THE POETIC USES OF LINNAEAN TAXONOMY FROM ERASMUS DARWIN TO JOHN CLARE

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments
Abstract
List of Illustrations
Abbreviations

I. Linnaeus and English Poetry 1
Romantic Botany 30
Linnaeus's English Afterlives 38
Literary Linnaeus 47
Linnaeus Unlocked 59

II. Erasmus Darwin's Artificial Versifying 75
Darwin's Tinkling Mesh 84
Similarity and Difference 96
'Ingenious speculation': Darwin's Footnotes 109

III. Wordsworth's Poetic Collections 130
Linnaeus's Paper Technologies 139
Wordsworth's Classifications 148
Wordsworth's Reorganisations 163
Wordsworth's Paper Technologies 175

IV. John Clare's Varieties 185
Botanizing with Clare 196
The Language of Description 208
'The Man of Science and of Taste' 224

V. Conclusion 241

Bibliography 245

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ABSTRACT

This thesis challenges critical assumptions that Carl Linnaeus was a dulling if not malignant influence on Romantic poetry by exploring the ways in which Linnaean strategies of comparison and distinction, organisation and arrangement, enumeration and description find echoes in the poetry of Erasmus Darwin, William Wordsworth, and John Clare. As studies of Romantic science have proliferated in the last thirty years, research has investigated the gendered implications of the Linnaean system, as well as the imperial and commercial ramifications of botany's global networks. Other accounts of Linnaean botany and poetry have preferred classificatory slippages rather than taxonomy's possibilities. By contrast, this thesis argues that Linnaeus often looked at the natural world through a poetic lens, and that works such as his *Philosophia botanica* (1751) pay close attention to questions of language, an attention magnified by translations such as the Lichfield Botanic Society's *System of Vegetables* (1783-5), which boasted Samuel Johnson as a consultant. Among the Lichfield Botanic Society's three members was Erasmus Darwin, who produced the first thoroughly Linnaean poem, *The Loves of the Plants* (1789). Yet the poem's reputation as a work of literary artifice has fallen alongside Linnaeus's own sunken currency as the author of an 'artificial' system. On the other hand, William Wordsworth and John Clare have been regularly positioned as 'natural' poets in opposition to the 'peeping' botanist's compulsion for prying and collecting. In doing so, critics have overlooked both poets' Linnaean engagements. Challenging allegations of the imaginative failure of Linnaeus and his system, this thesis offers a reappraisal of Linnaeus and his reception in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain. By offering a reconsideration of the period's enthusiasm for Linnaeus and his system, it provides a more complex interpretation of Romantic responses to the natural world.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1 Robert Dunkarton and Henry Kingsbury after Martin Hoffman, 'Linnaeus in his Lapland Dress', first published in Robert John Thornton, *New Illustration of the Sexual System of Carolus von Linnaeus* (London: the author, 1807)

Fig. 2 Linnaeus's drawing of *Andromeda polifolia* from 'Iter Lapponicum' (1732), London, Linnean Society, GB-110/LM/LP/TRV/1/2/1. <http://linnean-online.org/165368/> [accessed 21 June 2018]

Fig. 3 'Manypeeplia Upsidownia' in Edward Lear, *Nonsense Botany & Nonsense Alphabets* (London: Frederick Warne, 1927), n. p.

Fig. 4 Sarah Ashton, *Fan*, 1792, paper, yew, sycamore, 255 × 475 mm open, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1915/3746, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O366497/fan-ashton-sarah/> [accessed 13 December 2018]

Fig. 5 Classes XIV to XXIV, from Edward Stringer's engraving of Pierre Bulliard, 'Système sexuel de Linnæus', printed after the preface to *Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789)

Fig. 6 Title page of *The Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789)

Fig. 7 'Mimosa', reproduction from *The Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789)

Fig. 8 Herbarium cupboard, Carl Linnaeus, *Philosophia botanica* (1751), BL. 79, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/120027/> [accessed 23 July 2018]

ABBREVIATIONS

1815 William Wordsworth, *Poems* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme and Brown, 1815)

1827 William Wordsworth, *Poetical Works*, 5 vols (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827)

1836 William Wordsworth, *Poetical Works*, 6 vols (London: Moxon, 1836)

EP John Clare, *Early Poems*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Margaret Grainger, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989)

EV Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, ed. by Adam Komisaruk and Allison Dushane, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 2017), I: *Economy of Vegetation*

EY *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967)

Last William Wordsworth, *Last Poems, 1821-1850*, ed. by Jared Curtis, Apryl Lea Denny-Feris, Jillian Heydt Stevenson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999)

LBOP William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992)

Loves Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, ed. by Adam Komisaruk and Allison Dushane, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 2017), II: *Loves of the Plants*

LP John Clare, *Later Poems, 1837-1864*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Margaret Grainger, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984)

LY *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Later Years*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Alan G. Hill, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979)

MP John Clare, *Poems of the Middle Period*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998)

MY *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill, rev. edn, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969)

P2V William Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983)

PW William Wordsworth, *Prose Works*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974)

SP William Wordsworth, *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*, ed. by Carl H. Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989)

SSIP William Wordsworth, *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845*, ed. by Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004)

I. LINNAEUS AND ENGLISH POETRY

'Is it not as language that all natural objects affect the poet?' Henry David Thoreau[1]

Poetry of the last fifty years has welcomed Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778), whose 'love of all things made', as Richard Wilbur put it, 'had brought | Bird, beast, fish, plant, and stone | Into the reaches of his branchy thought'.[2] The names Linnaeus gave to plants have provided titles for poems by Louise Glück ('Ipomoea', 'Lamium', 'Trillium') and Les Murray ('Angophora floribunda').[3] The 'learned Latin | handle', as Amy Clampitt writes, 'shifts everything abruptly inward'.[4] Inward, Clampitt clarifies in the next line, is 'childhoodward'; and two Nobel poet laureates, Czesław Miłosz and Tomas Tranströmer, have confessed to formative boyhood affections for Linnaeus.[5] Despite the hospitality of modern verse, which praises Linnaeus's exuberant love of the natural world as much as the precision of his linguistic response to it, literary scholarship has routinely been less enthusiastic. James McKusick has referred to Linnaeus's 'bloodless but precise Latin terms': the 'precise but rather colorless prose studded with the Latin name for genus and species'.[6] Geoffrey Hartman suggested that

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[1] 7 August 1853, *Journal*, ed. by Robert Sattelmeyer, 8 vols (Princeton: University of Princeton Press, 1981-), VI: *1853*, ed. by William Rossi and Heather Kirk Thomas (2000), p. 289.
[2] 'The Fourth of July' in Richard Wilbur, *The Mind-Reader: New Poems* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), p. 21. Although the founder of the sexual system was variably referred to as 'Carl von Linné', 'Linnæus', and 'Linneus', this thesis will refer throughout to 'Linnaeus'.
[3] See *Flora Poetica: The Chatto Book of Botanical Verse*, ed. by Sarah Maguire (London: Chatto and Windus, 2001).
[4] 'Botanical Nomenclature', in *The Kingfisher: Poems* (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 16.
[5] Czesław Miłosz, 'The Art of Poetry, No. 70', *Paris Review*, 133 (Winter 1994), 242-273 (p. 247); Tomas Tranströmer, *New Collected Poems*, trans. by Robin Fulton (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Bloodaxe Books, 1997), p. 186.
[6] James McKusick, *Green Writing: Romanticism and Ecology* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 22.

> Nature and art are both endangered by the deadly Latin of modern anatomical analysis. We should not see the things of this world under the species of false objectivity, or of its killing nomenclature, but through the medium of their own natures and the *lingua franca et jocundissima* of vernacular perception.[7]

Of course, the joke here lies in Hartman's glossing of 'vernacular perception' by means of a Latin scrim.[8] According to Hartman, Latin is not just the language of specimens but of turning beings into things. The Latin nomenclator is equally implicated: Anna Pavord writes that Linnaeus 'imposed' his names on plants 'with the ruthless efficiency of a computer programme'.[9] Paul Alan Cox's introduction to Stephen Freer's translation of *Philosophia botanica* (1751) characterises Linnaeus's early botanical writing as 'cold, precise, and reads with about as much excitement as source code for the computer design of a toaster'.[10] Yet James L. Larson comes nearer to the strangeness of Linnaeus's writing when he describes the content of the taxonomist's major critical works as having 'prescriptive, pedantic, even oracular content'.[11] Larson's choice of 'oracular' recalls the motto above the door to Linnaeus's study at his country estate in Hammarby, just over ten kilometres south-east of Uppsala – *Innocue vivito, numen adest* [sic] (Live irreproachably, for God is near) – and August Strindberg's admiration of Linnaeus as a seer.[12]

This thesis will contest Linnaeus's reputation as a systematical tyrant and a writer of dead words. McKusick's critique of Linnaean nomenclature, for example, follows directly from his discussion of the Anglo-American botanist, William Bartram (1739-1823).

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[7] Geoffrey H. Hartman, 'Christopher Smart's *Magnificat*', in *The Fate of Reading, and Other Essays* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975), p. 98.
[8] The phrase is taken from Wallace Stevens's 'Notes towards a Supreme Fiction', *Collected Poems* (London: Faber, 1984, repr. 2006), p. 346.
[9] Anna Pavord, *Naming of Names: The Search for Order in the World of Plants* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 395.
[10] Carl Linnaeus, *Philosophia Botanica*, trans. by Stephen Freer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), xx. In-text references to '*Philosophia Botanica*' will refer to Freer's translation rather than to Linnaeus's Latin original, *Philosophia botanica* (Stockholm: 1751).
[11] James L. Larson, *Reason and Experience: The Representation of Natural Order in the Work of Carl von Linné* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 48.
[12] Ovid's original line is 'innocue vivite: numen adest' ('Live innocently, gods are nigh', l. 640) from *Ars Amatoria*. See *The Art of Love and Other Poems*, trans. by J. H. Mozley, rev. by G. P. Goold, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 56-57; August Strindberg, *Letters*, ed. by Michael Robinson, 2 vols (London: The Athlone Press, 1992), II (1892-1912), 593.

Bartram's *Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East and West Florida* (1791), a book read with pleasure by both William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, wove Linnaean nomenclature into an ecstatic natural tapestry which is part-hymn, part-catalogue. Bartram, exploring the rivers and waterways around Mobile, Alabama, and, having spent a night in a fig grove, discovered a cathedral of *Magnolia grandiflora* (southern magnolia trees), giving rise to a rapturous response:

> What a sylvan scene is here! the pompous Magnolia, reigns sovereign of the forests; how sweet the aromatic Illisium groves! how gaily flutters the radiated wings of the Magnolia auriculata! each branch supporting an expanded umbrella, superbly crested with a silver plume, fragrant blossom, or crimson studded strobile and fruits! I recline on the verdant bank, and view the beauties of the groves. Aesculus pavia, Prunus nemoralis, floribus racemosis, foliis sempervirentibus, nitidis. Aesculus alba, Hydrangia quercifolia, Cassine, Magnolia pyramidata, foliis ovatis, oblongis, acuminatis, basi auraculatis, strobilo oblongo ovato, Myrica, Rhamnus frangula, Halesea, Bigonia, Azalea, Lonicera, Sideroxilon, with many more.[13]

Rather than offering a sharp distinction between the vernacular and the classical, Bartram's passage shows a hybrid woof. The passage's initial flickering between Latinate and Anglo-Saxon diction in phrases like 'radiated wings' dissolves into a stream of Latin nomenclature. This passage from Bartram is indebted to an eighteenth-century tradition of pastoral writing which translates a European aesthetic ('sylvan scene') to an altogether wilder landscape, where his nightly camps are constantly menaced by alligators and his presence is compromised by the colonists' hostile treatment of local indigenous people. Yet the incantatory power of botanic Latin becomes the pivot between the Virgilian past and the plenitude of the New World, exemplified by Bartram's burgeoning list. Botanical language is absorbed so that the reader glides over the granularity of *Magnolia auriculata* (now known as *Magnolia fraseri*, a small species of magnolia with large flowers) and

[13] William Bartram, *Travels through North & South Carolina, Georgia, East & West Florida, the Cherokee Country, the Extensive Territories of the Muscogulges, or Creek Confederacy, and the Country of the Chactaws; Containing, an Account of the Soil and Natural Productions of Those Regions, Together with Observations on the Manners of the Indians* (Philadelphia: James and Johnson, 1791), pp. 407-8.

strobile (a scaly cone). A botanist would judge from Bartram that he had also seen a buckeye, a laurel-cherry, a bottlebrush buckeye, an oak-leaved hydrangea, a small shrub (*Cassine*), a subspecies of *Magnolia fraseri* (*Magnolia pyramidata*) of which Bartram is recorded as discoverer, an alder buckthorn, and, along with more familiar flowers (Begonia, Azalea, and Lonicera or honey-suckle), a genus known as a 'bully tree'. In this passage, the Elysian backdrop is concretised into crowding specificity, reminding the reader that Bartram is no disinterested traveller, but a commissioned naturalist.[14] William Stowe argues that by breaking another of Bartram's cataloguing paragraphs into Whitmanian free verse, one finds 'the rhythm of Bartram's prose and the pleasure he takes in the gorgeous and exotic Latin polysyllables more evident'.[15] Against the lushness of Bartram's writing, his combination of aesthetic delight and botanic specificity, McKusick's perception of the 'bloodlessness' of Linnaean language becomes less convincing. While there may be no blood in this passage, there is certainly a strong sense of sap rising through botanic veins, as the enthusiasm mounts in Bartram's accumulated clauses.

The effect of the natural world upon William Cowper was less ecstatic than it was minutely and precisely described: the result (at least, according to Hazlitt) of his temperamental 'fastidiousness'.[16] The green-fingered character of the third book of Cowper's georgic, *The Task* (1785), is not a traveller like Bartram but a private gentleman labouring independently in his garden. His careful eye observes the 'tender germs' of the cucumber plant, 'upstarting quick | And spreading wide their spongy lobes' (III. 521-2).[17]

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[14] Bartram was commissioned by the Quaker English physician, Dr. John Fothergill, to send seeds, specimens, and drawings from Florida.
[15] William Stowe, 'Linnaean Poetics: Emerson, Cooper, Thoreau, and the Names of Plants', *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 17.3 (Summer 2010), 567-583 (p. 569).
[16] 'On Thomson and Cowper', *Lectures on the English Poets* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1818), published in *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, ed. by Duncan Wu, 9 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1998), II, 244-261 (pp. 249-50).
[17] *The Poems of William Cowper*, ed. by John D. Baird and Charles Ryskamp, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1995), II: *1782-1785* (1995), pp. 176-8 (p. 176).

'Lobe', a 'rounded projection or division of a leaf', is a precise botanic word, a sign of specific discourse, although it antedates Linnaeus by half a century.[18] If Linnaeus's influence on Cowper begins to look doubtful, however, Cowper nods at Linnaeus's sexual system in his steady observation of the cucumber's maturation. The cucumber's roots,

> Indulged in what they wish...soon supply
> Large foliage, overshadowing golden flowers,
> Blown on the summit of th'apparent fruit.
> These have their sexes, and when summer shines
> The bee transports the fertilizing meal
> From flow'r to flow'r, and ev'n the breathing air
> Wafts the rich prize to its appointed use.
> (III. 534-540)

Lover of the greenhouse, of the 'ruddier orange and the paler lime' which '[p]eep through their polish'd foliage' (III. 573-4) and of the 'crimson honors' of the geranium (III. 578), the gardener is not content to leave nature to her work. Rather, Cowper's gardener is ready to assist with 'glad espousals' should his '[a]ssistant art' be required (III. 541, 543). 'Espousals' signals the presence of Linnaeus, whose sexual system divided plants into twenty-four 'marriages', both public (Classes I-XXIII) and 'clandestine' (Class XXIV: Cryptogamia).[19] Nor is pollination the gardener's only intervention, '[s]ince just arrangement, rarely brought to pass | But by a master's hand' (III. 588-9) invites him to group his exotic flowers in a 'regular yet various scene' (III. 592). In these lines, Cowper connects the practical ramifications of Linnaean botany – the sexual characteristics which organise his system – to the aesthetic compulsions of arrangement to 'dispos[e] well | The gay diversities of leaf and flow'r' (III. 589-90).

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[18] According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the botanic application of 'lobe' first appeared in the English phytologist Nehemiah Grew's *Anatomy of Vegetables Begun* (London: Spencer Hickman, 1672), and was used by Phillip Miller in his *Gardener's Dictionary* (London: the author, 1733), before appearing in James Lee's Linnaean translation, *An Introduction to Botany* (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1760). 'lobe, n. c', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/109501> [accessed 15 October 2018].

[19] 'Public' marriages included plants whose sexual organs (stamens and pistils) were visible and countable, whereas the cryptogamic plants (algae, moss, ferns, fungi) hid their reproductive parts.

This thesis argues that poets of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries found poetic resources in Linnaeus. Nor was a single poet's engagement static: as a heavy-weight participant in the fierce taxonomic debates of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Linnaeus provoked eloquence, verbosity, disgust, doubt, fidelity, and admiration. Rousseau's letter to Linnaeus of 21 September 1777 concluded with a passionate declaration of devotion: 'I read you, I study you, I meditate upon you, I honour you and love you with all of my heart'.[20] In the next century, Henry David Thoreau put Linnaeus in the august company of Homer and Chaucer following a trip to the Cambridge library in Boston. [21]

When George Crabbe's poem, *The Library* (1781), which classified books by binding and by subject, arrived at the subject of natural history, it was described in terms which may sound familiar to readers of Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* (1789):

> Next to the vegetable tribes they lead,
> Whose fruitful beds o'er every balmy mead
> Teem with new life, and hills, and vales, and groves,
> Feed the still flame, and nurse the silent loves;
> Which, when the Spring calls forth their genial power,
> Swell with the seed, and flourish in the flower:
> There*, with the husband-slaves, in royal pride,
> Queens, like the Amazons of old, reside;
> There, like the Turk, the lordly husband lives,
> And joy to all the gay seraglio gives;
> There**, in the secret chambers, veil'd from sight,
> A bashful tribe in hidden flames delight;
> There***, in the open day, and gaily deck'd,
> The bolder brides their distant lords expect;
> Who with the wings of love instinctive rise,
> And on prolific winds each ardent bridegroom flies.
> (ll. 167-182)[22]

[20] L 4545, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/777772905/> [accessed 20 June 2018].
[21] 3 February 1852, *Journal*, IV: *1851-1852*, ed. by Leonard N. Neufeldt and Nancy Craig Simmons (1992), p. 321.
[22] *The Library* (1781), in George Crabbe, *The Complete Poetical Words*, ed. by Norma Dalrymple-Champneys and Arthur Pollard, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), I, 121-122.

*Alluding to the Sexual System of Linnaeus.
**The Class Cryptogamia.
***The Class Dioecia.

Crabbe's seraglio would reappear in *The Loves of the Plants* alongside the meads, hills, and vales of georgic verse. A line such as 'Feed the still flame, and nurse the silent loves' borrows the balanced line and repeated sounds which Darwin and Crabbe both learned from Pope. It is tempting, therefore, to imagine that Crabbe's *Library* germinated *The Loves of the Plants,* although there is no evidence to prove Darwin read Crabbe, and Desmond King-Hele has suggested that Darwin had ruminated on the idea of a botanic poem since the late 1770s.[23] Yet Darwin forced Crabbe to re-examine his own lines. By the time Crabbe came to publish his *Poems* in 1807, he had revised the lines on Linnaean botany from *The Library* so that they came to read quite differently:

Here first describ'd, the torpid Earth appears,
And next, the Vegetable-robe it wears;
Where flow'ry Tribes, in Valleys, Fields and Groves,
Nurse the still Flame, and feed the silent Loves;
Loves, where no Grief, nor Joy, nor Bliss, nor Pain,
Warm the glad Heart or vex the labouring Brain;
But as the green Blood moves along the Blade,
The Bed of Flora on the Branch is made;
Where without Passion, Love instinctive lives,
And gives new Life, unconscious that it gives.
(ll. 309-318).[24]

Crabbe has kept his good line ('Nurse the still Flame, and feed the silent Loves'), but in swapping the original positions of 'feed' and nurse', however, he has distanced himself from the 1781 poem's pervasive alliteration, a literary quality which Anna Seward

[23] Robert L. Chamberlain, however, thinks that Darwin may have 'caught the tone' for *Loves of the Plants* from Crabbe, and that Crabbe altered his verse after reading the 1798 parody of Darwin ('The Loves of the Triangles') in the *Anti-Jacobin*. 'George Crabbe and Darwin's Amorous Plants', *The Journal of English and German Philology*, 61.4 (October 1962), 833-852 (p. 840).
[24] Crabbe, *Complete Poetical Works*, I, 144.

described as being a particular addiction of Darwin's verse.[25] Crabbe's poem had been purged, too, of his allusions to Linnaean classification: his Amazons, 'bolder brides', and 'ardent bridegroom[s]'. Instead, Crabbe emphasises the fluid mechanism of plants, which act on 'instinctive' but passionless love. Sexual potency remains – 'as the green Blood moves along the Blade | The Bed of Flora on the Branch is made' – but it is almost murderously passive. Although Crabbe removed Linnaeus from his *Library*, Linnaean classification was translated into other modes elsewhere in his verse. In *The Parish Register* (1807), for example, the clergyman-narrator recounts the comic vanities of lower-class plantsmen who hope to inflate their self-importance by Linnaean reference:

> 'Why *Lonicera* wilt thou name thy child?'
> I ask'd the Gardener's wife, in accent mild:
> 'We have a right,' replied the sturdy dame;
> And *Lonicera* was the Infant's name.
> If next a Son shall yield our Gardener joy,
> Then *Hyacinthus* shall be that fair boy;
> And if a Girl, they will at length agree,
> That *Belladonna* that fair maid shall be.
> (I. 611-618)[26]

Such pretensions take place in a larger climate of social climbing by laying hands on learned language, a temptation which later appeared in *Jane Eyre* (1847), in which the unlikeable Blanche Ingram 'entered into a discourse on botany with the gentle Mrs. Dent'. Jane observes, 'It seems Mrs. Dent had not studied that science: though, as she said, she liked flowers, "especially wild ones;" Miss Ingram had, and she ran over its vocabulary with an air'.[27] Here, botanical knowledge is a distinctly showy, aspirational gesture; it triggers a musical performance rather than a learned conversation. Crabbe's gardener uses

[25] Anna Seward, *Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin, Chiefly During his Residence at Lichfield* (London: J. Johnson, 1804), p. 308.
[26] Crabbe, *Complete Poetical Works*, I, 229-230.
[27] Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*, ed. by Jane Jack and Margaret Smith (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), p. 216.

botanical language to pretend to the status to which Blanche Ingram was born, but with equally unsympathetic results.

> High-sounding words our worthy Gardener gets,
> And at his Club to wondering Swains repeats:
> He then of *Rhus* and *Rhododendron* speaks,
> And *Allium* calls his Onions and his Leeks;
> Nor Weeds are now, for whence arose the Weed,
> Scarce Plants, fair Herbs and curious Flowers proceed
> Where Cuckoo-pints and Dandelions sprung,
> (Gross names had they our plainer sires among;)
> There *Arums*, there *Leontodons* we view,
> And *Artimisia* grows, where *Wormwood* grew.
> But though no weed exists, his garden round,
> From *Rumex* strong our Gardener frees his ground,
> Takes soft *Senicio* from the yielding land,
> And grasps the arm'd *Urtica* in his hand
> (I. 619-632).[28]

Crabbe's gardener may have 'high-sounding' language, but he is still foolish enough to lay his hand on a stinging nettle (*Urtica*), suggesting that the knowledge of words does not necessarily lend a recognition of the objects to which those words refer. The gardener's borrowed language does not fit his context: instead of appearing clever, he merely turns windbag. Nor does his neglect of the 'gross words' of 'plainer sires' imply his moral delicacy. Rather, the plantsman's prurience dribbles into unnecessary narration:

> Not DARWIN'S self had more delight to sing
> Of floral courtship, in th'awaken'd spring;
> Than *Peter Pratt*, who simpering loves to tell,
> How rise the *Stamens*, as the *Pistils* swell;
> How bend and curl the moist-top to the spouse,
> And give and take the vegetable vows...
> (I. 633-638)[29]

Thus Darwin is lampooned, becoming the butt of a joke Crabbe first construed. Crabbe's manoeuvres show that botanic allegiances, like poetic modes, are not static. The equation

[28] Crabbe, *Complete Poetical Works*, I, 229-230.
[29] Crabbe, *Complete Poetical Works*, I, 230.

of Linnaeus with natural history in 1781 no longer suited Crabbe in 1807. The sheer popularity of botany made it available for social critique: not only for gentle satire at the 'uppity' lower classes, but at tradesmen, and at melancholic, scholarly bores who are oblivious to the sexual relations between men and women even as they lecture on vegetable reproduction ('The Preceptor Husband').[30]

James Plumptre's preface to his closet-drama, *The Lakers* (1798), suggests that humour resides in the language itself: the educated half of his audience, he was assured, would understand the satire on botany, while the other half would be

> pleased with the comic sound of the jargon, when delivered with humour, though unacquainted with its literal meaning. He [the author] had heard audiences set into roars of laughter by Lingo's bad Latin, though perhaps four-fifths of the audience were unacquainted with the language.[31]

If binomial nomenclature can sound incantatory in the hands of William Bartram, Plumptre sees the other side of the coin: incantation as nonsense. Another Laker, writing in a Plumptre-an vein, Robert Southey suggests classifying novels according to the Linnaean system:

> Monandria Monogynia is the usual class, most novels having one hero and one heroine. Sir Charles Grandison belongs to the Monandria Digynia. Those in which the families of the two lovers are at variance may be called Dioecious. The Cryptogamia are very numerous, so are the Polygamia – Where the lady is in doubt which of her lovers to chuse, the tale is to be classed under the Icosandria. Where the party hesitates between love and duty, or avarice and ambition, Didynamia. Many are poisonous, few of any use, and far the greater numbers are annuals.[32]

Capitalising on the doubled taxonomy of Crabbe's *Library*, Southey goes further to classify books *as* plants. If the most common novels conclude with public marriages of one

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[30] Crabbe, *Tales of the Hall* IX, *Complete Poetical Works*, II, 413-423.
[31] James Plumptre, *The Lakers* (London: W. Clarke: 1798), x. 'Lingo' was a comic character in John O'Keeffe's comic opera, *The Agreeable Surprise*, produced at the Haymarket Theatre in 1781.
[32] Robert Southey and S. T. Coleridge, *Omniana or Horae Otiosiores* (1812), ed. by Robert Gittings (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press Ltd., 1969), p. 70; quoted by David Duff, *Romanticism and the Uses of Genre* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 11, n.50.

man to one woman (Monandria Monogynia), *Sir Charles Grandison* is an example of an order whose hero has a harem of two. Out of the class 'Dioecia' (Greek for 'two houses'), plants with male and female characteristics on separate trees, Southey invokes strains of *Romeo and Juliet*. Species in the class Icosandria are spoiled for choice, sporting flowers with more than twenty stamens; and in Didynamia, the fourteenth class, flowers have two competing sets of stamens, two long and two short. Reading plot into number and position, Southey's drollery emphasises the unimaginatively vegetative conception of human love in contemporary novels, as well as the continuing humour of botanic language out of place. The fertility of botanical Latin's funniness extends into the nineteenth century in the form of Edward Lear's nonsense botany. Lear, who made his name by a precocious illustrated folio of parrots, integrates birds and binomial nomenclature into playful specimens of a spoof flora: Cockatooca Superba and Pollybirdia Singularis.[33] Given the existence of plant species which resemble insects – a performance of visual and verbal mimicry which drew John Clare to the spider (*Ophrys sphegodes*) and bee orchises (*Ophrys apifera*) – the ridiculousness of Lear's Tigerlillia Terribilis and the Bluebottlia Buzztilentia have a whiff of credibility about them.[34]

Considering Geoffrey Hill's proposition that 'there cannot be a parody where there has been no perception of the real condition', botanical nomenclature's susceptibility to jokes and nonsense does not deny it power.[35] If Crabbe spans the serious and the jocular, Charlotte Smith's posthumously published long poem, *Beachy Head* (1807), reckons more seriously with Linnaeus in lyrical blank verse, although botany is only one of the learned

[33] Edward Lear, *The Complete Nonsense and Other Verse*, ed. by Vivien Noakes (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 251, 253; Lear, *Illustrations of the family of Psittacidae, or Parrots: the Greater Part of Them Hitherto Unfigured, Containing Forty-Two Lithographic Plates, Drawn from Life, and on Stone* (London: the author, 1832).

[34] *The Complete Nonsense*, pp. 385, 417. 'Nonsense breaks rules not by forgetting them, but by following them to the letter', suggests Jean-Jacques Lecercle in *Philosophy of Nonsense*: *The Intuitions of Victorian Nonsense Literature* (London: Routledge, 1994), quoted by Noakes in the introduction to *The Complete Nonsense*, xxvii.

[35] Geoffrey Hill, 'The Exemplary Failure of T. H. Green', in *Critical Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 121.

subjects circulating through the poem. The poet ranges expansively through geology, history, antiquarianism, and ornithology, and the poem's strata shows traces of its author's wide reading of Shakespeare, Thomson, and other English poets. Skilfully braiding poetic tradition with her reading of natural history, each allegiance carefully footnoted but not without the occasional disputation, Smith's botanic line rambles expansively while still rooting itself in what Judith Pascoe calls the 'poetics of the botanically exact'.[36] Smith ventures into the more explicitly didactic in her *Conversations introducing Poetry: Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History* (1804), a work of educative fiction in dialogue, in which the knowledgeable Mrs Talbot composes and collects poems for her children with the intention of impressing their memories with facts about flowers, insects, and birds. In his *Ratio operis* to *Genera plantarum* (1737), Linnaeus wrote that he believed 'there is hardly anyone born with such a memory that he could retain the genera without a system'.[37] Mrs Talbot's poetry, like Linnaean taxonomy, shapes information for imperfect memories. Smith's dialogues attempt to balance real objects with poetic description: Mrs Talbot's son George, with his precocious ear for metre and verse, tempts his more prosaic younger sister Emily to acquire a working knowledge of the classics, while she insists on the sufficiency of natural objects in the world.

Although John Aikin's *Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (1777) argues from the perspective of zoology – and indeed disposes of the 'vegetable kingdom' as yielding 'comparatively few materials' other than vexingly indescribable subjects such as scent, colour, and taste to the poet – it offers a useful diagnosis for why Linnaean

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[36] Judith Pascoe, 'Female Botanists and the Poetry of Charlotte Smith' in *Re-Visioning Romanticism, 1776-1837*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson and Joel Haefner (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp. 193-209 (p. 201). Jacqueline Labbe describes Smith's footnotes as a 'navigational tool' for entering learned discourses traditionally hostile to women and for challenging received (male) wisdom. See '"Transplanted into more congenial Soil": Footnoting the Self in the Poetry of Charlotte Smith', in *Ma(r)king the Text: The Presentation of Meaning on the Literary Page* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), pp. 71-86.

[37] Staffan Müller-Wille and Karen Reeds, 'A translation of Carl Linnaeus's introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737)', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 38 (2007), 563-572 (p. 567).

language might offer particular attractions at the end of the eighteenth century. The poet, wrote Aikin, 'should think it incumbent upon him to discover and investigate *new facts*, as well as to frame *new combinations of words*'.[38] Smith, whose botanic footnotes show that she had read Aikin's *Essay*, applied herself to both tasks.[39] Alongside 'Arum', 'Burdock', 'Beech' and 'Ash', her Darwinian poem 'Flora' incorporates 'Cypripedium', 'Scandix', 'Lunaria', 'Scutellaria', and 'Leontodon' (ll. 36, 45, 64, 66, 67).[40] In explaining 'Flora' to her children, Mrs Talbot says that 'Some of these the structure of the verse compelled me to insert as they are scientifically called; others are designed by their common or vulgar names'.[41] The strength of 'compelled' here suggests that poetry not only accommodates the language of Linnaeus but requires its music.

Lingering in poetry well after the waning of its influence in scientific circles, Linnaean taxonomy prompted Sarah Hoare to credit Linnaeus with

> ...experience taught,
> And ample page so richly fraught
> With scientific lore,
> We scan thy sexual system clear...[42]

A double implication is at work: 'scan' can be read both as an eye moving rapidly over a number of plants in different habits ('That bloom o'er hills, o'er meadows fair, | The forest [and] the moor'), and as a poetic reckoning of Linnaeus's taxonomic arrangement. Hoare does not, in fact, go on to describe Linnaeus's sexual system, although her verse absorbs his language, describing the 'fine furcated leaves', '[t]he cups nectareous' glimpsed under

[38] John Aikin, *An Essay on the Application of Natural History to Poetry* (Warrington: J. Johnson, 1777), p. 132.
[39] *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, ed. by Stuart Curran (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 234.
[40] *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, pp. 279-289.
[41] Charlotte Smith, *Conversations Introducing Poetry: Chiefly on Subjects of Natural History*, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1804), II, 181.
[42] Sarah Hoare's 'The Pleasures of Botanical Pursuits: A Poem' first appeared in the eighth edition of Priscilla Wakefield's popular *Introduction to Botany, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (London: Davis, 1818), pp. 181-187 (p. 183). When the poem came to be published in Hoare's *Poems on Conchology and Botany* (London: Simpkin & Marshall; Bristol: Wright and Bagnall, 1831), 'sexual system' was changed to 'curious system' (p. 65), demonstrating Linnaeus's changed reception.

the microscope, and the 'fringe, the down, the gland'lar hair': language specific and embodied.[43] This thesis will not argue for the literary equality of all poems which respond to Linnaeus. It will, however, argue for the persistence of Linnaeus's influence in literary writing despite modern critical prejudice at his putatively leaden touch.

'Every flowery versifier has materials at hand for a lover's bower,' wrote John Aikin, 'but a botanist alone could have culled and sorted the plants which compose the charming bower of Eve'. A 'botanist', Aikin clarified, is everyone who 'surveys natural objects with a searching and distinguishing eye; whether he consider them singly, or as parts of a system; whether he call them by their trivial or learned appellations'. [44] Chaucer's daisies, the floral catalogues of Spenser and Shakespeare, and Milton's paradisal bower prove that plants were hardly novel subjects of poetry. Cowley's six-part Latin poem, *Sex libri plantarum*, published between 1662 and 1668 and translated into English as *The History of Plants* in 1689 by a cohort including Nahum Tate and Aphra Behn, is a notable forerunner for the extended plant catalogue poem. Cowley's poem is acute in its description of eye-bright (*Euphrasia nemerosa*):

> On a black Stalk, nine Inches long she grew,
> With Leaves all notch'd, and of a greenish hue,
> While pretty Flowers on her top she bore,
> With yellow mixt and purple streaks all o'er.[45]

If the smeared perception of 'greenish hue' is less than exact, Cowley's botanic measurement ('nine Inches long she grew') anticipates the speaker of Wordsworth's 'The Thorn'.[46] Yet while Wordsworth's flowers are metaphorically extravagant – like his lesser

[43] Hoare (1831), pp. 84, 85.
[44] Aikin, p. 48.
[45] *The Second and Third Parts of the Works of Mr Abraham Cowley, the 6th edition, the Third Containing his Six Books of Plants* (London: Harper, 1689), p. 17.
[46] 'I've measured it from side to side | 'Tis three feet long and two feet wide'. 'The Thorn', *Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992),

celandine spreading out its 'glossy breast | Like a careless Prodigal (ll. 29-30)' – Cowley's are at once more allegorical and usefully medicinal: 'Kind to th'Eyes! Who giv'st not only sight, | But with it also Objects that delight'.[47] Qualities of enumeration, variety, and vitality were crucial for Cowley, as they were for Erasmus Darwin, but with its interest in plant virtues (or uses), *The History of Plants* emerges from within the herbal rather than botanical tradition. Participating in the tradition of Dioscorides's medical treatise, *De materia medica* (composed approximately 77 A.D.), which was translated into Latin and then transcribed, annotated, and commented upon throughout the medieval period, when the more scientific knowledge of Aristotle's pupil Theophrastus had been lost, herbals made medical knowledge more accessible.[48] Despite Cowley's herbalism, Linnaeus included Cowley in *Philosophia botanica* among the poets who wrote about plants, and my research into the Linnean Society's collections has revealed that Linnaeus owned a copy of Cowley's *Poemata Latina* (1668), a volume which contains *Sex libri plantarum*.[49] While Abigail Williams has rightly cautioned that a book catalogue (or library) will never be able to fully ascertain the correlation between a book as a possession and its significance to its owner, nor reveal which books were read or which merely kept for their value, the reference to Cowley in *Philosophia botanica*, taken together with the presence of the physical book in Linnaeus's library, suggests he may have read it.[50] More conjecturally, a later poem in Linnaeus's copy of *Poemata Latina*, 'Hymnus in Lucem' (Hymn to Light), bears ink marks in the margin of each line, as though the reader ticked

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pp. 77-85 (p. 78). Henceforth it will be referred to as *LBOP*. Unless indicated, all future references to Wordsworth's poetry are to the relevant volume of the Cornell edition.

[47] 'To the Small Celandine', *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 79- 81 (p. 80), henceforth *P2V*; Cowley, *Six Books of Plants*, p. 31.

[48] Pavord, p. 71.

[49] Abraham Cowley, *Poemata Latina. In quibus continentur sex libri plantarum* (London: J. Martyn, 1668), London, Linnean Society, BL.937. Linnaeus listed Cowley among the botanical poets who joined 'economists', biologists, and theologians: miscellaneous writers 'who have written various [works] for the uses of others'. *Philosophia Botanica*, pp. 28-9.

[50] Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 108.

off the lines as they passed. If the marks belong to Linnaeus, they may further underline his familiarity with Cowley.

Although Cowley's long plant poem left later critics in a knot of contending judgments, James Thomson's *Seasons* (1726-30) was much more successful.[51] Despite the immense popularity of *The Seasons* – Hazlitt described Coleridge finding a 'little shabby soiled copy' in an 'obscure country alehouse' at the turn of the century – it cannot have been influenced by Linnaean botany.[52] Thomson's lines on the 'shining meal' on the 'velvet leaves' of the auriculas, and the 'father-dust' by which the 'tulip-race' is perpetuated more likely shows the influence of the seventeenth-century English plant anatomist Nehemiah Grew (1641-1712), who studied pollen through a microscope, or the English systematist John Ray (1627-1705).[53] Indeed, the floral catalogue found in 'Spring' – 'The daisy, primrose, violet darkly blue, | And polyanthus of unnumbered dyes' (ll. 531-2) – owes more to a poetic tradition than the botanic cataloguing impulse. Nevertheless, Thomson's persistent attention to the superiority of vision – the 'hurried eye', the 'philosophic eye', the 'microscopic eye', the 'straining eye' – makes it an influential text for the purposes of this thesis, as later English georgics would be written under Thomson's as well as Linnaeus's influence. If, for Thomson, spring brings 'living herbs, profusely wild, | O'er all the deep-green earth, beyond the power | Of botanist to number up their

[51] Samuel Johnson wrote of the author of *The History of Plants* that he was 'sometimes esteem[ed] as learned, and sometimes despise[d] as trifling, always admire[d] as ingenious, and always condemn[ed] as unnatural'. *Lives of the Poets*, ed. by John H. Middendorf, Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson, 3 vols (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), I, 56; Aikin, p. 57.

[52] Hazlitt, *Selected Writings*, II, 246. Linnaeus's sexual system was first published in 1735. The first Linnaean botany was Patrick Browne's *The Civil and Natural History of Jamaica* (1756), which used the sexual system but not Linnaean nomenclature. A more widely accepted starting point was William Hudson's *Flora Anglica* (1762), which surpassed the third edition of John Ray's *Synopsis methodical Stirpium Britannicarum* (1724) as the standard text on British plants, until it in turn was overtaken by William Withering's *Botanical Arrangement of British Plants*, 2 vols (Birmingham: Cadel and Elmsley; London: Robinson, 1776).

[53] 'Spring' (ll. 537, 541, 539), *The Seasons*, ed. by James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 28. John Ray produced an outline of a taxonomic system based on natural affinity. In addition, Ray influentially defined the species as that which could reproduce itself – a definition Linnaeus accepted – and divided seeds into monocots (those which produced seedlings with one leaf) and dicots (those which produced seedlings with two leaves). See A. G. Morton, *History of Botanical Science: an Account of the Development of Botany from Ancient Times to the Present Day* (London: Academic Press, 1981), pp. 195-213.

tribe' (ll. 222-224), the botanist's ocular intrusions, however futile, might be encouraged by the 'excursive' eye of *The Seasons*.[54]

Johnson's life of Thomson anticipated certain critiques of Erasmus Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* (1789) – such as the 'florid and luxuriant' diction, which fills 'the ear more than the mind' – but if Johnson recognised the power of the poem and the originality of its composition, he also acknowledged the question of organisation: 'The great defect of *The Seasons* is want of method,' wrote Johnson, 'but for this I know not that there was any remedy. Of many appearances subsisting all at once, no rule can be given why one should be mentioned before another; yet the memory wants the help of order, and the curiosity is not excited by suspense or expectation'.[55] In his *Dictionary*, Johnson defined 'method' with the assistance of Isaac Watts: '*Method*, taken in the largest sense, implies the placing of several things, or performing several operations in such an order as is most convenient to attain some end'. [56] Labouring under such a vague definition, *The Seasons* seems hardly likely to fail at placing 'several things' or 'several operations' to 'some end'. More substantive, perhaps, is Johnson's definition for 'methodical' as '[r]anged or proceeding in due or just order'. Since 'method' and 'system' are adjacent if not interchangeable terms in this period (Johnson defines the latter by reference to the former), Johnson seems to have considered *The Seasons* to lack the backbone which a system would provide. But what has system to do with poetry? More particularly, what do systems have to do with poetry in an age apparently determined to be anti-systematic?

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[54] 'Spring', p. 12.
[55] 'Thomson' in Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, III, 1293.
[56] Isaac Watts, *Logick, or The Right Use of Reason in the Enquiry After Truth* (London: Clark and Hett, 1725), p. 506; 'method, n. s.', Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the Words are Deduced from their Originals, and Illustrated in their Different Significations by Examples from the Best Writers*, 2 vols (London: Strahan, 1755), n. p.

In August 1750, Thomas Gray wrote from Stoke to his friend Joseph Warton to report that he had come by three quarto volumes of the '"Histoire du Cabinet du Roi" by Mess. Buffons and D'Aubenton'.[57] '[I]t is all a Sort of Introduction to Natural History,' Gray explained to Wharton. '[T]he weak Part of it is a Love of System w^{ch} runs thro' it, the most contrary Thing in the World to a Science, entirely grounded upon Experiments, that has nothing to do with Vivacity of Imagination'. Buffon might have been surprised to see his work thus described, given his explicit scepticism toward contemporary systematists like Linnaeus in the 'Premier discours' of *Histoire naturelle, général et particulière* (44 vols, 1749-1804) and in the natural history entries for Diderot's and D'Alembert's *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers* (1751-1772), written by Buffon's assistant Louis Jean-Marie Daubenton.[58] Gray's first editor, the poet William Mason, might have been equally surprised to read this letter of Gray's to Wharton. In a footnote appended to the last phrase of Gray's quotation ('Vivacity of Imagination') Mason wrote, 'One cannot help lamenting, that Mr. Gray let his imagination lie dormant so frequently in order to apply himself to this very science'.[59] Gray's initial response to Buffon's *Histoire naturelle*, and his contrasting a 'love of system' with a 'vivacity of imagination', were called into question by the favourite study of Gray's later life:

[57] *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. by Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1937, repr. 1971), I: *1734-1755*, pp. 327-330 (p. 329).
[58] Yet, as both Foucault and Staffan Müller-Wille show, Buffon's project was hardly untaxonomic: his approach to natural history might have hoped for less artifice, sought for more affinities, and demanded a different style, but he shared a project for ordered inquiry with Linnaeus. Foucault describes Linnaeus and Buffon as having 'the same grid' in *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Tavistock, 1970), p. 135. In a footnote to an essay, Müller-Wille corroborates Foucault by suggesting that 'Buffon and Linnaeus were much closer in their approaches than they themselves, and later historians, admitted'. 'Collection and collation: theory and practice of Linnaean botany', in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical* Sciences, 38 (2007), 541-562, p. 549.
[59] *The Poems of Mr. Gray. To Which are Prefixed Memoirs of his Life and Writings*, ed. by William Mason (York: Ward, 1775), p. 210.

> He followed [Natural History] closely, and often said that he thought it a singular felicity to have engaged in it; as, besides the constant amusement it gave him in his chamber, it led him more frequently out into the fields; and, by making his life less sedentary, improved the general course of his health and spirits.[60]

Gray's pleasure in practicing natural history out of doors agrees with other apologies for botany as a healthful exercise and an antidote to melancholy, since 'The spleen is seldom felt where Flora reigns' (*The Task,* I. 455).[61] Gray's apprenticeship to Linnaeus led to his interleaving the tenth edition of Linnaeus's *Systema naturae* (1758), which he purchased in London in October 1759.[62] Contrary to Mason, however, Robert Mack reads Gray's commitment to Linnaean natural history as a manifestation of mental disorder rather than its remedy, writing that 'Gray's careful observation of the natural world was also a compulsive response to the perceived threat of a disordered imagination, and as such it is intimately related to Gray's other scholarly and creative endeavours'.[63] While Mack's commentary draws rather bold if not unwarranted conclusions about the root of taxonomic enthusiasm, the dissatisfying effect of Gray's Linnaean commentaries caused his friend Horace Walpole to write after Gray's death that 'Mr Gray often vexed me…by finding him heaping notes on an interleaved *Linnaeus*, instead of pranking on his lyre'.[64] Like Mason, Walpole thought Gray's turn to natural history a deviation from poetry rather than a tributary of it. In setting aside his lyre for Linnaeus, Gray became a miserly dullard, laying up facts in his three-volume storehouse. Gray's *Systema naturae* eventually came into the possession of another writer, whose prose Geoffrey Hartman has suggested, 'may be the

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[60] *Poems of Mr. Gray*, p. 341.
[61] Cowper, II, 128. This is Rousseau's position in the seventh walk of *Les Rêveries du promeneur solitaire* (1782), which Charlotte Smith's reprised in a footnote to her sonnet 'To the goddess of botany', *Poems of Charlotte Smith,* p. 68.
[62] Robert Mack, *Thomas Gray: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 572. *Systema naturae* (1735), which attempted to classify all natural objects in an eleven-page folio pamphlet, was nearly 1400 pages in two volumes by 1758. Modern taxonomic nomenclature for animals dates itself from this edition, while plant nomenclature dates from *Species plantarum* (1753).
[63] Mack, p. 572.
[64] Mack, p. 572-3.

best nature poetry in the language'.[65] 'I have by happy chance just added to my Oxford library the poet Gray's copy of Linnæus', wrote Ruskin in his introduction to *Proserpina* (1875-86), 'with its exquisitely written Latin notes, exemplary alike to scholar and naturalist'.[66] After Ruskin's death, his cousin Joan Severn gave it to an American, Charles Eliot Norton, who in turn bequeathed it to Harvard, where it is now preserved in the Houghton Library (Nor 2103.2). Nearly every page of Nor 2103.2 offers additions, clarifications, and illustrations in Gray's small, neat hand. Gray's copy of the Linnaeus's *Systema naturae* became a portable compendium of his reading, a one-man encyclopaedia. It was a record of his education in natural history: a bibliography, embedding not only his own notes, but cross-references to Buffon, William Hudson, Thomas Pennant, John Ray, and many others. Gray's *Systema naturae*, in fact, looks not unlike Linnaeus's own interleaved copies of his works, which he used to make corrections, reclassifications, or insertions of new species for subsequent editions.[67]

In Charles Eliot Norton's *The Poet Gray as Naturalist* (1903), a collection of Gray's Linnaean annotations, Norton quotes the poet as saying 'I cannot brag of my spirits, my situation, my employments, or my fertility; the days and the nights pass, and I am never nearer to anything but that one to which we are all tending; yet I love people that leave some traces of their journey behind them'.[68] Gray's journey through Linnaeus, of course, left exhaustive traces through the latter's texts; and the passing of this interleaved *Systema naturae* from one writer to another, demonstrates its value as a literary talisman as well as repository of Gray's scholarship. According to Norton, natural history was a study which consoled Gray for his loss of literary productivity. This narrative of Gray's scholarship –

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[65] Hartman, p. 97.
[66] *The Works of John Ruskin*, ed. by Sir Edward Tyas Cook and Alexander D. O. Wedderburn, 39 vols (London: George Allen; New York: Longmans, Green and Co, 1903-1912), xxv: *Love's Meinie and Proserpina* (1906), p. 200.
[67] See below, pp. 143-4.
[68] Charles Eliot Norton, *The Poet Gray as Naturalist* (Boston: Goodspead, 1903), pp. 5-6.

particularly natural history – as a sign of poetic failure or personal isolation is contested by Joshua Swidzinski.[69] Constructing Gray's unfinished History of English Poetry through entries in his commonplace books, Swidzinski identifies 'fifty-nine distinct species of meter' in Gray's taxonomic approach to prosody and literary history. Unlike Thomas Warton's organic history of the development of English poetry (*The History of English Poetry,* 1774-81), which failed to adapt pre-Conquest poetry or Saxon and Celtic poetic traditions to its narrative approach, Gray's taxonomic approach to prosody collected genera. Taxonomy, therefore, was not so much a turning away from poetry for Gray – the 'dissipation of his energies into history and natural science' – but rather a digging more deeply into the matter of poetry itself.[70]

Charges of the Romantic opposition to systems persist, despite local evidence.[71] On 19 March 1797, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote to her childhood friend Jane Marshall (*née* Pollard) about the Wordsworths' charge, Basil Montagu. 'You ask to be informed of our system respecting Basil,' Dorothy wrote. '[I]t is a very simple one, so simple in this age of systems you will hardly be likely to follow it'.[72] The diagnostic phrase which Dorothy slips into her sentence – 'this age of systems' – sticks in the mind, jamming up against the description of the romantic era as one of failed systems, if not antagonistic to all systems. (Consider Blake's memorable phrase as a totemic utterance of the threats posed by systems to the imagination: in *Jerusalem*, Los howls, 'I must Create a System, or be enslav'd by

[69] Joshua Swidzinski, 'Uncouth Rhymes: Thomas Gray, Prosody, and Literary History', *Studies in Philology,* 112.4 (Fall 2015), 837-861.
[70] René Wellek, *The Rise of English Literary History* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1941), pp. 163-64, quoted by Swidzinski, p. 848.
[71] Ann Shteir, for example, argues that 'romantic poets, essayists, and scientists who developed an approach to nature [were] often guided by holistic and emotional concerns'. Examples of writers with 'antisystem spirit' include Charles Lamb, Keats, and Coleridge, although Shteir fails to substantiate the first with any reference, allows that Keats was botanically trained, and observes that Coleridge 'revered' Linnaeus but thought botany ought to go beyond external characteristics. *Cultivating Woman, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 30-31.
[72] *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Early Years (1787-1805)*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Chester L. Shaver (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 180. Henceforth referred to as *EY*.

another Mans'.)[73] Yet, as Clive Siskin has recently argued, 'System is everywhere in Wordsworth and in his historical period'.[74] Wordsworth's letters include references to systems of gardening, education, civil and martial policy, and of the nerves. Reviews of his poems frequently accused him of having a system of his own. According to one review, Wordsworth's bad poetry might be counterbalanced by the fact that 'he does always write good verses, when, by any accident, he is led to abandon his system...'[75] Byron, who described the *Excursion* as a 'vasty version' of Wordsworth's 'new system to perplex the sages', classed himself along with his contemporaries whose poetic practice varies from his own, including Wordsworth, as being part of a 'wrong revolutionary poetry system (or systems)'.[76] Siskin is helpful in framing systems as the Enlightenment 'crucible' for trying to mix parts into wholes, and yet his concluding proposition that Wordsworth is the 'Enlightenment Poet of System' continues to position systems as antithetic to Romanticism.[77]

The Romantic period has commonly been described as an era of system failure, a gloss which may offer relief to those who agree with John Hollander that '[s]ystem can, indeed, be the first refuge of the unimaginative'.[78] Wordsworth's *Recluse*, the '*first* and *only* true Phil[osophical] Poem in existence', was unfinished.[79] Likened to a Gothic church, Wordsworth's corpus was perpetually immured in the process of completion, like Gaudi's Sagrada Familia, which broke ground in 1882 and which is currently estimated to

[73] *The Complete Poetry and Prose of William Blake*, ed. by David V. Erdman, rev. edn (New York: Anchor Books, 1988), p. 153.
[74] Clive Siskin, 'Renewing Wordsworth', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 49.3 (Summer 2018), 113-122 (p. 113).
[75] Francis Jeffrey in *The Edinburgh Review*, 11 (Oct 1807), 214-31, printed in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Robert Woof (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 199.
[76] 'Dedication' to *Don Juan*, 4. 25-8, in *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome M. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980-1993), V: *Don Juan* (1986), p. 4; Byron's letter to John Murray of Sept 1817, in *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, 12 vols (Massachusetts: Belknap Press, 1973-1994), V: *So Late into the Night*: *1816-1817* (1976), p. 265.
[77] Siskin, pp. 116, 121.
[78] *Vision and Resonance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), p. 312.
[79] Letter from Samuel Taylor Coleridge to Wordsworth, 22 May 1815, *Collected Letters*, ed. by Earl Leslie Griggs, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956-1971), IV: *1815-1819* (1959), p. 969.

be completed between 2026 and 2028.[80] Coleridge's own attempt at a systematic defence of his thought in *Biographia Literaria,* and his synthesis of the systems of others (Hartley, Kant, Hegel) was unwieldy and digressive. Yet Coleridge's failure at systematic completion ought not to be a refutation of its power. Indeed, Seamus Perry's study of Coleridge requires one to see Coleridge as a writer of 'and yet': a writer who sought the unity of the whole, while wishing to respect the diversity and distinctness of parts. It is perhaps as unwise to use Coleridge to support systematic poetry (whatever that might be) as it is to recruit him to the side of unsystematic poetics, since his writing is almost compulsively fragmentary, just as he was theorist of wholeness: " 'Fitness in art, as Coleridge told Green, 'must not be a conspiration of...component but of constitutent Parts, not of parts *put* to each other but of distinct but indivisible arts growing out of a common Antecedent Unity'.[81] While organicism, particularly of the Coleridgean kind, is perhaps more familiar in Romantic circles than system, a survey of organic form lies outside the scope of this thesis. Tilottama Rajan has suggested that although organic form and systems are similar – in that both reach for comprehensiveness – systems are better at incorporation. The organism cannot add anything new: it can only grow from within. If Coleridge is, as Laurence Lockridge suggested, 'trapped in unsystematic fragments', this need not leave him unrecuperated and anti-systematic, since, according to Rajan, systems are designed to absorb new objects, and the splinters of earlier systems.[82] A system, as Linnaeus's botanical taxonomy pushes to the breaking point, can include almost anything. (The first edition of *Systema naturae,* published in Leiden in 1735 as an eleven-page folio pamphlet, included 'Paradoxa' or doubtful species among the Regnum Animale: the hydra,

[80] Preface to *The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James A. Butler, Michael C. Jaye (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 38.
[81] Quoted by Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), p. 195.
[82] Laurence S. Lockridge, *Coleridge The Moralist* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), quoted by Perry, p. 21; Tilottama Rajan, 'System and Singularity from Herder to Hegel', *European Romantic Review*, 11.2 (2000), 137-149.

monoceros, satyr, dragon, and phoenix were listed alongside a South American frog and the pelican.) On the other hand, as Staffan Müller-Wille argues, each newly discovered species was capable of revealing the failure of the sexual system by possessing characteristics not represented by that system, suggesting that incorporation brings the risk, as well as the riches, of fragmentation.[83] The explosion of species discovered by European botanists – in Japan, South Africa, China, Egypt, and Venezuela – called the fixity of Linnaeus's system into question even as those species found temporary resting places.

Systems open up their bodies to incorporate new additions, but they also analyse their continuant parts. Coleridge's classification of Shakespeare's sonnets in Wordsworth's copy of Robert Anderson's *Works of the British Poets* (13 vols, 1792-5) reveals that poetry is as susceptible to classification as plants.[84] In the margins of the tenth volume of Anderson's anthology, Coleridge sketched a systematic shorthand for ranking Shakespeare's sonnets. Two interdependent sets of signals were put to work: the first was a series of sigla which indicated the category of the sonnet, from the 'first class of goodness' ascending to the '4th or highest' class. The second indicators used position to differentiate sonnets praised for 'manner or style', those sonnets praised for 'thought or matter', and the sonnets praised for both style and matter. Sonnet XXXII ('If thou survive my well-contended day'), an example of the 'first class of goodness', bears its classifying mark (T) above the sonnet heading, indicating that Coleridge admired both style and matter. Sonnet XXX ('When the sessions of sweet silent thought') is likewise praised for both style and matter, but is raised to the second class (I). Sonnet CVI ('When in the chronicle of wasted time') is a member of the third class ('higher still'), and the position of the mark (Ŧ) to the left of the sonnet heading designates the presiding quality of its style. Coleridge placed

[83] 'Collection and collation: theory and practice of Linnaean botany', p. 559.
[84] *The Works of the British Poets. With Prefaces, Biographical and Critical*, 13 vols, ed. by Robert Anderson (London: Arch; Edinburgh: Mundell, 1792-5), Grasmere, Dove Cottage Library, 1995.R171.1, transcribed in *The Collected Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by George Whalley, 6 vols (London: Routledge; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980-2001), I: *Abbt to Byfield* (1980), pp. 82-87.

sonnet CVII ('Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul') in the highest category (Π), doubly raised by the combined superiority of its style and substance. The rationale for this critical shorthand is not disclosed, at least in the margins of Anderson's *Works*, but Coleridge forefronted the subjectivity of his classification scheme by writing that all judgments were made 'according to the feelings and taste of S. T. C.'[85]

Poetry, then, as seen in Coleridge's system of sonnets or Gray's taxonomy of genres, can be classified. Coleridge's definition of poetry – as the '*best* words in the best order' – shows it to possess its own taxonomic powers. [86] Linnaeus's taxonomy was based on principles of arrangement (*dispositio*) and nomenclature (*denominatio*).[87] Enthusiasm for Linnaeus was particularly rooted in *Philosophia botanica*, first translated into English by the apothecary Hugh Rose as *The Elements of Botany* in 1775.[88] It was from *Philosophia botanica*, Rousseau confessed to Linnaeus, that he 'derive[d] a more genuine profit... than from all the books on morality'.[89] A taxonomic handbook written in aphorisms, *Philosophia botanica* explained Linnaeus's sexual system, collected his terms, and summarised the rules upon which they were constructed.[90] Critical consensus was not unanimous. Although the judge, polymath, and poet, Sir William Jones, had written Linnaean-inflected verse ('The Enchanted Fruit, or the Hindu Wife'), he expressed

[85] *Marginalia*, ed. by George Whalley, 6 vols (London: Routledge; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980-2001), I, 83.
[86] Recorded by Henry Nelson Coleridge and published in *Specimens of the Table Talk of the Late Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, 2 vols (London: J. Murray, 1835), I, 84.
[87] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 111.
[88] I have quoted predominantly from Stephen Freer's translation unless otherwise indicated, as Rose's contemporary translation, *The Elements of Botany* (London: T. Cadell, 1775) occasionally abbreviates its original.
[89] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Collected Writings*, ed. by Christopher Kelly, trans. by Charles E. Butterworth, Alexandra Cook, and Terence E. Marshall, 14 vols (Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1992-2009), VIII: *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker, Botanical Writings, and Letter to Franquières* (2000), p. 244. Rousseau also said of *Philosophia Botanica* that there was 'more knowledge in this work than all the volumes in folio...in this one there is not a word that is not necessary'. Letter from Jacob Jonas Björnstall to Carl Christoffer Gjörwell, 1 September 1770, *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, VIII, 242.
[90] Richard Pulteney, *A General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (London: Payne and White, 1781), p. 47.

concern about Linnaeus's language.[91] In a letter to Sir Joseph Banks in October 1791, Jones wrote,

> You must not imagine that because I am, and shall be, saucy about the Linnaean language, that I have not the highest veneration for its great author; but I think his diction barbarous and pedantic, particularly in his *Philosophia Botanica,* which I have a right to criticise, having read it three times with equal attention and pleasure.[92]

In the letter to Banks, one gentleman to another, Jones' concerns were scholarly and classical. In an article for *Asiatick Researches*, however, his objections took on moral scope. In 'The Design of a Treatise on the Plants of India', Jones wrote that 'The allegory of *sexes* and *nuptials*, even if it were complete, ought, I think, to be discarded, as unbecoming the gravity of men, who, while they search for truth, have no business to inflame their imaginations'.[93] This concern for the male reader of Linnaeus is unusual: anxieties over the licentiousness of the sexual system were usually aimed at women. In his preface to *The Lakers*, Plumptre wrote that he was 'not singular in thinking the study of Botany not altogether a proper amusement for the more polished sex', and Richard Polwhele's misogynist poem *The Unsex'd Females* (1798), published the same year, described libertine female botanists who 'With bliss botanic as their bosoms heave, | Still pluck forbidden fruit, with mother Eve'.[94]

Despite 'barbarous' diction and inflaming allegories, the usefulness of Linnaean nomenclature persisted. The French-Swiss botanist, Alphonse de Candolle, still supported Linnaeus's nomenclature at the end of the century as a 'language so universal, so precise, so adapted by a man of genius for the needs of the science that it ought not to be

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[91] 'The Enchanted Fruit; or, the Hindu Wife', *Sir William Jones: Selected Poetical and Prose Works*, ed. by Michael J. Franklin (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1995), pp. 80-97.
[92] *The Letters of Sir William Jones*, ed. by Garland Cannon, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), II, 892.
[93] 'The Design of a Treatise on the Plants of India', in *Asiatic Researches; or Transactions of the Society Instituted in Bengal, For Inquiring into the History and Antiquities, the Arts, the Sciences, and Literature of Asia*, 20 vols (London: J. Sewell, et al., 1799-1839), II (1799), 348.
[94] Plumptre, xi-xii; Richard Polwhele, *The Unsex'd Females* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1798), pp. 8-9.

abandoned'.[95] Binomial nomenclature, which identifies a plant by a two-part handle of a generic and specific name, was devised gradually by Linnaeus for pragmatic purposes. It first appeared in his travel account, *Öländska och Gothlänska Resa* (1745), which offered two-word abbreviations of each species' diagnostic phrase name in its index, abbreviations which reappeared in the flora of Swedish plants, *Flora suecica* (1745), which numbered 1140 plant species for quick reference. *Philosophia botanica* (1751) began to articulate the rules for specific naming and trivial epithets which were assigned throughout *Species plantarum* (1753), the work now taken as the starting point for modern plant nomenclature.[96] Yet Linnaeus's linguistic reformations – the new botanic Latin which William Stearn credits him with creating – are wide-ranging: embracing leaf shape, plant parts, physical positions.[97] As Linnaeus wrote in his 'Vita', an unstable autobiography which wavers between the third and first person,

> He [Linnaeus] saw that the petala, calyx and fructus were not the only parts of fructification, and therefore he included the involucrum, gluma, amentum, spatha, calyptras, valve, corolla, nectarium, filament, antherae, pollen, pistillum, germen, stylus, stigma, siliqua, legumen, folliculus, pomum, bacca, drupe, arillus, receptaculum, triplex; nay, he introduced other parts, as stipulae, bracteae, glandulae, spinae, aculei, stimuli, eyma, scapus, petioles, pedunculus, and all these were regularly defined, either for determining something new, or for supplying deficiencies of former writers.[98]

New language not only fitted observed characteristics: it allowed one to *determine* them. As made clear by Southey's classification of modern novels, however, such specific

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[95] 'Une langue aussi universelle, aussi précise, aussi bien adaptée par un homme de génie aux besoins de la science ne doit pas être abandonée.' Alphonse de Candolle, *La phytographie ; ou, L'art de décrire les végétaux considérés sous différentes points de vue* (Paris: 1880), p. 35, quoted by William Stearn, *Botanical Latin*, 4th edn (Newton Abbot: David and Charles; Portland, Oregon: Timber Press, 2004), p. 45. Alphonse de Candolle was the son of Augustin Pyramus de Candolle, a proposer of a natural system in which multiple affinities between plants determined their relations.

[96] For the development of binomial nomenclature see William Stearn, 'The Preparation of the *Species Plantarum* and the Introduction of Binomial Nomenclature', prefacing *Species Plantarum*, 2 vols (London: The Ray Society, 2013), I, 65-74.

[97] Stearn, *Botanical Latin*, p. 16.

[98] Richard Pulteney, *A General View of the Writings of Linnaeus*, ed. by William George Maton, 2nd edn (London: Mawman, 1805), pp. 555-6.

language leaches into metaphoric usage to varying effect. *The Lakers* ends with Lady Veronica Beccabunga marrying Speedwell (the plot is spoiled by the Linnaean binomial), whereupon she declares, 'We will be *connate* like the twin flowers on the same *peduncle*, and I trust our love will be *sempervirent* and *perennial*'.[99] Such pompous verbiage is risible because of the disjunction between language and situation. Veronica Beccabunga has failed to recognise her habitat.

Considering Linnaeus a sterile legislator of an overturned system, a man whose petty authoritarianism has been disproved by the passage of time – by the natural systems of Michel Adanson, Bernard and Antoine Laurent de Jussieu, and Augustin Pyramus De Candolle; by theories of evolution; by genetic analysis – a bloodless authoritarian with a beady eye, a mechanist glued to the ruler and the microscope, is short-sighted. Such a reductive approach would be surprised by Czesław Miłosz and Richard Wilbur's invocations of Linnaeus in the twentieth century, and be deaf to Louis Zukofsky's playful late flowers poems, such as his invocation of the privet: 'League gust strum ovally folium...'[100] Such an approach would misread eighteenth and nineteenth-century engagements with Linnaean botany as trivial, myopic, cut off from the swelling organicism of the science that came after Linnaeus, a science which relied on the information he collected and arranged. Linnaeus becomes a convenient antagonist: the victim of a narrative of scientific progress which relies upon the toppling of an outmoded authority. Admittedly Linnaeus, announcing himself as '*princeps botanicorum*' and his *Systema naturae* as a work to which 'natural history has never had a fellow', displayed a hubris to which such a narrative of ultimate defeat is particularly winning.[101] Such a

[99] Plumptre, III. iii (p. 59).
[100] 'Privet', in Louis Zukofsky, *Complete Short Poetry* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), p. 328. The privet's botanical name is *Ligustrum ovalifolium*.
[101] *General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1805), pp. 535, 549.

narrative misses what has been rescued from oblivion as well as what is interesting about Linnaeus. The chapters which follow demonstrate that the presence of Linnaeus does not necessitate poetic frigidity. His influence may be flexible, variable, mutated or resented, but he is *useful*, whether that use is a matter of structure or language. The remainder of this first chapter will be dedicated to Linnaeus's imaginative afterlife in English through translation, and his attention to the specificities of language in his texts, magnified by translators such as William Withering in his popular English flora, *A Botanical Arrangement of all the Vegetables Naturally Growing in Great Britain* (1776), and the Lichfield Botanical Society's *System of Vegetables* (1783-5) and *The Families of Plants* (1787).

The leader of the Lichfield Botanical Society, and likely the chief translator of *The System of Vegetables*, was Erasmus Darwin, whose first poem, *The Loves of the Plants* (1789), was a catalyst in popularising Linnaeus's system. Darwin is frequently overlooked as a genuine poet, a critique which doubles back to prove the poetic dangers posed by Linnaeus. My second chapter corrects this by attending to the particularities of rhyme, metre, and tonal manipulation in *The Loves of the Plants*. Although Wordsworth has been considered Darwin's poetic opposite, he was influenced by Darwin's verse and prose writings. Wordsworth's greatest sympathies with Linnaeus lie, however, in his ceaseless revisions. Staffan Müller-Wille has described Linnaeus's 'paper technologies', his perpetual innovation in the organisation and rearrangement of his genera and species.[102] My third chapter considers the echoes of Linnaeus's paper technologies in Wordsworth's practice of arranging the categories of his poetic collections after 1815. While Wordsworth would not have known about Linnaeus's practices, and this chapter distinguishes between poetic and botanical species, I argue that these analogous practices tease out Wordsworth's

[102] Müller-Wille and Isabelle Charmantier, 'Natural History and Information Overload: The Case of Linnaeus', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 43 (2012), 4-15 (p. 6).

categorical mind and Linnaeus's mental mobility so as to cast new light on both. The fourth and final chapter argues that, despite a common critical positioning of John Clare as a 'natural' poet opposing enclosure of any kind, Clare encountered Linnaeus repeatedly throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Such engagements were forged through his friendship with the head gardener at nearby Milton Hall, Joseph Henderson, and Clare's figure of the 'man of science and of taste'. In addition, Clare's descriptive poetry finds an ally in Linnaeus's concise descriptions. Both strategies are designed to bring the natural object to the eye and mind of the reader, and to prepare readers in advance to recognise what they are seeing.

Romantic Botany

Although books have been published on the interrelation of science and poetry from the middle of the twentieth century onwards, the last three decades have seen a rising interest in Romantic science. While one can no longer imagine baldly asserting with Douglas Bush that '[R]omanticism was a revolt of the feeling heart and the senses and the imagination against mere reason and its abstract picture of the world and man'.), M. H. Abrams's sanguine reminder that a greater number of romantic theorists were silent on the ostensible conflict between science and poetry but 'regard[ed] these, when properly employed, as parallel and complementary ways of seeing' is a forerunner of more recent approaches.[103] Just as Gillian Beer has made a strong case for reading scientists as writers in her impeccable *Darwin's Plots* (first published in 1983), later work such as Noah Heringman's *Romantic Science: the Literary Forms of Natural History* (2003) and Tim Fulford, Debbie Lee, and Peter J. Kitson's *Literature, Science and Exploration in the Romantic Era:*

[103] Douglas Bush, *Science and English Poetry: A Historical Sketch, 1590-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 79; M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 308-9.

Bodies of Knowledge (2004) have argued for the significance of science as a cultural practice.[104]

Foucault remains a touchstone in his influential reading of taxonomy as primarily being about discourse rather than things, but the rise of thing-based ecological criticism since the 1980s has significantly shaped how literary critics write about plants and about systems of arrangement. Jonathan Bate's *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991) and his later *Song of the Earth* (2000), were formative in locating ecocritical thought within a Romantic tradition, a relationship confirmed by Lawrence Buell and James McKusick, and still flowering in more recent titles such as Dewey W. Hall's *Romantic Ecocriticism: Origins and Legacies* (2016). While I am sympathetic to the claims of ecocriticism, particularly considering the acute and manifold threats posed to the environment and the perilous state of environmental legislation at the time of this writing, ecocritical approaches can oversimplify complicated relationships to the natural world and its representation in poetry, ignoring uncomfortable contradictions in the interest of ethical consistency. John Clare is an important figure in this debate, but although Clare celebrated the bird in its nest and the flowers at the riverside, he had a tendency to pilfer bird eggs '& culld the sweetest blossoms one by one'.[105] Linnaeus frequently comes across badly in ecocritical accounts: as a systematist, he fails to see the 'this-ness' of each organism, yet this use of the systematist as foil is complicated by

[104] Such a climate has led to a revived interest in practitioners of Romantic science such as Darwin, Joseph Priestley, and Humphry Davy, who is the subject of a large digital letters project (*The Davy Letters Project*) collaboratively funded by the British Academy, the Wellcome Trust, the British Society for the History of Science, and the Society for the History of Alchemy and Chemistry (2011-). The 'scientific turn' in Romantic studies has given rise to studies of Romantic geology (Noah Heringman's *Romantic Rocks, Aesthetic Geology* [2004]), astronomy (Thomas Owens's doctoral thesis *The Language of the Heavens: Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Astronomy* [2014]), vitalism (Denise Gigante's *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* [2009]), and the emergent field of the medical humanities, while Richard Holmes's prize-winning and readable study, *Age of Wonder: How the Romantic Generation Discovered the Beauty and Terror of Science* (2008), presented an account of Romantic science to a wider readership.

[105] John Clare, 'Childish Recollections', *The Early Poems*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Margaret Grainger, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), II, 298-301 (p. 300). Henceforth referred to as *EP* with respective volume number. Marcus Poetzsch has written about this in 'The Brighter Side of the "Dark Ecology": John Clare and Henry David Thoreau' in *John Clare Society Journal*, 34 (2015), 63-73.

Linnaeus's own early-ecological text, *The Economy of Nature*, as well as the ecstatic celebration of nature in his travel diaries.[106] This is not to disregard ecological accounts. This thesis would not have been written without M. M. Mahood's *The Poet as Botanist* (2008). Mahood focuses on a longer chronological span than will be pursued here, but many of our texts and characters coincide. Her book's interest, however, lies in the poet's 'feeling for the organism': a unification of perception and empathy.[107] If she is sceptical of terms like 'ecopoetics' and 'ecocriticism', Mahood is nevertheless sympathetic to poetry which is attentive to ecosystems as well as to individual plants.[108] Her local detail is invaluable, although this thesis does not always agree with her. A predominating emphasis on scientific accuracy – that is, accuracy confirmed by recent discovery and current knowledge – cannot properly value Linnaean taxonomy, displaced and dethroned as it has been by theories of evolution, and by chemical and genetic analysis.

Similarly, Theresa M. Kelley's *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (2012) was one of the chief instigators of this thesis. Kelley's book, which investigates the 'friction' between 'matter, cultural material, poetic figuration' and philosophical concepts, is a rich and informative account of botany in the Romantic period. Her coverage stretches from eighteenth-century nurserymen and 'Jacobin' poets like Erasmus Darwin, to female botanists and botanical artists, Indian illustrators and colonial administrators, situated alongside the arguments of practitioners and sceptics of *Naturphilosophie*. Kelley's interest, however, lies less in Romantic taxonomy than it does in taxonomic slippage: the monster or the individual that defies the species. Her inquiry leads her to seek examples of

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[106] Donald Worster has called Linnaeus, whose work enabled ecological thought to progress, the 'key ecological figure of the age' in *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 31-55.

[107] The phrase is Barbara McClintock's, quoted by Mahood, *The Poet as Botanist* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 71.

[108] This scepticism is motivated by a desire to distinguish ecology – or the scientific study of biological interrelationships – from environmentalism, which is underwritten by ethics and a subsequent wish to take action.

'errancy', local resistances of taxonomic order, 'monstrous particularity', moments where 'plant differences give systematic protocols the slip'.[109] Kelley argues that this interest in the monstrous – the individual that exceeds the species – emerges from an amplified sense of taxonomy's investment in difference. While not wishing to dispute her diagnosis of a cultural anxiety about the monstrous or errant species in the period, I became interested in her insistence on exceeding taxonomic protocols rather than evidence of the uses of taxonomy itself. I am aware, too, of the lure of narrative progression which describes the path from 'artificial' taxonomy to 'natural' system. Kelley acknowledges that the 'natural' system is only partly natural, and that Linnaeus himself had composed 'Fragments of a Natural System' in *Classes plantarum* (1738), which he continued to probe and explore for the rest of his life.[110]

Kelley's interest in monsters recalls Denise Gigante on epigenesist and organic form:

> The tendency toward individuation that characterized life worked, and still works, against regulation. Differentiation often takes place spectacularly, the organism performing its greatest feats of originality in the struggle against regulative forces that seek to shape and maintain it. When pushed to an extreme, life in its plenitude – in the sheer gusto of its living power – threatens to overwhelm formal containment. No mere assemblage of its parts..., the sublime vitality of the Romantic period, in refusing to submit to preestablished conceptual or ideological categories, defined a new form of monstrosity.[111]

This passage unpacks the social and political contexts of the organism, particularly in its discussion of 'regulative forces': the organism in a battle for individuation against, say, corporate standardisation, economic alienation, or government bureaucracy. However, it also discloses a fair amount of aesthetic positioning: words like 'spectacularly', 'plenitude', and, with a touch of Hazlitt, 'gusto' – the drama of life 'pushed to an extreme' – suggests the rhetorical power of the individual against the hegemon, the preference for

[109] Theresa M. Kelley, *Clandestine Marriage: Botany and Romantic Culture* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 2012), pp. 1, 3, 2.
[110] 'Fragmenta Methodi Naturalis' in *Classes plantarum* (Leiden: 1738), pp. 486-514.
[111] Denise Gigante, *Life: Organic Form and Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p. 48.

messiness, excess, spillage. Elsewhere, Gigante pays tribute to nature's 'uncontainable prolificity'.[112] 'Sublime vitality' marries two aesthetic and epigenesist discourses but it is also exclamatory. I do not wish to deny the attractions of this aesthetic positioning, nor the force of Gigante's rhetoric, but I do want to question what such a position takes for granted. In opposing organicist fullness, taxonomy becomes aligned to the 'regulative forces that seek to shape and maintain' the marvellous profligacy of life. By contrast this thesis seeks to repurpose taxonomy from the dust-heap of poetry – as a regulative container, a machine of dead language – to see how poets of the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth centuries interpreted its own plenitude.

Work in the past two decades has recovered the important contributions of contemporary women to botany. Ann Shteir's *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (1996) sought to redress the silence over female practitioners of botany. Although women were eager consumers of botanical guides, the furore surrounding the radical implications of Linnaean terminology meant that women had to position themselves carefully so as not to seem too knowing of either science or sex. Nevertheless, women acted as patrons of botany (Queen Charlotte, Margaret Bentinck, Duchess of Portland), produced botanical art (Ann Lee, the marvellous Mary Delany), poetry (Charlotte Smith, Frances Arabella Rowden, Sarah Hoare), and works of prose (Priscilla Wakefield, Maria Jackson, Elizabeth Kent). They were not adjuncts to the study of botany, but integral consumers and producers, popularisers, translators, and educators. Sam George's *Botany, Sexuality, and Women's Writing, 1760-1830: From Modest Shoot to Forward Plant* (2007) builds upon Shteir's work but is more interested in the ways in which botanical discourse encouraged women to become authors.

[112] *Life*, p. 63.

George quite rightly attributes the popularity of botany in the period to Rousseau, who is a significant European interlocutor, and her work is valuable for gathering together many neglected texts by women, although it frequently fails to analyse the literary qualities of those texts. Amy King's *Bloom: the Botanical Vernacular in the English Novel* (2003) takes the metaphor of 'bloom' from Linnaeus's interest in plant reproduction – a trope which the wide circulation of Linnaean texts made available – and applies it to the nineteenth-century novel, extending Linnaeus far beyond Shteir's and George's range to encompass George Eliot and Henry James. As these works provide an excellent account of the gendered implications for botany during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this thesis does not seek to reproduce their findings.

Neither does this thesis intend to travel ground covered elsewhere in terms of botany's implications for eighteenth-century imperial expansionism.[113] Botany, like other forms of natural history, was hardly a disinterested project of inquiry. Voyages of discovery such as Pehr Löfling's to Venezuela in 1754 were motivated by commercial interests and were paid for by governments in search of natural resources. The subsequent composing and compilations of foreign floras had an unfortunate tendency to erase or exploit local knowledge.[114] The story of 'travelling natures' – not only specimens and information brought from the New World to the old, but rapidly advancing cross-pollination in newly 'discovered' countries – is traced by Alan Bewell in *Natures in Translation: Romanticism and Colonial Natural History* (2017). Taking up Bruno Latour's claim that nature is political, Bewell shows that nature is also inevitably plural, changed and marked by various human encounters. Bewell notes, for example, that explorers of America moved westward only to find familiar species spreading ahead of them. Bewell's

[113] See Londa Schiebinger and Claudia Swan, eds., *Colonial Botany: Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).
[114] See, for example, Londa Schiebinger, 'Nature's Unruly Body: The Limits of Scientific Description', *Regimes of Description: In the Archives of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by John Bender and Michael Marrinan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 25-43.

account of the British fear of the Hessian fly (*Mayetiola destructor*) as a possible weapon of biological warfare wielded by the newly enfranchised American colonies is a significant account of a febrile period, and discloses the degree to which translated natures were not always desirable for imperial powers.

In more text-centered or poetic accounts, much work on botany and literature addresses the figural potential of plants. This is an entirely comprehensible choice, given the rich analogical base of Linnaeus's sexual system, and his comparison of flower reproduction to human marriages. Linnaeus's explanation of the parts of a flower is manifestly metaphorical:

> Therefore the CALYX is the *bedroom*, the COROLLA is the *curtain*, the FILAMENTS are the *spermatic vessels*, the ANTHERS are the *testicles*, the POLLEN is the *sperm*, the STIGMA is the *vulva*, the STYLE is the *vagina*, the [vegetable] OVARY is the *[animal] ovary*, the PERICARP is the *fertilized ovary*, and the SEED is the *egg*.[115]

It was exactly this figurality which made the sexual system so scandalous. Work by Dahlia Porter, Catherine Packham, and Devin Griffiths is attentive to imagery, metaphor, and analogy.[116] This thesis, however, will look less at poetic images than the language that became available through translations of Linnaeus's reformed botanic Latin. Poets work through figure and borrow metaphor, certainly, but the material of their craft is words. Nikki Hessell's article on Keats' botanical training while a medical student at Guy's Hospital offers an approach closer to the one I would like to champion here.[117] If Keats did go to botanical lectures and excursions conducted by William Salisbury – a probable event given that he had to pass an exam in *materia medica* in order to qualify for his apothecary

[115] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 105.
[116] Dahlia Porter, 'Scientific Analogy and Literary Analogy in Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*', *European Romantic Review*, 18.2 (2007), 213-221; Catherine Packham, 'The Science and Poetry of Animation: Personification, Analogy, and Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*', *Romanticism*, 10.2 (2004), 191-208; Devin Griffiths, *The Age of Analogy: Science and Literature Between the Darwins* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016).
[117] Nikki Hessell, 'John Keats: The Botanist's Companion', in *John Keats and the Medical Imagination*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 91-108.

licence in July 1816 – it is likely that he read Salisbury's two-volume guide, *The Botanist's Companion* (1816), which contained, as many botanical works did, a list of botanical terms and definitions. Hessell locates Salisbury's botanical terms in poems like *Endymion* (1818) and 'I stood tip-toe', a poem elsewhere praised by Fiona Stafford for its botanical exactitude: its attention to the sweet peas' 'taper fingers catching at all things | To bind them about with tiny rings' (ll. 59-60).[118] Hessell notes that while Keats' early reviewers mocked his y-terminating adjectives, this verbal form has its origin in botanical language. Yet, despite *The Botanist's Companion*'s explicit allegiance to the sexual system, Hessell leaves the link between Salisbury's botanical language and Linnaeus unvoiced.[119] As this thesis will explain below, botanical language was largely seen as an invention of Linnaeus, who was praised for his linguistic innovations. Botanic language was arbitrary: like Locke, Linnaeus recognised a gap between words and things.[120] Yet, Thoreau's confession that, 'Cutting a path through a swamp where was much brittle dogwood, etc., etc., I wanted to know the name of every shrub' demonstrates that arbitrary words were attached to real objects with genuine epistemological demands on the observer.[121] Knowing the name of every shrub allowed Bartram to rhapsodise as he was 'cheerfully received' into the 'hospitable shade' of

[118] Fiona Stafford, 'Keats Shoots and Leaves' in *Keats's Places*, ed. by Richard Marggraf Turley (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 71-91 (p. 74).
[119] Salisbury wrote that although several systems were in circulation, 'none have as yet approached so near to perfection as that of the celebrated Linnaeus, which has stood its ground for fifty years, and is the only one used in the present day throughout the British islands and the north of Europe'. *The Botanist's Companion, Or, an Introduction to the Knowledge of Practical Botany and the Uses of Plants*, 2 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816), I, 2.
[120] 'If anyone examines attentively all the generic names, it will be clear to him that not one in fifty of these contains any essential character of the genus or attribute common to all the species comprised in it, so that any connexion is assured'. Linnaeus, *Critica botanica* (1737), trans. by Sir Arthur Hort (London: Ray Society, 1938), p. 61; John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P. H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), pp. 346-7.
[121] 13 December 1851, *Journal*, IV, 204.

> Orange groves, overtopped by grand Magnolias, Palms, Live Oaks, Juglans cinerea, Morus rubra, Fagus sylvantica, Telia, and Liquid-amber; with various kinds of shrubs and herbaceous plants, particularly Callicarpa, Halesia, Sambucus, Zanthoxilon, Ptelea, Rhamnus frangula, Rudbeckia, Silphium, Polymnia, Indigo fera, Sophora, Salvia graviolens, &c.[122]

Linnaean arrangement and its denomination was mobile enough for the Quaker botanist from Philadelphia to carry it with him on his journeys, and to preserve it in his written records. The thing itself is at risk of loss. Meanwhile, one gains sound, incantation, and a density of information packed into an intertexture of precise, particular words.

Linnaeus's English Afterlives

In May 1732, on the eve of his twenty-fifth birthday, Linnaeus undertook a commission from the Royal Academy of Sciences to conduct a survey of Lapland's flora and fauna, not unlike Bartram's travels through the southern states of North America forty years later. The trip resulted in two books: an acclaimed botanic catalogue, *Flora lapponica* (1737), and a travel journal, which Linnaeus titled 'Iter Lapponicum'. After the death of Linnaeus and his son Carl Linnaeus the Younger, the journal made its way into the hands of Sir James Edward Smith (1759-1828), the founder of the Linnean Society in London, who had bought Linnaeus's library, manuscripts, and specimen collections in 1783. Under Smith's aegis, 'Iter Lapponicum' was translated and published in English as *Lachesis Lapponica, or a Tour in Lapland* (1811); it would not appear in its original Swedish until 1888-9. The journal's first appearance in English, argues Annika Lindskog, made Britain the first to experience the Romantic construction of Lapland which later spread so influentially

[122] Bartram, p. 183.

throughout Europe.[123] Linnaeus's account begins with a business-like statement of intent, followed by an extended description of the contents of his luggage:

> My clothes consisted of a light coat of Westgothland linsey-woolsey cloth without folds, lined with red shalloon, having small cuffs and collar of shag; leather breeches; a round wig; a green leather cap, and a pair of half boots. I carried a small leather bag half an ell in length, but somewhat less in breadth, furnished on one side with hooks and eyes, so that it could be opened and shut at pleasure. This bag contained one shirt; two pair of false sleeves; two half shirts; an inkstand, pencase, microscope and spying-glass; a gauze cap to protect me occasionally from the gnats; a comb; my journal, and a parcel of paper stitched together for drying plants both in folio; my manuscript Ornithology, *Flora Uplandica*, and *Characteres generici*. I wore a hangar at my side, and carried a small fowling-piece, as well as an octangular stick graduated for the purpose of measuring. My pocket-book contained a passport from the Governer of Upsal, and a recommendation from the Academy.[124]

The ponderous specificity of this catalogue – the enumeration of each of his possessions, as well as the careful description of his appearance – evidently struck his readers. 'Everything is important', writes Margit Abenius on Linnaeus's style, 'or everything is equally important': a stylistic quality shared by the equivalence of objects within his taxonomic system.[125] The paragraph was reprinted in its entirety by the *Critical Review*, which praised the journal's 'enthusiasm' and 'interesting pictures' as opposed to the 'stiff, generalizing, statistical style so much in vogue'.[126] The catalogue was printed also by the *Monthly Review*, who thought that the 'artless preamble of the diary will extort a smile from those who are familiar with the splendid appointments of modern ease and

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[123] Annika Lindskog, 'Constructing and Classifying "The North": Linnaeus and Lapland', in *Romantic Norths: Anglo-Nordic Exchanges 1770-1842*, ed. by Cian Duffy (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), pp. 75-99 (p 76).

[124] *Lachesis Lapponica, Or, a Tour to Lapland*, ed. by James Edward Smith, 2 vols (London: White and Cochrane, 1811), pp. 1-2. 'Shalloon' is a 'closely woven woollen material used chiefly for linings'. 'shalloon, n.1.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/177355> [accessed 30 May 2018].

[125] Quoted by Lindskog, p. 85; for the equivalence of objects in Linnaean taxonomy, see Staffan Müller-Wille, 'Names and Number: "Data" in Classical Natural History, 1758-1859', *Osiris*, 32.1 (2017), 109-128 (pp. 116, 126).

[126] *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, 2.1 (July 1812), 78-86 (p. 79).



Fig. 1. Robert Dunkarton and Henry Kingsbury after Martin Hoffman, 'Linnaeus in his Lapland Dress', first published in Robert John Thornton, *New Illustration of the Sexual System of Carolus von Linnaeus* (London: the author, 1807), paper, mezzotint, etching, 505 × 353, British Museum, London, 1902,1011.2961

refinement', and by the *Edinburgh Review*, who wrote that the 'graphic style of his equipment and costume, would make no despicable figure in the writings of Cervantes'.[127]

[127] *Muir Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, 67 (March 1812), 225-240; *Edinburgh Review*, 19.38 (February 1812), 317-339.

The latter reviewer might have had the opening of *Don Quixote* in mind where, in Smollett's translation, Quixote's expenditures are enumerated as rustic cuisine ('a plate of salmagundi, commonly at supper', 'gripes and grumblings on saturdays' and 'lentils on fridays'), and 'a fine black suit, with velvet breeches, and slippers of the same, for holy-days, and a coat of home-spun, which he wore in honour of his country, during the rest of the week'.[128] Or perhaps the reviewer recalled the mock-heroic catalogue of Don Quixote's arms: his 'old suit of armour', the 'head-piece without a beaver', altered with a 'vizor' made of 'paste-board'.[129] If Linnaeus's style (and dress) would make no 'despicable figure' in Cervantes' novel, Linnaeus is also more than a little like the deluded knight of La Mancha, whose adventures are a sequence of misapprehensions. The taxonomic project as exemplified by *Systema naturae* is quixotic in the reach of its ambitions.

Linnaeus's self-presentation at the beginning of *Lachesis Lapponica* became a fixture of subsequent biographical writings about Linnaeus. The catalogue of dress has a remarkably long life across the century, appearing in Sarah Waring's *A Sketch of the Life of Linnaeus* (1827); Florence Caddy's late nineteenth-century biographic 'yarn', *Through the Fields with Linnaeus* (1887); and L.C. Miall's 'Vacation Rambles of a Naturalist' in *The London Quarterly Review* in 1899.[130] It amplified what Dietrich Heinrich Stoever had already performed in his 1792 biography of Linnaeus: it transfigured a famous man from a foreign country, about which little was known, into a narratable object. Stoever's

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[128] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The History and Adventures of the Renowned Don Quixote*, trans. by Tobias Smollett, 2 vols (London: Millar, 1755), I, 1-2. Robinson Crusoe's retrieval of goods from the sinking ship is another example of the early novel's attraction to enumerations of ordinary possessions. See *The Novels of Daniel Defoe*, ed. by W. R. Owens and P. N. Furbank, 10 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2008-2009), I: *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, ed. by W. R. Owens (2008), 94-5.

[129] Cervantes, p. 4.

[130] Sarah Waring, *A Sketch in the Life of Linnaeus: In a Series of Letters Designed for Young Persons* (London: Harvey and Darton, 1827); Florence Caddy, *Through the Fields with Linnaeus: a Chapter in Swedish History*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, Green, 1887), I, 17; L. C. Miall, 'Vacation Rambles of a Naturalist', *London Quarterly Review* (January 1899), 30-40.

biography, originally published in Hamburg, appeared in English translation as *The Life of Sir Charles Linnaeus, Knight of the Swedish Order of the Polar Star* (1794), and it was still in circulation in 1851 when Thoreau recorded reading it in his diary, before suggesting that an acquaintance 'who writes poetry in a sublimo-slipshod style' should write in Latin. 'Methinks', added Thoreau, 'what a man might write in a dead language could be more surely translated into good sense in his own language, than his own language could be translated into good Latin, or the dead language'.[131] Latin was not a barrier to native poetry, but a crucible for it.

According to Stoever, Linnaeus was

> the most *systematical* genius of the age, the most intimate and scrutinizing minion that ever graced the bosom of Nature; who rendered her knowledge the most regular and the most cultivated, and became her teacher in all parts of the world. Never was the name of any Literatus of his nation, or of Northern Europe at large spread so far, honoured so devoutly, and rendered so immortal as his. However distinguished and uncommon his merits were, as extraordinary and memorable became the vicissitudes of his fate, and as rugged and thorny the paths on which he attained the climax of his greatness.[132]

It may be difficult to reconcile 'genius' with the phrase 'scrutinizing minion', yet it is the 'vicissitudes' and 'thorny paths' of Linnaeus's life which make his biography a good one: a man of humble beginnings, the son of a country parson, who was so poor as a student that he mended his shoes with tree bark, who suffered the discomforts of remote travel to rural Lapland, and overcame doubters and envious colleagues to become the most famous man Sweden ever produced. Linnaeus himself fell prey to the wizardry of his own meteoric rise. In *Nemesis Divina*, Linnaeus's bizarre manuscript collection of anecdotes of transgression and divine punishment, he recounted a fortune-teller's prediction of his

[131] 15 November 1851, *Journal*, IV, 186.
[132] D. H. Stoever, *The Life of Sir Charles Linnaeus, Knight of the Swedish Order of the Polar Star, &c. &c., to which is added, A Copious List of His Works, and a Biographical Sketch of the Life of his Son*, trans. by Joseph Trapp (London: E. Dodson, 1794), p. 2.

future glory despite his unimpressive record as a student.[133] According to Stoever, Linnaeus's greatness was almost foretold by his being promised to another profession. Like his father, Linnaeus was intended for the church. In this way, he adhered to the pattern of great men: Stoever compared Linnaeus to Luther, who ought to have been a lawyer; to Voltaire, who ought to have been a barrister and parliamentary councillor, and to Shakespeare, who was intended to be 'the yard-measure of a linen-draper'.[134] Michael Dobson has written that by the 1760s, Shakespeare was 'something more than author'. Rather, '[i]nvested with significances' which the plays could not constrain, the playwright and his characters 'began to escape from the Folio to appear in poems, novels, anthologies of quotations, pageants'.[135] Similarly, Linnaeus's own fictional appearances stray into Shakespearean improbabilities in *Through the Fields with Linnaeus,* which dramatises Linnaeus's choice of a vocation with the help of the Bard:

> [Linnaeus] roamed the fields now more in distress of mind than for research: he wandered off as far as the royal tumulus of Amlech – Shakespere's 'Hamlet'; his disturbance of mind was, perhaps, equally great. Had Linnaeus been able to read English he would have found a kinship in Hamlet's unwilling acceptance of life, with its problems not always adapted to man's varying mental constitution. To be or not to be a clergyman: that was the question.[136]

While clearly still ripe for nineteenth-century speculation, the connection between Linnaeus and Shakespeare cropped up in the previous century. A Swiss traveller, Charles Victor de Bonstetten, wrote of his friend and host Thomas Gray that '[a]fter breakfast…appear Shakespeare and old Lineus struggling together as two ghosts would do for a damned soul. Sometimes the one gets the better, sometimes the other'.[137] Shakespeare and Linnaeus were both national figures who came to exemplify the spirit of

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[133] *Nemesis Divina*, ed. and trans. by M. J. Petry (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), p. 109.
[134] Stoever, p. 7.
[135] Michael Dobson, *The Making of a National Poet: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Authorship, 1660-1769* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 185.
[136] Caddy, I, 41.
[137] Norton, p. 18.

their respective nations during a period of mercantile expansion and international ambitions, secular saints whose canonisation was open to ideological exploitation. According to Lisbet Koerner, the formation of the Swedish Linnaean Society in 1918 explicitly looked to English Shakespeare societies as models.[138]

Despite Linnaeus's mother's painful disappointment at her son's defection from the church, Stoever described Linnaeus flourishing under the guidance of his teachers, egged on by his compulsive attraction to botany: 'LINNAEUS procured [valuable works on botany] secretly, and impelled by his desire of learning novelties, he read and studied to the last glimpse of the midnight lamp' before moving to Uppsala, 'the theatre of his greatness'.[139] Yet, even in this theatre, he was not to be given a smooth path to glory: 'No great, or eminent man of our age,' wrote Stoever, 'not even BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, the *American* printer, ever struggled with so many difficulties and adversities, while endeavouring to reach the towering height at which his genius made his aspire'. Like the catalogue of luggage, Stoever would be recycled in various popular histories of Linnaeus through the next century, depicting a great man and character for the cultural imaginary who 'exhibited the most eloquent picture of the strength of the human powers and endowments, and who proved by their own example, what the genius and activity of a single individual is capable to accomplish'.[140]

The picaresque qualities of Linnaeus's life, which were picked up by the reviewer at the *Edinburgh Review*, were recounted by Stoever in the incident of Linnaeus's unmasking of a fraudulent seven-headed serpent in Hamburg in 1735. Taking the unwise and quixotic step of revealing that the serpent's seven heads were 'nothing but the jaw bones of weasels artfully covered with serpent's skin, regardless of the palpable difference which subsists between the structure of the jaw bones of weasels and serpents', the young taxonomist was

[138] Lisbet Koerner, *Linnaeus: Nature and Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 180.
[139] Stoever, pp. 15, 17.
[140] Stoever, p. 171.

advised to leave Hamburg quickly. 'Thus,' wrote Stoever, a bemused narrator, 'commenced the travels of LINNAEUS with adventures and unexpected accidents, thus was he obliged, on account of his genius and better penetration to leave a city where he had sojourned with great pleasure for about a month, notwithstanding such a delay little corresponded with his pecuniary resources'.[141]

Inevitably, the mode of his biography was not all comic. Linnaeus's rise was taxed by certain tragedies: the premature death of his friend, the ichthyologist and fellow taxonomist, Pehr Artedi, and the deaths of his disciples.[142] Linnaeus's 'Vita' acknowledged that his success came at great expense, and that his books and garden had swelled with specimens as his assistants perished: Christopher Ternström, who died of a fever on the way to China; Fredric Hasselquist, who died at Smyrna; Pehr Löfling, who died in what is now Venezuela; Pehr Forsskål who died of a plague in Yemen; and Johan Peter Falk, who committed suicide on an expedition to Russia.[143] Stoever, not wishing to overlook dramatic convenience in the death of his own subject, does not fail to mention that his subject died the same year as Rousseau and Voltaire.

[141] Stoever, p. 74.
[142] In Stoever's account of Artedi's accidental drowning in Amsterdam, his historical tense slips into the present, leading him into a quickened style conscious how this tragic episode will end: 'In a short time after, on the 25th of September 1735, ARTEDI was in company at SEBA's – he left his house to return home – the night was dark, unknown the way – he comes to the brink of a canal not inclosed with rails, in which he falls – his shrieks and moans are not heard – the struggles of his agony are witnessed – he falls, far from his native land, in the bloom of youth, a victim to that element the inhabitants of which were so familiar to him, and to the better knowledge of which he had devoted the whole diligence of his life, and spurned all obstacles. Next day his body is found; LINNAEUS informed of his fate hastens to the spot, and with a torrent of tears beholds the inanimate remains of the best of friends, and causes them to be committed to the tomb' (pp. 83-4).
[143] On Ternström, Hasselquist, Löfling, and Forsskål see Frans A. Stafleu, *Linnaeus and the Linnaeans: The Spreading of their Ideas in Systematic Botany* (Utrecht, Oosthoek, 1971), pp. 148-151; for Falk see Stoever, pp. 179-80.

The first edition of Richard Pulteney's *General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1781) predated Stoever's biography by a decade, and, since it was published only three years after Linnaeus died, it had the advantage of proximity. Pulteney's book narrated Linnaeus's life through his publications, providing a kind of annotated précis of his author's works. Thus *Bibliotheca botanica* (1736) was 'by no means as unentertaining as may be expected from the general idea of a catalogue merely'; *Flora suecica* (1745) was a 'pattern for all succeeding writers of *local* catalogues'; and the great work of the *Species plantarum* (1753) required 'nice inspection' of '*every species*' belonging to a genus, and of every '*actual variety*' belonging to the species.[144] Without claiming the perfection of the sexual system, Pulteney acknowleged the advantage of its public approbation and wide circulation. Yet, beyond the familiarity and the pedagogical ease of the Linnaean system, Linnaeus retained qualities of exceptionalism: 'In this work of LINNAEUS,' wrote Pulteney of *Philosophia botanica*, 'it is difficult to determine, whether we ought most to admire the genius of its author in his inventive power, or that exquisite scientific arrangement which he has given to the whole'.[145] Elsewhere, Pulteney described his subject as framed by nature with a liberally endowed mind, possessing a 'lively imagination corrected however by a strong judgment'.[146] Shortly after his death, Linnaeus was presented to the English reader not as a sterile computational regulator but as a man of vigour, experiment, and principle. His appeal, suggested Pulteney, is particularly visible to the sympathetic observer:

[144] *General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1781), pp. 17, 38, 25.
[145] *General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1781), p. 49.
[146] *General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1781), p. 213.

> To all who see the aid this extraordinary man has brought to *natural science*, his talents must appear in a very illustrious point of view; but more especially to those who, from similarity of taste, are qualified to see more distinctly the vast extent of his original design, the greatness of his labour, and the elaborate execution he has given to the whole.[147]

In appealing to his reader's taste, Pulteney opened up the question of Linnaeus's aesthetic qualities: described here not as a rigid tyrant, Linnaeus is an artificer, a creative labourer, a man of talent.

Literary Linnaeus

As Sir William Jones's comments on Linnaeus's botanical language reveal, not all readers were persuaded by Linnaeus's style. In Rousseau's introduction to his fragments of a botanical dictionary, he defended Linnaeus from claims of barbarous usage:

> People complain that the words of this language were not all in Cicero. This complaint would be reasonable if Cicero had written a complete treatise on Botany. These words are nonetheless all Greek or Latin, expressive, short, sonorous, and by their extreme precision even form elegant constructions.[148]

Pulteney, whose qualifications as a literary critic are perhaps less ascertainable than Rousseau's, claimed that Linnaeus 'had a happy command of the Latin tongue, which is alone the language of science; and no man ever applied it more successfully to his purposes or gave to description such copiousness, united with that precision and conciseness, which so eminently characterize his writings'.[149] The appearance of 'precision' in both accounts is unsurprising, since it is a quality which Linnaeus explicitly laid claim too. Subtler, perhaps, is Rousseau's appeal to expressivity, to sonority, and to elegance; as is Pulteney's balancing of precision with 'copiousness'. The pairing of

[147] *General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1781), p. 214.
[148] *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, VIII, 97.
[149] *A General View of the Writings of Linnaeus* (1781), p. 214.

copiousness and precision might suggest that Thoreau read Pulteney as well as Stoever since he exclaimed in his journal, 'How copious and precise the botanical language to describe the leaves, as well as the other parts of a plant!'[150]

According to the aphorisms which appeared first in *Fundamenta botanica* (1736), were expanded in *Critica botanica* (1737), and finally consolidated in *Philosophia botanica*, precision was won by ridding one's style of frivolous metaphoric language. In the section dedicated to genera, for example, botanists were advised to consider the following:

> The pompous and their flourishes of eloquence are to be rejected.
> In a character, nothing is more abominable than a rhetorical style.
> The technical terms enable us to express our ideas in a few words.[151]

Linnaeus's aphorism doubled down elsewhere: 'Plain TERMS should be chosen; obscure and erroneous ones should not allowed'.[152] Linnaeus's sense of style as expressed in *Philosophia botanica* signalled his sympathies with the anti-Ciceronian plain style advocated by Sir Francis Bacon for the assimilation of data, and later favoured by the Royal Society.[153] In this way, Linnaeus reprised conventional ancient suspicions of eloquence as deceit.[154] Locke, who shared Linnaeus's professed suspicion of the obscurities or waywardness of eloquence, cautiously allowed for the invention of words

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[150] 20 August 1851, *Journal*, III: *1848-1851*, ed. by Robert Sattelmeyer, Mark R. Patterson, and William Rossi (1990), p. 382.
[151] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 145.
[152] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 146. In the *Elements of Botany*, Hugh Rose translated this aphorism as 'Only the pure and proper terms of art are to be used; obscure and erroneous terms are never to be admitted' (p. 274).
[153] According to Sir Thomas Sprat, the Royal Society were resolved to 'reject all the amplifications, digressions, and swellings of style: to return back to the primitive purity, and shortness, when men deliver'd so many *things*, almost in an equal number of *words*. They have exacted from all their members, a close, naked, natural way of speaking; positive expressions; clearness; a native easiness: bringing all things as near the Mathematical plainness, as they can...' *The History of the Royal-Society of London, for the Improving of Natural Knowledge* (London: J. Martyn and Allestry, 1667), p. 113. Regarding the need for caution in reading of Sprat's account and making reductive assumptions about Royal Society stylistic protocol, see Brian Vickers's 'The Royal Society and English Prose Style: A Reassessment' in Vickers and Nancy S. Struever, *Rhetoric and the Pursuit of Truth: Language Change in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, Papers Read at a Clark Library Seminar, March 1990* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California: 1985), pp. 3-76.
[154] Such critiques can be found authoritatively in, for example, Book X of Plato's *Republic*.

for which Linnaeus argued: 'He that hath new notions, will, perhaps, venture sometimes on the coining new terms to express them,' writes Locke, 'but men think it a boldness, and 'tis uncertain, whether common use will ever make them pass for current.[155] Turning Locke on his head, Linnaeus's proposed that 'If botanists agree about technical terms, and are consistent in their writings, knowledge will turn out to be very easy to acquire'.[156] Linnaeus's critics were suspicious of his confidence in nominalism – 'If you do not know the names of things, the knowledge of them is lost too', he asserted, in an ancient line of argument raised in Plato's *Cratylus* – but such confidence explains his desire that names for plants and the language of plant description be apt and convenient for the memory and for what Locke calls 'common use'.[157]

Elsewhere in *Philosophia botanica*, Linnaeus's approach to naming genera became more specific: names hybridised from Greek and Latin roots were not to be recognised, and generic names ending in the Greek termination '–oides' were banished from the 'marketplace of Botany'.[158] 'Barbarous' names, or names that came from non-classical languages, were rebaptised by being formed from Greek or Latin. The subjects commemorated by generic names were regulated, so that those which commemorated any famous man or saint were to be discarded, while those commemorating botanists (e.g. *Dillenia, Gerardia*) and those named after kings and patrons – financiers of botanical expeditions – were to be preserved. More suggestively, Linnaeus allowed generic names 'derived from poetry' – *Ambrosia, Nepenthes, Protea, Actaea, Narcissus, Circaea* – to

[155] Locke, p. 471.
[156] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 253.
[157] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 169. In *The Cratylus*, a Platonic dialogue which interrogates the suitability of words for things, and their status as either objects of human convention or bearers of essences, Cratylus tells Socrates that 'he who knows names, knows also things'. Socrates's response subsequently casts doubt on Cratylus's position. *The Cratylus, Phædo, Parmenides and Timæus of Plato*, trans. by Thomas Taylor (London: B. and J. White, 1793), p. 117.
[158] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 173. This reference to the 'marketplace' ('*foro*', from *forum*) might recall the economic forces behind many botanical expeditions – and the lucrative trade in exotics – but the metaphor also suggests a common place or public sphere where ideas, as well as goods, are exchanged.

stay.[159] Rules which governed the choice of generic names also applied to the naming of classes and orders, which ought to consist of a single word characteristic of the plants grouped under it. This is because

> ...methods are numerous, variable, and modern.
> because names are the unavoidable burdens of technique;
> because names must be ready and prompt.[160]

This advice sounds remarkably Horatian when one recalls that the *Art of Criticism* recommends that 'Whenever you instruct, be brief, so that what is quickly said the mind may readily grasp and faithfully hold: every word in excess flows away from the full mind'.[161] The features of a specific name – which was not yet quite the same as the trivial name or the name of the individual species but a step in that direction – should not be '*elusive, uncertain,* or *deceptive*' but '*firm*, *certain* and *mechanical*'. *Mechanical* seems to confirm the unthinking, industrial quality of Linnaean taxonomy of which his critics accuse him. Yet, one ought to recall that the eighteenth-century sense of 'mechanical' referred not only to machines and to automatons, but also to the '[c]onstruction of parts depending on each other in any complicated fabrick'.[162]

Since, according to *Critica botanica*, words are arbitrary and essences can only be known once all species are known and compared, names must be chosen helpfully.[163] Here, the Linnaean system's emphasis on visibility can be an aid to the botanist: 'The specific name', wrote Linnaeus, 'must declare its own [particular] plant at first sight, since it contains the definition that is *inscribed on the plant itself* '.[164] Such a name must be derived from unvarying parts of the plant, thus cancelling qualities of colour, smell, taste,

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[159] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 183.
[160] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 216.
[161] Horace, *Satires, Epistles, Ars Poetica*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough, rev. edn (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1929, repr. 1978), p. 479.
[162] 'mechanism, n. s.', Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, n. p.
[163] *Critica botanica*, p. 61.
[164] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 220.

hairiness, curliness, and deformity, which are influenced by habitat. The denial of the senses in determining the name of the plant seems to settle Linnaeus on the far-side of poetry from the 'red flower' of Wordsworth's 'Love Lies Bleeding', or his more famous 'host of golden daffodils', or the 'soft fragrance' of bluebells in Clare's 'Morning Pleasures'.[165] In the first act of *The Lakers*, Miss Veronica Beccabunga nods to this deprivation when presenting a plant to the man masquerading as Sir Charles Portiscale:

> Ver. I must have a specimen for my *hortus siccus*. Sir Charles, you don't seem to admire it.
> Sample. I don't think much of it indeed, Miss. The colour's so dim, and it's got no smell.
> Ver. Why, what botanist ever thought of colour or smell in a plant?[166]

Despite Linnaeus's sidelining of scent and colour, plant names are not devoid of aesthetic qualities. 'Artistic beauty demands brevity', Linnaeus wrote in aphorism 291, 'for the simpler the better too; and it is foolish to do in more [words] what can be done by fewer; even nature itself is very compendious in all its action'.[167] Not only was brevity kind to the memory, allowing the names to rise 'ready and prompt'; it appealed to a sense of the beautiful. While his stylistic maxims show the influence of Horace, Linnaeus's favourite poet was Ovid, whose *Metamorphoses* explores the suppleness of figure.[168] Nevertheless, Linnaeus's preference for simplicity, brevity, and clarity was wary of the deployment of *figurae*: 'The specific name must not be decorated with rhetorical figures; still less may it be erroneous, but it should faithfully express what nature dictates'.[169] Nature, then, even

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[165] *Last Poems, 1821-1850*, ed. by Jared Curtis, Apryl Lea Denny-Feris, Jillian Heydt Stevenson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 265-6; *P2V*, pp. 207-208; *Poems of the Middle Period*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P.M.S. Dawson, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), IV, 213-217. For respective abbreviations (*Last*, *P2V*, *MP*), see the list prefacing this thesis.
[166] Plumptre, I. iii. 16.
[167] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 246; Rose's translation strips away the sense of 'artistic beauty' in *Elements of Botany*, p. 335.
[168] See the first line of the *Metamorphoses*: 'My mind is bent to tell of bodies changed into new forms.' Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Books I-VIII, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, 3rd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977, 1999), p. 3.
[169] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 249.

within the artificial system, required a 'natural' (that is, naked) language. A range of specific rhetorical figures become problematic: the synecdoche, for example, so common in botanical literature, should not be indulged. 'A *metaphor* is always obscure,' Linnaeus continues, 'for this reason bare simplicity is better. | *Irony*, being a sort of lie, must be excluded for that reason'.[170] Nor does the humble simile escape blame since, as aphorism 299 reveals,

> Any simile that is misused in a specific name, may be more familiar than your right hand; but even so, it is unacceptable.
> A simile exhausts in a single word what would otherwise have to be explained by a whole speech; but every simile is lame, and therefore every obscure simile, which is not absolutely obvious to everyone, is used to the disgrace of the art of botany.[171]

Linnaeus's assertion that 'every simile is lame' seems undeniably hostile to metaphoric language. Brian Vickers and Claire Preston have rebutted Bacon's supposed hostility to figurative language by showing Bacon's commitment to a variety of rhetorical approaches throughout his life, and one wishes to extend the same generosity of self-contradiction (or context) to Linnaeus.[172] Even as he staked his position against metaphor, Linnaeus took recourse to figurative language. In aphorism 299, for example, the simile is compared to the familiarity of one's right hand, and, in its lameness, to a failed limb. Linnaeus wrote in similar if surreal terms in his discussion of a plant's specific name:

> Names are the plant's hands; the generic name is the right hand and the specific is the left; the hands of plants have eyes, and they believe only what they see; the plant should proffer them to the botanist to see if he will believe in the facts.[173]

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[170] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 249. Rose appears to condense Linnaeus's catalogue of rhetoric figures into a single phrase: 'figures of rhetoric' in *Elements of Botany*, p. 336.
[171] *Philosophica Botanica*, p. 251.
[172] See Brian Vickers, '"Bacon among the literati": Science and Language', *Comparative Criticism*, 13 (1991), pp. 249-271; and Claire Preston, 'English Scientific Prose: Bacon, Browne, Boyle' in *The Oxford Handbook of English Prose, 1500-1700*, ed. by Andrew Hadfield (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 268-291 (pp. 268-269).
[173] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 226.

One might, then, consider Linnaeus's objection to metaphoric language as applying particularly to the act of naming: he was unwilling to name a plant by its resemblance to another object. There is no need, then, to tease out the disagreements between Linnaeus's stated linguistic rules and his own expression: no need to point to the metaphor that slips into his dedication of *Critica botanica* to the Oxford-based botanist Johan Jakob Dillenius: 'It was due to you that I wrote much on the theory of botany, when I myself, properly conscious of how lightly I was laden, should long ago have taken in my sails'.[174] There is no need to draw attention to his likening of botany to a 'free state' and 'commonwealth', or his allusions on the failures of recent botanists who have 'forthwith experienced shipwreck: they have avoided sundry rocks, but have often fallen victims to Scylla in their desire to escape Charybdis'.[175] It is more truthful to say then that Linnaeus's approach to language, like Bacon's, was multivalent. Reiterating a clear aesthetic position (simple, direct, clear, brief, concise), it was itself – even amidst a discussion of the way language ought to be employed – subject to the manoeuvres offered by metaphoric language for rhetorical effect.

Lisbet Koerner has suggested Linnaeus's upbringing in a minister's home provided a stylistic influence on the 'artful construct[ion]' of *Philosophia botanica* in the form of a Lutheran almanac.[176] Yet, as Linnaeus's reference to Scylla and Charybdis demonstrate, and the phrase from Ovid over the door to his study, his influences were not restricted to religious sources. Stoever's Linnaeus was a lover of 'the *Belles Lettres*, and even when old age had chilled the brilliancy of his imagination, would frequently read OVID and VIRGIL, and rehearse with ease and pleasure, several passages from the works of these poets'.[177] Proof of an eighteenth-century education, Linnaeus quoted from the *Georgics*, the *Aeneid*,

[174] *Critica Botanica*, xx.
[175] *Critica Botanica*, xix, xxi, p. 2.
[176] Koerner, p. 22.
[177] Stoever, p. 262.

Ovid's *Tristia* and the *Metamorphoses.*[178] His extant library contains two copies of a *Gaudia Poetica*, a tri-lingual poem by the dissolute Frederick Calvert, Lord Baltimore, an anonymously authored Swedish pastoral, and two volumes of Milton's prose, with excerpts of his poetry quoted in the introduction.[179] John L. Heller has written of Linnaeus's use of classical mythology in his trivial names in *Systema naturae* (particularly after the tenth edition of 1758), concluding that Linnaeus was a slap-dash classicist, with little more knowledge than an inattentive schoolboy.[180] Nevertheless, poetic fragments persist in catalogues, and in the cabinets of the specimens held in the vaults of the Linnean Society, where one tray of *Coleoptera* (beetles) exhibits a *Hercules* and its sister tray of *Lepidoptera* (butterflies and moths) a *Ulysses*, a *Leda*, and a *Deianira.* As the prefatorial matter to *Flora lapponica* shows, Linnaeus used classical poets to frame his encounters with landscape. His quotations from Ovid in the Prolegomena to *Flora lapponica* refer to the eternal hardness of northern soil, as well as the crystal-clear pools of water surrounded not by swampgrass or spiky rushes but fresh and evergreen grass. Koerner confirms that Ovid and Virgil taught Linnaeus how to describe living nature, so that he combined

[178] Virgil's *Georgics* are quoted in *Critica botanica* (p. 151) and in *Philosophia Botanica* (p. 247), with three lines from Book IV used as an epigraph to *Flora lapponica* (Amsterdam: 1737). In this last example, the quotation is taken from the Orpheus episode, after the loss of Eurydice and immediately before Orpheus's dismemberment: 'Alone he roamed the frozen north, along the snowy Tanais, and the fields never free of Riphaean frost.' In *Flora lapponica*'s preface to the reader, Linnaeus quotes from the *Aeneid* (VI. 438-9) to describe his journey through Lapland, comparing it to Aeneas's journey through the underworld (p. 13). The Prolegomena which follows quotes Ovid's *Tristia* and the *Metamorphoses* (IV. 297-301).

[179] *Gaudia poetica. Composed in Latin, English and French in the year 1769* [Augustae: 1769], London, Linnean Society, BL.213; *Gaudia poetica*: *Latina, Anglica, et Gallica lingua composita, 1769* (Augustae: 1770), London, Linnean Society, BL. 664; *Pastoral pa Damons och Daphnes herda fäst* (Stockholm: 1744), London, Linnean Society, BL. 1175/92 [b]; John Milton, *The Works of John Milton, Historical, Political, and Miscellaneous*, 2 vols (London: Millar, 1753), London, Linnean Society, BL. 718-1/2.

[180] John L. Heller, 'Classical Mythology in the *Systema Naturae* of Linnaeus', *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, 76 (1945), 333-357.

> citations with a rough-hewn poetic style that evoked how he experienced the natural world in a state of naive ecstasy, and is enhanced by the synesthetic linkages between the senses that mark his literary genius. Mostly, he worked in his own, self-styled genre...part rhapsody, part oral epic, part elegy and part periscope exegesis. Read through the prism of later Romantic nature poetry, Linnaeus's nature writings are beautiful.[181]

An example of this prismatic nature poetry might be found in Linnaeus's memorable incident with a bog rosemary on his journeys through Lapland. The bog rosemary, a '*Chamaedaphne* of Buxbaum', at this time was

> in its highest beauty, decorating the marshy grounds in a most agreeable manner. The flowers are quite blood-red before they expand, but when full-grown the corolla is of a flesh-colour. Scarcely any painter's art can so happily imitate the beauty of a fine female complexion; still less could any artificial colour upon the face itself bear a comparison with this lovely blossom. As I contemplated it I could not help thinking of Andromeda as described by the poets; and the more I meditated upon their descriptions, the more applicable they seemed to the little plant before me, so that if these writers had had it in view, they could scarcely have contrived a more apposite fable. Andromeda is represented by them as a virgin of most exquisite and unrivalled charms; but these charms remain in perfection only as long as she retains her virgin purity, which is also applicable to the plant, now preparing to celebrate its nuptials. This plant is always fixed on some little turfy hillock in the midst of the swamps, as Andromeda herself was chained to a rock in the sea, which bathed her feet, as the fresh water does the roots of the plant. Dragons and venomous serpents surround her, as toads and other reptiles frequent the abode of her vegetable prototype, and, when they pair in the spring, throw mud and water over its leaves and branches. As the distressed virgin cast down her blushing face though excessive affliction, so does the rosy-coloured flower hang its head, growing paler and paler till it withers away. Hence, as this plant forms a new genus, I have chosen for it the name of *Andromeda*.[182]

[181] Koerner, p. 23.
[182] *Lachesis Lapponica*, pp. 188-9. Johann Christian Buxbaum (1693?-1730) was a German physician, botanist, and entomologist.



Fig. 2. Linnaeus's drawing of *Andromeda polifolia* from 'Iter Lapponicum' (1732), London, Linnean Society, GB-110/LM/LP/TRV/1/2/1. <http://linnean-online.org/165368/> [accessed 21 June 2018]

The cartoonish drawing of Andromeda in the manuscript of 'Iter Lapponicum' which formed the basis of *Lachesis Lapponica* – a diptych of a naked, woman chained to a rock and menaced by a lizard, mirrored on the left by a plant beset by an insect, its branching leaves mimicking the woman's distressed arms – shows that Linnaeus was not a very capable draughtsman. Had Edward Lear, an associate member of the Linnean Society from the age of seventeen, seen Linnaeus's drawing of *Andromeda polifolia* when he drew his Manypeeplia Upsidownia or Queeriflora Babyöides?[183]

[183] Lear, *The Complete Nonsense and Other Verse*, pp. 252, 419.

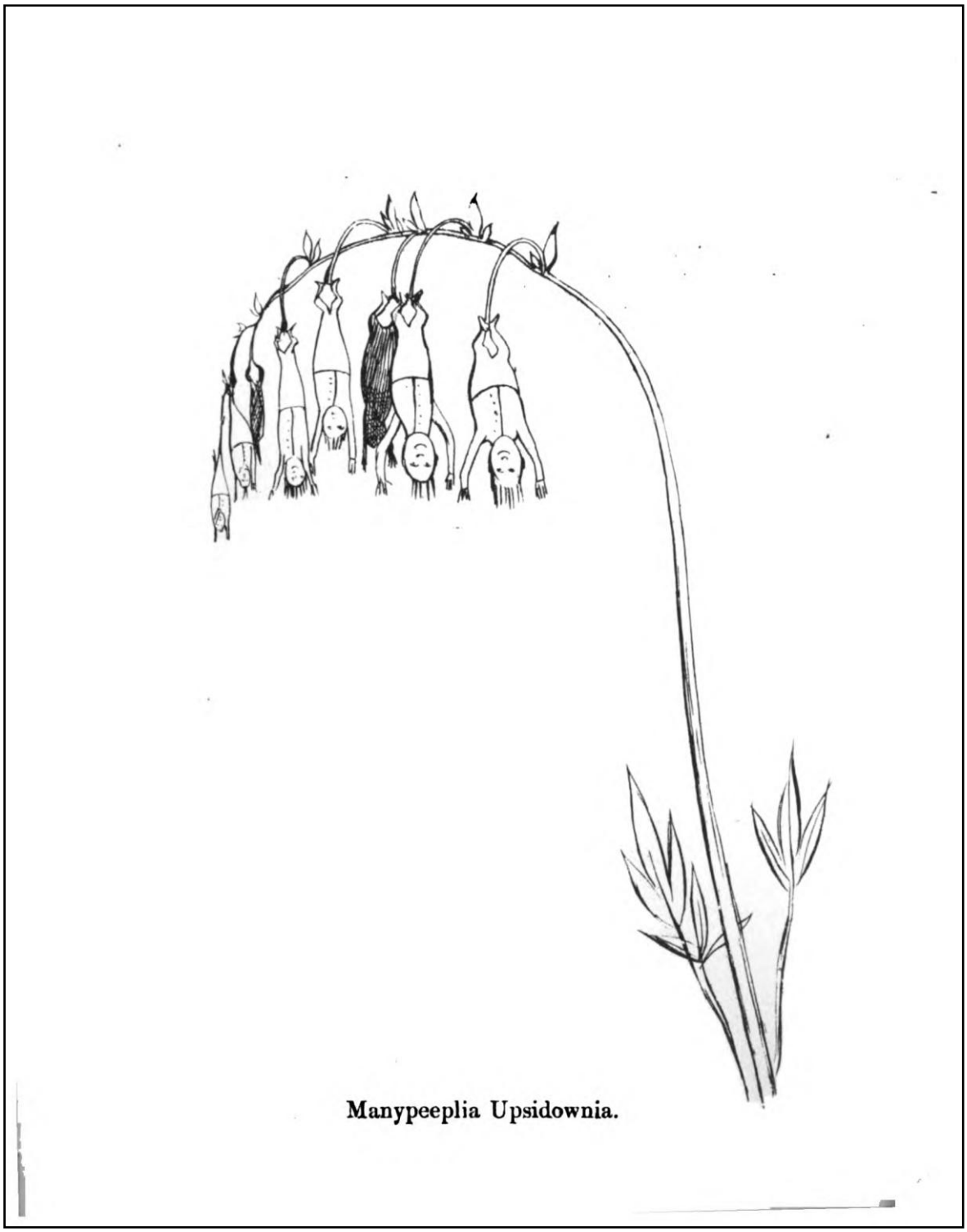


Fig. 3. ‘Manypeeplia Upsidownia’ in Edward Lear, *Nonsense Songs, Stories, Botany and Alphabets* (London: R. J. Bush, 1872), n. p.

Linnaeus was, however, evidently susceptible to acts of imaginative analogy. The legend that stands between the figure of woman and her 'vegetable prototype' might be translated as 'False and true | Mystical and real | Fashioned and depicted (or described)'. Recalling Larson's comment on Linnaeus's pedantic oracularity, this is an oddly arcane legend from a systematic botanist. Linnaeus's encounter with the plant metamorphosed from Johann Christian Buxbaum's '*Chamaedaphne*' to *Andromeda polifolia* is suggestive and paradoxical, comparative and poetical, bizarre and imaginative, giving the lie to a vision of Linnaeus as a merely crabbed, austere, bloodless microscope-user.

Linnaeus's literary reputation as a nature writer of ecstatic observation is particularly embedded in his native Sweden, not least because of his travel diaries, and Annika Lindskog suggests that in recent years Linnaeus has come to be seen as one of the first Swedish lyricists of the natural world.[184] In 1957, author and diplomat, Dag Hammarskjöld, praised Linnaeus's Swedish works to the Swedish Academy: 'As an observer and a name-giver,' Hammarskjöld wrote, 'Linnaeus taught us to see with insight, but freely…With the creative power of the poet, he showed us how better to capture and hold the elusive experience of the moment in the net of language…'[185] Similarly, August Strindberg, famously called Linnaeus not a naturalist but a poet: a 'man who has fantasy, which is the capacity to combine phenomena, see context, arrange and sort it out'.[186] The strength of this native support confirms Condorcet's *Éloge* on the death of Linnaeus for the French Academy of Sciences, in which he suggested that although Linnaeus's style did not suit everyone equally, his Swedish 'compatriots' found in his work 'an elegant and agreeable style, and a kind of eloquence more rare than everything: the only one, perhaps,

[184] Lindskog, p. 86.
[185] Dag Hammarskjöld, *The Linnaeus Tradition and Our Time* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1957), p. 7.
[186] Quoted by John Eric Bellquist in *Strindberg as a Modern Poet: A Critical and Comparative Study* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 118.

that really suits philosophical works, and which consists of enclosing many ideas in a few words, and in expressing new and important truths in a noble and simple style...'[187]

Linnaeus Unlocked

If, as Condorcet suggested in his *Éloge*, Linnaeus's style was attractive to his fellow Swedes, although without that eloquence which struck the 'greatest number of people' – an eloquence better exemplified, perhaps, by Buffon – Linnaeus's linguistic isolation posed more of a problem than his geographical isolation.[188] The composition of his scientific works in Latin meant that they could circulate more widely among men of a certain education than his travelogues and diaries. Nevertheless, restriction to Latin narrowed the influence of his usable system, as Erasmus Darwin observed:

> [T]hat System which hitherto like the Bible in catholic countries, has been locked up in a foreign language, accessible only to the learned few, the Priests of Flora, whilst the gardiner, the herb-gatherer, the druggist, the farmer, and all who are concerned in cultivating the various tribes of vegetation, in detecting their native habitations, or in vending or consuming their products, could by no industry arrive at that System, which they wished to attain, and were capable of enlarging.[189]

Linnaeus, a good Protestant who banned the names of his saints from his botanical commonwealth on account of their superstitious character, might have been surprised to see himself aligned to papists and priests, but as soon as the sexual system was embedded in botanical practice, translations of his botanic bible followed rapidly. James Lee's popular *Introduction to Botany* (1760) appeared shortly after the chief gardener of the Chelsea Physic Garden, Phillip Miller (1691-1771), admitted the Linnaean system,

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[187] Nicholas de Caritat, marquis de Condorcet, 'Éloge de Linné', in *Histoire de l'Académie Royale des Sciences* (Paris: De l'imprimerie royale, 1781), pp. 66-84 (p. 82).
[188] In *Critica botanica*, Linnaeus wrote that he was 'born at the edge of the world in a remote country' (p. 55).
[189] *A System of Vegetables, According their Classes, Orders, Genera, and Species, with their Characters and Differences*, 2 vols (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1783), xi.

however stingily, into the seventh edition of Miller's popular *Gardener's Dictionary* (1759).[190] It was not until the eighth edition of the *Gardener's Dictionary* (1768) that binomial nomenclature was incorporated, and in the intervening years Lee's book had gone through three editions. Lee's *Introduction to Botany* was the first popular explanation of the Linnaean system in English, although it was not an explicit translation, since the author argued that an exact translation would encumber the beginner with unhelpful phrases.

While clearly interested in producing an accessible, instructive text, Lee's *Introduction to Botany* discarded Linnaeus's radical attention to punctuation and typography.[191] In *Philosophia botanica*, Linnaeus's attention to the linguistic character of botanic writing extended beyond the precision of language itself to consider the visual effect of that language. When collecting synonyms, for example – the various names by which a plant is known throughout botanical literature – Linnaeus recommended that the best name should be at the head of a column, that the names be collected according to ascending or descending chronology, and that each synonym be set out on a fresh line. In doing so, he wrote in *Critica botanica*, the 'generic names stand out clearly, and the desired information easily comes to hand'.[192] Linnaeus delivered further recommendations for the form of citing previous authors, and proposed that in complete lists of synonyms the discoverer of the plant might be indicated by an asterisk. In his section on plant description, Linnaeus suggested that the description follow the order of growth from root

[190] The preface to the seventh edition suggests that the author was swayed by receiving several letters which requested that, since 'the new System of Botany, published by Dr. *Linnaeus*, was now more generally studied than any other', his plant names would render the work 'more complete'. *The Gardener's Dictionary: Containing the Best and Newest Methods of Cultivating and Improving the Kitchen, Fruit, Flower Garden, and Nursery*, 7th edn (London: Rivington, et al., 1759), n. p.
[191] According to *Philosophia Botanica*, 'The specific definition is brought out very clearly by means of punctuation properly inserted.' Linnaeus therefore used 'a *comma* to separate the parts; I make use of a *colon*, where there is a subdivision of a part; and I finish the definition with a *full stop*' (p. 255).
[192] *Critica botanica*, p. 212.

up, setting forth separate parts in separate paragraphs.[193] Although these specificities risk making the author appear a quibbling legislator, they also reveal Linnaeus to be conscious of his reader. As a result of Lee's disregarding Linnaeus's advice about literary presentation – a mistake which subsequent translators such as William Withering and Erasmus Darwin did not make – Lee's text is dense, packed with hard words. It is not a surprise to this reader that John Clare, who came upon Lee's *Introduction to Botany,* found it a 'dark system'.[194]

The Linnaean system's path to popularity was by no means smooth. While Linnaeus had argued for the priority of a philosophical knowledge of botany based on taxonomy above considerations of medical, agricultural, and economic uses of plants, the entry for botany in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1771) preferred useful study to theoretical enterprise. Moreover, the author of the article, likely William Smellie, the Scottish editor of the *Encyclopaedia* and a translator of Buffon, sensed 'obscenity' as 'the very basis of the Linnaean system. The names of his classes, orders, &. convey often the vilest and most unnatural ideas'.[195] Rather than an accessible and communicable botanical system, Smellie judged the sexual system to have 'loaded the best system of botany that has hitherto been invented [Tournefort's] with a profusion of foolish and often unintelligible terms, which throw an obscurity upon the science, obstruct the progress of the learner, and deter many from ever entering upon the study'. The author concluded by determining that 'the distinction of sexes among vegetables has no foundation in nature; or, at least, that the facts and arguments employed in support of this doctrine, when examined with any philosophical accuracy, are totally insufficient to establish it'. When the second edition of

[193] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 280. Rose's *Elements of Botany* does not follow Linnaeus's typography.
[194] See below, pp. 191-2.
[195] 'Botany', *Encyclopaedia Britannica; Or, a Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, Compiled Upon a New Plan*, ed. by William Smellie, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Bell and Macfarquhar, 1771), I, 627-653 (p. 653). The first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was published in a hundred parts from 1768 to 1771, when it was issued in three volumes.

Encyclopaedia Britannica came to be published seven years later (1777-1784) under the new editorship of James Tytler, the entry on botany had been substantially revised. The uses of plants which were catalogued at length in the first edition were reduced, and criticism of Linnaeus, who had recently died, was softened. The author investigates several botanic systems (those of Gesner, Caesalpino, Morison, Ray, Knaut, Herman, Boerhaave, Rivinus, Ludwig, and Tournefort) before praising Linnaeus

> who hath established the science of botany on the most solid foundation, by introducing a method of arrangement, if not absolutely perfect, at least as nearly approaching to perfection as can be expected; and therefore hath been deservedly followed, in preference to every other, by all botanists, since its first publication.[196]

The revision of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* reveals that the 1770s was a decade of negotiation, the end of which confirmed Linnaeus's reputation in Britain. Rose's *Elements of Botany*, published in the middle of the decade, was arguably the first direct translation of a Linnaean text. The second effort was *A System of Vegetables* (1783-5), undertaken by a 'Botanical Society at Lichfield'. In reality, the botanical society was made up of three members: Erasmus Darwin, Sir Brooke Boothby (a friend of Rousseau), and William Jackson, a proctor in the Lichfield Cathedral Court. Given their separate lives, it is likely that the majority of the translation fell to Darwin.[197] Darwin's correspondence certainly broods over the accuracy of the translation.[198] Such accuracy was paramount given Darwin's falling out with William Withering over the latter's *Botanical Arrangement of all*

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[196] 'Botany', *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Or, a Dictionary of Arts, Sciences, & on a Plan entirely New*, ed. by James Tytler, 10 vols (Edinburgh: Balfour, Gordon, Bell, Dickson, Eliot, 1778-1783), II, 1283-1318 (p. 1285).

[197] This is also the opinion of Desmond King-Hele and Jenny Uglow. See King-Hele's note (n. 5) to Darwin's letter to Joseph Banks, 13 September 1781, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, ed. by Desmond King-Hele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 187; Uglow, *The Lunar Men: The Friends who Made the Future, 1730-1810* (London: Faber, 2002), p. 379. I shall henceforth refer to Darwin as the author of the translation.

[198] Darwin's ambitions for the translation are clear in a letter to Sir Joseph Banks in which Darwin hopes that Banks might 'at a leisure hour...run your eye over it, and favour me with what you think may be translated more intelligibly or more elegantly – and with any other words, which Linneus has affix'd peculiar meanings to, which are not there mention'd – as we wish to make this translation as perfect as our language and the nature of the subject will allow of.' 1 November 1781, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, p. 196.

the Vegetables Naturally Growing in Great Britain (1776). The two had been colleagues, mutual members of the loose gathering of Midlands inventors and scientists who made up the Lunar Society, and Darwin had been instrumental in ensuring that the Birmingham medical practice of Lunar Society member William Small fell to Withering after Small's death.[199] Withering's book would become the standard English flora for the next eighty years, going through seven editions by 1830 and lasting well into the mid-nineteenth century under the editorship of William MacGillivray. When Dorothy Wordsworth wished for a book of botany in 1800, it was the third edition of Withering's flora which her brother and Coleridge ordered. The extent of Withering's influence shows in Mary Tighe's *Selena* (1802), in which the eponymous heroine finds a poem pressed between the pages of Withering's botany:

> While smiling Science shews her Withering's page,
> And half unveils her most attractive face;
> Reveres the memory of the Swedish sage,
> And bids me Nature's charms delighted trace.[200]

This is poetry of a functionally sentimental nature rather than of lasting quality, perhaps, but it shows how Linnaeus might be folded into Withering's reputation, and how botanical books housed specimens of poetry as well as plants.

Unlike Lee, Withering followed Linnaeus's typography in order to guide the reader's eye. His text is clear and approachable, and his introduction to Linnaean botany is prefixed by a detailed account of how the beginner ought to approach a specimen. His 'Rules for Investigation' model the movement between direct observation and bookish confirmation:

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[199] See Uglow for an account of the disintegration of the friendship between Darwin and Withering, a disintegration based partly on Darwin scooping Withering's discovery of the medical uses of digitalis and attributing it to his dead son, Charles, and partly on Darwin's response to Withering's *Botanical Arrangement of All the Vegetables Naturally Growing in Great Britain*, 2 vols (Birmingham: Cadel and Elmsley; London: Robinson, 1776). *Lunar Men*, pp. 276-9, 381-3.

[200] Tighe, *Collected Poetry*, ed. by Paula R. Feldman and Brian C. Cooney (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2016), pp. 245-6.

'We look into several of the Blossoms, and find two Chives in each Blossom', Withering narrates. 'This circumstance informs us it belongs to the second Class. Turning to the beginning of the second Class at page 5, we find it contains two Orders, and that the Orders depend on the number of Pointals...'[201] This form of directly-voiced guided instruction can be found in epistolary models such as Rousseau's letters to Madame Delessert (1771-4) and Priscilla Wakefield's popular *Introduction to Botany, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (1796), both of which were aimed at a polite, female readership.[202] It is on account of this female readership that Withering ham-strung himself: in seeking to make his text inoffensive, Withering judged that 'it was thought proper to drop the sexual distinctions in the titles to the Classes and Orders, and to adhere only to those of Number, Situation, &c'.[203] Readers who preferred to un-bowdlerise their botany were guided to *Philosophia botanica* and *Sponsalia plantarum*, Lee's *Introduction*, and Colin Milne's *Botanical Dictionary* (1770). Withering preferred the safer path: 'All controversies about system are studiously avoided,' he wrote, 'Mankind are weary of such unprofitable disputes: every System is invented, undoubtedly may glory in its peculiar beauties, and with no less reason, blush for its particular disputes'.[204] One might forgive Withering for reading the cultural landscape awry; his two-volume flora appeared between the first and second editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, in the wake of Smellie's strongly-worded disapproval at the sexual system's 'obscenity'. Withering's technical language thus kept its eye on safe sales and an extended readership: 'stamens' became 'chives', an older English word used by herbalists like Gerard; 'stigmas' become 'pointals'. This

[201] Withering, *Botanical Arrangement*, I, xxxi.
[202] The popularity of Rousseau's letters was due in part to Thomas Martyn's translation and amplification of the letters in his *Letters on the Elements of Botany: Translated with Notes and 24 Additional Letters* (London: White, 1785).
[203] Withering, *Botanical Arrangement*, I, v.
[204] Withering, *Botanical Arrangement*, I, v.

coyness struck Darwin as a lack of integrity.[205] His critique of Withering was publicised in the Translator's Preface to *System of Vegetables,* declaring that, along with fiddling with Linnaeus's genera, Withering's translations 'rendered many parts of his work unintelligible to the latin Botanist; equally difficult to the english scholar; and loaded science with the addition of new words'.[206] It was in direct distinction from Withering's castrated translation, then, that Darwin introduced *A System of Vegetables* as a 'literal and accurate translation' of Linnaeus's *Systema vegetabilium* (1774), which 'unfolds and describes the whole of his ingenious and elaborate system of vegetation'. Accurate terms were crucial since they were either Linnaeus's original language and indicative of his constructions, or the means by which to see parts of the plant which were so central to his system. Linnaeus's specification for language formation made him a particularly daunting subject for the translator, as was his valuation of precision and compression. Although the *System of Vegetables* had nothing like the long life of Withering's *Botanical Arrangement*, and it failed to reach a second printing, it was warmly reviewed. The translator believed Linnaeus's language was worth great effort since it was 'one of the most wonderful and successful efforts of human ingenuity'.[207] If this feels excessive, the exclamation marks which follow do not dampen the translator's enthusiasm:

> In many single pages [of the book] twenty plants are accurately discriminated from every other known plant! and more than twenty thousand plants are described in one octavo volume! so artful is the arrangement, and so laconic the style of this celebrated system! and yet from the comparative shortness of the words of our language, we have been able to render it still more concise in the translation.

[205] Yet even in the *System of Vegetables*, Darwin wrote that it was on account of the 'greater delicacy of modern language' that he used '*one male*' and '*one female*' rather than '*one virility*' and '*one feminality*' (I, v).
[206] *System of Vegetables*, I, ii.
[207] 'Advertisement' to *System of Vegetables*, II, 845.

'The *starting point*,' wrote Linnaeus in the Memoranda of *Philosophia botanica*, 'must be to marvel at all things, even the most commonplace'.[208] According to his Lichfield translator, Linnaeus's condensation translates the real into the marvellous. Indeed, not only was Linnaeus's style one of '*l'extrême laconisme*' in Condorcet's phrasing; the system itself was laconic.[209] Compression, however, demanded an exchange. Translations of Linnaeus frequently apologise for the 'hard words' required by botany. In Priscilla Wakefield's *Introduction to Botany* (1796), Felicia confesses to her sister Constance that she is 'apprehensive of the number of hard words at the entrance' to her botanical education.[210] Learning a new language might prove a barrier to entry, a preliminary step which could deter students or detain them by sheer boredom from proceeding in their studies.[211] Yet Darwin argued for the functional value of imported words: 'As new ideas require new words to represent them, and must therefore be explained to the young Botanist, it is of no consequence from what language they are derived'.[212] 'Impalement' (or 'empalement' as Withering had it) was 'as difficult to the english scholar, [sic] as the word calyx'.[213] Furthermore, 'impalement' would not be understood by those already familiar with Linnaeus's language, and would not 'assist the young Botanist in his study of the original'. By this last phrase, the translator suggests that studying Linnaeus 'in the original' was the intention of every serious botanist, as reading Dante in the Italian is to the lover of poetry.

The Preface of the Translators of *A System of Vegetables* advances a significant document for botanic translation: Darwin was conscious of the mediating process of

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[208] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 332.
[209] Condorcet, p. 81.
[210] Priscilla Wakefield, *Introduction to Botany, in a Series of Familiar Letters* (London: Newbery et al., 1796), p. 2.
[211] Yet, objects James Wheeler, 'it should be remembered, that every science must have terms peculiar to itself, expressive of its peculiar and necessary distinctions.' *The Botanist's and Gardener's New Dictionary; Containing the Names, Classes, Orders, Generic Characters, and Specific Distinctions of the Several Plants Cultivated in England, According to the System of Linnæus* (London: Strahan et al., 1763), vii.
[212] *System of Vegetables*, I, ii.
[213] *System of Vegetables*, I, iii.

translation, as well as the grammatical, syntactical, and linguistic decisions which translation necessitates. Convinced that 'pod' and 'shell' would need as much definition as their Linnaean equivalents, 'legumen' and 'siliqua', while lacking the rewards of wider conversability with trained and foreign botanists, Linnaeus's terms were retained and given English terminations.[214] In this way 'corolla' became 'corol', 'petalum' became 'petal', 'anthera' became 'anther' and so on. In compounding by means of participles and diminutives, the new language yielded 'corollet', 'five-petal'd', and 'anther-bearing'. This compromise was modelled upon Rousseau's attempt at naturalising Linnaeus's terms into French in his 'posthumous Botanical work', his fragments of a botanical dictionary.

> The determining of the exact number of these words, necessary to be naturalised into our language, was a task of much nicety and consideration. We were afraid of rendering our work difficult to the english reader, if we introduced many innovations, or did much violence to our vernacular tongue or of making it unintelligible to the latin Botanist, if we were too parsimonious in the engraftment or transplantation of exotic terms. We hope we have steered between these two extremes, for we have had the opinion of many and skilful pilots to direct our voyage...[215]

These 'skilful pilots' include not only numerous botanists – James Lee, Thomas Martyn, and Richard Pulteney among them – but that 'great Master of the english tongue Dr. SAMUEL JOHNSON, for his advice in the formation of the botanic language'. Having translated Juvenal, Johnson was no stranger to the theory of translation, the activity 'by which the impediments which bar the way to science are, in some measure, removed, and the multiplicity of languages become less incommodious'.[216] Regrettably, no record of Darwin's communication with Johnson remains. (Johnson's life of Philips does however throw up an unexpected Linnaean connection by disclosing his acquaintance with Phillip

[214] *System of Vegetables*, I, iii.
[215] *System of Vegetables*, I, iii.
[216] Samuel Johnson, '*The Idler*, no. 68' in *The Idler and the Adventurer*, ed. by W. J. Bate, John M. Bullitt, L. F. Powell, Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 211-214 (p. 212).

Miller, author of the *Gardener's Dictionary* and head of the Chelsea Physic Garden, who at eighty years of age met Linnaeus when the latter came to England in 1737.)[217] Darwin's consultation of Johnson offers a pleasant complication of biographical record: according to Anna Seward, the giants of Lichfield had 'one or two interviews, but never afterwards sought each other. Mutual and strong dislike subsisted between them'.[218] Yet, despite the lamentable absence of a record of Darwin's and Johnson's exchanges on the subject of translation, Darwin's meticulousness towards the matter is plain.

> In regard to the general language, we have endeavoured to copy that of LINNEUS with the most scrupulous exactness; for as this illustrious Naturalist may be said to *have formed a language*, rather than to have found one, suitable to his purpose; and appears to have studied every part of his work, from the great outline of his system to the most minute circumstance of construction and arrangement, with industry and sagacity almost peculiar to himself, we have translated it, as far as might be, page for page, and line for line: have accurately attended to his mode of punctuation, and have introduced the astronomic characters with all the numerous capital and italic types, which are used in the original.[219]

In this paragraph, Darwin stated explicitly what other writers had implied: that Linnaeus was an active creator of botanic language rather than a pure regulator. Indeed, no element of the original text was too petty for the translator's care: punctuation, typography, and symbols fell under his remit as much as linguistic accuracy, mirroring his author's attention to minutiae. Linnaeus made diminutives out of Latin and Greek; so did Darwin in English (e.g. leaflet, stalklet, coronet). Certain diminutive adjectives were not formed without difficulty and required periphrasis. (Darwin gave the example of 'subramous' or 'thinly-branched'). On the other hand, Darwin approached compound words with confidence: 'We come now to those numerous *compound words* constructed by our author in so artful a manner, as to depicture such a variety of forms, of leaves, fruits, flowers,

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[217] Samuel Johnson, 'J. Philips', *The Lives of the Poets*, I, 338-357 (p. 346). For an account of Linnaeus's meeting with Miller, see Stoever, pp. 89-90.
[218] Seward, p. 68.
[219] *System of Vegetables*, I, vi.

stems, seeds, as no language was before ever made to describe'.[220] Since English, like Latin, has a genius for compounding, should a compound of 'oblong' (*oblongum*) and 'egg' (*ovatum*) when describing a leaf form be rendered as 'egg-oblong' or 'oblong-egg'd'? Which of the two shapes predominate? What happens if one adds 'oval' (*ovale*) and 'elliptic' (*ellipticum*)? Such compounding, writes Darwin, 'conjur[es] up before our eyes the outlines of forms as numerous and as accurate by the magic of a few words, as the pencil alone was thought capable of producing'.[221] Fretting over the terms of leaf definition (*ovatum, lunatum, lanceolatum*), Darwin wondered if *cordatum* would be better translated as 'hearted' or 'heart-shaped'? The translators settled upon the former ('egg'd', 'moon'd, 'lanced') because it resembled the original language more closely, and because 'shape' indicates external surface, Darwin argued, rather than sheer outline. Indeed, a preference for 'hearted' rather than 'heart-shaped' made further compounding (e.g. 'heart-egg'd' or 'egg-hearted') less bothersome. Although the rationale for these decisions passes the test it sets for itself, the average reader might struggle to muster up the mental image of 'egg-hearted' which Darwin claimed was 'conjur[ed]' up by the magic of concision. Darwin defended himself against cries of idiosyncrasy by arguing that such criticisms may also be laid at his author's door: in composing such idiosyncrasies, he was only the better (that is to say, more accurate) translator. Nor did this draw to a close Darwin's haggling over the details of translation. Adjectival or passive participial compounds offered choice: thus 'axe-form' meant in the shape of an axe, while 'axe-formed' meant shaped *by* an axe.[222] After consulting with friends, his preference was for the adjectival form, since adjectives 'become more euphonious from their being less loaded with consonants' and were sanctioned by common and literary usage (e.g. 'small-tooth comb', 'blindfold').

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[220] *System of Vegetables*, I, vi.
[221] *System of Vegetables*, I, vii.
[222] These debates are tested among his correspondents, as demonstrated by Darwin's letter to Sir Joseph Banks, 29 September 1782, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, pp. 190-1.

Darwin's confidence in these rulings led to his boast that the aptness of English in compounding words yielded a text with 'greater precision' than the original Latin. When applied to the root, for example, '*dentata*' is translated as 'teethlike', whereas when referring to a leaf it became 'tooth'd'. After this lengthy process of whittling down alternatives, Darwin was confident that purchasers of *A System of Vegetables* – published in four parts between 1783 and 1785 and re-issued as a two-volume book – would be grateful for his efforts.

> Our readers will perceive, that to equal all these niceties of combination with precision and conciseness in our translation was an undertaking that required some degree of hardiness; this was the Gorgon-feature, that had hitherto frozen the designs, or blasted the progress of all, who looked upon this giant Naturalist, and deterred them from the encounter.[223]

'Hardiness' is both 'hardship; fatigue' and 'stoutness; courage; bravery'.[224] The act of translation was not a tedious drudgery, as Desmond King-Hele has suggested it to be – or at least *only* drudgery. It was a test of the translator's acuity and powers of expression. Producing an accurate translation from Linnaeus's Latin to contemporary English was one challenge; equalling Linnaeus's values of simplicity, brevity, and clarity was another. Such challenges do not necessarily resolve each other. As Johnson wrote elsewhere of Dryden: 'closeness [in a translation] best preserved an author's sense' while 'freedom best exhibited his spirit'.[225] This dichotomy is put under additional pressure when considering scientific accuracy.

Darwin's fidelity to his author, as well as his verbal scrupulosity in translation, reveal him to be a writer attentive to his métier. This concern for accuracy, use, and decorum, as well as functional expressivity, forges sympathies with his poetic work, which was to become public at the end of the decade of translation. Uglow and King-Hele have

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[223] *System of Vegetables*, I, vii.
[224] 'hardiness, n. s', Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, n. p.
[225] 'The *Idler* No. 69', p. 217.

stressed the continuity from Darwin's transition from Linnaean translator to Linnaean poet, as if 'the copious word-making of the translation (leading to the coinage of many now common words such as "bracts", "anthers", "florets") had triggered some creative impulse'.[226] In considering the fastidiousness of Darwin's translation of *A System of Vegetables*, one might recall a line from Cowper: 'There is a pleasure in poetic pains, | Which only poets know'. This is a neat maxim, but the lines which follow acknowledge by accumulating phrases how much wrestling neatness requires:

> The shifts and turns
> Th'expedients and inventions, multiform,
> To which the mind resorts, in chase of terms
> Though apt, yet coy, and difficult to win
> T'arrest the fleeting images that fill
> The mirror of the mind, and hold them fast...
> (I. 285-290)[227]

Here Cowper snags on a definition: unspooling 'poetic pains' as 'shifts', 'turns', 'expedients', and 'inventions', modified after the fact, and just out of reach. The hard pleasures of poetry lie in trying to match word to thing so that the thing is momentarily caught in the net of the 'apt' word.

What are the advantages of considering *A System of Vegetables* a poetic resource? It is clearly a project attentive to language. The book translates an author who himself was careful in his use of language, a language whose principles he occasionally placed under stress by his own propensity to make metaphors and analogies, and to use poetry to substantiate his prose. In Darwin's hands, *A System of Vegetables* becomes a technical word-hoard: a storehouse of vocabulary as well as of objects. Nicholas Roe has written of

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[226] Uglow, p. 385. Desmond King-Hele makes a similar suggestion but proposes that it was translating *The Families of Plants, with their Natural Characters, According to the Number, Figure, Situation, and Proportion of all the Parts of Fructification*, 2 vols (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1787), which, lacking the intellectual challenge of settling the questions of anglicizing Linnaeus's terms, drove Darwin to poetry. See *Erasmus Darwin: A Life of Unequalled Achievement* (London: Giles de la Mare, 1999), p. 217.

[227] *Poems of William Cowper*, II, 146.

the significance of C. H. Kaufman's *Dictionary of Merchandize and Nomenclature in All Languages* (1803) for the poetry of Keats after he won it as a school prize: Keats would 'raid' Kaufman's book 'again and again for the rich, material textures of its language'.[228]

Reading a seed catalogue, *Gilbert Wild's Daylilies* (1991), Elaine Scarry shows how one might read a list for aesthetic pleasure rather than information.[229] The pith of *System of Vegetables* is a catalogue of classified plants. The genera are listed beneath their respective class, below which unspools a list of species, each to its own line. See, for example, *Heliotropium*, a member of Pentandria Monogynia (five stamens, one pistil):

179. HELIOTROPIUM. *Cor*. Salver-form, 5-cleft, with teeth interposed: the throat closed with vaults.
peruviavum. 1. H. leaves lance-egg'd, stem shrubby, spikes numerous aggregate-corymbed. *peruvian*
indicum. 2. H. leaves heart-egg'd acute ruggedish, spikes solitary, fruit two-cleft. *indian*
parviflorum. H. leaves egg'd wrinkled rugged opposite alternate spikes pair'd. *small-flower'd.*
europaeum. 3. H. leaves egg'd most intire downy wrinkl'd, spikes pair'd. *european*.
supinum. 4. H. leaves egg'd most intire downy plaited, spikes solitary. *supine*.
fruticosum. 5. H. leaves linear-lanced hairy, spikes solitary sessile. *shrubby*.
curassavicum. 6. H. leaves lance-linear smooth veinless spikes pair'd. *curassia.*
orientale. 7. H. leaves linear smooth veinless, flowers scatter'd lateral. *oriental.*
gnaphalodes. 8. H. leaves linear obtuse downy peduncles two-fork'd, flowers of the spikes fourfold, stem shrubby. *gnaphalium-like*.[230]

Alongside the metaphoric language describing the genus – the marvellous architecture of the sunflower's 'throat closed with vaults' – each species offers a tight-packed string of adjectives. Darwin's translation of *Heliotropium* offers a line-driven typographical unit not unlike the short floral poems of the twentieth-century objectivist, Louis Zukofsky. Each of the *80 Flowers* was rigorously formed into units of eight lines of five words, each poem, as

[228] Nicholas Roe, *John Keats: A New Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 39.
[229] 'Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis (Particularly Delphinium)', in *Regimes of Description: In the Archives of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by John Bender and Michael Marrinan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 107-8.
[230] *System of Vegetables*, I, 152.

Zukofsky wrote, 'growing out of and *condensing* all my previous books'.[231] See, for example,

> Oxalis
>
> Wood-sorrel lady's-sorrel 3-hearts tow ox
> aleese rapids whose soul
> air-spring disperses thru water elator
> ox lips mistaken for clover
> more ruse mulberry locust-flower shield
> welcome wanderer *oxalis* time primrose-yellow
> a breeze sweet rampant pulse
> scald scold honor the bard[232]

Until it is voiced and its internal connections are overheard, Zukofsky's 'Oxalis' offers a musical unit approaching nonsense which nevertheless keeps its foot firmly in the world of things. Accuracy mattered to Zukofsky as well as Darwin: Zukofsky would compose poems only upon 'those flowers I have actually seen and whatever botany I can learn in 10 years'.[233] The oxalis is not the only plant embedded in the poem: in 'more ruse' Zukofsky offers the riddling ear the botanic name for mulberry (*Morus*). When the wood sorrel appears in *Beachy Head* among the 'tumps' of 'bright green mosses' (l. 360), Charlotte Smith's endnote identifies it as *Oxalis acetosella*, which Darwin defines as 'scape one-flower'd, leaves three'd inverse-hearted root teeth-like'.[234] (Withering's definition is 'Stalk with 1 flower: leaves 3 together: leafits inversely-heartshaped, hairy'.)[235] Smith's poetic description, with its 'light thin leaves | Heart-shaped and triply folded' (ll. 361-2) is more concise than either Darwin or Withering, and in this she is closest to Linnaeus. A century and three-quarters later, Zukofsky retained the wood sorrel's leaves' '3-hearts'. In both

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[231] Michele J. Leggott, *Reading Zukofsky's* 80 Flowers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), p. 11.
[232] From *80 Flowers* (New York: Stinehour Press, 1978), printed in Zukofsky, p. 346.
[233] Leggott, p. 12.
[234] *Poems of Charlotte Smith*, pp. 215-247; *System of Vegetables*, I, 351.
[235] Withering, *An Arrangement of British Plants; According to the Latest Improvements of the Linnaean System*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (Birmingham: Swinney, 1796), II, 430.

Darwin's translation and Zukofsky's compressed poetic micro-encyclopaedias, the syntax of ordinary English prose is put under stress. There is the suggestion of good humour in the assonance of Darwin's construction of the *Heliotropium orientale*'s flowers as 'scatter'd lateral'. In Darwin, as in Zukofsky, there is an amalgamation of the Germanic and Romantic roots: there is room in *A System of Vegetables* for both 'ruggedish' and 'peduncles', for 'downy' and 'obtuse'. Elsewhere, Darwin's translation smacks of the ingenious: the gladiolus is described as '6-parted, grinning', and cachrys is 'cork-barked'.[236] Arguably, this is reading *A System of Vegetables* against the grain. Darwin intended his translation of Linnaeus to be useful to 'the gardiner, the herb-gatherer, the druggist, the farmer', who had hitherto been excluded from Linnaean botany. Although reading *A System of Vegetables* as a literary banquet of odd flavours and unexpected word choice may seem perverse, such a reading reveals that translating Linnaeus was not simply a tedious exercise. Rather, it placed Darwin's linguistic resources under pressure, and the result is startling.

In an Interlude of Darwin's *The Loves of the Flowers*, the Poet undercuts the traditional distinction between prose and verse by declaring that 'some prose has its melody'.[237] If there are musical qualities in *System of Vegetables*, the next chapter will go deeper into an investigation of Darwin's apparent poetic clamour.

[236] *System of Vegetables*, I, 200, 79, 220.
[237] Erasmus Darwin, *The Botanic Garden*, ed. by Adam Komisaruk and Allison Dushane, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 2017), II: *The Loves of the Plants*, p. 40. Hereafter *Loves.*

II. ERASMUS DARWIN'S ARTIFICIAL VERSIFYING

Although one reader was to decry Darwin's compound terms as 'extremely inharmonious, and not more intelligible than the original Linnaean expressions', the reviews of *A System of Vegetables* were largely enthusiastic.[1] The *Monthly Review* was cool on Linnaeus's Latin ('that illustrious systematist...had very uncultivated notions of the general spirit of Latin purity'), but the reviewer warmed to its English translation, writing that 'the Lichfield language is pure throughout, and on every page gives proof of *masterly* expressions'.[2] Arguing against claims that a translation was unnecessary given the ubiquity of Latin among botanists, against accusations of the inaccessibility of the Lichfield Society's translated botanic language, and against claims that the translation was inadequate to its purpose, the reviewer declared, 'If definitive words, strong, full, concise, and plain, can be found out to mark precisely every distinction, it must be allowed to be adequate'.[3] The example of the Papaver (poppy) was offered as a demonstration of the translation's excellence:

> 648. PAPAVER. *Corol*. 4-petal'd. *Calyx* 2-leaved. *Capsule* 1-cell'd, gaping with pores under the permanent Stigma. *Poppy*.[4]

Darwin's translation maintained the numerical specificity of Linnaeus's descriptive approach, but it also gave way to startling figuration ('gaping with pores'). Although no explicit record exists of a contemporary poet reading *A System of Vegetables* – barring Dr Johnson, presumably, and, as we shall see, Charlotte Smith – the poetic possibilities lay

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[1] Robert John Thornton, *Advertisement to the New Illustration of the Sexual System of Linnaeus* ([London]: [1797]). Thornton preferred Thomas Martyn's *Language of Botany* (London: White, 1793) which Desmond King-Hele suggests heavily plagiarised *System of Vegetables*. See *Erasmus Darwin: A Life of Unequalled Achievement*, p. 181.
[2] *Monthly Review*, 72 (June 1785), 401-410 (p. 407).
[3] *Monthly Review*, 72, p. 408.
[4] *System of Vegetables*, I, 401.

dormant in the text awaiting resurrection by its reader. Nikki Hessel has described William Salisbury's Botanic Terms as a grab-bag of a poet's lexicon. As was common for an eighteenth-century dictionary, Darwin's botanic terms were indexed alphabetically. Thus, under D, one reads

Daedal
Dagger'd
Declined
Deciduous
Decurrent
Decursive
Decussated
Deflected
Delta-like
Depending
Depressed
Distant
Distinct
Divaricated
Diverging
Divided
Dorsal
Dotted
Double
Down
Downy

The column offers a range of aesthetic choice from the baroque ('daedal') and dramatic ('dagger'd') to the tactile ('downy'). Like his first long poem, *The Loves of the Plants* (1789) – which concluded with a 'Catalogue of the Poetic Exhibition' (an index of poetic portraits), an index of the contents of the footnotes, and an index of the names of the plants – *A System of Vegetables* includes a bouquet of indexes.[5] Besides the index to the Botanic Terms and Definitions, the end of the second volume includes an index of generic names,

[5] The profusion of advertisements, prefaces, catalogues, indexes, interludes, and images in *The Botanic Garden* leads Martin Priestman to shrewdly propose that William Blake's 'sense of the book as a material object' makes Erasmus Darwin a closer affiliate of Blake's than other Romantic poets. See *The Poetry of Erasmus Darwin: Enlightened Times, Romantic Spaces* (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013), p. 218. Blake, of course, also engraved prints for *The Economy of Vegetation*. See Desmond King-Hele for further correspondences between Blake and Darwin, in *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986), pp. 35-61.

an index of trivial names, the 'Alphabetical Catalogue of English and Scotch Names of Plants', and the 'Alphabetical Index of Latin Terms, with their Translations'. This plethora of indexes suggests an anxiety over how readers might use the volume. Will they want the familiar English names of a plant? Or will they prefer the genera? The several indexes allow several pathways through the book. Yet, as William Gass suggests, listing is a 'fundamental *literary* strategy' (my italics) which rarely draws attention to itself.[6] Darwin's multiple indexes hide their aestheticism in plain sight. They are functional but, in their plenitude, they act as testament to Darwin's love of the list, his aesthetics of accretion, which is shared by the *Loves of the Plants*'s evident pleasure in enumeration. The catalogue's venerated place in poetry is ensured by Homer's catalogue of ships in the second book of the *Iliad*. In his 'Observations on the Catalogue', Pope professed himself wary in undertaking his translation of it:

> I had some cause to fear that this Catalogue which contributed so much to the Success of the Author, should ruin that of the Translator. A meer heap of Names tho' but a few Lines together, could afford little Entertainment to an *English* Reader, who probably could not be appriz'd either of the Necessity or Beauty of this Part of the Poem...*Dionysius* of *Halicarnassus* in his Discourse of the *Structure and Disposition of Words*, professes to admire nothing more than that harmonious Exactness with which *Homer* has placed these Words, and soften'd the Syllables into each other, so as to derive Musick from a Croud of Names which have in themselves no Beauty or Dignity. I would flatter myself that I have practis'd this not unsuccessfully in our Language, which is more susceptible of all the Variety and Power of Numbers than any of the modern, and second to none but the *Greek* and *Roman*.[7]

In this passage, Pope allows for the music of the catalogue to which John Clare would later cheerfully confess himself susceptible. The 'Croud of Names' provided by the indexes to *System of Vegetables* might not pass Pope's poetic benchmark, yet Pope is clearly attracted to the indexical form. His translation of the *Iliad* offers a lavish bouquet of indexes: the

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[6] William Gass, 'I've Got a Little List', *Tests of Time: Essays* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 2014), pp 78-101 (p. 92).

[7] Alexander Pope, *The Iliad of Homer*, ed. by Maynard Mack, Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope, 2 vols (London: Methuen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967), I: *Books I-IX*, pp. 173-177 (pp. 175-177).

'Index of Persons and Things'; a 'Poetical Index', subdivided into Fable, Characters or Manners, Speeches or Orations, Descriptions of Images, Similes, Versification; and the 'Index of Arts and Sciences'. This attraction survived the *Iliad*: nearly a decade later, the *Dunciad Variorum* (1729) offered an 'Index of Things (Including Authors)', a performance which joins the genre of satirical indexes, such as the 1705 satirical index to William Bromley's *Remarks in the Grande Tour of France and Italy* and Gay's *Trivia* (1716).[8] Is it perverse to read the indexes of *A System of Vegetables* as one reads Homer's catalogue of ships? Linnaeus might say so. The ostensible purpose of the index is referential.[9] The Linnaean system was itself indexical: Sir James Edward Smith compared it to a dictionary, proposing that one discovers a plant's character as one finds words by orthography.[10] This comparison was spelled out more fully by Linnaeus in his introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737), where he divided the parts of fructification into twenty six parts: 'All these features are to us the letters of plants,' Linnaeus wrote, 'and once read, they will teach us the characters of plants. These were inscribed by the Creator. It will be our duty to read them'. [11] This alphabetical approach was taken to an inventive extreme by Jean-Pierre Bergeret in his cryptographic botanical work, *Phytonomatotechnie universelle* (1783-4), in which Bergeret created referential codes for plants made of thirteen letters, each of which corresponded to particular physical characteristics. *Iberis semperflorens*

[8] *Remarks in the Grand Tour...performed by a Person of Quality in the Year 1691* (London: John Nutt, 1705). The index was added not by Bromley but by Dr. William King, a political opponent.
[9] Robert E. Belknap divides his lists into pragmatic and poetical lists in his first chapter of *The List: The Uses and Pleasures of Cataloguing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).
[10] James Edward Smith, *A Grammar of Botany* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1821), p. 32. In Smith's analogy, the Linnaean system is the dictionary, the natural system of Bernard and Antoine Laurent de Jussieu is the grammar: 'A dictionary quarrels not with a grammar, nor a history with a chronological table' (xiii-iv). Buffon wrote similarly in the 'Premier discours' of *Histoire naturelle*. See *Oeuvres*, ed. by Stéphane Schmitt and Cedric Crémière (Paris: Gallimard, 2007), p. 42.
[11] Staffan Müller-Wille and Karen Reeds, 'A translation of Carl Linnaeus's introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737)', 563-572.

(broad-leaved candy tuft), for example, is glossed as VEHJUHFUALIDE, a name one can imagine neither saying nor remembering. [12]

Yet the notable distinction between the indexes of *A System of Vegetables*, and the indexes of Lee, Withering, and Rose, for example, was given in its advertisement: 'Many of our friends have lamented the want of a mark or accent to determine the pronunciation of botanic names, and have thought this would be a work highly acceptable to those, who are not critics in the learned languages'.[13] The generic and trivial names listed in the index begin to look like components of a partially scanned line of verse: Equisétum, Eránthemum, Eríca. Rather than pointing to the world of real observable elements, the status of these generic names is emphasised *as words*.

Accentuation does not go off without some debate. Ought there to be a curved or straight line over the penultimate syllable of the words of uncertain quality? Should the accent be placed over the syllable 'which is longer dwelt upon, or spoke with more energy'? Which procedure should govern accentuation when classical pronunciation contradicts modern pronunciation? Darwin compared the modern pronunciation of Anemone (*anémone*) with its classical appearance at the end of a line of hexameter verse by Bion and in the work of Ovid (*anemóne*): a botanical list clarified by its recourse to poetry.[14] Charlotte Smith accents the anemone in *Beachy Head*, where 'the copse's pride, anémones, | With rays like golden studs on ivory laid' grew '[m]ost delicate' (ll. 364-6). For a twenty-first century reader, this accentuation seems unnecessary, as the accent falls on the expected syllable. Smith's note, however, revokes the givenness of such an accent:

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[12] Jean-Pierre Bergeret, *Phytonomatotechnie universelle, c'est-à-dire, l'art de donner aux plantes des noms tirés de leurs charactères*, 3 tomes (Paris: 1783-4).
[13] *System of Vegetables*, II, 847.
[14] Bion's 'Lament for Adonis' (l. 66) in *The Greek Bucolic Poets*, trans. by J. M. Edmonds, rev. edn (London: Heinemann; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1928), pp. 385-395 (pp. 390-1). In Book x of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid implies the anemone but does not actually name it. *Metamorphoses, Books IX-XV*, trans. by Frank Justus Miller, rev. by G. P. Goold, 2nd edn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984, repr. 2005), p. 117.

> It appears to be settled on late and excellent authorities, that this word should not be accented on the second syllable, but on the penultima. I have however ventured the more known accentuation, as more generally used, and suiting better the nature of my verse.[15]

Given the novelty of Darwin's accentuated index, and Smith's acknowledgment of 'late and excellent authorities', it seems likely that Smith had come across a copy of *A System of Vegetables*.[16] Smith's note on the anemone shows herself to be unafraid to dissent from specialists and authorities.[17] Her note reveals the fault-line where botanic correctness meets the poetic ear: her verse refuses to be hobbled by 'correct pronunciation', yet her eye and poetic procedure are careful enough to note the disagreement.

For Darwin, words of four syllables like *Leucoium* or *Anthericum*, which begin with a dactyl but might be called choreambics when placed at the end of pentameter verses, were 'disagreeable' from the modern habit of accentuating the antepenult when the first and last syllables should rightly be given weight. Describing botanic accentuation in the language of classical poetic scansion shows an unexpected convergence in the ostensible division between poetic and pragmatic lists, and makes the indexes of generic and trivial names a halfway house for both poetry and referentiality.

The appetite for accented lists was proven when a reviewer wondered why the alphabetical index of Latin botanic terms ('the very elements of the science') were unaccented, particularly since the book was calculated to appeal to those without 'Latin opportunities', as the reviewer put it, as much as to the 'Latin Botanist'.[18] If translations of Linnaeus were designed to widen access to botanical knowledge, the English reader's (projected) desire for an accented index suggests a further anxiety over social performance, an anxiety in identifying a plant audibly which, in the case of botanical excursions, may

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[15] *Beachy Head: With Other Poems*, p. 158.
[16] Darwin had died in 1802, and the *Beachy Head* volume was published in 1807.
[17] Pascoe, p. 197; see also Labbe, pp. 71-86.
[18] *The Monthly Review, or Literary Journal*, 73 (July 1785), 1-13 (p. 7).

cause social distress.[19] This anxiety seems justified after reading the *Monthly Review*'s praise of the Lichfield Society for 'an attempt novel in its kind, an attempt truly laudable, as well as serviceable. Who, that has heard the pronunciation of botanic names from the mouths of unlettered persons, could ever bear the jarring dissonance, without wishing for more enlightened times?'[20] Yet, the consideration for the oral and aural conditions of botanical enunciation is not unusual: Linnaeus himself suggested that generic names should not exceed one and a half feet long (Linnaeus's Horatian term is *sesquipedalia*) since these are 'disgusting' and 'are actually painful to pronounce and liable to damage the throat of the speaker'.[21] The accented index which appears in *System of Vegetables* is not perfect – it was judged incomplete in neglecting to accent the botanical terms and on account of its variable accenting of trivial names – but an approving reader of the accented index, corresponding with the *Gentleman's Magazine* as 'P. B. C', suggested that a corrected copy of the index might be published separately from the work as a whole. 'From the smallness of the size and price it would be in every body's hands', wrote P. B. C., 'and if the terms of art were added, accented in the same manner, the work would be still more useful'.[22] In the *Families of Vegetables*, the Lichfield Botanical society's second translation, Darwin thanked his reviewers and accepted their advice, accenting the names of genera and trivial names more fully, and offering an accented index of general botanic terms. After explaining the rationale of his system of accentuation, which was based on emphasis rather than quantity, Darwin divulged a hint of a more extensive project:

[19] On the contemporaneous standardisation of spoken English, see Lynda Mugglestone's *Talking Proper: The Rise of Accent as Social Symbol* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).
[20] *Monthly Review*, 73, pp. 6-7.
[21] *Philosophia botanica* (Stockholm: 1751), p. 202. 'Sesquipedalia verba' is found in *Ars Poetica* (l. 97), pp. 458-9.
[22] 'Letter', *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle,* 55.10 (October 1785), 757-758 (p. 757).

> But we hope, (and indeed, venture to fortell,) that a learned Botanist will soon favour the public with a *Metrice Botanica*; with the quantities of botanic names and terms, expressed by long and short marks, and with authorities from greek, latin, and arabic poets, or prose-writers, for those words which are esteemed dubious; a work much wanted, and which would be highly useful to the medical, as well as botanical world, and of great entertainment to every classical reader.[23]

Instructive and entertaining: the accented index fulfils Horace's criteria for poetry ('aut prodesse volunt aut delectare poetae').[24] While the Lichfield Botanical Society shied away from giving the metrical botanist's name, evidence points to the Reverend Samuel Goodenough (1743-1827), founding member of the Linnean Society and later Bishop of Carlisle, as the author of *Metrice Botanica*. In early March 1787, Goodenough wrote to Sir James Edward Smith, the purchaser of Linnaeus's collections and founder of the Linnaean Society, to announce that Goodenough's *Systema Accentuatum* (presumably the *Metrice Botanica*) was 'ready for the press' but that it would be kept back until Smith returned from his journeys on the Continent.[25] Unfortunately, there is no trace of the *Systema Accentuatum* after this exchange, although correspondence between Goodenough and Smith in March 1822 returned to the question of accentuation. On 8 March, Goodenough offered his assistance to Smith in accenting generic and specific names during the preparation for Smith's 'English flora'. The suggestions which followed gesture at the unpublished manuscript:

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[23] *Families of Plants*, xvi.
[24] *Ars Poetica* (l. 333), pp. 478-9.
[25] Letter of 11 March 1787, GB-110/JES/COR/11/8, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/62552/> [accessed 26 October 2018].

> Where the syllable was pronounced long as in púrus, edúlis, Polypódium, I put one straight stroke ─. Where it was pronounced short as Màgnus palùstris, Chrysànthemum, I put two straight strokes ‖. *I* preferr'd this to the more learned characters of – & ◡ because we accent a living language according to the *use*, not the *nature* of the syllable. Thus there are some refined critics who would pronounce polypódium, Polypȍdium, the *o* in polypódium being an *omicron* & thus by nature *short* – but this in the present state of things would be perplexing – because great tenderness of attention should I think be paid & practical Men & Ladies & Gardeners who have been accustomed to pronounce so.[26]

Goodenough's accents were not only intended to guide the pronunciation of those whose access to botany was previously limited, but his letter suggests it has been informed by common usage. Smith replied to the Bishop within the week with a polite demurral: 'As to accents,' he wrote, 'Yr Lordship's plan is excellent...but perhaps it is more than I want. Common English readers, not wanting to make Latin verses, would never understand *màgnus* & *palùstris*, &c.'[27] Smith perceived the connection forged by accentuation between botany and poetry but was evidently unconvinced. With the zeal of a scholar for his obscure subject, Goodenough was not content to risk being misunderstood. 'Dear Sir,' he wrote to Smith in his letter of 14 March,

> When I put my two strokes over màgnus etc, it was more to shew you by plan, than any wish that you should mark words, disyllables or others, which the common genius of our language would so readily point out. Whether the single stroke will sufficiently teach the pronunciation of words of three or more syllables, a little use & experience will convince you – If for instance the word Ricirus occur, will the same mark ' indicate that the *i* be pronounc'd short, as if two consonants followed it? I only throw out this for your consideration.[28]

[26] GB-110/JES/COR/12/74, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/62727/> [accessed 25 September 2018]
[27] Letter of 13 March 1822, GB-110/JES/COR/12/75, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/62728/> [accessed 25 September 2018]
[28] Letter of 14 March 1822, GB-110/JES/COR/12/76, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/62729/> [accessed 25 September]

Thereafter, like Darwin's missing correspondence with Samuel Johnson, the trail vanishes.[29] While the exchange between Goodenough and Smith, like the debate surrounding the accentuation of generic and specific botanic names risks the impossibly arcane – a clubby muttering of pedants and specialists – it identifies a strand of botanic practice which is attuned to the eye *and* the ear, offering an aesthetic counterpoint to the pragmatic, referential world of newly discovered and circulated species. Darwin's translation wrestles with discourse, the discourse which Foucault judged to be at the heart of the Linnaean system.[30] As a scientist, Darwin aimed for accuracy. As a poet, he knew that accuracy does not come at the expense of the expressive word.

Darwin's Tinkling Mesh

Robert Thornton's criticism of Darwin's 'inharmonious' terms presages later readings of his poetry. Byron's *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* (1809) left very few of his elders unscathed: it was the work of a young poet hungry to demonstrate his deftness and simultaneously revenge himself upon what he perceived to be a moribund literary culture. When he re-read the poem in 1816, annotating a copy owned by his friend Robert Charles Dallas, he wrote a marginal note attenuated by the humility of distance, 'The greater part of this Satire I most sincerely wish had never been written – not only on account of the injustice of much of the critical and some of the personal part of it – but the tone and temper are such as I cannot approve'. [31] This 'greater part' of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* did not, apparently, extend to his comments on Erasmus Darwin.

[29] If Smith responded to Goodenough's letter of 14 March 1822, it has not been preserved. The next extant correspondence between the two is Goodenough's letter in August 1822, thanking Smith for condolences after the death of Goodenough's daughter.
[30] 'Natural history is nothing more than a nomination of the visible...' Foucault, p. 132.
[31] *Complete Poetical Works of Lord Byron*, I, 257.

> Let these, or such as these, with just applause,
> Restore the Muse's violated laws;
> But not in flimsy DARWIN'S pompous chime,
> That mighty master of unmeaning rhyme,
> Whose gilded cymbals, more adorned than clear,
> The eye delighted, but fatigued the ear;
> In show the simple lyre could once surpass,
> But now worn down, appear in native brass;
> While all his train of hovering sylphs around
> Evaporate in similes and sound:
> Him let them shun, with him let tinsel die:
> False glare attracts, but more offends the eye.
> (ll. 891-902)

In another 1816 marginal note to this passage, written in John Murray's copy, Byron refused to apologise for his 'tone' since '[t]he neglect of The Botanic Garden is some proof of returning taste. The scenery is its sole recommendation'.[32] According to Byron's critique, Darwin was guilty of rhyme which is merely ornamental and insubstantial ('flimsy'), rhyme that does not do what might be called *work.* Although Byron was himself a highly skilled rhymer, the reference to Darwin's 'gilded cymbals' borrows from the lexicon of what Simon Jarvis has called 'rhyme-hating'.[33] Byron's larger accusation – that Darwin wrote verse more attentive to the eye than the ear – is not unjustified. (In the last line of the verse paragraph, however, Byron allows that even this preference for sight over sound is meretricious.) As far as delighting the eye, Darwin would agree with Byron. In the first interlude of *The Loves of the Plants,* which takes the form of a conversation between a Poet and a Bookseller, the Poet underlines the difference between poetry and prose as a distinction in abstraction, for, as he puts it, 'the Poet writes principally to the eye, the Prose-writer uses more abstracted terms'.[34] This focus on the eye explains Darwin's 'hovering sylphs' and allegorical figures, for personifications and allegories, as

[32] Byron, I, 416, n. 902.
[33] '[R]hyme is...a toy, a bawble, a gewgaw, a trifle; it jingles, it tinkles, it rattles and babbles'. Simon Jarvis, 'Why Rhyme Pleases', in *The Lyric Theory Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by Virginia Jackson and Yopie Prins (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), pp. 434-448 (p. 435).
[34] *Loves*, p. 40.

he says a little further on, are 'arts of bringing objects before the eye; or of expressing sentiments in the language of vision'.[35] It is precisely because of Darwin's visual poetics that his choice of the Linnaean system as a subject for poetry was so fitting. Linnaean botany, with its emphasis on the visible sex organs of plants, was the perfect candidate for a poem which reversed Ovid and turned plants into people: 'restor[ing]' them to their 'original animality'.[36] This privileging of the eye, however, does not have to mean it is achieved at the expense of the ear, as Byron suggested by insisting upon the third-rate quality of the verse. Indeed, a man who in an occasional verse to his sister once rhymed 'sweeter' with 'saltpetre' shows a covert sympathy with Byron.[37]

Byron's accusations of poetic insubstantiality – the 'gilded cymbals' and 'native brass', the 'false glare' of the 'tinsel' – drew from the stock of critical vocabulary surrounding Darwin's poem. In *The Pursuits of Literature* (1794), Thomas James Mathias sneered at Darwin's 'filmy, gauzy, gossamery lines' (I. 105).[38] If the Darwinian parody, *Loves of the Triangles* (1798), struck a blow to Darwin's fame, *Lyrical Ballads* knocked it down. In a letter of 6 June 1802, Henry Crabb Robinson wrote that he 'wo^{d} rather have written the Thorn than all the tinsel gawdy Lines of Darwin's botanic garden', and Crabb Robinson did not think much of 'The Thorn'.[39] The following year, Crabb Robinson declared that 'the tawdry trash of the Della Cruscan School & the false glitter of Darwin &

[35] *Loves*, p. 41.
[36] *Loves*, p. 6. *Loves of the Plants* also shows an allegiance to an enlightenment aesthetics which elevates sight above the other senses, an aesthetic which can be traced back to Addison, who launched his *Spectator* essays on 'The Pleasure of the Imagination' thus: 'Our Sight is the most perfect and most delightful of all our Senses. It fills the Mind with the largest Variety of Ideas, converses with its Objects at the Greatest Distance, and continues the longest in Action without being tired or satiated with its proper Enjoyments' (No. 411). Joseph Addison and Sir Richard Steele, *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), III: *Nos 283-426*, pp. 535-6. Addison's suggestion that sight 'may be considered as a more delicate and diffusive kind of Touch' is explicitly recalled in Darwin's posthumously published poem, *The Temple of Nature* (London: J. Johnson, 1803): 'And the mute language of the touch is sight' (III.144).
[37] Priestman, p. 20.
[38] Thomas James Mathias, *The Pursuits of Literature, Or, What You Will: A Satirical Poem in Dialogue. Part the First* (London: Owen, 1794), p. 15.
[39] From Crabb Robinson's letter to 'T. R.', 6 June 1802, *The Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle (1808-1860)*, ed by. Edith J. Morley, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1927), I: *1808-1843*, p. 44.

his admirers' to be 'incompatible with true poetry'.[40] A similar sentiment appears in an 1812 letter to Shelley from Thomas Hookham, who accused the young poet of a 'false taste in poetry. You love a perpetual sparkle and glittering, such as are to be found in Darwin, and Southey, and Scott and Campbell...'[41] Robert Southey, who recognised Darwin as an 'artist', would have agreed with Hookham that there was a 'false[ness]' in Darwin's poetical theory. 'Darwin', he wrote, 'had the eye and the ear of a poet, and the creative mind; but his writings have served to show that these are of little avail without the heart; and the heart was wanting in him'.[42] Southey allowed what Byron does not – that Darwin possessed the 'eye *and the ear* of a poet' (my italics). The vocabulary used by Crabb Robinson, Hookham, and Byron emphasises the 'glaringly showy' and 'tastelessly gay' nature of Darwin's verse, embodied in metaphors of clanging vessels, cheap metals, and insubstantial veils.[43] According to this school of criticism, Darwin's poetry is all edifice and surface; the transparency of its fabric merely shows how little lies behind it. Between its cheap finery and eye-catching spangles, *The Botanic Garden* apparently does not quite earn its effect. In the 1820s, 'flimsy' became a slang word for paper money: Darwin's rhymes, then, are cheaply reproducible and unanchored by permanent value.[44] Yet Byron himself was a sometime victim of literary history. An essay on Byron by T. S. Eliot shows that falsity may be the quality by which an unsympathetic reader may dismiss an earlier (popular) poet.[45]

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[40] Letter from Crabb Robinson to John Howill Rutt, 7 May 1803, *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, I, 49.
[41] Letter of 10 December 1812, *The Letters of Percy Bysshe Shelley*, ed. by Frederick L. Jones, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), I: *Shelley in England*, p. 341.
[42] 'Art. VIII. Collective Works of the Late Dr. Sayers; to which have been prefixed some Biographic Particulars. By William Taylor, of Norwich. 2 vols. Norwich, 1823.' *Quarterly Review*, 35 (Jan, March 1827), 175-220 (pp. 198, 199).
[43] Sense 3a. 'gaudy, adj.2', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/77116> [accessed 26 October 2018].
[44] Sense b. 1. 'flimsy, adj.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, < www.oed.com/view/Entry/71615> [accessed 26 October 2018].
[45] The stanza on the Battle of Waterloo in *Childe Harold*, wrote Eliot, 'seems to me quite false; and quite representative of the falsity in which Byron takes refuge whenever he *tries* to write poetry'. Even if Byron is

Richard Polwhele, whose poem was dedicated to that definite anti-Darwinian, Matthias, disagreed with his friend on the subject of Darwin's poetry. 'It is easy,' wrote Polwhele in a footnote to *The Unsex'd Females*,

> to run over the changes of 'artificial glitter' – 'glaring varnish' – 'deliciousness that cloys.' Thus was Gibbon treated. Gibbon, forsooth, was required to bring down the haughtiness of his style to a level with that of vulgar 'prosers'. And Darwin must lower his eagle wing, to silence the clamour of the poetic sparrow-hawks, that, whilst they arraign his flights, are pining at their own imbecility.[46]

Polwhele's defence is unusual, both in its comparing of Darwin with Gibbon (although both Gibbon and Darwin are committed composers of footnotes), and its promotion of Darwin from the lesser 'sparrow-hawks' to an eagle's sublimity, a natural metaphor thrown into relief against the backdrop of cheap luxury with which Darwin was more frequently linked. When Frances Arabella Rowden came to publish her Darwinian poems, *A Poetical Introduction to the Study of Botany*, she 'endeavoured to imitate the classical distribution and versification of this elegant writer' while sloughing away the 'language frequently too luxuriant for the simplicity of female education'.[47] The organisation of Rowden's poetry is more strictly Linnaean, proceeding from the first to the twenty-fourth class, yet her poetry is chastely programmatic, recalling Johnson's appeal not to let 'the original author lose by his imitators'.[48] The 'luxuriant' language with which Rowden charged Darwin might refer to Darwin's excessive ornamentation, but in its sense of being 'profuse, exuberant, rank', it was tinged with the wanton promiscuity of Linnaeus's system.[49] James Edward Smith accused Linnaeus, for example, of a 'luxuriant imagination,

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'never dull', Eliot suggested the reader 'still recognize[s] a falsity in most of those passages which were formerly most admired'. 'Byron', *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber, 1957, repr. 1971), pp. 199, 200.

[46] Polwhele, pp. 4-5.

[47] 'Advertisement' to Frances Arabella Rowden, *A Poetical Introduction to the Study of Botany* (London: T. Bensley, 1801), n. p.

[48] 'Waller', *Lives of the Poets*, I, 261-324 (p. 317).

[49] 'luxuriant, adj.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/111506> [accessed 26 October 2018]. Like the first edition of Withering's *Botanical Arrangement*, Rowden's poem skirts around plant sex.

with difficulty restrained by his excellent judgment.[50] 'Luxuriant' plants are also those which through cultivation produce doubled flowers.[51] Such a connection recalls Crabb Robinson to 'T.R' when comparing the *Botanic Garden* to Wordsworth's 'Thorn': 'The one is an artificial Versifier the other is a feeler and a painter of feelings'.[52] Darwin's artificiality puts him on the wrong side of poetic history, just as Linnaeus's artificial taxonomy was replaced by the development of 'natural' taxonomies based on multiple affinities rather than selected characteristics. Artifice in both cases is shorthand for old-fashioned, disproved, unnatural, forced.

After taste turned against the *Botanic Garden* in the early nineteenth century, Darwin's popularity seemed proof of its initial pretence. As early as 1818, Hazlitt could cheerfully say, 'I have myself outlived one generation of favourite poets, the Darwins, the Hayleys, the Sewards. Who reads them now?'[53] The poet's grandson, Charles Darwin, later admitted he found the previous century's enthusiasm for Erasmus's poetry 'quite incomprehensible to this day'.[54] Nor did the twentieth and twenty-first centuries rediscover much appetite for Darwin. James Venable Logan's 1936 monograph on Darwin asserted that although *The Botanic Garden* might be a historical curiosity, 'Darwin's poetry is dead eternally for the general reader' as the poet 'stands as a supreme example of bad taste in ornate language'.[55] Even a recent *Times Literary Supplement* review has admitted that 'few find Darwin digestible now'.[56] Critical studies of Darwin's poetry contribute valuable glosses of his allusions and root his polymathic interests in social networks, but rarely treat his poetry as *poetry*. Theresa M. Kelley, for example, quotes Darwin but rarely parses him.

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[50] Carl Linnaeus, *Reflections on the Study of Nature; and a Dissertation on the Sexes of Plants*, trans. by James Edward Smith (Dublin: L. White, 1786), xi.
[51] Sam George, *Botany, Sexuality and Women's Writing, 1760-1803: from Modest Shoot to Forward Plant* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), p. 32.
[52] *Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, I, 44.
[53] 'On the Living Poets', *The Selected Writings of William Hazlitt*, II, 300.
[54] Charles Darwin, *The Life of Erasmus Darwin*, ed. by Desmond King-Hele (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 32.
[55] *The Poetry and Aesthetics of Erasmus Darwin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1936), p. 94.
[56] Norma Clark, 'Happily Versified', *Times Literary Supplement*, no. 4958 (9 June 2017), pp. 11-12 (p. 11).

Martin Priestman is determined to address Darwin's literariness, but the breadth of his ambition in wanting to unpack the entirety of Darwin's interests – part of a larger plan of revitalising the Enlightenment as a period of energetic thought and experiment – means that his informative but often scattered analysis fails to lodge itself in the poems. If Darwin's poetry 'only really works as poetry if the reader is lured into becoming interested in all of these things too', reconsiderations of Darwin's poetry will not be quick to arrive.[57] Donald Hassler reads Darwin as a formalist, a minor poet of nervous modernity in the mode of Wallace Stevens' Crispin ('The Comedian as the Letter C'). For Hassler, who spends some time considering Darwin's metre, Darwin was a better thinker than he was a poet: 'This means that we will never cherish and anthologize him as much as we do our complete poets. But...Darwin teaches us...that we can never have the complete poets that we would want, and he also teaches us how to bear it'.[58]

Thus Darwin may offer pedagogical consolation, but with 'false theories' and 'false glare' in his harmony he is elsewhere widely suspected of not being sincere in his poetic ambitions, no different from the man with a taste for, as Wordsworth put it, 'rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry'.[59] This perceived desultoriness might be the result of particular claims made by Darwin in his letters. In 1788, Darwin told his son he would not put his name to *Loves of the Plants*, since 'the addition of my name would seem as if I thought it a work of consequence'.[60] In 1789, he told the engineer James Watt that he wrote 'for pay, not for fame', and in the same year he bragged to Watt's partner, the manufacturer Matthew Boulton, that his poem was an 'idle book' which 'sells so well, as to *pay* me'.[61] This emphasis on money may be what lies behind Mahood's claim that 'at heart' Darwin

[57] Priestman, p. 4.
[58] Donald M. Hassler, *The Comedian as the Letter D: Erasmus Darwin's Comic Materialism* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), viii.
[59] Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), *LBOP*, p. 751.
[60] Letter of 21 February 1788, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, p. 308.
[61] Letter of 20 November 1789; he repeated the claim in a later letter of 11 January 1790; letter of 22 October 1789, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, pp. 353, 358, 349.

'mistrusted poetry'.[62] Desmond King-Hele is more convincing, however, in arguing that the letters in which Darwin disavows poetic seriousness were a pretence, a gesture of bravado to impress his successful manufacturing friends. Material concerns are rarely estranged from poetry. (Consider Wordsworth on Southey's critical review of the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*: 'He knew that I published those poems for money and money alone'.)[63] As a result of failing to be taken seriously as a poet, Darwin's poetry has failed to attract close readings which take it on its own terms. What follows in this chapter is an attempt to discover whether Darwin's poetry does, in fact, have virtues which redeem him from two centuries of poor readings and inherited prejudice – therefore redeeming Linnaeus's influence by implication. Rather than disclaiming Darwin as an 'artificial versifier' as Crabb Robinson did – or rather, by discounting 'artificial' as an inherently derogatory term, as the garish shadow of true and 'natural' – this chapter will read 'artifice' as evidence of human ingenuity and inventive design, and test his poetry for signs of skill rather than shoddy workmanship.

George Saintsbury's suggestion that the eighteenth-century couplet has something in common with a cheap watch implicates Darwin's choice of form: standardised, knocked out to order on Pope's pattern, the couplet had scarcely 'any secret effect left possible'.[64]Assuredly Darwin wrote under Pope's tuition. Indeed, he was accused by Seward of having gone too far in his imitation. Seward drew attention to a couplet from the beginning of the fourth canto:

> Long ailes of Oaks return'd the silver sound,
> And amorous Echoes talk'd along the ground.
> (IV. 9-10)[65]

[62] *Poet as Botanist*, p. 59.
[63] Letter to Joseph Cottle, Summer 1799, *EY*, p. 267.
[64] George Saintsbury, *The History of English Prosody*, 3 vols (London: Macmillan, 1906-1910), II (1908), p. 457.
[65] *Loves*, p. 89.

Seward recognised the couplet's origin in Pope's 'Eloisa to Abelard', where Eloisa, '[p]ropped on some tomb', hears ghostly whispers: 'In each low wind methinks a spirit calls, | And more than Echoes talk along the walls' (l. 304-5).[66] 'Plagiarism is atoned when it improves upon its original,' Seward observed, 'but in the present instance we are disappointed. This generally so very accurate describer, here indolently sacrifices the verisimilitude of the circumstance, rather than change his rhymes. Echoes talk in the air and along walls, but we never hear their voice at our feet'.[67] One might excuse Seward's pointed tone given the probability that Darwin plagiarised her poetry in the first lines of *The Economy of Vegetation*.[68] Darwin's carelessness on the subject of poetic borrowing was acknowledged in the third Interlude of *Loves of the Plants*: 'There are probably many others [imitations and borrowings]', he wrote, 'which, if I could recollect them, should here be acknowledged'.[69] This casual approach to poetic ownership recalls his letter to his son Robert, a physician like himself:

> Sir Joshua Reynolds, in one of his lectures on pictorial taste, advised Painters, even to extreem old age, to study the works of all other artists, both antient and modern; which he sais will improve their [inve]ntion, as they will catch collateral ideas (as it were) [from] the pictures of others, which is a different thing from imitation; and adds, that if they do not thus copy <u>others</u>, [they] will be liable to copy <u>themselves</u>, and introduce into their [work] the same faces, and the same attitudes again and again.[70]

Darwin argues that 'catch[ing] collateral ideas' prevents self-parody, a gesture in the direction of Eliot's pronouncement that 'good poets steal'.[71] Seward is wrong, however, in

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[66] *The Rape of the Lock and Other Poems*, ed. by Geoffrey Tillotson, Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope (London: Methuen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1940, reset 1962), pp. 291-349 (p. 344).
[67] Seward, pp. 355-6.
[68] Seward, p. 132.
[69] *Loves*, p. 88.
[70] Letter of 13 April 1792, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, p. 400.
[71] When Eliot writes that 'Immature poets imitate; mature poets steal; bad poets deface what they take, and good poets make it into something better, or at least something different', I would argue that Darwin's theft is of this last kind. 'Philip Massinger', in *The Sacred Wood* (London: Methuen, 1920), pp.112-130 (p. 114).

her judgment of Darwin's theft. For Darwin *has* improved on Pope, or, rather, he has altered him for his purposes. '[A]nd more than' becomes 'amorous': the melancholy mode of the conclusion to Pope's poem is twisted to erotic conspiracy as Darwin homophonically converts Pope's words. Darwin then reorients the origin of sound: the repeated susurrants of 'ailes', 'silver sound', and 'amorous Echoes' create a whisper of feet rasping along the ground, passing to and from a midnight assignation. The 'amorous Echoes' of footfall are the talebearers of the prolific amours with which the poem teems.

If, as Christopher Ricks has suggested, a poet writing about a *line* invites an investigation of the verse-line and lodges a claim for artistry, Darwin's borrowing from Pope's lines may point to an investment in his poetic craft.[72] In *Loves of the Plants*, such a line appears at the end of the first canto, where the Muse ceases to speak and the scene darkens in tones of Gray:

> Loud shrieks the lone thrush from his leafless thorn,
> Th'alarmed beetle sounds his bugle horn;
> Each pendant spider winds with fingers fine
> His ravel'd clue, and climbs along the line...
> (I. 441-4)[73]

Even in the melancholy country churchyard, Darwin cannot resist a side-glance at levity ('Th'alarmed beetle'). Yet, while Darwin's thrush is surely a nod to Gray's 'moping owl', the source behind Darwin's couplet is Pope:

> The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine!
> Feels at each thread, and lives along the line...
> (*Essay on Man*, I. 217-218)[74]

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[72] 'Pope ensures our noticing that the verse-line too is evoked, itself to be as exquisitely fine, as feeling, as alive', and, 'It is the placing of *lines* at the end of the line there which should especially alert us'. Christopher Ricks, 'William Wordsworth 1' in *The Force of Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 89-116 (pp. 95, 96).

[73] *Loves*, p. 39.

[74] *An Essay on Man*, ed. by Maynard Mack, Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope (London: Methuen, 1950), p. 42.

Pope's rendition ('lives along the line') is better than Darwin's because of the surprise of the preposition. If Pope's spider is passively sensitive, however, Darwin's 'climbing' spider shows restlessness, industry, and a whiff of Arachne's recklessness. Pope's phrase is borrowed again at the end of *Economy of Vegetation*'s third canto as the Goddess of Botany recedes with her train:

> So shoot the Spider-broods at breezy dawn
> Their glittering net-work o'er the autumnal lawn;
> From blade to blade connect with cordage fine
> The unbending grass, and live along the line;
> Or bathe unwet their oily forms, and dwell
> With feet repulse on the dimpling well.
> (III. 575-80)[75]

This passage demonstrates a much greater degree of enjambment than Darwin usually entertains, breaking the couplet's habitual 'stiffness', threading one line to another as the spider connects each blade of grass.[76] Here, as in subsequent appearances in the next century – in Crabbe ('green Blood move along the Blade') or Wordsworth ('Felt in the blood and felt along the heart') or Tennyson's sunbeam 'stri[king] along the world' – the preposition retains its pleasurable jolt.[77] One may forgive Darwin, then, for failing to dislodge Pope's phrase from his ear. The *Anti-Jacobin*'s sharp parody, 'The Loves of the Triangles', discerned this addiction in the parody's repurposing of the ravelling spider for mathematic ends: 'How slow progressive *Points* protract the *Line*, | As pendant spiders spin the filmy twine' (ll. 39-40).[78] This second purloining is a good one – lines are perhaps better suited to geometrical proofs than natural history – but the sputtering alliteration

[75] *EV*, pp. 126-7.
[76] Saintsbury, II, 572.
[77] Attempting to map out the effects of the line from 'Tintern Abbey', Helen Darbishire wrote that in Wordsworth's 'curious' use of 'along' – mirrored by similar usage in the *Prelude* and 'The Female Vagrant' – even 'such a workaday word...takes on some of the power of that mysterious alliance' of the powers of sensuous and moral perception. 'A Phrase of Wordsworth's', *Review of English Studies*, 21.81 (January 1945), 60-62 (pp. 61, 62).
[78] 'Loves of the Triangles' in George Canning and John Hookham Frere, *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin, 1799* (Oxford: Woodstock Books, 1991), pp. 108-141 (p. 117).

shows how easily ‘pendant’ can sound like ‘pedant’ and the jokes (meticulously explained by the *Anti-Jacobin* in the poem’s footnotes) dispelled.

Darwin’s long poems (*Loves of the Plants*, *Economy of Vegetation*, and the *Temple of Nature*) repeatedly return to the image of the line in the act of being woven. In the second edition of *Loves of the Plants* (1790), Darwin added a portrait of Cannabis, treading the ‘breezy strand’ of China with a ‘dishevelled distaff’ in her hand:

> So when with light and shade, concordant strife!
> Stern CLOTHO weaves the chequer’d thread of life;
> Hour after hour the growing line extends,
> The cradle and the coffin bound its ends...[79]

The line, therefore, is a manifestly *made* thing, no matter its metaphoric or metaphysical properties. Rather than a carelessly mercenary author, Darwin’s attraction to the line and its making should alert us to his own ambition as a fellow spider. Or perhaps one might liken the poet to Vulcan, who in the *Economy of Vegetation*, surprises Mars and Venus:

> O’er his broad neck a wiry net he flung,
> Quick as he strode, the tinkling meshes rung;
> Fine as the spider’s flimsy thread He wove
> The immortal toil to lime illicit love;
> Steel were the knots, and steel the twisted thong,
> Ring link’d in ring, indissolubly strong;
> On viewless hooks along the fretted roof
> He hung, unseen, the inextricable woof.
> (II. 157-164)[80]

Darwin’s poetry may not be so much ‘gilded cymbals’, as Byron would have it, but ‘tinkling meshes’. ‘Tinkling’ is a part of the stout rhyme-hating lexicon – like ‘gaudy’ it is a word used to denigrate Darwin’s poetry – but Darwin claims both as he hangs the

[79] *Loves*, p. 212.
[80] *EV*, p. 82.

'inextricable woof' of his long couplet poems. While his critics repudiate his 'flimsy, gawzy, gossamer[y] lines', the spider and his insubstantial material are surprisingly hardy.

Similarity and Difference

According to Seward, Darwin chose the Linnaean system as a subject for his verse because it offered 'unexplored poetic ground'.[81] The popularity of *Loves of the Plants*, which desired to 'induce the ingenious to cultivate the knowledge of BOTANY' by 'recommending to their attention the immortal works of the celebrated Swedish Naturalist LINNEUS' meant an inevitable twinning of Linnaeus and Darwin in the public imagination.[82] Sarah Ashton's botanic fan, for example, marries verse and system by displaying a leaf-shape border and illustrations of Linnaeus's twenty-four classes on one side, with lines from *The Economy of Vegetation* (IV. 441-448) on its reverse. Its coy selection of lines – beginning with 'Come, ye soft Sylphs! who fan the Paphian groves' – turn the poem into an advertisement which coaches its bearer into a sequence of ritually flirtatious gestures.

[81] Seward, p. 130.
[82] 'Advertisement' to *The Loves of the Plants*, *EV*, p. 40.



Fig. 4. Sarah Ashton, *Fan*, 1792, paper, yew, sycamore, 255 × 475 mm open, Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1915/3746, <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O366497/fan-ashton-sarah/> [accessed 13 December 2018]

While eighteenth-century didactic verse sought to test the limits of poetic reach – trying cider, hunting, medicine, sheep, beer, sugar cane (or slavery) – taxonomy is an especially judicious choice.[83] 'All that truly can be known by us,' wrote Linnaeus in his introduction to the *Genera plantarum* (1737), 'depends on a clear method by which we distinguish the similar from the dissimilar', and the diagnosis of a plant consists in the 'affinity of the Genus and the difference of the *Species*'[84]. Ben Westwood has suggested that by making 'wholes out of parts, the singular out of the multiple' in rhyme, metre, syntax, and stanzas,

[83] John Philips's *Cyder* (1708), William Somerville's *The Chace* (1735), John Armstrong's *The Art of Preserving Health* (1744), John Dyer's *The Fleece* (1757), Christopher Smart's *The Hop-Garden* (1752), and James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764). In his *Lectures on English Poetry* (1742), the first Oxford Professor of Poetry, Joseph Trapp (1679-1747), observed that 'any Thing in the World may be the Subject of this kind of Poem [that is, didactic]: The Business or Recreations of the City, or the Country; even the Conduct of common Life, and civil Converse: But none more suitable than Arts and Sciences'. *Lectures on Poetry Read in the Schools of Natural Philosophy at Oxford, Translated from the Latin, with Additional Notes* (London: Hitch and David, 1742), p. 200.

[84] Müller-Wille and Reeds, 'A translation of Carl Linnaeus's introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737)', p. 564; *System of Vegetables*, I, 11.

the 'art of reading poetry is a taxonomic one'.[85] As the Irish actor and elocutionist Thomas Sheridan recognised in his reading of *Windsor Forest*, the couplet is particularly suited to taxonomy in its interplay of similarity and difference by means of parallelism and inversion.[86] More recently, the *New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* has described the nature of rhyme to

> call into prominence simultaneously a complex set of responses based on *identity* and *difference*. On the phonic level, the likeness of the rhyming syllables (at their ends) point up their difference (at their beginnings). The phonic semblance (and difference) then points up semantic semblance or difference the equivalence of the rhyme syllables or words on the phonic level implies a relation of likeness or difference on the semantic level.[87]

The entry in the *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* continues to identify metre and rhyme as the 'vertical and horizontal' axes which arrange the 'schematization' of poetic elements. The axes that divide Linnaeus's classes are visually realised in the plates which preface *The Loves of the Plants*, taken from Pierre Bulliard's *Dictionnaire élémentaire du botanique* (Paris: 1783) and engraved by Edward Stringer.

[85] Ben Westwood, 'Edward Lear's Dancing Lines', *Essays in Criticism*, 67.4 (2017), 367-391.
[86] *Lectures on the Art of Reading. In Two Parts*, 2nd edn (London: C. Dilly, 1781), p. 277.
[87] *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, ed. by Roland Greene, Stephen Cushman, Clare Cavanaugh, Jahan Ramazani, Paul Rouzer, Harris Feinsod, David Marno, and Alexandra Slessarev, 4th edn (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), pp. 1182-1192 (pp. 1084-5). Incidentally, the definition of rhyme in this entry is followed by a thorough taxonomy of rhyme.

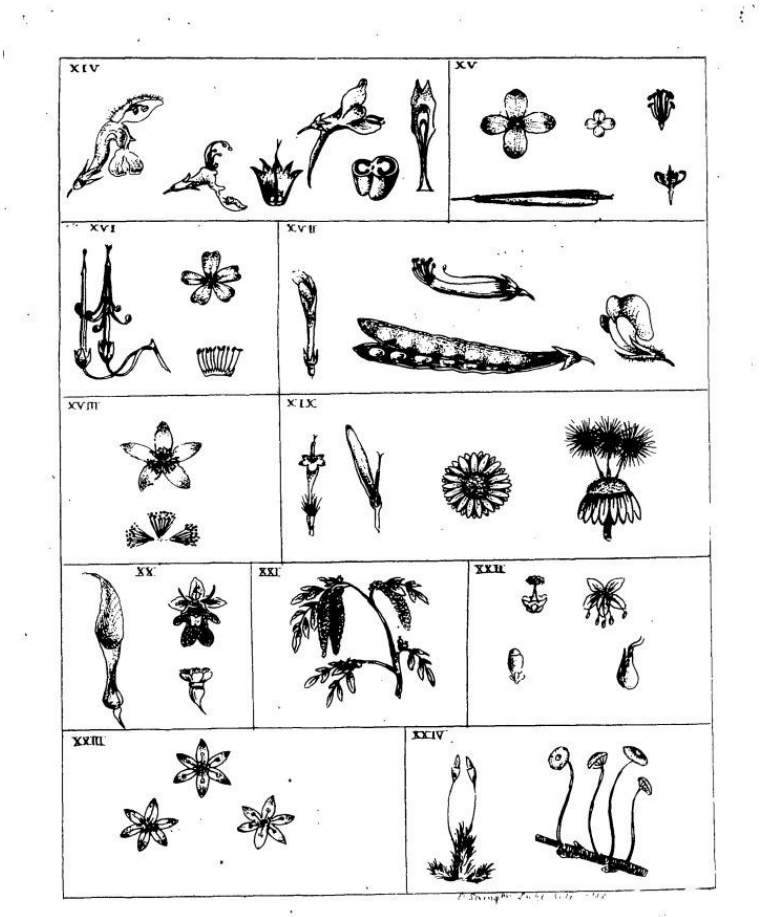


Fig. 5. Classes XIV to XXIV, from Edward Stringer's engraving of Pierre Bulliard's illustration of the 'Système sexuel de Linnæus', printed after the preface to *Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789)

Similarity and difference have their respective dangers: of sameness on one side and discordance on the other. Leigh Hunt's criticism of Darwin, that he described a 'dragon-fly and lion in the same terms of proportion', suggests a comparative procedure which has gone awry, yet one wonders how much to blame Darwin's poetic sources.[88] Anna Seward suggested that 'if poetic taste is not much degenerated, or shall not hereafter degenerate, the Botanic Garden will live as long as the Metamorphoses'.[89] While this claim may seem strikingly overconfident to the modern reader, given Darwin's diminished reputation as a

[88] *The Examiner*, 6 July 1817, reprinted in *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, ed. by Michael Eberle-Sinatra, Robert Morrison and Jeffrey N. Cox, 6 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), II: *Periodical Essays, 1815-21*, ed. by Greg Kucich and Jeffrey N. Cox, pp. 122-125 (p. 123).
[89] Seward, p. 180.

poet, *The Loves of the Plants* explicitly linked itself to 'P. OVIDIUS NASO, a great Necromancer', in its 'restor[ing]' Ovid's plants to their 'original animality'.[90] Lord Kames wrote of the author of the *Metamorphoses* that it was

> hard to say whether Ovid disgusts more by too great variety or too great uniformity. His stories are all of the same kind, concluding invariably with the transformation of one being into another. So far he is tiresome with excess in uniformity. He also fatigues with excess in variety, by hurrying his reader incessantly from story to story.[91]

That Horace Walpole, an enthusiastic reader of *The Botanic Garden*, confessed to Hannah More that he was 'not a whit more interested about one heroine and her swain than another' suggests that Darwin was unable to avoid wholly the critique Kames levelled at Ovid.[92] The equivalence of objects in a catalogue might embody the structural pleasures – or else the dulling reiteration – of repetition. Although *The Loves of the Plants* is prefaced by prose explanation of the Linnaean system, the sequence of plants as they appear in the four cantos do not strictly follow the progression of Linnaeus's twenty-four classes as Rowden's poems did. Rather, Darwin writes in the Proem that his poem may be read as a sequence of 'diverse little pictures suspended over the chimney of a Lady's dressing-room, *connected only by a slight festoon of ribbons*'.[93] This piece of theatricality may suggest that the order that follows is purely whimsical but Seward perceived that Darwin's method was structured by contrast, and that he chose 'flowers or plants which are indigenous to climates strikingly the reverse of each other'.[94] In the first canto, for example, Anthoxa of

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[90] *Loves*, p. 6.
[91] Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: A. Miller, A. Kincaid and J. Bell, 1762), p. 405.
[92] Letter of 22 April 1789, *Correspondence with Hannah More, Lady Browne, Lady Mary Coke, Lady Hervey, Mary Hamilton (Mrs. John Dickenson), Lady George Lennox, Anne Pitt and Lady Suffolk*, ed. by W. S. Lewis, Robert A. Smith, and Charles H. Bennett (London: Oxford University Press; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), p. 292.
[93] *Loves*, p. 6.
[94] Seward, p. 285.

the ‘wide heath’ is followed by Osmunda of the ‘dripping cell’.[95] The third canto, in which the following portrait appears, gathers harmful plants such as *Circaea* (Enchanter’s Nightshade), the Upas tree, and *Vitis vinifera* (grape vine).

> “Drink deep, sweet youths,” seductive VITIS cries,
> The maudlin tear-drop glittering in her eyes;
> Green leaves and purple clusters crown her head,
> And the tall Thyrsus stays her tottering tread.
> ——*Five* hapless swains with soft assuasive smiles
> The harlot meshes in her deathful toils;
> “Drink deep,” she carols, as she waves in air
> The mantling goblet, “and forget your care.” —
> O’er the dread feast malignant Chemia scowls,
> And mingles poison in the nectar’d bowls;
> Fell Gout peeps grinning through the flimsy scene,
> And bloated Dropsy pants behind unseen;
> Wrap’d in his robe white Lepra hides his stains,
> And silent Frenzy writhing bites his chains.
> So when PROMETHEUS, fearless of his ire,
> Stole from the throne of JOVE forbidden fire;
> And, lantern’d in his breast, from realms of day,
> Bore the bright treasure to his Man of clay;—
> High on cold Caucasus by VULCAN bound,
> The lean impatient Vulture fluttering round,
> His writhing limbs in vain he twists and strains
> To break or loose the adamantine chains.
> The gluttonous bird, regardless of his pangs,
> Tears his swoln liver with remorseless fangs.
> (*Loves*, III. 287-310)[96]

Linnaeus described *Vitis vinifera* as having lobed leaves which are sinuous or waving and naked, a sense of bared undulation present in the ‘seductive’ Vitis’s ‘tottering tread’.[97] In this dense restoration of the grape vine’s ‘original animality’, Darwin describes a debauch where the personified (if sedated) plant entertains her five lovers. Darwin’s zeal against alcohol has not been confined to his medical opinion but spills out in his comparison of

[95] *Loves*, pp. 87, 94.
[96] *Loves*, pp. 76-7.
[97] *Species plantarum*, I, 202.

this sordid banquet to the account of Prometheus, an analogy that pivots neatly on the centrality of the tortured liver to both the classical myth and the drunkard.[98]

W. K. Wimsatt has suggested that Pope's rhymes are shown at their best when the parallel structure of the couplet reveals the oblique tensions between differing functions in the same parts of speech, or in differing parts of speech: just the right ratio of tension between similitude and dissimilitude. Pope's couplets 'tend to hover on the verge of antithesis and hence to throw a stress upon whatever difference of meaning appears in the rhyme words'.[99] Since for Wimsatt the parallelism of the couplet form risks tedium, obliqueness of rhyme prevents this by prompting surprise through the unexpected. [100] Out of the twenty-four lines that form this verse paragraph, half of the twelve couplet rhymes pair different parts of speech. The remaining six pairs are noun-rhymes, a natural extension of Darwin's materialist poetics, perhaps, although several of the rhyme-words in those parallel noun-pairs are verbs converted into nouns ('tread', 'smiles', 'toils', 'stains'). The appearance and reappearance of rhyme words weave through the passage. The pairing of 'stains' with 'chains' – imagined manifestations of Vitis's dangerous power – is concretised in the myth, where Frenzy's 'writhing' becomes Prometheus's own contortions as he 'strains | To break or loose the adamantine chains'. In absorbing this Miltonic allusion into rhyme, Darwin drew attention to 'troublesome and modern bondage of rhyming', whose chains he refused to throw off.[101] The broadening of 'stains' to 'strains' puts pressure on the reader's ear, testing whether such pressures overburden the line. Yet no such overburdening happens: rather, the revolving of 'stains' to 'strains' casts the

[98] On Darwin and alcohol, see Desmond King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin: A Life of Unequalled Achievement*, pp. 47-49, 162, 199-200. The Poet Laureate, Henry James Pye, attempted a defence of *Vitis vinifera* in his Darwinian poem, 'The Vine', Oliver Oldschool, *The Port Folio*, 4.13 (31 March 1804), p. 104.
[99] W. K. Wimsatt, 'One Relation of Rhyme to Reason', in *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* (Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1952), pp. 152-166, (p. 159).
[100] Wimsatt, pp. 161, 162.
[101] John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, ed. by Alastair Fowler, rev. 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 55.

reader backwards through the verse, and echoing the perpetual repetitious torment suffered by Prometheus, whose 'swoln liver' regenerates during the night only be freshly assailed the following day. The repetition in the rhymes underlines the repetition ('fluttering round') inherent in the allusion. The note attached to Vitis, states that 'The chemical process of fermentation converts this sugar [of the juice of the ripe grape] into spirit, converts food into poison!' The reader is wise, therefore, to be attentive to other conversions in the verse. At the start of the catalogue of diseases caused by alcohol, Darwin delivers the following couplet:

> Fell Gout peeps grinning through the flimsy scene,
> And bloated Dropsy pants behind unseen...
> (*Loves*, III. 298-9)

Here Darwin simultaneously deploys a homoloteuton and a homophone, so that 'scene' also calls up 'seen', which is undone in the following line. The effects of alcohol wrack the body, the doctor writes, by 'producing more than half of our chronical diseases'.[102] Purity – or distillation – only makes such liquids more toxic, but Darwin's rhymes are by no means themselves pure:

> – *Five* hapless swains with soft assuasive smiles
> The harlot meshes in her deathful toils...
> (*Loves*, III. 291-2)

Here 'smiles' must sink down into 'toils', a very slant rhyme indeed. In the following couplet,

> O'er the dread feast malignant Chemia scowls,
> And mingles poison in the nectar'd bowls...
> (*Loves*, III. 295-6)

[102] *Loves*, p. 76.

the scowls: bowls rhyme words may suggest the accent of the tongue who enunciates them, but the rhyme converts 'bowls' into 'bowels', a word too indiscreet to write and so left to the ear, so that one hears 'And mingles poison in the nectar'd *bowels*', a line which absorbs the sweetness of wine and its adverse effects into the body before introducing the sequence of allegorical diseases who are fellow banqueters. What the eye sees as similar, the ear hears a telling difference. This sound slippage suggests that Darwin is not immune from combining the authority of a Miltonic phrase with scatological humour. This sly manipulation of sound, together with the incongruity of classical allusion and low humour, suggests the poet's debts to Pope have Scriblerian overtones.

If Darwin risks a conspiratorial wink in the Vitis passage based on what is heard in the rhyme, the next passage looks to the architecture of verse lines. Following Seward's observation of Darwin's structural contrasts in plant paragraphs, Darwin follows a verse paragraph on the 'itinerant vegetable' Æga (*Conferva aegagropila*) in the fourth canto, and its analogy with Hero waiting for her own sea-borne lover Leander, with a plant which is embedded firmly underground.

> Deep, in wide caverns and unfathom'd cells,
> Daughter of Earth, the chaste TRUFFELIA dwells;
> On silvery beds, of soft asbestos wove,
> Meets her Gnome-husband, and avows her love.
> —*High* o'er her couch impending diamonds blaze,
> And branching gold the crystal roof inlays;
> With verdant light the modest emeralds glow,
> Blue sapphires glare, and rubies blush, *below*;
> Light piers of lazuli the dome surround,
> And pictured mochoes tessellate the ground;
> O'er the gay ailes delighted Cupids stray,
> And shed from odorous lamps celestial day. —
> (*Loves*, IV. 297-308)[103]

[103] *Loves*, pp. 102-3.

Linnaeus describes Truffelia (*Lycoperdon tuber*) as a spherical, solid, roughly prickled, rootless subterranean fungus.[104] Prompted by this gnomic description, Darwin exchanges the mysterious loves of the cryptogamic class for a gem-encrusted palace. His structural seduction continues into the next verse paragraph which compares Truffelia's kingdom to the salt mines of Poland, whose caverns, 'crystal walls' and 'glittering domes' point forward to *Kubla Khan*.[105] The *Oxford English Dictionary* identifies several neologisms in the mine of the Truffelia passage: both 'lazuli' (for lapis lazuli) and 'tessellate' ('To make into a mosaic') are first citations, examples of Darwin's verbal inventiveness.[106] The passage pays attention to the structure of Truffelia's kingdom: its architectural components ('crystal roof', 'light piers', 'dome', 'ailes', 'lamps') and jewelled materials ('soft asbestos', diamonds', 'branching gold', 'crystal', 'emeralds', 'sapphires', 'rubies', 'lazuli'). 'Pictured mochoes' is a reference to the moss agate or 'similar form of chalcedony with dendritic markings'. [107] This strangely porous substance is half-mineral, half plant, just as Truffelia is both plant and subterranean heroine: a lesser Proserpine whose divine abductor has been shrunk down to a 'Gnome-husband'. The passage is equally interested in space, conveyed not only the 'unfathom'd cells', but through a lexicon of measurement: 'deep', 'wide', 'high', 'inlays, '*below*', 'surround'. This density of spatial markers conceals Truffelia even further, lost as she is in the cavernous labyrinths of her underground mosaic palace.

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[104] *Species plantarum*, II, 1183.
[105] For echoes of Darwin's ornate architecture, caverns and domes in Coleridge's poetry, see Desmond King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets*, pp. 90, 112-117.
[106] 'lazuli, n.' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/106553> [accessed 6 February 2018]. 'tessellate, v.' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/199664> [accessed 6 February 2018]. The *Oxford English Dictionary*'s example of 'tessellate', taken from *The Economy of Vegetation* (1791), is predated by the Truffelia passage in *The Loves of the Plants* (1789). On Darwin's neologisms, see Desmond King-Hele, *A Concordance to Erasmus Darwin's "The Botanic Garden"* (London: Welcome Institute for the History of Medicine, 1994).
[107] 'Mocha, n.1', in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/120517> [accessed 6 February 2018].

In a passage bewildered by the heady demarcation of space, Darwin takes similar liberties with the metre. The caesura after 'Deep' weighs on the reader's breath, retarding the pulse of the heroic line, which elsewhere in the poem may seem rapid and seemingly effortless. (Mahood suggests, for example, that Darwin's poetry makes the readers feel as though they were 'being taken on a lightning tour of the Natural History Museum by Dr Pangloss'.)[108] Thereafter, instead of roughly resuming the line's conventional accent and relief, the passage contains several surprises. The first hurdle concerns the scanning of 'Truffelia', 'silvery', 'diamonds', 'emeralds', 'sapphires', and 'odorous': words which are usually given three syllables but can be reduced to two in the interest of preserving a strict metre. Earlier poets might have marked such elisions, and Darwin does elide words as, above, 'unfathom'd' and 'O'er'. Yet, his comments on metre in the third Interlude show a degree of disregard for the strictures of elision. Scanning his own phrase – 'And vocal rosebuds thrill the inchanted grove' (*Loves*, IV. 222) – Darwin writes that 'the *e* is supposed by grammarians to be cut off, which any one's ear will readily determine not to be true'.[109] As a poet Darwin allows latitude of sense as well as music to govern the reader's ear.

Besides the difficulties of elision, there are several local instances of Darwin replacing the expected accent with successive unaccented syllables. The first line, for example: 'Deep, in wide caverns and unfathom'd cells', begins with an inverted accent, which is reasonably common for the heroic line and employed throughout Darwin's poetry.[110] The result of the inversion does not 'come right' again, but rather has ramifications so that one might scan the line in the following way:

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[108] *Poet as Botanist*, p. 81.
[109] *Loves*, p. 84.
[110] Pope offers precedence for initial inversion: e.g. 'Bear me, oh bear me to sequester'd Scenes' (*Windsor Forest*, ll. 261-2), *Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Critcism*, ed. by E. Audra and Aubrey Williams, Twickenham Edition of the Works of Alexander Pope (London: Methuen; New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), pp. 148-194 (p. 173).

Déep, ĭn wĭde cávĕrns ănd ŭnfáthŏm'd célls

One is left with a distinctly triple sense of metre: rather than five sets of iambs, one might read two dactyls and two sets of iambs. Or, perhaps, one might read a trochee, followed by an amphibrach, a pyrrhic, another trochee, and the stray accented rhyme word ('cells'). If one is swayed by the triple beat, one surrenders the accent on 'wide', but even then the repeated unaccented syllables ('and unfathom'd') puts one on the wrong foot. It appears that below ground, metre is as susceptible as space in being confused by the maze of Truffelia's kingdom. Several lines down, one reaches a similar example:

Méets hĕr Gnóme-húsbănd, ănd ăvóws hĕr lóve

The compound of 'Gnome-husband' invites a spondee unless one is swayed by the predominance of the triple beat, but even then the subsequent cluster ('and avows') pulls the same trick of unfooting the reader. While my approach above has been to read Darwin through the apparatus of traditional syllabic scansion, the reader might notice these lines as examples of the strong stress metre which would return at the end of the century in *Lyrical Ballads*. Caught midway between accentual and syllabic approaches to verse, which he manifests by maintaining a regular decasyllabic line but freer triplicates and a lack of elision, Darwin can be read both ways.[111]

Typography, too, becomes a tool by which Darwin is able to manipulate metre. Isaac Watts described italics as 'Those words that have the chief Place or Force in a sentence, and are most significant and remarkable; where the *Emphasis* is placed'.[112] In the Preface to *Loves of the Plants*, the poet explains that the 'name or number of the Class, or Order of each plant is printed in italics', whereas 'secret' will indicate the plant is a

[111] I draw support from Hassler's reading of Darwin's line in 'Making it Strange (Technically)', the third chapter of *The Comedian as the Letter D*, pp. 61-80.
[112] Isaac Watts, *The Art of Reading and Writing English: Or, the Chief Principles and Rules of Pronouncing our Mother-Tongue* (London: J. Clark, 1721), p. 63.

member of Cryptogamia, or 'Clandestine Marriage'. Ulva, for example, 'seeks her Lord amid the trackless tides; | Her *secret* vows the Cyprian Queen approves' (*Loves*, I. 374-5), while Byssus 'lights her votaries to the *secret* cave' (*Loves*, IV. 360). There is no such intervention in the Truffelia episode, though perhaps the depth of the caverns and the 'unfathom'd cells' of Truffelia's habitat gives the game away.

As Watts suggested, italics indicate where the reader is to place the accent, and guides a vocal interpretation of the text. In *Loves of the Plants*, the italicised word disclosing the class of the plant often falls on the accent, as in the following: 'Sweet blooms GENISTA in the myrtle shade, |And *ten* fond brothers woo the haughty maid' (*Loves*, I. 57-8). The semaphore for Linnaean class in these examples invites the voice to lay appropriate stress where it is expected. Elsewhere, however, italics are not so neatly matched. [113] In the passage on Rubia (Madder), the Linnaean indicator is displaced from a syllable the heroic line would be expected to accentuate onto a traditionally unaccented medial position: 'With chemic art *four* favour'd youths aloof | Stain the white fleece, or stretch the tinted woof' (*Loves*, I. 345-6). Similarly, while in the example of Lina (Linum or Flax), '*Five* Sister-nymphs with dewy fingers twice' is traditional, the accent in the later line '– Charm'd round the busy Fair *five* shepherds press' (*Loves*, II. 77, 81) is less so. In these strained positions, the italics lend their typographical aid to unexpected accents.

In the Truffelia episode, however, Darwin's italics are not solely used in the services of classification. The first deployment preserves the not unfamiliar trochee in the first position: '–*High* o'er her couch impending diamonds blaze' (IV. 301). The second example, however, throws caution to the wind: 'Blue sapphires glare, and rubies blush, *below*' (IV. 304). The line offers six accents rather than the heroic line's expected five. The last accent ought to fall on the last syllable ('bělów'), but the alliteration and italics

[113] In the case of '*secret*', for example, the italics invite the reader to lower her voice or whisper rather than force the trochee into a spondee.

suggests a strong plosive start (‘*bélŏw*’ if not ‘*bélów*’), an unorthodox end to the line. Italics, which brings classification into the woof of Darwin’s couplets, become a tool for playing with the heroic line’s expected music, causing the reader of *Loves of the Plants* to stay alert. Such metrical interventions suggest, as Wordsworth does, the reader’s pleasure of recognising ‘similitude’ in ‘dissimilitude’, observing moments where convention is disrupted by unexpected patterns. Truffelia, writes Darwin in his note, ‘never appears above ground, requiring little air and perhaps no light. It is found by dogs or swine, who hunt it by the smell’.[114] The metrical transgressions in the Truffelia episode suggest that one may be rewarded by keeping one’s ear (if not one’s nose) tuned in order to hunt out what has been overlooked in the strata of Darwin’s couplets.

‘Ingenious speculation’: Darwin’s Footnotes

In *Loves of the Plants*, the similarity and difference inherent in rhyme and metre work against a larger formal friction between the poetry and the prose notes. The Poet’s conviction that ‘some prose has its melody, and even measure’, which he delivers to the Bookseller in the first Interlude, sounds familiar to a reader acquainted with *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).[115] Wordsworth argued that

> the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose, when prose is well written.[116]

While members of a similar church, Darwin and Wordsworth are arguing from different sides of the aisle: Darwin suggesting that good prose possesses melody and measure and

[114] *Loves*, p. 102.
[115] *Loves*, p. 40.
[116] *Loves*, p. 40; *LBOP*, p. 748.

Wordsworth proposing poetry's possession of the language of 'good prose'. The exception made by Wordsworth ('except with reference to the metre') is significant and Darwin makes a similar throw-away concession ('Next to the measure of the language...'): the difference introduced by metre was, perhaps, too obvious for discussion. In a footnote to his discussion of the difference between poetry and prose, Wordsworth writes that he uses the word 'Poetry' against his better judgment to mean 'metrical composition', since '[t]he only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis; because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable'.[117] The truest distinction lies between Poetry 'and Matter of fact, or Science', a distinction also employed by Darwin. For Darwin, 'Science is best delivered in Prose,' because prose is more hospitable to abstract language, whereas poetry is embodied and concrete. Similarly, science reasons in 'stricter analogies than metaphors or similes' whereas poetry allows for 'looser analogies'.[118] Analogies which compare the 'essential properties of bodies', wrote Darwin in *Zoonomia*, lead 'to many and important discoveries' but if linking together 'objects, otherwise discordant, by some fanciful similitude...it may indeed collect ornaments for wit and poetry, but philosophy and truth recoil from its combinations!'[119] *Loves of the Plants* insists on the reader's perpetual testing of similarity and difference when reading the collaboration of the poetry and its footnotes. Both modes are present – the abstract and the concrete, the rational and the 'looser' analogy.

In a relatively recent edition of Darwin's collected long poems (*The Economy of Vegetation*, *The Loves of the Plants*, and *The Temple of Nature*), the poems appear without

[117] *LBOP*, p. 750.
[118] *Loves*, p. 41; *EV*, p. 40.
[119] *Zoonomia, or, the Laws of Organic Life*, 2 vols (London: J. Johnson, 1794-6), I, 1.

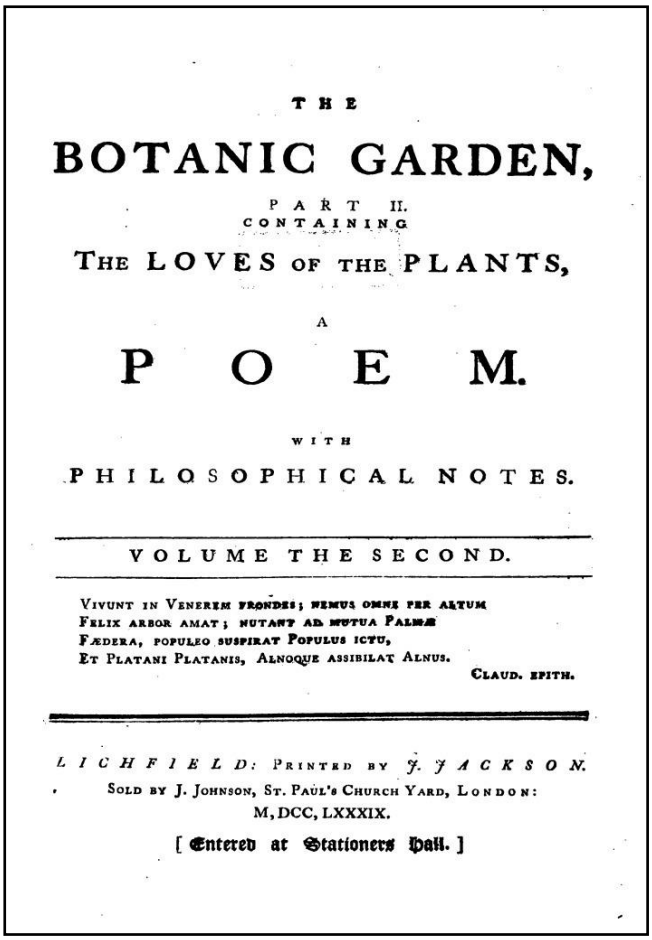
their footnotes, additional notes, catalogues, indexes, or interludes.[120] In his preface to the volume, Desmond King-Hele cites the expense, yet the volume's editor, Stuart Harris, wrote that he hoped that the absence of the notes 'makes easy an enjoyment of the poem as "plain text"'.[121] Harris is wrong, however, to think that there is such a thing as 'plain text': Darwin's verse without the notes offers only half of the poem's art.[122] When Southey wrote of Darwin that the poet's 'own philosophy should have taught him…that poetry, like painting, must have its relief – its shade, as well as its light', Southey was referring to Darwin's style.[123] He thought the varnish and impeccable versification of Darwin's poetry required a foil to break up a crystalline coherence that risked becoming calcareous. However, notes offer an additional testing of unity and variety, particularly of tenor. The footnotes of the *Botanic Garden* (and, later, *The Temple of Nature*) offer relief and shade from the brilliance of the verse in the tonal mutabilities, the encyclopaediac spread, and the epistemological risks of the notes.

Rather than a prosthesis, the philosophical notes were evidently so much a part of the poem that reviewers of *The Loves of the Plants* in 1789, and of *The Economy of Vegetation* in 1791, published illustrative poetic quotations along with their respective notes.[124] The 'spinning of affiliations' between the verse and notes, to borrow Kelley's phrase, are present from the poem's earliest conception.[125] According to Seward, the impetus for the poem came from Darwin's creation of a botanic garden a mile outside of Lichfield in

[120] Erasmus Darwin, *Cosmologia*, ed. Stuart Harris (Sheffield: Stuart Harris, 2002). Unlike *Lyrical Ballads*, however, twenty-first century readers will find a reading copy of *The Botanic Garden* difficult to come across. The 2017 Routledge edition edited by Adam Komisaruk and Allison DuShane, to which I have been referring throughout this chapter, bears several comic and occasionally grievous misprints and its cost is hardly affordable by students.
[121] Instead of Darwin's notes, Harris provides his own.
[122] *Cosmologia*, ix.
[123] Southey, 'Collective Works of the Late Dr. Sayers', p. 198.
[124] These notes may also be why the *Botanic Garden* is not better known: such 'philosophical notes', as Martin Priestman has suggested, make anthologising of the poem difficult (p. 9).
[125] Kelley, p. 122.

1776.[126] Once the garden was finished, Seward was left alone in the garden and wrote the poem that would be incorporated into (or plundered for) the beginning of *The Economy of Vegetation*.[127] Delighted with Seward's composition, Darwin proposed that the poem 'ought to be the exordium of a great work...I...will write the notes, which must be scientific; and you shall write the verse'.[128] In this original formulation, as Seward described it, the poem was to be a hybrid work and a collaborative venture divided along gendered lines.[129] Darwin's proposal was apparently refused out of concern that the Linnaean sexual system would not be a 'strictly proper [subject] for a female pen' and Seward encouraged Darwin to write the verse himself.[130] The title page of the published *Loves of the Plants* proclaims its bipartite nature:

[126] Anna Seward suggests a date of 1777 (p. 125); see also King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin: A Life of Unequalled Achievement*, p. 134.
[127] For Seward's account, see *The Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Darwin*, pp. 128-132.
[128] Seward, p. 130.
[129] Despite the gendered approach of Darwin's proposal to Seward, Charlotte Smith deserves to be placed alongside Darwin as a writer who was interested in the note's capacities. Smith was a quiet experimenter with the footnote, an experimentation which is particularly visible throughout the annotative history of her ever-expanding collection, *Elegiac Sonnets* (1784-1806) and in her final collection, *Beachy Head, with Other Poems*. See Kelley on Smith's 'more muted dance of verse and notes' (p. 122).
[130] Seward, p. 131.



THE

BOTANIC GARDEN,

PART II.
CONTAINING

THE LOVES OF THE PLANTS,

A

POEM.

WITH

PHILOSOPHICAL NOTES.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

VIVUNT IN VENEREM FRONDES; NEMUS OMNE PER ALTUM
FELIX ARBOR AMAT; NUTANT AD MUTUA PALMÆ
FŒDERA, POPULEO SUSPIRAT POPULUS ICTU,
ET PLATANI PLATANIS, ALNOQUE ASSIBILAT ALNUS.

CLAUD. EPITH.

LICHFIELD: PRINTED BY J. JACKSON.
SOLD BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD, LONDON:
M, DCC, LXXXIX.

[Entered at Stationers Hall.]

Fig. 6. Title page of *The Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789)

The dignified place given to the philosophical notes had precedent, although Karina Williamson and Michael Edson show that Darwin's *Botanic Garden* had more authorial notes than any other georgic of the eighteenth century, at a ratio of one note to every twelve lines.[131] The title page to a work by another physician-poet, James Grainger's *The Sugar Cane* (1764), advertised the work as a poem in four books 'With Notes'.[132] On the other hand, Wordsworth's *Descriptive Sketches* and *An Evening Walk*, both published in 1793 by Darwin's publisher Joseph Johnson, written in Darwinian couplets with

[131] For an instructive table of georgic poems with authorial notes from 1708-1807 see Karina Williamson and Michael Edson, 'Annotating Georgic Poetry', in *Annotation in Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Michael Edson (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press; Lanham, MD; Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), pp. 3-21 (pp. 6-7).

[132] *The Sugar-Cane* (London: Dodsley, 1764). *The Botanic Garden* has over twice the number of notes (358) as Grainger's poem (139).

Darwinian epithets, did not advertise their notes.[133] This divergence may suggest that a certain amount of learned or institutional specialism was required to recommend the notes as an enhancement of the book's appeal. Annotation's historical connection to scholarly practice, its facilitation of antiquarian and editorial quibbles of classicists, theologians, and editors of Shakespeare, signposts learnedness – if only, in satirical form, to be deflated. For Grainger and Darwin, notes were less an indication of obfuscation and more of a window for further communication, translating specialised knowledge for the common reader. This, at least, is Alex Watson's view.[134] While this is undoubtedly correct, especially given Darwin's avowed wish to 'inlist Imagination under the banner of Science', this is by no means the sole purpose for the notes. The polyvocal proliferating tones of Pope's *Dunciad* (1729-1743) offered Darwin a model for the range of pitch and propositions of which notes were capable, offering the means, as Seamus Perry puts it, of 'indulging [one's] taste for expansive digression while leaving the text intact (more or less)'.[135] Williamson and Edson argue that poets deployed annotation to 'shape perceptions of generic identity': annotation situates a poem within the contested realm of georgic verse.[136] As they point out, three eighteenth-century translations of Virgil's *Georgics* – Joseph Trapp's translation into blank verse (1731), John Martyn's prose translation (1741), and Joseph Warton's *Georgics* in heroic couplets (1753) – were all published with extensive footnotes.[137] 'The ubiquity of notes' in later georgics like Grainger's *Sugar-Cane*, they write, 'implies the expectation among both readers and poets that such poems both include and require dense annotation'.[138]

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[133] *Descriptive Sketches. In Verse. Taken During a Pedestrian Tour in the Italian, Grison, Swiss, and Savoyard Alps* (London: J. Johnson, 1793); *An Evening Walk. An Epistle, in Verse. Addressed to a Young Lady, from the Lakes of the North of England* (London: J. Johnson, 1793).
[134] Alex Watson, *Romantic Marginality: Nation and Empire on the Borders of the Page* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), p. 52.
[135] Seamus Perry, *Coleridge and the Uses of Division* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 99.
[136] Williamson and Edson, pp. 10, 13.
[137] Williamson and Edson, p. 5.
[138] Williamson and Edson, p. 16.

Corroborating Williamson and Edson's argument, reviews of *The Botanic Garden* suggest the notes were understood as a key to the verse. The reviewer of *Loves of the Plants* for the *Critical Review* wrote that 'When we read the poem, almost the whole, even to a botanist, is at first ænigmatical, and to the less learned reader, appears to be a string of riddles, whose solution is to be found in the notes'.[139] For this reader of the poem, therefore, the notes were an aid to reading: a clarification of the difficulties posed by the verse. In the same magazine's review of the entire *Botanic Garden* in October 1792, the reviewer prefaced an excerpt from *The Economy of Vegetation* by writing that 'We cannot resist transcribing the following lines, for their own merit, and the philosophical hints contained in the notes'.[140] In Charlotte Smith's *Conversations Introducing Poetry*, Mrs Talbot offers *The Botanic Garden* as a poem with broad but divergent appeal. '[T]he splendour and beauty of the verse makes it delightful to George, who has an admirable ear for poetry', Mrs Talbot tells her sceptical, poetry-averse daughter Emily. Emily's brother Edward, on the other hand, was 'attracted by the variety of information in the notes; and became interested in experiments and facts, which probably would not, if offered to him in another way, have excited his curiosity'.[141] For Genette, paratexts, of which the note is a species, are a '*threshold*', a 'vestibule' – a word shared by Darwin's 'Advertisement'.[142] According to Genette, notes have additional resources of pitch. '[I]n denying himself the note,' writes Genette,

> the author thereby denies himself the possibility of a second level of discourse, one that sometimes contributes to textual depth. The chief advantage of the note is actually that it brings about local effects of nuance, or sourdine, or as they say in music, of *register*...[143]

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[139] *Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, 68 (November 1789), 375-381 (p. 375).
[140] *Critical review, or, Annals of Literature*, 6 (October 1792), 162-171 (p. 163).
[141] *Conversations introducing Poetry*, II, 167-8.
[142] Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 2.
[143] Genette, p. 328.

For Genette, adding another voice does not reduce a poem to 'formlessness', as Logan said of the *Botanic Garden*.[144] Nor does it prove the 'flimsiness' of the woof of the poem. Reading the verse and notes together requires an active eye, translating from one distinct form to another in pursuit of the poem's thread. If the relationship between verse and notes poses a challenge to the linear reading of *The Loves of the Plants*, the mimosa, or sensitive plant, troubles the distinction between vegetable and animal kingdoms:

> Weak with nice sense, the chaste MIMOSA stands,
> From each rude touch withdraws her timid hands;
> Oft as light clouds o'erpass the Summer-glade,
> Alarm'd she trembles at the moving shade;
> And feels, alive through all her tender form,
> The whisper'd murmurs of the gathering storm;
> Shuts her sweet eye-lids to approaching night;
> And hails with freshen'd charm the rising light.
> Veil'd, with gay decency and modest pride,
> Slow to the mosque she moves, an eastern bride;
> There her soft vows unceasing love record,
> Queen of the bright seraglio of her Lord. –
> So sinks or rises with the changeful hour
> The liquid silver in its glassy tower.
> So turns the needle to the pole it loves,
> With fine librations quivering, as it moves.
> (*Loves*, I. 267-82)[145]

'Libration', a technical word Darwin borrows from Thomson, is 'the motion like that of the beam of a balance oscillating upon its pivot'.[146] Yet despite the mechanistic implication of this definition, Darwin's verse seems to 'feel alive' through its form: ebbing and liquid, with the glottal slide of 'liquid silver', 'glassy', 'needle...pole...loves', 'librations', and the susurrunts of 'So sinks', 'rises', 'silver', 'glassy'. The additional parallel between the last two couplets 'So sinks...' and 'So turns...' ushers a wave-like

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[144] Logan, p. 137.
[145] *Loves*, pp. 30-1.
[146] 'Spring', (l. 743), *The Seasons*, p. 38. 'libration, n.', in *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/107927;jsessionid=7185BA0E1612E1F95A8A9947B6761406> [accessed 6 February 2018].

vibration of movement through the verse that mirrors the mimosa's sensitivity. Rather than being simply alert to the natural world, the mimosa is quivering with it.

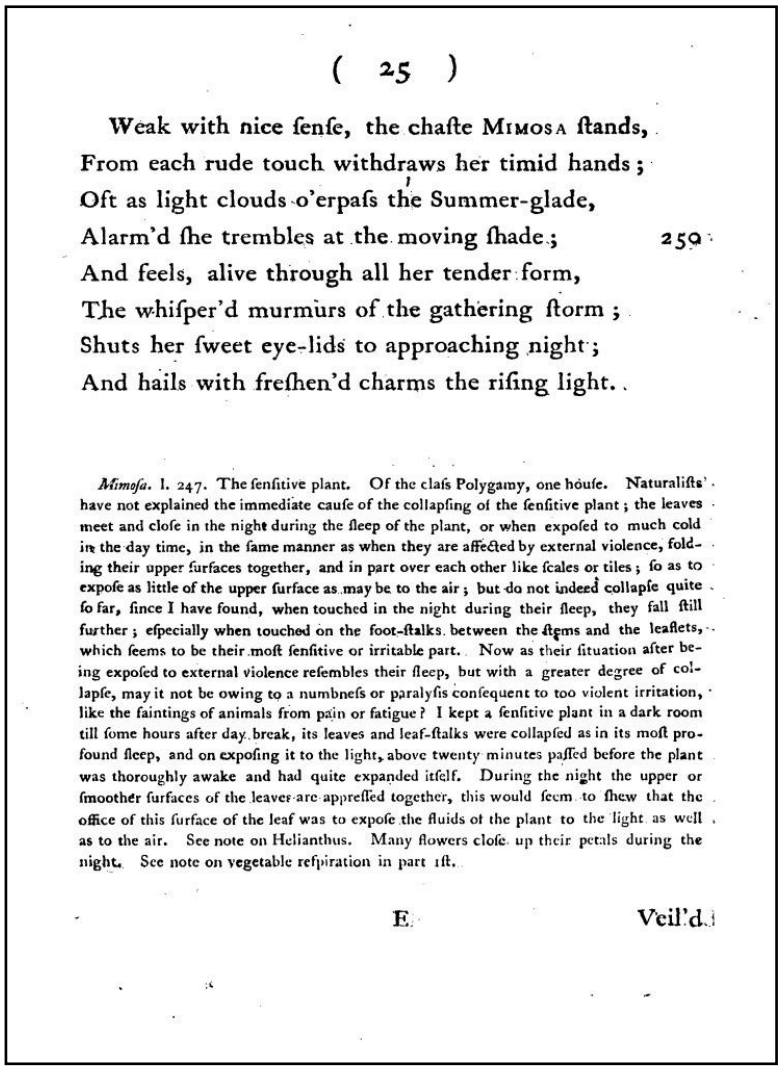
Linnaeus's *Mimosa pudica* is a Brazilian member of Polyandria Monogynia, having five stamens and one pistil, and a spine-like stem covered in bristles ('caule aculeato hispido').[147] While the physical bristles do not translate into verse, the plant's bristling chastity does. The note to mimosa expresses Darwin's piqued curiosity in the plant's responsiveness:

> Naturalists have not explained the immediate cause of the collapsing of the sensitive plant; the leaves meet and close in the night during the sleep of the plant, or when exposed to much cold in the day time, in the same manner as when they are affected by external violence, folding their upper surfaces together, and in part over each other like scales or tiles; so as to expose as little of the upper surface as may be to the air; but do not indeed collapse quite so far, since I have found, when touched in the night during their sleep, they fall still further; especially when touched on the footstalks between the stems and the leaflets, which seems to be their most sensitive or irritable part. Now as their situation after being exposed to external violence resembles their sleep, but with a greater degree of collapse, may it not be owing to a numbness or paralysis consequent to too violent irritation, like the fainting of animals from pain or fatigue? I kept a sensitive plant in a dark room till some hours after day break, its leaves and leaf-stalks were collapsed as in its most profound sleep, and on exposing it to the light, above twenty minutes passed before the plant was thoroughly awake and had quite expanded itself. During the night the upper or smoother surfaces of the leaves are appressed together, this would seem to shew that the office of this surface of the leaf was to expose the fluids of the plant to the light as well as to the air. See the note on Helianthus. Many flowers close up their petals during the night. See note on vegetable respiration in part 1st.[148]

There is evident reciprocity between the verse and the note on the question of environment, although the verse, true to Darwin's visual theory of poetry, displays a greater interest in the concretised, moving bodies of light and obstruction: 'Oft as light clouds o'erpass the Summer-glade, | Alarm'd she trembles at the moving shade' (*Loves*, I. 269-270).

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[147] *Species plantarum*, I, 518.
[148] *Loves*, p. 30.



(25)

Weak with nice ſenſe, the chaſte MIMOSA ſtands,
From each rude touch withdraws her timid hands;
Oft as light clouds o'erpaſs the Summer-glade,
Alarm'd ſhe trembles at the moving ſhade;
And feels, alive through all her tender form,
The whiſper'd murmurs of the gathering ſtorm;
Shuts her ſweet eye-lids to approaching night;
And hails with freſhen'd charms the riſing light.

Mimoſa. l. 247. The ſenſitive plant. Of the claſs Polygamy, one houſe. Naturaliſts have not explained the immediate cauſe of the collapſing of the ſenſitive plant; the leaves meet and cloſe in the night during the ſleep of the plant, or when expoſed to much cold in the day time, in the ſame manner as when they are affected by external violence, folding their upper ſurfaces together, and in part over each other like ſcales or tiles; ſo as to expoſe as little of the upper ſurface as may be to the air; but do not indeed collapſe quite ſo far, ſince I have found, when touched in the night during their ſleep, they fall ſtill further; eſpecially when touched on the foot-ſtalks between the ſtems and the leaflets, which ſeems to be their moſt ſenſitive or irritable part. Now as their ſituation after being expoſed to external violence reſembles their ſleep, but with a greater degree of collapſe, may it not be owing to a numbneſs or paralyſis conſequent to too violent irritation, like the faintings of animals from pain or fatigue? I kept a ſenſitive plant in a dark room till ſome hours after day break, its leaves and leaf-ſtalks were collapſed as in its moſt profound ſleep, and on expoſing it to the light, above twenty minutes paſſed before the plant was thoroughly awake and had quite expanded itſelf. During the night the upper or ſmoother ſurfaces of the leaves are appreſſed together, this would ſeem to ſhew that the office of this ſurface of the leaf was to expoſe the fluids of the plant to the light as well as to the air. See note on Helianthus. Many flowers cloſe up their petals during the night. See note on vegetable reſpiration in part 1ſt.

E Veil'd

Fig. 4. Reproduction from *The Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789)

Shelley, who had read his Darwin, accordingly paid attention to the mimosa's light-response in 'The Sensitive Plant', where 'it opened its fan-like leaves to the light, | And closed them beneath the kisses of night' (I. 3-4).[149] 'Fan-like leaves' is a particularly Linnaean compound structure, echoing the description of mimosa in *Species plantarum*

[149] 'The Sensitive Plant', in *The Poems of Shelley*, ed. by Kelvin Everest and Geoffrey Matthews, Longman Annotated English Poets, 5 vols (Harlow: Longman, 1989-2016), III: 1819-1820, ed. by Jack Donovan, Cian Duffy, and Michael Rossington (2011), p. 294-316.

(1753): 'foliis subdigitatis pinnatis'.[150] If Shelley's anapaestic tetrameter shows the mimosa moving to a different music to that made by the 'knowing poise' of Darwin's pentameter, Shelley's later description of the Sensitive Plant as 'trembl[ing] and pant[ing] with bliss' owes much to Darwin's love-struck plants, particularly in the boldly erotic image of plants 'interpenetrat[ing]' each other with 'the light and odour its neighbour shed' (I. 9, 66-67).[151]

Darwin's note to the mimosa demonstrates the means by which the author can enter the poem through the narrating voice: 'I kept a sensitive plant in a dark room,' Darwin wrote. The 'I' authorises the experiment; it offers one personal account of the mimosa which, through reported anecdote, may be measured against other personal accounts conducted elsewhere in repeated or altered conditions. This 'I' is utterly missing from the verse, where the experiment is conducted in poetry's performance. The voicing of Darwin's notes recalls Gillian Beer's observation on the language of his grandson Charles, who, in *The Origin of Species* (1859),

> emphasises the element of address...The voiced presence of the observer in the language is a necessary methodological control, supplementing the work's imaginative history...The tone of a single man speaking, the presenter of the evidence, the creator of the theory, is a necessary counterpoise to that speculative extension back through time and change which is also crucial to the argument.[152]

As with Charles Darwin's 'speculative extension', Erasmus Darwin's notes also allow for hypothesis: 'Now as their situation after being exposed to external violence resembles their

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[150] Withering omits the mimosa, which is not native to Britain. Darwin's marvellously rotund translation is 'leaves nearly finger'd feather'd' (*System of Vegetables*, II, 780), where Philip Miller's terser translation is 'Winged-handed leaves' in *The Gardeners Dictionary: Containing the Best and Newest Methods of Cultivating and Improving the Kitchen, Fruit, Flower Garden, and Nursery*, 8th edn (London: Rivington et al., 1768).

[151] Michael O'Neill, *Romanticism and the Self-Conscious Poem* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 164. For Darwin's influence on Shelley see *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* (pp. 187-226) or Desmond King-Hele's *Shelley: His Thought and Work* (London: Macmillan; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1960), pp. 162-64, 233.

[152] *Darwin's Plots*: *Evolutionary Narrative in Darwin, George Eliot and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 61.

sleep, but with a greater degree of collapse, may it not be owing to a numbness or paralysis consequent to too violent irritation, like the fainting of animals from pain or fatigue?' Questions may appear in the note, where a rising intonation might interrupt the poetic line's shape. Neither does the violence of the verb 'collapse', which Darwin used several times in the note, appear in the verse, where the mimosa is presented as an actor with fragile dignity. If notes, as Genette suggested, offer tonal resources, they seem to allow the writer to expand a tonal range without sounding uncertain, unstable, or uncontrolled. This can be seen in the case of Drosera, whose

> zone of diamonds trembles round her brows;
> Bright shines the silver halo, as she turns;
> And, as she steps, the living lustre burns.
> (*Loves*, I. 208-210)[153]

The note swivels on 'the living lustre' to translate Drosera as the more familiar 'sun-dew'.

> The leaves of this marsh-plant are purple, and have a fringe very unlike other vegetable productions. And, which is curious, at the point of every thread of this erect fringe stands a pellucid drop of mucilage, resembling a ducal coronet. This mucus is a secretion from certain glands, and like the viscous material round the flower-stalks of Silene, (catchfly) prevents small insects from infesting the leaves...[154]

This note tests the limits of the kind of language admitted in a poetical work: 'mucus' and 'mucilage', like 'secretion', are examples of what Johnson might call harsh diction. Even the flatness of the note's 'marsh-plant' is transposed to a 'moss-wove' and 'rushy-fringed' mis-en-scène in the verse. As with the mimosa, the similarities and differences between the verse and the notes beg the question: what facts survive the transformation of form? What degree of knowledge is correlative?

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[153] *Loves*, p. 27.
[154] *Loves*, p. 26.

Purple leaves and fringe aside, Darwin's notes make room for function and process rather than extensive description. The ducal crown in the note to Drosera (the 'pellucid drop of mucilage') is not simply an ornament but a possible part of the plant's defence mechanism. In the verse, there is no need for defence: the propulsive motion of the poem grounds it in a deterministic universe where plants flirt, love, beseech, curse, and die. In the notes, however, the outcome is less certain. The note may act as the verse's defence mechanism: clarifying its strangeness and compression, marking its correspondences and deviances, tempering erotic fantasy with colluding fact, making not only distinct registers possible but occasional dissonance. An example of such dissonance is present in one of the most admired episodes of *Loves of the Plants,* featuring a luminous fungus.[155]

> On DOVE's green brink the fair TREMELLA stood,
> And view'd her playful image in the flood;
> To each rude rock, lone dell, and echoing grove
> Sung the sweet sorrows of her *secret* love.
> ...
> The misty moon withdrew her horned light,
> And sunk with Hesper in the skirt of night;
> No dim electric streams, (the northern dawn,)
> With meek effulgence quiver'd o'er the lawn;
> Nor star benignant shot one transient ray
> To guide or light the wanderer on her way.
> ...
> – As the bleak blast unfurls her fluttering vest,
> Cold beats the snow upon her shuddering breast;
> Through her numb'd limbs the chill sensations dart,
> And the keen ice-bolt trembles at her heart.
> "I sink, I fall! Oh, help me, help!" she cries,
> Her stiffening tongue the unfinish'd sound denies;
> Tear after tear adown her cheek succeeds,
> And pearls of ice bestrew the glistering meads;
> Congealing snows her lingering feet surround,
> Arrest her flight, and root her to the ground;

[155] See, for example, *English Review, or, An Abstract of English and Foreign Literature*, 14 (July 1789), 1-8 (pp. 3-5).

> With suppliant arms she pours the silent prayer,
> Her suppliant arms hang crystal in the air;
> Pellucid films her shivering neck o'erspread,
> Seal her mute lips, and silver o'er her head,
> Veil her pale bosom, glaze her lifted hands,
> And shrined in ice the beauteous statue stands.
> (*Loves*, I. 393-396, 401-406, 413-428)

Darwin's Ovidian efforts were not wasted: it is upon Tremella, Anna Seward wrote, that 'the Poet lavished some of the finest effusions of his fancy. It is surely the transcendent passage of this second part of Dr. Darwin's poem...It is superior to the Ovidian Daphne'.[156] Tremella appears in a letter Darwin wrote to Sir Joseph Banks in 1781, accompanying a request for the loan of books to assist with the translation of *System of Vegetables*. 'The history you mentioned to Mr Boothby of the Tremella is truly curious', Darwin wrote, 'yet I have certainly seen parts of fungi, particularly growing on an old rail, turned to a white gelatinous substance, as I supposed by the frost'.[157] Tremella is an eerie gesture to the gothic mode, a ghostly remnant turned solid by the frost (or so Darwin thought) but strangely like the frost itself. Just as Darwin describes Tremella in flight, so Linnaeus's *Flora lapponica* (1737) described Tremella as 'fugax': ephemeral, fleeting, or transitory.[158] Tremella nostoc's description in *Species plantarum*, 'plicata undulata', is translated beautifully by William Withering as 'plaited and waved'.[159] Darwin was sufficiently intrigued by Banks' history of the Tremella and his own experience to translate his letter into an expanded note on Tremella:

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[156] Seward, p. 300.
[157] Letter of 14 October 1781, *Collected Letters of Erasmus Darwin*, p. 195.
[158] Linnaeus borrows 'fugax' from the German botanist John Jakob Dillenius. Linnaeus spent a week with Dillenius in Oxford, where Dillenius was Sherardian Professor of Botany. See Wilfrid Blunt, *The Compleat Naturalist: A Life of Linnaeus* (London: Collins, 1971), pp. 114-115.
[159] Tremella is classed as 'Cryptogamia Algæ' in *Species plantarum*, II, 1157. 'Starjelly' is found in William Withering, *Botanical Arrangement*, II, 731. Like the truffle, Tremella is now placed in the kingdom of fungi rather than plants. See 'Tremella' in *Ainsworth and Bisby's Dictionary of the Fungi*, ed. by Paul M. Kirk, Paul F. Cannon, David W. Minter and Joost A. Stalpers, 10th edn (Wallingford: CAB International, 2008), p. 696.

> *Tremella*. l. 393. Clandestine marriage. I have frequently observed funguses of this Genus on old rails and on the ground to become a transparent jelly, after they had been frozen in autumnal mornings; which is a curious property, and distinguishes them from some other vegetable mucilage; for I have observed that the paste, made by boiling wheat-flour in water, ceases to be adhesive after having been frozen. I suspected that the Tremella Nostoc, or star-jelly, also had been thus produced; but have since been well informed, that the Tremella Nostoc is a mucilage voided by Herons after they have eaten frogs; hence it has the appearance of having been pressed through a hole; and limbs of frogs are said sometimes to be found amongst it; it is always seen upon plains or by the sides of water, places which Herons generally frequent...[160]

Jenny Uglow has suggested that the note to Tremella has far more 'natural' pathos than the verse. Part-commonplace book, part portable Lunar society meeting, Darwin's notes to *Loves of the Plants* are read by Uglow as the true bearers of Darwin's poetic vision. Certainly, there is a whiff of the elegiac mode at the start of the note, where the crispness of autumn is still settling into the ground and on the air. Translating Linnaeus in *System of Vegetables*, Darwin writes that 'Fungusses' are 'Vagabonds, plants of the Autumn...'[161] Only after the curious case of the fungus, transformed into 'a transparent jelly' after a sudden frost, does Darwin's tone wrench away from fireside comforts, pivoting on his musing ('which is a curious property') to the natural historian's prurience ('and distinguishes them from some other vegetable mucilage'). 'Mucilage' plummets from the decorous restraint of 'autumnal mornings'. Darwin's note becomes even less decorous as he explains his former suspicion that 'star-jelly' was really 'mucilage voided by Herons after they have eaten frogs'. Darwin's tone has once more plunged to the scatological, surmising that this voided star-jelly is the production of a heron since 'it has the appearance of having been pressed through a hole'. No amount of judicious certification – that the Tremella nostoc (or nestoc) is 'always seen upon plains or by the sides of water, places which Herons generally frequent' – can rescue the beauty of the note's opening.

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[160] *Loves*, p. 37-8.
[161] *System of Vegetables*, I, 5.

Nor is this the conclusion of the note, which strays into a discussion of fungi so acidic that consumption provokes blistering or intoxication. Darwin puzzled over the classification of such fungi, doubtful that things which smell so much like animals when burned, which can rot so easily, and which can grow without light, can be vegetables. The 'esculent mushrooms on beds covered thick with straw', he concludes, 'would seem to shew, that they approach towards the animals, or make a kind of isthmus connecting the two mighty kingdoms of animal and of vegetable nature'.[162] He was partly right: fungi are not plants. Rather than an isthmus, however, they are now recognised to form a separate kingdom entirely. In this conclusion to the footnote, Darwin's sensitivity to metaphor – a quality which acquires lyricism in its sympathetic stretch – returns as a conjectural coda on which the final note of the first canto concludes. Devin Griffiths has written of Charles Darwin's argument for the use of metaphors as a step in the process of formalising intuitions when thinking through ideas which have yet to be proven.[163] This protected space for analogy as a philosophical testing ground exists also in what Cowper described as the 'ingenious speculation' of Erasmus Darwin's notes.[164] This is a word taken up by Kelley when she describes the 'play of formal resemblance and dissonance' between the poetry and the footnotes as opening 'the way to speculation'.[165] Speculation is etymologically related to the act of seeing, and therefore suited to Darwin's eye-poetics, but it is also hypothetical and invented. Speculation involves risk, conjecture, a gamble. In *Loves of the Plants*, intellectual experimentation reaches out beyond the bounds of single footnote: 'See Helianthus', wrote Darwin in the note to the mimosa, 'See note on

[162] *Loves*, p. 38.
[163] Griffiths, *The Age of Analogy*, pp. 211-215, 246.
[164] Review of *The Economy of Vegetation* in *The Analytical Review* (March 1793), republished in *Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, ed. by James King and Charles Ryskamp, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979-1986), v: *Prose 1765-c. 1799 and Cumulative Index* (1986), 100-106 (p. 106).
[165] Kelley, p. 84.

vegetable respiration in part 1st'.[166] The notes point to each other as they would in an encyclopaedia – another mode of testing and comparing to determine particularities and commonness – creating a unified whole out of branching hints. The reader of the verse might know Tremella to be a cryptogam by the line 'Sung the sorrows of her *secret* love', but without the note on Tremella, the reader would not know her to be a fungus rather than an algae, fern, or moss. The Ovidian transformation is rooted in habits of close scientific observation: the note confirms the verse's description of Tremella's gelatinous appearance by her 'crystal' arms, her 'pellucid film', her body shrined 'in ice'. Such transformation is completed by the note's stamp of verification even as the metamorphosis is acknowledged as a fiction.

While the hybridity of Darwin's project may seem a fatiguing collaboration between two visual axes as well as two distinct disciplines, pleasure bridges the poem's component parts. *Loves of the Plants*'s conclusion with the polygamic Adonis plant ('A *hundred* virgins' and a '*hundred* swains', IV. 387) compared to the joyfully promiscuous Otaheite islanders, blessed by a 'pleased Venus', underlines the poem's pervasive interest in the erotic pleasures of plants.[167] For Darwin, as for Lucretius, love – the query to which pleasure is the answer – is the prime mover: 'When LOVE DIVINE, with brooding wings unfurl'd, | Call'd from the rude abyss the living world' (I. 101-2).[168] In Darwin's medical theory of the four faculties, volition (or the response to sensation) is structured on the twin poles of pleasure and pain. As he wrote in *The Temple of Nature*, 'Thy potent acts, Volition, still attend | The means of pleasure to secure the end' (III. 435-6).[169] Pleasure is not frivolous, then, but rather a vital component of living and creating. 'We have no

[166] *Loves*, p. 30.
[167] *Loves*, pp. 106-7.
[168] *EV*, p. 47.
[169] *Temple of Nature*, p. 144.

sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure'.[170] This line from Wordsworth's 'Preface' to *Lyrical Ballads* begins to sound very different in Darwin's company, in which sympathy links feeling humans with sensitive plants, and the metaphoric weight of 'propagation' is drawn out. Although Darwin and Wordsworth were read in their own time in opposition, and although those differences have been carried through the past two centuries, the enlarged Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* of 1802 imagines a future collaboration between the vocations which Darwin personally united as both a Poet and a Man of Science. The fulcrum between these two vocations is pleasure.[171] Darwin's pleasure in questions of knowledge is made evident by his essaying notes, his interrogations, his doubts, his certainty that the notes as well as the verse will require revision and amplification.[172] He was promiscuously curious – about Orphic mysteries, flashing nasturtiums, poison trees, flytraps, salt mines, the behaviour of clouds, the imperviousness of cedar to worms – and his notes are generative, begetting further notes and editorial vexations. (The Routledge edition of the *Botanic Garden* provides Darwin's commentaries on his notes, followed by a layered editorial commentary on both sets of authorial annotations.) The centrality of pleasure to Darwin's oeuvre and his own enthusiastic encyclopaedism seem proof of the unity Wordsworth predicted when he wrote that when

> the labours of men of Science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present, but he will be ready to follow the steps of the man of Science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the Science itself.[173]

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[170] *LBOP*, p. 752.
[171] *LBOP*, p. 752.
[172] In the Advertisement to the *Botanic Garden*, published with 'The Loves of the Plants', Darwin explained his previous reluctance to publish the poem 'according to the rules of Horace, hoping to have render'd it more worthy the acceptance of the public'. He has decided to publish, Darwin stated, since he was 'less able, from disuse, to correct the poetry; and, from want of leisure to amplify the annotations'. 'Advertisement', *Loves of the Plants* (Lichfield: J. Jackson, 1789), n. p.
[173] *LBOP*, p. 753.

Yet the future tense which Wordsworth employed in 1802 – the year of Darwin's death – proclaimed that that promised unity has not yet arrived.

> If the time should ever come when what is now called Science, thus familiarized to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of men.

Transfiguration suggests an even more concrete connection to Darwin and his Ovidian ambitions, yet Wordsworth's *if* looms large, detaining the vision on the threshold, preventing it from being fully entertained. Poetic objections seem to play their part in this speculation:

> It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.[174]

In this portion of the Preface, Wordsworth is taking aim at dramatic verse ('those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters'), yet his disapproving subordination of a poetry which pretends to sublimity by the deceits of 'transitory and accidental ornaments' and by the artificial stimulation of his reputation ('excit[ing] admiration of himself by arts') recalls familiar critiques of Darwin's tinkling rhymes and cheap glitter.

This chapter has argued that Darwin's verse rewards close reading, as do the footnotes, which have their own melody and metre. Close reading threatens to unweave the *Botanic Garden*'s tapestry by taking phrases out of their context and testing their survival, although there is precedence in having a taste for Darwin's lines. Maria Edgeworth described her father taking up the *Botanic Garden* when its 'merits have been questioned',

[174] *LBOP*, p. 753.

and scanning for the 'best lines in the page' to which he could 'give contrast and variety'.[175] It is not the only method for encountering Darwin. In extracting passages dramatising individual plants (Circaea, Tremella), contemporary reviews suggest his readers' appetites for longer quotations: for 'portraits' and 'scenes' rather than lines. However, failing to pay attention to component parts in the dazzle of the whole risks the devaluation of that whole. The poverty of Darwin's verse has been so continually accepted that English criticism lacks a tradition which takes his work seriously and judges it worthy of critical effort. A dependence on certain contemporaries – upon Byron, Crabb Robinson, Coleridge – risks forgetting others, such as Cowper, who praised Darwin's 'harmony of versification' and the 'sweetness of his numbers'.[176] As Crabb Robinson's 'versifier', Darwin becomes merely a transposer of fact into the couplet's straitjacket, as though facts were settled commodities rather than speculative expeditions. Along with Darwin's sunken currency, Linnaeus and his taxonomic system are threatened with irrelevance. Artificial systems are no longer read as timely propositions – human-built constructions that allow for certain relations to be thought through – but as dead collections and museums of the past. Taking Darwin seriously as a poet does not mean arguing that all of his lines are equally good but it does ask for a reader who entertains the pleasure of a text, rather than in its inevitable failure. Reclaiming artifice as a denominator of skill rather than deceit, of knowing workmanship rather than hollowness, acknowledges the artifice of all poems (for no poem, regardless of what Crabb Robinson says, is truly natural). In 1827, John Clare wrote to Henry Francis Cary, the translator of Dante, to say he was 'astonishd to think why [Darwin] is neglected so much for I am sure there is passages of uncommon harmony & beauty in them particularly his descriptions of nature or scenery more properly

[175] *Memoirs of Richard Lovell Edgeworth* (London: Hunter and Baldwin, Cradock and Joy, 1821), II, 136, quoted by Williams, *The Social Lives of Books*, p. 92.
[176] *Letters and Prose Writings of William Cowper*, V, 106, 91. Regrettably, Darwin thought little of Cowper.

speaking'.[177] Clare thought that the public neglect of such poets was 'owing to the Publics finding no path that leads to their beautys'. If Clare was able to perceive Darwin's 'uncommon harmony', the music of those harmonies – and Linnaeus's collusion with those harmonies – awaits fuller consideration.

Further, just as *Loves of the Plants* invites the testing of syllable against syllable, of rhyme against rhyme, and note against line, so the architectural differences between Wordsworth's sequential poetic collections encourages readers to see how taxonomic arrangements guide interpretation.

[177] Letter of 4 November 1827, *Letters of John Clare*, ed. by Mark Storey (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 403.

III. WORDSWORTH'S POETIC COLLECTIONS

Although *Lyrical Ballads* has been seen as ringing the death knell for Erasmus Darwin's reputation as a poet, as his grandson Charles observed, Wordsworth's debt to Darwin was perceived as late as 1830 by the anthologist and editor Alexander Dyce, who recognised a similarity between two lines of Wordsworth's poem 'To Enterprise' and Darwin's description of the destruction of Cambyses's army in the *Economy of Vegetation*.[1] Wordsworth replied with a hint of froideur, 'You are quite correct in your notice of my obligation to Dr Darwin. In the first edition of the Poem it was acknowledged in a note, which slipped out of its place in the last, along with some others'.[2] Darwin, like Wordsworth, had gone to St John's College, Cambridge, and had admired the younger poet's (rather Darwinian) *Descriptive Sketches* (1793), little realising that Wordsworth's poetic theories would be advanced at the expense of his poetic reputation.[3]

In the year that *Lyrical Ballads* was first published, Wordsworth wrote to the bookseller and publisher, Joseph Cottle, with the request that he 'would contrive to send me Dr Darwin's Zöonomia *by the first carrier*'.[4] During his conversations with Isabella Fenwick, Wordsworth acknowledged *Zoonomia: Or, the Laws of Organic Life* (1794-1796) as the source for 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill', but Darwin's biographer Desmond King-Hele has proposed that traces of Darwin are scattered throughout *Lyrical Ballads*, not

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[1] Charles Darwin, *The Life of Erasmus Darwin*, p. 34; 'To Enterprize', *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820-1845*, ed. by Geoffrey Jackson (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), pp. 397-403. Henceforth *SSIP*.
[2] Letter of 19 April 1830, *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*: *The Later Years*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Alan G. Hill, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), II (1829-1834), p. 235. All future references will be to *LY* and the respective volume number. Dyce was the editor of *Specimens of British Poetesses* (1827) and *Specimens of English Sonnets* (1833), and of editions of the works of William Collins, Mark Akenside, Matthew Prior, and Thomas Parnell.
[3] 'We infinitely prefer the simplicity, even of the most unadorned tale in this volume, to all the meretricious frippery of the *Darwinian* taste', wrote the reviewer of *Lyrical Ballads* in the *British Critic*, 14 (October 1799), 364-9, printed in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 79; King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets*, p. 67.
[4] 28 February or 7 March 1798, *EY*, p. 199.

least in Wordsworth's belief that every flower 'enjoys the air it breathes' ('Lines written in early spring', l. 12), an anthropomorphising gesture to Darwin's sensuous plants.[5]

Yet Wordsworth's perceived antipathy to science acts as a second wedge between the poets. Marilyn Gaull presents Wordsworth as an objector to the 'mechanistic, anatomizing, collecting, even experimental sciences that "murder to dissect"...that deface or intrude on nature, that take samples out of settings and disrupt the processes by which everything lives'.[6] The phrase upon which Gaull alights ('Murder to dissect') is one regularly dredged up in Romantic criticism to prosecute Linnaeus in particular and taxonomic impulses in general, as are the familiar lines on the 'philosopher' so oblivious to human feeling as to 'peep and botanize | Upon his mother's grave' ('A Poet's Epitaph', ll. 19-20).[7] This quotation was already nimble enough for a correspondent to use in an 1824 letter to Wordsworth. Wishing to introduce the poet to a female friend, John Kenyon wrote that his friend was a proficient botanist but not one to 'peep and Botanize etc'.[8] It has been observed that Wordsworth's views on science were more nuanced than casual acquaintance with these passages, taken out of context, might suggest. According to Schneider, the poet had an excellent training in mathematics at Hawkshead Grammar School under William Taylor before taking up his place at St John's College, Cambridge.[9] In addition to his formal training, Wordsworth read widely in contemporary science and encountered Humphry Davy, Alexander Humboldt, and possibly Joseph Priestley.[10] Nevertheless, Wordsworth's recurring ambivalence towards microscopic scrutiny and

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[5] *The Fenwick Notes of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Jared Curtis (London: Bristol Classical Press, 1993), p. 15. Wordsworth acknowledged Darwin obliquely in the 'Advertisement' to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), *LBOP*, p. 739. See King-Hele, *Erasmus Darwin and the Romantic Poets* for a range of echoes and possible relations between Darwin and Wordsworth, pp. 62-87.
[6] Marilyn Gaull, 'Wordsworth and Science', in *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp 599-613 (p. 600).
[7] *LBOP*, pp. 235-7 (p. 236).
[8] *LY* I, n. 280.
[9] Ben Ross Schneider Jnr, *Wordsworth's Cambridge Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 4, 5, 10.
[10] Duncan Wu, *Wordsworth's Reading*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993-1996), I: *1770-1799*.

scientist's passion for specificities lingers. In the fourth book of *The Excursion*, the Wanderer suggests that an attention to minutiae leads to infinite disaggregation, wondering whether

> twas ever meant
> That we should pry far off, yet be unraised;
> That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
> Viewing all objects unremittingly
> In disconnection dead and spiritless;
> And still dividing, and dividing still,
> Break down all grandeur…
> (IV. 953-962)[11]

To pore is to examine an object 'with fixed attention' or 'with intense concentration'.[12] As the root of 'pore-blind' in Johnson's *Dictionary*, *poring* implies the ruining of one's eyes.[13] By means of thudding alliteration (dwindle, disconnection, dead, dividing, dividing, down); parallelism ('That we should pry'; 'That we should pore'); and chiasmus ('And still dividing, and dividing still'), the Wanderer impersonates the self-charmed monotony of a mind hedged in by compulsion, incessantly driven to disassembling until the substance of the whole is lost. In the 1850 *Prelude*, sceptical readers who disbelieve the child's quick perception of local shepherds as mythical apparitions 'pore | on the dead letter' and 'miss the spirit of things' (VIII. 296-7).[14] There are no organic encounters when one pores; one merely approaches blindness. By contrast, Coleridge was

[11] *The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James Butler, Michael C. Jaye, and David Garcia (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), pp. 156-7.
[12] 'Pore, v.1b.' *Oxford English Dictionary* <www.oed.com>[accessed 24 March 2016]
[13] 'Pore, v.2, 3'. Ibid. Samuel Johnson, 'poreblind, adj', *Dictionary of the English Language*, n. p.
[14] *The Fourteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), p. 168.

> no slave
> Of that false secondary power, by which
> In weakness we create distinctions, then
> Deem that our puny boundaries are things
> Which we perceive, and not which we have made.
> To thee, unblinded by these outward shows,
> The unity of all has been revealed…
> (II. 223-229)[15]

Wordsworth's deployment of 'slave', echoing the description in 'The Poet's Epitaph' of the philosopher as a 'fingering slave' whose prying disregards proper feeling, implies the existence of a connection between ordering and an alienated humanity.[16] This connection carries additional implications of possession and dispossession: the trope of the greedy, acquisitive botanist, as though the impulse for demarcating particulars is related to the instinct for hoarding.[17] Habitual distinction, Wordsworth suggests, threatens to develop into an over-reliance on artificial boundaries to structure perception; the consequence is a human mind which mis-recognises these demarcations as natural. Such distinctions distort the interpenetration of the world and the mind, bestowing on the visible world a mirage of comprehension. These structures, described in the 1805 *Prelude* as 'outward shows' were revised to 'formal arts' in 1850, suggesting a balancing act between sheer external and useful artifice.

While the passage's context situates it within a critique of an empiricist discourse of the mind's attempts to understand itself – 'class[ing] the cabinet | Of their sensations'

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[15] *Thirteen-Book Prelude*, ed. by Mark L. Reed, 2 vols (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), II, 37. In the 1850 *Prelude*, the line 'In weakness we create distinctions' was revised to 'we multiply distinctions', suggesting that Wordsworth later believed some degree of distinction to be unavoidable.

[16] See also *Excursion*, IV. 1250-1252.

[17] Ruskin suggested that the difference between the botanist's and the artist's knowledge of plants is that 'the one notes their distinctions for the sake of swelling his herbarium, the other, that he may render them vehicles of expression and emotion'. The Preface to the Second Edition of *Modern Painters* in *Works*, III, 36, quoted by M. H. Abrams, p. 312. Susan Stewart, on the other hand, differentiates between the hoarder, who collects objects for their own fetishized intrinsic value, and the collector who considers the relations between objects. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984; repr. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), p. 156.

(II. 224-5) – the passage's implications for scientific ordering at large is clear.[18] Taken together, these two passages frame the act of distinction, and an over-attention to minutiae, as the convulsions of a mind enslaved to and constrained by narrow and fictitious forms. Wordsworth's apparent distaste for the 'false secondary power' responsible for creating distinctions, the 'puny boundaries' which are artificially constructed rather than organically perceived, and the uncongenial impulse towards classification suggest a mental incompatibility with Linnaean botany. Nevertheless, in March 1801 the poet reminded his publishers, Thomas Norton Longman and Owen Rees, that he and Coleridge were 'conjointly' in their debt for the purchase of two copies of the third edition of Withering's *Arrangement of British Plants* (1796) and two accompanying microscopes, a request encouraged by Dorothy.[19]

Dorothy's botanical instinct is set down in her diaries, where her brief notes, as Virginia Woolf described it, 'unfurl in the mind'.[20] On 14 May 1800, Dorothy observed at Grasmere '[a] beautiful yellow, palish yellow flower, that looked thick round & double, & smelt very sweet – I suppose it was a ranunculus'.[21] On 7 May 1802, while walking in the orchard, she observed the sorrel leaves opening at nine o'clock, recalling the Linnaean fashion for horologias.[22] The entry written several days later makes clear she has been reading Withering: 'We brought home hackberry blossom, crab blossom – the anemone nemerosa – Marsh Marygold – Speedwell, that beautiful blue one the colour of the blue-

[18] *Fourteen-Book Prelude*, p. 38.
[19] *EY*, p. 322. 'Oh! that we had a book of botany!' wrote Dorothy, 16 May 1800, *Grasmere Journals*, ed. by Pamela Woof (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 2.
[20] 'Dorothy Wordsworth', first published in 1929 and revised for the second series of *The Common Reader*. Republished in *The Essays of Virginia Woolf*, ed. by Andrew McNeillie and Stuart N. Clarke, 6 vols (London: Hogarth Press, 1986-2011), V: 1829-1932, ed. by Stuart N. Clarke, pp. 113-121 (p. 115).
[21] *Grasmere Journals*, p. 1. Dorothy does not borrow her language from Withering, who describes the genus of ranunculus as 'deciduous, 5 (or 3) leaved: *petals* 5...with a nectariferous scale or pore within the claw: *styles* permanent: *seeds* incrusted, upright' in *Arrangement of British Plants*, II, 503.
[22] *Grasmere Journals*, p. 97. For more on horologias, see Melissa Bailes, 'Linnaeus's Botanical Clocks: Chronobiological Mechanisms in the Scientific Poetry of Erasmus Darwin, Charlotte Smith, and Felicia Hemans', *Studies in Romanticism*, 56.2 (Summer 2017), 1-30.

stone or glass used in jewellery, with its beautiful pearl-like chives...'[23] ('Chives' is Withering's translation of Linnaeus's 'stamens', one of those bowdlerising acts Darwin despised.)[24] The passage also retains Dorothy's strong sense of aesthetics – of vitality and colour, of living objects compared with objects of human craft and ingenuity – revealing the 'suggestive power which is the gift of the poet rather than of the naturalist'.[25] Late in life, Wordsworth told a correspondent that, while 'not many Persons have found more delight in noticing plants and flowers' than himself, he had 'neglected more than I ought the minutiae or rather rudiments of the knowledge'. [26] This neglect, he wrote, came in part from his dependence on Dorothy, who was 'almost always at my side in my wanderings, and she for our native Plants was an excellent Botanist'. This companionship is preserved in their writings. If 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' has been read as a counter-melody to Dorothy's diary entry of 15 April 1802, Dorothy's journal acted as a repository for her brother's observations.[27] On 23 April 1802, Dorothy recorded a walk where ''William observes that the umbrella yew tree, that breasts the wind, had lost its character as a tree, and had become something like to solid wood'.[28] 'Character' or essence makes identification possible. In Woolf's account, Dorothy's powers of observation share something with the taxonomist: 'searching out its character, noting its resemblances and its differences and taking it to her heart with all the ardour of a discoverer...' [29] These observations culminate in an experience which anticipates *To the Lighthouse*'s Lily Briscoe: 'She had seen it at last – she had laid it up in her mind for ever. It had become one

[23] 12 May 1802, *Grasmere Journals*, p. 98.
[24] See above, pp. 64-5.
[25] Woolf, p. 115.
[26] Letter from Wordsworth to Charles Alexander Johns, 29 July 1841, *LY* IV, p. 220.
[27] *Grasmere Journals*, pp. 84-5. See Lucy Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth: 'All in Each Other'* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 156-159.
[28] *Grasmere Journals*, p. 90.
[29] Woolf, p. 118.

of those "inner visions" which she could call to mind at any time in their distinctness and in their particularity'.[30]

The Wordsworths' shared natural objects are tracked through the copy of Withering's *Arrangement of British Plants* now held at Dove Cottage. Plant sightings are transcribed and dated, such as 'Lysmachia Nemerosa. Yellow Pimpernell of the Woods. Pimpernill Loosestrife. May 30th 1802.' The Wordsworths are not shy to correct their authority, as one observes in William's note to *Pinguicula vulgaris* (common butterwort). The flower, he wrote, could be found

> in great abundance all round the Grasmere Fells. This plant is here very ill described, a remarkable circumstance belonging to it is the manner in which its leaves grow, lying close to the ground, and diverging from the stalk as exactly to resemble a starfish, the tall slender stalk surmounted by the blue flower, and rising from the middle of this starfish, renders the appearance of the plant very beautiful especially as it is always founded in the most comfortless and barren places, upon moist rocks for example.[31]

In addition to the notes, pencil marks track the reader's attention. Pages are turned up or down, where the reader paused or marked the place to return. This is the case with the page featuring *Papaver somniferum* (opium poppy), and one wonders if the Wordsworths had been thinking of Coleridge. Small pieces of moss, ferns, grass, and dried leaves are pressed in the pages, turning Withering's guide into an ad-hoc herbarium.

Dorothy Wordsworth may have mediated a more intimate, diurnal relationship with botany with her brother, but Wordsworth staked a claim for it in his poetry. In 'Ruth', first published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), Wordsworth described the power of the 'lovely youth' from 'Georgia's shore' to bewitch Ruth Othello-like with traveller's tales:

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[30] Woolf, p. 118.

[31] William Withering, *An Arrangement of British Plants; According to the Latest Improvements of the Linnaean System*, 3rd edn, 4 vols (Birmingham: Swinney, 1796), Grasmere, Jerwood Centre, Wordsworth Trust, 1995.R120, II, 18.

He spake of plants divine and strange
That ev'ry day their blossoms change,
Ten thousand lovely hues!
With budding, fading, faded flowers
They stand the wonder of their bowers
From morn to evening dews.

He told of the Magnolia, spread
High as a cloud, high over head!
The Cypress and her spire,
Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam
Cover a hundred leagues and seem
To set the hills on fire.
(ll. 49-60)[32]

The strong pulse of the tetrameter induces an incantatory haze, amplified by the repetitions built into the line ('budding, fading, faded'; 'High as a cloud, high over head'), which lend enchantment to the lover's stories. Nevertheless, Darwin-like, Wordsworth anchors the spell in fact. A footnote to Magnolia clarifies it as 'Magnolia grandiflora', and a further note to the scarlet flowers disclose Wordsworth's source: 'The splendid appearance of these scarlet flowers, which are scattered with such profusion over the Hills in the Southern parts of North America is frequently mentioned by Bartram in his Travels'.[33] Coleridge, who like Wordsworth had enjoyed reading Bartram, quoted observations from the *Travels* on the passage of birds at the conclusion to 'The Lime-Tree Bower my Prison'. An earlier footnote in that poem demonstrates the botanical interest Coleridge shared with the Wordsworths. The footnote is attached to the speaker's envy of the scenery his friends would encounter without him: the 'roaring dell', the 'branchless Ash | Unsunn'd and damp', and the

[32] *LBOP*, pp. 191-208 (pp. 193-4).
[33] *Magnolia grandiflora* appears throughout Bartram as one of the 'illustrious families of forest trees' which 'form the venerated groves and solemn shades' of the southern American states. The scarlet flowers to which Wordsworth makes reference might be the herbaceous plant, a species of *Gerardea flammea*, which Bartram described as growing 'erect, a single stem from a root, three or four feet in height, branching very regularly from about one half its length upwards, forming a cone or pyramid, profusely garnished with three tubular labiated scarlet or flame coloured flowers, which give the plant a very splendid appearance, even at a great distance'. Bartram, pp. xv, 412-3.

dark green file of long lank Weeds,
That all at once (a most fantastic sight!)
Still nod and drip beneath the dripping edge
Of the blue-clay stone.
(ll. 17-20)[34]

The 'lank Weeds' were identified in Coleridge's footnote as 'Asplenium Scolopendrium, called in some countries the Adder's Tongue, in others the Hart's Tongue: but Withering gives the Adder's Tongue as the trivial name of the Ophioglossum only'.[35] Although 'The Lime-Tree Bower my Prison' was written in 1797, the reference to Withering suggests the note's composition after 1800.[36] Like Wordsworth's note to 'Ruth', Coleridge's note grounds the natural object in a bookish specificity which could be mistaken for pedantry.[37] The note offers some anchor of truth to both poets, some substitution to the line, or, as with Darwin, a counter-voice. The presence of the footnote suggests that the poetic line is not sufficient: its presence indicates a corresponding absence. In a similar though much more complex act of corroboration, thirty-five years after Wordsworth wrote an elegy for his brother John, 'I only look'd for pain and grief', the poem was published in his collection *Poems, Chiefly of Early and Late Years* (1842) as 'Elegiac Verses in Memory of My Brother, John Wordsworth, Commander of the E.I. Company's Ship the Earl of Abergavenny, in which he perished by Calamitous Shipwreck, Feb 6, 1805'. The published poem, which describes an encounter with an 'unknown Plant', a type of his brother John, appeared with an endnote to the unknown plant. 'The plant alluded to,' wrote

[34] *Poetical Works*, ed. by J. C. C. Mays, 3 vols in 6 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), I, 349-354.
[35] The list of plants that appears in Coleridge's journal, transcribed from Withering's *Arrangement of British Plants* in Sara Hutchinson's hand between November 1800 and February 1801, begins with *Adders Tongue*. *The Notebooks of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Kathleen Coburn, 5 vols in 10 (London: Routledge, 1957-2002), I: *1794-1804* (1957), 863 21. 77.
[36] *Poetical Works*, I, 351. The corresponding identification in Withering is in *Arrangement of British Plants*, III, 761, 766. Jack Stillinger notes that Coleridge tried to expand or revise the note in the 1817 proofs, citing 'Donn's Hortus Cantabrigiensis – in which <the> Aspenium Scolopendrium is associated with Harts Tongue' and writing elsewhere on the page 'for Adders' Tongue is not only a poetical but a really *characteristic* name of the Asp: Sco. –'. *Coleridge and Textual Instability: The Multiple Versions of the Major Poems* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 149. 'Donn's Hortus Cantabrigiensis' is James Donn's popular *Hortus Cantabrigiensis : Or, a Catalogue of Plants, Indigenous and Foreign, Cultivated in the Walkerian Botanic Garden, Cambridge*, first published in 1796, which ran to thirteen editions by 1845.
[37] Richard Mabey, *The Cabaret of Plants: Botany and the Imagination* (London: Profile Books, 2015), p. 210.

Wordsworth in the note, 'is the Moss Campion (Silene acaulis, of Linnaeus.)' Wordsworth described his first sighting of '[t]his most beautiful plant'. The first 'specimen' he saw

> in its native bed, was singularly fine, the tuft or cushion being at least eight inches in diameter, and the root proportionately thick. I have only met with it in two places among our mountains, in both of which I have since sought for it in vain.[38]

As Wordsworth distances himself from the poem by turning botanist, measuring the 'tuft' and the root, judging the plant dispassionately 'fine', he merges aesthetic judgment with a naturalist's inclination for measurement and symmetry. Yet it is that final line ('of which I have since sought for it in vain') which triggers pathos; it is difficult to read about the moss campion without intrusions of the pathetic fallacy. Footnotes are not only the means of amplifying knowledge but also of modifying feeling. The precision which Coleridge sought in his specification of *Asplenium scolopendrium* is put to work by Wordsworth in the service of memorialisation and the mastery of sustained grief. Yet the road from manuscript poem to publication after thirty-five years reminds one of a significant context for Wordsworth's composition: his lifelong habits of the revision and representations of his poetic corpus.

Linnaeus's Paper Technologies

If, for Wordsworth, '[r]evision was compulsive and continuous', the same might be said of Linnaeus.[39] The poet was still a boy when Linnaeus died in the aftermath of a stroke in 1778, but it was a year of great personal significance for Wordsworth. This was the year Wordsworth's mother died, and in which he was separated from Dorothy, whom he would

[38] *P2V*, p. 682.
[39] Stephen Gill, 'Wordsworth's Poems: the Question of Text', *The Review of English Studies*, 34. 134 (May 1983), 172-190 (p. 176).

not meet for another nine years, and he was sent to Hawkshead.[40] Despite their distance in age and geography, Linnaeus and Wordsworth shared habits of authorship. Both men paid attention to the minutiae of their respective vocations: the care they took with their published work was scrupulous and relentless.

For the past decade, Staffan Müller-Wille has been investigating what he calls Linnaeus's 'paper technologies': that is, the changing physical formats by which Linnaeus arranged his data in order to continue and extend his classificatory project. In doing so, Müller-Wille has built on the work of scholars such as Ann Blair, Brian Ogilvie, and Lorraine Daston, whose research considers epistemological communities and the production and structuring of knowledge. These investigations introduce a new awareness of Linnaeus as a formal experimenter. These paper technologies, like Linnaeus's system of classification, supplement the inevitable limitations of human memory.[41] The tide of information Linnaeus received from his correspondents abroad necessitated a shift in the choice of forms by which that information was retained and made available for use. As a young man, Linnaeus used several structuring devices – his notebooks feature lists, dichotomous diagrams, and tables – which solidify and digest the subject of his studies.[42] According to Müller-Wille, the objects of one structuring device could be parleyed into another. In an early student notebook, *Manuscripta medica*, for example, Linnaeus lists 'Unfamiliar plants that I had not yet seen before I came to Skåne'.[43] This list of unfamiliar plants reappeared in *Spolia botanica* (1729), a short catalogue in which Linnaeus attempted to master contemporary European taxonomies by arranging the plants of

[40] For the significance of this separation and the subsequent reunion, see Newlyn, *William and Dorothy Wordsworth:* '*All in Each Other*', pp. 1-24.
[41] See above p. 12.
[42] Dichotomous diagrams 'repeatedly and successively' divide into two branches. 'dichotomous, adj.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/52233> [accessed 15 August 2018]. See Staffan Müller-Wille and Sara Scharf, 'Indexing Nature: Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) and his Fact-Gathering Strategies', *Svenska Linneällskapets Årsskrift* (2011), 31-60.
[43] Müller-Wille and Isabelle Charmantier, 'Lists as Research Technologies', *Isis*, 103 (2012), 734-752 (p. 746).

Swedish provinces according to differing approaches: the flora of Scania (Skåne) by Rivinus's system, of Smolandia (Småland) by Tournefort's, and the plants of Roslagen by John Ray's.[44] Linnaeus was evidently interested in trying several versions of arranging the objects under consideration before perfecting his own sexual system. Later, in the manuscript notebooks for *Fundamenta botanica* (1731-3), Linnaeus drew 'boxes' or 'slots' which represented the genera into which he might later 'deposit' the species.[45] This relied upon his estimation of how capacious the genus would be. This tabular method was more mobile than a serial list, but – as keepers of commonplace books have found – its fixity in the form of a notebook meant that certain boxes were at the risk of filling up while others would be left empty. The table's capacity to rearrange its objects was limited.

Herbaria, however, offered the possibility of a freer approach. Although books of preserved plant specimens have existed since the sixteenth-century, it was common for the herbaria to take the form of a bound book.[46] Linnaeus's herbaria, however, are distinctive in that they consist of unbound sheets which could be rearranged and reshuffled when new information came to light.[47] Linnaeus advised his readers to store their specimens in

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[44] Augustus Quirinus Rivinus or August Quirinus Bachmann (1652-1723) was a German physician, astronomer, and botanist based in Leipzig.

[45] See, for example, images 130, 146, 147 of *Fundamenta Botanica*, Volume VIII (1733), Linnean Society, < http://linnean-online.org/61330/> [accessed 18 July 2018].

[46] Luca Ghini, a botanist at the University of Pisa, is credited with the first herbarium. See Brian Ogilvie, *The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 35.

[47] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 18; Staffan Müller-Wille, 'Linnaeus's herbarium cabinet: a piece of furniture and its function', *Endeavour*, 30.2 (June 2006), 60-64. Despite Müller-Wille's suggestion that Linnaeus may have been one of the first botanists to leave his herbarium unbound, Professor Stephan A. Harris, the Druce Curator of Herbaria at Oxford, argues that this is not the case. Jacob Bobart the Younger – whose father, Jacob Bobart the Elder, was the first Keeper of the Oxford Physic Garden in the early 1640s – compiled the Morisonian herbarium, which shows no evidence of having been bound. More persuasively, the herbarium of Jacob Bobart the Younger's friend, William Sherard, which was one of the largest in the world when it was bequeathed to the University of Oxford in 1728, was unbound. Unlike the herbarium of Sherard's rival, Hans Sloane, which was bound and inconveniently arranged by geography and collector, Sherard was trying to generate a new classificatory system based on Caspar Bauhin's *Pinax theatri botanici* (1623). It seems very likely (though not proven) that Linnaeus may have seen Sherard's collections when he visited Sherard's successor, Dillenius, at Oxford in 1736. Personal exchange, 9 December 2018. See also Harris, 'William Sherard: his herbarium and his *Pinax*', *Oxford Plant Systematics*, 21 (September 2015), 13-15; 'Illustrations in the Morisonian Herbarium', *Oxford Plant Systematics*, 22 (June 2016), 10-11.

[a] wooden CUPBOARD, which can be closed by two long folding doors, nicely corresponding to a vertical partition.
The *dimensions* of the cupboard on the inside should be accurately determined.
Height, 7 ½ Paris feet from top to bottom.
Width, 16 inches, besides the partition.
Depth, 1 foot, to wit from front to back.
The cupboard should be *divided* by the partition into two equal parts, from front to back.
The compartments should be separated horizontally, by shelves 6 lines thick.[48]

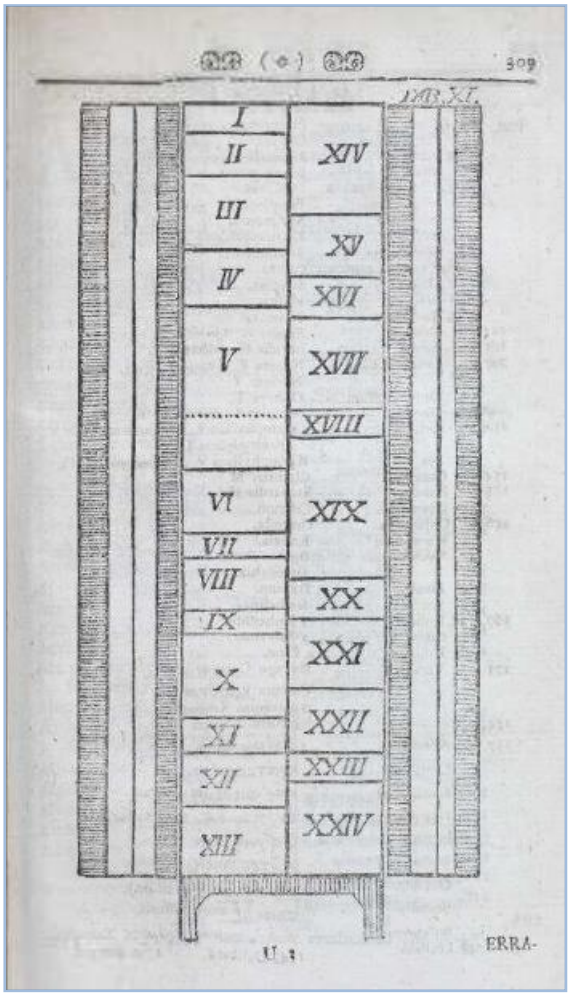


Fig. 8. Herbarium cupboard, Carl Linnaeus, *Philosophia botanica* (1751), BL. 79, Linnean Society, <http://linnean-online.org/120027/> [accessed 23 July 2018]

[48] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 329.

Each of the roman numerals within the rectangles of the diagram of the herbarium cupboard represents a class in Linnaeus's sexual system. Linnaeus suggested how much space in inches should be given to each class, with room for 6,000 mounted plant specimens. He added that

> [i]f the folding doors are *marked* with the numbers and names of the genera, with the spaces on the shelves corresponding exactly, and linden bands are kept between the spaces, enclosing the same genera and themselves marked with the numbers of the genera, then any plant can be pulled out and produced without delay.[49]

This method of preserving plant specimens indicates the importance of mobility to Linnaeus's paper garden. His herbarium was, as Müller-Wille suggests, a tool for uncovering taxonomic relationships.[50] By keeping the sheets loose, species were not only easier to find but freer to be transplanted.[51]

A second example of Linnaeus's revisionary paper technologies is his self-annotations. Like Wordsworth, Linnaeus was a lifelong reviser of his texts: *Genera plantarum*, first published in 1737, went through seven editions in Linnaeus's lifetime, and the final (thirteenth) edition of *Systema naturae* was published after Linnaeus's death by Johann Friedrich Gmelin in ten volumes (1788-1793).These re-editions and expansions were issued not only to correct previous errors, but to incorporate newly discovered species, particularly as a result of expeditions abroad. The volume of new species sent by Linnaeus's many international correspondents produced an overload of information with which, Müller-Wille argues, Linnaeus attempted to reckon by using the previous edition as a manuscript. Like Thomas Gray's annotated copy of *Systema naturae*, Linnaeus interleaved his own books to absorb and to structure new information. It is not uncommon

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[49] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 330; 'linden bands' are separators made of lime-tree bark.
[50] Staffan Müller-Wille, 'Collection and collation: theory and practice of Linnaean botany', p. 558.
[51] Further instructions, and the specificities of laying out the specimen, can be found in *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 18.

in the period for works of natural history to be used in this way, although it is less common for printed books to be used for the creation of entirely new works. Linnaeus's personal copy of *Genera plantarum* (1737), for example, is annotated with notes for *Species plantarum* (1753).[52]

Linnaeus's development of paper slips towards the end of his life as he prepared the twelfth edition of *Systema naturae* offers the greatest example of his experimentation with progressively flexible solutions.[53] The Linnean Society currently possesses 1030 paper slips – 901 of which refer to botanical subjects – each produced to a uniform size (13 by 7.5 cm) and used horizontally like an index card.[54] Like a commonplace book headword, each paper slip is titled by its generic name, and lists below the features of a particular species in a regularised format, including the specific epithet and a diagnostic phrase or description of its morphological features.[55] Several of Linnaeus's paper slips are crossed through diagonally, indicating that the information on the paper slip has been transferred elsewhere.[56] José Celestino Mutis (1732-1808), a Spanish botanist and priest stationed in Columbia, for example, sent Linnaeus a specimen of *Cleome gigantea*. The species was duly described on a paper slip, bound with Linnaeus's copy of *Species plantarum* (1762), and later integrated into the twelfth edition of *Systema naturae*.[57] This offers a relatively rare example of a paper slip bound into an annotated book, according to the Head of Collections at the Linnean Society, Isabelle Charmantier.[58] While there is no suggestion that Linnaeus tried to urge his ad-hoc system of paper slips upon his friends, students, or

[52] *Genera plantarum* (1737), London, Linnean Society, BL.49A.
[53] For a full account, see Isabelle Charmantier and Staffan Müller-Wille, 'Carl Linnaeus's botanical paper slips (1767-1773)', *Intellectual History Review*, 24.2 (2014), 215-23.
[54] The slips are stored by the Linnean Society in alphabetical order but it is not known whether this is how Linnaeus organised them or not.
[55] These features include the calyx, corolla, stamen, pistil, perianth, and seed. 'Carl Linnaeus's botanical paper slips (1767-1773)', p. 220.
[56] See the case of the genus *Salacia* in 'Carl Linnaeus's botanical paper slips (1767-1773)', p. 221.
[57] *Species plantarum*, 2nd edn, 2 vols in 7 (Stockholm: 1763), II. i. 937. London: Linnean Society, BL.88/2-1. *Systema naturae*, 3 vols (Stockholm: 1767-8), III, 232.
[58] Personal exchange, 26 September 2018.

correspondents, he nevertheless continued to use them until his death. Thereafter, Carl Linnaeus the younger assumed his father's position at Uppsala and continued the practice.[59]

The radical rearrangeability of Linnaeus's working habits undermines his reputation as an essentialist, as a theorist of fixed objects and unchanging species. Given the volume of information he received daily from abroad, his experiments were born of pragmatism and his methods allowed for easier collation: that is, for the stripping away of differences when comparing species descriptions in order to come to a generic definition. Despite his lasting scholastic reputation, Linnaeus's books refer to Bacon more often than they do to Aristotle.[60] Like Bacon, Linnaeus liked to compose his theoretical works in the form of aphorisms, and to emphasise the integrity of his work based on personal experience and examination. In the introduction to *Genera plantarum*, Linnaeus asked

> what reason should ever have taught that only those features [petals and fruit] be taken? What observation by one's own eyes taught it? What revelation? What argument derive a priori or a posteriori? Certainly none of these, if not mere authority. We do not accept any authority in botany but autopsy [i.e. observation with one's own eyes]... All that I have described, I have seen with the naked, unarmed eye.[61]

[59] While Linnaeus does not seem to have invented the index card, he was one of the first natural scientists to exploit its possibilities. It seems that Linnaeus first used paper slips when cataloguing the Queen of Sweden's butterfly collection with Daniel Solander, who later accompanied Sir Joseph Banks on the *Endeavour* (although the paper slips were used vertically rather than horizontally). Solander brought his method of paper slips with him to Britain, and used them while cataloguing the contents of Sir Hans Sloane's collection at the British Museum. Solander's successor, Jonas Dryander used the paper slips after him, as did Dryander's successor Robert Brown. Thus card cataloguing was foundational to one of the fore-most institutions of British collecting. 'Carl Linnaeus's Botanical Paper Slips (1767-1773)', pp. 227-230.

[60] Morton allows for a tension between Linnaeus's 'essentialist idealist stand' and a 'powerful empiricism', as well as botanical intuition (*History of Botanical Science*, p. 264). Similarly ambivalent, Stafleu, who conceives of Linnaeus as methodically Aristotelian, judges Linnaeus to have good empirical instincts which were muddied by his philosophical and theological commitments (*Linnaeus and the Linnaeans*, p. 139). *Hortus Cliffortianus* (1737) and *Philosophia botanica* (1751) both gesture to Bacon, and Linnaeus quotes directly from *De augmentis scientiarum* in *Fundamenta botanica* (1736) and *Fauna suecica* (1746). See Staffan Müller-Wille, 'The Synthesis of Facts in Linnaean Natural History', in *Philosophies of Technology: Francis Bacon and His Contemporaries*, ed. by Claus Zittel, Gisela Engel, Romano Nanni, and Nicole C. Karafyllis, 2 vols (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2008), II, 515-538 (p. 521).

[61] 'A translation of Carl Linnaeus's introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737)', pp. 568, 569.

Linnaeus's commitment to 'know things themselves' ('res ipsas nosce') must be weighed against his theoretical commitments, a tension exhibited in a thought experiment proposed in *Genera plantarum* (1737).[62] 'Two learned persons', he wrote,

> one a taxonomist, the other an empiricist, may enter a garden stuffed with exotic and unknown plants and equipped with the best botanical library. The taxonomist will, by reading the letters of fructification, easily track the plants back to their class, order and genus; and once that is done, only a few species will be left to distinguish. The empiricist will persist in turning over all the books, reading all the descriptions, and looking at all the drawings with unceasing toil; and still he will not be sure about the plant, except by accident.[63]

This question, of theory versus empiricism, is less a problem of philosophy than it is of practicality: the natural historian was stymied by an overwhelming volume of data, scant resources, and finite time. Systems such as Linnaeus's were designed to parse new information and to sort that information so as to make it accessible to the botanical community. The pragmatic botanist combines both system and autopsy in order to answer his curiosity. Taxonomy may be an artificial solution, but it is a comprehensive one. Systems provide the data which will eventually rearrange them: they offer ways of thinking through a proposition. Linnaeus's paper technologies divulge the significance of revision to his working processes. He gravitated towards formats which enabled alternatives, rerouting, correction, recollection – knowledge of these habits challenges a cultural conception of Linnaeus as a rigid, rule-bound thinker by revealing a man who saw heuristic mobility as a handmaid to truth.

Like Linnaeus, Wordsworth was criticised for his system of classification: the much-discussed arrangement of his poems from *Poems* (1815) onward was described by the *Monthly Review* as 'scientifically distribut[ing]' his poems in such a way as would 'probably give little satisfaction to that author himself, or to his few though ardent

[62] 'Primus est gradus sapientiae res ipsas nosce' is found in Aphorism 10 of the 'Observationes in Regna Naturae', *Systema naturae* (Leiden: 1735), p. 2. It is quoted by Annika Lindskog, p. 84.
[63] 'A translation of Carl Linnaeus's introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737)', p. 570.

votaries'.[64] The poet himself was described as a man haunting his 'local habitation', giving names to 'airy nothings'. Borrowing Theseus's eloquent scepticism, the unsigned reviewer transformed Wordsworth into an enchanted Linnaeus, a mythical name-giver as local genius.[65] While the differences between Wordsworth and Linnaeus are likely to strike the reader at first – one a botanist, a son of the Enlightenment, whose works were written almost entirely in Latin; the other a poet, a herald of the subsequent century, who advocated the 'real language of men' – they share a comprehensive approach to knowledge in the ambitions of their work. As *Systema naturae* attempted to arrange all of creation, so for Wordsworth 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge...the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spared over the whole earth, and over all time'.[66] Wordsworth declared to Lady Beaumont, the wife of his patron, that there was 'scarcely one' of his poems which did not 'aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution'.[67] If each poem conspired to direct his reader's sentiments, thoughts, and intellectual constitution – participating within a didactic frame, however subtle – the categories by which his shorter poems were arranged were intended to promote these encounters.

[64] *Monthly Review*, 78 (November 1815), 225-34, quoted in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 557.
[65] William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, ed. by Sukanta Chaudhuri, Third Series (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2017), v. i. 16-18 (p. 247).
[66] *LBOP*, pp. 752-3.
[67] Letter of 21 May 1807, *Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth: The Middle Years*, ed. by Ernest de Selincourt, rev. by Mary Moorman and Alan G. Hill, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969-70), I: *1806-1811*, p. 148. All future references will be to *MY* and the respective volume number.

Wordsworth's Classifications

Any resistance to Wordsworth's classificatory impulses must contend with the Preface to his two-volume collection, *Poems* (1815). By the third paragraph of the 1815 Preface, Wordsworth begins his work of distinction by enumerating the 'powers requisite for the production of poetry' which are ranked as: 1) observation and description; 2) sensibility; 3) reflection; 4) imagination and fancy; 5) invention; and 6) judgment.[68] Directly after concluding his taxonomy of poetic powers, Wordsworth enumerates the 'divers forms' or 'moulds' of poetry (genres) and their respective species as 1) Narrative (epopoeia, 'Historic Poem', tale, romance, mock-heroic, metrical novel); 2) Dramatic (tragedy, historic drama, comedy, masque); 3) Lyrical (hymn, ode, elegy, song, ballad); 4) Idyllium (epitaph, inscription, sonnet, epistle, loco-descriptive poetry); 5) Didactic (i.e. Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura* and Virgil's *Georgics*); and 6) Philosophical Satire (i.e. the work of Horace and Juvenal).[69] Classification by genre was hardly new. David Duff shows that eighteenth-century collections of poetry such as John Bell's *Bell's Classical Arrangement of Fugitive Poetry* (1789-1797) could be 'classical' both in the sense of neoclassical aesthetic allegiances and their interest in generic taxonomies. Alternative taxonomies arranged by John Ogilvie and George Campbell attempted to disassemble the power-grid of neoclassical genre theory, and Duff suggests that later anthologies transferred the taxonomic method from genres to authors.[70] Wordsworth's Preface, however, is striking in its sheer taxonomic accrual; the author seems to compelled to repeatedly distinguish: 'still dividing, and dividing still'. If, as Thomas Campbell suggested, 'Poetry is of too spiritual a nature to admit of its authors being exactly grouped by a Linnaean system of

[68] William Wordsworth, *Shorter Poems, 1807-1820*, ed. by Carl H. Ketcham (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), pp. 632-3. All future references will be to *SP*.
[69] *SP*, pp. 633-4.
[70] Duff, pp. 25, 48-9.

classification', poetry is evidently not spiritual enough to avoid dissection along the cross-sections of form and the poet's capacity.[71]

Wordsworth's first public acknowledgment of the arrangement of his poems in the preface to *The Excursion* (1814) used a metaphor drawn from architecture rather than from natural history.[72] In describing his unachieved philosophical poem, *The Recluse*, Wordsworth likened *The Excursion* to 'the ante-chapel' of a 'gothic church'. 'Continuing this allusion', wrote Wordsworth,

> [the author] may be permitted to add, that his minor Pieces, which have long been before the Public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive Reader to have such a connection with the main Work as may give them claim to be likened to the little Cells, Oratories, and sepulchral Recesses, ordinarily included in those Edifices.[73]

The architectural metaphor anticipates T.S. Eliot's commentary on Herbert's *Temple* which argued against short poems as an inevitable indication of a 'minor poetry': 'The *Temple* is...a book constructed according to a plan; and as we get to know Herbert's poems better, we come to find there is something we get from the whole book, which is more than a sum of its parts'.[74] The Gothicism of Wordsworth's metaphor suggests a more intricate interrelation between parts than what Eliot discovered in Herbert – pockets and recesses hidden behind 'edifices' – and the architectural imagery implies that the subsequent arrangement will be permanent. However degraded, gothic structures endure: they are maintained through periods of neglect, renovation, parody, preservation, and eclectic revival. Yet the collections of Wordsworth's 'minor Pieces' are characterised not by their

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[71] Thomas Campbell, *Specimens of the British Poets: With Biographical and Critical Notices, and an Essay on English Poetry*, 7 volumes (London: J. Murray, 1819), quoted by Duff, p. 49.
[72] The Oxford English Dictionary records the first usage of 'corpus' in this sense to Chamber's *Cyclopedia* (1728), although the entry has not been revised since its first publication in 1893. 'corpus, n', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/41873> [accessed 27 July 2018].
[73] 'Preface' to *The Excursion*, p. 38.
[74] 'What is Minor Poetry', *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 45.

ornate and lapidary tenacity, but by their tendency to shift, expand, remove, and accommodate new forms.

The groundwork for Wordsworth's 'cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses' was laid in his *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807).[75] Reviewers at the *Critical Review, Le Beau Monde,* and Francis Jeffrey at the *Edinburgh Review* took umbrage at the humble subjects of the short lyrics and what Byron termed the 'namby-pamby' language in which they were written, but critics also objected to the apparent egotism of a poet who grouped several of these poems under the heading 'Moods of My Own Mind'.[76] In the letter to Lady Beaumont, Wordsworth sought to defend his poetic choices. If the book was considered trivial from its parts, Wordsworth suggested that together the poems 'have a connection with, or a bearing upon, each other, and therefore, if individually they want weight, perhaps, as a Body, they may not be so deficient'.[77] In the case of his collected sonnets, he suggested, they 'do...collectively make a Poem on the subject of civil Liberty and national independence'.[78] The collection works not only as a gathering of individual pieces but work together to

> fix the attention upon a subject eminently poetical, viz. The interest which objects in nature derive from the predominance of certain affections more or less permanent, more or less capable of salutary renewal in the mind of the being contemplating these objects...There is scarcely one of my Poems which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or to some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution.[79]

Unlike the four editions of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798, 1800, 1802, and 1805), and *Poems* (1815), Wordsworth's experiments in *Poems, in Two Volumes* were unaccompanied by the

[75] Fraistat, *The Poem and the Book: Interpreting Collections of Romantic Poetry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 201, n. 29; *P2V*, p. 4.
[76] Byron's phrase appears in an unsigned review in *Monthly Literary Recreations*, 3 (July 1807), 65-6, p. 169; *Critical Review*, 3.1 (August 1807), 94-402; *Le Beau Monde, or, Literary and Fashionable Magazine*, 2 (October 1807), 138-42; and Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*, 11 (October 1807), 214-31; quoted in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 169, 170-177, 177-185, 177-185, 214-31.
[77] 21 May 1807, *MY* I, 147.
[78] *MY* I, p. 147.
[79] *MY* I, p. 148.

critical positioning of an advertisement or preface. The emphasis on connectivity, on the collective nature and cooperation of poems for the edification of the reflecting reader which was made clear in Wordsworth's 1807 letter to Lady Beaumont was absent. The result was a readership that failed to understand his purposes.

Wordsworth's first recorded intention to reorder his published poems, found in his letter to Coleridge on 5 May 1809, aimed to arrange the poems by the arc of human life from childhood to old age. Within each class, poems would 'ascend through a regular scale of imagination', a phrase repeated in his delineations of the Poems relating to Childhood, the class on the Affections, and on the poems on the Naming of Places. 'The principal of the arrangement,' Wordsworth wrote, 'is that there should be a scale in each class and in the whole, and that each poem should be so placed as to direct the Reader's attention by its position to its *primary* interest'.[80] The proposed work was a collection which would be finely divisible: not only into the ages and development of man but featuring further division within each class as each poem gives way to the next. As the reader's eye travelled down the contents page, the poems would rise in imaginative pitch. The collection as a whole would gather significance as the poetic wave of each class raised the reader's interest. The collection might end, Wordsworth suggested, like *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) with 'Michael, a Pastoral': with death, broken oaths, the dispersal of a man's estate, a growing oak, and visible ruins: 'the remains | Of the unfinished Sheep-fold' (ll. 489-90).[81]

The collection published six years after the letter to Coleridge was not the collection Wordsworth proposed in 1809. In March 1811, Wordsworth was evidently thinking further about republishing his shorter poems, and his conception of the collection had developed by 31 May 1812, when he announced his intentions of arranging his poems

[80] *MY* I, p. 336.
[81] *LBOP*, pp. 252-268 (p. 268).

'with some reference either to the fancy, imagination, reflection, or mere feeling contained in them'.[82] By 1815, the classes that Wordsworth had proposed to Coleridge had been expanded from seven to twelve, and spread across two volumes. Wordsworth explained in his Preface to the *Poems* (1815), that his system allowed poems apparently miscellaneous to 'be arranged with reference to the powers of mind *predominant* in the production of them; or to the mould in which they are cast; or, lastly, to the subjects to which they relate'.[83] Duff describes *Poems* (1815) as an extended theoretical experiment which ultimately collapses, a failure due to Wordsworth's positing not one but three overlapping systems of classification (subject matter, psychology, and genre). Arranging poems by genre, which Matthew Arnold argued was a better and more ancient method, offered ordinary readers 'a clear framework for the reading experience' by guiding the reader's expectations.[84] There was the question of *whose* expectations were to be considered: for Henry Crabb Robinson, the system of classification as it eventually appeared suffered from 'an obvious fault, that it is partly subjective and partly objective'.[85] Charles Lamb thought 'there is only one good order' of poems '[a]nd that is the order in which they were written'.[86] Wordsworth's nod to chronology in *Poems* (1815) is his designation of a date of composition and of publication in two right-hand columns of the contents page, in which his poems look even more like specimens labelled by the date and location of their discovery. Like Lamb, Coleridge preferred the chronological order for arranging a poet's works: 'After all you can say, I think the chronological order is the best for arranging a poet's works. All your divisions are in particular instances inadequate, and they destroy the

[82] 'I have been correcting some of them lately', Wordsworth wrote to John Edwards, a liquor merchant and poet from Derby, 'and probably ere long may republish the whole arranged in a manner that will make more clear my intentions in writing them'. *MY* I, p. 471; Henry Crabb Robinson, *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, ed. by Edith J. Morley, 3 vols (London: Dent, 1938), I, 89.
[83] *SP*, p. 634.
[84] Duff, p. 39; Matthew Arnold, *Poems of Wordsworth* (London: Macmillan, 1879), xiii.
[85] *Henry Crabb Robinson on Books and Their Writers*, I, 165.
[86] Letter from Crabb Robinson to Dorothy Wordsworth, 20 February 1826, *Correspondence of Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, I, 151.

interest which arises from watching the progress, maturity and even decay of Genius'.[87] The appeal to chronology – for tracking the author's development from his earliest work to his mature productions – can also be traced in the editorial debates of the last century, which pit authorial manuscript against printed book, 'final intentions' against transformed artefact.[88] The lure of chronology offers two faces: the preference for the first complete draft of a poem as a record of the poem's history, and the preference for the last, authorised version of the poem as a demonstration of the author's creative final act. Classification schemes replace history, as Susan Stewart has argued, erasing origin with the creation of a new or manipulation of a pre-existing context. [89] In offering his chronological columns alongside his classification system, Wordsworth offered another index, trying to interpret his taxonomy along another organisational axis.

Poems (1815) is an experiment that shores up its confidence by being produced after nearly seventy years of anthologies, where collections such as Dodsley's *Collection of Poems by Several Hands* (1748), William Dodd's *Beauties of Shakespeare* (1752), Vicesimus Knox's *Elegant Extracts: or Useful and Entertaining Pieces of Poetry* (1784), and Robert Anderson's *The Works of the British Poets, with Prefaces Biographical and Critical* (1795-1807) were constructed (and consumed) as taste-makers, canon-formers, and nation-builders. If anthologies, as Leah Price writes, 'trained readers to pace themselves through an unmanageable bulk of print by sensing where to stop and where to linger', Wordsworth was as interested in a programme of reorienting readerly attention from skimming towards a sturdier reflection through the bulk of his own corpus.[90] The arrangement of the 1815 *Poems,* wrote Wordsworth, had 'long presented itself habitually

[87] Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Table Talk,* ed. by Carl Woodring, 2 vols (London: Routledge; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), I, 453.
[88] See Jerome J. McGann, *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
[89] Stewart, pp. 151-2.
[90] Leah Price, *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 4.

to my own mind', and his phrasing recalls a class of *Poems, in Two Volumes* ('Moods of My Own Mind') which drew critical displeasure in 1807. 'Nevertheless,' continued Wordsworth,

> I should have preferred to scatter the contents of these volumes at random, if I had been persuaded that, by the plan adopted, any thing material would be taken from the natural effect of the piece, individually, on the mind of the unreflecting Reader. I trust there is sufficient variety in each class to prevent this; while, for him who reads with reflection, the arrangement will serve as a commentary unostentatiously directing his attention to my purposes, both particular and general.[91]

Classification solves the problem of miscellaneity, aids the weak reader and offers navigation to the strong. The specific language here ('directing his attention') recalls Wordsworth's words to Coleridge in 1809 ('each poem should be so placed as to direct the Reader's attention'). Wordsworth's choice of *commentary* to describe his arrangement emphasises the authority of the conceived work, given the historical development of commentaries from interpretations of sacred texts and classical authors, but it also reveals Wordsworth's insistence on controlling both the authorial and editorial voices of the text. Wordsworth's concern for the reader's experience, or for creating the conditions in which his poems may be most favourably received, was maintained a decade after the publication of *Poems* (1815).[92] In the Wordsworths' correspondence with Henry Crabb Robinson, both men reprised former positions. Wordsworth wrote that 'the only thing of much importance in arrangement is that one poem should shade off happily into another – and the contrasts where they occur be clear of all harshness or abruptness'.[93] The reasons for this were of

[91] *SP*, p. 634.
[92] Judith B. Herman has argued for *Poems* (1815) as a sustained attempt to reposition poems which had been poorly received, or to resituate older poems within Wordsworth's contemporary moment. See 'The Poet as Editor: Wordsworth's Edition of 1815', *The Wordsworth Circle*, 9.1 (Winter 1978), 82-87.
[93] Letter of 6 April 1826, *LY* I, p. 440.

> slight importance as matter for Reflection – that is (I take it) in terms of a principled stance – but of great matter of *feeling* for the Reader by making one Poem smooth the way for another – if this be not attended to classification by subject, or by mould or form, is of no value, for nothing can compensate for the neglect of it.

Evidently Wordsworth's concern for the reader's experience of the whole resulted in the creation of a fictional reader. Lamb, a member of Wordsworth's actual readership, was sceptical, observing that '[t]he reader who is enjoying for instance...the magnificent Ode which in every classification ought to be the last, does not stay to ask nor does he care what faculties has been most taxed to the production'.[94] For Lamb, a poem was enjoyed as a discrete, self-contained experience, upon which Wordsworth's classification forced an unwanted context. Yet the quotation from Wordsworth's letter above reveals that he was less interested in the reader's conscious testing of the framework of his poetic works than in the reader's lived experience of encountering the poems in such an arrangement. The classification was to act as a map of the territory.

If classification works by distinguishing one object from another, Wordsworth's classes were accused by reviewers of being insufficiently distinct. As the *Monthly Review* observed in November 1815,

> [I]n the present volumes we have a poem belonging to the class of 'Fancy', with no possible distinguishing characteristic from another in the class of 'Imagination'… in short, we have here such a pompous classification of trifles, for the most part obvious and extremely childish, that we do not remember to have ever met with so "Much Ado About Nothing" in any other author.[95]

[94] Lamb's opinion is recounted by Crabb Robinson in a letter to Dorothy Wordsworth, 20 February 1826, *Correspondence of Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle*, I, 152. Crabb Robinson preserved his scepticism of Wordsworth's arrangement and offered his own attempt – the 'order that I should most enjoy' - which would divide the poems by themes: poems on the love of nature, poems on human life, poems on liberty and public virtue, and religious poems (p. 153).
[95] *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 558.

The distinction between fancy and imagination participates in a long and knotty genealogy.[96] Wordsworth first attempted a distinction between the two in his 1800 note to *The Thorn*, a distinction which returned in the Preface to *Poems* (1815).[97] While Fancy and Imagination were creative as well as associative powers for Wordsworth, there is a distinction of sonority and effect between them. While both have the power to evoke and combine images, fancy's effects are 'playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic'.[98] Effervescent, evanescent, and capricious, fancy's images are quick, profuse, scattered, and surprising. The mountainous solemnity of the imagination, on the other hand, holds an 'indestructible dominion'. In *Biographia Literaria,* written partly in response to Wordsworth's 1815 Preface, Coleridge allowed that his argument with Wordsworth over the nature of fancy and imagination might come down to a matter of approach. Coleridge sought the 'seminal principle', he wrote, while Wordsworth's poetical approach excused an unsystematic line of investigation.[99] This lack of systematicity explains the perceived porousness of Wordsworth's categories which so irked his critics. In the 1815 Preface, Wordsworth acknowledged that the class of *Poems of the Fancy* or *Poems of the Imagination* might without impropriety have been enlarged from that consisting of *Poems Founded on the Affections* and vice versa. The poet tried to anticipate criticism of this nature by stating that the poems classified by powers of the author's mind were divided by the '*predominant*' character, 'which implies the exertion of other faculties in less degree'. Various poems bear several possible categorical marks upon them, but '[t]he most striking characteristics of each piece, mutual illustration, variety, and proportion, have governed

[96] See, for example, James Engell, *The Creative Imagination: Enlightenment to Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 265-276 (p. 274); and, more recently, Alexander Schlutz, 'Wordsworth and Coleridge on the Imagination', *The Oxford Handbook of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Richard Gravil and Daniel Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp. 499-515.
[97] *LBOP*, p. 351.
[98] *SP*, p. 640.
[99] *Biographia Literaria, or Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate, 2 vols (London: Routledge; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), I, 88. On the relation between *Biographia Literaria* and *Poems* (1815) see I, xlv-li.

[Wordsworth] throughout'.[100] While Wordsworth's discussion of gradation, 'shading', and poems 'smoothing' off into one another suggest the chronological progression of evolutionary development, the selection of one predominating characteristic from among many possible affinities raises the definition of artificial classification, in which one aspect is selected to order a group of objects, rather than the web-like multiple affinities of natural arrangements.[101] It is this artificiality which Arnold recognised in his preface to *Poems of Wordsworth* (1879), when he wrote that Wordsworth's

> categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory. Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin which was Wordsworth's reason for joining them with others... Wordsworth's poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.[102]

Arnold, who preferred to organise Wordsworth's poetry by genre, arranged his collection of Wordsworth's poems in more familiar categories – 'Poems of Ballad Form' ('We are Seven', 'Lucy Gray'), 'Narrative Poems' ('Ruth', 'The Brothers', 'Michael'), 'Lyrical Poems' (which begins with 'My heart leaps up' and includes several flower poems, Scottish poems, and the Lucy cycle), 'Poems Akin to the Antique, and Odes' ('Laodamia', 'Ode on Intimations of Immortality'), and 'Sonnets, Reflective and Elegiac Poems' ('Tintern Abbey', 'Elegiac Stanzas', 'Glen-Almain') – and yet, in their muddled generosity, these last two categories cannot escape a trace of the editor's own ingenuity.

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[100] *SP*, p. 634.

[101] Gill emphasises the link between Wordsworth's collections and biological progression: 'His habits of revision suggest that he increasingly saw individual poems in the same way, as discrete entities on first publication yet open to evolution within the greater evolving order of the whole' ('Wordsworth's Poems: the Question of Text', p. 175). The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines artificial classification as 'a classification scheme based on characteristics selected primarily for pragmatic reasons, to enable identification and categorization of the things classified, rather than for any correspondence to natural affinities or essential characteristics'. 'artificial, adj. and n.', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/11211> [accessed 4 September 2018].

[102] Arnold, xii-xiii.

(Lamb might have objected to Arnold's arrangement on the grounds that the *Ode* no longer offers the final note.)

The manifestly artificial arrangement of Wordsworth's classification system was acknowledged by Wordsworth as having 'palpable designs' on the reader: each poem was placed as to 'direct the Reader's attention by its position to its *primary* interest'.[103] One may dispute the existence of what Jeffrey called Wordsworth's 'system' of poetry, but it is nonetheless true that the poet, like Linnaeus, understood arrangement to shape habits of thinking and perceiving.[104] Artificial arrangement, proposes Müller-Wille, acts as an indexing tool and offers navigational assistance.[105] Poetic knowledge may be very different from botanical knowledge – it may rely on the encouragement of human sympathies or the imaginative of common encounters, it may train the ear as well as the eye – but both arrangements teach the reader-student to recognise the relations between objects. Botanic genera and poetic genre can be easily distinguished, but they share an etymological root (Latin *genus* from the Greek γένος), both offer the conveniences of condensing and grouping phenomena, and both rely on formal resemblance to enable this grouping.[106] Wordsworth's classes are not strictly generic in the literary sense, as Arnold and Duff noted, but he still continued to collect by kind, even when he was the only perceiver of that kinship.

Wordsworth was aware of how unconventional his associations might appear to his readers; the preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) acknowledged the particularity of his

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[103] The phrase is Keats's, used in a letter to J. H. Reynolds, 3 February 1818, *John Keats*, ed. by John Barnard, Oxford 21st Century Authors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), pp. 116-7 (p. 117); *MY* I, 336.

[104] Siskin suggests that Jeffrey's anxiety over Wordsworth's system was rooted in Jeffrey's recognition that a system amplified Wordsworth's voice, thereby doing away with the need for a cultural mediator such as a critic ('Renewing Wordsworth', p. 121).

[105] 'Collection and collation: theory and practice of Linnaean botany', p. 550.

[106] 'genus, n', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/77719> [accessed 10 October 2018]; 'genre, n', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/77629> [accessed 10 October 2018]

subjects and the possibility of 'diseased impulses' guiding his imagination.[107] This admission pre-empted but did not silence critics such as Jeffrey, who objected to an idiosyncratic poetics which was capable of producing 'Elegiac stanzas to a sucking-pig – a Hymn on Washing day – Sonnets to one's grandmother – or Pindaric on goose-berry pye…'[108] Here Jeffrey accuses Wordsworth of a disjunction of genre as much as of association, a combination which the classification of 1815 may have intended to break up. While granting that society would be improved by holding Wordsworth's associations as common and familiar, Coleridge argued in 1817 that it was not the poet's job to change habitual associations from their current to their ideal form. Such was the task of a moral philosopher or clergyman.[109] Yet, Wordsworth's poetry, and the prefaces which introduce it, rejects this division between the poet's literary function and the activities of the moralist; the poet's supreme gift is to connect.

When Brian R. Bates proposes that 'What seems most important to Wordsworth in [the preface of 1815] is that readers recognize that they can approach his classification schema from various interlocking perspectives', he recognises the collection's opportunities.[110] Rather than a bizarre and novel vehicle for Wordsworth's self-authorisation, the collection acted as a guide for the reader, travelling sequentially through the poems rather than reading piece-meal, who is invited to participate in the integral flux and re-flux of a Wordsworthian sensibility. The intention behind his 'shading' of one poem into another, and the smoothing of contrast between the poems, was to conduct readers into a series of conscious encounters with their own moral development. The three systems of organisation – chronological, generic, psychological – may appear to argue,

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[107] *LBOP*, p. 757.
[108] *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 189-190.
[109] *Biographia Literaria*, II, 130.
[110] Brian R. Bates, *Wordsworth's Poetic Collections, Supplementary Writing and Parodic Reception* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), p. 91. Bates suggests that *Poems* (1815), produced in an age of bibliomania, constructs a gentleman's library for readers to wander through, drawing their own conclusions.

interrupt, and contradict each other, and yet they arguably form what Fraistat calls a 'contexture', a larger whole 'fabricated' from several parts.[111] It is no coincidence that *Poems* (1815) begins with one rainbow – 'My heart leaps up when I behold | A Rainbow in the sky' – and concludes with the flickering rainbow ('The Rainbow comes and goes') of the great *Ode*. The last lines of 'My heart leaps up', in which the poet wishes that his days be 'bound each to each in natural piety', insists on the value of sequential integrity and of the 'legitimate whole'.[112] While Lamb positioned the *Ode* as a freestanding monument, the poem – with its concentric comings and goings, its rounds, echoes and coronals – broods over the poles of forgetfulness and recollection. It asks the reader to test 'intimations' against events, apprehensions against glory, modelling the reciprocity and reverberations of a larger whole.

Ultimately, as Wordsworth wrote to Lady Beaumont, the poems intended to 'be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier'.[113] In an unsigned 1808 review in the *Eclectic,* Montgomery paid tribute to Wordsworth's ability to enlighten his readers through their encounters with his poems. 'His *Cumberland Beggar*, *Tintern Abbey*, his *Verses on the naming of Places*, and some other pieces in his former volumes,' Montgomery wrote, 'have taught us new sympathies, the existence of which in our nature had scarcely been intimated to us by any preceding poet'.[114] Wordsworth, who 'wish[ed] either to be considered as a Teacher, or as Nothing', would have been pleased.[115]

Eventually, since 'Poems… cannot read themselves', such participation elicits a demonstration of the reader's attentiveness.[116] A poem like 'Simon Lee', for example, asks its readers to read it in good faith. By indicating that the reader will be disappointed by the

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[111] Fraistat, p. 4.
[112] *SP*, p. 634.
[113] *MY* I, p. 145.
[114] *Eclectic*, 4 (January 1808), 35-43, printed in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 208.
[115] *MY* I, p. 195.
[116] *SP*, p. 635.

lack of substance yielded by the poem ('…I'm afraid that you expect | Some tale will be related'), Wordsworth invites the reader to supply the incident's significance:

> O reader! had you in your mind
> Such stores as silent thought can bring,
> O gentle reader! you would find
> A tale in every thing.
> What more I have to say is short,
> I hope you'll kindly take it;
> It is no tale; but should you think,
> Perhaps a tale you'll make it.
> (ll. 73-80)[117]

The last two lines of this quotation appear to dismiss 'Simon Lee' as inconsequential – an inconsequentiality underlined through the sing-song regular cadences of the metre, and the dawdling coquettishness of the rime riche – before immediately turning back on themselves to see whether the reader has accepted the poet's bluff. If the poet has succeeded, the reader enriched by the stores of 'silent thought' which unearth human significance in the seemingly trivial will make something of the poem. It is an almost arch act of immersive persuasion, building upon the critical claims the poet had been making since *Lyrical Ballads*. He was, as Coleridge said of the poet, trying to create the taste by which he may be enjoyed, but he was also trying to impart pleasure, writing 'For the delight of a few natural hearts' ('Michael', l. 36).[118] Framed more sceptically, the poet seems to have been trying to create a more sympathetic audience for poems which were misread or ignored in their first appearance, and to argue for the value of his work in the aftermath of a highly visible critical rejection.[119]

Wordsworth continued to use his classification system for the rest of his life. Yet, there were changes: poems were pulled from certain categories and inserted into others,

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[117] *LBOP*, p. 67.
[118] From his 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' (1815), *SP*, p. 654; also found in *MY* I, 150; *LBOP*, p. 253.
[119] I am thinking primarily of Jeffrey's review of the *Excursion*: 'This will never do'. *Edinburgh Review*, 24 (November 1814), 1-30, quoted in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 381.

thanks to the 'unified yet infinitely expandable system of classes'.[120] Sequences were re-sequenced; categories were renamed. *Juvenile Pieces,* for example, became *Poems Written in Youth,* exchanging scattered precocity for more serious signals of future promise. New categories were added (*Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803* and *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1814*) and older categories, such as the classes of sonnets, were expanded. While Gill states that that 'by the collected editions of the 1840s the overall scheme was looking increasingly ramshackle' through the ongoing shuffling of poems, this shuffling is a sign of the flexibility of Wordsworth's corpus.[121] Such flexibility results in an editorial minefield, as editors must choose between an iteration of Wordsworth's arrangements, or a procedure governed by chronology. Given the profusion of Wordsworth's manuscripts and editions, the editorial crux analysed by McGann – who argues that in borrowing from procedures developed for older texts which lack original documents, modern textual criticism has failed to account for the many different choices posed by literature overburdened by original drafts – is at the forefront of Wordsworth criticism.[122] With some variation in editorial procedure among individual volumes, the Cornell series prefers the earliest completed form of a poem, whereas De Selincourt retained Wordsworth's classifications from the final collection of 1849-50, a decision supported by Wordsworth's declaration: 'You know what importance I attach to following strictly the last Copy of the text of an Author'.[123] Yet Wordsworth's desire to remove jarring contrasts between poems, his preference for the smoothed transition and effortless glide of feeling from one poem to

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[120] *P2V*, p. 39.
[121] Gill, 'Wordsworth's Poems: the Question of Text', p. 175.
[122] For a condensed account of his argument, see *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism*, pp. 3-4.
[123] Letter to Alexander Dyce, 19 April 1830, *LY* II, p. 236. In Gill's most recent selection of Wordsworth's poems, made for the 21st Century Oxford Authors series, he disregards Wordsworth's 'express' ordering of his poems, with the conviction that a 'presentation which best recognises the claims of chronology can best reveal the growth of the poet's mind' and the historical circumstances in which his poetry was published: priorities aimed at the intended (undergraduate) reader. In order to do so, Gill orders his selection of poems by volume publication and the sequence of poems within each respective volume. See *William Wordsworth*, ed. by Stephen Gill, 21st Century Oxford Authors (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxxxvi-xxxxix (xxxvii).

another, whether for pedagogical or aesthetic effect, meant in practice a lifetime of trying several combinations.

Wordsworth's Reorganisations

The scholarship of Stephen Gill has brought necessary and essential claims for the significance of Wordsworth's lifelong revisions of individual poems to the fore: 'Revisitings of various kinds', he writes, 'are at the heart of Wordsworth's creativity'.[124] His work, however, rarely addresses at length the revisions and rearrangements of Wordsworth's collections. (Stewart's suggestion that collections convert production into consumption demonstrates how Wordsworthians might dislike the poet's rearrangements, reading them as deviations from or threats to new composition.)[125] Wordsworth's structural reorganisations can be broken broadly into two strands: his reorganisation of the poetic classes, and his reorganisation of the poems within and between those classes. The poet's attention to the structure of his collections is evidenced by the traces his alterations have left on the nine collections he published between 1815 and the final collection of 1849-50. This presence is felt not only in transferring a poem from one class to another, or a class from one position in the collection to another, but in his relenting and returning it to the original class. While the significance of such movements and transferrals may draw the scepticism of a reader who sees these changes as no different from the quibbles over the positioning of a comma – the writer's poring (and 'dwindl[ing] as he pours') over the minutiae of his text – Wordsworth's ambitions for collections' ability to guide the reader suggest that his reorganisations ought to be counted as substantive rather than accidental. To use Gill once more, Wordsworthian creation is frequently a regeneration.[126]

[124] *Wordsworth's Revisitings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 8.
[125] Stewart, p. 156.
[126] *Wordsworth's Revisitings*, p. 10.

In 1815 and 1820, for example, the class of *Inscriptions* followed *Poems on the Naming of Places* and prefaced the class of *Poems Referring to the Period of Old Age* and *Epitaphs and Elegiac Poems*. There is logic in this proximity: inscriptions share a commemorative act with epitaphs. '[A]n Epitaph presupposes a Monument, upon which it is to be engraven,' wrote Wordsworth in his first 'Essay upon Epitaphs'. 'As soon as nations had learned the use of letters, epitaphs were inscribed upon these monuments; in order that their intention might be more surely and adequately fulfilled'.[127] However, in his 1827 collection Wordsworth lifted *Poems on the Naming of Places* along with *Inscriptions* from the sobering decline of the poems in the final classes, and placed both between the poems commemorating the Scottish tours, and the *Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty*. Again, a certain logic is at work in keeping the two categories together: *Poems on the Naming of Places*, originally published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), performs poetic inscriptions on rocks, hills, mountains, for which the poet is occasionally chastised: 'I, like a Runic Priest, in characters | of formidable size, had chisselled out | Some uncouth name upon the native rock ...' ('To Joanna', ll. 28-30).[128] In this reorganisation, however, Wordsworth has lost the cohesion that came from grouping together the 'Miscellaneous Sonnets' and 'Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty': if formally relentless, the passage from occasional sonnets to prophetic invectives shows Wordsworth gradually raising the temperature.

In his 1809 letter to Coleridge, Wordsworth wondered if the *Poems on the Naming of Places* could act as a 'Transition to the Poems relating to human life; which might be prettily connected, harmoniously I may say, by Poor Susan...'[129] The transitional, connective quality of *Poems on the Naming of Places* might explain its flexibility. Unsatisfied with the 1827 arrangement, Wordsworth promoted *Poems on the Naming of*

[127] *The Prose Works of William Wordsworth*, ed. by W. J. B. Owen and Jane Smyser, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), II, 49, 50.
[128] *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 5 vols (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1827), III, 85.
[129] *MY* II, p. 335.

Places and *Inscriptions* still further upward for his 1832 collection, now to separate *Poems of the Fancy* and *Poems of the Imagination.* This separation of fancy from imagination is unusual across the breadth of Wordsworth's collections, as the two categories are paired in all collections before and after 1832, and because the Preface to *Poems* (1815) compared the two qualities at length. In 1836, *Inscriptions* falls halfway through the collection, after the 'Thanksgiving Ode', and before *The Egyptian Maid*. While this order is maintained in 1840, the one-volume collections of 1845 and 1847 settle *Inscriptions* near *Poems Referring to the Period of Old Age*, with only *Selections from Chaucer Modernised* to divide them. He had returned to his earlier intuition that *Inscriptions* were autumnal, conclusive, commemorative.[130]

Poetic species and plant species have clear differences: plants are short-lived, vulnerable to weather and disease, and propagate without human interference. Poems are composed not discovered; they work in the eye and in the ear; they survive on the page and in the mind. Both, however, are made out of the seeds of the species that came before them; both can be uprooted. Both plants and poems are susceptible to time, albeit in understandably different ways. For Linnaeus's plant specimens to exist in the bomb-proof locker below the Linnean Society in Burlington House, they had to be carefully preserved. 'Poems', writes Gill, 'whether published or not, remained as evidence of what survived time's depredation'.[131] In revising his poems, Wordsworth tried to ensure that they continued to retain their active powers, and the new contexts offered by various positions within the collections tested this capacity for survival and re-ignition.

From 1815 until the final collection of 1849-50, over ninety individual poems seem to have been shifted from one category to another – roughly sixteen percent of the poems.

[130] The move of *Inscriptions* to the centre of the seven-volume collection of 1849-50, in which it rests once more between the 'Thanksgiving Ode' and *The Egyptian Maid* continues to demonstrate the poet's restlessness. This move may suggest that the material form of the collection – whether it was published in a single volume or in a number of volumes – affects the shape of the whole.
[131] *Wordsworth's Revisitings*, p. 1.

Certain transferrals occurred after the creation of new categories. In 1815, for example, 'Ellen Irwin' and 'Glen Almain' had appeared in *Affections* and *Imagination* respectively, and in 1827 both were transferred *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803*. In the same year, a sonnet ('Degenerate Douglas'), which had been classified among *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, joined *Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803*. Wordsworth's collections – like Linnaeus's unbound herbaria or the stack of paper slips – expanded as stand-alone volumes such as the *River Duddon* sonnets, or *Ecclesiastical Sketches* (later renamed *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*) were absorbed as classes. Poems such as the sonnet 'To the River Duddon', first published in *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807) and classified as a member of the *Miscellaneous Sonnets* in 1815, migrated to its geographically appropriate category.

The class of *Poems Proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection* is rather less determinate in its qualities than the sonnets, and Wordsworth moved poems in and out of this class throughout the length of his revisions. 'Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-Tree', the first of Wordsworth's poems to appear in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), was placed at the head of *Sentiment and Reflection* in 1815. Following 'Tintern Abbey', although separated by the title page of the new class, the poem's opening *siste viator* ('Nay, Traveller! rest') arrests readers making their way intrepidly across the second volume, with a sharp invitation to change modes, to pause and linger. The poem concludes with further instructions for the reader:

> O be wiser, Thou!
> Instructed that true knowledge leads to love,
> True dignity abides with him alone
> Who, in the silent hour of inward thought,
> Can still suspect, and still revere himself,
> In lowliness of heart.
> (ll. 55-60)[132]

[132] *1815*, II, 83-86 (p. 86).

Wordsworth's readers, familiar with 'Lines left upon a Seat' as the work of a young man who was beginning to distinguish himself, may have experienced the poem's concluding sententiae differently in 1815 when its author was no longer unknown. On the contrary, *Poems* (1815) confirmed Wordsworth as a poet of note, however badgered by critical persecution. In 1815, 'Lines left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree' was followed by 'The Character of a Happy Warrior', which begins with a robust interrogation: 'Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he | Whom every Man in arms should wish to be?' Moving from the flexing blank verse of the previous poem to a regimented march of couplets, the poet retains the reader as his pupil, encouraging him to be

> More skilful in self-knowledge, even more pure,
> As tempted more; more able to endure,
> As more exposed to suffering and distress;
> Thence, also, more alive to tenderness.
> (ll. 23-26)[133]

There is very little tenderness in the poem's armour, however, and the poem is a stirring summation of masculinity. In the *Fenwick Notes*, Wordsworth suggested that the wars with France stimulated his interest in 'the military character' celebrated by the poem, yet, while Lord Nelson exemplified most of the virtues of the ideal warrior, his 'one great crime' (his liaison with Emma Hamilton) made this association objectionable.[134] The poem's composition between December 1805 and January 1806, however, means that it was written when the poet's grief for his dead brother was still fresh, and Wordsworth acknowledged that John possessed 'many elements of the character here pourtrayed'.[135] The inability to fix the character of the 'Happy Warrior' to a single living subject – one hero was blighted by an act of treachery, the other did not live – may explain the poem's tonal teetering on the verge of jingoism.

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[133] *1815*, II, 87-90 (p. 88).
[134] *Fenwick Notes*, pp. 40, 143.
[135] *Fenwick Notes*, p. 40.

The transition from the poet's confrontation of his own past while on the precipice of an unknown future in 'Tintern Abbey', to the consideration of a dead youth whose early promise was blighted into misanthropy in 'Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree', to the muscular Christianity of the 'Character of a Happy Warrior' suggests a narrative of a self-making man, who, risking disappointment, takes steps to safeguard his disciplined spiritual independence. In the edition of 1845, however, 'Lines Left upon a Seat' appears in the first class, *Poems Written in Early Youth*, and is found between 'Descriptive Sketches', the poem admired by Erasmus Darwin, and the much revised 'Guilt and Sorrow; Or, Incidents upon Salisbury Plain'. Placed in this new context, 'Lines Left upon a Seat' follows the young poet's earnest prayers for the young French revolution ('May in its progress see thy guiding hand | And cease the acknowledged purpose to withstand'). The proximity of 'Lines Left upon a Seat in a Yew-tree' to *Guilt and Sorrow*, however, and the bitterness of its own disappointments, confirms the inevitable failures of those revolutionary hopes.

Other poems, such as 'Lines, Written while Sailing in a Boat at Evening' and 'Remembrance of Collins, Composed upon the Thames near Richmond', follow the same trajectory of being moved from *Sentiment and Reflection* to *Poems Written in Early Youth* and back again. 'If thou indeed derive thy light from heaven' was poached from *Sentiment and Reflection*, where it followed 'Lines, Written while Sailing' and 'Remembrance of Collins' in 1827, becoming an epigraph to the class from 1836 to 1843, and then finally raised to the epigraph for the one-volume collection of 1845, displacing the prominence of 'My heart leaps up' as the collection's point of departure. In 1827, 'If thou indeed derive thy light from heaven' followed two early poems which explicitly meditate on the character of the poet. Wordsworth greatly admired Collins and his letters to Alexander Dyce, who produced an edition of Collins in 1827, read with an editor's partisan zeal.[136]

[136] 29 October 1828, *LY* I, pp. 647-650; 12 January 1829, *LY* II, pp. 2-3.

(In one such letter, Wordsworth asserted that 'Thomson, Collins, and Dyer had more poetic Imagination than any of their Contemporaries'.[137]) Wordsworth's elegy for Collins – which integrates one of Collins' lines ('And oft suspend the dashing Oar', l. 15) into its watery body ('Now let us, as we float along, | For him suspend the dashing oar', ll. 17-18) – shows Collins and Thomson to be braided in Wordsworth's mind to some extent, in part because of Collins' elegy for Thomson.[138] In Wordsworth's 'Essay, Supplementary to the Preface' (1815), this connection reasserts itself:

> When Thomson died, Collins breathed his regrets into an Elegiac Poem, in which he pronounces a poetical curse upon *him* who should regard with insensibility the place where the Poet's remains were deposited. The Poems of the mourner himself have now passed through innumerable editions, and are universally known; but if, when Collins died, the same kind of imprecation had been pronounced by a surviving admirer, small is the number whom it would not have comprehended.[139]

In this passage, physical remains blend with poetical corpora, and editions become monuments and memorials. To write about Collins is to write about – among other things – poetic reputation, particularly after death. Collins was proof that a genuine poet was neglected in his own time, a point upon which the 'Essay, Supplementary' – written in 1815 after Jeffrey's painful dismissal of the *Excursion* – is particularly insistent. Following on directly from 'Remembrance of Collins', in which the 'evening darkness' and the sombre commemoration of a 'Poet's sorrows' draws the poem to its conclusion, Wordsworth's opening exhortation seems to refer to stars of the poetic past:

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[137] 12 January 1829, *LY* II, p. 3
[138] 'Ode Occasion'd by the Death of Mr Thomson', *Thomas Gray and William Collins: Poetical Works*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 164-166; *LBOP*, pp. 106-7.
[139] *SP*, p. 651.

> If Thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven,
> Shine, Poet, in thy place, and be content!
> The Star that from the zenith darts its beams,
> Visible though it be to half the Earth,
> Though half a sphere be conscious of its brightness,
> Is yet of no diviner origin,
> No purer essence, than the One that burns,
> Like an untended watch-fire, on the ridge
> Of some dark mountain; or than those which seem
> Humbly to hang, like twinkling winter lamps,
> Among the branches of the leafless trees.[140]

Followed in 1827 by 'Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian', which salutes 'the chosen Few | who cast not off the acknowledged guide', this untitled eleven-line piece of blank verse is couched in the consolations of the canon. The first line, conversing with a couplet from Pope – 'Both must alike from Heaven derive their light | Those born to judge as well as those to write' (*Essay on Criticism*, ll. 13-14) – makes no mention of the critic's divine gifts but reserves its allegiance for the poets who suffer their lashes.[141] In transposing 'If thou derive' from *Sentiment and Reflection* into an epigraph to the collection as a whole, the poem loses the canonical context which shaped its first reading – the bundled voices of eighteenth-century 'Brothers in Soul' – and dramatises Wordsworth self-consolation for the vagaries of public recognition. Was it necessary in 1845 for the Poet Laureate to tell himself to 'Shine...in thy place, and be content!'? The use of 'If thou derive thy light from heaven' as an epigraph to *Poetical Works* (1845) reveals how much work he intended the single-volume collection to perform on his behalf.

The mobility of Wordsworth's poetic species is seen by the relative lateness by which a poem will be displaced from its classificatory lodging place. 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill', first published in *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), and 'The Horn of Egremont Castle', first published in *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807), were both classified as poems of the

[140] *1827*, IV, 237.
[141] Suggested by Ketcham, n. 523; Pope, *Pastoral Poetry and Essay on Criticism*, p. 240.

Imagination in 1815 and yet were shifted to the murkier category of *Miscellaneous Poems* in 1845. The uncertainty of the poems' lodging place is predicted in *Poems* (1815) where a footnote to 'The Horn of Egremont Castle' reads, 'This Poem and the Ballad which follows it ['Goody Blake and Harry Gill'], as they rather refer to the imagination than are produced by it, would not have been placed here but to avoid a needless multiplication of the Classes'.[142] As in artificial classifications at large, Wordsworth's classes are selective rather than wholly descriptive. Rather than split the class *Poems of the Imagination* into varieties, Wordsworth lumped 'The Horn of Egremont Castle' and 'Goody Blake and Harry Gill' into the class of *Imagination*, although his footnote may indicate he expected the reviewers to revolt.[143]

With each shift and each replacement, Wordsworth left traces of his classificatory experiments within collections which are as internally mobile as Linnaeus's unbound herbaria. These collections have categories, like the shelves of Linnaeus's wooden cupboard, but their structure is such that one is able to perpetually re-evaluate the position of the part (the species, the poem) to the whole. As Stewart writes, '[E]ach element within the collection is representative and works in combination toward the creation of a new whole that is the context of the collection itself'.[144] The record of these shifts threatens to yield dry prose: a sequence of arrangements which result in the meagre record of a writer's dissatisfactions. Does this mobility make any difference to the reader of Wordsworth's poems? Are these 'little more than imaginative equivalents of Wordsworth's notorious gastronomic frugality'?[145] Or are these revelations of a poet 'constantly in dialogue with himself', who considered all poetry 'provisional'?

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[142] *1815*, I, 316.
[143] If so, he was not wrong: '"Goody Blake and Harry Gill" *referring to the imagination*!!!' exclaimed a writer at the *Monthly Review*, quoted in *William Wordsworth: The Critical Heritage*, p. 559.
[144] Stewart, p. 152-3.
[145] Stephen Gill, '"Affinities Preserved": Poetic Self-Reference in Wordsworth', *Studies in Romanticism*, 24 (1985), 531-549 (p. 535).

Wordsworth's gradual repositioning of his poems calls to mind Linnaeus's experimentation with the classification of *Morus* (mulberry) and *Urtica* (nettle).[146] Since the mulberry is occasionally dioecious – it has male and female sex organs on separate plants – Linnaeus situated *Morus* in the twenty-second class, Dioceia, in the first edition of *Systema naturae* (1735). Yet, he associated it with *Urtica*, which, like *Morus* has four stamens and two pistils, and can be similarly both dioecious and monoecious. Hedging his bets, Linnaeus placed *Urtica* in both classes. *Morus* followed *Urtica* to the twenty-first class, Monoecia, in *Hortus Cliffortianus* (1737) and *Genera plantarum* (1737), and by the second edition of *Systema naturae* (1740), *Morus* occupied at least three taxonomic positions.[147] After 1744, *Morus* disappeared from Dioecia and appeared in Monoecia Tetrandria, next to *Urtica*. While clearly distinct – as Müller-Wille writes, no one would mistake a mulberry tree for a nettle – Linnaeus perceived morphological similarities which led Buffon to ridicule Linnaeus in the *Histoire naturelle*.[148] These morphological similarities led Linnaeus to hope that nettle might be substituted for mulberry in the feeding of silkworms, with the intention of weaning Sweden off a taste for imported silk onto a domestically-raised equivalent.[149] This ambition ultimately failed, but the experimental shifts of *Morus* and *Urtica* show the lengths to which Linnaeus was willing to go to test his suspicion that a relationship existed between two objects, a relationship which would be drawn out from the act of comparing and distinguishing in each taxonomic resting place.

For Wordsworth's part, 'Ruth', which was classified among the class of the *Affections* in 1815, was brought together with 'Laodamia' in 1820, and both poems were

[146] Staffan Müller-Wille and Isabelle Charmantier, 'Natural history and information overload: The case of Linnaeus', pp. 12-4.
[147] Polygamia Dioecia, Monoecia Tetrandia, and Dioecia Tetrandria ('Natural history and information overload', p. 12).
[148] See Buffon, 'Premier discours', pp. 38-9.
[149] Koerner, pp. 133-4.

transferred to the *Imagination* in 1827. (They were separated again in 1836.) In a letter to Crabb Robinson, Wordsworth explained that by grouping the 'Scotch poems' together, a 'gap' had been made in *Imagination* which had been 'supplied' by Ruth and Laodamia'.[150] The poems were, in effect, caulking. Does it change 'Ruth' to be read in the context of *Imagination* as opposed to *Affections*? Do 'Ruth' and 'Laodamia' shed mutual light on each other when put in sequence? In 1815, when 'Ruth' appears in the class of *Affections*, the poem appears in a series of loss and deprivation. In 'The Last of the Flock', a man's livelihood (and beloved stock) are sold off one by one until he is left weeping in the public road. The economic deprivation of the 'Last of the Flock' becomes metaphorical in 'The Complaint' as the first and last two lines of the second poem observes a 'change, and at the very door | Of my fond Heart' which 'hath made me poor'.[151] The opening lines of 'Ruth' ('When Ruth was left half desolate | Her father took another Mate') confirm this atmosphere of abandonment in the double betrayal of her mother's death and her father's reattachment, and anticipate her later rejection by her American lover.[152] In 1815, 'Ruth' was succeeded by Dorothy Wordsworth's 'The Cottager to her Infant', which carries the wintry notes of the conclusion to 'Ruth' into the realm of the snug. Unlike 'Ruth', however, this poem carries no real risk or deprivation; rather, 'the kitten sleeps upon the hearth'.[153]

The decision to bring 'Ruth' and 'Laodamia' together in 1820 within the class of the *Affections* is poetically unexpected. This tonal disjunction between 'Ruth' and 'Laodamia' owes something to the tetrameter of the former poem, and the pentameter of the latter. Where the language of 'Ruth' utterly English, the stately syntax of 'Laodamia' unwinds in a pagan mythological past. The poet deploys words like 'roseate', 'visage', 'pellucid',

[150] Letter of 6 April 1826, *LY* I, p. 440.
[151] *1815*, I, 147.
[152] *1815*, I, 148.
[153] *1815*, I, 160.

'purpureal', which Steven Stryer has argued is an intentional approximation of Virgilian style: words with a consciously poetic lineage far from the steady Anglo-Saxon of 'Ruth' ('Beneath her Father's roof, alone | She seemed to live; her thoughts her own').[154] This tonal shift is so stark that Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth that 'I should have seen [Laodamia] in a strange place, and greatly admired it, but not suspected its derivation'.[155]

Yet, despite the difference in voice and poetic expression, the poems' titles emphasise the significance of the female characters around which the poems cluster. Both are deserted by their husbands, whose absences are explained by a certain masculine recklessness. Both are victims of disruptive love and both suffer for it, although not without eliciting the reader's pity. 'Ah, judge her gently who so deeply loved!' says the poet in the 1814 text of 'Laodamia', for 'tears to human suffering are due' (ll. 122, 128).[156] Although both poems end with corpses, Ruth's imagined funeral is comfortingly hymned by a 'Christian congregation', while 'Laodamia' ends with the uneasy image of 'A knot of spiry trees' which grow out of Laodamia and Protesilaus's tombs: 'A constant interchange of growth and blight!' The transition from 'Laodamia' into 'The Affliction of Margaret' in 1820 and to 'Her eyes are wild' (also known as 'The Mad Mother') in 1827 is semantically consistent.[157] However, the positioning of 'The Triad' after 'Laodamia' in 1832 suggests that the distinctions between 'Laodamia' and 'Ruth' became more pronounced as the years passed, and the classicism of 'Laodamia' began to predominate over its emotional frequencies, until the two poems were separated in 1836. Nor are all of Wordsworth's alterations necessarily significant. In 1836, 'Laodamia' was prefaced by 'To a Sky-Lark' and followed by 'To a Young Lady, Who had been Reproached for Taking Long Walks in

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[154] Steven Stryer, '"A loftier tone": "Laodamia", the *Aeneid*, and Wordsworth's Virgilian Imagination', *Studies in Philology,* 112.3 (2015), 575-597.
[155] Letter of 7 April 1815, quoted by Stryer, p. 582. The admirable strangeness of 'Laodamia' was not easily produced: Wordsworth told Isabella Fenwick the poem 'cost me more trouble than almost anything of equal length I have ever written'. For the terse note to 'Laodamia' see *Fenwick Notes*, p. 16.
[156] *SP*, p. 146.
[157] *LBOP*, p. 88.

the Country', both of which force the reader to be ingenious in following (or spinning) the thread which binds them.

Wordsworth's Paper Technologies

Like Linnaeus, Wordsworth used previous editions of his printed poetical works as what Müller-Wille and Charmantier rather clinically call 'annotation platforms', to redraft and reorganise forthcoming editions. Wordsworth's *Poetical Works* (1836), held at the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, was used to revise the collections of 1838, 1840 and 1845.[158] The Windsor volumes show the range of Wordsworth's revisions and the extent to which Wordsworth unsettled his previous collections, even as he made the transition from a coterie-favourite to established national poet. At the most minimally interpretative end are the typographical changes: throughout the collection of 1836, Wordsworth changed commas to semicolons, full stops to dashes, and question marks to exclamation marks. This last alteration can take slightly more interpretive heft. In 'The Brothers', for example, James's question to the vicar – 'Then James is still among you?' – is revised to an exclamation ('Then James is still among you!'), an alteration which changes the tenor of the line by exchanging Leonard's tentative hope for a detonation of nervous relief. Also minimal in interpretation are Wordsworth's corrections of misprints, as for example, Wordsworth's amendment of 'Fresh springs of green box-wood' to 'Fresh *sprigs*' (my emphasis) in 'The Childless Father', which withers the vernal associations of the previous line (springs, green) to the literalism of funereal ornaments. These minor alterations suggest the volumes' dual function as both manuscript book and printer's mark-up. It is clear that Wordsworth was as involved with and opinionated about the typography of his

[158] Windsor, Royal Library, RCINs 1084645-650. Future in-text references will be to the 'Windsor volumes'. According to Gill, the editions of 1815, 1836, and 1845 roused Wordsworth to 'particular labour and vigilance' ('Wordsworth's Poems: the Question of Text', p. 174).

collections as Linnaeus had been: Wordsworth changed apostrophes, accent marks, page numbers, and head words, changed capital to lowercase letters, and roman to Arabic numerals, alterations which may reflect the shifting conventions of contemporary publishing. He set dates to poems ('The Female Vagrant', 'A slumber did my spirit seal', and his sonnet 'Composed on the Eve of a Marriage of a Friend in the Vale of Grasmere'), suggesting the continued pull of chronology upon his classification, even as the columns of compositional dates inserted in 1815 were removed in 1827. The question of dates becomes especially pointed in the case of the sonnet John Clare thought 'owns no equal in the English language': 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1802'.[159] Although originally given the date 1803, the date is crossed out in the Windsor *Poetic Works*, and amended to 1804 in the text, while 1802 is added in the left margin.[160] This sonnet which appears to wear the badge of historical specificity so resolutely displays its uncertainty on the page.

The Windsor volumes also embed the changes of individual words which register Wordsworth's dissatisfaction with current copy.[161] Certain changes seem amusingly incidental, as with Wordsworth's altering of 'the broad green wave' in 'The Brothers' to 'the broad blue wave'.[162] Similarly in 'Lucy Gray', Lucy's 'sweet face' in the third stanza was changed to 'bright face'.[163] More interesting perhaps is 'Uncertainty', from *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, in which the 'monuments of eldest fame' (l. 9) became 'of eldest

[159] Letter to Markham E. Sherrill, 12 July 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 86.
[160] According to Jared Curtis, it was composed between July 31 and September 3, 1802 (*P2V*, p. 147). In the Fenwick note Wordsworth says the poem was 'Composed on the roof of a coach, on my way to France, Sepbr. 1802', yet, the sonnet bore the date 1803 until the collection of 1838, a change that was recorded in the Windsor volumes. See Stephen Gill, 'Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802', in *Fourteen English Sonnets: Critical Essays*, ed. by Michael Hanke (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2007), pp. 53-63 (p. 64, n. 10).
[161] Given the palimpsestic nature of the collection, it would take some time to verify the rough dates of many of his changes.
[162] *Poetical Works of William Wordsworth*, 6 vols (London: Moxon, 1836), I, 111.
[163] *1836*, I, 16.

name' in revision.[164] Falling on the rhyme word (1836: 'characters of Greek or Roman fame'), Wordsworth's choice was constricted. Yet the rime riche must have looked less appealing to Wordsworth when he came to review the sequence. Repetition, so beautifully defended in his note to 'The Thorn', did not pass muster here.[165] More substantial is the revision which occurs in a sonnet in the same sequence ('Eminent Reformers – The Same').

> HOLY and heavenly Spirits as they were,
> Spotless in life, and eloquent as wise,
> With what affection do they prize
> Their new-born Church! labouring with earnest care
> To baffle all that might her strength impair;
> That Church – the unperverted Gospel's seat;
> In their afflictions a divine retreat;
> Source of their liveliest hope, and tenderest prayer!
> The Truth exploring with an equal mind,
> In polity and discipline they sought
> Firmly between the two extremes to steer;
> But theirs the wise man's ordinary lot,
> To trace right courses for the stubborn blind,
> And prophesy to ears that will not hear.[166]

The sonnet was written between 17 January and 24 November 1821, a period of time in which Gill suggests Wordsworth was thinking about Catholic Emancipation.[167] For the *Poetical Works* (1845), Wordsworth revised the fourth line from 'new-born Church' to '*reformed* Church' (my emphasis). In the years falling between these two versions, Geoffrey Jackson reveals that Wordsworth himself 'laboured with earnest care' over these lines.[168] 'Reformed' implies correction as well as a return to origins, emphasising

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[164] *1836*, IV, 197.
[165] *LBOP*, p. 351.
[166] *SSIP*, p. 182.
[167] Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 343.
[168] From 'Their new-born Church!' Wordsworth tried 'The Church! Regenerate – labouring with due care' (1838). This was revised to 'That Church and reverence with filial care', before being changed to 'That Church remodelld under Heavns pure air', 'Labouring incessantly with filial care', and 'The newborn Church labouring with filial care'. *SSIP*, p. 182.

continuity rather than the novelty of a 'new-born Church'.[169] The Reformation was, in part, an attempt recover the authenticity of the early Church.[170] Unlike the alteration of 'green' to 'blue' or 'sweet' to 'bright', the revision in this sonnet contains theological heft. Wordsworth's letter to his nephew Christopher of 12 November 1846 reveals that he had still not made peace with his alteration: 'I do not like the term, "*reformed*"' Wordsworth wrote, 'if taken in its literal sense as a *transformation*, it is very objectionable'.[171]

Wordsworth's revisions turn on themselves, aiming not only for a tighter compression or the better phrase but occasionally disturbing what appears to be the original intention of the lines. Thus in another of the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, 'Elizabeth', the revisions absorbs a gathering darkness which the poem has attempted to scatter.

> HAIL, Virgin Queen! o'er many an envious bar
> Triumphant – snatched from many a treacherous wile!
> All hail, Sage Lady, whom a grateful Isle
> Hath blest, respiring from that dismal war
> Stilled by thy voice! But quickly from afar
> Defiance breathes with more malignant aim;
> And alien storms with home-bred ferments claim
> Portentous fellowship. Her silver car
> Meanwhile, by prudence ruled, glides slowly on;
> Unhurt by violence, from menaced taint
> Emerging pure, and seemingly more bright!
> For, whereso'er she moves, the clouds anon,
> Disperse; or – under a Divine constraint–
> Reflect some portion of her glorious light![172]

In the Windsor volumes, the last three lines are altered to the following:

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[169] Various senses listed by the *Oxford English Dictionary* include renewal, restoration, rebuilding, and redressing of errors or making amends. 'reform, v.1.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/160988> [accessed 3 September 2018].
[170] Defining the Reformation which, as Diarmaid MacCulloch has argued, was in fact several overlapping reformations, tempts historical inaccuracies. For a lucid and diverse account see MacCulloch's *Reformation: Europe's House Divided (1490-1700)* (London: Allen Lane, 2003).
[171] *LY* IV, p. 816.
[172] *SSIP*, pp. 179-180.

> Ah! Wherefore yields it to a foul constraint
> Black as the clouds its beams dispersed, while shone,
> By men and angels blest, the glorious light?

The established church – the 'silver car' which Elizabeth rules with 'sleepless prudence', purified in the crucible of crisis and discontent – is beleaguered in the revised sonnet, absorbing the malignity of the foul air in which it moves. In making these revisions, Wordsworth unravelled the sonnet's rhyme structure, scrambling the regularity of the Petrarchan conclusion. Indeed, the certainty of the original line is caught up in the speculation of a question, however rhetorical. The tone is changed from victorious triumph to sickening infection, a queasy refutation of its earlier mood.[173] The motivation for these alterations may be contextual as much as poetical: the ascent of another 'Sage Lady' to the throne the year after the *Poetical Works* (1836) was published, and the conversion of several of Wordsworth's Tractarian friends to the Church of Rome.[174]

In the third volume of the Windsor *Poetical Works*, Wordsworth made serious amendments to the 'Thanksgiving Ode', amendments which include removing the lines which so had offended certain of his contemporaries ('Yea, Carnage is thy Daughter').[175] It is within this same volume that Wordsworth cancelled a previous class – 'Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty' – and inscribed the following:

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[173] Nor was the poet satisfied with this concluding pessimism. A further revision, adopted in 1845, returns to the sonnet's earlier triumphalism: 'For, where she moves, the stormy clouds are gone | Or tarrying, under a divine constraint, | Reflect some portion of her glorious light'. *SSIP*, p. 180.

[174] Abbie Findlay Potts proposes that the sonnet contains references to the execution of Mary Stuart and other anti-Catholic measures in *The Ecclesiastical Sonnets of William Wordsworth*, ed. by Abbie Findlay Potts (New Haven: Yale University Press; London: Humphrey Milford; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922), pp. 57, 274, quoted by Jackson, *SSIP*, n. 265; *William Wordsworth: A Life*, p. 418.

[175] For a discussion of the poem and its reception, see Duncan Wu, 'Wordsworthian Carnage', *Essays in Criticism*, 66.3 (July 2016), 341-359.

Political Poems
Class I
Sonnets
with other pieces
dedicated to a national
Independence and
to Liberty
Part I[176]

Here, the proximity of 'class' to 'Political Poems' invites one to inquire (however doubtfully) whether the two concepts might have had any interrelated purchase for the poet. Later, Wordsworth drafted a further list of the poems which would make up 'Political Poems | Class II', although the language of 'classes' did not survive the transposition into print. In *The Sonnets of William Wordsworth* (1838), they are titled 'Political Sonnets' and divided into 'series', while from 1845 onward as 'Poems Dedicated to National Independence and Liberty', they were once more divided into 'Parts'.

Elsewhere, classes were expanded. Within *Ecclesiastical Sonnets*, for example, Wordsworth drafted several additions which are integrated in 1845: '27. Thanksgiving After Childbirth', '31. Funeral Service', 'Commemoration Service', and 'Marriage Ceremony'. The numbering which Wordsworth assigned to the poems suggests that he envisioned their working within the context of the collection as it existed. He was not only tacking the poems onto the collection but opening up a position within the body as a whole. As seen from the considerable drafting, the Windsor volumes were repurposed as a manuscript for composition as much as line-revision: a means by which Wordsworth could bring new work into frictive proximity with established poems. In reading through the sequence of the collection as a whole, the poet could identify what was missing. The Windsor volumes show evidence not only of addition and integration but of diffusion and absorption. In a printed note at the back of the first volume of *Poetical Works* (1836),

[176] *1836*, III, 172.

Wordsworth wrote: 'The whole of the Poems lately published, entitled "Yarrow Revisited," will be found interspersed in the several classes of this edition'. Yet, the poems of *Yarrow Revisited* were extracted again in 1840 when it appeared as a separate class. The integrity of the poetic collection even across several volumes was maintained by the notes of cross-reference throughout the volumes. (This may have had a practical element, and ensured that the changes could not be overlooked or ignored by an editor or printer.)[177] Much of the reordering of the poems within the classes takes place in the text of the volumes – above a title here, or below a conclusion there – and occur more frequently in the later volumes than the former.[178] The Windsor *Poetical Works* (1836) is significant because it reveals that Wordsworth's project of sorting, organising, arranging, and rearranging was not just an act of 1815. Rather, the volumes demonstrate the considerable labour Wordsworth continued to lavish upon his classification as he aged, just as he continued to take all his poems seriously.[179] If his classification was weakened, as Gill suggested, by decades of incorporations, changes, and reversals, Wordsworth's arrangements continued to rouse him to confront the breadth of his oeuvre.

While Wordsworth was not likely to have been aware of Linnaeus's methods, and the use of previous collections to restructure future editions might be in many ways a pragmatic choice for revision, preferable to repeated and tedious transcriptions of his poems, comparing Wordsworth and Linnaeus in this way offers two implications. First, this comparison reveals Linnaeus's authorial persona, as well as his nature as a restless experimenter, both qualities which tend to be lost in current literary discussions of

[177] Thus, in volume four, Wordsworth wrote above 'After visiting the Field of Waterloo': 'Here insert from 5.103 "Incident at Brugès"'. In the fifth volume, where "Incident at Brugès" was printed and currently placed, he wrote 'See 4.124'. In doing so he transferred a poem from *The Poems of Sentiment and Reflection* to *Memorials of a Tour on the Continent*, and placed 'Incident at Brugès' in a series of three poems on the subject.

[178] In this way, Wordsworth inscribed 'Here insert from 7 vol p. 51 "Lines on the expected Invasion, 1803"' above 'Anticipation, October 1802' (IV, 199), and wrote 'Here insert from 2.220 "A Jewish family"' (V, 128).

[179] The first lines of 'The Horn of Egremont Castle', for example, a poem composed in 1806, were rewritten in this edition for the his *Poems* (1845); *P2V*, p. 87.

Linnaeus. He was a pragmatist, continually altering his methods of organisation for ease of access and the mobility which aids re-conceptualization, but he was also an intuitive thinker who tested his suspicions (such as the relationship between *Morus* and *Urtica*) in print. The second implication is that comparing the two authors takes Wordsworth's rearrangements as serious poetic acts rather than indications of compulsive micro-managing, as a lifelong habit which was intended to enrich and to guide poetic interpretation.

The Fenwick note to 'This Lawn, a carpet all alive' provides a telling counter to the recycled phraseology of 'The Tables Turned' and the philosopher who 'peeps and botanizes'. As the poem figures the lawn as 'type' and 'simile' (1829 text), and as 'apt emblem' (1835), Wordsworth cannot settle on a precise metaphorical category for his lawn. The poem's gliding enjambment works against tightly controlled metre: an incarnation, perhaps, of the light-flickering lawn's embodiment of the world's 'strenuous idleness'. This is a trick Wordsworth might have learned from his reading of seventeenth-century poets, and indeed the language of the poem recalls the language of Wordsworth's 1802 daisy poems, which spin a 'web of similes' which, for Jared Curtis, bears echoes of George Herbert.[180] Yet, if 'This lawn' looks back to the compositions of his younger years, here is maturer grounding: the playful grassy surface, with its transient shadows and wind-blown leaves is contrasted with the

> grass beneath, that grows
> Unheeded, and the mute repose
> Of sweetly-breathing flowers.
> (ll. 16-18)[181]

[180] Jared R. Curtis, *Wordsworth's Experiments with Tradition: The Lyric Poems of 1802, with Texts of the Poems Based on Early Manuscripts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1971), pp. 91, 67. ['[W]eb of similes' (l. 10) is from 'To the Daisy' (*P2V*, p. 238) and recalls Herbert's 'Prayer (1)', *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. by Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 178.
[181] *LP*, pp. 184-6 (186).

In the Fenwick note, the somnolent harmony of the lawn ('the sloping one approaching the kitchen garden') gives way in the note to a discussion of its previous incarnation as a kitchen garden. Wordsworth offered the assurance that he meant no disrespect to the 'Cabbages and Onions' which grew there, as the former were objects of ancient worship, and both vegetables are beautiful in their development and decay. After a digression upon the incredible colour of potato plants once seen in Scotland, Wordsworth declared:

> Some are of the opinion that the habit of analysing decomposing, & anatomising is inevitably unfavourable to the perception of beauty. People are led into this mistake by overlooking the fact that such processes being to a certain extent within the reach of a limited intellect we are apt to ascribe to them that insensibility of which they are in truth the effect & not the cause. Admiration & love, to which all knowledge truly vital must tend, are felt by men of real genius in proportion as their discoveries in Natural Philosophy are enlarged; and the beauty in form of a plant or an animal is not made less but more apparent as a whole by more accurate insight into its constituent properties and powers –[182]

Arguably, an overdependence on lines of Wordsworth's own poetry in 'A Poet's Epitaph' and 'The Tables Turned' encourages such erroneous thinking. Yet the note to 'This Lawn &c' argues that beauty is not limited to a particular provenance; it excludes neither cabbages, potatoes, nor the microscopic gaze. Poetic perception can pore without risking blindness. Dissection does not risk myopia: the poet admires wholes *and* constituent parts.

In his note to another poem about plants rewritten in 1835, 'Loves lies Bleeding', Wordsworth exclaimed,

> How touching & beautiful were in most instances the names [our Forefathers] gave to our indigenous flowers or any other they were familiarly acquainted with! Every month for many years have we been importing plants & flowers from all quarters of the globe many of which are spread thro' our gardens & some perhaps likely to be met with on the few commons which we have left. Will their botanical names ever be displaced by plain English appellations which will bring them home to our hearts by connection with our joys & sorrows?[183]

[182] *Fenwick Notes*, p. 45.
[183] *Fenwick Notes*, p. 67.

This nostalgia for 'plain English appellations' recalls Wordsworth's advocacy of plain language in his advertisement to *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), in which he forewarned his readers that he had given up 'gaudiness and inane phraseology' for a style which might risk lowness, familiarity, and indignity, although influenced by 'elder writers' or poetic forefathers.[184] This eulogy for the common names for plants seems to distance itself from the possibility of Linnaean nomenclature to 'bring [indigenous flowers] home to our hearts by connection with our joys and sorrows'. Yet this distancing makes Wordsworth's botanical footnote to the moss campion of 'Elegiac Verses' in 1842 more perplexing. If Linnaeus's language offered Wordsworth a certain verification which might counterbalance feeling, the poet was unwilling to write off the Linnaean project as antithetical to feeling or the perception of beauty.

By the time the elderly Wordsworth dictated his notes to Isabella Fenwick in 1843, John Clare was living in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, and yet Wordsworth's praise of 'plain English appellations' reminds one of Clare's celebration of the 'vulgar names for the flowers'.[185] While Clare's 'vulgar names' have been taken as a fundamental stance against the taxonomist's murderous dissection, assumptions that 'analysing decomposing, & anatomising' might be obviously 'unfavourable to the perception of beauty' is no truer for Clare than it was for Wordsworth.

[184] *LBOP*, p. 739.
[185] Letter of 18 October 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 107.

IV. JOHN CLARE'S VARIETIES

Wordsworth I love, his books are like the fields,
Not filled with flowers, but works of human kind;
The pleasant weed a fragrant pleasure yields,
The briar and broomwood shaken by the wind,
The thorn and bramble o'er the water shoot
A finer flower than gardens e'er gave birth,
The aged huntsman grubbing up the root--
I love them all as tenants of the earth:
Where genius is, there often die the seeds;
What critics throw away I love the more;
I love to stoop and look among the weeds,
To find a flower I never knew before;
Wordsworth, go on – a greater poet be;
Merit will live, though parties disagree![1]

John Clare's sonnet to Wordsworth is a wiry thing: it exclaims and twists, requiring a second reading to test the firmness of its propositions. The first line of the sonnet establishes is bounds, and its exclamation of affection and affiliation is recognisably Clare's, whose sonnets so frequently and enthusiastically enumerate their loves. These loves – Wordsworth, weeds (human and vegetable), the refuse of critics, crouching to look for unknown flowers – bloom amidst sturdily asserted maxims. Wordsworth is by no means an undiscovered flower, dredged up from among the 'tenants of the earth', but Clare seems to feel his support of Wordsworth as being asserted in the teeth of the latter's embattled reputation. Yet Wordsworth's reputation in the 1840s was hardly as beleaguered as it was after *Poems, in Two Volumes* (1807), or after *The Excursion* (1814). Nevertheless, Clare admitted in his journal that this beleaguered reputation affected his early readings of Wordsworth: '[W]hen I first began to read poetry', Clare wrote, 'I dislikd

[1] 'To Wordsworth' was published 15 May 1841 in *English Journal* and, although no manuscript exists, is thought by Clare's Oxford editors to have been composed between 1840 and 1841. See *The Later Poems of John Clare, 1837-1864*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Margaret Grainger, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), p. 25. Future quotations from Clare's poetry are to the relevant Oxford edition and will be referred to in abbreviated form, i.e. *LP* II, p. 25.

Wordsworth because I heard he was dislikd & I was astonishd when I lookd into him to find my mistaken pleasure in being delighted & finding him so natural & beautiful'.[2] Thus Wordsworth's early defensiveness appears justified: readers of his poetry were forced to reckon with negative critical opinion. For Clare, Wordsworth's poems were rescued by their receptivity to re-reading. In a letter to his publisher, John Taylor, Clare wrote that he preferred Wordsworth to Crabbe because he could 'read a poem of the former twice over with added pleasure'.[3] The sonnet to Wordsworth offers no evidence of genius's dead seeds; rather, it is itself an example of Wordsworth's poetic propagation. In choosing the sonnet, Clare selected a poetic form which Wordsworth helped to revive, a form in which Clare was incredibly prolific and experimentally playful.[4] Without surrendering the pleasures of his own taste, Clare borrows from Wordsworth's poetic methods in the course of his catalogue of uncultivated plants. The third line of the sonnet – 'The pleasant weed a fragrant pleasure yields' – pockets the elder poet's habit of repeating a word in a varied form.[5]

Clare, too, was recognised as a poet 'whose books are like the fields'. In *Flora Domestica* (1823), Elizabeth Kent suggested that 'None have better understood the language of flowers than the simple-minded peasant-poet, Clare, whose volumes are like a beautiful country, diversified with woods, meadows, heaths, and flower gardens…'[6] *Flora Domestica* offered advice for green-fingered town-dwellers illustrated by poetic passages

[2] 29 October 1824, *Natural History Prose Writings of John Clare*, p. 196.
[3] 6 December 1821, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 221.
[4] See, for example, Clare's letter to Hessey of 4 July 1820: '& if those cursd critics could be shovd out of the fashion wi their rule& compass & cease from making readers believe a Sonnet cannot be a Sonnet unless it be precisly 14 lines…' *Letters of John Clare*, p. 80. Clare's friend Octavius Gilchrist is an example of one such critic. In his essay on Clare for the *London Magazine*, Gilchrist praised an early sonnet 'The Setting Sun', despite its 'answering less strictly to the legitimate structure of the sonnet, of which, it is pretty certain, the unlettered author knew nothing'. See *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Mark Storey (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 40.
[5] Examples of polyptoton can be found throughout Wordsworth's career: for example, 'Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo' ('When, looking on the present face of things', l. 3, *P2V*, pp. 170-171), and 'No motion but the moving tide' ('Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont', l. 27, *P2V*, pp. 266-268).
[6] Elizabeth Kent, *Flora Domestica; Or, the Portable Flower-Garden: With Directions for the Treatment of Plants in Pots; And Illustrations from the Works of the Poets* (London: Taylor and Hessey, 1823), xxii.

and was, like Clare, published by John Taylor and James Augustus Hessey. Notwithstanding Kent's apparent jab at his mental acuity, Clare wrote to Taylor to say he was 'uncommonly pleased' with *Flora Domestica*, as 'The account of [the flowers] is poetry'.[7] Clare, quoted nine times in Kent's pages, appeared alongside Wordsworth, whose poetry was extracted at such length (although less frequently than Clare) that Kent had to remind herself that her book 'was not to be a reprint of Mr. Wordsworth's poems'.[8]

Kent's volume set a precedent. In 1837, *Flora and Thalia: or, Gems of Flowers and Poetry by a Lady* featured Clare's poem, 'Autumn'. Five of Clare's poems were collected in *Poetry of the Year: Passages from the Poets Descriptive of the Seasons* (1853), including one of his earliest compositions on the primrose ('Welcome pale primrose'), which had appeared the previous decade in an American anthology, *The Lady's Book of Flowers and Poetry*. Clare's botanical poems were published on either side of the Atlantic while the poet was confined to the Northborough Asylum, his public reputation dwindling. In the twentieth century, Clare's poems were excerpted in Joan Rutter's and Walter de la Mare's 1937 collection, *Here's Flowers: An Anthology of Flower Poems* (five poems); Sarah Maguire's *Flora Poetica: An Anthology of Poems about Flowers, Trees, and Plants* (2001) (fourteen poems); and he was quoted twice in the National Trust's anthology *Favourite Flower Poems* (2016). 'Evening Primrose', a flower which '[w]astes its fair bloom upon the night', is common to these last three collections. This sonnet, printed in Clare's last collection, *The Rural Muse* (1835), is, like much of Clare's poetry, pregnant with traces of Gray's 'Elegy'. The evening primrose is not, however, found in a picturesque country churchyard; Clare's sonnet celebrates wasteful

[7] Letter of 31 July 1823, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 279.
[8] Kent, p. 127.

flowers as well as wastelands: landscapes studded with plants which, as Kent recognised, 'seldom find a bard to sing them'.[9]

The presence of Clare across these anthologies demonstrates the closeness of his reputation with what James Thomson called 'the vegetable world'.[10] Norman Gale's description of Clare as a 'crony of the flowers' is supported by the breadth of the poet's engagement with plants, from an early sonnet to the primrose written between 1807 and 1817 and the 'Primroses wi their mole eyed faces' in a transcript made by W. F. Knight, the house-steward of the Northamptonshire Asylum and Clare's late amanuensis.[11] In 'The Progress of Ryhme', Clare's explores the 'finer flowers than e'er gardens gave birth':

> For everything I felt a love
> The weeds below the birds above
> And weeds that bloomed in summer hours
> I thought they should be reckond flowers
> They made a garden free for all
> And so I loved them great and small
> And sung of some that pleased my eye
> Nor could I pass the thistle bye
> But paused and thought it could not be
> A weed in natures poesy
> (ll. 82-92)[12]

Here Clare worries at the words which divide 'weeds' from 'flowers'. Yet if, as Ruskin believed, weeds are simply plants 'in the wrong place', Clare, taken from the fields and exhibited in London salons, found an appropriate object correlative in a poem he wrote after his dislocation to Northborough:[13]

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[9] Kent, xxii.
[10] 'Summer', l. 112, *The Seasons,* p. 64.
[11] 'I love pale Primroses', *LP* II, p. 1065.
[12] *MP* III, p. 495.
[13] In 'The Parable of Joash', Ruskin further qualifies the weed as 'A vegetable which has an innate disposition to *get* into the wrong place', which is the 'very essence of weed character' and found in men as well as plants. *Works*, XXV, 283, 284.

> Een here my simple feelings nurse
> A love for every simple weed
> And een this little 'shepherds purse'
> Grieves me to cut it up…
> ('The Flitting', ll.185-8)[14]

These lines recalibrate Kent's description of Clare as 'simple-minded' to fit the maternal life of his sensations ('my simple feelings nurse | A love…'). Both 'The Progress of Ryhme' and 'The Flitting' appear in Clare's manuscript collection *The Midsummer Cushion*, and the similarity of sentiment is underlined by the rough proximity of composition.[15] When these two quotations are considered together, Clare like Wordsworth can be read as a poet who cares little for classifications and for the scientific practice of dissecting and displaying plants. Yet one might be tempted to question why Clare was compelled to cut up the 'little "shepherds purse"' at all? Marcus Poetzsch's discussion of Clare's 'hands-on naturalism' – which Robert Heyes has called a 'one-man ecological disaster' – threatens to replace a beloved prophet of ecology with a poet who 'plunders' bird nests and 'culls' specimens of flowers and ferns.[16]

Critical coverage of Clare's love of nature rarely fails to mention the poet's antipathy, if not positive hostility, to Linnaean botany.[17] Marilyn Gaull has argued that instead of providing Clare a counterbalance of sanity and order, Linnaean botany offered 'confusing names' to an already confused poet who, as Mahood wrote, recognised 'not...dried and labelled specimen[s] but...living neighbour[s]'.[18] Similarly, Eric Miller has suggested that Clare was estranged by Linnaean binomials which 'subordinate vernacular

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[14] *MP* III, p. 487.
[15] Clare's Oxford editors date 'The Progress of Ryhme' to between 1824 and 1832, and 'The Flitting' between May and June 1832, *MP* III, pp. 429, 493.
[16] Marcus Poetzsch, 'The Brighter Side of "Dark Ecology": John Clare and Henry David Thoreau', p. 63. Further, Clare's love of common plants is hardly a riposte to Linnaean botany since 'weed' is not a botanical but a horticultural category.
[17] An unusual exception to this is J. W and Anne Tibble's comparison of Clare with Linnaeus in *John Clare: A Life* (London: Michael Joseph, 1972), pp. 33, 274-5.
[18] 'Clare and "the Dark System"' in *John Clare in Context*, ed. by Geoffrey Summerfield, Hugh Haughton, and Adam Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 279-294 (p. 291); *Poet as Botanist*, p. 121.

names, alienating from the common observer the objects to which they are assigned by interposing the scrim of learned language'.[19] Kelley, citing Miller's analysis, opposes the 'fixed positions' of Linnaean names 'in a systematic grid' to Clare's delight 'in plant names that seem ready to fly or creep off toward some other kingdom of nature'.[20] In this way, Clare glossed his poem 'The Wild Flower Nosgay' in a letter to his publisher James Augustus Hessey by writing that he thought 'vulgar names to the flowers best; <as>but I know no others'.[21] The poem celebrates 'golden catkins', a 'sallow tree', 'bluecaps', 'ragwort', 'crimp frilled daisey', 'bright bronze buttercup', 'Freckt cowslip peeps', 'hooded aron', 'wan hued Lady smocks', the 'jaundice'd tincturd primrose sickly sere', 'vi'lets', 'lily buds', 'freckld cuckoos', 'pu[r]ple bugles', 'ragged robins', a 'flag flower', 'old mans beard', 'lambtoe notts', 'canterbury bell', 'lings', 'teazle burs', and 'heath bells'.[22] These flowers are extracted at length because they illustrate in a single poem the lush proliferation of flowers in Clare's verse at large, frequently caught with a masterful and apt adjective ('crimp frilled daisey', 'hooded aron').

Clare's praise of 'vulgar names' in his letter to Hessey has been fleshed out by Miller et al. into a critical stance: a locally-rooted Clare who preferred common knowledge to the estrangement of formal learning, a poet who himself could not be subordinated to a system.[23] Yet, Clare's descriptions of flowers demonstrate his wide reading and his indebtedness to elder poets. His compressed phrase for the primrose, 'jaundice'd tincturd primrose sickly sere', has more than a little of Milton's 'rathe primrose' ('Lycidas', l. 142), a connection embedded more strongly in Clare's late poem, 'I love the rath

[19] Eric Miller, 'Enclosure and Taxonomy in John Clare', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 40. 4 (2002), 635-657 (p. 638).
[20] Kelley, pp. 128-9.
[21] 18 October 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 107.
[22] 'The Wild Flower Nosgay', *EP* II, pp. 409-412.
[23] Kelley, p. 129.

primroses pale brimstone primroses'.[24] Milton's 'rathe primrose that forsaken dies' is not 'sere' as Clare's is, but it is sickly. 'Sere', however, appears in 'Lycidas' ('Ye myrtles brown, with ivy never sere', l. 2) suggesting that it was a word which Clare heard reverberating from within the same lexical field.[25]

Despite Clare's apparent hostility to Linnaean language, a short piece of early comic verse which reports a brief, bantering marital spat between 'mistress shrew' and her husband Hodge ('A Ploughmans Skill at Classification After the Lineian Arrangment') proves that Clare knew the sexual implications of the Linnaean system, and may suggest that he had read Darwin's *Loves of the Plants* by 1819 and had thus been alerted to the humorous possibilities of botanic verse.[26] In his autobiographical writing, however, Clare appears to disapprove of the Linnaean system in a severer tone:

> Hills Herbal gave me a taste for wild flowers which I lovd to hunt after and collect to plant in my garden which my father let me have in one corner of the garden and on happening to meet with Lees Botany second hand I fell for collecting them into familys but it was a dark system & I abandond it with a dissatisfaction[27]

Before he was a poet of nature, Clare was a gardener: first apprenticed to the master of the kitchen-garden at Burghley House as a young man, and later, as an adult, the cultivator of his own gardens, transplanting wild flowers and nursing florist bulbs.[28] The quotation above from his fragmentary autobiography reveals his knowledge of gardening as both practical and bookish. Clare's 'hooded aron' (arum) owes its unconventional spelling to

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[24] *LP* II, p. 963; Milton, *The Complete Shorter Poems*, ed. by John Carey, rev. 2nd edn (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2007), p. 253.
[25] Milton, *Complete Shorter Poems*, p. 243.
[26] Clare owned an 1825 edition of *The Botanic Garden* bound with an 1824 printing of *The Temple of Nature*. See No. 183 in the *Catalogue of the John Clare Collection in the Northampton Public Library*, ed. by David Powell (Northampton: County Borough of Northampton, Public Libraries, Museums and Art Gallery Committee, 1964), p. 26.
[27] *John Clare's Autobiographical Writings*, ed. by Eric Robinson and John Lawrence (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 48.
[28] Jonathan Bate, *John Clare: A Biography* (London: Picador, 2003), p. 71.

John Hill's stoutly anti-Linnaean *Useful Family Herbal* (1754).[29] Yet, whereas Hill's *Herbal* sparked a youthful appetite for collection, James Lee's *Introduction to Botany* (1760) led to what was either a new attraction or a postlapsarian descent from grace ('I fell for collecting them into familys'). As argued in the first chapter of this thesis, Lee's *Introduction to Botany* – with its clotted paragraphs and indistinct typography – is not an easy text for beginners. In another autobiographical fragment, Clare expanded upon his botanic education:

> As to my learning I am not wonderfully deep in science nor so wonderfully ignorant as many may have fancied…I have puzzled wasted hours over Lee's Botany to understand a shadow of a system so as to be able to class the wild flowers peculiar to my own neighbourhood for I find it woud require a second Adam to find names for them in this way & a second Solomon to understand them in Linnaeus's system – moder[n] works are so mystified by systematic symbols that one cannot understand them till the wrong end of ones lifetime & when one turns to the works of Ray Parkinson & Gerard were there is more of nature & less of art it is like meeting the fresh air & balmy summer of a dewey morning after the troubled dreams of a nightmare[30]

According to this passage, Clare considered the study of formal botany as fruitlessly arcane; his language roots itself in suspicions of occultism and hierophancy ('shadow', 'mystified', 'systematic symbols'). Clare repeatedly associates Linnaean botany with obscurity, or, as he phrases it in his journal entry of 24 October 1824, 'darkness visible', another borrowing from Milton (*Paradise Lost*, I. 63).[31] By contrast, the works of English herbalists and botanists like John Gerard and John Ray dispel the vapours of obscure, night-lurking specialists with healthful summer country air.[32]

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[29] John Hill, *The Useful Family Herbal. Or, an Account of all those English Plants, which are Remarkable for their Virtues* (London: Johnston and Owen, 1754), p. 14.
[30] *Autobiographical Writings*, pp. 46-7.
[31] Grainger, p. 195; Milton, *Paradise Lost*, p. 64.
[32] A suggestive inversion of Clare's sentiment is phrased, however, by the *Monthly Review* in its praise of *A System of Vegetables*: the reviewer suggested the Linnaean translation was accessible to 'the female sex, and the un-latinised,' while their forefathers could only obtain knowledge '*more painfully*, from antient herbals, from their favoured Gerard, and the laborious Parkinson'. *Monthly Review, or, Literary Journal*, 72 (June 1785), 401-410 (p. 409).

Given poems such as 'The Wildflower Nosgay', it may be no surprise that Thomas De Quincey praised Clare for the 'loveliest flowers most felicitously described'. De Quincey continued, less expectedly: 'The description is often true even to a botanical eye; and in that, perhaps, lies the chief defect; not properly in the scientific accuracy, but that, in searching after this too earnestly, the feeling is sometimes too much neglected'.[33] De Quincey's conclusion that Clare is an overly botanical poet, too scientific, and lacking affect, is rarely referred to in discussions of Clare's natural excursions.[34] It disturbs the received idea of the poet walking his native fields with 'habitual love'.[35] Yet, reading Clare's careful description of the 'teazle's jointed cup' ('Noon', l. 52), the 'hairy leaves | Of woodbine' ('Winter', ll. 249-250), or the columbine's 'stone blue or deep night brown | Their honey-comb-like blossoms hanging down' ('June', ll. 121-2) corroborates De Quincey's observation.[36] Clare's observations on the columbine, which had gestated from an earlier fragment ('The columbine & deep stone blue | There honey comb indented heads hang down', 'Fragments', ll. 15-16), suggests the longevity, care, and precision with which he meditated on his poetic images.[37] Edmund Gosse revived De Quincey's criticism in 1924 when he praised Clare's primrose as being 'too much like a coloured plate in a botanical treatise. Here is nothing that transcends unreflecting observation, nothing that speaks to the spirit of Man'.[38] 'Coloured plate' – manufactured, genteel, artificial, instructive – is bad, and 'botanical treatise' is worse, athough Gosse, like De Quincey,

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[33] From 'Sketches of Life and Manners', *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, 7 (December 1840), 765-76, reprinted in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 246.
[34] One exception to this is Greg Crossan, *A Relish for Eternity: the Process of Divinization in the Poetry of John Clare* (Salzburg: Universität Saltzburg, 1976), p. 33.
[35] 'To the Snipe' (l. 74), *MP* IV, pp. 574-577.
[36] 'Noon', *The Early Poems of John Clare*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and Margaret Grainger, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), I, 404-407 (p. 405). Henceforth referred by *EP* and respective volume number; 'Winter', *EP* II, pp. 682-691 (p. 691); 'June', *Poems of the Middle Period*, ed. by Eric Robinson, David Powell, and P. M. S. Dawson, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), I, 75-83 (p. 81). Henceforth referred to by *MP* and respective volume number.
[37] *EP* II, p. 522.
[38] Gosse was referring to 'The Primrose Bank', *MP* III, p. 543; from 'Nature in Poetry', *Sunday Times*, 5 October 1924, printed in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 374.

seems to write from underneath the looming shadow of Wordsworth, a shadow which dogged Clare's reputation in the first half of the twentieth century, culminating in Bloom's assessment in *The Visionary Company* (1962). Thus, Clare is faced with two interpretations, both of which kept poetry and taxonomy separate: either the poet who finds Linnaean botany artificial, obscure, and dark, preferring instead the natural, vulgar, country air; or he is the knowing poet whose exactness becomes itself a form of poetic occlusion.

Clare's own classificatory tag, the 'Northamptonshire peasant', printed on the title page of *Poems, Descriptive* in 1820 and carried over onto *The Village Minstrel* (1821) so that the London literati could read him as the genuine article, made locality integral to his reception.[39] As with Wordsworth, Clare's practice of incorporating local landmarks like Langley Bush, Lolham Bridge, and Swordy Well grounds his poetry within a specific geographical range. The emphasis of Clare's locality was given critical heft by John Barrell's cornerstone study of the poet, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840* (1972), which argued that after 1821, and in conjunction with the enclosure of Helpston, Clare's writing was 'increasingly preoccupied with being "local"'.[40] Barrell's analysis took root in subsequent work – Jonathan Bate's biography of Clare, Heaney and Paulin's readings, Iain Sinclair's *Edge of the Orison* (2005) – as locality became progressively central to critical readings of Clare: a locality incarnated in the dialect which distinguished his voice.[41] The eighteenth century's interest in establishing a natural

[39] This categorisation was dropped by the publication of *The Shepherd's Calendar* (1827), by which time Clare might have hoped to rest on the laurels of his previous publications. Stephen Colclough has argued that by the late 1820s Clare preferred to be known as 'John Clare' rather than 'John Clare the Northamptonshire Peasant', at least in bestselling annuals like *Friendship's Offering*. See 'Designated in Print as '"Mr John Clare"': The Annals and the Field of Reading, 1827-1835', *John Clare Society Journal*, 24 (2005), 53-68.

[40] Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 120.

[41] Seamus Heaney, 'John Clare: a bi-centenary lecture' in *John Clare in Context*, ed. by Geoffrey Summerfield, Hugh Haughton, and Adam Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 130-147; Tom Paulin, 'John Clare in Babylon' in *Minotaur: Poetry and the Nation State* (London: Faber, 1992),

standard for English meant that Clare's 'vulgar' names were also socially common, lower-class, and rough: the antithesis of literary language. Even Wordsworth's support of the 'real language of men' drew lines around acceptable usage: poetic language ought to be inartificial but plain and open to the general public.[42] In 1822, Charles Lamb, a supporter of Clare's poetry, warned Clare that he was too 'profuse' with his 'provincial phrases'. 'In poetry *slang* of every kind is to be avoided', Lamb wrote. 'Now and then a home rusticism is fresh and startling, but where nothing is gained in expression, it is out of tenor'.[43] Modern readers are likely to feel drawn to the particularity of Clare's 'startling' vocabulary – his 'crizzling', 'soodling', 'sweeing' – the specific locality encountered in his 'vulgar' language becomes unspoiled rather than tone-deaf. This new ear for rural dialect enabled Douglas Chambers to assert that Clare wrote in 'a vocabulary not only freed of classical mythologizing and latinate taxonomy but revelatory of the almost prelapsarian exercise naming things as they are'.[44] Having 'more of nature & less of art', Clare, not Linnaeus, becomes a second Adam. In this way, praise for the local, 'vulgar' Clare frames a critical disregard for the structural mechanisms of learned knowledge which interfere with nature.

Yet, in the earlier passage taken from 'The Flitting', Clare positioned the familiar name of *Capsella bursa-pastoris* between quotation marks ('And een this little "shepherd's purse"'), indicating the spokenness or consciously provisional nature of the name.[45] He was aware, by 1832, that there were other names in circulation, and yet it was this common name which fit his measure. This was a selection made with attention and

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pp. 47-55; Iain Sinclair, *Edge of the Orison: In the Traces of John Clare's 'Journey out of Essex'* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2005).

[42] *LBOP*, p. 757.

[43] Charles Lamb to Clare, 31 August 1822, printed in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 175.

[44] Douglas Chambers, '"A love for every simple weed": Clare, botany and the poetic language of lost Eden', in *John Clare in Context*, ed. by Geoffrey Summerfield, Hugh Haughton, and Adam Phillips (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 238-258 (p. 238).

[45] The quotation marks might also ensure that London readers were less likely to read 'shepherd's purse' as a pouch belonging to an agricultural labourer, although a glossary such as the one provided in *Poems, Descriptive* and *The Village Minstrel* (1821) would have made this clear.

alertness, and it is an indication that one ought not to allow Clare's confessions of rural innocence or ignorance to dominate his reputation. To do so plays into stale depictions of the artless peasant poet which persisted for more than a century after his death. On the other hand, critics such as Mina Gorji and John Goodridge have called for a reconsideration of Clare as an 'artful poet with a sophisticated awareness of his cultural situation', by underlining his indebtedness to poetic tradition and London coterie culture.[46] Over-attentiveness to Clare's social circumstances, Gorji sensibly concludes, risks interfering with a full understanding of his accomplishments and the wider cultural circumstances of his time.

While it would be foolish to deny the importance of locality for Clare's poetic language or his choice of subjects, I would like to put pressure on the given supremacy of this version of Clare, which leads readers or critics to suppress any niggling contradictions which might present themselves in his writing. Doing so obscures a Clare who is ambivalent and variable, neither 'too wonderfully deep in science nor so wonderfully ignorant as many have fancied'. Simon Kövesi, writing about Clare's inconvenient variability and the tension between Clare's opposition to enclosure and his employment as an enclosing hedge-digger and fence-planter, proposes that Clare 'cannot be constructed as the ecological fantasy of a sin-free green messiah, but – by his own account – is instead a messy, complex, paradoxical, anxious, changeable and context-dependent person'.[47]

Botanizing with Clare

Clare's journal, kept in the main from September 1824 to September 1825, collected descriptions of his daily rounds. On 25 March 1825, Clare recorded taking 'a walk to day

[46] Mina Gorji, *John Clare and the Place of Poetry* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 7.
[47] Kövesi, *John Clare: Nature, Criticism, History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 17.

to botanize'.[48] Less than a month later, he '[t]ook a walk in the field a birds nesting & botanizing'.[49] On 3 June, Clare caught a cold after 'a Botanizing after Ferns & Orchises'.[50] Meaning '[t]o look for plants in their natural habitats, for botanical purposes' and 'to study plants botanically', the *Oxford English Dictionary* first records the appearance of 'botanize' in 1757 with A. R.'s *Curiosities of Paris*, a series of letters written by an anonymous doctor on his visit to France. It is after a curious venture abroad – like Clare risking his health on his own pedestrian voyage of discovery – that 'botanizing' enters the English language.[51] Despite Clare's apparent distrust of Linnaean botany, he comfortably employed both 'botanize' and 'botanizing' in his writing. Douglas Chambers has argued that by 'botanize' Clare meant what the English 'founders of the science had meant by it: a careful attention to what is there, with all its literary and cultural associations', but this seems to disregard the possible resonances of the word within a formal, scientific context.[52] Alongside its appearance in his prose, 'botanize' appears in a sonnet from Clare's middle period, 'Ive loved thee swordy well & love thee still', printed in the *Stamford Champion* on 20 April 1830. Seth T. Reno has read this sonnet as evidence of Clare's ecophilia, claiming that the 'central tension driving' the sonnet is 'between the human desire to control and categorize nature through botany, on one hand, and the ecological complexity of the world that resists such Enlightenment thinking, on the other'.[53] Disregarding any discomfort Clare's reader might feel at Reno's reduction of the sonnet to a mechanical unit of 'central tension', this judgment is called into question by the sonnet itself, which poses alternative readings rather than solving them.

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[48] Grainger, p. 59.
[49] Journal entry, Saturday 16 April 1825, Grainger, p. 234.
[50] Journal entry, 3 June 1825, Grainger, p. 244.
[51] 'botanize, v', *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/21828> [accessed 27 September 2018].
[52] Chambers, p. 250.
[53] Reno, 'John Clare and Ecological Love', *John Clare Society Journal*, 35 (2016), 59-76 (p. 66).

> Ive loved thee swordy well & love thee still
> Long was I with thee tenting sheep & cow
> In boyhood ramping up each steepy hill
> To play at 'roly poly' down – & now
> A man I trifle oer thee cares to kill
> Haunting thy mossy steeps to botanize
> & hunt the orchis tribes where natures skill
> Doth like my thoughts run into phantasys
> Spider & Bee all mimicking at will
> Displaying the powers that fools the proudly wise
> Showing the wonders of great natures plan
> In trifles insignificant and small
> Puzzling the power of that great trifle man
> Who finds no reason to be proud at all[54]

Like Wordsworth's hailing of boyhood landscapes, where recollection is laid alongside continued avowals of affection, Clare begins his sonnet in a past tense that rolls into the present. The reader snags at the fifth line: is 'cares' a verb or a noun? One might read the botanizer as a potentially lethal presence to the landscape ('*thee* cares to kill') or as the poet's Rousseauvian botanizing in order to relieve his anxieties (killing his 'cares'). Murdering 'cares' is followed by the poet's ghostly apparition upon Swordy Well's 'mossy steeps'. A member of that famously difficult Linnaean class of cryptogamia, moss provides the stepping stone to Clare's botanical activities, just as 'haunt' is the spectral anticipation of his 'hunt[ing]' of the orchis tribes in line 7. 'Tribe', a word with a thorough botanical pedigree, was first used in the seventeenth century by Parkinson's *Theatricum Botanicum* (1640) and Grew's *Anatomy of Plants* (1682), borrowed by Milton and Thomson ('Spring'), and employed in Linnaean works like Withering's *Arrangement of British Plants*, the *Transactions of the Linnaean Society*, and Martyn's translations of Rousseau.[55] Clare contributes to this tradition by marrying botanical intent with 'phantasys' – that is, with a 'extravagant, or visionary fancy,' recalling both Darwin's 'luxuriant' poetry and Rousseau's rhapsodic botany, which will reappear in Clare's

[54] *MP* IV, p. 145.
[55] In *Paradise Lost*, the word is used by Eve in XI. 278-9, to lament the loss of the flowers she named ('Who now shall reare ye to the Sun, or ranke | your Tribes...?'), p. 612.

writings on taste.[56] While Reno reads the poem as offering resistance to 'Enlightenment thinking', the emphasis on appearance and display in the sonnet (the orchis' mimicry of the spider; 'displaying', 'showing') accords with Linnaean botany's reliance on visible characteristics. The language of littleness ('trifles'), and man's small significance in the face of nature's enormity, is cast in a different light when one considers how frequently reviews and readers noted Clare's eye for minutiae. As seen in Wordsworth's lines on 'dwind[ing] as we pore' from *The Excursion,* 'minuteness' was a quality freighted with negative connotations of pedantry, obsession, narrowness, and acquisition.[57] Clare, after all, *does* note the streaks on a tulip, or rather the 'crimson spots | I' the bottom of a cowslip'.[58] His attentive eye was enhanced by the gift of a pocket microscope in 1829 from Marianne Marsh, the wife of the Bishop of Peterborough, who suggested it would help Clare to 'ascertain the place which a plant ought to have in the system, and show you the beauty of the blossoms of the seed vessels of Mosses and other concealed blooming tribes'.[59]

Certainly Clare repeatedly excused himself from pretending to botanical knowledge, claiming that he was 'not much of a classifier', 'no botanist', 'ignorant of botany', and had 'not the sufficient [scientific] curiosity about me'.[60] Although this may testify to a genuine diffidence, a whiff of the amateur's polite demurral lingers around these disclaimers. While Clare may not be 'much of a classifier', he is certainly willing to

[56] See, for example, the seventh walk of Rousseau's *Reveries du promeneur solitaire* (Paris: 1776-8), translated as *The Reveries of the Solitary Walker* in *Collected Writings of Rousseau*, VIII, 57-68.
[57] Clare's excellent eye for the minute was mentioned by *The Eclectic Review*, *The Gentleman's Magazine*, *The New Monthly Magazine*, *The Druid's Monthly Magazine*, as well as by R.V. Hankinson, Revered W. Allen, Frank Simpson, and Cyrus Redding, among others.
[58] In the *Quarterly Review*, however, Octavius Gilchrist uses this phrase from *Cymbline* (here misquoted) to show Clare's freedom from literary paraphrase. *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 95. The original quotation is 'the crimson drops | I' th' bottom of a cowslip' (II ii. 38-9). See *Cymbeline*, ed. by Valerie Wayne, Third Series (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2017), pp. 202-3.
[59] Robert Heyes, *Looking to Futurity: John Clare and Provincial Culture* (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Birkbeck College, University of London, 1999), p. 157. The casual reference to 'the system' and Marianne Marsh's emphasis on the 'beauty' and 'blooms' which would be more easily visible with the aid of the microscope, suggests that her gift answers a pre-existing interest. According to Heyes, Clare was on friendly terms with Marianne Marsh's son, George, an amateur entomologist, and exchanged specimens with him.
[60] Grainger, pp. 18, 21, 22, 38.

try his hand at it. He suggests the ragwort's association with the chrysanthemum family (both are indeed members of the *Asteraceae* family) and suggests his 'ragged robin' is a 'species' of catchfly, showing that he was perfectly capable of considering the taxonomic relation between plants.[61] Clare wrote fragmentary essays on the sexual organs of plants and trees, and, after consideration, allowed that many plants and trees to be hermaphroditic. He divided ferns, brambles, and flowers into 'sorts', 'kinds', and 'species'. 'Collections for natural history' progressed; he 'hunt[ed]' his vegetable prey and prized its scarcity.[62] These hunts were not solely reveries in solitude, as Rousseau had modelled, but also social occasions. Clare's friendship with Joseph Henderson, the Scottish head gardener at Milton Hall and, after 1837, an Associate of the Linnaean Society, coincided with a period of projected natural histories. While these projects have been discussed as viable plans which fell by the wayside as the middle of the decade wore on, Robert Heyes has described a series of attempts whose overlapping edges are ill-defined.[63] These projects included a projected collaboration with Elizabeth Kent on a book of birds, a 'Natural History of Helpstone' (tentatively modified elsewhere to 'Biographys of Birds & Flowers' with an appendix on animals and insects), a collection of poetic quotations about flowers called 'a garden of wild Flowers', and a collaboration with Henderson. The excursions with Henderson began with an invitation offered in June 1822 to go on a 'Plant-hunting, Butterfly-catching Expedition' to Whittlesea-Mere'.[64] Clare's and Henderson's friendship was conducted through affectionate exchanges of specimens as well as books, magazines, and poetic judgments. On Saturday 27 November 1824, Clare

[61] Grainger, pp. 18, 17.
[62] Grainger, pp. 63, 210.
[63] Robert Heyes convincingly challenges Margaret Grainger's framing of Clare's miscellaneous writings on natural history as numbered 'Natural History Letters' to his publishers. See 'John Clare's natural history' in *New Essays on John Clare: Poetry, Culture and Community*, ed. by Simon Kövesi and Scott McEathron (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 169-188.
[64] Heyes, 'Writing Clare's Poems: "The Myth of Solitary Genius"' in *John Clare: New Approaches*, ed. by John Goodridge and Simon Kövesi (Helpston: John Clare Society, 2000), pp. 33-45 (p. 45, n. 10). Henderson's invitation to Clare is quoted by Heyes in *Looking to Futurity: John Clare and Provincial Culture*, p. 203.

recorded the receipt of 'a parcel of Ferns & flowers from Henderson the common Polipody...the harts tongue...the Lady fern...& tall white Lychnis with seven new sorts of Chrysanthemums - the Paper white the bright lemon 3 sorts of lilac & 2 others'.[65] The gift was especially valued because its contents arrived 'in the melancholy of autumn'. The exchange was mutual: on 7 May 1825, Clare recorded sending 'some Pootys [snail shells] and Ferns to Henderson yesterday'. That this is the sole entry for the day may suggest the significance of the present. Several days later, Clare received a 'Double Marsh marigold' in return.[66] Clare did not adopt Henderson's use of Linnaean nomenclature in his journal, but incorporated botanical names such as 'anemonie pulsitilis' and 'Chilome barbata' elsewhere.[67]

The walks Clare took – either with his friend John Billings, with Henderson, or with Henderson in mind – were conducted in the purpose of discovering, differentiating, and, if necessary, naming. On 8 Dec 1824, Clare found 'the common Pollopody…& a very small fern in hilly wood scarce larger than some species of moss & a little resembled curld parsley I have named it the Dwarf Maiden hair & I believe it is very scarce here'.[68] In this brief account Clare employs the language of discovery, an interest in scale, habitat, physical description, and scarcity: in short, botanical discourse. More explicitly systematic, perhaps, was Clare's visit nearly a week later to Milton Hall, where he viewed a 'fine Edition of Leniuses Botany [*del.* &] with beautiful plates & find that my fern which I found in Harrisons close dyke by the wood lane is the "thorn pointed fern"'.[69] This entry discloses not only Clare's ability to aesthetically appreciate a Linnaean text ('fine Edition') without references to obscurity or unutterability but also his willingness to use it as a

[65] Grainger, pp. 207-8.
[66] Grainger, pp. 238, 239.
[67] Grainger writes that 'Anemenoie pulsitile', 'Anemonie pulsitilis' or 'anemonie pulsitilla' were Clare's varied spellings of *Pulsatilla vulgaris*, or pasqueflower . The 'Chilome barbata' (*Chelone barbata*) is mentioned by Kent. Grainger, pp. 24-5, 61 n.3, 83, 271.
[68] Grainger, p. 209.
[69] Grainger, p. 210.

resource of identification and confirmation, as a supplement to his practical knowledge. Two weeks after his consultation, Clare 'preserved a specimen' of a 'new species of moss fern' which he thought 'a sort of moss mistletoe': a tentative trial towards his own herbarium.

It might be argued that these rambling outdoor activities are very different from his poetic work: his 'botanizing' in the fields and wastes, his hunt for 'specimens', look like distractions from the poems he found 'in the fields'.[70] Alan Vardy's useful account of the history and progression of Clare's friendship with Henderson identifies a partnership where each man saw his role as distinct to the other, along with 'the value of their relative contribution'.[71] The scientist and the poet may collaborate for each others' private ends, but for Vardy their activities were ultimately distinct.[72] Vardy takes his evidence from Clare's list of orchises on the inside of his second-edition copy of Isaac Emmerton's *Plain and Practical Treatise on the Culture and Management of the Auricula, Polyanthus, Carnation, Pink, and the Ranunculus* (1819). Vardy concludes that the list's 'lack of interest in scientific classification' is proved by Clare's interest in particulars: 'True to his poetics, and ethics in general, Clare ensured that each flower was recorded – their primary value lay in their individual beauty, not in their status as specimens'.[73] But 'specimen' does not imply alienation; Clare, after all, willingly integrates the words 'specimen' and 'species' into his vocabulary. Moreover, while Clare does not use scientific classification in his list, his attraction to the catalogue (discussed below) is in keeping with the scientific impulse toward identification and arrangement: Clare's lists of plants – and later his lists

[70] 'I found the poems in the fields, | And only wrote them down' ('Sighing for Retirement', ll. 15-16), *LP* I, pp. 19-20 (p. 19).
[71] Alan Vardy, *John Clare, Politics and Poetry* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 151.
[72] There is support for Vardy's division of labour in the document Grainger titled 'Natural History Letter 1a'. where Clare assures his anonymous correspondent that 'if your Author shoud deem [curious Orchises] deserving a place in his garden I can get Henderson to write down their classification, History, & suitable soils for he is an exelent botanist' (Grainger, p. 25).
[73] Vardy, p. 154.

of birds – are alphabetical, in part because they respond to books which present their subjects alphabetically.[74] Rather than avoiding them, Clare responded to ordered structures. Additionally, one finds Vardy's division of labour hard to countenance when one confronts a list of books and periodicals Clare 'had lent to friends or which he wished to borrow or buy', which includes many books which are explicitly Linnaean: 'No 10 and Nos 13, 14, 15 and 16 of Loudons Plants', 'Bingleys Botany by Frost', the new edition of Withering's *Arrangement of British Plants* (a repeated request), 'A Botanical Treatise on the Tribe Orchis with Portraits of the Flowers by Dr Sibley', 'Loudons Hortus Britannicus 1 Vol 8vo 21', 'Loudons Encyclopedia of Plants', 'Loudons Plants No 1 – taken monthly until finished', 'Lindleys British Flora', and 'Smiths English Flora'.[75]

A letter to an anonymous correspondent offers a suggestive venue for scientific curiosity to mingle with rapture in a way that again prefigures Clare's formulations of taste. The letter's intended recipient has been contested: Grainger thinks the letter to be a response to Withering's *Systematic Arrangement of British Plants* (4th edn, 1801), and while Storey argues that it is intended for Elizabeth Kent – as Clare originally believed that *Flora Domestica* was written by a male author – Heyes believes it to be intended for John Claudius Loudon, to whose monthly *Encyclopedia of Plants* Clare subscribed from 1828.[76] Regardless of its intended reader, Clare's letter offers a wholly different voice than the one employed in his journal entry of 24 October 1824 accusing Linnaeus of Satanic obscurity.

[74] See, for example, Natural History Letter I, which is a commentary on Kent's *Flora Domestica*. Grainger, pp. 13-23.
[75] Grainger, pp. 361-4.
[76] Grainger, xlii-xliii; *The Letters of John Clare*, p. 283; Heyes, 'John Clare's Natural History', p. 188.

> Dear Sir
>
> I have often felt a wish & have now attempted it which is to thank you for the pleasure which the perusal of your book on plants has given me & for the use which it has given to society at large for every body who makes use of that mind which his creator has given him must feel delighted with the study of Botany it is the book of nature open at every season & every day turns over a new page to amuse & instruct the looker on as he passes from the village pasture to the cultivated field or the wild & uncultivated heath her pleasures are every where & her profits are ever found in the minds of those who make this delightful study their amusement—I do not mean the mere science for of that I know but little but the reflections it creates to see the various colours of field flowers & the eternal variety of shapes & different tintings of the leaves of herbs & trees & when we notice these things we feel a desire to know their names as of so many friends & acquaintance & the easiest way of becoming acquainted with these is by the assistance of Botany which is so far a very useful system & every one who attempts to render a useful system popular deserves the thanks of those interested in it for his labours & you deserve them in many instances & if I might put in a plea for the future shepherds & ploughmen of my country (as intelect is the heritage or birth right of every sphere of life) I think your abilitys might render Botany popular enough to win their attention by making them acquainted with the flowers of their own country that make gardens in summer of the spots where they live & labour by publishing a Work with illustrations of our British Plants similar to your book of Plants & instead of giving figures of select specimens of plants as you did there I think you might give illustrations of them all & yet leave it acceptable to the purchase of such readers[77]

While it is clear that Clare continued to distance himself from claiming the identity of a botanist ('for of that I know but little') and while 'mere science' still seems to lack essential value to Clare, the words he used to describe the pleasurable effect of botanical study ('delighted', 'delightful, 'amuse and instruct', 'amusement') echo much of the period's botanical discourse, pivoting on a Horatian blend of knowledge and delight. Clare's interest in botany as perambulation is evident, and this interest generously incorporates both wild and cultivated landscapes ('as he passes from the village pasture to the cultivated field or the wild & uncultivated heath'). His hope for future botanical books to teach the 'shepherds & ploughmen' of England to recognise their native flowers is reminiscent of his grammar-master, William Cobbett, whose *Grammar of the English*

[77] *Letters of John Clare*, pp. 283-4.

Language (1819) was intended for the 'Use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Ploughboys'. Such a book of botany would turn labouring landscapes rather than exotic colonies into 'spots' for leisure. In this letter, Clare seems to be a totally different man from the Clare who perceived botany as 'unuterable' and 'darkness visible', or, as he strikingly wrote elsewhere, the 'host of alphabetical arangments as woud fill a book to describe the flora of a village like the types of the Chinese characters that fill a printing house to print one book with'.[78] 'Alphabetical arangments', Clare appears to suggest, are superfluous, needlessly profuse, clunky, un-economic uses of language. Yet Clare's thickly growing 'wild flower catalogues', occasionally alphabetical, manifest the same kind of profusion, however 'tedious and long' they appear to outsiders.

How can one explain these pivots? Clare's autobiographical fragments, the largest source of material used by critics to keep the spectre of Linnaeus at bay, were written concurrently with the journal and his excursions into natural history. There appears to be an argumentative co-existence of curiosity and disgust: six weeks after Clare's ruminative essay on the male and female flowers of the oak, following on from his plan for a poetic botany on Kent's model, Clare produced the infamous comparison of the Linnaean system to 'darkness visible'.[79] Yet the accumulating presence of botanical practices, growing steadily over the period of the journal, provides a quizzical counterpoint. Nearly a week after the Miltonic reference, Clare remarks on his 'chrisanthymums' opening 'their beautiful double flowers' and, on the first of November, walks to Lolham Bridge to 'hunt for a species of fern'.[80] Clare's prose, then, is engaged in a doubled task of testing the uses and pleasures of botany, and rejecting it in a cloud of displeasure at what he calls its 'mystery'.

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[78] Grainger, p. 16.
[79] Journal entry, 24 October 1824, Grainger, p. 195.
[80] 30 October 1824, Grainger, p. 197.

Elsewhere, Clare was able to un-riddle the mystery of unfamiliar speech. Despite the local gypsies' reputation for 'mistic language & black arts', Clare discovered 'on familiar acquaintance' that this occult communication was merely 'things calld by slang names like village provincialisms & that no two tribes spoke the same dialect exactly'.[81] That which had been mysterious, translated through a closer acquaintance, became conceivable. As a poet who paid attention to the names of things, and on account of his knowledge of wild flowers, Clare liked to discover what the gypsies names for plants were ('I usd to be amusd with the names they calld them'). He learned that what he called water betony was their 'Waspweed', their 'Buckbane' was his bog bean, and 'hiskhead' was selfheal. Nor is this interest in the dialect names for plants necessarily anti-Linnaean. Rather than an antagonist to local names, Linnaeus advised their collection in floras. In *Flora suecica* (1745), for example, under *Bellis perennis* (daisy), he offered *Pytter* (standard Swedish) and *Futtelius* (the dialect of Skåne), whereas for *Leontodon taraxacum* (dandelion), he listed the French *piss-en-lit* as well as *Kopiss* (Västergötland), *Smórblomster*, *Skallnacke* (Östergötland), and *Monkhuswud* (Dalarna).[82] Clare's interest in the varying local names of plants may qualify him more as a poet than as a Linnaean disciple, but his encounter with the gypsies' 'mistic language' demonstrates that without interpretation, a specific language may feel like a threat, and thus awaits only familiarity and attention to translate it.

Clare's prose, a form that was a harder test of his abilities than rhyme, and lacking the structural pegs of rhyme and metre to hang the phrases upon, manifests a doubled consciousness of botany.[83] Andrew Hodgson has described the sonnet as a 'manifestly artificial form', and, while Clare has been much praised for his naturalness, one late sonnet

[81] *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 69.
[82] *Flora suecica* (Stockholm: 1755), pp. 296, 270.
[83] For the difficulty of prose writing for Clare see Heyes, 'John Clare's Natural History', p. 185.

offers a example of how natural objects might come to nestle into his formally adept poetic grasp.[84]

> The Maple with its tassell flowers of green
> That turns to red a stag horn shaped seed
> Just spreading out its scalloped leaves is seen
> Of yellowish hue yet beautifully green
> Bark ribb'd like corduroy in seamy screed
> That farther up the stem is smoother seen
> Where the white hemlock with white umbel flowers
> Up each spread stoven to the branches towers
> And mossy round the stoven spread dark green
> And blotched leaved orchis and the blue bell flowers
> Thickly they grow and neath the leaves are seen
> I love to see them gemm'd with morning hours
> I love the lone green places where they lean
> And the sweet clothing of the Maple tree[85]

This sonnet – unpublished in Clare's lifetime and particularly striking when read in the unpunctuated draft transcribed by Knight – demonstrates the habit of Clare's sonnets to swell against the stricture of the line. The repetition of 'spread' in lines 3, 8, and 9 performs its meaning as it increases its presence throughout the verse. Without the navigation provided by punctuation, the reader is disoriented: does 'that' in the second line refer to the maple or to the flowers? Does 'just spreading out' refer to the Maple or to the 'stag horn shaped seed'? Clare's sonnets seduce the reader into practicing a languorous reading practice, snaking forward-and-backward, as the reader tests out each word to see if it provides a footing stable enough to proceed. This is the dislocation Helen Pownall recognises as requiring 'double checking or alertness' as the reader encounters Clare's 'shifting syntax'.[86]

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[84] Andrew Hodgson, 'Form and Feeling in Clare's Sonnets', *John Clare Society Journal*, 31 (2012), 51-66 (p. 52).
[85] 'The Maple Tree', *LP* II, p. 1025.
[86] 'Syntax and World-View in John Clare's Fen Poems', *John Clare Society Journal*, 34 (2015), 37-49 (p. 39).

This is a sonnet fixed by colour: the maple's green flowers, red seed, yellow-green leaves, white hemlock and its white flowers, dark green orchid, blue bells, the 'lone green places' where the blue bells grow. Clare's sonnet seems like a natural corrective to Linnaeus's disregarding of colour, evidence of the 'different tintings' which, as he wrote to his botanical correspondent, spur the observer to want to learn the plants' names. This sonnet, however – a genre exemplifying that 'most artificial and genuine species of poem' – is interested in art: in 'corduroy', 'screed', tassels, gems, and 'sweet clothing'.[87] This is a faint and delicate homage to Darwin's well-dressed and ornamented plants.

Chambers notes that 'umbel flowers' may be a reference to hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) as a member of the Umbelliferae family. '[A]nd yet,' he concludes, 'the "truth" of the maple is something far more complex, more composite, than such taxonomy can suggest'.[88] While 'umbel' rather nicely chimes with 'blue bell' flowers three lines below, and one might be tempted to dismiss it as merely neat rhyme, or a learned pun on *humble,* disyllabic adjectives are not uncommon for Clare and he could easily have replaced it. As the only use of 'umbel' in Clare's works, and one of only four recorded uses in English poetry until his death, the use of 'umbel' in proximity to the hemlock suggests that botanic specificity offers its own lexicon of connection, its own accented music, and requires readers to re-investigate his wavering animus against Linnaeus' dark, unutterable words.

The Language of Description

When Clare wrote of Wordsworth that he was 'poet for whom origionallity of description the present day has few if any equals', he may not have expected the ways in which his

[87] Unsigned review in *Eclectic Review* of January 1822, possibly by Josiah Condor. See *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 171.
[88] Chambers, p. 253.

own reputation would become shaped by his descriptive powers.[89] The question of description became a prominent bridge between Clare and another brother-poet, John Keats. Although Clare and Keats never met, Clare received Keats's observations on his poems through their mutual publisher, Taylor. 'When I read Solitude to [Keats]', Taylor wrote to Clare, 'he observed that the Description too much prevailed over the Sentiment. – But never mind that – it is a good Fault – and besides you know I must have something to cut out, or "Othello's Occupation's gone" as the Play says'.[90] Taylor, despite his attempts at mitigating Keats's criticism, evidently agreed, having 'an Apprehension that [Clare's poem] contains rather too much minute Description I feel desirous of cutting out a Couplet here & there. – The Difficulty is the greater in parting with them, as they are generally excellent in their Way'. Taylor's letter revealed to Clare that the problem with description in 'Solitude' is not one of quality but of quantity. Description prevailed 'too much'; there was 'too much minute Description'. By suggesting the removal of a 'Couplet here & there', Taylor implied that, for all their excellence, no greater whole would be affected by their omission. The couplet was evidently a central and aggregative vehicle of Clare's description; and, as each couplet was as good as the next 'in their Way', the choice of which was to be removed was not one to be agonised over. Taylor wrote again on this subject six months later to repeat Keats's judgment:

> I think he [Keats] wishes to say to you that your Images from Nature are too much introduced without being called for by a particular Sentiment … his Remark is only applicable now & then when he feels as if the Description overlaid & stifled that which ought to be the prevailing Idea.—He likes your first pastoral which E[dmund] D[rury] copied & sent very much indeed; but I am afraid it is not poetical or select enough in certain parts of the Soliloquy.[91]

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[89] The quotation marks are Clare's. Letter to Markham E. Sherwill, 12 July 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 87.
[90] Letter of 16 March 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 38, n.4; 'Solitude', *EP* II, pp. 338-352.
[91] Letter of 29 September 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 99, n.7.
[91] *The Letters of John Clare* does not specify the pastoral to which Taylor referred, but John Goodridge has suggested 'Damon and Collin' (*EP* II, pp. 15-19), published as 'William and Robin' in the *Village Minstrel*. John Goodridge, *John Clare and Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 72.

This second judgment differs subtly from the first. In using 'Images from Nature' in the place of 'description', Taylor confirmed the pictorial character of description. Description is exterior to the thing it attempts to describe: like a fabric it 'overla[ys] and stifle[s]', interposing a layer of interference between the act of perception and expression. Keats-via-Taylor instructed Clare in the lesson that description should be in the service of – rather than take the place of – feeling. It comes when it is 'called for', like a good domestic. At first Taylor tried to hedge Keats's opinion ('his Remark is only applicable now & then') but he concluded by taking Keats's critical stance as his own ('but I am afraid it is not poetical or select enough'). Taylor's reading of Clare's poetry as not 'select enough' agrees with his earlier letter's recognition of the 'too-muchness' of Clare's poem. Doubts as to the poem's 'poetical' nature begs the question of what 'poetical' means in the context of a particular poem and what an unpoetical poem might look like. In the second letter, Taylor seized on Keats's word ('prevailed') but changed its earlier use. Whereas in the earlier letter, description regrettably 'prevailed', now the 'Idea' which ought to 'prevail' has been obstructed. Whether description actively prevails or prevents an Idea from assuming its rightful strength, it usurps undue influence: it skews a poem's expressive power. In response to Keats's criticism, Clare assured his publisher that Keats's advice would not be 'thrown away if I can help it tho you are well aware of my stubborness'.[92]

In a postscript to a letter to Taylor of the same year, Clare quoted approvingly from *Endymion* to express his growing appreciation for the poem and its author. '[H]eres a description of woody glooms', he wrote, before transcribing three lines from Book II, recounting Endymion's chase of a golden butterfly through

[92] Letter of 3 October 1820, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 98.

> ‘buried paths where sleepy twilight
> ‘dreams
> ‘The summertime away –’[93]

Clare disregarded the rather good rhyme at the end of the couplet (‘dreams’ | ‘unseams’); the poem’s subject, its ‘brain-sick shepherd prince’; Endymion’s philosophizing over ‘ardent listlessness’; the poem’s jewelled language and hallucinatory cast; and its mythological apparatus. Instead, his selection seized upon Endymion’s conversion from melancholic to curious specimen-hunter as he follows the butterfly into a denser landscape. In selecting these lines, Clare insists on his ‘stubborness’, his refusal to give up description, and his willing to contest the judgment of a ‘brother poet’ by paying attention to Keats’s own employment of atmospheric description over sentiment.

Taylor may have shown Keats Clare’s poem on ‘Solitude’ with Keats’s sonnet on the same subject in mind. Keats’s sonnet (‘O Solitude! if I must with thee dwell’), his first published poem, appeared first in Leigh Hunt’s *Examiner* on 5 May 1816, and then again in *Poems* (1817). Clare’s and Keats’s poems on solitude celebrate similar landscapes of river, dell, bough, and ‘flowery slope’. Keats’s ‘wild bee’ emerging from a ‘fox-glove bell’ (l. 8) is spotted in Clare’s verse ‘[a]s he turns the petals bye | Gold dust gathering on his thigh’ (ll. 185-6), almost twenty lines after ‘wild thymes pinky bells’ (l. 167).[94] The varying scales of the poems – Keats’s compact sonnet versus Clare’s long couplet poem’s stretching over more than three hundred lines – determine the scope of both poems. Clare has more space to unpack Keats’s ‘jumbled heap | Of murky buildings’ (ll. 2-3) into a mouldering abbey ‘[h]ung wi pelitorry green’ (l. 208). Lacking Keats’s ‘pavilion’d’ trees, Clare’s is a ‘disorderd scene’ of ‘wattld hedge’ (ll. 76, 109); his river moves by ‘random

[93] The quotation marks are Clare’s, transcribed in his letter of 19 April 1820 (ii), and quoted in *Letters of John Clare*, p. 51. *Endymion,* II. 73-74, in *Poems of John Keats,* p. 134. In the printed text, these lines appear as one and half lines of a couplet (ll. 73-4).

[94] Fiona Stafford has suggested that the scientifically accurate connection of wild bee and fox-glove (*Digitalis*) might come from Keats’s medical apprenticeship, and his botanical training under William Salisbury. See ‘Keats Shoots and Leaves’, p. 77.

tide' (l. 138) rather than a Keatsian 'crystal swell' (l. 5). Yet the sestet of Keats's sonnet points to a critical preference which informed his comment to Taylor on Clare's poem.

> But though I'll gladly trace these scenes with thee,
> Yet the sweet converse of an innocent mind,
> Whose words are images of thoughts refin'd,
> Is my soul's pleasure...
> (ll. 9-12)[95]

The second definition in Johnson's entry for the verb 'describe' is given as 'to delineate; to mark out; to trace...'[96] 'Tracing' emphasises description's historical relation to visual portraiture. In these lines from his sonnet to solitude, written four years before he delivered his judgment of Clare's poem on the same subject to Taylor, Keats declared that while he is willing to offer poetic description of 'Nature's observatory' as he had done in the preceding octave, he preferred language that reflected thought (a companion's 'innocent mind') rather than 'Images of Nature' which 'overlay' and 'stifle'. Keats's advice to Clare therefore emerges from a critical poetic difference between the two poets.

Clare was quickly recognised as a descriptive poet by other readers than Keats. The *New Monthly Magazine* judged him a 'strictly...a descriptive poet', while John Scott, the editor of the *London Magazine* observed that 'The feeling of the descriptive parts of these poems causes them to steal upon the reader with all the moral and poetical influence that belongs to the objects themselves'.[97] Evidently Scott, unlike Keats and Taylor, understood objects and their re-creation in language to be bearers of 'poetical influence' rather than detractors of it. It is not, perhaps, a surprise that Clare's readers paid attention to his descriptions, given fact that the title of his first volume (*Poems, Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery*) invited its readers to notice this particular quality of his poems. Readers who

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[95] *Poems of John Keats*, p. 41.
[96] Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language*, n. p.
[97] *New Monthly Magazine*, 13 (March 1820), 326-30 printed in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 68-73 (p. 68); *London Magazine*, 1(March 1820), 323-8 printed in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, pp. 78-80 (p. 80).

liked Clare's descriptions praised the accuracy, care, and tastefulness of his minute observations, while those less certain of the virtues of description in poetry interpreted it as a sign of his restricted range.

Taylor's softening of Keats's criticism – that description is 'a good Fault' – lost its conviction, or tact, in the following years. During the preparation of *The Shepherd's Calendar* in 1826, Taylor judged Clare's latest offering a 'descriptive Catalogue in Rhyming Prose...scarcely one Feature of which has not been better pictured before by you'.[98] Clare's poetry was again dismissed as 'unpoetical': cheap versification which dully repeated previous efforts. Upon the receipt of 'November', Taylor wrote 'I have often remarked that your Poetry is much the best when you are not describing common Things'. Common objects threaten to provoke common language. Wishing Clare would write 'more philosophically' or 'with more Excitement', Taylor judged 'November' to be weighed down 'too much' with the 'language of common every Day Description'.[99] Contradicting Clare's first readers, who praised the poet's careful observation of common things, Taylor was confronted once more by Clare's stubborn 'too-muchness'.

The second-class stature of Clare's poetic gift, determined by the quantity of description in his poetry, has endured alongside his poetic reputation. In this way, Geoffrey Grigson, the editor of a selection of Clare's poetry, could write in 1950 that 'He versified rather than put down in prose what might have filled the note-books of another poet. Observation and description are not poetry, or at least cannot be poetry of the higher order...'[100] (One 'cannot reply "Notebook, notebook"' to Clare's 'exactitude', scoffed Edmund Blunden in 1929, pre-empting Grigson.)[101] As a poetic tool, description threatens to depreciate the overall value of the poem. In the middle of the previous century, Burke's

[98] Letter of 28 January 1826, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 358.
[99] Letter of 4 March 1826, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 363.
[100] *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 407.
[101] *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 380.

Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful (1757) created a precedent for Keats's judgment of Clare's poetry by establishing description as a poor substitute for feeling: 'We yield to sympathy, what we refuse to description', wrote Burke. He continued:

> The truth is, all verbal description, merely as naked description, though never so exact, conveys so poor and insufficient an idea of the thing described, that it could scarcely have the smallest effect, if the speaker did not call in to his aid those modes of speech that mark a strong and lively feeling in himself.[102]

These lines recall criticism of Erasmus Darwin's poetry as all polish and no heart. If language – which is already remote from the world of objects as a body of mere signs – fails to move the passions, it has failed to work. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's influential account of description, on the other hand, was less interested in feeling than in form. In emphasising the difference between painting and poetry, Lessing's *Laocoön* (1766) judged the proper sphere of poetry to be movement in time: that is, as primarily narrative. Lessing borrowed Pope's phrase to put down purely descriptive poetry as 'a banquet of nothing but sauces'.[103] Description is, like Taylor's metaphoric fabric, an ornamental, decorative, and ultimately insubstantial addition: a piece of 'pedantic trifling, to which little or no genius can be attributed'.[104] Although *Laocoön* was not translated into English until 1836, Dorothy Wordsworth's journal recorded Wordsworth reading Lessing in February 1802.[105] While Wordsworth's preface to *Poems* (1815) affirms the importance of the powers of 'observation and description' to the poet, his disavowal of 'poetic diction' in the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* disassociates his poetics from so-called 'descriptive' poets like Thomson,

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[102] Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), published in *The Writings and Speeches*, ed. by Paul Langford and William B. Todd, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981-2015), I: *The Early Writings*, ed. by T.O. McLoughlin and James T. Bolton (1997), p. 319.
[103] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön: An Essay on the Limits of Painting and Poetry*, trans. by Edward Allen McCormick (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 89-90.
[104] Lessing, p. 89.
[105] Duncan Wu speculates that this may have been *Laocoön* in *Wordsworth's Reading*, II: *1800-1815*, p. 134.

whose *Seasons*, so irksome to Lessing, was a catalyst for Clare's early attempts at writing poetry.[106]

In *Laocoön,* Lessing analysed a passage on the gentian from *Die Alpen* (1729) by the botanist and Linnaean correspondent Baron Albrecht Von Haller. In admitting that the selected passage 'may be called a masterpiece of its kind', Lessing's implication was that its 'kind' was nonetheless secondary. Although skilfully painted 'after nature', the passage produces no 'illusion', which Lessing believed to be essential to poetry. (On the other hand, twentieth-century critics such as Barthes disliked description precisely because it triggers what he calls the 'referential illusion', proving, as Michel Beaujour has argued, that description can lose on both fronts.)[107] In the lines from *Die Alpen,* Lessing is aware of the 'poet at work' but such work is 'a long way from seeing the object itself'.[108] The problem is compounded by the choice of subject, the nature of description in poetry, and the telling effect of the poet's labour overcrowding the object. That careful description might be perceived as laborious drudgery might recall Clare's status as a labouring poet who was once called the 'Wordsworth of Labour'.[109]

John Barrell differentiates Clare from eighteenth-century descriptive poets like Thomson by drawing attention to the 'disordered' nature of Clare's descriptions. Unlike Thomson's supremely ordered landscape, description in Clare's verse celebrates manifold and the simultaneous impressions – the 'this *while* that' perceptions – which struggle against the sequence imposed by language. This simultaneity and disorder, this 'accuracy

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[106] According to his autobiographical writings, Clare 'met with' a fragment of Thomson's *Seasons* around the age of thirteen when a Methodist weaver showed it to him. 'I knew nothing of blank verse nor rhyme either otherwise than by the trash of Ballad Singers but I still remember my sensations in reading the opening of Spring' which made Clare's heart 'twitter with joy'. After purchasing his own copy, he 'clumb over the wall into Burghley Park', the local estate of the Marques of Exeter, and on his journey home 'got into a strain of descriptive poetry'. 'Sketches in the Life of John Clare', *Autobiographical Writings*, pp. 9-10.
[107] Roland Barthes, 'L'effet de Réel' in *Le bruissement de la langue* (Éditions du Seuil: Paris, 1984), p. 174 ; Michel Beaujour, 'Some Paradoxes of Description', *Yale French Studies*, 61 (1981), 27-59.
[108] Lessing, p. 88.
[109] Edwin Paxton Hood, 'John Clare, the Peasant Poet' in *Literature of Labour* (1851), printed in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 265.

of the description' grounded in 'vulgar' language, reinvests the sense of the local which Barrell understands as central to Clare.[110] Ben Hickman, on the other hand, using Lessing to his advantage, sees Clare's use of description as working in the interest of narrative. By describing the 'changing scene', Clare introduces time and thus narrative 'as perception' into his poetry. Both Barrell and Hickman, however, conceive of description as advancing another, more substantial purpose. Either description testifies to felt, local experience, or description tells a story in time. It cannot stand on its own feet.

Clare was not as easily bored by description as some of his readers. A passage in 'May' provides a jubilantly rephrasing of what Taylor called a 'descriptive catalogue in Rhyming Prose':

> My wild field catalogue of flowers
> Grows in my ryhmes as thick as showers
> Tedious and long as they may be
> To some they never weary me
> (ll. 193-196)[111]

Although here Clare writes in the workaday rhyming couplet that Taylor was confident he could trim back, this quatrain teases Taylor for reaching for the scissors. Where one might expect the more picturesque 'bowers' as a rhyme word, Clare's choice of 'showers' suggests that catalogues might revive or nurture poetry. Clare is not the only poet of syntactic heaping and 'incremental syntax'; Fiona Stafford observes that reading Keats is 'rarely a question of either/or but an experience of and...and...and'.[112] Catalogues draw attention to the problem of ending: their iterative pleasures contain the seeds of infinity. This evidently made no difference to Taylor, who excised Clare's quatrain in praise of catalogues along with over 220 more lines of 'May'.

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[110] Barrell, p. 131.
[111] *MP* I, p. 65.
[112] Stafford, p. 72.

Like Scarry, who confesses that she would like to recite the names of the contents of a seed catalogue of lilies ('Raspberry Dream, Raspberry Wine, Raindrop, Raining Violets, and Random Wait, as well as the School Girl, See Here, and Someday Maybe'), the catalogue held a particular joy for Clare.[113] In his autobiography, he described buying slate pencils and paper at John Drakard's bookshop in Stamford and his pleasure in reading the pages of book sales catalogues which acted as a wrapping tissue for his purchases.[114] Given the historical connection between flower catalogues and the pastoral mode, it is utterly fitting that they should appear in the work of a poet who experienced the hardships of a non-idealised pastoral life, who criticised Crabbe for his unsympathetic portrait of peasants and Keats for describing nature as 'she...appeared to his fancys & not as he would have described her had he witnessed the thing he describes'.[115]

Description in Clare, particularly description of plants, is thus half poetic inheritance and half personal experience. In this way, he is like Linnaeus, who wrote 'All that I have described, I have seen with the naked, unarmed eye'.[116] Description, crucially, is a tool for a system of botany which is constructed on visible differences. Linnaeus, wrote Erasmus Darwin, 'may be said *to have formed a language*, rather than to have found one'.[117] This language was formed for description, in order to accommodate the work of classifying plants. 'TRUE BOTANISTS', wrote Linnaeus, 'will construct Fundamental DESCRIPTIONS in characteristic words, particularly of obscure, rare, and new plants, according to the rule of Delineation of a plant...'[118] The model delineation that follows establishes a prototype for plant description: first, the name of the plant – class, order, genus, and species (including vernacular names or synonyms), followed by the etymology

[113] 'I sense that there is one person in the country who names all the daylilies, the racehorses, and the lipsticks', writes Scarry, p. 108.
[114] *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 46.
[115] Letter to Herbert Marsh, Jan-Oct 1830, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 519.
[116] Staffan Müller-Wille, 'A translation of Carl Linnaeus's introduction to *Genera plantarum* (1737)', p. 569.
[117] *System of Vegetables*, I, v.
[118] *System of Vegetables*, I, 11.

and known history of the plant. Linnaeus offered an extensive vocabulary for each structure of the plant: root, trunk, branch, leaf, flower, fruit, and so on. Thus, a root might be 'creeping' or 'jointed', 'tooth-like' or 'perennial'. The leaf might be 'imbricated' or 'scattere'd', 'oblong' or 'awl'd'. While Linnaeus certainly proposed a descriptive practice that was more selective than the swelling or scattershot habits of Renaissance natural historians, I hesitate to agree with Lorraine Daston that Linnaeus's descriptions were 'bland by summary, repetition, and omission of details'.[119] Rather than accumulating detail, vividness requires careful choice: a procedure which is 'subtractive rather than additive', as Scarry writes of Thomas Hardy.[120] Linnaeus offered 'finger'd', 'feather'd', 'foot'd' (the composition of the leaf); 'erect', 'bowing', 'nodding', and 'resupine' (flowers); 'globular' 'bell'd', and 'funnel-form' (petals). Such intricate, careful language, mediated through the translator's careful approximation, might remind the reader of Clare's 'creeping' crow flowers ('A Copse in Winter', l. 13), his 'pouchd lip'd cuckoo bud ('Recollections after a Ramble', l. 227), the 'scallopt briony' ('Sunday Walks', l. 135), or 'spirey wheat' ('November', l. 46)[121].

Clare's acknowledged debts to eighteenth-century poets like Thomson mean that he is not likely to be as repulsed by Augustan poetic diction as Wordsworth claimed to be in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1800).[122] Indeed, the epithet and noun construction of poetic diction (i.e. 'scaly flocks', 'fleecy care', 'finny race') chimes with Linnaean nomenclature in the enumeration of the 'blotch leaved orchis' ('The Maple Tree', l. 10),

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[119] Daston, 'Description by Omission: Nature Enlightened and Obscure' in *Regimes of Description: In the Archive of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by John Bender and Michael Marrinan (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), pp. 11-24 (p. 13).
[120] Scarry, pp. 95-117 (p. 105).
[121] 'A Copse in Winter', *EP* II, p. 63; 'Recollections after a Ramble', *EP* II, pp. 187-196 (p. 195); 'Sunday Walks', *EP* II, pp. 645-651 (p. 650); 'November', *MP* I, pp. 144-155 (p. 146).
[122] John Goodridge contradicts the critical narrative which postures eighteenth-century influences on Clare as a 'slightly embarrassing literary adolescence through which he must pass in order to find his authentic voice'. Rather, eighteenth-century literature is an affectionate, ransacking influence from which Clare diverges and to which he returns. See 'Clare and eighteenth-century poetry' in *John Clare and Community*, pp. 36-58 (p. 36).

the ‘pigeon winged orchis’ (‘Sweet Jenny Jones’, l. 18), the ‘stinking briony’ (‘Morning Walk’, l. 9), the ‘heart leaved briony’ (‘Walks in the Woods’, l. 136), the ‘wanhued ladysmocks’, ‘flusht briar rose’, and ‘hooded aron’ (‘The Wild Flower Nosgay’, ll. 22, 45, 19) in Clare’s long rhymed poems.[123] This collegiality between poetic diction and binomial nomenclature was perceived John Arthos, although Arthos omitted the specifically Linnaean context.[124] Clare’s pairing of noun and adjective recalls both poetic diction and binomial nomenclature itself. Examining one of Clare’s species – the woodbine (Lonicera), for example – one finds several poetic varieties: the ‘ramping woodbines’ (‘Wild Nosgay’, l. 11), the ‘twisting woodbines’ (‘The Wild Flower Nosgay’, l. 45), the ‘clinging woodbines’ (Walks in the Woods’, l. 128), and the ‘streakd woodbine’ (‘June’, l. 8).[125] ‘Streakd’ appears in lines from ‘June’ which are reworked into another species in ‘Summer Images’, published in *Midsummer Cushion* (1835). The original lines – ‘streakd woodbine | That lift their slender throated flowers | Agape for dew falls’ – becomes ‘The gay convolvulus wreathing around the thorn | Agape for honey showers’. Convolvulus is another winding plant commonly known as bindweed, but Clare’s replacement of ‘streakd woodbine’ with ‘convolvulus’ might have been prompted by an association found in *Endymion*, where Keats describes ‘Convolvulus in streaked vases flush’ (II. 415).[126]

Of course, Linnaeus’s botanical language was not intended to be primarily poetic. It had heavy lifting to do as a language formed with the intention of precisely recreating an absent object, in order that one might identify a plant having never seen it before. These botanic descriptions were intended to become botanical calligrams, and yet the fact that

[123] ‘The Maple Tree’, *LP* II, (p. 1025); ‘Sweet Jenny Jones’, *LP* II, p. 915-916, (p. 915); ‘Morning Walk’, *EP* I, pp. 494-497 (p. 495); ‘Walks in the Woods’, *MP* III, pp. 567-572 (p. 572); ‘The Wild Flower Nosgay’, *EP* II, pp. 409-412.
[124] John Arthos, *The Language of Natural Description in Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1949, repr. London: Frank Cass, 1966), pp. 17, 32. This is addressed also by Donald Davie, *The Language of Science and the Language of Literature, 1700-1740* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1963), pp. 11-12.
[125] ‘Wild Nosgay’, *EP* II, p. 385; ‘The Wild Flower Nosgay’, *EP* II, pp. 409-412 (p. 410); ‘Walks in the Woods’, *MP* III, pp. 567-572 (p. 572); ‘June’, *MP* I, pp. 75-83 (p. 75).
[126] *Poems of John Keats*, pp. 102-220 (p. 145).

Linnaeus urged botanical students to use one's own hand for measurement showed the extent to which botany was a hands-on practice.[127] Language, as Lessing argues in *Laocoön*, works in space; and language – by means of letters and books – can conquer the challenges of physical space. Drawings were expensive; specimens might not survive the voyages on which they were sent. A letter from Joseph Banks to Linnaeus' son, Carl Linnaeus the younger, written on 5 December 1778, expressed the common fear that plants might be lost at sea: the ship by which Linnaeus's samples were to arrive had not been heard of for a year.[128] By contrast, as one learns from Banks' biographical account of his friend Daniel Solander, a former pupil of Linnaeus's, that written descriptions were a safeguard and a precaution against inevitable decay, if not loss. 'We directed [the draftsman's] drawing,' wrote Banks,

> and made rapid descriptions of our natural history specimens while they were still fresh. When we had been at sea a long time, and they were exhausted, we completed our descriptions, and added synonyms using our library. These were entered directly into books in the form of flora for each country we had visited.[129]

Plants lose form; they can become 'exhausted'. Words on paper preserve the apprehension of a moment in its vitality.

Clare's descriptive poetry does not fulfil an identical function to botany's descriptive language, although the Oxford chemist and botanist George Claridge Druce claimed he was able to locate and identify 120 plants in Clare's poetry, finding at least the first Northamptonshire identification of 42 species.[130] Rather, Clare and botanical language intersect in the employment of what the Greeks called *enargeia*: the bringing-vividly-

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[127] 'Botanical calligrams' is Foucault's phrase (p. 135); *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 282.
[128] *Letters of Sir Joseph Banks: A Selection, 1768-1820*, ed. by Neil Chambers (London: Imperial College Press, 2000), p. 51.
[129] Banks, pp. 78-9.
[130] *Northamptonshire Botanologia: John Clare* (Northampton: Peterborough Natural History, Scientific, and Archaeological Society, 1893, repr., 1912), p. 183.

before-the-eye-ness of descriptive language.[131]Janice Hewlett Koelb, reading the classicist Ruth Webb, argues that works of art have no special status in the deployment of *ekphrasis*, or verbal description, in the ancient Greek rhetorical manuals in which it first appeared.[132] Rather, it was redefined by John Dewar Denniston in the 1949 *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, a redefinition taken up by Leo Spitzer in his widely-read 1955 article on Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.[133] In remaking the term at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, literary critics redeemed description (the technique of poetasters) into something of literary value.

Arguably, Linnaean nomenclature and botanical language was designed to act ekphrastically in this recovered original sense: to single out a plant and characterise it so that a reader could visualise a plant without having seen it. (Linnaeus's botanical works had no plates of individual species, a gesture towards affordability.)[134] Similarly, Clare's descriptions were recognised by his readers as having the qualities of *enargeia*: Clare was a man of 'vivid perception' (*New Times*); his poems included 'vivid descriptions of rural scenery' (*Literary Chronicle*); the *Shepherd's Calendar* possessed 'vivid colouring and peculiar freshness' (*Literary Chronicle*).[135] By 1835, the *Druid's Monthly Magazine* praised the *enargeia* of Clare's descriptions to such extent that while Clare 'has described things as they exist, with fidelity to the original...we cannot separate the reality from the description'.[136] Reality itself was rivalled. While description has been seen as indicating a

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[131] Janice Hewlett Koelb, *The Poetics of Description: Imagined Places in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 33.
[132] Ruth Webb, 'Ekphrasis Ancient and Modern: The Invention of a Genre', *Word & Image*, 15.1 (1999), 7-18; Koelb, p. 2.
[133] '[*E*]*kphrasis*...the reproduction through the medium of words the sensuously perceptible *objets d'art*'. Leo Spitzer, 'The "Ode on a Grecian Urn": Or Content vs. Metagrammar*', Comparative Literature*, 7 (1955), 203-225 (p. 207).
[134] For a more nuanced account of Linnaeus and the pictoral tradition, see Isabelle Charmantier, 'Carl Linnaeus and the Visual Representation of Nature', *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences*, 41.4 (Fall 2011), 365-404 (p. 392).
[135] 21 January 1820, *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 55; 6 Oct 1821, *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 146; 27 October 1827, *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 209.
[136] *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 240.

lesser poetic talent (Lessing's 'pedantic trifling' and Grigson's 'versifying' come to mind), De Quincey acknowleged that 'To describe well is not easy'.[137] Nor should Clare's pleasure in the literary act of description and his love of enumeration be dismissed as a 'psychological necessity', as Jonathan Bate has suggested.[138] To succeed at what De Quincey recognised as a difficult art offers the artist the pleasure of overcoming the challenge posed by his object.[139]According to Beaujour, the art of describing is justified when the writer feels a yearning to something and wants to reproduce an 'analogous emotion' in the reader. To describe is thus to recreate twice over. Stephanie Kuduk Weiner has analysed the mimetic fidelity of Clare's poetry, and its lyrical dialectic between referentiality and pure language: his poetry points to real objects in the world while simultaneously drawing conspicuous attention to itself as language.[140] Clare's descriptive language, however, goes beyond imitation of recognisable objects and stages moments of local recognition for readers who might not recognise these natural objects or phenomena. That is, it prepares the reader for a later apprehension. A description of the 'ragged robin', for example, describes the plant growing

> wild by the side of brooks & rivers with a narrow leaf just like a catchflye & a cluster of flowers on the top of several stalks from the same [*del*.? stalks] root of a beautiful bright pink colour jagged about the edges as if they had been torn *now you know my ragged robbin*' (my emphasis).[141]

This description presents the plant to the reader's eye – habitat, leaf shape, likeness (to the 'catchflye'), position of the flowers, and colour and shape of the root – and concludes that

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[137] 'Postscript on Didactic Poetry' from 'Gallery of the German Prose Classics. No. II – Lessing', published in *Blackwood's Magazine*, 20 (January 1826), 2-24, republished in *The Works of Thomas De Quincey*, ed. by Grevel Lindop and Barry Symonds, 21 vols (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2000-2003), VI: *Articles from* The Edinburgh Saturday Post, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine *and* The Edinburgh Literary Gazette, *1826-1829*, ed. by David Groves and Grevel Lindop (2008), p. 71.
[138] Bate, p. 311.
[139] De Quincey, p. 71.
[140] Stephanie Kuduk Weiner, *Clare's Lyric: John Clare and Three Modern Poets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
[141] Grainger, p. 17.

the describer's language has directly and decisively imparted knowledge to the reader. For Clare, poetry participates in this circle of recognition:

> a clown may say that he loves the Morning but a man of taste feels it in a higher degree by bringing up in his mind that beautiful line of Thompsons 'The meek eyd morn appears mother of dews' The [*del.* Clown] rustic sings beneath the evening moon but it brings no assosiations he knows nothing about miltons descriptions of it 'Now comes still evening on & twilight grey hath in her sober livery all things clad' nor of Collins Ode to Evening the man of taste looks upon the little Celadine in Spring & mutters in his mind some favourite lines from Wordsworths address to that flower he never sees the daisey without thinking of Burns & who sees the taller buttercup carpeting the closes in golden fringe without a remembrance of Chattertons beautiful mention of it if he knows it 'The king cup brasted with the morning dew'...the clown knows nothing of these pleasures he knows they are flowers & just turns an eye on them & plods bye therefore as I said before to look on nature with a poetic eye magnifys the pleasure (*Natural History Letter* III)[142]

While David Locke distinguishes between the 'poet's task' to find the objective correlative and 'the scientists' job to give the readers the blueprint by which they could actually construct a similar experience for themselves', Clare combines the two.[143] He describes a method of practicing natural history which is undergirded by poetic recognition: the observer recognises flowers *because* he has read about them. Like Linnaeus looking at the marsh plant through the screen of Ovid, Clare's poetry participates in the loop of this bookish practice by describing plants and flowers in such a way that the reader who approaches the maple tree will recognise it and 'mutter' Clare's line on the 'tassel flowers' or the 'stag horn shaped seed', or, in meeting the '[d]ark creeping ivy', recognises it as the 'bloom of ruins' by its 'berries brown' ('To the Ivy').[144]

Rather than a means of padding out lines, as Taylor might read Clare's couplets, Clare's descriptive catalogues artfully recreate natural objects. This recreation is not a passive photography as Edmund Gosse positioned it, but a skilled *enargeia* which teaches

[142] Grainger, p. 41.
[143] David Locke, *Science as Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 53.
[144] 'To the Ivy', *EP* II, p. 597.

readers to see and to recognise.[145] Instead of acting as a second-rate technique for frigid poetasters, description, writes Michel Beaujour, 'opens...windows in the reader's imagination, which expands worlds and multiplies quasi-perceptions, ought to be considered a life-force, the ever-available key to inexhaustible treasures'.[146] The man of taste, encountering the natural world mediated by his books and moved to enunciate what he has read, proves that description is not a substitute for substance, but rather swells to meet the reality for which it prepared.

'The Man of Science and of Taste'

In his fragmentary essay, 'Taste', Clare proposes that close attention to natural objects is the provenance of the 'man of dissernment' for whom

> there is happiness in contemplating the different shapes of leaves of the various kinds of trees plants & herbs there is happiness in examining minuitely into the wild flowers as we wander amongst them to distinguish their characters & find out to what orders they belong in the artificial & natural systems of botany[147]

In the lines that follow, Clare's prose continues to ramble – 'lolling' and 'wandering' – without discarding the character of the 'man of dissernment'. While the passage's emphasis passes from his 'distinguish[ing]' of plant characters to 'mark[ing] the crinkles' in the stream and watching the 'little dancing beetles twharling', these are not alternative ways of looking but integrated raptures. Just as 'there is happiness' in taxonomic distinction, so there is 'happiness' in 'lean[ing] on the rail of wooden brigs' and looking at the water below, 'happiness' in bending over the old woods mossy rails' and listening to the call of the 'hairey bumble bee'. Taste, for Clare, is pleasure-giving: it 'finds pleasure

[145] 'His was a camera, not a mind', Gosse wrote in a 1924 article for the *Sunday Times*, 5 October 1924, no. 5295, p.8, reprinted in *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 375.
[146] Beaujour, p. 67.
[147] Grainger, p. 284. This fragment is dated to the mid-1820s.

where the vulgar cannot even find amusement', as the first line of the essay proposes.[148] While this connection between taste and pleasure exists elsewhere in Clare's writings, the essay on taste shows a continuum of aesthetic pleasure passing from botanical examination to leisurely ramble heightened by Clare's orthography. Here there is no division between the taxonomic eye 'minuitely' classifying wild flowers and the poet's inclusive rapturous gaze.

'Taste' recurs throughout Clare's work: it leads the mole to practice his 'rude' architecture, just as birds have the 'taste...to choose such homes upon the waste'.[149] Taste spans the natural and the man-made, offering 'worthy praise' to that 'wronged bush' the bramble, just as the spire of Glinton church pleases '[l]ike elegance of beauty much refined | By taste'.[150] For Clare, taste moves between the instinctive and the instructed, the natural and the learned. As Sarah Weiger has shown, Clare's most extensive engagements with taste across the decade after the publication of *Poems Descriptive of Rural Life and Scenery* shed light on his conceptualization of natural history.[151] These varying notions of taste converge in the long couplet poem, 'Shadows of Taste', which takes its origin from a sonnet written in the second half of the 1820s, eventually published in revised form in the *Stamford Bee* in 1831. According to Weiger, 'shades of taste' and their ability to cohere depend upon Clare's 'man of taste' and his ability to associate them: 'to see the shades in their environmental context as parts of a larger, shared natural and literary history'.[152]

In a fragment titled 'Essay on Taste', Clare describes taste as 'uniformity of excellence – it modifys expression & selects images – it aranges & orders matters &

[148] Denise Gigante perceives of this connection between taste and sensory pleasure as the root of modern aesthetics in *Taste: A Literary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 2.
[149] 'The Mole' (l. 1), *MP* IV, p. 294; 'The Moorehens Nest' (ll. 43-4), *MP* III, p. 468.
[150] 'The Bramble' (l. 13), *MP* IV, p. 329; 'Glinton Spire' (ll. 4-5), *MP* IV, p. 252.
[151] Sarah Weiger, '"Shadows of Taste": John Clare's Tasteful Natural History', *John Clare Society Journal*, 27 (2008), 59-71.
[152] Weiger, p. 68.

thoughts – but genius creates them'.[153] In this fragment, Clare seems to be working alongside Coleridge and Wordsworth at differentiating modes of aesthetic appreciation into primary and secondary faculties. Given Clare's frequent celebration of variety, his apparent approval for 'uniformity' is notable, as is his commendation of its powers of arrangement and organisation. The phrasing of this fragment recollects a fragment printed in the Tibbles' collection of his prose: 'I have just finished reading the works of Pope', Clare wrote, before going on to defend Pope against critical depreciation:

> if he is no poet where are we to look for one he has written a great deal of verse & it appears to me to be uniformly excellent & therefore I should not only contend that he is a poet but a great poet & his uniform excellence I should say has been one of the reasons that has contributed to the false taste & false criticisms about him[154]

While quantity of material is not necessarily a rebuttal to claims of being a bad poet – and the volume of Clare's (variable) verse comes to mind – Clare's point is that the consistency of Pope's excellence might lead readers to forget what bad poetry looks like. The 'uniform excellence' of both taste and Pope suggest that Clare's discussions of taste maintain understandable eighteenth-century ties.

Taking its term from a 'passive sense' (as Wordsworth put it), any discussion of taste quickly ran into debates over the nature of perception, whether taste was innate or learned, universal or individuated. Hume thought that the variety of taste was obvious to 'the most casual enquirer' as the 'sentiments of men differ with regard to beauty and deformity' in particulars 'of all kinds'. [155] Yet, since poets like Homer are beloved across the boundaries of history and culture, Hume supposed it natural to seek after a standard of taste 'by which the various sentiments of men could be reconciled'. For Alexander Gerard, taste occupied the middle ground between a mind's innate capabilities and that mind's cultivation and

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[153] Grainger, p. 267.
[154] *Prose of John Clare*, ed. by J. W. and Anne Tibble (London: Routledge, 1951), pp. 222-3.
[155] 'Of the Standard of Taste', *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, rev. edn (London: London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Donaldson 1758), pp. 134-146 (pp. 134, 136).

development. Gerard conceived of taste as a 'compound pleasure', an 'aggregate' of several qualities (novelty, beauty, sublimity, resemblance, harmony, wit, moral judgment, and good sense) which regulate each other and improve the powers of the imagination.[156] This connection between taste and the imagination recalls Addison's influential 'Pleasures of the Imagination' essays in the *Spectator* (No. 411-421), which inspired Mark Akenside's *Pleasures of Imagination* (1744). In the third book, Akenside wondered:

> What then is taste, but these internal pow'rs
> Active, and strong, and feelingly alive
> To each fine impulse? a discerning sense
> Of decent and sublime, with quick disgust
> From things deform'd, or disarrang'd, or gross
> In species? This, nor gems, nor stores of gold,
> Nor purple state, nor culture can bestow;
> But GOD alone, when first his active hand
> Imprints the secret byass of the soul.
> (III. 515-523)[157]

This passage seems to align Akenside with those who have come to be called 'internal sense' theorists – Shaftesbury, Hutcheson, Hume, and Reid – who understood the love of beauty to be an internal and therefore subjective quality.[158] Yet Akenside is soon tempted to the middle path:

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[156] Alexander Gerard, *An Essay on Taste* (London: Millar; Edinburgh: Kincaid and Donaldson, 1759), pp. 83, 148.
[157] *The Poetical Works of Mark Akenside*, ed. by Robin Dix (London: Associated University Press, 1996), p. 150. Clare owned one copy of *The Pleasures of Imagination* (1814), and two copies of Akenside's *Poetical Works* (1800 and 1807). *Catalogue of the John Clare Collection*, p. 23.
[158] See, for example, Timothy Costelloe, *The British Aesthetic Tradition: From Shaftesbury to Wittgenstein* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

> Ask the swain
> Who journeys homeward from a summer day's
> Long labour, why, forgetful of his toils
> And due repose, he loiters to behold
> The sunshine gleaming as thro' amber clouds,
> O'er all the western sky; full soon, I ween,
> His rude expression and untutor'd airs,
> Beyond the pow'r of language, will unfold
> The form of beauty smiling at his heart,
> How lovely! how commanding! But tho' heav'n
> In every breast hath sown these early seeds
> Of love and admiration, yet in vain,
> Without fair culture's kind parental aid,
> Without inlivening suns, and genial show'rs,
> The shelter from the blast, in vain we hope
> The tender plant should rear its blooming head,
> Or yield the harvest promis'd in its spring.
> (III. 526-541)

Akenside's labouring 'swain', struck into inarticulate admiration by the beauty of the sunset, appears to experience a genuine encounter of beauty.[159] This is strikingly different from the rustic in Clare's essay on taste, where the 'rude man' fails to notice the exquisite autumnal landscape unless his 'business leads his occupation thither'. While the 'man of dissernment' examines nature minuitely, the rustic's 'eye is dead and sees no praise'.[160] Similarly, contrasted with 'that noble insect restless man | Whose thoughts scale heaven in its mighty span',

> the low herd mere savages subdued
> With nought of feeling or of taste imbued
> Pass over sweetest scenes a carless eye
> As blank as midnight in its deepest dye
> ('Shadows of Taste', ll. 49-52)[161]

For Sara Weiger, the 'carless eye | As blank as midnight' recalls Clare's description of Linnaean botany as consisting of 'unuterable words' which 'make darkness

[159] Such an encounter does, however, recall William Duff's comments on the vulgarity of indiscriminating wonder in *An Essay on Original Genius* (London: Dilly, 1767), pp. 65-66.
[160] Grainger, p. 284.
[161] 'Shadows of Taste', *MP* III, pp. 303-310 (p. 305).

visible'.[162]Attention to the poem, however, shows that the 'carless eye' which Clare describes belongs to 'low herd mere savages' rather than to learned botanists. Given the rudimentary nature of nineteenth-century rural schools and the expense of books, it seems very unlikely that the 'low herd mere savages' were practitioners of Linnaean botany. Rather, the 'carless' rural eye is dulled by routine or apathy rather than the surfeit of curiosity practiced by Linnaeans, which Clare elsewhere calls 'Darwin's prying thought'.[163] To 'pry' is not necessarily a hostile intrusion for Clare. In 'A Hunt for Dobin or the Force of Love: A Tale', a 'swain' loves 'alone to prye | In Natures gambols' (ll. 192-3), proving the coexistence of the curious eye with delight and play.[164] Thirty lines on, however, the poet salutes the rural labouring poets whose 'curious eye would pry in every where | Pleas'd would they carless look and list around | On every rural sight and rural sound' (ll. 219-221). In these later lines, the close positioning of a 'curious eye' with 'carless' looking seems to frustrate any attempt to be overly programmatic about curiosity and carelessness as alternative modes of being in the world, but it also imitates the rustic poet's varying currents of attention. Clare's discussion of taste depends upon a certain amount of flux, and one should keep Sarah Houghton Walker's suggestion to be alert to 'Clare's tendency to use language in very different ways'.[165] Weiger's argument for the 'carless' and blank Linnaean eye, which rests on the conjunction of two examples of Clare's writing, produced in different genres, for different readers, at different times, raises a larger methodological question about how one finds literary evidence from a body of work which is fragmentary, revisionary, contradictory, and frequently undated.

The blankness of the 'carless eye' was personally observed by Clare: his autobiographical sketches describe youthful Sunday walks where he 'try'd the taste' of his

[162] See above, p. 192.
[163] 'Morning Walk' (l. 17), *EP* I, pp. 494- 7 (p. 495).
[164] *EP* I, pp. 70-78 (p. 75).
[165] *John Clare's Religion* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), p. 5.

friends 'by pointing out some striking beauty in a wild flower or an object in the surrounding scenery to which they woud seldom make an answer'.[166] Unimpressed by Clare's impromptu aesthetic examinations, these friends turned 'carless to reasume their old discourse'. Clare thought it odd that while he paid attention to the world around him 'another shoud pass me as carless as if he was blind'. The debate surrounding taste – whether it is instinctive to particular individuals or the product of careful cultivation – is particularly appropriate to Clare, whose surroundings did not provide extensive opportunity for the improvement of taste in the way that Alexander Gerard imagined it when he wrote that '[r]efinement of taste...is superadded a long and intimate acquaintance with the best performances of every kind'.[167] Rather, Clare's reputation as a peasant poet relied on his native genius, his untutored spark. It is not surprising, therefore, to see his equation of taste with instinct in 'The Mole' and 'The Moorhens Nest'. Taste's instinctive nature offered the means by which Clare could make sense of his aesthetic responses to objects which his neighbours cheerfully ignored. As with the 'man of dissernment' in the essay on taste above, Clare's 'man of taste', a *Spectator*-inflected roving character who appears throughout his writings on taste, is frequently placed in opposition to the 'vulgar' and to 'clowns', terms also used to describe the rural people among whom Clare lived.[168] The temptation to draw connections between Clare and the 'man of taste' is strong, and Adam White's suggestion that Clare's conventionally picturesque conception of taste allowed him to construct an identity of aesthetic discrimination established upon social hierarchies further entrenches the gap between the 'man of taste' and his ignorant, rustic neighbours.

[166] *Autobiographical Writings*, p. 14.
[167] Gerard, p. 126.
[168] An example of this opposition can be found in 'Shadows of Taste' (ll. 97-106) and in Grainger, pp. 283-284; Adam White, 'John Clare: "The Man of Taste"', *John Clare Society Journal*, 28 (2009), 38–54.

In Clare's prose fragment, 'Pleasures of Spring', which offers a catalogue of delights ('Gardening Lovers walk narrow lanes woodrid<es> Shepherds & Maize ploughmen', etc.), the man of taste appears scrambling

> under the tree fullest in leaf to read [*del*. a book] Thompson & putting in a [*del*. n] Primrose between the leaves for a mark & pledge of spring instead of doubling down the leaves[169]

Originally, this reader of 'Thompson' was described as 'the Poet', a character crossed out in favour of the 'man of taste', only to reappear further on, strolling out 'in the divinity of the fields catching at flowers & budding twigs [*del*. sh?] wreathed with Ivy by the fingers of many a Springs return he gazes in the madness of rapture'. This exchange may be the result of a thoughtless error of composition, or it might suggest either that Clare initially perceived the man of taste as an alternative to the poet, or that Clare was refining a distinction as he wrote, employing what Malcolm Andrews calls Clare's 'vocabulary of discrimination'.[170] The man of taste behaves very much as a poet might – reading Thomson under a tree with a primrose as a bookmark – at least, he strongly recalls Clare himself. 'The Primrose' is the title of one of Clare's earliest poems, a sonnet begun around 1807 and reworked in 1817. The primrose, therefore, like Thomson, is a sign of the poet's earliest manifestations, his 'starting up' from the mulch.[171]

The title of this fragmentary essay, 'Pleasures of Spring', is shared by a poem composed between late December 1828 and early 1829. In the poem, the poet acts like the man of taste in the prose composition, reading poetry amidst the verdure:

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[169] Grainger, p. 278.
[170] Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989), p. 4, quoted by White in 'John Clare: "The Man of Taste"', p. 39.
[171] 'The Primrose' (l. 1), *EP* I, p. 182. This primrose should be distinguished from the evening primrose (above, p. 186), which belongs to a different family. For this distinction, and for a closer look at each of Clare's plants, see M. M. Mahood's comprehensive *John Clare Flora* (Nottingham: Trent Editions, 2016), pp. 106-111, 85-6.

> The Poet feels it neath some forward bush
> The first in leaf to hide the singing thrush
> Where cutting open with heart beating speed
> Some book just purchased which he loves to read
> (‘The Pleasures of Spring’, ll. 25-28)[172]

In the absence of punctuation, the propulsion of the lines makes the Poet’s secretive reading teeter uncannily on the edge of vivisection. The leaves of the bush seep into the leaves of the book, and the poet seems to be dissecting the thrush in full-hearted song before the next line settles all elements into their rightful place. As the poem continues, its landscape becomes heavily peopled with spring-mad ramblers: ‘the Lover’, ‘the Hind’, ‘the Shepherd Boy’, ‘the Husband man’, and ‘herdboys’ all take their entrances and exits before the reader encounters ‘the man of taste’ walking ‘among the woods | & fields’, ‘peep[ing]’ into nests to ‘mark with rapture’ how birds ‘brood their young’. Then, like the Poet, the man of taste

> drops beneath the bushes to peruse
> A pocket poet of some favoured muse
> Then plucks a primrose from its leafey bed
> To place between the pages which he read
> Instead of doubling own to mark the place
> & lye a relic in times withered space
> Reminding him as seasons take to wing
> What joys he felt on such a spot in spring
> With such sweet essence of earths fading fruits
> His soul is chronicled above the brutes’
> (‘The Pleasures of Spring’, ll. 291-300)[173]

Once more the ‘man of taste’ is the eager reader who ‘marks’ place with a flower ‘culled’ from its habitat. In both the prose composition and the poem, then, the man of taste and the poet are each others’ approximates: distinguished by name alone, both are ravenous

[172] *MP* III, pp. 48-68 (p. 50).
[173] *MP* III, p. 60.

readers and rapturous ramblers. The 'withered' primrose recollects lines from 'Shadows of Taste' which warn that should one

> take these several beings from their homes
> Each beautious thing a withered thought becomes
> Association fades and like a dream
> They are but shadows of the things they seem
> Torn from their homes and happiness they stand
> The poor dull captives of a foreign land
> (ll. 147-152)[174]

For Weiger, these lines are evidence of Clare's taste for living, rooted plants holding onto a context the specimen is stripped of, 'abstracted into an environment that approaches contextlessness – perhaps with a Linnaean label that only makes "darkness visible"'. [175] Whereas 'withered' cast a melancholic light as the mere afterthought of a lovely 'thing' in 'Shadows of Taste', the withered primrose in 'Pleasures of Spring' tracks the passing of time, a historical document 'chronicl[ing]' the soul of the rambler. Rather than a dead specimen, the withered floral bookmark stores its 'sweet essence', a future physical reminder of a spring day's 'waste of happiness' lost to the relentless progress of the year. Removing plants from their habitat can offer its own reverie: it is an act of memory as much as a scientific investigation, recalling Linnaeus's endearing suggestion that a summer's herbarium make a Christmas treat.[176] Clare's admission in November 1824 that he had begun a 'a system of profiting by my reading at least to make a show of it by noteing down beautiful odd or remarkable passages & imitations in the poets & prose writers' shows how a poet might go about forming his own poetic herbarium.[177]

Can 'Shadows of Taste' be reduced to a diatribe against the habits of collection and classification as Weiger attempts? In an earlier passage of the poem, the 'man of science',

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[174] *MP* III, p. 309.
[175] Weiger, p. 62.
[176] *Philosophia Botanica*, p. 331.
[177] Grainger, p. 206.

roaming '[i]n discoverys moods...oer the furze clad heath leaf buried woods', metamorphoses into

> the man of science and of taste [who]
> Sees wealth far richer in the worthless waste
> Where bits of lichen and a sprig of moss
> Will all the raptures of his mind engross…
> And minds of different moods will oft condemn
> His taste as cruel such the deeds to them
> While he unconsious gibbets butterflyes
> And strangles beetles all to make us wise
> Tastes rainbow visions own unnumbered hues
> And every shade its sense of taste pursues
> (ll. 97-98, 107-110, 115-120)[178]

Rather than fermenting in infernal darkness, the man of taste and science 'tastes rainbow visions own unnumbered hues' in his taxonomic rambles, and Clare's lack of guiding punctuation here allows the reader to see 'tastes' as both a verb and a noun in the genitive: an instance of the creative linguistic economy which Taylor praised in his 1820 introduction to *Poems Descriptive*.[179]

While 'the man of taste' is a familiar eighteenth-century construct, and the 'man of science' appears in Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* (1802), Clare's construction – 'the man of science and of taste' – is more unusual. This rare phrase appears in an influential treaty on the picturesque, Humphry Repton's *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (1803). Beautiful grounds, Repton urged, can be made by felling trees as much as planting them.

[178] *MP* III, pp. 307-8.
[179] *John Clare: The Critical Heritage*, p. 47.

> The land steward, or the timber merchant, would mark those trees which have acquired their full growth are fit for immediate use, or separate those which he deems to stand too near together, but *the man of science and of taste* will search with scrutinizing care for groups and combinations, such as his memory recalls in the pictures of the best masters; these groups he will studiously leave in such places as will best display their varied or combined forms: he will also discover beauties in a tree which the others would condemn for its decay; he will rejoice when he finds two trees whose stems have long grown so near each other that their branches are become interwoven; he will examine the outline formed by the combined foliage of many trees thus collected in groups, and removing others near them he will give ample space for their picturesque effect: sometimes he will discover an aged thorn or maple at the foot of a venerable oak, these he will respect not only for their antiquity, being perhaps coeval with the father of the forest; but knowing that the importance of the oak is comparatively increased by the neighbouring situation of these subordinate objects; this will sometimes happen when young trees grow near old ones, as when a light airy ash appears to rise from the same root with an oak or an elm. These are all circumstances dependent on the sportive accidents of nature, but even where art has interfered, where the long and formal line of a majestic avenue shall be submitted to his decision, the man of taste will pause, and not always break their venerable ranks, for his hand is not guided by the levelling principles or sudden innovations of modern fashion; he will reverence the glory of former ages, which he cherishes and admires the ornament of the present, nor will he neglect to foster and protect the tender sapling which promises with improving beauty to spread a grateful shade for future "tenants of the soil" (my italics)[180]

I quote this passage at length because of its many sympathies with Clare's work: his invectives against the fickleness of fashion and popularity, his admiration for the deep roots of antiquity, his woodman poems, the oaks which appear again and again across the breadth of his work, and his vigorous defence of two condemned elm trees.[181] Clare did not own a copy of Repton's *Observations*, but the library at nearby Milton Hall did have two manuscript books by Repton, who had improved the park at Milton, and it is possible Clare encountered the *Observations* in his many borrowings.[182] Under Repton's tutelage,

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[180] Humphry Repton, *Observations on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening* (London: J. Taylor, 1803), pp. 75-6. While in 1803, 'science' might still refer to the broader connotations of particular knowledge of any kind, by the 1820s, when Clare referred to the 'man of science and of taste', it had taken on the narrower, modern sense of the 'natural sciences'. See sense b. of 'science, n.' *Oxford English Dictionary*, <www.oed.com/view/Entry/172672> [accessed 11 December 2018].

[181] For Clare and popularity see 'Popularity in Authorship', first published in the *European Magazine* in November 1825, and reprinted in *The Prose of John Clare*, pp. 255-260; for Clare and antiquity see 'Antiquity', *MP* I, p. 347; for Clare and the woodman see EP II, pp. 287-296, *MP* IV, p. 212, and *MP* III, pp. 567-572; for the loss of the elms see Clare's letter to Taylor, 7 March 1821, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 161.

[182] Grainger, p. 365; Timothy Brownlow, *John Clare and Picturesque Landscape* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 103.

the landscapist dips into Newtonian theory alongside the author's aesthetic maxims, but Clare's 'man of science and of taste' is more interested in natural history than in the science of vision. Thus, in a note taken from Peterborough MS 27, the man of taste

> admires order he loves Botany Entemoly but they are in /the/ classifications that aranges his mind to admire he loves gardens [*del*. but] & it is the cleaness of the gravel walks & the spruceness of the borders that gives the first sensations [*del*.] his pleasure (Note A)[183]

The poet, on the other hand, loves 'Botany & entemoly' but prefers

> the old heaths & commons & meadows [*del.* were] where the Flowers grow in their glory & the insects live in their happiness rather than see them classified in books & he prefers the bleak common to the spruce common & loves variety better than order (Note A)[184]

Rather than a equivalence of roles between the poet and the man of taste as seen in 'Pleasures of Spring', this dichotomy offers a more familiar Clare, the poet who found Linnaeus repulsive and obscure, preferring wildness to order, variety to uniformity. Yet the phrase 'in their happiness', so central to the essay 'Taste', reasserts itself, suggesting some continuity between this note and the essay on taste, although it is a continuity troubled by the different positions the man of taste is given in each text. In *The Natural History Prose Writings of John Clare*, Grainger offers an unfinished couplet from the same manuscript, Peterborough MS A27,

> man of taste fond of order & [ ]
> the Poet fond of wildness & irregularity[185]

These two lines, possibly a couplet waiting for its originating rather than completing rhyme, confirm Note A's distinction between the man of taste and the poet, and affirm that

[183] Grainger, p. 290.
[184] Grainger suggests Clare 'probably' intended this passage for his essay on taste.
[185] Grainger, p. 289.

this distinction rests on their aesthetic preferences. The absence of a second noun in the first line suggests an omission in Clare's thought. The couplet seems to require the opposite of 'irregularity' in the first line, to juxtapose the man of taste's preference for order with the poet's fondness of wildness, and yet the opposition has to sufficiently agree with 'irregularity' in order to rhyme. The omission is not evidently metrical. What is left is a near cleft between the two men – the man of taste and the poet – but one left troubled and incomplete. Grainger reads Clare's writings on taste as indicative of the poet's 'carefully considered reservations' about both 'the man of taste' and the 'man of science', reservations expressed with a 'pointedness verging on the satiric'. She believes that his 'real sympathies' lie with the poets and shepherd boys who appear in his prose, and Mahood chooses to accept this conclusion without contestation.[186] Yet Grainger's procedure devalues the suggestion of Clare's essay – the possible continuity of botanic knowledge with aesthetic or poetic pleasure – by equating this passage with Clare's writing elsewhere.

In her distinction between the lover of spruce borders and the poet, Grainger musters other passages of poetry for evidence. Her final examples are taken from 'Shadows of Taste', where 'disorder is an ugly weed' for those to whom 'spruce & delicate ideas feed' (ll. 153-154), and where Clare observes that 'arts strong impulse mars the truth of taste' (l. 160). Although 'Shadows of Taste' plays tribute to the variety of taste among '[m]inds…as various as the leaves of trees' (l. 54), the poet's observation on the relation between art and the 'truth of taste' seems to suggest that taste is not quite as various as it appears, or rather that not all preferences are equal. Or perhaps one might read the poet's concern for the obliteration of truth by art as a counterpoise to the sole conviction that

[186] Grainger, p. 283; *Poet as Botanist*, p. 129.

> No spots give pleasure so forlorn & bare
> But gravel walks would work rich wonders there
> With such wild natures beautys run to waste
> (ll. 157-159)[187]

It is not in the absence of beauty in gravel walks but the inability to see beauty in the teeming wasteland by which art overrides the 'truth of taste' by denying its variability.[188] This is a position very similar to the Fenwick note to Wordsworth's 'Poor Robin', which fumes at a carelessly uttered dismissal of moss, lichen, and fern as 'rubbish'. 'True taste has an eye for both [weeds and garden-flowers]', pronounced Wordsworth.[189] Clare's discussions of taste can only be synthesised with difficulty, and the fragmentary nature of his corpus exacerbates this. These discussions of taste occur, one might say, in 'minds of different moods'.[190] Despite apparent contradiction – or perhaps because of it – variability is crucial to Clare's writing on taste, and to the wider picturesque aesthetics which undergirds it, even as variability can be traced by to Akenside's concession in his passage on taste: 'Diff'rent minds | Incline to diff'rent objects' (III. 546-7). Given the variability of his writings on taste, it would be careless to award Clare a cohesive position as Weiger is tempted to do. Taken together, however, these texts reveal Clare worrying at the borders of these terms – taste, science, poet, genius, order – and offering collaborations as well as disassociations between them.

Although constituting a major interest in his middle period, 'taste' appears early in Clare's poetic career. In an unpublished attempt at blank verse, Clare salutes 'Taste':

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[187] *MP* III, p. 309.
[188] A reading supported by Johanne Clare, *John Clare and the Bounds of Circumstance* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987), p. 149.
[189] *Fenwick Notes*, p. 75.
[190] 'Shadows of Taste' (l. 115).

thou charm
That so endears & nature makes so lovly
Namless enthuseastic ardour thine
That wilder witching rapture 'quisitive
Stooping bent genius oer each object – thine
That longing pausing wish that cannot pass
Uncomprehended things without[t] a sigh
For wisdom to unseal the hidden cause
('The Ramble', ll. 42-49)[191]

As in Clare's other writings on taste, this poem features a 'heedless passenger' passing the poet, 'staulk[ing] along as tho his eyes were blinded'. The curious stooper, on the other hand, like Thomson's 'man of philosophic eye' who '[c]urious surveys, inquisitive to know' ('Autumn', ll. 1133, 1135), looks down to 'find a flower [he] never knew before' ('To Wordsworth', l. 12).[192] In the last paragraph of the unfinished poem, the poet stops beside a 'Bee flower' blossom, which may be the bee orchis (*Ophrys apifera*) of 'Swordy Well':

& such a one as natures happiest hand
Neer took a tool to scoop & hollow out
One of more curious interesting form
Its speckld petals c[a]lyx burnished gold
Inmixd with somber hues…
(ll.89-93)

While Mahood reads these lines as the failure of scientific language to infuse poetry, 'inmixd' is a word worthy of Hopkins. 'Its speckld petals c[a]lyx burnished gold' is a flawless if dense iambic line, drawing together natural and artificial textures.[193] The absence of more lines like this might suggest the poem was an experiment Clare did not feel compelled to extend. Lines such as 'wilder witching rapture 'quisitive' jam in the mouth. Nevertheless, the poem is a record of encounters with other forms, other

[191] *EP* I, pp. 500-3. Clare's Oxford editors date 'The Ramble' to the years before 1818-1820.
[192] Thomson, p. 192.
[193] Mahood decided that the poem's 'confusions of syntax and scansion suggest that Clare is no happier with James Thomson's weighty blank verse style than he is with terms like "calyx"'. *Poet as Botanist,* p. 121.

vocabularies too easily disregarded in the construction of Clare as a 'natural' poet opposed to the confusions of Linnaean botany. From Linnaeus Clare reaped both the quick joke of the 'Ploughman's Classification', as well as his curiosity about the 'impregning dust' of the sexual reproduction of plants. That dust 'impregn[s]' his verse: the 'March dust' that calls out the bees ('To L. M.', l. 9), and 'loads' their thighs, '[y]ellow dust as fine as flour' ('Reccolections after a Ramble', ll. 15-6), or the '[g]old dust' that catches when the bee 'turn[s] the petals by' ('Solitude', ll. 185-6). Linnaeus is Clare's ally in forging a sharp enargeic language of description which was as pleasurable as it is communicable. Through his friendship with Henderson, Clare found in scientific botany the means of sociably connecting his local knowledge to a wider body. Finally, in the 'man of science and of taste', Clare discovered a model which joins scientific curiosity to rapture. Clare's variable encounters with Linnaeus – his bookishness, his love of catalogues, his botanical rambles, his precise descriptions, his toying with a tasteful natural history capable of entertaining taxonomy – must leaven more familiar accounts of Clare's rejections of Linnaeus's deadening obscurity. By pleading a middle ground between being 'wonderfully deep in science' and 'wonderfully ignorant', Clare invites readers to consider ways in which Linnaean botany might continue to lure the poet.

V. CONCLUSION

After nearly seven years in the Northampton General Lunatic Asylum, John Clare wrote a letter to his son, Charles:

> I wrote or rather thought Poems made botanical arrangements when a little boy which men read & admired I loved nature & painted her both in words & colours better than many Poets & Painters & by Perseverance & Attention you may all do the same –[1]

There is reason to be careful of what Stillinger calls 'textual primitivism' in approaching and reprinting Clare's unedited texts, yet the lack of punctuation in this letter suggestively draws things together commonly kept separate, a conjunction which this thesis has been pursuing. Clare's syntax tests the reader's ordering capacities: the suggestion that Clare 'wrote or rather thought Poems made botanical arrangements' is a periphrastic play on poesy/posey, but it also recollects Wordsworth's poetic classifications. The forward motion of the letter, however, unchecked by the barriers of commas and full-stops, invites a revision – Clare 'wrote or rather thought Poems' *and* he 'made botanical arrangements when a little boy' – before the subordinate clause ('which men read & admired') casts doubt on this separation, bringing poetry and botanical arrangement once more into closer relation.

Given this suggestive proximity, I will rephrase an observation made by Donald Davie in 1963: Why is there a notion abroad that what is against classification is a good thing for poetry; and that what is taxonomic isn't?[2] Why lean on depredations of the uses of taxonomy rather than acknowledging its powers or strategies? A factor is, surely, partial knowledge. While Charles Darwin has been recuperated as a literary figure, thanks

[1] Letter of 26 January 1848, *Letters of John Clare*, p. 656.
[2] 'There is a notion abroad that what is "organic" is a good thing for poetry; and it follows that what is mechanical isn't'. *The Language of Science and the Language of Literature*, p. 5.

to the scholarship of Gillian Beer and others, Linnaeus awaits his just reconsideration. If Darwin's study of origins in the pre-human past held narratological implications for prose fiction, so Linnaeus's attention to the enunciated relation between objects has a bearing on poetry. This delayed reconsideration must, in part, be traced to Linnaeus's linguistic isolation. Buffon was praised for his style because he wrote in a well-travelled vernacular. Linnaeus knew that by doing so, he would restrict his readership. The marginality of the Swedish language – no less true today than it was in 1811 when Sir James Edward Smith published *Lachesis Lapponica* – means that non-Swedish readers are still likely to be unfamiliar with Linnaeus's reputation as an ardent and perceptive nature writer. A reading edition of his travel journals would do much to repair the breach, as would continued work on improving knowledge of Britain's relationship to Scandinavian Romanticism. Sustained comparative readings of his Swedish and Latin prose will test contemporary opinions of his style as barbarous and uncouth, precise and sonorous. Linnaeus's enormous bibliography in Latin creates a second challenge. The intricacies, negotiations, and experiments of his working practices are still being parsed by historians of science. As that work is carried out, literary scholars should remain open to further revelations about his methods, thought, and style. As such studies proliferate and extend, as Linnaeus's texts undergo more sustained literary analysis, this work of recuperation will continue.

The long-standing negative freight of the word *artificial* raised in the second chapter of this thesis weighs heavily on interpretation, with connotations accumulated through the literary past:

> 'The forme of procedyng artificyal | Is in no wyse ner poetycal' (*Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ll. 83-4)
>
> Gloucester: 'Why I can...wet my cheek with artificial tears' (*Henry VI Part 3*)
>
> 'Mr. Elliot is evidently a disingenuous, artificial, worldly man, who has never had any better principle to guide him than selfishness.' (*Persuasion*)[3]

The artificial always raises the spectre of the natural. Staffan Müller-Wille argues that Linnaeus was the first to draw attention to the distinction between artificial and natural systems, although this acknowledgement of his system's artifice was a necessary recognition of incomplete knowledge rather than an admission of failure.[4] The stigma of the man-made or well-wrought is amplified when applied to a work of poetry such as Darwin's *Loves of the Plants*, which doubles its artificiality by taking Linnaeus's artificial system as its subject. Nothing is as despised as that which was formerly popular, and Darwin's poem, which thrived on human ingenuity, on mechanism, and on a relish of manufactured textures, was collateral to *Lyrical Ballads*'s loudly signalled turn to the natural. Despite this long historical framing of *artificial* as deceptive and unlikable, however, it is still a word that can be read in opposing ways. Coleridge described the 'collocation' of the words of Shakespeare and Milton as so 'artificial...that you may as well think of pushing a brick out of that wall with your finger as of displacing a word without injury from one of their sentences'.[5] Shakespeare and Milton, two great English poets, are proof that artifice can still mean artistic excellence in the early nineteenth century: the production of a whole which cannot suffer its parts to be dislodged without damage.

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[3] Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*, ed. by Mary S. Serjeantson (London: Early English Text Society by Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 3; William Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 3*, ed. by John D. Cox and Eric Rasmussen, Third Series (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2001), III. ii. 184-5 (p. 279); Jane Austen, *Persuasion* (1818), ed. by Janet Todd and Antje Blank (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), II. 9. 225.

[4] 'Collection and collation: theory and practice of Linnaean botany', p. 550.

[5] 1 July 1833, *Table Talk*, I, 403.

Linnaeus's system continued to incorporate new constituent parts into its fretting until the weight of evidence could not sustain it. Yet while the Linnaean system no longer claims scientific authority, its aesthetic failure is not a necessary corollary. On the contrary, poets of the past two centuries have found a compatriot in Linnaeus. Czesław Miłosz's cool but moving ode to Linnaeus pays tribute to the taxonomist as a fellow artist:

> He would sing with the psalmist.
> Rank, number, symmetry
> Are everywhere, praised with a clavecin
> And violin, scanned in Latin hexameter.[6]

Miłosz's verse, composed in Polish and translated into English by the American poet Robert Hass, shows how widely Linnaean taxonomy travelled. This thesis has argued that such global passages have lodged locally, yielded poetic matter, structured collections, offered variations in metre and rhyme, ultimately discovering, as Miłosz put it, 'the language of marvel'.

[6] *Provinces*, trans. by Robert Hass (Manchester: Carcanet, 1993), pp. 6-7.

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