CHAPTER TWO

THE GARDEN AND THE NATION

Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to understand the links between gardens and the idea of nation making. The texts to be examined here are Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Paul Auster's *Moon Palace* (1989) and Rhys Bowen's *The Victory Garden* (2019). The garden as an act and a metaphor in these novels, the chapter argues, defines and critiques national narratives. The beautiful estate gardens in Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* form part of a stable English order comprising of countryside mansions, exchange of pleasantries and notions of gentility all of which are managed by a careful pushing aside of the "ugly" processes of production, both in the home gardens and in gardens elsewhere, that is, the plantations. In Rhys Bowen's *The Victory Garden*, the processes of production hitherto kept at bay are brought to the fore by the World War which called upon people to actively engage themselves in the cultivation and production of food, thereby challenging the old notions of stability as seen in Austen novels. The Puritanical notions of American Eden find expression in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* where the New World is seen as a garden state of control, operating through a taming of actual and metaphorical wilderness. In the twentieth century America of counterculture, the setting for Paul Auster's *Moon Palace*, Central Park becomes a symbol of American nationalist resurgence and also a site drawing attention to the history of violence latent in its foundations. The gardenscapes thus become signposts in the making and the unmaking of the national myths and attest to the embeddedness of the symbol of cultivation in nationalist imaginings.

I

The relationship between gardens and nation building often presents a complex network of aesthetics and politics. This chapter examines the intertwining with the objectives and arguments underlined below.

Objectives

i. To examine how gardens narrate nations
ii. To understand how gardening presents pictures of pastoral and productive and how these link with the ideas of nationalist narrative

iii. To show how the Edenic narratives are implicated in nationalist myths
iv. To understand how the garden space offers a subversion of national glory

Hypotheses

i. That the acts of gardening are often likened to nation building in literary texts;
ii. The garden spaces reinforce the idea of nation as home as opposed to the hostile outside;
iii. The metaphor of gardening extends to the idea of culture pitting different nations against one another using different styles of gardening;
iv. The nation is read as an Edenic project and space to be protected from outside forces.

Arguments

i. The landscape gardens symbolising Englishness are pastoral pictures of beauty which conceal labour and exploitation
ii. The idea of the American nation as Eden and the perfect garden state lends itself to disciplining of wilderness, actual and metaphorical
iii. Central Park in fiction offers a site of contemplation of the history of exploitation underlying the glory of the American nation
iv. Victory gardens cultivated during the two world wars critique and upturn the pastoral images of the garden and bring labour to the forefront redefining the nationalist narrative of gardens

II

Review of Literature

Nations are often seen in the garden image of paradisiacal bliss, Edenic abundance and a haven offering protection. The best example of this might be seen in the case of U.S. whose foundational myths are replete with garden imagery. For example, in Heike Paul writes how Columbus's descriptions of the New World bring to mind a Biblical understanding of the Garden of Eden (46). Reflecting on the idea of manufacturing in the American soil and seeing it relation to the European continent, Thomas Jefferson in

writes how "Those who labor in the earth are the chosen people of god, if he ever had a chosen people, whose breasts he had made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue… While we have land to labour then, let us never wish to see our citizens occupied at a work-bench, or twirling a distaff" (252-253).

In *Virgin Land*, Henry Nash Smith outlines the idea of the garden of the world in relation to the Westward movement. He describes how the pioneers "plowed the virgin land and put in crops, and the great Interior valley was transformed into a garden: for the imagination, the Garden of the World" (138) which "became one of the dominant symbols of nineteenth-century American society—a collective representation, a poetic idea (as Tocqueville noted in the early 1830's) that defined the promise of the American life" (138). Following this, the Western yeoman had become "the hero of a myth, the myth of mid-nineteenth century America" (Nash Smith 153). The Southern version of this myth "dealing with the plantation emphasizes the beauty of harmonious social relations in an orderly feudal society. It presupposes generations of settled existence and is inimical to change" (Nash Smith 173).

Richard Hofstadter outlines the agrarian myth which he defines as "a sentimental attachment to rural living" (24) which "the American mind was raised upon" (24). He notes how "The United States was born in the country and has moved to the city" (23) and how the gradual industrialisation and urbanisation has endowed the rural past with a nostalgic value leading to the myth (24). Hofstadter observes how the agrarian myth finds expression in the writings of people like Jefferson who praises the yeoman farmer in his writings (23). Jean de Crevecouer contributes to this myth by eulogising the act of working the land in the new world. He notes how the Americans are a people of cultivators, scattered over an immense territory" (2). This immense expanse of land, represents an opportunity for "every one to partake of our great labors and felicity, to till unrented, untaxed lands!" (12).

Urban spaces such as parks in cities are oftentimes seen as national symbols. Hyde Park in London ad Central Park in New York are cases in point whose conception and development and use overtime reflect the various ways in which the contemporary zeitgeist finds expression. Tweedie sees the Hyde Park as "the wide theatre upon which their tragedies and comedies have been enacted, the forum in which many public liberties have been demanded, the scene where national triumphs have been celebrated"

(17). Acting as “Sporting ground, shambles, dwelling-place, scene of intrigue, theatre of Royal magnificence and military display” (Tweedie 10), the park seems to “epitomise the history of England” (10). In the US, the Central Park in the heart of New York city represents the variegated American culture. Rosenzweig and Blackmar write how the Central Park, the symbol of our national culture” (1) is “envisioned as a place of romance and destiny” (2) and “powerfully symbolized the redeeming power of nature” (2). They refer to how “in choosing a site and taking the land for a democratic public park, the gentlemen swept aside the concerns of poor New Yorkers” (7) and offer an account of the deprivation of settlers on the site which in a way alludes to the sweeping aside of the natives in American history.

In literature, the garden properties and features including the flowers, weeds, the garden space or land and the gardener have strong nationalist overtones. In Act III Scene IV of Richard II (1595), for example, the gardener talks about the garden as a metaphor for the kingdom which has rightly been taken care of by Bolingbroke who has pulled out the weeds or, in other words, got Bushy and Green killed.In England, the literary gardens consisted of sprawling open lawns in Austen, or offered a cloistered space of faith and healing in the Victorian era of scepticism.In the nineteenth century America, the garden featured prominently in Puritan imaginings of nature mostly in the novels of Nathaniel Hawthorne. In novels such as *The Secret Garden* (1911), the garden becomes a space keeping intact the sacredness of childhood and healing properties of the English nation.In the eighteenth century, the garden stood for the Enlightenment ideals of propriety, taste and an intelligible nature, most exemplified in Alexander Pope’s prescriptive writings like *Epistle to Burlington* (1731). William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) shows how the selling off of the Compton estate marks a shift to the post Abolitionist America. Amitav Ghosh’s Ibis Trilogy presents large opium fields on one hand and botanical gardens on the other juxtaposing exploitation with scientific experimentation enabling the English empire. Nadeem Aslam’s *The Blind Man’s Garden* (2013) presents the eponymous garden of Rohan, a man going blind as a microcosm of the Pakistani nation beset by the weeds of terrorism.

Mulk Raj Anand’s *Two Leaves and a Bud*, presents the exploitative underside of the plantations in the British raj. Gangu, a plantation worker at a tea plantation in Assam and his wife Sajani and daughter Leila are subjected to all kinds of financial and sexual

exploitation during their time in the plantations, and eventually, death. The novel throws light on the squalor and the precarious lives of the plantation workers. The beautiful tea gardens here become symbols of colonial atrocities.

Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* is another example that furthers the image of the garden in the British regime as the site of exploitation. The "sea of poppies" of the title refers to poppy fields that sedated the people and the economy in British India, turning peasants into "afeemkhors", destroying families, as the British amass huge fortunes. In the novel, Deeti recalls how the fields that once held useful food crops such as wheat and vegetables gave way to huge swathes of poppies as the Sahibs forced them to cultivate these labour intensive crops. The grim plight of the peasantry symbolized by the poppy fields presents a contrast to the Royal Botanical gardens of Calcutta, overseen by Pierre Lambert. The narrator notes how Paulette would get her lessons in botany as she observed her father labeling plants in accordance with the Linnaean system. The narrative here invites the reader to see how the resources extracted from one kind of garden, i.e., the poppy fields, are used to further the purpose of imperial science and beauty in the botanical gardens.

Jerzy Kosinki's *Being There* offers an interesting counterpoint to the ideological understandings of the garden. Here, we find Chance, the gardener, spending all his life working in a garden, without any connection with the outside world whatsoever. The gardener defies the state mechanisms of control and vigilance as he has no official documents or papers such as identity proofs or property documents. This lack of documentation makes him invisible to the state, and in a way ensures the existence of the gardener outside the bounds of ideological state apparatuses.

Following a car accident, Chance enters the realm of the state. His name is twisted as Chauncey Gardiner, which signifies his initiation into the world. His unique stance or weird comments are mistaken as profound pronouncements on the state and the economy. He uses images of gardening, the only thing that he knows of, while answering questions relating to state affairs. The garden and the gardener in this novel, offer instances of resistance to national narratives; Chance's usage of the garden utterances is literal and comes from a place of working with the garden first hand and is mistakenly interpreted as metaphorical. The novel thus uses the garden to satirize the metaphorical foundations of national narratives.

III

Mansfield Park (1814)

Gardens are central to Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park*. The narrative is necessarily built on estate gardens, farm gardens and overseas plantations that sustain the living conditions in England. The book depicts Fanny's coming-of-age in the estate of Mansfield Park where she is moved and which she adapts to, eventually becoming its mistress. Mrs. Price, poor and overwhelmed with too many children hands over her eldest daughter Fanny Price to be brought up at Mansfield Park estate by her sister Mrs. Bertram and her husband Sir Thomas Bertram. Initially unable to adapt to the environment amidst unwelcome cousins and indifferent aunts, Fanny finds a friend in Edmund, her eldest cousin, to whom she takes a liking and finally marries. The novel follows dealings among the Bertrams in Mansfield Park, the Grants and the Crawfords in the Mansfield parsonage, the Rushworths at the Sotherton estate and the Prices in Portsmouth.

Austen's *Mansfield Park* has been read as bildungsroman (McDonnell 197-214), a subversion of religion (Bonaparte 45-67), a psychological novel (Flavin 137-159), the theme of incest (Smith 1-15), politeness and hypocrisy (Davidson 243-264), a discussion of the theatricals (Lodge 275-282), spatiality (Skinner 126-148), feminine space (Despotopoulou 569-583), evangelicalism (Monaghan 215-230), morality and didacticism (Duffy Jr. 71-91), gendered understanding of nature and animals (Seeber 269-285), acts and discussion of reading (Kelly 29-49), the idea of religion (Willis 65-78), family (Cohen 669-693), slavery and silence (Boulukos 361-383). The chapter seeks to understand how such garden discourse in the novel sheds light on the contemporary understanding of beauty devoid of labour as defining the national character and ethos of a society acutely aware of its class consciousness.

Cultivation and gardening are recurring tropes in the narrative. The estate symbolizes order and repose associated with Old England and is seen "as a metonym of inherited culture endangered by forces within and without" (Duckworth 71). In the novel, the estate becomes a space of 'culturing' to which Fanny is transplanted. This process saves her from the bedlam of her Portsmouth home which is seen as unfit for growth. The text makes use of physical garden in instances where Fanny is made to cut

the roses in the heat and falls sick, in the discussion on the improvement of Sotherton estate in context of landscape improvement aesthetics, Henry's insistence on improving Edmund's parsonage at Thornton Lacey, the young people crossing the park boundaries to the wilderness while on a tour of Sotherton estate, Mrs. Crawford's garden in the parsonage at Mansfield Park and finally oblique references to plantation gardens in Antigua. The chapter argues how in these garden settings, Austen takes note of the marginalization of labour and labourers subsumed to the ends of beauty both in the novel and in the nation as a whole.

Alistair Duckworth in "*Mansfield Park*: Jane Austen's Grounds of Being" notes the function of estate improvements in *Mansfield Park*. He writes how improvements are a "recurring motif" in the novel and must be understood in light of Austen's "reasoned dislike of Repton's methods" (43) wherein unpleasant elements are "shut out" and "screened off" preventing "any participation in the community" (43). Offering further context of the discourse of improvement in Austen's time, Duckworth mentions how Edmund Burke warned against "the overthrow or destruction of establishments sanctioned by time and custom" (46) and how he distinguishes between "improvement" and "alteration", the former associated with necessary upkeep and the English tradition and the latter with wholesale destruction of tradition and French revolution (46-47). He notes how Austen saw the landscaping style of Repton as not "improvement" but "alteration" that completely does away with the well-established structures (47). Radical improvements espoused by Crawfords are thus discredited in the narrative as "they signal a radical attitude to cultural heritage; they take no account of society as an organic structure…" (54). The chapter develops Duckworth's observations on improvement in order to understand how the landscape gardens and the discourse surrounding the pursuit of beauty in the formation of the country estates and the idea of Englishness operates through a despise and concealing of the facts of production involving dirt and exploitation, both at home and in the colonies. A careful examining of the instances of gardening in the novel show how Austen offers a critique of the classist narration of Englishness signaled by blatant consumption of the tidied up final product in the form of beautiful landscape gardens, as espoused by the likes of Rushworth, Mary and Henry. In its place, Austen offers subversive views of gardening in Fanny and Edmund and offers an example of Mrs. Grant's garden that advocates for personal involvement in the acts of cultivating the garden and in turn, the English nation. By making frequent references to

Antigua and the slave trade, Austen also brings to notice the ugly processes of production in the other garden of the plantation in the colonies, details of which are pushed aside to make way for the pastoral landscape at home.

The discourse of landscape improvement in the novel has been a focal point of significance and sustained critical interest. Widespread in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, landscape improvements suggest changes made to the estate grounds, often to aesthetic ends and in the hands of an improver or a landscape architect such as Humphrey Repton and Lancelot Capability Brown. The metaphor of improvement extended to disposition and was often seen as the marker of a person's taste, class, wealth etc. best seen in the case of Pemberley estate which proved crucial in turning the tide of Elizabeth's opinion in favour of Darcy as Duckworth notes (38). In *Mansfield Park*, Rushworth visits Smith's newly improved estate at Compton and is full of admiration for the same:

> I wish you could see Compton,' said he. 'it is the most complete thing! I never saw a place so altered in my life…The approach is now one of the finest in the country. You see the house in the most surprising manner. I declare when I got back to Sotherton yesterday, it looked like a prison-quite a dismal old prison (84).

Here, he notes how Sotherton feels like a 'prison' compared to Compton and is in desperate need of improvement. Mrs. Norris notes how an estate such as Sotherton with suitable grounds must be improved since Rushworth has the means and the wealth to do so. He wishes Repton to be hired for the project and wants the avenue to be taken down. Fanny expresses dismay at the indiscriminate felling of trees for the view: "Cut down an avenue! What a pity! Does not it make you think of Cowper? 'Ye fallen avenues, once more I mourn your fate unmerited" (87).

Duckworth notes "it is precisely the resistance of the heroine to those forces endangering her world which permits the continuity of an integral society" (7). Edmund who shares Fanny's opinion states how he would model his landscape: "I do not wish to influence Mr. Rushworth,' he continued, 'but had I a place to new fashion, I should not put myself in the hands of an improver. I would rather have an inferior degree of beauty of my own choice, and acquired progressively" (88). To this, Rushworth notes that he

would rather employ someone to get desired results for his landscape rather than getting his hands dirty especially as he claimed that he had no idea of doing it the right way:

> You would know what you were about of course- but that would not suit me. I have no eye or ingenuity for such matters, but as they are before me; and had I a place of my own in the country, I should be most thankful to any Mr. Repton who would undertake it, and give me so much beauty as he could for my money; and I should never look at it, till it was complete. (88)

This shows how both men differ on the matter of improving the present appearance of the garden. While Edmund does not want to invest a lot of money or make drastic changes to the layout of the garden, Rushworth believes that one should try to secure the best money can provide, including radical transformation of the garden space. Further, Rushworth's handing over of the improvement to a professional suggests an underlying dislike of labour.

While Fanny opposes radical improvements, she is willing to witness its progress. Mary Crawford's response to this reeks of classism and points at two Englands: one which works the land and witnesses the unfolding of the landscape and the other which just consumes the final product secured at some cost. Mary informs her of her uncle's garden at Twickenham which had to be 'improved' despite being 'pretty': "for three months we were all dirt and confusion, without a gravel walk to step on, or a bench fit for use. I would have everything as complete as possible in the country, shrubberies and flower gardens…but it must be all done without my care" (88). Mary's words draw attention to the human tendency to redesign or change the shape of things just as a stamp of personal choice and approval. As Raymond Williams points out, it was a practice amongst land owners to engage landscapers to 'invent' natural beauty. He observes that this is an extension of the ideology controlling "land improvement and politeness, just as when he and his kind went to other men's countries, such countries were 'discovered'" (*Country and City*120). This draws attention to human intervention everywhere to elicit maximum pleasure as well as profit, much pursued in the colonies. Further, this opposition between the product and the process and the consumption of beauty as the final product as opposed to getting one's hands dirty upholds a picture of a nation basking in pastoral repose moving the apparatus of production out of sight or else delegating it to people seen as lowly. For example, Mrs. Norris and Lady Bertram send

Fanny out in the heat to cut roses as the former sits in the shade. When Edmund learns how the task made Fanny sick, Mrs Norris quips:

> If Fanny would be more regular in her exercise, she would not be knocked up so soon. But I thought it rather do her good after stooping among the roses; for there is nothing so refreshing as a walk after a fatigue of that kind; and though the sun was strong, it was not so very hot. Between ourselves, Edmund," nodding significantly at his mother, "it was cutting the roses, and dawdling about in the flower garden that did the mischief. (103)

Her light hearted description of making Fanny run errands in the heat is a comment on how Mrs. Norris makes a sport of Fanny's labour for the frivolous ends of beauty and pleasure.

In the novel, the garden serves as the vantage point for musings on the beautiful and the ugly. Mary Crawford sitting with her harp by the window in a garden setting presents a picture of beauty: "A young woman, pretty, lively, with a harp as elegant as herself; and both placed near a window, cut down to the ground, and opening on a little lawn, surrounded by shrubs in the rich foliage of summer, was enough to catch a man's heart. The season, the scene, the air, were all favourable to tenderness and sentiment" (95-96). Mary Crawford's classist prejudice again plays out in her statements on Mrs. Grant's garden. Austen presents instances of involved gardening at Mrs. Grant's parsonage at Mansfield as Fanny delights at the gradual and sustained cultivation and takes notes of her good taste while Mary Crawford trivialises the same: "It may seem impertinent in me to praise, but I must admire the taste Mrs. Grant has shewn in all this. There is such a quiet simplicity in the plan of the walk!—not too much attempted" (222). Further, Mary notes how "it does very well for a place of this sort. One does not think of the extent here- and between ourselves, till I came to Mansfield, I had not imagined a country parson ever aspired to a shrubbery or anything of the kind" (222).

Mary's perception of such people as incapable of contemplating beauty or aspiring to taste thus marks an important distinction in the novel. Taste is seen to be acquired through wealth and detached viewing while engagement with the land is equated with labour and seen as anything but aesthetic. As Quaintance notes, Mary finds

"no wonder in this shrubbery equal to seeing myself in it," effectively "declining countrified improvement in favour of urban" (377).

In other instances, the garden is thought of as a thing screening off the inside from the outside country and its workings. Duckworth notes how in Repton's improvements in his own cottage, such screening off prevents "any participation in the community" (43). This is also visible when Mrs. Norris talks about how she and her husband had been planning to build the garden wall and the plantation "to shut out the churchyard, just as Dr. Grant has done" (86). The less pleasing farm yard is expressed as somewhat unwelcome presence in the view as Mary Crawford notes how in the Grant's parsonage in Mansfield Park she "cannot look out of my dressing closet without seeing one farm yard, nor walk into the shrubbery without passing another" (89). Thus, improvements often require closing off and concealing unpleasant and ugly looking landscape features or even dirty cottages on the estate signifying squalor by the planting of shrubberies and shifting of ugly looking features such as the farm to the backyard. In the novel, when Henry Crawford arrives at Edmund's parsonage at Thornton Lacey, he suggests improvements for the estate. While both Henry and Edmund agree to the removal of the farm yard, Henry stresses on the additional beautification by closing up of squatters while Edmund states that he can make do with the bare minimum: "The farm-yard must be cleared up entirely, and planted up to shut out the blacksmith's shop…And there must be your approach- through what is at present the garden. You must make you a new garden at what is now at the back of the house; which will be giving it the best aspect in the world- sloping it to the south east…" (250). To this, Henry states, "I must be satisfied with much less ornament and beauty. I think the house and premises may be made comfortable, and given the air of a gentleman's residence without any very heavy expense, and that must suffice me; I hope it may suffice all who care about me" (251). Here too, the theme of consumption of beauty by making labour or working people invisible is played out, as Williams notes, "a working country is hardly ever a landscape" *(The Country, 120)* and that "the very idea of landscape implies separation and observation" (The Country, 120).

The insistence on clearing the farm yard can also be read in light of Repton's pronouncements on landscaping which strictly distinguishes between the park and the farm, one "an object of beauty, the other of profit" (387). Duckworth observes parallels

between Crawford's methods and Repton's which suggest "desire for complete cultural reorientation" (52) or "alteration" (50). He observes that "a ploughed field and a field of grass are as distinct objects as a flower garden and a potato ground" (387) and that "it is the business of taste and prudence so to disguise the latter and limit the former (387), thus underlining separate spheres in the contemporary discourse of picturesque in England.

The concealing of ugly and unpleasant facts of production underway at home grounds also spills over to the colonies which house plantations. Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* makes frequent references to Antigua where Sir Thomas Bertram owns a plantation and has to travel in order to oversee its workings. Edward Said in *Culture and Imperialism* observes how the material life in Mansfield Park is taken care of by the proceeds from Antigua (85). He notes how for the characters in the novel, "the island is wealth, which Austen regards as being converted to propriety, order and, at the end of the novel, comfort and added good" (91). The island houses plantations, as opposed to the beautiful, sanitized garden settings at home which are marked by exploitation and constant working and degeneration of both land and humans. The plantations are characterised by slaves of African origin, the fearful 'other' of the Europeans who ought to be dehumanised and made invisible for the sustenance of the colonial economy. The following excerpt shows how Fanny's mention of the slave trade was met with an eerie silence:

> "But I do talk to him more than I used. I am sure I do. Did you not hear me ask him about the slave trade last night?"
>
> "I did- and was in hopes the question would be followed up by others. It would have pleased your uncle to be inquired of farther."
>
> "And I longed to do it- but there was such a dead silence! And while my cousins were sitting by without speaking a word, or seeming at all interested in the subject, I did not like- I thought it would appear as if I wanted to set myself off at their expense, by shewing curiosity and pleasure in his information which he must wish his own daughters to feel". (213)

Said notes how the two worlds cannot be thought of together as “there is simply no common language for both” (96), also implying the impossibility of the ugly underbelly of the empire surfacing to disrupt ordered garden of home. Thus, while the product of the wealth flowing in from such plantations is seen in the form of estate improvements and beautiful manor houses, the process of production involving slaves and their exploitation happens entirely out of sight. Scenes from Antigua do not make it to the plot and neither the reader nor the characters (except for Sir Bertram and Tom) are privy to the events.

IV

The Scarlet Letter (1850)

Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* examines the implications of the Edenic myth as the foundational narrative of the American nation in the early seventeenth century Puritan colony. In the novel, Hester Prynne, a young married woman, is convicted of adultery and publicly shamed and made to wear the letter ‘A’ as a form of punishment. Her husband, Roger Chillingworth, had sent Hester away on the New colony by promising to join in later and was captured by the Indians after a shipwreck, leaving Hester alone for two years. When he finally returns, he learns of Hester’s adultery and decides to exact revenge by trying to unearth the identity of her partner and to bring him to the public eye. Arthur Dimmesdale, Hester’s partner, initially refrains from revealing himself and is waited on by Chillingworth who seeks to treat the former’s heart ailment but later manipulates Dimmesdale to reveal his identity. The novel ends with Dimmesdale revealing his identity in public and dying, after which Hester and Pearl leave for England. Chillingworth leaves Pearl his fortune and Hester comes back to live her last days in the colony and dies here. The novel throws light on the dreary life of the Puritans as a god-fearing people the in early seventeenth century America. The garden figures in the narrative as an Edenic metaphor functioning in the conception and upkeep of the Massachusetts colony. The chapter examines how the Puritan colony can be seen as a garden needing constant scrutiny and weeding out of subversive impulses. It argues that this impulse derives from the conception of the nation as New Eden that operates through the separation, fear and taming of the wilderness.

The novel is a critique of the early seventeenth century Massachusetts colony of "a people among whom religion and law were almost identical" (47). As the narrator quips, "The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognized it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison" (45). The taming of this "virgin soil" by bringing the same under cultivation, heavily imbued with sexual undertones, forms an important part of foundational myths of the nation where the people are ordained by God to convert the wilderness to a garden. The narrative, however, presents very few accounts of working the soil and actual farming. The taming of the garden here is symbolized by such retributive institutions as prison and cemetery, symbols of punishment and death, respectively, a stark contrast to the symbols of production and fecundity. The Utopia, or New Eden of the novel thus presents an anti-pastoral world of law and discipline which clamps down heavily on any display of unauthorized behaviour or emotion.

The New Eden of *The Scarlet Letter* presents a dark world after the fall refer to the article Hawthorne offers a critique of how the Puritan society rigidity subverts the original envisioning of the New World as filled with promise and hope. In this wasteland characterized by strictures and punitive measures, the narrator finds it shocking that even a plot of grass should grow. Noting the growth of vegetation near the prison, the narrator observes: "Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-pern, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of a civilized society, a prison" (46). Further, the narrator describes a rose bush growing nearby:

> But on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him (46).

The solace and beauty offered by the rose here is ironical when seen in light of the overwhelming structures of discipline and punishment. The rose here serves only as a remnant of the fallen world as the narrator states:

> This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it, or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson as she entered the prison-door, we shall not take upon us to determine…It may serve, let us hope, to symbolize some sweet moral blossom that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow (46).

Here, the fall from the old world is both actual and metaphorical as it opens up a history of settlement in the American colony that required clearing up of the howling wilderness. The "fall of gigantic pines and oaks", to make way for the new Edenic space of the Puritans, suggests this history of the decimation of wild growth. The "rose", a symbol of passion, is a remnant here of this wild world which is tamed in the Puritanical garden. In the following scene, the narrator describes how the Puritan population gathered before the prison door to watch the plight of Hester:

> The grass-plot before the jail, in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning, not less than two centuries ago, was occupied by a pretty large number of the inhabitants of Boston, all with their eyes fastened on the iron clamped oaken door. Amongst any other population, or at a later period in the history of New England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business at hand (47).

The garden of the Puritan colony symbolized by the grass plot is a barren land of spectators and sadist figures who take pleasure in observing the punishing of instinct and natural growth symbolized by Hester's adultery. The barren nature of the Puritan nation is again mentioned in the plot of Hester's cottage which was abandoned as "the soil about it was too sterile for cultivation" (75). Standing face to face with this new life of existence in wilderness, Hester's plight represents that of the pilgrims who first arrived in the American nation and despite finding it a wilderness stayed on as they had nowhere to turn to:

> Her sin, her ignominy, were the roots which she had struck into the soil. It was as if a new birth, with stronger assimilations than the first, had converted the forest-

> land, still so uncongenial to every other pilgrim and wanderer, into Hester Prynne's wild and dreary, but life-long home. All other scenes of earth- even that village of rural England, where happy infancy and stainless maidenhood seemed yet to be her mother's keeping, like garments put off long ago- were foreign to her, in comparison. The chain that bound her here was of iron links, and galling to her inmost soul, but could never be broken (74-75).

In the manner of the first settlers, Hester makes a productive garden out of this barren space as she is seen as "plying her needle at the cottage-window" (76) or "laboring in her little garden" (76).

The garden land of Puritan righteousness is frequently contrasted with the wilderness around. As Chillingworth appears in the crowd watching Hester on the scaffold, he engages in a conversation with one of the townsmen and tells him how the former has come back from spending time in the wilderness among the Indians. The man speaks highly of the Puritan society and sees it as a holy space in comparison to the profane wilderness:" Truly friend; and methinks it must gladden your heart, after your troubles and sojourn in the wilderness," said the townsman, "to find yourself at length in a land where iniquity is searched out and punished in the sight of rulers and people, as here in our godly New England" (58-59).

Here, the act of "searching out" of "iniquity" can be compared to the weeding of the garden whereby "unruly" and "useless" plants with profuse growth are taken out. The act of weeding is central to the very idea of gardening which implies maintenance of structure and where anything posing a threat to structure is eliminated. Similarly, the realization of the God's garden in the Puritan colony requires disciplining and weeding out of any corrupt impulse. This act of purification is what leads the consecrated or "godly New England," and separates it from the surrounding wilderness as stated by the townsman.

This conversion of the wilderness into garden is also carried out through the culture and learning of men like "the Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale- young clergyman, who had come from one of the great English universities, bringing all the learning of the age into our wild forest land" (62).The novel points to how leaders of this new nation such as Governor Bellingham still latch on to European models of living in private life. In "his

new habitation" planned "after the residences of gentlemen of fair estate in his native land" (96) Bellingham's garden displays attempts at introduction of English culture. The garden is "carpeted with closely-shaven grass, and bordered with some rude and immature attempt at shrubbery" (98).The narrator writes how:

> the proprietor appeared to have relinquished as hopeless, the effort to perpetuate on this side of the Atlantic, in a hard soil, and amid the close struggle for subsistence, the native English taste for ornamental garden. Cabbages grew in plain sight; and a pumpkin-vine, rooted at some distance, had run across the intervening space, and deposited one of its gigantic products directly beneath the hall window, as if to warn the Governor that this great lump of vegetable gold was as rich an ornament as New England earth would offer him (98).

This points to how the Puritan American soil supports no symbols of beauty and "culture" and has only subsistence crops to offer. Ironically, it is the English culture that the Puritans fled in the in the first place to find a safe haven in the New World. The rigid Puritan way of life with little freedom for self-expression or no room for transgression ended up converting this haven into the same culture that they had fled. Interestingly enough, the root word of the culture is 'colere' which variously refer, among other things, to 'inhabit' and 'cultivate' which in turn mean 'colony' and 'tending of something, basically crops or animals' (Williams, *Keywords* 49). The idea of culturing is therefore central to a colony and the Puritan society takes culturing to its logical extreme. The narrative gives an example of "tending" or culturing in the way children are brought up: "The discipline of the family in those days was of a far rigid kind than now. The frown, the harsh rebuke, the frequent application of the rod, enjoined by Scriptural authority, were used, not merely in the way of punishment of actual offences, but as a wholesome regimen for the growth and promotion of all childish virtues" (84).

Further, Hester observes the children on the streets "as Puritanic nurture would permit; playing at going to church, perchance, or at scourging Quakers; or taking scalps in a sham fight with the Indians, or scaring one another with freaks of imitative witchcraft" (86). For Pearl, brought up away from this "nurture": "The pine trees, aged, black and solemn, and flinging around groans and other melancholic utterances on the breeze, needed little transformation to figure as Puritan elders; the ugliest weeds in the garden were their children whom Pearl smote down and uprooted almost unmercifully"

(87). Thus Pearl's temperament reflects a rejection of Puritan American education; in her garden the Puritans were evil and "ugly" weeds whom she "smote down."

Later, Hester suggests to Dimmesdale that they flee the Puritan colony for the older 'culture' of England where he could "be a scholar and a sage among the wisest and the most renowned of the cultivated world" (182). Here English and American notions of cultivation are pitted against each other. While the Puritan idea of cultivation of human nature and the nation at large implies constant pruning and retributive justice, the European idea of cultivation is seen as leading to flourishing of knowledge and the "cultivated world" of Europe as a space which would support expanding human knowledge.

The forest surrounding the Edenic colony is seen as the abode of evil forces such as the Black Man, and Indians, and a moral wilderness lurking in the margins and threatening to impinge upon the cultivated Eden. The narrator states how the forest is seen as the natural abode of Hester, a figure of sin in the Puritan community and how her settling in the colony instead of the forest comes as a surprise: "and having also the passes of the dark, inscrutable forest open to her, where the wildness of her nature might assimilate itself with a people whose customs and life were alien from the law that had condemned her- it may seem marvellous that this woman should still call the place her home, where, and where only, she must needs be the type of shame" (74).

The space where Hester chooses to live the rest of her life in the colony is also a barren wilderness of sorts. She takes to living in a cottage "On the outskirts of the town, within the verge of the peninsula, but not in close vicinity to any other habitation" (76), whose "comparative remoteness put it out of the sphere of that social activity which already marked the habits of the emigrants" (76). In the narrative, Hester is associated with the wilderness and its freedom and danger. Hester's advocacy for the wild may be attributed to the fact that her lonely plight in the novel led her to abound in a sort of "moral wilderness, as vast, as intricate, and shadowy as the untamed forest" (183) leading to an affinity for desolate, abandoned places. The narrator notes how her ostracism in turn rendered her fearless and free: "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers-stern and wild ones-and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (183). From this position, she felt detached from "human institutions, and whatever priests or legislators had established; criticizing all with hardly more reverence

than the Indian would feel for the clerical band, the judicial robe, the pillory, the gallows, the fireside, or the church" (183). Thus, it is the forest and wilderness that resembles an Edenic space for her rather than the colony envisioned as New Eden by the pilgrims.

In the forest, away from the Puritan constraints, Hester and Pearl meet Dimmesdale. Hester plans to stop Dimmesdale in the forest on his way to his sermons to the Indians and decides to let him know of Chillingworth's identity and intent. The spot in which Pearl and Hester find themselves and the stream that passes through the spot are described in melancholic terms:

> Here they sat down on a luxuriant heap of moss; which at some epoch of the preceding century, had been a gigantic pine, with its roots and trunk in the darksome shade, and its head aloft in the upper atmosphere…All these giant trees and boulders of granite seemed intent on making a mystery of the course of this small brook; fearing, perhaps, that with its never ceasing loquacity, it should whisper tales out of the heart of the old forest whence it flowed, or mirror it revelations on the smooth surface of a pool. (170-171)

The fall of the pine tree is evoked in nostalgic terms and points to a fall from a pre-existing Eden of luscious wild growth which was lost with the advent of civilization. The course of the brook is redirected or stopped by the branches falling off trees and pebbles as if trying to keep it from "whisper"ing what is lost of the forest and its people in the wake of the Edenic project in the New World. This can also be read as an understanding of how the Puritan society clamps down on people transgressing in order to keep "whisper" of wild human impulses at bay. The pensiveness evoked by the loss of the "gigantic pine" and the course of the brook points to the general melancholy occasioned by the creation of the garden nation.

Hawthorne thus locates an alternative Eden in the forest opposed to the Edenic nation envisioned in the form of a Puritan colony. In this forest, Hester and Dimmesdale, the two star crossed lovers, realize their own Eden where they finally have a few moments to themselves after years. The narrator observes how the two sitting on the fallen pine tree presents a beautiful yet poignant picture:

> They sat down again, side by side, and hand clasped in hand, on the mossy trunk of the fallen tree. Life had never brought them a gloomier hour, it was the point whither their pathway has so long been tending, and darkening ever, as it stole along- and yet it unclosed a charm that made them linger upon it, and claim another and another, and after all, another moment. The forest was obscure around them, and creaked with a blast that was passing through it. The boughs were tossing heavily above their heads, while one solemn old tree groaned dolefully to another, as if telling the sad story of the pair that sat beneath, or constrained to forebode evil to come (179-180).

The forest is here seen as a space where the human impulses can find a temporary outlet and which offers only momentary respite from the disciplinarian garden in its shade.

Hester suggests to Dimmesdale how the forest space of transitory solace can be turned into their own Eden as she tells the latter how he can permanently settle in the forest and have freedom from strictures and the prying eyes of Chillingworth:

> Whither leads yonder forest-track? Backward to the settlement, thou sayest! Yes; but onward, too! Deeper it goes, and deeper into the wilderness, less plainly to be seen at every step; until some few miles hence the yellow leaves will show no vestige of the white man's tread. There thou art free! So brief a journey would bring thee from a world where thou hast been most wretched. To one where thou mayest still be happy! Is there not enough shade in all this boundless forest to hide thy heart from the gaze of Roger Chillingworth?." (181)

To this, Dimmesdale "with a sad smile" (181) states how this can take place "only under the fallen leaves!" (181) implying how a move to the forest would already mean his fall from divine grace and social standing, as in the case of such people as Mistress Hibbins. The ever receding forest constantly giving in to the garden project of the New World can offer no actual respite from the shame and stricture.

V

Moon Palace (1989)

Paul Auster's *Moon Palace* follows Marco Stanley Fogg as he goes about trying to find his way in the 1960s U.S. A student at Columbia, Fogg has lost both his parents and is supported by his Uncle Victor. The death of Victor, a man already sinking into poverty by the time of his death, causes Fogg to fend for himself. Fogg decides to throw his life to chance and ends up on the streets, taking shelter for a brief period in Central Park. While he manages to get by for a few days with help from strangers in the form of food, sometimes leftovers and even money, he soon falls prey to the whims of weather. Drenching himself in rain, he gets fever and is rescued by his friend Zimmer and a girl named Kitty Wu who has been on the lookout for him since she first met him accidentally. After recovery, he wishes to stop being a drain on Zimmer's finances and eventually finds himself the job of a caretaker of an eighty six year old Thomas Effing. He learns that Thomas Effing was actually the famous painter Julian Barber who decided to venture out to the West, came into wealth by taking away the exploits of the Gresham brothers who he killed there and decided to give up his old life and identity for a new one.

Fogg also comes to know of his estranged father Solomon Barber who happens to be Thomas Effing's son and who later dies following severe injury after a skirmish with Fogg. The novel ends with Fogg continuing on his Westward journey that he started with his father Solomon and ending up at a beach in California which he sees as "the end of the world" (306) also marking the end of the Western frontiers of the American continent.

The work is discussed in light of such issues such as The rewriting of the American history and origin myths in such stories as Kepler's Blood (Gonzalez 21-34), parental care (Begedou 1-13), the relation between the self and society (Jinyun and Ruifang 289-294), trauma and postmodern representation (Shostak 149-170), identity formation and existentialism (Khanbazian and Sabouri 217-226), paradox (Moncef 75-91), a reading of Levinasian subjectivity (Uchiyama 115-139), hunger as resistance (Alvarez 7-16), among other things. Theodora Tsimpuki sees Central Park in the novel as representing "the era's conceptualization of public space as a concrete, real, urban site

of democracy" (438). Although she notes how the depiction of Central Park in the novel is "not idealized, romanticized or invested in pseudo s-innocenece, she states that the park invokes "the enduring myth of the frontier, and its themes of radical individualism, self-reliance and equality of opportunity" (439). The chapter suggests the Central Park episode in the novel instead critiques the ideas of self-reliance and equality by presenting a destitute Fogg who is barely getting by in the park.

The narrative is replete with references to American nationalist myths and important events and happenings from American history. The book starts with the line "It was the summer men first walked on the moon" and takes into account, apart from the moon landing and space race many such important events of the 1960s unfolding at the backdrop such as the Vietnam War, student protests on university campuses. Other references include Uncle Victor handing him over his collection of fourteen hundred and ninety two books, a reminder of Columbus' arrival on the land, watching the movie *Around the World in 80 Days*, Marco being a reference to "Marco Polo, the first European to visit China; Stanley was for the American journalist who had tracked down Dr. Livingstone "in the heart of darkest Africa" and Fogg was for Phileas, the man who had stormed around the globe in less than three months" (6).

It is necessary, however, to look at the episode of Fogg's time in Central Park which Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar call "a symbol of our national culture" (1), as it is mythologized and made popular by poets such as Walt Whitman as he talks about New York gentility parading on the grounds of the park or through popular films such as *When Harry met Sally* or *Hannah and Her Sisters* (Rosenzweig and Blackmar 1). The chapter discusses how an understanding of the Edenic garden myth informs both Auster's writing of the novel vis-à-vis the writing of the American nation through myths, narratives and images. It seeks to look at how Fogg's sojourn in Central Park throws light on and offers a critique of the transcendentalist understanding of solace in nature.

Auster revisits the myth of the American Adam through the narrative of Fogg. The revision is ironical and anti-iterative in the sense that the narrator keeps referring to his story with a sense of fatalism that is not accepted. While his initial withdrawal from agency and action is a subversion of the Adamic myth, his latter stint as a caretaker and his venturing out to the West casts him in the light of the Adamic hero. His brief stay in

Central Park further offers a revisionary and ironic understanding of the Adam working his way in a garden space of the park and of America.

The American Adam, as noted by R.W.B. Lewis, is an individual characterized by innocence and enterprise. The image of “the authentic American as the figure of heroic innocence and vast potentialities, poised at the start of a new history” (1), Lewis notes, informs such classic works of American literature by Melville, James, Hawthorne and others. This figure is “the hero of a new adventure: an individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources” (5).

The image, built on the figure of the mythical Adam presupposes the idea of America as the gardenland of endless possibilities. In the novel, Auster’s protagonist Marco Stanley Fogg goes on to debunk the traits of the American Adam noted by Lewis. He decides to throw his life to the winds and embarks on an “adventure” of sorts which far from opening up the world of opportunities paves the way for his downfall. Disavowing the possibilities of student loans, scholarships etc. Fogg “gaunt, disheveled, intense, a young man clearly out of step with the rest of the world” (15) refuses to takes action to better his financial situation after the death of his uncle. Thus, far from being “untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race” he lets his inheritance decide his future. He poses as “an anarchist hermit, a latter- day crank, a Luddite” (26) and takes to fabricating bizzare theories, to explain his descent into penury. For example, he explains his telephone disconnection due to non-payment of bills as the voice over telephone being simulacra which should not be paid much heed to. He writes:

> With all the fervor and idealism of a young man who had thought too much and read too many books, I decided that the thing I should do was nothing: my action would consist of a militant refusal to take any action at all. This was nihilism raised to the level of an aesthetic proposition. I would turn my life into a work of art, sacrificing myself to such exquisite paradoxes that every breath I took would teach me how to savor my own doom (20-21).

With this preposterous positioning, he sets out to make sense of his life with the limited tools at his disposal. He decides to read Uncle Victor's books that the latter gave to him. The books on diverse subjects packed together appear to him "a strange mixture, packed with no apparent order or purpose" (21), "an absolute chaos of print" (21). As he goes on reading the books one by one, he attempts to make sense of this chaos. He equates this exercise to an exploration of the American continent:

> I was occupying the same mental space that Uncle Victor had once occupied-reading the same words, living in the same stories, perhaps thinking the same thoughts. It was almost like following the route of an explorer from long ago, duplicating his steps as he thrashed out into the virgin territory, moving westward with the sun, pursuing the light until it was finally extinguished (22).

Read in light of the Adamic experience, whether subverted or subsumed within the history of adventure stories, this has metaphoric implications; stories of adventure relate to the taming of chaos. In the context of the book, however, the story looks unreliable as Fogg is intent on making a garden out a "virgin" territory as he "plows through" (22) the books.

As Fogg is thrown out of his apartment following his constant defaulting on rent, he takes to the streets and takes shelter in Central Park. He narrates how he chooses Central Park to spend the first night of his expulsion:

> Night was approaching, and before too many hours had passed, I would have to find a place to sleep…I was not going to stretch out on the sidewalk like some bum…I would be exposed to every madman in the city if I did that; it would be like inviting someone to slit my throat. And even if I wasn't attacked, I was sure to be arrested for vagrancy…If I eventually chose Central Park, it was because I was too exhausted to think of anything else… I had heard all the horror stories about Central Park, but at that moment my exhaustion was greater than my fear (54-55).

The dangers confronting the Adamic figure of Fogg in nighttime New York resembles the perils of wilderness presented to the early settlers of the American continent. The way he settles in Central Park can be likened to the settlers coming to

terms with the dangerous landscape as they had nowhere else to turn to. William Bradford, in the *History of Plimmoth Plantation* notes:

> Being thus passed the vast ocean, and a sea of troubles before in their preparation…they had now no friends to welcome them, nor inns to entertain or refresh their weather beaten bodys, no houses or much less townes to repaire to, to seeke for succoure […] Besides what could they see but a hidious and desolate wildernes, full of and willd men? And what multitudes ther might be of them they know not. (94-95)

The way the settlers eventually warm up to their surroundings and carve their haven within the wilderness, Fogg finds his refuge in the park as he notes how the park "became a sanctuary for me, a refuge of inwardness against the grinding demands of the street" (56). The park boundaries can be seen as the frontier beyond which the dangers of wilderness lurk. Noting such dangers in the wilderness of the capitalist American streets, Fogg says how, "talking out loud to yourself, scratching your body, looking someone directly in the eye: these deviations can trigger off hostile and sometimes violent reactions from those around you" (57). In the park, in contrast, "No one thought twice if you stretched out on the grass in the middle of the day. No one blinked if you sat under a tree and did nothing, if you played your clarinet, if you howled at the top of your lungs" (57). Seen in light of the 1960s countercultural movement, the park resembles a space of free love challenging the nationalist thrust of war as it was "live and let live" (57) and "people smiled at each other and held hands, bent their bodies into unusual shapes, kissed" (57).

Fogg's description of the park invokes the foundational narratives of the American nation as expressed in the writings of Whitman, Emerson and Thoreau. Fogg notes how "the grass and the leaves were democratic, and as I loafed in the sunshine of a late afternoon, or climbed among the rocks in the early evening to look for a place to sleep, I felt that I was blending into the environment" (57). This can be seen as an allusion to Whitman's as the speaker in his *Leaves of Grass* notes: "I lean and loafe at my ease…observing a spear of summer grass" (Whitman). The image of grass can be seen as the symbol of democracy "a uniform hieroglyphic" (Whitman) "sprouting alike in broad zones and narrow zones/ Growing alike among black folks as among white" (Whitman). The image of the merging of the self with nature is an idea that runs through

Emerson's writings: "Standing on the bare ground,—my head bathed by the blithe air, and uplifted into infinite space,—all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball: I am nothing; I see all; the currents of Universal Being circulate through me: I am a particle of God." (13). Fogg's ruminations on how "the park gave him a chance to return to my inner life, to hold on to myself purely in terms of what was happening inside me" (58) brings to mind Emerson's dictum of "Know thyself." The park appeared to him a benign space of nature where people would display acts of kindness by helping him with food or money.

His sojourn in the park is also characterized by the motif of the escape from the restricting clutches of civilization to nature running through American literature. As Huck takes to the river or Thoreau moves to the woods, Fogg escapes to Central Park, "a man-made natural world" (62). As noted before, he constantly contrasts the environment of the park "a sanctuary" with the demands of the city where "like it or not, you cannot enter them without adhering to a rigid protocol of behavior" (56) This suspicion of society and its norms is characteristic of transcendentalism, a movement popular in nineteenth century America which called for a return to nature in order to be in touch with one's real self. Describing this strain, Emerson, one of the key proponents of this philosophy, writes in his essay titled "Self Reliance": "Society everywhere is in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members" (35).

In the same essay, he outlines the importance of self-reliance which he calls an "aversion" (35) to "conformity," (35). The movement's insistence on self-reliance, however, is troubled and undercut by Fogg's inactivity in the park and his resorting to such acts as foraging for food in trash cans. Just as Huck finds himself getting "sivilised" inspite of everything he does to escape the regimented world of parents and their already determined world, Fogg's transcendentalist reverie is meant to show how the American garden in a city is no refuge but can only offer fleeting moments of respite before being subsumed into the cultural space again, thus reversing the nature as plenitude story. It is clear through events such as being confronted by a policeman while looking for food in trash cans, mugging, as his uncle's clarinet case is taken away from him and so on. One way of looking at such interventions by the state, its law and order and crime, is presenting those, after Leo Marx, as "machines" disturbing the quiet of the transcendentalist garden. Regarding his foraging for crumbs, his perspective oscillated

between seeing these as "spiritual initiations, as obstacles that had been thrown across my path to test my faith in myself" (61) and "a challenge to the American way" (61), "a living proof that the system had failed, that the smug, overfed land of plenty was finally cracking apart" (61). In a reversal of the initiation narrative of America, his sojourn in Central Park ends up in delirium and having to be rescued from his famished situation by Kitty Wu and his friend Zimmer. Thus, as he fails to take on his Adamic role as "self-reliant and self-propelling" (Lewis 5), he is expelled out of garden to the wilderness of the American society, where he is forced to work hard for survival.

Interestingly enough, this Central Park episode opens up larger issues surrounding the history of the creation Central Park whose construction park displaced almost sixteen hundred people living on the land (Rosensweig and Blacksmar 60), mostly Africans Americans and immigrants who had no say in policy making (60). As Rosenzweig and Blacksmar note, the railroad construction in the nineteenth century in Uptown Manhattan brought in "skilled American, German and Irish workers" (62), making it an industrial town consisting of such "nuisance industries" (soap, wax, paint, chemical, and bone-boiling plants). The town also became the site of asylums and yellow fever epidemic which made many Manhattan elites move elsewhere. In this light, the "pre-parkites" consisting mostly of these immigrants were seen with increased suspicion. The park dwellers, who were mostly engaged as low paying labourers, often supplemented their food and income by growing on land or scavenging. This made them seen as 'squatters' stealing and engaging in such businesses as liquor brewing "conventionally viewed as illegal" (76). The term 'squatter' as Rosenzweig and Blacksmar note, is "a cultural category than a formal legal description, a convenient shorthand for the sort of poor people more affluent New Yorkers preferred to remove from their neighbourhoods" (77). In order to counter such corrupting influences, the Manhattan elites called for a public park, "as a way of screening out new poor residents and their associated trades (an early form of zoning) and as a means of removing the existing poor population (an early form of urban renewal)" (63). The state's policing of Fogg's foraging and eating out of garbage cans can be seen to hark back to the scavenging activities of the park dwellers seen with suspicion, while his expulsion has marked parallels with the people who were dispossessed of their land rights, shelter, life and livelihood, in order to make way for the pastoral grounds of the rich.

Auster makes use of the moon as an object and metaphor relating it to paradisiacal imaginings of the American nation. The novel's title "Moon Palace" refers to the 'moon' as a metaphor for the American dream. The novel refers to the 'moon' in such events as moon landing of 1969, the restaurant near his apartment named Moon Palace, Uncle Victor's musical band named "Moonlight Moods", Ralph Blakelock's painting named "Moonlight" and so on. The novel can be read as a critique of the American dream and American nationalist aspirations which often necessitate violence or lead to destructive ends. The novel is set in the 1960s where the moon landing coincides with such events as Vietnam wars, student protests etc. signaling the co-existence of unrest and prosperity. Uncle Victor heading out to the West with his band "Moonlight" ends in failure and his death, similar to the plight of Blakelock, the painter of 'Moonlight' who descended into madness and obscurity after drawing painting scenes from the West. Reading the words 'Moon Palace', from the window of his apartment, Fogg sees them as "hung there in darkness like a message from the sky itself. MOON PALACE. "I immediately thought of Uncle Victor and his band, and in that first, irrational moment, my fears lost their hold on me" (17). This is ironical as instead of the serving as the start of a successful period, it marks the beginning of Fogg's poverty and famished situation which culminates in his sojourn in Central Park.

As the President marks the moon landing of American astronauts as the "greatest event since the creation of man" (31), the narrator Fogg notes its paradisiacal underpinnings: "since the day he was expelled from Paradise, Adam had never been this far from home" (31). The author seems to poke fun at the American pioneering spirit as a way of having access to paradise as Fogg argues for the veracity of the moon landing within a group of Julliard students in his "comic-pedantic style" (38), drawing references from a host of philosophers and writers. He quotes Cyrano, a writer accounting his trip to the moon in a 1649 book: "The Garden of Eden is located on the moon, and when Adam and Eve ate from the Tree of Knowledge, God banished them to the earth" (38-39). This is a reference to seventeenth century French writer, Cyrano de Bergerac's 1657 book *The Other World: The Comical History of the States and the Empires of the Moon* which gives an account of the moon voyage of the explorer named Cyrano. The novel discusses how after Cyrano's unsuccessful attempt to travel to the moon from France by attaching dew bottles to his body then brings him back to earth and lands him in New France, from

where he then makes a successful launch using rockets this time. Speaking of Cyrano's attempts to travel to the moon, Fogg notes:

> Cyrano first attempts to travel to the moon by strapping bottles of lighter-than-air dew to his body, but after reaching the Middle Distance, he floats back to earth, landing among a tribe of naked Indians in New France. There he build a machine that eventually takes him to his destination, which no doubt goes to show that America has always been the ideal place for moon launchings (39).

Cyrano's narrative which is "A Comical History of the States" might serve to be a satire of the explorers as Cyrano thinks he has landed in France while in reality he is in New France, showing 'discoverers' of the continent who happen to set out to discover a particular land and end up finding something else. Such accidental discoveries are then endowed with myths and the discovered land seen as Edenic or paradisical. Fogg's puerile attempts to justify the American nation's pioneering attempts here shows how the idea of American paradise, its redemption and recreation derives its force from such narratives and myths.

Auster further gives examples as to how the concept of the American Eden and a lost paradise finds expressions in paintings such as Ralph Albert Blakelock's "Moonlight". Blakelock is a nineteenth century American landscape painter whose painting "Moonlight" sold at a record price. He ventured to the West as a young man and it is there that he started painting the Western landscapes and Indians in landscape. He is seen as one of "the final heirs of the Hudson River School" (Gunning 61) alongwith George Inness (Gunning 61) which had revivified the Claudean Ideal Landscape by giving it an American urgency" (Gunning 61). As Gunning notes, "Blakelock's landscape seem to recycle a nocturnal shadow of the Claudean Ideal Landscape, the golden sunlight given over to a pale moonlight that seems like a dark melancholic sun than a nocturnal view" (61). In the novel, Fogg looks at a Blakelockpainting, a task assigned to him by Thomas Effing, and describes the same:

> A sky the same color as the earth, a night that looks like day, and all human forms dwarfed by the bigness of the scene…In spite of their smallness in relation the setting, the Indians betrayed no fears or anxieties…I wondered if Blakelock hadn't painted his sky green in order to emphasize this harmony, to make a point

> of showing the connection between the heaven and earth. If men can live comfortably in their surroundings, he seemed to be saying, if they can learn to feel themselves a part of the things around them, then perhaps life on earth becomes imbued with a feeling of holiness (139).

Here, Fogg attempts to present an image of prelapsarian bliss, “an American idyll, the world the Indians had inhabited before the white men came to destroy it” (139). Here, “the human forms dwarfed by the bigness of the scene” refers poignantly to the erasure of the Indians from the land. As Gunning notes, “the usually minisicule Native American figures that populate many of Blakelock’s landscapes recall a long tradition of Indian staffage figures contemplating the landscape, providing a recognizable allegory not only of wilderness, but of a vanishing past” (62). Though he speaks of how the “Indians betrayed no fears or anxieties” in the face of the all-encompassing landscape, suggesting a humble way of existence in the midst of nature, the harmony suggested here is ironical. The painting of the earth and sky in the same hues, the merging of night and day suggests the removal of distinctiveness and an evening out of either landscape features or the humans.

Gunning observes, “These images sentimentalize the Indians even as compositional schemes naturalize their vanishing, like the brilliant coloured foliage of a Hudson Valley autumn” (62) and that “It is not simply the Indians that are being displaced here: a whole world appears to be fading, growing darker and paler in moonlight” (62). Blakelock’s painting points at an alternate understanding of American Eden which runs counter to the idea of Eden espoused by the European settlers who saw this land as howling wilderness, ignoring its eccentricities. The almost invisible Indians in the painting bring to the fore a history of erasure which necessitated the invisibility of these people in order tame the wilderness and make a garden out of the same.

The novel offers further instances of violence at the heart of the making of the American nation through Charlie, Mrs. Hume’s brother, a soldier who escaped being part of the Nagasaki troop. Speaking on the desiccation of the Indian population at the outset of its formation, all out destruction in the form of atom bomb attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the Vietnam war etc, he offers some examples marking the nation’s tryst with bloodshed and exploitation. Touching upon these, Charlie, Mrs. Hume’s brother, a soldier who escaped being part of the Nagasaki troop notes “The same stuff, killing

yellow people wherever we can find them. It's like slaughtering the Indians all over again. Now we have H-bombs instead of A-bombs. The generals are still making new weapons in Utah, far away from everything, where no one can see them (224).

Here, along with noting the nation's history of violence, Auster also depicts the picturesque landscape of the American West as the site of such violence. Apart from serving as the plot of violence, other landscapes like that of the West, forming an important part of the American imagination, also engender violence and exploitation in the process of their formation. As an example, Auster touches upon the site of Central Park when Fogg tries to find out more about Blakelock, the painter who fascinated Thomas Effing: "I was particularly interested to learn that some of his early work in the 1870s had been set in Central Park. He had painted the shacks that stood there when the park was still new, and as I looked at the reproductions of these rural places in what had been New York, I could not help thinking about the miserable time I spent in there myself"(140).

Here, the "shacks" referred to by Fogg open up an alternate understanding of the recreational space of the park. Rosenzweig and Blackmar describe how the park appeals to the pastoral aspirations of the city as it was conceived of as a space that offered the New Yorkers prospects of recreation and respite from the noise and commotion of the city. They note how the park was built by evicting inhabitants of the Seneca village, consisting of blacks and Irish families, many of whom were rightful owners of the land. This history of the beautiful park went largely unnoticed hitherto as the "pre parkites" "have generally been unrepresented or misrepresented, either ignored or disparaged as debased population of savages. Legislative discussions and public reports contain only indirect hints that anyone at all lived on proposed park land" (63). They attempt to unearth this history by offering an account of the Seneca village and its inhabitants.

The Seneca village was formed by black labourers in Manhattan who bought land at cheap rates from the Whiteheads who were rapidly selling off their farmland. Populated mainly by African Americans, the village also came to be called "nigger village" "reflecting the virulent racism of the day" (Rosenzweig and Blackmar 66). The blacks were later joined by Irish and German immigrant labourers. The settlement came to be a thriving community with its own churches, social setup and of the few black eligible voters in nineteenth century America were some of its black inhabitants.

However, as the writers note, the onlookers and observers described this community as "a wilderness" "with "the habitations of poor and wretched people of every race and color and nationality" (67). In the same vein, the houses of the Seneca villagers, as they write, were seen as "shanties" a term that "describes (and demeans) a building's occupants as well as the building itself" (Rosenzweig 68). They refer to how Egbert Viele, the first engineer of the park sees the same as, "the refuge of about five thousand squatters, dwelling in *rude huts* of their own construction, and living off the refuse of the city" [my italics](63-64). Citing a *Times* reporter who spoke of the park residents as "principally Irish families" living in "rickety…little one storie shanties…inhabited by four or five persons, not including the pigs and goats" (63) and that the filth ought to be replaced with something that likened Champs Elysees (63). Fogg'sdescription of the "shacks" in these paintings refer to this history of demeaning of Seneca village households which eventually led its eviction. The construction of the park lead to the subsuming of the land and its people to the landscape: beautiful, sanitized and picturesque, devoid of any reminders of poverty or ugliness. Blakelock's painting of these shacks, brings to the fore history long forgotten and serves to open up understandings of what goes into the building of such beautiful gardenscapes and, by implication, the American garden nation.

VI

The Victory Garden (2019)

Rhys Bowen's *The Victory Garden* looks back at an early twentieth century England in the midst of World War I and the role of gardening in the war. The 'victory garden' of the title refers to the kind of gardens that came about in the wake of war in England and the U.S.A, as nations called upon farming as a way to address wartime food shortage and to ensure victory.

The novel follows Emily in her journey from being the daughter of a protected household through being part of the nation's army as land girl to her taking up herb gardening and gardening for commercial enterprise. Initially wanting to be a nurse like her friend Clarissa, Emily, much to disappointment of her parents, ends up enlisting herself in the Women's Land Army as land girl, as a way of escaping her dull country life and serving the nation. During her training, she alongwith other girls are asked to

help locals with their farm work and learns digging, harvesting, haymaking, milking etc. after which she is called upon to work at Lady Charlton's estate at Dartmoor. After her fiancée Robert Kerr, an Australian soldier in the air force, dies fighting, leaving her pregnant, she decides not to go back home and asks for residence at the cottage on the estate, offering to take care of the kitchen garden in return. She discovers the herb garden near the cottage and the journal of a woman named Susan with medicinal recipes helps her formulate concoctions and help locals with their problems. With her experiences in the herb garden and kitchen garden, she takes up making and selling lotions and potions after the war ends. Set in the countryside England during World War I, the different kinds of gardens depicted in the novel- lawns and grounds of the Bryce family, Lady Charlton's estate at Dartmoor, the farm gardens or victory gardens producing food, and Emily's herb garden in the Devonshire estate- offer varying perspectives of a nation in the middle of a crisis and partake in its alleviation.

Bowen's narrative operates through an intertextual understanding and subversion of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century pastoral image of repose devoid of labour in the English countryside presented and critiqued in Jane Austen. The initial description of the Bryce estate emblematic of nineteenth century repose is undercut by the facts of wartime in the narrative. The narrator describes Emily's view of the lawn:

> The rhythmic clickety-clack of the lawnmower made Emily Bryce cease her writing and glance out of her window. Old Josh was pushing the mower over a lawn that already appeared to be immaculate. Her gaze swept the full length of the garden to the rhododendrons and azalea bushes, now to full springtime bloom, surrounding the bottom of the lawn with brilliant pinks and oranges. The apple trees in the kitchen garden were also white blossom (2).

This is a vague reminder of how gardens and gardening, especially flower gardens and rolling estate gardens landscaped to the best of contemporary tastes, upheld the ideals of beauty and stability in the English nation. Wygant writes how for both the British and American nations: "gardening was a cultural statement about national identity. For the English, ornamental gardens were part and parcel of the expression of leisure; families expressed their wealth and stature through the elaborate ornamental plants and design of the landscape (1-2). This "cultural statement" (1) of repose in the well kempt grounds of the estate is further symbolized by "the scent of newly mown

grass" (3) which are "Safe, familiar scents, scents of home" (3), Emily feels. This idea of home and safety intertwined with English verdure receives a setback in the wake of war. The narrator writes how "Her parents seemed to take it for granted that their grounds would look perfect, not appreciating how lucky they were to have a gardener who was well beyond the age to be called up to fight. Their smooth and comfortable life had not been changed one bit, apart from…" (2).

The apparent stability exemplified by the garden grounds is undercut by the melancholic facts of wartime which includes the non-existence of young male gardeners most of whom have been enlisted, and the unspeakable fact of the death of the Bryce son Freddie who was in the army and killed in warfare. If the eighteenth and nineteenth century gardens and estates marked the glory of the British Empire, the gardens in the twentieth century landscape can be seen to signal a shift in old notions of the national pride. The era marked a period of socio-economic upheaval when the nation suddenly found itself devoid of a large population of young men and were faced with a decline in its national coffers. The sense of despair in the twentieth century landscape results not only from the widespread deaths, fear and uncertainty but also points to sea change in a world order hitherto marked by a confident landed gentry, aristocratic values, propriety, dainty women and courteous men. The wars posed a challenge to and marked the end of centuries of British colonialism which had brought in a steady flow of wealth from the colonies, resulting in a flourishing economy. Thus, scenes of idyllic repose in the country with its green expanse are undercut by the looming war and resulting death.

The idea of home and the 'unheimlich' civilization and savagery is often used in the novel to present a contrast between the polished English with their well kempt gardens and the Australian soldier Kerr, a fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force, whose homeland is unsuitable for such landscaping and is employed by the Commonwealth to fight its war. He notes how his mother "tries to grow flowers, especially roses, but she never quite succeeds" (13) as "there's only about six inches of rain a year. Not enough for a proper garden" (13). He is seen admiring the beautiful greenery of the Bryce estate which might have appeared "heaven" like (13) to his mother in Australia: "I can see a bit of the grounds from my window, and it all looked so perfect, so unreal…that green, green grass and all those roses. My word, if my mother saw this, she'd think she'd died and gone to heaven" (13). Bowen plays on the idea of how gardens, and the lack thereof,

define notions of culture. The "cheeky Australian" (10), comes from a land unfit for gardens and finery and uses language deemed unsuitable for British sensibilities during Emily's convalescent home visit and is referred to as having "no sense of propriety or decorum" (9) and as a "savage" (36) by his teammates. While he frequently pits the class conscious society of England with the absence of class hierarchy in Australia where there is "Plenty of land and sunshine, and nobody cares if you're a duke or a chimney sweep" (16), he appreciates the beauty and solace that the English garden offers during wartime. He notes "But out where we live, it's no place for a woman, really. No hat shops or beauty parlours or even other women to talk to. That's why I wanted to see this garden…to finally have something positive to write to my mum about. All she's heard is bad news so far…So I thought I'd describe these flowers. She'd like that (16). Thus while the estate landscapes here stand as structures emblematic of 'cultural imperialism' or soft power, they also reflect a desire for normalcy on the part of Robert Kerr whose experiences in war create in him a renewed interest for beauty and order.

The lawns and grounds of the Bryces serve as the last bastion of Old England as they desperately try to hold on to genteel glory on its grounds. Mrs. Bryce hosts a garden party for Emily's twenty-first birthday and as a coming out ceremony as "for many of England's elite, garden parties were the centre of social gatherings, and the elaborate gardens were as much part of their homes as the dining halls or salons" (Wygant 2). While Emily says how "It wouldn't be right to celebrate while so many people are suffering and mourning" (11) and that "Every young man I knew has been killed and most of the young women have moved away or married" (11), Mrs. Bryce is hell-bent on having the garden party: "I had always planned to have my daughter come out properly into society. I had expected her to be a debutante. And since that option has been denied you, the very least I can do is to give you a twenty-first party" (12). This harks back to garden parties and balls in Austen as the meeting grounds of the opposite sexes in the country world of Regency England whose societies revolve around marriage. In a world characterized by the unavailability of able bodied young men for marriage, Mrs. Bryce's garden party as the coming-of-age ceremony of Emily, in an ironic reversal of the Austen world, becomes an assortment of motley group of wounded soldiers, acquaintances and sickly/disabled people.

This image of garden party in the midst of a morbid atmosphere might also bring to mind the Sheridans' garden party in Katherine Mansfield's "The Garden Party." The Sheridans remain unperturbed by the death of a man in a cottage nearing the estate and go ahead with their garden party with full pomp. The daughter Laura, horrified by the death, asks for stopping preparations for the party: "But we can't possibly have a garden party with a man dead just outside the front gate" (Mansfield 7), but her concerns are turned down as silly and her idea of putting a halt on the party as "extravagant" (7). The cottages reeking of poverty were termed "the greatest possible eyesore" (7) in the landscape, their gardens containing nothing but "cabbage stalks, sick hens and tomato cans" (7). Darrohn notes how "such gardens are reserved not for giving parties but for producing food" (523) and how "the beauty of their garden-party results from the labors of a host of workers" (522) such as "the gardener." (522). The garden parties in both Mansfield and Bowen are characteristic of class assertion and have huge spreads laid out for similar ends. However, while the garden party in Mansfield becomes a mark of insensitivity with people dying just round the edge of the park, the garden party in Bowen intends to dissipate the general air of gloom surrounding war and also includes soldiers. Further, while the productive gardens are seen as lowly and contrasting with the Sheridans' beautiful garden grounds, in *The Victory Garden*, the horticultural is brought to the fore alongwith the beautiful as Mrs. Bryce states how they "grow the salad stuff in our own kitchen garden" (37). The garden in the latter becomes a point of reflection upon a world in transition.

Mrs. Bryce's mention of cultivating vegetables needs to be understood in the context of the food situation in England during wartime. At the time of World War I, nations underwent massive food shortage with wartime rationing as well as due the unavailability of agricultural labourers who were called up for war. Wygant notes how the situation in Britain was particularly dire as imports accounted for 50 percent of its food (4) which was hit by naval blockades by German U-ships. Thus Britain swiftly employed women to take up the work of cultivation in order to prevent the nation from starving which lead to the creation of the Women's Land Army (4-5). In the novel, discussions on food come to the fore when people arrive for the garden party and the soldiers talk about how they "haven't seen food like this since we left home" (37), referring to wartime food rationing. Mrs. Bryce comments on how the party itself has been organized with food sent by nearby farmers and friends and vegetables grown in the

garden. The narrative tells us how Emily has to share Daisy's ration as she has left hers at home and almost no food is provided without the ration book. Simpson, Lady Charlton's help on the estate points the kitchen garden on the estate to Emily and says "I try to keep the kitchen garden growing so Her Ladyship has something to eat" (118). He notes how the unavailability of workers has affected the food supply: "There used to be plenty coming from the home farm. Ten men working on that, there were, but now they've all gone to the war, apart from the farm manager and a couple of boys, so they are down to just a few cows and chickens these days." (118). Emily observes how "the kitchen garden should be restocked with winter produce to keep us going" (216). Thus kitchen gardens which were pushed aside in favour of decorative gardens on the landscape and in narrative here takes the centrestage and serves to allay the nation's food crisis.

While the garden was instrumental in generating desire for societal niceties, it also became pivotal in posing a challenge to traditional gender roles and spheres. The formation of the Women's Land Army brought women into the domain of war which had been hitherto been perceived as masculine. The humble acts of gardening and the production of food to serve national interests and the labeling of such gardens as victory gardens meant that war depended as much on the values of care and nurture as on aggression, muscle power and violence. In *Cultivating Victory,* Wygant notes how women in the UK and US were actively forging a nationalist narrative of self-sufficiency and how their participation in turn was facilitated by the women's rights groups across the continent seeking greater opportunities for women in the work force.

This development, on one hand, furthered the nationalist cause, while on the other, the idea of women laboring in the fields posed a challenge to the Victorian image of the angel in the house. Named after a poem of the same name by Coventry Patmore delineating the characteristics of desirable femininity such as tenderness, caregiving, meekness and chastity, the ideal advocated for women taking care of home and hearth while men went out in the world being the provider. In the Victorian period the angel in the house found particular strength in the figure of Queen Victoria and became the national ideal of womanhood. In the twentieth century, this image met with the ire of feminists such as Virginia Woolf who found such an ideal of femininity debilitating and said that "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman writer"

(Woolf 1254). The cultivation of the victory garden by the Women's Land Army proved to be another major blow to this idea of the angel whereby the role of women as nurturers took a backseat and they went out cultivating the land and providing for the nation. Through gardening, women became active participants in nation building alongside their male counterparts who were fighting enemies with guns and bombs. In the novel, Emily who feels "stuck at home" (48) volunteers for nursing services at the hospital and finding it full, stumbles upon what is known as the Women's Land Army as the woman registering the names of volunteers says: "We're in desperate need, actually. There are no men to work in the fields and the early crops are ready for harvest. As you must know, last year's harvest was a complete failure, and if we don't do something soon, the country won't be able to feed itself. We might win the war, but end up starving. That's not what we want, is it?" (49).

The urgency of the national call thus necessitated the participation of women in active farm work. The woman further notes that "It's hard work, but rewarding, knowing that you are feeding the country" (50). This has gendered and nationalist implications as the victory gardens pave the way for the new nationalist myth of woman as cultivators feeding the nation, as in the mythical role of Demeter, the goddess of fertility. The garden and the people who cultivate them, the women, part of the Women's Land Army, offer an alternative understanding of nation building relying on female service and active labour as opposed to pastoral consumption in landscapes designed by men.

The advent of the victory garden also lead to changes in the genteel feminine attire as the corset came to be replaced by more comfortable clothes like trousers which are suitable for farm work. In the novel, this is mentioned by Alice, a land girl who delights in doing away with uncomfortable clothing and finds "freedom at last" (60) and leads the other girls to do the same saying "No more corsets if they want us to do a man's work" (61).

This shift from beauty to utility also has implications for notions of class as "Knowledge of ornamental gardening was seen as a genteel trait, as opposed to farm labor, which carried with it a stigma of peasant labor and strife" (Wygant 2), which the victory gardens served to dissipate. In her letter to Clarissa, Emily notes how the land army she has joined is a "motley crew" (66) of people from different classes. Lady Charlton on hearing Emily's "upper-class accent" (134) is surprised as she thinks "the

land girls would be all farmworkers' daughters" (134) and tells Emily how farm work is "Hardly a normal occupation for one of your class" (136). Emily then presents a picture of the Land Army which includes people from different ranks and classes: "One of us is from London, Daisy is a servant from a stately home and I myself am the daughter of a judge. And amongst our squad there is a dancer from a show on the pier, a well-spoken middle-aged widow and only two land girls who were in any way connected with agriculture before" (134). When she breaks the news of joining the Land Army to her family, she meets with baffling and resentful reactions. While her mother says "But you're a gentlewoman. They meant they need lower class girls. Girls who are used to that kind of drudgery" (52), her father exclaims "Be proud of you? My daughter, a field hand? A peasant girl? I don't care what you signed. You can go right back tomorrow and tell them you have changed your mind" (52).

Emily nonetheless ventures out to join as a land girl and while finding the farm work initially grueling, takes a liking to the same after sometime. Her work as land girl involves such labour intensive jobs as "harvesting crops, milking cows, making hay" (49). The narrator notes how Emily's work in the potato field "was back breaking work, bent over for hours, then carrying the heavy baskets to fill sacks, which were then loaded onto a farm cart" (71-72) and "at lunchtime, they staggered to the shelter of a barn, where they gratefully drank cups of tea provided by the farmer's wife" (73), undermining all notions of class. Writing to Clarissa, Emily notes her newfound excitement and purpose as she exclaims: "We are haymakers! We are learning to use a scythe, which looks terrifying. One wrong sweep and we cut off our feet at the ankles! Then we have to rake, bundle and bring the bundles to the haystack" (109).

When Emily's parents make one last attempt to put an end to her whims and come to take her home, they find the sight of Emily working in the farms appalling: "Just look at you. What a disgrace. Covered in mud and hauling potatoes like a peasant. If your grandparents could see you now, they would be appalled" (73). Mrs. Bryce tells her how Mr. Bryce arranged a "proper job" (73) for her in an office in lieu of toiling in the rain and mud (74). This instance points again to strong class divisions in the English society where the upper class is expected to own land and enjoy its fruits while the peasants work the land and take up hard labour. Emily's parents fretting over their daughter taking up farming reflects anxiety in the wake of challenge to such class

divisions. Cultivating the victory garden thus becomes a way of cutting across different classes shunning hierarchy of labour and forging a new "agrarian myth: the idea that labor on the land was not only good for one's character, but also made people loyal to the land and better citizens" (Wygant 30).

The space and act of gardening as imposing order on nature and serving the impetus for taming the wilderness is threatened in Mrs. Charlton's estate whose "gardeners all enlisted in the army, leaving the grounds to run completely wild" (113). As the land girls approach Dartmoor, they encounter a picture of an estate going wild for want of mowing: "The façade was free of adornment, apart from a front porch. A Virginia creeper climbed up one side, its leaves turning blood red. Scots pines at the rear protected the house from the Dartmoor winds. And around it was a wilderness of land- an overgrown lawn, tangles of shrubs, herbaceous borders high with weeds" (116). To these grounds, Lady Charlton welcomes the land girls who she believes will restore the "former glory" (116) of the estate. Having set the grounds to order, Emily, who is now pregnant with Robbie's child, takes up residence at the Cragsmoor cottage on the estate to which Lady Charlton readily agrees. She then throws herself to the shaping of the kitchen and herb garden around the cottage as "a way to bring some kind of meaning in a life in chaos" (227) and turning it into a "civilized place" (249).

Once, when Lady Charlton and Emily sit down to catalogue books, they stumble upon Jane Austen. Lady Charlton recommends to Emily *Northanger Abbey* as one of her favourites (264). This mention of Jane Austen in a novel predominantly centered on gardens and the act of gardening hints at an intertextual understanding of the worldview and culture engendering the idea of Englishness. As mentioned in the earlier section, Austen novels present and critique a pastoral picture of England in the early nineteenth century that is characterized by sweeping green meadows symbolising repose and order of a nation at the zenith of material glory. In the wake of the social disruption caused by the war, the mention of Jane Austen hints at a time of nobility characterized by strict class divisions and invisibility of labour, to which the era of victory gardening and food rationing offers a stark contrast.

Emily's cottage garden aids in furthering nationalism both ideologically and materially. Having taken up residence in the cottage, Emily soon finds herself in the shoes of the seventeenth century woman Tabitha Ann Wise who concocted herbal

medicines and also in Susan Olgilvy who was the last woman to inhabit the cottage and who used Wise's book to make potions for the villagers. Bowen writes how Susan contrasts the overgrown garden to trimmed lawns back home and wished to bring this garden "back to order and beauty" (223). Staying in the cottage, Emily is seen as the wise woman possessing knowledge of medicinal plants and starts to receive requests for tinctures and other medicines. Having stumbled upon the book of recipes and the diary, Emily wishes to experiment using the herbs from her cottage garden and is able to prevent Spanish flu- killing soldiers in large numbers- from wreaking havoc in the village. In offering solutions in the form of herbal remedies to problems like the flu, she posits the garden in a key role in the British nationalist discourse.