



A Garden of Earthly Delights

Joyce Carol Oates, Elaine Showalter

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Joyce Carol Oates's Wonderland Quartet comprises four remarkable novels that explore social class in America and the inner lives of young Americans. In *A Garden of Earthly Delights*, Oates presents one of her most memorable heroines, Clara Walpole, the beautiful daughter of Kentucky-born migrant farmworkers. Desperate to rise above her haphazard existence of violence and poverty, determined not to repeat her mother's life, Clara struggles for independence by way of her relationships with four very different men: her father, a family man turned itinerant laborer, smoldering with resentment; the mysterious Lowry, who rescues Clara as a teenager and offers her the possibility of love; Revere, a wealthy landowner who provides Clara with stability; and Swan, Clara's son, who bears the psychological and spiritual burden of his mother's ambition.

A masterly work from a writer with "the uncanny ability to give us a cinemascopic vision of her America" (*National Review*), *A Garden of Earthly Delights* is the opening stanza in what would become one of the most powerful and engrossing story arcs in literature.

A Garden of Earthly Delights is the first novel in the Wonderland Quartet. The books that complete this acclaimed series, *Expensive People*, *them*, and *Wonderland*, are also available from the Modern Library.

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