CHAPTER FOUR

SEXUAL POLITICS IN THE GARDEN

Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to examine the themes of gender and sexuality in relation to the garden in novels like D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers* (1913), Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1955), Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) and Elizabeth Gilbert's *The Signature of All Things* (2013). The chapter argues that the garden can be read as a text offering cues to gendered understanding of the world and sexual fashioning. In Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, garden metaphors become a way of categorising women into intelligible forms while in *Lolita*, the garden takes the form of sites and metaphors furthering the mythical temptation of the sexes. In *The Signature of All Things*, Gilbert offers an understanding of how the garden becomes a symbol of masculine prowess and how the garden spaces owned by men enable gendered fashioning. The act of cultivation becomes a subversive metaphor in Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* where the idea of a garden fertile for cultivation is projected on a male body undergoing sex-change operation.The chapter thus contends that garden depictions and its metaphorical implications of culturing, seeding, paradisiacal bliss partake in construction of notions of masculinity and femininity in fiction.

I

Objectives

i. To examine links between garden or gardening and sexual or gendered formations
ii. To understand how far the Biblical myth of the Edenic garden has a bearing on such formations
iii. To explore the nationalist, botanical, pastoral implications of gardening and their bearing on gender constructions
iv. To examine shifts in the idea of cultivation in light of the changing understanding of gender

Hypotheses

i. That gender and sexuality as social constructs are informed and aided by garden metaphors;

ii. That the construction of gender and sexuality operates in and defines garden spaces;
iii. That the myth of the Edenic garden has long dictated Western assumptions of gender and sexuality, nature and culture;
iv. That the garden as an intermediary space between home and outside, nature and culture offers perspectives on spatiality.

Arguments

i. The garden and the metaphor of culturing and husbandry extend to the taming of women by man
ii. The science of botany, accessible to females at in the nineteenth century lend new dimensions to the gendered space of the garden, containing both women and exotic plant species
iii. The gendered division of public/private can be seen at work, among others, in park spaces where the female becomes the object of male gaze
iv. Feminist retellings deploy the metaphor of culturing and rewrite the patriarchal Edenic myth to effect a reversal of gender identities.

II

Review of Literature

Gardens can be read as gendered spaces. The mythical and metaphorical associations of the garden have strong gendered and sexual overtones. The Biblical garden was the space where God endowed Adam with an absolute control over Eve and all other species. Medieval literature is replete with the images of the walled garden or "hortusconclusus" as a metaphor for the women's body. The motif of control is central to the idea of cultivation and or gardening which involves taming of wilderness. Literary depictions of garden in relation to gender and sexuality can be seen in works like Boccacio's*Tessida* which depicts the heroine weaving in a walled garden (Feminae). This image has its roots in the Medieval cloistered gardens which sheltered and walled off the nuns from the outside world. The Medieval poem *The Romance of the Rose* is set in a walled garden as the site of courtly romance. In *Hamlet*, gardening becomes a male pursuit as the

gravediggers call it "Adam's profession". Gardens forming the setting of important scenes in nineteenth century English novels often become the space of repose for the heroines and the markers of good of taste of the male estate owners as in *Pride and Prejudice* and or recount the myth of Edenic bliss in *Jane Eyre*. Shedding their pastoral overtones, gardens also turn into Gothic spaces as depicted, for example, in Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* where the night-time garden appears fearful and suggests the trepidations of sexual awakening. The gardens become markers of the black woman's creativity in Alice Walker's "In Search of Our Mother's Gardens" where she terms her mother's gardening activity as art work that saw them through their difficult times. Such literary depictions of the gardens throw light on the symbolic as well as spatial implications linking land, nature and the gendered self.

The garden in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* becomes the metaphor of control and taming. In the "bitter garden" of Baby Kochamma, she "waged war" on the weather, trying to grow exotic fruits and plants, chopping off and shaping wild vines acting like "a lion tamer" with "an enormous pair of hedge shears." This is reflective of her need to control and manipulate the events around her and also reflects a chanelling of her unrealized sexual angst. Just as she "wages war" on nature, she tries to shame and tame people around her.

Literature on gardening and scholarly work on literature and culture show the highly gendered nature of gardens and gardening. Underlying the social constructivist nature of gender itself, Simone De Beauvoir in the *The Second Sex* states "one is not born but rather becomes a woman." Drawing from Beauvoir, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* undermines the material basis of even biological sex and states how "gender is not to culture as sex is to nature; gender is also the discursive/cultural means by which "sexed nature" or "natural sex" is produced and established as "prediscursive," prior to culture, a politically neutral surface on which culture acts" (11). This linguistic construction and implication of gender and sexuality lends itself to our understandings of the wider world, land and non-human life. Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society* notes that the word "culture" has its roots in the notion of control of natural growth (xiv) as the idea of "husbandry." The idea of culturing extends to the taming of women who are seen as unruly and fickle. The male control of a woman's body or land is also expressed in words like "semen" which derives from the idea of seeding or sowing. Carolyn

Merchant's *The Death of Nature* talks about how pastoral poetry depicted nature "as a garden, a rural landscape, or a peaceful fertile scene" (7) where she was "a calm, kindly female, giving of her bounty" (7). The nostalgia for an "uncorrupted Garden of Eden" (7) is what characterizes pastoral mode of writing. She discusses how "nature, tamed and subdued, could be transformed into a garden to provide both material and spiritual food to enhance the comfort and soothe the anxieties of men distraught by the demands of the urban world and the stresses of the marketplace" (9). Thus, the organic community of the pre-modern world which had the female had been disrupted by the Scientific Revolution turned the organic and living world into machine working on set patterns and which could be mastered. The idea of the landscape as feminine and virginal land in the American context, is also a trope used by Henry Nash Smith who refers to the American landscape and the "the vacant continent beyond the frontier" (4) as virgin land or "the garden of the world" (12). Pointing to the gendered nature of such myths, Nina Baym points to how landscape is thus viewed as "compliant and supportive" (135) and is seen as "a virginal bride or a non-threatening mother" (135). The metaphor of "the land-as-woman" (ix) is, however, best explained by Annette Kolodny in *The Lay of the Land* where she refers to how America's pastoral literature "hailed the essential femininity of the terrain in a way that European pastoral never had" (6) and how ""to make the new continent woman was to already civilize it a bit, casting the stamp of human relations upon what was otherwise unknown and untamed" (9). Beauvoir's arguments on agriculture and subjugation of women offer an important perspective on the garden as a gendered space. In the chapter titled "Early Tillers of the Soil" in *The Second Sex*, she states how the subjugation of women by men began with the permanent settlement which came about with agriculture. Earlier, children were equated with agricultural produce which were seen as gifts of God. Women bearing children and nature bearing crops were seen as mysterious forces of which the man knew nothing about and acted his part only to serve these forces. When man began to realize his importance as the agent seeding both women and fields, he began looking at women and nature as passive forces only to receive man's activity. Apart from the metaphorical understandings, it is also the space of the garden that lends itself to gendering of women. Doreen Massey's *Space Place and Gender*explores the gendered implications of space and talks about how respectable women in the nineteenth century were not seen to be strolling about in streets and parks while the flaneur was a male figure moving about. She talks about how the flaunese becomes an impossibility because of the gaze which is inevitably male. As the women's

rights movements gaining momentum in the nineteenth century and with calls for the physical and intellectual engagement of women in public life, gardening was seen by people like Wollstonecraft as something that would offer women the much needed physical and mental engagement (147) and a way of coming to terms with their newfound freedom in a familiar space. Thus gardening advice texts written by women and for women came to be circulated during this period. Because women were now seen as experts in handling nature and because of the association between women and the tenderness of flowers, the discipline of botany was seen as appropriate for feminine temperaments. The space of the garden-physical, metaphorical and literary- thus invites attention to gendered understandings of nature and the constructions of masculinity, femininity and sexuality.

Such ideas relating to the masculinist taming of nature is a theme prevalent in such texts as D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita,* Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* and Elizabeth Gilbert's *The Signature of All Things*. In *Sons and Lovers*, it might be pertinent to understand the formation of Paul's masculinist self in relation to the garden images that form crucial part of Paul's interactions with women. In Humbert's allegory of Edenic pleasure and transgression the park spaces of America offer insights into the concept of the flaneur, a maze gazer. While Alma's brilliance as a botanist and women making forays in the world of science in *The Signature of All Things* pervades the general themes of the novel, it is also interesting to note how such behaviour is cultivated in the male controlled space of the estate of White Acre, owned by her father Henry Whittaker. While the rewriting of patriarchal myth of Eden in the Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* happens through a sex change operation, one might also look at how gender and sex categories are challenged taking into account the gendered taming of land.

III

Lolita (1955)

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* is a tale of Humbert Humbert, a middle aged professor's pedophiliac desires for the twelve year old Dolores Haze, who he calls Lolita. Narrated by Humbert, the novel recounts his paedophiliac encounters, the latest one being with Lolita, which leads him to commit murder and lands him in jail. He talks about how his

pedophilia was triggered by his desire for his childhood love, Annabel. Since then, he finds girls in their early teens, between the age of nine and fourteen who he calls "nymphets" (15), sexually attractive, so much so that he believes these girls to be inviting his advances. Thus it is the gaze of Humbert which turns these girls into precocious sexual beings.

Critical reception of *Lolita* has moved from being through being seen as "a novel about love" (Trilling 5), "a rebellion against all morality" (Green 25), "a study in tyranny" (Amis 37), to being "self-conscious fable about the European love affair with America- the forms, myths and dreams it contains, the language in which it is written" (Bradbury 451). Studies on the novel have also taken into account links between the garden or the Edenic metaphor and the theme of sexuality. Paul Giles' "Virtual Eden: *Lolita*, Pornography and the Perversion of American Studies" links the metaphor of ironic depiction of Eden in the novel to the American nation while others such as Simonetti's "The Maniac in the Garden: Lolita and the Process of American Civilization" makes a comparative study of the novel and the film adaptations by Kubrick and Lyne in order to show how the novel fits in the tradition of American literature of a machine intruding upon a pastoral landscape.

Giles here observes how the narrative conjures a virtual Eden by way of parody of the idea of Edenic paradise in the American consciousness through a metafictional understanding of myths of nation making (42). He examines "the link between academic projections of the United States as a young nation and Nabokov's affiliation of his prepubescent heroine with the youthful bounties of America itself" (43). By referring to Leslie Fiedler, R.W.B. Lewis' notions of innocence, Giles points to how "Humbert Humbert is himself participating in that tribute to youthful insouciance which underwrote the nationalist agenda of cold war America" (44).

Taking into account Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden*, where he states how "the ominous sounds of machines, like the sound of the steamboat bearing down on the raft or of the train breaking in upon the idyll at Walden, reverberate endlessly in our literature" (15-16), Simonetti problematizes the Romantic myth of childhood innocence in American literature. Here, the author describes Humbert as a machine intruding upon the innocence of Lolita comparing it to the garden landscape.

However, perhaps the most extensive study linking the idea of sexuality in *Lolita* with the myth of Eden comes from Eric Goldman in the essay "'Knowing *Lolita*: Sexual Deviance and Normality in Nabokov's *Lolita*" which underscores the myth's instrumentality in turning "normal sexual behaviour into deviance" (88). Goldman highlights the novel as Nabokov's "feminist statement" where Humbert's mythical positioning of Lolita seen among "a long line of mythical temptresses" (90) is undercut by statements which draw attention to such sexual behaviour as normal rather than deviant. As an example, he refers to how the narrative highlights Humbert's own desires rather than Lolita's, how the school teacher Miss Pratt talks about how Lolita should be allowed to take part in such activities as school play even if it involved meeting boys, which Humbert objects to, and how John Ray refers to a considerable population beset by Humbert's affliction. Goldman explains how such statements can be read as Nabokov's reference to Kinsey studies on sexuality which discussed prevalent sexual behaviours among girls and boys. Lolita's Eve-like stance is thus seen as part of such normal sexual awakening which Humbert mythologises to his own predatory ends.

Drawing from this body of work, this thesis looks at how Humbert's myth making can be looked at in relation to the taming of wilderness equated with women and conversion of the same to a gardenland. His identifying Lolita as an Eve in the garden and viewing of America as the land of parks can be seen as a way of taming and imposing understandable forms on landscape and women.

Humbert Humbert's understanding of sexuality and his paedophilia is largely shaped in relation to the pastoral landscape of the garden where he has his first sexual encounter with Annabel. While his attempts are thwarted by the arrival of Annabel's parents in the garden, Humbert states how "that mimosa grove- the haze of stars, the tingle, the flame, the honey dew, the ache remained with me, and that little girl with her seaside limbs and ardent tongue haunted me ever since- until at last, twenty-four years later, I broke her spell by incarnating her in another" (14). Years later, Humbert not only relocates Annabel in Lolita but also projects the green Edenic atmosphere of sexual transgression onto the site of their first meeting: "I was still walking behind Mrs. Haze through the dining room, when, beyond it, there came a sudden burst of greenery- "the piazza," sang out my leader, and then, without the least warning, a blue sea-wave

swelled under my heart and, from a mat in a pool of sun, half naked, kneeling, turning about on her knees, there was my Riviera love peering at me over dark glasses" (41).

Simonetti writes how "The New World pastoral imagery is particularly apparent in the episode of Humbert's very first encounter with Lolita" (154) and how "an abundance of sea and garden imageries, and it recalls the sighting of land after a long voyage" (154). This can also be read as an instance of pastoral projection of plenty onto the landscape which looks fertile and comforting. Mention may be made, for example, of John Smith's descriptions from *A Map of Virginia* where he describes the land to be "lusty and very rich" (3). Further, he writes how "the country is not mountanous not yet low but such pleasant plainehils and fertle valleys, one prettily crossing another, and watered so conveniently with their sweetebrookes and christall springs, as if art it selfe had devised them" (3). Commenting on this, Susan Manning in "Literature and Society in Colonial America" writes how "the 'sweet brooks and crystal springs', 'as though devised by art' are the landscape of European pastoral convention" (3) and how since Columbus reported his unexpected discovery to Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain in 1492, European observers and settlers have confronted the pristine facts of America with a language already freighted with centuries of tradition and association—*European* realities." (3). Thus the sighting of Lolita and equating her with an inviting landscape in the space of the garden here refers to an attempt to project his own European experience of the pastoral pleasures onto the American landscape.

Humbert takes up an Adamic role trying to make the landscape yield and to turn it into a garden. He does this by conjuring the myth of the Edenic garden where Humbert sees himself as a helpless Adam lured by the Eve-like Lolita. Goldman states how "numerous scenes in Lolita re-enact Humbert's primal Adamic experience- a sexual transgression in some secluded garden , a moment of detection in the forbidden act, an finally, an awkward scrambling to cover nakedness- like Adam and Eve suddenly made aware of human sexuality" (92). While trying to vindicate his love, he refers to juvenile laws from various countries and sets himself as a helpless pawn in the scheme of the Edenic archetype. To that end, he sees the nymphets to be casting a spell on him, as discussed by Goldman:

> By associating his role with a helpless Adam rather than acknowledging his role as a sexual predator, Humbert prepares himself for an Edenic "fall" for which he

> will not be responsible, transforming himself from sexual deviant to a helpless victim of Lolita's magnetism. While he is the one acting upon Lolita, mentally as well as physically, he transfers his onus of temptation and guilt to Lolita, making her out to be a modern Eve while identifying himself with a helpless Adam. (93)

Scenes from the Edenic garden myth are frequently recreated whenever Humbert finds himself alone in the presence of Lolita. He conjures a scene of Adamic helplessness at the sight of Lolita biting an apple: "She wore that a pretty print dress that I had seen on her once before, ample in the skirt, tight in the bodice, short sleeved, pink, checkered with darker pink, and, to complete the colour scheme, she had painted her lips and was holding in her hollowed hands a beautiful, banal, Eden-red apple" (63).

Here, with the forbidden fruit of the garden in hand "Humbert is fitting Lolita into a long line of mythic temptresses- beginning here, with Eve" (Goldman 90). The garden space becomes a metaphor for his forbidden desires and for Lolita herself when he refers to how at the prospect of physical engagement with Dolores made him as "helpless as Adam at the preview of early oriental history, mirage in his apple orchard." (79) and how "there was in her a garden and a twilight, and a palace gate- dim and adorable regions which happened to be lucidly and absolutely forbidden to me…" (324). That Lolita and his sexual interests are part of his own Edenic mythopoeia becomes clear when he refers to Lolita as "smelling of orchards in nymphetland" (103) and "the most mythopoeic nymphet in October's orchard haze" (211). He is obsessed with his own mythicized European childhood, and he struggles to regain it in the young American continent" (Simonetti 160). His project of nymphomania operates by categorizing girls "Between the age limits of nine and fourteen…who, to certain bewitched travellers, twice or many times older than they, reveal their true nature which is not human, but nymphic (that is, demoniac)…" (15) as nymphets or seductresses. This kind of categorising or renaming as "Lo, Dolores, Lolly" is distinctive characteristic of the colonisers whereby they possess the landscape they rename (Simonetti 156). According to Giles, this "theoretical transposition of women from active subjects into metaphorical or infantilized objects, implicit within the work of Smith and Lewis, is made ludicrously explicit and literal within the world of Lolita" (46). His mythmaking is part of this project of taming the landscape where and imposing understandable forms and symbols on the same.

To Humbert, the garden spaces such as parks present prospects of Edenic bliss in the New land. It is also the space where he assumes the role of a flaneur who gazes at these women. The gardenscapes in Lolita offer spaces where deviant behaviour is sublimated to the act of gazing by a flaneur. The flaneur, is a prominent image of nineteenth century Parisian social life which refers to a strolling male in parks or gardens. Massey talks about the image of flaneur offers a way to understand the gendering of public spaces like streets and parks. She refers to flaneur as:

> the stroller in the crowd, observing but not observed. But the flaneur is irretrievably male. As Wolff (1985) argues, the flaneuse was an impossibility. In part this is so because the 'respectable' women simply could not wander around the streets and parks alone. (This was for reasons of socially constructed 'propriety', but for those 'non-respectable' women who did roam the public spaces movement would still be effectively restricted by the threat of male violence.) In part, the notion of a flaunese is impossible precisely because of the one-way-ness and the directionality of the gaze. Flaneurs observed others; they were not observed themselves. and, for reasons which link together the debate on perspective and the spatial organization of painting and most women's exclusion from the public sphere, the modern gaze belonged (belongs?) to men.

As Massey argues, the flaneur's gaze was frequently erotic. And women was, and was only, the object of his gaze (234). In the novel, Humbert enjoys sitting in the garden park gazing at nymphets who he says do not occur in polar regions (35). He expresses his delight and explains in detail his reveries in the park:

> How marvellous were my fancied adventures as I sat on a hard park bench pretending to be immersed in a trembling book. Around the quiet scholar, nymphets played freely, as if he were a familiar statue or part of an old tree's shadow and sheen. Once a perfect little beauty in a tartan frock, with a clatter put her heavingly armed foot near me upon the bench to dip her slim bare arms upon me, and tighten the strap of her roller skate, and I dissolved in the sun, with my book for fig leaf , as her auburn ringlets fell all over her skinned knee, and the shadow of leaves I shared pulsated and melted on her radiant limb next to my chameleonic cheek. (20)

He further states, “Ah, leave me alone in my pubescent park, in my mossy garden. Let them play around me forever. Never grow up.” (20). Humbert here assumes the role of flaneur who would scrutinize women in public spaces to find out the potential nymphet amongst them. The garden thus becomes the site where girls are gendered- they become women with bodies to be viewed by men like Humbert. The flaneur’s gaze, seen in light of the American conquest can also be read as an imperial male infantilizing gaze that subordinates and sexualizes the object of gaze.

Thus, New World with all its garden spaces clearly presents to Humbert prospects of a paradise. Humbert looks for spaces where he would be able to have more of these sights. The Magnolia Garden despite its humble associations becomes a source of glee as is frequented by children, who are the objects of his nymphomania:

> Thumbing through the battered tour book, I dimly evoke that Magnolia Garden in a southern state which cost me four bucks and which, according to the ad in the book, you must visit for three reasons: because John Galsworthy (a stone-dead writer of sorts) acclaimed it as the world’s fairest garden; because in 1900, Baedecker’s guide had marked it with a star; and finally, because…O Reader, My Reader, guess!...because children (and by Jingo was not my Lolita a child!) will “walk starry-eyed and reverently through this foretaste of Heaven, drinking in beauty that can influence a life…(174)

As much as a search for nymphets, his tale is a mythical quest of Edenic spaces whereby he can enact his Adamic role of transforming the rugged landscape and hostile surroundings into a paradise. In his search for these spaces and the sexual prospects they offer, he seems to be reenacting the role of the explorers who looked at the New World as a land of immense possibilities and which can be worked on to regain the paradisiacal state. Here, mention may be made of Walt Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass* where he sees the new world as the garden world teeming with sexuality. The Adamic project is described in sexual innuendos as the speaker speaks of “My limbs and the quivering fire that ever plays through them, for reasons, most wondrous, /Existing I peer and penetrate still” (79). Seen in this light, Humbert can be seen as engaging himself in a similar Adamic project “singing the phallus” (79) in the space of the garden.

IV

The Passion of New Eve *(1977)*

The garden and the conquest of the American landscape play out again in Angela Carter's *The Passion of New Eve.* The novel follows Evelyn, a Professor as he finds himself in an apocalyptic setting of New York where mugging and arson are rife. His favourite is Tristessa, the movie star who he later discovers to be a man performing a woman all along. He encounters a woman named Leilah who he abuses and impregnates. After the abortion goes wrong, he leaves Leilah in this mess and escapes to the desert where he is kidnapped by a group of women and taken to their underground laboratory called Beulah. Here he meets a self-styled multi-breasted Mother goddess who rapes and then castrates him. She and her team perform some kind of surgery on Evelyn and turn him into a woman with vagina, uterus and breasts. This he learns is part of their feminine cult which seeks to redo the myth of creation and remove the male principle. He then turns into Eve who is to the undergo passion or suffering including rapes and molestations with his new body and self.

The title of the novel, as noted by Ferreira, refers to the 'passion' or suffering undergone by Christ on behalf of mankind which here translates to Evelyn's suffering on behalf of men. Here 'New Eve' points to the name change Evelyn undergoes (from Evelyn to Eve) after the sex change operation and also refers to his change in his sexuality from man to woman. Also the 'new' Eve indicates a play on the Edenic story where Eve is made by God out of Adam's ribs while she is the product of a woman playing god who creates Eve out of Evelyn. Again, one of the episodes of Christ's passion includes his agony in the garden where he goes to the garden of Gethsemane experiencing suffering and prays for allaying the same. Here, the sex change operation of Evelyn or his passion is initiated in a technological space where he is seen as a garden of sorts.

The novel has been read as "science fiction text" (Fereira 284), as a study of heterotopic spaces (Filimon 66-76), a study of transgendered body (Carroll 241- 255), quest for self (Perez Gil 216-234) among others. The chapter adds to this discussion by examining how the motif of gardening and the Edenic metaphor in the novel are used to subvert the sexual politics where man is seen as taming both land and female body.

Carter's "demythologizing business" in the novel, the chapter argues, should be read alongside the history of gender construction vis-à-vis the history of agriculture which work towards the subduing of women by men.

Gender and sexuality form some of the focal concerns in Angela Carter. Writing at the backdrop of the feminist movements in Britain, Carter saw femininity as "social fiction" (Notes) and sought to explore the social constructivist nature of ideas relating to gender and their role in female oppression. In her reading of Marquis de Sade in *The Sadeian Woman,* Carter explores how his pornographic writings depict women not as objects of desire but instead as active participants in the sexual act. This idea pervades all her works where women use their sexuality to their effect in a patriarchal setup. In *The Sadeian Woman*, reclaims the passivity associated with women and soil in the sexual act and sees this as a powerful notion:

> The missionary position has another asset, from the mythic point of view; it implies a system of relations between the partners that equates the woman to the passive receptivity of the soil, to the richness and fecundity of the earth. A whole range of images poeticises, kitchifies, departicularises intercourse, such as wind beating down corn, rain driving against bending trees, towers falling, all tributes to the freedom and strength of the roving, fecundating, irresistible male principle and the heavy, downward, equally resistible gravity of the receptivity of the soil. The soil that is, good heavens, myself. It is almost self-enhancing notion; I have almost seduced myself with it. Any woman may manage, in luxurious self-deceit, to feel herself for a little while one with great, creating nature, fertile, open, pulsating, anonymous and so forth (8).

Her works critique the gendered implications of myth and folklore which she calls "extraordinary lies designed to make people unfree" ("Notes"). She calls *The Passion of New Eve* "an anti- mythic novel" ("Notes") and "a feminist tract on the social tract of femininity, amongst other things" ("Notes").To this end, Carter's *The Passion of New Eve* can be read as a feminist re-reading of Nabokov's *Lolita*. While in *Lolita*, Humbert was able to delve into his Adamic role as the cultivator of the landscape and its sexual subjugation through recourse to the Edenic myth, in *The Passion of New Eve*, this Adamic project is abruptly taken over by Mother in Beulah who plays upon this myth to

act upon Evelyn's body, seen as a fertile garden land. Further, the hero of this Adamic project is not an Adam but named Evelyn and later, Eve.

In *The Passion of New Eve,* the Edenic garden and its gendered implications must be understood in relation to the myth of American Adam and the Frontier myth. Here Evelyn, "child of a moist, green gentle island" (11) arrives at a New York caught up in the violence of the civil rights movements by the blacks and women groups and is "lured" (11) by the excitement of terror that it offers him. Here he meets Leilah, "a girl, a softly black in colour- nigredo, the stage of darkness" (10) who acts in the manner of an inviting landscape. This can be read as an allusion to *Lolita* where Dolores Haze is described in the same enticing light by Humbert Humbert. By so doing, Carter here invites attention to the archetypal understandings of the female sex in mythology and in popular culture.

In the novel, the dangerous city resembles the explorer's first accounts on meeting with a rugged inhospitable terrain and savagery. Leilah here becomes the embodiment of Gothic wilderness which he attempts to tame. The myth of the Westward movement of the frontier is enacted in the way Evelyn adapts to the dangers of the landscape gradually transforming it symbolically by impregnating Leilah. Henry Nash Smith writes how the frontier myth has its genesis in the idea of the "West as the Garden of the World" (4) and how Turner sees frontier as "the meeting point between savagery and civilisation" and for him "the outer limit of agricultural settlement is the boundary of civilisation" (4). The act of Westward movement is thus an act of civilising and which Evelyn undertakes here through the sexual subjugation of Leilah. He describes his pursuing of Leilah with the image of Fall (21) and also refers to Leilah's mouth as a "mysterious fruit" (21). Carter here highlights the highly gendered nature of such myths where women are equated with land to be cultivated or the wilderness to be tamed by men.

Evelyn's westward movement and symbolic taming of the landscape is halted in the desert where he is kidnapped by a group of women and taken to an underground facility called Beulah which resembles a laboratory and is operated by a group of women headed by the multi-breasted Mother. The space is an antithesis to the towering phallic structures of the city and a "simulacrum of the womb" (49). It is in this space that Evelyn undergoes a forced sex-change operation. Here Evelyn is stripped of his Adamic agency

to convert barren land into garden and is, instead, seen as a garden to be cultivated. Here, Carter subverts the gendered implications of the Edenic myth on several levels. First, the Garden of Eden, a sacred male space created by a male God, is reclaimed by Mother as one which she possesses:

> Where is the garden of Eden?' Sophia demanded of her in a ritual fashion.
>
> 'The garden in which Adam was born lies between my thighs,' responded Mother all Mahler in her intonation, which seemed to issue from the depths of a sacred well.
>
> She smiles at me, quite kindly.
>
> 'Because I can give life, I can accomplish miracles,' she assured me. (60)

Here, mother poses as the goddess of agriculture such as Demeter. Beauvoir notes how in the beginning of agricultural settlement, "all nature seemed to him like a mother: the land is woman and in woman abide the same dark powers as in the earth[…] he stood hesitant between technique and magic, feeling himself passive and dependent upon Nature, which dealt out life and death at random (93-94). This mystical nature of creation and came to be profane with the use of tools by men who took over the female domain. Mother's act of relocating the garden and the source within her reclaims this space of creation.

Second, the tradition equated of the land and the garden with the women's body is overturned as Mother sees in the male body of Evelyn with a womb and a garden: "I see before me the fairest earth ripe for the finest seed. In the most pure womb of Mary, there was sown one whole grain of wheat, yet it is called a garden of wheat" (63), She further says,"Think of the endless prairies I'm going to carve inside you, little Evelyn, they're going to be like the vast acreage of heaven, the meadows of eternity" (64).

Finally, challenging the traditional role of man possessing the tools to make soil germinate and the phallus to impregnate women. The act of "carving" of "prairies" invites attention to the history of agriculture and the making of tools heralding in a masculinist prerogative of cultivation. Here, mention may be made of Beauvoir who notes:

> It is the advance from stone to bronze that enables him through his labour to gain mastery of the soil and to master himself. The husbandman is subject to the hazards of the soil, of the germination of seeds, of the seasons; he is passive, he prays, he waits […] The workman, on the contrary shapes his tool after his own design; with his hands he forms it according to his project; confronting passive nature, he overcomes her resistance and asserts her passive will. (100)

She further writes how,

> The religion of woman was bound to the reign of agriculture, the reign of the irreducible duration, of contingency, of chance, of waiting, of mystery; the reign of Homo faber is the reign of time manageable as space, of necessary consequences, of the project, of action, of reason. Even when he has to work with the land, he will henceforth do with it as workman; he discovers that soil can be fertilized, that it is good to let it lie fallow, that such and such seeds must be treated in such and such a fashion. It is he who makes the crops grow; he digs canals, he irrigates or drains the land, he lays out roads, he builds temples: he creates a new world. (101)

The idea of the Homo faber or man as creator is here undermined as Mother, a woman, takes up the role of cultivator with her tools. In the space of Beulah, "complicated mix of mythology and technology" (44) the mother uses technology to not just to fashion her own body but also to turn Evelyn into a woman with all the reproductive organs and "an earth ripe for the finest seed" (63), as stated in the previous example. Removing the male agency in seeding both the woman and soil, she states how the technology comes to aid with the sperm bank where "you can seed yourself and fruit yourself" (73) making her "self-sufficient" (73).

This is a literal decentering of the phallus which stands "not for the superior fitness of an individual male over other men, but for the generic male superiority- not only over females but also over other species," (Bordo 89). This is a literal decentering of the phallus which stands "not for the superior fitness of an individual male over other men, but for the generic male superiority- not only over females but also over other species," (Bordo 89). As Mother states "his phallic projector takes him onwards and

upwards" (50) "to the barren sea of infertility, the craters of the moon!" this acts as a reassertion of the chthonic a "journey back, journey backwards to the source!" (50).

This transformation lays bare the fluidity of gender and sexual categories, in this case brought about by technology. Prefiguring Butler, here Carter shows how gender and sexuality are "performative" and not pre-discursive (Butler 33). In pointing to the constructedness of gender and sexuality, Carter is also questioning beliefs which equate the land to woman and term them passive recipients of male action. Thus a reclaiming of both land and body is enacted here. The novel offers a critique of both myths and phallic structures of haughty apartments which does not seem to notice its underbelly. Carter also parodies the reductionist metaphor-making business of patriarchy that tries to impose forms on land and women and reduce them to symbols.

V

Sons and Lovers (1913)

D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*deploys the idea of the garden in order to explicate the taming of the sensual. Here, the garden is pitted against the mine pits and is also used as a metaphor explicating the culturing of sensual nature. Critical reception of *Sons and Lovers*rangesfroma Freudian reading of the text by exploring the desire for the mother, (Kuttner 263-292) and reading the same as "bildungsroman" (Beards 204-215), to one striving to find a balance between the sensual and the spiritual (Janik 360). Kate Millet in one of the more popular analyses, undertakes a gendered reading of the text whereby she sees Paul as the quintessential artist who is "beyond morality" (249) and who disposes of all the women in his life after he manages to draw his spiritual and physical needs from them.

The nature imagery in the reading of the novel is seen to take note of flowers in the novel. Spilka writes how "flowers are the most important of the vital forces in *Sons and Lovers*" (5). Seamus O Malley's article "The Final Aim is Flower: Wild and Domestic Nature in *Sons and Lovers*" makes use of the symbol of the garden to analyse images of wild and domesticated nature to arrive at the conclusion that the opposition in the narrative is not between wild and domesticated nature but between wild and domestic blossoms. Studies take into account the idea of the masculine in the novel where Paul

Morel is seen as sub-consciously seeking out the masculine represented by his father, Walter Morel (Granofsky 242-264). In this line of thought, research has taken into account dominant or hegemonic masculinity in *Sons and Lovers* (Subrayan and Yahya 33-37), in *Aaron's Rod* (Subrayan 16-19), in *The Lost Girl* (Subrayan 455-463). The present chapter seeks to contribute to this body of knowledge by looking at the different ways in which the masculine and the feminine are dealt with in relation to the idea of garden.

D.H Lawrence's writings explore the theme of sexuality, disillusionment with the modernist society, loss of organic life and masculine energy in the wake of industrialisation, artistic dilemmas and vitality of the natural world. Lawrence sought to resurrect the sensual in a world that was hijacked by an overemphasis on the mind, one alienating the human from what he believed to be vitality and the essence of living, ultimately leading to wars. The sexual themes in his works like *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* caused scandal and led to their temporary ban in England. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* too was widely deemed obscene at the time of its publication. The natural world throbbing with life is often linked with sexual energy in all his works. In the poem 'Snake', the slithering snake as the force of nature bemusing the narrator has sexual overtones, which the "voice of his education" seeks to dissipate. In *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the gamekeeper Mellors and Lady Chatterley make love in the secrecy and the shelter of the woods the same way as Paul and Miriam in *Sons and Lovers*. The Garden of Eden symbolism replete in these works suggests a return to the garden of sexual bliss in the midst of nature. The farm garden in *Women in Love* suggests the vitality of its first generation men who are still related to the land. However, in *Sons and Lovers*, the idea of the garden operates largely in opposition to the sexual vitality and suggests, instead, a taming of the same.

The novel follows Paul Morel, a young man who suffers due to his inability to strike fulfilment in relationships with three women he has in his life- his mother Gertrude Morel, Miriam and Clara. Paul is the son of Gertrude who comes from a wealthy bourgeois family and Walter Morel, a miner. The class differences between the two soon begin to play out in the form of squabbles over money and the father's drinking habits. The sons witness these squabbles and lean towards their mother. Henceforth, the mother comes to play a vital role in their lives bordering on a romantic Oedipal relationship.

Paul, the younger son is unable to break this tie and fails in his relationships. Only when the mother dies does Paul take the first step towards his freedom. The garden here figures prominently as Gertrude's home garden, Miriam's garden, as a metaphor of culturing and an Edenic metaphor and offers cues to the Paul's burgeoning sexual self.

In all of Lawrence's novels, we find a rift between industrial and organic, nature and culture, as noted by Janik in his article "D.H Lawrence and Environmental Consciousness" (360). He writes how "Lawrence tended to think in terms of dichotomies, and the most fundamental was that between the organic- nature, the body, the blood- and the mechanical-civilization, the mind, the intellect" (360).In *Son's and Lovers*, however, the mining world of Walter Morel whose "nature was purely sensuous" (23) is not really equated with the dead industrial life as the miners are shown to be still having some kind of contact with land and "profoundly in touch with their natural surroundings" (Janik 362). The dichotomy operational in the narrative is that of the cerebral and the visceral and the garden in the narrative represents the former. Early on, the aesthetic looking front gardens "with auriculas and saxifrage in the shadow of the bottom block, sweet- Williams and pinks in the sunny top block" (10) are seen to mask the actual living conditions at the Bottoms. Similarly, it is suggested that the authentic and sensual nature of the people such as Paul is controlled and shaped by Mrs. Morel who "loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual" (18) and is associated with the garden and its ideas of control and propriety. The garden is seen as Gertrude Morel's space as she is seen planting, reflecting and moving around and enjoying the view of the garden with her son.

If the garden is an Eden beautifying and masking the ugliness of the pits and constructed by removing Hell Row, Walter Morel, by dint of his profession in the pits is effectively banished from this Eden. As critics note, there exists in the narrative a distinction between the pit dirt and sanitized spaces. This metaphor of Eden can be extended to the domestic life of the Morels where Mrs. Morel and the kids appear distant from the father and form a unit of Edenic bliss excluding the father. Further, the garden is mostly frequented and planted by Mrs. Morel and Walter Morel is almost never seen in its space.

Mrs. Morel who is pregnant with Paul is pushed to this garden by Walter Morel after a heated argument. By pushing Mrs. Morel to the garden and shutting the door on

her, Walter reenacts his banishing from the familial Edenic space and attempts to reclaim the same. Ironically however, this act further pushes Morel away from home space as Gertrude limits speaking to him and the children maintain a distance.

The garden, a space of reflection for Mrs. Morel, now makes her anxious and fails to comfort her. As opposed to the pleasing space of blossoms and a pastoral space in the daytime, the vitality of the nighttime garden makes her uncomfortable. As opposed to being a controlled space, the garden seems to come alive at nighttime. The flowers are described as stretching out to the moonlight. The garden is highlighted as a place of sensual activities, of sights and sounds that make her dizzy:

> She became aware of something about her. With an effort she roused herself to see what it was that penetrated her consciousness. The tall white lilies were reeling in the moonlight, and the air was charged with their perfume, as with a presence. She touched the big, pallid flowers on their petals, then shivered. They seemed to be stretching in the moonlight. She put her hand into one white bin: the gold scarcely showed on her fingers by moonlight. She bent down to look at the binful of yellow pollen; but it only appeared dusky. Then she drank a deep draft of the scent. It almost made her dizzy (33).

The daytime garden space of autonomy comes to be a symbol of controlled sexuality while the vital garden or wild nature comes to symbolize sensuality/sexual abandon that Mrs. Morel offers a contrast to.

Paul, growing up with his mother in this garden inherits his mother's anxiousness relating to sexuality and models his idea of femininity on his mother, a symbol of domestic bliss. For Paul, his father's violent behavior at home leads him to develop a sensitive nature and a "subordinate masculinity" (Connell 78-79). This is the world of the mother, the feminine and tamed nature into which Paul is initiated in his childhood. Malley draws parallels between Paul's "shying away from the sites of masculinity and his attraction to gardens and wildlife" (Malley 28). The garden is "Gertrude's place of retreat" (Malley 28) where "she can transcend the brutality of her immediate surroundings" (Malley 29). However, Paul is soon initiated into the Lawrentianmasculinist cult in his early teens as he is exposed to "dazzling descriptions of all kinds of flower-like ladies, most of whom lived like cut blooms in William's heart

for a brief fortnight" (64), and wondering whether village folks think that "he's living on his mother." (104). He declares that he is the man in the house in absence of his father and brother (102) and soon realizes on growing up that he must be a man enough to earn his living and court women. In trying to fit in, he shows complicity to patriarchy (Connell 79) and its requirements and advantages.

His role as a gardener is crucial to his own understanding of his masculine self. He is happy to see his mother "pottering about" the garden and plants rare flower bulbs which make her happy. By planting rare bulbs in the garden, he manages to take up the role of the provider to some extent and provide for his mother's happiness

When Paul meets Miriam, he attempts to "culture" the "swine-girl" using garden metaphors. He points to how her garden doesn't have much to look at:

> "I suppose these are cabbage rose?" he said to her, pointing to the bushes along the fence." She looked at him with startled big brown eyes.
>
> "I suppose they are cabbage roses, when they come out? He said.
>
> "I don't know" she faltered. "They're white, with pink middles."
>
> "Then they're maiden-blush."
>
> Miriam flushed. She had a beautiful warm colouring.
>
> "I don't know," she said.
>
> "You don't have much in your garden." he said.

At another occasion, Paul pins flowers to Miriam's dress attempting to make a lady out of her.

> 'Come here, and let me pin them in for you.' He arranged them two or three at a time in the bosom of her dress, stepping back now and then to see the effect. 'You know,' he said, taking the pin out of his mouth, 'a woman ought always to arrange her flowers before the glass.'

Miriam laughed. She thought flowers ought to be pinned in one's dress without any care. That Paul should take pain to fix her flowers for him was his whim.

He was rather offended at her laughter.

'Some women do- those who look decent,' he said. (192)

Thus, he attempts to tame Miriam's love for the wild and her sensual nature whereby she draws pleasure by fondling flowers. Further, garden metaphors are used to describe Miriam's nature as religious and incapable of sexual and romantic relationships. Miriam's nunnery garden is the image of the hortusconclusus or the medieval enclosed garden, often likened to the virgin woman's body.

While Paul rejoices in garden plants and blossoms, Miriam is seen to be amused by nature in the wild. When Paul and Miriam go about discovering the wild countryside, it is Miriam who is seen as locating wild rose bushes and plants to look at. The wild nature of the countryside makes Paul anxious and he runs to the open meadows. As Malley observes, "Paul's ultimate turn away from Miriam must not be traced to a single motive, but one element of the repulsion is Miriam's open, unenclosed and uncultured nature. She refuses to contain herself, modelling her being on the vastness of the wilderness and Paul is compelled to "culture" her in both senses of the term" (Malley 34). Miriam's fondling of the wild plants and flowers makes him aware of Miriam's sensual nature which runs against his ideal of pastoral femininity symbolized by his mother going about her garden.

As in the case of Miriam, Paul uses flowers again in an attempt to culture Clara. While taking a walk on the countryside, the three discover a meadow with wild overgrowth and flowers surrounded by hills on all sides. While Miriam slowly picks the flowers by smelling and feeling each blossom, Paul runs around quickly picking as many blossoms as he can. Clara, on the other hand, appears disinterested in picking any of these flowers: "Miriam plucked the flowers, lingering over them. He always seemed to her too quick and scientific. Yet his branches had a natural beauty more than hers. He loved them, but as if they were his and he had a right to them" (260).

This leads to a conversation which offers insights on the three differing viewpoints on nature: Paul's clinical approach to the picking of flowers makes a case for masculine possession and domestication of wildflowers by turning them into drawing room objects of beautification as opposed to beings in their own right. Miriam's engagement with nature suggests a less anthropomorphic approach as each flower is revered and appreciated. Clara again sees nature as a vital being of its own whose taming and gardening kills the same and makes it devoid of vitality. Her defiance challenges Paul and he shocks her by suddenly showering on her the flowers plucked. In the manner of subjugating nature in the wild, Paul attempts to tame Clara's non-compliance with this act. Soon after, they begin courting each other.

The metaphor of gardening and the taming of nature in relation to gendered fashioning also plays out in Paul's description of Baxter Dawes. The latter is seen as entering into a scuffle with Paul on learning of his relationship with his wife Clara. With his boisterous and rustic ways, Baxter represents something of the masculine model offered by Walter Morel. As Paul nears the end of his affair with Clara, he lets her know how she might be choking Dawes' masculine self with her firm will and which in turn might have soured the relationship between the two. He uses the garden metaphor of domesticating to explicate the same.

In other words, Paul accuses Clara of trying to tame and 'culture' wild nature represented by the masculine Baxter Dawes. This echoes his earlier complaint of Miriam trying to smother him. Through such images of gardening and garden metaphors, the narrative hints at the gender politics at play in the viewing of women and nature. Taming, culturing, gardening and husbandry are the prerogatives of men and the taking up of these tasks by the opposite gender is scorned at in the narrative.

Paul's coming away from his mother's garden suggests his exploration of his own masculine self through the culturing of wilderness, or in this case, unruly women. His failure to do so with Miriam brings him back to his mother's garden where he contemplates breaking up with her. The garden in the night time appears alive and sensual, as opposed to the daytime garden of pastoral delights. Holding them by their throats, Paul plucks the flowers and bites into them and announces to his mother that he is calling off the relationship with Miriam. Paul's violent plucking of the night time

flowers appearing sensual is a symbolic culturing of Miriam's sensual self which he fails to accomplish in reality.

The garden might be seen as the symbol of modernity which thwarts the realization of the authentic sensual self. Through this, the narrative offers a critique of Gertrude's 'cultivating' the character of Paul which kept him from attaining a masculine character like that of Walter Morel or Baxter Dawes.

VI

The Signature of All Things (2013)

The Signature of All Things spans the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries across Europe and the New World focusing on the life of Alma Whittaker. Her father Henry Whitaker, former assistant to Joseph Banks soon forms his own business empire in medicinal plants and moves to Philadelphia. He and his wife, who also comes from a family of botany experts, educate their daughter Alma Whittaker in botany and initiate her into the world of libraries and intellectual conversations which the nineteenth century men find intimidating. Much of her botanical education takes place in her father's estate gardens and hothouses. Very soon she finds herself to have known all about the estate garden and crosses over to the wilderness. She discovers moss and her work on mosses earns her fame. The gardens in White Acre estate offer perspectives, among other things, on the gendered dimensions of human relationship with nature.

The eighteenth and nineteenth century saw the rise of botanical gardens in Europe, the New World and the British colonies. Exotic plant species from the all over the world were brought to these gardens in order to be studied for scientific purposes. While acquisition of plants and ravaging the third world countries to adorn home gardens was a nationalist venture, it also increasingly symbolised a masculine endeavour with the tropes of enterprise, conquest and taming. Such explorations were made by men like Captain Cook and Joseph Banks who is described in the novel as a "beautiful, whoring, ambitious, competitive adventurer!" (13), "everything Henry's father was not" (13) who "brought home nearly four thousand plant specimens" (13). Banks is also the supervisor of the Kew Gardens which hosted such plant species and became the hub of modern botanical research. Henry Whitaker who "admired him enormously" (13) and who

happens to be the son of an orchardman at Kew is also driven by this masculinist enterprise and covets Banks' success. His father is described as "a simple man", (10) "a humble man respected by his masters" (10), "forceless and complacent" (12) who takes care of plants at the garden and presents a figure of stewardship as opposed to Bank's conquest. Henry abhors his father's "subordinate masculinity" and aspires instead to the manliness espoused by Banks. In his explorations across the world to collect plant species, we find repeated references to his sturdiness. After being discredited by Banks, Henry sells the entire plant shipment to Dutch East India Company and with his new found fortune, lands up in Holland. The Dutch and their association with outspokenness and gardening appear to Henry as marks of masculine industriousness:

> Henry admired the Dutch and worked well with them. He effortlessly comprehended these people- these industrious, tireless, ditch-digging, beer drinking, straight speaking, coin-counting Calvinists, who had been making order out of trade since the sixteenth century, and who slept peacefully every night of their lives with the certain knowledge that God wished for them to be rich. A country of bankers, merchants and gardeners, the Dutch liked their promises the same way Henry liked his (that is to say, gilded with profit), and thus they held the world captive at steep interest rates (46).

Henry then looks at the United States as a country of opportunities. The country's meadows, land and forests and the "expansive, generative possibility- a veritable alluvial bed of potential growth" presented to Henry prospects of growth. In "The entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was at war with its forests- and its denizens, armed with axes, oxen and ambition, were winning" (51) Henry takes up the Adamic role as "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 confronted him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources" (Lewis 5). He raises his estate at Philadelphia named White Acre which contains along with a Palladian mansion "several botanical structures-including the first of what would eventually be many freestanding hothouses, an orangery modelled after the famous structure at Kew, and the beginnings of a glasshouse of staggering scope" (51) enjoying the envy it

generates among people. His estate with all its botanical garden structures becomes the symbol of Henry's masculine prowess and class:

> He knew that his estate must not merely dazzle, but also intimidate. Louis XIV used to take visitors on walks through his pleasure gardens not as an amusing diversion, but as a demonstration of force: every exotic flowering tree and every sparkling fountain and all the priceless Greek statuary were all just a means to communicate a single unambiguous message to the world: "You would not be advised to declare war against me!" Henry wished White Acre to express the same sentiment. (52)

It is to be noted that Louis XIV's Garden of Versailles consisted of parterres and topiaries, plants cut in geometrical patterns which represented a firm control of nature. The gendered overtone of such taming of nature is also what informs Henry's display of his botanical exploits. Along with being markers of wealth and social status, Henry's glasshouses and hothouses also stand for Henry's brute masculine energy which enabled him to traverse difficult terrains to procure nature and serve the rationalist end of science and commerce. The botanical wonders of the estate as described thus:

> There were the noble greenhouses, filled with cycads, palms and ferns, all packed in deep, black, stinking tanner's bark to keep them warm. There was the loud and frightening water engine which kept the greenhouses wet. There were the mysterious forcing houses- always faintingly hot- where the delicate imported plants were brought to heal after long sea voyages, and where orchids were bribed into blooming. There were the lemon trees in the orangery, which were wheeled outside every summer like consumptive patients, to enjoy the natural sun. There was the small Grecian temple, hidden at the end of an avenue of oaks, where one could imagine Olympus (67).

The garden structures in his Philadelphia estate enable him to exert hegemonic masculinity (Connell 77), that is a control over other forms of masculinities and femininities. An Arcadia in itself (66) the estate of White Acre also houses her mother, Henry's wife Beatrix "plucked" (48) from the family of the custodians of the Hortus Botanical Gardens in Amsterdam, "a premier European family of learning and science" (48) and her private garden planted with tulip bulbs procured from hortus. The garden is

“a triumph of functional Mathematics…with pathways and topiary, according to strict Euclidean principles of symmetry (all balls and cones and complex triangles, clipped and rigid and exact) (92). On seeing this garden designed on geometrical principles, Ambrose Pike is amused:

> Who would not recognize them? It’s the golden ratio! We have double squares here, containing recurring sets of squares- and with the pathways bisecting entire construction, we make several three-four-five triangles, as well. It’s so pleasing! I find it extraordinary that somebody would take the trouble to do this, and on such a magnificent scale. The boxwoods are perfect, too. They seem to serve as equation marks to all the conjugates. She must have been a delight, your mother (233).

Beatrix’s garden is a thus a part of the masculinist structure of control symbolised by Henry’s estate. By emulating the strict Euclidean principles she also displays scientific temperament which is to be “unsentimental, rational, straight-thinking, correct, rigorous, exact” (Sterling 8) and seen as masculine traits. By working in this garden by her side, her daughters, especially Alma, are initiated into this scientific rigour. Born to parents who encourage learning, Alma becomes a precocious child who is ever curious about books and her surroundings. She is described as “an energetic and engaging young lady, who needed little rest” (92) and who “enjoyed the work of the mind, enjoyed the labour of gardening, and enjoyed the conversations at dinner gatherings.” (92). As a child, she knew Greek and Latin and was even exposed to Linnaeus’ scientific findings. While this might seem out of place in the nineteenth century, it was actually very much a part of the discourse of the day whereby botany became more accessible to the women in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and came to be called “feminine” as explained by Ann B Shteir:

> The simplicity of the Linnaean sexual system for naming and classifying plants according to the reproductive parts of flowers helped bring botany into prominence. During the later eighteenth century women had more culturally sanctioned access to botany than to any other science; they collected plants, drew them, studied them and named them, taught their children about plants, and taught popularizing books on botany. Botany came to be widely associated with women and was widely gender coded as feminine. (30).

Alma is thus trained in the masculinist view of acceptable female behaviour, that is, being privy to botanical knowledge, in both the estate garden and through her education and is "as fiercely cultivated as one of her father's rare specimens" (Skurnick), whose talents he displays with pride to the gentlemen:

> "Oh no," Henry corrected his guest. "I think you'll soon enough find that my wife and daughters are passably capable of conversation."
>
> "Are they?" the gentleman asked, plainly unconvinced. "In what topics?"
>
> "Well", Henry said, rubbing at his chin as he considered his family, "Beatrix here knows everything. Prudence has artistic and medical knowledge, and Alma- being the tall one
>
> "Botany," Professor Peck repeated, with practiced condescension. "A most improving recreation for girls. The only scientific work that is suited to the female sex. I have always surmised, on account of absence of cruelty, or mathematical rigor. My own daughter does fine drawings of wildflowers."
>
> "How engrossing for her," Beatrix murmured.
>
> "Yes quite," said Professor Peck, and turned to Alma. "A lady's fingers are more pliant you see. Softer than a man's. Better suited than man's hands, some say, for the more delicate operations of plant collection" (110).

The estate of White Acre alongwith its gardens thus become a male domain where exotic specimens and female behaviour are cultivated and acclimatized to masculine conditions of control. Interestingly, Alma makes groundbreaking botanical discoveries relating to moss only outside the cultivated space of the garden in the woods by the riverside bordering the estate. These discoveries take her around the world and make her travel even in whaling ships as she searches for answers to her own personal life as well as the mysteries of the natural world. Challenging the prescribed female code of conduct and making real forays in the male scientific world thus requires her to step out of the cultivated space of the garden.

VII

Conclusion

The garden as a space and metaphor underlines the importance of the idea of nature in determining gender roles and sexual labelling. The domestic/wild binary goes a long way in offering access to spaces and restricting the same. The garden as a site of botanical enquiry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries can be seen as a gendered space of masculine hegemony where scientists, mostly male would engage in the classification and governance of the plant and natural world. These notions of nature largely derive from the metaphor of Eden and its associated innocent and forbidden spaces, the masculine and the feminine. A re-examination and demystification of these fictional garden metaphors and spaces thus becomes necessary in understanding the underlying politics of space and a redefining of the various sexual and gender roles that are assigned to these.