

Margaret Willes. *The Making of the English Gardener: Plants, Books and Inspiration, 1560-1660*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011. x + 336pp. +80 b/w + 24 color illustrations. \$45.00. Review by WILLIAM E. ENGEL, THE UNIVERSITY OF THE SOUTH, SEWANEE.

When I told a friend I was reading a new book on English gardens his assumption was, naturally enough, that it must be about Capability Brown and his followers. Nothing could be further from the case. In fact Capability Brown, although mentioned in passing in the introduction, is not even listed in the index. Instead this book concerns the period before the creation of the great landscape gardens and examines in painstaking detail “the networks of communication and circles of cultivation” (1). Margaret Willes is interested in what justifiably can be termed the horticultural revolution in England.

The *terminus a quo*, two years after the accession of Elizabeth I, is selected owing to its being a time when England lagged woefully behind the rest of Europe where all aspects of gardening were concerned. The *terminus ad quem*, 1660, logically enough is the arrival of Charles II into his restored kingdom when England was “poised to lead the world in the design of gardens” (2). We do well to recall that just four years after the Restoration the first book sponsored by the Royal Society was John Evelyn’s great treatise on trees, *Sylva* (271).

What happened in this one-hundred-year span is the subject of a series of carefully linked investigations that are derived from a range of sources including “drawings, plans, and occasional glimpses in the background of portraits” (8), since the gardens under discussion no longer exist in their original forms and the libraries of the great gardeners now are dispersed. The ten chapters move in turn sensibly from garden designs following European models created to delight Gloriana; to the tools used to plan and execute garden designs, as well as the necessity of planting edible root vegetables in times of dearth; to the introduction of exotic plants from the Ottoman domains and the New World; to the burgeoning demand for gardening and husbandry books in English; to decorating homes and banqueting houses—especially those in and part of gardens themselves; to gardens

of members of King James's family and inner circle, as well as those planted by yeoman—and their wives—with an eye toward “profitable enterprise” (163); to the collecting and growing of rare and unusual plants; to the application of theories of medicine and astrology in the cultivation of plants with an eye toward pharmacology; to the brisk trade in and market for low-priced books with a bearing on gardening coincident with a rise in general literacy; to advice on gardening and correspondence among the cognoscenti including those “knowledgeable plantsmen” who spent time abroad during “The Long Winter” (259). The final line of the epilogue provides a satisfying sense of triumph and closure: “The stage was now set for the English garden to become the envy of the world” (275).

Along the way the reader is treated to a range of emblems, allegories, and metaphors associated with specific plants and gardens; most notably the celebrated image of England as a garden as revealed in the third act of *Richard II* (63). We also learn of the radically Trinitarian designs encoded in the garden buildings on the estate of the recusant Sir Thomas Tresham (39-40); as well as the biblical herbal of Levinus Lemnius, translated into English in 1587, filled with parables taken from “references to plants, fruits, and trees” (46). Most compelling in this regard is the elaborate Grove of Diana of John, first Baron Lumley, who is credited with creating “one of the first allegorical gardens in England as an apologia to Elizabeth I” for his having been implicated in “the Ridolfi plot which aimed to marry his brother-in-law the Duke of Norfolk to Mary Queen of Scots, and re-establish Roman Catholicism” (42). Owing to Elizabeth's long-standing and often cultivated link between herself and virgin huntress Diana, Lumley by implication is the hapless Actaeon in this elaborate Italianate garden with its rich iconographic program. The very act of his turning his ambitions toward gardening and away from politics—and, by extension, using his money and estate in ways that visibly showed his contrition—seems to have been his way of acknowledging his gratitude to Elizabeth for confining him to the Tower of London and not having him beheaded with the other conspirators.

Apropos of the Diana and Actaeon story, many gardens of the period relied on Ovid's *Metamorphoses* for themes and programmatic

details. For while it is well known that Robert Dudley, a great patron of literary works, had engaged Arthur Golding to translate Ovid (the book we now think of as “Shakespeare’s Ovid” owing to his thorough mining of its stories and allegories), never before had I considered the rationale behind his request: the *Metamorphoses* was “the source for the decoration of the great fountain at the centre of the formal gardens at Kenilworth” (37). This is a clear instance of how English gardening and literature go hand in glove. Dudley continued to develop his gardens at Kenilworth radiating out from the center to the extent that, although Elizabeth had visited briefly in 1572, by July 1575 the prospects and sites (including walls along the walk adorned with stone white bears, emblems of the Dudley family, and the first appearance of obelisks in England) were so alluring and refined that the queen stayed for an unprecedented nineteen days (24). Undoubtedly it was to Dudley’s Kenilworth along with Cecil’s Theobalds, the gardens of Francis Bacon’s youth, that the essayist looked back nostalgically when he wrote his idealized description of the requirements and decorum of a proper garden (151).

For a number of reasons this book is a delight to read. First, the detailed explanations of black and white illustrations advance the book’s main themes and clarify how we have come to know what can be known about this ephemeral art of garden-making. For example, two geometric grids of a garden design “show how gardeners laid out knot gardens, which had become highly intricate by this period. The string and pegs diagram on the left are often mentioned in household accounts of garden equipment” (53). Along the same lines special mention must be made of the outstanding and numerous color plates that greatly enhance the luster of this already handsome volume. Also the author generously supplies brief biographies and expatiates judiciously on key familial and political affiliations among the people mentioned. For example, one may tend to forget how exactly Arbella Stuart figured into Elizabeth’s concerns about the royal succession, but Willes reminds us and, moreover, shows a decisive link to one of the preeminent gardeners of the period, Bess of Hardwick (30).

A final aspect of this book that makes it a pleasure to take in hand is the index, which will appeal both to literary historians and gardeners alike. Scholars will welcome the fact that entries proceed by authors’

names rather than by their books. This procedure is especially helpful in the case of, for example, the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphilli*, which can be found under Colonna. This also makes it possible to consider the extent of Hugh Platt's remarkable contributions to husbandry and agronomy without getting bogged down in trying to track these developments in his various treatises. And gardeners will come across much here that explains why certain flowers (most notably the rose and the tulip) and how specific horticultural techniques came to be valued over others. Incidentally, individual flowers are listed in the index as well, so people interested in carnations or saffron crocus or even hops can go directly to their favorite plants. In all this is a rich and useful compendium on the history of the men and women of an earlier age who sought to make an art of nature and to see nature more clearly in their artistic endeavors.

James Kelly and Fiona Clark, eds. *Ireland and Medicine in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. Farnham and Burlington: Ashgate, 2010. xiv + 227 pp. Review by CELESTE CHAMBERLAND, ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY.

Medical historians' traditional preoccupation with professionalization and institutionalization has increasingly yielded to the evolving historiography of the medical marketplace in recent decades. By shifting the focus from universities and physician biographies to more broadly based conceptions of training and practice, scholars such as Margaret Pelling and Andrew Wear have enabled a more expansive picture of early modern medicine to emerge. Nevertheless, Ireland has been notably absent from this scholarship. In seeking to address this lacuna in the historical record, Fiona Clark and James Kelly have assembled a collection of essays that seeks to underscore the complexity of an oft marginalized, yet prolific site of early modern medical practice. In *Ireland and Medicine in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, a diverse range of scholars explores the development of a distinctly Irish medical tradition that retained its Gaelic legacy whilst demonstrating the influence of English and Continental medical