Collecting, Cultivating, Classifying:
Status and Collaboration in Early Modern English Botany

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Abstract

Making claims about the natural world is a social endeavor that is tied up in collaborative networks of people of varying statuses. In early eighteenth-century England, as exotic plants were streaming into Europe from New World colonies, English plant enthusiasts sought ways to comprehend and classify them. At the impetus of new Baconian scientific methods which emphasized empirical, first-hand observations, these naturalists viewed plants directly in order to make claims about botanical specimens in general. Gardens were crucial to this strategy. Those with the social and financial resources to do so amassed impressive collections of exotic plant specimens using complex networks to import them. These plants were then cultivated and experimented with in orangeries. Then, these plants were named and classified by those with the status and authority necessary to be believed when making botanical claims. The role that an individual could play in this botanical knowledge making process, as well as the extent to which their contributions were trusted and acknowledged, depended on their status—in particular, whether or not they were considered a gentleman. Duchess Mary Somerset and Reverend Robert Uvedale were two such figures who were not seen as gentlemen, yet employed markers of status that they did have to contribute to botanical classification. Somerset was a woman who lacked formal education but possessed land and social connections. Uvedale was an educated man, but lacked financial and social capital. Despite these limitations, Somerset and Uvedale collected exotic specimens, cultivated them in gardens and orangeries, and classified them into volumes of dried plants. Their participation and contributions proved that the creation of botanical knowledge in early modern England was a global and collaborative undertaking that was inherently linked to the social status of people involved. To ignore botany’s social history is to misrepresent the way botanical knowledge was formed.
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Figure 5. Herbarium of Mary Somerset. HS 235, Natural History Museum London.
INTRODUCTION

“All sow’d 9—Some will have this to be Jallap, others Mechocan, but it agrees not with ye description of either, the Indians call it poke.”¹

Notes in Duchess Mary Somerset’s notebook revealed one of the fundamental dilemmas of early modern botany: Who got to decide how plants are named? The confusion surrounding the plant called Jallap/Mechocan/poke proved that tension existed between names given by Europeans and indigenous peoples. Observation also played a role in naming plants. In the early modern period, there was no universal botanical classification scheme, so plants often took on different names as they exchanged hands. But the goal of the emerging study of botany was taxonomic—botanists hoped to classify plants and give them names that everyone could agree on. Determining who got the final say on naming plants revealed a collaborative web of social interactions and social identity markers that formed the cornerstone of botanical knowledge production.

Although we may like to believe that claims about the natural world stem from objective and universal truth, they are instead created by people. For claims to become knowledge, they must be believed by others. Further, the believability of knowledge is inextricably linked to the believability of the person making that knowledge claim. The particular qualifications that made someone believable varied based on the historical context, but believability has always been linked to identity.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in England, believability was linked to gentlemanly status. To be a gentleman meant to have the means to act free of vested interest,

to own land, be educated, and to have the leisure time necessary to be curious. Gentlemanly status also depended on subscribing to a codified system of honor and morality, of which truth telling was a key component. To be a gentleman was to be expected to tell the truth. The converse of this was also true—those who fell outside the narrow category of gentlemanliness were deemed untrustworthy and unreliable. The connection between identity and truthfulness manifested itself in interpersonal relationships and the production of knowledge about the world.

Since it was such a global and collaborative undertaking, early modern botany depended on hierarchical systems of trustworthiness. Vast networks of people across the world participated in botanical knowledge production, including merchants, explorers, gardeners, academics, patrons, carriers, artists, authors, botanists, and more. Translating the work and observations of these people into actual botanical knowledge had to be done by someone trustworthy enough to do so: gentlemen. Gentlemen depended on lower classes of people to make observations that could be turned into knowledge. Gentlemen got the credit for creating knowledge, while the people who did the work to lead to those conclusions were ignored.

However, the boundaries that separated gentlemen from non-gentlemen were permeable. Even those who did not fit into the narrowly defined category of gentleman could participate in botanical knowledge production. Using Duchess Mary Somerset and Reverend Robert Uvedale as case studies, this thesis investigates the ways that these people who fell outside the category of gentleman navigated the world of botanical knowledge production. Somerset was a wealthy and well-connected Duchess with many trappings of gentlemanliness—but she was a woman and therefore doomed to be seen as untrustworthy and unreliable. Uvedale was a man with a

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2 For more about gentlemanly status, science, and trust, see Steven Shapin, A Social History of Truth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

university education, but he lacked the social and financial capital necessary to be considered a gentleman. Despite these exclusions, Somerset and Uvedale contributed to botanical knowledge production by collecting exotic specimens, cultivating them in gardens and orangeries, and classifying them into volumes of dried plants. Their participation and contributions proved that the creation of botanical knowledge in early modern England was a global and collaborative undertaking that was inherently linked to the social status of people involved, and to ignore its social history is to misrepresent the way botanical knowledge was formed.

COLLECTING PEOPLE AND SPECIMENS

In the early modern world, collecting was both the means and ends of identity formation. In order to begin collecting, people needed to acquire enough authority to compel others to do their bidding. Also, through the process of amassing a collection, a person could bolster their authority through the connections they forged and the materials they acquired. Collecting was a central activity to the project of botanical knowledge production in early modern England, since the goal of botany was to have as many botanical specimens as possible available for study. Despite lacking full gentlemanly status, Mary Somerset and Robert Uvedale leveraged their authority, institutional affiliations, and social connections to amass impressive collections of exotic botanical specimens in their gardens, which in turn bolstered their statuses.

The type of authority necessary to amass collections depended on the type of collection and the culture of collecting at the time. When Somerset and Uvedale were collecting botanical specimens, Renaissance era cabinets of curiosity were being supplanted by Enlightenment styles of collecting. Cabinets of curiosity were collections that reached peak popularity during the Renaissance and were mostly created by princes and other types of nobility. They brought
together a variety of rare, exotic, and exciting specimens—both natural, such as fossils and feathers, and made by humans, such as tools and artworks.\(^4\) Although they are often described as smorgasbords of eclectic objects that lacked a cohesive organization structure, cabinets of curiosity had internal classification schemes and their contents and organization scheme reveal truths about the authority of the people creating them.\(^5\)

The living botanical collections, in the form of gardens, created by Somerset and Uvedale fall somewhere between cabinets of curiosity and the Enlightenment style museums that began to emerge in the eighteenth century, such as the Muséum d’Histoire Naturelle n France.\(^6\) These newer collections sought to gain control over the natural world by not only collecting exotic specimens, but also classifying them. Collections tended to be more specialized, and the classification of the items was more important than their aesthetic appeal.

The shift from Renaissance to Enlightenment forms of collecting was exemplified in one of the most important institutions for early modern natural history, the newly formed Royal Society in London. Founded in 1660 by a group of natural philosophers and physicians, this institution prided itself on being a meeting place for gentlemen to discuss and disseminate facts about the world that they gleaned from new Baconian experimentation.\(^7\) Francis Bacon, a philosopher and scholar, ushered in a new era of scientific exploration grounded in the importance of first-hand observation, rather than relying only on the work of previous scholars. Entry into institutions such as the Royal Society was predicated on conventions of gentlemanly status, which in turn fostered a conversational dynamic rooted in egalitarian models of behavior.\(^8\)

\(^5\) Ibid., 36.
\(^6\) Ibid., 122.
Gentlemanly status was an indicator of one’s power and authority that enabled free action and political representation and stemmed mainly from land ownership, overseeing laborers, education, and gender. Since the Royal Society only admitted gentlemen, they were able to give all members a fair chance to express their views and produce knowledge, so they could portray themselves as being egalitarian. But since Somerset and Uvedale were not gentlemen, they could not gain access to gentlemanly knowledge production.

The Baconian framework for creating knowledge about the natural world paved the way for new ways of thinking about collecting. Since botanists began to prioritize empirical investigation of actual living botanical specimens, the value of gardens increased. While dried specimens or drawings could suffice if necessary, the best way for these scholars to study plants was to see them alive and growing. Robert Uvedale demonstrates the value he placed on direct visual observation and his hesitancy to trust his inferior when he wrote, “I have added twenty varieties of Anemenies, I hope; for I saw them not in flower, but was forced to trust my Gardener's care to parcel them as he took them up.” Uvedale was hesitant to trust his gardener, who was of a lower class, so less gentlemanly and therefore less trustworthy. Uvedale set himself apart from his gardener by creating a hierarchy where his own observation was more valuable than the testimony of his inferior.

Somerset and Uvedale participated in the new model of botanical collection primarily through their garden estates and their complex global networks of correspondence. Rather than traveling abroad to collect specimens themselves, Somerset and Uvedale used their connections and land to arrange for specimens to be sent to them from abroad. The ways that they went about

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9 Ibid., 49.
collecting botanical specimens were directly connected to their social status and institutional affiliations.

Mary Somerset was a very wealthy and powerful woman. Her father was Arthur Capel, the first Baron Capel of Hadham. He was a politician and royalist army officer and owned land across ten counties.\(^{12}\) Her second husband, Henry Somerset, was also a powerful man. He held a variety of administrative posts, including lord-lieutenant of Gloucestershire, Monmouthshire, Herefordshire, and Bristol, and lord president of the Council in the March of Wales.\(^{13}\) Soon after their marriage, Mary and Henry became the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort. With that title came influence over a vast area of England and ownership of a significant amount of land. Somerset’s wealth and influence enabled her to collect botanical specimens, as well as other luxurious items for her household from overseas.\(^{14}\) The couple’s wealth also enabled them to purchase a townhome in Chelsea near London, which gave them access to emerging urban forms of sociability and situated them close to influential London residents such as Sir Hans Sloane. Mary and Henry had six children that survived to adulthood, so similarly to most women of her time period, Mary was busy child rearing for much of her adult life. After Henry died in 1700, Mary continued to expand the gardens on their estate, gaining more autonomy through widowhood.\(^{15}\) She remained in control of the affairs of her heirs, which caused tension with her children and ultimately lead to her being banished from Badminton and sent to live at her Chelsea estate at the age of eighty in 1709.\(^{16}\) While the identities of wife and mother were a crucial part of Somerset’s

\(^{14}\) Ibid. 90.
\(^{15}\) Ibid., 199.
\(^{16}\) Ibid.
life, they purposely remain much outside of the scope of this project, which is more concerned with the way that Somerset employed her status in the botanical world.

Unlike Somerset, Robert Uvedale was of more modest means. His biographers describe his family as a “very minor offshoot of a younger branch of the Dorset Uvedales, an armigerous branch of an important family originating in Cumberland.”17 He was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge alongside the likes of other botanical figures, such as Leonard Plukenet. He went on to serve as the master of the Free School at Enfield, and then formed his own school after a lawsuit over his teaching practice.18 His school educated some more prominent boys, including Sloane’s nephews.19 Later in life he also became a rector and held a variety of positions within the church. The identities of school master and clergyman show that he was not of a gentlemanly status, since he had to work and did not hold political offices. However, his deep involvement with education prepared him well for the intellectual side of botanical collecting.

Collecting Specimens

Getting botanical specimens from their native habitats in the New World across the Atlantic to English gardens was an incredibly difficult task. Uvedale’s letters to his fellow plant enthusiast Richard Richardson are full of complaints about problems that interrupted his botanical collecting. Richardson was a respected figure in the botanical world, and corresponded with other botanical notables such as Sir Hans Sloane, James Petiver, and Jacob Bobart. Richardson and Uvedale frequently exchanged exotic plant specimens and other curious objects, and corresponded as though they were equal in social standing.

19 Ibid., 5.
Uvedale wrote frequently of the problems with the postal system and the people maintaining it. One such letter to Richardson reads, "I could not forbear returning my thanks for your kind present of Fowl, and specimens. They came in good condition by good fortune (though the carrier's care deserves no commendation.)" His parenthetical slight illustrates how frustrating it was to transport goods at the time. Uvedale’s frustration also points to a larger power dynamic at play. An indicator of gentlemanly status was having the ability to command others to work for you, rather than having to do it yourself or work for another. So, in addition to the vexation he felt because of the consequences of faulty handlers, such as spoiled plants or packages that never arrived, Uvedale also expressed his anxiety about his abilities to command others. If he was a gentleman and had more resources to hire private, trustworthy carriers, he would be able to avoid much of the frustrations of transporting specimens.

**Collecting People**

In order to acquire seeds and specimens to grow, garden owners first needed to establish a network of people to find, gather, and transport those seeds and specimens. Somerset and Uvedale used their statuses to create social networks with fellow plant enthusiasts throughout the globe, which enabled them to take part in the global transfer of specimens.

Sir Hans Sloane, the prominent physician and collector, was one of the most important actors in this global network and was connected to both Somerset and Uvedale. Sloane achieved prominence as a physician and botanist after traveling to Jamaica and publishing a book about the botanical specimens he found there. Sloane owned a manor in Chelsea, situated close to

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both the Chelsea Physic Garden and Somerset’s townhome. He was a collector of collectors, meaning that in addition to his own assemblage of specimens from his time in Jamaica, Sloane also gathered specimens and entire collections from other botanists and explorers, both during their lives and after they died. He amassed an impressive collection that became the basis for the British Museum in London. In addition to botanical specimens, Sloane’s collection contained coins, medals, books, shells, mathematical instruments, antiquities, ethnographic artifacts, and fossils.  

Sloane served as an intermediary between many people involved in botanical collecting, including Somerset and Uvedale. Sloane was a member and later the president of the Royal Society in London and provided Somerset and Uvedale a link to that elite institution that they could not participate in directly. While both Somerset and Uvedale corresponded with Sloane, Somerset was closer to Sloane. Their homes in Chelsea were near one another and their correspondence demonstrating a higher level of intimacy. In one letter to Sloane, Somerset wrote:

…if your business dos not earnestly require your being in towne all day, I should go my journie much more quietly, if I could speake with you one more before I go [tomorrow], wee shall bee at home all day till the agoing time, with yu thinke so necessary for my lord

Somerset’s entreaty to see Sloane on such short notice was only appropriate because they had a close relationship. Also, Sloane was the physician to both her and her husband, which was part of the reason why she could request his time. Further, her elite status as a Duchess enabled her to make requests of Sloane more easily than those of a lower station.

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Uvedale’s identity also shaped the ways that he interacted with Sloane. Uvedale’s letters to Sloane describe transactions involving seeds, herbs, and natural history books. Dealings with these types of objects show that the relationship between Uvedale and Sloane was primarily professional and botanical. Uvedale’s institutional and educational affiliations facilitated interactions between the two men. In a letter to Sloane, Uvedale brought up a conversation from the meeting of the Fellows of Trinity College, Cambridge and asked Sloane to look into a matter concerning ownership of the parsonage at Enfield. Uvedale hoped that Sloane could use his connections to gather more information that would be helpful to Uvedale. Unlike conversations between Somerset and Sloane, those between Uvedale and Sloane were about land ownership and universities. While these matters were commonplace topics amongst men, women did not have the authority to participate in these types of discussions and decisions. The interactions between Uvedale and Sloane demonstrate the gendered dynamic that laid beneath all interactions in the early modern period, since as men they could find common ground through education and botany, despite being of different social statuses.

Global networks, forged by colonizing missions to the New World, enabled botanical collecting. As Westerners set up elaborate systems to explore and exploit new lands, they also set up networks of communication and trade that could be used to transport native plants back to England. Employing status to take advantage of these networks was the best way to conduct botanical collecting. Somerset and Uvedale used their status to connect with botanical figures of the day, such as William Sherard, James Petiver, Samuel Doody, George London, and Jacob Bobart the Younger. By unpacking the relationships that Somerset and Uvedale had with these botanical figures, the role that status played in botanical knowledge production becomes clearer.

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Somerset and Uvedale were both connected to a man named William Sherard (1659–1728). Sherard was an affluent botanist and scholar who traveled the world holding various governmental and education posts.\textsuperscript{25} Between 1700 and 1702, Sherard lived at Badminton and tutored Somerset’s grandson Henry, the second Duke of Beaufort. During his time, Sherard also provided crucial botanical expertise to aid in collecting and classifying plants. Somerset prevailed on Sloane to orchestrate the appointment:

My request to you is that you would discourse Dr Sherard & if hee will bee contented with a quiet life in the country, in a place, where he shall be used with all the kindess hee can wish, & will I hope find my Grandson to tractable & likely to improved, that hee may take comfort in the employment you will if you can prevaile with him (who has hitherto been so fortunate) to undertake this give great ease to mee.\textsuperscript{26}

Somerset persisted and after two years of petitioning, Sherard joined her household. Even though Somerset was of a higher social class than Sherard, she still had to work hard to convince him to take the position. Her determination to secure Sherard’s appointment showed that she really wanted him to live at Badminton. Somerset’s appeal to Sloane demonstrated that she understood the value of her connection with Sloane for forging new connections. She does not allude to the ways that Sherard would be of service to her, but rather frames his appointment as beneficial for him and her grandson. She used her rural lifestyle, kind disposition, and grandson to convince Sherard to stay with her. The position benefited Sherard by providing him access to a vast botanical collection. The arrangement also benefitted Somerset and her garden, as she must have been expecting, since Sherard arranged for up to three hundred new place species to be sent Badminton and aided in their classification.\textsuperscript{27}

\textsuperscript{26} Mary Somerset, "Mary Somerset to Sir Hans Sloane," 4/29/?? British Library.
\textsuperscript{27} Mark Laird, \textit{A Natural History of English Gardening, 1650-1800}, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 88.
Unlike the professional and unequal relationship between Somerset and Sherard that relied on Sloane as an intermediary, the relationship between Uvedale and Sherard was both professional, social, and more equal. The two men were friends with shared connections. Uvedale repeatedly refers to Sherard as “our common friend” when writing to Richardson, gesturing to a level of intimacy beyond that of just botanical correspondents. Uvedale writes:

Our common Friend Dr. Sherard gave me his company for two or three days last week. I hope we shall keep him in England now. We remembered you in a glass of wine; and he told me he designed to write to you. He brought me some Seeds, part of tender, others of hardy Plants.  

In addition to bringing him plant seeds, Sherard also interacted with Uvedale socially, by sharing a glass of wine in honor of their friend. Despite their different social status – Sheard being of a much more noble class than Uvedale – their university degrees and commitment to botanical study placed them on more of an equal footing, and enabled them to socialize and collaborate in creating botanical knowledge.

Another figure with whom both Somerset and Uvedale corresponded and traded with was James Petiver (1665–1718). Petiver’s successes illustrate how collections could be used to bolster status. Petiver was not highly educated, nor was he of impressive social class. However, he used his collection, published writings, Royal Society membership, and network of correspondents to create an identity for himself. Two of those factors – the Royal Society and his published writings – set him apart from Somerset and Uvedale. Petiver fit the role of the Baconian scientist, insofar as he managed the labor of others for the benefit of himself and science. He knew that rich patrons enjoyed seeing their names in print, so he listed them both as

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donors and dedicatees in his published writings. Petiver recognized that book dedications were a concrete way for authors to assert their connections with others.\textsuperscript{30}

Petiver both corresponded with, and wrote about, Somerset and Uvedale. In an essay in the Royal Society’s publication \textit{Philosophical Transactions}, Petiver gave an account of “divers[e] rare plants” that he “observed last summer in several curious gardens.”\textsuperscript{31} He described the appearance of the plants, their names, any references to published volumes that described them, where he saw them, and who cultivated them. These details together formed a written account of his first-hand account of the plants, and thus served as a valuable form of botanical knowledge. Petiver mentioned a few plants that he saw flowering in Somerset’s garden at Chelsea: Rough Bushy Hawkweed, Egyptian Mandlin, and Yellow African Bean-Caper.\textsuperscript{32} Referring to these plants by name allowed Petiver to assert more of his botanical knowledge and created a published source for future authors to reference these plants. Petiver also brought together Somerset and Uvedale when he wrote, “the Cape Tree-Cranesbill with roundish circled leaves… is cultivated in most of the curious Gardens about London, viz. With the Dutchess of Beaufort, Bishop of London, Dr Uvedal, Mr du Bois, &c.”\textsuperscript{33} Petiver used his observations to place these people in a group of his own creation, as proprotors of ‘curious Gardens about London.’ In doing so, he demonstrated the power associated with his status as a collector and highlighted the importance of identity for the trustworthiness of sources. While the names and descriptions of the plants were important, so too were the names and titles of the people who wrote about them and collected them.

\textsuperscript{30} The idea of using book dedications to solidify social connections was brought to my attention by Professor Lisa Graham.
\textsuperscript{31} James Petiver, “V. An Account of Divers Rare Plants…” \textit{Philosophical Transactions} 28, no. 337 (January 1, 1713): 33–64.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 37, 59, 64.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid., 63.
In addition to the official proceedings of the Royal Society, Petiver was also involved with another institution at the intersection of botanical inquiry and gentlemanly sociability. The Temple Coffee House Club was an informal assembly of male botanists that met periodically to discuss and display botany. The club combined some of the intellectual imperatives of the Royal Society, such as the commitment to Baconian scientific inquiry, with the conversational sociability of early eighteenth-century English coffee houses, since people could exchange ideas more freely than in institutions such as universities. Most members of the Temple Coffee House Club possessed the traits necessary for membership in the Royal Society – they were male intellectuals of middling or high rank. Both Petiver and Sloane were members, and were mentioned by name in a satirical literacy piece about the Club called The Transactioneer, which demonstrates their centrality to the organization as public representatives for the organization. Somerset and Uvedale were not members of the Temple Coffee House Club, since they lacked the gentlemanly status necessary even for a group that was less formal than the Royal Society.

Samuel Doody (1656–1706) was another botanist in contact with both Somerset and Uvedale. Doody mainly studied mosses and fungi, and corresponded with and sent specimens to many of the central botanical figures of his time, including Ray, Petiver, and Sloane. He was a member of the Royal Society and Temple Coffee House Club. While he only published one essay, he was remembered in the many plants and specimens that he sent and for his time running the Chelsea Physic Garden. Both Somerset’s and Uvedale’s correspondence reveal that they received roots, seeds, and plants from Doody. Those sent to Somerset were exotic.

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specimens from Barbados, Tobago, Surinam, and Africa. Doody’s role for Somerset and Uvedale was that of a correspondent and supplier, and demonstrates that their network consisted of people with institutional affiliations and global connections.

George London (d. 1714) was a prominent nurseryman and garden designer who sent Somerset plants. He was an apprentice to John Rose, the gardener of Somerset’s brother, Arthur Capel (1632–1683), first earl of Essex. The connections between Somerset, her brother, and Rose, may have been how London and Somerset were introduced. London sent Somerset specimens from the West Indies, New England, Portugal, the Canaries, and Africa.37 Somerset created detailed lists about these shipments, containing the names of people who sent her specimens, where the specimens were from, the date they were received, and the names of the plants (often with an entry at the end to acknowledge that not all the specimens were identified). One of these lists reads, “Seeds given me by Mrs. London August 1697 from Virginia.”38 Mrs. London was presumably the wife of George London, and the entry exemplifies the way that women involved with botany were reduced to fragments and clues hidden deep within the collections of others. Somerset referenced another female collector in a list entitled, “A catalogue of seeds give me by my Lady 1693.”39 On the back of the list, Somerset identified the woman as her daughter, Ann Coventry. These two examples demonstrate the ways that women could use their familial relationships to forge connections and participate in botanical networks. However, it also shows the limitations for women, and underscores the fact that Somerset was an

38 Sloane MS 3343 fol. 58, British Library.
39 Sloane MS 3343 fol. 213, British Library.
exceptional case. Her tremendous wealth and social capital allowed her to overcome some of the limitations placed on women in the botanical world.\(^{40}\)

A final important figure in both Somerset’s and Uvedale’s networks was Jacob Bobart the younger (1641–1719). Bobart was a professor of botany at the Physick Garden at Oxford, and was connected with most of the aforementioned botanical figures. Bobart visited, corresponded with, and sent plants to Somerset. Bobart sent Somerset specimens from Barbados and the Oxford Physic Garden.\(^{41}\) In a letter Bobart wrote to her, he gestures towards the difficulty of collecting botanical specimens, “...it appears to me, the best way [to send botanical specimens] is to send a man and horse of yr owne chooseing, rather than commit them to the carelessness of a publick carrier.”\(^{42}\) Bobart knew that Somerset had the resources to hire private carriers, which was a much safer way to transport botanical materials. The ability to hire a private carrier was both an indicator of wealth and status and a practical measure to increase the likelihood of successful deliverance of botanical specimens.

Somerset also engaged in botanical patronage. At the urging of Bobart, Somerset patronized a man named Edward Lhwyd\(^{43}\) (1660–1709). Although he was the keeper of the Ashmolean Museum and considered a prominent naturalist of his day, Lhwyd struggled

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\(^{40}\) Although this has the unfortunate implication of once again marginalizing women to footnotes, I have included here a preliminary list of other women that I came across in Sloane’s manuscript collection at the British Library for future study: Margaret Ray Sloane MS 4039, Sloane MS 4040, and Sloane MS 4042, Lady Renlagh Sloane MS 1367, Add MS 75354, and Add MS 72884, Elizabeth Maitland Duchess of Lauderdale Add MS 23250 and Add MS 23251, Eleanor Glanville Sloane MS 4067, Margaret Baker Add MS 2485 and Add MS 2486, Anne Bobart Sloane MS 4063, Maria Sybilla Merian Sloane MS 4053, Sloane MS 4065 and Sloane MS 4067, Rachel Grigg Sloane MS 4065, Mary Greene and Anne Hill MS 4065, Elizabeth Buddle Sloane MS 4066, Anna Herman, Ann Ashe, and Mary Ashe Sloane MS 4037.


\(^{42}\) He adopted the Welsh form of his family surname Lloyd, and it could be spelled Lhwyd, Lhuyd, or Luid[ius]. From Roberts, Brynley F., “Lhuyd [Lhwyd; Formerly Lloyd], Edward (1659/60?–1709), Naturalist and Philologist,” \textit{Oxford Dictionary of National Biography}. 

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financially and relied on wealthy patrons such as Somerset to support his work. He traveled around Wales, Scotland, and England collecting botanical specimens and making observations about the natural history and culture of those areas. A letter from Bobart to Somerset’s gardener explained that Lhwyd was reaching out to many wealthy people interested in botany, and in return for their support he sent them plants. Four months later, Bobart wrote again, this time to Somerset directly:

The success and prosperitie of your glorious gardens, Madame, is especially owing to yr Graces auspicious Patronage: I heartily wish I were in capacitie of proving more serviceable to yr Grace, wch I should be absolutely proud of; but to the perfection of yr Garden it is hard to make addition.

Bobart was clearly pleased with Somerset’s decision to patronize Lhwyd (whom he mentions elsewhere in the letter), and portrays a tone of deference and service to her. By offering to help her, he also asserted a type of authority, implying that he had abilities and resources to potentially help her, yet also acknowledging that she was more powerful and her garden was such ‘perfection’ that there was not much he could do to be of help. The patronage relationship demonstrates how Somerset leveraged her resources to influence the course of botanical explorations. In an earlier letter, Bobart wrote:

I am very glad to heare of (as by Mr Marchant) the glorious success of yr plantations, but noe wonder, under the auspicious supervising of such a Patroness, who dayly makes appeare the transcendent wealth of the Vegetable Kingdome.

After reading both letters, it is clear that this letter was a precursor to his other letter and it was a way for Bobart to compliment Somserset’s gardens to get in her good graces before asking her to

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patronize his contact Lhwyd. Patronage relationships reflected the hierarchical nature of early modern English society.\textsuperscript{48} The fact that Bobart appealed to Somerset on Lhwyd’s behalf indicated that there was too large a social gap between Somerset and Lhwyd for him to be able to reach out to her directly. While Somerset’s status as a patron showcases her powerful social status, in the botanical realm it was a way of reducing her importance by placing her in a role of supporter, rather than as one making botanical knowledge herself. Patrons had authority to orchestrate projects, but not to participate directly in those projects.

While most of the new knowledge about the botanical world was emerging through conversation and correspondence, the traditional mediums of books and manuscripts also played a role. Somerset frequently wrote to Sloane about borrowing botanical publications:

I shall be very impatient till you performe yr promis of affording mee one of the books you are publishing, I must not forget to thanke you for the transactions wch I have constantly rece’d … you will receive some Badminton venison, if comes by the Arencester coach.\textsuperscript{49}

Somerset used her connection with Sloane to acquire one of his books, as well as a copy of the \textit{Philosophical Transactions} of the Royal Society, of which Sloane was a member. Books were traditional forms of authority, and although she partook in communal and epistolary forms of knowledge production, Somerset still valued the knowledge found within published books. However, the influx of new specimens from abroad meant that books quickly became outdated and they were not always sufficient, which in turn heightened the importance of other types of knowledge production such as letters and in-person conversations. Somerset also paid Sloane

\textsuperscript{49} Mary Somerset, “Mary Somerset to Sir Hans Sloane,” 7/10/?? Folio 25, British Library.
back with venison from Badminton, since the was known for hunting parties, which is example of the way that botanical collecting intersected with other forms of sociability and gift giving.

Beyond the people mentioned here, there were many others involved in the project of botanical collecting whose status was too low for them to even make it into the historical record at all. Some of these, including indigenous people, carriers, and women, get briefly mentioned throughout Somerset’s and Uvedale’s manuscripts. Others, such as African slaves and merchants, were likely involved too, despite a lack of evidence. The process of botanical collecting was inherently a collaborative process rooted in horribly oppressive structures of colonialism and slavery. While their stories cannot be discussed here, their contributions are worth acknowledging and their exclusion supports the conclusion that botanical knowledge production was connected with status.

In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, botanical collections were created using complex and global network of correspondents set up by European colonial endeavors. The roles that people could take in these networks depended on the extent to which they were viewed as a gentleman, and their ability to forge connections with others in the botanical world. The collecting practices and social interactions of Somerset and Uvedale reveal that botanical collecting was in fact dependent on social status, institutional affiliations, and authority. Additionally, once Somerset and Uvedale gained entry to the world of botanical collections, their involvement increased their status. These collections served as the foundation for their cultivating and classifying practices.
CULTIVATING PLANTS AND POWER

Gardens are more than neutral sites where seeds and bulbs are cultivated into plants. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, gardens were sites of experimentation and empirical botanical knowledge production. Gardens were also centers of power and wealth for landed gentry and royalty. Additionally, gardens were living repositories for domestic and exotic plants, and therefore crucial resources for the emerging project of botanical classification. Although people from all social classes partook in a wide array of gardening activities, the gardening activities of Somerset and Uvedale show how status determined who could participate in which types of gardening labor. Furthermore, gardens were used as tangible displays of status and to bolster prestige and authority.

Cultivating Plants

In the early eighteenth century, gardening took many forms. Many gardens were owned and controlled by individuals, such as Somerset and Uvedale. People used gardens to produce food and medicine and to display their status and power. Additionally, botanical gardens were created by universities and other institutions with scientific, academic, or medicinal agendas, growing plants for study and experimentation. Also, as the eighteenth century progressed, more and more gardens emerged that were devoted to raising and selling flowers. No matter the type of garden, a team of people was needed to complete various gardening tasks. Gardening work consisted of everything from weeding done by peasants, to the managing and overseeing done by wealthy landowners, to the designing done by professional garden designers.\(^5\) Which of these roles a person could take up depended on their gender and social status.

There has always been a complicated relationship between women and gardening. In some ways, women were believed to be well-suited to gardening, as they were supposedly closer to nature, skilled at caring for living beings, and charged with the maintenance of the household. But at the same time, women were not supposed to participate in strenuous physical or intellectual labor, both of which were required to garden effectively. However, no matter the public perception, women have always been crucial actors in the development of gardening, through both their tedious labor and their innovative ideas. These gendered gardening conventions were evident in the activities and depictions of Somerset and Uvedale.

The reasons that Somerset and Uvedale garden revealed the nuanced connections between gardening, identity, and experimental inquiry. One clear reason that Somerset and Uvedale gardened was simply because they were passionate about plants and curious about the natural world. Plants were beautiful and mysterious. In the end of a letter to Sloane where she shared details about the health of her plants in her garden and orangery, Somerset wrote, “when I get into storys of plants I know not how to get out.” Her passion for plants was so intense that when she got into discussing them, she didn’t want to stop. Somerset’s meticulously kept lists and catalogues, artfully arranged florilegium and herbarium, and carefully recorded correspondence all demonstrated that she was deeply interested in plants. The effort she put into the creation and preservation of these materials illustrates a high level of curiosity and devotion. Uvedale’s passion for his plants also emerged through his prolific correspondence and the time and energy he put into his garden, above and beyond his other occupations and duties. Through

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52 Mary Somerset, “Mary Somerset to Sir Hans Sloane,” 6/10/??, British Library.
gardening, Somerset and Uvedale could make new discoveries about the natural world while also creating a beautiful garden to bolster their social status.

Another reason why Somerset was interested in gardening was because of its importance to her family. Her father, Arthur Capel, first Baron Capel of Hadham, was known for his Italianate gardens.53 A painting called “The Capel Family” by Johnson Cornelius provides evidence of the importance of her familial connection to gardens (see Figure 1). In the painting, Mary is a child standing with her family in front of a garden at her childhood home in Hadham Hall in Hertfordshire. From a very young age, gardens were a central piece of Somerset’s identity and they were tied together with concepts of family and aristocratic power. Her siblings also maintained a connection to gardens. Her younger sister Elizabeth, who is seen in the portrait handing pink flowers to an infant, went on to practice flower painting. Her brothers Arthur and Henry also cultivated gardens; Arthur at Cassiobury and Henry at Kew Gardens54. These familial connections undoubtedly aided in Somerset’s botanical collecting practices later in life, and solidified at a young age the association between aristocratic power and gardening.

Gardening was also a way to take respite from mental health difficulties. Somerset turned to gardening both to produce homeopathic medicines to ease her woes and as an activity in and of itself to help alleviate her sadness.55 Letters from Somerset, her husband, and her friend Lady Chaworth, all corroborate the story that Somerset was suffering. In the early modern period, distress and internal turmoil was often explained as a crisis of the spirit and addressed through religious means. Somerset’s spiritual crisis was part of the impetus for her botanical collecting.

54 Henry married Dorothy Bennet, the heir to the Kew House. It wasn’t until the house and gardens passed to his great-niece that they became the foundation for the Royal Botanical Gardens as Kew is known today. See Gloria Cottesloe and Doris Hunt, *The Duchess of Beaufort’s Flowers* (Exeter, England: Webb & Bower, 1983), 16.
By bringing together natural specimens, she interpreted God’s Book of Nature, and she thought that understanding would lead to salvation. Reading religion and spirituality into gardening motivations would have been common in her time, as religious salvation was at the heart of early modern life in general, and in the project of botany more specifically. Claims about the natural world were made through the lens of religious conventions.

Another possible motivation for Somerset’s gardening practice was the desire to develop a meaningful hobby. As the Duchess of a large and powerful aristocratic estate, Somerset had many duties relating to the household, but she was not expected or even allowed to work for an income. Instead, women were expected to maintain the household and family.56 The care of the gardens came under her auspices as manager of the household, but Somerset went above and beyond the expectations by creating an enormous garden with domestic and exotic specimens. Her garden was for more than just practical medicinal purposes or display, it was also a hub of botanical inquiry and experimentation.

Somerset’s contemporaries portrayed her as actually laboring in the garden herself, rather than just directing others to do it all for her. In fact, in one of the contemporary gardening texts that talked about her accomplishments, the author took note of how much time Somerset spent gardening herself. Written by the landscape gardener Stephen Switzer, The Nobleman, Gentleman, and Gardener’s Recreation claimed to be the first history of its kind—the first to introduce the history of gardening. Switzer started with the garden of Eden and made his way up to his day, highlighting various “virtuosos” who were influential in garden history, mostly royals and nobility. He introduced the section on women by writing, “It would be an unpardonable

Omission not to mention those Virtuous and Honourable Persons amongst the Ladies, who have likewise shewn a particular Veneration and Esteem for the Subject we are upon."

When talking about Somerset in particular, he highlighted her accomplishments and her first-hand gardening efforts:

What a Progress she made in Exoticks, and how much of her Time she virtuously and humbly employed in her Garden is easily observable from the Thousands of those foreign Plants (by her as it were made familiar to this Clime) there regimented together, and kept in a wonderful deal of Health, Order, and Decency… Besides, her Servants assured us, that excepting the times of her Devotions, at which she was a constant Attendant, Gard’ning took up two Thirds of her Time.

Somerset was applauded for her commitment to her garden and her religious piety. Switzer also placed gardening within the context of exploration and addressed the complicated balance that gardening maintained between being a solitary, pious, religious, and womanly affair with being a noble, mercantile, imperialistic, and manly one. The use of the term ‘regimented’ evokes military connotations, but the phrase ‘Health, Order, and Decency’ had a domestic connotation. These terms betrayed the gendered depiction of devotion and piety that linked Somerset as a woman with domestic themes. ‘Health, Order, and Decency’ were goals promoted for women themselves, and the gardens they cultivated.

Uvedale’s motivations for cultivating plants were more difficult to ascertain. Although he accumulated an impressive collection, plants were not his number one priority, since he had to devote most of his time to his school and his church. His letters were filled with laments about the lack of time he could devote to his garden.

57 Ibid., 53.
I have this Spring been thrown back in my Garden by other cares, having had a sick family but, God be thanked, all now well; seventeen of my house having had the small-pox within the compass of less than three months last past … but now, more leisure and better weather gives room for a little diversion again without doors.60

For Uvedale, gardening occurred during leisure time, when he was not preoccupied by other concerns such as work or sickness in his household. In a way then, his gardening could be conceived of as a hobby. His ability to spend time gardening as a hobby was an indication of his status, since it was a luxury to be able to spend time on an activity outside the bounds of work. Uvedale’s motivation for gardening came from the desire to gain respite from his duties while still appealing to his inquisitive and academic sensibilities fostered by a life of study. Gardening was a way for him to relax while still learning.

Investigating the ways that Somerset and Uvedale cultivated plants gives insight into the role that status played in determining which type of gardening activities were acceptable. Somerset and Uvedale were deeply involved in the intricacies of gardening. Their passion came through in their correspondence, where they frequently advised fellow gardeners about the finer points of plant cultivation, such as how exactly to plant them and when to water them. The plants that Somerset and Uvedale cultivated fit into two categories: flowers or exotics. While there is an overlap between these two categories, approaching their cultivating practices from these two perspectives is a constructive way to compare and contrast the labor involved with these different categories of plants, their reasons for cultivating them, and how each type of gardening was viewed by others.

60 Robert Uvedale, “Robert Uvedale to Richard Richardson,” May 9, 1699. *Extracts from the Literary and Scientific Correspondence of Richard Richardson.*
Growing flowers for their decorative purposes was a common practice in Europe, especially in England. In the earlier part of the eighteenth century, flower gardening remained mostly a recreational activity. Many people grew flowers in their private gardens, and florists’ societies emerged as forums for flower enthusiasts to compete with their neighbors to see who had grown the most beautiful and unique flowers. In early modern England, the term florist was used to describe a person with high level of experience and expertise in cultivating flowering plants. Florists had different prerogatives for cultivation than their counterparts who focused on gardening exotic specimens. Florists were concerned with raising the most beautiful and unique flowers, especially ones with special traits such as stripes, spots, or double blooms. In contrast, people growing exotic specimens were often doing so as part of the botanical mission to discover, name, and classify new plant species. The contrast between flowers and exotics had a gendered component: it was more acceptable for women to recreationally grow flowers than it was for them to grow exotic specimens for academic or commercial purposes. Through their gardening efforts with both flowers and exotics, Somerset and Uvedale tested these gendered conventions.

Uvedale prided himself on his gardening knowledge and approached plant cultivation like a florist. Most of the plants he mentioned in his correspondence to Sloane and Richardson were flowers, such as tulips and ranunculi. Like other florists, Uvedale displayed a preference for uniquely colored flowers, as seen in a letter where he described his Myrtles (flowering shrubs) as being variegated with white and yellow, meaning that the edges of their leaves were yellow or

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62 Ibid.
white. Also, Uvedale’s keen interest in the intricacies of gardening practice was apparent in his detailed description of his method for cultivating Tulips:

I carry out all the earth every year two foot and a half deep at the bottom; I lay dung half rotten about eight inches or more, not trod down, but loose, to drain the beds, if wet seasons happen, for the Bulbs will not endure wet; over that a stratum of about six inches or more of fresh earth sifted fine—a light loam is good for that use…

Uvedale and Richardson used their correspondence to improve their gardening tactics and share knowledge about plant cultivation that they acquired through first-hand experience. Epistolary knowledge production was in line with emerging themes in Baconian scientific inquiry that prioritized collaborative experimentation and empirical observation. Their knowledge of plants came from their actual experience working with them, rather than reading books about them.

In addition, Uvedale used his gardening practices to engage in the trading economy as a type of merchant. Uvedale’s letters clearly showed that he exchanged plants frequently and on a seasonal basis. For example, he wrote to Richardson, “You may freely command what my Garden affords; therefore pray let me have your order while the Spring lasts.” Uvedale was methodic in his exchanges, and took orders for particular plants from his garden. His exchanges went both ways, as he used his own stock of plants to trade for new species from his correspondents’ gardens. His transactions were more mercantile than Somerset’s. Her exchanges were more like a patronage relationship, and the distinction between trading and patronizing was rooted in class and gendered dynamics. Somerset could yield her power and social status to import plants to cultivate, and once she grew them, they served to reinforce her social standing.

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64 Robert Uvedale, “Robert Uvedale to Richard Richardson,” October 27, 1696. Extracts from the Literary and Scientific Correspondence of Richard Richardson.
Uvedale had to trade his plants in order to acquire new ones, and his garden served as a means of establishing his social rank from the start.

Cultivating flowers was also tied up with a host of gendered conventions in the beginning of the eighteenth century. It was generally held that flower gardening was the most acceptable type of gardening for women, as opposed to gardening exotic plants or growing crops for agricultural or mercantile purposes. In fact, a 1717 text called *The lady’s recreation: or, The third and last part of the art of gardening improv’d* set up a very clear connection between women and flower gardening:

> So the Management of the Flower-Garden in particular, is oftentimes the Diversion of the Ladies, where the Gardens are not very extensive, and the Inspection thereof doth not take up too much of their Time.\(^{67}\)

Charles Evelyn sets up a gendered justification for flower gardening with stipulations. The use of the words ‘Management’ and ‘Inspection’ implicated women in a complex power dynamic. On one hand, managing, inspecting, and supervising were powerful actions, wherein the person conducting them could make decisions and maintain a level of prestige. On the other hand, managing implied a separation from the actual on-the-ground labor. By describing women as managers of gardens, Evelyn did not acknowledge that women were also directly involved in the work of gardening, from weeding and planting to designing and organizing. The author also correlated femininity with gardening only as a non-time-intensive diversion. He argued that it was appropriate for women to manage small flower gardens that did not take up too much of their time. By that logic, Somerset failed on both counts. Her gardens were some of the largest in

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England, and towards the end of her life, she spent a majority of her time gardening. Even so, the author praised Somerset and lauded her gardening accomplishments, going so far as to say that “by her Knowledge and Management, she has given the greatest Example of Female Horticulture, perhaps, that any Nation can produce.”68 The author set her up as an exceptional case, as a woman who was smarter and more accomplished than most of her female peers. The author praised her both for her variety of beautiful native flowers as well as for her ‘curiosities’ from other lands. However, despite effusive praise, her name and the name of her garden were actually only mentioned in footnotes. Even in a book all about women in gardening, Somerset was still marginalized, which illustrates the entrenched nature of gender-based exclusion in the early modern period.

In her own writings, Somerset took pride in her gardening abilities. For example, she wrote:

I have severall plants rais’d from yr shaddock[a type of citrus tree] that are more then seven inches high, this hot summer brings on my plants to such a height that I am forct to top plants that are in the ground against the wall in the orengree [orangerie] wch is 18 foot high.69

Somerset’s trees grew so tall that she had to devise new ways to house them. Since the climate was too cold for citrus trees to be planted directly in the ground without protection, Somerset planted them in her orangery—but she would not have expected them to grow so tall as to outgrow the eighteen-foot structure. The disjunction between the ways that her contemporaries viewed her, as a supervisor, and the ways she viewed herself, as a direct participant in gardening, showcase the complexity of the connections between gender and flower gardening.

68 Ibid.
69 Mary Somerset, “Mary Somerset to Sir Hans Sloane,” 7/10/?? British Library.
Part of what set Somerset and Uvedale apart from other gardeners of their day was their ability to experiment with cultivating exotic plant specimens using newly developed technologies. Over the course of the seventeenth century in England, systematic experimentation gained popularity and became institutionalized. Debates took place as people tried to decide the most trustworthy sites for knowledge about the natural world to be produced. People also debated as to the most trustworthy people to create the knowledge. Value was placed in first-hand observation, but testimony was not always accepted at face value. Public experiments were lauded as one of the most trustworthy sources of knowledge. These took place in many settings, from laboratories to apothecary’s shops, to coffeehouses and university halls. Experiments also occurred in greenhouses.

Most of the experiments that took place in gardens and greenhouses arose from a simple yet often debilitating problem that gardeners faced when attempting to cultivate exotic plant specimens: the climate. After seasons of disappointing failures, gardeners began to experiment with ways to protect their plants from the cold. The most effective methods that emerged from these experiments were greenhouses.

Greenhouses started as structures called orangeries, so named because their purpose was to enable gardeners to cultivate oranges and other citrus fruits. Orange trees became a staple of Italian gardens, after being brought to Europe by the Arabs from China and Burma in the thirteenth century. In the middle of the sixteenth century, orange seeds spread to more northern European countries, as the style for gardens at the time reflected Italian fashions. Oranges became an integral part of court life, as symbols of rarity and prestige that buttressed the

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reputation of those who had access to them.\textsuperscript{72} However, winters were too cold in countries like England for the orange trees to survive unaided. Problems cultivating warm-weather plants were the impetus for gardeners and architects to begin designing structures to protect orange trees. Orangeries started as temporary structures erected around orange trees during the winter that were removed in summer. However, these temporary structures were often expensive, unsightly, and not completely effective, so permanent structures soon became the more popular option. Permanent structures were especially suitable for orange trees, since orange trees were grown in pots and thus easily relocated into orangeries in winter and outside in the summer.

Innovations in heating techniques, pioneered by the Dutch, made orangeries progressively more effective at evenly heating rooms for wintering plants. Stoves\textsuperscript{73} were developed that used pipes to spread heat more evenly.\textsuperscript{74} The Dutch influence was especially prevalent in England during the reign of Queen Mary and William III (William of Orange), starting in 1689.\textsuperscript{75} The couple was interested in gardening and they built three stove houses at Hampton Court Palace. In 1692, Somerset received a report about their stoves.\textsuperscript{76} Seven years later, Somerset had her own orangery built, and she described the structures in a letter to Sloane:

…this place has 4 fier places the smoake warming it under 2 paved walks, one that parts the middle from the border under the wall, the other along by the windows & doores, the roofe is halfe glass the other deale being next the wall in manner of windows to raise to let in raine & aire in very hot weather, everything grows extravagently, one plant now in flower that I fancie has not blowne in England…\textsuperscript{77}

\textsuperscript{72} Stefan Koppelkamm, \textit{Glasshouses and Wintergardens of the Nineteenth Century} (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 10.
\textsuperscript{73} Stoves could refer to both the appliance the created heat, or the overall structure, as a synonym for orangery.
\textsuperscript{74} For a great contemporary account about green-houses and orangeries, see chapter four in Charles Evelyn’s \textit{The lady's recreation: or, The third and last part of the art of gardening improv’d}, London, 1717.
\textsuperscript{76} Mark Laird. \textit{A Natural History of English Gardening, 1650-1800} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 104.
Somerset was proud of the orangery that she and her husband constructed at Badminton. Her description included both a detailed account of the structure itself, as well as a gesture towards the success she had growing plants in it. She even asserted that one of the plants growing there had never otherwise been bloomed in England. The introduction of orangeries and stoves to the Badminton estate indicated a change in priorities for Somerset and reflected a larger trend in the gardening field. With the introduction of orangeries, her emphasis changed from flowers to exotic plants from warm climates, especially succulents.

Uvedale also grew exotic plants in stoves and orangeries. He had greenhouses at least by March of 1697, which was two years before Somerset’s stoves were completed. His greenhouses were likely of a similar layout to Somerset’s and their contemporaries. Most greenhouses of their day were long buildings with walls partially made of glass – an expensive commodity and an indicator of wealth for those that could afford it on a large scale. Greenhouses would have some sort of heat source, likely a stove, with innovations constantly improving the evenness of heat. Uvedale’s letters frequently contained complaints about plants in his greenhouse not flourishing as much as he would like them to. As with all types of experiments, Uvedale’s greenhouses experienced quite a bit of failure before arriving at the desired result. The dedication of Somerset and Uvedale to continue experimenting with exotic plants, despite frequent disappointments and setbacks, as well as all the time, resources, and effort they put into their endeavors, demonstrated their dedication to the project of plant cultivation.

In their positions of authority within their estates, Somerset and Uvedale both oversaw a collection of gardeners. Their letters are full of references to these gardeners, often in order to

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complain about their faults. Uvedale especially complained frequently about the shortcomings of his gardeners. In one letter he wrote,

...my Bulbs are confused by the roguery of my Gardeners, which torture me so that I am sometimes minded wholly to leave off my pleasure, and have been forced to change three since Lady-day [March 25, the feast of the Annunciation] last, and am now without one.\(^79\)

In a period of just seven months, Uvedale was forced to switch gardeners three times. He expressed his frustration in finding proper assistants and illustrates the hierarchy of gardening labor at the time. Uvedale was a gardener, florist, and botanist since he physically labored in the garden himself (gardener), oversaw the collection and cultivation of plants and flowers (florist), and studied the plants he grew (botanist). His role was of different level of gardening than the unskilled workers he hired only to do physical labor such as weeding or planting. These differences in labor correlated with the social hierarchy of the time. The more gentlemanly a person, the more likely they were to have a supervising role, rather than one that involved only physical labor.

Somerset similarly participated in the three aspects of gardening that Uvedale did – physical labor, management, and study. But with more resources at her disposal, Somerset hired more effective gardeners and she did not complain about them quite as much in her correspondence. From 1682 to 1694, Somerset employed a man named John Mansfield as the head gardener at her garden at Chelsea, and he focused mainly on domestic flowers.\(^80\) Her garden’s close proximity to other London gardens, such as Bishop Henry Compton’s Fulham Palace, the Chelsea Physic Garden, George London’s garden at Brompton Park, and the royal


Hampton Court Gardens, enabled Somerset to learn about and acquire more flower specimens.\textsuperscript{81} In 1694, Somerset found a new gardener for her Chelsea garden, William Oram. He was instrumental in Somerset’s shift of emphasis from florists’ flowers to exotic plants, since he had expertise with exotics.

These gardeners likely belonged to the Society of Florists that met periodically in London starting in at least 1670.\textsuperscript{82} These societies fostered collaboration and competition amongst florists, and gave them a platform to discuss and display plants. Gardeners could share ideas, participate in networks of gardening knowledge production, and set themselves apart from lower level gardeners who were not involved in societies.

\textbf{Cultivating Power}

Gardens were also sites of cultivating power and prestige, as demonstrated by early modern royalty. At the end of the seventeenth century, Queen Mary and William III (William of Orange) took a keen interest in the gardens on their royal estates. They used their gardens to express their ruling philosophy and religious views. They were Protestant and their gardens reflected the harmony believed to be indicative of the perfectly ordered state of the heavens.\textsuperscript{83} Similarly, French King Louis XIV used his impressive gardens at Versailles to showcase his absolute power and incite floral motifs as symbols of that power.\textsuperscript{84} Louis XIV, along with other male plant enthusiasts of his day, made it their mission to shift the connotations of flowers away from feminine representations of beauty and fertility, and towards masculine traits of curiosity,

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 85.
good taste, and even political and military power. Cultivating valuable flowers and exotics required political influence, botanical knowledge, economic resources, and cultural refinement— which were traits that men wanted to be associated with masculinity, not femininity.\textsuperscript{85} Gardens began to take on meanings of power and prestige, at just the time when women were being edged out of recognition in the gardening world.

Following the examples of royalty both at home and on the continent, the Duke and Duchess of Beaufort designed the grounds of their Badminton estate to reflect their power and beliefs about the world. Their home was situated in the center of their estate, with twelve radiating avenues of trees extending out at all angles (See Figure 2). These avenues that extended far into the adjacent countryside were a concrete display of power based in land ownership, since they declared that the Duke and Duchess owned the enclosed land that the avenues passed through.\textsuperscript{86} Asserting land ownership was an important political gesture, because the Duke and Duchess, along with many other English noble families, were reasserting their dominance after the turmoil of the English Civil War and Glorious Revolution that followed. During that tumultuous time, England grappled with the question of who should hold power and authority in their country. Nobles tried a variety of tactics, including erecting impressive estates and gardens, to assert their claims to power. The awe-inspiring size, beauty, and design of the Badminton estate did much to cement the powerful position of the Duke and Duchess.

On a smaller scale, Robert Uvedale’s gardens also brought him prestige. As a teacher and clergyman, Uvedale likely considered himself somewhere in the middling sort of people. His ability to spend leisurely hours cultivating plants indicates a level of economic security, but he

\textsuperscript{85} Ibid., 34.
was not necessarily set to leave an impressive legacy. However, his gardens and herbarium gave him a reason to be remembered. For example, he was mentioned in a letter from the botanist James Sutherland to Richardson,

I have had the honour of the acquaintance of some of those learned and curious Gentlemen ye met with, as Dr. Uvedale at Enfield, who has given me frequent supplies of rare seeds and plants from his famous and well-stocked garden.

Sutherland was himself a gardener and botanist and correspondent of many of the prominent botanical figures of the day. By describing Uvedale as ‘learned and curious’ and his gardens as ‘famous and well-stocked’, Sutherland bestowed a level of prestige and remembrance onto Uvedale. Interestingly, Sutherland also placed Uvedale in the category of ‘Gentlemen.’ This was the only example of a contemporary using that term to describe Uvedale, and did not reflect the reality of Uvedale’s identity. Nevertheless, by placing Uvedale in the category of Gentlemen, Sutherland imparted a sense of power and authority onto Uvedale, and firmly established his place in botanical networks.

Uvedale was also remembered in *Catalogue of Trees, Shrubs, Plants, and Flowers, Both Exotic and Domestic* (1730). Compiled by the Society of Gardeners in London, this catalogue was written after both Somerset and Uvedale died. The prominent London gardeners and nursery men who were a part of the Society of Gardeners used this text to share knowledge about the variety of plants growing in England—but there was also space in the document dedicated to honoring those who were instrumental in plant collection and cultivation. In the preface of the catalogue, the authors highlighted “worthy persons, from whose Generosities the several English

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87 James Sutherland, “Sutherland to Richardson,” September 19, 1702. *Extracts from the Literary and Scientific Correspondence of Richard Richardson.*
Gardens have been supplied with a great Number of Trees, Plants, Flowers, &c." The entry for Uvedale reads:

The curious Dr. Uvedale of Enfield did by his great Correspondence abroad, collect a very valuable Parcel of Plants and Flowers, which he, with great Skill and Care, maintained for many Years, and some of the valuable Trees were planted in the full Ground, where they are now remaining; but the Bulk of his Collection was sold to Sir Robert Walpole soon after the Doctor’s death.

The language used illustrates the way that Uvedale’s gardening enabled him to cultivate a legacy. The authors used the verbs ‘collect’ and ‘maintain’ to describe the labor that Uvedale participated in, but they did not refer to his actions as managing or supervising. By recognizing him in this preface of a book, the authors translated his ephemeral gardening achievements into a lasting legacy in textual form that went beyond the temporary life of his garden and plants.

An entry in the same catalogue for Somerset immediately followed the entry for Uvedale, and the juxtaposition illustrated the underlying gendered nature of gardening. Her entry reads,

Her Grace the Duchess of Beaufort did also collect a numerous Quantity of rare Plants into those famous Gardens of Badmington, where she preserved and maintained them with great Care in wonderful Beauty for many Years.

The authors described Somerset’s plant cultivation using traditionally feminized concepts of care and beauty. While the authors also referred to her labor in the same way as Uvedale, with the verb ‘maintained’ and ‘collect’, they did not reference her global correspondence or the legacy of her collection. Somerset left behind a textual legacy, but through a gendered lens.

Another example of the ways that Somerset and Uvedale were remembered for their gardening pursuits was found in the book Historical and biographical sketches of the progress of

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88 Society of Gardeners, Catalogue of Trees, Shrubs, Plants, and Flowers, Both Exotic and Domestic, vi.
89 Ibid. vii.
90 Ibid.
botany in England, from its origin to the introduction of the Linnaean system. This book was written in 1790 by Richard Pulteney, a strong proponent of the Linnaean system of botany. Pulteney was not born until 1730, over a decade after the deaths of both Somerset and Uvedale. He was of a different age of botany, one in which the work of botanists before Carl Linnaeus was often devalued and underappreciated. Linnaeus’s binomial nomenclature and classification based on sexual anatomy of plants revolutionized the botanical world, and overshadowed the botanical knowledge that occurred previously. Additionally, Pulteney’s text was published amid the age of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. While they both get rather short mentions in Pulteney’s piece, Somerset’s mention was dramatically shorter than Uvedale’s. The entirety of Somerset’s entry reads, “The Duchess of Beaufort had a garden richly stored at Badminton, in Gloucestershire.” She was remembered for having a good garden, but the entry makes no mention to any of her actual work or accomplishments. On the other hand, Uvedale was honored as both a botanist and a patron of botany, and was remembered for cultivating a garden, not just possessing one. His entry also referenced the plant that was named in his honor by Petiver. Comparing their entries uncovers how status and personal identity impacted the ways that plant enthusiasts were viewed and remembered. Even though Somerset and Uvedale did very similar gardening work, their statuses altered the way they were viewed. As an elite woman, Somerset was seen as possessing and supervising, rather than directly contributing. As an educated man, Uvedale was recognized as a botanist and a cultivator of plants. Gender and education were thus

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93 Ibid., 30.
two aspects of identity that played a major role in the ways that plant enthusiasts were remembered.

A final way that Somerset used her plant cultivation to bolster her power and reputation was through the creation of painted volumes of her plants called a florilegium. Between 1703 and 1705, the Dutch artist Everhard Kickius lived at the Badminton estate and painted plants found in Somerset’s garden. These paintings on parchment were bound into two leather volumes, one for her garden at Badminton and one for her garden at Chelsea. The paintings contain vivid depictions of her garden plants, often in groups with the roots showing (see Figure 3). They can be read both as scientific documentation and artistic representations. These volumes bolstered her reputation by capturing the vibrancy of her flowers and plants for people to appreciate—even if they were not able to see her plants in bloom directly. The florilegium demonstrated her ability both to cultivate the plants in the first place, and then to hire skilled artists to depict them. Since the volumes were not published, Somerset was in control of who was able to view them, similarly to how she could control who visited her gardens.

In the end, the gardening activities that Somerset and Uvedale undertook allowed them to both cultivate impressive gardens and cultivate their reputations and legacies. They used their gardens and orangeries as sites of experimentation, which was the key form of natural knowledge production in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Somerset’s and Uvedale’s cultivating practices also illuminated a strong connection between control over gardens and control over one’s social status. Gardens were a way to create a personal legacy and to participate in the larger project of botanical knowledge production.

95 The original volumes are housed in the archives at the Badminton estate. They are reproduced in part in Gloria Cotteslow and Doris Hunt, *The Duchess of Beaufort’s Flowers* (Exeter, England: Webb & Bower, 1983).
The study of early modern botany was a collaborative endeavor that included countless people around the globe. Nevertheless, the history of botany tends to be portrayed as a timeline of innovations by influential men, as is the case with the history of science more generally. While prominent botanical figures such as John Ray and Sir Hans Sloane often receive scholarly attention, they were part of a vast network of plant enthusiasts working together to create knowledge about the natural world. The classification efforts of Somerset and Uvedale, as seen in their correspondence and herbaria, illustrate the ways that they employed their resources and status to provide tangible contributions to the collaborative project of botanical classification.

In the early eighteenth century, changes were taking place in the ways that people thought about and studied the natural world. Francis Bacon ushered in the beginning of a new way of creating knowledge about the natural world, based on experiential methods instead of the testimony of ancient authors. The previous textual approach to studying botany was constrained to those with fluency in Latin, and the old books failed to account for all of the new exotic specimens arriving in Europe from the New World. The new Baconian approach grounded on experimental methods opened the doors to larger segments of the population to contribute to natural knowledge production. However, the ways that this shift to experimentation actually unfolded demonstrated the way that status continued to play a role in who got to make conclusions about the natural world.

One of the most influential figures in the transformation of botanical classification at the end of the seventeenth century was John Ray (1627–1705). Ray was a Cambridge educated plant

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enthusiast who laid the foundations of early modern botany. His classification scheme centered around the idea of arranging plants based on their internal structure and anatomy, rather than their use or habitat, as had been the practice previously. As a result of this emphasis on anatomical study, first-hand observation became more valuable, since structure and anatomy could only be studied effectively by observation. Botanists did study descriptions and illustrations of plants, but those sources relied on another person’s interpretation and testimony about a plant, and were thus less trustworthy than viewing the plants themselves. However, the task of actually connecting botanists with botanical specimens from across the globe was not an easy one. Some botanists were able to travel abroad and view plants growing in their natural habitats and take them for future study. But the majority of European botanists did most of their research in Europe. Even those who did travel could not see enough specimens with their own eyes to form an all-encompassing botanical classification scheme. The solution to this dilemma was the creation of gardens.

Gardens were the best ways to connect botanists with plants. They allowed botanists to study living exotic plants from all over the globe, without necessarily traveling too far. Herbaria were another way to connect botanists with plants, using dried plants instead of living ones. Through their creation and study of both gardens and herbaria, Somerset and Uvedale made meaningful contributions to botanical classification.

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97 Ibid., 384.
Naming Plants

One of the thorniest parts of cultivating exotic plant specimens was determining their names. The authority to name a plant was vested in those with a high enough status to be deemed trustworthy, and this trustworthiness depended on gentlemanly status. Plant names circulated in correspondence and personal catalogues and could also be further solidified by being listed in published books. Naming botanical specimens was one of the core tasks of botany in the early modern period, since in order to build upon the store of knowledge about plants, people needed to ensure that they knew which plants they were talking about.

Many of the seeds and specimens that Somerset and Uvedale received came to them without clear names. Sometimes information was lost during overseas voyages as plants changed hands. Other times, the plants had never received names in the first place since botanists had never been exposed to them. In a letter to Richardson, Uvedale recounted the frequency of plants arriving without names when he wrote, “I could not find time to write the names of my Plants, I believe now, upon enquiry, I should not find names to write; but they who cultivate Plants must expect such fortune.”98 This difficulty was so prevalent that Uvedale resigned himself to receiving plants without names.

Other problems that arose when naming plants were language barriers. Since many of the plants were coming from foreign lands, they often had foreign names. Somerset’s plants from China proved especially troublesome. One of her lists reads, “Seeds from China the names gues’d at mark’t only wth figures & a St. Andrews crosse X.”99 Somerset had to guess at the

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names of plants, and she used her own internal classification scheme to keep track of the names that she did not know. Another language barrier occurred since plants were frequently given Latin names. Ascribing plants with Latin names made it easier to share a common lexicon of names across countries and languages—but only for those versed in Latin. In the early eighteenth century, knowledge of Latin was mainly limited to educated men. While Uvedale could read and write in Latin due to his university education, Somerset could not. As she wrote in a letter to Sloane about the flowers in her herbarium, “they are as my Lords Gardiner & I usually calls them, hee has been in this the scribe, & neither hee nor I understand latine so that I feare wee have committed many faults.”  

Evidently her gardener did not have a university degree either, so working together they had many difficulties determining the names of her plants.

Uvedale highlighted the distinction between Latin and non-Latin names when he wrote in a letter to Richardson, “The Bulbs are underwritten by the barbarous names the Flower-sellers give them, which, for distinction sake, they keep them by.”  

Uvedale distinguished between the ‘barbarous names’ of vernacular languages used by florists, and the Latin names that were used by botanists. Generally, this distinction between Latin and vernacular languages, such as English, reflected a hierarchy of authority: Gentlemen who used Latin names had the authority to name plants, while others who used their vernacular names were only interested in plants as a hobby or business venture, rather than as an intellectual inquiry. However, Uvedale complicated this dichotomy. Although he was not a gentleman, Uvedale acted as both a florist and a botanist. He cultivated flowers himself and traded them as a florist would, but his university education, use of

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100 Somerset, Mary. “Mary Somerset to Sir Hans Sloane,” 12/17/?? British Library.
Latin, and herbarium indicated a botanical mission that set him apart from florists and other amateur plant enthusiasts.

**Classifying Plants**

Herbaria, collections of dried plants, were one of the most important resources of early modern botany. They provided the next best thing to living specimens, since dried plants still maintained many of the anatomical features of living plants. When placed in a manuscript volume, as Somerset’s and Uvedales’ were, herbaria were easily transported and altered.\(^\text{102}\) They enabled gardeners to share their plants with people beyond those who could visit their gardeners—both those geographically and temporally disparate. It was common practice for plant enthusiasts to send their herbaria to one another and annotate them with additional information. Herbaria could also contain more plants than even the largest garden. And perhaps one of the most valuable aspects of herbaria from a historical perspective—they could be preserved. Plants and gardens were inherently temporal entities, but by placing dried plants into bound volumes, and eventually into the collections of prominent men, botanists ensured that their plants and knowledge about the botanical world could live on.

Mary Somerset’s herbarium contained a collection of twelve bound folio volumes of dried plants from her gardens at Badminton and Chelsea.\(^\text{103}\) She worked on these volumes throughout the latter part of her life, but some of the finishing touches were added after her death. Her herbarium also contained two smaller volumes that were completed earlier in


\(^{103}\) HS 131- HS 142, Natural History Museum London.
Somerset’s life in preparation for the larger collection. One of these smaller volumes was compiled by Somerset herself, and the other was put together by Sir Hans Sloane.

Creating an herbarium was not an easy task. Somerset’s correspondence showed that it was a time intensive and collaborative project. In one of her letters, she thanked Sloane for sending her some of the necessary supplies to create her herbarium, “I returne you many thanks good Doctor for giving yr selfe the trouble of getting mee a book bound for my Parchments.”

Her connection with Sloane facilitated her inclusion in botanical networks through his assistance in creating her herbarium. Acquiring parchment and the knowledge of how best to dry her plants and affix them to the parchment was crucial to the successful creation of her herbarium. Somerset also spoke of the necessity of others to help with this endeavor. She wrote, “I am busy with my dry’d plants, if I had a good assistant I believe I could make a Catal[ogue] of 2000 plants, & very few common ones” Somerset might have meant that she did not have an assistant, or that she had one who was not adequate. Either way, she made it clear that the scope of her herbarium was such that assistance was necessary, which implied that creating an herbarium was a time intensive and serious process. Her herbarium was one of the most significant ways that Somerset contributed to the project of botanical classification.

Most of the entries in Somerset’s herbarium contained basic information about the plants, including their name (if known), origin, and a reference to a contemporary work that mentioned them. However, there were a few entries that contained interesting additional information. For example, an entry she wrote about a specimen called Tehima from China given to her by Sloane reads, “It maketh very good Oyl wch they call Mayeou. They also put some of it upon little

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104 HS 235 and HS 66, Natural History Museum London.
106 Mary Somerset, “Mary Somerset to Sir Hans Sloane,” 2/19/?? British Library.
Cakes, and it gives them a grateful Taste. They sow them in May.”

Somerset combined her scientific interest in plants along with more traditional observations about their use. Information about the use of plants was valued by cooks and gardeners, but would not necessarily be the primary concern for botanists, since Ray’s classification scheme did not depend on use, but instead was focused on anatomy.

Part of the value of herbaria was that they were able to outlive the people who created them. All the volumes of Somerset’s herbarium were given to Sloane after her death, and therefore they now reside in the Natural History Museum in London. Her herbarium is a part of Sloane’s collections and resides in a collection alongside other historical herbaria. Somerset’s herbarium has been studied by botanists ever since it was created, as seen in many annotations throughout its pages, both from the eighteenth century and the modern day. Somerset recognized that her herbarium would be part of her scientific legacy, in a similar way that her children and her estate would continue the legacy of her name and family.

Robert Uvedale’s herbarium consisted of fourteen volumes of dried plant specimens from England and abroad. His herbarium was valuable in large part because it was arranged in the classification scheme of John Ray. Since Ray was such an important botanical figure but he did not create an herbarium himself, herbaria made by people who were in close contact with Ray took on a higher level of significance. While Uvedale did not reference his herbarium in his correspondence quite as much in Somerset did, so we do not have as much insight into his methodology, he did still mention it occasionally. For example, he wrote to Richardson that, “

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can, notwithstanding, enjoy a little pleasure in turning over my *Hortus Siccus*, to which you have been soe great a benefactor.”

Rather than referring to his volumes of dried plants with the English word “herbarium,” he calls it his *Hortus Siccus*, which is the Latin and more scientific word choice. Richardson was both a contributor to Uvedale’s herbarium and one who assisted in classifying the specimens within it. In addition to the volumes compiled by Uvedale, there are also many plants credited to Uvedale’s garden found elsewhere in Sloane’s herbarium.

In addition to the physical labor of growing the plants, drying them, and then affixing them to parchment, there was a host of intellectual labor that went into the creation of an herbarium. One way that botanists could identify and classify plants was by consulting published books or manuscripts by contemporary authors. It was common practice for botanists to cite botanical texts and authors within their herbaria. Using an abbreviation system, authors created a complex web of relationships between their individual specimens and entries written in a variety of different works (see Figure 4). By connecting specimens to outside books, herbaria were validated and given more authority. At the same time, these books were validated as well by being connected to actual specimens. Books were valuable resources since they were relatively easily accessible and able to be transported and edited. However, books had serious limitations since specimens were being introduced to Europe more quickly than experts were publishing about them. Somerset frequently lamented that she could not find references to her plants in any of the books she had. Additionally, most published botanical books did not include images of the plants, so it was difficult to connect plant information with the actual specimen of the plant.


Ultimately, the greatest forms of authority for botanical classifying were the botanists themselves. Botanical classification was inherently collaborative because of the sheer scope of their topic. Experts formed networks to share their knowledge and attempt to name and classify all the plants in the world. One of the important people who helped both Somerset and Uvedale was William Sherard (1659–1728), a prominent botanist of the early eighteenth century. Sherard lived on the Badminton estate with Somerset for a few years as a tutor to her grandson. While he lived with Somerset, he provided expertise and knowledge about plant cultivation. Sherard also assisted Uvedale with botanical classification, as seen in a letter Uvedale wrote to Richardson,

Dr. Sherard has been so kind to give me his company and assistance in correcting my Hortus siccus, which is but mealy furnished, and most out of my own garden, which cannot be supposed to afford much, though it has been the grave of a great many Plants which have grown there in half a century.\(^\text{111}\)

Uvedale valued Sherard’s company and expertise in making corrections to his herbarium. While writing hesitantly about the value of his plants, Uvedale applauded the assistance given to him by Sherard.

Somerset also consulted Sloane for his botanical knowledge. She reached out to him to confirm the names of the plants she put in her book, in an effort to minimize errors. She wrote,

If you will bee troubl’d … to see the faults before they are in the booke, to send it to you, it beeing pitty to have them after so much charge to bee false nam’d wch may easily bee done by mee, most of them being rais’d from seed wch came without names.\(^\text{112}\)


Somerset clearly valued accuracy and wanted to make her herbarium as up to date as possible, given the challenges of receiving specimens with no names. Sloane had the authority necessary to name specimens, so he could help her avoid making faults in her herbarium.

One of the most important botanists who consulted Somerset’s and Uvedale’s herbaria was John Ray. Evidence for his communication with them came in both correspondence and annotations in their herbaria. Ray wrote to Sloane,

the box of plants, which you did me the favour to send me last week, came safe, for which I return you thanks. I have cursorily overlooked them, and do find that the specimens from Badminton are very fair ones, and curiously dried and preserved.\textsuperscript{113}

Ray directly saw specimens from Badminton and used them to formulate his classification scheme. He gave his opinion of her specimens, using the terms ‘fair’ and ‘curiously,’ both of which had positive connotations and reflected a sense of respect and recognition. Additionally, one of Somerset’s herbaria, volume 235 in the Natural History Museum in London, contains annotations in Ray’s distinct handwriting (see Figure 5). The fact that Ray wrote the names of plants into Somerset’s volume indicates that he deemed her work worthy of engaging with, and that Somerset had the necessary connections, through Sloane, to get her herbarium into Ray’s hands. At the same time, Ray’s entire classification scheme depended upon access to volumes such as these, which provided crucial resources for his conclusions about botanical classification, so the work was collaborative and benefited both Ray and Somerset.

Uvedale and Ray also shared a connection through the organizational structure of Uvedale’s herbarium. Uvedale’s herbarium was organized along Ray’s scheme, which divided plants into species and recognized the difference between monocots and dicots—species with one

\textsuperscript{113} John Ray to Sir Hans Sloane, 11/24/1703 in Edwin Lankester, \textit{The correspondence of John Ray: consisting of selections from the philosophical letters}, 437.
or two seed leaves inside, respectively. Uvedale’s herbarium was thus even more valuable in the eyes of botanists and historians of science, since Ray himself did not create an herbarium. Similarly, Uvedale and Ray also mutually benefitted from each other’s work, even though Ray got most of the credit for classification.

As illustrated in their herbaria and correspondence, Somerset and Uvedale were influential actors in the collaborative project of early modern botanical classification. They understood the value of their gardens and herbaria as crucial resources for classification, since Baconian science relied heavily on first hand observations of plants. Somerset used her garden and herbarium to overcome her lack of Latin proficiency and to create a lasting record of her botanical contributions. Uvedale’s herbarium remains one of the most robust examples of Ray’s classifications scheme, and his gardens were instrumental in forming a legacy for him. In the end, the classification efforts of Somerset and Uvedale complicate narratives of individual botanists as the saviors of the science by revealing that rather than discrete geniuses, the history of early modern botanical classifications was that of a complex network of collaborative plant enthusiasts, working together to make sense of plants, primarily through gardens and herbaria.

CONCLUSION

In early modern England, botanical knowledge production was a collaborative and social project that relied on a host of people from around the globe. First, plants were collected from their native habitats abroad and brought to England, using a complex infrastructure of networks, most of which were employed for other colonial purposes. In order to collect these specimens,

people needed to be collected as well—in the form of social networks. To collect exotic plant specimens, a person needed to have the status necessary to compel others to do their bidding from afar. After the plants and seeds made their way to England, they were planted in gardens. Figuring out the best way to cultivate these new and exotic specimens was often an experimental process, occurring in orangeries. These plants were then used to buttress the status of the person who owned and cultivated them. Finally, these plants served as the resources for creating a universal botanical classification scheme to make sense of the natural world. Using living garden collections and volumes of dried, plants were named and categorized. Plant naming was implicated in power dynamics, because the people who were trusted to make naming and classification decisions held a certain status, which was dependent on their adherence to norms of gentlemanliness. At every step of the botanical knowledge production process, status played a role in what types of labor people did and how much authority they had to make conclusions about plants. Gentlemen—socially connected and educated men with no need to work for others but who instead devoted their time to leisurely pursuits and conversation—often got the credit and recognition for their botanical contributions. But people like Mary Somerset and Robert Uvedale illustrated that the reality of botanical knowledge production was much more complex than that. Not only were non-gentlemen involved in every level of botanical knowledge production, they contributed crucial resources and expertise that enabled conclusions about the natural world to be made. By studying Somerset and Uvedale as examples, it becomes clear that botanical knowledge was socially and collaboratively produced, and there were so many more people that were involved in the process than we may think. Further investigation into botanical networks will continue to reveal more influential actors and give a more nuanced understanding of the complicated world of early modern English botany.
Figure 3. Everhard Kickius, *Badminton florilegium*, album one (1703-05), fol. 15 (detail), watercolour and bodycolour, heightened with gum, over graphite underdrawing, on vellum, 58.4 x 42.5 cm), Badminton House. Photo reproduced by kind permission of His Grace the Duke of Beaufort. From: Mark Laird. *A Natural History of English Gardening*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. Plate 82.
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Figure 4. Herbarium of Mary Somerset. HS 235, Natural History Museum London.
Figure 5. Herbarium of Mary Somerset. HS 235, Natural History Museum London.
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