Strangers Among Us: Invasive Plants In British Literature, 1669-1800.

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“STRANGERS AMONG US”: INVASIVE PLANTS IN BRITISH LITERATURE, 1669-1800.

A dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in English
In the Department of English
The University of Mississippi

by
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May 2016
ABSTRACT

Exotic flora in the long eighteenth century (1666-1800) embodied a point of contact between the natural and imaginary worlds, bearing witness to the ways that ideology relocates living things according to human desire. Most accounts view these exotics through the lens of ecological imperialism and “invasive” species. Both of these terms are twenty-first century metaphors that materialize the role of imperialism in circulating exotics, applying the narrative of invading British empire to the behavior of foreign plants. However, such accounts do not fully acknowledge the cultural work that images of foreign plants do. I opt instead for an ecocritical reappraisal of the idea of “invasive species,” one that acknowledges imperialism while accounting for the ways in which these flora act as more fluid and adaptable symbols that can endorse conflicting ideologies as the era progresses. Chapter 1 uncovers this cultural work in the Restoration using the writings of Abraham Cowley and John Evelyn, arguing that these writers celebrate the return of Charles II through the Royalist oak and the tropical orange, employing both trees as symbols of a British landscape that praises the monarch by welcoming exotic flora from across the globe. Chapter 2 tracks the ways in which exotic flora represent the masculine aesthetic of the “genius of the place,” formulated by Alexander Pope and the Royal Society botanist Richard Bradley. As exotic flora take root in a new market of gardening women in the midcentury, male writers, as Chapter 3 observes, use the rhetoric of the virtuoso to cast aspersions on women who garden as a way to announce their literacy, as exemplified in the writings of Eliza Haywood. Chapter 4 extends these trends into the picturesque and botanical cults of the late eighteenth century to trace the emergence of the greenhouse not only to display tropical rarities, but also to stage anxieties about the economy that circulated these living commodities, charting this anxiety through James Thomson’s portrayal of the tropic zone in The Seasons, and in William Cowper’s greenhouse in The Task.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to
My parents Debi and Scott, who always let me know how proud they are;
    My partner Jeff, who always propped up my dejected spirits;
    My friends, who always commiserated and celebrated.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I send my deepest gratitude to my committee: Dr. Jason Solinger, Dr. Karen Raber, Dr. Erin Drew, and Dr. Theresa Levitt. Without financial support from the Department of English, none of this would have been possible.
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INTRODUCTION: “STRANGERS AMONG US”

I. The Amiable Foreigner

It is not enough that trees should be naturalized to the climate, they must also be naturalized to the landscape, and mixed and incorporated with the natives. A patch of foreign trees planted by themselves in the out-skirts of a wood, or in some open corner of it, mix with the natives, much like a group of young Englishmen at an Italian conversazione: But when some plant of foreign growth appears to spring up by accident, and shoots out of its beautiful, but less familiar foliage among our natural trees, it has the same pleasing effect, as when a beautiful and amiable foreigner has acquired our language and manners so as to converse with the freedom of a native, yet retains enough of original accent and character, to give a peculiar grace and zest to all her words and actions.


Imagine that Sir Uvedale Price is leading us through one of his “picturesque” landscapes. He pauses every now and then to explain to us what we ought to see in this perspective, or how this grove of trees balances that charming crag, or how this turn of the path affords a charming view of the hills, and so on. Along the way he offers instructions on how to properly plant one of these landscapes on our own grounds. In the midst of such discussions, he passingly remarks on how to properly naturalize a foreign tree. He informs us that such a tree ought not only match the climate of where it is planted, but it also must seem as though it sprang up there naturally. He compares the poorly naturalized tree to a group of Englishmen huddled at the corner of a continental salon, awkward, incapable of mingling. He then reverses the analogy, explaining that a properly naturalized tree will behave like an “amiable foreigner” who has so thoroughly adapted as to “converse with the freedom of a native,” yet still retain its “peculiar grace and zest” as a guest in this well-designed landscape. He is critical not of the exotic tree, but of those who plant it to ill effect. His idealized landscape might resemble the rural English countryside, yet he is all too pleased to introduce into
this environment plants that do not biologically originate from it. His tone is welcoming.

To us, over 200 years later, in our time of ecological crisis, when we have altered the very seasons that people in previous centuries could take for granted, and when we have spread into nearly every environment organisms that do not biologically “belong,” Price’s remark sounds problematic. The “amiable foreigner” he admires for naturalizing can easily become too amiable, too acclimated to its new environment. On the one hand, this stranger might be some innocuous species that happens to come from somewhere other than England. Or, on the other, this strange new tree might be something aggressive or threatening—something like the *Rhododendron ponticum* introduced by the horticulturalist Conrad Loddige in his nursery in the 1760s. This rhododendron is a flowering shrub that, according to Richard Mabey’s *Flora Britannica*, “has escaped from gardens and built up impenetrable, obstinately rooted, evergreen thickets at the expense of almost all other species,” and is thus “regarded as a menace” (158). Indeed, as Mabey notes, the eighteenth century, the “Age of Improvement,” saw many such invasive species introduced into England, and the *Rhododendron ponticum* in particular was a favorite among picturesque gardeners (158). We might imagine, then, that Price’s seemingly innocent remark about some “amiable foreigner” could be just the sort of advice that prompted landscapers to populate Britain’s forests with “some plant[s] of foreign growth,” whose “beautiful, but less familiar foliage” appears to “shoot” among these British trees as though it naturally grew there. We might imagine that Price’s “amiable foreigner” as an invasive species.

Admittedly, one would need to be preoccupied with ecological problems to make such a leap. Laced with picturesque language of the sort that masks the material impact of the environments he describes, Price’s leisurely treatise, his stroll through his imaginary landscapes, invites us to overlook the ecological realities that such landscapes ultimately made possible. Or, conversely, with our own warming climate, and our biodiversity on the brink of collapse, our irrevocably altered world tempts us to judge Price’s musings as ignorant, perhaps even malevolent.
Knowing that we as a species depend for survival on the environments we have spoiled, our presentism might be excused.

This study is about presentism, in a way. More precisely, this study examines images of exotic flora in literature of the long eighteenth century in order to bring our own ecologically-conscious presentism in conversation with writers who, like Price, mention these exotic plants in passing, rarely with any awareness of their potentially invasive behavior, or any concern for their foreign origin. There is something in these portrayals of exotic flora that our own presentism prevents us from seeing, something that reveals some glimpse of the motives for transplanting into new environments things that do not belong. This “something” is complicated by the very metaphor implied in the term “invasive species.” Calling an organism’s behavior “invasive” personifies it, assigning it an agency that we might associate with invading barbarians, or invading colonizers. We anthropomorphize such species, and, when we do so, we not only attempt to describe their ecological behavior, but we also—consciously or not—attribute to that species a particular story. The story goes something like this: “First, this environment was pure and intact. Then, we introduced this seemingly innocent plant that had no competition, no diseases, and no other controlling factors in this new environment. Now, this environment is overrun with what we have introduced. Therefore, this species must be invasive.”

Bound up in this narrative are various tropes of anthropocentrism, orientalism, imperialism, and consumerism. We thought the plant was “for” us. We wanted the plant because it was pleasing to the eye, and because it came from some faraway place that reminded us of something we lacked. We implemented a global economy that involved establishing colonies, trade routes, and a whole system of people and policies that allowed us to ship this plant, along with numerous other foreign commodities and enslaved humans, from its place of origin to the place where we wanted to naturalize it. We did all of these things because we thought of that plant as a thing to be purchased
and owned, rather than as a living organism specific to a particular ecosystem. In some cases, the conditions were right, and the plant thrived. In other cases, the conditions were more than just “right,” and the plant escaped cultivation, and now the plant has become a pest. This is the story we tell to describe an ecological reality we have created, and this story is very much inflected with “isms” that literary texts have created.

So this study is about images of exotic plants in literary texts from an era that proved crucial in spreading these plants into environments where they did not natively grow. This study is about both seeing past our own ecologically-minded presentism, and using that presentism to interrogate images that these writers treat as mere houseplants: background décor, floral tropes, flourishes that they can deploy to serve a number of different symbolic, metaphorical, analogical, and literary schemes. This study is about interrogating those schemes to discern the cultural forces behind ecological change. Most of all, this study is about thinking of these images of exotic flora as a point of contact between the imaginary and physical worlds, as a testimony bearing witness to the ways that ideology relocates living things according to human desire.

This study is also about the ecological impact of a particular set of stories specific to a particular culture in a particular time. Unlike the story of the invasive species we tell ourselves, the story eighteenth-century writers tell about exotic flora is less clear. There are no attempts to turn the invading species into a colonizer or a barbarian. Rather, these writers more frequently tell the tale of the foreign flower as a desirable commodity, as an art object, or as some enchanting, intriguing creature from a faraway place. It is not a simple story of imperialism or orientalism. It features no heroes or villains, no virgin lands to be ravaged by foreign weeds. It articulates a desire to fill British landscapes with flora that come from places that Britain imagined into being, both as something to distance itself from, and as something to emulate. It is a story that reveals intentions seemingly innocent, much like the dazzling leaves of some amiable foreigner shooting its strange foliage out of
II. Rhetorical Aggressions: From Amiable Foreigner to Invasive Species

How did we get from “amiable foreigner” to “invasive species,” and what did we lose along the way? How did the story change, and why should we examine that change? Perhaps the best way to begin addressing these questions is to consider—briefly—what the term “invasive species” means, and how that term compares to the way eighteenth-century writers customarily discuss exotic flora in their landscapes. Ecologists and ecocritics alike point to anthropocentrism as the cause of such ecological problems: if we thought of the world’s biota as something other than commodities, we might think twice before relocating them according to our economic and aesthetic desires. Or so the logic goes. This logic is not without evidence. One eighteenth-century instance of this anthropocentrism occurs in Joseph Addison’s Spectator essay from May 19, 1711. Adopting his customary spectatorial persona, Addison praises international commerce conducted at the Royal Exchange. His vision of this commerce is mercantilist: left to rely on its own resources, each nation would have very little to supply itself without trade with other parts of the world whose resources are better distributed. In making his case, he cites the usefulness of exotic plants to the British economy:

Natural Historians tell us, that no Fruit grows originally among us, besides Hips and Haws, Acorns and Pig Nutts, with other Delicacies of the like Nature; that our climate of it self, and without the Assistances of Art, can make no further Advances towards a Plumb than to a Sloe, and carries an Apple to no greater perfection than a Crab: that our Melons, our Peaches, our Figs, our Apricots, and Cherries, are Strangers among us, imported in different Ages, and naturalized in our English gardens; and that they would all degenerate and fall away into the Trash of our own Country, if they were wholly neglected by the Planter, and left to the Mercy of our Sun and Soil. (Spectator 69, May 19, 1711)

Addison’s anthropocentrism emerges through his focus on fruiting plants. The “Strangers among us” are melons, stonefruit, and figs that he regards as far superior to the sloes and crabapples he perceives as native to the English countryside. In fact, Addison informs us that the exotic fruits of
England’s gardens would quickly “fall away into the Trash of our own Country” were it not for the steady cultivator’s hand, implying that Britain’s native fruits fail to please the palette when compared to botanical “Strangers” from warmer parts of the world. He likewise implies that Britain’s climate is fickle: its “Sun and Soil” are merciless, and would easily ravage the tender fruits he lists, fruits of Mediterranean origin, fruits whose savor he selects in order to make foreign commerce seem as beneficial as possible to the London audience he addresses. Indeed, Addison imagines these botanical “Strangers among us” not as invaders or noxious weeds, but as precious commodities that must be shipped from abroad and carefully cultivated in English gardens. Unlike Price’s “amiable foreigner,” these “Strangers” do not naturalize on their own.

So that simple “invasive species” story we told ourselves has several wrinkles. The species we focus on reflect our anthropocentrism through their economic importance, and the ways we assign “origin” are likewise problematic. As soon as Addison claims that “no fruit grows among us,” he then proceeds to list sloes and crabapples as “native” British fruits. Addison’s interests lie elsewhere than the natural world (at least for this issue of The Spectator), so he takes the naturalists’ word for it, and uses Britain’s supposed lack of native fruit to make an argument in favor of international commerce. His rhetorical figure is synecdoche, grouping together a handful of foreign trees to represent all goods desirable from abroad. As with Price’s essay above, Addison’s articulates a desire for foreign things—fruiting things, things of benefit to human use—that we in the twenty-first century might be tempted to judge as anthropocentric. However, there is more to our presentism than anthropocentrism. Implicit in the anthropocentrism of our invasive species narrative is a kind of xenophilia, a desire for things that grow in other environments. In many ways, Addison’s xenophilia anticipates to two broader cultural forces: orientalism and imperialism. As we shall see in greater detail below, both of these forces are nineteenth-century categories that we in the twenty-first century still invoke in our narratives of invasive species; likewise, both of these cultural
forces tell stories that we project backwards onto the eighteenth century. Both of these forces have turned the amiable stranger of Addison and Price into the invasive species of today.

Twentieth-century scientific discourse labels many aggressively spreading species as “invasive,” and in using that label our ecologists apply a narrative of nineteenth-century empire onto the behavior of living things. As many literary critics of an ecological bent have pointed out, science—the language of Addison’s natural historians and our own ecologists—is inextricable from language. If anything, the problem of invasive species illustrates the degree to which scientific discourse must grapple with contradictory language and the competing narratives implied by scientists’ linguistic choices. Richard Forman and Michael Godron observe that these introduced species go by “a galaxy of names—alien, invader, introduced, adventive, and exotic” (382). From “adventive” to “invasive,” the range of terms reflects various attempts to describe in scientific vocabulary a phenomenon that threatens biodiversity worldwide, prompting ecologists to adopt such terms in order to generate popular sympathy. Implicit in each of these terms is a metaphor, a story of its own. For instance, like the metaphor of the invasive species, the metaphor of virginity carries considerable power in twenty-first century scientific rhetoric: Jozef Keulartz and Cor van der Weele connect species nativism to a kind of “restoration ecology,” which attempts to reverse anthropogenic ecological impact to an imaginary “virgin” state of nature, an “attempt to return degraded ecosystems to their original state” (103-4), and thereby restore their purity. Ecologists sometimes avoid the implicit metaphor of purity and virginity, opting for the term “ecological baseline” instead, but even this standard is still entangled in the rhetoric of what Neil Evernden

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1 For instance, in the context of queer studies and their potential overlap with ecosudies, Robert Azzarello advocates interrogating scientific discourse not as a disinterested discourse detached from the realm of empirical fact, but as a culturally produced rhetorical category. He claims that, while “Environmental studies looks to ‘the natural’ to find normative ethics . . . Queer studies, on the other hand, begins by denouncing the social anxiety contained in the concept of unnaturality and its concomitant endangerment of queer persons” (17-18). By highlighting the role of twentieth-century science in manufacturing heteronormativity, Azzarello shows one of the many ways in which science can be mobilized as a cultural force, and ought to be interrogated as such.

2 Emma Marris critiques this notion of an ecological baseline, which, while useful as a “reference state” for restoration
would call nature as normative and “healthy” (28). Indeed, the very program of restoration ecology resembles what Cary Wolfe has critiqued as “biodiversity [as] the fundamental ethical value [which] leads to predictable problems around indigeneity vs. ‘weed’ species” (100). Thus, “restoring” “virginity” and protecting “virgin” environments from “invasive” species all implies that there was some intact, pristine environment to begin with. As Evernden points out, restoring environments to a pristine “baseline” state requires an anthropocentric judgment of its own: the line defining a pristine versus a degraded environment very much depends on the stories told by the human beings drawing that line. In attempting to draw that baseline, we apply to the natural world a postcolonial narrative of restoring nature and culture to a pre-invasive state—one that proves difficult to define.

As the problematics of “baseline” or “restoration ecology” illustrate, the presentism of the invasive species narrative persists despite its ecological and cultural shortcomings. Perhaps the best instance of a cultural critic reappropriating the notion of a pre-colonial baseline occurs in Alfred Crosby’s 1986 study *Ecological Imperialism*, which chronicles the spread of various European species (plant and animal) into what he terms the “Neo-Europes” of the world (6). He characterizes these “Neo-Europes” as colonized spaces where Europeans introduced various food crops and livestock, displacing native flora and fauna. Just as twenty-first century ecologists observe, ecological imperialism causes changes in ecologies and economies so pervasive that many “neo-Europes” now “export more foodstuffs of European provenance” than any such commodities native to their own soil (Crosby 7). Crosby’s term, while problematic, has gained considerable purchase in scholarly discourse: Charles Mitchell, for instance, calls Eugene Schieffelin’s introduction of the European ecology, tends to get tangled up in the cultural history of imperialism. Restoration ecologists tend to assume an ecological baseline that occurred “before Europeans arrived,” and thereby assume a normative, ethical role for “healing a wounded or sick nature” (Marris 3).

3 Crosby’s term “ecological imperialism” should not be confused with Richard Grove’s “green imperialism.” Grove’s study (*Green Imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens, and the origins of environmentalism 1600-1860*) uses the latter term to describe the roots of the twentieth century conservation movement in early modern and eighteenth century colonial writings.
starling (Sturnus vulgaris) into New York’s Central Park an act of “ecological imperialism” and “avicultural hegemony,” however playfully (178).

Despite its problems of assigning plant origins and defining baselines, the nineteenth-century imperial narrative inflects the invasive species story, turning all of earth’s environments into a kind of Neo-Europe. However, the orientalist side of that imperial narrative also plays a role: a good many of the species labeled “invasive” are not just European in origin, but also often Asiatic. Despite the historical connotations of the term “invasive,” there is some biological truth to the behavior it describes: one needs only think of the Japanese vine kudzu (Pueraria montana) smothering groves across the southeastern United States to see such a botanical invasion in action. Although kudzu made its debut at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, many of these species were introduced during the long eighteenth century as ornamental shrubs—significant, since the eighteenth century saw the rise of landscape as its own aesthetic discourse in literature, alongside a vogue for “Chinese” landscape design. Not surprisingly, many of the species introduced during the long eighteenth century are “Oriental” in origin: Japanese honeysuckle (Lonicera japonica), Chinese wisteria (Wisteria sinensis), heavenly bamboo (Nandina domestica), tree-of-heaven (Ailanthus altissima), mimosa (Albizia julibrissin), popcorntree (Triadica sebifera), and Chinese privet (Ligustrum sinense), just to name a few. As Amy King has noted in her study of popular botany and its effect on the “bloom

4 The imperial narratives bound up in the ideas of “ecological imperialism” and “invasive species” have prompted scholars from various backgrounds to critique the continued use of these terms, not only in fields of cultural and literary studies but also in ecology as well. Brendon Larson, for instance, regards such terms as “competitive and militaristic” (172); he charts the workings of this imperial metaphor by equating bioregion to nation, then shows how the journal Biological Invasions exploits this xenophobic rhetoric to persuade its readers (Larson 178-80). Invasion ecology, therefore, employs a metaphor so powerful that, as Jozef Keulartz and Cor van der Weele argue, the metaphor of invasive species “ceases to be perceived as a metaphor and is taken literally, so that we are no longer able to recognize that it represents but a singular perspective” (102).

5 These references come from James H. Miller’s Nonnative invasive plants of southern forests: a field guide for identification and control, one of many resources listed on Invasive.org. Miller provides approximate dates for each of these species. Most were introduced into the southeastern United States in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Stephen Spongberg catalogues various botanists who imported and circulated exotic plants: John Tradescant, Mark Catesby, Andre Michaux, John and William Bartram, and Hans Sloane, all of whom sent plants from the Caribbean and the American colonies back to Europe, as well as Sir Joseph Banks, whose voyages with Captain Cook in the South Pacific likewise resulted in more botanical rarities to populate European gardens. Some of these became invasive. For instance,
narrative” in the late eighteenth-century novel, the eighteenth century saw, in addition to “Chinese” landscapes, a “broad cultural interest in plants, botanizing, and plant collection” that “contributed to an increased commercial stake in nature” (74). Accordingly, King notes that “Between 1750 and 1850, approximately five thousand foreign species of plants were introduced into England,” both by Royal Society botanists and by private nurseries and landowners (74). Thus, horticulturalists and botanists throughout the eighteenth century were responsible for circulating these exotic flora, all of which began as “strangers among us,” and some of which became “invasive.”

In replacing Addison’s and Price’s “amiable foreigners” and “strangers among us” with “invasive species,” we have applied a nineteenth-century narrative of empire and orientalism both onto the behavior of living things we have observed in our own era and onto the narratives told by eighteenth-century writers. Bound up in our presentism, these categories prevent us from seeing what happened in the eighteenth century to contribute to our current ecological crisis. How then, might we reconstruct the stories that eighteenth-century writers told themselves about the botanical strangers they brought into their midst? What might these stories reveal about eighteenth-century culture, so often judged for seeding empire and environmental catastrophe? This study brings ecostudies to bear on the material practices of horticulture in eighteenth-century texts, to the extent that these texts allow us to reconstruct them. This study employs a specific focus on exotic flora themselves, as literary images and rhetorical tropes, and as specimens detailed in horticultural and

William Hamilton, in his estate at the Woodlands in the early nineteenth century, first planted the Chinese tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), which soon escaped cultivation and infested the American landscape (Spongberg 88).

6 Not all invaders were spread through deliberate human activity; many accompanied human migration inadvertently, or were spread through natural forces. Forman and Godron list many such species which, thanks to a lack of natural predators and deterrents, invade new environments when dispersed naturally (293); however, regardless of the means by which a species spreads, any introduced species can cause at the very least an indelible mark on the landscape, and, at most, irreversible consequences. Forman and Godron list a variety of “village species” that spread around any areas of human settlement worldwide: such species include not only common lawn weeds such as shepherd’s purse (*Capsella bursa-pastoris*), plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), and dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), but also such animals as the housefly (*Musca domestica*) (294).
botanical texts. This study then takes these representations and brings them into conversation with the political, economic, and gendered ramifications that propagate from them. In this regard, this study aims to excavate the cultural roots of an ecological problem, bringing together literary representation and (as much as possible) material practice.

III. Anthropocentrism, Imperialism, and Other Noxious Weeds.

I have said that this study is in many ways about our own ecologically-minded presentism, and keeping that presentism in check. Indeed, as heirs to the Enlightenment project of “improving” the environment—i.e., maximizing the environment’s production of material wealth for humans of European descent—it is understandable for us to look to the eighteenth century as the origin of many of our environmental woes. Accordingly, this study furthers scholarly attempts to reread the eighteenth century through an ecocritical lens, not merely as a precursor to our own anthropocentrism, but in a more searching, more complex way. In doing so, I bring eighteenth-century studies and ecostudies together in three new and necessary ways. First, this study attends to the relationship between material, horticultural practice and literary representations of exotic flora, furthering the recent materialist turn in garden studies and ecostudies. This study’s second contribution is a specific focus on the way exotic flora function as literary tropes, as rhetorical figures: in each of these capacities, this study contends that exotic flora functioned as

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7 Jonathan Bate, for instance, locates in the Enlightenment a post-Cartesian split between nature and culture, one whose ultimate consequence has been to view the natural world as “a place neither of mystery nor sanctuary but rather something to be managed” (168). The result of this split between nature and culture is an instrumentalist view of nature, one that elevates humanity to a position of mastery while relegating other biota as mere resources, fit for human exploitation. In the writings of the British Romantics, Bate finds glimmers of conservationism. He phrases this sentiment as a communion between humans and the natural world, a communion of “a peculiar intensity” that “diminishes when technology and industrialization alienate us from” that world (244). In this regard, Bate’s narrative, like our own of the invasive species, is typical in projecting onto the eighteenth century a certain presentism. Just as Bate finds in the Romantics some glimmer of proto-conservationist sentiment, our own metaphor of the invasive species has caused us to project onto the eighteenth century narratives of our own making, narratives of Enlightenment empire that circulated into each part of the world plants that do not belong. While glimmers of those narratives do actually exist in these texts, the temptation is easy to construe the Enlightenment as the villain, and our own post-Romantic conservationism as the savior.
representations of living things that occupied both a role as organisms in the British environment and as art objects. Finally, this study contributes a reading of the complex social, political, economic, and gendered ramifications of how exotic flora function in discourses about the British nation and environment in the eighteenth century. These contributions are all necessary because they extend ecocritical attempts to reevaluate the role eighteenth-century culture played in shaping the physical environment we in the twenty-first century have inherited.

In excavating the cultural roots of an ecological problem, this study heeds the recent materialist turn in ecosudies, namely by establishing a relationship between horticultural texts and literary representations of exotic flora. In garden history, this materialist turn is not quite so recent, though to garden historians this material focus more closely resembles historicism in literary studies. Almost any essay in the journal *Garden History* has to make some concession that horticultural practice did not always mirror literary representation, and this incongruence has plagued attempts by literary scholars to link the two. As Donna Landry observes in her reading of greenhouse romanticism in Jane Austen’s fiction, Alistair Duckworth’s *The Improvement of the Estate* has prompted critics to attend more to “The large, panoramic prospects” of picturesque estates than to “talking about geraniums in pots” (722n): such historicist literary studies cause literary scholars necessarily to

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8 Serenella Iovino and Serpil Opperman, in their introduction to the 2014 collection of essays entitled *Material Ecocriticisms*, trace this materialist turn from the “thing theory” of Bill Brown and the “vibrant matter” of Jane Bennett to ecocritics who work with the narratives undergirding our ecological crises. Bringing these strains of critical theory to bear on narrative scholarship “completes” the work of previous literary scholars by making “the emanating point of the narrative . . . No longer the human self, but the human-nonhuman complex of interrelated agencies” (9). This study thinks of plants as living things, so this study only engages such theory implicitly. Plants are inanimate, but still classified as a form of life; however, like the abiotic elements studied in such ecocritical efforts, plants participate as part of the ecosystem. Thus, plants have what Iovino, Opperman, and Bennett might call a “distributive agency,” an agency distinct from both the animal and mineral worlds.

9 Tom Williamson, for instance, anticipates the materialist turn in garden history when he issues a corrective to Anne Bermingham’s *Landscape and Ideology*. He qualifies his approach by specifying that, on the one hand Bermingham’s arguments about the deployment of landscape to naturalize social difference are necessary for showing the ways in which culture makes “vast inequalities appear normal and unchanging” (8). However, on the other hand, “we must recognize their limitations” because “individual landowners were, it can be argued, more concerned about the impression their gardens made on their neighbors of similar social rank than with the impact they had on the local poor” (8). Stephen Bending likewise frames his history of the role of women in British gardening with a materialist edge, emphasizing the physical garden spaces British imperial subjects created, rather than just their literary representation (4-5).
shy away from attempts to bridge the gaps between material and literary, particularly in images of landscapes, gardens, and environment. The critical “tendency to bracket the horticultural dimension” of landscape studies tends to obscure not only the gaps but the potentially productive overlap between the two (722n). Likewise, histories of botany and imperialism tend to overlook the ecological impact of individual plants themselves, attending instead to the broad strokes of historical movements. As E. C. Spary notes in his case study of Pierre Poivre’s attempts to transplant the true nutmeg (*Myristica fragrans*) to France in order to break the seventeenth-century Dutch monopoly on the spice, “‘Big histories’ of colonial botany . . . pass swiftly over the highly contested, complex procedure by means of which the living plant in its ‘other’ location became interchangeable with the metropolitan substance of commerce” (187). In connecting horticultural and literary representations of exotic flora, this study seeks to bring together not only primary texts of different fields, but also different strains of scholarship. Previous histories of imperialism and botany—or literature and botany—tend to underplay the ecological impact of the plant specimens involved in the colonial commerce they allude to. Likewise, these studies tend to overlook the fact that, while these literary representations of exotic flora are indeed literary representations, these representations ultimately refer to physical, living organisms that British subjects circulated across the globe. While literary representation and material practice might not always exhibit a simple one-to-one correspondence, these representations allow us to peer into the cultural fantasies undergirding the desire to transplant the botanical strangers among us.

In reconstructing these cultural fantasies, I adopt a specific focus on how exotics are evaluated both in ecostudies and in eighteenth-century studies. This focus responds to previous histories of botany and empire, which often presume that eighteenth-century people had a strictly instrumentalist view of nature. The charge of instrumentalism is understandable, and, in the case of many eighteenth-century texts, this instrumentalism can be modified or qualified, but never entirely
written away. The workings of empire are often complicit with the workings of anthropocentrism, as ecocritical scholarship in eighteenth-century studies must often admit. William M. Adams and Martin Mulligan, in their attempt to decouple twentieth-century colonialism from conservation, detect in eighteenth-century imperialism “a distinctive pattern of engagement with nature: a destructive, utilitarian, and cornucopian” one (22). Answering the call to revise the view that the eighteenth century ultimately led to our own anthropocentrism, such scholarship searches eighteenth-century writings for hints that our presentism prevents us from seeing, while still accounting for the often imperial, often anthropocentric views these writers convey. Christopher Hitt, for instance, in making his case for the vital role that eighteenth-century studies can play in ecostudies, acknowledges that no eighteenth-century text can be reduced to some “proto-ecological sentiment,” but instead must be considered in fuller complexity (127). In looking back on the eighteenth century from our own era of ecological crisis, we must both keep our presentism in check and acknowledge these writers as more than merely mouthpieces of European human empire. In each of these writers, exotic flora evidence a broader, richer, and more complex engagement with the natural world—often instrumentalist, but not always exclusively so.

Finally, I read these literary representations of exotic flora as implications of something broader than themselves, more than mere rhetorical flores, and more than simply representations of living specimens. I attend to the social, political, economic, and gendered implications that these images of exotic have in discourses of nation and the environment. I say “nation” here instead of “empire” because, while empire certainly existed in one form or another in the eighteenth century, it is important to think of eighteenth-century nationalism as an entity distinct from nineteenth-century imperialism. This, too, is a critical impulse that this study acts against, despite (and precisely because of) the well-documented synergy between botany and empire. Previous accounts of exotic botany in eighteenth-century letters have made a compelling case for this complicity. Most notable of these
critics is Mary Louise Pratt, who has identified the role of European botanists in spreading imperial power to colonized lands. In her account, the botanist appears in travel literature “Alongside the frontier figures of the seafarer, the conqueror, the captive, [and] the diplomat” as an unlikely agent of empire, armed not with the sword of conquest but “with nothing more than a collector’s bag, a notebook, and some specimen bottles” (26). They, too, in their application of Linnaean botanical names to indigenous flora, enact a form of empire that divests itself of its armor in order to claim intellectual ownership of the biota of colonized environments. Likewise, Jill Casid sees in the establishment of empire a metaphor of planting that replaces conquest with farming: as part of what she calls “imperial georgic,” the very act of colonizing entails a “founding imperial gesture of sowing seed,” resulting ultimately in the postcolonial diaspora which, likewise, “signifies a scattering of seed” across the regions of the globe colonized by European powers (Sowing Empire xvii). Equating empire to plantation results in a “materializing metaphor of the practices of agriculture and landscaping as heterosexual reproduction” that “produce[d] imperial subjects to populate the colony or work the plantation machine” (Casid Sowing Empire xvii). These “herborizers” were not the only agents in this imperial mission of scientific study: as the Linnaean botanists began classifying and transplanting exotic flora, their specimen plants, too, proved crucial in altering both the tropical ecosystems they observed, as well as the European ecosystems whose gardens would receive the botanical strangers they sent back home.

This study draws from garden history, landscape studies, and ecosudies for its critical

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10 Beth Fowkes Tobin has remarked that “the culture of botanical connoisseurship” in the late eighteenth century “invested tropical plants with cultural significance” (181), a cultural significance specific to the place and time into which these botanical connoisseurs introduced their new specimens. Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan have highlighted the ways in which naturalizing a plant in a specimen garden and assimilating it into a new culture go hand in hand: when Europeans shipped botanical specimens back to Europe, they routinely “wiped exotic flora clean of cultural complexities” attributed to them by indigenous peoples in their native environments “in order to be pasted neatly into folios of European herbaria, shipped effortlessly to European botanical gardens, and included efficiently in European classificatory systems,” resulting in a palimpsest of cultural meanings overlaying each plant the Linnaean botanists classified (7).
framework. For its primary sources, this study relies on essays, poetry, botanical texts, and horticultural manuals, since these kinds of texts best represent the image of the exotic plant wherever it appears. If essays, poetry, and fiction use the exotic plant as a rhetorical trope, botanical texts and horticultural manuals offer at least some sense of the ecological, material impact of the plant specimen, the ways in which people thought about these botanical “strangers” as living art objects intended to decorate their grounds. By transforming exotic plant into art object, eighteenth-century writers overlooked the potential of such art objects to become an ecological problem in their own right. This study’s attendance to the material, horticultural, and pragmatic concerns behind transplanting exotic flora helps serve its ecocritical goals. Cheryll Glotfelty lists such goals as part of the unifying concerns of ecostudies as a field: we must use a variety of literary and nonliterary texts in order to establish “What bearing might the science of ecology [might] have on literary studies,” the ways in which “science itself [is] open to literary analysis,” and “What cross-fertilization is possible between literary studies and environmental discourse” (xviii-xix).

Horticultural texts and literary texts are prisms, not mirrors: they cannot reflect accurately the material and historical realities of the people who transplanted such specimens, but they can offer a glimpse into the cultural narratives that undergird an ecological problem.

I contend that the key eighteenth-century narrative contained within the twenty-first century problem of invasive species is, in its simplest form, one of xenophilia. In order to better inform this narrative, this study brings eighteenth-century criticism to bear on the stories that horticultural and

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11 Although there are plenty of portrayals of exotic flora in eighteenth-century novels, this study necessarily overlooks fiction. Such works of narrative fiction as Robinson Crusoe often portray exotic botany in the context of island gardens spatially removed from the British metropole (cf. Jill Casid’s article “Inhuming Empire”). While these portrayals are significant for the light they shed on European fantasies of empire abroad, I opt for essays and poetry instead because these genres offer a better picture of what exotic botany looked like to British subjects transplanting foreign plants into their own landscapes in England. Essays and poetry, like horticultural manuals and botanical texts, focus more on the aesthetics, mechanics, and class dynamics that shaped British environments. Consequently, this study also positions Britain as a metropolitan center in this circulation of exotic flora, even though the colonies also played a role as hubs of this imperial plant trade in their own right.
literary texts unfold about the desire for all things exotic. Recent scholarship in eighteenth-century studies has shown that xenophilia is a more productive term than orientalism. An example would serve to illustrate why. The figure of the invasive plant—plant as invader rather than amiable stranger—does exist in eighteenth-century English letters. However, its appearance is quite rare. In an anonymous satire on avarice published in 1737, the figure appears as the noxious weed. The satirist uses the image amidst a diatribe on the South Sea Bubble:

Discreetly vain, our Neighbours loath
The Fopp’ries not of native Growth.
Britain most humbly picks up all
Scatter’d throughout this Spacious Ball.
Inhospitable now no more,
Each Vice is welcome to her Shore.
The dearest-bought, the most she prizes,
And, howe’er foreign, nat’ralizes.
As here each Plant Exotic lives,
Here each Exotic Folly thrives.
Britain this Ware, like other sorts,
Always importing, ne’er exports. (12)

Adopting a mercantilist vision of British economy that values the profits of exports over the expense of imports, the satirist establishes a metaphor between the behavior of the exotic weed and the behavior of fickle consumers. The rhythmic repetition of “Each Vice,” “each Plant Exotic,” and “each Exotic Folly” links avarice to rambunctious vegetation, emphasizing the image of Britain as the collector of all the “Fopp’ries not of native Growth” “Scatter’d throughout this Spacious Ball.” The satirist’s end is a moral one, of course, seeking to reform the greed of the English consumer by characterizing that greed as a kind of reckless xenophilia, and manifesting that greed as a noxious plant from abroad strangling Britain’s verdant shores. However, the satirist’s image is hardly typical. As with various goods from foreign shores, the weed “not of native Growth” indicates a broader preoccupation of British culture with exotic things.

In fact, if anything, the satirist’s noxious weed points not to the xenophobia for which the writer uses it, but to the xenophilia that makes the weed noxious to begin with, a xenophilia we will
see repeatedly used not to restrict the flow of exotics into the English landscape, but to increase it. In this regard, this study furthers a prevailing strain of scholarship on the eighteenth century which treats xenophilia in eighteenth-century English culture. Such criticism\textsuperscript{12} likewise revises Edward Said’s thesis by highlighting the degree to which our modern notion of orientalism projects a nineteenth-century historical narrative backward. Like the narrative of invasive species, projecting orientalism backwards results in the conception of the eighteenth century as an era whose empire was simply less pronounced than in the nineteenth century. Most notably, Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins critiques this tendency, making a case instead that the category of eighteenth-century chinoiserie constitutes a form of Englishness. Jenkins views Chinese objects as “a literary medium that organized . . . New subjectivities in the early modern period” (14), new ways of bolstering the “coherence of Englishness” by using chinoiserie as an aesthetic category for articulating English character (13). Seen in this way, “England stands out among all other nations because it contains all other nations” (Jenkins 18). Such scholarship attempts to reconceptualize eighteenth-century English identity as cosmopolitan, an identity that embraces rather than rejects all others. Indeed, as we have seen with Addison and Price above, it is in this spirit that exotic flora were transplanted into the British landscape. The British landscape garden over the course of the eighteenth century becomes increasingly cosmopolitan, encompassing botanical “strangers” from all climates in order to realize a space in which all of the botanical rarities of the world thrive in one place.

Seen through this lens, the satirist’s “noxious weed” becomes less an indicator of some xenophobia endemic to the English character, and more a strategic political position adopted by a particular author at a particular time. The image of the noxious weed illustrates the exception rather

\textsuperscript{12} Robert Batchelor, likewise, calls for rethinking the critical narratives we as cultural critics tell, cautioning against “the reduction of transcultural processes to binary discursive oppositions rooted in inherited ideas about national cultures, imperial economies, and civilizational contrasts” (80). Srinivas Aravamudan has also proposed an alternative paradigm for imagining the eighteenth century’s relationship to the Orient: he uses “enlightenment orientalism” to refer to “a fictional mode for dreaming with the Orient” (8).
than the rule: it represents simply a rhetorical posture that a writer uses to characterize foreign things as malicious, precisely because that writer lives in a culture that desires foreign things. Jenkins has observed this phenomenon in the way male writers deploy xenophilia as a charge against women. When they do so, they articulate not the norm within English culture, but a political position that uses women’s desire for exotic goods as a critique against their character (Jenkins 12). Not a single parlor in England existed without some reference to an imaginary China; likewise, not a single garden in England—Stowe, the Chelsea Physic Garden, Kew, the Leasowes—has a complete story without exotic flora. As Douglas Chambers puts it, “All gardening is in some sense an act of translation,” translation in the sense of removing one thing from its place of origin and embedding it in another (12). Indeed, this act of translation to create the ideal garden ultimately results in landscapes populated either with infertile hybrids that support none of the biota endemic to an ecosystem (as Emma Marris reminds us), or to invasives that actively strangle those biota out (146). This is because, before the eighteenth century, the garden drew on such mythic environments as Eden, Arcadia, and the Hesperides—landscapes that assembled plants from disparate places—landscapes that existed only in stories. Such tales, available in literary texts, reveal the cultural roots of an ecological problem, and the cultural ramifications attending that problem.

IV. The Imaginary Garden.

Exotic flora in this era embodied a point of contact between natural and imaginary worlds, and that means that these exotic flora carry complex social, economic, and gendered implications. These flora act as fluid and adaptable symbols that can endorse various, even conflicting ideologies as the century progresses. By moving beyond the framework of “invasive” species, I offer a broader and more complete account of the cultural work of exotic flora in eighteenth-century letters.
In Chapter 1, I argue that, during the Restoration Abraham Cowley and John Evelyn use the figure of the orange, a fruit that can transplant anywhere, alongside the Royalist oak, rooted in England’s mythic and material past, to imagine a British landscape that celebrates the restoration of Charles II by welcoming and naturalizing exotic flora from the outside world. Evelyn’s *Sylva* functions as a royalist manifesto, advising the import of tropical variety into the British landscape. He weds the agenda of bolstering Britain’s forests to improve its naval power with the agenda of importing exotics in order to endow England with the means to establish mercantilist self-sufficiency. Cowley’s *Six Books of Plants* uses the orange and the image of an exiled Pomona to naturalize and legitimate Charles II’s claims to England, anticipating that his return to the throne will then be inscribed on England’s landscape through the presence of exotic plants. The orange’s mobility, along with the horticultural practices involved in transplanting the citrus, contrasts the stability of the English oak: mighty and rooted, the oak always manages to find its way back home in the image of the ship mast, which these writers associate with a growing international commerce transporting homeward the goods—and plants—of abroad.

In Chapter 2, I argue that, in the early eighteenth century, Alexander Pope and the Royal Society botanist Richard Bradley develop the horticultural aesthetic of the “genius of the place,” as Pope famously put it, in order to import exotic flora as accessories for the Augustan gentleman gardener, all while shunning the figure of the virtuoso for engaging in the same horticultural practices. Devolving from an elite figure of broad-ranging interest in the natural world to a mere dabbler and dilettante, the virtuoso thus serves as a straw man. Focusing on Pope’s *Dunciad*, Richard Bradley’s horticultural texts, and Joseph Addison’s *Spectator* essays, Chapter 2 analyzes the complex role that the virtuoso plays, a role that characterizes interest in the natural world as small-minded while authorizing that same interest among a select male elite. Thus, in different contexts, the virtuoso becomes a convenient tool for casting aspersions on the tastes of some gentlemen while
privileging the tastes of others, all while legitimating the import of exotic plants into England’s
gardens.

In Chapter 3, I argue that by the midcentury, exotics among women function in much the
same way—as a means to proclaim status as ladies of learning—while provoking an anxious
response among male writers, and while prompting an attempt among female writers to revise and
respond to this anxiety. Eliza Haywood best illustrates this trend, since her writings retaliate
masculine attempts to characterize female accomplishment in gardening (as well as other areas of
endeavor) as dubious, resulting in the figure of the uppity bluestocking woman as an emblem of
false learning. Haywood’s *Female Spectator* critiques this kind of false learning in men, reappropriating
masculinist tropes of vapid learning and effeminacy to create a space for her spectatorial voice as a
source of authority for her female readership. Midcentury writers also align the fashionable feminine
aesthetic of sharawadgi—a kind of chinoiserie—with the emerging genre of romantic fiction,
turning the material practices of landscaping into a metaphor for weaving tales of faraway lands. In
this fashion, horticultural and literary texts voice subtle anxieties about this influx of exotics.

Chapter 4 extends into the picturesque and botanical cults of the late eighteenth century to
trace the emergence of the greenhouse, deployed not only geographically and architecturally to
house tropical rarities, but also imaginatively to stage anxieties about the economy that circulated
these living trophies of empire. This anxiety plays out in James Thomson’s portrayal of the tropic
zone in *The Seasons*, in William Cowper’s greenhouse in *The Task*, and in William Mason’s parterres
in *The English Garden*. Comparing Thomson, Cowper, and Mason, I argue that the tropic space is
first projected into a different latitude altogether, and is thus entirely foreign to England, whereas
later in the century the temperate zone enfolds the tropics, naturalizing them by designating certain
spaces for them to thrive. These naturalized tropic zones offer all the botanical treasures of Britain’s
colonies to the imperial subject’s hand, obscuring the sordid economy of slave labor that brought
this vegetable wealth across the sea. Ultimately, the horticultural technology of the greenhouse collapses the distance between the temperate and tropic zones, activating latent anxieties about the workings of British empire by obscuring these workings, and allowing British landowning subjects to inhabit the garden as a fantasy landscape filled with botanical strangers from abroad, strangers whose passivity as plants allows British people to turn Britain into a cosmopolitan imperial tropical fantasy.

The ideal garden, planted with all fruits and flowers desirable to the taste and eye, is a story from whose common root springs the invasive plant. Why Asia, why the Orient, and why the constant attempt to alter physical landscapes in order to afford the visual pleasures of plants that do not biologically originate from them—these sorts of questions require an interrogation of literature as part of a xenophilic culture, and that culture as a contributing factor to our ecological reality. In excavating the cultural roots of an ecological problem, I seek to attend to these political, cultural, gendered, and economic implications in ways that previous studies have necessarily overlooked. I do so in order to show the ecological impact of the stories that literary texts can tell.
CHAPTER 1: THE OAK AND THE ORANGE:
NATURALIZING EXILE AND THE RESTORATION

IN ABRAHAM COWLEY’S SIX BOOKS OF PLANTS AND JOHN EVELYN’S SYLVA

I. The Royal Tree and The Tropical Tree

Gardens in seventeenth-century Europe proclaim the power of the state as a steward of knowledge. Although monarchs throughout European history had always used gardens to naturalize their authority, the garden over the course of the seventeenth century undergoes a significant change: the variety of exotic specimens increases. The practical explanation for this increase points to Britain’s emergence as a colonial power. Britain’s overseas commerce—the hints of its first age of empire—broadens its access to botanical specimens from around the globe. Certainly British gardeners had been seeking out exotic flora before the seventeenth century; however, during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, gardens began to function as repositories of European scientific expeditions, living curiosity cabinets in which each exotic plant serves as an object of study and display, a material representation of Europe’s apprehension of the natural world. Not surprisingly, gardens served a crucial role in the development of the natural sciences: like specimen cabinets, the garden could be used to curate, catalog, and showcase the objects of European scientific inquiry (i.e., colonial subjugation). Richard Grove traces the totalizing classificatory function of the garden to the hortus medicus of the fifteenth century. Grove interprets

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13 One could, in fact, argue that the garden fulfills the same ideological function that Benedict Anderson ascribes to the museum. Anderson describes the cultural work of the museum as one that enmeshes objects in a “totalizing classificatory grid, which could be applied with endless flexibility to anything under the state’s real or contemplated control” (184). In the institution of the museum, Anderson discerns a way for modern nations “to create alternative legitimacies” of power that obscure the brutality and violence on which that power rests (181).
these medicinal gardens as “the sites of the first attempts to classify plants on a global basis” (72). Thanks to this rhetorical scheme, the garden—both as a physical space and as a figure—increasingly grew into a representation of the power of the state, specifically by accumulating new exotic flora. Gardens also fulfilled a function analogous to that of botanical texts, which, like the garden, represented exotic flora both as objects of inquiry and, implicitly, as evidence of the state’s imperial reach. Beth Fowkes Tobin describes this ideological dimension of the garden in terms of “the rhetorical strategies of decontextualization, typification, and sometimes recontextualization” (25). In Tobin’s analysis, decontextualization is what happens to exotic specimens in herbal and horticultural texts in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Pressed and drawn on the pages of botanical volumes, exotic plants are uprooted from their original environment, and given a rhetorical context utterly divorced from whatever cultural meaning they might have had in their places of origin. Just as these specimens were naturalized in gardens, they were recontextualized in texts.

So, besides the practical explanation of imperial networks of commerce increasing Britain’s access to exotic specimens, what else causes the garden to assume this new ideological role? What cultural or historical forces contributed to this change? For Britain in the seventeenth century, the chief answer is exile. The courtiers and aristocrats responsible for Britain’s gardens were banished from England in the events leading up to the execution of Charles I in 1649, and ending with the restoration of Charles II in 1660. For over a decade, Charles II’s retinue lingered with him in Europe while he attempted—unsuccessfully—to wrest power from Oliver Cromwell’s protectorate. The separation of British aristocrats from their homeland forced them to conceive of their British identity in new ways, ways that had to reconcile their appetite for Continental luxuries with their

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14 Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan agree with Tobin’s assessment of the role of decontextualization here. They remark that European botanists would routinely acculturize plant specimens, “wip[ing them] clean of cultural complexities in order to be pasted neatly into folios of European herbaria, shipped effortlessly into European botanical gardens, and included efficiently in European classificatory systems,” resulting in a palimpsest of cultural meanings (Introduction to Colonial Botany 7).
yearning for a taste of home. As we shall see below, gardens during the Restoration offered a testament to the restored monarch’s power, not only through a blending of British and continental horticultural design, but also through accumulating exotic specimens. In this regard, the garden fuels the appetite for exotic goods that the restored court brought back to England, and recreates a sense of the old aristocratic order specifically by opening its borders to specimens from abroad.

This is why two particular Restoration writers—Abraham Cowley and John Evelyn—imagine landscapes as gardens abounding in exotic flora. Charles II’s exiled retinue set a standard for consumption, a taste for exotic goods, and, after the Restoration, aristocrats decorated their gardens according to this standard with increasing numbers of exotic specimens. Hence this chapter’s central claim: horticultural practices influence the ways that Abraham Cowley’s *Six Books of Plants* (1662), and John Evelyn’s *Sylva* (1664) both use the oak and the orange to reconcile openness to the exotic with a rooted sense of home, namely through the orange’s role as a symbol representing all things exotic, and the oak’s role as a symbol representing both the British throne and the ship mast that conveys the wealth of the globe back home to England.

Saturated with a long and rich history, the oak and the orange act in Cowley’s and Evelyn’s writings as a synecdoche for the abundance of the natural world. The orange stands in for a whole range of exotic flora being imported into Britain’s gardens, such as the Chinese and American trees that Evelyn recommends to be naturalized in England’s forests in *Sylva*. Meanwhile, the oak stands in for a sense of native identity, acting as a rooted Royalist symbol that reconciles the appetite for foreign luxury with a sense of homecoming. The trees’ traditional associations, however, are inflected by events specific to the latter half of the seventeenth century: the disruption of exile during the Interregnum, the attempts of Charles II’s government to establish naval dominance of the seas over the Dutch, the influence of Dutch horticulture on British gardening, and the demand for exotic flora that Restoration culture created. Using these two arboreal symbols, these authors
create landscapes that respond to the Royalist experience of exile and restoration by inviting back into England the botanical exiles of other lands.

II. Cowley’s Garden of Exiles.

As Royalist sympathizers, Abraham Cowley and John Evelyn both were banished to the Continent. Cowley recounts this experience in his essay “Of Myself,” published after his death in 1668. He relates how he joined the Royalists during the Civil War when he was still enrolled at Cambridge; he lost his fellowship in 1643 and fled to Paris. He does not name the Civil War specifically, nor does he need to. Instead, suffice it to say, he finds himself “soon torn from thence by that violent public storm which would suffer nothing to stand where it did, but rooted up every plant, even from the princely cedars to me, the hyssop.”

Garden metaphors creep into much of Cowley’s writing—his *Essays* in particular—though here the image of the Civil War as a storm uprooting trees resonates deeply with the destruction of Britain’s forests brought about by the War, as well as the rootless existence of exile. He, like the “princely cedars” of the court, has been severed from his native soil, and must dwell with them in banishment abroad. Cowley admits that he was fortunate to have escaped, but his service to the crown “engaged [him] in ways most contrary to the original design of [his] life.” His boyhood love of poetry made him long for the seclusion of a poet in the country, quite the opposite of being seen in the public eye daily with the court—or, indeed, remaining separate from his homeland with them. Cowley was far from alone in yearning for a patch of land to cling to in such a tempest. Cowley’s longing for a fixed, protected, secluded home in England is typical of the disruption that the Civil War wrought in the lives of these people. In his

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15 Quotations from Cowley’s *Essays* comes from the version Quotidiana.org edited by Patrick Madden.
essay, as in his *Six Books of Plants*, plants present Cowley with an allegorical language that he uses to project onto the natural world the state of exile he experiences.

Cowley published the *Books of Plants* as a complete collection in 1662, and it is likely that he wrote most of the botanical poem during his exile. He wrote the original in Latin. Later in 1689, Nahum Tate produced an English translation that included Aphra Behn’s translation of Book 6. Tate’s preface to the 1689 edition lays out Cowley’s design: Books 1 and 2 dwell on medicinal herbs in the Oxford Physic Garden, 3 and 4 on the flowers of the seasons bickering before Flora to see which is the fairest of them all, and Books 5 and 6 on trees. While Books 1-4 are notable in their own right, for our purposes Books 5 and 6 suffice, since each of these dwell on the themes of exile, the motif of the orange as a stand-in for exotic goods, and the motif of the oak as a British royalist symbol capable of furnishing Britain with shipmasts for conveying these exotic goods back home. As we will see below, Evelyn develops the oak’s symbolism further, but for the orange some explanation is in order. First, Cowley uses plants as part of a broader scheme to naturalize the state of exile and the primacy of monarchy itself, thanks to the orange’s associations with mythical landscapes. Second, prior to Cowley’s poem, the orange was thought to originate from anywhere or nowhere: its botanical origin was, quite simply, imaginary. Third, the orange was an exotic fruit, one of many luxury plants that came to characterize British horticulture after the Restoration, thanks in no small part to the lavish tastes of Charles II’s exiled court. Even abroad they desired both a taste of home and exotic luxuries, and the estates they rebuilt after returning to England reflect these worldly appetites through the Dutch innovation of the orangery. Finally, by creating courtyards specifically designed to grow oranges, the restored court made the physical grounds of their estates speak not only for their fine tastes, but also for the power of the restored monarch. The orange played a role in all of these historical dynamics, and it is for that reason that Cowley lists the orange among numerous other exotic fruits in Book 5 of his *Books of Plants*. 
Just as the orange gives Cowley a metaphor ripe with the experience of exile, Cowley’s *Six Books* allegorizes the Civil War, the Interregnum, and the Restoration in botanical terms in order to naturalize monarchy itself—which is to say, Cowley confers the rhetorical authority of nature upon the restoration of his king. Neil Evernden defines the rhetorical authority of nature as a category that places human caprices and human politics “beyond choice or debate,” turning what is political, cultural, or historical into “‘the norm,’ ‘the way,’ the given” (22). Cowley invokes this natural authority through personification and allegory, casting trees and flowers as nymphs, and then characterizing those nymphs as quarreling politicians. By personifying plants in this fashion, Cowley can assume a detached posture that removes him from the squabble and allows him to claim a broader perspective that justifies his prophetic tone. The presence of a powerful goddess—Flora, Pomona, or Dryas—restores monarchic order each time the plants’ petty differences divide them. Allegory allows Cowley to map the disruption of exile and his hopes for the Restoration onto the natural world, transferring the passage of the seasons onto his own experience as a banished Royalist. Read through this rubric, his *Six Books of Plants* casts the Interregnum as transitory, seasonal, provisional. The “winter” of Puritan rule will pass, just as winter always does. Once the season of our discontent gives way, Pomona, Flora, and Dryas can return to England and manifest the rightful power of the restored monarch through the flourishing of Britain’s forests, turning Britain into the Fortunate Isle.

Among the Fortunate Isle’s botanical riches, Cowley’s narrator lists the orange, troping it as a free-floating signifier of the tropical zone of which the Fortunate Isles are part. The orange’s associations with the tropics run deep. It functions as an example of what Tobin calls “tropicality,” which she defines as “the way in which the category of the tropical operates in the European imagination,” a transferrable quality that obscures and mystifies the means of production that bring it from one landscape to another (11). In Tobin’s account, the orange in seventeenth century
literature serves as one of many such signifiers of tropicality in order to aestheticize labor. Through its ability to fruit and flower in the same season, the orange reinforces the myth of tropical abundance. The tropics appear to produce their own products spontaneously—copiously and wastefully, as Tobin points out, in accordance with a European fantasy that overlooked the labor that indigenous peoples invested in their environments (5). Tropicality not only mystifies labor by making the orange seem self-fertilizing, but also makes the orange mobile. All literary tropes move from text to text, but the orange in particular points to the material, horticultural practice of transplanting it into aristocratic gardens.

The orange’s need for special growing conditions prompted this mobility. In most northern European climates, oranges required potting up for easily removal indoors during winter, so gardeners developed microclimate gardens called orangeries specifically for citrus cultivation. Associated with the Orient and requiring special conditions, the orange became an apt symbol for a conflated, Saidian geography. Edward Said would call this an “arbitrary” geography that conflates physical regions of Asia into one distant, indistinct East. Said’s East is an imaginary terrain that stretches beyond the line designating the West as “our land” and the East as “barbarian land” (54). Seventeenth-century botanical texts confirm the orange’s orientalism. Botanists in the Middle Ages often obscured the orange’s Chinese origins, believing that oranges were the “golden apples” planted in the Hesperides, fruits that granted immortality to any who ate them. Ironically, then, a fruit associated with the Far East became the native of a mythical garden that, as Robert Graves reminds us, lingered far to the west of the classical world (50). Later on in the eighteenth century, the Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus would assign the orange the name *Citrus aurantium*, referring both to the orange’s golden color (*aureus*) and to its mythological associations with the golden “apples” of immortality. Linnaeus would reiterate the allusion by placing the orange in the botanical order called *Hesperideae* (“Hesperidium”). Like Said’s Orient, the Hesperides occupies an imagined,
arbitrary geography from which the orange was said to originate.

The orange, with its anywhere/nowhere association, plays a role in Cowley’s larger scheme to naturalize empire by representing the state of exile. To this end, Cowley selects as a backdrop for his boastful plant-courtiers faraway regions, most notably the Fortunate Isles, where his botanical goddesses hold court and await the passage of winter to return to the North. Book 5 stages the trees of the Old and New Worlds boasting before Pomona, who, as Tate puts it, sits in state “in one of the fortunate Islands between the two Worlds.” (122). Supposed to lie somewhere beyond the Azores, these “fortunate Islands” occupy a heterotopic anywhere/nowhere space akin to the Hesperian gardens, one that, as Foucault defines the term, “has the ability to juxtapose in a single real place several emplacements that are incompatible in themselves” (181). Thus, like the physical gardens planted by Charles’ restored court, the Fortunate Islands assembles plants from disparate geographies, all in the same place. Furthermore, Cowley’s landscapes operate as what Foucault might call a “heterochronia,” a space that disrupts “traditional time” (182). Cowley’s Fortunate Isles are seasonless—always in a state of perpetual spring—and sequestered from the “natural” order of events, not entirely unlike the provisional state of exile. In these ways, Cowley develops the idea of exile spatially, reading it onto the mythic world of nature in order to conceive of exile as seasonal. In this regard, Cowley naturalizes exile as a provisional, seasonal state, one that Edward Said might call “a discontinuous state of being” (177), merely an interruption in the natural course of events that the Restoration will redress.

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16 Citations refer to page numbers of the 1795 ECCO edition of Cowley’s complete works, translated by Tate and Aphra Behn.
17 Said’s essay “Reflections on Exile” regards exile and nationalism as “two conflicting varieties of paranoia” that mutually define one another (177): “nationalism is an assertion of belonging” whereas exile is not. Exile, “unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being . . . Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people” (177). While Said has twentieth-century exiles and refugees in mind, his expression of the rupture of exile holds true for the Royalists who, during the 1640s, were banished from England with the court of Charles II. Likewise, Said’s remark on the “triumphant ideology” of restoration holds true for the sentiments expressed by those who witnessed it themselves.
Even in exile, the Charles II’s court maintained something resembling its lavish standard of living, and this standard required luxury goods. In previous centuries, the orange was a luxury fruit capable only of being grown in environments with naturally warm climates. However, even when oranges became more readily available to northern climates in the seventeenth century, they maintained their air of exoticism and luxury. Thus, oranges serve as part of the restored court’s culture for consuming luxury items. Even though Cowley and his fellow Royalists regarded their banishment as a transitory state, they made the most of it, often by maintaining their lavish standard of living as they attended their exiled monarch. When Charles II and his retinue fled to the continent during the events leading up to his father’s execution, his court brought along a culture characterized by Epicurean tastes. Thus, the sense of Britishness for the exiles was twofold, manifesting not only as a nostalgic desire for the material objects of home, but also a hankering for Continental luxury goods. They brought this desire for exotic goods to bear on the landscapes they rebuilt around their country estates during the Restoration, and they did so with an eye towards the Continental gardens they saw in their time abroad. Dutch horticulture in particular provided the restored aristocracy an aesthetic suitable for their lavish tastes: this style of horticulture contributed to the English landscape a preference for enclosed courtyards intended to emphasize exotic specimens, as well as orangeries and hothouses. As Erik de Jong notes, the wealthier Dutch enjoyed collecting

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18 I use “Epicurean” here broadly to refer to a generally indulgent attitude. However, it is worth noting that Epicureanism in its specific philosophical form came into fashion after the Restoration. Alastair and Carola Small, in their examination of Evelyn’s relationship with Epicureanism in his unpublished work Elysium Britannicum, observe that Evelyn’s fascination with Epicurus began to wane after the Restoration “in part because a new, more hedonistic form of Epicureanism had become fashionable among some of the leading figures of Charles II’s circle, such as the Duke of Buckingham and the Earl of Rochester” (212). Thus, while many writers such as Evelyn and Cowley would style the garden as a retreat from such fashionable circles, the tastes of the restored court, combined with increased access to exotic flora, characterize the Restoration garden as very much a space that responds to court fashions.

19 Not surprisingly, Puritan propaganda during the Civil War represented this yen for foreign goods as one of many vices exhibited by the Cavaliers—decadent debauchers, incapable of controlling their appetites, a convenient foil to what Sarah Olivier calls the “stoic” type of the Puritans (58). During the Interregnum, the court’s continued fondness for Continental fashions merely reiterated the Puritans’ accusations. D’Addario notes that the Royalists often asked their British friends to send them sundries to remind them of home, even while requesting the latest gowns and fine wines from France (62). Coupled with nostalgia, the Royalists’ openness to the foreign did not at all contradict or lessen their desire to return to England.
exotic flora (not just tulips), and Dutch horticulturalists responded to this demand by developing the greenhouse and hothouse. Focusing on Johannes Commelin's *De Nederlantze Hesperides* (1676), a manual for constructing orangeries and stove-houses, de Jong shows the influence Commerlin exerted on several Dutch estates. For instance, the house of Magdelena Poulle at Gunterstein featured an orangery modeled precisely to Commerlin’s specifications: built with ten south-facing windows, a pair of chimneys to heat the interior, and a pair of hothouses to shelter other exotic specimens, Poulle’s symmetrical orangery opens into a courtyard flanked by walls so as to capture solar heat (30). Commelin’s frontispiece (Figure 1) offers a classicized vision of such an orangery. A pair of gardeners dig a hole to plant a stout young citrus tree. Attended by cherubs, Pomona sits enthroned in the background, crowned with her wreath of fruit. Behind her rises a mansion handsomely adorned with a portico and a wing off to the side where a pair of arched windows open to the light beyond. Occupying the center of the visual space, the arched windows suggest that this wing of the house must be the subject of Commerlin’s treatise: an orangery. Together with the classical reference to the Hesperian garden in the title, Commelin’s manual announces its project to transplant the orange and lemon from their faraway origins right into the courtyard of the well-to-do gardener, where they can offer their fruits freely to the landowner’s hand, minus the unsavory business of overseas commerce.

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20 Drawing on Dutch innovations, planting practices during the decades following the Restoration reflect the court culture for exotic appetites, as well as an emphasis on the portability of exotic plants that the orange tree exemplified. Writing about the greenhouse quarter in the gardens of Hampton Court, Jan Woudstra has also found evidence that elaborate vases and pots were used during the later seventeenth century to bring live plants indoors in order to allow “guests to pick their own fruit during banquets” (“Use of Flowering Plants” 194). Orange and lemon trees were commonly potted for this purpose (194). These material practices point to a renewed interest in plants as luxury items, an influence of Dutch horticulture on aristocratic landscapes, and to the association between citrus trees and portability.
Figure 1. Frontispiece of Johannes Commelin’s Nederlandze Hesperides (1676).

Thus the orange’s horticultural transplantability couples with its heterotopic, orientalist associations, making the orange ripe as a metaphor for a rootless, mobile tree. Like the exiled aristocrats of Charles II’s court, the orange’s native home was always somewhere else, and, like the luxury goods enjoyed by the exiled court, the orange carried a charge of exoticism, desirability, and expense. These associations extend from the material practices of horticulture all the way to the symbolic realm, which is why Cowley invokes the orange as a fruit native to the heterotopic landscapes in his poem. The orange figures as part of Cowley’s broader scheme to lend to the state of exile the transitory status of nature’s seasons, and to lend the authority of nature to his monarch restored from exile.
When Cowley imagines his tree nymphs and botanical goddesses, he always implies the image of a monarch enthroned at court—a court whose location, like the gardens he imagines in his poem, floats somewhere beyond the horizon. Accordingly, Cowley’s fifth book develops the allegory of exiled goddess as an exiled monarch, folding this theme with the commonplace theme that the New World’s riches are botanical rather than mineral wealth. Cowley figures both Flora and Pomona as exiled queens whose courts languish in a latitude other than here they belong. Unlike Flora, whose capacity as monarch allows her to silence conflict, in Book 5, Pomona’s government is a dysfunctional commonwealth, one whose problems she cannot resolve alone. This goddess of fruit, descending on the Fortunate Isle in a remote sea, summons a banquet for the sylvan gods. This Fortunate Isle is like an orangery: it can bear the fruits which “Nature . . . does our soil deny . . . and bears ‘em all the year” (132). Deities from the Old World and New arrive at the table, ranging from Classical sylvan figures (Pan, Silenus, Fauns, Vertumnus, etc.) “To . . . strange pow’rs from new-found India . . . Most dreadful in their aspect, form, and name” (133). The nymphs of each fruit-bearing tree parade their produce before the assembled gods, while the deities debate which fruit they like best. Tempers rise. Omelichilus, one of the New World deities, “throws a Cocoa bowl at Bacchus’ head.” Bacchus hurls a goblet of wine back, laying Omelichilus “bruis’d and sprawling on the place” (156). This insult incites the deities to a brawl, which Apollo manages to quell by taking up a lyre (157). Apollo instructs the New World deities not to “Grieve” that “of your bane [gold]

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21 This is a strategic trope of early empire that anticipates what David Shields sees in British portrayals of Spanish empire later in the 18th century: in what later would be called the “Black Legend,” 18th century British writers began increasingly to represent Spanish empire as violent and corrupt, contrasting it with the “benevolence” of their own imperial mission (175). For Cowley, the Spanish lust for gold is greedy and misguided, since gross mineral wealth is far inferior to the new plants he sees in the Americas, as he relates towards the end of Book 5.

22 While Book 5 maps the experience of exile in spatial and temporal terms, Books 3 and 4 allegorize it in the figure of Flora herself, whom Cowley imagines chasing the seasons around the globe before returning with her floral retinue to England. Cowley’s speaker is explicit in equating the Roman goddess to an exiled monarch: the opening of Book 3 tells us that she “Among the rest [of Rome’s deities] an exile . . . became” (76), but now summons her floral court in England, heralded by the coming of spring. Thus Flora rides the chariot of Zephyr across the globe, holding the court of her “Flow’ry empire” wherever “the seasons of the year require” (76), naturalizing exile as a seasonal, transitory state.
you’re dispossess’d” (160). Mary Louise Pratt would call the narrator’s reproach an instance of anti-conquest, in which the European male gaze, while claiming ownership of what it sees, disavows any blame for depriving the New World of its riches (8). Attributing greed and violence to other empires, Cowley uses the botanical riches of England to forecast for England a sunnier fate than either Spain or the fallen Incan empire of the New World, both of whose greed-stained legacies will send them down a darker path.

Representing for Cowley a sort of botanical wealth that far outshines the metallic spoils of other empires, the nymphs for the orange and lemon appear amidst this uneasy pageant of sylvan gods. Like botanists before and after him, the Royalist poet locates the orange in the arbitrary, imaginary geography represented by the mythic garden of Atlas. Cowley’s poet tells us how the citrus trees enter the scene of the goddess’ court:

> Orange and Lemon next like Lightning bright
> Came in, and dazled the Beholders sight;
> These were the fam’d Hesperian fruits of old,
> Both Plants alike ripe fruit and blossoms hold;
> This shines with pale, and that with deeper gold.
> Planted by Atlas, who supports the skies,
> Proud at his feet to see these brighter stars to rise (140) 23

The garden of Atlas recedes forever beyond the edge of the reader’s imagination, highlighting transplantability of this golden “Hesperian fruit.” The orange is also heterochronic, collapsing seasonal time, performing the seasons of both autumn and spring at once, holding “alike ripe fruit and blossoms.” Cowley’s portrayal of the citrus recalls its material association with transplantability. The perpetual summer of the orangery grants it a kind of eternal life, one that defies the natural progression of the seasons. Thus, to say that the citrus nymphs originate from the Hesperian

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23 Citations for Cowley refer to the page numbers of the 1795 ECCO edition, with books 1-5 translated by Nahum Tate, and Book 6 translated by Aphra Behn.
gardens is both to erase their place of botanical origin and to give them a drifting, mobile origin, one that recalls the transplanting of orange and lemon trees into aristocratic gardens of Cowley’s era. 

The rootless existence of the orange contrasts the stability associated with the oak, which Cowley turns into the tree of Charles II. Like the Hesperian fruit, the oak’s symbolism is classical in origin: it is the royal tree associated with Zeus, king of the gods. Cowley evokes this lineage in Book 6 of his *Books of Plants*, which Aphra Behn translated toward the end of her life. Dryas, the oak goddess who narrates much of Book 6, roots the fate of Britain in the oracular oaks of Dodona, through whose leaves “Jupiter disdain’d not to relate / ‘Thorough an Oaken Mouth his future Fate” (182). Cowley refers to the classical custom of reading the rustling of the Dodona oaks’ leaves for omens (Hamilton 26). The oracle Dryas foretells the birth of Brutus, founder of Britain: Dryas claims to have descended from one of the Dodona oaks, brought to England as the mast of Brutus’ ship, who to England “a said Exile came,” “But happy Father of the British name” (182). Cowley positions the exiled Brutus as a parallel to Aeneas—the founder of a nation, and, like Charles II, banished from his native land. Brutus casts out to sea on a ship of sacred oak and founds the British royal line, which Charles II will rightfully continue. (Or so the myth goes, in Cowley’s retelling.)

By emphasizing oaks in Dryas’ very name (*dryos*: Greek for “oak”), Cowley evokes a long tradition associating the oak with British royalty. Richard Mabey’s *Flora Britannica* verifies this association. He recounts the folklore of the Boscobel Oak—a tale that Cowley expands into the entirety of Book 6. The oak stood near Boscobel house; under it, Charles II supposedly hid himself to escape Cromwell’s forces in 1651 (Mabey 76). Like Dryas and Dodona and Brutus’ ship, this tale fed into the tradition of England’s monarchy as the mighty oak. In fact, Oak Apple Day or Royal Oak Day would later become a public holiday to commemorate the Boscobel oak, and the Tories would likewise adopt the oak as their party symbol after the Restoration (Mabey 76). After the Anglo-Dutch Wars—the first of which was started by Richard Cromwell in 1652—the oak would
assume an additional political charge thanks to the deforestation of England, as we will see in greater
detail below with Evelyn’s arboreal treatise. Cowley decries this loss of trees in his poem as well.
Dryas laments that Cromwell’s men are like locusts, “Insects of pois’nous kinds,” “And Cromwell!
viler yet than all the rest” (189). She declaims to her fellow dryads that Cromwell, “the barbarous
Conqueror will invade, / Tear up your Roots, and rifle all your shade” and “spare no Race of Trees
of any Age” (191). The shipbuilding industry required oaken masts for naval warfare, and all too
soon these grew short in supply. Simon Schama points out that, during this first war, the Dutch
“monopolize[d] supplies of Baltic timber by buying the production of entire Norwegian forests,
years in advance,” forcing the British to exhaust their own groves (162).24 Not surprisingly, Cowley’s
account of the deforestation, in Dryas’ lips, reiterates the necessity of oaken masts to British power.
Today’s trees and saplings become tomorrow’s shipmasts, and these masts bring England both her
wealth and her protection. The floating oak is a ship’s mast that conveys royal authority from the
mists of antiquity to Cowley’s own era.

In the figure of the shipmast, the oak—like the orange—moves, but, unlike the orange, it
always finds its way back to its Royalist home in England. The oaken mast likewise transfers British
power overseas and circulates colonial wealth from periphery to metropole, carrying England back
home from exile and stretching the rod of British power across the globe. This mobile, but still
homeward-bound, motion of the oak occurs after Dryas has retold the deforestation wrought at the

24 Jeffrey Theis, in his reading of Andrew Marvell’s “Upon Appleton House,” is quick to point out that Richard
Cromwell’s hand in deforesting England is, if anything, a continuation of the same trend from previous regimes. Theis
reminds us that Charles I’s forestry policies granted “favorable forest leases to friends” while “imposing harsh fines on
others,” allowing him to “manipulate a forest-based economy” while still remaining, as king, “the man most culturally
associated with the mighty oak” (“Political Woodpecker” 200). Raymond Williams, in his account of the emergence of a
new kind of capitalist aristocrat in seventeenth-century England, also notes that individual landowners played their own
part in the deforestation. Such landlords contributed to “wholesale enclosure” at the hands of a “new kind of capitalist
overlord” in the decades leading up to the Civil War, causing the old feudal order to be replaced with a new aristocratic
system (Williams 39). Thus, while Cowley singles out Richard Cromwell as the Puritan defiler of England’s oaken groves,
the royalist poet’s portrayal of Cromwell is more than a little self-serving.
hands of Richard Cromwell. The dryad laments the ages of man, along with humanity’s eventual fall from a sylvan diet to a carnivorous diet. In the golden age, humans fed on acorns: “Thy bounties, Ceres! were of little use, / And thy sweet food ill manners did produce” (179). Now in this fallen age, man subsists on a cereal rather than sylvan diet, and “Luxurious traffic” roams over all the earth, bringing riches to England (180). This passage, worth quoting at length here, encompasses the themes of England embodying the fantasy of the Fortunate Isle and deploying its botanical wealth—its oaks—to funnel all of the world’s riches to its shores:

Oh! How has Nature bless’d the British land,
Who both the valued Indies can command!
What tho’ thy banks the Cedars do not grace,
Those lofty beauties of fam’d Libanus,
The Pine, or Palm of Idumean plains,
Arab’s rich wood, or it’s [sic] sweet-smelling greens,
Or lovely Plantain [planetree], whose large leafy boughs
A pleasant and a noble shade allows?
She [Dryas] has thy warlike groves and mountains bless’d
With sturdy Oaks, o’er all the world the best;
And for the happy Island’s sure defence,
Has wall’d it with a moat of seas immense;
While to declare her safety and thy pride,
With Oaken ships that sea is fortify’d (181).

Cowley’s speaker figures Britain as the “happy Island,” recalling the Fortunate Isle of Book 5. While not capable of bearing all fruits at all seasons, the Isle of Britain can enjoy all the fruits of the world, thanks to the sturdy oaks whose masts bring the luxurious traffic of the world to Britain. So, while Dryas laments the new cosmopolitan diet as a fall from a simpler sylvan age, she celebrates her own role as the bearer of luxuries from afar, just as oaken masts now bear goods from the Americas.

The climax of Book 6 introduces the figure of the restored monarch himself, whom Dryas espies resting beneath an oak tree. Weaving in the tale of the Boscobel Oak, Cowley’s narrator describes the recumbent youth, whose “image all divine / Breaks thro’ that cloud of darkness” veiling his royal visage (198). Rejoicing, Dryas shelters him beneath her boughs, and bids her nymphs adore and glorify him. The poem then enters a visionary mode, imagining that “The Golden
Age seems now again restor’d” (200). Rivers flow with nectar, and Peace returns with a retinue of other allegorical goddesses: Plenty, Fame, Modesty, Religion, and so forth, ending with “gen’rous Liberty” (200). Hardly a botanical treatise at this point, Cowley’s poem figures the Puritans as defilers of England’s oaken groves, affording them no place in this restored England, and enthrones Charles, who will, just as Flora and Dryas, pronounce a peaceful reign over the proud and warring flora of Britain’s forests.

This golden age will bring not only the flourishing of Britain’s own flora, but an influx of goods and species from abroad, turning Britain into the sylvan lord of an arboreal host, a restored Fortunate Isle. Britain becomes the Fortunate Isle; the Fortunate Isle lingers on the tropical edge of the literary imagination. As a native of this floating, heterotopic landscape, the orange carries its material association with transplantation into new realms, allowing it to dwell in the backdrop of Pomona’s fortunate isle, which presages the English forests that flourish upon Charles’ return. This restored forest appears in more pragmatic form in Evelyn’s Sylva, which, like Cowley, uses the British oak to forecast the wealth of the nation, and uses exotic trees as a register of the nation’s mercantilist self-sufficiency.

III. Locally Grown: Evelyn’s Oaken Navy and the Fruits of Mercantilism.

As we have seen above, the ideological work of the oak was much the same in John Evelyn’s arboreal treatise as it was in Cowley’s botanical poem. As royalists exiled with Charles II’s court, both writers recall the deforestation of England at the Puritans’ hands. Evelyn, however, saw that deforestation continue even under the reign of the restored Charles II. This is why Evelyn’s Sylva (1664) was published under Charles II’s commission to assess Britain’s arboreal wealth. Evelyn’s treatise attests the power of exile and restoration to reshape England’s landscape. Even though
Evelyn’s curiosity allows him to frame his inquiry of the natural world as a theological quest to unravel the workings of God, his vision of Britain’s ideal forest is ultimately anthropocentric. It is a forest whose trees he sanctions in service of agriculture and shipbuilding, hardly amounting to a conservationist sentiment—at least in a twenty-first century understanding of the term. Yet despite Sylva’s political motivations, Evelyn’s treatise proves vital not only for a prehistory of conservationist thought, but also for what this treatise reveals about the relationships between landscape and text. Evelyn uses this treatise to materialize a fantasy of Britain as an arboreal-naval power, a ruler of the seas wielding ships built of its own trees. This fantasy of sylvan military power proves key to building what Jeffrey Theis has called the “sylvan nationalism” on which Charles II’s regime depended to reinstate the might of its fleet (Writing the Forest 228), a nationalism equating Britain’s strength to the verdure of its forests.

In order to examine why the oak assumed this important political charge, some account is necessary not only of the events contributing to Britain’s deforestation—the Anglo-Dutch Wars, specifically—but also the politics shaping the landscapes of the restored aristocracy. Evelyn frames his treatise as a husbandry manual aimed specifically at landowners. Characterizing forestry as a patriotic duty fitting for nobility, Evelyn envisions for England acres of managed woodland, and his vision would ultimately manifest as the stately avenues of trees stretching far beyond the walls of the manicured parterres surrounding the aristocrats’ country estates. Properly husbanded and supplied both with oaks and with trees from all climes, Evelyn’s imaginary forest promises arboreal wealth and economic security for generations.

To be sure, deforestation had been ongoing in England since the administration of Charles I (Theis “Political Woodpecker” 200), and would only continue under the governments of Cromwell and Charles II. Their wars with the Dutch would prove the culprit for this loss—wars that routinely failed, leaving Britain denuded of its trees. The First Anglo-Dutch War (1652-1654) resulted from
the Navigation Acts passed by the Commonwealth parliament, which attempted to give the English a monopoly on transatlantic shipping. A skirmish between Dutch and British ships led to the war, which the British spectacularly lost, along with many lives and many masts of British oak. As Pat Rogers notes, attempting to supply the effort, Richard Cromwell’s war machine pulled down “sturdy oaks which had been growing for a thousand years” (288-89). After the Restoration, Charles II commissioned the Royal Society, which Evelyn and Cowley helped form, to investigate the state of Britain’s forests in 1662. Evelyn compiled his report as *Sylva* in 1664, calling for all landholders to replant their forests in order to furnish shipbuilding lumber for the upcoming conflict. This Second Anglo-Dutch War (1664-1667) also failed: the Dutch defeated the English in 1667 and brought back the *Royal Charles* to Amsterdam as a trophy ship. Zwicker notes that the rapid succession of the Plague Year in London (1665-1666), the Great Fire, the Popish Plot (1666), and the British defeat in 1667 felt apocalyptic: “The combination of fire, plague, and military defeat left the impression that the four horsemen of the apocalypse had descended on London in rapid order” (Zwicker 94). This stew of fear and loss led pamphleteers to question “the morals of the royal family” “for explanations of that failure” (Zwicker 94), leading to renewed charges that the court’s dissolute desires for foreign luxury were undoing the nation. Compounding a court culture already rife with its Epicurean ways, Charles II’s attempts to establish a mercantilist dominance of overseas commerce created a sense that England was overreaching its own bounds.

Needless to say, the glow of the Restoration had quite faded by the 1670s. However, the project Charles commissioned for Evelyn’s *Sylva* succeeded—at least, according to him. Evelyn’s treatise went through four editions: his preface to the second (1670) boasts that “more (I dare say) than two Millions of Timber-Trees” have been planted in the King’s “almost exhausted Dominions” since the treatise’s first printing in 1662 (1). Looking back over his shoulder in the 1660s, Evelyn

25 Quotations and citations of *Sylva* come from the ECCO text of the second edition of 1670.
congratulates himself on a project that seems poised to restore England’s oaken might. The thrust of Evelyn’s argument in *Sylva* would prove essentially the same as the agenda of Charles: replanting Britain’s forests would relieve Britain of its dependence on foreign lumber, fostering a mercantilist economy less reliant on foreign imports, while allowing England to grow such foreign luxuries on soil of its own.

Like the court’s taste for the luxurious fruits of faraway lands, Evelyn’s treatise left its mark on the British landscape in the form of great avenues of trees extending beyond the garden wall. Evelyn’s aristocratic woodlands played a part in the development of the British garden, which represented the restored monarch by mingling the iconography of various European landscapes. Although owing a great deal to Dutch influence, English horticulture in the Restoration and early eighteenth century was not strictly Dutch in nature. Rather, it is more accurate to say that English horticulture was heavily Continental. In particular, the English emulated the elaborate gardens of the French, which sought to intrigue and surprise the viewer, as well as stylize the infinite variety of nature under the regulating power of a mighty, absolute monarch. The British version of this aesthetic opted to turn the landscape into a representation of the restored monarch, while still respecting the perceived liberty of the populace and Parliament, whose representation in the government would (theoretically speaking) curb the restored king. Thus Williamson notes that the

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26 If the Dutch tendency was to create enclosed spaces to highlight exotics, then Italian and French gardening in the seventeenth century proceeded along different lines. Italian and French aesthetics were variations on neoclassical themes intended to impress the viewer with a sense of centralized power through vast spaces and formal geometry. The French mode of gardening demanded expanses of manicured hedges, elaborate box topiaries, and sprawling walks and mazes intended to be viewed from a high vantage point. Andre Le Notre (1613-1700), the royal gardener and chief architect of Louis XIV, was certainly known for these grand gardens, though his innovation was to replace the neoclassical emphasis on symmetry with a looser notion of balance. Instead of making each quadrant of a courtyard a mirror image of the opposite, he would vary or reverse the design, creating surprise for the garden stroller while still maintaining a sense of overall cohesion. Tom Williamson notes that Le Notre’s balance was still heavily formal and geometric, even if somewhat looser in its expression than stricter landscapers (25).

27 While French garden design in the seventeenth century emphasized large swaths of space, the French, like the Dutch, displayed their fair share of exotic specimens as well. Chandra Mukerji notes that the orangery at Versailles “housed a huge collection of tender citrus and palms” as well as “plants of the Mediterranean world” (20). In this capacity, exotics fulfilled both the role of art-object to be beheld and product to be consumed.
aristocratic English garden featured enclosed, tightly ordered geometric designs (after the Dutch and French styles) immediately surrounding the house, framed with “The wild irregularity of the park” ranging beyond the garden wall (24). Instead of a miniature version of Versailles overlooking acres of harshly clipped topiaries, the English opted for a blended aesthetic. The blend of Continental influences on the seventeenth century British landscape suggests that, after the exiled court of Charles II returned to England, they brought with them a new fervor for gardening that emblematized the power of the monarch within the constrained space of the garden, and represented the liberty of the populace in the rolling woodlands beyond.

Fast on the heels of the First Anglo-Dutch War, Evelyn insists on replenishing Britain’s forests in order to regenerate the nation’s naval power and decrease foreign dependency. We know that Britain was forced to exhaust its own supplies of shipbuilding lumber, thanks to the Dutch tactic of purchasing Norwegian forests in advance to supply their shipbuilding industry (Schama 162). With this in mind, Evelyn’s preface makes it the ultimate goal of his treatise to regenerate England’s “almost exhausted Dominions.” He organizes the text in three parts: chapters cataloging uses of individual trees, chapters on pruning and husbandry, and finally chapters on cider. For Evelyn, forests require just as much care or management as any field of crops, and this conception of the forest as a managed space bears considerable precedent in Early Modern England. Jeffrey Theis has noted that throughout the Middle Ages and Renaissance, “forest” and “wilderness” occupied distinct spaces, and that, for Evelyn’s audience, forests hosted a wide range of human inhabitants who would glean the woods for kindling, eking out a living there (Writing the Forest 13).

This notion of a forest as a lived-in and managed space contrasts our own twenty-first century Romantic fantasy of virgin land. So for Evelyn the idea of a forest as a managed space informs his vision of Britain’s arboreal army.
Although Evelyn lists a variety of foreign trees for England’s forests, he makes a point of singling out the oak, which for him holds the best promise for securing the nation’s wealth and might. He recommends several kinds, though, not surprisingly, he insists on *Quercus robur*, the English oak (now called the French oak in the twenty-first-century). Evelyn’s characterization of Oaks as “the truest Oracles” of England’s power harkens back to the prophetic oaks of Dodona as we have seen in Cowley above. Evelyn cites Dodona as one of many instances of sacred groves throughout Classical and Biblical antiquity in the final arc of his treatise. Here, in Chapter 35, “An Historical Account of the Sacrednesse, and Use of standing Groves, &c.,” Evelyn assumes the mode of a religious tract extolling “those little Souls of Plants” (144), whose miraculous growth has inspired the pious veneration of trees. Just as the oak proves the “Oracle” of the ancient world, so too this tree, quintessentially British, holds the salvation of Charles II’s England. Appealing to both classical and biblical authority, Evelyn claims that theologians have “generally concluded [the True Cross] to have been the Oak, and I do verily believe it” (36). As such, the British Oak is inherently superior to foreign woods: for when it comes to “Box, Cornus, Ebony, and divers of the Indian Woods” “we find them more fragil, and not so well qualified to support great incumbencies and weights, nor is there any Timber more lasting which way soever us’d” (36). Ascribing to British oak the masculine virtue of strength, Evelyn gives the oak an auspicious lineage. This noble line would explain why Evelyn sees fit to include, in Chapter 30, “Of the Age, Stature, and Felling of Trees,” a catalog of notable old oaks growing on various British estates—specimens of good husbandry representing thoughtful noblemen who have managed their estates well.

Evelyn’s treatise imagines Britain’s sylvan treasury as a forest comprised not only of sturdy British oaks, but also exotic specimens shipped in from the colonies—thanks to the oaken masts bearing these foreign trees back across the seas. While instructing his audience on the growth of these “Forain Curiosities” (8), that, just as much as oaks, required the cultivator’s hand. To this end,
Evelyn spends a moment speculating on the mechanics of plant growth, and how these principles of growth allow plants to naturalize in one environment or another. He calls these principles the “genius of the Soyls,” and uses it to illustrate the importance of husbandry, the role that human intervention must play in replenishing Britain’s forests with exotics from abroad:

are sometimes, and in some regions Aborigines, descended immediately from the Genius of the Soyls, Climate, Sun, Shade, Air, Winds, Water, Niterous-Salts, Rocks, Bankes, Shores . . . even without Seed, or any perceptible rudiment. But with all this we are not satisfied without supposing some previous seminal disposition lurking, and dispers’d in every part of the Earth . . . such as are fit for the Sun and Influences to operate on, ‘till they have prepar’d, discuss’d, and excited their Seminal and Prolifique vertue to exert it self and awake out of sleep, in which they lay as in their causes; And free themselves from those impediments which hindred their Specification and Nativity (25).

Thus for Evelyn and his fellow members of the Royal Society the “Genius of the Soyls” and elements can cause a plant to spring up in its native environment spontaneously, “even without Seed,” all influences acting in concert to produce species appropriate to each place and climate. However, Evelyn cautions that these “genii” alone aren’t enough to “awake out of sleep” the “Prolifique vertue” necessary to make these plants germinate, “For the design of this Discourse is not to perswade Men to sit still, and let Nature work alone, but to ayd and assist her as much as they are able” (27). Thus Evelyn proposes to teach his gentlemanly audience the proper ways of getting plants to germinate in climates other than their own, as well as the proper ways to redraw botanical geography through human desire. Evelyn assigns certain species as indigenous to certain places, but stipulates that human ingenuity can aid their propagation anywhere in England. There is, however, more at work here than a mere statement of scientific knowledge in Evelyn’s era. Couched in this statement on the mechanics of naturalizing plants is a certain ideology, an ideology that calls for importing exotic flora by matching each one to a new environment closely aligned with its native environment. This ideology of naturalization contrasts what Carolus Linnaeus would later argue. Londa Schiebinger points out that Linnaeus regarded tropical plants as “globally adaptable,” and even “hoped that he could ‘fool,’ ‘tempt,’ and ‘train’ them to grow in Arctic lands and thereby create
‘Lapland cinnamon groves, Baltic tea plantations, and Finnish rice paddies’ (Plants and Empire 7).

Needless to say, such schemes spectacularly failed. However, Evelyn’s ideas on aligning plants closely with environments resembling their native ones reveals that he regards England’s climate as uniquely adaptable to plants, rather than plants as uniquely adaptable to climate. By studying closely such microclimates in England, Evelyn proposes to instruct his audience of gentlemen gardeners in how best to supply England locally with what it would otherwise have to ship from abroad, as Evelyn makes clear in his encomium on ciders at the end of Sylva.

This “Genius of the Soyls” moment in Evelyn’s treatise is also worth pausing over because it affords us a glimpse into how a pre-Enlightenment thinker such as Evelyn conceptualized of the process of naturalization, and the ways in which this conceptualization resembled that of later Enlightenment botanists as the eighteenth century moved on. Evelyn’s discourse on the “little souls of plants” (144) and the “genius of the soyls” connects to broader early modern discourses in the natural sciences. These discourses often sought to classify and group objects in the natural world not only according to likeness but also according to Aristotelian ideas of sympathy. Living and nonliving things yearn for likeness; thus, organisms will naturally gravitate towards environments that most closely reflect their inner nature. Foucault accounts for this early modern Aristotelian power of sympathy to attract objects together across vast distances, making each object like the other by dint of each object’s mutual likeness. To him, sympathy has the power “of rendering things identical to one another, of mingling them, of causing their individuality to disappear –and thus of rendering them foreign to what they were before” (Order of Things 23-4). Evelyn invokes this idea of sympathy when he attempts to explain the mechanisms by which plants naturalize to new environments. To him, the “little souls” of plants can only thrive in environments where the “genius of the soyl” approximates the place of their own origin. This early modern idea very much informs what later horticultural science explained through less metaphysical terms. Later Royal Society horticulturalists
such as Richard Bradley in the early eighteenth century would advocate for plants to be naturalized in environments most closely resembling their places of origin, as we shall see in future chapters. In this regard, later Royal Society horticulturalists such as Bradley would approximate what earlier botanists such as Evelyn saw in the natural world: a sense that plants had sympathy for a particular environment, a particular set of circumstances, that the avid horticulturalist would have to replicate in the garden in order to naturalize a new species there.

The circulation of arboreal wealth from periphery to metropole allows Evelyn to envision Britain’s arboreal might through its ability to grow plants from faraway places, and, by proxy, its ability to sate its own cosmopolitan appetites with the produce of its own lands. As Evelyn remarks in his chapters on caring for fruit trees to produce cider, sylvan variety will enrich an economy that will profit through self-sufficiency. Lamenting the current vogue for foreign wines, Evelyn justifies planting fruit trees as a means of supplying Britain with its own cider, which Evelyn urges his reader to prefer before such imported vintage: “if at any time we are in danger of being hindred from Trade in Forreign Countries, our English indignation may scorn to feed at their Tables, to drink of their Liquors . . . so long as our Native Soyl does supply us with such excellent Necessaries” (148). Indeed, for Evelyn the sylvan diet is a diet of privilege and luxury, “Since our Forests are undoubtedly the greatest Magazines of the Wealth, and Glory of this Nation; and our Oaks the truest Oracles of its perpetuity and happinesse, as being the onely support of that Navigation which makes us fear’d abroad, and flourish at Home” (128). Brimming with the fruits of foreign lands, forest for Evelyn becomes treasury and navy all at once.

Through this proper husbandry, Evelyn’s forest will become a kind of Eden, a Fortunate Isle where all botanical oddities and rarities can thrive, an isle gladly conferring native status to any tree willing to sink root there, a welcome space to exiles both botanical and human alike. This forest of oaks and foreign curiosities will relieve England of its dependency on foreign lands while
simultaneously allowing England to secure its wealth overseas from the colonies. Just as the trees of this fantasy forest can flourish under the careful hand, so too the populace of England will thrive under a just monarch, enjoying all the fruits this various forest can afford.

Evelyn and Cowley map the experience of exile and the imperative of royal naval power onto physical landscapes. Transfiguring England into the Fortunate Isle, the Hesperian garden, a sylvan treasury, and a sylvan navy all at once, these writers use the images of the orange and the oak to naturalize and legitimate the reign of their restored monarch. Cowley’s botanical poem and Evelyn’s silvicultural treatise imagine England as a nation whose power derives from its native oaks and whose power transplants trees from foreign environments back onto British soil. In this regard, texts can function both as representations of the real and as ways to reimagine the relationship between text and landscape.

Cowley and Evelyn also mark the beginning of an era characterized both by an influx of exotic flora into England’s landscapes and a fervent interest in the natural world. The Enlightenment—in which Evelyn and Cowley, as Royal Society fellows, both played their own role—would not only make the study of botany more widely accessible, but would also make such study fashionable. Inspired to display their learning, collectors and virtuosi began to fill their estates with curiosity cabinets, collections of fossils and minerals, and living plants from the tropics. As the Restoration transitioned into the Augustan Era, foreign curiosities became all the rage, and this vogue for natural philosophy left its own mark on the British landscape.
CHAPTER 2: THE VIRTUOSO, THE GENTLEMAN, AND THE CARNATION:

ELITE MASCULINITY AND BOTANICAL VARIETY IN THE AUGUSTAN GARDEN

I. Introduction: Gentlemen Gardeners and Virtuosi.

During the first few decades of the eighteenth century, many botanists of the Royal Society published horticultural manuals, botanical treatises, and essays on the aesthetics of gardening. During this flourishing of texts, a figure began to emerge whom I will call the gentleman gardener. This figure is the implied audience of such manuals as Richard Bradley’s *The Gentleman and Gardeners Kalendar* (1718), Stephen Switzer’s *Iconographia Rustica: or, the nobleman, gentleman, and gardener’s recreation* (1718), Henry Stevenson’s *The Gentleman Gard’ner’s Director* (1744), and so on. The gentleman gardener cultivates his garden as a material representation of his newfound status, specifically through the accumulation of variety of exotics. Horticultural texts appeal to this landowner of the middling ranks who, instead of inheriting his estate by title, acquired it through capital, as became increasingly common in the eighteenth century. These gardening manuals oppose the gentleman gardener to the virtuoso: this figure, also implicit like the gentleman gardener, uses his garden to dabble in his scientific interests. The virtuoso fashions himself part of this growing male elite, collecting various natural specimens—exotic plants among them—with no less gusto than his counterpart. However, unlike the gentleman gardener, the virtuoso’s taste level is always suspect because it smacks of the crass wealth that the gentleman gardener seeks to obscure. Both characters are simply rhetorical figures: the virtuoso becomes the gentleman gardener’s scapegoat, a tasteless double who indulges in precisely the same consumptive practices as he. Both collect, both amass, both dabble—in fact, both figures are defined not by their objects of study, but by the way they are
used to organize social strata, separating the gentlemen who have arrived in the circles of good taste from the pretenders who have not.

Early eighteenth century writers present several versions of the virtuoso and the gentleman gardener. In the Restoration and early decades of the eighteenth century, gentleman and virtuoso were in many ways the same; however, as the century wore on, and as the objects of virtuosic study became available to a wider range of social strata, the special status accorded to virtuosic study began to fade. As a result, horticulture—which played its own role as part of this program of worldly accomplishment expected of eighteenth-century gentlemen—no longer held quite the unique status it once did. Writers in the early eighteenth century began to voice a need to distinguish between the right and the wrong kind of horticulture, the right and the wrong kind of botanical study, the right and the wrong kind of interest in the natural world. These distinctions, instead of restricting the flow of exotic flora into the British landscape, encourage it. More than ever before, the gentleman gardener introduces the exotic into the British landscape, and now can claim a convenient set of pedants, dunces, and virtuosi on which to displace his own consumption of exotic flora.

The rhetoric of excess surrounding the virtuoso plays a part in shaping the British landscape, as well. By displacing his own consumptive practices onto a straw man, the gentleman gardener can excuse his own tendency to obsess over variety and novelty in the garden. Essential to understanding the development of the garden in the early eighteenth century, Alexander Pope’s horticultural aesthetic of the “genius of the place” turns variety into the ultimate sign of an accomplished garden. Alexander Pope formulates this aesthetic in poetical terms, whereas Richard Bradley—a Royal Society botanist of Pope’s time—formulates the same “genius of the place” aesthetic in botanical terms. Both versions of the aesthetic extol variety as the chief mark of accomplishment. By assembling as many exotics as possible in one place, the gentleman gardener displays his wealth in a fashion whose material capital, like the art of gardening, masks itself as
natural. By shifting the certificate of knowledge\textsuperscript{28} away from aristocrats and scientists, and into the hands of the gentry of gentleman gardeners, early eighteenth century writers endorse importing exotic flora into Britain’s landscape, naturalizing a practice made possible only through the increase of landed capital, and making what once was a pastime for a select few an obsession shared by a new burgeoning class of horticulturalists. Garden variety became the hallmark of horticultural accomplishment, and the figure of the virtuoso—a figure designed to naturalize the acquired capital of the new male elite—made this development possible.

II. From Virtuoso to Dunce: Exotic Botany and the Gentleman in the Augustan Era

Both “gentleman gardener” and “virtuoso” are figures more often implied through rhetorical choices than explicitly stated. However, these figures have a history: they emerged in tandem with the shifting of the British landowning hierarchy that took place after the Restoration. Just as horticultural texts began to address a broader audience of male planters who now owned land, these two figures coalesce in an era when ownership of land no longer had to be strictly inherited. I refer to the rise of the middling classes, the various strata of landed and moneyed classes that developed between the landowning aristocrats above and the laboring classes below. In pronouncing certain horticultural practices in “good” or “bad” taste, the gentleman gardener reiterates his belonging to this emerging population. He owns land, though he might not be an aristocrat; he is interested in studying the natural world, though he might not be a member of the Royal Society; he collects exotic

\textsuperscript{28} Bourdieu describes the certificate of knowledge as one of many markers of membership: it is a marker certifying that someone understands the arbitrary codes of distinction that taste creates. These “certificates of knowledge” confer “the right to be ignorant” (329). Those who draw attention to such certificates of knowledge signal themselves as déclassé, unworthy of membership to the circle of people who can declare what is and isn’t in good taste. It is gauche to draw attention to the imaginary nature of such codes; to do so would characterize one’s understanding of distinction as ill-informed and undeserved. Thus the class of people who can pronounce standards of taste remain conspicuously silent on the certificates of knowledge that give them this authority, and they maintain that silence in order to repel the uninitiated.
plants, though he insists that his interests lie in higher spheres than botany. His gardens are both a frame and a mirror, surrounding his house with a geometrically patterned space, while reflecting flatteringly on his literacy and taste.

The emerging landed classes to which he claims belonging is a new male elite that began to emerge after the Civil War in the seventeenth century, and was now starting to crystallize in the early eighteenth. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the restored aristocracy brought its taste for luxury to bear on the British landscape, populating gardens both with exotic flora and oaks intended to bring foreign goods to British shores. In the final decades of the seventeenth century, the sumptuary standard of the restored aristocracy became the standard of these emerging social strata. These classes were characterized, broadly speaking, by acquired or invested wealth rather than inherited wealth, and they were comprised of members both from the classes of merchants and lawyers and from the lower rungs of the restored aristocracy. Raymond Williams reminds us that this aristocracy was in truth not a “restoration” of some old order, but a new order of “capitalist landlord” who enclosed public grazing land and replaced feudal castles with country houses designed to be seen as “the visible centres of the new social system” (39). Framed with well-appointed gardens, these country estates announced a new way of doing business, one that replaced the martial trappings of the old feudal order with a veneer of leisure and respectability.

The emerging gentry arises from many causes, and, as an emerging class, has not yet settled on the terms it uses to describe itself. Michael McKeon corroborates Williams’ observation on the “restored” order of capitalist landowners. McKeon notes that “By 1699, seventy-one percent of England was already under enclosure, mainly owing to the private agreement of [individual landowners] rather than an act of Parliament” (168). Enclosure made land available to this emerging, middling class in new ways, ways that circumvented the old order that conferred land ownership chiefly through inheritance. Consequently, the terms “gentry” and “aristocracy” themselves grew
increasingly slippery. McKeon offers a subtle treatment of this slippage. The boundary between aristocrat and gentry was in flux because each term denoted “categories variously based upon legal, heraldic, social, and economic criteria” (McKeon 159). Late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century England saw a drastic redistribution of wealth that challenged traditional definitions of these terms. So McKeon explains the difference between gentry and aristocracy in terms of “status” instead of “class”: the former denotes a social standing conferred through birth, whereas the latter denotes a social standing conferred through acquired capital. A sea-change was taking place in Britain: inherited capital was being replaced by moneyed capital acquired through investment, collection of rent, and credit (McKeon 166). This redistribution of capital allowed more men to hold land, more men to have the disposable income necessary to fill that land with exotic specimens. As the gulf between aristocracy and moneyed classes began to narrow, this redistribution of capital also created a need to distinguish a tasteful elite from the pedantry of virtuosi.

However, before this shift takes place, the virtuoso was not always a suspect figure. Samuel Pepys speaks of one virtuoso in particular—John Evelyn—with admiration, and conversed with him on numerous occasions. Pepys’ diary suggests that, in his era, the specialized knowledge of the virtuoso was a mark of unique accomplishment, one that enhanced rather than detracted from Evelyn’s display of class. Thus on 5 October 1665, Pepys recalls one garden stroll with the Royal Society botanist:

And here [Evelyn] showed me his gardens, which are for variety of evergreens, and hedge of holly, the finest things I ever saw in my life. Thence in his coach to Greenwich, and there to my office, all the way having fine discourse of trees and the nature of vegetables. (164)

Pepys’ scintillating conversation with Evelyn suggests that both men, despite Evelyn’s much deeper knowledge of the vegetable kingdom, could speak on such matters with philosophical interest. They discuss not the dirty work of how to grow vegetables, but instead dwell on a much loftier “discourse of trees and the nature of vegetables.” Both men display a virtuosic interest in gardening that would
distinguish their self-styled expertise from mere farmers. Highlighting Evelyn’s privileged class, Rebecca Bushnell remarks that “Evelyn exemplifies the gentleman gardener and virtuoso or ‘curious’ man for whom gardening was an intellectual passion,” as opposed to a matter of mere subsistence (Bushnell 31-2). In other words, the contempt the gentleman gardener holds for mere vegetable-growers aligns the mechanics of taste. As Pierre Bourdieu reminds us, taste enacts a “denial of lower, course, vulgar, venal, servile—in a word, natural—enjoyment” that opposes itself to the more “sublimated” realm of high taste (7). Evelyn’s vegetables aren’t something he grows for his own survival: on the contrary, the sensual delight produced by Evelyn’s gardens reinforces Evelyn’s performance as a tasteful, accomplished gardener. While Evelyn’s **Sylva** devotes whole chapters to the praxis of gardening, his philosophical interest in horticulture claims a higher, more abstracted sphere than that of mere peasants digging around in kitchen gardens.

From the Restoration to the early eighteenth century, gardening left the realms of mere subsistence and aristocratic leisure, and assumed a new function, one that shored up the status of these emerging classes against one another, allowing people of similar social rank to claim distinction that was in truth common to their peers. This shift parallels the extent to which exotic gardening began to sweep down the social ladder. As land became more readily available to those without noble titles, so too the capital necessary to purchase, cultivate, and amass exotics. Daniel Defoe’s *Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-6) attests to these historical shifts. Defoe’s England is a country experiencing urbanization, being parcelled off into individual garden plots owned by an emerging gentry. Defoe describes the towns adjacent to London, including Kensington and Twickenham, Alexander Pope’s home. Defoe informs us that Kensington palace once belonged to William and Mary, who planted an “exceedingly fine” garden, “enlarged to such a degree, as to reach quite from the great road to Kensington town” (345). Kensington Palace was where William and Mary retired after fashioning the gardens of Hampton Court; Defoe’s remark shows that they made
quick work of landscaping the grounds of Kensington to match the opulence of Hampton. In time, those who owned smaller estates began to emulate the horticultural extravagance of the royal residence. Defoe directs his reader’s attention south to Chelsea, “a town of palaces, and which by its new extended buildings seems to promise itself to be made one time or another a part of London” (345). What once was the exclusive retreat of kings and queens has now become many opulent residences, each adorned with its own garden. Defoe’s observation suggests that the status symbols of royalty and aristocracy are available to a much broader range of people than they were during the Restoration. This diffusion of wealth among the middling classes also leads Defoe to speculate that Chelsea might sooner or later become incorporated into the urban sprawl of London itself. Defoe singles out the nearby house of the Earl of Ranelagh, which Pat Rogers reminds us will later open to the public as Ranelagh, the famous pleasure garden in 1742 (704n). Defoe sums up the region of Middlesex: “Let it suffice to tell you that there’s an incredible number of fine houses built in all these towns within these few years . . . Among all these three thousand houses I reckon none but such, as are built since the years 1666, and most of them since the Revolution” (347). Defoe’s vision is essentially a double exposure between the large, solitary, aristocratic estates of Kensington and Ranelagh, and the smaller estates which he deems equally lovely to behold. His gesture back to 1666 reinforces the point, linking the urbanization of the region with the acquisition of land and property by a wider range of people—all made possible by the Revolution of the previous century.

Accompanying this increase of smaller, opulent residences is the patchwork of gardens multiplying across the landscape. As Defoe notes during his travels through the region, a pair of foreigners accompanying him remark “that England was not like other countries, but it was all a planted garden” (343).

The Revolution of the previous century had not only changed the character of the aristocracy itself, but also had cleared the way for new classes of people to emulate those above their
station, to a greater degree than ever before. Gardens played a crucial role in these changes, eliminating public grazing lands, piecing apart the landscape into handsomely appointed plots surrounding country houses all over the outskirts of London. These gardens allowed each newly ascendant family to proclaim its class. The men of these ascendant classes began to use scientific learning in much the same way that the aristocracy once did. Accordingly, the good taste of this scientific learning begins to shift, bringing into existence the virtuoso as a strawman and scapegoat who absorbs the excessive consumptive practices of the gentleman. This strategic use of the virtuoso emerges in response to the rising gentry and justifies—rather than restricts—the importing of exotic flora into England’s gardens.

Alongside this shift in land ownership, the figure of the virtuoso began to move away from the realm of respectability, and began to be aligned increasingly with pedantry. Perhaps one of the last writers to speak of virtuosi in a positive light would be the Earl of Shaftesbury, to whom the virtuoso is the gentleman. Shaftesbury’s *Soliloquy: Or, Advice to an Author* (1710) uses “virtuoso” to denote a man whose well-rounded, worldly learning allows him to form more convincing characters as a poet or playwright. Thus, after reviewing all the different spheres of knowledge that an accomplished writer ought to master, Shaftesbury concludes that to be a *Virtuoso (so far as befits a Gentleman)* is a higher step towards the becoming a Man of Virtue and good Sense, than the being what in this Age we call *a Scholar*. For even rude Nature it self, in its primitive Simplicity, is a better Guide to Judgment, than improv’d Sophistry, and pedantick Learning . . . ‘Tis no wonder, if after so wrong a ground of Education, there appears to be such need of Redress, and Amendment, from that School which we call *The World*. The mere *Amusements* of Gentlemen are found more improving than the profound *Researches* of Pedants. (174-5)

Undergirding Shaftesbury’s virtuoso is a claim to empiricism as opposed to secondhand learning acquired through books: this virtuoso is a man who studies “Nature it self, in its primitive Simplicity,” instead of the scholastic bookishness Shaftesbury ascribes to the pedant. While Shaftesbury thinks of such study in natural philosophy as a mark of good sense and virtue, his
parenthetical qualifier “so far as befits a Gentleman” is revealing. The virtuoso still bears some vestige of the accomplishment and social standing that he once enjoyed in the era of Pepys and Evelyn, but Shaftesbury implies that there is a degree of curiosity in the natural world past which the gentleman dare not stray.

Later texts would be more explicit in aligning the excessively virtuosic gentleman with the pedants and scholars whom Shaftesbury treats as a separate class. The horticultural manuals of the early eighteenth century hint at this virtuosic figure, always displacing him further towards the margins of the conversation, gesturing towards his pedantry from a self-assuredly safe distance. One of the best examples of this rhetorical distancing emerges in the way the horticultural manuals differentiate between a generalist and a specialist audience. Early eighteenth century horticultural texts insist on the usefulness and erudition of gardening in order to appeal to men of accomplishment, a utility that these texts oppose to idle, pedantic dabbling. Indeed, whether as a “kalendar” designed for kitchen gardeners, or an herbal composed by a distinguished member of the Royal Society, botanical texts in the early eighteenth century market themselves to a readership deeply concerned with the correct display of taste.

One of the most prolific horticultural writers of the early eighteenth century was Richard Bradley (1688-1732), a naturalist elected fellow of the Royal Society in 1714. Bradley signals not only a generalist rather than a specialist audience for his gardening manuals, but also an audience interested more in the material practice of gardening than in the pedantry all too often associated with horticultural writers. Accordingly, Bradley’s preface for New Improvements (1721) argues the utility of his manual, Bradley mocks “some of these Writers” of other gardening manuals who think that “they had perform’d great Matters, by heaping together a load of Observations from Varro and Pliny” and “Collecting from Antiquity and foreign Soils” “without carefully considering wherein their Experiments differ from the Genius of our Soils and Climates” (i). Bradley claims his own distinction from this pedantic lot by
offering practical instructions for plants that he claims can actually grow in England, instructions Bradley insists are rooted in his own experience. Bushnell has observed the ways in which many such botanical texts opposed themselves to pedantic, scholarly works, since horticultural writers like Bradley “wanted to claim the authority of experience for themselves” (165). Including himself with this group of more helpful authors, Bradley concedes that “We have now and then, it is true, a Gentleman studious and capable of obliging the World, free from the narrow Views of Self-Interest, and employing his Hours for a more diffusive Benefit than the Culture of his own private Estate or Garden” (i-ii). For Bradley, the distinction between pedant and gentleman lies not in which one amasses the greatest botanical variety, but in their purpose. The gentleman gardener for him acts out of an investment in the public good that ranges far beyond the confines of “his own private Estate or Garden”.

By locating the purpose of the pedantic gardener in “his own private Estate or Garden,” Bradley privileges the generalized knowledge of the gentleman gardener, suggesting that the gentleman cultivates his garden out of some sense of public good, whereas the virtuoso now collects exotics solely for his own vanity. Like the pedants who pad their gardening manuals with georgic poetry, the virtuoso is self-impressed, self-important. Thus, Bradley’s gardening manual demonstrates signals the shift beginning to take place between specialized botanical knowledge and the kind of armchair knowledge that Addison and other gentlemanly writers would display. Bradley’s decisions to make horticulture accessible to a broader audience point not to a democratizing of the garden, but to alternate strategies to shore up the class of the gentleman gardener, namely by conjuring virtuosi and “school-men” on whom to displace his own behavior. No longer able to rely on aristocratic rank, the gentleman gardener must justify his acquired class, lest it seem moneyed and therefore déclassé. Just as he naturalizes his newfound status, he naturalizes the greatest variety of exotic flora in his garden in order to display that status.

Variety, novelty, irregularity—these become the characteristics of the English garden as the eighteenth century progresses. Nor are they arbitrary: accumulating exotic specimens plays a role in shaping the English garden as a space that bolsters the gentleman’s claims to status, and as a space that naturalizes the exotic. Just as the ideal garden must imitate nature, so too the gentleman gardener’s newfound class must seem natural, inherited rather than acquired, a fit emulation of the aristocracy of previous ages. Likewise, his exotic flora must seem as though they sprung up there by accident, masking the acquired capital necessary to purchase them. The garden writers of Augustan England speak not of individual exotics, as that would smack of virtuosic pedantry and crass wealth. Rather, they speak of the “appropriateness” of each element of a garden to its placement in the composition. They speak of variety, novelty, and irregularity as the characteristics that make a garden seem like an idealized version of the natural world, an idealized version in which their own class is immaterial.

This is a self-serving distinction, as we have seen—one that says more about the way the gentleman fancies himself than the things he consumes, which always threaten to drag the gentleman down to the same plane as those he seeks distinction from. One of the ways in which the gentleman and virtuoso occupy the same plane lies in their fascination with variety and novelty. Addison’s *Spectator* 412 elaborates this point, connecting the notions of novelty and variety with the pleasures of the imagination, while divorcing both of these notions from the material capital necessary to acquire them. Addison claims that

> Every thing that is *new* or *uncommon* raises a Pleasure in the Imagination, because it fills the Soul with an agreeable Surprise, gratifies its Curiosity, and gives it an Idea of which it was not before possest. We are indeed so often conversant with one Sett of Objects, and tired out with so many repeated Shows of the same Things, that whatever is *new* or *uncommon* contributes a little to vary human Life, and to divert our Minds, for a while, with the
Strangeness of its Appearance: It serves us for a Kind of Refreshment, and takes off from the Satiety we are apt to complain of in our usual and ordinary Entertainments (402).

Addison’s language is the language both of science and of fashion: novelty gratifies “Curiosity” because it breaks the monotony of “one Sett of Objects,” offering “a Kind of Refreshment” that “divert[s] our Minds” (402). Addison’s gentleman suddenly seems virtuosic, seeking out new “Entertainments” beyond the “usual and ordinary.” Perhaps, though, the gentleman is satisfied with novelty “for [just] a while,” whereas the virtuoso is fascinated by it constantly. For this reason, Addison draws the line of distinction between pleasures derived from the “uncommon” and pleasures derived from the “beautiful.” The “uncommon,” like novelty, gratifies curiosity for just a while, whereas the beautiful “strikes the Mind with an inward Joy, and spreads a Cheerfulness and Delight through all its Faculties” (403). This “inward Joy,” we are led to believe, places the gentleman’s appreciation of novelty and variety on a higher plane than his virtuosic counterpart, despite the fact that both characters would respond to novelty and variety in precisely the same way. In other words, the moment Addison attempts to draw a line between the gentleman’s and the virtuoso’s appreciation of the natural world, the line shifts, emphasizing the similarity rather than the difference between the two figures. After all, how are Addison’s readers supposed to distinguish between an “inward” and an “outward Joy,” neither of which he bothers to define? The distinction is always tautological, defined less by the objects that each figure appreciates, and more by the anxieties of defining social distinction in an era when such distinctions seem to be losing their meaning.

As markers of social standing in this era of shifting class structure, variety, novelty, and irregularity in the garden signal familiarity with landscape aesthetics, a new vein of writing that began to coalesce in the early eighteenth century. There is perhaps no better writer to speak for this emerging discourse than Alexander Pope, that consummate gentleman gardener (and gentleman of
letters) whose *Epistle to Burlington* (1731) famously instructs the landscaper to “Consult the genius of the Place in all” (57). Indeed, Pope’s letters reveal that he was an avid garden tourist, and admired variety and irregularity. For him, this “genius of the Place” need not manifest through strict, trammeled formality. Pope’s writings point to the ways in which the garden of the eighteenth-century gentry began to replace the gardens of the seventeenth-century aristocracy, naturalizing new social positions by exchanging neoclassical order for an aesthetic that styled itself after the surprising irregularities of nature. In a letter to Martha Blount dated June 22 1724, Pope illustrates this new taste for the irregular garden in a description of Sheborne House in Dorset:

> The Gardens are so Irregular, that tis very hard to give an exact idea of ’em but by a Plan. Their beauty rises from this Irregularity, for not only the Several parts of the Garden itself make the better Contraste by these sudden Rises, Falls, and Turns of ground; but the Views about it are let in, &c hang over the Walls, in very different figures and aspects . . . From the corner of this you issue at once upon a high green Terras the whole breadth of the Garden, which has five more green Terras’s hanging under each other, without hedges, only a few pyramid yews 6c large round Honisuckles between them. The Honisuckles hereabouts are the largest & finest I ever saw. You’ll be pleas’d when I tell you the Quarters of the above mention’d little Wilderness are fill’d with these &c with Cherry trees of the best kinds all within reach of the hand. (170-2)

Pope delights in the garden’s apparent artlessness. His emphasis on the “Contraste,” the “Rises, Falls, and Turns of ground” create the sense that the garden’s topography emulates the irregular variety of a wilderness. He narrates his trek, his attention lingering not so much on individual plant specimens, but more on the overall effect. Indeed, here Pope as garden tourist reminds us of Pope as visionary pastoral poet in *Windsor Forest*, who attends to the ways in which “Earth and Water seem to strive again / Not Chaos-like together crush’d and bruis’d, / But as the World, harmoniously confus’d” (12-14). The overall composition of land forms delights Pope. Novelty in this landscape arises from the harmonious confusion of various elements striving together over a broad expanse of space. The grounds of Sheborne house do not strike Pope as a cabinet of exotic specimens, but as a well-planned garden whose art conceals its own art. The path Pope takes admits different “Views”
that “are let in” by the screening foliage and walls “in very different figures and aspects,” suggesting that the art of this garden lies less in its geometric regularity and more in its ability to present views at selective angles. The garden’s prospects are plotted carefully along the way, revealing an “Irregularity” from which their “beauty” arises. Janet Waymark confirms that the landscape described by Pope’s letter was designed by William, 5th Lord Digby (1662-1752), whose plans for the grounds feature “formal but asymmetrical gardens with their groves, avenues, and terraces leading northwards towards the canal formed from the widened [River] Yeo” (65). The parks at Sheborne would later be overhauled in the 1750s by the famous landscape designer Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1716-83), eliminating the formal walks and redirecting the canal to form various ponds and water gardens (67). Thus, Pope’s description of the landscape, with its formal grounds framing the house and its increasingly sylvan parks beyond, would have been quite typical of garden design in his time, and would have represented the status of its owner not as an autocrat bending nature to his will, but as a gentleman who represents his status subtly in a naturalized landscape—that is, a landscape “made” natural. This is a power whose confidence needs not speak.

However, true to what we have seen of gentleman and virtuoso, Digby’s landscape at Sheborne House features exotic flora placed to enhance the naturalized effect. In the midst of this well-turned garden, one exotic specimen stands out to Pope: the “Honisuckles,” a species of flowering perennial which Bradley’s *New Improvements* lists as one of “those *Foreigners* which are already naturalized to our Country” (22-3). Richard Mabey’s *Flora Britannica* (1997) notes that there is a species of honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) native to England: this species is variously called “woodbine” and “eglantine,” but it also thrives in the same woodland conditions as a Japanese honeysuckle (*Lonicera japonica*) which was introduced during the eighteenth or nineteenth century (Mabey 348). This honeysuckle, then, could be native or introduced; Pope’s language makes the distinction unclear, and his language likewise dwells not on the exoticism of the plant, but on its
pleasing effect, on the way the landscape selectively camouflages and reveals the plant’s beauty.
Likewise, the honeysuckle strikes Pope’s eye not for its foreignness, but for its size (“the largest & finest I ever saw”), and its ability to blend into “the above mentiond little Wilderness” of cherry trees as though it naturally grew there. Naturalized exotics act as part of the “variety,” the *concordia discors* Pope celebrates in *Windsor Forest*, that causes all disparate things to agree with a “genius of the place.” The variety of plants encompassed in this well-designed landscape presents the abundance of the natural world not as a curiosity cabinet, but as a seemingly natural landscape in which plants of foreign origin seem to spring spontaneously from the ground. The variety of plants attests not to the crass wealth necessary to acquire and naturalize them, but to the shifting class structure in Augustan England, a class structure in which it is now necessary to conceal the material means of wealth in ways not necessary to previous ages.

Admiring the irregularity of the Sheborne gardens—the ways in which those gardens mask their own art and mask the exotic origins of the plants growing there—Pope seems quite comfortable in adorning his “genius of the place” with flowers from any part of the globe. His genius of the place doesn’t need strictly English plants; rather, his aesthetic merely calls for plants that seem suitable for whichever environment they are planted in. While Pope does not speak of how to naturalize exotic plants specifically, he does speak of the aesthetics of appropriateness in garden design in his *Epistle to Burlington*. Reiterating classical ideals of moderation, Pope advises Burlington to plant a garden neither too gaudy with ornament, nor too bare. This ideal garden represents the genius of the place by positioning objects thoughtfully rather than arbitrarily, always with attention to the appropriateness of each object to its location. Accordingly, Pope advises against “One boundless Green, or flourish’d Carpet” (95). Pope’s footnote to the line explains that each of these signifies “The two extremes in parterres, which are equally faulty; a *boundless Green*, large and naked as a field, or a *flourished Carpet*, where the greatness and nobleness of the piece is
lessened by being divided into too many parts, with scroll’d works and beds” (95n). These “scroll’d works and beds” would have been filled with exotic flora, as Richard Bradley’s horticultural manuals suggest. Pope illustrates each of these extremes, of excessive and deficient ornament, in the following verse paragraph with Timon’s Villa. John Butt reminds us that Timon wasn’t meant to represent anybody in particular, but simply functions as “a personification of aristocratic pride” (592n). Timon’s villa exemplifies ill-spent wealth (“What sums are thrown away!” 100) through its sheer size, “bring[ing] all Brobdignag before your thought” with a pond as vast as “an Ocean, his parterre a Down” (106). Unlike the subtle and tasteful art guiding the wilderness landscape of Sheborne above, Timon’s gardens smack of crass grandeur. The gardens feature “No pleasing Intricacies . . . to perplex the scene; / Grove nods at grove, each Alley has a brother; / And half the platform just reflects the other” (117-118). Pope’s centrally placed caesurae visualize the oppressive symmetry he describes, folding each line of verse neatly between “Grove” and “Alley,” “half the platform” and “the other.” Pope’s portrayal of Timon’s villa represents tackiness as ill-mastered taste that regresses to the neoclassicism of the Restoration aristocracy of the previous century. His portrayal also characterizes this ill-mastered taste as a misunderstanding of natural order and variety. Timon’s garden is a place of “inverted Nature,” where the landscape has been hewn into unnatural shapes by bad art:

Trees cut to Statues, Statues thick as trees,
With here a Fountain, never to be play’d,
And there a Summer-house, that knows no shade;
Here Amphitrite sails thro’ myrtle bow’rs;
There Gladiators fight, or die, in flow’rs;
Un-water’d see the drooping sea-house mourn,
And swallows roost in Nilus’ dusty Urn. (120-126)

Ending the verse paragraph with the image of dried fountains, Pope suggests that Timon’s villa has both drowned itself in ornaments and placed all of its ornaments out of place. For all of the garden’s
artfulness, there is no sense of natural belonging: sea-horses and Nilus swim not in water but languish in drought; gladiators fight not in the arena but on parterres of flowers; the sea goddess Amphitrite is stranded on dry land; summer-houses offer no shelter from the sun; and topiaries become statues, while statues outnumber trees. Pope uses the example to suggest that statues ought to be appropriately placed according to what they portray, rather than merely displayed as art objects whose opulence calls too much attention to itself. They ought to be carefully positioned and thoughtfully chosen, rather than cluttered in sheer mass. For Pope the tasteful gardener “let[s] Nature never be forgot,” opting neither to “over-dress, nor leave her wholly bare” (50-53).

Positioning Nature against crass wealth, Pope imagines an ideal garden whose art conceals its own art.

However, there is still the fact that Pope speaks of statues and garden features, rather than individual plants. Pope’s description of the rambling honeysuckles at Sheborne suggests that Pope admires the vines because they seem appropriate to the woodland rambles of Digby’s grounds—which is to say, the horticultural art required to make the honeysuckles thrive in that environment has concealed itself, making the honeysuckles, like Digby’s status, seem naturally sprung. Horticultural writers of Pope’s era speak of plants in much the same way he speaks of statues and water features: they too regard individual plants as art objects that must be placed according to an aesthetic of appropriateness and context. Pope’s contemporary, the Royal Society botanist Richard Bradley, offers a more scientific version of the aesthetic of appropriateness that Pope presents to Burlington above.

Like Pope, Bradley speaks of gardening in terms of taste and class; however, unlike Pope, Bradley clothes these terms not in classical allusion and neatly folding heroic verse, but in botanical and horticultural language instead. Thus Bradley’s version of Bourdieu’s certificate of knowledge relies on the specific, botanical knowledge of each individual plant’s origin. This knowledge, like
Pope’s footnote on Timon’s symmetrical parterres, requires explanation. Bradley’s botanical knowledge is specialized; it is not part of the “finishing” classical education enjoyed by British men in these newly emerging classes in the Augustan era. By explaining the certificate of knowledge in botanical rather than classical terms, Bradley signals an important change in the way horticulture registers class in the early eighteenth century. The gentleman gardener, unlike Lord Digby, no longer needs an inherited title or even a classical education to make his garden represent his class. Rather, the tasteful gardener can now acquire his knowledge through such manuals as Bradley’s, which Bradley markets to a broadening public. Bradley’s writings, like other gardening manuals, address a common readership with levels of interest varying from the casual kitchen gardener to the expert botanist. For this reason, his horticultural treatises often have to untangle a thicket of competing names for each plant they catalog. Bradley’s *New Improvements* (1721) signals his mixed readership by pairing botanical Latin names with their English counterparts. His entry for the lilac, for instance, specifies that botanists refer to this plant as a “Syringa or Pipe-Tree,” while “Gardeners give the Name of Syringa to another Plant” (25). Thus, Bradley promises to include a bilingual index in order to “call every Plant by the Name they know them by” and thereby “reconcile the Botanist with the Gardener” (25). Separating gardener from botanist, Bradley’s manual joins both the specialist and the generalist in a common, gentlemanly readership. He proposes to join the different levels of knowledge in this readership with a new certificate of knowledge, one that is botanically informed and Royal Society approved, in order to instruct his mixed audience on how best to naturalize exotic plants.29 This is a gardener who can read his way into taste; he can acquire the certificate of knowledge that previous generations of gardeners could only be born into.

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29 For a more detailed account of the shift from classical to scientific learning as a part of the program of gentlemanly literacy, see Jason Solinger’s *Becoming the Gentleman*. Solinger argues that Pope’s self-fashioning of himself as a gentleman relied heavily on his claims to literacy. Accordingly, Pope rewrites “a social hierarchy in which literacy, rather than lineage, determines one’s position” (Solinger 57). Thus, like horticulture, literature becomes “a new form of power,” allowing Pope to claim “himself as both man of letters and a gentleman, one whose knowledge of good verse represented but one part of his knowledge of the world” (57).
Like the aesthetic of appropriateness governing where Timon ought to place his statues of sea goddesses, Bradley mandates that trees and plants of foreign origin ought to be placed “appropriately,” as well—“appropriate” in the sense that the gardener must fashion a new environment for that plant analogous to the one from which the plant originates. Bradley’s *New Improvements* remarks that plants from the American colonies can be planted just about anywhere “if they are managed with Judgment” (22). So he claims “that Plants of Virginia, even those of the North Parts of Carolina, will bear our Frosts” (22). He offers a few examples, such as the “Tulip-Tree” (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), “which flourish so well in the Earl of Peterborough’s Wilderness at Parson’s-Green” (22). Bradley claims that the tulip-tree is a “Virginia Plant,” which “yet finds no difference between the Degrees of 38 and 52”; it is “an Inhabitant of the Woods” in its “Native Country,” so, accordingly, “in my Lord Peterborough’s Garden it flourishes in a Wilderness, but I have known it planted in a much warmer, and more open Exposure, and it has perish’d” (22). Thus Bradley concludes the tulip-tree example, advising “to plant every Tree in a Wood which is natural to a Wood, and upon a Plain that which is the Native of a Plain” (22). Bradley’s advice for his gentleman gardener is tantamount to what Pope advises for Burlington: just as a tasteful gardener ought never place a statue of a sea goddess in some dry setting, so too a tasteful (and observant) gardener ought never place an exotic tree in an environment that differs too drastically from its own. Pope expects his ideal gardener to know that a statue of Amphitrite belongs near water; likewise, Bradley expects his ideal gardener to know not only that the tulip-tree originates in Virginia, but that it prefers cool, moist woodlands instead of exposed plains. This sense of appropriateness announces the gardener’s classical literacy and taste for Pope, and, for Bradley, botanical and horticultural expertise. For both, this sense of appropriateness constitutes what Bourdieu would call a certificate of knowledge, a gustatory horticultural practice that marks the gardener as a member of a class of tasteful gentlemen.

By yoking scientific and aesthetic discourse, writers of the garden in the Augustan era reflect
not only the burgeoning interest in importing exotic plants, but also why this interest matters to those who use gardens to project their newly acquired status to those of rank similar to themselves. Like monuments, statues, grottoes, and other garden features, plants now figure as part of the gentleman’s program of horticultural taste. Exotic flora now offer one more way that the newly ascending landowners can use their grounds to display their taste. Contrary to what we have seen about the virtuoso, that taste for collecting exotic things is not suspect at all, but rather enhances the gentleman’s claims to class, provided that he describe his collections correctly. By using the virtuoso as a scapegoat to excuse his own excesses, the gentleman gardener can continue to populate his grounds with growth from all regions of the globe.

We have seen how the virtuoso functions as a straw man on a broader level, but one example in particular merits closer examination. When Pope lampoons virtuosi in the final book of his *Dunciad*, he tempts us to believe that he is exempt from their small-minded lot. However, a closer look at the carnation collector—one of a whole parade of dunces paying tribute to the goddess Dullness in the final arc of the mock epic—reveals that, in order to satirize a virtuoso, it takes one to know one.

IV. The Dunce’s Carnation and Pope’s Grotto.

‘Fair from its humble bed I rear’d this Flow’r,
Suckled, and cheer’d, with air, and sun, and show’r,
Soft on the paper ruff its leaves I spread,
Bright with the gilded button tipt its head,
Then thron’d in glass, and nam’d it CAROLINE:
Each Maid cry’d, charming! and each Youth, divine!
Did Nature’s pencil ever blend such rays,
Such vary’d light in one promiscuous blaze?
Now prostrate! dead! behold that Caroline:
No maid cries, charming! and no Youth, divine!
And lo the wretch! whose vile, whose insect lust,
Lay’d this gay daughter of the Spring in dust.
Oh punish him, or to th’Elysian shades
Dismiss my soul, where no Carnation fades.’
He ceas’d, and wept. (4.403-19)

– Alexander Pope, *Dunciad* (1742)

Of all the dunces Pope could have chosen to lampoon, why a carnation breeder? Why this particular version of unworthy scholar? As Pope’s florist brilliantly demonstrates, many supposed men of taste went to great lengths to demonstrate their mastery of botany and the natural sciences. They would resort to breeding extravagant specimens and naming them after persons of quality (such as Caroline). Their penchant for collecting would ultimately separate turn the virtuoso into a figure meant to absorb the excesses of the gentleman gardener, all while validating the gentleman gardener for indulging in the same material practices. Their penchant for collecting would also affect the world outside their minds, smothering that world beneath a display case, transfiguring living things into dead art objects, and further spurring the appetite for exotics that transformed the British landscape. Pope’s florist demonstrates both of these results of the small-mindedness he attributes to his dunces. Imploring the goddess Dullness to punish his fellow dunce for stealing the flower, the carnation collector accuses the insect collector of “Lay[ing] in dust” his beloved flower with the rest of his dead specimens, exchanging the glass cloche that would have protected the living carnation in the garden for the glass case that entombs the dead blossom for display. Underlying the accusation is, of course, the irony of one small-minded collector scalding another. His remark about “Nature’s pencil” anticipates Johnson’s remark that the proper purpose of a poet is not to number streaks of the tulip. Pope’s carnation, like Johnson’s tulip, suggests a similar sentiment: these naturalist dunces

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30 Samuel Johnson, speaking through the mouthpiece of his philosopher in *Rasselas, Prince of Abissinia*, pronounces that “The business of a poet . . . is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdure of the forest” (628). Like a botanist, Imlac’s ideal poet must know enough about individual tulips in order to remark on the species, but, unlike a botanist, Imlac claims that poet isn’t ultimately interested in numbering the streaks on each petal. That poet also must not glut himself with only knowledge of the natural world, for Imlac goes on to say that “the
ogle over minutiae of the natural world, and their classifying gaze smothers the organisms they collect.

Both collectors’ obsession with the trivial signals their exclusion from the circles of good taste. The insect collector and flower thief justifies himself by presenting Dullness a “peerless Butterfly” (4.436) that he has likewise pinned: displayed in its case, the dead butterfly becomes a collectors’ piece or curio that, as Bourdieu has noted, turns natural object into art object (30). The passage also conjures the image of adult men frolicking in meadows, counting the streaks in flower petals or trying to catch butterflies. The disparity between masculinity, status, and small-minded pursuits underscores the degree to which the dunces’ social capital fails to register as good taste.

Linda Zionkowski has remarked that such “trivial pursuits” suggest “a growing cultural disdain for homo otiosus,” (143-44). Zionkowski refers to the leisured class of virtuoso that emerged in the final decades of the seventeenth century, a dilettante whose collecting smacks of regression to the dissolute Restoration court instead of serious scholarship. Pope’s narrative of the squabble between the two collectors comments not only on their lack of good taste, but also on the indiscriminate nature of fashion to confer its favor on anybody willing to pander to its demands. We see this latter theme most clearly in the way the goddess responds to the florist’s plea. True to the gardener’s accusation, the insect collector explains his pursuit of the butterfly as part of his pursuit of all naturalia: “I meddle, Goddess! only in my sphere. / I tell the naked fact without disguise, / And, to excuse it, need but show the prize” (4.432-4). Disguising his small-mindedness with a tautology whose “prize” “excuses” his theft, the insect collector expects the goddess to approve of the natural specimens he has pinned in his dusty cases. Dullness, seeing that both dunces fulfill their

knowledge of nature is only half the task of a poet; he must be acquainted likewise with all the modes of life” in the world of men—the world of culture—in order to “trace the changes of the human mind” (629). By separating the world of nature from the world of culture, Rasselas privileges one over the other in much the same way that the figure of the gentleman gardener does, excusing his own virtuosic indulgences in order to claim some broader interest in the bigger picture.
pedantry equally well, pronounces neither of her subjects guilty, as “both have done [their] parts” (4.436), since “The mind, in Metaphysics at a loss, / May wander in a wilderness of Moss” (4.449-50). Pope’s use of moss and carnations groups exotic botanists with other dunces, suggesting that they, like so many gentleman naturalists in the Augustan era, exhibited that “dang’rous Thing” Pope’s *Essay on Criticism* famously called “a little Learning” (1.215).

Pope’s final remark on the “wilderness of moss” points to one of the poem’s chief conceits: the inability of the dunce to discern scale. Mistaking specimens of moss for trees, the dunce’s mind remains lost in a Lilliputian forest less than an inch tall; similarly, the dunce is obsessed with streaked carnations, pinned butterflies, and other dusty minutiae whose curiosity occupies his attention, eclipsing any glimmer of higher concerns. This self-absorbed attention ultimately causes the dunce to hold nature up as a mirror to himself, missing the creator of the whole. This small-minded obsession with the natural world holds a great deal in common with the emerging consumer culture of the early eighteenth century. Simon Jarvis, in his analysis of Pope’s representation of the drudgery of scholarly labor, remarks that “Pope’s dunces are often portrayed as treating products as mere physical material (lumber or frippery, for example)” (114-15). In mistaking physical substance for meaning—surface for depth—the study of quaintness for the study of God—Pope’s dunces turn their diligence into pedantry. Pope’s mockery conveys a certain superiority that elevates him above such misled scholars.

Pope’s choice of the carnation as the dunce’s flower is far from arbitrary: carnations in Pope’s time were all the rage. Horticultural texts of his era attest to the carnation’s extraordinary variety, revealing that carnations were to early eighteenth-century England what tulips were to the early seventeenth-century Netherlands. Like tulips, carnations came in many colors; however, unlike tulips, the streaks of the carnation were no longer a secret to horticulturalists. For both flower crazes, florists would attempt to hybridize the flowers to produce blossoms whose petals had flames,
speckles, or streaks in order to increase the flower’s market value. While the carnation craze did not result in a stock market crash, a survey of horticultural writings from Pope’s era reveals some considerable commonalities. The botanists of early eighteenth-century England frequently comment on carnations’ variety, their hybridization, and their malleability to human desires. William Salmon’s *Botanologia* (1710) specifies that carnations differ little with respect to their roots, leaves, and stalks, “but [are] manifold in respect to the Flowers . . . some being of one Color, some of another, some of many, some Striped, some Spotted; some finely Dented only; some Jagged or deeply Cut in, &c.” (197) Such accounts reaffirm what Bushnell has observed about carnations among early modern gardeners, which she terms “the aristocrats of the early English plant world” (Bushnell 150). Bushnell reports that the gillyflower—one of many names of the carnation—was the first to be hybridized via cross-pollination; she also reports that cultivators of carnations met with more success than the Dutch tulipists who relied on alchemy in the previous century. Bradley’s *New Improvements* (1721) details the pollination experiment. Like Salmon before him, Bradley’s entry for “Caryophyllis” enumerates the sundry classes of the carnation—some native, like the “cheddar pink,” and others, like the “China-pink” introduced (54). He singles out a variety known as “the Picketees” which tends to be named for “some Person of Note or Quality” and that he routinely sees upwards of “one Hundred different sorts in one Garden, every one distinguish’d” (50)—a practice Pope refers

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31 Writing about the Dutch tulip craze, Mike Dash notes that the early tulipists sought “subtle variations of these flames or flares of color to grade their flowers according to a strict set of criteria,” valuing the different classes of blossoms according to an elaborate pricing scheme (59). Tulips of the “broken” variety were highly prized: these bulbs were afflicted with what 20th century botanists would term the “mosaic” virus, causing their petals to break into multiple colors. This botanical disease produced bulbs noticeably less hardy than their uninfected counterparts, but, because germ theory was not understood by the early modern botanists, “the phenomenon of breaking seemed akin to magic,” prompting the tulipists to resort to concocting alchemical potions with which to water their bulbs, hoping in vain such measures might cause them to break and increase their value (Dash 60). Needless to say, such attempts at hybridizing tulips failed, mystifying the Dutch botanists even further. Responding to the increased demand for the feeble and more valuable broken tulip bulbs, the Dutch tulipists valued broken tulips far more than the natural varieties, whose “bright colors” struck them as “rude” (59). Thus the Couleren, or single-colored tulips, fetched the lowest value, while Marquetinnen tulips (which sported as many as four colors) fetched a much higher price (Dash 58). These phenomena—valuing the hybrids and streaks over the single colors, speculating hotly over the prices of individual specimens, and madly pursuing the latest fabulous hybrids to satisfy a niche market of florists—each play their part in England’s fascination with carnations in Pope’s era.
to when his dunce names his streaked carnation “Caroline.” He then remarks on the hybridization of the species through his cross-pollination experiment: “I have endeavour’d to explain how the Dust of one Flower will impregnate and enliven the Seeds of another; and that from that accidental Coupling, the Seeds are so chang’d as to produce Plants with Blossoms varying from those of the Mother-Plant” (50). He then provides detailed instructions on gathering and germinating hybridized carnation seeds (50ff). Both exotic and native, malleable and adaptable, variable and fashionable, the carnation for early eighteenth century writers sinks its roots at the intersection of horticulture, science, and fashion. Thus, with Pope’s florist, naming his carnation for a person of quality and ogling over its streaks speaks to this broader botanical discourse that connects the carnation to consumer culture, and aligns the carnation with the Dutch tulip craze from a century before.

Pope’s decision to focus on the carnation as the dunce’s flower highlights the dunces’ conflation of science and fashion. Recalling the superficial vanity of a previous flower craze, the dunce’s streaked carnation expresses the vanity of the new horticultural science of Pope’s time. Erin Mackie notes this connection in Market a la Mode: “Both the new science and the burgeoning retail trade are materialist and visually oriented institutions; both involve collection/consumption and display” (56-7). Mackie draws a parallel between “The devotee of the mode, with his or her collection of fashionable accessories, and the dedicated man of science, with his collections of butterflies, bones, and, beetles,” since both are guilty of “what we would call their fetishization of objects” (56-7). Just as Pope fashions the dunce to mock the new science of his era, the gentleman gardener writes his way into status by fashioning the virtuoso as a scapegoat, a tacky version of himself who indulges in the vain surfaces of things and collects and displays the very same exotic objects that the gentleman does. According to this scheme, the virtuoso is also a pedant, one whose display of exotic objects parallels his ostentation of classical knowledge. He seeks to impress his audience with his ill-mastered display of luxury and learning. By showing off his own acquired
certificate of knowledge, the virtuoso legitimates the gentleman, even though both figures engage in the same consumptive practices.

However, a glance at Pope’s own garden suggests that he indulged in very much the same horticultural practices as his dunces. Adorned with the famous grotto in which Pope devoted himself to his literary labors, Pope’s garden furnished him not only a space for literary production, but also a curiosity cabinet of the natural world, both vegetable and mineral. It was a renowned literary site, as John Serle, Pope’s gardener at Twickenham, attests. Shortly after the poet’s death, Serle published *A Plan of Mr. Pope’s GARDEN* (1745) laying out both a complete map of the grounds, and, as his subtitle advertises, a “Perspective View of the GROTTO” “WITH An Account of all the Gems, Minerals, Spars, and Ores of which it is composed, and from whom and whence they were sent.” Set into the walls of the grotto, most of Pope’s mineral collection hails from various patrons in England; some, however, originate from Egypt and Italy along with hummingbirds’ nests, corals, and “many other curious Stones from the Island of St. Christopher in the West Indies” (8). Pope’s mineral collection isn’t a far cry from the collections of dried butterflies and flowers Pope alludes to in the florist episode of the *Dunciad*. In fact, as Douglas Chambers points out in *The Planters of the English Landscape Garden*, Pope’s grotto would have been fairly typical of other garden grottoes during the early- to mid-eighteenth century: irregular and craggy, these grottoes would have replaced the elaborate Italianate grottoes of seventeenth century gardens, swapping out sculptures of sea gods for shells, minerals, and collections of natural curiosities (51). By exchanging classical marbles for natural curiosities, Pope’s grotto responds to the changes we have seen in the way the gentry signals its class: scientific learning begins to join classical learning as a mark of literacy and taste. The

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32 Maynard Mack points out that, despite the renown of Pope’s garden, Pope wrote “surprisingly little information about it, [and] still less what it meant to him” (21). Pope was known to busy himself a great deal in his garden, as Mack reminds us, but, as John Serle’s account suggests, Pope seems to have been more concerned with recording his garden’s mineral wealth than its botanical wealth.
Twickenham grotto was a space whose collection of natural objects was meant to embody Pope’s muse, bringing together in one place objects whose natural beauty was intended to inspire Pope’s verses. Maynard Mack’s landmark study of Pope’s garden demonstrates that “Pope’s ‘creation’ of Twickenham constituted an act of the mythopoetic imagination . . . without which he could not have written his mature poems as we have them” (9). The overall thrust of Mack’s argument is that Pope’s garden furnished him a place of retirement from the busy world of the city, a refuge from the world where his stunted stature and literary insults had earned him the enmity of many rivals. Here, physically surrounded by the finest objects culled from the natural world, the self-educated Catholic poet could compose at a peaceful remove from his bitter, Whiggish detractors.33

The collection of objects in Pope’s garden—monuments, inscriptions, minerals, and specimen plants—all serve to reflect flatteringly on Pope’s own learning, literary, and virtuosic accomplishment. They also point to the garden’s purpose as a place intended to foster literary production through reflection and contemplation. In this regard, Pope’s garden typified many other Augustan gardens of Pope’s day. As Mack observes, “landscape and garden at this period assume some of the functions of album and commonplace book, philosophical vademecum and memento mori” whose arrangement of walks, urns, obelisks, and avenues “serve as aids to reflection” (Mack 22). Serle’s plan of Pope’s garden reinforces the reflective function his collections would have performed by coupling mineral wealth with literary wealth. Accordingly, Serle’s pamphlet appends some of

33 As Pope’s mineral and botanical collections suggest, gardens were no longer sites of strictly classical learning: they began to acquire a distinctly scientific bent, as well, and landowners of the gentry classes would exploit this association to their advantage. While previous generations of aristocrats deployed such strategies throughout the Renaissance—arranging reproductions of classical sculptures throughout their grounds in order to reflect on their own classical learning—in Pope’s era landowners began using the garden as repositories for natural curiosities. Most notable among these was Pope’s grotto at Twickenham, which he adorned with various minerals that his correspondents would send him. Douglas Chambers notes that the “elaborate Italianate and emblematic grottos” of the late seventeenth century “were replaced instead by grottos filled with natural curiosities: shells, gems, and stones of all sorts” (51-2). Myers explains Pope’s mineral collection in the grotto as an endorsement of Shaftesbury’s idea that minerals represent divine art in their simplest form (13). In fact, when Pope donated his mineral collection to the Royal Society as his “Museum” in 1740, Pope wrote to Henry St. John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke, that he intended the mineral collection as “a Study for Virtuosi” (qtd. in Myers 15).
Pope’s “VERSES on a Grotto by the River Thames, at Twickenham, composed of Marbles, Spars, and Minerals,” in which Pope’s speaker rhapsodizes: “Great NATURE studiously behold! / And eye the Mine without a Wish for Gold” (12). Serle’s map of the garden positions Pope’s “Mine” of literary inspiration amidst extensive gardens (Figure 2).

Figure 2: John Serle, A Plan of Mr. Pope’s Garden as it was Left at his Death (1745). The “Explanation” in the lower left corner indicates that an orangery would have been located at “13” in the circular area in the southwest corner of the map.

On the east end of the grounds stands an “Obelisk in memory of his mother,” a monument customary for gardens of Pope’s era. A “Shell Temple” stands in the west, and, between them, a vineyard and stoves flanking the north side of the grounds. These stove houses would have been used to shelter vegetables during the winter. Bordering the “Bowling Green” in the middle of the grounds is a “Grove,” which, as Serle’s regularly placed dots suggests, would have featured trees
ranked in a careful grid. South of the grove, a series of straight avenues cuts through screens of foliage; some of the avenues grow serpentine and irregular towards the southwest corner of the map. However, many of these walks radiate from a circular area labeled “13. The Orangery.” The placement of this orangery at the convergence of five radiating avenues hints at the importance of this structure: a viewer would not spend too much time wandering through the screened avenues in before finding the way to this prized collection of citrus. Indeed, the radiating avenues would have made the orangery selectively visible from several different points in the garden, drawing viewers’ attention there. Pope and Serle, we might infer, wanted the garden’s design to entice the viewer to this feature, presumably to marvel at the poet’s collection of tender plants. Like orangeries and greenhouses of the aristocratic gardens of the late seventeenth century, Pope’s orangery would have housed not only citrus but also—likely—other botanical rarities. Bradley’s New Improvements hints at this possibility, informing his readers that “the Beauty and Advantage of the Orangery is owing to the good Condition of the Conservatory,” and accordingly lays out a plan for “a Green-House as might be agreeable to the Rules of Architecture, and at the same time rightly adapted to the Welfare of Foreign Plants” (69). Bradley’s use of the generic phrase “Foreign Plants” indicates that, while chiefly for citrus, the orangery could house other ornamental exotics as well. In addition to extending the growing season for vegetables, it is likely that Pope’s orangery and stove houses would have performed much the same function as the collection of minerals in his grotto: a collection of rare natural objects intended for display.

Pairing botanical with mineral specimens, both the grotto and the features of Pope’s garden would have furnished curiosities for the poet’s study of nature. Although Serle does not mention any of these exotic flora by name, his account of Pope’s garden advertises the rarity of the things found there, capitalizing on Pope’s literary fame to disclose the secrets of the poet’s garden to a curious audience. This garden would have stricken Pope’s contemporaries, in Maynard Mack’s phrasing, “as
a true country of the mind” (232), a secluded place that the poet fashioned for himself to fit his persona as a satirist with a distant view of his age, whose curated objects from the natural world inspired his imagination and boasted his accomplishment to his guests.

But there is still the underlying irony of Pope’s own virtuosic practices, the ways in which his own collections possibly inspired those of his insect collector and carnation breeder above. His collections of minerals and plants suggest that he could satirize his dunces so well because, in his penchant for collecting, he resembled them himself. Indeed, decades after Pope’s death, Samuel Johnson would regard Pope’s grotto as an error of taste, clicking his tongue at such a vanity in his *Lives of the Poets* (1779):

> A grotto is not often the wish or pleasure of an Englishman, who has more frequent need to solicit than exclude the sun; but Pope’s excavation was requisite as an entrance to his garden, and, for some men try to be proud of their defects, he extracted an ornament from an inconvenience, and vanity produced a grotto where necessity enforced a passage. It may be frequently remarked of the studious and speculative, that they are proud of trifles, and that their amusements seem frivolous and childish; whether it be that men conscious of great reputation think themselves above the reach of censure, and safe in the admission of negligent indulgences, or that mankind expect from elevated genius an uniformity of greatness, and watch its degradation with malicious wonder; like him who having followed with his eye an eagle into the clouds, should lament that she ever descended to a perch (429).

Johnson’s remark on Pope’s grotto suggests that the cave, like the collectors Pope satirizes, might seem “frivolous and childish.” Johnson muses that perhaps such eccentrics think themselves “safe in the admission of negligent indulgences” such as Pope’s fanciful grotto, or that perhaps the fault lies in “mankind,” for whom such errors of taste furnish “malicious wonder.” Johnson’s closing image of the eagle descending from the clouds suggests that Pope’s grotto, like the bathos Pope practices so often in his satire, constitutes its own art of sinking in material, horticultural form.

Later critics have read Pope’s grotto and garden in more sympathetic ways, though. As a famous literary garden, Pope’s grounds at Twickenham are significant not only for what the garden says about the poet’s ideas, but also for what the garden represents more broadly about the ways in
which horticulture created and reinforced the figure of the early eighteenth-century gentleman. The more minerals—the more marbles, spars, and crystals—the merrier, and the same holds true for Pope’s garden and for the ideal garden of Augustan England, as well. Variety becomes the defining feature of the early eighteenth-century garden, and becomes the way that the garden reflects on the gentleman’s accomplishment. It does so by accomplishing two paradoxical functions simultaneously: it represents cultural capital (learning) through material capital (exotic plants), and it obscures material capital by making exotic goods appear to have sprung naturally in the gentleman’s well-appointed grounds. In this regard, the garden resembles the grotto, and, for this reason, the gentleman can use the garden both to boast and naturalize his newly acquired status.

Pope’s visionary pastoral poet in *Windsor Forest* famously tells us that the forest’s delight lies in its variety: it is “Where order in variety we see, / And where, though all things differ, all agree” (15-16). So too for the garden: the garden assembles variety, and reflects the accomplishment of its gentlemanly owner by assembling as broad a collection as possible in one place. As we have seen with Pope and Bradley above, the gentleman gardener makes “all things” “agree” by naturalizing them according to an aesthetic of appropriateness. Each ornament and each plant seems to emerge naturally in the garden, obscuring the material means that brought it there. Similarly, the garden holds a mirror up to nature, emulating the natural world by providing an idealized version of it, one that represents the power of the gentleman gardener through an art that masks its own art. Thus when Pope extols order in variety, there are two sides to his statement: on one, the garden fulfills its role through accumulating variety; and, on the other, the gentleman fashions the garden through an “order” that causes all things to seem as though they “agree” of their own accord. In order to make the garden a flattering representation of his class, the gentleman gardener must tame variety through
order, thereby making his acquired capital seem natural. In other words, he does so in order to
naturalize his class.

After Pope’s death, after the stern geometry of the seventeenth century garden begins to
loosen its grip, and after the Royal Society horticulturalists reach further and further to the margins
of the world for their foreign plants—after the gentleman gardener carries on the work previously
available only to the aristocrats of former years—the obsession for exotics begins to claim a new
market of would-be gardeners. Women, ladies of learning, would join the ranks of British gardeners.
In response, male writers of the mid-eighteenth century would deploy the rhetoric of the virtuoso
against women, turning the bluestocking into the pedantic figure that the virtuoso was fast
becoming, and using her to absorb their own excesses in much the same way. In this regard, the
pattern of using the virtuoso to legitimate the importing of exotic flora repeats itself, but with a
difference: the midcentury vogue for chinoiserie would play a role, turning feminine gardening into
an errant Orientalizing of British tastes. By populating the British garden with “strangers” from
abroad, women gardeners—and women writers—were beginning to materialize their fictions of the
East using the British landscape itself.
CHAPTER 3: ROMANCERS OF THE GARDEN, AND GARDENING FOR THE LADIES:

NATURALIZING EXOTIC FLORA IN THE FEMALE SPECTATOR.

I. Chinoiserie and Botany for the Ladies

Writing about the newfound vogue for the “Chinese” style of gardening in 1757, Sir William Chambers equates chinoiserie to a kind of romantic fiction. He claims that the Chinese landscapers “distinguish three different species of scenes, to which they give the appellations of pleasing, horrid, and enchanted. Their enchanted scenes, answer, in a great measure, to what we call romantic” (Of the Art of Laying out Gardens among the Chinese 788). He elaborates the point by listing several of the mechanisms these supposed Chinese landscapers use “to excite surprise”: “Sometimes they make a rapid stream or torrent pass underground . . . at other times, they dispose the rocks [in such a manner that] the wind . . . causes strange and uncommon sounds” (788). In addition to these devices, Chambers lists “all kinds of extraordinary trees, plants, and flowers” as ornaments that make these scenes seem “enchanted” (788). Invoking magic and wonder—the very stuff of romantic fiction—Chambers aligns this Chinese manner of horticulture with fantastical landscapes. The physical materials of these landscapes are organized in such a way as to transport the viewer into an environment that does not resemble their ordinary, physical reality. These are worlds populated with exotic things, and they are intended to resemble fictions of faraway lands.

Of course, Chambers refers not to any authentically Chinese form of landscaping, but to an English one. His remarks indicate that English landscapes were starting not only to resemble supposedly Chinese ones, but also fantastical ones. Midcentury English landscapes began to leave behind their neoclassical, Augustan forebears. Gone were the obelisks, urns, and classical
inscriptions of Pope’s day; the fashionable ornaments of midcentury landscapes now were gothic ruins, pagodas, and “Chinese” bridges emerging from the greenery. Purporting to represent faraway places, midcentury gardens featured exotic ornaments tucked into the backdrop of rolling, natural forms, with drifts of greenery and pleasantly disposed hills and ponds designed to make these outlandish structures seem “naturally” placed there. With these supposedly “eastern” ornaments came a host of flowers and shrubs from the Orient. Horticultural art was beginning to mimic chinoiserie.

Horticultural art was beginning to mimic literary art, too. To be sure, it always had: one could argue that gardens of the Middle Ages and Renaissance were meant to invoke the hortus conclusus of Eden. Or one could argue that the Italianate gardens of the seventeenth century, populated with their classical marbles, were intended to invoke a kind of Arcadia. Or one could argue that early eighteenth-century landscapes, adorned with their classical obelisks and urns with quotations from Virgil, were intended to invoke pastoral or georgic poetry, or invite philosophical contemplation of the sort that polite readers might find in such writers as Addison, Shaftesbury, Pope, or Chesterfield. But by the middle of the eighteenth century horticulture began to emulate literature in new ways—namely, in ways that invoked the genre of romance, far newer than classical and Biblical forms. The chinoiserie pagodas and gothic ruins of the mid-eighteenth-century garden invited the viewer to enter a fictitious world of far away, a world whose distance ranged to the Orient instead of antiquity.

As scholars of the novel know well, eighteenth-century writers debated hotly over this newly emerging literary form: its characteristics and subject matter; its readers, and whether those readers ought to read this kind or that kind of story. Ian Watt, Michael McKeon, and successive generations of twentieth-century scholars have trodden these paths well. There is little need here to rehearse Defoe’s use of the plainspoken everyman narrator, or Fielding’s formula of the epic-comic prose-
poem, or Richardson’s preference for the subjectivity and multiple perspectives afforded by the epistolary form. Rather, I focus on the ways in which romantic novels inflect landscape itself. The garden’s previous literary forms—Arcadia, the Hesperides, or Eden—always occupied respectable positions in literary canon. Eighteenth-century writers joust ed over the superiority of the ancients and moderns, but they never questioned whether both were worth reading. However, domestic and romantic novels did not yet enjoy such privilege and prestige. Their influence on their readers was dubious, and, I argue, so was their influence on landscapes. By responding to landscapes that now emulated new literary genres, midcentury writers betrayed a number of anxieties about the newfound control that their contemporary landscapers had over their physical environment. In particular, they worried that this newfangled orientalizing of the English landscape smacked of a feminine and therefore suspect consumption of exotic things.

They expressed these anxieties often in horticultural terms: language that mentions explicitly and implicitly the importing of exotic flora as one of many foreign elements populating the environments they inhabited. Sometimes, they expressed these anxieties in fictional terms: language that projects the ethical—often gendered feminine—problems of novelistic fiction onto the physical environments that landscapers were creating. Horticulture was now a polite art available to both male and female readers, and it figured as part of a midcentury culture that mocked its own xenophilia in order to justify it. Chinese flowers, chinoiserie pagodas, Chinese landscaping aesthetics—writers increasingly thought of horticulture as an art that not only brought exotic things into the domestic garden, but also made the domestic garden look like a fiction of an exotic place. As a result, writers began to use the xenophbic rhetoric directed against the virtuoso to critique those who desired exotic things, and their strategies for doing so moved along increasingly gendered lines. Misogyny characterized women’s consumption of exotic things as dubious, dismissed women’s learning and accomplishment as merely products of fashion, and critiqued women’s learning by
making it out to be a xenophilic desire for things outside of the home, contrary to a woman’s proper place. Midcentury bluestockings advocated women’s literacy and learning in all fields, including natural philosophy, botany, and horticulture, and their responses to this virtuosic rhetoric reveal the vulnerability of the gentleman gardener to his own xenophilic vices, as well as the vulnerability of the British landscape to foreign flora.

In particular, I focus on Eliza Haywood’s *Female Spectator* because her essays place botany and horticulture in conversation with various other areas of women’s endeavors, and attempt to use botany and horticulture to endorse a kind of masculine, respectable xenophilia. Haywood, maligned by Alexander Pope’s mentioning her as a dunce in the 1729 edition of *The Dunciad*, retaliated against the virtuosic rhetoric of male writers in subversive ways, as we shall see below. Haywood presents a case study of a midcentury author responding to a landscape increasingly cultivated by women, increasingly populated by exotic things, and increasingly emulating fantastical settings. Her advocacy for women’s learning in natural philosophy clears a new path by which exotics enter the landscape by validating the horticultural pursuits of a newly emerging class of women. However, Haywood’s advocacy ultimately acts within a masculinist framework already established by the prevailing discourses of romantic fiction, chinoiserie landscaping, and xenophilia. Male writers in Haywood’s time characterized these cultural forces as delicate, vain, and inappropriate for women.

In her efforts to reclaim these pursuits for her female audience, Haywood had to call upon the masculinist framework available to her, a framework that characterized xenophilia as appropriate only when it was coded as masculine. In order to understand the gendered dynamics underlying that...

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34 Helene Koon made an early case for why *The Female Spectator* merits critical attention, proposing that Haywood’s friendship with Richard Steele and Daniel Defoe—both Whigs—earned her the ire of Pope and his Tory circle. The 1729 edition of *The Dunciad* mentions Haywood among Pope’s other dunces, and, “Perhaps coincidentally, Haywood’s extraordinary output of work ceased shortly after the appearance” of Pope’s mock epic (43-44). *The Female Spectator* represents a sudden flurry of literary production in the last decade of Haywood’s life, and critics often treat Haywood’s essays as a conservative departure from her more adventurous early fiction, with the tacit implication that Pope’s attack silenced her during the 1730s. However, it remains unclear whether her silence was caused by her detractors (Koon 44).
framework, a brief review is necessary of the gendered conversations surrounding romance, the chinoiserie aesthetic of sharawadgi, and the xenophilia attending both of these.

II. Sharawadgi and Strangers in the Landscape.

The foreign origin of exotic flora enlists these new botanical strangers in the same commerce that creates and feeds the British taste for the exotic, and puts them in a position to activate the same xenophobic fears and xenophilic desires in which Haywood’s essays participate. These desires always had a gendered dimension: when masculine, desire for the exotic comes across as a noble, scientific pursuit, whereas, when feminine, desire for the exotic comes across as fashionable, vain, or errant. Discussions centering on chinoiserie landscapes and romance novels played a role in shaping these gendered implications, as Sir William Chambers illustrates above. Exotic goods circulated into England at the same time that English landscapers began to conceive of the garden in self-consciously foreign and fictive ways, ways that aligned landscaping with fictitious settings—romantical settings often associated with a female readership. The midcentury vogue for chinoiserie gardening represents a masculine, and therefore socially acceptable version, of the same desire to approximate physical landscapes to fictive ones. Sharawadgi depends on telling a convincing fiction of a faraway place using an assemblage of exotic objects. Likewise, sharawadgi requires an art that conceals its own art, and this art proves potent enough to turn the fantastical environments of romances into physical realities, physical landscapes shaped by the same xenophilia Haywood endorses for her female subscribers.

Romance in mid-eighteenth-century England was associated with a predominantly female readership, as is well known. Charlotte Lennox’s *The Female Quixote* serves as perhaps the most prominent example of this association. An instance from Lennox’s novel represents fiction as a force that shapes physical environments, thereby projecting the ethical problems of the novel onto
the English landscape. Her novel also famously portrays romance reading as a feminine pastime, aligning it with an errant desire for exotic things. These themes come to the forefront in a passage towards the end of the novel, when Arabella, the Quixote steeped in the bad reading habits of French romances, is schooled by a learned doctor. The doctor diagnoses her taste for romance as a kind of ailment, instructing her in why her trust in such fanciful stories is misplaced. As the conversation unfolds, the implication becomes clear: a stern, male voice is required to correct this woman’s errant desire for the tales of faraway lands. At first, Arabella clings stubbornly to her convictions: to her, romances are history—fact rather than fiction—and she believes she can expect her reality to live up to the lofty standards of heroes and damsels in such improbable tales. However, the doctor attempts to reason with her, offering the following caveat for why one cannot expect the real world to match such far-flung fictive worlds:

You will perceive that your authors have parcelled out the World at Discretion, erected Palaces, and established Monarchies wherever the Conveniency of their Narrative required them . . . Nor have they considered themselves as invested with less Authority over the Works of Nature, than the Institutions of Men; for they have distributed Mountains and Desarts, Gulphs and Rocks, wherever they wanted them, and whenever the Course of their Story required an expedient, raised a gloomy Forest, or overflowed the Regions with a rapid Stream. (378)

The doctor’s account of how these romancers describe landscape parallels the language of horticulture and garden planning: raising a gloomy forest, overflowing a stream, distributing “Mountains and Desarts, Gulphs and Rocks, wherever they wanted them,” wielding undue power over both “the Institutions of Men” and “the Works of Nature.” The verb parcel points to the practice of subdividing land into smaller lots, suggesting not only land use but also, as the doctor’s image of moving mountains and groves suggests, the image of redistributing land features according

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35 Margaret Dalziel examines the “plausible theory” that this conversation was ghost-written by Samuel Johnson, since its dialogue critiquing the romance sounds uncharacteristic of the rest of Lennox’s novel (414-5n).
to some anthropocentric scheme. Through such descriptions, the doctor reasons that the writer of romance “disfigures the whole Appearance of the World, and represents every Thing in a Form different from that which Experience has shewn” (378). The doctor’s language of disfigurement and drastic alteration of the landscape mimics what William Chambers ascribes to his Chinese enchanters above, who can shape gaping chasms and whistling stones to charm the viewer. The doctor’s language also suggests that fiction in general, and romance in particular, exerts an extraordinary influence on the physical environments readers inhabit. The metaphor underlying his reasoning is that reality is like physical geography: given, physical, and materially there, like the empirical “Experience” which “shows” things to be different than the romancers’ representations of them. Just as romancers pretend that they can conjure a forest or a mountain range if their story so requires, so too the genre of romance can reshape the way readers perceive the world around them—just like Arabella, the perfect example of the impressionable young female reader who so often consumes these improbable tales.

Lennox’s novel illustrates the broader conversation surrounding female reading habits and the genre of romance: when female (and “because” female), desire for the exotic comes across as errant, an ailment or weakness that a male authority must correct. Otherwise, xenophilia is endorsed when coded as masculine, and, accordingly, discards its associations with feminine delicacy and deficiency. An instance of this masculine xenophilia—and its connections with chinoiserie landscaping and the generic conventions of romance—occurs decades earlier than Lennox’s novel. This instance demonstrates how it is possible for a genre associated with women to influence horticulture in ways thought of as masculine, and respectable. One of the correspondents of Addison’s *Spectator* represents romance as a force capable of redistributing geographic features at a whim. In *Spectator* 477, a correspondent responds to Addison’s “pleasures of the imagination” essays. Claiming himself to be “an Humourist in Gardening,” this enthusiast describes his various
wilderness walks and parterres of his estate. He then muses that “there are as many kinds of Gardening as of Poetry: Your Makers of Parterres and Flower-Gardens, are Epigrammatists and Sonneteers in this Art: Contrivers of Bowers and Grottoes, Treillages and Cascades, are Romance Writers” (21). Addison’s correspondent bases his comparison on scale and ornamentation: epigrams and sonnets, like parterres and flowerbeds, are spatially constrained forms that use dense ornamentation such as rhyme schemes and wordplay. These *flores rhetoricae* remind him of drifts of flowers. Similarly, the “Contrivers of Bowers and Grottoes” work with larger forms—romance, or prose fiction—in order to create ornaments on a grander scale. Like the romancer’s ability to dream up tales in exotic settings, the “Contrivers” of “Treillages and Cascades” fashion environments that mimic faraway lands by altering land forms and geography. Redirecting waterways, piling cliffs and caves where they could not have occurred naturally, landscapers reshape the grounds in far more profound ways than mere florists. The male horticulturalist, like the male romancer in Lennox’s example above, wields a love for exotic goods that Addison’s garden enthusiast characterizes as powerful instead of delicate, bearing (in most cases) the cultural gravitas of established literary forms. Indeed, in this usage the garden enthusiast’s invocation of romance conveys an air of whimsy and even nobility, rather than the errant xenophilia with which Lennox would later associate it. The male gardener reworks the landscape in the same quasi-supernatural fashion as the romancer, feeding into an anthropocentric fantasy of power. The assumed gender of Addison’s speaker, as well as the gentlemanly exchange implied by the letters Addison and Steele answer in their publication, inflect the speaker’s metaphor comparing gardening to romance, elevating horticulture to a noble realm of masculine endeavor.

If horticulture and romance bear in common this ability to reshape both physical and imaginary landscapes, what does that comparison have to do with xenophilia, and the importing of exotic flora? For both Addison’s gardening enthusiast and Chambers’ Chinese landscapers, the link
lies in an aesthetic called “sharawadgi,” a chinoiserie aesthetic that sought to reshape gardens according to a supposedly “Chinese” notion of caprice and studied irregularity—an aesthetic that prompted the importing of “all kinds of extraordinary trees, plants, and flowers,” as Chambers suggests above. Addison’s horticultural correspondent hints at this aesthetic when he expounds on his own “Compositions in Gardening.” He regards his landscapes as being “altogether after the Pindaric Manner, and run into the beautiful Wildness of Nature, without affecting the nicer Elegancies of Art” (21-22). Just as he aligns gardening with the creation of romantical settings, he alludes to a gardening aesthetic that Addison has already celebrated in his previous essays—an aesthetic whose art conceals its own art. Addison was not the first to coin this idea, nor the first to assign it a Chinese origin. As Robert Batchelor notes, Addison’s essays rehearse the arguments found in Sir William Temple’s treatise *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus* (1685) “without crediting [Temple] or mentioning the word sharawadgi” (87), which was Temple’s word for the idea. In *Spectator* 415, Addison opposes the Chinese aesthetic of a more rugged nature with the geometric parterres favored by English gardeners. He speculates that the Chinese “have a word, it seems, in their language, by which they express the particular beauty of a plantation that thus strikes the imagination at first sight, without discovering that it has so agreeable an effect” (143). It is, in effect, a naturally looking landscape so subtly crafted that it looks completely uncrafted; its art does not “discover” itself at first glance, nor does it evince the material wealth necessary to bring it into being. Tony C. Brown compares Addison’s paraphrase to Temple’s original more closely: “[T]hough we have hardly any Notion of this Sort of Beauty,” says Temple, “yet they [the Chinese] have a particular word to express it; and, where they find it hit their Eye at first Sight, they say the Sharawadgi is fine or is admirable” (qtd. in Brown 172). Ascribing this idea to Chinese gardens, Temple and Addison both regard sharawadgi as the ideal form of the English garden, one whose artifice emulates nature so
perfectly that art vanishes into thin air.\footnote{Brown notes that “Addison’s reference to the Chinese and their supposed taste in landscape gardening” has received relatively little critical attention, thanks to the fact that the reference has been “siphoned off into the realm of garden theory, where it receives wide notice” (142). Bachelor contends that Addison’s reference to the Chinese indicates Addison’s privileging of them as “the most civilized people,” a civilization whose garden aesthetics were so refined “as to create a free and irregular appearance” (87)—which is to say, Addison’s and Temple’s engagement with China has less to do with the reality of China as a place, and more to do with their own English ideas of what China was thought to mean. Eugenia Zuroski Jenkins puts this translation of Chinoiserie more succinctly: “Addison uses the term ‘Chinese’ to designate an invisible yet real aesthetic operation on the natural world, an artistic transformation so delicate and perfect that it completely disappears” (72).}

Like the status sought by ladies of learning, virtuosi, and gentlemen, sharawadgi offers a means of naturalizing class by obscuring the material means of the capital necessary to affect it, and by adopting masculine codes of respectability that befit such acquired status.

So Chineseness—of an imaginary, masculine sort—comes to represent the ideal mode of English landscaping that works in tandem with the masculine framework of xenophilia already in place in eighteenth-century English culture. However, the chinoiserie inherent in the English garden made itself known in far less subtle ways, ways that more directly referenced the ability of landscape to emulate fictitious settings. As Williamson notes, the influence of an imaginary China on the landscapes of midcentury England manifested as a fad for pagodas and painted bridges: such elements of chinoiserie suggests an affinity for “the supposed virtues of the Chinese political system (it could be safely invested with any number of virtues, being so far away)” (Williamson 65).

Williamson refers to such pagodas as the one erected by Sir William Chambers at Kew Botanical Gardens in 1757, not long after the publication of Lennox’s novel. Simon Schama describes how landscapers attempted to realize William Chambers’ “‘formula of ‘laughing,’ ‘enchanted,’ and ‘horrible’ landscapes” by “using statuary of monstrous birds and dragons, and trees carefully carved to appear as though they had been blasted by lightning” (542). Among these fantastical gardens modeled after Chambers’ orientalized influence were “Chinese gardens where the visitor could wander in a dream-like, shamanic state among waterfalls, bridges, and hanging rock faces beneath
which lotus and lilies floated in carp-filled pools” (Schama 542). The English infatuation with the “Chinese” style of gardening thus sought not only to create gardens that looked natural, but also to create gardens explicitly intended to transport the viewer to faraway places. This fad, coupled with other midcentury fads such as garden hermits,38 sought to create gardens that mimicked the faraway settings of romances, turning a customarily feminine and exotic genre into the ideal British garden.

Chinoiserie and xenophilia only registered as good taste when mid-eighteenth-century writers used it in a way considered masculine. Both of these loves for foreign things depended on a masculine politics of respectability that simultaneously aligned chinoiserie with the feminine genre of romance and used the genre of romance as a way to extol its own power over the landscape. These gendered dynamics are, of course, self-serving to the authors we have surveyed above. Thus, when Haywood endorses women’s study of botany as part of a broader program of engagement with the natural world, Haywood does so within the masculinist framework surrounding botany and xenophilia. She reappropriates the masculine authority associated with both of these pursuits, divorcing them from their associations with delicacy and vanity in order to claim them as appropriate endeavors for her female audience.

III. Eliza Haywood, Natural Philosophy, and Gardening for the Ladies.

Defending the study of natural philosophy for women, Haywood writes in The Female Spectator 3 that, “Whether our Speculations extend to the greatest and most tremendous Objects, or

38 Williamson notes one such hermit “at Hawkstone (in Shropshire) [who] as visitors approached, would come out of his cave waving—instead of arms—bloody stumps, and crying ‘Memento mori’” (68). Gordon Campbell’s recent book The Hermit in the Garden treats the phenomenon of garden hermits at much greater length, tracing them from the tradition of Christian monasticism to eighteenth-century gothic gardens. He contrasts the “Edenic creations” of Capability Brown’s rolling, park-like landscapes “This was the associative garden, the garden of feeling, which began with Pope’s garden at Twickenham and then became the guiding principle of gardens such as Painshill [and] Stourhead” (25). The feeling invoked by garden hermits, as Williamson’s example suggests, was a reminder of mortality. Maynard Mack likewise remarks that the vogue for fake ruins in midcentury landscapes worked not only as a memento mori but also as a device to make an estate seem older than it truly was” (22). Later on in the 1760s, such ornaments as fake ruins and garden hermits served to invoke a gothic mood, making the garden emulate the settings of gothic novelists.
She is agreeing with Philo-Naturae, one of her correspondents who recommends scientific study for women. She expresses much the same admiration for the natural world that Joseph Addison did in his “pleasures of the imagination” essays in The Spectator decades before: in all natural wonders great and small, Haywood sees the work of a divine hand whose power makes the ordinary seem marvelous and strange. Thus, since “Love and Reverence to the Deity is by every one allowed to be the Ground-Work of all Virtues and Religion, it is, methinks, no less impolitick than unjust to deny us the Means of becoming more good as well as more wise” (231). Turning the masculine, virtuosic gaze of scientific learning upward to God, Haywood implies that men study the natural world in order to discern God’s workings and learn “Virtues and Religion” from the principles of the natural world. Why, then, deny that privilege to women, who, as Haywood suggests, might be made “more good as well as more wise” through such virtuosic study?

Haywood was not alone in her call to open scientific learning to women. As Donna Landry has noted, women had been permitted to dabble in botany and science in one capacity or another since the seventeenth century (479). Margaret Cavendish—herself a virtuoso exiled along with John Evelyn and the rest of Charles II’s court—had been the first and only woman permitted to attend a Royal Society meeting prior to Haywood’s day (Girten 59). Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan have likewise observed that, although rarely, women did serve as botanists in European colonies: Schiebinger and Swan highlight Maria Sibylla Merian (1647-1717), whose work examined both insects and flora from the East Indies (Colonial Botany 11). However, it was likely more widespread practice for women to study herbs not in far-flung settings, but in the kitchen and flower gardens of the home. Herbalist knowledge had long been passed down among European housewives. In fact, Schiebinger contends that the domestic herbalist knowledge of working women contributed more to

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39 Citations of The Female Spectator refer to page numbers from the 1766 ECCO text.
the development of botany as a science than most histories admit: “From the sixteenth century on, academic naturalists sought to record and codify ‘indigenous’ traditions among European lay herbalists, many of them women, in a process similar to that undertaken in the colonies” (Plants and Empire 11). Accordingly, Eliza Haywood’s argument for opening scientific study to women was part of a broader discourse, a response to masculine attempts to close the scientific community away from a growing chorus of female voices.

For these reasons, Kristin Girten reads Haywood’s endorsement of science as a site for resistance against such patriarchal constraints. Girten proposes that Haywood “pays lip service to a gendered division of knowledge” while undermining it (57), turning natural philosophy into a means for women “to expand the horizon of, and thereby reshape, the sphere to which they are consigned (58). Girten’s analysis of the Philo-Naturae essays in The Female Spectator provides a useful way to revise the view that Haywood’s later writings were more reserved than her earlier novels and romances: Haywood’s voice in The Female Spectator is just as subversive as in her early fiction, even if it is more subtle, didactic, and tempered. Rather than disagree with Girten’s conclusions, I would like to extend them. When taken against the backdrop of botany and horticulture, Haywood’s subversiveness—her case for scientific study as a women’s pursuit—advocates for serious study of botany and horticulture by women, since male horticultural writers of Haywood’s era often made a point of framing horticulture as a polite, domestic, and decorative art.

Fellows of the Royal Society—all male in Haywood’s era—might have wanted to keep women out of their circle, but their strategies for doing so involved presenting horticulture in service of domesticity. Men of the Royal Society held in high esteem the female botanists and horticulturalists in the early eighteenth century—though they often couched that esteem in masculinist terms that reflected their double standard. An example of this backhanded praise occurs in Stephen Switzer’s Iconographia Rustica (1718), which lists a whole parade of various botanists and
gentlemen gardeners whom Switzer regards as important for the development of this newly emerging field. Among these luminaries, he claims “It would be an unpardonable Omission, not to mention those Virtuous and Honourable Persons amongst the Ladies, who have likewise shewn a particular Veneration and Esteem for the Subject we are upon” (71). He briefly reviews the Flora or “floral-feasts” of women in ancient Rome, then highlights the career of Mary Somerset, Duchess of Beaufort (1630-1715). Badmington in Glocestershire was Beaufort’s garden, as Switzer remarks: “What a Progress she made in Exoticks, and how much of her Time she virtuously and busily employed in her Garden, is easily observable from the Thousands of those foreign Plants (by her as it were made familiar to this Clime)” (72). Switzer’s characterization of Beaufort’s extensive gardens confirms what Stephen Bending detects in such authors, namely that female botanists are repeatedly associated with exotic ornamentals, as these were thought most becoming of the decorative, feminine, domestic garden: “while writing of all kinds might be addressed to men, an overt address to women tends to be confined to publications on flowers and flower or kitchen gardening” (249n). Switzer’s remark also associates Beaufort’s botanizing more with hobbyists than with serious botanists: he admires “The great Favour she held towards Virtuoso’s in her own way” and considers her “very eminent in Botanick Amusements” (73). His choice of “Amusements” and his associating her with virtuosi characterizes her botanizing as a superficial and idle affair, valuable for importing numerous species of exotics, but otherwise not as serious as the other horticulturalists he celebrates. Switzer drives home this last point when he concludes that, “When Men are observ’d to busie themselves in this diverting and useful Employ, ‘tis no more than what is from them expected; but when by the Fair and Delicate Sex, it has something in it that looks supernatural, something so much above the trifling Amusements of Ladies” (73-4). In Switzer’s account, men are expected to take on the natural world in serious study, whereas women are expected to occupy themselves with frivolities. To him, such horticulturalists as Beaufort are exceptions and not the rule. Indeed, it is
telling that, as Stephen Bending notes, Switzer’s list of botanists only includes three women (21).

Thus, even when acknowledged for their contributions to the science, women horticulturalists are thought to be either exceptional for their sex, or somehow more superficial than their male counterparts, despite their efforts. Accordingly, Stephen Bending notes that, while the work of male landscapers has been associated with large-scale landscapes such as the parks of Capability Brown, “women are repeatedly associated with the small-scale and easily moralised endeavour of the flower garden” (13). Circled by walls and hedges, nestled cozily near the house, the woman’s flower garden was both spatially and ideologically aligned with her domestic role. Male horticulturalists were eager to tap into this burgeoning market of female readers. Horticultural manuals, such as Richard Bradley’s The Flower-Garden Display’d (1733), advertise this concern for framing horticulture as a properly domestic pursuit through its title and its lavish illustrations. Bradley announces that his manual will contain “Curiously engrav’d on copper-plates” intended to guide the depictions of flowers “Not only for the Curious in Gardening, but the Prints likewise for Painters, Carvers, Japaners, &c. also for the Ladies, as Patterns for Working, and Painting in Water-Colours; or Furniture for the Closet.” Linking the feminine pastime of china painting with the manufacture of chinoiserie, Bradley’s title recommends gardening as a way to better understand exotic flowers as art objects in order to allow women to produce objects to beautify the home, and thereby better fulfill their household role.

The “Curiously engrav’d” plates occur throughout the chapters of Bradley’s manual, often organizing the flowers in visually balanced bouquets displaying the stamens, streaks, ruffles, and forms of each blossom. However, unlike the water-colors and furniture Bradley imagines for his female readers, Bradley’s prints in the Flower Garden Display’d carry more than a decorative function. Each plate portrays certain garden flowers that bloom within a particular month (see Figure 3). So congested is the level of detail that the casual viewer might not notice the numbers nestled between
the painstaking blooms. These numbers are keyed to a legend at the bottom of the plate, and this legend lists the English names of each of the flowers. The pages following each plate list the flowers in order, with a brief paragraph detailing the cultivation of each plant. Latin names are conspicuously absent; in fact, the flowers are not even listed in alphabetical order. The organization of Bradley’s manual is strictly visual: the flowers are merely listed in order according to their number, and numbered according to where they appear in the floral arrangement. Displayed within the domestic ornament of an urn, the flowers are “tamed,” some lying on the table around the urn’s base. These specimens are divorced from their outdoor environment, framed as art objects in an indoor setting.
The plate for May illustrates this domestic setting particularly well. This plate also features several flowers of exotic origin. Bradley remains silent on the origins of most of these plants, though some, such as the “White Hyacinth of Peru” announce their origin by name. Some, like “The Cinnamon
“Rose” have “been a long time in England” (39). Others, like the “China Pink,” are listed as “a Native of China” (42), or, as with the “Indian Queen Ranunculus,” listed as “of the Persian Sort” (44). Others still come not from a country or region, but from “a Breeder rais’d in Holland” as with “The Bishop of Canterbury Tulip” (40). Whether as exotic specimens or newly formed hybrids, the flowers are no longer portrayed as living specimens with the intent of botanical study. Rather, their portrayal is strictly ornamental, pointing to their purpose as consumer products. Together the floral bouquet represents specimens from England, Europe, Asia, and the Americas, neatly arranged and contained in the decorated interior space portrayed in each plate, numbered and organized not in the fashion of masculine botanical texts, but in a visual, aestheticized way that Bradley seems to have approved for his female readers.

Bradley gives the female members of this audience a stilted, rudimentary introduction to horticulture. Bradley’s version of gardening for the ladies suggests that he and his fellow Royal Society writers felt the need to water down scientific writing even while letting their female readership dabble in it—with male supervision, of course. Accordingly, when Haywood calls for women to take a more serious approach to scientific learning, she implicitly critiques writers such as Bradley who have deemed women unworthy of comprehending scientific writing in its full complexity. Thus, even though Haywood’s call for women’s study of science might strike a radical chord, her intent was very much in line with the domestic role that her patriarchal culture prescribed for her contemporaries. For Haywood, women should study the natural world in order to improve their maternal role, just as, for Haywood’s contemporaries, women should cultivate a garden and study botany in order to better serve their role as homemakers.

For these reasons, Haywood’s spectator shows repeated concern for extending the narrow compass of her female readers’ knowledge. Specifically, she wishes her readers to turn their attention to the masculine realm of science in order to get their heads out of the airy realm of fashion. In this
regard, Haywood’s call to scientific literacy figures as part of a broader program of knowledge that Haywood has in mind for her readers, a program always opposed to the feminine vanity of fashionable pursuits. She views her ideal reader as well-rounded, polished, versed in various areas of endeavor previously permitted only to men. In *Female Spectator* 3.15, during a discussion on what characterizes good taste, Haywood’s spectator remarks that the efforts her audience spends on becoming “early connoisseurs in the mode” should better be spent on the study of nature itself. Thus, instead of making “smart remarks on the dress of every one we see at the ball,” her reader ought to spend more effort “in examining the various and beautiful habits with which nature cloaths those plants and flowers which adorn our gardens.” Equating the petals of the garden’s flowers with the latest fashion of dress, Haywood implies that, while flowers might fade from season to season just as fashionable clothes do, the natural beauties of the garden afford her readers a delight far more enduring. She drives this point home by connecting natural beauty with contemplation of the divine. These floral beauties derive their pleasing effects from “a love and reverence for the Great Author, Director, and Sole Disposer of every thing in nature” (126). Echoing her injunction above that scientific study is ultimately a theological study, Haywood opposes nature to fashion in order to privilege the former. By separating nature from the realm of fashionability, Haywood enlists women’s study of the natural world in a higher sphere, one separate from the beau monde. This “higher” sphere is also “closer”—closer to home, less absorbed with the charms of balls and finery, and more with the cultivation of woman as the wise dispenser of practical and enriching knowledge to her children.

Significantly, Haywood aligns scientific knowledge with practical knowledge, as opposed to the frivolous knowledge derived from romance and bad reading habits. Further on in *Female Spectator* 3.15, Haywood responds to another correspondent who signs himself Philo-Naturae.  

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40 Kristen Girten notes that it is far from clear whether Philo-Naturae is a real reader, or a fictional one written by
the wonders of observing the natural world to those afforded by operas and balls, finding the latter, of course, quite wanting. Over the course of this letter he mentions various forms of popular natural observation: he praises the microscope as a means of discovering all the minute beauties of nature (133), commends women who show enthusiasm for the Royal Society’s researches (138-9), and concludes his letter by insisting that “the study of nature is the study of divinity” (140). Haywood’s spectator responds that she can imagine no better place for this reader’s letter than her hands, since a curiosity for the natural world strikes her as both appropriate and natural to her sex (141). She agrees with Philo-Naturae that these scientific pursuits would, along with reading, distract women from such “absurd and ridiculous follies, which at present too much engross their hours” (142). She contrasts this kind of female reader with the “young lady, whose head is full of the gay objects of the world” who won’t bother with filling her idle hours with such a useful pursuit as reading (142). Just as Switzer associates the female sex with idle, non-botanical pursuits above, so too Haywood reiterates the customary masculinist claim that too many of her fellow women indulge in the idle pastime of reading romances, since romances are the genre of choice for the fashionable circles of the world.

Indeed, Haywood’s insistence on scientific learning as an instructive alternative to such vapid reading points to the broader debates surrounding the novel in her era, the broader masculinist anxieties that positioned romantic novels as a feminine and therefore inferior form of reading. For Haywood, the danger of reading lies in “FABULOUS accounts of real facts, instead of informing the mind” (145). For this reason, Haywood recommends reading as “a great way toward acquiring that fine taste which is so much talk’d of, and so little understood” (143). After listing various classical authors whom Haywood’s spectator recommends for an ideal reading program, her spectator goes
on to remark that, “NEXT to history, I prefer those accounts which are to be depended on of voyages and travels;—the wonders related by those who plough the deep, and get their bread upon the great waters” (152). From here, Haywood’s spectator weaves in a passage from Addison’s Spectator 67 wholesale: praising the “industrious merchantmen” to whom “we owe every delight and peace and plenty bring,” justifies her love of travel narratives by qualifying that, while “our island” “boasts of no delicacy within itself,” “The very fruits, which now grow in our orchards, are not originally our own” (153). Brought to England by the “industrious merchantmen,” these fruits “have been gradually imported from foreign climates, and by the gardener’s art naturalized” (153). It is thus through gardeners that these foreign plants can “enrich us with those luscious juices which the citron, the pomegranate, the orange, the lemon, and many other exotic fruits afford” (153). Indeed, thanks to these “industrious merchantmen” “the nice and distinguishing appetite” can now enjoy “tea, coffee, chocolate, sago, spices, oils, and wines” to so great an extent that, if it weren’t for this flow of exotics from abroad, “what an indifferent appearance would both our persons and houses make, without those ornaments of dress and furniture, with which we are supplied from China, Persia, Russia, France, Holland, and Brussels?” (153) Thus, Haywood’s spectator concludes that, “IN fine, all our pleasures, all our elegancies, flow from foreign parts” (153). For her, these foreign parts are places in the real world, as opposed to fictions of those faraway places presented in the romantical fictions so prevalent in her day.

In prescribing scientific study as a valid feminine pursuit, Haywood makes the claim that the world of facts—rather than the world of romance—merits study. Accordingly, she enlists history and travel as appropriate subjects for her reader, and it is in this digression that she privileges a knowledge of things that “flow from foreign parts” (153). Only through certain forms of reading can her domestic female reader encounter the exotic—only through a mediating, masculine voice. Her emphasis on “industrious merchantmen” and her response to her male reader Philo-Naturae
indicate the degree to which her female reader, while enlightened, can still fulfill the patriarchally prescribed domestic roles decreed for her by her society. Natural curiosities feature as part of a program of good, speculative, factual reading for her audience, as do travel accounts that, in Haywood’s mind, trace the origins of exotic plants overseas. It is through this chain of associative logic that Haywood’s spectator concludes her discussion, determining that “The knowledge of nature, of the world, and of ourselves, will enable us to judge of all around us” (155). Haywood thus fits together these scientific, literary, and horticultural discourses to establish her authority as an arbiter of taste. She enlists masculine modes of learning in the cause of improving the lot of her female readers. In doing so, she establishes her authority as, essentially, a masculine authority that authorizes masculine forms of xenophilia.

We have seen Haywood attempting to rescue scientific discourse from male writers as a safely domestic way for women to encounter exotic things, and we have seen Bradley’s strategies for reframing horticulture as a safely domestic pursuit. Undergirding both the scientifically learned woman and the horticulturally accomplished woman is the enduring image of woman as decoration. For Bradley, as with many male writers in the early and mid-eighteenth century, women’s accomplishments were ornamental. Haywood’s defense of scientific study for women turns such study into less of an ornamental and more of a domestic pursuit, divorcing mere accomplishment from utility. The Philo-Naturae essays act as one of many places where Haywood pushes against the notion that women’s accomplishments are purely decorative. Yet, as Anne Bermingham and many others have pointed out, the aestheticization of women would only grow more prevalent despite Haywood’s attempts. Making feminine accomplishment pretty, as Bermingham observes, “went along with the domestic confinement of women and the increasing tendency to transform the home into an aestheticized space of commodity display, a space where commercial wares constructed gender identities and social positions” (509). Thus, Bradley’s urn containing his illustrated flowers
designates such flowers as purely aesthetic objects, just like the female readers for whom he simplifies horticulture. Similarly, while Haywood advocates for women’s study of science, her ideal woman is still at home in the home, even if her role there is less ornamental and more utilitarian. Tempered by a masculinist and essentialist framework, Haywood’s essays enact a subtler, more camouflaged subversion of patriarchal mores than her earlier amatory fiction. Her essays take a customarily masculine mode of xenophilia and claim it for her female audience, offering it to them as a way to carve out a niche of their own in a public, masculine discourse that seemed bent on denying them any place at all.

IV. The Fashionable “Mrs. Tulip, in the autumn of her age” in Eliza Haywood’s Female Spectator (1744-6).

Haywood’s defense of scientific learning makes a space for women in an otherwise masculine world. However, Haywood’s use of exotic flora as tropes performs a different function. Through images of exotic gardening and such foreign flowers as the tulip, Haywood critiques men’s consumptive behaviors, turning them into victims of the vices they often attribute to women. Not surprisingly, Haywood’s strategy assumes many of the same gender norms that she undermines. Men in Haywood’s Female Spectator are easily seduced by luxury and fashionability, but these vices are still essentially feminine in Haywood’s usage. This limitation of Haywood’s critique parallels what we see in other eighteenth century women writers. Bermingham observes that female writers such as Hannah Moore attempted “rescue femininity from its negative gender codings,” but they often could only do so “within the polarities established by patriarchy, for [their attempts to reclaim femininity] assumed a masculinist norm, and an essentialist construction of sexuality and subjectivity” (501-2). Haywood’s defense of femininity operates along much the same lines: using misogynistic tropes against men, she turns her male detractor into the vapid and effeminate beau
whose glut of exotic goods has consumed him. By turning the fashionable man into a victim of emasculating luxury, Haywood endorses consumption of exotic goods if and only if such consumption does not usurp a woman’s fundamentally domestic role.

The tulip plays a role in Haywood’s critique of men’s consumption because, although the flower is feminine in its associations as we shall see below, the flower still held a tinge of its original exoticism in Haywood’s era, and this exoticism associated the flower with the public world of fashion instead of the private world of the home. As Mike Dash’s *Tulipomania* has shown, the tulip originated from the Himalayas (5), was traded to the Ottoman Turks (10), was cultivated in the gardens of Carolus Clusius in the 1530s (53), and later ended up in the hands of the Dutch (59). A market developed in the Netherlands over trading tulip bulbs (114-115); this trade later sparked a tremendous stock market speculation that collapsed in the late 1630s (167). The tulip carried its association with empty speculation and exoticism well after the Dutch tulip exchange collapsed. As Benedict Robinson observes in his reading of the tulip in Andrew Marvell’s *The Garden*, tulip embodied “an ‘orientalizing’ of English tastes,” “an errant desire for exotic plants that rooted itself right in the soil, taking hold of and subtly altering an English ecology” (Robinson 96). This “desire” is “errant” because, in Haywood’s usage, it detracts from the role gentlemen were supposed to play as proponents of the public good. Jason Solinger notes that the eighteenth-century emphasis on the gentleman as a man of public affairs developed in tandem with the notion of “worldly knowledge” as a hallmark of the gentleman. This worldly knowledge was imagined to be more robust and pragmatic than the “older clerical model of learning”—Scholasticism—that had held sway since the Middle Ages, because worldly knowledge worked “in favor of a gentlemanly paradigm that defined the ideal education as a consequence of . . . ‘the commerce of the world’” (6-7). This standard of worldly knowledge comprises one of many markers of the gentleman in eighteenth-century letters. As we shall see below, Haywood contrasts the superficial, self-absorbed beau with the proper
gentleman by implying that the former is only interested in foreign affairs insofar as they affect his access to exotic goods, whereas the latter would take a more earnest interest in foreign affairs on account of their political significance.

Belles and beaux are decorative, costly, over-delicate, all associations bound up in the figure of the tulip; they are divested of utility. Haywood invokes these conventional associations by one of her allegorical women, “Mrs. Tulip.” In characterizing Mrs. Tulip as faulty and superficial, Haywood privileges many of the same values—plainness, modesty, and so forth—that male authorities prescribed as proper virtues for women. After Haywood’s spectator nominates her club, she goes on to relate the cautionary tale of Martesia, who meets the aptly-named Clitander at an entertainment at Vauxhall Gardens. She reinforces her warning to her young female readers with several similar cautionary tales: an indiscreet husband cheating on his wife at a masquerade (37ff), followed by an admonition against attending such entertainments in public gardens in general (51-2). As part of this list of ill-fated matches, Haywood’s spectator asks, “CAN Mrs. Tulip, in the autumn of her age, tho’ in her dress gaudy as the flower whose name she bears, imagine her antiquated charms will be able to reclaim the wild, roving heart of young Briskcommon?” (73) Here the gaudy, ephemeral flower stands for superannuated beauty enhanced by the costly trappings of a fashionable world too young for Mrs. Tulip’s “antiquated charms.” The implication is that Mrs. Tulip has no business flirting with Briskcommon, who is too young for her, while Briskcommon is a little too easily won by Mrs. Tulip’s overcosmetized beauty.

The example of Mrs. Tulip and her ill-matched young lover charges both characters with feminine vices, and these feminine vices imbue the figure of the tulip. Thanks to the tulip’s association with the Dutch tulip craze of the previous century—its constellation of meanings, which encompassed fashionability, costliness, and exoticism—the tulip was also a figure of frailty, of surface without depth. Perhaps the best instance of this association occurs in Pope’s comparison
between women and tulips in his *Epistle to a Lady* (1743):

Ladies, like variegated Tulips, show,  
‘Tis to their Changes that their charms we owe;  
Their happy Spots the nice admirer take,  
Fine by defect, and delicately weak (41-44).

Pope’s simile suggests a visual parallel between the streaks of the variegated tulip and the beauty marks and patches sported by fashionable women. Changeful, superficial, and gaudy, the tulip and the belle become very much like fashion itself: fickle, cosmetic, capable of captivating gullible men. Whereas Pope intends the comparison as a jab against painted women, Haywood’s use of the tulip as a trope results in a critique that cuts both ways. Her Mrs. Tulip is gaudy and deluded about her own age, but Mrs. Tulip’s young admirer Briskcommon is equally at fault for pairing himself with a superannuated belle. By listing Mrs. Tulip and Briskcommon among various ill-fated pairings, Haywood critiques both characters as having a delicacy by defect.

Just as Haywood’s ideal woman is a married, domestic one, her ideal man is one who privileges civic duty and useful pursuits over fashionability. By characterizing the beau as effete and self-absorbed instead of worldly and civic-minded, Haywood deals fashionable men their fair share of the critique by turning tropes of their own misogynist discourse against them. In the midst of a diatribe against “over-delicacy” (89), Haywood’s spectator critiques men of fashion who have half-baked opinions of foreign affairs, and only concern themselves with worldly news when

they labour under the want of any of those commodities, the interruption of our commerce prevents from being imported; and then indeed they complain bitterly against the times. One who can endure no cloaths that are not of the *French* cut, cries, he is made a monster by a dunce of an *English* taylor:—another is poisoned with ill scents, and dies for some fresh orange and bergamot—a third says, Pax on the *Spanish* war, and those that forced our late minister into it; there is not a bit of right vermillion paste now to be had! (89)

Here exotic botanicals circulate on the foreign market along with many other luxury commodities, and, in their refined form, preoccupy men of fashion. These beaux only concern themselves with world affairs when wars threaten their supply of fine clothes or cosmetics—which, Haywood is
quick to point out, these beaux wear to no less a degree than the belles they lust for. The beau’s list of amatory “ammunition” includes such eaux de toilette as the orange water and bergamot water, one of many such delicacies “this doughty hero” must carry into “battle” daily (90). Turning Pope’s overcosmetized belle Belinda into an equally painted beau, Haywood plays on the irony of comparing the effeminate trappings of the beau to the weapons of a hero, all while locating this beau’s panoply of cosmetics in foreign trade. Haywood’s turnabout of misogynist rhetoric effeminizes the beau, making him the unwitting extension of the gaudy beauties he pursues. Haywood reinforces her portrayal of the beau by including a letter from one of her correspondents in Female Spectator 12 who mentions that “there are men-butterflies, as well as women:—things that are above the trouble of reflection, and suffer themselves to be blown about by every wind of folly” and “novelty” (290). Superficial and ephemeral, the butterfly becomes the perfect insect to pair with the gaudy tulips: it flits about on the winds of fashion, frequenting the gardens of fashion, despoiling the female flowers, and drifts away unharmed by its own transgressions, immaterial and fragile the whole while. The beau’s “over-delicacy” becomes for Haywood a sign of his effeminacy, detracting from his proper role as a man of public good, and reducing his interest in world affairs into a mere fetishism of foreign commodities.

The beau’s absorption in the world of fashion translates into xenophilia, an errant desire for exotic goods that male writers attribute to women. Haywood uses this fashionable desire to characterize beaux as effete, and in the same gesture defends her female readers’ interests in exotic goods—as long as women’s xenophilia does not interfere with the domestic role she endorses for them. Haywood best displays this strategy in Female Spectator 2.7, when she responds to a correspondent who is concerned that his maids’ craving for tea might ruin him because of the “loss of time, both . . . to the mistress and servants” spent in preparing tea for every one of his guests. Her tea-cautious correspondent, “Mr. Careful,” also worries that “drinking too much of this Indian
herb” might lead to other ailments such as “a dejection of spirits or flatulency” (83-4). Instead of agreeing with his case against this exotic commodity, Haywood’s spectator is stunned that her readers will have to suffer yet another harangue against a past time her sex is so fond of (85). She defends the virtues of tea, but acknowledges that this correspondent’s fears have some merit: “alas! The passion we have for exotics discovers itself but in too many instances, and we neglect the use of what we have within ourselves for the same reason as most men do their wives” (85). Aligning this “passion we have for exotics” with men’s adultery, Haywood positions xenophilia as the driving force behind the same circulation of commodities and flowers that Haywood critiques in the figure of the beau above. The consumption of this “Indian herb” indicates a deeper lack in English tastes that such foreign flowers attempt, in vain, to fulfill.

However, foreign flowers only pollute English tastes when they are reduced to commodities; as objects of scientific study, as we have seen above, Haywood endorses them. Thus, Haywood’s critique of exotic goods is far from categoric: she qualifies xenophilia, provided that the exotic is “studied” instead of merely desired. Whereas elsewhere Haywood endorses the study of exotic things as part of a well-rounded program of female improvement, here Haywood couches her defense of exotic things in terms of moderation. Indeed, for Haywood, tea isn’t dangerous because it is an “Indian herb,” but rather because it is consumed to excess. Thus, she reasons that, if “baum, sage, mint, or any other English herb” were substituted for tea “and used in the same manner, the effect would be the same” (86). She claims this is because Mr. Careful’s servants would take no more time in preparing a drink from an Indian herb than from an English one (86). Haywood’s spectator concludes the matter with a gesture towards the customary all-things-in-moderation theme: “As these monthly essays are published with a view of improving the morals, not complimenting the frailties of my sex, those who remember that excesses in all things are blameable, will not think what I have said too severe” (88). Haywood’s reliance on the moderation theme conceals another aspect
of her critique of Mr. Careful: he is concerned about tea not only because it is exotic in origin, but also because he thinks women consume it more than men. Mr. Careful is not alone in interpreting tea as a feminine pastime. As Eugenia Zurosky Jenkins shows in her reading of *The Rape of the Lock*, taking tea struck Pope’s and Haywood’s contemporaries as the feminine counterpart to coffee, which would have most often been served in the public space of the coffee house as opposed to the domestic space of the parlor (135). Haywood’s defense of tea makes a case for a feminine pastime while pointing out that her male readers are no less susceptible to exotic goods themselves.

Haywood’s debate about the nature of tea illustrates some of the ways in which she attempts to address the objections of her male subscribers—sometimes through conciliation, as with Mr. Careful, and others through bolder subversions, as with her diatribe against the over-delicacy of fashionable men. Haywood defends xenophilia for women while critiquing it in men, reappropriating customarily misogynistic strategies to critique such over-delicacy for both genders. While this strategy ultimately reinforces the essentialist framework available to Haywood, she uses it to make a case that her female readers are capable of judging their own choices and exercising good taste without needing a male authority to do so. In critiquing men’s fashionability, Haywood replaces male authority with her own voice. Her critique also points to a broader desire for exotic goods, represented both by the overcosmetized beau and the gaudy Mrs. Tulip. Just as Haywood’s ideal reading program connects domestic women to the exotic origins of things, characters who frequent the fashionable, public spaces of Haywood’s world populate those spaces with exotic goods—tea, bergamot water, tulips. Both the public world of fashion and the private, domestic world of Haywood’s readers abounds in the fruits and flowers of faraway places. The xenophilic theme in Haywood’s essays parallels the developments in the English garden during the midcentury—the English garden which, according to landscapers of Haywood’s era, was growing increasingly “Chinese.”
Douglas Chambers, in his study of the influence of the *Georgics* on the English garden, writes that “All gardening is in some sense an act of translation” because “Even at its most basic involves the literal translation or physical movement of plants from one place to another” (12). Chambers goes on to say that “there is also a figurative translation involved: the translation of an idea or a text or a picture or even of a garden elsewhere” that transfers “a text of some kind” onto the physical environment (12). In Haywood we have seen that this translation of text onto environment involved organisms that, to paraphrase her, flowed from foreign parts. Haywood makes the case for both women and men to study these new natural objects, and, in her turnabout of masculine rhetoric, joins the masculinist call to import exotic goods into England’s environments. Haywood’s essays pinpoint exotic flora more specifically, highlighting their ability to delude the superficial and fashionable men of her era, and, in doing so, claiming a masculinist space of authority for her female readership. By her prudent instruction, Haywood’s reader seeks to become a virtuoso.

The fashion for all things Chinese in the English landscape brought in not only supposedly Chinese pagodas and bridges, or supposedly Chinese modes of designing landscapes, but also plants that flow from foreign parts. We have seen with Haywood’s defense of women’s study of science, and as we have seen in Haywood’s attempts to oppose scientific study to the vapidity of romance; both of these attempts contribute, in their own way, to the desire to study and import organisms from faraway places, and the desire to make landscapes that resemble those settings. Male attempts to downplay the role of women in the developing science of botany likewise played their own role in this: as we have seen with the rhetoric of the virtuoso, xenophobia merely spurs xenophilia, leading not to a restriction in the flow of organisms from foreign parts, but to an increase. In a similar fashion, the greenhouse—an emerging technology that allowed horticulturalists to transplant flora that could not naturalize without such protection—likewise serves the function not of separating
exotic things from the landscape, but of bringing them into even closer proximity with the verdure of the native British countryside.
CHAPTER 4: THE FRAGILE GREENHOUSE: RETAINING AND RELEASING THE TROPICS IN JAMES THOMSON’S SEASONS, AND WILLIAM COWPER’S THE TASK

I. Greenhouse as Metaphor.

Examining the hothouses and pineries that appear in Austen’s fiction, Jonathan Bate observes that “The history of the greenhouse is bound up with that of empire” (9). Initially, the greenhouse was merely a glassed-in structure for protecting vegetables and greens for the kitchen. However, over the course of the seventeenth century, the ideology associated with this structure changed from strictly utilitarian to expressly imperial. Accordingly, Jill Casid echoes the imperial overtones that Bate detects in the figure of the greenhouse: collections of tropical plants in greenhouses “performed significant ideological work” in constructing the identity of the owners of such collections, and this identity was often “a particular British identity shaped by class, gender, and colonialist agendas” (Sowing Empire 170). As British empire expanded its reach, and as British botanists sent back cuttings and seeds from further and further afield, greenhouses became increasingly important not only as showcases of living imperial trophies, but also as vehicles—conduits, holding-places for nurturing newly transplanted species. Thus, Deidre Lynch’s seminal article on Jane Austen’s “Greenhouse Romanticism” identifies greenhouses as “switch points in the networks of plant transfer that facilitated this era’s global redistribution of flora” (692). As these brief examples indicate, greenhouses in the latter eighteenth century served a crucial role in redistributing plant life. They had every part to play in the ecological dimension of British empire.

Consistently the greenhouse is associated with imperialism, and rightfully so. As the century wore on, the greenhouse developed into a space for sheltering exotic flora whose transport to
England could only have occurred by means of an imperial, global network of trade, colonization, and exploitation. The greenhouse allowed British landowners to enclose their own little square of tropic space, complete with its own artificial climate and ecosystem, but without the drawbacks of disease or indigenous peoples that landowners in the colonies might face. The greenhouse is very much a fictive space as well, one that depends on inventing a climate that isn’t in England, a heterotopic landscape that isn’t in any of England’s tropical territories, and a fantasy that English empire—like the tropics—is abundant and spontaneous in its production of floral luxury. By assembling the growths of England’s colonized climates all in one place, the greenhouse exemplifies the Edenic fantasy already present in the garden, as these critics point out.

In examining writers’ portrayals of greenhouses in the middle and later eighteenth century, I do not wish to overturn the greenhouse’s connection with imperialism. The critics mentioned above all make compelling cases for that connection. Rather, I wish to modify it. Critics consistently associate the greenhouse with imperialism; however, they also think of the greenhouse as a rigid boundary between the tropical fantasy within and the temperate reality without. Indeed, the tropes associated with the greenhouse—its exoticism, its tropicality, its imperialism, its expense and luxury, its domesticity—all exist alongside its association with fragility. The greenhouse’s fragility indicates its permeability, and, as greenhouses grew prominent among landscape writers of the late eighteenth century, the greenhouse’s vernal fiction began to shape the way writers imagined landscapes. Tropes of abundance and tropicality began to reside not just in the fictitious world within the greenhouse, but also outside of the greenhouse’s glass. Thus, the greenhouse is permeable, capable of transferring its tropical qualities out of its own boundaries. The greenhouse as a figure fulfills Britain’s imperial fantasy not by keeping tropic and temperate separate, but by releasing the tropics—its flora, its associations with variety and abundance—onto the British landscape.

Admittedly, the notion of “releasing” a tropical climate is counterintuitive. It is a twenty-first
century idea that human activity can alter climate: indeed, our own moment of ecological crisis proves this idea all too well. However, it was an eighteenth-century idea that the tropics were abundant, fertile, and wasteful of their own luxury. It was an eighteenth-century idea that the greenhouse was a space fraught with luxury and fragility. It was an eighteenth-century idea that the greenhouse creates its own miniature tropic space. It was an eighteenth-century idea that the seasons of spring and summer manifested on the landscape as floral abundance. And it was an eighteenth-century idea that the greenhouse suspends seasonal time, preserving the spell of floral abundance even in the darkest and coldest times of year. Thus, the greenhouse inflects the way eighteenth-century writers trope the warmer seasons of the year, creating the impression that the conditions within the greenhouse both resemble and characterize the conditions without.

In advancing this idea, I would like to reach further back than Austen’s era of the 1790s. William Cowper’s famous portrayal of a greenhouse in The Task (1785) certainly comes to mind, as does William Mason’s portrayal of a conservatory in The English Garden (1772-82), and we shall treat each of these works in greater detail below. However, the association between the tropics, abundance, spring, and summer reaches perhaps its best pronouncement in a text much earlier than either of these: James Thomson’s Seasons (1747). While Thomson makes no mention of a greenhouse, his association of the warmer seasons with the tropics demonstrates how an eighteenth-century writer conceives of climate in separate latitudes as analogous. Through the trope of floral abundance, he likens tropical and temperate latitudes that the greenhouse later brings together.

II. “Another Flora there, of bolder hues”: James Thomson’s Naturalist’s Gaze and Tropical Geography in The Seasons.

Since Thomson claims that his purpose is to chart the progress of the seasons, it makes sense that he would imagine geographic extremes in order to exemplify each. Thus, as Michael
Cohen notes, Thomson’s fancy flies to the Arctic to epitomize winter, and to the torrid zone to epitomize summer, all in the name of rendering each season sublime (139). This technique forces Thomson’s poem to traverse the globe in search of the best example of each of the seasons; thus it makes sense that he locates spring and summer in separate latitudes. However, even though spring and summer occupy different places geographically, Thomson links the two seasons—and the temperate/tropic dichotomy they represent—through the trope of floral abundance. Thus, when Thomson imagines the jungles of the tropics as the abode of “Another Flora there, of bolder hues, / And richer sweets, beyond our garden’s pride” (Summer 694-5), he conceives of the torrid zone as the realm of a different goddess whose name recalls the goddess of the British spring. He accounts for the workings of these floral goddesses through his technique of minute description, which is itself an imperialistic descriptive technique, because of its association with the same botanists who performed the work of European empire abroad.

As I shall spell out below, Thomson’s relationship with empire is a fraught one, one that requires elaboration and qualification in its own right. However, Thomson’s similarity to Royal Society naturalists requires far less of a stretch. Samuel Johnson made the comparison between Thomson and a naturalist, remarking that Thomson “thinks in a peculiar train,” that Thomson’s is an “eye that distinguishes, in every thing presented its view, whatever there is on which imagination can delight to be detained, and with a mind that at once comprehends the vast, and attends to the minute” (208). While Johnson here means to praise Thomson’s attention to minute detail, Johnson’s assessment of Thomson’s descriptive powers comes with a caveat. We might recall what Imlac, the philosopher who advises Prince Rasselas in Johnson’s 1759 novella, famously proclaims: “The business of a poet . . . is to examine, not the individual, but the species; to remark general properties

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41 In-text citations here refer to the line numbers of the 1768 ECCO text of Thomson’s works compiled shortly after his death.
and large appearances: he does not number the streaks of the tulip, or describe the streaks of the tulip, or describe the different shades in the verdures of the forest” (628). Much of Thomson’s work in *The Seasons* consists of just that—numbering shades of verdure, relishing the blooming of each flower, including “the tulip-race, where Beauty plays / Her idle freaks” (*Spring* 534ff). Yet if we take Imlac as a mouthpiece for Johnson’s own views, then we might suppose that Johnson admires Thomson not just for his “eye that distinguishes,” but for Thomson’s ability to direct the reader’s attention both to the “vast” and to the “minute.” To Johnson, Thomson’s talent lies in his ability to hold both grand and small in view simultaneously, his ability to zoom in on small painterly details, and pan back out to the sublimity of the whole. It is through this technique that Thomson, according to Johnson, reveals to the reader “wonders that he never saw before what Thomson shews him” (208). This reader can look to Thomson’s *Seasons* not only for vivid word-painting but also for rich attention to the everyday curiosities of the natural world. Thus Johnson praises Thomson for being able to entertain “the naturalist . . . for he is assisted to recollect and to combine, to arrange his discoveries, and amplify the sphere of his contemplation” (209).

As Johnson’s turn of phrase suggests, the reader of *The Seasons* also is shown a naturalist’s view of the world: Thomson’s speaker, adopting the attention of a naturalist, unveils in things great and small wonders previously unseen. In so doing, Thomson views the minutiae of the landscape through what Mary Louise Pratt might call “imperial eyes.” As Pratt convincingly demonstrates, travel writing and the works of European botanists envisioned the tropics as a space ripe for colonization, whether literally through the expansion of British empire, or metaphorically through the language of Linnaean botany. Linnaeus provided these botanists a language that assigned plants a place in a scientific classificatory scheme, erasing them of whatever cultural meanings they might have had to non-European peoples. However, such texts rarely made their imperialism explicit: instead, they operate through a concept Pratt refers to as “anti-conquest,” by which she means
“strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (8). Thomson’s portrayals of landscapes—both domestic and tropical ones—not only enact the naturalist’s gaze as Johnson suggests above, but also an implicitly imperialistic one. I invoke Pratt’s notion of anti-conquest in order to show that, while Thomson uses a naturalist’s eye for his minute descriptions—and in doing so involves himself in the project of empire—his attitude towards empire is far from mere jingoism. Just like the naturalists that Pratt examines, Thomson enacts a form of anti-conquest by adopting the naturalist’s “strategies of representation,” claiming for himself a sense of “innocence” while bearing witness to the effects of empire on the British landscape and on the realm of the tropics.

The poet of “Rule, Britannia!” supported the project of empire, even if he did so with reservations. Critics have traced the contours of Thomson’s sentiments about the imperial project in order to find the gaps, the places where his paean to British empire falters. Tara Wallace discerns in Thomson’s *Seasons* a “discomfort” with empire, “its enslavement of other races, its use of brute military force, its crude accumulation of wealth and political power,” even while the poem “tames these brutalities within domestic space” (53). The domestic space Wallace refers to is the British countryside, enclosed in a thousand garden plots and spreading groves, verdant and idyllic. Wallace contends that Thomson uses his descriptive eye as a means to “re-write the story of British conquest and rule to make it palatable to Britons themselves” (53), projecting onto this landscape a vision of imperial power that issues not from above, but from below. Britain’s success abroad originates from the small actions of small people, “the simplest activities of its working citizens, who toil all the more cheerfully once they learn the importance of their lowly tasks” (63). Just as ordinary citizens contribute in their own tiny way to the triumph of Britannia, so too the streaks of the tulip contribute to the beauty of the flower, and the beauty of the flower likewise to the wonder of the whole. Thomson’s vision of empire is a meliorist one, one that hopes for progress both in the moral
character of British citizens at home and in the moral character of Britain’s colonized lands abroad. He projects this meliorist vision onto the natural world, discerning in the tiniest workings of nature a glimpse of the divine. Yoking together prosperity at home with the success of the imperial project overseas, Thomson links domestic and tropical space through his descriptions of the two disparate landscapes.

Thomson suffuses the temperate landscape of England in Spring with qualities of abundance and variety that he will later associate with the tropics in Summer. While domestic, this landscape is sublime in its own way, sublime in the sense that it outstrips the poet’s powers of representation. Thomson celebrates the sublimity of the countryside through such epithets as “the verdant maze” (Spring 515) and “yon mingled wilderness of flowers” (Spring 524), emphasizing verdure, fertility, abundance, and unruliness. Leading the reader’s attention to the garden’s various sights, Thomson’s speaker attempts to account for each flower as it blooms. So various and wondrous is the scene that the poet admits that even a botanist would not be able to keep up with the season’s progress. Spring drives up hosts of “living herbs, profusely wild,” scattering their blooms “O’er all the deep-green earth, beyond the power / Of botanist to number up their tribes” (223-25). The blossoming fields turn the British landscape into a perfumed oriental wonderland: “Arabia” itself “cannot boast / A fuller gale of joy, than, liberal, thence / Breathes thro’ the sense, and takes the ravish’d soul” (496-500). Flushed with vernal life, Thomson’s temperate landscape holds more precious fragrances than the balms of the East, displaying in all its dizzying variety “The negligence of Nature, wide, and wild; / Where, undisguis’d by mimic Art, she spreads / Unbounded beauty to the roving eye” (501-4). Overwhelming the poet with her floral wealth, the British Flora unlocks her stores, showering the landscape with fragrant delights whose richness rivals that of the East, and exhaust the poet’s powers of description. Thus the verse paragraph culminates in “Infinite numbers, delicacies, smells, / With hues on hues expression cannot paint, / The breath of Nature, and her endless bloom” (550-
2). The aporetic formula that “expression cannot paint” this variety attempts to account for the myriad flowers by confessing the poet’s descriptive limits. Thomson’s poet has attempted to account for each of these “Infinite numbers, delicacies, smells” by varying his scale between the enormous and the minute, the collective sum and the individual specimens. Even at the largest scale, the ineffability of his landscape registers not as a complete composition, but as an accumulation of overwhelming details.

By comparing the English landscape of Spring to the fragrant balms of Arabia, Thomson links the domestic countryside with the exotic orient, suggesting that both possess an abundance of aromas and delights too numerous for poet or botanist to account for. These qualities—this imperial connection between the garden of “here” and the garden of “far away”—reaches its full pronouncement in *Summer*, when Thomson’s poet whisks the reader away on an imaginary excursion to the tropics. Even in visiting the distant lands where British empire has planted its standard, Thomson continues to enact a kind of anti-conquest, claiming for himself and his privileged British reader a sense of innocence from the exploitation of empire. He carefully separates Britain from the ravaging violence of other European powers, viewing Britain as the benevolent nation that liberates the tropics from the clutches of petty tyrants and from the disease of the tropics’ own luxurious excess. Accordingly, Beth Fowkes Tobin detects in Thomson’s portrayal of the tropics in *Summer* the trope of the “‘torrid zone’ as a site of natural abundance unassisted by human agency” (*Colonizing Nature* 22). As Tobin points out, the trope of tropical abundance constitutes an aspect of “tropicality,” an aesthetic category that she defines as a projection of “European fantasies of fertility and abundance” onto the depictions of the tropical landscape (11). In Tobin’s view, this fantasy of tropical abundance ultimately serves to mystify the labor of indigenous—often enslaved—humans

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42 As Tara Wallace puts it, “At times, [Thomson’s occluded portrayal of] the brutality of empire is projected onto other nations” (55).
who lived in these colonized zones that Thomson imagines as the realm of summer. The tropics strike Thomson as spontaneously productive, and conspicuously lacking the involuntary human labor that empire enlisted in these faraway places (11). Indeed, as we shall see below, Thomson’s tropics overflow with botanical wealth ripe for the picking, and British empire relieves the excess, thereby serving not only the good of its own populace but also the good of the colonized.

So Thomson uses landscapes to naturalize and rationalize empire, construing it as good for everybody. An optimistic view, to say the least. The abundance Thomson associates with the tropics characterizes Britain’s colonized lands as places incapable of managing their own wealth. He does so by characterizing the tropics—that fruitful kingdom of summer—as a realm languishing under the harsh scepter of the Tyrant Heat. Like the “other Flora” and the British Flora showering their blooms on the landscape, Tyrant Heat is a figure that creates both difference and likeness, distancing the tropics as the fallen empire of a despot, while making the tropics familiar through a stock orientalist trope. The cruel autocrat first appears at the beginning of *Summer* when Thomson’s poet describes the action of sunlight awakening each leaf and flower in the morning, only to wilt by noon. As the day wears on, the nutritive power of light quickly gives way to the deadly power of “[T]yrant Heat, dispreading thro’ the sky” (209), whose “burning influence darts / On man, and beast, and herb, and tepid stream” (210-11). Thomson’s polysyndeton dramatizes the oppressive heat on each

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43 Thomson’s association of the tropics with wasteful luxury is an extension of the tropical degeneracy thesis that lingered over eighteenth-century writing from the previous century. Following the classical model set forth by the Greek geographer Thales of Miletus (624-546 BCE), seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers organized the globe into five climatological zones: in the northern hemisphere, these were the arctic and summer tropics; in the southern, there were the winter tropics and Antarctic, with the equator as the fifth climate zone between the two (Forman and Godron 229). The tropical degeneracy thesis held that, since Englishmen (and Europeans by extension) originated from the temperate zone, dwelling too long in either of the tropic zones would damage their health and corrupt their spirits. As Jim Egan explains, based on this theory, early modern writers believed that the bodies of English people, native to a temperate climate, “could not survive in temperatures foreign to their native England”; thus, critics of the British imperial project would invoke classical authorities to show that “English bodies were naturally equipped to survive only in England,” despite the efforts of colonists to acclimate to the tropic zone (15), and thus many eighteenth-century writers maintained that a tropical climate might cause in an Englishman “a transformation or even degeneration in man himself” (14). As Mike Hulme notes, the view that tropical climates corrupted one’s physical and moral character originated in sixteenth-century writings, and only grew more prevalent as the British empire increased its grasp in the nineteenth century (9).
and every living thing, slowing the rhythm of the iambic to a sluggish crawl. Beneath this tyrant’s sway, “distressful Nature pants” (447), languishing like one of Heat’s subjects. The poet, too, is powerless against this unrelenting ruler, begging in vain for “All-conquering Heat” to “intermit thy wrath” (451). Whereas Thomson orientalizes the British Spring by comparing her fragrances to Arabian balms, here Thomson orientalizes Summer through the stock figure of the sceptered tyrant, from whose wicked rule British empire shall “rescue” the botanical riches of the tropics.

The botanical wealth of the torrid zone figures both as the groveling subjects of Heat’s empire and as the treasures British empire will rescue from this despot. Fleeing into the shade of a jungle grove, Thomson’s poet shifts his account of Summer from the cruelty of heat to the exotic wonder of the fruits of the tropics, along with the riches offered by Pomona and the “other Flora.” Just as Tyrant Heat confers an oriental quality on the season, so too this “other Flora” creates an oriental sense of distance through wonder and desirability. Thomson’s poet escorts the reader to Pomona’s “citron groves” (663), where “in eternal prime, / Unnumber’d fruits, of keen delicious taste” (657-8) tempt his palette. He flees the Tyrant, seeking the shade of Pomona’s orchards, then directs the reader’s gaze outward to the more open landscape of

Plains immense
And vast savannahs, where the wandering eye,
Unfixt, is in a verdant ocean lost.
Another Flora there, of bolder hues,
And richer sweets, beyond our garden’s pride,
Plays o’er the fields, and showers with sudden hand
Exuberant Spring (690-7)

Here this other goddess Flora seems the tropical counterpart to the fair goddess who awakens the flowers of Britain’s spring. Thomson’s formula of “showering” “Exuberant Spring” with “sudden hand” orientalizes this “other Flora” by echoing a formula from John Milton. Milton’s description of Pandemonium at the opening of Book 2 of Paradise Lost portrays Satan’s “throne of royal state” which “far / Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind, / Or where the Gorgeous East with richest
hand / Show’rs on her kings barbaric pearl and gold” (2.1-4). Like Milton’s “Gorgeous East,” Thomson’s “other Flora” sheds the blessings of her warmer season. Her strangeness, too, works in tandem with Thomson’s convention that the tropics represent a space of extremes to contrast the gentler weather of the temperate zone: just as Tyrant Heat can make a summer that blazes more than Britain’s, so too this “other Flora” boasts floral wealth “of brighter hues.” In this unremitting clime, Thomson’s speaker wonders why “richer sweets, beyond our garden’s pride” would be wasted on those so unfortunate as not to be British subjects. Asking “what avails this wondrous waste of wealth” (860), Thomson’s speaker turns the tropics’ “profusion of luxurious bliss” (861) into a landscape that spontaneously produces its own wealth—far more than it could use for its own inhabitants. “This pomp of Nature” (862) births not only the other Flora Thomson marvels at above, but also a “Ceres void of pain” (863) whose seeds are “By vagrant birds dispers’d, and wasting winds” casting away so many “unplanted fruits” (864-5). Overabundant in its own luxury, and ignorant of the horticultural arts necessary to bring these botanical rarities to best use, Thomson’s poet laments that “The parent-sun himself / Seems o’er this world of slaves to tyrannize” (885).

If the inhabitant of the tropical realm is blessed with this landscape of luxury and cursed to suffer under the oppression of Heat’s scepter, Thomson figures Britannia as the liberator of wealth from the tropics. Hailing Britannia as the “QUEEN OF ARTS” (1441), Thomson’s poet boasts that Britannia’s soil is rich, and “merciful [her] clime,” that her “streams [are] unfailing in the summer’s drought” (1446-7) blessed with a temperate climate in which liberty thrives. It is on these various arts of liberty that the poet concludes the season, narrating the closing of the summer day. Overabundant, and quick to shed her blessings on the sweltering landscape, the “other Flora” of the tropics holds botanical variety that, despite the floral richness of Britain, rivals and therefore tempts the desires of the British imperial subject. The way to rescue this botanical variety from the slavish oppression of the tropic sun is through an imperial economy, one that moves tropic wealth across
seas. Even when the tropics occupy a separate latitude, Thomson figures the space between temperate and tropic as permeable, a space that the commerce of empire can traverse.

Even if Thomson does not mention a greenhouse explicitly, he invokes the conventional associations of exoticism, variety, and abundance that the greenhouse would later embody. Like Thomson’s landscapes in *The Seasons*, the greenhouse refracts the workings of empire through anti-conquest: it distorts empire, turning the chronicler of empire into merely an innocent party who happens to benefit from it. Eliding the economic means necessary for its own construction, the greenhouse presents the fantasy of a heterotopic tropics as though all of its tender specimens grew naturally together, despite their geographically disparate origins. It masks the labor of indigenous peoples who cultivated exotic plants, botanists who classified them in the Linnaean system, sailors and merchantmen who transported these plants overseas, and horticulturalists who labored to maintain these expensive, living status symbols for British landowners. Or, in other words, the greenhouse does what Thomson’s *Seasons* does: it brings the British subject in close intimacy with tropical goods that empire makes available. It creates a permeable boundary that the workings of empire can easily traverse.

III. “Summer fruits brought forth by wintry suns”: Unseasonal Labor in William Cowper’s *Task*.

One famous greenhouse demonstrates the greenhouse’s permeability more succinctly than Thomson, collapsing the distance between whole latitudes to just the thinness of a pane of glass. This greenhouse forms the center of William Cowper’s *The Task*; its description in Book 3 opens with the oft-quoted line “Who loves a garden loves a greenhouse too” (78). Composed over the

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44 Citations of Cowper’s *Task* refer to the page numbers of the 1792 ECCO edition.
course of 1783 and 1784, Cowper’s *Task* uses its greenhouse as a site to meditate on the uncertainties of climate. Tobias Menely configures this meditation as a contrast between *kairos* (the Greek sense of the “right time” or the “end times”) and *chronos* (the Greek sense of time in its daily or seasonal passage) (480). Significantly, as Menely suggests, Cowper composed his poem shortly after the June 1783 eruption of the Iceland volcano Laki, which caused the year of the poem’s composition to be “a year in which none of the seasons seemed as they should” (482). Thus, for Menely, Cowper’s greenhouse becomes an instrument of suspending seasonal time in a year of seemingly apocalyptic uncertainty, allowing “the gardener to escape the capriciousness of spring in a ‘clime so rude’ as England’s, producing artificial and perhaps ill-begotten blooms” (486). In the reading of Cowper’s greenhouse I offer here, I’d like to focus less on the greenhouse’s suspension of time, and more on its importing of space—its heterotopic function, which the greenhouse represents in an even more pronounced way than the outdoor garden. Cowper’s greenhouse encloses a square of the tropics in the temperate zone of England, and in so doing it serves several thematic functions for Cowper’s poem. For 170 lines, Cowper describes in meticulous detail the construction of his greenhouse: eliminating all signs of labor from the picture, his gentlemanly speaker recounts the setting of the greenhouse’s foundation in November, the germination of seeds throughout the winter, and finally the culmination of the greenhouse’s floral wealth in spring. In each of these movements, Cowper focuses on the plants themselves, which seem to thrive in utter absence of the human hand. This absence of labor allows Cowper to connect the greenhouse thematically to the digressive composition of his poem: writing, like gardening, is leisurely labor. Mingling both indoor and outdoor space, both the pleasure and uncertainty of horticultural labor, and both the plants of the tropics and the plants of the temperate zone, Cowper’s greenhouse serves as his ideal metaphor for the leisure labor writing represents.

Greenhouses were not always idle playthings in fanciful gardens. Cowper’s greenhouse in *The
Task occurs at a point in the greenhouse’s history when this structure’s ideological purpose was changing. A brief account of the greenhouse’s history is necessary to appreciate this change: as Bate points out, the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed the transformation of the greenhouse from a utilitarian structure (one for supplying kitchens with out-of-season produce) to an increasingly luxurious structure (one intended for display) (9-10). As horticultural manuals proliferated in the early decades of the eighteenth century, the terms “forcing house” and “stove house” increasingly denoted greenhouses intended for kitchen gardens, the kind that would have grown summer vegetables for the kitchen in all seasons of the year (Woods and Warren 51). These “stoves” served a function distinct from more ornamental greenhouses, orangeries, and conservatories: while the stove was reserved for the practical function of growing out-of-season vegetables—admittedly, a luxury in its own right—the greenhouse and orangery were more expressly ornamental, more expressly luxurious. They housed not only such luxury fruits as oranges and pineapples, but also ornamental flowers such as oleanders and geraniums. Whether to protect tender summer vegetables during the winter, or to furnish aristocrats’ tables with frivolous citrus treats, the greenhouse before the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was meant to protect fruits, vegetables, and flowers for some use exterior to the house itself.

However, as Cowper’s portrayal of a greenhouse suggests, greenhouses in the 1780s were already beginning to shift from utilitarian to ornamental. Greenhouses in Cowper’s era were now

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45 As Woods and Warren indicate, the earliest form of the greenhouse was the cold frame or forcing bed: a small bed of soil in a wooden frame fitted with a window-like lid that could be lifted for ventilation, intended to protect tender crops during the winter. The Romans were first to use such frames, though theirs were constructed from mica, since they lacked the technology necessary to polish fine panes of sheet glass (Woods and Warren Glass Houses 3). The technology for larger panes of glass developed during the Renaissance. The Italians thus adapted the cold frame into a more permanent structure, constructing wooden galleries to protect orange trees. These wooden structures later evolved into stone halls with large windows—the orangery, as we have seen (Woods and Warren 6-8). Woods and Warren likewise point out that, while seventeenth- and eighteenth-century greenhouses featured some skylights on their roofs, greenhouses constructed completely out of glass remained largely impossible until steel-frame construction permitted glass roofs in the nineteenth century (90). The only eighteenth-century greenhouses with glass roofs were relatively small compared to the lavish glass palaces of later centuries.
becoming the “playthings for amateur gentlemen architects” (Woods and Warren 51) intended to house ornamental plants as conversation pieces. Thus, their design became increasingly whimsical. As landscapers unfettered the garden from its early-eighteenth-century formality, so too their adherence to classical forms. Starting in the 1750s, greenhouses “could look like classical temples, Palladian villas, or, later, like tiny Gothic castles or Chinese houses” (Woods and Warren 51). By the 1780s and 90s, the Gothic and “oriental” styles won out, featuring pointed windows and fanciful ogee arches (95). Some even arose to the status of “follies,” deliberately outlandish garden structures intended to draw attention to their own vanity. The Dunmore Pineapple in Scotland comes to mind (Figure 4). Built by John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, in 1761, the pinery features stone masonry framing large south-facing windows. The flanks of the building converge under a cupola shaped like an enormous stone pineapple. A twenty-first century observer might imagine a slightly more dignified version of the abode of Spongebob Squarepants. (Slightly.) Evolving from humble cold frames to pineapple-crowned temples, greenhouses became status symbols, as did the gardens that framed them. Just as the country house was “set free from all signs of industry, from all association with useful toil and activity” (Williamson Polite Landscapes 118), so too the greenhouse served less for production, and more for conspicuous consumption.
To individual landowners who sought to upstage their neighbors, the greenhouse served as a status symbol, a highly individualized expression of a landowner’s wherewithal to acquire the glass, building materials, plants, tanner’s bark,\textsuperscript{46} gardeners, stove, and fuel to keep a greenhouse warm throughout the English winter. Just as the collections of plants housed in greenhouses helped construct the identities of privileged British landowners, Cowper’s greenhouse reinforces his persona as gentleman gardener. As Joseph Musser points out, Cowper presents himself in \textit{The Task} through multiple personae, variously appearing as “‘the retired gentleman’ and ‘the public, political man, the concerned citizen, and most essentially the satirist’” (515). Deborah Heller echoes Musser’s characterization of Cowper as the leisurely gentleman: Heller reads the growing of cucumbers in

\footnote{May Woods and Arete Swartz Warren’s history of the greenhouse specifies that tanner’s bark was pulverized oak bark originally used in the process of curing leather. This bark would be laid on the floor of the greenhouse, where it would decompose, providing residual heat (61). As we shall see below, William Cowper’s portrayal of the greenhouse calls this foundation of rotting matter a “stereoraceous heap” that steams as it breaks down, humidifying the greenhouse.}
Cowper’s greenhouse not as Cowper’s attempt to prove “the usefulness of his retirement,” but also “a silent reveling in the joys of peace and quiet” to allay him in his year of depression and madness during the poem’s composition (585). The greenhouse represents for Cowper a place of retired labor, separate from the sordid and busy world outside his garden walls. Thus, Cowper’s greenhouse in serves both as a space for display and more as a space for private, leisurely labor. I speak of “leisurely” labor here to point out the paradox between the two terms: owning a greenhouse meant that one had arrived, that one did not need to perform one’s own horticulture. So the labor Cowper describes in the greenhouse is not one of necessity, but one of luxury. As Cowper’s greenhouse episode dramatizes so well, the labor of the greenhouse is only made possible by the material means to purchase, construct, and maintain one, means that the commerce of empire fostered. The way that Cowper uses his greenhouse in The Task—both literally, with respect to the labor he describes occurring within it, and figuratively, with respect to the central position he assigns to the greenhouse as an image in his poem—indicates the shifting ideological charge in the greenhouse as a structure.

Admittedly, this notion is counter-intuitive: labor, rather than leisure, is one of Cowper’s favorite themes in The Task, implied by its very title. However, thematically, the labor celebrated in The Task is a mystified form of labor, the leisured labor of the gentleman-gardener-poet. Cowper exemplifies this labor through not only the figure of the greenhouse in Book 3, but also the figure of the sofa that occasions Book 1. While Cowper’s speaker muses on the “unscented fictions of the loom” (2) adorning the toile upholstery of the sofa, he privileges real vegetation over the peonies embroidered on the sofa’s cushions, which he considers far superior to “th’inferior wonders of an artist’s hand” (14). After speculating about the history of the sofa, Cowper’s speaker escorts the reader on a wilderness walk, emphasizing an indoor-outdoor motion that he will later return to in Book 3. The advertisement of the 1792 edition announces that the first book sprang from a dare, when Lady Austen, “fond of blank verse, demanded a poem of that kind from the author, and gave
him the SOFA for a subject.” Thus, by “connect[ing] another subject with it,” Cowper claims to have constructed through association the chain of digressions that constitute the whole work. Through this framing device of capricious association, Cowper can make the theme of luxury seem to spring spontaneously from the subject matter of the sofa itself. The poem’s speaker, constantly walking through the various settings, embodies this associative motion. The argument to the first book asserts the primacy of walking through reiterating the activity of walking in its narration of what will follow: “A School-boy’s ramble.—A walk in the country . . . Another walk . . . The Wilderness.—The Grove. . . . The necessity and benefits of exercise” and so forth. Cowper’s poet will return to this motif of wandering at the beginning of book 3, “The Garden,” when he claims that “I, designing other themes, and call’d / T’adorn the Sofa with eulogium due, / To tell its slumbers and to paint its dreams, / Have rambled wide” (59, my emphasis). Relating the indoor subject matter of the sofa in Book 1 to the outdoor garden in Book 3, Cowper recalls the inevitable indoor-outdoor motion of one Book in the other.

The labor required to erect and maintain the greenhouse becomes for Cowper not a source of toil, but an even more exquisite aspect of the leisure his gentleman gardener persona enjoys. Labor, in fact, resides in neither the world of the indoors nor outdoors: it occupies a sphere residing altogether outside of the speaker’s purview, a dirtier and sadder urban world lingering somewhere outside of the garden walls, a realm of business and industry from which Cowper’s speaker distances himself. Contrasting the world of indoor luxury with an outdoor world of what he will call in Book 3 a “laborious ease” (70), Cowper’s poet adopts an attitude of leisurely labor. He muses that in the luxurious indoor activity of writing poetry he finds both diversion and employment, as he does in the equally luxurious outdoor activity of gardening. Thus, like the rest of those “whom the world” outside the garden wall “Calls idle,” Cowper “Esteems that busy world an idler too” because Cowper claims to study “laborious ease.” In these contemplative pursuits, the poet finds in his
Friends, books, a garden, and perhaps his pen,
Delightful industry enjoy’d at home,
And nature in her cultivated trim
Dress’d to his taste, inviting him abroad—
Can he want occupation who has these? (70).

Placing the labor of gardening in a list of other diversions, Cowper’s poet finds in the garden both a “Delightful industry” and an image of “nature” “Dress’d to his taste.” Thus between gardening, reading, socializing, and writing, Cowper’s poet claims to be “studious of laborious ease / Not slothful; happy to deceive the time, / Not waste it” (70). The “laborious ease” and “Delightful industry” brought about by the labors of gardening and writing occupy Cowper’s horticultural musings throughout this book, reinforcing Book 3’s central metaphor that greenhouse gardening is an act of creation much like the process of composition. As Musser and other critics have pointed out, Cowper represents an instance of the late eighteenth century tendency to characterize literature as process, emphasizing the writing of a work as much as and even more than the finished piece. Musser connects Cowper’s literary process to the picturesque aesthetic: applying Uvedale Price’s theories to Cowper’s work, Musser suggests that Cowper, like Price’s deliberately rugged landscapes, “is most pleased by variety and therefore more satisfied with movement than with stasis, with process than with product” (517). Invoking the greenhouse’s associations with out-of-season fruit, Cowper plays on the phrase “happy to deceive the time” by characterizing his own idle writings as a kind of labor, a labor that never quite completes itself.

As Cowper instructs the maintenance of the greenhouse in Book 3, he maintains a tension between the “Delightful industry” of gardening and writing, and the often dubious products gardening and writing can produce. Despite the poet’s and gardener’s best efforts, not all seeds germinate. Indeed, to say that the greenhouse occupies a central place in this digressive poem is no stretch at all: when the speaker in Book 3 describes the passage of autumn, he presents a step-by-step instruction of how to build the greenhouse, starting even with the origins of the greenhouse’s
floor. His language adopts a prescriptive tone of horticultural manuals, frequently using a kind of passive periphrastic voice to express action that the gardener—and the reader, by implication—”must” take in order to ensure the greenhouse’s success.\footnote{The passive periphrastic in Latin combines the gerundive and the verb \textit{to be} to express an action that “must be” done. It is often rendered in English as something that “is to be done,” implying an obligation or passive command that lingers somewhere in the future. I read Cowper’s use of it here as an adaptation of the instructions frequently offered by horticultural manuals.} Before the reader arrives upon the unseasonal delights the greenhouse promises, the gardener must further gather the “stereoraceous heap” of dung that “The stable yields” (75). Cowper’s gardener must then lay this decomposing waste out “ere the beech and elm have cast their leaf / Deciduous, when now November dark / Checks vegetation” (75). It is in this dark and cold season of late autumn that “the task begins” (my emphasis) (75). Calling the construction of this greenhouse by the name of the larger work signals the thematic importance this horticultural episode holds for the work as a whole. As with many of Cowper’s digressions, the subject of this digression does not emerge until the concluding lines, when Cowper’s poet speculates that

\begin{quote}
The learn’d and wise  
Sarcastic would exclaim, and judge the song  
Cold as its theme, and like its theme, the fruit  
Of too much labour, worthless when produc’d (77).
\end{quote}

After extensive labor all winter long, the greenhouse bears its unseasonal fruit, and this fruit can easily prove a paltry reward for the tremendous effort the greenhouse has exacted. The “song” like the fruit can be “cold as its theme,” premature, or unripe, incapable of suiting the appetites of “The learn’d and wise” who are all too pleased to criticize what the gardener and writer have, in their luxurious labor, waited so long to produce. Cowper’s account of germination in the greenhouse suggests an analogy between germination and literary production: both endeavors, pursued in darkness and private, require intense effort that only becomes visible after the work of composition, a literary labor that remains invisible to the public eye. Priscilla Gilman notes, Cowper was
“monomaniacal” in his obsessive editing and revising of *The Task* during the poem’s production: for Gilman, Cowper’s revisions reflect a preoccupation with public taste, as well as his “attempts to escape criticism by doing everything possible to ensure success” (91). The analogy between germination and poetic composition is essentially a Georgic formula, elevating horticultural work to the dignity of literary work. And, like the song, a hothouse delicacy displays its worth not in the process but in the product.

By “tasking” this central Book in his poem with erecting and maintaining a greenhouse, Cowper’s poet marks this labor-intensive horticultural innovation as key to his subject matter, emulating the precise instructions we might find in horticultural kalendars. Aestheticizing this labor, Cowper’s poet moves from constructing the greenhouse to instructions on forcing seeds to germinate. “Forcing,” that verb denoting the task of getting plants to bloom or germinate out of season, plays a key role in Cowper’s description. While the gardener might be absent from Cowper’s picture, the artificial environment of the greenhouse bears many traces of the gardener’s incessant, forceful labor. Once the frame starts to collect heat from the decomposing litter on its floor, the planter selects seeds and commits them

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to pots of size
Diminutive, well-fill’d with well-prepar’d
And fruitful soil, that has been treasur’d long,
And drank no moisture from the dripping clouds:
These, on the warm and genial earth that hides
The smoking manure, and o’erspreads it all,
He places lightly, and as time subdues
The rage of fermentation, plunges deep
In the soft medium, till they stand immers’d.
Then rise the tender germs, upstarting quick,
And spreading wide their spongy lobes, at first
Pale, wan, and livid, but assuming soon
If fann’d by balmy and nutritious air,
Strain’d through the friendly mats, a vivid green” (75).
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The delayed syntax ("assuming soon . . . a vivid green") dramatizes the waiting period between seeding and germination. A number of details and provisions attend the germinating of the seeds.
They must be planted in “well-prepar’d / And fruitful soil” that has been kept safe from the rain; the soil must be lightly tamped lest it crush the seeds committed to it; the soil must also rest from “the rage of fermentation” lest the seeds rot within it; and even then they will only germinate “If fann’d by balmy and nutritious air.” The passive participles (“well-prepar’d,” “treasur’d,” “immers’d,” “fann’d”) carry a passive periphrastic force: emulating the Latin structure that uses the passive voice to carry the sense of actions that must be done, Cowper’s repeated use of these participles creates both a sense of the gardener’s ever-present labor and a sense of instruction. In order to ensure that the seeds germinate, the syntax invites us to imagine that the soil must be well-prepared, must be treasured long, must be fanned with nutritious balmy air, and so forth. Using this syntactical structure, Cowper’s speaker can emphasize the gardener’s intensive labor while maintaining his focus on the greening seedlings that receive this labor, making the seedlings from warmer climes seem to spring spontaneously from the artificially warmed earth. Just as the greenhouse elides the labor of indigenous peoples whose work made botanists transport these plants to begin with, Cowper’s syntax makes the greenhouse plants seem self-germinating, despite the labor of the barely-present gardener.

Just as we have seen with Thomson’s portrayal of the torrid zone as an orchard of the sun offering the botanical wealth of all climes to the British subject, so too Cowper’s greenhouse assembles tropical plants from disparate places, preserving each as a polished art object intended for display. Arranged together in a fictitious landscape, Cowper’s hothouse plants create the sense of a seasonless tropics, one in which ordinary time is suspended in a fiction of the horticulturalist’s making. It is only after this lengthy account of horticultural labor that we arrive at one of Cowper’s most famous passages, detailing the rich denizens who, thanks to the gardener’s care, flourish under the shelter of the glass. Here Cowper’s verses preserve in summerlike brightness all the botanical treasures of the tropics, rendering each individual specimen as a gleaming, living art object:
Who loves a garden, loves a green-house too.
Unconscious of a less propitious clime,
There blooms exotic beauty, warm and snug,
While the winds whistle and the snows descend.
The spicy myrtle with unwithering leaf
Shines there and flourishes. The golden boast
Of Portugal and western India there,
The ruddier orange and the paler lime,
Peep through their polished foliage at the storm,
And seem to smile at what they need not fear.
Th’amomum there with intermingling flow’rs
And cherries hangs her twigs. Geranium boasts
Her crimson honours, and the spangled beau,
Ficoides, glitters bright the winter long.
All plants, of ev’ry leaf, that can endure
The winter’s frown, if screen’d from his shrewd bite,
Live there and prosper. Those Ausonia claims,
Levantine regions these; th’Azores send
Their jessamine, her jessamine remote
Caffraia; foreigners from many lands,
They form one social shade, as if conven’d
By magic summons of th’Orphean lyre.
Yet just arrangement, rarely brought to pass
But by a master’s hand, disposing well
The gay diversities of leaf and flower
Must lend its aid t’illustrate all their charms,
And dress the regular yet various scene.
Plant behind plant aspiring, in the van
The dwarvish, in the rear retir’d, but still
Sublime above the rest, the statelier stand . . .
Nor taste alone and well-contriv’d display
Suffice to give the marshall’d ranks the grace
Of their complete effect. Much yet remains
Unsung, and many cares yet behind,
And more laborious; cares on which depend
Their vigour, injur’d soon, not soon restor’d” (78-9)

The passage opens with a contrast between the “warm and snug” tropics within the greenhouse and the whistling winds and descending snows outside, allowing the citrus to “Peep through their polished foliage” and “smile at what they need not fear.” Bate compares these primped and manicured flowers to the “social slickness which characterizes” fashionable, and therefore “morally dubious” characters in Austen’s fiction, such as such as Wickham in *Pride and Prejudice* (10-11).
Divorced from their native soil and from their status as living specimens, Cowper’s greenhouse
plants are transfigured into art objects that, assembled together, suspend seasonal time. Thus the person who loves Cowper’s garden and greenhouse is “unconscious of a less propitious clime” because the greenhouse creates the illusion of another climate altogether, a carefully delineated tropic space enfolded in a temperate British landscape. Cowper’s speaker catalogs both specific species and their kingdoms of origin as well: Portugal and India, the Middle East and the Azores, all dwelling together “as if convened by magic summons of the Orphean lyre.” The “magic summons” unites all of these specimens in a highly insulated climate whose artifice displays itself on every glossy leaf. However, as with Cowper’s reliance on the passive periphrastic above, the human Orpheus who conjured all these flowers and tends to them remains conspicuously absent. These flowers all show signs of a “master’s hand” that “dispos[es] well” the “gay diversities” of every species and “illustrates all their charms,” even if this master has spirited himself away from the picture. Just as sharawadgi creates a horticultural art so subtle as to vanish into thin air, the greenhouse’s tropical spell imparts the sense that these plants all grew together naturally, and were all naturally polished and pruned by a gardener who happens not to be there.

But what happens to Cowper’s hothouse plants when the seasons finally change, and the temperate climate admits the warmth of the sun again? Cowper’s hothouse exotics are passively acted upon by an invisible gardener until they reach maturity. Once they are ready to exit their shelter, Cowper ascribes to his plants a kind of personal agency once the coming of spring to the outside world allows the season outside the greenhouse to match the season it encloses in its glass panes. He ascribes this agency to the former denizens of the hothouse by portraying the landscape as though flowers were capable of identifying themselves to human eyes, capable of performing the part of human botanist by naming themselves. Cowper’s speaker rejoices when the warmer season marks the British landscape with the unique botanical specificity he had previously accorded only to the tender exotics of the hothouse. After a screed against Capability Brown, Cowper’s speaker
imagines the landscape awakening in spring, each flower opening in turn:

Then, each in its peculiar honours clad,
Shall publish, even to the distant eye,
Its family and tribe. Laburnum rich
In streaming gold; syringa ivory pure;
The scentless and the scented rose, this red
And of an humbler growth, the other tall (134-5)

And so forth. The narrator relates the blooming of “The lilac various in array, now white, / Now sanguine,” “the woodbine, pale and wan,” “Hypericum” whose copious flowers seem “all bloom,” the broom and the jasmine, “mezereon, too” (135). Once this army of flowers awakens, “all this uniform, uncoloured scene” in the bleak of winter “Shall be dismantled of its fleecy load, / And flush into variety again” (135). A contrast emerges between the gray monotone of the wintry landscape and the “flush” of “variety” in the vernal landscape. The flowers in the outdoor garden all look alike, dormant for the winter, and it is not until spring dawns again that each flower “Shall publish” “Its family and tribe.” In winter, monotony; in spring, infinite variety whose order announces itself through the spontaneous action of blossoming, much like the variety with which Thomson’s “other Flora” showers the tropics. Cowper’s speaker dramatizes this vernal spontaneity by eliminating the roles of gardener and botanist altogether, causing the flowering branches to “publish” their “families” and “tribes” to the observer’s eye. The arrival of spring brings defamiliarizes the English garden by turning such familiar flowers as laburnum and lilac into exotic specimens whose blossoms announce the “family and tribe” to which Linnaean botany has assigned them. Spring causes the landscape outside of the hothouse to mimic the landscape that the gardener has created within, showering on each bloom the botanical variety that Thomson associated with the tropics.

By casting the exoticism of foreign flowers in high relief, the artifice of Cowper’s greenhouse makes nature itself an artificial luxury, one whose labor produces its own fruits and flowers without the human hand. Cowper’s greenhouse not only bridges the gap between temperate and tropic, but
releases onto the vernal landscape the botanical variety it has harbored throughout the winter. Thus, Cowper’s greenhouse encloses a small square of tropic space in a permeable boundary: permeable, in that the variety it encloses during the winter blossoms onto the landscape during the spring. Blending indoor-outdoor space, the greenhouse becomes for Cowper a structure in which the indoor activities of writing and the outdoor activities of horticulture meet. Thematically and topically, the greenhouse in Cowper’s Task can just as easily join the latitudes it purports to keep separate, thanks in part to the way Cowper figures the greenhouse in his symbolic program, and thanks in part to the way the greenhouse functions horticulturally as a temporary holding place for plants that are simultaneously luxurious and “necessary.” Through these mystifications of labor, the greenhouse closes the oceanic gap that separated the latitudes in Thomson’s Seasons, making it so that the leisurely labor of one British writer is all it takes to unleash the floral wealth of the tropics on the temperate landscape.

IV. The “Right” Plant for the “Right” Place: The Imperial Fiction of the Greenhouse and the Picturesque Landscape.

Poet and gardener William Mason (1724-1797) composed his poem The English Garden (1772-82) as a kind of georgic horticultural manual in which he articulates picturesque landscaping aesthetics. By the 1780s, this aesthetic had become the standard of horticultural taste. His explanatory notes for Book 4 specify that, of “all the ornaments of the Flower-Garden, the Conservatory is intitled to the preeminence; [however,] it stands in a separate scene” from the rest of the garden’s features (191). Mason’s advice makes the greenhouse aesthetically “preeminent” and nestled in its own little devoted corner of the landscape. His advice also mirrors the way that Mason treats even hardy exotics: these, too, get their own little beds and glades in the outdoor landscape, serving less to draw attention to themselves and more to contribute to the effect of the whole. He
thinks of plants not as individual specimens, but as groups and clusters that the gardener can position just as a painter would work with brush strokes. His use of painterly diction throughout his poem renders these groups of plants not only as clusters, but as “the pencils and colours with which [the gardener] is to work” in order to paint the “naked soil,” which Mason compares to “the Painters canvas” (171). John Phibbs and other garden historians describe this painterly use of greenery in terms of “‘dotting’ or planting single specimens . . . ‘mingling’ or mixing plants of different species [and] ‘massing’ or planting a group of the same species or cultivar” (35). In these terms, Mason was a mingler.

In the closing decades of the eighteenth century, horticulturalists in the picturesque school followed such advice as Mason’s. They grouped plants into masses, groves, drifts—the living “pigments” of the landscaper’s art. Tellingly, the composition of these masses consisted of native, exotic, and long-naturalized specimens, rather than singly grouped species: as Cowper’s greenhouse illustrates so well, it was chiefly in greenhouses that plants were strictly segregated by their exotic origin, thanks to the material fact of their cultivation needs. Outdoor plantings freely mingled plants regardless of origin: as long as they were hardy, they “belonged.” In touching briefly on Mason, I would like to highlight not only the influence the greenhouse exerts on horticultural practice, but also the imperially inflected ways that these writers think about the landscapes they imagined and planted. Whereas once the greenhouse strictly delineated exotic and native with boundaries of glass, picturesque landscapers dissolved that boundary as much as they could in order to seamlessly integrate exotic flora into the British landscape, much in the way that the greenhouse assembles exotics from all regions regardless of origin. By aestheticizing plants as painterly pigments, masses, and forms, these writers erased the status of plants as imperial trophies, reserving that function for the interior of the greenhouse, and making the entire British landscape a space where exotic and native freely mingled.
We might think briefly of the example from Uvedale Price, his “amiable foreigner” in his *Essay on the Picturesque* (1796): the “plant of foreign growth” that “appears to spring up by accident” and thus seems to have “acquired our language and manners so as to converse with the freedom of a native” (294n). To borrow Phibbs’ definitions of mingling and muddling again, Price was a mingler like Mason. Price praises this naturalized foreigner in the very same passage that he condemns “patch of foreign trees planted by themselves in the out-skirts of a wood” (294n) that seem awkwardly shoehorned into some place where they do not blend with the natives. Mason enacts similar principles by mingling native and exotic outside the greenhouse, and, within, mingling tender exotics from all different climes. By creating spaces for exotics both inside and outside of his greenhouse, Mason creates the imperial fiction that native and exotic—even those tender exotics requiring protection—can thrive alongside one another. Thus Mason devotes Book 4 to Alcander, who has planted a memorial garden for his lost lover Nerina. The Nerina episode of Book 4 describes the flower garden that Mason himself designed for Nuneham House near Oxford (Phibbs 45). Mason’s speaker specifies that Alcander’s garden is a bower, “a kind of monumental structure,” a secluded “hermitage” suited to melancholy reflections (194). Exotic flora flourish in this memorial structure, putting all of Mason’s gardening principles into context, and displaying the ways in which the garden can embody an intersection between the realms of art and nature. He describes Nerina’s bower:

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each flower that bears transplanting change
Or blooms indigenous . . .
... Here far beyond
That humble wish, her Lover's Genius form’d
A glittering Fane, where rare and alien plants
Might safely flourish, where the Citron sweet,
And fragrant Orange, rich in fruit and flowers,
Might hang their silver stars, their golden globes,
On the same odorous stem: Yet scorning there
The glassy penthouse of ignoble form,
High on Ionic shafts he bade it tower
A proud Rotunda . . .
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All within was day,
Was a genial Summer’s day, for secret stoves,
Thro’ all the pile solstitial warmth convey’d. (96-7)

Uniting both hardy exotics (“each flower that bears transplanting”) and natives that “bloom indigenous,” this greenhouse intermixes plants regardless of origin. Just as this greenhouse erases the origins of each plant in order to make them seem as though they naturally belong together, so too this greenhouse erases all signs of its own artifice. Alcander’s hermitage is subtle, a far cry from such lavish spectacles as the Dunmore Pineapple. Its columns are Ionic, the supposedly feminine order appropriate to the memory of Nerina. Mason’s speaker presents this tropic garden as a contrast to the “glassy penthouse of ignoble form” that characterize gaudier conservatories. Despite the subtlety of the gardener’s taste, this greenhouse still is meant for display: its rounded sides form a “theatric curve” recalling the circular seating of an amphitheatere, and implying that these exotics are meant to please a viewer positioned in just the right spot. Likewise, this glass house conceals its imperial artifice: it manufactures the heat of “a genial Summer’s day” through “secret stoves.” Enshrined safely in glass, exotic flora encircle a statue of Nerina herself.

Mason’s description of this statue makes it clear that Nerina represents a vision of England in the middle of an imaginary, imported tropics, breathing in the fragrance of floral sweets from around the world. Residing at the center of this “glittering Fane” (96), the statue of Nerina stands amidst “That bright space / Guarded the spicy tribes from Afric’s shore, / Or Ind, or Araby, Sabæan Plants / Weeping with nard, and balsam” (97-8). The polysyndeton of “or” emphasizes each disparate place, imparting the sense that these botanical rarities thrive together despite difference, all mingled together under the sheltering glass. Situating the greenhouse as a space that “guards” its living exotic sweets against the changeful seasons without, the speaker equates Alcander’s greenhouse to a religious space, a “Fane” designed to venerate the memory of this lost lover, whose marble likeness lingers over the heated beds “to inhale / That incense which a tributary world /
From all its regions round her altar breath’d” (98). Invoking the orientalist trope of *felix Arabia*, Mason turns the statue of Nerina into the body of the female imperial British subject, a body both receiving and adorned with the fragrances of faraway lands. We might imagine Pope’s Belinda inhaling the perfumes from the neatly arranged bottles on her toilet: “This casket India’s glowing gems unlocks, / And all Arabia breathes from yonder box” (*The Rape of the Lock* 1.134-5). Neatly enclosing the tributary tropics away from the British climate, citrus and resinous trees shed their aromas to glorify the memory of the British subject Nerina, and to gratify the senses of any who might wander through its sultry confines. The fiction of the tropics, manufactured seamlessly by the concealed art of Alcander’s well-appointed greenhouse, causes Alcander’s guest to exclaim that this cunningly designed tropic garden must be “Hesperian fables true, / If true, here only” (107). In prescribing his picturesque principles for the horticulturalist, Mason’s greenhouse creates an imperial Hesperian fable: Nerina’s shrine mingles and muddles flora from all places, gathering them in collective awe of a statue that could just as easily be Britannia.

Mason illustrates what would become in later centuries standard horticultural practice: both inside and outside of the greenhouse, plants “belong” not where they grow naturally, but where they aesthetically and horticulturally work best. A twenty-first century garden manual phrased this idea more succinctly: “A wise gardener chooses the right plant for the right spot” (Bender *The New Southern Living Garden Book* 689). In this regard, horticulturalists and writers retell the same imperial fiction as the greenhouse itself, causing geographies once kept separate now to mingle freely, both in and out of the greenhouse’s confines. Grounded in an imperial fiction that positions England as the receiver of the world’s botanical riches, this principle links imperial ideology the material, ecological consequences that British empire made possible. Even in separating tender from hardy exotics, the greenhouse offered British subjects yet another means to make empire work in their own gardens.
CONCLUSION: THE GREENHOUSE BREAKS.

The greenhouse makes true the Hesperian fable. It turns a little glassed-in square of the English countryside into a fortunate isle where citrus, nard, balsam, and all the fragrant rarities of the tropical world flourish within reach of the privileged, landowning British subject. It makes material the anthropocentric, imperial fictions eighteenth-century writers tell about themselves, about the supposedly well-meaning intentions of their nation. So, too, the fictions of the east, offered by the fanciful sharawadgi gardens of Haywood’s day, work in tandem with the vogue for virtuosic study of the natural world to allow the learned woman a new way to claim her place as a masculine connoisseur, a curious Flora whose investigations into the scientific world allow her to inhabit a privileged space formerly reserved only for men of the Royal Society. The virtuoso, who played no small role in amassing variety in England’s gardens, tells the story that these gardens could be an Arcadia, or a grotto, or an orangery, in each of whose richly inscribed spaces he can collect all the botanical riches of the globe in order to naturalize his claim to his newly acquired social standing. And these riches, brought home by masts of oak, represented by the luxurious orange that could have been from anywhere, allowed an entire generation of aristocrats to fashion the British landscape in the image of their restored king.

In each of these instances exotic flora serve either as means to tell stories, or as things that tell stories on their own. They yoke together the physical environments of British subjects with the tales these people told of other lands. They turn these stories into physical realities whose consequences shape our physical environments today. Addison’s strangers among us and Price’s amiable foreigners bring the seemingly innocent English garden into close intimacy with xenophilic
narratives told by a particular culture about the lands that culture colonized. For better or worse, our lands bear the mark of such tales.

There is one final image that merits attention because it offers several new territories to explore, several areas of further consideration. Like the image of the exotic flora above, this image tells a tale. It hints that the Hesperian fable of the greenhouse is one that will not last, one whose tropical spell can easily break, and whose botanical rarities perish without the protection of glass. Implicit in this tale is the possibility that anthropocentric empire is like the fragile greenhouse: it purports to contain what it brings into the landscape, but for all its contrivance the greenhouse is an artificial structure easily crushed by the elements. For William Mason, as we have seen, the greenhouse holds the promise of the Hesperian fable. It also has the quality of fragility, of fashionability: when well-appointed, the greenhouse becomes Nerina’s shrine, capable of concealing its own art; but when tacky and poorly managed, the greenhouse turns into a fragile bauble that can be shattered by England’s unpredictable weather. This fragile greenhouse appears in Book 4 of *The English Garden*, and belongs to a learned youth “Of polish’d manners” who “lov’d the art I sing” and was “a deep adept / In Nature’s story, [for] well he knew the names / Of all her verdant lineage; yet that skill / Misled his taste” (70). This youth, studied in Linnaean botany and betraying some hints of virtuosic obsession, misapplies his art, straying into a modish and fashionable taste that tempts him to produce a flashy, showy garden of tender exotics that will not last. He is “scornful of every bloom that spreads spontaneous,” opting instead to purchase all of his specimens “from remotest Ind” and crowns his hills “With all the pride of Ganges” (70). His hothouse status symbols thrive for a time, but soon enough a winter hailstorm shatters his greenhouse, freezing all of the tender exotics within:

At the dread sight [of the storm]
The Aliens stand aghast; they bow their heads.
In vain the glassy penthouse is supply’d:
The pelting storm with icy bullets breaks
Its fragile barrier; see! they fade, they die.
Warn’d by his error, let the Planter slight
These shiv’ring rarities. (70)

Like fashion, the fickle seasons delude the young gardener’s fancy for a time, warming these tender exotics with propitious weather until winter comes, smashing the “glassy penthouse” and smothering “These shiv’ring rarities” under a “frozen shroud” (70). Cautioning his “Planter” to avoid these tender exotics, Mason’s speaker admits that, if one must plant such specimens to please “Fastidious Fashion,” he should plant them in a protected spot. This sheltered parterre acts as an interlude in the landscape: “So in the web of epic song sublime / The Bard Mæonian interweaves the charm / Of softer episode, yet leaves unbroken / The golden thread of his majestic theme” (71-2). Comparing this protected glade of exotics with a “softer episode” in the grand epic of the landscape itself, Mason’s speaker aligns greenhouse exotics with fashion, capable of manufacturing a tropical fiction for a time, but ultimately incapable of producing a garden that will last, leaving only decimated stumps and shattered glass in its wake.

This image is significant because the youth Mason describes “scorns” all flowers of “spontaneous” growth, valuing only the costly foliage of Ganges, denying all value to native English things. Yet Mason uses the image not to endorse some form of native species gardening—not as we might be tempted to in our own era—but to characterize the youth’s tastelessness as ephemeral and fragile. His xenophilia is errant because it is tainted by the feminine force known as “Fashion.” Unlike the judicious gardener, a devotion to consumerism and fickle fashion renders this youth incapable of managing the exotic things he brings into the landscape.

Mason speaks in the 1780s, at the beginning of an era in which the British landscape was transformed by the twin vogues for botany and picturesque landscaping. These two cultural obsessions treat landscape as the canvas, and exotic plants as the paint: transfiguring environments into art objects, consumers in the last two decades of the century intensified the economy of exotic
plants we have seen throughout the era, paving the way for the modern horticulture industry. This industry springs out of the broader culture of eighteenth-century xenophilia we have seen throughout this study, and this industry—more than ever before—turned exotic plants into commodities beholden to that cultural force known as fashion. Jane Austen’s fiction chronicles well the fashionable follies of such characters as General Tilney, whose “village of hothouses” supplies his kitchen with unseasonal produce all year long (1050); or the “moor park apricot” in the gardens of Mansfield Park (453); or the “curious water plant” that Mr. Darcy points out during Elizabeth’s tour of Pemberley with him (348). Indeed, as Deidre Lynch points out, transplanting exotics serves no small part in the obsession Austen’s characters have with improving their estates (713). Nor was Austen alone in bearing witness to the changes the picturesque and botanical cults wrought in the environments around her. Charlotte Smith, with her keen eye for botanical detail, describes whole landscapes filled with exotics that have escaped cultivation, exotics whose presence in the gothic gardens of her fiction could only have been made possible through the emergence of the horticulture industry and its attending fashionability. Erasmus Darwin, too, populates his *Botanic Garden* with nymphs from foreign lands: his poems read like versified horticultural catalogues. Indeed, clustered in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, a host of texts attend to botanical and horticultural strangers that now flourished in England’s cosmopolitan landscapes, and these amiable foreigners attest to the material power of consumerism and fashionability to alter the ecology of the English countryside.

The previous eras we have surveyed merely unlocked the floodgates. If eighteenth-century writers thought of exotic flora as commodities before, the final decades of the century turned that xenophilic commodity culture into an obsession that swept through the middling classes. At the turn of the eighteenth century, the biodiversity and ecology of the English landscape underwent changes chiefly wrought by Royal Society botanists, wealthy landowners, and a handful of nurseries and
horticulturalists supplying these patrons. At the turn of the nineteenth, any landowner of the newly emerging gentry could purchase exotic plants, and impact the ecology and biodiversity of their own grounds. The culture of xenophilia we have seen throughout this study turned plants into commodities that could be circulated into new environments as never before, setting the stage for the invasive species problem we now grapple with today, and making Mason’s story of the shattered greenhouse a cautionary tale of exotic things mismanaged.

In Mason’s version of the story of the fashionable youth whose greenhouse shatters, the delicate exotics all perish beneath winter’s frozen shroud; they pose no threat, and their loss is an economic one, a waste of the youth’s resources. For Mason, there is no possibility that these plants might invade the countryside into which they have been cast. The notion of an invasive species never occurs to this writer at all, even though the story he tells very closely resembles the ones we tell about the botanical strangers among us.

Our own native species narrative is one of exotic things mismanaged, exotic things escaping cultivation and assuming a life of their own—exotic things reminding us that our anthropocentrism, like the greenhouse, is a fragile fantasy, and that our own consumerism and xenophilia endows these foreign plants with a threatening agency. Mason might not ascribe such agency to the “shiv’ring rarities” of the greenhouse, but he does exhibit and awareness that the Hesperian fable can degenerate into a brittle illusion. In this regard, such tales of exotic flora, for all their cornucopian and anthropocentric rhetoric, for all their imperial overtones, have something to teach us about the way we imagine our environment and our place in it. They offer a message of caution, a warning that the environments created by our culture result in no small part from strangers among us that we once regarded as amiable. They remind us that the stories we tell can take hold in the environments we inhabit.


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