

ABSTRACT

The thesis examines garden instances in fifteen novels from different locations in order to observe how such instances are ideological reflections of the four themes of nation, sexuality, the sacred and ecology. The texts under examination are Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Frances Hodgson Burnett's *The Secret Garden* (1911), D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), Phillipa Pearce's *Tom's Midnight Garden* (1958), Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977), J.M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), Paul Auster's *Moon Palace* (1989), Kate Morton's *The Forgotten Garden* (2008), Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* (2009), Jhumpa Lahiri's *The Lowland* (2013), Elizabeth Gilbert's *The Signature of All Things* (2013), Nadeem Aslam's *The Blind Man's Garden* (2013) and Rhys Bowen's *The Victory Garden* (2019). It argues that the idea of cultivation, along with its Edenic implications, aids in furthering, critiquing, and redefining ideas of culture, nature, gendered, religious and national identities. The study looks at the acts of planting, tilling, sowing, husbandry, culturing and sees these as taking the shape of literary imaginaries along the lines of nation building, stewardship of the earth, sexual disciplining, taming of human and non-human life, and aesthetic and utilitarian uses of land. Symbolising paradise and Biblical Eden, the garden in fiction further takes into account nostalgic times and spaces, forbidden desires and acts, contemplative sites and safe havens or sanctuaries. Thus the materiality of land, water, sunshine and seed aided by the gardener's nurture and control takes on variegated forms and meanings when seen in relation to social productions. The methodology used for the work is interdisciplinary and eclectic. As a way of gauging the various means by which land, its worship, design, stewardship, and tillage take place, the examination of the gardens in fiction enable us to look at the various ways non-human and plant life affect human imagination and the planet in an ever entangled world.