

Introduction

Authorizing English Botany

For almost a century before it was an adjective, the word “herbal” was a noun. As objects, individual copies of early English herbals were not only read and consulted but also inscribed and illuminated, purchased and bequeathed. Written forms for herb lore extended back long before the English language, and those lists of plant descriptions and medical remedies, or “book[s] containing the names and descriptions of herbs, or of plants in general, with their properties and virtues” (*OED n.1*), became a popular genre in Renaissance England within a few decades of William Caxton’s importation of printing to Westminster. By that time, printed editions of classical works had already been increasing rapidly on the continent, including texts that contained accounts of plants: Pliny the Elder’s *Natural History*, with its chapters on plants in books 4–6, was first printed in Venice in 1469 and was regularly reprinted thereafter. Theophrastus, Aristotle’s pupil and Lyceum contemporary whose *Enquiry into Plants* influenced Pliny, initially found his way into print in Treviso in 1483. Peter Schoeffer published the first expressly vernacular herbal, *Der Gart der Gesundheit* (*The Garden of Good Health*), in 1485, and it was quickly reprinted and translated into other languages, its numerous pirated editions readily demonstrating that there was a lucrative market for vernacular books about plants.¹

Given the genre’s popularity on the continent, it is unsurprising, then, that the first examples of the word “herbal” cited in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) stem from the titles of two sixteenth-century London publications: the anonymous *Grete Herbal* of 1526 (*STC* 13176) and William Turner’s *A New Herball* of 1551 (*STC* 24365). The word “herbal,” however, had first appeared in printed English a year earlier than the *OED* currently records in the title of an anonymous book of 1525 published by

¹ Anna Pavord, *The Naming of Names: The Search for Order in the World of Plants* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), 160.

the London stationer and printer Richard Bankes, who copied his text from a popular medieval herbal manuscript known as *Agnus castus*.² Like many early printed works derived from medieval manuscripts, Bankes's title page used an incipit, a rhetorical convention of conspicuously delineating a text's beginning by offering a description of the nature of the work: *Here begynnyth a newe mater / the whiche sheweth and treateth of [the] vertues & propriytes of herbes / the whiche is called an Herball* (STC 13175.1). Through the efforts and investment of Richard Bankes, the era of the printed English herbal had officially begun.

When several discrete texts were copied and bound together within a single manuscript volume, titles starting with phrases like "here begynnyth" signified to readers the change from one text to another despite their seeming continuance on the handwritten page. In this context, Bankes's "newe mater" thus begun can be interpreted as signifying the verbal material that would follow the text's (now-printed) title page, the intellectual fabric "whiche sheweth and treateth of [the] vertues & propriytes of herbes." Such a reading might posit that which "is called an Herball" was not the book object itself but the book's content, and the word "herbal" would be an identifying characteristic not of the "matter's" material *medium* but of its verbal *meaning*. This reading might be used to support an argument that Bankes's 1525 book is a progenitor not to the first use of "herbal" as a noun but to the adjectival form of the word that the *OED* credits to 1612: the substance of the text of the verbal work that Bankes prints may be understood to refer to "belonging to, consisting of, or made from herbs."³

² For an account of the circulation of *Agnus castus* in manuscript, see *Agnus castus*, ed. Gösta Brodin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950). On the popularity of *Agnus castus*, see George R. Keiser, "Vernacular Herbals: A Growth Industry in Late Medieval England," in Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (eds.), *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2008), 292–307.

³ The initial identification of this text as "Banckes' [*sic*] Herball" appears to be Agnes Arber's in her *Herbals: Their Origin and Evolution*. Though she acknowledges that "Dr. Payne suggests that it is probably an abridgement of some medieval English manuscript on herbs," Arber is content to identify publisher Bankes as the agent who should be responsible for serving in the place of the would-be author (*Herbals*, 38–40). A decade later, Eleanor Sinclair Rohde reinforces this ascription by repeating "*Banckes's Herball*" as the proper title of the volume in *The Old English Herbals* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1922), 55; as does H. S. Bennett ("Bankes' Herball") in *English Books and Readers, 1475–1557*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 98–99; and Blanche Henrey ("Banckes's herball") in *British Botanical and Horticultural Literature before 1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), 1:12. I follow the *Short Title Catalogue* (STC) in regularizing the spelling of Richard Bankes's name, but because Bankes did not own the rights to the text during the period of the text's immense popularity with Tudor printers, I do not use the name "Bankes's Herball" to describe the many editions of this text. Instead, throughout this volume I use the name given to the text by printer John King when he licensed it in 1561: "the little *Herball*."

Such a reading of the word “herbal” is not possible, however, in one of the first of the many reprinted editions of Bankes’s text. The stationer and printer Robert Redman, who set forth the work from his shop at the sign of St. George in Fleet Street around 1539, rechristened the volume as *A boke of the propertyes of herbes the whiche is called an Herbal* (STC 13175.5).⁴ For Redman, the ambiguity of the medieval phrase “Here begynnyth a new mater” was easily eliminated to focus explicitly on the physical manifestation of the text that most concerned its producer: the book. While its title remains dependent on its work’s verbal content in its delineation of the characteristics or “virtues” of plants, Redman’s herbal is inseparable from its status as a material object able to be commodified. Over the next thirty years, as the little *Herball* was printed in various forms by at least thirteen other publishers, all but one chose to confirm on their volumes’ title pages that “an herbal” is first and foremost a type of *book*. The word was also used to describe books by contemporaries: in the inventories of the Cambridge probate court, the word “herball” or “harball” appears as a generic marker to note an otherwise unnamed book artifact six times between 1545 and 1583.⁵ It was the turn of the century before the cognate “herbalist” appeared to describe “a collector or writer on plants,” as John Dee used in his diaries to characterize the barber-surgeon John Gerard in 1594.⁶ Attention to the publication history of an extremely popular, anonymous herbal, as well as to the *OED*, illustrates how English stationers identified herbals as books well before those who composed botanical texts were ever identified as herbalists. The word “herbalist” entered the English language only after *other* figures made it possible for herbal texts to reach their readers.

The present book is an account of how stationers helped to create the position of the Renaissance English herbalist. *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade: English Stationers and the Commodification of Botany* argues that scholars need to consider botanical texts not just as the verbal works of authors but also as the products of the craftsmen and craftswomen who made printed books for profit. Tracking the development of botanical science through authors’ original works provides a method for identifying the moments when particular descriptions or classification systems entered

⁴ Like many of the books bibliographers credit to him, the Redman volume is undated, and the date provided by the *STC* is inferred and marked with a query that signifies “a range of up to two or three years on either side” of the date provided (1:xxxviii). Redman died in 1540.

⁵ E. S. Leedham-Green, *Books in Cambridge Inventories: Book-lists from Vice Chancellor’s Court Probate Inventories in the Tudor and Stuart Periods*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

⁶ “Aug. 26th, Mr. Gherardt, the chirurgion and herbalist, [cam to mel.]” John Dee, *The Private Diary of Dr. John Dee*, ed. J. O. Halliwell-Phillipps (London: Camden Society, 1842), 50.

the broader discourse, but it tells a very narrow story that ignores the many in favor of a mostly elite few. By examining the motivations not just of authors but of the publishers who commissioned and wholesaled herbals, the printers who manufactured herbals, the booksellers who retailed herbals, and the customers who purchased and read herbals, scholars can better apprehend Renaissance English attitudes towards natural history. Authors may have sometimes been the originators of verbal works of botany, but stationers were the gate through which all would-be authors had to pass if their works were to reach the reading public. In many cases, a publisher's desire to publish a herbal even preceded an author's desire to write a book, such that herbal authors were regularly commissioned by publishers to compile herbals. In these cases, a stationer's desire to publish and sell a printed herbal actually spurred herbalists to create such texts.

The originating agency for a given herbal volume therefore does not necessarily begin with the figure whose name appeared in large letters on the title page. Indeed, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the names that most frequently appeared on title pages were those who manufactured printed books, not those who authored them. To be financially successful, English stationers needed to have a sophisticated understanding of the marketplace of readers, and it was stationers' judgments that determined what books, including what books of natural history, would be available for sale in Renaissance London. Stationers' agency, therefore, is central to understanding how and why authors were able to present themselves as authoritative in print. Their economic and commercial concerns took precedence over authors' botanical labor.

Investigations of the material texts produced by stationers also reveal that the study of plants not only was of interest to the social and intellectual elites of the Royal Society in the later seventeenth century but was popular with a wide swath of the English population early in the sixteenth century. This project's investment in the critical capacity of nonspecialist readers finds support from assessments that reconsider the ways that early modern vernacular science and related epistemologies were formed and maintained by artisans and women throughout the period.⁷ Approaching herbals not simply as the verbal products of authors but as the artifacts of printers and booksellers enables us to see Renaissance readers, particularly those of the

⁷ Wendy Wall, *Recipes for Thought: Knowledge and Taste in the Early Modern English Kitchen* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Pamela Smith, *The Body of the Artisan: Art and Experience in the Scientific Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Antonio Pérez-Ramos, *Francis Bacon's Idea of Science and the Maker's Knowledge Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

middling sort, as sophisticated thinkers capable of evaluating claims of authorial knowledge with skeptical and judicious eyes. Early modern stationers were deeply attuned to such readers' needs and desires because the purchasing power of readers determined the success or failure of publishers' own commercial ventures. The booksellers' attitudes towards the texts they sold could facilitate an author's success in print.

Close reading of the botanical texts in question reveals that herbal authors often responded to their dependency upon publishers. Authors were often frustrated by the limitations that publishers placed upon the material presentation of their works: they regularly complained that publishers were unwilling or unable to accommodate their demands for illustrations or corrections and were stymied by their necessary reliance on booksellers to disseminate their botanical scholarship. Yet those who wished to generate the authority that came from maintaining a large audience had no alternative but to seek print publication. Print's capacity for producing easy and seemingly unlimited repetition of heterodox ideas has long been recognized as leading to the success of the Protestant revolution, and reformers were especially attuned to the ways that print, coupled with shifting religious mores, could make people socially and politically vulnerable. As the Protestant and humanist veneration of individual study gained momentum, however, the vulnerability inherent in print also extended to naturalists who used others' printed books as a form of research alongside their own botanical experience. As the sixteenth century made way to the seventeenth, herbal authors began to downplay their reliance on the other printed books that they used both to conduct and to disseminate their research. Mimicking the strategies deployed by reformers in their religious tracts, authors began to use the paratexts of their herbals strategically to signal their superiority to other books in the marketplace as well as to the artisans who marketed books for commercial gain. Thus it was that the figure of the authoritative Renaissance herbalist emerged as a deliberate construct: a persona that authors could use to elevate their works above the material means that distributed their botanical texts to a reading public.

My project began with a desire to understand how a seventeenth-century apothecary like Thomas Johnson could so easily control later critical discourse about his professional rival, the Elizabethan barber-surgeon John Gerard. In the 1633 edition of Gerard's text that he was commissioned to edit, Johnson suggests that Gerard copied a dead associate's manuscript translation of Dodoens and then attempted to cover up his offense by reorganizing the material and adding details from other

books he had read. Botanical historians have largely taken Johnson at his word, finding that Gerard did use others' books to supplement his own accounts of plants, and many scholars have condemned Gerard as a plagiarist or a fraud as a result. Yet, as I investigated this narrative further, I became unsatisfied with a conclusion that relied on an implicit veneration of authorial originality to demarcate scientific expertise. Renaissance authors of books of natural history, whether in England or on the continent, regularly declaimed their superior authority by denigrating their predecessors in their fields, and I recognized such claims as rhetorical appeals designed to position the authorial self within an emergent botanical discourse.⁸ Likewise, my work on the history of English printing had taught me that the stationers who produced and sold books had a vested interest in positioning older volumes on similar topics as inferior to the new commercial products that they wanted to sell.

As I continued to investigate accounts of Gerard's *Herball*, I realized that it was important to keep the motivations of the two agents of publisher and author distinct: a publisher is primarily concerned with the economic ramifications of claiming that a book is superior, while an author is invested in the intellectual rewards that result from others recognizing that superiority. A single edition of a book required a sizable investment of publishers' capital, and stationers' concerns about profit were compounded when the volumes in question were large, illustrated, and complexly formatted, as Renaissance herbals eventually grew to be. In the case of these massive, expensive tomes, an author's disparagement of earlier texts could make both economic and rhetorical sense. Criticism of a previous volume made less sense, however, when the established earlier book was produced by the same publishing house. What's more, the material, regulatory, and economic concerns of printed books, particularly large ones, were different when a book was reprinted in 1633 rather than printed for the first time in 1597. A suggestion that a previous edition of a book was flawed could cast aspersions upon the quality of a publisher's other books and undermine the sales of the new, improved volume. The publisher and the editor of the 1633 second edition of Gerard's 1597 *Herball* therefore were motivated by two different sets of concerns. While it may have suited Thomas Johnson's interests as a botanist to denigrate the quality of Gerard's 1597 text, it had been published by Joyce Norton's late husband

⁸ Surveying what she calls Gerard's "anthological" approach from the perspective of literary historians' scholarship into commonplacing, Leah Knight has come to a similar conclusion. See Knight, *Of Books and Botany in Early Modern England: Sixteenth-Century Plants and Print Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), esp. chap. 4.

John Norton, and her profits would be harmed by such open disparagement. Instead, the publishers of the 1633 edition used their governing role in the communications circuit to limit the authority that Thomas Johnson was permitted to display.⁹

Printed books may be the means through which a herbalist's success or failure could be measured by posterity, but the medium of print includes other figures who influenced how (and if) Gerard and Johnson ultimately met their audiences. As I explained in this book's Prologue, editing someone else's book rather than authoring his own placed Thomas Johnson in a subordinate position that made him intellectually defensive. The success of an author's ideas thus had much to do with the success of the bookseller who published his works. Hence, I realized that, if I was to understand how Johnson was offered the opportunity to malign Gerard in print, I needed to investigate the motivations of Norton and Whitaker, too. I soon found other questions that I wanted to answer: How did accusations of plagiarism function in the period as a means for a seventeenth-century author to discredit a sixteenth-century one? To what extent were those accusations modeled on the accusations of piracy that were sometimes leveled against early modern stationers? How did shifting regulatory constraints upon the ownership of textual works change with the incorporation of the London Stationers' Company in 1557? When did status-seeking authors begin to try to mitigate the social and intellectual ramifications of their dependency upon publishers? Why would publishers risk so much capital in the production of large illustrated books that could easily leave them bankrupt? How did booksellers use features like authorship or professionalization as marketing strategies to sell more books? As I sought answers to these questions, it became clear that there was room in the history of herbals for a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship between works as the products of authors and the printed documents that were the products of artisans in the book trade.

Traditional scholarship into early modern English botany has examined authors' production of herbal works in order to highlight important nuances in their botanical discoveries, development of classification schemes, and methods of plant description. This research has primarily sought to credit authors' original contributions to scientific study or the history of ideas. In many cases, scholars have asserted that some authors plagiarized or otherwise copied others' work and have therefore sought to

⁹ On the communications circuit, see Robert Darnton, "What Is the History of Books?" *Daedalus* 111 (1982): 65–83.

remedy the corruptions that crept into the historical record. Yet these studies often take authorial claims of originality at face value, missing the authors' need to position themselves as producers of valuable commodities within a competitive print marketplace. By shifting the focus away from authors to the forms their books ultimately took in bookstalls, I offer a fuller picture of the environment in and for which such authors wrote. In attending to herbals as commodities, I demonstrate how Renaissance natural history was understood to appeal, like the 1623 folio of Shakespeare, to a "great variety of readers." The production of a printed book required booksellers to risk large amounts of capital in the hopes of a future return; as a result, successful booksellers needed to be attentive to the tastes of their anticipated customers and were unlikely to produce books simply because authors desired them to do so. Because printers and booksellers often altered, and sometimes even commissioned, authors' works in order to suit their book buyers, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade* argues that investigation into the contingencies of Renaissance printing can better clarify authorial behaviors in the cultural context of English botany. By focusing on publishers' *editions* rather than authors' *works*, this project uncovers the ways that bookmakers and booksellers shaped Renaissance natural history through print. Hence it is herbals' status *as books* that is the focus of this study.

Just as herbals themselves served a dual purpose, offering their readers herbal remedies as well as descriptions and sometimes depictions of plants, this book has two particular audiences in mind: those who are invested in herbals as texts and those who are interested in herbals as books. I hope that readers who enter from one category will gradually find themselves drifting towards the other as upcoming pages reveal how entangled medium and message were for both the early modern stationers who produced herbals and the authors who wrote for them. This study takes a deep dive into the ways that books were produced at the time that herbals were first printed in England. Historians of science will find in the following pages a broader context for understanding the texts they value through my attention to the structure of the Tudor and Stuart book trade. Likewise, book historians who specialize in the literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries will also find that my history of the Stationers' Company of London both before and after its incorporation in 1557 clarifies the shape of the Elizabethan and Jacobean book trade. To understand how and why publishers invested in the books they did when they did, it helps to understand how their efforts were regulated and protected. These regulations fundamentally changed with the Stationers' incorporation and the

introduction of a new, more equitable method of copyright than had been operating previously under the patent system. The new form of financial protection for publishers who were members of the Stationers' Company enabled them to take greater financial risks in ways that benefited would-be herbalists: stationers could invest in new works, make bigger books, and add more complicated paratexts. Put another way, the economic, material, and regulatory concerns of publishers provided herbalists with alternative opportunities to showcase the new specimens their botanical excursions had uncovered.

In seeking to illuminate the means by which herbals were understood by *all* of their textual progenitors, stationers and authors, as well as by the readers who used them, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade* recognizes that the books under examination were, first and foremost, artifacts designed to be sold for profit.¹⁰ Of course, it is also true that publishers' awareness of the political maneuvering of church and crown, as well as the social-climbing activities of civic groups, often determined what they printed, as did an awareness of continental trends gleaned during annual trips to the Frankfurt Book Fair. As I delineate the ways that publishers sought to distinguish their own editions of a botanical text, stationers' motivations for printing a particular work at a particular time figure heavily in my discussions. For example, prompted by the threat of John Parkinson's *Theatrum botanicum* reaching print before their second edition of Gerard's *Herball* could make it into London's bookstalls in 1633, the publishers Joyce Norton and Roger Whitaker seem to have given Thomas Johnson less than a year to edit the massive folio, leading him to grumble in his note to the reader that such forced haste should excuse any errors that remain in his text.¹¹ Similarly, the bookseller John Day may have published William Turner's *The Names of Herbes* (STC 24359) in 1548 specifically to pique the interest of his patron William Cecil, whose fascination with plants was widely known. For his part, Turner may have approached Day with his herbal manuscript after being introduced to him by their mutual acquaintance Thomas Gibson, a printer-turned-physician who had published his own herbal a decade earlier. An investigation into the

¹⁰ On twentieth- and twenty-first-century bibliographers' disquiet with the economic motivations of Renaissance book publishing, see Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing*, 9–11.

¹¹ Johnson complains throughout his 1633 edition that he is forced to work quickly; the preface to an appendix written after the rest of the work was printed or in press explains that such haste led to inadvertent omissions: "I finde that I haue forgotten diuers which I intended to haue added in their fitting places: the occasion hereof hath beene, my many businesses, the troublesomenesse, and aboue all, the greate expectation and hast of the Worke, whereby I was forced to performe this task within the compasse of a yeare" (sig. 6S2r). See also Henrey, *British Botanical*, 1:48.

biographical histories of all three men reveals considerable overlap in both religious and social spheres that strongly suggests they were acquainted with one another. Such evidence makes it clear that the circumstances and contingencies of early English publishing often influenced authorial behavior.

As the means by which texts of botany were disseminated, English herbals have received increased scholarly attention in recent years as researchers have sought to uncover, among other topics, changes in the science of description, women's resistance to medical authority, the "urban science" practiced in Renaissance London, and Elizabethan authors' easy and ubiquitous facility with botanical metaphors.¹² While public interest in the names, properties, and virtues of plants is of crucial importance in understanding the role herbals played in such developments, it is herbals' physical status as exchangeable and commercial artifacts that facilitated these changes. As Elizabeth Eisenstein and others have shown, the medium of print offered early moderns seeking to better understand the natural world a powerful vehicle of information transfer, one that not only brought to light the work of classical and medieval authorities but also made explicit the work of those contemporaries who were translating, commenting upon, and revising these earlier authorities.¹³ The mass proliferation of printed copies of these competitively "authoritative" texts permitted an increase in personal and institutional library holdings, and as a result natural historians working in distinct regions, or across borders, could refer to the features of specific editions of herbals in their communications with one another.¹⁴ Printed books functioned both as a garden from which old information might be gathered and as a valuable public battleground upon which new authors might stake new claims. They enabled local naturalists to gain a larger and sometimes international public, making their private labors known to a wide audience. Their increasing ubiquity as resources led printed books to multiply: once commentators no longer had to invest their time in copying texts, or in traveling long distances to access particular copies of others, the restructuring of old knowledge and the

¹² See Ogilvie, *Science of Describing*, Rebecca Laroche, *Medical Authority and Englishwomen's Herbal Texts, 1550–1650* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), Deborah E. Harkness, *The Jewel House: Elizabethan London and the Scientific Revolution* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), and Knight, *Of Books and Botany*.

¹³ Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press As an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979).

¹⁴ See R. J. Fehrenbach (ed.), *Private Libraries in Renaissance England: A Collection and Catalogue of Tudor and Early Stuart Book-Lists* (Binghamton, NY: Medieval and Renaissance Texts and Studies, 1992–2004).

gathering of new could occur with greater ease, making it possible both to debate and to advance what was known about the natural world.

Yet, as I have been arguing, industrious translators, innovative authors, and intrepid explorers were not the only ones facilitating this spread of natural history. These figures' emerging spirit of inquiry was enabled and encouraged by the efforts of the bookmakers and booksellers seeking to capitalize on that spirit. By supplying the product that early herbalists required both to conduct and to disseminate their research, book producers played a crucial role in the emergence of what would eventually become the discipline of botany. For example, Leonhart Fuchs's beautifully illustrated and tremendously influential work *De historia stirpium comentarii insignes* (*Notable Commentaries on the History of Plants*; Basel, 1542) outlined the characteristics of 497 European and imported plants in 344 chapters that were illustrated by 511 woodcuts, making it "one of the noblest achievements of the German Renaissance."¹⁵ A bestseller by any measure, *De historia stirpium* went through thirty-nine editions before Fuchs's death in 1566 and remained in print long thereafter. Yet despite his status as a revered botanical authority and *De historia stirpium*'s regular reprinting in vernacular translations throughout Europe, Fuchs could not find a publisher willing to risk the capital necessary to publish his follow-up work.¹⁶ The Vienna Codex, as Fuchs's proposed three-volume sequel is now known, which was to be triple the size of his earlier book, was too expensive a risk for Basel publishers like the widow of Michael Isingrin (the initial publisher of *De historia stirpium*) and like Johannes Oporinus, so it never appeared in print.¹⁷ Otto Brunfels likewise complained that the structure of his illustrated herbal *Herbarum vivae eicones* (*Living Images of Plants*, Strasbourg, 1530–1536) suffered because he was forced to accommodate the publisher Johannes Schott's organization of the efforts of artists, woodblock cutters, composers, and pressmen.¹⁸ As the cases of Fuchs's Vienna Codex and Brunfels's *Herbarum* illustrate, the efforts and investments of publishers and printers limited what herbals' authors could and

¹⁵ Frederick G. Meyer, Emily Emmart Trueblood, and John L. Heller, eds., *The Great Herbal of Leonhart Fuchs*, 2 vols. (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), 1:15, 65.

¹⁶ Meyer et al., *Great Herbal*, 1:45.

¹⁷ In a letter to Joachim Camerarius dated April 3, 1563, Fuchs wrote in complaint: "I have long since finished my Commentaries on the History of Plants, arranged in three massive volumes. Isingrin's widow and her son-in-law have broken faith with me, notwithstanding that she is bound in her own handwriting. So my dear Joachim, no one anywhere can be trusted. I have much more material, which I completed earlier, in the hands of Oporinus. But he, too, has so far duped me with false hope." Quoted in Meyer et al., *Great Herbal*, 1:152.

¹⁸ Kusukawa, *Picturing the Book of Nature*, 19.

could not make available to a Renaissance reading public. To properly locate early modern knowledge of natural history, the increasing production of herbals over the course of the sixteenth century needs to be understood not only in terms of a developing scientific movement but also in terms of a robust but limited economic demand for a specific kind of commodity.

In England between the first appearance of the little *Herball* in 1525 and the release of John Parkinson's *Theatrum botanicum* (STC 19302) in 1640, the book trade saw the production of more than two dozen editions of books identified on their title pages or by contemporaries as herbals. These texts included translations of French texts such as the anonymous *Grete Herball* (trans. Laurence Andrewe, first edition 1526, STC 13176) and Rembert Dodoens's *A Nieuwe Herball, Or History of Plants* (trans. Henry Lyte, first edition 1578, STC 6984); books written for an English market but printed on the continent such as William Turner's three-part *A New Herball* (1551, STC 24365; 1562, STC 24366; and 1568, STC 24367); Latin books written and published in London that were authored by foreigners such as Pierre Pena and Matthias de L'Obel's *Stirpium aduersaria noua* (first edition 1570–1571, STC 19595); and interpretive or exegetical works that combined translation with a translator's creative additions, such as Thomas Newton's translation of Levinus Lemnius's *An Herbal for the Bible* (1587, STC 15454). These texts range from pocket-sized, unillustrated octavos to huge folios filled with costly woodcuts. They appear variously in black-letter, roman, and italic typefaces, all three occasionally used on the same page of text. The woodcuts used in one book reappear in others, sometimes appended to the same plants and sometimes to different ones.¹⁹ Their verbal contents range from the descriptions of plants to accounts of their medicinal value or practical usage, to plants' emblematic significance to the Christian reader of "the book of Nature,"²⁰ or to the emphatic patriot seeking to demonstrate England's superior natural blessings over those of foreign climes.²¹ Herbals contain indexes, tables of

¹⁹ The woodcuts in Parkinson's *Theatrum botanicum*, for example, were copied from the second edition of John Gerard's *Herball, or General Historie of Plantes*, edited by Thomas Johnson (Henrey, *British Botanical*, 1:80).

²⁰ The full title of Newton's translation is *An Herbal for the Bible. Containing a plaine and familiar exposition of such Similitudes, Parables, and Metaphors, both in the olde Testament and the Newe, as are borrowed and taken from Herbs, Plants, Trees, Fruits and Simples, by obseruation of their Vertues, qualities, natures, properties, operations and effects: And by Holie Prophets, Sacred Writers, Christ himselfe, and his blessed Apostles usually alledged, and into their beauenly Oracles, for the better beautifieng and plainer opening of the same, profitably inserted.*

²¹ From Thomas Johnson's "An Aduertisement to the Readers," in his 1636 edition of Gerard: "For I iudge it requisite that we should labour to know those Plants which are, and euer are like to be Inhabitants of this Isle; for I verily beleuee that the diuine Prouidence had a care in bestowing Plants

contents, equivalency listings of plant names across regional and national linguistic barriers, marginal notations, in-text citations, and ornamental types functioning as organizational and annotation markers; they are prefaced by their authors, their publishers, and their commenders; they contain addresses to the reader, to patrons, and to civic and royal authorities.²² They were sold and resold for great and small sums of money and presented as bequests in wills; and they appear in the booklists of medical practitioners and in the portraits of gentry, identified both by their individual titles and by their generic marker of “herbal.”²³ The herbals still extant were hand-colored by their producers or by later owners; they were corrected, annotated, and added to by later readers, and the pages of their copies can demonstrate both heavy use and none at all.²⁴ Herbals were mined for ideas by later authors writing advice books as well as by would-be ladies and gentlemen on husbandry and housekeeping.²⁵ They refer to other books currently offered for sale by the same publisher that might also interest readers, books that may or may not have anything to do with plants.²⁶ Indeed, the story of herbals *as books* can be seen as the story of nearly all early modern English books in microcosm, one that encompasses more investigations than have been appreciated by the traditional crediting of individual botanical discoveries. These studies are

in each part of the Earth, fitting and convenient to the foreknowne necessities of the future Inhabitants; and if wee throughly knew the Vertues of these, we needed no Indian nor American Drugges” (sig. 7B4v). On the phenomenon of local projects in early modern natural history, see Alix Cooper, *Inventing the Indigenous: Local Knowledge and Natural History in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²² The title page of Turner’s *A New Herball* of 1551 carries the royal arms for King Edward, while Pena and L’Obel’s *Stirpium aduersaria noua* carries Elizabeth’s arms. John Gerard’s two catalogues of plants in his Holborn garden printed in 1596 and 1599 were dedicated to William Cecil and Walter Raleigh respectively.

²³ For example, the Southwell-Sibthorpe Commonplace Book lists a copy of Gerard’s *Herbal* in its inventory. Cited in Laroche, *Medical Authority*, 122.

²⁴ Ann Blair, “Errata Lists and the Reader As Corrector,” in Sabrina Alcorn Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin (eds.), *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 21–41; 41.

²⁵ Michael R. Best has demonstrated that Gervase Markham depended heavily on information contained in a late edition of the little *Herball* in his compiling of *The English Housewife*, reorganizing its information on remedies around illnesses rather than around plants and adding specific quantities to perfect remedies for healing simples. See Best, “Medical Use of a Sixteenth-Century Herbal: Gervase Markham and the Bankes Herbal,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 53 (1979): 449–458.

²⁶ The full title of Peter Treveris’s 1526 work is *The grete herbal whiche geueth parfyt knowlege and vnderstandyng of all maner of herbes & there gracuous vertues whiche god hath ordeyned for our prosperous welfare and helthfor they hele & cure all maner of dyseseas and sekenesses that fall or mysfortune to all maner of creatoures of god created/practysed by many expert and wyse maysters/las Auicenna & other. &c. Also it geueth full parfyte vnderstandyng of the booke lately prentyed by me (Peter treueris) named the noble experiens of the vertuous handwarke of surgery (STC 13176)*. Treveris had printed Hieronymus’ *The vertuous handwarke of surgery (STC 13434)* in 1525.

important in understanding the significance of herbals to early modern English readers, but they convey only a part of what is an interdisciplinary tale. To fully understand how herbals came to be and how they mattered for early modern natural history, we need also to appreciate why they were books.

Publishers

In previous pages, I have often used the word *publisher* in a manner that would be anachronistic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it is one that requires some explanation. In the twenty-first century, a book publisher is the corporate agent that owns the right to distribute and wholesale a book and provides the capital to enable its manufacture. As a result of this right and these activities, publishers either earn a profit generated from the sale of the books to retail outlets or they suffer a loss if they are unable to sell a sufficient quantity of their product in order to break even. Some publishers also own and control the actual process of the manufacture of their books, but others contract out that process to agents who print and bind books on their behalf. Thanks to modern colophons, readers are easily able to distinguish those who front the money for a publication from those who are physically responsible for a book's manufacture. In early modern England, however, the term *publisher* simply meant "a person who declares or proclaims something publicly" (*OED n.l.*) and could refer as readily to a preacher or a ballad singer as to an agent responsible for the creation of a book. The equivalent early modern English term to the modern *publisher* was *printer*, a word that could, unhelpfully, refer both to the agent whose entrepreneurial initiative caused a book to be printed and to the contracted agent responsible for actually printing it. Though sometimes these roles overlapped (if, say, printers decided to risk their own capital to publish books for themselves), the concerns and priorities of each role are sufficiently distinct that, without an appreciation of the role of publishers as the "prime movers" of the book trade, historians are unable to fully comprehend the ways that books in the period were conceived of as products to be sold. As Peter W. M. Blayney notes, "it was the publisher, not the printer, who decided that the text should be made public and who would eventually make a profit if it sold well enough during his lifetime. And by the same token, it was the publisher whose investment was at risk if the public declined to buy the book."²⁷ Though the term *publisher* in this modern

²⁷ Peter W. M. Blayney, "The Publication of Playbooks," in David Scott Kastan and John D. Cox (eds.), *A New History of Early English Drama* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 384–422; 391. The term "prime movers," used in the previous sentence in reference to publishers, is also Blayney's.

sense was not contemporaneous in the period under discussion, the word's utility in clarifying the arguments of this book is too significant to disregard.²⁸

In focusing on the ways that herbals were the products of publishers, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade* is of a piece with what is sometimes called the "New Textualism," a term popularized by the work of Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, which describes a form of historicist literary criticism that distinguishes between physical documents and the texts transmitted by those documents.²⁹ Since the 1990s, literary scholars of Renaissance England, particularly those focused on the works of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, have begun to consider the behaviors of publishers more seriously as a means of understanding contemporary attitudes towards literature. By "thinking of plays as publishers thought of them, as commodities," Zachary Lesser writes, we can "change the ways in which we read the plays themselves."³⁰ More recently, Kirk Melnikoff has demonstrated that Elizabethan publishers "made substantial interventions in what were developing literary forms" to shape their would-be readers' sense of genres like travel narratives, lyric poetry, literary anthologies, and erotic verse.³¹ In turning authors' texts into the commodities of books, Renaissance publishers anticipated the desires of customers whose preferred reading acts were satisfied or frustrated by the publisher's formatting choices or affordances, as well as by the ways that Renaissance printers presented these features in the printed books themselves. As Ann Blair has urged, "[c]loser attention to the people involved in the production of a book, from front matter and illustrations to indexes and errata lists, can bring to light the role of historical actors other than the author in shaping how a work was read, by whom, and for what purposes."³² These concerns are precisely what *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade* is designed to uncover.

²⁸ Peter W. M. Blayney, *The Stationers' Company and the Printers of London, 1501–1557*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 30–33.

²⁹ Though it was initially common in legal terminology, the phrase was first used in a literary context in Margreta de Grazia and Peter Stallybrass, "The Materiality of the Shakespearean Text," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 44 (1993): 255–283. See also G. Thomas Tanselle, *A Rationale of Textual Criticism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989) and Alan B. Farmer, "Shakespeare and the New Textualism," in W. R. Elton and John M. Muccio (eds.), *The Shakespearean International Yearbook 2: Where Are We Now in Shakespearean Studies?* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 158–179.

³⁰ Zachary Lesser, *Renaissance Drama and the Politics of Publication: Readings in the English Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 4.

³¹ Melnikoff, *Elizabethan Publishing*, 7.

³² Ann Blair, "An Early Modernist's Perspective," *Isis* 95 (2004): 420–430; 428.

Richard Bankes's Little *Herball*

In 1525, Richard Bankes printed and published a small quarto herbal of 207 short chapters.³³ In all editions subsequent to his quarto reprint of 1526, the herbal was printed in octavo, with nine to ten sheets of paper folded thrice to make up the volume. In the absence of documentary records testifying to the activities within a particular bookshop or printing house, it is difficult for a modern scholar to determine a Renaissance publisher's success in anticipating the attractiveness of any given edition to their readers; however, the extant evidence of reprinting the same or similar titles strongly suggests that an earlier edition had sold out. Bankes's immediate reprinting of his 1525 edition the following year indicates that his sense of the little *Herball's* probable appeal to Tudor readers was correct. The book that he chose to publish *was* a sufficiently desired textual commodity among London customers that he not only profited from its manufacture but did so quickly. What might have accounted for the little *Herball's* popular appeal in print in London in 1525?

It may have had something to do with the affordances of the text he printed, the *Agnus castus* text, which survives in more than three dozen medieval manuscript copies.³⁴ Late medieval English manuscript texts had recently begun to include finding aids such as tables, and this feature, coupled with *Agnus castus's* alphabetized chapters, helped to speed up readers' ability to locate desired information about plants and remedies, novel conveniences that were intensified by the standardization afforded by the new medium of print. In searching for a popular work in which to invest, Bankes seems to have realized that the well-liked *Agnus castus* had not yet appeared in print, and he set about to remedy the gap, mirroring the user-based conveniences that had lately accompanied the work in manuscript.

Many of the remedies and folk accounts of plants that were first outlined in the little *Herball* of 1525 later made their way into the massive botanical tomes of William Turner, Rembert Dodoens, and John Gerard in the second half of the sixteenth century. Before these large authorized volumes of botanical knowledge became available, however, Tudor readers clamored for smaller printed herbals, and booksellers resoundingly

³³ Subsequent reprints of the *Herball* vary in their number of individual chapters; the 1525 edition has 207, but only 206 are listed in the table that follows the text.

³⁴ George R. Keiser, "Vernacular Herbals: A Growth Industry in Late Medieval England," in Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (eds.), *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England* (York: York Medieval Press, 2008), 292–308; 300.

obliged: Bankes's anonymous herbal was reprinted at least eighteen times by 1567, more than a dozen times before the appearance of Turner's folio *A New Herball* of 1551 demonstrated that England too could produce a herbalist of its own to rival natural historians on the continent such as Brunfels and Fuchs.³⁵ Because extant medieval manuscripts confirm that there was nothing particularly new or original about the textual content of the little printed herbal of Bankes and his successors that could account for its widespread appeal, its extraordinary popularity must have been due, at least in part, to its increased availability within the new medium, demonstrating its first publisher's skill as a reader of the dynamic marketplace for English books.³⁶ Of course, modern historians considering Bankes's ability to evaluate the texts that would best sell in Tudor London are left with only the positive evidence of his selections (we don't have a means of knowing those texts that he considered and rejected), but we can judge from the multitude of subsequent editions that Bankes's initial decision to publish was widely and rapidly copied by his fellow booksellers, and these many reprint editions suggest that the economic benefits the little *Herball* offered to its first publisher were amply evident to others in the book trade.

Other features of the little *Herball* raise additional questions about the relationship between texts and the books that contain them. While Fuchs's *De historia stirpium* was celebrated throughout Europe for its naturalistic woodcuts that indicated the shape and features of plants, all the editions of the little *Herball* were unillustrated, and the text's descriptions of plant morphology are often too vague to be useful as a finding aid in the field. More curiously, its plant descriptions depend on readers having a preexisting acquaintance with the subject: "This herbe Auetum that men call Aucte / otherwyse Dyll. This herbe hathe leues lyke to

³⁵ As several of the reprinted editions of Bankes's *Herball* exist in only single copies, it is reasonable to assume that there may have been additional editions that are no longer extant. Though his dataset examines books published more than a decade after the last edition of the little *Herball* was printed, Alan B. Farmer has demonstrated that edition loss rates decrease as the number of sheets of paper needed to print a copy of the edition increase (this unit is known as an "edition-sheet"). Assuming that herbals fall into a "low-loss genre," a book of similar length to the little *Herball* with nine edition-sheets would have a minimal loss rate of 9.7 percent; given the eighteen editions of the text that are extant, even a conservative estimate may posit the complete loss of one or two additional editions. See Alan B. Farmer, "Playbooks and the Question of Ephemerality," in Heidi Brayman, Jesse M. Lander, and Zachary Lesser (eds.), *The Book in History, The Book As History: New Intersections of the Material Text: Essays in Honor of David Scott Kastan* (New Haven, CT: Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library and Yale University, 2016), 87–125.

³⁶ As Bankes was still a relatively inexperienced publisher in 1525, it should also be noted that his decision to publish the *Herball* in 1525 may simply have been a lucky guess, or the fortunate happenstance of a copy of what turned out to be a particularly appealing manuscript text somehow finding its way into his hands.

Fenell / but the Sede is Somdele brode as the Orage [orange] Sede is.”³⁷ Cominum (cumin) leaves are “moche lyke to Colynadre (coriander),” Dragantia (*dracontium*) has leaves “lyke to Rew / but it hathe whyte Speckes,” while gout-curing woodbind (woodbine) “bereth lyke to the Hoppe.”³⁸ In order to use the little *Herball*, in other words, a reader must already be familiar with the bulk of its subject matter – the work therefore complements the plant knowledge that an early modern reader would bring to the text but offers very little to the botanically illiterate.

There are other examples of this phenomenon. In her analysis of Fuchs’s *De historia stirpium*, Sachiko Kusukawa explains that Fuchs’s descriptive strategy in matching ancient signifiers to contemporary signifiers likewise assumes foreknowledge on behalf of his readers.³⁹ By using images to provoke readers’ recall of the subjective features of known plants (like taste and smell), Fuchs reveals that he anticipated a botanically literate audience for his book. Yet, unlike the large illustrated and authorized herbals with which it shares a genre, the herbals printed by Bankes and those who followed him were not compendia of the best and latest botanical information gathered by informed readers, and their medical receipts seem to offer their readers little in the way of new morphological or phytological information. To gain any practical import from these little herbals, readers were required to be critically active and to bring as much knowledge to the text as they could take away.⁴⁰ It was familiarity with local plants, rather than the novelty of exotic ones, that provided much of the book’s appeal to readers in Tudor London, a response readily

³⁷ Sig. A2r. In Bankes’s 1525 index or table, as well as in Wyer’s versions of the herbal, this plant is identified as “Anetum,” or anise, which suggests that Bankes (or his compositor) experienced minimal confusion as they set type from their manuscript copy.

³⁸ Sigs. C1r, C2v, and I2v. As Larkey and Pyles note, Wyer’s editions of the herbal have “more descriptions of the plants, with characteristics of their growth” (*An Herbal [1525]* [Battleboro, VT: New York Botanical Garden, 1941], xvi), a detail that suggests Wyer’s supplementing Bankes’s texts with information of his own. In all editions of the little *Herball*, descriptions beginning with letters located in the first half of the alphabet generally contain more information about morphological characteristics of their plants than descriptions located in the latter half of the book. Such division is likely the result of Bankes’s (or his copy text’s) use of two or more sources in the original compilation, evident from internal evidence; from the midpoint of the text (after “Morell, or Nyghtshadewe”), the text offers information about each plant’s humeral characteristics, noting whether the simple is hot, cold, moist, or dry and the degree of each. In Wyer’s texts, these humeral characteristics occur throughout.

³⁹ Kusukawa, *Picturing the Book of Nature*, 120.

⁴⁰ Even the modern editors of Fuchs’s *De historia stirpium* find that their preexisting botanical knowledge is called upon in a similar way: “Even with a knowledge of Latin, Fuchs’s great herbal cannot easily be understood without a knowledge of botany” (Meyer et al., *Great Herbal*, 1:xiii).

capitalized upon by Tudor publishers, whose livelihoods depended upon their knowing what readers wanted.

Such assumptions of a competent reader using a herbal not as a self-sufficient authority but as a guide to individual memory or to refresh experience is consistent with what Brian W. Ogilvie finds was the norm for natural historians operating in the second half of the sixteenth century when the number of known plants increased rapidly. Ogilvie argues that the published descriptions and illustrations of plants provided by Renaissance botanists served as the “final stage in the condensation of experience,” and these printed books enabled botanists to share their experience with others in the “Republic of Letters.”⁴¹ The evidence of the eighteen surviving editions of the little *Herball*, however, suggests that use of printed herbals as a guide to experiential memory was occurring even in the simple botanical books that were designed for a less sophisticated reading public. The answer to the question of the little *Herball*'s popularity with Tudor readers may be found not in its novelty but in the way that the text of the book reinforces its readers' existing botanical knowledge.

Small herbals' lack of botanical originality and their initial failure to proclaim recognized (or recognizable) authorities may be the reason that, despite their unmistakable popularity with early modern readers, many scholarly works of botanical history have either dismissed them or disregarded them entirely.⁴² Rather than seeing their regular appearance in the historical record as demonstrating the marketability of botanical knowledge to a paying public, the anonymous vernacular herbals of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in both print and manuscript, have been denounced for their lack of sophistication.⁴³ As earlier English herbals lack both authorship and originality, histories of the English herbal regularly begin with the works of William Turner, whose three-volume *A New Herball* (1551–1561) led to his celebration as the “Father of British Botany.”⁴⁴ Those histories ascend through the volumes of Henry Lyte, John Gerard, and John Parkinson to explore how the labors of these men led to the creation of a uniquely English genre of a scientific book. Yet, as the products of both late medieval scriptoria and early Tudor stationers

⁴¹ Ogilvie, *Science of Describing*, 181.

⁴² A. G. Morton, *History of Botanical Science: An Account of the Development of Botany from its Ancient Times to the Present Day* (London: Academic Press, 1981), 123.

⁴³ Jerry Stannard, “Dioscorides and Renaissance Material Medica,” in *Materia Medica in the XVI Century: Proceedings of a Symposium at the International Academy of the History of Medicine* (London: Pergamon Press, 1966), 1–21; 8.

⁴⁴ Rebecca Laroche traces this celebratory phrase to Benjamin Daydon Jackson. See *Medical Authority*, 23n5.

ably demonstrate, the genre of the printed herbal in English preceded the efforts of these named authors. In the words of Wendy Wall, “authorship bears the mark of things unauthorized.”⁴⁵

By prioritizing authors and their botanical works over stationers and their editions, scholars of herbals have largely overlooked one of the most popular English books of the sixteenth century and missed the fact that thousands of early modern readers between 1520 and 1560 were eager to access botanical information however they could find it. Despite its quaint readability, abdicated authority, and ambivalent functionality, the eighteen-plus editions of the little *Herball* (as well as the marginalia that appear in surviving copies of these editions) testify to the existence of a robust popular reading culture for natural history in the first half of the sixteenth century. This is the context that would enable more “authoritative” English herbals by William Turner and John Gerard to appear in print, as these smaller volumes had demonstrated an eager market. Without considering the practical means by which ideas spread, a scholarly focus on the presentation and transmission of ideas can lose a great deal of important context. While the texts of printed herbals are of crucial importance in understanding the development of early modern descriptive science, the physical status of these books as marketable commodities facilitated such developments. Seemingly insignificant works such as the little *Herball*, together with its multiple reprints published by Robert Redman, Elizabeth Redman, Robert Wyer, William Powell, and others, demonstrate that the English public, like its continental brethren, was eager to own botanical works printed in the vernacular – and was willing to pay for them.

Expanding the agents of the production of knowledge to include the publishers, printers, and booksellers of herbals reminds us that the potential audience for herbals included those who did not necessarily have a vested interest in contributing to the creation of scientific knowledge on a grand scale. As one of the products offered in the burgeoning trade in books in early modern London, herbals were purchased by a wide variety of readers with an equally varied suite of attitudes towards the function of books in their daily lives. Because they contained “the names and descriptions of herbs, or of plants in general, with their properties and virtues,” herbals could serve as authorities for plant knowledge. Their status as physical objects also allowed readers to use them as personal repositories

⁴⁵ Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 346.

to record their own experience, supplementing the printed page with marginal annotations detailing their own knowledge. The conjunction of a sixteenth-century hand with a printed book serves, in Monique Hulvey's words, as "one of the many invaluable testimonies of the active relationship between Renaissance readers and their books."⁴⁶ Like other books, herbals were objects that could be personalized by their owners, and individual readers could as easily have seen a herbal as an occasion for record-keeping and a supplement to experience, just as they could have used the text of a book as an authoritative source of information.

Several of the copies of the later editions of the little *Herball* held in the Huntington Library contain marginalia demonstrating a user's identification of crucial parts of the text or clarification of detail. A 1552 edition of the text printed by Robert Wyer has readers' marks explaining that "Emerodes" are also known as "piles," and that the important part of the chapter on "Saluia" is the *Herball's* observation that "If ye haue an ytchyng on you washe it well with [the] ioyce of ths herbe & it Shall Slee ytchyng," which a reader saw fit to underline.⁴⁷ Neither of these manuscript annotations serves to say anything of the botanical import of the book in question, nor do they contribute anything especially useful to a different reader of the same copy of the book. What such marks in books do demonstrate, however, is evidence of their practical usage by readers who were engaging with these texts in both an intellectual and a *material* way. They serve as reminders that books are not only practical sources of information but also artifacts manipulated by people in real time and real space, and that the influences of such non-authorial actors on the reception and continued production of books for the marketplace are more complex than any account of their botanical authors alone could accommodate.

Traditional Accounts of Herbals

I argue throughout this volume that the significant economic consequences of the mass production of books in England that print made possible had lasting repercussions for those who wished to be recognized as experts within emerging disciplines like botany. Indeed, those early capitalists who invested in print technology created both opportunity and motive for herbalists to thrive. Stationers' facility with textual technologies was also

⁴⁶ Monique Hulvey, "Not So Marginal: Manuscript Annotations in the Folger Incunabula," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 92 (1998): 159–176; 174.

⁴⁷ Sig. A3r.

directly linked to English herbals' material features: as stationers' ability to print high-quality woodcut images improved over the sixteenth century, naturalists' long-standing debates over the utility of illustrations for descriptions gained increasing relevance. In Sachiko Kusukawa's words, "the fact that learned scholars envisaged their knowledge to be presented in printed books affected the way they devised text-image relations, and more crucially, the way they set up their arguments and even their methods of study."⁴⁸ My study adds to Kusukawa's observation by further shifting the agency of stationers to the forefront of studies of Renaissance natural history to delineate how a second, third, or fourth edition of a popular herbal differed from the one preceding it, or to explain how the popularity of early modern books might reasonably be determined in the first place.⁴⁹

Compounding the difficulties of assessing Renaissance herbals in their original contexts is an anachronistic tendency to evaluate early works of natural history by later scientific standards. A preference for recognizing authors, particularly those who claimed to write from the basis of their own hands-on experience with plants, has sometimes led to studies of herbals that promote the role of authorial primacy and originality in an age that, by contrast, also placed a high value on comprehensive anthologizing (or, as early modern herbalists themselves termed it, "gathering"). These modern histories have provided somewhat arbitrary judgments of botanical reputations: early empirical herbalists are fêted for their modern outlooks, while those authors whose work was heavily composed of book-based research are considered derivative at best and plagiarists at worst. In one of the most popular narratives about English herbals, Thomas Johnson is credited for the ways that his plant-gathering expeditions into the wilds of Kent enabled him to edit the work of John Gerard. Despite Gerard's own ample botanical and medical experience, Gerard's open admission that he depended upon the books of others renders him, in the opinion of many historians, guilty of nearly all the crimes of which a modern man of science and letters can be accused. Once suspicious forms of textual production

⁴⁸ Kusukawa, *Picturing the Book of Nature*, 2.

⁴⁹ The present study recognizes its genesis in Agnes Arber, *Herbals: Their History and Evolution*, which was first published in 1912. The lasting impact of Arber's *Herbals* may be seen in the attitudes taken towards the volume in various journal reviews of its third edition, published in 1988. John M. Riddle calls *Herbals* a "classic" that remains "the best single volume in English on early printed herbals" ("[Untitled Review]," *Systemic Botany* 13 [1988]: 473); Karen Reeds sees it as "the single best work on herbals" ("[Untitled Review]," *Isis* 79 [1998]: 288); while Jeanne Goode's review in *Brittonia* asserts that "although *Herbals* have been studied extensively since [the 2nd edition of the text in 1938], this work of meticulous scholarship and lucid exposition has never been surpassed" ("[Untitled Review]," *Brittonia* 40 [1988]: 47).

have been detected, the villainy comes to be seen elsewhere, too, even in anonymous works well outside of authorial control; for example, the sixteenth-century printer Robert Wyer is considered a rogue and a plagiarist for reorganizing the text of the little *Herball* that was in the public domain and for adding his own modifications to it.

As Renaissance literary historians have turned towards the history of science, however, these assumptions about authorial originality, long the subject of literary study, can be seen to rest on precarious foundations. In particular, Leah Knight has shown that the large herbals of Turner and Gerard were often recursive and “anthological”; as she demonstrates, the extensive metaphors of gathering and planting found in these works signify how strongly linked authorial and botanical practices were in the English imagination. She writes:

Like poems in a garden of verse, a period understanding of plants was always gathered from many sources: from anonymous and named poets, ancient and modern, as well as from both ancient and modern herbalists; from sometimes acknowledged but often unnamed women and husbandmen; from servants sent to collect plants from abroad, and from gardeners who sent plants and information by correspondence.⁵⁰

This anthological thinking recasts what we may think of as “normative” botanical behavior, particularly during moments of composition. What’s more, a recognition of the broader context in and for which early English books were authored, compiled, and offered for sale shows that herbals had a broad and diverse public-facing readership, and authors’ own knowledge of these readers influenced the ways they wrote and read other books.⁵¹

Print’s capacity for distributing complex packages of information in a relatively stable form granted early herbalists broad access not only to one another’s work but also to the regularly translated works of classical botanical authorities like Theophrastus and Dioscorides.⁵² It was through printed books that natural historians were eventually able to grasp that ancient authorities’ understanding of plants was regionally contingent and therefore limited; it was only through fruitless attempts to identify

⁵⁰ Knight, *Of Books and Botany*, 108. Knight’s *Books and Botany* is primarily focused on the relation of texts and plants in the early modern imagination, explaining how botany functioned as a readily understood and accessible metaphor of collection. She considers how readers and later authors used herbals, both how they manipulated the physical books themselves and how they mined them as sources of information. The present book is more concerned with how and why herbal books came to be written, printed, and published in the first place.

⁵¹ Lorraine Daston makes a similar point in “Taking Note[s],” *Isis* 95 (2004): 443–448; 447.

⁵² See Eisenstein, *Printing Press*. Statues of both figures appear on the frontispiece of Thomas Johnson’s revised edition of Gerard’s *Herball* of 1633; see Figure 8.2.

Mediterranean plants in other landscapes that the modern concept of biogeography gradually emerged. While the easy motility of geophytes like bulbs and tubers has long been understood as a major contributor to the infamous tulip craze in the seventeenth century (bulbs serve as food reserves that allow tulips to survive outside of soil and without light for long periods of time), the role of print in spreading knowledge about exotic and more fragile plants or about difficult-to-transport specimens like trees is far less appreciated.⁵³ In a sense, the ubiquity and familiarity of books have led to the printed medium being too often ignored by historians of botany, who, in searching for the forest, have largely neglected the trees.

Attending to material books often poses its own challenges, as book historians' interest in historical particularity often considers single copies or titles in isolation from a book's larger commercial context. Such studies discern some of the trees of the proverbial forest, but they may ignore the mutually beneficial relationship between their particular species of tree and the other growth sprouting from the forest floor. Book historians who organize their investigations around modern, rather than historical, notions of textual genre can sometimes suffer from the same narrow focus that can affect historians of science. As the verbal content of herbals often includes a combination of subjects such as medical remedies, discourses on gardening and agriculture, and systems of plant classification and description, the texts of herbals are often used indiscriminately in debates about emerging distinctions between the publication of works of husbandry, natural history, or medicine.⁵⁴ Depending on a book historian's particular purview, then, any individual herbal title might be slated into one generic category or another.

Commodifying Botany in the English Herbal

While literary scholars' interest in herbals is often piqued because the books can serve as resources for the interpretation of early modern botanical understanding, thereby answering questions about the significance of mad Ophelia's bouquets or King Lear's crown of weeds, ad hoc approaches that

⁵³ On the thefts to which tulip cultivators were subject as a result of their portability, see Anne Goldgar, *Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 57–58.

⁵⁴ For example, in John Barnard, D. F. McKenzie, and Maureen Bell, *The Cambridge History of the Book in Britain*, vol. 4 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), both Lynnette Hunter and Adrian Johns find reasons to discuss the herbals of John Gerard and John Parkinson in their retrospective chapters of "Books for Daily Life: Household, Husbandry, Behaviour" and "Science and the Book."

treat herbals as mere containers of botanical facts can sever the relationship between medium and message that allowed such botanical knowledge to spread.⁵⁵ Over the course of the sixteenth century, early modern English readers saw more than two dozen herbal editions appear in stationers' bookstalls, belying Cordelia's claim that plants are the "unpublished virtues of the Earth" (18.16).⁵⁶ By 1608, when the quarto text of *King Lear* appeared from the press of Nicholas Okes on behalf of its publisher Nathaniel Butter, a curious English reader eager to peruse a codex containing "the names, or descriptions of herbs, with their properties and virtues" had an impressive array of options from which to choose. If they were flush enough with coin, they could have purchased a copy of John Gerard's 1,400-page *Herball or History of Plantes* of 1597, a fashionable choice, no doubt, considering that Gerard had just been elected Master of the Barber-Surgeons' Company the previous August and had been "Surgeon and Herbalist" to James I since 1604.⁵⁷ If our hypothetical early modern reader desired an older work, but one with a continental pedigree, an English version of Rembert Dodoens's *Cruydeboeck* appeared in English bookstalls in 1578, translated from a French edition that had been circulating on the continent since 1557. The Englishman Henry Lyte had translated Dodoens's *Nieuwe Herball, or Historie of Plants* (STC 6984) from French for this 1578 edition, correcting and annotating the text against his own experience of plants and supplementing with new material supplied by Dodoens himself. Though *A Nieuwe Herball* was initially printed in Antwerp, it was distributed by Gerard Dewes at the Sign of the Swanne at his shop in Saint Paul's Churchyard, making this text readily available at the very heart of the English book trade. Three more editions followed in 1586, 1595, and 1619, while *Ram's Little Dodoeon* (STC 6988), an abridged "epitome," appeared in 1606. If our hypothetical reader instead preferred to read about plants in Latin, Pierre Pena and Matthias de L'Obel's *Stirpium aduersaria noua* (1570–1571; STC 19595), one of the earliest English books to feature an engraved copperplate title page, was considered both so elegant and so authoritative that the renowned

⁵⁵ Rebecca Laroche makes a similar point about the way that women engage with printed botanical books: "we should not think it enough to gloss any example as merely reflective of a general gendered material reality. Rather, each herbal reference should be taken on its own terms" (*Medical Authority*, 164).

⁵⁶ Quotations from Shakespeare are taken from the *New Oxford Shakespeare: The Complete Works, Modern Critical Edition*, ed. Gary Taylor, John Jowett, Terri Bourus, and Gabriel Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁵⁷ Robert F. Jeffers, *The Friends of John Gerard (1545–1612), Surgeon and Botanist* (Falls Village, CT: The Herb Grower Press, 1967), 79–81.

Antwerp publisher Christopher Plantin purchased 800 copies of it to bind with his own editions of L'Obel.⁵⁸ And if new editions were too expensive for our reader in 1608, or simply could no longer be found in bookshops, secondhand copies were perhaps still available. The London secondhand market may likewise have featured copies of the extremely popular anonymous works like the illustrated *Grete Herbal* (STC 13176–13179; published 1526, 1529, 1539, and 1561) or the little *Herball* first published by Bankes and reprinted by many, many others. An awareness of the different herbals available for sale in Renaissance London makes it clear that selecting any one of them as a straightforward representative of Shakespeare's botanical knowledge is an arbitrary and questionable procedure.

Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade functions both as a complement and as a corrective to accounts that examine herbals primarily as containers for botanical texts by contextualizing the provenance of the material artifact of herbals' bookish forms. In so doing, this work reveals the diversity of meanings that early English herbals could have for their earliest authors and audiences. My approach is in line with a particular theoretical development in the history of books, an approach that D. F. McKenzie has identified as the "sociology of texts."⁵⁹ Though McKenzie was not the first bibliographer to insist upon the importance of conducting historical and cultural investigations into the circumstances surrounding textual production and reception, his work is considered foundational in determining the ways in which material forms influence textual meaning.⁶⁰ McKenzie argues that the discipline of bibliography is well situated to include within its precincts not only the technical processes of printing but also the social processes that enabled written works to spread. By refusing to elevate the status of the verbal work over the printed object that mediates it, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade* demonstrates the multiple subjectivities inherent in a term like Michel Foucault's "author-function," which should encompass the activities not only of writers but also of publishers, printers, and booksellers, agents whose identifiable acts define the boundaries of textual discourse. Foucault's assertion that the author-function is constrained by its context demands the establishment of that context for the unique circumstances of every would-be author: "[the author-function] is

⁵⁸ STC 2:225.

⁵⁹ D. F. McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts: The Panizzi Lectures* (London: British Library, 1985).

⁶⁰ For a discussion of the influences of the New Bibliography upon McKenzie's "sociology," see Sarah Neville, "Nihil biblicum a me alienum puto: W.W. Greg, Bibliography, and the Sociology of Texts," *Variants* 11 (2014): 91–112.

a speech that must be received in a certain mode and that, in a given culture, must receive a certain status.”⁶¹ In the culture of sixteenth-century London, long before the legal establishment of a writer’s right of ownership over their intellectual labors, the subject who was considered primarily responsible for a particular textual artifact was its publisher.

In his investigation of the author-function’s more practical advantages, Foucault’s “What Is an Author?” suggests that the discourse of authorship was largely prompted by an authoritarian need to adjudicate issues of censorship and punishment, particularly in response to the proliferation of subversive textual productions. Here, too, may be seen the import that early moderns ascribed to the producers of the material artifact: alongside the author of a given work, printers and publishers were subject to the same strictures of reward and punishment, and these risks determined what kinds of books stationers would produce. The penal function of authorship is why, in 1579, during the reign of Elizabeth I, it was not only John Stubbes who lost his right hand for authoring a treasonous pamphlet arguing against the queen’s marriage negotiations with the Duke of Anjou; so too did his publisher, William Page. Had his sentence not been withdrawn out of compassion for his advanced age, the printer Hugh Singleton would have been subjected to the same harsh punishment as well.⁶² A number of royal proclamations reveal that authorities throughout Europe viewed printers and publishers as critically responsible for book production and hence saw them as liable textual agents.

Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade is divided into three sections that move from bibliographical and textual theory through the publishing and reception of particular herbals. The chapters of Part I are designed to show those unfamiliar with methods of analytic, critical, and historical bibliography how such scholarship reframes traditional debates over the nature of authors’ works. These chapters consider the intellectual stakes of approaching herbals as documents as well as discursive products by examining how the early commercial practices of English printers shaped both popular reading habits and the development of scholarly and botanical authority. Because herbals were of demonstrable value to publishers prior to the appearance of authors on herbals’ title pages, Part II of this book focuses on two popular anonymous works that have been less frequently considered by scholars. The chapters in this section argue that, in the case

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?,” in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, trans. Josué V. Harari (New York: Random House, 1984): 107.

⁶² On Stubbes, see Cyndia Susan Clegg, *Press Censorship in Elizabethan England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 71–72.

of texts without authors, like the little *Herball* and the *Grete Herball*, readers of natural history were unable to fall back upon authorship to limit the scope of a book's authority. Instead, as my chapter on reference books on the public stage (Chapter 6) shows, early moderns responded to the physicality of the book form as a marker of a character's individual credit, suggesting that readers were especially attuned to herbals' material nature. The book's third and final section, Part III, returns to authors and considers how authors' professional identities function to legitimize the large-format herbals of William Turner and John Gerard, the authoritative "English herbalists" whose books created the benchmarks for understanding early modern attitudes towards plants.

Chapter 1 begins with an expansion of Foucault's author-function to include such figures as stationers, booksellers, and printers to show how an author could attempt to establish their scholarly bona fides by denigrating the publishing behaviors of others. To ground this approach in materials that are familiar to those who study Renaissance natural history, I begin with an examination of the way that Leonard Fuchs, the author of one of the best-known herbals of the period, *De historia stirpium commentarii insignes* (*Notable Commentaries on the History of plants*; Basel, 1542), orients himself in relation to his publisher, Michael Isingrin. Throughout his address to the reader, Fuchs tries to downplay his reliance on Isingrin (or on any bookseller) to distribute his botanical knowledge among continental readers. Distribution of texts through print makes authors vulnerable in other ways as well: Fuchs is so disquieted by the fear of losing control of his text that he goes out of his way to condemn the Frankfurt printer Christian Egenolff, a bookseller who had pirated the herbal of Otto Brunfels. This example of Fuchs and Egenolff suggests that, to better understand how herbalists themselves conceived of their authority in print (and how such authority could easily be undermined), scholars of natural history need to make a "bibliographic turn."

Chapter 2 addresses the regulatory constraints upon the printing of herbals that are evident through examination of the records of the Stationers' Company of London. This medieval bookmaking guild was granted the legal status of a corporation in 1557 and given full authority over the new technology of printing. Even before William Caxton brought England's first handpress and movable type to Westminster in 1476, royal, civic, and religious authorities had long struggled with containing the spread of heretical and seditious material. Yet print's capacity for producing multiple copies of illicit work en masse was a far greater threat to crown or ecclesiastical control than that posed by written manuscripts or

the singing of prohibited ballads. As the craft of printing spread, crown attempts to manage and censor the productions of various presses grew unwieldy, particularly as Protestant reformers took to using print as a vehicle for democratizing a Christian's relationship to God. It was Catholic Queen Mary I who attempted to solve the problem of press control by granting a single London company a monopoly over all printed material in exchange for monitoring potentially heretical output. All printed books, not just herbals, were affected by this event, but I argue that the development of the "author-ized" English herbal can be directly tied to the effects of the Stationers' Company's incorporation in 1557.

As a corporation, the Stationers' Company of London was legally able to own property in its own right, administer its own affairs, and police within the boundaries of its membership a standard of civic behavior in line with City customs. By registering with the Company the titles of works they published or wanted to publish, individual stationers were able to manage the high degree of short-term financial risk they undertook in the speculative process of bookmaking. The growth in the production of herbals shows that the Stationers' Company regulations helped to encourage larger and more elaborate books of natural history. Through establishing their legal ownership of a work prior to printing it, stationers could discourage others from copying or pirating their texts and undermining their investments; by centralizing power over both the bookselling and the printing crafts, the incorporation of the Stationers' Company largely freed royal authorities from the minutiae of individual patent disputes that had previously plagued Chancery. In requiring all printed texts to declare the names of the publisher and printer who produced them, the authorities' comprehensive system of censorship and punishment ensured that the responsibility for what Foucault calls the "author-function" was shared among textual progenitors. Chapter 2 argues that, by enabling all stationers to protect their financial investments, the creation of the Stationers' Company licensing and entrance system had two significant effects on the early English book trade. First, licensing served to democratize the economic insurance that had previously been offered to a select few publishers under the Tudor patent system. Second, the ability to enter a title into the Stationers' Registers transformed what had been a temporary privilege protecting a publisher's right to recoup a past investment (the ability to sell books that had already been printed) into a permanent and future one: the ability to reap benefits from a work in perpetuity. With the Stationers' Company system of entrance, therefore, came the ability to establish that verbal works have value within the book

trade even before they were transformed into the commodity of printed books. Because of the Stationers' Company's attention to potential (but not yet existing) books, the products of authors were also able to become something that could be valued, bought, and sold.

Thinking bibliographically about herbals requires appreciating both the way that the printed medium affected how authors approached their works and the circumstances leading up to publication. To show how English stationers shifted their approach in marketing their wares between the first and second half of the sixteenth century, Chapter 3 reveals how the very *physicality* of the book form was understood to engage early modern consumers. What's more, by the seventeenth century, botanical illustrations, which were largely drawn from the continent, were seen as medications in their own right, able to soothe and comfort melancholic or agitated readers. By the beginning of King James I's reign, the age of the illustrated printed herbal had arrived, seemingly to stay. Customers' material preferences, however, had economic ramifications for the stationers who had to figure out how to produce – and to pay for – these ever larger and more complicated books. As the size of herbals increased, so too did the initial outlay of expense required to produce one, making the publication of illustrated herbals possible only after the regulatory systems of the sixteenth century had become sufficiently sophisticated to protect publishers' investments. Even so, illustrated herbal publishing was so expensive that it could be pursued only by the wealthiest stationers. The three chapters of Part I thus move from textual theory, to print history, to material practice.

Part II moves into a discussion of particular works: by examining the editions of the little *Herball* and *The Grete Herbal* (1526), the former unillustrated and the latter illustrated, Chapters 3 and 4 show that anonymous books of science reveal how early modern readers evaluated the texts – and not the authors – before them. These chapters demonstrate that figures other than authors were responsible for the extraordinary success of printed English herbals in the first half of the sixteenth century, and they paved the way for stationers' increased investment in larger, “author-ized” works of botany that are the subject of the book's third section. This deep dive into Tudor printing and publishing history demonstrates the value of investigating the separate provenance of each *edition* of a work to better account for stationers' anticipation of readers' market demands. Who was reading these early vernacular herbals in the 1530s and 1540s? Investigating the decisions of publishers as they promoted their bookish wares can help us to better answer that question.

In Chapter 4, I reexamine the publication of the little *Herball* in the context of the book trade of Tudor London. After charting the connections among its publishers, I ask whether crown attempts to control printing by the means of individual patents or copyrights issued to individual stationers may have inadvertently contributed to a culture of copying that modern scholars have since misinterpreted as piratical. In an era when the risk of ecclesiastical reprisal was very real, the *cum privilegio* privilege of the crown offered booksellers what appeared to be an implicit endorsement of a book's contents (though it explicitly was not one), indicating that such a book was unlikely to be flagged as seditious. Moreover, my attention to the sociology of the English print trade in the first half of the sixteenth century reveals that the default assumption of aggressive competition between rival booksellers may be overstated. A consideration of herbals as books reveals evidence that stationers also engaged in mutually beneficial social and economic relationships in order to minimize financial risk in their promotion of the commodification of the printed medium.

Chapter 5 continues this examination of books as artifacts by using contemporary readers' marks in anonymous English herbals to argue that Renaissance readers used printed texts as opportunities to record their own experiences of native plants and medical experiments, pushing back against a pervasive view of early herbal readers as credulous and unsophisticated. Former scholars have asserted that early modern readers were necessarily naïve and inclined to follow any recommendations communicated through the written word because they lacked an understanding of the value of scientific experimentation and expertise. Instead, I argue in favor of adopting Madeline Doran's more nuanced conception of early modern credulity, one which recognizes that sixteenth- and seventeenth-century readers were quite capable of critically evaluating the information they encountered in books.⁶³ Though botanical or medical historians with a vested interest in the accuracy of herbals' subject matter might scorn herbals' inclusion of folklore or medical practices that have little efficacy, a focus on the material book uncovers some of the processes by which early modern readers evaluated the texts in front of them. Commonplacing and the contemporary marginalia left in Renaissance books indicate that early modern readers, much like modern scholars, were capable of using books as authorities only inasmuch as it suited them to do so. A particularly pious reader of a copy of the 1529 edition of *The Grete Herbal* now held in the

⁶³ Madeline Doran, "On Elizabethan 'Credulity': With Some Questions Concerning the Use of the Marvelous in Literature," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 1 (1940): 151–176.

British Library, for example, even sought to replace that book's Catholic sentiments with her own preferred Protestant theology, striking out all references to "our Lady" and substituting the less inflammatory "God." If traditional religious pieties could be so easily supplanted by a reader's "truant pen," it is difficult to make a case that minor botanical details should offer greater resistance.

To illuminate the setting in which publishers, herbalists, and medical authors competed for readers, as well as to highlight the skepticism with which early modern audiences regarded the authority of books, Chapter 6 explores how books were used as properties on the English Renaissance stage to underwrite characters' affectations of medical and scientific expertise. Herbals and other books of natural history existed for early moderns not only as locations where information was stored but as objects that could be strategically deployed for professional or social effect. For attentive audiences, stage books served particularly *material* ends as recognizable resources that signified characters' social and intellectual pretensions. In plays by William Shakespeare and John Webster, the characters' medical acumen is signaled by book learning rather than by professional or formal training, and Thomas Heywood makes similar use of books in his innovative *Wise Woman of Hoxton*. Understanding how early moderns both thought about and performed with books is a crucial foundation for understanding how English herbalists conspicuously used others' books as they gathered materials for their own.

In the two chapters of Part III, I reveal the degree to which early modern herbalists *themselves* conceived of their works as printed books designed to be sold by publishers concerned about competition within a print marketplace. My chapter on William Turner (Chapter 7) discusses the ways that an author's "bibliographic ego" could surface even in a nonliterary text.⁶⁴ Turner is the first of the named English herbalists to identify his book as a uniquely valuable service that would benefit the Protestant English commonweal, and from this position he chastises his botanical contemporaries for declining to share their knowledge in print. Turner explains their refusals by claiming that cementing their expertise within a book would open these men up to critique or even force them to account for their opinions. He admits he is also concerned about such criticism, but he is more worried that some readers might interpret his research into continental herbals as little more than a compilation of other men's labors. His

⁶⁴ The phrase is Joseph Lowenstein's, who first used it to refer to Ben Jonson's attitude to print in "The Script in the Marketplace," *Representations* 12 (1985): 101–114.

preface describes how the continental herbals of his predecessors and contemporaries influenced his own investigations of plants and identifies which authors he used in his studies. Turner became a physician during his studies as a naturalist, and there is evidence that the shift in his professional status also changed his approach to his readership and his assumption of an authorial identity as a botanical expert.

Turner's careful attention to his printed botanical sources is well founded because it seems to have protected his long-term reputation with subsequent botanical scholars. In Chapter 8, I examine how Thomas Johnson employs a similar authorizing technique in his changes and additions to the 1633 edition of John Gerard's *Herball*. Early in the volume, Johnson makes a special point of highlighting the major players in the production of botanical knowledge from King Solomon through to his own time, with particular reference to continental printed works. Because he desired to distance his legitimate use of such materials from the sly thefts that he accuses Gerard of engaging in, Johnson's introductory matter explicitly refers his readers to other printed works in order to confirm his findings. Johnson's deference to printed authorities has accorded well with modern ideas of scholarly citation, and his use of other herbal works has served to elevate his reputation in botanical histories that regularly charge Gerard with plagiarism. My reexamination of the case of Gerard's *Herball* begins not with Johnson's accusations but with the perspective of John Norton, the publisher who first commissioned Gerard to produce the text that became Gerard's *Herball*. By centering the stationers who stood to make or lose money through the *Herball*'s three publications of 1597, 1633, and 1636, the chapter redeems Gerard's reputation and reframes the debate over his herbal.

This book thus employs a methodological strategy that recognizes the materiality of the books under examination and considers the circumstances that led to their production. Hence this project is a work of book history inasmuch as that discipline is modified by the word "book." Yet I recognize that there is a need for limitations in the scope of this study. The present work does not provide an exhaustive analysis of botanical texts printed in sixteenth-century England, nor is it an examination of the medical and botanical importance of herbal works, both of which have already been provided elsewhere.⁶⁵ The three parts of this book illuminate how herbals were variously understood by the diverse agents who produced and used them, from authors, publishers, printers, booksellers, and

⁶⁵ See Henrey, *British Botanical*, and Arber, *Herbals*.

stationers to readers, annotators, players, editors, and compilers – all characters with a vested interest in the chapters that follow. By highlighting the shifting contingencies and regulations that characterized English printing in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, *Early Modern Herbals and the Book Trade* is more than a history of a publishing trend. It is a history of artisan investors as they navigated the uncharted waters of economic speculation in printed books.