

GREEN ECONOMIES: AN ECOFEMINIST PERSEPCTIVE ON *THE WINTER'S TALE* AND
HAMLET

by

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Green Economies: An Ecofeminist Perspective on *The Winter's Tale* and *Hamlet*

Thesis directed by Assistant Professor Richelle Munkhoff

My readings of *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale* draw on the evolving historical narrative created by feminist scholars of the history of science, medicine, and ecology. Early modern male medical professionals and scientists greened themselves and their fields, I argue, by positioning themselves above feminized Nature. These men's greenness, the way in which they locate themselves in relation to the natural world, represents the unspoken colonization of knowledge. By "Green Economies," then I mean to read for what has been greened, by whom, in what way, and to what end. Yet Shakespeare also depicts female characters, such as Ophelia, Perdita, and Paulina, who have the capacity and knowledge to green their own economies to gain or maintain authority. Influenced by ecofeminist thinkers, the linchpin of my readings will look at how early modern men, women, and literary characters greened their political, social, and sexual economies for their own means.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

My readings of *Hamlet* and *The Winter's Tale* draw on the evolving narrative of early modern women created by feminist scholars of the history of science, medicine, and ecology. Over the last several decades, feminist literary and historical research on early modern science and medicine has moved scholars' focus away from a few men and their now canonized works to marginalized figures and the nuanced intricacies of the period's understanding of these fields.¹ In the early 1980s, scholarship criticized the Scientific Revolution, which some scholars, such as Carolyn Merchant, have argued harmed both women and the natural world. In her book *The Death of Nature*, Merchant describes a seventeenth-century shift from the personification of nature as a motherly nurturer to that of a sexualized and unruly force requiring men's husbandry. While today's research still evokes these paradoxical metaphors, scholars succeeding Merchant tended to focus on the latter. For example, Evelyn Fox Keller's and Sandra Harding's works in the mid-80's concentrated on misogynistic metaphors used during the Scientific Revolution that have come to influence modern humankind's view of science, nature, and women.² Surveying early feminist work on the history of science and medicine, Alisha Rankin notes that such research re-narrated the Scientific Revolution "as having a net negative effect on women and science" ("Women in Science and Medicine" 408).

Consequently, researchers began examining the barriers used to hinder women's participation in early modern science and medicine. Such work focused on the lives of individual early modern women as well as the various obstacles used to subjugate their knowledge and experience. Margaret Pelling's *The Common Lot* and Pelling and Frances

White's *Medical Conflicts in Early Modern London* addressed early modern male physicians' concerns about masculinizing their field and separating their work from that of female caregivers. Monica Green's and Elizabeth Furdell's work addressed the gender divide in medieval and early modern medical practice respectively by examining print culture and literacy.³ These studies investigated the professionalization of the medical field and questioned the ways in which both learned and lay practitioners understood medicine, health, and the body. When considered together, these scholars complicated the idea that women played marginal roles in medieval and early modern science and healthcare while pointing out a paradigm shift that affected both male and female medical practice—what Green describes as “a growing general belief in the ability of learned medicine to provide desirable medical care” (7).

Feminist scholarship on the history of medicine also was pushing back against late-twentieth century narratives that depicted early modern female medical practitioners as victims of systematic persecution. Work, such as Merry Wiesner-Hanks' and Doreen Evenden's studies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century northern European midwifery, highlighted female midwives' position of power and authority as medical practitioners.⁴ Simultaneously, scholarship began investigating the subordination of both male and female medical practitioners to members of bureaucratic institutions such as The Royal Society and The College of Physicians.⁵ Feminist archival research has garnered a more broad view of early modern science and medical practice that goes beyond discussions of the obstacles that early modern women faced. They highlighted the authority and power that some early modern women had when practicing medicine. By the early 2000's, feminists working on medieval and early modern science and medicine had collected and created a robust corpus of primary and secondary

materials through which future generations can more accurately discuss women's participation in and impact on science and healthcare.

Feminist scholars have further expanded research on early modern women by focusing on their participation in science and medicine in domestic spheres. Deborah Harkness' and Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton's research have been concerned with "shift[ing] our historical vantage point to the streets, houses, churches, and hospitals" where early modern men and women were both "consumers of medical services and [] practitioners" (Harkness 52).⁶ Today the works of early modern healthcare providers Lady Grace Mildmay, Jane Sharp, Lady Margaret Hoby, and Elizabeth Isham are available thanks to the work of Linda Pollock, Elaine Hobby, Joanna Moody, and the University of Warwick respectively.⁷ Such scholarship contributes greatly to understanding regional healthcare and the period's philosophies regarding the human body. Moreover, work on early modern receipts and women's engagement with herbal knowledge by Michelle DeMio, Rebecca Laroche, Elaine Leong, Sara Pennell, Alisha Rankin as well as the work of the Early Modern Recipes Online Collective has engaged in the research of regional medicine, early chemistry, and early modern women's daily lives.⁸

As historians and literary scholars of science and medicine continue to explore early modern women's participation in professional and lay healthcare and scientific experimentation, ecofeminists working with early modern literature and materiality are extending the study of women's relationship to nature. As Jennifer Munroe notes and I will discuss in my reading of *The Winter's Tale*, historically much of what we designate as "nature" bears human influence ("It's All about" 139n2). Moreover, ecofeminists working on the early modern period are drawn particularly to instances of nature personified as feminine and how such designations reflect the period's understanding and treatment of women and nature. Therefore, for much ecofeminist

work on this period and for my work here, the use of capital “N” Nature is a label for natural imagery that is personified as female. Scholarship has investigated these personifications as an anxiety that surrounds early modern male characters that cannot control women or the natural world. And as sites of profound disquietude, female figures and land have prompted various means of husbandry throughout the early modern period. Nature and women possess the ability to create and sustain life. Thus, historically both have been viewed as objects of men’s pleasure and exploitation. However, I certainly do not mean to suggest that imagery of Nature always situates early modern women as victims. Ecofeminists, such as Sylvia Bowerbank and Susan Griffin, have rightly cautioned that when nature imagery is mapped onto female characters we potentially situate women in inferior positions to men, thus essentializing women while also offering them a powerful position from which to resist patriarchal apparatuses.⁹

Yet early modern literature and agricultural and medical texts did feminize Nature in a number of ways and for a variety of means. This work, however, does not merely attempt to reconstruct early modern women’s inferiority when compared to and understood through Nature imagery. The goal of my readings is to explore how women have resisted being essentialized as weaker subjects and how women’s association with and knowledge of nature provides them with influence and authority when it came to the period’s understanding of women’s bodies, reproduction, and somatic healing. Of course, I do not want to suggest that scholars will ever know fully what it was like to live as an early modern woman. However, my hope is that by building off of the work of past and present feminist scholars, I can more responsibly represent the lived experiences of early modern women. In his *Second World and Green World: Studies in Renaissance Fiction-Making* (1988), Harry Berger notes,

Since the forces and processes of thought engender the forms of cultural environment much as a living organism creates its own shell, the shell, once relatively complete, may be inhabited at any subsequent time. A period imagination, unlike a historical period, may be revived or revised, uncritically perpetuated or critically tested, during later historical periods (Berger 46).

Similarly, I hope to revive the period imagination surrounding early modern healthcare and herbal medicine as represented in the period's literature and historical texts and, as the feminist scholars before me, revise the historical narrative that ignores women's roles in science and medicine. Books such as *Speaking for Nature* (2004), *Ecocritical Shakespeare* (2011), and *Ecofeminist Approaches to Early Modernity* (2011) have continued this work by augmenting discussions of women and Nature and locating female resistance and agency in early modern England.

In my readings, I am particularly interested in the period's knowledge production and management, especially when it came to the understanding and treatment of the environment and women. This work is built on the conviction that the study of early modern literature alongside the history of science and medicine yields a better understanding of the period's cultural, social, political, economic, and sexual economies as well as a more accurate view of women's role in the evolution of medicine and healthcare. Herbal and medical documents are "*crafted* documents," Green notes, "meant to serve specific, historically contingent purposes," so literary methodologies and techniques then become a fundamental part of studying the "shifting meanings and uses of medical texts" (11). When considered as such, medical and agricultural texts provide modern literary scholars with a deep corpus of knowledge from which to revive the

period's cultural imagination and incorporate women into historical narratives from which they have often been excluded.

Shakespeare is often lauded for not moralizing, so to single out his works' treatment of Nature as officious and slanted toward eco- and gynophobia would be both inadequate and inconsistent. Although eco- and gynophobia manifest in many of his works, he also presents Nature's and women's resistance to such fears. These plays, when read with and against the period's herbal, medical, and agricultural texts provide a glimpse of early modern women's daily lives and roles in the period's medical marketplace.

By "Green Economies," I do not mean to code Shakespeare's treatment of nature with the twenty-first-century notion of conservation. Rather I mean to invoke its use as a verb meaning, "to become green," "to become covered in vegetation," or to green "over or up" ("Green"). So just as in Leah Knight's *Reading Green in Early Modern England* (2014), this work is not an attempt "to read *greenly*," but to read for what has been greened, by whom, in what way, and to what end. Early modern male medical professionals and scientists greened themselves and their fields, I will argue, by positioning themselves above feminized Nature and therefore as spokesmen for it. Knight notes, "In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, greenness was by no means so closely associated with any such defined or definable socio-political arena" (1). Yet these men's greenness, the way in which they locate themselves in relation to the natural world, represents the unspoken colonization of knowledge, which is most certainly political. The literary characters that appropriate Renaissance men of science, medicine, and agriculture occupy positions of authority when they speak for Nature, and as Munroe and Laroche argue, "are in effect also speaking [their] political interests related to it" (1). This work then is concerned with how the early modern period spoke about, for, and with the natural world, how

and who constructed these ecological narratives, and the political and social implications of doing so. *Economy* in the late sixteenth century not only carried specific ties to agricultural, domestic, and political husbandry but also suggested management by a “divine government suited to the needs of a particular nation or period of time” as in Christian economy (“Economy”). By “Green Economies” then, I mean to draw attention to the early modern tendency to conflate issues of land and domestic management with nationhood and the perception of divinely granted authority over Nature. Influenced by ecofeminist thinkers, the linchpin of my readings will look at how early modern men, women, and literary characters greened their political, social, and sexual economies for their own means.

Before turning to *The Winter’s Tale* and *Hamlet*, I first want to situate my readings beside early modern thoughts regarding Nature and nationhood. The ability to manipulate the natural landscape and lord over Nature is essential to maintaining the political and social status quo in *The Winter’s Tale* and *Hamlet*, and the scientific and political writings of Francis Bacon and Edmund Spenser respectively establish a narrative with which we can read with and against these texts’ green economies. In his *De Sapientia Veterum* (1609), Bacon notes

True and this particularly is exposed, that man seems to be as the center of the world, regarding final causes; so that if humankind is away, all things seem to wander and fluctuate continually without design . . . For in fact, all things serve humankind . . . so that everything is put in motion not for itself, but for man. (670-1)

Uncovering Nature’s mystical functions through reason and experimentation yields, for Bacon, new discovery and, thus, justifies Nature’s continual subjugation to man’s will. Innately chaotic,

Nature, Bacon seems to believe, can be returned to a perfect state when natural philosophers eventually expose “final causes,” thus reinforcing an anthropocentric view of Nature.

Further in *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum*, Bacon feminizes his He justifies aggressive force against Nature through an allusion to rape: “Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object” (*Works* 331). Here investigating natural truths excuses savage, invasive behavior, but the reference to infiltrating and puncturing as a means of controlling the natural world also suggests that early modern man also employed aggression to husbanding women. Entering and penetrating without hesitation or moral repugnance, scientific man must make all things subservient to maintain his supremacy. Therefore, anxiety over maintaining a legacy through legitimate progeny and land demands aggressive husbandry and knowledge of Nature and female bodies.

Edmund Spenser uses similar logic when arguing for Ireland’s colonization in *A View of the State of Ireland* (1596). First, Irenæus invokes “Almighty God” before Eudoxus asks about a possible “remedie” for the land and people of Ireland (9, 18). Just as Bacon establishes Nature as a chaotic force, Spenser describes Ireland as diseased and irreverent and in need of England’s divinely granted authority. Further, Irenæus refutes Eudoxus’ claim that the “noble King” should “plant a peaceable government amongst them,” instead advocating for “such violent means to pluck them under” (19). Like weeds, Ireland requires husbandry from another nation. Thus, Spenser’s text seeks not only to eliminate the Irish-ness of the landscape but also to remove those who inhabit it. He politicizes national husbandry when depicting Ireland as a barbaric nation unable to effectively husband its own land. As Munroe observes in *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature*, “[C]olonizing Ireland involved getting

[England's] hands dirty by either evicting or starving out tenants and landholds and seizing land for queen and country" (51). For England, taking control of a barbarous and prodigal country necessitates an equally savage "plucking" and cultivation. Of course, Spenser understood that not all of Ireland's inhabitants were diseased and suggested that "good care [was] to bee had by all occasions, to encrease their number, and to plant more by them" (32). Under the banner of civilization, England eventually began its pruning and replanting of nearly 30,000 Irish lives, and later continued its cultural imperialism by fertilizing the Irish land with crops, flowers, and herbs common to England (Munroe 24-5, 47-8). Ireland, therefore, lost its sovereignty and became a political, social, and horticultural extension of England. These agricultural activities then are forms of national husbandry with the perceived potential to bring stability and prestige.

These now canonized men and their texts represent only a small sample of the period's cultural imagination surrounding science, agriculture, and women. However, the emphasis on husbandry—both in domestic, political, scientific, and ecological spheres—pervades the period's literature and, I will argue, the period's understanding and treatment of female bodies. In what follows, I explore Ophelia's attempt to practice her herbal knowledge and display her somatic medical authority. In her ultimate failure to access medicament, we see the early modern conflict between male and female herbal authority and women's struggle to treat themselves when faced with the growing professional male practice. My reading of *The Winter's Tale* deviates from the history of medicine slightly to examine the ways in which male and female characters recast inherited mythologies using Nature imagery. Shakespeare's Polixenes and Perdita understand human reproduction through feminized Nature and construct metaphors that bolster their own homosocial bonds and return them to a homosocial utopia. Paulina's success and restored status, however, comes as she embraces the paradoxical role that feminized Nature

plays: a nurturer and an unruly object susceptible to men's derision. Together these readings consider the early modern consequences of greening the medical marketplace and domestic spheres in early modern London.

Notes

¹ Alisha Rankin's chapter "Women in Science and Medicine, 1400-1800" in the *Ashgate Research Companion to Women & Gender in Early Modern Europe* provides a fantastic account of the evolution of contemporary scholarship on medieval and early modern women in science and medicine.

² See Fox Keller's *Reflections on Gender and Science* and Harding's *The Science Question in Feminism*.

³ See Green's *Making Women's Medicine Masculine: The Rise of Male Authority in Pre-Modern Gynaecology* and Elizabeth Furdell's edited collection *Textual Healing: Essays on Medieval and Early Modern Medicine*.

⁴ See Merry Wiesner Hanks' "Early Modern Midwifery: A Case Study" in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe* and *Working Women in Renaissance Germany* and Doreen Evenden's *The Midwives of Seventeenth-Century London*.

⁵ See Alison Klairmont-Lingo "Empirics and Charlatans in Early Modern France: The Genesis of the Classification of the 'Other' in Medical Practice" (Rankin 410n12). Also see Green's *Making Women's Medicine Masculine* for a discussion of medical professionalization in the medieval period.

⁶ See Lynette Hunter and Sarah Hutton's edited collection *Women, Science and Medicine 1500-1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society*.

⁷ See Pollock's edited text *With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tutor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay, 1552-1620*; Hobby's edited text *The Midwives Book*; Moody's edited text *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby, 1599-1605*; and the

University of Warwick's Centre for the Study of the Renaissance's edited digital text *Elizabeth Isham's Booke of Remembrance*.

⁸ See DeMio and Pennell's edited collection *Reading and Writing Recipe Books, 1550-1800*; Pennell's "Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England"; Leong and Rankin's edited collection *Secrets and Knowledge in Medicine and Science, 1500-1800*; Leong's "Making Medicines in the Early Modern Household" and "'Herbals She Peruseth': Reading Medicine in Early Modern England"; Rebecca Laroche's *Medical Authority and Englishwoman's Herbal Texts, 1550-1650*; and Alisha Rankin's *Panacea's Daughters: Noblewomen as Healers in Early Modern Germany* and "Exotic Materials and Treasured Knowledge: The Valuable Legacy of Noblewomen's Pharmacy in Early Modern Germany."

⁹ See Sylvia Bowerbank's *Speaking for Nature* and Susan Griffin's *Made from This Earth*.

CHAPTER II

VENTRIOLQUIZED VIOLETS: SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HERBAL AUTHORITY AND FEMALE RESISTANCE IN *HAMLET*

Depicting Ophelia as an object of pleasure and beauty, Shakespeare understands that, in terms of masculine discourse, to be Ophelia is not to be. Distributing rosemary, pansies, fennel, columbines, rue, and a daisy, Ophelia reveals her knowledge of Nature and signals her separation from the language and epistemologies of men. While her herbal dispensation suggests her aristocratic education, her songs indicate her appropriation of the period's herb-wives—women whose paradoxical subjectivity frees Ophelia to vocalize her melancholy. Her madness and death, then, do not represent true lunacy and suicide respectively; rather, when we examine the full scope of her education and herbal knowledge, they reveal her inconceivability within a greened masculine discourse and her desire for self-preservation, evident through her intimacy with Nature.

In what follows, I argue that Ophelia's interactions with the natural world resemble the battle for knowledge between women who distributed herbs for medicines and male-authored herbal manuals such as John Parkinson's *Paradisus Terrestris* (1629) and *Theatrum Botanicum* (1640) and John Gerard's *Herball or Generall Historie of Plantes* (1636), which attempt to tame and obscure women's knowledge. Specifically, Shakespeare's use of violets exemplifies herbal women's struggle against male-published texts that suppressed women with professionalized discourse.¹ While *Hamlet*'s male characters adopt a discourse that centers them in the natural and political, allowing them to speak *for* Nature, Ophelia, left abject by her femininity, retains the ability to speak *with* Nature. Natasha Korda has read Ophelia's madness as the arrogation of and

a contemporary parallel to the War of the Theatres, and while she examines the nuanced, gendered vocalizations of both male and female characters, she does not consider, nor has any work to date, both Ophelia's education *and* her appropriation of herb-wives through song. Ophelia's speech and songs, I argue, mark a form of resistance, which anticipates the description of herbal women in the manuals of Gerard and Parkinson. Although Ophelia ultimately fails to communicate in the face of masculine discourse, her struggle mimics that of herbal women in the way both use intimacy with Nature and oral knowledge to disrupt longstanding epistemologies, or the green economies, created by men.

Medical Rhetoric and Female Practice in Seventeenth-Century London

Early modern male medical practice depended, in part, on the conflation of words with performance. The seventeenth-century "Annals of the College of Physicians" records, "Catherine Clark was accused by Mr. Bredwell of practicing medicine. She denies the word but confessed to the deed" (qt. in Kerwin 81). In fusing "physician-like activities" and "physician-like rhetorical forms," the "Annals" makes inseparable words and practice, while Clark's stance does the opposite in the face of a professional medical practice that relied on this conflation (Kerwin 81). Similarly, in *The English Husewife* (1623), Gervase Markham writes of female medical practitioners, "Neither doe I intend here to lead [their] minde with all the Symptomes, accidents, and effects which goe before or after every sicknesse, as though I would have [them] to assume the name of Practitioner" (5). Markham withholds the term *practitioner* from describing women's medical contributions and reminds us of the power of nomenclature—in this case, the act of devising what is and is not acceptable professional practice. Additionally, William Kerwin explains, the College "interrogated people in Latin as a part of their hearings," making "ignorance of Latin . . . prima facie evidence of incompetence" (80). Considered together, these

moments exemplify the importance of discourse management when it came to describing men's professional medical practice. However, female practitioners, like Clark, could attempt to sidestep this precarious man-made conflation by embracing their own knowledge, refusing the man-made monikers and definitions used to define their practice, or simply ignoring professional authority, as was the case of 35.5 percent of the women summoned for disciplinary hearings before the College (Pelling, *Medical Conflicts* 198). The separation of professional activities from professional language poses a significant threat to male medical authority and, as I will show, this conflict is manifest in the period's herbal manuals.

Maintaining one's masculinity while authoring a guidebook for non-masculine fields required strategic rhetoric as Rebecca Laroche, Wendy Wall, and Caroline Bicks discuss in terms of the period's herbal, housewifery, and midwifery manuals respectively.² Bicks notes that "early modern masculinity depended in part upon the protection of men from the effect of female speech," so an all-female gathering "often appears as a site of profound effeminization" (29). Women's shared herbal knowledge also represents the possible threat of emasculation. As women exhibit mastery over somatic medical practice, they have the ability to shape or misshape profound sites of masculinity, which was especially the case for midwives, who were thought to be able to determine the size of the infant's tongue and penis when they cut the umbilical cord (Bicks 43).³ Bicks goes on to note, "men imagined the tongue" to be "a central site of masculine self-presentation and identity" (49). Masculinity then required mastery of discourse, which depended on the husbandry of one's tongue and phallus and therefore excluded women. Thus, a man's ability to express himself with language signals his masculinity and skilled penis, both of which—according to William Sermon's *The Ladies Companion* (1671)—make him "more serviceable to Ladies, (or to such as delight in long things)" (107). To eschew effeminization

then, male medical-text authors attempted to masculinize their discourse by colonizing women's oral and herbal knowledge through print, defaming female gatherings and knowledge and disrupting communication between female practitioners and their patients.

Ophelia, too, experiences this husbandry of language and stands distinctly apart from *Hamlet's* other characters as a figure without access to an authoritative discourse. Her solidarity with female medical practitioners is evident through a comparison of the natural elements that Shakespeare gives his male characters to those he has Ophelia speak of in Act IV. The first plant *Hamlet* mentions, *hebona*, was used to kill King Hamlet. An early modern invention, *hebona* and its derivatives were "names given by Shakespeare and Marlowe to some substance having poisonous juice" ("Hebona"). Therefore, Hamlet's "tragedy," Laroche contends, "exists [. . .] in the language of his father," while Ophelia's flowers and herbs exist not discursively but literally within the natural world and likely on the physical stage ("Ophelia's Plants" 219).⁴ The conflation of *hebona* with discourse suggests that Act IV's flowers and herbs operate outside of language. Likewise, while political discourse engenders Hamlet's struggle, as Katherine Eggert notes, to "reinvent [his] own succession" and "recompose his family tree," Gertrude's political status and misfortunes, too, spring from this poison and therefore political discourse (Eggert 101-2; *Hamlet* 1.5.91). Denmark's queen, and *Hamlet's* only other female character, is further distanced from Ophelia, and the herbal women who I argue she represents, as Claudius deems Gertrude an "imperial jointress"—an appellation that suggests her joint possession of Denmark and political and discursive authority over land (1.2.9).⁵ Juxtaposed to *hebona*, Act IV's curative flowers and herbs mark Ophelia's preclusion from language and subjugation with Nature, while *hebona* signifies *Hamlet's* other characters' fixation with and mastery of a language often associated with masculinity and therefore authority.

Contemporary queer theory and work on the posthuman, which I will not have time to discuss here,⁶ provide helpful lenses through which to examine herbal women and Ophelia. In outlining professional medical practice, early modern manual authors simultaneously construct queer spaces for women's practice in two ways: by denying women's access to their discourse—either due to women's illiteracy, lack of Latin proficiency, or often femininity—or by defining women's practice for women. Lee Edelman notes, “To be queer, in fact, is not to be, except insofar as queerness serves as the name for the thing that is not, for the limit point of ontology, for the constitutive exclusion that registers the no, the not, the negation in being” (149). Women's herbal knowledge, characterized as feminine and therefore requiring husbandry, does not fit within the professional medical narrative. When a woman's knowledge appears authoritative and masculine—thereby, eschewing the conventions of her sex and gender—she thus appears outside of language and not to be. Yet, *not being* still *is*. That is, occupying a queer space does not mean early modern women's or Ophelia's herbal knowledge did nothing, only that it was initially without written representation.

Ophelia's Husbanded Discourse and Potential Autonomy

Among Ophelia's education and accomplishments is her herbal knowledge, which separates her from *Hamlet's* other characters, potentially contests masculine discourse, and, like unsanctioned herbal women, affords her some autonomy despite operating within a queer space. In the First Quarto of the play, Shakespeare begins Ophelia's mad scene with this stage direction: “Enter Ofelia Playing on a Lute.” Deanne Williams argues that this stage direction's absence in both the Second Quarto—from which the Norton edition that I employ throughout this paper is drawn—and Folio creates an Ophelia “more resolutely mad,” making her “trajectory more emphatically tragic” due to the lute's association with her aristocratic accomplishments (120).

Yet all versions portray a young woman with some access to reading and proficiency in herbal knowledge—clear indications of her aristocracy. As in Williams’ reading, these accomplishments reflect “domestic order . . . as well as the conflicting aims of female sexual power and daughterly duty,” but her inability either freely to read or dispense herbal knowledge suggests that she must work within the queer space created for her, which offers her the potential for resistance while also portending her demise (120).

Evident in Shakespeare’s association of Ophelia with flowers and herbs, language’s volatile nature constructs a precarious situation for Ophelia and early modern women. As an aristocratic, educated woman, Ophelia would likely have been aware that the herbs named in Act IV generally provide comfort and alleviate inward pain, but on three occasions in the play, Shakespeare draws attention to one flower that held powerful medicinal and chemical qualities: the violet. An authority on early modern midwifery, Jane Sharp records the use of violets for “congested lungs,” and John Gerard records the flower’s multiple uses for the respiratory system: being “cold and moist [. . .] The floures are good for all inflamations, especially of the sides and lungs; they take away the hoarsenesse of the chest, the ruggedness of the winde-pipe and iawes” (Sharp, *Medical Glossary*; Gerard 852). “Syrup of Violets” was a common beverage and medicine “used to ease fevers and coughs and relieved inflammation of the liver, lungs, and chest” (Laroche, “Behind”). Further, violets, being “cold and moist,” have a unique temperature compared to *Hamlet*’s other natural elements. With the exception of pansies, which are only “obscurely cold,” and daisies, which are cold and moist only “of the second degree” and only at certain times, *Hamlet*’s other herbs do not share the same temperature as violets (Gerard 855, 634). This flower’s relationship to Ophelia, as I will discuss, and its distinct qualities among the others, then, suggest its peculiar role in *Hamlet* and its potential to remedy throat soreness and

perhaps Ophelia's silence. Yet, from her first appearance on stage with Laertes to her last living moments on stage in Act IV, men keep Ophelia from violets and, as I will show, metaphorically keep her from speaking. Forced to swallow male discourse, follow men's concept of femininity, and choke on her own thoughts, she symbolically needs the soothing effects this flower provides. By withholding this decongestant, the play demonstrates her inability to use language effectively as she does not speak authoritatively.

For the most part, Ophelia's education has not prepared her to master traditional discourse—a distinct training, which offers the potential for political hegemony and survival, that even Hamlet acquires when he eventually asserts his masculinity.⁷ Hamlet struggles to become a living monument to his father. Yet he has the potential to wield discourse and support his masculinity in a number of ways, assuming a midwife did not misshape his phallus (167). Additionally, “many things are required of man,” notes Juan Luis Vives,

wisdom, eloquence, knowledge of political affairs, talent, memory, [. . .] and other qualities that it would take a long time to rehearse. If some of these are lacking, he seems to have less blame as long as some are present (85).

Hamlet struggles to speak authoritatively in an environment that has “diseased” him mentally or “disseized” him literally in terms of land,⁸ yet he eventually gains his father's narrative, voice, and authority while also retaining many other means of upholding his gender as Vives' list suggests (3.2.399). Ophelia's education, on the other hand, has revolved around maintaining her chastity, for “no one requires eloquence or talent or wisdom or professional skills or administration of the republic or justice or generosity; no one asks anything of her but chastity. If that one thing is missing, it is as if all were lacking to man” (Vives 85).⁹ Survival, while inevitably ephemeral, has historically privileged those with access to authoritative means of

preservation, such as print and language. Ophelia is disadvantaged in this area since she does not wield language independently, evident in the texts she is allowed to carry. With the exception of a book of prayer, she holds not books but rather Hamlet's letters, which she later discovers do not signify what she had thought, revealing that she cannot freely exercise autonomy in this discourse. That is, Hamlet has the potential for a legacy in language, as he reconstructs his father's story and later instructs Horatio to "tell [his] story" and give "[his] dying voice" to Fortinbras; Ophelia, however, does not retain authoritative means of preservation as her legacy depends on her body (5.2.323, 330).

Controlling what women read is crucial to husbanding women's minds and bodies—vessels that men do not trust to govern themselves. Vives also alludes to physical repercussions from perusing non-religious texts: "What room do these thoughts leave for chastity, which is defenseless, unwarlike, and weak? A woman who contemplates these things drinks poison into her breasts of which such interest and such words are symptoms" (73). As *symptoms*, words are physically manifested and contagious; moreover, a woman's thoughts—evoked from the memory of what she has read—infect not only her mind but also her body and potentially her offspring. Believed to pass on characteristics from the breast to the child, breastfeeding posed a significant risk to infants who nursed from physically or spiritually unhealthy women, since women's breasts could infect their children with impropriety—foreshadowing Hamlet's claim that women "breed maggots" (2.2.180).¹⁰

As a result, Polonius spends much time nurturing his daughter, for it is crucial that her virginity remains above question and free from Hamlet's infectious words. After learning of Hamlet's letters to Ophelia, Polonius "in way of caution" explains that she "do[es] not understand [herself] so clearly / As behooves [his] daughter and [her] honor" (1.3.95-96).

Feeling the need to interject and interpret Hamlet's "many tenders" for her, he warns that had she "ta'en these tenders for true pay" she would have "tender[ed him] a fool"—or as a footnote recounts—"present[ed him] with a grandchild" (1.3.98, 105, 108; 23n108). Filled with infectious words, Hamlet's letters represent a threat to Ophelia's chastity, as they seem enough to jeopardize her virginity. To hinder his daughter's autonomy and protect her only asset, Polonius prevents her from expressing desires and feels justified in keeping her silent.

Hamlet's male characters work to silence Ophelia by husbanding her access to Nature. Laertes instructs her, "For Hamlet, and the trifling of his favor, / Hold it a fashion and a toy in blood" (1.3.5-6). Under a banner of brotherly concern, he urges his sister to be wary of Hamlet's affection and not to trust or reciprocate his words. Referring to Hamlet's affection as "A violet in the youth of primy nature, / Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting," Laertes figuratively regulates his sister's desires and speech (1.3.7-8). But Laertes is wrong about violets' ephemerality: they are perennials. True knowledge either eludes Laertes' understanding or constitutes a risk to male power; if Ophelia has both knowledge of and access to violets, she possesses the capacity to heal herself when necessary and, therefore, the potential for independence from her brother and father. Violets, then, come to represent not only Laertes' concerns for Hamlet's intentions but also male practitioners' concern for the possibility of female autonomy and authoritative speech.

Seventeenth-Century Herbal Manuals and Gendered Epistemology

Laertes' husbandry of Ophelia indicates a cultural paranoia surrounding seventeenth-century women's medical practice. Referencing the "link [. . .] between insecurities of status and gender" in early modern medical practice, Margret Pelling's study of medical conflicts in London reveals that medical practice "was neither well organized nor firmly controlled. No

system of surveillance had more than partial application” (*Medical Conflicts*, 191; *A Common Lot*, 244). It should not be surprising then that men, with limited structural authority from the still-nascent College of Physicians, carved out their own authority in their texts, often by feminizing competitors’ work in order to bolster and masculinize their own influence.¹¹ So in masculinizing their texts, male authors not only manipulated mediums to which women had limited access but also attempted to hew out a position for themselves in the professional medical community that juxtaposed herbal women’s work.

The herbal manuals of John Parkinson make a deliberate attempt to justify men’s central place within the natural world by gendering knowledge, restricting how and with whom women dispensed medical care, and obscuring women’s historical impact on herbal medicine. His works share a similar nativity to that of housewifery books. Discussing these domestic texts, Wall notes, “housewifery was first published as a subset of husbandry,” and these texts worked to divide men’s and women’s practices “into distinct knowledges” (*Staging* 28). The gendering of knowledge found in Parkinson’s 1640 herbal, the *Theatrum Botanicum*, participates in a similar tradition and begins when he addresses “the Kings Most Excellent Maiestie”:

Having by long paines and endeavours, composed this Manlike Worke of Herbes and Plants, Most gracious Sovereigne (as I formely did a Feminine of Flowers, and presented it to the Queenes most excellent Maiesty) I could doe no lesse then submissively lay it at your Maiesties feet, to be approved or condemned.” (fol. 3r)

Dedicated to a male head of state, Charles I, the *Theatrum*—a “Manlike Worke”—suggests the strict association of “Herbes and Plants” with masculinity and flowers with femininity. Further, often referring in the “Dedication” to the way in which this work provides necessary, practical knowledge, he uses several phrases that position his work within the medical community through

an emphasis on healing the body: “bodily estates,” “bodies health,” “approved remedies,” “cure and prevent their diseases,” and “live in health” (fol. 3r). Parkinson designates this text, about healing and herbs, as masculine, whereas he styles his earlier *Paradisus Terrestris* (1629), which Laroche notes associates pleasure and fripperies with flowers, as feminine (*Medical* 34). As medicinal herbal knowledge was common among educated women, Parkinson’s separation of these knowledges into gendered texts contradicts the work that early modern women actually did.¹² Moreover, Parkinson’s construction of a hyper-masculine text in a traditionally gender-neutral field becomes apparent when we consider that his language subjugates any object lacking masculine signification and designates unsanctioned female medical practice to a queer space, to no place, within professionalized medicine. Labeling objects as feminine, then, becomes a discursive defensive tactic, ensuring that men remain sovereign while women’s professional practice becomes nameless or, as we will see with Gerard, madness.

Published eleven years before the *Theatrum*, Parkinson’s “Feminine of Flowers” or *Paradisus Terrestris* (1629) indeed associates women’s knowledge with pleasure and men’s with practicality. The *Paradisus*, presented to Charles’s Queen Henrietta Maria, has an assumed female readership that emphasizes the pleasure associated with women in the *Theatrum*, and, as Rebecca Bushnell has noted, the text itself de-emphasizes the herbs’ and flowers’ medicinal uses (Bushnell, *Green* 61; Laroche, *Medical* 34). Rather than emphasize the medicinal—and thus professional and masculine—aspects of Nature in a text dedicated to a woman, he conceives the *Paradisus* as a “speaking Garden” enabling women to imagine their “wants”—the beauty of flowers “when you cannot see any of them fresh vpon the ground” (sig. **2r). He goes on to describe women in terms of Nature or their association with it by addressing the queen who “so much delighted with all the faire Flowers of a Garden, and furnished with them as farre beyond

others, as [she is] eminent before them” (sig. **2r). Here, compared to flowers and praised for their beauty, women are mere decorative objects separated from the medical practice in the *Theatrum*.

Using femininity as a mark of weakness and failure, Parkinson presents the *Paradisus* as an object for achieving pleasure—a sensation he condemns in women when he alludes to the Fall of humankind. First, he notes men’s divinely sanctioned authority over Nature:

God [. . .] at the beginning when he created *Adam*, inspired him with the knowledge of all naturall things [. . .] as he was able to give names to all the living Creatures, according to their several natures; so no doubt but he had also knowledge, both what Herbs and Fruits were fit, either for Meat or Medicine, for Use or for Delight [. . .] not onely for necessity whereon to feed, but for pleasure also. (sig. **3r)

Parkinson establishes that Adam, and therefore men, should husband Nature not only for practical use but also for *pleasure*. A few lines later he warns men against being like “our Grandmother *Eve*,” who “set [her] affections so strongly on the pleasure in them, as to deserve the losse of them in this Paradise, yea and of Heaven also”—a reference that reminds his “Covrteous Reader” of the toll humanity paid due to a woman’s failure to master her desires (sig. **3r).

Women, he assumes, are incapable of responsibly controlling their desires for pleasure—let alone of mastering the medical knowledge contained in the *Theatrum*. Men have the authority and facility to husband both “Use” and “Delight” while women have neither. By emphasizing Eve’s failure, he exiles women from serious participation in the herbal narrative by rendering such activity a male province. In other words, even though Parkinson carves out a place for women within the natural world—a space for pleasure and beauty—he ultimately gives men

authority to husband this place because of a distrust towards the insatiable desires with which he marks femininity. Herbal manuals such as Parkinson's thus attempt to relegate women's professional herbal knowledge, not to a diminished place, but to no place within the medical canon.

Hamlet, likewise, refers to Adam's authority and women's insufficiencies during the "nunnery scene," suggesting again that women should not be trusted to wield discourse. Berating Ophelia, he charges her: "you nickname God's creatures and make your wantonness ignorance" (3.1.143-5). An ironic invective, if Hamlet refers to crude, sexual innuendos given to fruit such as medlars (known as open-arse), as it is he who participates in a discourse of "country matters" (3.2.107).¹³ But in addition to this double entendre, *nickname* may also mean "to misname," suggesting Ophelia's misjudgment of his character and state of mind and also women's foolish interactions with creation. For Hamlet, Adam's authority and accomplishments deteriorate when women, who according to Hamlet act from malicious intents, disrupt men's discourse. This, Parkinson and Hamlet would agree, must be prevented for men to become and remain sovereign.

Placing herbal knowledge under men's domain through printed texts not only augments men's influence; it also reflects male manual authors' insecurities when it came to writing in fields where women were prominent practitioners, authorities, and distributors of oral knowledge. This issue gains further nuance in *Hamlet* in light of violets' fragrance and chemical compound, which contribute to the flower's association with memory and seem to suggest Ophelia's lack thereof.¹⁴ According to Diana Ackerman, violets "contain ionine[,] which short-circuits our sense of smell" (9). After a few moments of smelling violets, a person experiences a temporary anosmia to the fragrance, but in a minute or so "its smell will blare again. Then it will fade again, and so on" (Ackerman 9-10). While this unique trait was not chemically understood

until the nineteenth century, the use of violets in *Hamlet* reveals its early modern association with memory and the threat that loss of one's memory poses to male authority. Gerard describes violets as "bring[ing] to a liberall and gentle manly minde, the remembrance of honestie, comlinessse, and all kindes of vertues" (849-850). His description of violets raises a critical question: why restrict this flower and aroma to a manly mind if that means withholding thoughts of "honestie, comelinessse, and all kindes of vertues" from women? First, if women have chastity, as Vives notes, they have no need for other virtues. Additionally, since memory allows individuals to use the past in the present, survival is more likely assured to those who master authoritative means of preserving memory. That is, men's texts control whose narrative survives and how those narratives are preserved and therefore remembered. By relying on a language that privileges masculinity, men such as Parkinson can mitigate their fear of emasculation by printing "Manlike" texts and colonizing women's oral authority and memory. However, this task does not occlude women from medical history, but instead indicates men's authorial insecurity as they must supplant women's memory and knowledge with their own.

Hamlet's male characters attempt to control Ophelia's memory, and as a result it seems she must live in the present, inferior to men's discourse. After Laertes gives Ophelia instructions on avoiding Hamlet's affections, she replies, "'Tis in my memory locked, / And you yourself shall keep the key of it" (1.3.84-84). Unlike Hamlet, whose fascination with discourse allows him memory, Ophelia, through Laertes' earlier withholding of violets, is symbolically kept in the present. Even though she has the capacity to remember, Laertes guards her memory through his own interpretation of Hamlet's letters in the same way that Parkinson *attempts* to limit female herbalists' authority by replacing women's oral knowledge with masculine texts, which designate what women can and cannot do with herbs and flowers. However Laertes' husbandry

is, in part, futile. While she does not wield masculine discourse, Ophelia retains the herbal knowledge her education imparted, and, as my later discussion of Act IV will suggest, she employs an alternative discourse from that of the political and social worlds she currently occupies. Her memory of herbal knowledge, like that of herbal women, may not occupy an authoritative place in print, but it survives in shared oral knowledge and women's practice and cannot be entirely colonized.

In gendering the field of herbal medicine and, therefore, memory, herbal manuals not only cut professional female herbalists out of the field but also inadvertently mark them with a strange subjectivity. Male medical practitioners were quick to defend their professional status by coding herbal women's authority and oral knowledge with defamatory signs. A 1631 Act of Common Council specifically lambasts "Herbe wives" as among the "divers unruly people . . . inhabiting in or neere the city," practicing "sundry abuses . . . [in] the common Markets, and streets of the City of London" (qt. in Korda 171). Commonly scapegoated for the time's changing economic climate, these women's "unruly" behavior was also evoked in herbal manuals. While Parkinson's texts rely on implicit allusions to denigrate women, Gerard's *Herball* explicitly separates normative women from those exercising "sundry abuses." That is, Parkinson designates female practitioners to a queer space by denying them discourse, but Gerard creates a queer place by defining these women and their practice. Upon describing the composition of a salve used for healing open wounds, he remarks,

I send this iewell vunto you women of all sorts, especially to such as cure and helpe the poore and impotent of your Countrey without reward. But vnto the beggarly rabble of witches, charmers, and such like couseners, that regard more to get money, than to help for charitie, I wish these few medicines far from their

vnderstanding, and from those deceiuers whom I wish to be ignorant herein.

(360)

Aware that women were utilizing herbal knowledge, Gerard restricts their use to humanitarian efforts. By defining for whom—“the poore and impotent”—and by what motive—“for charity”—women were to dispense medicine, Gerard confines them to the realm of domesticity and service. Laroche, too, reads this moment as an explication of how male authors “conceived of [their] female readership” and attempted to outline who and what an appropriate herbal woman was *not*; yet in doing so, he simultaneously defines what inappropriate herbal practice and, thus, what queer practice is. (*Medical Authority* 12-3). Simply by working for compensation, these women, he argues, do not belong in the professional medical community. The *rabble* looks unnatural as it eschews normative gender expectations, belonging neither in Nature nor language, hence Gerard’s caricature of “witches, charmers, and such like couseners.” Confronted with this practice, Gerard uses language to define what he cannot comprehend, what is at “the limit point of ontology” (Edelman 149).

Gerard’s use of *rabble* also works to subordinate women’s knowledge and practice to his own. *The Oxford English Dictionary* records several late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century usages that illuminate this issue: “A long string or series of words, opinions, etc., esp. such as have little meaning or value or are derogatory in nature,” “A rambling, disjointed discourse or speech; a convoluted, incoherent ramble,” “A group, pack, or swarm (of animals),” and “A disorderly, disorganized, or unruly crowd; a boisterous throng of people; a mob” (“Rabble”). Besmirching these women’s ability to communicate and further highlighting their alienation from language, Gerard describes their speech as empty, confusing, meaningless. He

diminishes these learned women to mere animals—that is to say disorderly and unruly Nature, a realm subject to men’s husbandry.

This discursive move hindered literate and illiterate women from entering the period’s medical canon—an obstacle that affects our understanding of early modern women’s contributions to history’s medical narrative.¹⁵ However, neither herbal women’s nor, as we will see, Ophelia’s turn to Nature reflects the Foucauldian paradox that it may seem to imply. Rather it suggests what Bushnell calls, in another context, “*functional ambivalence*”: the ability to see that a particular early modern tendency “always allowed for the realization of an opposite one, without undermining or effacing itself in turn” (19). For these male authors, who, Laroche notes, cannot regulate who uses their texts or how, their books create authorial authority, while simultaneously producing authorial insecurity, which they attempt to remedy through print (Laroche, *Medical* 22). But what does early modern herbal women’s “functional ambivalence” look like?

Resistance and Survival in Ophelia’s Herbal Knowledge

A disadvantage when compared to printed texts’ survival, longevity, and authority, the shared oral knowledge of both literate and illiterate women simultaneously represents a form of resistance that disrupts longstanding hermeneutics and epistemologies within the field of herbal medicine. Oral knowledge and authority not only disrupts learned and professional green economies. It represents a form of feminized and green authority to which women often had access. Literate women certainly had an advantage as they could write, read, and disseminate recipe books as well as participate in oral knowledge, but illiterate women also performed powerful oppositions to male authority. Pelling notes such resistance in her *Medical Conflicts*: “Women do seem to have found it easier than men to deflect the [College of Physicians’]

summons by various means: pleading illness, sending male guarantors or, more frequently, simply not turning up” (*Medical Conflicts* 198). Moreover, women, such as Thomasina Scarlett who appeared before the College six times “utterly refus[ing] to stop practicing or to give any bond,” placed their experience and expertise above that of men’s texts and professional status (qt. in Pelling, *Medical Conflicts* 199). While not blatant in much of history’s medical canon, women’s participation in early modern medicine and their resistance to professionalized practice give us a clearer picture of early modern healthcare. Only when we have broadened the canon to include work historically designated to what I have been describing as queer spaces, have we been able to see women’s contributions and glimpsed these women’s shared oral knowledge.

Like the period’s herbal women, Ophelia occupies the only place left for her after men have carved out their own position within language, but just as Polonius remarks in his interview with Hamlet, “Though this be madness, yet there is method in’t” (2.2.202-3). Unable to navigate men’s language, Ophelia turns to Nature as an alternative discourse. Yet she does not have the flower she needs most; as she says, “I would give you some violets, but they withered all when my father died” (4.5.177-8). If this was Q2’s only mention of this flower (as it is in Q1), violets, in part, would recede into the twenty-first-century readings of Ophelia’s flowers and herbs: the symbolic association of fennel with flattery, pansies with love, columbines with ingratitude and sexual immorality, rue with repentance, and violets with faithfulness. However, by reading Q2’s repeated use of violets in conjunction with its, Gerard’s, and Parkinson’s present anxiety toward husbanding female desire, memory, and herbal authority, we see that Polonius’ death represents not merely the withholding of language but rather the death of masculine language for Ophelia. She, unlike Hamlet who carries his father’s signet ring, cannot carry the sign of her father since she is unable to wield discourse and since there are no violets to remedy her voice literally and

metaphorically. In other words, upon the death of her father, Ophelia loses her translator and remains excluded from male language. Thus, she turns to alternative discourses: Nature and song (3.2.17-18).

When we analyze Ophelia through her association and interaction with Nature, we see the nuanced resistances that she, like the non-sanctioned herbal women, performs, suggesting that she understands the motives and actions of those around her. She expresses her grief in a language that does not resonate with existing discourse, and, as a result, appears mad. Yet her actions augment her lucidity as all of the herbs she distributes were used to remedy inward pain—a virtue needed by all of *Hamlet*'s characters. She perhaps speaks the most accurate description of the barren Elsinore when distributing her flowers and herbs. One could use nearly all of these natural elements to cure diseases or complications related to reproduction: rosemary assists “women troubled with the mother, or the whites”;¹⁶ pansies cure “the French disease”; fennel “do fill womens breasts with milke”; rue “expels the dead child and afterbirth”; and columbines “facilitate [women's] labour” (Gerard 1294, 855, 1032, 1257, 1095). Her awareness extends beyond her understanding of Denmark's abortive state to the herbal knowledge that could cure those around her. That is, despite her presumed madness, Ophelia's use of herbal knowledge is actually a divorce from male authority and an alternative appropriation of her herbal knowledge.

While her herbal knowledge indicates her class and education, her songs mimic Hamlet's “antic disposition” and, in part, the professional medical community's perception of herb-wives (1.5.179).¹⁷ That is to say, she assumes the voice of Gerard's *rabble* in that her speech and songs are marked unruly and mad when compared to established discourse. In her chapter, “Cries and Oysterwives,” Korda notes that female hawkers, whose street-cries were evoked by

contemporary balladeers, primarily performed the vending of foodstuffs in London and could be heard from within the theatres. The ballads that Korda discusses often split the female hawkers, making them either sexually pure or depraved, and a similar split occurs in Ophelia's performance in Act IV. First, by having Ophelia speak of an owl ("They say the owl was a baker's daughter"), Shakespeare conjures not only images of death connected with this nocturnal creature, but also the bird's predatory nature, suggesting Ophelia's ultimate demise and questionable sexual appetite (4.5.42-3). The most prominent and perhaps memorable illustration of these paradoxical subjectivities comes when she sings about "Saint Valentine's day" (4.5.51). Describing a naïve maid who, in misinterpreting her love's intentions, sleeps with him before realizing he will not marry her in her now unchaste state, Shakespeare again points out how Ophelia "misnames" men's purposes, as the maid is incapable of translating masculine discourse. Since lewd content would not have been unusual in the ballads written about female hawkers, this is an odd genre for the "rose of May" to invoke if she hopes to eschew the repercussions of the period's sexual impropriety (4.5.157). However, as my previous reading of Vives suggests, Ophelia's maidenhood has already been made suspect by Hamlet's words, making any reality regarding her deflowering superfluous as its status is subjugated to a man's narrative. So like the hawkers invoked in seventeenth-century ballads, Ophelia must also negotiate these conflicting man-made ontologies.

As the relationship of high Renaissance ideals with the bawdy alternatives associated with herb-wives resonates through Ophelia's songs, this relationship offers her a discourse with which to be heard. Adding to female hawkers', and thus Ophelia's, duality, Korda explains, herb-wives lacked "the privileges of citizenship, civic identity, and membership in a community defined by one's skill in a particular trade," yet this lack simultaneously freed them from

obligatory fees and shop rent, affording them the mobility to sell goods and be heard in all places (154). This contradictory subjectivity informs Shakespeare's depiction of Ophelia, who in ventriloquizing these women, descends her social position and adopts the herb-wives' often sexualized bodies, voices, and also their resistances to men's authority. *Hamlet's* other characters may not understand her dialogue, but her speech and songs represent a form of communication and a social position intimately understood by female hawkers, evident when a Gentleman counsels Gertrude to speak with Ophelia, whose "speech is nothing / Yet the unshaped use of it doth move / The hearers to collections (4.5.7-9). Unable to distribute her flowers and herbs in an authoritative manner in court society, her speech signals her departure from her aristocratic class and acts as an appropriation of the herb-wives who, despite opposition from professional medical practitioners, would have been outside of the theatres selling their wares and disseminating somatic medicament in a manner understandable to those occupying this plebian social space.

Turning again to Shakespeare's use of violets, we see that Ophelia's death does not indicate suicide but rather her effort to alleviate sorrow through a natural element, yet she must replace the missing violets, which withered at her father's death, with a similar remedy. Considered cold and moist under Galenic medicine, violets were associated with water. Understanding this flower's temperature to be essential to balancing her humors, she thus perhaps seeks the "weeping brook" as another "cold and moist" element from which to find relief since violets are not available and since no other present flower or herb has the same qualities (5.1.174). While her desire for a natural cure leads her to water, it is enforced femininity in the form of her "garments, heavy with their drink" that leads to her death (5.1.180). Apparel, Vives notes in his chapter "On Adornment," could signify a woman's chastity and therefore her femininity. Drawing attention to her clothing, or "maiden weeds" as Shakespeare describes them

elsewhere, when depicting drowning suggests the detrimental effect that expected gender performance has on women (*Twelfth Night* 5.1.252). After all, femininity keeps her from discourse, keeps her metaphorically from unhusbanded herbal knowledge, and keeps her from communicating authoritatively.

Hamlet's last mention of violets comes at Ophelia's funeral and suggests her survival through a discourse *with* Nature. Believing her death a suicide and her chastity in question, a priest and doctor justify the lack of burial rites exercised for her before an indignant Laertes retorts, "Lay her i'th'earth, / And from her fair and unpolluted flesh / May violets spring" (5.1.217-9). He grants his sister the flower she could neither consume nor smell while living. Expecting violets to communicate his sister's innocence, he relies on her only asset, her body, to defend her against these men's accusations and to justify her life to men who, when smelling these violets, can recall "all kindes of vertues" (Gerard 850). Memorialized in flowers, women's legacy appears ephemeral, whereas men seem to have longevity as long as they can preserve their narratives in the form of male offspring and print. However, the presence of violets also offers a subtle intervention into this narrative. As they are perennial and "groweth in gardens almost euery where," violets seem to continue their conversation with Ophelia, suggesting the possibility for longstanding and ubiquitous disruption to male authority (Gerard 852).

To approach Shakespeare's *Hamlet* at the intersection of the seventeenth century's anxiety about patriarchal legacy and what today we might call ecocritical hermeneutics is to underline the privileged masculine epistemologies informing early modern literature and herbal medicine. As Margreta de Grazia notes, *Hamlet*—a play whose "language . . . upholds the attachment of persons to land"—is "framed by territorial conflict," making hegemonic those with the political and discursive shrewdness to possess and retain land (2-3). Gerard's and

Parkinson's texts attempt to construct a reality that undermines female herbal distributors by subjugating women's oral knowledge to literacy and printed texts. But they cannot colonize entirely women's alternative epistemologies, oral knowledge, and memory.

Notes

¹ Rebecca Laroche argues in “Ophelia’s Plants and the Death of Violets” for the study of the materiality of Ophelia’s flowers and herbs in the historical context of the seventeenth century. Lack of violets, Laroche notes, would signal to the early modern audience that “the opportunity to feel good, to find comfort, has disappeared,” and this knowledge should be examined if we are to gain a clearer picture of early modern literature and culture (217).

² See Laroche’s *Medical Authority and Englishwomen’s Herbal Texts, 1550-1650*; Wendy Wall’s *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama*; and Caroline Bick’s *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare’s England*.

³ This belief does not appear in the period’s most circulated female-authored midwifery texts: Jane Sharp’s *The Midwives Book, or the Whole Art of Midwifry Discovered* (1671) and Louise Bourgeois’s *Observations diverses* (1609). “These omissions,” Bicks explains, “suggest that the belief in midwives controlling the size of a man’s tongue spoke specifically to the concerns of male authors whose masculine identities were threatened by the midwife” (57).

⁴ See Margreta de Grazia’s “*Hamlet*” *without Hamlet*, which argues that Hamlet’s suffering springs from being dispossessed of Denmark and, therefore, his drama revolves around the discursive laws and traditions that govern land.

⁵ See Katherine Eggert’s chapter “Exclaiming Against Their Own Succession: Queenship, Genre, and What Happens in *Hamlet*” in *Showing Like a Queen* for more information on the role of feminine authority in Hamlet’s delay.

⁶ According to Rosi Braidotti’s description of capital “H” humanism in *The Posthuman*, it embraces the transcendental humanist ego and bolsters “the binary logic of identity and otherness . . . of ‘difference’ as pejoration” (15). Descending her class, Ophelia’s anti-humanism

(after all, she has been jilted by Vitruvian “H”umanism)-“rejects the dialectical scheme of thought, where difference or otherness played a constitutive role” (27). She, therefore, blurs the line between the Other (herbal women) and the Same (professional practice).

⁷ However, Hamlet’s fixation with masculinity does not simultaneously make him masculine. In presenting the play’s moments that deal specifically with Ophelia’s access to herbs, I do not mean to exaggerate Hamlet’s masculinity, but rather to suggest that it is contingent upon mastery of a male-privileged discourse, which becomes a method of controlling the political and natural worlds.

⁸ In her “*Hamlet*” *without Hamlet*, Margreta de Grazia asserts, “Until the eighteenth century, *diseased* shared both spelling and pronunciation with *diseized*: to be illegitimately dispossessed of lands” (157). Hamlet’s struggle, then, becomes tied to his lack of authority over Denmark.

⁹ While early modern teachers and parents were also concerned with boys’ education and reading, boys’ education was scaffolded in a manner that could eventually allow them access to texts that were kept from women; for more on early modern education, see Rebecca Bushnell’s *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice*.

¹⁰ For more information on wet nursing during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see chapters five and six of Valerie Fildes’ *Wet Nursing: A History from Antiquity to the Present*.

¹¹ For more information, see chapter ten of Rebecca Laroche’s *Medical Authority and Englishwomen’s Herbal Texts, 1550-1650*.

¹² For more information on early modern educated and aristocratic women’s accounts of medical practice, see *The Private Life of an Elizabethan Lady: The Diary of Lady Margaret*

Hoby, 1599-1605 and With Faith and Physic: The Life of a Tudor Gentlewoman, Lady Grace Mildmay 1552-1620.

¹³ For more information on Shakespeare's use of foodstuffs and a description of their early modern significance, see Joan Fitzpatrick's *Shakespeare and the Language of Food: A Dictionary*.

¹⁴ I'm grateful to Colleen Kennedy's "Smelling 'Violet' in Renaissance Works" on *The Recipes Project* for bringing this to my attention. <http://recipes.hypotheses.org/1904>

¹⁵ Midwifery texts, such as Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* (1671), may represent exceptions, yet as Elizabeth Harvey notes in *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (79) and Caroline Bicks' work *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* explains, the period's midwifery texts were suspect and, therefore, subject to male scrutiny.

¹⁶ The *mother*, or womb; The *whites*—or *Leucorrhœa*, anachronistic to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries—means "A mucous [. . .] discharge from the lining membrane of the female genital organs; the whites" (*OED*).

¹⁷ Robert Weimann, in his *Author's Pen and Actor's Voice*, draws a parallel between Hamlet's antics and the period's legacy of clowns—figures that provide Hamlet with an alternative discourse through which to express his grief: "The crisis in the courtly and humanistic world of the play cannot be adequately dealt with in the language of courtesy and rhetorical eloquence," hence Hamlet's turn from high Renaissance ideals to the bawdy, lowbrow foolishness of contemporary stage clowns (166).

CHAPTER III

HOMOSOCIAL BONDS AND GREEN RESISTANCE IN *THE WINTER'S TALE*¹

The Winter's Tale has a prominent ecophobic view of Nature, but the play also engages with ideologies that push back against the anthropocentrism on which these fears rely. Through the lenses of seventeenth-century scientific ideology and grafting manuals, Polixenes attempts to avoid Leontes' mistakes by reading grafting onto heterosexual reproduction. Queer theory is particularly important to understand Polixenes' grafting metaphor, which I argue he uses to reconstruct a homosocial utopia wherein men minimize women's participation in reproduction, freeing them of anxiety over paternity.² Yet Shakespeare complicates the play's male characters' anthropocentrism. Perdita and Paulina oppose depictions of Nature as human centered, yet they do so in strikingly different ways. Perdita figuratively casts herself as an eternal virgin, and therefore she is impervious to metaphors that liken female and plant reproduction. Paulina, however, embodies Nature's paradoxes. Considered together, Shakespeare's green economy encompasses a variety of philosophies regarding Nature's function and operations and avoids an entirely ecophobic reading.

Rebuilding Homosocial Reproduction in Polixenes' Green Economy

An examination of the play's other agricultural metaphors and subsequent implications will work to foreground my reading and help pinpoint Polixenes' underlying motives for using grafting rather than another agricultural metaphor. Leontes' downfall comes, in part, from an ecological metaphor that expects offspring to mirror their progenitor's appearance. The only other criteria he uses to determine his son's lineage besides appearance is women's speech. Speaking to his son, Leontes says, "Thou want'st a rough pash and the shoots that I have, / To be

full like me; yet they say we are / Almost as like as eggs” (1.2.129-31). At first blush, his speech may seem to suggest that he agrees with the description that the unknown “they” give. However, when we consider both his later clarification that it is “Women [who] say so, / That will say anything” and his paranoia over paternity, “his observation that Mamillius is a sprig needing foliage,” Joanna Grossman argues, “seems more like an invective outlining key differences between the two” (1.2.131; 49). He also disparages women when he marks their speech as thoughtless gossip and thereby establishes his narrative above Hermione’s and Paulina’s. Further, comparing human reproduction to plants places women in a precarious position since it turns any progeny with unique physical features into “nature’s bastards,” Perdita’s moniker for hybrid flowers, rather than replicas of parents. In conflating human and plant reproduction, Shakespeare reflects the negative consequences that result from obsessively questioning paternity, distrusting women’s speech, and husbanding poorly: the death of a son and wife, loss of a daughter, and barren land and a deteriorating nation-state.

Leontes also indirectly reinforces Bacon’s and Spenser’s human-centered understanding of Nature when he chooses to have Perdita abandoned in a Bohemian wilderness. If, as Gabriel Egan notes, Perdita’s “ceremonial” abandonment is likened to “seed thrown onto the ground” and the early modern cultural imagination considered land a feminized object, Leontes’ decision to banish the infant emphasizes the need for men’s husbandry over natural objects (126). Those in Sicilia understand Perdita’s removal from Hermione and abandonment in Bohemia to be a death sentence, so in replacing one feminized space with another, Leontes reinforces the idea that femininity breeds corruption, or at the very least is incapable of sustaining human life without proper husbandry. In other words, feminized objects, here mother and land, pervert offspring or else are too chaotic to offer protection and survival, making crucial men’s husbandry. So too, as

my earlier readings indicate, do Bacon and Spenser express that at times Nature necessitates violent human intervention.

While Shakespeare presents poor ecological, social, and political management in Leontes' actions, he depicts husbandry that eschews patrilineal paranoia and its consequences in Polixenes' use of agricultural conceits. Leontes describes his son as a plant, and relies on matching physical attributes to prove his paternity. Polixenes, however, minimizes both women's role in reproduction and any potential anxiety regarding his progeny by comparing his son to a different biological organism: "My parasite" (1.2.168). As a parasite's host, Polixenes feminizes his own body, drawing a comparison between himself and a pregnant woman. Like a parasite, a fetus does not provide any life-sustaining or –improving benefits, yet as Grossman notes, "one benefit [. . .] is that the female is assured that the organism came from within her" (50). In the same way, Polixenes, if he feminizes his body, can be sure that Florizel shares his blood and represents a legitimate heir. This metaphor does not rely on physical appearance, since a parasite likely differs greatly from its host, and it simultaneously masks women's role in reproduction. As I will discuss later with his use of grafting, Polixenes' ecological metaphors minimize the role of heterosexual reproduction in favor of a sexual economy that discursively limits women's role and bolsters homosocial bonds.

Turning to his reflection of his early friendship with Leontes, we can see a familiar turn to a human-centered understanding of Nature, consistent with Bacon's and Spenser's understanding of Nature as fundamentally chaotic and subject to men's God-given authority. His description reflects, in part, Christian theology but diverges in a strikingly anthropocentric manner to present a prelapsarian, pastoral utopia in which male-male bonds sustain both men's and Nature's purity. Polixenes' description minimizes women's agency in heterosocial bonds,

and a close examination of his narrative illuminates the ideological paradoxes surrounding the sexual and social economies as they are cast in ecological metaphors and Christian theology's Garden of Eden origin narrative. For example, Polixenes begins his account of his and his friend's childhood,

We were as twinned lambs that did frisk i' th' sun,
And bleat the one at th' other. What we changed
Was innocence for innocence; we knew not
The doctrine of ill-doing, nor dreamed
That any did (1.2.68-72).

Continuing his nostalgia, Polixenes recalls that had he and Leontes sustained their relationship in this manner (as lambs), they “should have answered heaven / Boldly ‘Not guilty,’ the imposition cleared / Hereditary ours” (1.2.74-6). According to Polixenes, this sentimental relationship brought both homosocial affection and spiritual purity to the “twinned lambs,” who would have remained sinless until death or Judgment had they “pursued that life” together (1.2.72). Further using the same pastoral animal often used to evoke Christ, Polixenes suggests that he and Leontes possessed the same innocence as the Lamb of God, thus conflating *pastoral's* relationship to agricultural landscapes and ecclesiastical authority. Therefore, using lambs to portray a sinless scene, Polixenes' speech alludes both to Christ's sovereignty, and as future kings their own, as well as Christianity's only recorded unsoiled landscape: Eden. His all-male Eden does not need to manage chaos since there is none, but once women's interference dismantles his Eden, as I will discuss, Polixenes employs a grafting metaphor that expresses and justifies men's husbandry of Nature and women.

Recasting Eden as a homosocial paradise, Polixenes departs from Christian theology in the way his paradise sexualizes women, emphasizing that sin occurs through physical relationships with them rather than (more generally) through actions against God's will. As with Eden's, Polixenes' and Leontes' falls were engendered by women, but by presenting women as sexually compromising rather than generally unfit to rule their own desires, Polixenes presents perfection in homosocial bonds. Responding to Hermione's comment about "tripping since" his innocent youth, he remarks,

O my most sacred lady,
 Temptations have since then been born to's, for
 In those unfledged days as my wife a girl;
 Your precious self had then not crossed the eyes
 Of my young playfellow" (1.2.79-81).

His suggestion that his and Leontes' falls correspond to their relationships with their future wives seems to reflect Genesis' depiction of humankind's fall and anticipate portrayals of Eve, which center men within the natural world. However, Hermione's response to this quip reinforces Polixenes' suggestion that it is heterosexual sex that led to his and Leontes' fall:

Th' offenses we have made you do we'll answer,
 If you first sinned with us and that with us
 You did continue fault and that you slipped not
 With any but with us (1.2.82-6).

Emphasizing that these kings first sinned with their wives, this conversation sexualizes men's fall and departs from Christian theology, which commands Adam and Eve to engage in sex before their Fall: "Bring forth fruit, and multiply" (Genesis 1:28). Polixenes' prelapsarian world

then does not imagine heterosocial relationships that trade “innocence for innocence.” Instead, the purity of this prelapsarian, pastoral utopia, whose two sinless male lambs make a Christ-figure unnecessary, depends on women’s absence and affectionate bonds between men.

The ideology undergirding Polixenes’ reconstruction of the lambs’ genesis anticipates Karl Marx’s description of ideology’s function: to conceal inconsistencies in the status quo by *reforming* them “into a diachronic narrative of origins” (Sedgwick 14).³ In other words, Polixenes’ narrative works to mask the paradoxical role women play in heterosexual bonds, which Leontes is unable to do. For example, Polixenes’ use of “twinning” suggests both that the two subjects were “intimately joined or united; as two things; coupled” and that as twins they shared a womb (“Twinned”). In emphasizing the lambs’ sameness and familiarity with each other, Polixenes celebrates this male-male bond, while minimizing the bond’s origin—within a woman. Glossing women in his origin narrative sheds light on the contradictions that underpin the ideologies informing the period’s concept of gender: that while women are essential to biological proliferation, their role in making heterosexual bonds is minimized, if not vilified as Polixenes’ “tripping” indicates.

When we consider Polixenes’ grafting metaphor alongside early modern English agricultural manuals, gender constructions, and discussions of nationhood, we see that he rebuilds his earlier utopic ideas of an all-male reproductive economy. The lack of sexual reproduction in Polixenes’ utopia opens the play to a queer reading, in which this pastoral world resists heteronormative reproduction. However, to reconstruct his male utopia and maintain the status quo, which exists in an environment with women, he must do so through heterosexual relationships. Through an examination of his grafting conceit, Polixenes ascribes reproduction onto homosocial relationships, foreshadowing Eve Sedgwick’s study of homosocial desire.

Grafting typically necessitates human intervention, and as I will discuss, represents a male labor and form of asexual reproduction. “The placement of the boundaries [between the sexual and the not-sexual] in a particular society,” Sedgwick explains, “affects not merely the definitions of those terms themselves [. . .] but also the apportionment of forms of power that are not obviously sexual,” which include “control over the means of production and reproduction of goods, persons, and meanings” (22). Male bonds then become a necessary source of comfort for *The Winter’s Tale*’s male characters who are concerned with their offspring. In using grafting as a conceit for reproduction, Shakespeare draws attention to the homosocial influences of heterosexual bonding and reproduction, which in turn highlights the silent, unseen powers that govern England’s early-modern sexual economy. Women do not appear prominently or directly in some of the passages on which my reading relies. However, my work, I believe, resonates with Sedgwick’s explanation that “the status of women [. . .] is deeply and inescapably inscribed in the structure even of relationships that seem to exclude women” (25). In other words, through careful examination of *The Winter’s Tale*’s ecological metaphors, a green economy emerges, displaying the homosocial nature of the period’s sexual economy as it works to subjugate women.

Appropriating the early modern period’s understanding of husbandry, and specifically grafting, Polixenes argues for a social economy that reproduces through men’s bonds and labor. He defends grafting against Perdita’s criticism, explaining,

You see, sweet maid, *we* marry
 A gentler scion to the wildest stock,
 And make conceive a bark of baser kind
 By bud of nobler race. This is an art

Which does mend nature—change it rather—but

The art itself is nature. (4.4.92-7, emphasis added)

By relying on grafting to repair and sustain Nature, Polixenes continues the early modern notion propagated by natural philosophers that sustaining Nature required humans' active husbandry, as Bacon's and Spenser's works indicate. Just as Polixenes champions for humankind to "mend nature," Bacon also places humankind at the center of the Natural world while under the assumption that Nature is fundamentally chaotic, necessitating human intervention. As this intervention seems to improve Nature, Polixenes appears to contradict his earlier quip with Hermione regarding women's corruptive powers and his later diatribe against Florizel and Perdita's engagement, for if grafting elevates the "wildest stock" when joined with "a gentler scion," Perdita does not corrupt Florizel since his social status would augment a "nobler race," thus mending and sustaining Nature's "final causes."

However, Polixenes' "inconsistency" actually reflects that grafting or the cultivation of heterosexual bonds is a male labor. What resonates throughout early modern husbandry manuals is who Polixenes' "we" represents. First, husbandry, of which grafting was one of many skills practiced by husbandmen, was administered by men generally. The *OED*'s first documented use of "husband" as a verb meaning "to till (the ground), to dress or tend (trees and plants), to manage as a husbandman; to cultivate" appeared in 1420 ("Husband"). With a dramatic increase in use beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, the printing of the verb "husband" reached its height by the end of the English Renaissance and carried with it the masculinity of its noun derivation. For example, within his *A New Orchard and Garden* (1618), William Lawson writes one book specifically to women: "The Country Hovswifes Garden." Although this book contains advice on a number of agricultural issues for the housewife, from beekeeping to the best

location for particular plants in regard to use and garden aesthetics, it does not address “the Art of propagating Plants,” as other parts of Lawson’s *New Orchard* does. Likewise, first printed in 1540, John Fitzherbert’s *The boke of husbandry*, as Munroe notes, directs all but four of its 171 sections toward men (“It’s All about” 143n12). In gendering particular sections, these texts separate early modern women’s agricultural and domestic labor, or “huswyfry,” from husbandry and its tasks. In one section titled “What warkes a wyfe shulde do in generall,” Fitzherbert does acknowledge women’s labor:

first swepe thy house, dresse vp thy dysshеborde, and sette all thynges in good order within thy house: milke thy kye, secle thy calues, sye vp they mylke [. . .] And to ordeyne corne and malte to the myll, to bake and brue withall whanne nede is. [. . .] Thou must make butter, and chese whan thou maist, serue thy swyne bothe mornynge and euenynge. (61v-r)

This lengthy excerpt only touches on the complex role and multifarious undertakings of early modern women, and to assume women never performed any form of grafting would be shortsighted. However, in placing women’s work in separate sections in their texts, Lawson and Fitzherbert suggest an early modern cultural norm, which signaled women’s distance from the rest of the manual’s tasks, including grafting. Polixenes’ “we” then is not genderless but represents men. In other words, he has constructed a green economy in which grafting two subjects, whether human or non-human, depends on men’s husbandry and knowledge and emphasizes the homosocial nature of early modern reproduction, which claims to create a “nobler race.”

Beyond representing human proliferation, agricultural metaphors were also employed in issues of English nationhood and colonization, an important function of which the play seems to

be aware. Claiming the “Art” of grafting benefits the English commonwealth in his *A booke of the arte and maner how to plant and graffe all sortes of trees* (1582), Leonard Mascall urges his country, “to giue a sure and certaine iudgement, that Plantyng and Graffying is more highly to bee commanded and praised, then many other worthie and noble thynges in this worlde” (A.iiir). Mascall continues his emphasis on national husbandry through agricultural activities when he explains to his reader, “If wee [England] would endeuour our selues therevnto (as other Countries doe,) wee might florishe, and haue many a strange kinde of fruite [. . .] that might greatly pleasure and serue many waies” (A.ivr). In this light, grafting provides both agricultural goods and international prestige to England. Alluding to grafting when discussing reproduction, Shakespeare signals the conversation’s potentially significant repercussions of taking grafting seriously. Polixenes is not angry when speaking theoretically about grafting, but his later fury about Florizel and Perdita’s engagement, and forthcoming “grafting,” suggests the practice’s importance for domestic and political stability and growth.

Polixenes’ aggression toward Florizel and Perdita materializes over issues of homosocial reproduction and nationhood. An issue of national stability, Florizel’s marriage is of utmost importance to Polixenes, and while he intends to “part [the couple]” before he ever hears any talk of marriage, he does not become hostile until after Florizel refuses to involve his father in his decision to wed (4.4.343). His reaction may seem hypocritical if we assume he understands Perdita’s social status to be a “baser kind,” which grafting should be able to elevate; however, his invective draws more attention to Perdita’s sexuality than her social status. He claims that she could marry a “herdsman” but is “Unworthy” of “*our* honor” after berating her as a witch and “enchantment” (4.4.422, 433-6, my emphasis). While this seems to refer to her status as a shepherdess, I argue that Polixenes’ rage results from disruption to homosocial bonds (hence his

use of “our”) which he justifies by vilifying female sexuality. So in referencing the herdsman, he succeeds in comparing the mental and sexual constitution of a low-born, uneducated agricultural figure, who would be thought to be more susceptible to women’s witchcraft and sexual prowess, to that of an educated and trained prince. Acts I and II apply similar charges against Hermione and Paulina, so the sexual accusations against Perdita do not signal her social position, but rather reinforce the play’s male characters’ discomfort with both women’s sexuality and any heterosexual bonding that is not triangulated through homosocial bonds. Further, Perdita’s adopted father is happy to graft his daughter to the disguised Florizel (“I give my daughter to him and will make / Her portion equal his”), but Florizel does not seek his father’s approval. So while watching his son interact with the “sweet maid” who is “Too noble for this place” does not provoke Polixenes’ wrath, Florizel’s unwillingness to consult his father does (4.4.92, 159). Disguised Polixenes advocates that it is reasonable for a son to “choose himself a wife, but as good reason / The father [. . .] / should hold some counsel / In such a business” (4.4.405-9). Additionally, he does not slander Perdita until *after* Florizel refuses five times to involve his father, and therefore homosocial negotiation, in his marriage (4.4.392-416). Here *The Winter’s Tale* emphasizes that grafting and marriage are exercised through homosocial negotiation and reproduction triangulated by men through a conferred heterosexual relationship.

Reading backwards, we can see that the oracle, which proclaims, “The king shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found,” could very well be referencing Polixenes and Leontes’ intimate bond (3.2.133-4). From the play’s start, Camillo describes the kings’ relationship in agricultural terms: “They were trained together in their childhoods, and there rooted betwixt them then such an affection which cannot choose but branch now” (1.1.22-4). Leontes’ accusations against his friend disrupt the figurative grafting on which their relationship

was erected, and their bond is “lost.” Before the young couple can marry, Polixenes and Leontes must re-graft, wherein they can again “branch” or reproduce. Of course, Perdita’s return would also be required, but her and Florizel’s marriage, inheritance, and future depend upon their fathers’ reestablishing their relationship. The kings’ relationship demonstrates that, like grafting, homosocial bonds dictate heterosexual reproduction.

Perdita and Paulina’s Green Resistance

When we consider Perdita’s and Paulina’s relationships with Nature, *The Winter’s Tale* opens itself up to the possibility of anthropocentric resistance. Polixenes and Leontes, I have argued, adopt green economies that center men in the natural world and rely on agricultural metaphors that disparage women. Perdita and Paulina, however, complicate such a view of Nature. Perdita constructs a pre-Fallen utopic world in a similar way that Polixenes does, but her utopia does not manifest in reality. Paulina’s green economy, however, opposes an anthropocentric view of Nature, not merely because she is not a man, but because *The Winter’s Tale*’s male characters condescend women’s role in reproduction and heterosocial relationships and therefore construct a queer space from which she must operate. Anticipating Edelman’s definition of queer, she is forced out of the early modern ontological parameters that define her body and gender. Both women’s resistance and green economy then operate under Bushnell’s functional ambivalence: Perdita must construct a homosocial world that accounts for men and Paulina adopts Nature’s paradoxical role as victim and sovereign.

Although Perdita navigates a precarious position as a woman, her resistance to the male characters’ green economy does not materialize as Paulina’s does. Reading *The Winter’s Tale*’s “material contexts related to both gender and nature,” Munroe argues that Polixenes and Perdita’s debate can best be described as “all about the gillyvors” (141). I agree with Munroe

that “at stake in this debate is [. . .] the implication of gendered authority associated with using art” to “make nature better” (142). However, while Perdita indeed has knowledge of the flowers she distributes, I do not believe that Perdita’s disruption to an anthropocentric view of Nature can be seen in the material flowers about which she speaks or holds on stage. She, like Ophelia, does not have access to the herbs and flowers she needs most, yet Ophelia’s unavailable violets materialize through her contact with water while Perdita’s absent flowers never do. Perdita instead figuratively circumvents men’s husbandry by reimagining the myth of Proserpina. As Polixenes recasts his prelapsarian pastoral through a grafting metaphor and Christian ideology, Perdita relies on Ovid to recast a homosocial utopia through Nature imagery.

Defining the process that Perdita ridicules in Act IV is crucial to understanding the green economy she uses to subvert male authority. First, Polixenes and Perdita, while discussing art and Nature, are not describing the same agricultural processes. Simon Estok attempts to draw a distinction between “cross-breeding” and what he calls “pollution”: “Polixenes has argued that in a material sense cross-breeding, rather than polluting to nature, is, in fact, natural” (97). This reading not only makes no attempt to unpack any distinction between cross-breeding and pollution but it also ignores the fact that grafting, which is what Polixenes describes here, abides an entirely different form of human intervention on natural reproduction. Crosspollination and grafting are forms of propagation that can produce hybrid plants both naturally or through human participation.⁴ However, while grafting can occur naturally, Polixenes’ use of “we” suggests human involvement. Additionally, flower propagation does not appear in either Lawson’s or Mascall’s texts, which generally focus on fruit and nut trees instead. Therefore, it is unlikely that grafting, as Polixenes describes it, is the same process by which carnations and gillyvors became hybrids.

Crosspollination of carnations and gillyvors could indicate human involvement, also called crossbreeding, or pollination that occurs naturally, but Perdita's detestation for either process reinforces her motivation to reconstruct a homosocial utopia that avoids both. If Perdita refers to crossbreeding, her disgust suggests that she opposes human intervention in plant propagation and therefore upsets Leontes' and Polixenes' green economies, which depend on husbandry. However, if she references natural crosspollination, as Egan argues, "She objects [. . .] not because [these flowers] are artificially created, but because even though naturally created [. . .] they *look* like hybrids that result from human interference in nature" (129). As the conversation closes, she conflates human reproduction with pollination when she says that she is as likely to plant "nature's bastards" in her garden as she is to "breed" with Florizel merely because he finds her painted face attractive (4.4.99-103). While she does not know the circumstances that brought her to Bohemia, Perdita may be expressing the same paranoia as her father if she is concerned about these flowers' unique features. Just as hybrid plants can result from natural or human-induced processes, human offspring that do not mirror their parents can be the product of fidelity or adultery. Early modern men had no way to distinguish between the two, and unfortunately for some women as with Hermione and Perdita, men's distrust could have violent repercussions.

To avoid the above green economies—either one that centers human action in Nature or one that relies on consistency and predictability from a force that can be anything but—Perdita recycles Ovid's Proserpina myth to construct an all-female, pre-Fallen utopia where she remains a virgin.⁵ Lamenting her lack of spring flowers at the summer's festival, she says, "I would I had some flowers o' th' spring that might / Become your time of day" before the vocative, "O Proserpina, / For the flowers now that, frighted, thou let'st fall / From Dis's wagon" (4.4.113-4;

116-8). Perdita longs for flowers that are out of season, and by invoking Proserpina and her flowers, she reminds us of a time pre-Fall and pre-men. Proserpina intends to remain a virgin like her mother, Ceres, but Venus and Cupid foil her plan. As a result, Dis abducts her while she picks flowers; he wins her as a bride for half of the year; and the earth experiences fall and winter for the first time. In this way, her pre-kidnapped environment represents an all-female, utopia where Ceres manages a consistent, unchanging, season-less Nature in perpetual spring.

For Perdita to reconstruct this pre-Fallen world, she, as Polixenes, must navigate heterosexual relationships. She takes on this task by figuratively feminizing Florizel when she desires “To strew him o’er and o’er!” with the flowers that Proserpina held before her capture (4.4.129). She goes on to describe the strewn Florizel “like a bank for love to lie and play on” (4.4.130). Even in naming him, Shakespeare feminizes him, associating him with flowers and Edmund Spenser’s female knight Florimell in *The Faerie Queene* (1596). Moreover, Shakespeare, in replacing the ending –mel with –zel, figuratively castrates his character. Associated with honey and bees, the Greek word *mel* suggests the possibility for pollination, so in removing the potential for propagation,⁶ Shakespeare metaphorically assures Perdita that Florizel (her bank of flowers) will not disrupt her virginity and therefore will not cross-pollinate to create any “bastards.” In these ways, Shakespeare and Perdita recast Florizel as the natural landscape that Proserpina occupies before the Fall and codes herself as the virgin goddess, eternally inhabiting a season-less world. While the lack of seasons suggests Nature’s predictability, a world without heterosexual relationships frees women from the consequences of male suspicion surrounding their paternity.

Perdita’s green economy then decenters humans’ role in Nature by imagining a world ruled by Ceres and occupied by willful virgins, resisting heternormative reproduction. Marilyn

Frye's "willful virginity," becomes a helpful lens through which to discuss Perdita's allusion of Proserpina. The word "virgin," she explains,

did not originally mean a woman whose vagina was untouched by an penis, but a free woman one not betrothed, not married, not bound to, not possessed by any man. It meant a female who is sexually and hence socially her own person. In any universe of patriarchy, there are no Virgins in this sense. [. . .] Hence Virgins must be unspeakable, thinkable only as negations, their existence impossible. (133)

A sexually mature woman, Perdita "[refuses] to be integrated into the early modern sexual economy" and performs queer resistance to patriarchal society (Jankowski 9). While she does not enact her economy, her fantasy resists green economies, which map forced human reproduction onto agricultural pursuits. For example, Jane Sharp uses a common early modern metaphor for reproduction in *The Midwives Book*, referring to the penis as a "yard" or "plow": "The Yard as it were the Plow wherewith the ground is tilled, and made fit for production of Fruit" (23). And in *De Dignitate et Augmentis Scientiarum* (1857), Bacon depicts the pursuit of knowledge about the natural world through an allusion to rape: "Neither ought a man to make scruple of entering and penetrating into these holes and corners, when the inquisition of truth is his whole object" (*Works* 331). Here interrogating natural truths justifies invasive behavior, and the reference to infiltrating and puncturing as a means of controlling the natural world also sexualizes agricultural pursuits. Or as Sylvia Bowerbank notes, early modern metaphors of rape and marriage "encoded and naturalized a harmonious bond between unequals in which the inferior *voluntarily* obeys the superior" (11-12). *The Winter's Tale* also engages in similar metaphors: grafting requires splitting a stock and inserting and binding a scion to propagate,

Perdita refuses to put a “dibble in the earth” while simultaneously refusing “to breed,” and in her post-Fallen world, Dis pries open the earth when abducting Proserpina. Perdita, however, by depicting herself as Proserpina before her kidnapping, avoids sexually aggressive agricultural metaphors and can figuratively sustain her virginity.

Perdita’s green economy does not materialize, but Paulina’s certainly does. Often overlooked as an ecological figure, Paulina embodies Nature’s paradoxes better than any other figure in *The Winter’s Tale*. Her authoritative speech queers her as male character’s slander her, yet she prevails in her queer space by embracing the functional ambivalence associated with early modern Nature metaphors. Lindsay Kaplan and Katherine Eggert’s work illuminate her functional ambivalence best when they describe early modern female authority “never as autonomy *from* men, but always as power *over* men” (90). Paulina then navigates an imposed queer subjectivity by adopting Nature’s paradoxical qualities: cruel, unforgiving, and chaotic, yet nurturing and restorative.

Throughout the play, male characters slander women, putting them literally and figuratively on trial and in so doing displace female characters’ from early modern femininity by drawing attention to female sexuality. Kaplan and Eggert assert that “anxiety about female sexuality might be considered a displaced version of anxiety about female authority, insofar as a causative relation between these two can ever be established” (90). Leontes ridicules Paulina for lacking femininity when he draws attention to her speech and her husband’s inability to control it. His denunciation against women’s speech and femininity are consistent with his recent paranoia against his wife. First, as I discussed earlier, he claims women “will say anything,” thus making their speech and his paternity suspect. Second, Hermione’s tongue has already sent Leontes reeling; her speech, not Leontes’, convinces Polixenes to remain in Sicilia even though

his friend assures him that “There is no tongue that moves, none, none i’ th’ world, / So soon as yours could win me” (1.2.21). Considered alongside the kings’ intimate bond and my reading of grafting, we could read the genesis of Leontes’ rage, not as a wife’s infidelity, but as a homosocial betrayal. Striking a similar nerve with Leontes, Paulina subverts the period’s established gender dynamics with her “boundless tongue,” as his admonishment of her husband indicates: “What, canst not rule her? [. . .] “thou art worthy to be hanged / That wilt not stay her tongue” (2.3.46, 109). Offering “medicinal” words and describing herself as a “physician” and “counselor,” Paulina marks herself as an authority over the preceding events and Leontes’ affected mind, going so far as to remove the infant from prison and present it to Leontes. Her king responds, calling her “A mankind witch” and “bawd” (2.3.67-8). Although not describing the monikers pitted against Paulina specifically, Kaplan and Eggert argue, “The next best opprobrium would be to characterize her behavior as male” (90). Conflating the sexually degenerate with sorcery and gender nonconformity as understood in the period, Leontes signals Paulina’s unfeminine behavior and speech and masculinity, which places her in a queer space at “the limit point of ontology” (Edelman 149).

Paulina’s paradoxical subjectivity becomes a way for her to embody the full complexity of Nature. If we read Hermione’s return as a superficial occurrence, both Perdita—whose presence magically ends Sicilia’s hardships—and Paulina possess Nature’s occult powers and represent the “final causes” that humanity has been unable to recognize or comprehend. However, if we do not read the supernatural onto the play’s close, Paulina becomes an ecological figure that had the potential to bring Hermione back at any time in the last 16 years. Cruel to provoke and encourage a decade and half of lamentation, she is brutal with Leontes, yet her decision to return Hermione suggests her restorative abilities. In this way, Leontes’ mournful

penitence, and therefore symbolically men's actions, do not dictate how Nature operations.

Instead, Paulina—like Nature, which creates hybrids by its own art—chooses the appropriate time to turn Nature into art and art into Nature. In other words, the causality that centers humans in Nature in Bacon's, Spenser's, Leontes', and Polixenes' green economies does not exist, leaving Paulina, the embodiment of Nature, to act of her own volition.

Notes

¹ I am indebted to Richelle Munkhoff for the generous amount of time and mentorship she willingly gave me throughout the course of this project as well as her thoughts on early modern grafting and reproduction in *The Winter's Tale*, which engendered this chapter.

² See recent scholarship on grafting and queer reproduction in Vin Nardizzi's "Shakespeare's Penknife: Grafting and Seedless Generation in the Procreation Sonnets" and his collaboration with Miriam Jacobson "The Secrets of Grafting in Wroth's *Urania*."

³ See Marx's *The German Ideology*

⁴ Although no recording of *crosspollination* exists before the nineteenth century, the process certainly did, and I use the term because it encompasses plant propagation that occurs naturally or by human effort (crossbreeding).

⁵ I reference *Ovid's Metamorphoses: A New Translation* translated by Charles Martin.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, in their anthropological study of contemporary science laboratories, write, “Scientific activity is not ‘about nature,’ it is a fierce fight to *construct* reality” (243). The early modern scientific, medical, and agricultural texts I have considered attempted to construct a reality that bolstered their male authors’ status while subverting women’s knowledge and authority to their own. Shakespeare’s works seem aware of textual authority’s knowledge colonization, and his plays are conscious of the complicated and nuanced consequences that such aggression has on his characters and his contemporary society. When we study the past’s materiality we stand a better chance of responsibly representing early modern men and women’s lived experiences and denoting the complicated relationships humanity has to its environment.

“The intellectual’s role generally,” Edward Said writes, “is dialectically, oppositionally, to uncover and elucidate [. . .] to challenge and defeat both an imposed silence and normalized quiet of unseen power wherever and whenever possible” (31). Although the texts considered here are part of a traditional canon of English literature, my aim has been to question the “imposed silence and normalized quiet” that still surrounds women’s role in the history of science and medicine despite the decades of research that suggests otherwise. I have focused my attention on the ways that early modern medical practitioners, husbandmen, and male literary figures attempted to silence women while often using Nature imagery that conflates nationhood and divine right to reinforce, justify, and naturalize their own authority. Shakespeare, however, presents us with texts that invert male dominance while simultaneously embracing it. Ophelia

and Perdita display their knowledge and authority by distributing herbs as medicament and manipulating Nature metaphors to construct an all-female space respectively. Paulina, too, embraces Shakespeare's texts' ambivalence toward women and nature as she represents feminized Nature—an unruly force but also a compassionate nurturer.

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