforting, in the botanic transformations often depicted in Shakespeare's works, Gruber finds little solace in the plant analogies in the Sonnets, where, she argues, an awareness of the eventual breakdown of human to humus evokes dread. Perhaps Shakespeare's shift away from the age-old trope of the "eternizing properties of vegetation" reflects his awareness that "the 'human' was being reconstituted" in the period, she suggests. Gruber argues that the botanical language of Shakespeare's sonnets actually anticipates a change in Renaissance thought, a change marked by a shift from an agrarian reciprocity of humans and nature to an atomic view characterized by mechanism and human isolation from the environment.

Given the importance of time and the cycles of history, we might expect that Shakespeare would appropriate botanical imagery in his history plays. Indeed, one of his most famous plant analogies occurs in *Richard II* where he likens the king to a negligent gardener. History plays are Janus-faced, looking backward to the past and forward to Shakespeare's time simultaneously. The "dynamic mixture of temporalities" that Jessica Rosenberg finds in gardening manuals, "futurological, nostalgic, memorial, recursive, cyclical," seem precisely those of the history play.[69] In "The Botanical Revisions of *3 Henry VI*," Jason Hogue provides a detailed textual analysis of the variants in the First Folio version of *3 Henry VI* and the first printed version of the play, the 1595 octavo *The True Tragedy*, illustrating how even single word changes

69 Rosenberg, "Before and After Plants," 468.

heighten the botanical registers of the play and provide evidence that the Folio version is a careful botanical revision of the octavo. These emendations are important not just for the ways that they seem to pun on Plantagenet and "highlight the iconography of the War of the Roses," but for the intertextual relationship they develop with the other plays in Shakespeare's first tetralogy by creating a kind of retroactive chronological coherence in the Folio. As he compares the botanical discourse in each, Hogue illustrates that the Folio text expands the vegetal imagery in ways that develop the concerns of the history play as genre as well as the specific focus of this particular history cycle. The botanical emendations Hogue scrutinizes point to the temporal concerns of the genre in its obsession with succession and the long and vexed march of monarchical and providential time in which the fruiting, harvest, and the felling of trees parallel the rise and fall of kings. Hogue ends with a fascinating explication of the "external/eternal" variant in the two versions of the play, but rather than privilege one play text over the other, he concludes by borrowing a notion from critical plant studies and calls for a celebration of multiplicity and proliferation—of both texts and plants.

The final essay might be read as a kind of coda to the volume as it looks forward to future critical plant studies readings of Shakespeare's plays. Although other essays have nodded toward some of the concerns of critical plant studies, Crachiolo engages more fully with Michael Marder's notion of "plant-thinking," specifically in relationship to plant temporality. In "Botanomorphism and Temporality," Elizabeth Crachiolo shifts the terms of analysis to what she calls "botanomorphism," the ways that human characters "are endowed with the characteristics, physical and ontological, of plants, in a kind of extreme metaphor." Rather than positing how plants probe what it is to be human as other essayists do in this collection, Crachiolo explores "what it means to be a plant." Looking at *Richard II* and *The Winter's Tale*, Crachiolo finds that botanical temporalities in the plays—temporalities that are cyclic, repetitive, and reproductive—resist closure. In *Richard II*, where politics is "a fundamentally vegetal endeavor," she argues that the characters' "plantiness" resituates the human in the larger perspective of history and nation. Since *The Winter's Tale* is structured around seasonal change and concomitantly, the "lives of plants over time," this play, too, figures characters as embodied plants. This mapping of plant temporality onto the characters in both plays decenters the human in favor of a long ecological perspective rather than a purely human one.

In his "Afterword," Vin Nardizzi moves us to the present as he reflects on Maggie O'Farrell's reimagining of Shakespeare's botanical knowledge in her recent novel *Hamnet*. In O'Farrell's fictional account of Shakespeare (who

is never actually named in the novel), Shakespeare is guilty of the kind of plant blindness that Marder and others decry as so endemic to contemporary culture. As Nardizzi notes, such a move—while interesting to contemplate, especially since it highlights women's very real involvement in botanical endeavors in the period—seems almost anathema to Shakespeare scholars. While many readers and viewers today, like Agnes's unnamed husband in *Hamnet*, might not recognize the variety of flora surrounding us, no one could ever accuse Shakespeare of plant blindness, as these essays prove. Nardizzi also points to the difficulties and complexities involved in recovering the sources of Shakespeare's "botanical imagination," noting the various ways essays in this collection seek to elucidate the plants Shakespeare includes—perusing printed and manuscript materials such as herbals, histories, and recipe books; through careful textual analysis; by engaging with various images; and even moving beyond historicist contextualization to the more philosophical concerns of critical plant studies. The possibilities are vast.

When some twenty-four years after Shakespeare's death, John Parkinson titled the volume meant to be his magnum opus *Theatrum Botanicum: The Theatre of Plantes*, he alluded to plants as actors on the stage of the natural world. Parkinson's title might accurately describe Shakespeare's botanizing.[70] Although most of the plants named in Shakespeare's plays are not physically present on the stage, they are nonetheless performers, as these essays show. In "Ophelia's Plants and the Death of Violets," Rebecca Laroche illustrates how the presence of the actual plants and flowers on stage in Ophelia's mad scene has the potential to decenter the play away from Hamlet, providing "two alternative views within the play": "a space that is not corrupted by human presence and a character's action that is not determined by Hamlet. In this way, the ecocritical call for attention to the nonhuman coincides with the feminist reworkings of history to include previously underdeveloped perspectives," Laroche concludes.[71] The material plants are not often depicted on the stage in performance, but perhaps they should be, as Laroche argues. Focusing on the plants of Shakespeare's botanical imagination in our analyses of the plays and poetry offers similar potential for reconfiguring the world of Shakespeare. Their virtues can act on us as viewers and readers if we attend to them—moving us, shaping

70 This title seems connected with the more general trope of the world as theater, i.e., the *theater mundi*. For a thorough discussion of all the texts constructed as theaters, see Ann Blair, *The Theater of Nature*, especially chapter 5.

71 Laroche, "Ophelia's Plants and the Death of Violets," 212. In my essay on *King Lear* in this collection, I consider the effect of various stagings of actual weeds in Lear's crown.

us, and perhaps altering not just our interpretations of his works, but our notions of our place and responsibilities as humans on the stage of our world.

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About the Author

Susan C. Staub is Professor of English at Appalachian State University. Her publications include *Nature's Cruel Stepdames: Representations of Women and Crime in the Street Literature of Early Modern England* and *The Literary Mother*, as well as numerous essays on Early Modern prose fiction, Shakespeare, and Spenser. Her current book project focuses on Shakespeare and botany.

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