

*Secret Gardens:  
Women and Gardens in the Long 19th Century and  
Beyond*



**LIT 6934 (5396) Fall 2013**

Instructor: Dr. Judith Page, Department of English, Turlington 4326, 392-6650, ext. 293  
(only on Tuesday mornings)

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**Please note: Our September 17<sup>th</sup> meeting will be at the Harn Museum of Art and our October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting will be in Library East, Special Collections.**

### *Description and Rationale*

In February of 1913, suffragettes attacked the Orchid House and burned down the Tea Pavillion at the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew. The *Journal of Horticulture and Home Farmer* reported on the second incident in this way: “For the second time within a fortnight female vandals have visited Kew Gardens with direful consequences. The picturesque tea pavilion was razed to the ground by fire. Happily the perpetrators were captured and are unlikely to resume their insane campaign for some time to come.” No longer content to be hothouse plants themselves, these early feminists apparently viewed Kew, with its vast collections of plants from around the world, as a bastion of masculine and imperialist power. Considered by the establishment as insane for wanting to destroy such beautiful and treasured places, the women saw the garden as a contested space and put their political agenda before aesthetic appreciation.

This course will explore the various dimensions of women’s engagement with gardening, botanical studies, and horticulture in England during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century—from the early educational treatises to such radical political acts. Representations of the garden and landscape—and women’s place in them—are often central to women’s literature. In the earlier part of the period, women writers used the subject matter of gardens and plants to educate their readers, to enter into political and cultural debates, particularly around issues of gender and class, and to signal moments of intellectual and spiritual insight. Gardens were viewed as real places and textual spaces to be read and interpreted for oneself and others. As more women became engaged in gardening and botanical pursuits, the meanings of their gardens became more complex. The garden became less a retreat from the world, as it had been in earlier eras, and more of a protected vantage point for engagement and expression of one’s status and aspirations to the world. Gardens were seen as transitional or liminal zones through which women could negotiate between domestic space and the larger world, as is evident in the range of women’s writing about the garden.

In looking toward the twentieth century, we see an increasing interest in what Virginia Woolf famously termed “Professions for Women.” The garden is no longer merely the woman’s domesticated landscape but it is the site of professional advancement and identity. Women such as Beatrix Potter became important environmental advocates and farmers. As horticultural colleges opened their doors to women and some were founded specifically for women, women began to write about their new opportunities. The first chapter of Frances Woseley’s *Gardening for Women* (1908) is not accidentally called “Gardening as a Profession for Women.” Professional “lady gardeners” were important in the response to the war effort in World War I, when estates were encouraged to give over some of their pleasure grounds to useful crops and women became part of a “land army” at work for the good of Britain and the war effort, a more socially acceptable way to demonstrate their competence than burning down tea rooms. Women writers increasingly became interested in the preservation of rural England, a goal that

sometimes clashed with the more public, visible, and active lives of women in both the countryside and the metropolis.

### **Requirements**

Regular class attendance and participation are required. All students are responsible for material covered in class and for any changes made to the syllabus when announced in class. For selected classes students will partner with me in getting the discussion going with a brief (approximately 10-minute) opening. (You will not be responsible for leading the entire class.) You may approach this session assignment any way you want—with hand-outs, with an electronic presentation, with a set of questions—if you choose to work in pairs, I urge you to work in a collaborative way with the other students who will be a co-presenter on a given day.

Many of the readings for class are on ARES through Library West: <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/>. If you do not already have an account for ARES, please get one now so that you can get going on the reading. In addition to articles and chapters on ARES and available electronically, we have another resource through the library: Eighteenth Century Collections Online (through Gale): <http://gdc.gale.com/products/eighteenth-century-collections-online/>. When you see the abbreviation “ECCO” on the syllabus, go to this collection through the database link on the library page. You may read the required pages on line and also print them out. Some books are also available as e-books through other sites.

### **--Seminar paper**

You will be required to write a **20-page paper** on some aspect of women and gardens, broadly interpreted. I am open to all approaches and various disciplinary intersections. Also, although the focus of this course is on England (rather than the larger context of Britain or the empire), you may certainly work in this larger geographical space, including intersections with America in the period. All students will also present their preliminary research to the seminar as part of a **mock conference panel**. In addition, you will submit a **prospectus (or proposal)** for the paper one month before the final paper is due. In this prospectus, you should address the issues that you will consider in your paper. Some questions your prospectus should address include: What is the scope of this study? What are the main questions or issues that have drawn you to the topic? What is your working argument? How does your proposed work fit into the ongoing scholarly debate about the subject or related subjects? How do you envision organizing your paper? What problems or challenges do you anticipate?

### **Grading**

Participation	30%
Seminar paper	70%

### **Required Texts:**

Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition* (Chicago)

MacKay, *Radical Gardening: Politics, Idealism, & Rebellion in the Garden* (Francis Lincoln)  
 Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (Penguin)  
 Brontë, *Jane Eyre* (Penguin)  
 Oliphant, *Miss Marjoribanks* (Penguin)  
 Levy, *A London Plane-tree and Other Verse* (Forgotten Books)  
 Burnett, *The Secret Garden* (Norton Critical)  
 Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (Warne)  
 Vita Sackville-West, *The Heir* (Hesperus)

**Recommended text:**

Helen Sword, *Stylish Academic Writing* (Harvard)

**Academic Integrity**

All students are required to abide by the Academic Honesty Guidelines. The UF Honor Code reads:

We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” For more information please refer to <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/studentguide>.

**Accommodations**

Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. For more information see <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc>.

<b>Schedule of Readings and Assignments</b>	
<b>August 27: Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction: Gardens in Theory and Literature</b> Harrison, <i>Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition</i>
<b>September 3: Week 2</b>	<b>Gardens as Cultural Objects:</b> MacKay, <i>Radical Gardening</i> ; Hunt, “The Garden as Cultural Object” and selections from <i>Greater Perfections</i> , ARES

<p><b>September 10: Week 3</b></p>	<p><b>Space, Miniature, and Botany:</b>  Bachelard, <i>The Poetics of Space</i>, especially <i>felicitous space, huts, nests, miniature, seeds, daydreams</i>; Chapter 7, “Miniature, is on ARES.</p> <p>Shteir: all selections on ARES: from <i>Cultivating Women, Cultivating Science</i>; “Botany in the Breakfast Room,” from <i>Uneasy Careers and Intimate Lives</i>; and “<i>Botanical Dialogues: Maria Jacson and Women’s Popular Science Writing in England</i>”; Page and Smith, Chapter 2, “The Botanic Eye”</p> <p><b>Primary texts:</b></p> <p>Jacson, <i>Botanical Dialogues</i>, Second part, Dialogue the Third, in ECCO: image # 279-305 (pages 219-241)</p> <p>Smith, <i>Rural Walks</i>, Dialogue V, “The Lily of the Valley,” in ECCO; Smith, <i>Rambles Further</i>, Dialogue VI, “May Day”, in ECCO</p>
<p><b>September 17: Week 4</b></p>	<p><b>Botanical Illustration at the Harn Museum</b> (Bury and Loudon)  Bilston, “Queens of the Garden: Victorian Women Gardeners and the Rise of the Gardening Advice Text,” on ARES</p> <p><b>Primary texts:</b> Loudon, <i>Gardening for Ladies</i>, selection on ARES</p> <p>Johnson, <i>Every Lady Her Own Flower Gardener</i>, from library catalogue, get electronic text: <a href="http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/title/7640">http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/title/7640</a>  Introduction and Chapter 1, General Remarks</p> <p>Ruskin, “Of Queens Gardens,” on ARES</p> <p>PDF with readings from Wollstonecraft, More, and Erasmus Darwin, and magazines on ARES</p>
<p><b>September 24: Week 5</b></p>	<p><b>Cultivated Gardens and Open Country:</b>  <i>Pride and Prejudice</i></p>
<p><b>October 1: Week 6</b></p>	<p><b>Landscape, Narrative, and Emotion:</b>  <i>Jane Eyre</i></p>
<p><b>October 8: Week 7</b></p>	<p><b>Special Collections: the George A. Smathers Libraries</b>  ***Prospectus due***</p>
<p><b>October 15: Week 8</b></p>	<p><b>Victorian Gardens:</b>  Oliphant, <i>Miss Marjoribanks</i>;</p> <p>Recommended: Tange, “Redesigning Femininity: Miss Marjoribanks’s Drawing-Room of Opportunity,” <i>Victorian Literature and Culture</i> 36 (2008): 163-86, on ARES</p>

<p><b>October 22: Week 9</b></p>	<p><b>Gendering the Poetic Garden:</b>  Rossetti, "Shut Out," (1862); H. D., "Sheltered Garden," (1916); Sackville-West, "Arcady in England" (1921) Pitter, "Other People's Greenhouses," (1941), all on ARES;  Levy, <i>A London Plane-tree and Other Verse</i> , pp. 1-30 (1889)  (Students will present on each poet.)</p>
<p><b>October 29: Week 10</b></p>	<p><b>Children and Education:</b>  Maria Edgeworth, "Simple Susan;" on ARES   Beatrix Potter, <i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i>   M. Daphne Kutzer, Chapter 2, "Into the Garden," of <i>Beatrix Potter: Writing in Code</i>, 33-63, on ARES</p>
<p><b>November 5: Week 11</b></p>	<p><b>Novel and Film:</b>  Burnett, <i>The Secret Garden</i>   Phillips, "The Mem Sahib, the Worthy, the Rajaj and His Minions: Some Reflections on the Class Politics of <i>The Secret Garden</i>," in Norton; 342-366   "Cultivating Mary: The Victorian Secret Garden":  <a href="http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature_association_quarterly/v026/26.1.price.pdf">http://muse.jhu.edu/journals/childrens_literature_association_quarterly/v026/26.1.price.pdf</a></p>
<p><b>November 12: Week 12</b></p>	<p>View the film by Agnieszka Holland (DVD is on reserve)</p>
<p><b>November 19: Week 13</b></p>	<p>Presentations</p>
<p><b>November 26: Week 14</b></p>	<p><b>Modernity and the Garden:</b>  Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens" (1919)  <a href="http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/woolf/monday/monday-07.html">http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/woolf/monday/monday-07.html</a>  Katherine Mansfield, "The Garden Party" (1922)  <a href="http://www.digital.library.upenn.edu/women/mansfield/garden/garden.html#party">http://www.digital.library.upenn.edu/women/mansfield/garden/garden.html#party</a>  Vita Sackville-West, <i>The Heir</i> (1922)</p>

<b>December 3: Week 15</b>	<b>Professions for Women: Gardening and Conservation</b> Selections from <i>In Nature's Name</i>  Gertrude Jekyll, Introduction to <i>Wood and Garden</i> (1899)  Frances Garnet Wolseley, "Gardening as a Profession for Women" (1908)  Beatrix Potter, "The Origins of Peter Rabbit" (1929) and "The Lonely Hills" (1942)  Vita Sackville-West, "Kent" (1934) ; and the garden at Sissinghurst Castle
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Please complete an evaluation of this course at the end of the semester:  
<https://evaluations.ufl.edu/evals/>