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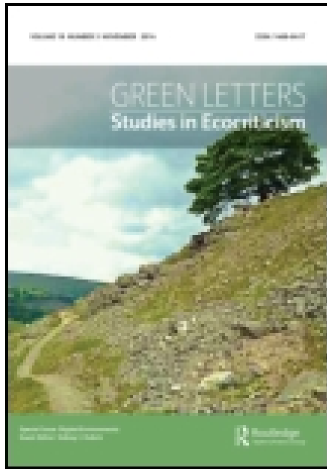

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Reading Shakespeare with the grain: sustainability and the hunger business

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Reading Shakespeare with the grain: sustainability and the hunger business

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Although scholars have begun to re-read Shakespeare's poems and plays in the light of ecocritical theory and methods, the role of food supply in his works, life and career continues to be overlooked. In our essay, we employ the idea of sustainability to conceptualise Shakespeare's literary career as a continuation of his business practices. We consider both his involvement in the public stage through his investment in a joint stock playing company and his management of natural resources – especially food and food-producing land – as commodities. The value of sustainability as a literary critical methodology is exemplified by a close reading of *King Lear*, using the early modern principle of *œconomia* as an analogue for the modern notion of sustainability. *Œconomia*, we argue, enables us to recover *King Lear*'s sophisticated portrayal of the politics of food supply and competing models of sustainable development in the household and state.

Keywords: Shakespeare; sustainability; food security; grain; *King Lear*; *œconomia*

The intricacy of biological and physical systems means that any effective approach to sustainability must be attuned to daunting levels of complexity. Such is the unpredictability of these systems that some commentators warn us to treat 'any new plan' that involves claims of sustainability as immediately 'suspect' (Ludwig, Hilborn, and Walters 1993, 17), whilst others alert us to an 'inherent unknowability and unpredictability to sustainable development' (Holling 1993, 554). For John P. O'Grady, former Professor of Literature and Environmental Studies, the concept of sustainability may itself prove unsustainable (O'Grady 2003). Nevertheless, the definition of sustainable development presented in the UN's Brundtland Commission Report of 1987 – namely 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987, 8) – seems reassuringly straightforward; perhaps deceptively straightforward. Even before the interaction of complex biological systems is applied, the meaning of 'needs', whether of present or future generations, threatens to mystify.

There are other problems. The concept of sustainable development does little to tell us why we tend to behave as we do and what needs to change in ourselves if we are to work towards a sustainable future. Interrogating that 'why' is essential if sustainability is to be placed at the heart of public policy, for all the complex and unpredictable ecosystems we aim to manage, the human mind poses the greatest challenge. It is, as O'Grady insists, 'incumbent upon scientists and managers, when compiling taxonomies and generating data sets for environmental decision-making, to take into account the full expanse of the

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human mind, with all its curious flora and fauna' (O'Grady 2003, 2).[1] Perhaps in this respect, poets, dramatists and novelists – for whom the uncertain, ineffable and numinous are familiar ground – can make a purposeful intervention and offer a guiding or even transformative contribution to debates around sustainability.

How might the 'curious flora and fauna' of the human mind be deployed to help reimagine the relationship between literature and sustainability? How might we conceive of a relationship between literature and the environment that holds the genuine possibility of enabling the creative arts to help shape the contours of increasingly important aspects of public policy? Twenty years ago, mathematician and zoologist Donald Ludwig together with co-authors Ray Hilborn and Carl Walters made an intriguing suggestion. They asserted that it is more appropriate to 'think of resources as managing humans than the converse' (Ludwig, Hilborn, and Walters 1993, 18). Translated to literary studies, this concept asks us to attend to the ways in which authors have framed their careers in the context of the finite resources available to them and in the light of the need to establish a secure legacy – the latter being all the more crucial before the first copyright laws of 1662 enabled writers to imagine with any confidence the prospect of a literary posterity.[2] In short, it invites us to consider the hypothesis that a self-sustaining environment authors its own writers.

This essay applies the hypothesis to one historical example of a creative response to the drive for sustainable futures. The so-called 'Golden Age' of Renaissance English literature, the years *circa* 1575–1625, coincided with what is now known as the Little Ice Age, a time of rapid cooling following the medieval warm period.[3] Focusing on the 'General Crisis' of mid-seventeenth-century Europe, and combining climate science with historical analysis, Geoffrey Parker has shown that 'changes in prevailing weather patterns, especially longer winters and cooler and wetter summers … brought hunger, malnutrition, and disease; and as material conditions worsened, wars, rebellions, and revolutions' (Parker 2013). Further, as Wolfgang Behringer and Brian Fagan have argued, climate change is a profound driver of cultural response and innovation (Behringer 2011; Fagan 2000). During the period 1575–1625, England, Scotland, Wales and much of mainland Europe experienced climatic disturbances as least as disconcerting as those we are familiar with in the present. Sharp winters followed by wet summers resulted in a run of poor harvests. For most of the population, existence was precarious: people lived, quite literally, on the breadline.

Printers and publishers responded to these conditions, simultaneously exploiting the suffering of the famine-stricken and informing and prompting public reaction, including calls for government action. A new and particularly grim literary genre emerged in response to these conditions: the famine pamphlet. In lurid detail, these texts described the lengths to which the hungry were prepared to go in order to satisfy their most basic needs. According to a report published in London in 1590, the citizens of Saint Denis, Paris, resorted to eating bread made from peas, oats, acorns, sawdust and, eventually, the ground-up bones of the dead (*The Copie of a Letter* 1590, 18–20). Heightened vulnerability to and awareness of food insecurity had implications for national security. Government attempts to manage the crisis resulted in a series of royal proclamations designed to regulate food supply, with a particular focus on grain. These measures set strict rules for the production, price and distribution of arable crops within and without the nation's borders (including clampdowns on cheap and substandard foreign imports). Anger at the failure of these regulatory efforts, coupled with sheer desperation, led to riots erupting across many regions.[4] Not since the Peasants' Revolt of June 1381 (and not

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until the Corn Laws of 1815) was food such a critical – and potentially revolutionary – political issue.

For most people, it was a 'time of … Dearth' (Lavater 1596, sig. A1^{r}): for those with ready cash and, as we have seen, for those with close links to the printing trade, it was a time of opportunity. One Warwickshire man, son of a glover, moneylender and alderman, saw his chance. Documents held in the National Archives and in the records office of his birthplace show that over a 15-year period, this individual purchased food-producing land and stored grain, malt and barley for resale (most likely at inflated prices) to neighbours and local tradesmen (SBTRO 1602a). In February 1598, he was prosecuted for holding 80 bushels of malt or corn during a time of shortage (NA 1598). He pursued those who could not (or would not) pay him in full for these staples and used the profits to further his own moneylending activities. In July 1604, he sued an apothecary, Philip Rogers, for 35 shillings and 10 pence plus 10 pence damages, seeking to recover the unpaid balance on a sale of 20 bushels of malt and a small loan made in March of that year (SBTRO 1604). The profits he made were channelled into a programme of land purchases, comprising in 1602 not just buildings but 20 acres of pasture and 107 acres of land suitable for the cultivation of arable crops (SBTRO 1602b). With his sights fixed on securing a sustainable future for himself and his family, he also acquired tithes on local produce, including 'Corne grayne blade & haye', thereby allowing him to pocket profits resulting from the manual work of others (SBTRO 1605).[5]

Combining legal and illegal activities – and grain hoarding during a time of shortage was regarded with particular opprobrium – this Warwickshire man was able to retire in 1613, at the age of 49, as one of the largest property owners in his hometown, Stratford-upon-Avon. His two daughters, who inherited their father's leases, land and property, married well and lived in sizeable town houses nearby. This man was William Shakespeare.[6]

Revisiting Ludwig et al.'s formulation, Shakespeare allowed the availability (and the unpredictability of the availability) of natural resources to manage his life choices and to inform his creative decisions. He and his family profited as a consequence. The need to ensure a sustainable future for himself and his family informed his literary career: rather than pursue the precarious route of patronage poetry, Shakespeare settled on writing for the public stage; aware that playwrights worked to commission and had no claim to copyright over their plays once sold, he invested in the playing troupe for which he wrote, establishing a joint-stock company, and took a percentage of the profits from repeat performances of his own and others' plays.[7]

It might come as a surprise to suggest that Shakespeare considered his work as a manager of land and commodities to be at least as (if not more) important that his work for the public stage. Scholars remain complicit in silencing the former part of Shakespeare's life. Bart Van Es's (2013) brilliant and bold *Shakespeare in Company* shows the playwright to be a skilled and savvy businessman. But it makes no mention of Shakespeare's involvement in the lucrative and sustainable business of hunger. In perpetuating the myth of writers as selfless slaves to the muse rather than people who need to stay alive if they are to write, academics do the public a disservice. Despite the influence of materialist theory (whether of Marxist, old or new historicist stripe) in scholarly circles, the suggestion that a literary genius made careful, considered choices in order to preserve his family from hunger and that he might have reflected these concerns in his creative decisions and output, still has the power to shock and enrage. When, in Easter 2013, the UK's *Sunday Times* ran a front-page article about Shakespeare's grain hoarding and business activities, the story made international headlines, prompting heated responses from media commentators (Leake 2013). For some, it meant that

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Shakespeare was, to quote *The Sunday Times*'s headline, a 'Bad Bard' (Leake 2013, 22). Howard Jacobson, responding in *The Independent*, declared that it is 'piffle' to suggest that 'Shakespeare is made more understandable by our seeing his accounts' (Jacobson 2013). But for many audiences – and, notably, those largely outside the literary and academic establishment – this aspect of Shakespeare's life offered a timely and provocative window not simply onto the plays and poems, but on our own attempts to reconcile present with future needs and ethical with financial imperatives (Lee 2013; Morrison 2013; Worstall 2013).

It turns out that possible evidence for seeing Shakespeare as an operator in the hunger business has been there all along – and not only, as we will argue later in this essay, in his literary output. The Shakespeare funerary bust in Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, has perplexed generations of artists and scholars (Figure 1).[8] Derided by Thomas Gainsborough as a 'silly smiling thing' (Garrick 1831, vol. 1, 312) and by the critic and biographer J. Dover Wilson as bearing the likeness of 'a self-satisfied pork butcher' (Wilson 1932, 6), it may indeed seem better suited to the top of a barrel organ than a church chancel.[9] The bust now on view is not, though, the original. The earliest funerary monument to Shakespeare was installed before 1623 (the precise date is unknown), having been commissioned by Shakespeare's son-in-law, John Hall. It was carved by the German sculptor Gheerart Janssen – a fellow client of Shakespeare's patron, the Earl of Southampton. Made by and for those who knew Shakespeare well, the original monument, there is every reason to assume, depicted him faithfully. An engraving based on a sketch made in 1634 by William Dugdale, historian of Warwickshire, might afford some insight into the monument as it appeared to its first viewers (Figure 2).

Hollar's engraving seems to suggest that the original funerary bust remembers a businessman who clutches a sack of corn, simultaneously withholding it from and offering it for sale – but only when the time and price are right. Shakespeare scholars have dismissed the evidence afforded by Dugdale's sketch, in a very real sense concealing it from public view. As Garber (2008, 221) suggests, scholars are perhaps anxious that such an interpretation provides ammunition to those who deny that the man from Stratford-upon-Avon – a mere tradesman – could also have been the creative genius behind the poems and plays. It is reasonable to suppose that a similar prejudice was in the minds of the eighteenth-century renovators who replaced what appears to be in Hollar's rendering a sack of grain with the velvet cushion and quill we see today. Whatever the nature of the object held by Shakespeare's effigy when it was first installed – and it is extremely unlikely we will ever know for certain – this process of revisioning is suggestive of the way in which Shakespeare the grain hoarder has been redacted from history so that Shakespeare the creative genius could be born. With that act of silencing – an act of omission in which literary historians have been complicit – we lose evidence of the symbiotic relationship between the drive for sustainability and literary creativity. Like the wise Pharaoh in Genesis 41 who, following the advice of Joseph, stores surplus grain during the good years so that his people can eat during times of famine, Shakespeare could justify his grain hoarding as being in the public interest, since unlike the local authorities he had a ready store of food available for purchase when supplies ran low. This prudent response to an unpredictable supply of natural resources, the original funerary monument perhaps suggests, was something to be proud of and remembered for. Like Joseph the favoured son, however, Shakespeare was not averse to profiting from the hunger business.

London playhouses closed during the summer months, which meant that in the off-season periods Shakespeare had the coin, time and freedom to pursue the serious business of sustenance. As the competing versions of the funerary bust suggest, Shakespeare responded to this opportunity by writing plays and dealing in commodities, feeding the wants as well as the needs (there are those slippery terms again) of his fellow

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Figure 1. Photograph of William Shakespeare's funerary monument, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. Image reproduced by permission of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

countrymen. Far from pulling in opposite directions, the twin businesses of plays and food were interrelated and mutually supporting. Appropriating the means of production as well as the produce itself, Shakespeare acquired local control over the only thing no one could

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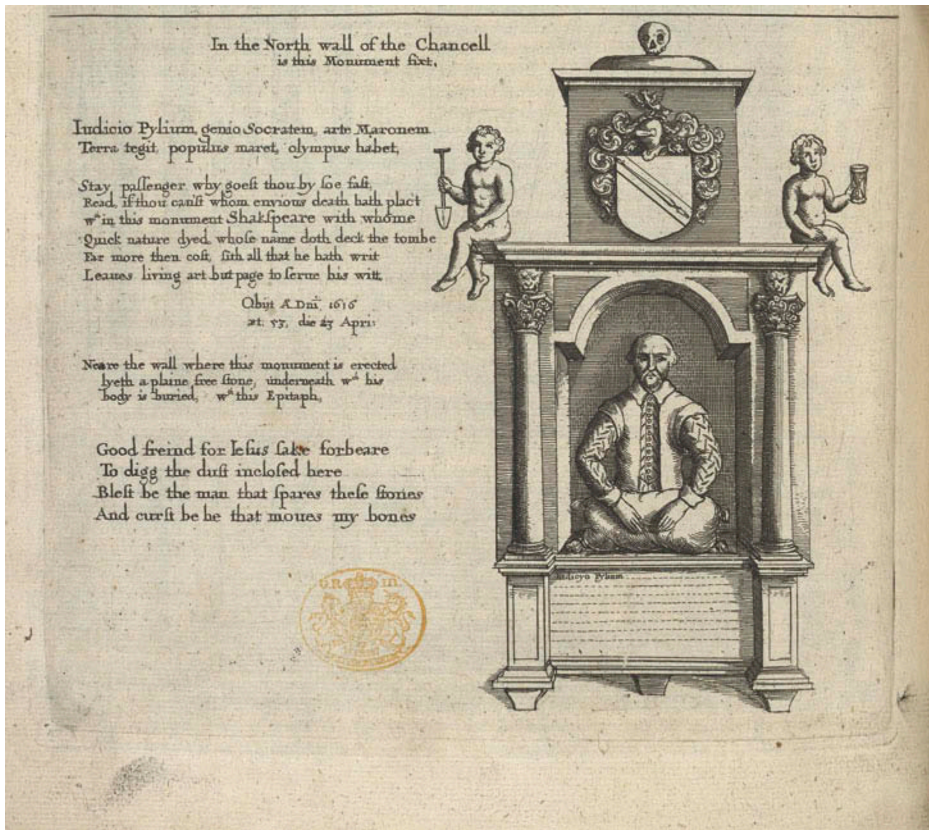

Figure 2. William Shakespeare's funerary monument, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire. Engraving by Wenzel [Wenceslaus] Hollar, from a sketch made in 1634 by William Dugdale and first published in Dugdale (1656, 520). © The British Library Board, General Reference Collection 191.d.12.

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do without: food. With his profits, minus a few fines for illegal hoarding and tax evasion, he bought up land in around the place of his birth, finally returning there on a permanent basis some time before 1616 as one of the most powerful property owners in the region, a purveyor of bread, beer and plays.

Dividing his time between the arable fields and pastures of Warwickshire and the barren, overpopulated London sprawl, Shakespeare used his writing not only to fund his investments in the hunger business, but also to represent and reimagine the battle for sustainability that was at the heart of late Tudor and early Stuart politics. Scholars including Joan Fitzpatrick and Robert Appelbaum have drawn attention to the importance of food and food-related imagery in Shakespeare's plays (Fitzpatrick 2007, 2010; Appelbaum 2006). The politics of sustenance – sustaining the bodies politic as well as natural – are written into the fabric, into the very grain, as it were, of Shakespeare's characters, language and plots.[10] It is desperation for cheap grain that results in the nadir of English fortunes, the lifting of the siege of Rouen, in *Henry VI Part 1*, where French forces led by Joan of Arc hide within sacks of adulterated corn. Treason, whether it takes the form of a 'lean and hungry' (1.2.194) Cassius in *Julius Caesar* or the plebeian 'cockle' that threatens to spoil the patrician 'corn' (3.1.70) of *Coriolanus*' Rome, is

figured as a crisis of sustenance.[11] Falstaff, a man who, unlike Cassius, can hardly be accused of thinking 'too much' (*Julius Caesar*, 1.2.195), is equally threatening to the stability of the state – and precisely because he is unable to moderate his appetite. The France of *Henry V* is, in the Duke of Burgundy's estimation, defeated as much by her own inadequate agricultural methods as by the English army at Agincourt: her 'husbandry doth lie on heaps', the French nobleman laments, 'Corrupting in its own fertility' (5.2.39–40). The same is true of the world of *King Lear*, in which a monarch's political errors – errors symbolised by his crown of 'idle weeds', which he plucks from unharvested fields of 'sustaining corn' (4.4.6) – result in an all-consuming 'dearth' (1.2.6).[12]

This politico-environmental discourse, requiring sophisticated knowledge of arable plants and farming techniques, would have been immediately recognisable to Shakespeare's first audiences, many of whom, like the man from Stratford-upon-Avon himself, had come to London from farming families and regions.[13] For them, the contemporary crisis of sustainable food supply, encompassing ownership of land, food purity and supply routes, as well as regulation of measures and prices, was one of the most pressing political issues of the day. Although the word 'sustainability' was unknown to Shakespeare, coiner of so many words, 'sustenance' and the concept we now understand as 'sustainability' – namely, 'human activity … in which environmental degradation is minimised' – were certainly not.[14] It is strikingly similar to the early modern principle of husbandry called *œconomia*, in which a husbandman's (or landowner's) primary responsibility was to ensure the long-term sustainability of his property, encompassing his family, dependents, goods, land and natural resources. Thomas Kyd, who wrote for the public stage and whose works seem to contain lines written by Shakespeare himself, translated one of the foundational texts of Renaissance *œconomia*: Torquato Tasso's *The Householders Philosophie* (1588). According to Tasso, the aim of *œconomia*, within both the household and the state, was to achieve a balance between conservation and increase. The former could be achieved by processes such as washing, repairing, preserving and storing, whereas the latter involved activities such as agriculture, business, trade and education. These contrasting but complementary forces were gendered: 'The care of wealth or substance', Tasso explains, 'is imployd to Conservation and Encrease, and is devided betwixt the Master and Mistresse, because the encrease is as proper to the Maister, as the keeping to the Mistresse' (Tasso 1588, fol. 18^{r}). Maintaining equilibrium between these masculine and feminine forces was essential if households (and, by analogy, the state) were to exist as self-enclosed, self-sufficient – and hence stable, secure and sustainable – units.

Scaled upwards, from home to state, this principle can be seen to inform Shakespeare's *King Lear* (1605). As we have argued elsewhere, by insisting on the ecocritical dimension that is so often written out of literary-historical analysis, *King Lear* can be seen as a complex and nuanced response to the politics of food supply, encompassing land ownership, the management of natural resources and the relationship between the monarch and his or her land (Archer, Marggraf Turley, and Thomas 2012; Archer, Marggraf Turley, and Thomas 2014, 80–105). Taking inspiration from the relationship between arable crops and their weeds that was so crucial to the agrarian economy, Shakespeare articulates these themes through recurring tropes of mimicry and subversion. Viewing the tragedy through a sustainability lens helps us to take this ecocritical reading of the play – and readings of early modern literature more generally – in new directions. We can perceive its examination of the ethics and limitations of sustainability as *œconomia*, and, in particular, the way in which it sets an ancient model of sustainability in tension with the proto-capitalist economy as represented by the predatory and appetitive but ultimately sterile characters of Goneril, Regan and Edmund.

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Of the 21 allusions to 'sustenance' and its variants in Shakespeare's plays, 5 appear in *King Lear*, and it is this mature work that realises most fully the fraught intertwining of limited resources and unpredictable and ungovernable natural systems, as well as the role of the 'curious flora and fauna' of the human mind when attempting to manage those systems (Spevack 1973, vol. 6, 3075–3076).[15] The play reveals this fascinating, most urgent dynamic in its very first scene, as an enraged Lear declares that he will divide his retirement between the courts of his two eldest daughters, Goneril and Regan:

> … Ourself, by monthly course,
> With reservation of an hundred knights,
> By you to be sustained, shall our abode
> Make with you by due turn: (1.1.126–9)

Goneril and Regan refuse to follow their father's script. Having accepted his initial bequests of land, they do not agree to 'sustain him and his hundred knights' (1.4.282). This is not simply 'sustain' as 'endurance'. This is 'sustain' as resource management and as such it conforms to the modern concept of sustainability. In the first act of *King Lear*, the ability of 'future generations' to meet their own needs, including the long-term security of the 'bastard' Edmund, is precisely what is at stake, and this ability is being compromised by the actions of the present ruler. Goneril and Regan, who have their own courts to run, cannot accommodate, feed and maintain Lear – who expects the trappings of kingship without the inconvenient responsibilities – and his sizeable retinue (implied in his use of the kingly 'Ourself') for 6 months out of every 12 months.

When one's father is (or, rather, was) king, the domestic politics of sustainability are indistinguishable from the national and international politics of devolution and the division of the kingdoms.[16] The 'bounty' awarded to Goneril and Regan as payment for their declarations of love at the beginning of the play is portions of land that are not self-sustaining. Goneril, receiving Scotland and the North, and Regan, taking Wales and the West Country, are assigned, in Lear's own estimation, very similar lands. The former sister receives 'shadowy forests … and wide-skirted meads' (1.1.55–6), whereas the latter is awarded land 'No less in space, validity, and pleasure' (1.1.73). 'No less', but, decisively, no more. Forests and pasture do not produce corn. A map of Britain, one of the few props specified in Shakespeare's play texts, is on stage from the beginning of Act 1 Scene 1. An unspeaking but dominant presence, the map reminds us that this is no imaginary or distant land: it is our Britain, here and now. The map tells us what Lear cannot (Cordelia's repeated 'Nothing' silences him on the matter): the former king had reserved for his youngest daughter the corn-rich lands of central and southern England.

Shakespeare's first audiences would have recognised this filial spat as a resource war and a struggle for the long-term sustainability that alone ensures national security. In the estimation of the Tudor historian William Harrison, England was believed to be more 'fruitfull' than Wales and both more 'bountifull' than Scotland (Harrison 1577, vol. 1, 37). Scotland/the North and Wales/the West – the portions given to Goneril and Regan, respectively – were thought to be unable to produce sufficient food to feed their populations (Anglesey, Wales's breadbasket, was vulnerable to siege by sea). A full consideration of the accuracy of Harrison's assessment is beyond the scope of this essay. Nevertheless, the implications of this perception for Shakespeare's urban audience are clear: receiving land that cannot sustain their subjects, Goneril and Regan must go to war. When Lear's elder daughters are compared to serpents, wolves, ravenous carnivores and predators – as they are throughout the play – it is for a very good reason: neither one owns lands that can produce the arable crops necessary to

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safeguard the long-term survival of their subjects. They must predate the resources of adjoining land – land reserved for Cordelia.

Sustainability forms a deep structure in *King Lear*. It works – imaginatively and emotionally as well as intellectually and strategically – because the family drama is so tightly folded into the politico-environmental crisis. It asks to be read in the light of its author's career as a grain hoarder, dealer in commodities and owner of food-producing land. In short, we need to read Shakespeare with the grain. After all, the phrase 'against the grain', perhaps most familiar to us now because of its appropriation on behalf of deconstruction, was coined by Shakespeare himself. Notably, it appears in *Coriolanus.* Written at about the same time as *King Lear* and amid the Midlands food riots of 1607 and 1608, when Shakespeare's own property was under threat, *Coriolanus* shows foreign invasion to be the fate of a city divided over how best to respond to 'dearth' and whether or not to hoard grain.[17]

To revise Ludwig et al.'s formulation in the light of these insights, resources manage humans and humans manage resources: the relationship is reciprocal. Mediating that relationship is literary creativity, through which the environment authors its writers and those writers author their environment. What, then, do we imagine when Shakespeare's name is mentioned today? Perhaps, as in the present-day funerary effigy, we see a middle-aged man resting his manuscripts on a tasselled velvet cushion; a man whose genius transcends time and place. But perhaps we now also see something more challenging, and ultimately more revealing: a playwright who lived during a crisis of sustenance, who wrote about that crisis, shaped the ways in which it was perceived, contributed to public debates about its management and amelioration and who took smart measures to protect himself and his family from its worst depredations. If the latter, then Shakespeare is a soul for our age, and his life and works can teach us invaluable lessons about our own precarious relationship with food.

In recent years, literary scholars have expanded the horizons of ecocriticism to the periods before the European Romantics and American Transcendentalists (Armbruster and Wallace 2001; Bruckner and Brayton 2011; Egan 2006; Rudd 2008; Stanbury 2004). The editors of the recent anthology *Ecocritical Shakespeare* ask whether 'reading, writing about, and teaching Shakespeare [can] contribute to the health of the planet' (Bruckner and Brayton 2011, 2). We should be sceptical of any such claims. Kate Soper, writing about Romanticism, offers a middle way. Warning against 'simplistic interpretations of the nature philosophy attributed to Romanticism by some environmentalists', she maintains that there are some aspects of this philosophy that could be 'harnessed to the development of a new politics of consumption' (Soper 2011, 17). So also, we suggest, 'reading, writing about, and teaching Shakespeare', as acts that encompass the stories Shakespeare told as well as the stories told about Shakespeare, can certainly help us to think critically and creatively about 'the health of the planet'. Shakespeare's works, read in the light of the grain of his life and times, remember what we in the well-fed West have largely forgotten, namely the insistent and urgent coupling of food and literature, sustenance and consumption. These texts memorialise the strange alchemy by which literary manuscripts are translated into performance, playhouse takings are transmuted into natural resources, and commodities are converted into land and property. If we recoil from this equation, then it is because we, unlike the young Shakespeare and his contemporaries, believe we know where our next meal, our warmth, light and our night's sleep are coming from. Creativity is inspired by hungry bellies just as much as by the satisfied paunch of Falstaff, and the periodic crises of sustenance that have shaped the tumultuous history of these

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islands have been fuel for poets and playwrights as much as for politicians. As audiences, readers and writers, we are at the heart of that process.

Notes

1. On this point, see also Ludwig, Hilborn and Walters, who assert that 'human motivation and responses' should be included 'as part of the system to be studied and managed' (1993, 18).
2. The development of copyright legislation can be followed in Rose (2010). The concept of an author's ownership of his or her literary works in late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Britain is discussed by Evans (1989).
3. The term 'Little Ice Age' was first used by Matthes (1939).
4. The British agrarian crisis of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries can be followed in Carroll (1996), McRae (2002, 51–90), Outhwaite (1991) and Walter (1991).
5. The tithe, purchased for £440, yielded £60 per annum. SBTRO (1614a) has Shakespeare seeking legal protection on behalf of himself and his heirs 'for all such losse detriment & hinderance' with respect to the annual value of his tithes, 'by reason of anie Inclosure or decaye of Tyllage'. A diary entry by Thomas Greene, dated 17 November 1614, details the problems experienced by 'Cosen Shakspeare' in Warwickshire as a result of enclosures (SBTRO 1614b).
6. Shakespeare's grain hoarding and related business activities are mentioned by Duncan-Jones (2001, 121–122), Greenblatt (2004, 362–364), Greer (2008, 228–229), Honigmann (1988) and Schoenbaum (1975).
7. Shakespeare's decision to forsake patronage poetry and the formation of the Lord Chamberlain's (later King's) Men as a joint-stock playing company is discussed by Shapiro (2005, 8, 40). Van Es (2013) argues that the latter development was crucial in the development of Shakespeare's dramaturgy.
8. On Shakespeare's funerary monument, see Price (1997) and Martineau (2003, 201–215). See also the letters by Jonathan Bate, Peter Beal, Brian Vickers and Stanley Wells written in response to Katherine Duncan-Jones's review of the 'Searching for Shakespeare' exhibition (National Portrait Gallery, London, 17 March 2006), published in the *Times Literary Supplement* (Bate et al. 2006). The present essay is the first academic study to suggest that the sack in Shakespeare's hands might be identified as a sack of corn and to relate this to Shakespeare's grain dealing and investments in food-producing land in and around Stratford-upon-Avon.
9. Gainsborough made this comment in a letter to David Garrick, 22 August 1768.
10. Studies of the portrayal of hunger and food insecurity in individual Shakespeare plays include Angel-Perez and Poulain (2008), Archer, Marggraf Turley, and Thomas (2012), Eastman (2007), Gurr (1975) and Marggraf Turley, Archer, and Thomas (2010).
11. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Shakespeare's plays are taken from Shakespeare (2007).
12. On the significance of 'idle weeds' in *King Lear*, see Marggraf Turley, Archer, and Thomas (2010) and Archer, Marggraf Turley, and Thomas (2012).
13. William's paternal grandfather, Richard Shakespeare, was a farmer; his mother, Mary Arden, was the daughter of a yeoman farmer; and Anne Hathaway's father, Richard, was also a yeoman farmer. Spier and Anderson (1985) examine Shakespeare's knowledge of agriculture.
14. The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) cites the earliest usage of 'sustainability' as dating from 1835. See also 'sustainable, *adj.*', 3. b. (OED, accessed 14 November 2013).
15. In addition to the examples of usage mentioned in the following discussion, see also *King Lear*, 3.3.6 and 5.3.321 (Shakespeare 2007).
16. *King Lear* and other plays by Shakespeare have been used by a number of critics to compare King James's union project with the contemporary politics of devolution (Maley and Murphy 2004; Maley and Schwyzer 2010; Maley and Tudeau-Clayton 2010).
17. Sicinius, a tribune, challenges the citizens' decision to elect Coriolanus as consul: 'your minds,/ Preoccupied with what you rather must do/ Than what you should, made you against the grain/ To voice him consul' (Shakespeare 2007, *Coriolanus* 2.3.231–4). On *Coriolanus* in the light of the Midlands food riots and Shakespeare's dealings in commodities and food-producing land, see Parker (1994, 33–43).

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