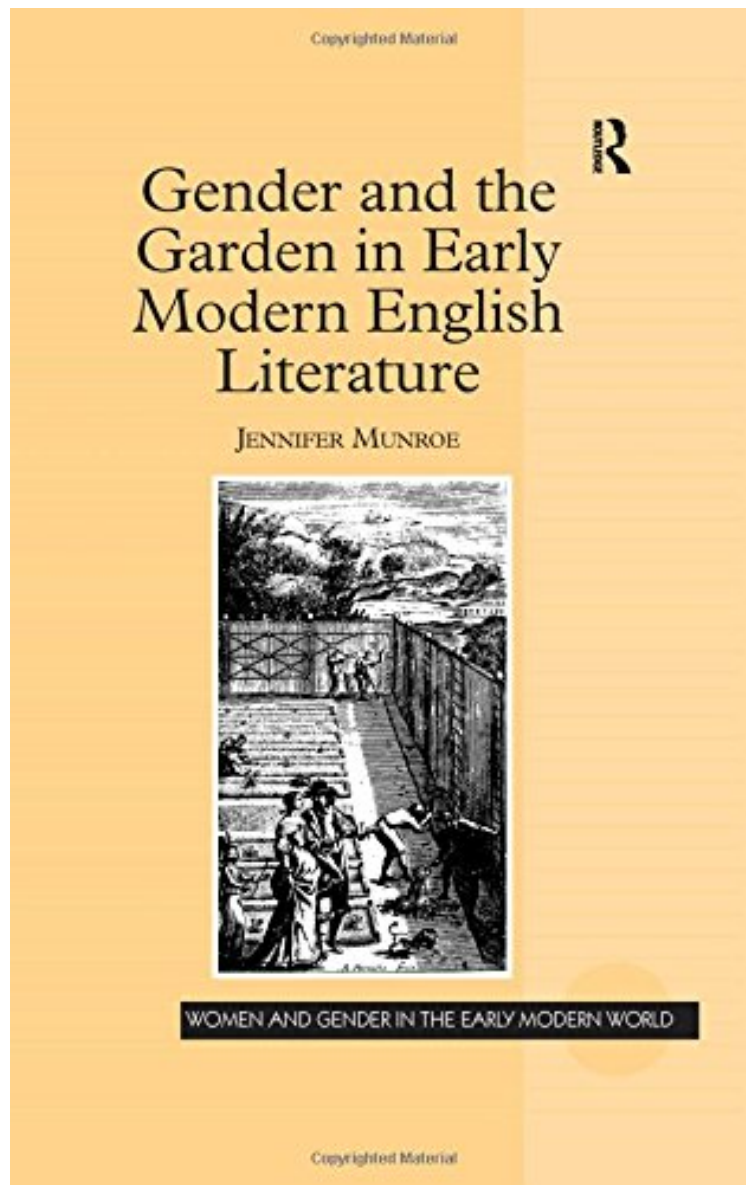


(Download pdf) Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World)

Jennifer Munroe

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praised *Gender and the Garden in Early Modern English Literature* (Women and Gender in the Early Modern World):

Radical reconfigurations in gardening practice in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century England altered the social function of the garden, offering men and women new opportunities for social mobility. While recent work has addressed how middle class men used the garden to attain this mobility, the gendering of the garden during the period has gone largely unexamined. This new study focuses on the developing gendered tension in gardening that stemmed from a shift from the garden as a means of feeding a family, to the garden as an aesthetic object imbued with status. The first part of the book focuses on how practical gardening books proposed methods for planting as they simultaneously represented gardens increasingly hierarchized by gender. The second part of the book looks at how men and women appropriated aesthetic uses of actual gardening in their poetry, and reveals a parallel gendered tension there. Munroe analyzes garden representations in the writings of such manual writers as Gervase Markham, Thomas Hill, and William Lawson, and such poets as Edmund Spenser, Aemilia Lanyer and Lady Mary Wroth. Investigating gardens, gender and writing, Jennifer Munroe considers not only published literary representations of gardens, but also actual garden landscapes and unpublished evidence of everyday gardening practice. She de-prioritizes the text as a primary means of cultural production, showing instead the relationship between what men and women might imagine possible and represent in their writing, and everyday spatial practices and the spaces men and women occupied and made. In so doing, she also broadens our outlook on whom we can identify and value as producers of early modern social space.

'The dual focus - on physical and imagined gardens, constructed by both male and female gardeners - makes Munroe's literary interpretation into a gorgeous tapestry, that weaves together material and ideological concerns as well as giving non-literary materials aesthetic and ideological significance.' Iona Bell, Williams College, USA 'While Roy Strong's *The Renaissance Garden in England* and David R. Coffin's many books focused on real garden aesthetics and scholars like John Dixon Hunt and Harry Berger Jr. have focused on the literary garden, Munroe's book is significant in the way it brings these two perspectives together and further focuses on gardening practice. This focus on the actual distribution of the physical garden space in comparison to the written discourse makes Munroe's book a unique and enlightened contribution to the study of gender in early modern literature.' *Early Modern Literature Studies* '...Munroe's study is an illuminating account of how contemporary gender politics permeated the horticultural space. Through readings of gardens real and imaginary, the author skilfully explores how readers, writers and indeed gardeners employed their own blessed plots as a medium for engagement with wider cultural, social, and political norms, and self-fashioning, especially among early modern women.' *Notes and Queries* About the Author Jennifer Munroe is Assistant Professor of English and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Women's Studies at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, USA.