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# *'Queen Lilies'? The Interpenetration of Scientific, Religious and Gender Discourses in Victorian Representations of Plants*

Caroline Jackson-Houlston

Can activities endorsed by Mary Wollstonecraft have been all bad for nineteenth-century women? The practices I have in mind are the verbal and visual study and representation of flowers, as both scientific and leisure pursuits. These activities were of great cultural importance to women in the Victorian period. Wollstonecraft herself took lessons in flower drawing from James Sowerby,<sup>1</sup> whose *English Botany* was a standard in both illustration and botany for many decades after its initial publication from 1790-1814. Although she disapproved of the way women were constantly figured as flowers, Wollstonecraft approved of botany as a subject of study for girls.<sup>2</sup>

To establish the continuity of the ideas involved, the first half of this article outlines modes of thinking that Victorian women inherited from Linnean botany, and from Romantic responses to it, across a broad range of social practices: in systematics, field study, flower painting and illustration, and popular botanical writing. An understanding of these is necessary for an appreciation of the complexities and ambivalences that allowed women to negotiate between discourses competing for hegemonic dominance. Prominent among these, especially in the first half of the nineteenth century, are the sexualisation of plants by Linnaeus and his followers, and Paleyan natural theology.<sup>3</sup> This survey draws on the substantial groundwork established from the later 1990s by Ann B. Shteir, Barbara T. Gates and others, which developed illuminating studies of individual women writers of the Romantic and Victorian periods. Gates and Shteir argued that 'in feminism, the extent to which scientific popularisation added both to the diversity of scientific writing and to the diversity of women's writing has been largely overlooked'.<sup>4</sup> More recently, our sense of this diversity has been amplified by demonstrations of the complex polyphony of discourses in popular magazines for a variety of audiences.<sup>5</sup> This polyphony constituted a textual dialogue between a number of writers and readers

within the material product of one or more issues. However, some aspects of the discursive practices of specific Victorian women within individual works remain relatively unexplored.<sup>6</sup>

In the second part of the paper I focus on strategies for reinforcing the authority of these women as writers, with particular focus on repeated references to the religious argument from design and to intergeneric intertexts from the Bible and poetry. I cannot offer the spectacular simplicities of either a plot to construct, or of a monolithic movement to resist, the well-known parameters of Victorian gender expectations. The argument does, though, rest on the assumption that, however meticulous and tactful we need to be in tracing out the differing influences of confounding variables such as class and niche audience, it is unnecessary and unhelpful to insist on a wholesale dismantling of 'the category of woman'.<sup>7</sup> My argument demonstrates some of the intricacies of real women's accommodation to, and partial satisfactions within, a gender ideology that, in Antonio Gramsci's terms, had a psychological and social validity for the Victorians.<sup>8</sup> Its legacy has by no means disappeared.

Victorian women botanists were still affected by the fallout from Linnaeus's creation of a binomial classification system for plants in his *Species Plantarum* of 1753.<sup>9</sup> This revolutionised botany, yet it had turned the singular barrier of Latin language into a double one for female students; not only the difficulty of access to a classical education, but also a problem of sexual decorum. For Linnaeus's system was based on the claim (originally made in his *Praeludia Sponsaliorum Plantarum* in 1729) that the reproductive parts of plants paralleled the sex organs of animals. Botany became 'the most explicit discourse, in the public domain, on sexuality during the mid eighteenth century'.<sup>10</sup>

Although one could argue that Paley's *Natural Theology* has implicitly masculinist assumptions, it neither follows nor addresses the spectacular gendering of eighteenth-century botanical nomenclature. In his chapter on plants, Paley's main emphasis is on the seed and its protection. Though he uses images of impregnation, and quotes, and shares with Erasmus Darwin a vocabulary of fertilisation (pollen is 'fecundating farina'), Paley places little emphasis on sexual processes. He holds the evidence of a 'designed and studied mechanism' to be weaker in plants than in animals, but that plants manifest more strongly a principle of beauty in the world, a beauty designed more for our benefit than theirs.<sup>11</sup> Nineteenth-century women contested the first of Paley's judgements, though implicitly and without naming him, and expanded on his second with enthusiasm. However, this entailed an avoidance of the implications of Linnean sexual classification (and

Linnaeus often was directly named), since this could be read as implying that promiscuity was designed into the world. If this were true only of plants, it would not matter, but if plants were emblematic of women, as traditionally assumed,<sup>12</sup> social anarchy was the consequence.

Controversial in itself, the Linnean debate gained a lurid vernacular currency through Erasmus Darwin's 1789 poem *The Loves of the Plants*. Though some of his female characters are shy and retiring, many are conspicuously, aggressively and promiscuously sexual.<sup>13</sup> The Glory Lily is promiscuously focused on younger 'swains':

When the young Hours amid her tangled hair  
Wove the fresh rose-bud and the lily fair,  
Proud Gloriosa led *three* chosen swains,  
The blushing captives of her virgin chains.  
– When Time's rude hand a bark of wrinkle spread  
Round her weak limbs, and silver'd o'er her head,  
*Three* other youths her riper years engage,  
The flatter'd victims of her wily age.<sup>14</sup>

Although she had no objection to the Linnaean sexual system, Anna Seward had refused Darwin's proposal that she write the verses to his notes, on the grounds that 'the plan was not strictly proper for a female pen'.<sup>15</sup> Most notoriously, Richard Polwhele attacked the poem's influence in the reactionary times of 1798 in his poem *The Unsex'd Females*. Girls studying botany, especially in a co-educational context, were liable to corruption:

For puberty in sighing florets pant,  
Or point the prostitution of a plant;  
Dissect its organ of unhallow'd lust,  
And fondly gaze the titillating dust.<sup>16</sup>

As Ann Shteir points out in her exemplary study *Cultivating Women: Cultivating Science*, it behoved botanical writers of both sexes to denounce any applications of Linnaeus's sexual system to human gender relations. Priscilla Wakefield, in *An Introduction to Botany* (1796) used a bowdlerized terminology developed by William Withering and this became common practice.<sup>17</sup> Increasingly, *what* is dangerous about the sexual system becomes unspecified through the substitution of more general terminology. Thus, the 1823 version of Sarah Hoare's poem *The Pleasures of Botanical Pursuits* praises Linnaeus and says 'we scan thy sexual system clear', but the 1831 edition of the poem reads 'I scann'd thy *curious* [my italics] system clear'.<sup>18</sup>

From about 1820, the natural system of classification developed by Jussieu and de Candolle had been taking scientific precedence over the

sexual. It was more complicated but made greater sense in that it explicitly linked together plant species that were manifestly related. However, many Victorian popular botany writers, increasingly ghettoised into specifically non-adult and non-professional markets, continued to use the now-bowdlerized artificial Linnaean system because it was simpler.<sup>19</sup> The struggle was epitomized in figures like Jane Loudon in the 1840s, who believed 'the Linnaean system was unfit for females'<sup>20</sup> but continued to describe it alongside the modern natural system.<sup>21</sup>

This intellectual hangover leads us to the question of the continuity of ideas across and beyond the Victorian era. Ann Shteir demonstrates the changing relations between women and botanical study across the Romantic and Victorian periods with immense authority and clarity, establishing notable intellectual changes around the 1830s, where traditional periodisation locates one of its significant boundaries.<sup>22</sup> Yet, to use Raymond Williams's model, the dethronement of ideas from hegemonic dominance to residual influence was a complex and gradual process.<sup>23</sup> Even the cheaper books of the mid-nineteenth century were still potent repositories of authority. Thus, Priscilla Wakefield's *Introduction to Botany* was in its eleventh edition by 1841, and the authors of introductory books continued to refer readers to authoritative texts of a couple of generations earlier, as well as to modern ones.<sup>24</sup> New knowledge and forms of thought took time to percolate. This writer's own experience as a consumer of books includes using a later edition of R.A. Johns's 1851 *Flowers of the Field* as a holiday flora in the 1950s; being exposed as a child to Mrs Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (first series, 1855) in the form of my mother's 1920s schoolbook edition; and to a copy of *The Young Lady's Book*, already in its fourth edition by 1838, as a result of family gifts passing through five generations. Thus, the emergent changes in ideas charted by Ann Shteir may have taken a very long time to achieve actual dominance.<sup>25</sup>

The notion that botany was *par excellence* the science for women was for the Victorians one solid inheritance from the Romantic period. Among natural history books published between 1801 and 1900, women wrote more of the books on plants (8%) than on other forms of natural history (for example, they only wrote 2% of those on birds.)<sup>26</sup> *The Young Lady's Book* also recommends mineralogy, conchology, ornithology and entomology. These are all tamed to some extent (the chapter on ornithology is entitled 'The Aviary') but botany ('The Florist') is presented thus:

as elegant and interesting an amusement as any pursuit whatever to which a young lady can devote her leisure ... she feels all that delight in [flowers] which seems so naturally to belong to her age and sex ... there

is something peculiarly adapted to feminine tenderness in the care of flowers.<sup>27</sup>

Ladies' botany confined women to the home and garden, both physically and mentally. Perhaps the most obsessively masculinist definition of the naturalist is that of Charles Kingsley in *Glaucus*. He needed qualifications 'as many and as lofty' as those for 'the perfect knight-errant of the middle ages'. He

should be strong in body; able to haul a dredge, climb a rock, turn a boulder, walk all day, uncertain where he shall eat or rest; ready to face sun and rain, wind and frost, and to eat or drink thankfully anything, however coarse or meagre; he should know how to swim for his life, to pull an oar, sail a boat, and ride the first horse that comes to hand; and, finally, he should be a thoroughly good shot, and a skilful fisherman; and if he go far abroad, be able upon occasion to fight for his life.<sup>28</sup>

As Lynn Barber caustically remarks, 'obviously Kingsley's perfect naturalist could not be a woman'.<sup>29</sup> Botany was the easiest branch of natural history to study at home. Moreover, such study did not offend against the instincts of the home-maker. According to Mrs E.E. Perkins in *The Elements of Botany*:

it requires no investigations which, by compelling that disregard to the sufferings of animals necessary in studying other branches of natural history, cannot but distress a feeling mind; for this reason it is especially a *feminine* pursuit and one suited to 'the mother of a family'.<sup>30</sup>

At times feminine sensibility became so strained as to preclude the operations of scientific precision. Charlotte Elizabeth [Tonna] opens her *Chapters on Flowers* by saying

Botany is doubtless a very delightful study; but ... my love of flowers ... is such, that no thirst after scientific knowledge could ever prevail with me to tear the beautiful objects in pieces.<sup>31</sup>

Indeed, it was precisely because of attitudes like these that botany rapidly succumbed to the process of reclassification and dismissal by what Joanna Russ calls 'the double standard of content' and 'false categorizing'.<sup>32</sup> If women could do botany, then it wasn't a science, and people who did it weren't men.<sup>33</sup> (The same was true of flower painting.) John Lindley in 1828 regretted the undervaluing of botany as 'an amusement for ladies rather than an occupation for the serious thoughts of man'.<sup>34</sup> Yet Lindley helped to enforce this split by writing both mainstream botanical textbooks and a *Ladies Botany* (1834-37). The latter was a clear and authoritative book that undoubtedly helped scientifically untrained women approach the topic. However, while

Lindley implicitly recognizes the deficiencies of education for women he also perpetuates them by equating the capacities of women with those of children.<sup>35</sup>

One very practical restriction on women's capabilities was Victorian clothing. Even though the crinoline did at least rid women of the weight of multitudinous petticoats, it hardly improved access to the flora of cliff or wetland. Female writers produce a chorus of pleas for more rational clothing but this apparent radicalism is firmly contained within the draconian regulation of Victorian dress. Margaret Gatty remarks with some irritation that

if anything could excuse a woman for imitating the costume of a man, it would be what she suffers as a sea-weed collector from those necessary draperies! But to make the best of a bad job, let woollen be in the ascendant as much as possible; and let the petticoats never come below the ankle.<sup>36</sup>

Women policed this system too. The botanical writers Agnes and Marie Catlow note with implicit criticism the dilapidation of a more zealous botanist with 'her hat awry, her cloak on her arm, and her dress torn to rags; the whole of the bottom hem was hanging about her ankles, and one breadth was almost gone'.<sup>37</sup> Victorian (and, indeed, modern) accounts of natural historians figure their investigations as quests or hunts with male heroes;<sup>38</sup> Victorian female dress conventions were inimical to such models.

Short skirts and stout footwear had the same ideological disadvantage as hard work; they declassified the wearer.<sup>39</sup> The insistent use of the term 'ladies' in Victorian books on flowers and flower painting is no accident of politeness. Even gardening had to be moderated, and required 'the assistance of a common labourer'.<sup>40</sup> The prolific Jane Loudon advises her female correspondent to go beyond the house and garden, but not [*pace* Kingsley] 'like a female knight-errant in quest of adventures; but ... in company with your maid ... you may wander through the woods of your own park without incurring any very serious dangers'.<sup>41</sup> The maid should carry the sketching pad, and a camp-stool, for 'nothing can be more injurious to a person of delicate constitution than over-fatigue'.<sup>42</sup> The delicate constitution is, of course, an index of class status, not a description of Annie's actual state of health. Abroad, Marianne North, daughter of a prominent MP, was practical and intrepid but it was definitely easier to be intrepid if you had fifty men to clear the road ahead of you, as was her experience.<sup>43</sup>

In *The Language of Gender and Class* Patricia Ingham argues that "'femininity" had as corollary social class' and that 'the language of

gender' was used 'to contain the class issue in the first half of the nineteenth century'.<sup>44</sup> But if the definitions of femininity and class were self-confirming and mutually defining we can also see the terminology of social class being used to contain issues of gender. Priscilla Wakefield had argued in 1817 that the distinctions of society would be endangered 'by arousing a passion for science in the bosoms of individuals' of too low a condition to gratify it.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, although women of the higher classes might need to employ their artistic talents to gain a living, the daughters of tradesmen should be 'prohibited from learning the ornamental arts' lest 'a dangerous taste for elegance' should lead to 'the abyss of prostitution'.<sup>46</sup> The working class are expected to service the interests of their betters: Sarah Hoare comments of widows who trade in shells that 'it is surprising, ignorant as they generally are, how soon they acquire a knowledge of their generic and specific names'.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, economic survival sharpened the faculties to a degree not seen in the socially superior girls nervous of scientific nomenclature.

Women of the higher classes entered the public market place not as scientists or as collectors, but as writers or illustrators, and frequently as both together. In this role many managed to earn a living by shrewdly exploiting diversification between audiences. In the 1840s Jane Loudon published four illustrated books on garden flowers, as well as five other related titles, for a range of different publishers.<sup>48</sup> Also with a variety of publishers, Anne Pratt was responsible for, among others, *Flowers and their Associations* (1840), *Wild Flowers* (1852-3), *Haunts of the Wild Flowers* (1863) and the five-volume *Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain* (1850-57).

Flower drawing by women was, however, subject to restrictions caused by professionalisation. Two of the founder members of the Royal Academy had been women, and one of them, Mary Moser, had been a flower painter; women could exhibit at the Royal Academy.<sup>49</sup> Nevertheless, women were not admitted to membership of the Academy or of other prestigious art organisations, or granted entry to life classes, until towards the end of, or even after, the Victorian period.<sup>50</sup> The highest recognition was not open to them; instead, Frances Borzello contends that as early as 1800 there was 'a layer of women artists working away at a lower level than the stars whose names have survived', making 'a living engraving, copying and teaching'.<sup>51</sup> By the 1830s Schools of Design offered opportunities for working class women, and later 'women set up, managed and taught in many of the private art schools which flourished in the 1880s and 1890s'.<sup>52</sup> An example of a workaday flower-artist from this period would be Mrs E.E. Perkins, author of *The Elements of Botany* (3rd edn, 1837), who described herself as a 'Professor of flower

drawing', and also illustrated James Fennell's *Drawing-Room Botany*. On the highest available plane would be Augusta Withers, Flower Painter in Ordinary to Queen Adelaide (fl. 1827-64) and Helen Angell, who in 1879 was appointed Flower Painter in Ordinary to Queen Victoria.<sup>53</sup>

All those named received money and some form of public recognition. However, the contribution of many other women to the production of books dealing with flowers was often both unpaid and relegated to handmaid status. Women were seldom trained as lithographers, but were very often hand-colourists.<sup>54</sup> Though illustration was one of the very few forms of natural history work in which comparatively large numbers of Victorian women were widely practised at a very high level<sup>55</sup> it was – and still is – consistently undervalued. It is often extremely difficult to work out who *did* illustrate a work, for illustrators (of either sex) were frequently unacknowledged. John Lindley, a prime player in the relegation of women botanist to the status of amateurs, had his own books illustrated partly by his daughters.<sup>56</sup> The complex responsibilities for art work that was engraved or lithographed, and possibly hand-coloured, allow for the easy exercise of what Russ calls 'denial of agency'.<sup>57</sup> This is spectacularly apparent in Blunt and Stearn, who argue of women artists (but not of men) that they were talented amateurs and/or that 'one cannot help feeling that a considerable share of their success must have been due to the skill of the engraver' or lithographer.<sup>58</sup>

Apart from 'denial of agency', 'false categorising' is a major barrier to the appreciation of women's drawing. In the classical hierarchy of art genres, flower painting came right at the bottom, along with still life.<sup>59</sup> Illustration, as a craft serving a different master, science, counts still lower. In 1860 Léon Legrange argued in the *Gazette des Beaux Arts* that

male genius has nothing to fear from female taste. Let men of genius conceive of great architectural projects, monumental sculpture, and elevated forms of painting ... all that has to do with great art. Let women occupy themselves with those types of art they have always preferred, such as pastels, portraits or miniatures. Or the painting of flowers ... To women above all falls the practice of the graphic art, those painstaking arts which correspond so well to the role of abnegation and devotion which the honest woman happily fills here on earth, and which is her religion.<sup>60</sup>

Although still life and flower painting could offer 'truth to nature' they were downgraded as 'mere imitation'.<sup>61</sup> Women were thought incapable of mastering perspective, but this assumption reveals a patriarchal sleight of hand. 'Perspective' was understood in art school terms to be largely a matter of architectural vanishing points, but the ability to understand and represent the revolutions of an irregular solid,

which is required to paint, say, a snapdragon, is equally a matter of perspective.

An overwhelming proportion of Victorian flower painting by women remains in the portfolios of amateur artists like those of the *Frampton Flora* brought to public attention by Richard Mabey in 1985, and much of their work is at least as good as that of the women who received payment for their art. Sometimes it provided a lifeline, if not a livelihood, even for privileged women like the English Rani of Sarawak who told Marianne North that life was twice as bright since she had started drawing flowers.<sup>62</sup>

Claiming that flower painting was a vital part of the life of Victorian women is not the same as arguing that all of it was artistically valuable. According to Blunt and Stearn, 'by 1840 the great era of flower painting was drawing rapidly to its close' though 'much important scientific illustration was being made' (26). The market for massive subscription editions of luxury tomes was collapsing, to be replaced, after the drop in the price of paper and advances in lithography and other cheap forms of reproduction, by small books for a diversified public. Publication constraints for this journal do not allow for the reproduction of coloured drawings, but the best of the luxury illustrations and of private amateur collections are widely available.<sup>63</sup> The more modest popular scientific illustrations are less well served but a range of monochrome examples is provided in Shteir's *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*. Many of the more attractive plates in popular botany books sacrifice absolute ease of reference for artistic pretensions by arranging a group of related species as a loose bunch or nosegay. On the other hand, modest cheap illustrations are often highly schematic. Figure 1 demonstrates the middle way chosen by Margaret Plues, in an attempt to coerce seaweeds into some form of artistic arrangement, in spite of their unpromising form and incompatibility of scale. The last thirty years of the century, though, mark the rise of professional female botanical artists working for specialist outlets, most notably Matilda Smith. In 1878 she started illustrating the prestigious *Botanical Magazine* and was shortly its sole artist. She routinely recorded even sexually suggestive flowers like the giant *Amorphophallus titanum*, an earlier picture of which had been taken down from its Kew exhibition site for reasons of prudery.<sup>64</sup>

Changes in attitudes to flower drawing can be charted partly by looking at changes in artists' primers, both general and specifically botanical. Early general examples focus on copying and colouring, though by the end of the century there is a new recognition of art instruction as career training. Specifically botanical primers are more



“The tufted seaweed slenderly  
Hangs from its place of birth ;  
And the blue waves left it tenderly,  
To kiss the green lips of earth.”

Fig. 1. From Margaret Plues, *Rambles in Search of Flowerless Plants* (London, 1865), 64. This plate demonstrates a collocation of sentimental verse and botanical illustration common in popular Victorian writing. The unattributed verse gains authority only by virtue of its poetic form. Although illustrations of flowers were often arranged as bouquets, seaweeds were less susceptible to such treatment; the differences in scale and texture result in a fairly common kind of awkward space-filling. (The numbered key is linked to references in the main text.)

precise, and by the late 1860s and 1870s lay considerable stress on perspective. Thus, George Brookshaw's *A New Treatise on Flower Painting, or Every Lady her Own Drawing Master* (1818) defends the art itself and women's capacities, but focuses largely on copying skills and his own authority: 'many ladies I have had the honour of teaching ... sketched flowers so correctly after my manner, that I mistook them for my own drawings'.<sup>65</sup> The plates are duplicated, one set already hand coloured, one left in line only for the purchaser to colour. In spite of the title there are no instructions on draughtsmanship; the book is almost entirely about colouring. At the mid-century, Duffield's *Art of Flower Painting* (1856) stresses that 'copying nature' is the key to success; 'considerable talent' is not required. In spite of the admonition that 'great attention must be paid to perspective', no instruction is given, on the grounds that faithful transcription of what is seen is sufficient for flowers, and perspective study is only necessary for those drawing from imagination.<sup>66</sup> A similarly art-focused manual of 1885, W.J. Muckley's *A Manual of Flower Painting in Oil Colours from Nature* also stresses a Gilpinesque need to generalize and idealize: 'the shapes of natural flowers are more or less imperfect'; 'judicious alteration in this respect is always necessary'.<sup>67</sup> However, Muckley has a much greater sense of economic realities. Flower painting can 'supply a means of livelihood to a large number of art workers of both sexes' (10).

James Sowerby's *Botanical Drawing-Book* (1807) is more precise, focusing on the parts of the plant, and not wasting time on colour mixing. By 1873 F.W. Burbidge's *Art of Botanical Drawing* stresses the value of correctness and notes that 'a good technical knowledge of geometry and perspective are ... essential', and although he does not attempt to teach these systematically, there are plenty of demonstrations of common problems.<sup>68</sup> Four years earlier, Walter Hood Fitch's articles for *The Gardener's Chronicle* were already focusing firmly on perspective and accuracy rather than on colour,<sup>69</sup> and Ruskin also offers sensible perspective advice in *Proserpina* (146-7).

Conduct books, often regarded as less practical than ideological, make a similar recognition quite early on. The *Young Lady's Book* (1838) argues that painting is at first largely a matter of copying, but that thereafter one needs the laws of perspective (347-8), and it then includes a substantial section on this. As yet the writer does not countenance the use of this for anything other than elegant recreation. However, *The Young Lady's Treasure Book* of 1884 has an expectation that women will earn money by their craft skills: 'the most honourable thing a woman can do ... is to *earn her own living*'.<sup>70</sup>

For the female flower painter, there was essentially a scale of choice

ranging from ornamental to the technical. The woman writer had a greater range of choices, the major one being the variety of intertexts to exploit. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there was no absolute distinction between scientific and literary writing. By the middle of the century, masculinized and professionalized botany was beginning to define itself by increasing the proportion of technical vocabulary and reducing the narrative, anecdotal and cultural elements. The serious botanical student was increasingly figured as male. Significantly Jane Loudon's 1842 *Botany for Ladies* was reissued in 1851 as *Modern Botany*. The feminist Lydia Becker's *Botany for Novices* (1864) tries to avoid assumptions about gender but does occasionally slip into 'man' and 'he'.<sup>71</sup> Epistolary forms, domestic narrative with a female instructor, religious reference, and verse quotation became the marks of a feminine and amateur authorship. Shteir discusses at length the prominence in the early nineteenth century of the first two of these features. I wish to concentrate on religious reference and verse quotation, and to argue that they can be used recuperatively, to restore a subtle degree of writerly authority to women authors, in spite of the downgrading of the female mentor.

The continuing use of a religious register is the more obvious of these strategies. Citing Marina Benjamin, Shteir suggests that in the Romantic period 'a conservative natural theology' could be used by liberal women who wanted to protect themselves from charges of republicanism (85, 252). Around 1800, there was a Paleyan confidence that theology was natural, and a part of science.<sup>72</sup> Wakefield insisted that studying nature is 'the most familiar means of introducing suitable ideas of the attributes of the Divine Being'.<sup>73</sup> As late as 1848, a list of 'scientific works' at the back of Agnes Catlow's *Popular Field Botany* includes *Illustrations of the Wisdom and Benevolence of the Deity as Manifested in Nature*. James Andrews's illustrated anthology *The Parterre* (1842) is addressed to 'Creation's readers'.<sup>74</sup> If plants are a large part of the third book of God's revelation, the natural world, then women can gain status as His ministers by reminding readers of this context and rehearsing the most basic tenets of its creed, marking out the importance of the message in a highly formalized language.<sup>75</sup>

In many books directly focused on the study of flowers, we see the religious acknowledgement shrinking in a way that suggests a shift from dominant to residual ideology, a shift that was more closely linked to the feminine than the masculine. John Lindley is fairly free with his religious professions in *Ladies' Botany* (8), but there are none in *Elementary Botany* (1832). A devotional register often becomes a literal declaration of good faith in the title page or the preface (or even in the

advertisements at the end) but less prominent in the main body of the text. Thus, James Fennell's and Mrs E.E. Perkins's *Drawing-Room Botany* (1840) has a quote from Lady Blessington on the title page, presenting flowers as 'glorious ministers of heaven'. Jane Loudon's *Botany for Ladies* (1842) introduces the (male) Botanist as peculiarly likely to find objects 'of admiration for that Almighty Power whose care has provided the flower to shelter the infant Germ'.<sup>76</sup>

The statement of religious views is often linked to one of two forms of authoritative discourse: firstly, actual quotation from the Bible, especially and predictably the passage in Matthew vi, 28-9, where Christ refers to the lilies of the field, and secondly, verse, most of it composed in the Romantic and Victorian periods rather than earlier (see Fig. 1 for an example). Thus, writers of both sexes, but particularly women, bolster their authority status with references that are not only intertextual but intergeneric. Poetic form itself seems intended to authenticate a sense of higher authority. Indeed, quotation seems to have offered an additional source of power once the maternal or sisterly botanical mentor had been downgraded. If verse replaced waning religious authority, as Matthew Arnold argued, then it could be used to inflect various forms of ideology. Books on flowers aimed at feminine and amateur readerships in the mid-nineteenth century are markedly heteroglossic. As well as the essential botanical and the important religious discourse, flower books typically impart economic, folkloric and semantic information, some fulsomely rhapsodic prose effusions, and a large number of literary intertexts. The appeal to poetic conventions marks these intertexts out as 'high culture', but their content and implications are surprisingly diverse. Many of the verses quoted are unattributed and are often, but by no means always, the work of the compiler.<sup>77</sup> They may be introduced solely as the work of 'the poet' or some poetic sage figure may be specifically named. Much of the quotation is from Romantic or contemporary Victorian poets, especially Wordsworth, Burns and Clare. Louisa Twamley (alias Meredith), author of such works as *The Romance of Nature; or, the Flower Seasons Illustrated* (1836), was a prolific source profusely quoted.

Verse extracts fall into four main groups: purely descriptive and ideologically neutral; nostalgic (flowers invoke memories of childhood and youth); religious (flowers remind us of the Creator and of our latter end); and gender-defining (flowers are feminine, but also act as models for women in their docility and fragility). The deictic/pronoun usages are important here. Sometimes flowers are neutral 'they' or 'it', or even, occasionally, 'he'. Sometimes apostrophe is used and gender is disguised by the use of the second person, 'thou'. But over and over

again the flower is figured as 'she', and extreme gender stereotyping is commoner in the lesser-known authors, such as Sarah Hoare.

For instance, the early Victorian Louisa Anne Twamley was both anthologist and anthologee. She eschews any botanical pretensions and has a definite religious framework ('I love flowers as forming one of the sweetest lines in the GOD-WRITTEN Poetry of Nature').<sup>78</sup> She even uses religion to elide the distinction between art and science: 'the Naturalist and the Poet – and the terms *ought* to be synonymous, for the true source of all their inspiration is the same' (239). Her *Romance of Nature* combines an anthology of canonical poetry with her own writing, and her sumptuous, if not very accurate, painting.

Twamley makes two kinds of authority claim through the manipulation of quotation. The book is seasonally arranged, and further divided into two forms: her own verse headed by epigraphs from earlier writers, and critical prose sections full of quotation. The quotations are drawn from 'the fathers of English poetry' (35) and nearly all are from the Renaissance or earlier.<sup>79</sup> By using mottoes from established poetical authorities, Twamley aligns these with her own compositions and inserts herself into British canonical tradition. On a couple of occasions she even quotes herself in the same format (1, 55). In the prose essays, she takes an authority position as collector and commentator. There are also extensive unacknowledged quotations, nearly always in a different typographical format (widely spaced like her own verse, not single-spaced like the canonical quotation). These sections of verse appear to be her own, woven into the same fabric of literary discussion as the others.

When it comes to focusing on particular species, Twamley makes some of her flowers male,<sup>80</sup> but the drive to maintain the link between flower and feminine beauty is so strong that it engenders a kind of *hortomachia*, different gender roles being assigned to different (non-sexual) parts of the plant. Thus, the gorse is called 'he' in her prose, but in the verse becomes 'it', and self-divided. The actual flower 'lives in a weapon-girt bower', the masculine spines being 'guardians of power' around her (73, 27). The female flower of the Lily of the Valley, a model of feminine reticence, is sheltered by a male leaf (28-9).

Women writers of more general popular books on flowers avoid pigeonholing women precisely by focusing on religious interpretations of plant features. Like the preceding generation, they used natural theology tactically, but to maintain claims about their own authority and about the capabilities of women. For instance, Margaret Plues (who is fond of quoting Twamley) favours the religious strain, and gender implications are often subservient to religious ones:

The Lily of the Vale, of flowers the queen,  
Puts on the robe she neither sewed nor spun [unattributed].<sup>81</sup>

*Rambles in Search of Wild Flowers* belies its somewhat self-deprecatory title by being one of the most remarkably heteroglossic of these popular flower books, mingling intensely technical vocabulary with strongly natural-theological morals. The latter are a key feature of the verse too: 'there is a lesson in each flower' leading 'to hope, and holiness, and God'. Plues does not entirely exclude conventionally gendered inter-texts (the Star of Bethlehem, a small lily, is 'pale as a pensive cloistered nun', 289) but they are comparatively infrequent, and, as here, often have a religious overtone.

Plues is old-fashioned in still using the female epistolary format that gives a woman the status of botanical instructor.<sup>82</sup> This entails, though, a commitment to fieldwork. She does write of ladies as either timid about their surroundings or constructed as so by gallant men, but the notion of woman's incapacity can be ironized: 'there being a bull in the field ... we waited till we could get the escort of a gentleman', though it was the sharp leaves of the plant he gathered that caused him injury.<sup>83</sup> Most importantly, she sees female botanizing as a tradition of liberty, one generation of women enabling the next. The mother of one of the botanical pupils in the text welcomes the 'renewed health' of her daughter who is now 'climbing the cliffs, penetrating the woods, and exploring the salt marshes', and 'she gladly provided stronger boots and dresses of a firmer texture in which she might ramble and climb at her own free will without fear of detriment' (8).

A more scholarly writer is Lady Caroline Catherine Wilkinson, in *Weeds and Wild Flowers: their Uses, Legends, and Literature* (1858). She uses a high proportion of older sources for her quotation (including the 'Stockholm Manuscript', a fourteenth-century version of older medical and herbal lore in Middle English) and Italian, German, Breton, Latin, and (very extensively) Welsh, in the original. Her chapters on the rose and the lily make short work of traditional associations. We are told that the rose is an 'emblem of love', but also that it 'schall clere yi bowalys [bowels] weel yt fyn'.<sup>84</sup> Fortright in some matters, she nevertheless purges her material of sexual implications, quoting Shakespeare on the daffodil ('When daffodils begin to peer / With heigh! the doxy over the dale') but glossing 'doxy' as 'glory' rather than 'loose woman' (84). She specifically disliked 'the follies of the sentimentalist with *his* "language of flowers"' (318, my italics).

Wilkinson is a writer with a keen sense of her own authority and a willingness to assert it. Sometimes this is done by setting one masculine authority against another, as in taking issue with Tennyson over the

habitat of the harebell: 'If I might *venture* to speak more scientifically on the subject, I should quote the matter-of-fact words of the botanist, "it is indicative of an extremely barren soil;" but I have respect for the privileges of the poets' (114-15). Sometimes she speaks more directly from her own experience: 'learned botanists and other high authorities' aver that the Butterwort gets its name for its use as a rennet, but, she argues, 'I beg to take a woman's privilege, and to suggest that ... it is not more usual to make butter by a curdling process than it is to make cheese in a churn!' (192-3). Relating that dyed hair was, according to the early Church fathers, a presage of the fires of hell, she comments, 'on this question we cannot, of course, presume to dispute with authorities so competent' but quotes Christ's words against them: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged' (156). She sometimes supports her copious religious reflections by verse quotation, but often seems willing to let her own words stand independently. Her selection of quotation downplays both sex and gender, and focuses on the uses and beauties of plants.<sup>85</sup>

From the choice of the SPCK as her publishers, Anne Pratt's (self-illustrated) *Wild Flowers* unsurprisingly focuses on flowers as religious emblems; while this emphasis is present, it is not the main thrust of the book. The verse quotations are largely descriptive of the appearance or situation of the plant, or anecdotal, but they are not strongly gendered or oriented towards social moralising. *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain*, which is more markedly scientific, is also more religious in both prose and verse parts of the text,<sup>86</sup> but again, largely avoids reinforcement of gender conventions.

Indeed, Pratt displays a strong-minded and forward-thinking view of women's position in her exclusively religious and moral work *The Excellent Woman as Described in the Book of Proverbs* (1847) in which she refigures woman according to a more inspiring religious model: Deborah 'went up fearlessly to the battles of the Lord.'<sup>87</sup> However, Pratt also has a sense of historical relativity: 'some of the lessons ... belong especially to older times; to days when patient unremitting labour, and submission, and modesty, were the virtues most highly commendable in women' (2). Moreover, she too champions the freedom of women in England to tread 'fearlessly,/O'er mead or hill' to 'seek the wood-flower still,/Upon its native bed'.<sup>88</sup> Pratt's flowers are not, on the whole, submissive or modest. With regard to the Lily of the Valley, Pratt notes that 'writers, both of olden and modern days, agree in regarding it as an emblem of modesty' but the plant cannot be the Biblical Lily of the Field, as it does not grow in Palestine.<sup>89</sup> Thus, Pratt uncouples the gendered reading from any Biblical authority. She also refrains from

quoting any of the copious verse in which this flower is emblematically described.<sup>90</sup> Pratt's suspicion of the link between gender ethics and religious authority is apparent in her remark that the Snowdrop was introduced to Britain by monks and 'deemed *by them* [my italics] an emblem of feminine purity'.<sup>91</sup>

In *Flowers and their Associations*, Pratt does not develop the traditional sexual emblems. The section on lilies concentrates for several pages on the identity of the 'lilies of the field'. There is a quotation from Young praising 'Queen lilies' and seeing them as fit for his pure-minded beloved, but the focus, ironically, is on a transience that affects all.<sup>92</sup> Pratt resists the insidious and powerful social pressure to identify flowers with women.

This identification is quite different from the common, but relatively less frequent, comparisons of women to birds, animals or gems. These are still recognisably metaphorical and single-layered, but the identification between women and flowers goes deeper. Milton is responsible for one of its most famous and influential manifestations when he pictures Proserpine as 'gathering flowers, herself a fairer flower'. This line is used as the epigraph to *The Young Lady's Book's* chapter on botany. Visually, the frontispiece to Darwin's *Botanic Garden* (by Henry Fuseli, Wollstonecraft's lover<sup>93</sup>) provides the clearest example of the associations that are being constructed. It represents Flora, that is, the totality of flowering plants, as a woman, gazing at her reflection in a mirror. Flowers are woman; what the woman sees as her reflection is, the title assures us, flowers – flora. Moreover, the oval frame of the picture situates the female viewer, but not the male, in an analogous situation to Flora herself, gazing at the woman who is flowers.<sup>94</sup>

The problem for women here is not only that, in Laura Mulvey's phrase, 'women are encoded for their *to-be-looked-at-ness*'.<sup>95</sup> The consciousness of our own image 'reflected back to ourselves by some object or person in the world'<sup>96</sup> has been identified as the most basic process of self-definition – Lacan's 'mirror stage'. The woman who contemplates flowers contemplates herself, and that self is a relative one defined in non-human terms, nature rather than culture. There is an interesting example from the chapter heading of the botany section of *The Young Lady's Book* (Fig. 2). The girl contemplates a flower. In order to achieve clarity, though, the background has been omitted at this point, producing a visual effect like the frame of a mirror. Masculine ideology invites the girl to misrecognize herself as less than human. Flora contemplating herself in a mirror, or a girl contemplating a flower, are doubly objects of the male gaze, through 'specular identifications' in the realm of the Imaginary.<sup>97</sup> This is one reason why, even

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Fig. 2. Frontispiece for chapter on Botany in *The Young Lady's Book* (1838).

in texts with female instructors, the overarching masculine discourse of science is often (and increasingly, as the nineteenth century progresses) represented by the male botanist; only the male is separable from the object of study.

The kinds of figurative language chosen to represent flowers are often those that, paradoxically, retard woman's entry to full sexuality by insisting on the perpetually liminal state of her virginity. The metaphor 'deflowered' exemplifies the ubiquity of this way of thinking. Rhetorically, the tenor and vehicle of the figures collapse into one another, creating a radical uncertainty as to which has primacy. Thus, Erasmus Darwin's *Glory Lily* is rather more conventional in her youth. It is first personified, and then the human personification is decked with the flowers that are themselves emblematic of human values:

When the young Hours amid her tangled hair  
Wove the fresh rose-bud and the lily fair (140).

In *The Young Lady's Book* there are quotations in sections on other sciences, but only that on botany is marked by figurative and metonymic links between student and subject. It closes as it opens, with 'the figure of a fair maiden collecting flowers', by referring to Perdita and with a quotation about Ophelia, and a picture of her (60). Gatty's *Parables from Nature* (First Series, 1855) are mostly not botanical, and a high proportion of the natural objects, including most trees, are personified as male (inaccurately so in the case of bees). But flowers are all required to be female in 'Training and Restraining', in which a (male) destructive wind lays low all the flowers of a garden (though not the presumably working-class *wild* flowers). The wind seduces the garden flowers by playing on their desire for independence: to 'be trusted to yourself a little more', to resent prohibitions and the 'childish treatment to which [they] had been subjected'.<sup>98</sup> The sight of the flowers dirtied, sullied and rotting prompts the young lady of the house to acknowledge 'the necessity of training, and restraint, and culture' she had earlier rejected (96). Figure 3 is an illustration by George Thomas from the 1861 Edition demonstrating this recognition, and focusing on the lily.

In the long run, is all this merely playful? This recovered history of nineteenth-century representation could go some way towards answering one of the commonest questions asked of secretaries of natural history societies today: why are so many of the amateur botanists women and so many birders men?<sup>99</sup> A more public bias is apparent too, not so much in science as in art. In periods when public acknowledgement of one's work and payment for it could be seen as indecorous and declassing, women artists could be seen to be in the minority, and this is



Fig. 3. Illustration to Margaret Gatty's story 'Training and Restraining' in *Parables from Nature*, 1861 edition, opposite p. 37. The text names a variety of flowers as the victims of an incautious desire for freedom, but the visual narrative renders identifiable only the lily, the most obvious emblem of female purity.

reflected in the proportions of illustrations by women in histories of botanical illustration.<sup>100</sup> Today the boot is on the other foot. In two Shirley Sherwood collections, of the British artists represented, in 1996, 12% are men and 88% women, and in 2001, 15% men and 85% women.<sup>101</sup> Of the 178 painters identifiable to sex in the Society of Botanical Artists catalogue for its 2002 open exhibition, only 16 (9%) are men. However, in the catalogue for the 2001 exhibition of the Society of Wildlife Artists, which specifically excludes plants, 62% of the artists are male and only 38% female. All the flower artists I know personally are women, and all the bird artists men. Husband and wife professional combinations, like that of John and Jane Paige, usually replicate this division. I would argue that this effect – which can be positively enabling, but is also likely to have something to do with the gendered disposition of time – is just one of the legacies of the hegemonic settlements and negotiations surrounding Victorian natural history still affecting women in the twenty-first century.

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#### Endnotes

1. Wilfred Blunt and William T. Stearn, *The Art of Botanical Illustration* (Kew: Antique Collectors Club in association with Royal Botanic Gardens, 1994), 218-19. This feature of Wollstonecraft's life is ignored by major biographers like J. Todd (*Mary Wollstonecraft: a Revolutionary Life* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2000]) and C. Tomalin (*The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* [London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974]).
2. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, vol. 5 of *The Works of Mary Wollstonecraft*, J. Todd and M. Butler (eds) (London: William Pickering, 1989), 122-3, 193.
3. The term is used in a broad sense here. As Jonathan Topham points out, there is a technical distinction between natural theology based on deductions about God from the universe without reference to Revelation and general theistic arguments from design in Creation ('Science, Natural Theology, and the Practice of Christian Piety in Early-Nineteenth-Century Religious Magazines', in *Science Serialized: Representations of the Sciences in Nineteenth Century Periodicals*, Geoffrey Cantor and Sally Shuttleworth (eds) (Cambridge, Mass., and London: MIT Press, 2004), 37. However, Christian writers (including Paley) tended to operate on the holistic assumption that revelations from the book of Nature and the Bible reaffirmed one another.
4. In their editorial introduction to *Natural Eloquence: Women Reinscribe Science* (Madison and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997), 4.
5. For example, Cantor and Shuttleworth, op. cit.; Sally Shuttleworth, Gowan Dawson and Richard Noakes, 'Women, Science and Culture: Science in the Nineteenth-century Periodical', *Women: a Cultural Review* 12: 1 (2001), <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals> consulted 12 December 2005, the SciPer project ([www.sciper@leeds.ac.uk](http://www.sciper@leeds.ac.uk)); *Culture and Science in the Nineteenth-century Media*, Louise Henson et al. (eds) (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), especially chapters by Shteir and Topham.
6. For a rather different argument for 'distinctively female traditions in science and

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- nature writing', see Barbara T. Gates, *Kindred Nature: Victorian and Edwardian Women Embrace the Living World* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), especially 3-8, 36, 249-50.
7. Ann Shapiro argues that feminist criticism has come to insist on the need to do this in her introduction to *History and Feminist Theory*, a special issue of *History and Theory*, Beischrift 31 (1992), 7. It is not clear how such a criticism could, by definition, remain feminist. although Shapiro's avocation of the concepts of 'permeability' and 'overlap' rather than 'separation' is useful (5). Similar but more nuanced anxieties are expressed by Lynne Pearce: 'patriarchy is no longer the monolithic white elephant we can blame for all our ills. For today's feminist reader everything, everywhere, is almost oppressively subtle, complex, and contradictory' (*Feminism and the Politics of Reading* [London: Arnold, 1997]), 44.
  8. A. Gramsci, *Prison Writing* (1929-35), in *A Gramsci Reader*, D. Forgacs (ed.) (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1988), 199.
  9. See Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body: Gender in the Making of Modern Science* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon Press, 1993), 1-32
  10. Alan Bewell, "On the Banks of the South Sea": Botany and Sexual Controversy in the Late Eighteenth Century', in *Visions of Empire: Voyages, Botany and Representations of Nature*, David Miller and Peter Reill (eds) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 174. Sam George succinctly describes the frankly sexual terminology in 'Linnaeus in Letters and the Cultivation of the Female Mind: "Botany in an English Dress"', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 28:1 (Spring 2005), 1-18.
  11. *Natural Theology* (London, 1846), Chapter 20, 179, 98-9.
  12. Both the convention and the resistance to sexual implication can be found in the verses on the frontispiece of Marguerite Countess of Blessington's *Flowers of Loveliness* (London, 1836): 'In Flowers and Blossoms, Love is wont to trace, / Emblems of Woman's virtues and her grace; / Both pure, both sweet, both formed with curious skill – / The quaint analogy surprises still.' (I presume Blessington was unaware of the older meaning of 'quaint'.)
  13. Londa Schiebinger (*Nature's Body*, 13) and Ann B. Shteir (*Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England 1760-1860* [Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1996], 16-17) argue that Linnaeus inscribed traditional gender assumptions into botany. However, since there are usually many more male than female parts in a flower, his system puts the focus on the female's power over the male. It is possible to link Darwin's style to that of eighteenth-century pornography (Schiebinger, 25). Both have programmatic variations of sexual partnership and insistent metaphorical language, but Darwin's style seems more playful than salacious, partly because of the strong influence of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*.
  14. *The Botanic Garden*, Part II, *The Loves of the Plants* (London: Jones & Co., 1824 edition), 140 (Book I, ll. 117-24).
  15. Shteir, 28-9; Anna Seward, *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin* (London, 1804), 131.
  16. Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females: A Poem*, Garland Facsimile edition of 1798 text, in *The Feminist Controversy in England*, G. Luria (ed.) (London: Cadell & Davies, 1974), 8-9.
  17. Shteir, 85, 73-4. It is worth noting that Paley also quotes Withering as a botanical authority (179).
  18. The poem appears in the eighth and ninth editions of Priscilla Wakefield's *An Introduction to Botany*; the quotations are from the ninth edition (London, 1823), 183, and Sarah Hoare, *Poems on Conchology and Botany* (London, 1831), 65. The

- dating is consonant with the shift marked by Shteir in magazine writing away from direct scientific material to a literary emphasis that 'recast botany for women in the spirit of Romanticism' (in Henson *et al.*, 6-7).
19. For example, James H. Fennell, *Drawing Room Botany* (London, 1840), 15.
  20. J. Loudon, *British Wild Flowers* (London, 1846), 1.
  21. The most famous attack on sexual systematics is John Ruskin's uncompleted *Proserpina* (1874 onwards) in which he tries to create a new botanic nomenclature. Ruskin's explanation of his reasons is so hysterically and protectively non-specific that it is difficult to see immediately what the objects of his anxiety actually are: 'the most current and authoritative names are apt to be founded on some unclean or debasing association, so that to interpret them is to defile the reader's mind. I will give no instances; too many will at once occur to any learned reader, and the unlearned I need not vex with so much as one' (*Proserpina*, [Orpington, 1879], 6). However, his attack is part of a debate more than a century old, and atypical of his time. He is not only tilting at windmills, but windmills that by the mid 1870s had been largely demolished.
  22. Shteir, 169, and n.18, above.
  23. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 121-7.
  24. For example, Agnes Catlow, *Popular Field Botany* (London, 1848), vi; *The Young Lady's Book: a Manual of Elegant Recreations, Arts, Sciences and Accomplishments* (London, 1859), Botany section.
  25. Gates (65) charts a similar progression for a volume by Anne Pratt.
  26. Statistics derived from R.B. Freeman, *British Natural History Books, 1495-1900: a Handlist* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1980), discussed in Shteir, 81, 251.
  27. *The Young Lady's Book: a Manual of Elegant Recreations, Exercises and Pursuits*, 4th edn (London, 1838), 35. It is worth noting that the 1859 edition, with a different publisher and subtitle (n.17), creates a separate botany section.
  28. Charles Kingsley, *Glaucus; or, the Wonders of the Shore* (Cambridge, 1855), 39. Kingsley's excessiveness seems the result of ambivalence. Although dedicated to Miss Grenfell, Kingsley posits a male addressee for this book, a 'London merchant'; his aim is to defend natural history against the charge of being 'somewhat effeminate' (36). In spite of praising natural history as an improving hobby for girls, Kingsley disliked the idea of women attending his botany classes: D.E. Allen, *The Naturalist in Britain: a Social History* (London: Allen Lane, 1976), 167-8.
  29. Lynn Barber, *The Heyday of Natural History 1820-1870* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1980), 31.
  30. [Mrs E.E. Perkins], *The Elements of Botany for Families and Schools*, 3rd edn (London: SPCK, 1837), 4.
  31. Charlotte Elizabeth [Tonna], *Chapters on Flowers* (London, 1836), 1. Similar qualms also afflicted the much more scientifically-minded Jane Loudon (*Botany for Ladies* [London, 1842], 281).
  32. Joanna Russ, *How to Suppress Women's Writing*, (London: The Women's Press, 1984), Chapters 5 and 6. All the sleights of mind exposed by Russ as strategies to deny or denigrate women's writing were operational during the nineteenth century and in later responses to it, and are applicable to other forms of cultural production such as art, as discussed below.
  33. This long-standing prejudice goes back to Rousseau: 'a woman or one of those men who resemble women asked you the name of a plant or a flower in a garden' (J.J. Rousseau's introduction to his *Dictionnaire des Terms d'usage en Botanique*, quoted in

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- translation in *Botany: a Study of Pure Curiosity*, an edition of the 3rd edn of *Lettres Élémentaires sur la Botanique*, trans. Kate Ottewanger and intro. Roy McMullen (London: Michael Joseph, 1979), v.
34. In his inaugural lecture as Professor of Botany at the University of London in 1829; quoted in Shteir, 157.
  35. John Lindley, *The Ladies' Botany of Professor Lindley Abridged by the Author* (London, n.d. but c. 1840) has a sub-title 'for the use of schools and young persons'. For his relations with the outstanding artist Sarah Drake, see H. Hewson, *Australia: 300 Years of Botanical Illustration* (Collingwood, Victoria: Csiro, 1999), 94, and also R.M. Hamilton and L. Dutton, "'Miss Drake' – Sarah Ann Drake (1803-1855) the Botanical Artist', *Orchid History Reference Paper No. 28* (Richmond, B.C, 2000); I am indebted to one of the referees for this paper for the latter reference.
  36. Margaret [Mrs Alfred] Gatty, *British Sea-Weeds* (London, 1872), I, viii. Gatty spends much of the introduction on the topic of dress for female collectors; by contrast, Samuel Octavus Gray does not address the topic of dress for his male collector until chapter 3, and then briefly (*British Sea-Weeds* [London, 1867], 25).
  37. Agnes and Marie E. Catlow, *Sketching Rambles; or, Nature in the Alps and Apennines* (London, 1861), I, 283.
  38. For example, Albert Millican, *The Travels and Adventures of an Orchid Hunter* (London, 1891); Alan Jenkins, *The Naturalists: Pioneers of Natural History* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1978. (Jenkins does not even give women like Sibylla Merian or Marianne North a mention in the index.)
  39. For a discussion of the use of this trope in Victorian book illustration, see C.M. Jackson-Houlston, "'The Burial-Place of the Fashions": the representation of the Dress of the Poor in Illustrated Serial Prose by Dickens and Hardy', *Textile History* 33:1 (May 2002), 98-111.
  40. Jane Loudon, *The Ladies' Flower-garden of Ornamental Annuals* (London, 1840), i.
  41. Jane Loudon, *The Lady's Country Companion; or, How to Enjoy a Country Life Rationally* (London, 1845), 355.
  42. Loudon, *Lady's Country Companion* 356.
  43. See the abridgement of Marianne North's travel writings, *A Vision of Eden: the Life and Work of Marianne North*, intro. J.P.M. Brennan, A. Huxley and B.E. Moon (Exeter: Webb & Bower, 1980), 91, 107, 161 or 201, for examples of her intrepidity; and 64, 98-9, 106, 110, 124, 171 for extreme measures taken to assist her.
  44. P. Ingham, *The Language of Gender and Class* (London: Routledge, 1996), 29-30.
  45. P. Wakefield, *Reflections on the Present Condition of the Female Sex*, 2nd edn (London, 1817), 111.
  46. P. Wakefield, *Reflections*, 54.
  47. S. Hoare, *Poems on Conchology and Botany* (London, 1831), 57
  48. *The Ladies' Flower-garden of Ornamental Annuals* (London: William Smith, 1840); also with Smith, *The Ladies' Flower-garden of Ornamental Bulbous Plants* (1841), *The Ladies' Companion to the Flower Garden* (1841), *The Ladies' Flower-garden of Ornamental Perennials* (1844), *British Wild Flowers* (1846), *The Ladies' Flower-garden of Greenhouse Plants* (1848), plus *Gardening for Ladies* (London, John Murray, 1840), *The First Book of Botany* (London: George Bell, 1841), *Botany for Ladies* (London: John Murray, 1842), *The Lady's Country Companion* (London: Longman, Brown, etc, 1845).
  49. Moser was not *only* a flower painter, but remembered as such. See Gill. Perry (ed.), *Gender and Art, Art and its Histories* series, 3 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1999), 96, 101, and F. Borzello, *A World of Our Own* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), 119.

50. D. Cherry, *Painting Women: Victorian Women Artists* (London: Routledge, 1993), 56, 96; Ann Sutherland Harris and Linda Nochlin, *Women Artists, 1550-1950* (Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Alfred A. Knopf: Los Angeles and New York, 1977), 249; Borzello, 8-9, 142.
51. Borzello, 91-2.
52. Cherry, *Painting Women*, 62
53. Cherry, *Painting Women*, 102-3; Blunt and Stearn, *Botanical Illustration* 252.
54. See Blunt & Stearn, *Botanical Illustration* 248.
55. In spite of differences in perspective, Lynn Barber and Barbara Gates largely agree on this: Barber, 126; Gates, 90.
56. Shteir, 179-80.
57. Russ, 20-4.
58. Blunt and Stearn, 249, 276, 284. They argue that 'the pleasant drawings for Mrs Loudon's *British Wild Flowers*' were executed by Henry Noel Humphreys (277); but there is no indication of this in the original, and the evidence for this claim is not given.
59. Catherine King, 'What Women Can Make', in Gill Perry (ed.), *Gender and Art*, 61-2
60. Quoted in Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), 13.
61. Cherry, *Painting Women*, 25, quoting the 1868 *Art Journal*.
62. North, *Vision of Eden*, 154.
63. For example, Blunt and Stearn (*Botanical Illustration*) provide good examples of the work of S.A. Drake (254-5, 258-9) and Augusta Withers (251). Richard Mabey redresses the balance of illustrative choice in favour of women in *The Flowering of Kew* (London: Century, 1988) and *The Frampton Flora* (London: Century, 1985).
64. Mabey, *Flowering of Kew*, 123-5 include two illustrations of Smith's original water-colours.
65. G. Brookshaw [G. Brown in earlier editions], *A New Treatise on Flower Painting or Every Lady her own Drawing Master* (London, 1818), 17.
66. Mrs William Duffield, *The Art of Flower Painting* (London, 1856), 10-11, 50-1.
67. W.J. Muckley, *A Manual of Flower Painting in Oil Colours from Nature* (London, [1885]), 41.
68. F.W. Burbidge, *The Art of Botanical Drawing* (London, [1873]), 16.
69. Eight articles, usefully reproduced in Blunt and Stearn, *Botanical Illustration*, 332-40.
70. *The Young Ladies Treasure Book: a Complete Cyclopaedia of Practical Instruction and Directions for All Indoor and Outdoor Occupations and Amusements Suitable to Young Ladies* (London, 1884), 531.
71. L. Becker, *Botany for Novices* (London, 1864), 42, 48.
72. The deist Erasmus Darwin saw even his evolutionary speculations in the notes to *The Loves of the Plants* as 'consonant to the dignity of the Creator of all things' (139).
73. Wakefield, *Introduction to Botany*, iii; see also 17, 25, 50, 123.
74. J. Andrews, *The Parterre: or, the Beauties of Flora* (London, 1842).
75. Beverly Seaton provides an extensive survey of the ways in which flowers were used to convey moral and spiritual messages in the period in 'Considering the Lilies: Ruskin's "Proserpina" and Other Victorian Flower Books', in *Victorian Studies* (Winter 1985), 255-82, but does not discuss this aspect of the gendering of authority. Anne Pratt makes a claim for a connection between women and authority in natural theology by citing Willis; 'It may be deemed unmanly, but the wise/Read Nature like the manuscript of Heaven,' *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain*

‘Queen Lilies’?

- (London: SPCK, 1850-7) I, 168. See also Gatty, viii.
76. J. Loudon, *Botany for Ladies or, a Popular Introduction to the Natural System of Plants* (London, 1842), viii.
  77. That this was a common practice is obvious from the specific denial of authorship of anonymous quotation by George W. Francis in *The Little English Flora or, a Botanical and Popular Account of all our Common Field Flowers with Engravings on Steel of Every Species* (London, 1839), preface.
  78. Twamley, *The Romance of Nature; or, the Flower-Seasons Illustrated* (London, 1836), vii. For information on Twamley, and illustrations, see Hewson, *Australia*, 134-5.
  79. The only Romantic used extensively (in spite of the book’s dedication to Wordsworth) is Shelley. The others named are: Beaumont, Chaucer, Cowper, Daniel, Douglas, Dryden, Richard Edwards, Fanshawe, Fletcher, Habington, Herrick, Jonson, Lydgate, Lylie, Milton, Lord Morpeth, Prior, Raleigh, Sackville, Shakespeare, Shirley, Spenser, Thomson, and Henry Wotton.
  80. As do some of the earlier writers she quotes, e.g. Douglas, 49, Prior, 64, and classical precedent (Narcissus, Adonis).
  81. Plues, *Rambles in Search of Wildflowers*, 270.
  82. For an account of how this device initially enabled women and then became a convention signalling their amateur status, see Shteir, Chapter 4, and 162-6.
  83. Plues, *Rambles*, 272.
  84. Lady Wilkinson, *Weeds and Wild Flowers: their Uses, Legends, and Literature* (London, 1858), 214-16. The coloured engravings are not by the author, but by a Mrs Bevington.
  85. Although Richard Folkard’s *Plant Lore, Legends and Lyrics* (London, 1884) appeared twenty-eight years later, it is worth contrasting with Wilkinson – who is not acknowledged, though Folkard’s content suggests she should be. Folkard’s quotations, like Wilkinson’s, are not markedly gendered, but his visual content is. The cover depicts three women gathering flowers, the foremost one naked, and the frontispiece is from a seventeenth-century drawing of Eden, with Adam next to a fruiting tree, and Eve stooping to an herbaceous plant.
  86. A. Pratt, *Wild Flowers*, 2 vols, (London, 1852). The religious emphasis is increased by some of the verse commissioned from other women writers for this book, e.g. II, 78-9, 103; IV, 35.
  87. A. Pratt, *The Excellent Woman as Described in the Book of Proverbs* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1847), 6-7.
  88. Pratt, *Flowers and their Associations* (London: Charles Knight, 1840), 255.
  89. Both Loudon and Plues attempted this identification, in, respectively, *British Wild Flowers* (300-1) and *Rambles*, 270, quoted above.
  90. *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of Great Britain* (London: SPCK, 1850-7) V, 253. The less botanical and more cultural *Flowers and their Associations*, 358-9, has two quotations, but neither has a marked gender message.
  91. *Flowering Plants*, V, 239. Compare Keble on the Snowdrop, as quoted by Robert Tyas, *Favourite Field Flowers*, (London, 1848), 4.
  92. *Flowers and their Associations*, 352-8. Compare Tennyson’s famous description of Maud as ‘Queen lily and rose in one’, *Maud*, l. 905.
  93. Only the first three editions contain this plate. It is reproduced in P. Tomory, *The Life and Art of Henry Fuseli* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), plate 173, and in Shteir, 25.
  94. This illustration adds a crucial element of self-reflexivity to the similar multifaceted presentations of flowers noted by Hawkins, “Formed with curious skill”, para. 28.

- Alan Bewell, “On the Banks of the South Sea”, discusses the erotics of the link between women and flowers in the context of the late eighteenth century, which he claims ‘implicitly offered women a language for understanding and talking about their own sexuality’ but without suggesting specific examples of women taking up this possibility ( 175).
95. Quoted in Cherry, *Painting Women*, 81. The continuing persuasiveness of Mulvey’s model is noted by Lynne Pearce in *Feminism and the Politics of Reading* (London: Arnold, 1997), 12, in spite of her own view (44).
  96. Terry Eagleton’s phrase, *Literary Theory: an Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 164.
  97. Grosz, *Jacques Lacan: a Feminist Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1990), 35.
  98. *Parables*, 86-7.
  99. The question of women in birding has been discussed recently in Stephen Moss’s *A Bird in the Bush: a Social History of Birdwatching* (London: Aurum, 2004), 315-30. He sees the barriers in the nineteenth century as ‘lack of time, lack of money, and the lack of freedom to choose’ (320), and, more recently, as both ideological and practical (lack of bushes to urinate behind, 330).
  100. Up to the eighteenth century ‘botanical painting was considered to be a man’s job’ because of the risks explorers faced: Margaret Stevens, *The Art of Botanical Painting* (London: Collins, 2004), 10.
  101. S. Sherwood, *Contemporary Botanical Artists: the Shirley Sherwood Collection*, ed. V. Matthews (Kew: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1996); S. Sherwood, *A Passion for Plants* (London: Cassell, 2001).