Elizabeth Gwillim's Botany

Sex, art, and science in Company Raj India 1801-1807

by

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ABSTRACT

Known for her ornithological activities, particularly the 121 watercolor paintings now housed in the Blacker-Wood Collection at McGill University, this paper investigates Elizabeth Gwillim's lesser explored participation in the science of botany during her time in Madras, India (modern-day Chennai) from 1801 to 1807. The twelve recovered botanical paintings and her private correspondence indicate her dedication to the modern system of plant identification as well as her efforts to discover new species. Examining her efforts through different paradigms of power, particularly gender and imperialism, her efforts are put in conversation with European and Indian artists and botanists to reveal her scientific participation.

Reconnue pour ses activités ornithologiques, en particulier les 121 aquarelles maintenant conservées dans la collection Blacker-Wood de l'Université McGill, cet article examine la participation moins explorée d'Elizabeth Gwillim à la science de la botanique pendant son séjour à Madras, en Inde (aujourd'hui Chennai) de 1801 à 1807. Les douze peintures botaniques récupérées et sa correspondance privée indiquent son dévouement au système moderne d'identification des plantes ainsi que ses efforts pour découvrir de nouvelles espèces. Examinant ses efforts à travers différents paradigmes de pouvoir, en particulier le genre et l'impérialisme, ses efforts sont mis en conversation avec des artistes et botanistes européens et indiens pour révéler sa participation scientifique.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

On the search for special and rare items of literary and art material related to Natural History, Casey Wood found himself in a shop outside London going through the contents of an art dealer's cellar in the early 1920s.[1] Curious portfolios were unearthed, one containing watercolors of fish, brightly colored and marked with Urdu, another containing a handful of beautiful, delicate pencil and watercolor paintings of flowers and plants, inscribed with their common English and Latin scientific names. The last and largest portfolio weighed thirty or forty pounds, bursting with ornithological paintings. Wood called the painter "no mean draughtsman," buying the collection and installing it in the Blacker-Wood Rare Books Collection at McGill University library. [2] Bearing an inscription on a leaf of paper in the portfolio the work announced it was of 'Elizabeth Gwillim, Madras, 1800-1806.'[3] Gwillim studied and participated in natural history in a liminal time, before sciences or imperial identities had fully formed, and her professional participation in the field reveals overt and covert dynamics on science and art.

Lady Elizabeth Gwillim (April 21, 1763 – December 21, 1807) moved from her home in England to Madras, India, (current day Chennai) for her husband's appointment to the Supreme Court of Madras in 1801 as puisne judge.[4] Sir Henry Gwillim was a barrister, judge, and author of books on law, the assignment to the foreign continent an opportunity to further his career and participate in the codification of law that was taking place in the Presidency. The middle-class couple from Hereford, England, moved with Elizabeth's unmarried sister, Mary Symonds, and

[1] Casey A. Wood, "Lady (Elizabeth) Gwillim--Artist and Ornithologist," *The Ibis* (July 1925): 594.
[2] Wood, "Lady (Elizabeth) Gwillim," 595.
[3] Wood, "Lady (Elizabeth) Gwillim," 595; Madras is modern-day Chennai, India.
[4] They traveled on the *Hindostan*, which arrived in India on July 26, 1801. According to the log of the *Hindostan*, British Library IOR/L/MAR/B/267D. In Anna Winterbottom, "Introduction," from Anna Winterbottom, Victoria Dickenson, Lauren Williams, Ben Cartwright, (eds.). *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Expected release 2023), 1.

several domestic servants.[5] Departing on March 31, 1801, their connection with home was preserved through many letters and packages between the continents. Hundreds of pages of letters from Gwillim and Symonds to their mother Esther Symonds, and sister Hester James, were preserved in the family. The British Library bought part of the collection in 1971. Full transcriptions of the 700 pages of faded and blurred letters were made available to the public by the Gwillim Project of McGill University in 2020-2021.[6]

A window into their personalities along with observations of each other, the letters preserve their respective experiences of India, and of particular interest, Lady Elizabeth Gwillim's efforts in botany. They left England in a moment between emergence and adoption, as the Enlightenment transformed ideas and technology changed the range of concepts along with the relative power of the Crown. Natural history had begun to fracture into separate sciences in Europe, new understandings emerging from the constant influx of flora and fauna from across the globe. England lost the war with the United States, but was expanding the empire in other directions, directly and indirectly. They were at war with France, but the battle for economic power took place in India, a frontier for the Dutch, Portuguese, and French, where each looked to establish dominance over the economic resources.

India presented an exciting opportunity to put new European systems of classification and identification to the test. Interested in ornithology and botany, Gwillim participated in the sciences as they developed. While her interest in ornithology was well established in the discovery of her work, with 121 exquisite and scientifically precise watercolor paintings, her work in botany is mostly found in her personal correspondence with her mother and sister.

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[5] Elizabeth refers to them as her 'black servants,' which Dr. Anna Winterbottom notes is an indication they were probably Indians returning from Britain."

[6] "Letters," The Gwillim Project, https://thegwillimproject.com/letters/.

Gwillim had established connections with those interested in botany in England, including nursery families and explorers. She expanded this network to include Europeans knowledgeable in the science in India and worked closely with locals, studying Telugu to better understand the native connection with plants.[7]

Gwillim's botanical pursuits fall in the beginning of the second scientific revolution. New scientific disciplines were being established, many splintering from the category of natural history, which separated into subdisciplines such as geology, biology, physiology and paleontology, parting from theology.[8] Botany was considered an absorbing pastime, a serious pursuit for men of knowledge that was available to women, especially women of the higher classes. Methods of codification were still evolving, botany understood as an essential economic pursuit but not yet part of the academic system like physics and mathematics. The English engaged in botany with an eye towards the plants indigenous to their own island region, or to the study of exotic flora abroad. Women were encouraged to learn the various ways to identify plants, which included knowing the different parts of the plants and their functions. This often resulted in herbariums, libraries of pressed specimens that required an artistic eye and precision. Botanical illustrations were a natural extension of the gentle pastime, but true representation of specimens were born of skill and scientific understanding.

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[7] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 6, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 258r-266r, f. 264r. "Letters," transcribed by Victoria Dickenson, Emilienne Greenfield, and Rebekah McCallum, https://thegwillimproject.com/letters/. All further citations of the letters from this collection have been consulted via the Gwillim project website.

[8] Dorinda Outram, "New Spaces in Natural History," in Nicholas Jardine, James A Secord, and E. C Spary, *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 250; Jan Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge: Constructivism and the History of Science* (Cambridge History of Science. New York: Cambridge Unviersity Press, 1998), 67.

Very few women traveled independently for the purpose of botanic study.[9] This makes Gwillim's works both ordinary and extraordinary, as she traveled with her husband, but was able to navigate her duties as a wife while pursuing her interest in natural history. Lines of power and domination were emergent, where she was still allowed to actively participate in a science that closed as it codified. Gwillim's participation in botany is complicated by England's domination of India through the imperial project. Her position as a woman subverted the Baconian narrative of masculine domination over nature but her status as a foreigner reinforced the prioritization of European views of the world over Indians.[10] These crossing lines of power of Gwillim's botanizing allows for a further understanding of the more covert forces of imperialism.

Gwillim writes of the experience of being one of the foreign ruling class, an encounter of relative power and dependence. Her curiosity about and appreciation for the Indian people was a perspective that was to become increasingly rare, especially as political space changed from Presidency to Dominion in later decades. This paper applies a lens that examines the colonizing force of England in India, through the power of European botanizing and Gwillim's social standing as a white middle class English woman. This paper does not have a truly decolonizing narrative, as it centers Gwillim and not a subaltern view. Papers centering Indian sources are used for context and a dynamic understanding of the networks Gwillim relied upon and their subsequent understanding of the natural world. As this paper is based upon textual sources, it is

[9] Londa L. Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire : Colonial Bioprospecting in the Atlantic World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 1; Jack Kramer and Linda Sunshine, *Women of Flowers : A Tribute to Victorian Women Illustrators* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1996), 15.
[10] Patricia Fara, *Pandora's Breeches : Women, Science and Power in the Enlightenment* (London: Pimlico, 2004), 41-48.

the European experience and practice that is most immediately accessible, though recent scholarship is making precolonial Indian primary sources more readily available.[11]

Lady Elizabeth Gwillim

The sketches of Gwillim's life before her travels to India are general, indicating an active and modest middle-class life. Born in Hereford, England, on April 20, 1763, to Esther (1743–1806) and Thomas Symonds (1730–1791), Elizabeth was one of four girls, her siblings Ann (*b.* 1759), Hester (*b.* 1768), and Mary (*b.* 1772) surviving childhood.[12] Her father was a stonemason, surveyor, and architect, the latter a business her mother took over upon his death. These drawing skills seemed to be a family trait, an occupation that was passed on to their daughters.[13] The letters Gwillim wrote from India to her mother and sister Hester, "Hetty," demonstrate a close relationship and similarity of interests between the siblings.

Gwillim enjoyed a good education for her sex, which she pursued and deepened for the rest of her life. Not satisfied with the subjects allotted to women, she pursued such subjects as Latin, writing in 1804, "a knowledge of [Latin] is the only means of being certain as to the principles of spelling, & the want of that knowledge makes us women so uncertain."[14] In addition to using Latin to improve her spelling in English, she acquired it to learn the modern botanic binomial taxonomies. She and her sisters visited museums and gardens, fostering

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[11] Native Indian science will be touched on in Chapter 4; Kapil Raj has several fantastic works looking into the native Indian perspective, including the article "Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities: Great Britain and India, 1760—1850," (*Osiris* 15 (2000): 119–34), and his monograph, *Relocating Modern Science : Circulation and the Construction of Knowledge in South Asia and Europe, 1650-1900* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007). The forthcoming book from the Gwillim Project also has a chapter on native Indian science by Marika Sardar and Abdul Jamil Urfi, "Ornithology and Natural History Studies in India: The Mughal and early British periods" from Anna Winterbottom, Victoria Dickenson, Lauren Williams, Ben Cartwright, (eds.). *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, Not yet released), 224-253.

[12] Winterbottom, "Introduction" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 4. Two other siblings did not survive childhood. Elizabeth was known in the letters as Betsy, Hester as Hetty, Mary as Polly, and Ann as Nancy. Their married names are Gwillim, James, Ramsden, and James, respectively.

[13] Winterbottom, "Introduction" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 5.

[14] Elizabeth Gwillim to Ester Symonds, August 12, 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 202r-207v, 205 v.

Gwillim's interest in natural history, helping her to establish a network of people who could support her interest in botany.

A year after they married, Elizabeth and Henry had a daughter, Elizabeth, in 1785. They had another child Henry, born in 1789, and perhaps a third, but none survived infancy and they were childless upon their arrival in India.[15] Gwillim was quite tender with her sister Hetty James, who suffered the loss of a child over the course of their correspondence, and often referred to the young Englishmen who served in India and frequented her home with motherly affection.[16] As much as not having children might have been a challenge for her, it also allowed her the time and space for other occupations, however much Henry might have supported her interests.[17]

Sir Henry Gwillim was a puisne judge under the Crown in a court governed by the East India Company. Henry had to weigh this system against the native Indian law practice, already a convergence of different cultural influences established over centuries. The British legal world in India was emergent, not quite formed, an amalgamation of native and foreign, Crown and company. Lady Elizabeth Gwillim also worked at the nexus of established and new paradigms, navigating the modern European science of botany while contextualizing the Indian ideas of the plant world. This paper is a detailed impression of her botanizing, not a broad sketch of her network. It looks to establish her project aims and relative successes, contextualizing her contribution to botany. As her efforts were professional, I refer to her by her last name, counter to the usual convention. Scholars usually refer to men by their last name and women by their first names, echoing the expectations of public and private life. In abandoning this convention, I hope

[15] Winterbottom, "Introduction" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 7.
[16] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, September/October [no date], 1806, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 329r-343v.
[17] Winterbottom, "Introduction" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 8.

to treat her with "the same historical distance that male subjects habitually receive" while also underlining her professional contributions to science and art.[18]

[18] Paris A. Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas : The Rise of Women Artists in London and Paris, 1760-1830* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2022), 15.

CHAPTER 2. HISTORIOGRAPHY AND HISTORY

The Archives

The Blacker Wood Natural History Collection at Rare Books Library at McGill University houses the bird, fish, and plant paintings by Elizabeth Gwillim, found in 1924 by Casey Wood. Recent interest in her life and work developed into a formal project connecting various collections and researchers across a wide range of disciplines, building on scholars' investigations over the years. Dr. Wood spent time in the 1920s and 30s looking for more information on 'Elizabeth Gwillim, Madras, 1800-1806,' discovering the outlines of her life. He established her date of birth, that she traveled with her husband to Madras for his appointment as puisne judge, and that she died on 21 December 1807.[19] Besides the evidence of her paintings, her scientific acumen was obscured, the only other reference to her was Rev. Malden's observation that she was "a great beauty in her youth."[20]

In 1973 curators for the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, happened upon her paintings as they searched collections for their exhibition, *Animals in Art, An Introductory Exhibition to Wildlife in Art.* Impressed by the scientific accuracy of her ornithological paintings, curator Terry Shortt described the works as being charismatically lifelike and precise in the depiction of feather patterns and arrangement, established her capacity saying, "Lady Gwillim applied both scientific and artistic method to her work."[21] Her paintings were displayed alongside those of John James Audubon (1765-1851), the catalogue emphasizing the comparison, asserting that

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[19]Allan Walkinshaw, Lawrence M. Lande, Robert McLaughlin Gallery, *Elizabeth Gwillim : Artist & Naturalist 1763-1807 : 27 May-22 June 1980, the Robert Mclaughlin Gallery* (Oshawa, Ont.: Gallery, 1980), 12.
[20] C. H. Malden, *A Hand Book to St. Mary's Church, Fort St. George, Madras : With a Description of Its Monuments and Other Objects of Interest* (Madras: S.P.C.K. Press, 1905), 35. Elizabeth's passing is noted on a plaque along with the governors of Madras and other titled English people. Her title helped preserve her memory as many tombstones were moved and lesser names lost to time.
[21] Walkinshaw, *Elizabeth Gwillim*, 12.

Gwillim's works rivaled and surpassed those of the famous naturalist. They both painted to scale, but Gwillim worked mostly with live birds and Audubon worked with preserved specimens.

The exhibition sparked curiosity and researchers slowly uncovered more about Gwillim's life. In 1976 her maiden name, Symonds, was discovered through the revelation that she and her husband traveled to Madras with her unmarried sister, Mary Symonds. With support from the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Allan Walkinshaw and Terry Shortt continued research her life with the aim of mounting an exhibit of Gwillim's work.[22] They published a small volume to accompany the exhibit of her ornithological works in the spring of 1980, establishing further contours to her life along with many unanswered questions. They asserted Gwillim's mastery of ornithological painting was comparable to the masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, regardless of gender, for their technical accuracy as well as the sense that Gwillim was "an artist and naturalist whose love of nature was boundless."[23]

Unbeknownst to Walkinshaw and Shortt, in 1971 the British Library bought four volumes of letters from Elizabeth Gwillim and Mary Symonds to their Mother Esther Symonds and sister, Hester James between 1800 and 1807 (Mss Eur C240).[24] The letters were acquired from Hester James's descendants and first gained significant attention from Patrick Wheeler, a former doctor with a passion for Indian history. In 2017, Wheeler published *Ribbons Among the Rajahs*, a social history of the "legions of women" who traveled to India from England in the 18th and early 19th centuries, including the experiences of Gwillim and Symonds.[25] He focused on the contours and expectation of everyday life, from the vagaries of travel to the realities of

[22] Walkinshaw, *Elizabeth Gwillim*, 15.
[23] Walkinshaw, *Elizabeth Gwillim*, 33.
[24] "Lady Elizabeth Gwillim papers." British Library, Mss Eur C240 : 1801-1809. https://searcharchives.bl.uk/primo_library/libweb/action/dlDisplay.do?vid=IAMS_VU2&search_scope=LSCOP_BL&docId=IAMS032-002265552&fn=permalink
[25] Patrick Wheeler, *Ribbons Among the Rajahs: History of British Women in India Before the Raj*, (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen & Sword History, 2017), 6.

keeping house. Wheeler subsequently published a monograph of their edited letters with commentary in 2021.

Simultaneous research at McGill University in 2017 connected the Rare Books Library with the South Asia Collection of the South Asian Decorative Arts and Crafts Collection Trust in Norwich, England, which houses Mary Symonds's landscapes and paintings of people, and the correspondence at the British Library. The project established a network of researchers across disciplines who undertook various projects and studies, including transcribing the letters and making them publicly available. Unable to travel abroad to England to see the letters in person, this made the vivid interactions between sisters and mother readily available to me, their unedited form accessible.

McGill University Press will publish a monograph from The Gwillim Project network members in 2023, and the advance copy was made available to me in my capacity as a Research Assistant. The book contains chapters focused on different aspects of Gwillim's life. Of particular relevance to this paper were Anna Winterbottom's robust introduction, Henry Noltie's piece on her botany, and the work by Marika Sardar and Abdul Jamil Urfi discussing the Indian scientific tradition. This history of research, the process of recovering the life of Gwillim and her family, creates the foundation upon which this paper attempts to reach even farther. Background for this paper is seen two ways – the first of which has been thoroughly explored, describing the individuals and groups who have attempted to learn more about her. The second situates Gwillim more generally in time and place.

England and India

As noted in the introduction, England lost the war with the United States in 1783 and by 1801 focused elsewhere for economic dominance. The British had an official mercantile presence in India starting in 1602, characterized by violence from the very beginning, as the British East

India Company (EIC) fought internationally as well as locally for dominance in trade.[26] Fort St. George was erected in 1639 by the EIC in the fishing village of Madraspatnam, or the shortened 'Madras.'[27] It was one of the first English settlements on the continent and grew to a municipality with a population of 40,000 people within a couple of decades.[28] It was considered a Presidency and assigned a governor by 1653.[29] The focus of this paper precludes a detailed description of the history of India and the East India Company as it is vast and complex, but the context is important. Gwillim stepped off the *Hindostan* onto an Indian masulah to bring her ashore, the small flexible local boat the only way to get her to land in the absence of harbor infrastructure, like docks. It was a literal and metaphorical representation of the time she would spend in Madras: the dynamics of power once she stepped on shore a combination of dependence, exploitation, and cooperation.[30]

The EIC continually expanded its territory, far beyond the Madras region. Fighting for dominance with the Portuguese, Dutch, and French, it markedly demonstrated its interested in being a ruling power in the mid-eighteenth century. Making the first declaration of war against a ruler in 1757, against the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj ud-Daula, the EIC went on to defeat the Mughal Emperor Shah Alam militarily and politically in 1765.[31] The Mughal taxes and "other functions of governance" were thereafter turned over to the EIC, an "acquisition of dominion"

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[26] William Dalrymple and Olivia Fraser, *The Anarchy : The East India Company, Corporate Violence, and the Pillage of an Empire* (Bloomsbury Publishing USA, 2019), 37. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=5896072.
[27] Charles C. Prinsep, *Record of Services of the Honourable East India Company's Civil Servants in the Madras Presidency, from 1741 to 1858* (Hathi Trust. London: Trübner, 1885), vi. https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc2.ark:/13960/t9j38vq7f&view=1up&seq=10; N Barlow, W. H Warren, Durai Singh, Helen Lakshmanan, and C. H Malden, *Church of South India, St. Mary's Church, Fort St. George, Madras-600 009 : A Brief History with a Description of Its Monuments and Other Objects of Interest with Illustrations and a Plan* (Rev. ed. Madras: GPI Press, 1980), 9.
[28] Dalrymple and Fraser, *The Anarchy*, 61.
[29] Prinsep, *Record of Services*, xxiv.
[30] Wheeler, *A Tale of Two Sisters*, 1.
[31] Dalrymple and Fraser, *The Anarchy*, 124.

that made the company a sovereign ruling entity.[32] William Dalrymple asserts there were many reasons for the EIC's success in India, but it was its close relationship with Parliament at home in England as much as its military successes in India that ensured its survival.

Protected by Members of Parliament over the years, the EIC was bailed out in 1772 to avoid bankruptcy and so an official investigation of "widespread allegations of corruption and malpractice made against individual EIC servants" was thereafter conducted. [33] Governor Generals were assigned to the Principalities of Bengal, Madras, and Bombay after the Regulating Act of June 1773, the local legal system reflecting conflicting ideas of their duties. The EIC ruled through emergency law and the Crown saw India as a colonial extension of Britain, leading to ideological clashes that in within the English community and against native Indians.[34] Sir Henry Gwillim stepped into this shifting law landscape and worked toward his understanding of his task.

As important as the EIC was to the economy (and culture) of England, it was not the primary political interest of English concerns. The EIC held significant military power, and was known as an empire within an empire, with twice as many security forces as the British Army by 1803, with 200,000 men to the Crown's 100,000.[35] The EIC could hold its own in India, and the war with Napoleon was a pressing reality, the Crown engaged in a formal and informal battle over the seas. The French National Convention declared war on Britain in 1793, with Gwillim arriving in India eight years into the conflict. Except for an official pause through the Peace of Amiens in March 1802 to May 1803, the war escalated during their stay. Gwillim wrote to her

[32] Dalrymple and Fraser, *The Anarchy*, 191.
[33] Dalrymple and Fraser, *The Anarchy*, 206.
[34] Haruki Inagaki, *The Rule of Law and Emergency in Colonial India : Judicial Politics in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series. Springer. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021), 2. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1007/978-3-030-73663-7.
[35] Dalrymple and Fraser, *The Anarchy*, 41-42.

sister Hetty James in August of 1803, "the expectation of a War has kept all ships here & nothing can sail untill [sic] we receive news from England which is of course waited for by us with the greatest anxiety - so it will be one year before you can know the fate of your care & kindness." [36] Travel took so long that the relative effect of the peace on shipping may have been minor, as the news of whether France and England were at war could take six months to travel.

Pressure on the expanding shipping network increased despite infrastructure and technological advances in shipping and a growing British power on the seas. British shipping was a combination of navy and merchant powers, which facilitated tasks on multiple fronts, including "averting an invasion of the British Isles, waging war at sea, mitigating economic warfare, circumventing the French blockade, safeguarding trade, and sustaining trade routes."[37] Though maintenance of these routes was critical for the subsequent political and economic growth of Britain, the Gwillim and Symond's letters pointed to a daily reality where India was quite isolated from England.

[36] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 14/15, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 134r-139v
[37] Katerina Galani, *British Shipping in the Mediterranean during the Napoleonic Wars*, (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2017), 1, doi: https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/9789004343283.

CHAPTER 3. WOMEN BOTANISTS

The natural sciences were often the pastime of the upper classes in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, and their amateur interests "fed and cushioned the science of plants in an era in which there was little remunerative employment for botanists."[38] Jan Golinski, in his book *Making Natural Knowledge,* describes early-modern patronage as an exchange of prestige and financial support in return for "status enhancement," in direct parallel with the Royal Society of England, conferring social power.[39] Women were barred from the Royal Society from its inception in 1662 until 1945, almost three centuries of exclusion.[40] As a result, research into the scientific activities of various women becomes a search outside of formalized spaces. There are examples of serious scientific interest from aristocratic women, but examples of middle-class women participating in the sciences, such as Gwillim, are far less frequent.

The number of historical studies of women in the natural sciences is growing, with foundational works by Carolyn Merchant, Londa Schiebinger, Emma Spary, and Ann Shteir, to name a few. Merchant's 1980 seminal work of ecological feminism focused on the Western social and intellectual transformation of nature "from the organism to the machine."[41] Merchant argued the period of the Scientific Revolution and Francis Bacon (1561-1626) in particular, demanded nature reveal its secrets so it could be controlled and dominated by humans. Parsing characterizations of gender, Merchant points to the simultaneous function of this argument as the sanctioning of domination over women by men. Written at the time when ecofeminism was

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[38] Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government : Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Improvement' of the World (*New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 138.
[39] Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 61.
[40] Londa L. Schiebinger, "Maria Winkelmann at the Berlin Academy : A Turning Point for Women in Science" (*Isis* 78: 1987) 175.
[41] Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature : Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (1St pbk.ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), xviii.

emergent, it established a line of thought that shows science is a social construction instead of a predetermined set of mechanistic parts. Merchant was concerned with the formation of science, mostly highlighting individuals as they related to a particular aspect of intellectual history and wrote almost exclusively about men.

Schiebinger took this approach farther, focusing on individual stories of women or plants, while emphasizing their place within a framework of intellectual history. Like Merchant, her work focuses on the seventeenth and eighteenth century, particularly on botany and colonialism. She provided multifaceted inquiries into the dynamics of gender and exploration, including but not limited to "voyaging, cross cultural encounters, linguistic imperialism, proprietary secrets, knowledge transfers, [and] classification schemes."[42] Exploring the participation of women in the sciences, Schiebinger emphasized the importance of the craft tradition to the early inclusion of women in the sciences. Schiebinger's early work focused on how old traditions allowed for women to participate in science, demonstrating that skills in illustration, calculation, and observation circumvented the academic subjects they were not formally taught.[43]

In "Maria Winkelmann at the Berlin Academy," Schiebinger established the ways in which women informally engaged in formal scientific settings and participated in the advancement of their fields. With the story of astronomist Maria Winkelmann (1670-1720), along with some of her contemporaries, Schiebinger demonstrated how women participated in the scientific sphere through craft tradition and guild associations. Schiebinger focused on the tradition of guilds in Germany, marking their formation and function. Women were able to participate in science through their male family members, whether father or husband.[44] Through

[42] Schiebinger, "Feminist History of Colonial Science," *Hypatia* 19, no. 1 (2004): 235. doi:10.1111/j.1527-2001.2004.tb01276.x; Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire,* 3-5.
[43] Schiebinger, "Maria Winkelmann at the Berlin Academy," 177.
[44] Schiebinger, "Maria Winkelmann at the Berlin Academy," 178-9.

various case studies, Schiebinger demonstrated that women were able to actively engage in the scientific process. Women would put their 'craft' skills to work, with such activities as observation, maintaining a lab, as well as the more public process of publishing. Women were rarely given their share of credit by their husbands or fathers, in part as it was not encouraged.

The hypothesis forwarded in the 1980s that guilds bolstered the idea of masculinity through the exclusion of women has a more nuanced understanding today. In "Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research," Clare Crowston paints a nuanced picture of guild politics and the reality of women's participation. Crowston's review of the field demonstrates French guild associations emphasized the sexual segregation of work, but shows that families, government, and religious organizations supported the vocational training of young women in the late seventeenth century, which led to greater economic opportunities in the eighteenth century.[45] In York, England, as in France and the Netherlands, guilds often broadened to include women through the creation of "a separate section…under the regulation and organizational structure of an existing corporation."[46] Demonstrating wider opportunities for women, Crowston's analysis of guilds shows the highest concentration of women to be in more 'feminine' crafts, entering occupations such as sewing and textiles – not the more 'masculine' trades that led to scientific opportunities.

The economic situations between Western European countries were not identical and their guilds had similarly divergent regulations and realities. In England, there were mandatory seven-year terms for apprenticeships with the largest percentage coming from the middle and upper classes. Women could become freemen in London and were rarely barred from

[45] Clare Crowston, "Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe: An Overview of Recent Research" (*International Review of Social History* 53, no. S16, 2008), 32-4. doi:10.1017/S0020859008003593.
[46] Crowston, "Women, Gender, and Guilds in Early Modern Europe," 38.

apprenticeships but made up only 1% of those registered as such.[47] As observed in relation to sons, "those…who were not indentured are, generally, almost invisible."[48] The same can be extended to daughters, as they were often not apprenticed, or they were bound for shorter terms that guilds did not record.[49]

The German, French, and English scientific academies were all concerned with public perception and, like guilds, restricted women's participation in their organizations. By rejecting the applications of women to join the scientific academies, "the social stigma attached to women would not further tarnish [their] already dull reputation."[50] The Royal Society of London, established by charter by King Charles II in 1660, and funded through mostly private means, was the first public institution for the pursuit of science. It was not a patron-based endeavor, but available to interested individuals in principle. In reality, status and class often played a more dominant role, as the "society acted as a gentleman's club, a place to socialize with one's own kind according to strict, if 'polite,' norms of social conduct."[51] The Royal Society has many connections and parallels with guilds, the most relevant of which is their exclusion of women.

The relationship of guilds and societies on women's opportunities is clearly illustrated in Gwillim's life. Like many women who gained access to science or the professional world, her

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[47] The Statute of Artificers in 1563 established 7-year apprenticeships. Patrick Wallis, "Apprenticeship in England," Chapter in *Apprenticeship in Early Modern Europe*, edited by Maarten Prak and Patrick Wallis, 249. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. doi:10.1017/9781108690188.010.

[48] Wallis, "Apprenticeship in England," 273.

[49] Wallis, "Apprenticeship in England," 270.

[50] Schiebinger emphasizes that this was not a single case of Winkelmann's rejection from the academy, but petitions from scientifically accomplished women in Germany and England being rejected, Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle in particular. Schiebinger, "Maria Winkelmann at the Berlin Academy," 187.

[51] D. Atkinson, *Scientific Discourse in Sociohistorical Context: The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London, 1675-1975* (1st ed, Routledge 1998), 16. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9781410601704; Londa Schiebinger also emphasizes this point in *The Mind Has No Sex?: Women in the origins of modern science* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 138. "From its beginning, the explicit goal of England's leading body of scientists–the Royal Society of London– was 'to raise a Masculine Philosophy.' Masculine philosophy was to be distinctively English (not French), empirical (not speculative), and practical (not rhetorical). Consistent with the discourse of the day, each of these favored qualities was considered masculine."

parents were active in a related field, as both of her parents were drafters, Gwillim's mother contributed to her father's architecture business, taking it over after his death.[52] The guilds for these occupations were all established in the 1830s, after Gwillim's death, so any training in drawing or drafting she received could only be considered informal, however proficient. While the drawing and observation skills potentially garnered from her parents' occupation would have been of help to Gwillim's botanizing, her main ways of acquiring proficiency were socializing, reading, touring, and receiving private tutoring.[53] Like all women, she was excluded from the Linnean Society as well as the Royal Society, formal participation in the field closed to her.[54]

Women in the eighteenth century participated in natural history as "collectors, patrons, artists, helpmates, and coworkers…[and] were visible as botanical writers."[55] This was in part due to the 'feminization' of botany, as it was considered a genteel pursuit in 1760-1830, thought to improve one morally and spiritually, and particularly as it kept women away from idle pursuits such as the card table.[56] In the 1830s this emphasis shifted as the field professionalized into a subject of study at universities, which were also closed to women. The first English professor of botany at the University of London, John Lindley, delineated 'polite botany' from 'botanical science' along gendered lines, a distinction of "an occupation for the serious thoughts of man" versus "amusement for ladies."[57] Indeed, the term "scientist" was coined in 1833, implying to the public its professionalization (and therefore the masculinization) of the pursuit.[58] The natural

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[52] Winterbottom, "Introduction" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 5.
[53] Her letters refer to conversations with many people, which is more fully explored in the next section, 'GWILLIM'S BOTANY.'
[54] Ann B. Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science: Flora's Daughters and Botany in England, 1760-1860* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 37.
[55] Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 61.
[56] Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 4; 36.
[57] John Lindley, *An Introductory Letter Delivered in the University of London on Thursday, April 30, 1829* (London, 1829), 17. As quoted in Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 5.
[58] Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge,* 67.

history Gwillim studied, which ranged from fish, birds, livestock, to botany, fractured and codified into distinct fields by the 1830s, and "became a more entrenched feature of the production of knowledge."[59] Plant study had not only stratified into its own category, it had graduated to a "botanical science." Botanical culture in 1760-1830 assumed women's participation but gendering of the science after 1830 was used to deny women access, as it became a profession, an inherently masculine pursuit.[60]

Gwillim's Botany

Gwillim's letters to her mother and sister reflect her wide-ranging interests and serve as an informal record of her botanical efforts. Formal records, such as notebooks or letters with her botanical network are yet to be found. These informal letters still demonstrate the variety of her interests and how she pursued them. She wrote on a wide number of subjects with a ready observation of her surroundings, commenting on the success of English vegetable seeds in her gardens, general sketches of the greenery of the landscape, or plants in local celebrations.[61] The letters also demonstrate her more rigorous attention to the pursuit of botanical science, collecting and sending seeds back to England, taking lessons in botany, and researching the local plants with the help of Indians. Gwillim treated botany as much more than an amusement, her efforts on par with professional botanists of the time.

Gwillim and Symonds both refer to their correspondence with Elizabeth, 'Lizzie,' Thoburn (1783-1855) and her mother Mary (c. 1747-) in their letters, mentioning packages and letters that travelled between the two parties across the ocean. Reginald Whitley (1754-1835) was the business partner to Peter Thoburn of Brompton Park Nursery and married widow Mary

[59] Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 67.
[60] Shteir, *Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science*, 169; also Schiebinger, *The Mind Has No Sex, 241-277.*
[61] A ready example is the letter from Elizabeth to her mother, Esther Symonds, on January 23, 1802. BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 21r-32r, 26v-27v.

Thoburn shortly after Peter's death in 1788. Brompton Park Nursery was established in 1681 by the former gardener to the queen and three of his colleagues.[62] Changing hands over the years, the nursery maintained its reputation as one of most significant holdings of plants with its estimated ten million maintained on 50 acres.[63] This was a far larger holding than the nearby Kew Gardens. One could subscribe to the Brompton Park Nursery annually, which allowed access to wander the grounds and take advantage of the library. Dr. Anna Winterbottom surmises that Gwillim and Symonds became acquainted with the Thoburns through John Gwillim's two-guinea subscription, which allowed him to bring his friends to the park.[64]

Gwillim and Symonds were close to the whole family at Brompton Park, with frequent mention of interactions with Lizzie and communication with their mother, as well as constant ferrying of seeds to the patriarch, Reginald Whitley. Elizabeth was clearly friends with Lizzie and her mother independently of Whitley, sending them shawls and keeping dibs on who owed whom a chatty letter. Only one letter from Gwillim to Lizzy Thoburn is part of the collection at the British Library, but in conjunction with Gwillim's mention of her, it is clear they connected over the pursuit of botanical knowledge. Gwillim wrote to her mother shortly after arriving in Madras, "I have had a good deal to write to Lizzy Thoburn which no one else cou'd do, about seeds & plants I have sent many sorts but like enough nothing new."[65] Thoburn's passion for botany is also evidenced by Whitley's eventual will, as he left her all of his botanical books, half

[62] John H. Harvey, "The Stocks Held by Early Nurseries" (*The Agricultural History Review* 22, no. 1, 1974), 18. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40273577.
[63] Harvey, "The Stocks Held by Early Nurseries," 19.
[64] Winterbottom, "Introduction," 8; Brompton, and Kew Royal Botanic Gardens, *A Catalogue of the Brompton Botanic Garden Part I: Containing Hardy Plants* (Ed. W. Curtis. London, 1803) 9, 12. https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433010843757
[65] Elizabeth to her mother, Esther Symonds, on October 17, 1801. BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 14r-18v, 14r.

of his library.[66] Gwillim exchanged seeds with Thoburn and Whitley consistently over the years, which formed an essential part of her scientific network in England.

Whitley was part of a long line of prestigious gardeners at Brompton Park and an active member of the Society of Gardeners in Greater London.[67] The founding members of Brompton Park were concerned with garden design and formation, planting, sale, and ensuring varieties had the correct standard naming of their stock.[68] This last point was of particular value to Gwillim as a participant in the field of natural history, as Whitley would be able to help her identify if any plants that were new to her were also new to the continent, with the accompanying network to establish her as the one who made the introduction to England. This is evidenced through their subscription service and the fact that Brompton Park was "sending large consignments to great estates all over the country."[69] Whitley was also connected with John Sims (1749-1831), the first editor of the hugely influential *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* and future member of the Royal Society.[70]

The access to *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* through Whitley meant Gwillim had a means of participation in the field that was unavailable to most women. She was credited with introducing two plant species to England, the *Trichosanthes Anguina*, or Snake-Gourd [fig. 1], and the *Althaea Flexuosa Seringapatam,* a variety of Hollyhock [fig. 2].[71] She sent the seed for

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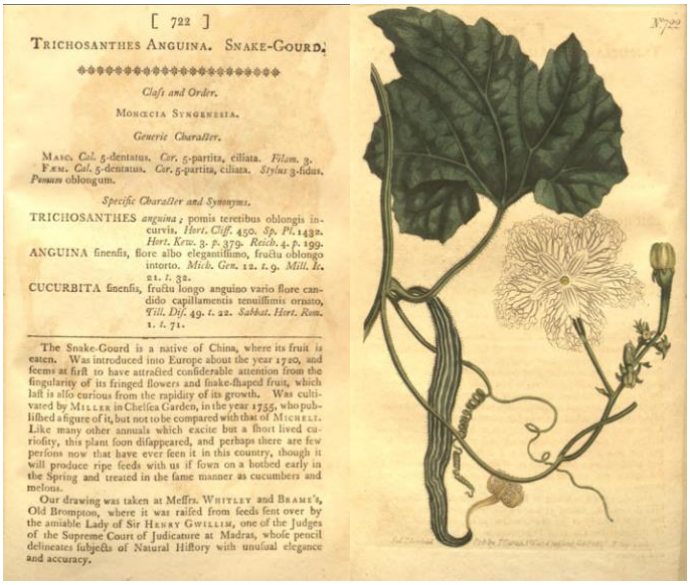
[66] Reginald Whitley, Last Will and Testament of Reginald Whitley, January 14, 1835 (The National Archives, Kew, Richmond, Surrey, UK: PROB 11/1843/274).
[67] Eleanor J. Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens : The Nursery Gardens of Chelsea, Fulham, Hammersmith, Kensington and a Part of Westminster, Founded Before 1900*. (London: Fullham and Hammersmith Historical Society, 1982), 3.
[68] Harvey, "The Stocks Held by Early Nurseries," 18.
[69] Harvey, "The Stocks Held by Early Nurseries," 19.
[70] W. Botting Hemsley, *A New and Complete Index to the Botanical Magazine: From its commencement in 1787 to the end of 1904, including the first, second, and third series to which is prefixed a history of the magazine* (London: Lovell Reeve & Co: 1906) XXV.
https://books.google.ca/books?id=OlhNAAAAYAAJ&pg=PR3#v=onepage&q&f=false
[71] John Sims, "TRICHOSANTHES ANGUINA, SNAKE GOURD," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, Volume XIX (1804) : 722, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4511247.pdf; John Sims, "ALTHAEA FLEXUOSA," *Curtis's*

the Snake-Gourd to Whitley who raised it, allowing the curiosity to be rendered for *Curtis's Botanical*. The magazine noted Gwillim's skill for painting subjects of the natural world, with "unusual elegance and accuracy," though they did not use a painting by her for that plant.[72] Printed in 1804, this meant Gwillim found seeds almost as soon as she had arrived, considering the four to six months of travel over the sea and additional two months of growing time – if the seeds arrived in the requisite season.



[722]

TRICHOSANTHES ANGUINA. SNAKE-GOURD.

Class and Order.

MONŒCIA SYNGENESIA.

Generic Character.

MASC. *Cal.* 5-dentatus. *Cor.* 5-partita, ciliata. *Filam.* 3.
FEM. *Cal.* 5-dentatus. *Cor.* 5-partita, ciliata. *Stylus* 3-fidus. *Pomum* oblongum.

Specific Character and Synonyms.

TRICHOSANTHES *anguina*; pomis teretibus oblongis incurvis. *Hort. Cliff.* 450. *Sp. Pl.* 1432. *Hort. Kew.* 3. *p.* 379. *Reich.* 4. *p.* 199.

ANGUINA finenfis, flore albo elegantiffimo, fructu oblongo intorto. *Mich. Gen.* 12. *t.* 9. *Mill. Ic.* 81. *t.* 38.

CUCURBITA finenfis, fructu longo anguino vario flore candido capillamentis tenuiffimis ornato, *Till. Dif.* 49. *t.* 22. *Sabbat. Hort. Rom.* 1. *t.* 71.

The Snake-Gourd is a native of China, where its fruit is eaten. Was introduced into Europe about the year 1720, and feems at firft to have attracted conſiderable attention from the ſingularity of its fringed flowers and ſnake-ſhaped fruit, which laſt is alſo curious from the rapidity of its growth. Was cultivated by MILLER in Cheſſea Garden, in the year 1735, who publiſhed a figure of it, but not to be compared with that of MICHELI. Like many other annuals which excite but a ſhort lived curioſity, this plant ſoon diſappeared, and perhaps there are few perſons now that have ever ſeen it in this country, though it will produce ripe ſeeds with us if ſown on a hotbed early in the Spring and treated in the ſame manner as cucumbers and melons.

Our drawing was taken at Meſſrs. WHITLEY and BRAME's, Old Brompton, where it was raiſed from ſeeds ſent over by the amiable Lady of Sir HENRY GWILLIM, one of the Judges of the Supreme Court of Judicature at Madras, whoſe pencil delineates ſubjects of Natural Hiſtory with unuſual elegance and accuracy.

Figure 1: John Sims, "Trichosanthes anguina," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* 19 (1804): t. 722.

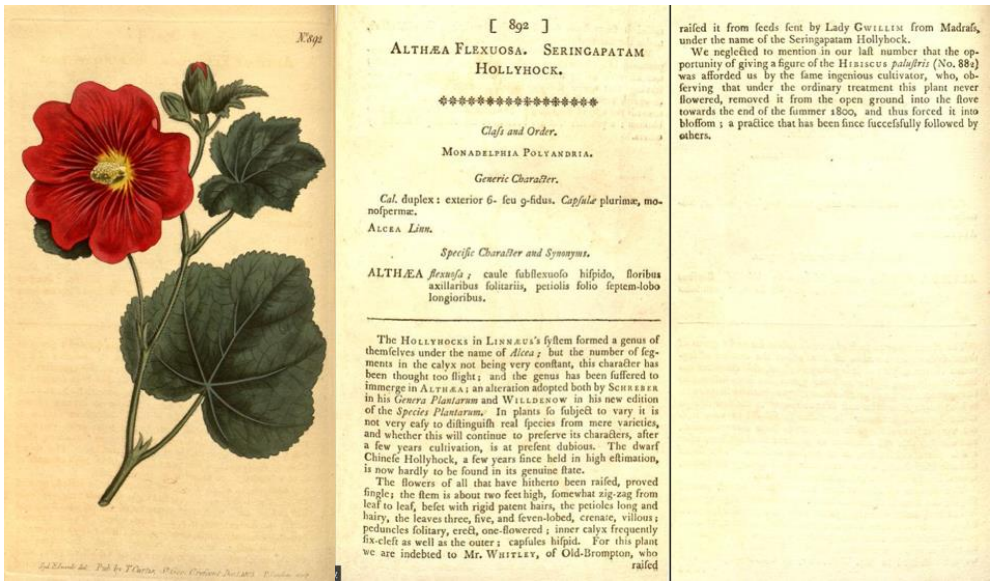
The magazine extended its gratitude to Whitley in 1806 for the new variety of hollyhock, saying they were "indebted" to the nurseryman for raising the seed sent to him by Gwillim.[73] A similar note was made in the 1817 publication of *The Botanical Register* in reference to the *Hibiscus tiliaceus,* "cultivated" in 1731, but the plant illustrated in the magazine was grown from seed sent by "Lady Gwyllim to Messrs. Whitley, Brames, and Milne."[74] Whitley was known for

Botanical Magazine, Volume XXII (1806) : 892, https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/14314#page/33/mode/1up.

[72] Sims, "TRICHOSANTHES ANGUINA, SNAKE GOURD," 722.

[73] Sims, "ALTHAEA FLEXUOSA," 892.

[74] Sydenham Edwards, "262: HIBISCUS tiliaceus," in *The Botanical Register: Consisting of Coloured Figures of Exotic Plants Cultivated in British Gardens; with their History and Mode of Treatment: Volume 3* (London: James



[892]

ALTHÆA FLEXUOSA. SERINGAPATAM HOLLYHOCK.

Class and Order.

MONADELPHIA POLYANDRIA.

Generic Character.

Cal. duplex: exterior 6- seu 9-fidus. *Capsule* plurimæ, monospermæ.

ALCEA *Linn.*

Specific Character and Synonym.

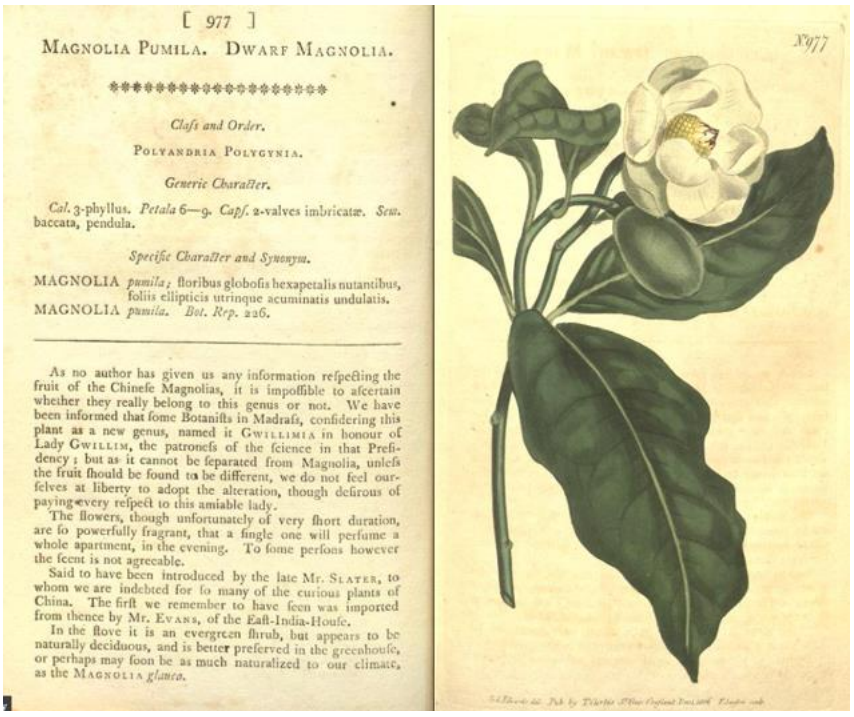
ALTHÆA *flexuosa*; caule subflexuoso hispido, floribus axillaribus solitariis, petiolis folio septem-lobo longioribus.

The HOLLYHOCKS in LINNÆUS's system formed a genus of themselves under the name of *Alcea*; but the number of segments in the calyx not being very constant, this character has been thought too slight; and the genus has been suffered to immerge in ALTHÆA; an alteration adopted both by SCHREBER in his *Genera Plantarum* and WILLDENOW in his new edition of the *Species Plantarum*. In plants so subject to vary it is not very easy to distinguish real species from mere varieties, and whether this will continue to preserve its characters, after a few years cultivation, is at present dubious. The dwarf Chinese Hollyhock, a few years since held in high estimation, is now hardly to be found in its genuine state.

The flowers of all that have hitherto been raised, proved single; the stem is about two feet high, somewhat zig-zag from leaf to leaf, beset with rigid patent hairs, the petioles long and hairy, the leaves three, five, and seven-lobed, crenate, villous; peduncles solitary, erect, one-flowered; inner calyx frequently six-cleft as well as the outer; capsules hispid. For this plant we are indebted to Mr. WHITLEY, of Old-Brompton, who raised it from seeds sent by Lady GWILLIM from Madrass, under the name of the Seringapatam Hollyhock.

We neglected to mention in our last number that the opportunity of giving a figure of the HIBISCUS *palustris* (No. 884) was afforded us by the same ingenious cultivator, who, observing that under the ordinary treatment this plant never flowered, removed it from the open ground into the stove towards the end of the summer 1800, and thus forced it into blossom; a practice that has been since successfully followed by others.

Figure 2: Sims, John. "Althaea flexuosa." *Curtis's Botanical Magazine 23* (1806): t. 892.



[977]

MAGNOLIA PUMILA. DWARF MAGNOLIA.

Class and Order.

POLYANDRIA POLYGYNIA.

Generic Character.

Cal. 3-phyllus. *Petala* 6—9. *Capsi.* 2-valves imbricatæ. *Sem.* baccata, pendula.

Specific Character and Synonym.

MAGNOLIA *pumila*; floribus globosis hexapetalis nutantibus, foliis ellipticis utrinque acuminatis undulatis.

MAGNOLIA *pumila*. *Bot. Rep.* 226.

As no author has given us any information respecting the fruit of the Chinese Magnolias, it is impossible to ascertain whether they really belong to this genus or not. We have been informed that some Botanists in Madrass, considering this plant as a new genus, named it GWILLIMIA in honour of Lady GWILLIM, the patroness of the science in that Presidency; but as it cannot be separated from Magnolia, unless the fruit should be found to be different, we do not feel ourselves at liberty to adopt the alteration, though desirous of paying every respect to this amiable lady.

The flowers, though unfortunately of very short duration, are so powerfully fragrant, that a single one will perfume a whole apartment, in the evening. To some persons however the scent is not agreeable.

Said to have been introduced by the late Mr. SLATER, to whom we are indebted for so many of the curious plants of China. The first we remember to have seen was imported from thence by Mr. EVANS, of the East-India-House.

In the stove it is an evergreen shrub, but appears to be naturally deciduous, and is better preserved in the greenhouse, or perhaps may soon be as much naturalized to our climate, as the MAGNOLIA *glauca*.

Figure 3: John Sims, "Magnolia Pumila," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine, Volume XXV* (1807): 977.

introducing exotics to England, and as much as he helped Gwillim, he benefitted from her botanizing activity, contributing to his "considerable reputation for uncommon plants."[75] *Curtis's*

Ridgeway, Piccadilly, 1817), plate 262, https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/130261. Thanks to the Society for the History of Natural History Symposium February 2023 for pointing me to this particular entry.

[75] Willson, *West London Nursery Gardens*, 21.

Botanical called her the "lady patroness of the science in that Presidency" in 1807 with the arrival of her package of dwarf magnolia.[76] While the magazine was "desirous of paying every respect to this amiable lady," [77] they denied it the name given to it in her honor, the *Gwillimia indica* [fig. 15]. The plant was brought to England by two others before her, the Mr. Evans that Mr. Sims noted in the article, along with the name for the bush *Magnolia pumila* [fig. 3].[78] The plant was given the name *Magnolia coco* in 1790 by Portuguese missionary João de Loureiro, which was its eventual codification.[79] Though *Curtis's Botanical* did not recognize her participation as discovery, Gwillim's contribution to botany was preserved in the formal nomenclature as a subdivision of the larger genus by Geneva botanist A.P. de Candolle in 1817.[80] Gwillim's efforts were recognized as notable, her proficiency in botany apparent to those in the wider scientific arena.

Gwillim experimented with different methods to safely transport seeds and saplings across the ocean, the bluntest tool of which appears to be volume. Many ships never made it across the ocean, whether due to bad weather or human adversaries at sea, and there was no guarantee plants would be viable when they arrived. Gwillim compensated by continuously sending packets and trying some common methods for ensuring their safe arrival. In 1801 she mentioned a trial of sending seeds two ways, the first "hung up in bags in a basket & hung up in Cabins," while favoring a "varnished past[e] board" method. [81] Both of these methods were described in Englishman John Ellis's 1770 booklet, *Directions for bringing over seeds and plants from the East-Indies and other distant countries in a state of vegetation* [fig. 4], one of the

[76] John Sims, "MAGNOLIA PUMILA, DWARF MAGNOLIA," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, Volume XXV (1807): 977, https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/471984.
[77] John Sims, "MAGNOLIA PUMILA, DWARF MAGNOLIA," 977.
[78] John Sims, "MAGNOLIA PUMILA, DWARF MAGNOLIA," 977; no date given for its original introduction.
[79] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 200.
[80] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany," 200: *Magnolia* Section *Gwillimia*.
[81] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, October 17, 1801, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 19r-19v, f. 19r.

first publicly available manuals on the subject.[82] Ellis favored rolling clean, dry seeds in a layer of beeswax before securing them with another layer of wax in a shallow box, a method that performs the same functions as varnishing seeds onto a piece of thick cardstock.[83]

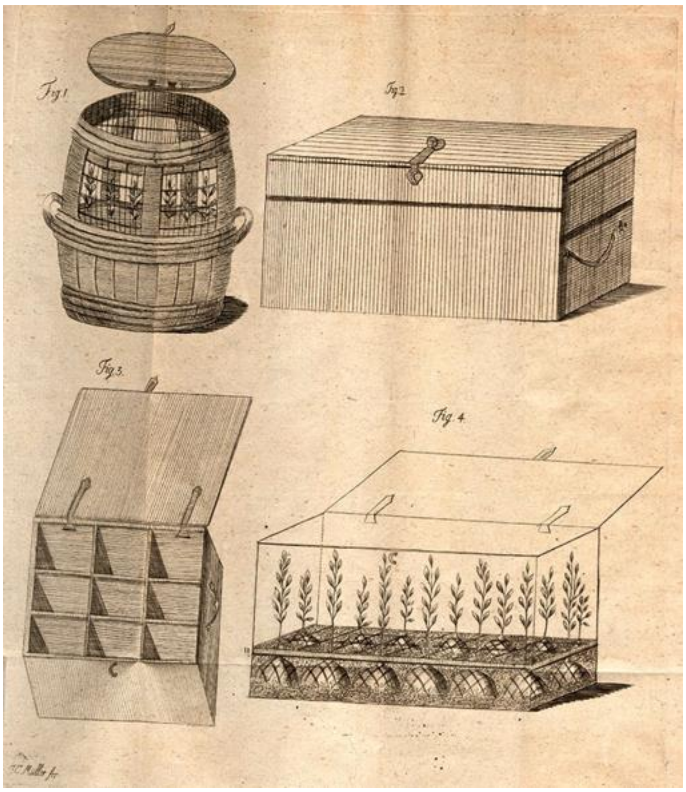


Figure 4: J.C. Müller, for John Ellis, *Directions for bringing over seeds and plants from the East-Indies and other distant countries in a state of vegetation*, 1770.

Gwillim sent live plants in various configurations in hopes of safe arrival, trying pots and boxes. Packing plants in boxes was popular due to its stability, relative climate control, potential protection from salt water and any pests onboard. The East India Company was known for a similar method, using casks with holes bored in the sides to safely bring exotics back to England

[82] Stuart McCook, "Squares of Tropic Summer: The Wardian Case, Victorian Horticulture, and the Logistics of Global Plant Transfers 1770-1910," in *Global Scientific Practice in an Age of Revolutions, 1750- 1850*, ed. Patrick Manning and Daniel Rood (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 201.
[83] John Ellis, *Directions for bringing over seeds and plants from the East-Indies and other distant countries in a state of vegetation* (London: Printed and sold by L. Davis, printer to the Royal Society, 1770) available through: Adam Matthew, Marlborough. China: Culture and Society, 3.

in the late eighteenth century.[84] Containing a foot of soil in which the specimens were planted, the boxes were heavy and cumbersome, which helped them stay put on the deck and protected the plant from weather while allowing for light and air circulation.

Gwillim mentioned sending seeds more often than plants, which indicates her wide network in Madras for the acquisition of the delicate matter. Sending live plants was generally regarded as having a higher chance of success than seeds, as seeds were hard to find, often not available at the time of travel, and could spoil easily from their own natural oils or poor packaging conditions.[85] She was aware of how often seeds spoiled, writing Hetty James in September of 1803, "I have no opportunity of sending anything by these ships but I shall send just a basket of seeds by Mrs: Davies. If I keep them they will be spoilled [sic] so I may as well venture."[86] Live plants were potentially hardier, and if treated properly in transit, had a higher rate of survival. Gwillim's contemporary, Joachim Loddiges, a London nurseryman, noted only one plant out of twenty would survive the much shorter trip from the Americas.[87] The botanist and surgeon John Livingstone wrote to the Horticultural Society of London about the challenge of sending live plants from China to London in 1819, estimating that only one in a thousand plants survived.[88]

The survival of plant matter in the long voyage often came down to their treatment in transport. Gwillim noted many failures, referring to one Captain as "stingy" and a "sorry Crab" as he did not allow the plants freshwater rations on one trip and "made such a favour of carrying my Plants that I almost repented of asking him to do it -."[89] Her botanical network included

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[84] Luke Keogh, *The Wardian Case: How a Simple Box Moved Plants and Changed the World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020), 32, https://doi.org/10.7208/9780226713755.
[85] McCook, "Squares of Tropic Summer," 202.
[86] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, September 10, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 142r-149v, 146v-147r.
[87] Jenny Rudolf, "The Botanical Cabinet." *Lankesteriana* 8, no. 2 (2008): 3, https://doi.org/10.15517/lank.v0i0.7926.
[88] Keogh, *The Wardian Case*, 45.
[89] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, ff. 279v-280r.

many people – ship captains and other friends – who were willing to ferry the plant matter back home. Not only did this ensure a safer trip, but it also helped avoid high import taxes.

Another letter notes the ruin of seeds and trees from a rough sea, as the pots of the trees broke and the seeds were destroyed by salt water.[90] Gwillim described sending a particularly large plant on the ship the *David Scott* in 1804, a specimen that followed the accolades from the editor of *Curtis's Botanical*. She wrote to her sister, "Dr: Sims has paid me great compl[i]ments I blush - Pray what can I send him if anything I can do will be acceptable I shall be very happy in the way of Plants -"[91] Her determination to find unnamed plants served the burgeoning professional relationship with Sims. She established specimens in boxes of soil, to ready them for the long trip. The tree she sent on the *David Scott* was over two feet tall and had been waiting on the premises in the shade of a tree for ships to depart for Europe.[92]

The ship took six months to reach Plymouth, a longer than usual trip, but unlike the *Princess of Wales*, it arrived safely.[93] The *Princess of Wales* was captured by a privateer on its return trip, and Gwillim's inventory was lost, including, "some dried plants for Dr: Smith, a letter to him & a Plant which Dr: Rottler the Botanist chose to give my name to if it might be accepted *[Gwillimia indica]* a large box of most curious plants for Mr: Whitley - seeds small boxes with sandal wood trees &c these months of my labour."[94] Clearly, connecting with those who could place her discoveries in the world of botany was important to her, as she looked to connect with John Sims, the editor of *Curtis's Botanical*, and Dr. James E. Smith, botanist and

[90] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, October 18, 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 88r-91v, f. 89v.
[91] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 13, 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 208r-211v, 210 v.
[92] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, October 16, 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 236r-241v, f. 236r.
[93] Wikipedia, s.v. "*David Scott* (1801 EIC ship)," last edited on 18 January 2021, at 19:10 (UTC), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Scott_(1801_EIC_ship); Wikipedia, s.v. "*Princess of Wales* (1795 EIC ship)," last edited on 2 December 2021, at 19:43 (UTC), https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_of_Wales_(ship)
[94] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 6, 1805 BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 258r-266r, 258r-259r.

founder of the Linnean Society. Her persistence and ingenuity ensured the few recorded successes of getting plants back to England.

The following excerpt from a letter to Gwillim's sister, Hetty, demonstrates how she adapted to the demands of sending seeds. She refined her strategies for success, dividing the same variety of seeds between multiple people she trusted to take care of the packets. This avoided issues on board and addressed the potential for ships to founder at sea, mentioning the failure of the *Princess of Wales* specifically. Sending specimens so many different ways helped ensure a minimum of plants would get to Whitley so that he could propagate them.

> Captain Willim …is the only person I know or that has offered to take things for us. - I think he will be safe, for he is gentlemanly in his manner & very pressing to be intrusted [sic] with things. - Polly sends views of all our houses - I send by him a bag of seeds which you will please to send to Mr: Whitley as they contain many seeds which I shou'd be glad to see growing. - I send the bag of seeds by a Mr: Hoseasan who is going hence with a large fortune - They have so much to carry for themselves that I cannot ask them to take anything home for me but he will take the bag to Trincomali in Ceylon where Captain Willim & some more of the ships are waiting for the remainder of the fleet and will then deliver it to him - the seeds are directed to you pr. favour of Capt: Willim. - as some of the seeds have been procured with difficulty I was loth to trust them all to one chance (as I did everything to the poor Prince [sic] of Wales-) I have therefore divided them in some measure, Captain Willim's bag contains my own collection & half of Dr: Berry's - and I send another bag containing Dr: Rottler's collection in the Mysore &c very numerous & the other half of Dr: Berry's - I have besides added a packet of flower tree seeds & some others fit for a present to any body you may chuse [sic]…If any misfortune shou'd happen to Captain Willims bag - give the little packet with the rest to Mr: Whitly but if that comes safe keep it.
>
> Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester Symonds James, n.d., likely November 1806[95]

Gwillim worked diligently to send specimens across the ocean, only sending pressed flowers on occasion, as she noted the lack of success in that method due to aggressive insect activity in

[95] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, n.d., likely November 1806, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 344r-345v, 344r-345r.

India.[96] Seeds and educational materials were sent back to her, with many vegetable seeds noted in her thanks to her family, as well as materials for study, "Mr: Livingston sent me a box of seeds with the Catalogues I requested, which I am glad of as they give me much information."[97] She prioritized studying natural history, her time mostly divided between ornithology and botany, though she complained that she could only dedicate two hours a day to this pursuit.[98]

Gwillim's botanical network grew with her connections with other European expatriates in India. Her primary interest was not the medical or culinary use of plants but learning what she considered "modern botany," an understanding of the field as a whole.[99] She connected with Governor Lord Clive before he left in 1803, remarking of his fondness for gardening, but disappointed in his lack of engagement with the science, writing that "he does not seem to know anything of Botany."[100] Lord Clive preferred entertaining and puttering around the garden to maintaining his gubernatorial duties, or as Gwillim put it, he was "inactive."[101] His wife, Lady Clive, was well known for her collection of curiosities as she traveled extensively in India, but had already returned to England by Gwillim's arrival.[102]

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[96] "There is great difficulty in preserving them from the [word crossed out] ants which are perfect scavengers… I have had a Bird eat up in a night." Elizabeth Gwillim to Ester Symonds, October 2, 1802 BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 82r-83v, 82v.

[97] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, 287v-288r.

[98] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, September 10, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 142r-149v, 148v. "From ten to twelve is all the time for writing learning or drawing - only 2 hours out of 24!! & yet more often than every other day - people come & take up those two hours."

[99] Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds, October 20-21, 1803 BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 160r-162v, 161r; Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 192.

[100] Elizabeth Gwillim to Ester Symonds, October 20-21, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 160r-162v, 161r.

[101] From Elizabeth Gwillim to her Mother, Esther Symonds August 16, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 140r-141v, 140v; Mary put this a bit more cuttingly, saying, "the present Lord Clive is a very good natured man but in the affairs of the Government he is a mere child & knows no more what is doing than I do, he is extremely fond of Gardening, & the natives who have a good deal of humour call him Gardener Maistrie, just at the people at home call the King Farmer George." Mary Symonds to Hester James, February 7, 1803, BL IOR, Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 100r-103v, 101r.

[102] Elizabeth wrote, "It was a disappointment that Lady Clive & her two daughters had left this place as they also were very free & agreable [sic] - she delighted in this Country & made large collections of curiosities which indeed any person might easily get but there is great difficulty in preserving them from the [word crossed out] ants which are perfect scavengers." Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds, October 2, 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 82r-83v, 82v-83r; Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany," 197.

Gwillim employed Dr. Johann Peter Rottler to help her better understand the local plants and the European system of botany. Rottler moved to Madras in 1803, having lived in South Asia for 27 years. Born in Strasbourg, France in 1749, he studied at the University of Strasbourg, a German-speaking Lutheran institution. He received ordination in Copenhagen before moving to Tranquebar as a missionary on behalf of the Society of Denmark.[103] He learned Tamil upon his arrival on the continent, preaching in the vernacular after only a year of study. He was so committed to the study of the language he wrote a dictionary in 1834, the first volume of which was dedicated to the Governor of Madras, Lord Bentinck. He was clearly proficient with the language and dedicated to its codification but had also built strong ties to the most important Europeans of the region.[104]

Rottler participated in botanical pursuit as soon as he got to Tranquebar, supervising the missionary garden in addition to his other duties.[105] Tranquebar was a center for those interested in botany, as Linnaeus's student John Gerhard König moved there in 1768.[106] Rottler traveled extensively on botanical "conquests" and became intimately familiar with southeast India and its plants.[107] Rottler participated in an active network of botanists in Europe, sharing his findings, sending seeds and letters, and eventually, a collection of almost 5,000 pressed specimens, which are currently housed in museums across Europe.[108] He was well-known in Europe for his

[103] T. Foulkes, "Biographical Memoir of Dr. Rottler" (*Madras Journal of Literature and Science*, No. 22, 1861), 2-3. https://archive.org/details/madrasjournalofl06madr/page/n10/mode/1up?view=theater
Current-day Tharangambadi, India.
[104] Johann Peter Rottler, et al. A *Dictionary of the Tamil and English Languages* (India: Vepery Mission Press, 1834), dedication [no page number].
[105] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 202.
[106] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 200.
[107] K. Matthew, "Notes on an Important Botanical Trip (1799-1800) of J. P. Rottler on the Coromandel Coast (India) with a Translation of His Original Text, Explanatory Notes and a Map" (*Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 113, no. 4, 1993), 368. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1006/bojl.1993.1075.
[108] Matthew, "Notes on an Important Botanical Trip (1799-1800) of J. P. Rottler," 352.

botanizing, particularly as he found several plant varieties that were new to Europe and Linnean taxonomy.

The secretary to Lord North, the first British Governor of former Ceylon, hired Rottler in 1803 to make a general tour of the island. Rottler's language skills and botanical knowledge were unparalleled, and the secretary Cleghorn remarked, "his eminent knowledge of Botany…will meet with approbation from the ministers of a Sovereign whose reign has been so honorably distinguished by promoting useful discoveries in every quarter of the globe."[109] Gwillim similarly sought legitimacy of her pursuit through the doctor, hiring him to teach her botany once or twice a week, starting in October 1804.[110]

Gwillim wrote to her sister Hetty James of her more academic approach to the natural science, "I am learning botany seriously - a gentleman lately come down the Country has lent me a large botanical library & Dr: Rottler the German Missionary [word crossed out] gives me a lesson once or twice a week."[111] Working with Rottler meant she had access to a wealth of language and botanical knowledge, as well as a lien to his connections in Europe and India. Her letter of 1806 detailed the vagaries of sending plants across the ocean, indicating she organized botanical packages on behalf of herself, Rottler, and the head of the Madras Botanical Garden, Dr. Berry. Rottler had worked with Berry in the winter of 1799 to 1800, publishing his observations of the plants in his care in a Berlin magazine.[112] In 1807 Symonds mentions Berry, writing of his request for her to paint a scientific representation of a plant that was new to

[109] Foulkes, "Biographical Memoir of Dr. Rottler," 8.
[110] Elizabeth first mentions Dr. Rottler by name in a letter to Hetty on October 14, 1804. In August of the same year she mentions, "we have some botanists come down now & I am becoming learned," presumably referring to Dr. Rottler, which would indicate a longer acquaintance. Elizabeth Gwillim to Hesther James, August 13, 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 208r-211v, 210v-211r.
[111] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, October 16, 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 236r-241v, 236r.
[112] Foulkes, "Biographical Memoir of Dr. Rottler," 7.

Europeans, the *Jateorhiza palmata*.[113] It is presumable that Gwillim and Symonds knew Berry independently of Rottler, but the nature of Gwillim's participation in the field was undoubtably taken more seriously because of the tutelage.

Gwillim was proud of her progress, learning the mechanics of the modern system, writing home she hoped it would help her identify the specimens she was sending back to England.[114] Rottler was clearly impressed with her scientific mind, as he commended her progress and endeavored to name a new variety of Magnolia after her, the previously mentioned *Gwillimia indica*.[115] A year into her studies with the doctor, Gwillim declared to Hetty James, "Dr: Rottler praises me too much & makes one lazy & turn my mind to other things."[116] He esteemed her talent and engagement with botanic study, particularly noting her artistic talent, requesting the painting she made of the *Gwillimia indica* for her family in England for himself.[117]

Rottler helped Gwillim learn botany but may have assisted her with language acquisition as well. Elizabeth most likely learned Telugu from a munshi - an Indian teacher of languages - or perhaps from her dubash - interpreter - who was a Telugu speaker.[118] Gwillim saw botany and language as intertwined, an understanding of botany aiding her understanding of Telugu. She understood plants were integrated into the expression of native Indian life in a way that made it necessary to know both systems. In 1805 she declared, "without some little knowledge of botany it is impossible to read the Hindoo language."[119] She appreciated this challenge, as, "after

[113] Mary Hester James, March 4, 1807 BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 365r-368v, 365v-366r. Further analysis in the section to follow.
[114] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, October 16, 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 236r-241v, 236 r.
[115] This is the only finished botanical painting accredited to Elizabeth Gwillim and is discussed further in the next section.
[116] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 6, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 258r-266r, n.f.
[117] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, 295v-296r.
[118] Personal correspondence with Dr. Anna Winterbottom, January 7, 2023.
[119] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 6, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 258r-266r, n.f.

learning a little Botany it seems almost impossible to stop –."[120]. Gwillim embarked upon learning Telugu soon after she arrived, and learning botany seriously served a dual purpose.[121]

Gwillim had a botanical network that included Europeans abroad, expatriates in India, and a wide range of local Indians. Symonds wrote Gwillim worked with native peoples across caste and religions, from poor country people collecting specimens, to doctors who knew common names and Brahmins who knew the Sanskrit names for plants.

> [Elizabeth's] present employments keep her quite happy I almost wish you could see her in her glory; that is, with about twenty black men round her, a table full of books, the floor strewed with baskets of seeded branches of trees, and she herself standing in the midst with her cap snatched to one side and talking away till she is quite fatigued. The seeds and plants are collected from the Hills, and woods, by some poor country people, and she gets some of the native Doctors to give her the common name, the Brahmins tell her the Sanscrit and the Books are consulted to find out the Linaean names so that with collecting plants &c raising them in our own garden, studying the Language & manners of this county [sic], & now & then drawing we continue thank God to amuse ourselves, and fill up all our time, without being indebted to to the society of the place…
>
> Mary Symonds to Ester Symonds, [no date, October 1803?][122]

Symonds's vivid depiction of Gwillim creates a sense of collaboration and mutual pursuit, despite the unequal power dynamics between individuals assembled. This passage is also particularly striking as it indicates the dedication with which Gwillim built her local botanical network and the systematic thoroughness of the pursuit. Symonds commented on Gwillim's ornithological efforts more frequently, noting a similar pattern: collaboration with locals, painting as soon as the specimen was available, establishing the local knowledge as she figured out how to codify it within the European system.

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[120] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 6, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 258r-266r, n.f.
[121] "I am very deep in Hindoo learning & am learning the Gentoo Language which I can write pretty well." Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 23, 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 72r-76v, 74 r.
[122] Mary Symonds to Ester Symonds, [no date, October 1803?], Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 160r-162v, 160 r.

Sardar and Urfi categorize this collaboration as a British dependency on the locals.[123] Gwillim's scientific efforts were made possible by the imperial dynamics in India, the quantity of plants she sent back to England proof of her local network. She was proud of the accolades from Sims, but also valued local recognition of her ambitions. Gwillim noted to her friend Nancy Green that even the servants would bring her items relevant to her pursuits in the "production of nature."[124] When she arrived in India, Gwillim had to take Indian boat from the British ship to land on shore, an image with metaphorical parallels to science: she brought her British ideas, but it was the strength of the scientific practice in India that buoyed her imperial botanizing efforts.

[123] Sardar and Urfi, "Ornithology and Natural History Studies in India," *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 237.
[124] Elizabeth Gwillim to Nancy Green [n.d.], Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 371v-373r, 371v-372r. Thanks to H. Noltie for the Latin name: Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany," 204.

CHAPTER 4. BOTANICAL PAINTING

The parallels between the worlds of art and science in Britain show similar trends as far as women's access to the field, compared through their respective organizations. There were proportionally more professional women painters than women botanists. The full extent of Gwillim's intentions for her botanical pursuits are unknown. I have referred to her botanizing in such terms as 'much more than amusement,' or as I did just now - 'pursuit.' Her letters indicate a diligence of efforts that makes them more than a hobby. Her scientific interests are clear, but not knowing her ambitions for her art, contextualizing within the world of the artists who showed at the Royal Academy in London illuminates potential goals.

Gwillim's botanical paintings are luminous and precise, stylistically similar with fine art in the genre displayed at the Royal Academy. Unlike the Royal Society, the Royal Academy of Arts was open to women from the very beginning, with Mary Moser (1744-1819) and Angelika Kauffman (1741-1807) serving on the first board.[125] Not allowed to attend classes, women could still participate in the annual exhibition. Over the years the numbers increased, and by 1799 "sixty-four women exhibited 103 works, more than 9 percent of all entries" at the Royal Academy.[126] Indeed, "between 1760 and 1830, more than thirteen hundred women showed more than seven thousand works of art in the most eminent exhibitions held in London and Paris, regularly contributing 7-12 percent of the pieces on display."[127] This rate dwarfs the contemporary number, as fewer than 5 percent of works on view in America and Europe in 2021 were by women, which meant that female artists were more visible in Gwillim's time than they are today.

[125] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 1.
[126] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 4.
[127] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 2.

Such visibility meant Gwillim was aware of the possibilities of personal commercial success through the Royal Academy, especially in the field of botanic art. Her assumed awareness is not just through cultural popularity of the exhibitions, but her husband's participation in the Society. Henry Gwillim was a contributing member to the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce before he was knighted.[128] His subscription was found in the 1796 journal along with more middle class titles such as Henry's own, national and international aristocrats, and cultural icons such as Sir Joseph Banks.[129] Henry Gwillim's subscription is noted on various years, the journal indicating his location and title changes until 1809, tracing his movement from England to Madras and back.[130] Henry's participation in the Academy ensured his wife had access to the annual exhibition and the ambitions to be gained from such events – as well as the social connections with which to foster them.

The earlier comparison of the Royal Society and guilds was made relative to the parameters of women's participation. A parallel line of inquiry demonstrates that, though restricted, women had opportunities in the art world that allowed them financial means and self-expression. The Royal Academy instituted submission parameters, which "seems to have inadvertently raised women's professional potential, opening its doors to women of divergent backgrounds."[131] Unlike the Royal Society and guilds, most women who took part in the exhibitions were from the middle class.[132] Though Elizabeth Gwillim gained a title later in life, she was not of the aristocracy, and her middle-class upbringing benefited her artistic ambitions.

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[128] The name changed to the Royal Society of Arts in 1908.
[129] "Front Matter" in *Transactions of the Society, Instituted at London, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* (14, 1796), 354. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41322000; Winterbottom, "Introduction," 11, footnote 74: 30.
[130] "Back Matter" in *Transactions of the Society, Instituted at London, for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures, and Commerce* (27, 1809), 284. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41325466.
[131] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 32.
[132] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 109.

This was partially due to those in the middle class not minding working for money, but significantly due to her family fostering drafting skills. Paris Spies-Gans showed 51.7% of female exhibitors had male relatives with an artistic career and 71.3% of exhibitors had a family member, male or female who was a professional artist.[133] The women who participated in the British art world were educated at home, with a relatively low rate of tutelage from art teachers. Gwillim and Symonds fell within and outside of these trends, as they benefited from the drafting experience of their parents, but also sought formal training, naming their painting teacher George Samuels in their letters.[134]

George Samuels (1770/71-1823) received an award from the Society of Arts in 1784 and exhibited annually at the Royal Academy from 1785 until 1822.[135] He painted in oils and watercolors, favoring landscapes and fashionable sites in and around London, advancing the popularity of the picturesque. Gwillim mentions working in his style, "I am working away after his manner in back grounds [sic] to my birds."[136] This is presumably a reference to the backgrounds of her ornithological paintings that included stylistic landscapes depicting geography, plants, and sometimes people or buildings. About 15 of the collection at Rare Books demonstrates this composition.[137] Samuel's *Royal Naval Hospital and the Queen's House, Greenwich, the Isle of Dogs beyond* [fig. 5] is composed in thirds, the bottom showing stylized trees and greenery, the midground featuring a building accented with little figures of people and wildlife, with a view in the distance. Gwillim's background follows this formula in *Crested*

[133] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 85.
[134] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 18, 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 49r-54v, 50v.
[135] F. M., O'Donoghue and Rosie Dias. "Samuel, George (1770/71–1823), landscape painter and topographical draughtsman." *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.* 23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 2 Nov. 2022. https://www-oxforddnb-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-24604.
[136] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 18, 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 49r-54v, 50v.
[137] A comparison of Elizabeth's work with that of her teacher can be found in the appendix, figures 2 and 3.

Partridge (Rollulus rouloul) [fig. 6], with large tufts of grasses in the fore, and little partridges in the background, an echo of the figures in Samuel's painting. The background of *Crested Partridge* sketches a ruin and indicates a longer view, staples in the Romantic style.

Figure 5: G. Samuel, *The Royal Naval Hospital and the Queen's House, Greenwich, Isle of Dogs beyond*, no date.

Figure 6: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Crested Partridge (Rollulus rouloul)*, [between 1801 and 1807].

The rest of her ornithological paintings depict the bird with limited background such as a midground that is sparsely or fully depicted, or no grounding at all, the bird floating in white space. Gwillim noted when Symonds sent scenes of people and landscapes, hoping they might be

"useful" to him.[138] Gwillim's connection with Samuels was quite friendly, extending beyond painting technique, as she sent him Indian curiosities and long letters. The intention in sharing the painting is not clear, but Gwillim entreated Hetty James to not give the paintings away (or, potentially, to sell them), as she thought they were a fantastic depiction of those native to Madras.

Whereas many women did not have access to nature and extremely few English women traveled to India, Gwillim had a rare opportunity for commercial success. While botany is seen as the more available science to women, for women painters, landscapes and "drawing from nature" were often inaccessible, and the parlor appropriate portraits or miniatures made up 51.7% of the entries by women to the Royal Academy between 1769 and 1830. [139] Only 15.8% of paintings exhibited by women depicted landscapes or views, and an even smaller 12.7% were flowers or still life paintings. This is in contrast with the overall entries, which show a lower popularity of portraits and a higher popularity for landscapes, 44.5% and 30.7% respectively, with flowers and still life paintings the least popular, at 1.6% of total entries.[140]

Beyond personal enjoyment and enriching occupation, artistic practice could provide income in an otherwise professionally limited world, a "sort of an insurance for a woman and her family in their war-torn world."[141] Proficiency at the professional level allowed for potential financial independence, a small grace in Gwillim's world of war, foundering ships, familiar and foreign diseases, and limited healthcare. Her efforts in Madras were amateur but could have contributed to a professional career. Many died on assignment in India, and had Henry passed before she did, her art skills could have provided essential income. Indeed, she was known in the

[138] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, no date. maybe spring 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 167r-177v, 170v.
[139] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 118-119.
[140] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 119.
[141] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 107.

community in Madras for her art and complained of the need to display her paintings as it cut into her time to make them; "from ten to twelve is all the time for writing learning or drawing - only 2 hours out of 24!! & yet more often than every other day - people come & take up those two hours."[142]

Calling her efforts amateur recognizes their level of accomplishment, as 'amateur' had much more positive connotations in Gwillim's day. An amateur indicated gentlemanly status, just enough knowledge, and refined taste without the need to garner a wage from the pursuit. Accomplished non-professionals were seen similarly in the worlds of art and science, though women were more often characterized as non-professional.[143] Gendered notions of respectability kept women's participation in either venture out of the public eye, as "the learned woman was castigated as a 'female pedant'" making her vulnerable to social censure, whether in the realm of art or science.[144] Taxonomic botany was seen as a man's venture, while flower portraits were a more feminine pursuit. A woman could occupy this liminal space of reclusive expertise, as "the aesthetically refined, practically orientated, amateur botanist filled the space between the expert collector and the ignorant anthophile."[145] Making the leap from amateur to professional would have meant carefully defining who one appeared to be, pursuing success from a feminized field such as flower painting a safer social venture.

The exhibitions at the Royal Academy in London featured many women artists, previously observed to have exhibited flower paintings at a higher rate than men. A few women

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[142] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, September 10, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 142r-149v, 148v.
[143] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 13.
[144] Sarah Easterby-Smith, *Cultivating Commerce: Cultures of Botany in Britain and France, 1760–1815*, (Science in History, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 86, 108. doi:10.1017/9781316411339.004; Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 234-237; Melissa Hyde and Jennifer Milam, eds, *Women, Art and the Politics of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Europe* (London: Routledge, 2003), 7. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.4324/9781315233666
[145] Easterby-Smith, *Cultivating Commerce*, 119.

famously participated in painting flowers and plants before the turn of the nineteenth century, among them, Madeleine Basseporte (1701-1780), who worked at the Jardin du Roi in Paris at the time of Linnaeus, and Moser, who was on the board of the Royal Academy was a celebrated flower painter.[146] Moser was commissioned by Queen Charlotte in 1794, affirming that women were not only accomplished painters in the genre, but also had "high connections and cultural influence."[147] Clara Maria Wheatley Pope (c. 1767-1838) and Mary Lawrance (*fl.* 1793-1830) were both well-known contemporaries of Gwillim, exhibiting their floral paintings at the Royal Academy in the years before she left for India.[148]

Mary Lawrance had her work on the walls of the Royal Academy as early as 1793, Clara Maria Pope following soon thereafter, her first exhibit in 1796.[149] They were both popular artists, employed to create elaborate botanical plates for publication, Pope's work popularized in the press and Lawrance published multiple collections of floral prints. Earlier artists, such as Moser, painted arrangements that featured multiple blooms in a vase [fig. 7], but the style evolved by the end of the eighteenth century, favoring single flowers. They varied in their execution, some more elaborate than others, such as Pope's *Ranunculus* [fig. 8], which featured a stylized landscape in the background reminiscent of formal portraits, or the backgrounds of Gwillim's ornithological paintings. There are also many examples of a simpler style, which depicted the bloom on a white background, the flower delicately and precisely rendered, the leaves and stem often fading to the background. Mary Lawrance's 1799 *A Collection of Roses from Nature* exemplified this style, the flower delicately and precisely rendered [fig. 9].

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[146] Kramer and Sunshine, *Women of Flowers*, 35; Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 61.
[147] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 31.
[148] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 18-9, 253-5; Kramer, *Women of Flowers*, 152-4.
[149] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 18, 255.

Figure 7 (left): Mary Moser, *Floral Still life*, no date.

Figure 8 (right): Clara Maria Pope, *Ranunculus*, Undated (before 1820).

Figure 9: Mary Lawrance, *Rosa Centifolia or Dutch hundred leaved rose*, 1799.

Lawrance's plate subtly demonstrates different views of the rose depicted on the same stem, as her prints showed the front, side and back view and buds in different stages of opening. This simple formula was useful to botanists as well as comely, making a popular print. It was also reminiscent of portraiture, though a style more popular with miniatures.

These flower paintings rarely detailed the root systems, nor did they separate out the reproductive parts of the flower, key to the Linnaean system and both hallmarks of botanical painting.[150] Gwillim's extant works follow the trend in popularized flower paintings, though they often are botanically specific. Only ten sheets of her flower paintings were found along with the collection of ornithological works by Wood in 1924. An additional work was found in the Smith collection of the Linnean Society of London.[151] A beautiful and detailed watercolor painting of the Magnolia with a typed scientific notation of *Magnolia coco* [fig. 15] demonstrates Gwillim's capacity as botanical artist. Her painting skill can also be seen in her ornithological drawings, as the backgrounds are quite detailed and demonstrate a range of botanical specimens in situ.

Gwillim's botanical paintings are delicately colored and show a range of focus, some studies of only stem and leaf, while others are focused solely on the bloom. They were not in the same style as the paintings she made of birds, where there was a whole scene, but are individual studies, where the there is a singular focus of the painting, presented without a background. Root patterns were only detailed in one, the *Anemone hepatica* [fig. 10]. While most of the paintings detail one view, the *Callistephus chinensis*, "China Aster," and ranunculus have multiple aspects of the blooms, displaying different sides or colors [figs. 11 & 12]. The small collection demonstrates Gwillim's interest in a range of plants, from the humble cowslip or *primula,* to the exotic amaryllis [figs. 13 & 14]. These are not Indian flora particularly, but were popular blooms in England, whether found alongside the roads or cultivated in private greenhouses by flower enthusiasts.[152]

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[150] Shteir, *Cultivating Women,* 41.
[151] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 204.
[152] Subramanya, "The Ornithology of Elizabeth, Lady Gwillim," in Winterbottom, Anna; Dickenson, Victoria; Williams, Lauren; Cartwright, Ben (eds.), *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press. Not yet released), 90; Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany," *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire,* 210.

Figure 10: Elizabeth Gwillim, *[Untitled leaves]; Anemone hepatica*, *c*. 1800. Right: anemone roots and stems.

Figure 11: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Callistephus chinensis "China Aster," c.* 1800. Right: closeup of the top stem.

Figure 12 (left): Elizabeth Gwillim, *Ranunculus asiaticus*, c. 1800.

Figure 13 (right): Elizabeth Gwillim, *Cowslip or primula veris*, c. 1800.

Figure 14: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Amaryllis belladonna*, c. 1800.

Gwillim's watercolor of the magnolia Rottler named for her, the *Gwillimia indica* [fig. 15], was so well regarded she painted it multiple times, giving one to her tutor and sending another across the sea.[153] The finished watercolor in the collection of James Edward Smith, the

[153] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, 295v-296r.

founder and President of the Linnean Society (1788-1828), was the one Gwillim gave to Rottler. Her signature marks the bottom lefthand corner, while 'Madras Nov 1804' is found on the bottom right, just under the pencil inscription, 'Rottler.' He sent a letter on September 2, 1805 along with the painting, and declared Gwillim's "Love and Application to Botany really deserves a place among those, whose Names are immortalized in the System."[154] In a follow up letter on October 15, 1807, he asked if "the Gwillimia has found a place as a new Genus in the System."[155] Rottler wrote both letters when Gwillim was still actively participating in botanic study, so it was not a nostalgic commemoration of who she had been, but an eager affirmation of who she was becoming.

Figure 15: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Lady Gwillim's watercolour of 'Gwillimia indica.*' 1805.

The painting depicted the magnolia in full bloom, the clipped branch with graceful leaves cradling two flowers, pistil and stamens precisely detailed in the open bloom, a bud nodding in the other direction. The painting is lively and animate, a snapshot of the plant at its peak, an

[154] Henry J. Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's 'Madras' Magnolia" (Retrieved August 12, 2022). https://stories.rbge.org.uk/archives/34065; Johan Peter Rottler, Veprey, near Madras, [India], to James Edward Smith, Norwich, [Norfolk] (2 September 1805, GB-110/JES/ADD/86), 2.
[155] Johan Peter Rottler, Veprey, near Madras, [India], to James Edward Smith, Norwich, [Norfolk] (15 October 1807, GB-110/JES/ADD/88), 1. https://linnean-online.org/64475/#?s=0&cv=0.

image that illustrated what dried specimens later delivered to England would have been like. It was kept in Smith's collection, a typed '*Magnolia coco*' label fixed above the faintest marking of *Gwillimia indica* noted at the bottom of the page. The branch floats in midair, no indication of the bush or of its habitat, the colors still vibrant despite the intervening centuries.[156]

Gwillim's flower paintings found by Casey Wood are similarly vibrant, delicately colored, and lack a background, though they are not as complete as the *Gwillimia indica* (*Magnolia coco*), some have the added perspective of a shadow. Of the twelve sketches, all show a singular species, the *Glauca luteum* [fig. 16] the only study of a stem, and the second sketch with the *Anemone hepatica* [fig. 10] detailing two fallen petals. This collection demonstrates the contemporary interest in botany, a cataloguing of indigenous English blooms and exotic blooms cajoled to grow in English greenhouses.

Of the flowers she painted, the *Chironia* [fig. 17], *Amaryllis belladonna* [fig. 14], *Erythrina herbacea* [fig. 18], are all native to South Africa, while the *Anemone hepatica* [fig. 10] was first found in North America. It is possible that Gwillim painted the South African blooms while on her way to India, as the Cape of Good Hope was a common stopping point. Elizabeth could have painted from flower seeds she brought to her Madras gardens, as she grew English vegetable seeds. It is also possible that the exotic flowers were housed by an amateur or professional grower in England, such as her friend Whitley. Roses [fig. 19], and Cowslip, or *Primula veris* [fig. 13] are both popular field and garden flowers in England. Such a confluence of plants indicates this was work that predates her tenure in Madras, probably housed by her

[156] The preservation of color in the painting is partially due to the quality of paints that Elizabeth used. For further studies on this topic, refer to the case study on The Gwillim Project site by Hana Nikčević, "'I shall want colours and paper for drawing': Artists Materials." https://thegwillimproject.com/artwork-2/i-shall-want-colours-and-paper-for-drawing-what-did-the-gwillims-use-to-paint/.

sister Hetty James when Gwillim left for India.[157] Of the many plants Gwillim mentions in her letters, whether observing her surroundings or reference a particular botanical pursuit, none of these specimens were mentioned by name or description.

Figure 16: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Glaucium luteum or Glaucium flavum*, c. 1800.

Figure 17: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Chironia*, *c*. 1800.

[157] Henry Noltie also comes to this conclusion in "Lady Gwillim's Botany," *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 207.

Figure 18: Elizabeth Gwillim, *Erythrina*, c. 1800.

Figure 19: Gwillim, Elizabeth. *Rosa sp*. C. 1800.

Of this collection, the *Anemone hepatica* is the most botanically accurate, though it is the least detailed, as the downy fur that insulates the stem is not represented. Gwillim includes such details in other illustrations, representing fine hairs on the stem *Callistephus chinesis*, and faint thorns on *Rosa sp.* but omitted the bottom half of the stems and the roots on both [figs. 11 & 19]. Her *Ranunculus asiaticus* are a fluff of petals, similar to the fine feathering of many of her birds, the blooms floating in the middle of the page with light sketch marks depicting stems and leaf

patterns [fig. 12]. While perhaps disappointing in the context of professional botany, they are beautiful floral ‘portraits,’ following the examples of Pope and Lawrance.

The three types of backgrounds in Gwillim’s 121 ornithological paintings ranged from a bird floating in white space, to a bit of midground for scale and contrast, to the bird in a richly detailed landscape. There are very few paintings that can be considered a combination of Gwillim’s interests, with five or so paintings of birds that also foreground plants. The *Common Starling* is perhaps the best example in the collection of this combination [fig. 20], with a small speckled species standing over a flowering vine. The botanical specimen is delicately depicted, showing the growing habit of the vine and flowers from light pink bud to blushing bloom. It looks like it is of the *Ipomoea* family, with varieties such as morning glory or sweet potato vine. In 1815, a botanical collection published an illustration of *Ipomoea paniculata* [fig. 21], describing the tenacious vine with pink bell-like flowers.


62

IPOMŒA paniculata.

Panicled Ipomœa.

PENTANDRIA MONOGYNIA.

IPOMŒA. Supra fol. 9.

I. *paniculata*, foliis palmatis: lobis septenis (quinis v. trinis) ovatis acutis integerrimis, pedunculis paniculatis. (*Char. ex Lin.*)

Ipomœa manicatana. *Jacq. coll.* 4. 210. *hort. schœnb.* 2. 39. *t.* 220.

Convolvulus paniculatus. *Lin. sp. pl.* 1. 223. *Willd. sp. pl.* 1. 865. *Hort. Kew. ed.* 2. 1. 354.

Matta-pull-toga. *Hortus, ex Rottboegh in MSS.*

Pal-modecca. *Rheed. mal.* 11. 101. *t.* 49.

Perennis, lactescens, tota glabra. Radix ex tuberibus conjunctis elongatis, *interdum, ceteu fusciis.* Caulis *(modò plures,)* sulcatus, subangulatus, teres, *ramosus, culmum crassus, ramosus.* Folia patulata, alterna, palmata, subquinquelinealia, 7-nervia, glabra, lobis extimis brevioribus, *non lato brevi ad basin; petiolus folia parum brevior.* Pedunculi axillares, solitarii, multiflori, longitudine foroi foliorum, erecti. Cal. subglobosus, parvus, dentriculus, chlorolinearis, longitudine tubi corollæ, foliolis subrotundis, dorso alto convexis, imbricato-conniventibus. Cor. subinfundibuli, rosea-pallescens, urceolato-campanulata; tubus brevis barbiculo-angustus albicans; fauces *5-plo longior, multifida ampliar, ventricosa- v. urceolata-cylindrica; limbus late subrotundus, patens, laciniis retusis nisi late brevi cum mucrone in medio.* Fil. *alba, inclusa, fauci aequalia, erecto-conniventia, basi barbata, 2 longiora; anth. subvolvente.* Stigma capitato-didymum, corrugatum. Caps. *3-dua, 6-valv.* Sem. *lanata.*

In distinguishing the characters of Convolvulus and Ipomœa, Linnæus had combined differences taken from the stigma with others from the corolla. But the differences of the one not being uniformly conjoined with those of the other, and in the corolla having no definable limit, he had been repeatedly led to refer to Convolvulus plants with the stigma allotted to Ipomœa, as in the present instance. Many similar transpositions having accumulated, from the attempts of succeeding botanists to conform in their arrangement of species to the characters so constituted, the two genera had become nearly useless in relation to each other. But Jacquin, in his late reform of their characters, has relied singly upon the difference of the stigmas; and no dislocation seems to be thence inferred in the natural connexion of the species that could have been avoided by more complex combinations, as the species are now found

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Figure 20 (left): Gwillim, Elizabeth, *Common Starling (Sturnus vulgaris).* C. 1801-107, Madras, India.

Figure 21 (right): Edwards, Sydenham, *The Botanical Register: Consisting of Coloured Figures of Exotic Plants Cultivated in British Gardens; with their History and Mode of Treatment: Volume 1*, 62.

> The present plant is a native of the East Indies, where, according to Mr. Roxburgh, it grows in hedges and thickets…Introduced [in England] in 1799 by Mr. Thomas Gibbs. We owe the opportunity of taking the present drawing to Mr. John Hall, in whose hothouse, at Notting Hill, the plant flowered this summer in great perfection. We had never before seen it in flower ; but we had found young plants of it at Messrs. Whitley, Brames, and Milnes nursery.
>
> Edwards, *The Botanical Register,* 1815[158]

William Roxburgh (1751-1815) was a Scottish surgeon and botanist who worked in Madras before he left to be Superintendent of the Calcutta Botanical Garden. He was clearly familiar with *Ipomoea paniculata*, but it is up to conjecture as to how Whitley procured the root. Roxburgh and Rottler were close colleagues, and it is possible the tuber was in one of the many packages Gwillim sent back to England to Whitley.

Only a couple of paintings of birds have such prominent botanic specimens, though they seem to be used for different reasons. The Desert wheateater (Oenanthe deserti) [fig. 22] is on the same plane as a giant plume of wheat, in apparent tribute to its name. Various palms, grasses, and indistinct trees form backgrounds, mimosa (a species of *Vitex*, either *negundo* or *agnus-castus*) particularly common, the gentle fronds providing a scale with which one can better understand the true size of the bird depicted [figs. 24 & 25].[159] The Common iora (Aegithina tiphia) [fig. 23] is nestled among the tiny butter-colored mango (*Mangifera indica*) blooms at the end of the branch, its breast of bright yellow the slightest contrast. Gwillim understood mango to be "the favourite fruit of the country" and in "The Ornithology of Elizabeth, Lady Gwillim" Suryanarayana Subramanya notes that she painted a captive bird.[160] She probably did not mean

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[158] Sydenham Edwards, *The Botanical Register: Consisting of Coloured Figures of Exotic Plants Cultivated in British Gardens; with their History and Mode of Treatment: Volume 1* (London: James Ridgeway, Piccadilly, 1815), 62, https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/312150#page/272/mode/1up.

[159] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 208.

[160] Subramanya, "The Ornithology of Elizabeth, Lady Gwillim" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 115-116. Quoting Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, 18 March 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1,ff. 55r-57v, f. 52r. For more details on plants represented in bird paintings, see 102.

for it to be political commentary on the status of women in society, or the imperial relationship of England towards India, but the metaphorical significance has some value.

Figure 22 (left): Elizabeth Gwillim, *Desert wheateater (Oenanthe deserti)*, c. 1801-1807.

Figure 23 (right): Elizabeth Gwillim, *Common iora (Aegithina tiphia),*. c. 1801-1807.

Figure 24 (left): Elizabeth Gwillim, *Red Munia (Amandava amandava), c*. 1801-1807.

Figure 25 (right): Elizabeth Gwillim, *Purple heron (Ardea purpurea), c*. 1801-1807.

Many of Gwillim's botanical paintings were lost in transit and it is known that some were disbursed prior to the sale of the collection of her works to Casey Wood. In his description of

buying the collection, Wood wrote that the dealer had sold some of it over the years, "mostly for framing but sometimes for decorating fire- and other screens!"[161] Symond's letters also reveal that she painted botanical works that are not in a public collection, such as the painting of the *Jateorhiza palmata* encouraged by Berry of the Madras Botanical Garden.[162] Gwillim's botanical network as ascertained through her letters illuminates the quality of her efforts and activity, which in many ways is more descriptive of her intent to participate in the field of botany than the discovered illustrations. It is safe to assume that there are many more of Gwillim's illustrations out there, but they cannot, as of yet, be studied.

[161] Wood, "Lady (Elizabeth) Gwillim," 596.
[162] Mary Symonds to Hester James, March 4, 1807, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 365r-368v, 366v; 'Western' in contrast to Indian copyists.

CHAPTER 5. IMPERIALISM

In establishing the bounds of Gwillim's botanizing, it is important to examine the structure within which she was acting. As Henry Noltie observed, formal learning in botany was "unusual for a woman of her status and position in India."[163] In some ways she was participating in a practice that was rare, but established, for an upper-class woman in England. In moving to India her middle-class roots translated into a situation of increased social power. In part because she had a title and position of importance due to her husband's work, partially because of the disparity in social status of the people around her due to the British imperial project.

Part of the significance of Gwillim's work is the location in which it was made and the circumstances of her tenure. Imperialism's influence was ubiquitous, showing up in her everyday life as it did her pursuits. When Gwillim arrived in India with Henry and Mary, British Parliament was slowly taking over governing the Presidencies from the EIC, having already established the Madras Supreme Court. It was not thought of as a colonial project, as Symonds reflected in 1804, "the English are only here for a few years, as it is contrary to the Policy at present to settle a Colony."[164] Regardless of intention, the imperial project was in full swing, the British established in overt as well as more covert ways. Henry Gwillim's position as puisne judge for the Supreme Court of Madras meant he set precedent in the use of British law for Indian peoples and imported essential British legal structures such as *habeas corpus*.[165]

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[163] Noltie, "Lady Gwillim's Botany" in *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 201.
[164] From Mary Symonds to Unknown recipient, February 1804, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 212r-216v, 214v.
[165] I investigated this parallel in a paper that expanded upon the legal aspects of Henry's work and summarized Elizabeth's botanizing in a paper for Laila Parson's Winter 2022 class Empire and Imperialisms at McGill University: currently under review for publish with *Cahiers d'histoire*; Huw V. Bowen, "The 'Little Parliament': The General Court of the East India Company, 1750–1784," *The Historical Journal* (34, no. 4, 1991), 857 ; Inagaki, *The Rule of Law and Emergency in Colonial India,"* 13.

The EIC fought to exploit the continent with those native to India as well as other Europeans. Though Symonds and Gwillim both make supercilious comments about the way Dutch and Portuguese treated Indians, they skated over the atrocities wrought at the hands of the English. Gwillim characterized Dutch men and women as immorally unchaste and cruel, "a disgrace to humanity."[166] While she initially wondered at the audacity of the English ruling a place in which they were such a minority of the population, she casually lumped the British executions of native Indians as part of idle lady's tea-time chatter three years later.[167] In *Colonial Justice in British India,* Elizabeth Kolsky traces the origins of British rule in India through law and lawlessness, remarking upon the identity that allowed for such an infringement of humanity: "Britons saw themselves as 'the lords of human kind,' a master race and a race of masters."[168] This frame of mind allowed the cognitive dissonance that proclaimed superiority to Indians as well as the other Europeans while it dismissed British violence.

Gwillim arrived in India shortly after the EIC established its settlements as English sovereign territories governed by English law, which effectively "transformed Indians into aliens in their own lands."[169] This alienation of home to natives into something foreign was a process that can be seen culturally in botany and art. The British were obsessed with categorizing and establishing the worth of items, a sense of superiority over the continent where they asserted increasing control.[170] This codification happened in conjunction with scientific collaboration with native peoples.[171] Constructivist arguments provide a theoretical framework with which to

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[166] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, 285v-286r.
[167] Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds, October 17, 1801, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 14r-18v, 17r; Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds March 7, 1804, BL IOR, Mss.Eur.C.240/3, ff. 184r-192v, 190v.
[168] Elizabeth Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India,* Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society, 17 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 16.
[169] Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India,* 31.
[170] Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge : The British in India* (Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 77.
[171] Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 5.

recognize the mix of people who contributed their efforts from the "myth that natural philosophy was somehow the peculiar property of Britain."[172] This understanding reveals the invisible role of those who were under imperial rule, and who cocreated the science commonly understood as Western.

India not only provided new materials to the European canon of natural history, but the native peoples contributed their own scientific understanding to materials. Sardar and Urfi's history of Indian science demonstrates parallels in European development: adherence and expansion of Roman and Greek concepts of animal and plant sciences, with a focus on medical uses of the latter. Categorization was important, which in the late 1500s turned into a more specific and observed understanding of the natural world. The artist Ustad Mansur (*f.* 1590-1624) was famous for his paintings of animals and plants, his depictions clearly reflecting that they were painted from life, not stuffed specimens.[173]

Though unequal, South Asia was an active participant in the development of knowledge, as ideas in science "disseminate only through complex processes of accommodation and negotiation, as contingent as those involved in their production." [174] Gauri Viswanathan's 1990 *Masks of Conquest* argued the educational efforts provided a space of transference and adaptation, which Kapil Raj's 2007 *Relocating Modern Science* took farther, demonstrating native populations actively participated in the creation of knowledge, specifically botany. [175]

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[172] Peter Walmsley, "Science, Masculinity, and Empire in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah*," in *Imagining the Sciences: Expressions of New Knowledge in the "Long" Eighteenth Century*, ed. Robert C. Leitz, III and Kevin L. Cope, (New York: AMS Press, 2004), 162.
[173] Sardar and Urfi, "Ornithology and Natural History Studies in India," *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 231.
[174] Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 13; 9.
[175] Gauri Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest : Literary Study and British Rule in India* (Twenty-fifth anniversary ed, Oxford India Paperbacks, De Gruyter, New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 20. https://doi-org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.7312/visw17169.

Raj elucidated that English scientific professionals did not impart the canon of natural history in their interactions with specialists in the native Indian population, as much as they created a new hybrid science.[176] Sardar and Urfi also alluded to this melding between cultures as early as the sixteenth century.[177] This collaboration took place in the context of an imperialist agenda and the process of institutionalization reflected British efforts to define themselves as superior to their Indian counterparts. Raj described the active participation of Bengali elites in this introduction of hierarchy, as they sought "new identity and legitimacy."[178] This active participation in the imperialist identity-making does not lessen the fact that it served to strengthen Western cultural hegemony in the long run.[179] This new hybrid science supported British supremacy, using ideas of hierarchy in nature as support for hierarchy in society.[180]

Gwillim commented on her perception of the local understanding of plants, one she characterized as relating to religious or spiritual practices, with incidental medicinal effect. In a letter of 1803, she wrote to her mother of the local relationship with plants, drawing a parallel to Nicholas Culpeper's astrological botany.

> Tho' their mode of studying Botany differs from our's at least our modern mode - such respect have they for the vegetable tribes that many of the more useful plants are venerated as Divinities. But their books & descriptions are exactly in the stile [sic] of Culpepper. & a plant is seldom not selected as a remedy for any natural quality but for the influence which some Planet [word crossed out] is supposed to have over it. - -
>
> Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds October 20-21, 1803[181]

[176] Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 172.
[177] Sardar and Urfi, "Ornithology and Natural History Studies in India," *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 232.
[178] Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 166.
[179] Viswanathan, *Masks of Conquest*, 2.
[180] Raj, *Relocating Modern Science*, 156.
[181] Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds October 20-21, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 154r-159v, 155r.

She wrote of the incidental healing effect of herbs and medical methods in local practice, while dismissing the observation that had supported their practice. She wrote, "they have formed no notion how the qualities of vegetables act on the human body," yet "have many excellent medicine [sic] amongst their Vegetables & which they apply [word crossed out] frequently with great success."[182] As the Indian systems were different than those used by English physicians, she identified their generations of practice of medicinal plants usage and subsequent capacity as 'accidental,' an active erasure of their knowledge. Though she relied on participation of Indians to develop the field, she did not esteem them more than her peers who considered the native understanding of the world as prescientific.[183] Gwillim, like other Europeans, saw her role as modernizing Indian plant knowledge, codifying it into the 'true' scientific system.

An exploration of taxonomy and artistic practice in the imperial context will be explored, but it is important to note that just as much as Gwillim looked to locals to understand native Indian flora and fauna, Indians included European systems of knowledge in their development of science. Sardar and Urfi mention Gwillim's contemporary, Raja Sarabhoji or Serfoji of Tanjore (*r.* 1798-1832) establishing botanic gardens, schools, and libraries with which to study plants and animals.[184] He studied with British tutors, which was reflected in his methodology. Raja Sarabhoji participated within the imperial framework as he looked to the 'modern' practice of European science. Without an understanding of his personal perspective, a scientific view shows he kept in step with the discipline and was just as thorough as Gwillim.

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[182] Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds October 20-21, 1803, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 154r-159v, 157r.
[183] Raj, "Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities," 134; Walmsley, "Science, Masculinity, and Empire in Elizabeth Hamilton's *Hindoo Rajah*," 159.
[184] Sardar and Urfi, "Ornithology and Natural History Studies in India," *Women, Environment and Networks of Empire*, 233.

Imperialism of Taxonomy

Botanists for the Crown and the EIC were primarily in search of medicinal or economically significant plants, though the aims and personal interests of the scientists did not always match their employers.[185] The idea of discovering a specimen unknown to the Linnaean system that could be named in their honor was an enormous motivation. Nomenclature was the most important aspect of botany to Linnaeus, besides classification. The claim for a discovery that led to naming was often hard-won by those in India, hampered by slow and incomplete communication between continents. Science often seemed to travel between metropole and the Presidencies, ideas and concepts mostly moving from Europe to India, the impact of Indian scientists unrecognized.[186] Gwillim and her tutor experienced this in their efforts to claim the Magnolia as *Gwillimia indica*, spending years trying to establish her as the first to introduce the variety to the Linnean system. Her magnolia was ultimately named by Portuguese missionary João de Loureiro, but both parties looked to Europe as the central space of intellectual codification.

The general scientific collaboration in India shows that Gwillim worked within the professional standards in the field set by her male European colleagues in her old home and new. She studied Latin and Telugu to better categorize and understand plant matter. Latin was the language of academic exchange in Europe (and the European globe) and Telugu was one of many local languages in Madras.[187] Gwillim studied botany to help her understand Telugu, as plants were important to expression in the language, writing her sister "their allusions to

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[185] David John Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze: India, Landscape, and Science, 1800-1856* (University of Washington Press, 2006) 163. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=3563206.
[186] Arnold, *The Tropics and the Traveling Gaze*, 169. "From the perspective of many [white British] botanists in India, who craved reciprocity, it all too often appeared a one-way traffic."
[187] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 200; Schiebinger writes that Latin was considered safe from the participation of women and others who could not communicate in it and was therefore 'neutral.'

particular plants which are essential to their different ceremonies are so pointed that unless you know the plants which Botany alone can teach you, the merit of the whole passage is lost…"[188] Gwillim's study of plants was clearly an end in and of itself, but also supported understanding the local people and customs. Mary described Gwillim's botanizing, as detailed in the section on her botanical network, a passage that also illuminated Gwillim's taxonomic efforts. Symonds wrote that Gwillim relied on a network where "the native Doctors…give her the common name, the Brahmins tell her the Sanscrit and the Books are consulted to find out the Linaean names…"[189] This was a thorough exploration of the taxonomy of plants, an apt illustration of the collaboration that was part of the codification of botany.

Gwillim's sequence of identifying names offers a window into the process of separating the names born of a native culture, and the reidentification through the Linnaean system of Latin binomials. In this context, taxonomy erased one culture as another claimed it, repeating a parallel of alienation that was seen when the EIC settled in India, making Indians foreign in their homeland under the new legal system.[190] In Londa Schiebinger's 2004 *Plants and Empire,* she dedicates a chapter to 'Linguistic Imperialism,' specifically considering botany within the socio-political process of naming. Just as sending plants across the ocean displaced them, renaming erased history, cultural location, use, and a network of relationships and they were "uprooted from their native cultures and acclimatized to colonial rule by being given European names."[191] The practice of giving a Latin binomial to a plant created a false sense of neutrality, cutting it off

[188] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, March 6, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 258r-266r, f. 264r.
[189] Mary Symonds to Ester Symonds, [no date, October 1803?], Mss.Eur.C.240/2, ff. 160r-162v, 160 r.
[190] Kolsky, *Colonial Justice in British India*, 30-1.
[191] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 196.

from its roots of cultural naming practices and uses, replaced by a combination of words that was agreed upon by convention with arbitrary connections to the plant.[192]

Plant names went from having a long and connected history to a place that indicated their use in healing and spiritual practice, to celebrating the colonial rule. Linnaeus guarded the right to name plants in his system, prioritizing celebrated botanists he knew. This worked to reinforce the idea that "science is created by great individuals," and incidentally European men: professionals prioritized, excluding women, non-Europeans, and those considered unqualified.[193] This exclusion of other histories made the story of plants into one of elite European individuals, the honor of naming akin to immortality, Linnaeas calling it the "'highest honor that mortal man can desire.'"[194]

Names reflected their native roots only when Linnaeus could find a close word in Latin or Greek with which he could create a sort of amalgamation of ancient and modern. This is seen with the beautiful night blooming *Datura,* a name allowed for its "association with *dare* from the Latin meaning 'to give, because it is 'given' to those whose sexual powers are weak or enfeebled.'"[195] Linnaeus's activities are emphasized as he served as an organizing force within the European botanical world and whose taxonomic structure has remained the standard since then.[196] The history of plant taxonomy demonstrates the imperial priorities and a hierarchy of knowledge between continents.

Alexandra Cook complicates this imperialist narrative, pointing out that Linnaeas only named 10% of plants after botanists, preferring to use as much local knowledge as possible. In

[192] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire,* 198.
[193] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire,* 203.
[194] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire,* 204, citing Linneaus in *Critica botanica*, no. 236.
[195] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire,* 200, citing Linneaus to Haller, cited in *Critica botanica*, vii-viii; no. 218, 229.
[196] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire,* 204.

Cook's case study of 131 plants from China, local names paid tribute to prominent men, and therefore "if Latin patronymics conceal local knowledge, Chinese patronymics must do likewise," both entrenching a patriarchal naming system.[197] She claims Linnaeus saw Asia as an economic and cultural equal to Sweden, or Europe, the use of botanist's names for plants a convenience instead of an imperialist act. In an examination of 286 economically important plants, 11% did not have a Greek or Latin root, but were based in the language native to their origin.[198] While this article adds interesting nuance to the conversation, the argument of the intentions of the father and son Linnaeus does not fully acknowledge the effect of a unifying taxonomy, which inherently values the global over the local or personal.

Though she writes of many European individuals in her network, Gwillim only mentions a couple of Indian servants by name, none of whom helped her scientific pursuits. The Indians who shared plants with Gwillim were nameless in her letters, her letter to Nancy Green showing her delight in botanizing was supported by her staff: "even the servants bring me whatever they find that has not fallen in" the most specific mention of the native network that supported her.[199] Through Gwillim's botanical network and the taxonomic efforts of the era it is clear the plants and the people who know the plants are an abstraction, however much she seems to have appreciated both. Western scientists were required to create a body of knowledge seen as impartial, which entailed "a heroic asceticism, laboriously attained, in order to keep at bay the temptations of subjective judgement. He – and the model observer was distinctly masculine –

[197] Alexandra Cook, "Linnaeus and the Chinese Plants: A test of the linguistic imperialist theory," *Notes and Records of The Royal Society* 64(2) June 2010:128, DOI: 10.1098/rsnr.2009.0051.
[198] Alexandra Cook, "Linnaeus and the Chinese Plants," 129.
[199] Elizabeth Gwillim to Nancy Green, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 371v-373r, 371v-372r.

was required to adopt the morality of the machine."[200] Gwillim was striving to represent plants with objective clarity through name, erasing the culture of a botanical specimen.

Imperialism in Botanical Painting and the 'Company School'

Much like botany, art was a hybrid space of English and Indian influence when Gwillim was in Madras. This was apparent from portraits to landscapes, to animals, birds, and, of course, to botanical specimens. English painters were interested in depicting India, seen as especially suitable to the Romantic style of the moment, watercolor the most popular medium, both as a finished piece and as studies for future engravings, aquatints, or lithographs.[201] The challenges of transportation made watercolor more popular than oil painting as it was challenging and expensive to return canvases to England.[202]

The English hired Indian painters to copy the British style of representing botanical specimens, and "the capacity of the Indian painter to change his style and adjust it to foreign requirements was quickly appreciated."[203] Traditional Indian botanical paintings were ornamental one-dimensional compositions that were integrated into the scenery and usually rooted in the ground. Indian painters adjusted to the aesthetic desires of the English, with their three-dimensional specimens isolated and often floating midair, roots dangling.[204] Their efforts were marked by saturated color preferences and a certain flatness to the depiction, Mildred

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[200] Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 153.
[201] Mildred, Archer and W. G Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880: An Essay by Mildred and W. G. Archer* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), 10.
[202] The other most popular type of painting was portrait miniatures on ivory. Mary Symonds was quite busy painting portrait miniatures for her social circle, remarking in a letter to her sister, " I am become a miniature painter (don't laugh) I have finished one lady's portrait, have two more in hand, and twenty petitioners praying to be drawn; but I don't undertake gentlemen for if I did I should not have breathing time." Mary Symonds to Hester James, March 18, 1802, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/1, ff. 55r-57v, 55v.
[203] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880*, 93.
[204] Rosie Llewellyn-Jones, "Painting in Lucknow 1775-1800," in *Forgotten Masters : Indian Painting for the East India Company*, ed. by William Dalrymple (London, UK: Philip Wilson, 2019), 32.

Archer categorizing the resultant works as the 'Company School:' art that was between styles and celebrated by neither culture.[205]

The Company School refers to the collection made by the EIC as they founded a public depository in 1801 that filled with "quantities of natural history material" donated by private individuals and Company servants.[206] The botanical paintings in this treasure-trove are characterized by Henry Noltie as resultant of research "made for Scottish EIC surgeons, primarily those working in Southern India" as early as 1772.[207] Indeed, Rottler's friend Roxburgh hired a team of Indian artists who produced 2,512 botanical paintings from 1793 to 1813, and assumedly made more that never arrived.[208] As was usual, the preoccupation was with 'useful' plants, those that connected with medicine, the arts, or economy.[209]

The art was considered English, as it had been made under the direction of British individuals, the names of the artists sometimes noted on the works, but any information beyond what they produced for the collection mostly obscured. Their participation in the creation of knowledge in this genre, much like those nameless Indians who collected botanical specimens and provided cultural context for the plants, was valued only in the context of those who had commissioned the work. It is not always apparent which works were painted by English or Indian artists when looking at the archived paintings, but those seen as painted by the British were valued over Indians, favoring colonizers over colonized.[210] The goal was descriptive, "art

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[205] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880,* 112; Noltie challenges this categorization, preferring 'Indian Export Art' as it centers those artists who created the paintings over those who commissioned them. H. J. Noltie, "Indian Export Art?: The botanical drawings," in *Forgotten Masters : Indian Painting for the East India Company*, ed. by William Dalrymple (London, UK: Philip Wilson, 2019), 78.
[206] Mildred Archer, *Natural History Drawings in the India Office Library* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1962), 1.
[207] Noltie, "Indian Export Art?," 78-9.
[208] Noltie, "Indian Export Art?," 78; Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880,* 96.
[209] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880,* 95.
[210] Noltie, "Indian Export Art?," 81.

applied to science, not a science subserving art," and the success of the Indian artists at the time was result of neatness and accuracy.[211]

Blindness to the manipulation of the English formula for painting plants is not surprising, but the idea of an impartial representation is false, as the British "draughtsmen of the time consciously applied specific strategies (such as simplifying, schematizing and exaggerating details as well as unrealistically combining several stages of development in the life cycle of a plant) that sometimes rendered their illustrations quite unlike real-life specimens of the depicted species."[212] The Indian artistic tradition was seen as inferior to the 'modern' British style. The British did not recognize that they were not objective and failed to see they preferred their own perspective, a metaphorical violence parallel with the corporeal violence they inflicted on the local population.

Archer noted the impact of this melding of techniques and priorities on the Indian artists, as they had preferred tempera paint until British patronage made watercolor more popular. This increase in popularity of watercolors affected subsequent brush techniques and methods for painting in other mediums.[213] Indian methods and priorities for art are not noted as influencing English technique. Again, information flowed from England to India, and though products were exported, the blending of techniques in India did not seemingly alter the direction of artistic trends in England. This reinforced the imperial structures of "creating a commonly made knowledge while creating different identities,"[214] relative powers maintained on the cultural level.

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[211] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880,* 110.
[212] Kärin Nickelsen, *Draughtsmen, Botanists and Nature: The Construction of Eighteenth-Century Botanical Illustrations* (*ProQuest Ebook Central*, Springer Netherlands, 2006), 11. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/mcgill/detail.action?docID=323396. Created from mcgill on 2022-09-25 17:52:16.
[213] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880, 112.*
[214] Raj, "Colonial Encounters and the Forging of New Knowledge and National Identities," 134.

Gwillim mentioned hiring Indian artists to copy some of her works to send back to England to save time and ensure arrival of at least one of the drawings.[215] She did not detail her opinions of Indian artists or comment on their style of painting, clearly seeing this as a functional option for ensuring record of her efforts. Symonds was more explicit in communicating perceptions of Indian artists when she wrote Berry, "had a drawing made of the root only by a Native, & this he intends to send to England by these Ships but it is so very ill done that it gives no Idea of the thing either in form colour or texture…"[216] The skill that imparted neatness and accuracy was not seen and therefore the botanical painting was not valued. The best English botanical painters were looking for perfection within the style, "to render themselves – along with the media they employ – transparent instruments of representation."[217] The closer an Indian painter was to the British in style, the more invisible he became – first through the structural force of imperialism and then through the requirements of the media itself. The most valued of the Indian artists were the ones whose contributions were not seen.

[215] "Mary drew above thirty sorts but that is a mere trifle it wou'd take an age to do them all she intends to have sent home these drawings, but as so many things were lost in the Prince of Wales Dr: Anderson has entreated that she will let a native copy them before they go home that they may not be entirely lost if an accident shou'd happen." Elizabeth Gwillim to Esther Symonds, no date; received in England February 28, 1806, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 271r-278v, 275v-276r.
[216] Mary to Hester James, March 4, 1807, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 365r-368v, 366v.
[217] Golinski, *Making Natural Knowledge*, 153.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Lady Elizabeth Gwillim, whose dynamic mix of character and passion for her pursuits still shines through her paintings today, died on December 21, 1807.[218] Elizabeth was buried at St. Mary's Church at Fort St. George, believed to be the oldest "British building of any kind in the whole of India," an imperialist tomb of sorts.[219] The last dated letter in the British Library was marked March 4, 1807, a fragment of Symonds describing a painting to her sister Hetty James. The circumstances of Gwillim's death are uncertain, though her delicate health and the enormous strain of her husband's position were clear. Her husband and sister returned home shortly after her death, Henry's tenure at the court cut short for political reasons. They carefully packed her artwork, ostensibly in the unusual crate in which Wood later bought the collection. It is not known what was left behind or lost along the way – perhaps notebooks of botanical and ornithological observations? How many more paintings? –. Many questions remain unanswered, others unasked in this paper. Her process of naturalizing English vegetables and herbs was not explored, nor was her full education through books, exploring the differences between her personal and professional beliefs.

The metaphors for archival research abound, the closest to this subject perhaps a garden, blooms changing depending on the season, focus shifting. The strength of Gwillim's painting has spoken to researchers across decades and continues to open into new spaces. It was my goal to establish and contextualize Gwillim's professional pursuit of botany through an understanding of gender, science, and art in turn of the century England. In order to understand these systems, and

[218] Malden, *A Hand Book to St. Mary's Church, Fort St. George*, 35.
[219] Barlow, *Church of South India, St. Mary's Church, Fort St. George, Madras,* 9.

appropriately frame her context in India, the role of imperialism was contextualized on the macro and micro level, showing the ways it brought violence and enforced invisibility.

There is no doubt Gwillim was a talented artist, her skill recognized by contemporaries and appreciated for its prescience by those who saw it in subsequent centuries. She was a passionate learner, India perhaps informing her dedication to botany. Her contemporary Emma Roberts (1791-1840) declared, "there are so very few methods for the employment of the time of the softer sex in India, a love of natural history opens up endless fields of pleasurable research to those who have enjoyed a taste for it."[220] Roberts's medium was mostly writing, whereas Gwillim clearly appreciated natural history for its scientific and artistic opportunities.

It is difficult to not theorize about the life Gwillim would have had, should she have lived longer. Maund's *Botanic Garden* and *Curtis's Botanical Magazine,* among others, employed many women artists, colorists, and illustrators, though often without credit.[221] Matilda Smith contributed more than 2,300 illustrations to *Curtis's Botanical*, a testament to scientific as well as artistic capacity.[222] Such a pursuit seems accessible to Gwillim, as would have showing pieces at the Royal Academy, her work fashionable and scientifically precise.

Gwillim's botanic efforts are perhaps best represented not by the plant that was not credited to her. Though she was attributed with introducing the *Trichosanthes Anguina,* or Snake-Gourd [fig. 1], and the *Althaea Flexuosa Seringapatam,* a variety of Hollyhock [fig. 2], it was the *Gwillimia indica* that filled the pages of so many letters. [223] Beyond tenacious efforts to

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[220] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880*, 91; Rosemary Cargill Raza, "Roberts, Emma (1791–1840), author," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (23 Sep. 2004; Accessed 29 Nov. 2022). https://www-oxforddnb-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-23747.
[221] Kramer, *Women of Flowers*, 13.
[222] Kramer, *Women of Flowers*, 35.
[223] John Sims, "TRICHOSANTHES ANGUINA, SNAKE GOURD," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, Volume XIX (1804) : 722, https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4511247.pdf; John Sims, "ALTHAEA FLEXUOSA," *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, Volume XXII (1806) : 892, https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/14314#page/33/mode/1up.

ascend the scientific ladder through creation of a plant with her name, she seemed to have real fondness for the modest bush with "a very sweet flower at least here it has a delicate odour but not strong."[224] She sent saplings of the plant back to England four times by 1805, Rottler simultaneously trying to establish the plant in her name by sending her finished watercolor to Smith, later of the Linnaean Society. Despite her title and accolades from the botanical elite, an employee of the East India House, known for his botanical imports, was attributed with its discovery.[225] Linnaeus often made taxonomic decisions himself, though the determination of this particular plant is not specified. Linnaeus named the *Magnolia* after Pierre Magnol as it was "a tree with very handsome leaves and flowers," as attractive as its namesake, but did not extend the favor to Gwillim.[226]

The absence of her mark on this species is both mundane and significant: Gwillim and Rottler clearly believed it was new to the Linnaean system, though probably related to the *Magnolia*. Those in Europe declared it was *Magnolia coco*, and though *Curtis's* recognized her efforts to send it back to England, it went no further. Her efforts were not seen as professional as she was a woman, her assertion that was a different species from *Magnolia coco* not prioritized in the patriarchal system of taxonomy. Plenty of plants were renamed as more was discovered of them, but despite her network, Gwillim did not have the influence to alter the classification of the plant in England. She believed it was a new species partially because of her communication with locals, noting "it came from Batavia & is there called Sampa Salaca. - which means milk

[224] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, 281v-282r.
[225] On the prestige of sending plants from colonies to England, see Jim Endersby, "A Garden Enclosed: Botanical Barter in Sydney, 1818-39," *The British Journal for the History of Science* 33, no. 3 (2000): 313–34.
[226] Schiebinger, *Plants and Empire*, 202.

flower."[227] This one plant represents her mastery of European modern botanic sciences, professional efforts toward codification and art, and her networks in India and England.

The work produced by Gwillim was before her time and of the moment, as she participated in an arena that vanished quickly after her death. Science codified and closed to women, and the professional realm for women in the arts also narrowed. During Gwillim's life there was a brief reprieve where women could "grapple with the questions that were animating, uprooting, and defining the revolutionary world, and to impart their own narratives on public walls as they did so."[228] There is an urge to claim her exceptional aspects and ignore what was ordinary, a false dichotomy as the opportunities that were available to her were later rarified.

Interest in categorizing the wonders of India lasted as long as the continent was foreign, interest waning upon formal colonization. It had lost its novelty, excitement in "exotic possessions passed and with the spate of books, letters, and journals published in the first forty years of the [19th] century, [and] the curiosity of the British public was gradually sated."[229] The project of turning India from the antiquated "oldest nation of the world" into one of "the most Polished modern ones" dramatically impacted the work and interests of the English people engaged there.[230]

Gwillim worked at the nexus of established and new paradigms in science, art, and imperialism. Contextualizing her work in the time and place of their creation establishes a starting point for reading the archive against the grain, recovering the silent and nameless Indians who supported her work and contributed their knowledge. Decolonial analysis helps unwind

[227] Elizabeth Gwillim to Hester James, August 24, 1805, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 279r-296v, 281v-282r; current-day Indonesia.
[228] Spies-Gans, *A Revolution on Canvas*, 7.
[229] Archer, *Indian Painting for the British, 1770-1880*, 103.
[230] Elizabeth Gwillim to Nancy Green, BL IOR Mss.Eur.C.240/4, ff. 371v-373r, 371v-372r.

such “complex encounters among cultures,” identifying the narrative told en lieu of indigenous or native practices.[231] The next step, of course, is to recover what was not told.

[231] Londa L. Schiebinger and Claudia Swan, *Colonial Botany : Science, Commerce, and Politics in the Early Modern World (*Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 7.

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