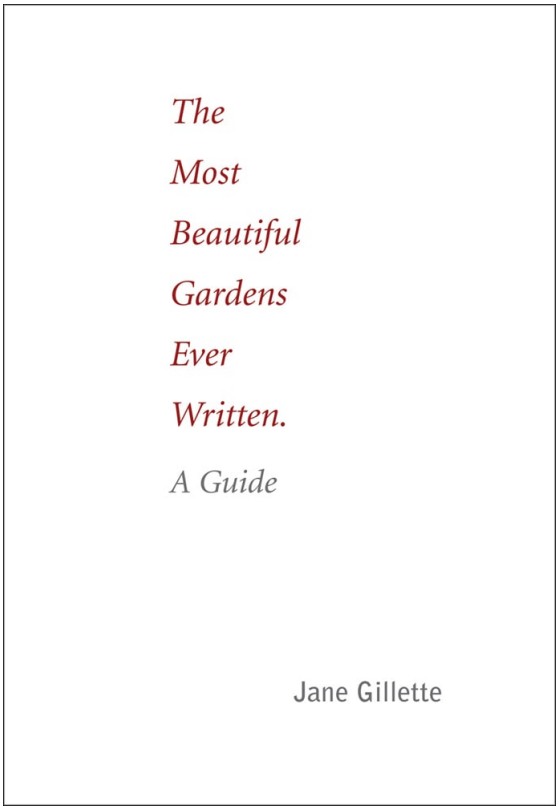
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Most Beautiful Gardens Ever Written: A Guide

Jane Gillette

ISBN	9781935935223
Publisher	ORO Editions
Binding	Paperback / softback
Territory	World excluding USA, Canada, Australasia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Japan
Size	203 mm x 127 mm
Pages	116 Pages
Illustrations	16 color, 13 b&w
Price	£13.99

- This guidebook invites readers on a tour of ten beautiful gardens as depicted in thousands of pages of fiction written by the most skillful of novelists over almost a millennium

Are gardens anything more than collections of plants? Spaces for leisure activities? Extensions that protect the private house from the public road? Art objects appreciated by a relatively small group of connoisseurs? To consider such questions this guidebook invites readers on a tour of ten beautiful gardens as depicted in thousands of pages of fiction written by the most skillful of novelists over almost a millennium. From Murasaki Shikibu's *Tale of Genji* and the ever-mysterious *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*, to such Chinese masterpieces as the Chin Ping Mei and Cao Xuequin *Story of the Stone*, and on through the works of famous American, Australian, English, and European writers, these novels compound gardens as they exist within the culture of the time with the specific needs of fiction, tackling everything from planting plans to the activities that take place within the garden confines. When novelists write the garden it is revealed, again and again, as the site of peccadilloes that define the state of being human, and while these written gardens may not be places we would ever wish to visit, should they actually exist, a consideration of their role in defining humanity provides yet another way to experience and appreciate any real gardens we happen to encounter. Contents: I. The Garden of Polygamy: Murasaki Shikibu, *The Tale of Genji;* II. The Garden of Rejected Love: Francesco Colonna, *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili: The Strife of Love in a Dream;* III. The Garden of Pornography: [T'ang Hsien-tsu], *Chin P'ing Mei*, or *The Plum in the Golden Vase;* IV. The Garden of No Prospects: Cao Xueqin, *The Story of the Stone, or The Dream of the Red Chamber;* V. The Garden of Gentlemanly Reticence: Laurence Sterne, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman;* VI. The Garden of the Test Tube: Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Elective Affinities;* VII. The Garden of Childhood Anxiety: Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking-Glass and What Alice Found There;* VIII. The Garden of Stupidity: Gustave Flaubert, *Bouvard and Pécuchet;* IX. The Garden of Hateful Parents: Christina Stead, *The Man Who Loved Children;* X. The Garden of Loving Literature: Vladimir Nabokov, *Ada*, or *Ardor: A Family Chronicle;* The Writer's Garden, the Reader's Garden; Notes; Illustrations; Garden Bibliography; Literary Bibliography.

Jane Gillette is an avid reader of long novels who has published short fiction in a variety of journals including Virginia Quarterly Review, Yale Review, Michigan Quarterly Review, Hopkins Review, Missouri Review, and Zyzzyva, among others. She has won a Lawrence Foundation Prize and an O. Henry Prize.

Published 25th Aug 2016