

Strange Fruit, Unusual Garden

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*And the Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering,
but He had no regard for Cain and his offering.*
—Genesis 4:3–4

ABSTRACT: From a European perspective, gardens and power have long gone hand in hand. Much of this has to do with the surprising resilience of coloniality and the arborescent notions of personhood that support it. In the present essay, I explore other models of personhood (and thus other gardens), drawing on ideas from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, the Talmud, and Emmanuel Levinas. At the center of my analysis is the brutal (and seemingly unanswered) murder of a Black gardener in Joanot Martorell’s 1490 prose masterpiece, *Tirant lo Blanc*.

“**E**XPLORATION, PENETRATION AND PLANTATION,” argues Denis Cosgrove in his account of early modern European gardens and imperial expansion, “but also anxiety, disruption and corruption, characterized in equal measures both these fields of endeavor.”¹ In linking Europe’s fascination with gardens and cultivated landscapes to the continent’s broader will to power, Cosgrove opens an important discussion of how early modern maps and territories came to be—an idea that Katharina Piechocki has recently developed in detail.² Focusing on Girolamo Fracastoro’s sixteenth-century Latin poem *Syphilis*, for example, Piechocki describes how the Atlantic Ocean all but disappears and the Strait of Gibraltar flows into the Caribbean:

¹ Denis Cosgrove, *Geography and Vision: Seeing, Imagining and Representing the World* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 53.

² Katharina Piechocki, *Cartographic Humanism: The Making of Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

The transition from the second to the third book of *Syphilis* is a passage from the Gardens of the Hesperides cultivating the Golden Apples to the Caribbean groves where the shepherd Syphilus, together with the local population of Hispaniola, cultivates the guaiac trees while attending to his flock of sheep. What takes shape as the vast expanse of the Atlantic Ocean vertiginously implodes when looked at through the lens of philology: suddenly, the apples and sheep separated by the ocean collapse into a single Greek homonym: *mēlos*.³

Through Fracastoro's use of the pastoral, two distinct milieus coalesce into a deliberate scientific and imperial territory. This coalescence, it is worth pointing out, is much like what one finds in sixteenth-century Portuguese poet Luís Vaz de Camões's account of Khoekhoe pastoralists on the eastern Cape of Good Hope.⁴ For Camões, these pastoralists' gentle demeanor, affinity for music, and dutiful care of their oxen links them "naturally" (though Piechocki is right to underscore the role that philology plays) to a Virgilian scene: "Cantigas pastoris, ou prosa ou rima, / Na sua língua cantam concertadas / Com o doce som das rústicas avenas, / Imitando de Títiro as Camenas" [They sing pastoral songs, in prose or verse, in their language, with the sweet sound of oaten flutes, imitating the muses of Tityrus.]⁵ Whether in southern Africa or the Caribbean, the powerful links between cultivated natural spaces and empire—to the point that vast physical and conceptual distances were summarily closed—would be difficult for European writers to ignore. Cosgrove points to this phenomenon, discussing how places and traditions outside of Europe came to have new categories of cultivation (and its sibling, "civilization") placed upon them: "Long associated with moral discourse, gardens and gardening offered an emblematic language for negotiating the spaces and landscapes of new worlds in the Renaissance."⁶ From a European perspective, it is fair to say that gardens and power have long gone hand in hand, and this relation has shaped modernity in profound ways. European gardens are at once folds and prisms, laboratories for the exploration of limits: of the self, of the world, of the division of labor.

What of the places upon which European nations would work to impose their theories of gardens and other cultivated landscapes? What was there, in the Caribbean and Africa, for example, before coloniality? What has endured? Looking back further into antiquity, what alternative view on gardens and power may have developed in Europe and the broader Mediterranean? What might have been? How, we must continually ask, might things have been different? Can one access this difference now, recalibrate, and chart an alternate path forward? In the face of climate change and the surprising resilience of coloniality, this last question is perhaps the most important one before humanists today.

One potentially powerful tool for recalibration is a well-known one. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari suggested several decades ago (and with little thought for coloniality or climate change) a range of viable options by which one might retrace one's learning and rethink some of the connections now taken as axiomatic. Of singular utility is their account of the rhizome as an "image of thought."⁷ Modernity has a particular connection to trees, forests, and deforestation,

³ Piechocki, 179–80.

⁴ Luís Vaz de Camões, *Os Lusíadas*, vol. 61–64, ed. Emanuel Paulo Ramos (1572; repr., Porto, Portugal: Porto Editora, 2006).

⁵ Camões, vol. 63:5–8. Except where specified, all translations are my own.

⁶ Cosgrove, 53.

⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 16.

they argue, and this connection has yielded largely undesirable results: “We’re tired of trees. We should stop believing in trees, roots, and radicles. They’ve made us suffer too much.”⁸ Turning away from *tree* as an organizing concept, Deleuze and Guattari remind their reader that there are yet alternative models to which one might turn:

The West has a special relation to the forest, and deforestation; the fields carved from the forest are populated with seed plants produced by cultivation based on species lineages of the arborescent type; animal raising, carried out on fallow fields, selects lineages forming an entire animal arborescence. The East presents a different figure: a relation to the steppe and the garden (or in some cases, the desert and the oasis), rather than forest and field; cultivation of tubers by fragmentation of the individual; a casting aside or bracketing of animal raising, which is confined to closed spaces or pushed out onto the steppes of the nomads. The West: agriculture based on a chosen lineage containing a large number of variable individuals. The East: horticulture based on a small number of individuals derived from a wide range of “clones.” Does not the East, Oceania in particular, offer something like a rhizomatic model opposed in every respect to the Western model of the tree?⁹

The facile distinction between East and West here is unconvincing; however, the account of tuber cultivation and its conceptual (underground) ramifications points nonetheless to new possibilities. If wheat, corn, and soybeans emerge from “species lineages” of seeds as individual shoots, yams and potatoes point to other principles: a self that is already the clone of an Other sprouts “eyes” all along its surface, and from these grow multiple shoots—only some of which emerge from underground—and more clones. To harvest yams or potatoes, one must first clear away the rhizomatic, green shoots that emerge into the light. (They are, in most cases, little more than leafy camouflage, even if yam leaves can be cooked and eaten; potato leaves, on the other hand, carry high amounts of toxic solanine and should never be ingested.) It is necessary, then, to dig into the dark earth, albeit not in a straight line (in this sense, carrots and beets are not, strictly speaking, tubers at all). Using a pitchfork or other pronged tool, one pushes into the soil and pulls up, in an aleatory but always cautious manner, so as not to damage the sweet, colored bulbs scattered below. It is more like straining or sifting than excavating, and it is difficult, deliberate work. Tubers are a slow-motion explosion of form and nourishment, an “otherwise” than the arborescence of wheat and spears. If sponges are infinite passageways, always dividing back on themselves to hold liquid despite having no interiority of their own, tubers are the tender fingers of hands outstretched in prayer.¹⁰ And there are few gardens more unusual than prayer.

The theme of prayer hastens a return to Genesis and the biblical verse in the epigraph that precedes this essay. Why does God favor Abel’s animal sacrifice over Cain’s vegetable gifts? To get the obvious out of the way, there does not seem to be a problem with the gifts themselves. There are multiple examples of grain offerings in the Bible, even if a kind of meat-centric hierarchy does eventually seem to evolve.¹¹ What matters here, as both the Talmud and various Christian and Muslim texts suggest, are the intentions that underlie the two offerings. Abel offers the firstborn

⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, 15.

⁹ Deleuze and Guattari, 18.

¹⁰ For a highly suggestive account of the sponge, see Fabio Morábito, “La esponja,” [The sponge] in *Caja de herramientas* [Toolbox] (Mexico City: Pre-Textos, 2009), 15–19.

¹¹ For more on animal and grain sacrifices, see Lev. 1–7. My thanks to Charlotte Fonrobert for clarifying my doubts (and errors) about these forms of sacrifice.

of his flock along with the fat, a sign of his devotion and his sincere desire to turn away from sin, which always “crouches at the door.”¹² Cain’s error seems to be primarily one of stance, and God tells him directly: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.”¹³ What does it mean here to “do right”? Is this purely a procedural question? The Hebrew verb employed here is *yataw*, which points at once to “doing right” and “being glad.” In reality, the two meanings are largely intertwined, since to “be glad” and to “do right” are coterminous in this scene. It is a question of simultaneity rather than cause and effect, in that God does not present acceptance as a reward for “doing right” so much as He reminds Cain that gladness and doing right are each the *condition of possibility for* and *result of* the other. It is not a matter of reward after the fact so much as a recognition of human architecture *as it is* and Cain’s evasion of that architecture. In the same verse, God explicitly tells Cain what comes from gladness and ethics: “If you do right / are glad” [הָלוֹא אַם-תַּיִטִּיב] there will be “uplift/acceptance” [שָׂאָת].¹⁴ The sense of “uplift” at the end of this phrase comes from the verb *nasa*, which literally means “to lift,” even as it points to “acceptance” and “exaltation” in a more figurative sense.

In Genesis 4:7, God tells Cain that he can turn from sin and be glad/right, if he will only choose to do so. In a sense, nourishment and gladness are there to be had (immediately and in perpetuity) insofar as Cain is willing to give the “first fruits of his garden” to God, one whose command exceeds all understanding and whose alterity is absolute. This, perhaps, is the lesson one may take from the gifts offered by Cain: insofar as they are not the first fruits of his fields, he fails to respond to the Other’s command and remains estranged from the ethical, crouching evasively at the door where sin resides. He does not remain there, however. In killing Abel, he springs out of this doorway into sin, violating the primary command imposed upon him by the Other: not to kill, not to reduce his brother to wheat (Levinas).

At least Cain *attempts* to cut Abel down. In the end, he is unable to do so. Why is this so? In the first place, Cain eschews the “uplift” [שָׂאָת] God promises him, instead “rising up” [קוּם] against his brother and killing him as they speak to one another in a field. After Abel’s death, God reveals to Cain the futility of his actions: “What have you done? Hark, your brother’s blood cries out to Me from the ground!” [מָה עָשִׂיתָ; קוֹל דְּמֵי אָחִיךָ, צֹעֲקִים אֵלַי מִן-הָאֲדָמָה].¹⁵ The word for “blood” here is not the singular *dam*; it is the plural *demei*. Why does this matter? There are multiple possibilities. The most common reading is that the blood that Cain spills is not just Abel’s but also that of his descendants, all those who would now not be born. This is made clear in the Mishnah, in a discussion of the weight of testimony in a criminal trial: “In civil cases one may repay the money damage and he is atoned; but in criminal cases the blood of the person executed, and of his descendants to the end of all generations, clings to the originator of his execution.”¹⁶ As evidence of this principle, the text cites Genesis 4:10: “So we find when Cain slew his brother, it is said: *The sounds of your brother’s bloods cry to me from the earth*. It does not say your brother’s *blood* but your brother’s *bloods*, his blood and that of his descendants.”¹⁷ A murderer, in this sense, is

¹² Gen. 4:7.

¹³ Gen. 4:7.

¹⁴ Gen. 4:7.

¹⁵ Gen. 4:10.

¹⁶ *The Jerusalem Talmud, Fourth Order: Neziqin, Tractates Sanhedrin, Makkot, and Horaiot*, ed. and trans. Heinrich W. Guggenheimer (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 164.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a destroyer of worlds: “Therefore man was created single in the world to teach that for anybody who destroys a single life it is counted as if he destroyed an entire world, and for anybody who preserves a single life it is counted as if he preserved an entire world.”¹⁸ As difficult as it may be to find fault with this reading, it is worth remembering that it rests on a strictly arborescent principle of “lineage,” not to mention a nakedly heteronormative understanding of (re)productive sex. Is the weight of murder—the “world” it ends—to be understood primarily in terms of the subsequent generations that will not come to be? Clearly this cannot be the point.

In the same section of the Mishnah, there is an alternate reading of the plural reference to blood in Genesis 4:10. The text is brief and provides no source, but it is significant: “Another explanation: *Your brother’s bloods*, the blood was splashed on trees and stones.”¹⁹ In this “other explanation,” the blood of Abel splashes in droplets onto the trees, the earth, and stones; and what God hears are these droplets crying out to Him. What is the notion of self that emerges from this “other explanation”? What is the source of this “crying out”? It is multiple and rhizomatic. Cain, imagining his younger brother to be a single tree or stalk of wheat one can simply cut down, has misread everything. He could not “do right,” one might say, precisely because his view of his brother, God, and the world around him was stubbornly, tragically arborescent. Sin caught him looking at a forest of singular trees and dreaming of deforestation. Abel calls out to God, however, in multiple voices, a rhizomatic chorus. As Paul Celan has put it, “Nah sind wir, Herr, / nahe und greifbar” [We are close, Lord / close and within reach.]²⁰ Abel here is that *we*, a cloud of droplets, a wet sponge, an assemblage. He is the blood on the ground, Deleuze and Guattari’s “Eastern” garden, and the Others who appear before us, calling us into question. All of these are *unusual* in the most conventional sense, and yet they may well index the deeper, subterranean architecture of human being: a being-for-the-Other that responds to all the multiples before us. The *bloods* cry out in prayer from the stones, trees, and the earth itself—an unusual garden.

MURDER IN THE GARDEN

In the European literary tradition, there are few gardens more unusual than gardens of love. Often enough presided over by Venus herself, these gardens were consistently strange and contradictory places. Focusing on medieval gardens of love, Rod Barnett argues that they were consistently sites of emergence and transition, of the endless forking paths that led simultaneously to perdition and the very possibility of redemption. For Barnett, they are essentially “ambivalent and transgressive” sites in medieval European literature, a “reification of the conjunction of opposites” principally defined by “authority and equivocation; carnality and moral perfection; desire and renunciation; acceptance and rejection, the opposites moving together in a subtle dance.”²¹ The thirteenth-century *Roman de la Rose* [Romance of the rose] provides a kind of archetype for Barnett’s argument, in that one must set aside reason (and thus humanity) to enter the allegorical garden, but it is also along its many paths that one may find some form of redemption.²²

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Paul Celan, “Tenebrae,” in *Kommentierte Gesamtausgabe* [Complete works], ed. Barbara Wiedemann (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2005), 97.

²¹ Rod Barnett, “Serpent of Pleasure: Emergence and Difference in the Medieval Garden of Love,” *Landscape Journal* 28, no. 2 (2009): 148.

²² Barnett, 146.

Within the Iberian Peninsula, gardens of love appear with some regularity throughout the late medieval period and into the sixteenth century. As in the *Roman de la Rose*, they tend to be places of emergence and transition, where spiritual loss brings with it the conditions for the possibility of redemption and (eventually) renewed social cohesion. One enters them by placing the body and soul at mortal risk, but it is precisely through such a gamble that one might emerge on the other side, saved. They are, in the spiritual sense, places of both high risk and high reward. Iberian gardens of love tend also to be sites of colonial violence, however, and this violence frequently enough revolves around Muslim men, especially those associated in some explicit way with Africa and/or Blackness. As victims of Christian violence or as witnesses to it, these men cast a shadow over the workings of love and sensuousness, revealing as they do the troubling surplus that conditions these texts.

Near the middle of *Tirant lo Blanc* [Tirant the white], Joanot Martorell's 1490 chivalric masterpiece, the eponymous hero finds himself in a garden, tricked into believing that his beloved Carmesina, the daughter of the emperor of Constantinople, has had sex with another man. The author of the deception is the Viuda Reposada, a lady-in-waiting who wants Tirant for herself. Upon revealing to Tirant her desire for him and receiving the difficult (but not surprising) news that Tirant is already in love with Carmesina, the Viuda Reposada decides to let him in on a secret:

And so that you might know, Lord Tirant, how much I wish to serve you, I will make known to you by my efforts all that you currently do not know, so that you will not be deceived regarding the actions of the princess. She has abandoned any piety and personal honor—as well as that of her parents—since she no longer has any respect for the law.

[E perquè conegau, senyor Tirant, quant vos desige servir, que ab la mia indústria vos faça venir a notícia de totes les coses que ignorau e que en los fets de la princessa no siau decebut en vostra opinió, com ella se sia despullada de tota pietat e de la honor sua, de son pare e de sa mare, no guardant dret ni envers.]²³

The Viuda Reposada here offers to reveal Carmesina's deceitful (and dishonorable) actions as a show of her own loyalty to Tirant. She goes on:

Knowing a valiant and virtuous knight like you, and many others who are in love with her, she could have satisfied her desire honestly. However, the sky, the earth, the sea, and the sands all condemn the sin she has committed (and continues to commit each day). How can the mercy of our Lord permit and not punish such a horrid case of adultery? If you knew what I know, you would spit in her face. And afterward, you would do the same to every woman the world over because of her.

[Sabent ella hun cavaller axí valentíssim e virtuós com vos sou, e molts altres qui d'ella són enamorats, poguera sos apetits honestament complir, mas lo peccat per ella comés—e comet cascun dia—, los cels, la terra, la mar e les arenes se n'abominen. E com la benignitat de nostre Senyor permet e no ponex prestament hun tant nefandíssim crim de adulteri? Que si vos ho sabíeu com yo sé, li scupiríeu en la cara. Aprés, a totes quantes dones són en lo món, per causa d'ella.]²⁴

²³ Joanot Martorell, *Tirant lo Blanc* (1490; repr., Valencia: Biblioteca Valenciana Digital, 2019, bivaldi.gva.es/es/consulta/registro.cmd?id=2555), chap. 268.

²⁴ Martorell, chap. 268.

Carmesina's crime, Tirant now knows, is adultery. What he does not know, however, is with whom she has been unfaithful.

Continuing her accusation against Carmesina, the Viuda Reposada claims that the princess has been involved with her father's Black gardener, a Muslim man named Lauseta: "Therefore, if you believe what I say, distance yourself from her as quickly as you can. This is the honorable thing to do, since she is tangled up with Lauseta, a Black slave (bought and sold) and a Muslim, a gardener who works in the orchard." [Per ço, si vós me volreu creure, apartau-vos d'ella lo més prest que poreu, que serà molt loable cosa per a vós, com ella se sia enbolicada ab lo Lauseta que-s nomena, sclau negre, comprat e venut, moro per sa natura, ortolà que l'ort acostuma de procurar.]²⁵ Tirant does not believe the Viuda Reposada, though he has seen Carmesina on different occasions talking to Lauseta "about the orange trees and myrtles" [dels tarongers e de les murteres]²⁶ in the garden. The Viuda then urges Tirant to put the truth of her accusations to the test. She tells him to go secretly to a small cottage near the garden and make use of an improvised set of mirrors to spy on the two lovers when they meet. Tirant grudgingly agrees to do so and to keep it a secret.

Spying on Carmesina through a small window (and through the refracted images produced by the mirrors), Tirant sees her emerge topless with her hair down and sit down on a garden bench next to a person he thinks must be Lauseta. In reality, it is Plaerdemavida, a young lady-in-waiting wearing a Corpus Christi carnival mask and dark gloves made especially for the occasion to look like Lauseta. What Tirant does not know is that the Viuda Reposada, the author of the entire deception, had earlier instructed Plaerdemavida to wear the mask and gloves while fondling Carmesina's breasts and thighs and kissing her to make her laugh and feel merry. The scene devastates Tirant, who is convinced that Plaerdemavida is Lauseta.

After some time passes, Tirant returns to his own room, where he begins to pace for hours. He is finally so filled with rage that he returns to the scene of the perceived offense. Putting on a disguise, Tirant surprises Lauseta, who is changing out of his work clothes. Making sure no one is watching, Tirant grabs Lauseta by the hair and decapitates him. Leaving Lauseta's body on the ground, Tirant looks around once again before returning unseen to his room. Once there, he cries out in anger over Carmesina's supposed dishonesty:

Oh God, just and true, you who correct our faults, I ask for vengeance and not justice from this awful woman! Tell me, pitiless lady, was my disposition less in line with your desires than that of the Black gardener? If you had loved me as I believed you did, you would still be mine, and you would not find someone who loves you more than I do. And if love ruled you as firmly as it does me, nothing would be too much for you, but I tell you now that you never loved me.

[;Oh Déu just e verdader, que corregeis los nostres defalts, jo demane venjança e no justícia d'aquesta senyora tan descominal! Diques, donzella sens pietat, ¿la mia disposició no era conforme als teus desigs, més que la del negre hortolà? E si tu, com jo creia, haguesses amat, tu fores encara mia, e no pogueres trobar qui més t'amàs de mi. E si amor així fermament te senyorejàs, com fa a mi, no t'era cara neguna cosa, mas dic-te que jamés no m'amist.]²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., chap. 269.

²⁷ Ibid., chap. 286.

One imagines that Martorell's reader is to be moved by Tirant's distress and see Lauseta's murder as little more than a sign of how upset Tirant has become at Carmesina's perceived infidelity. He is angry at Carmesina and perhaps just a bit out of his mind. If Tirant is overcome by rage and emotional pain, however, why does he disguise himself before murdering Lauseta? Why does he look around twice to make sure that no one has seen him? Martorell's contemporaries might plausibly have found little fault with the murder, as the Kingdom of Valencia had long prescribed death for a Muslim man who had sex with a Christian woman.²⁸ There is also the fact that the entire scene—from Carmesina's supposed tryst with Lauseta to Tirant's act of homicide—is but the fruit of the Viuda Reposada's sinful plan. She desires Tirant, and she is willing to lie and sacrifice the reputations and lives of others to have him. A good attorney might argue that the Viuda Reposada likely knew what Tirant's reaction would be, and that she pointed him at Lauseta in much the way one might aim a gun. According to this argument, Tirant is but a weapon in the hands of the Viuda Reposada—the true mastermind of the crime. Opposing counsel would then highlight what is perhaps the most damning aspect of the crime for Tirant: he disguises himself prior to killing Lauseta and then, after the murder, looks around to make sure he has not been seen. This strongly suggests that Tirant was not so much a mindless weapon as a killer aware—before, during, and after—of his crime. The Viuda Reposada is by no means innocent, though it is perhaps a stretch to see her as the author of Lauseta's death.

Like Cain, Tirant has spilled the blood/s of another. The question that arises has to do with the aftermath of this crime. Do Lauseta's *demei* cry out to God? Is there a reckoning for Tirant? Martorell is largely silent about this, and even Carmesina appears not to notice the gardener's absence. Lauseta's *demei* stain the ground in this would-be garden of love, but no one seems to hear their call. Was he buried? Did anyone mourn him? All the reader knows is that Tirant sinks into a deep depression after the murder, though the explicit cause of his sadness is his belief that Carmesina has betrayed him. He is so struck by a sense of loss and betrayal that people in the Greek court begin to worry for his health. He eventually resolves to sail off to battle in service of Carmesina's father, the emperor of Constantinople. He leaves without saying goodbye to Carmesina or even looking at her as he passes.

At the last instant, Plaerdemavida comes aboard Tirant's ship to find out what is ailing him. He tells her everything he had seen in the garden, how he had killed Lauseta, and his bitter depression over Carmesina's betrayal. Plaerdemavida is deeply moved by Tirant's confession, in part because she is now the only one who knows of his guilt: "When Plaerdemavida learned what troubled Tirant and realized that the Black gardener had been killed (and that no one would know who did it unless she told them), she became very unnerved" [Com Plaerdemavida conegué lo mal de Tirant quin era, e véu que lo negre ortolà era stat mort e no podien saber qui u havia fet, sinó ara per relació sua, estigué molt alterada.]²⁹ Plaerdemavida contains herself long enough to prove Carmesina's innocence, and Tirant expresses his deep shame over having been tricked.

What of the murder? If Plaerdemavida had plans to convince Tirant to turn himself in, these fall immediately to the wayside when a storm suddenly hits the small fleet and threatens to send it to the bottom of the Mediterranean. Some of the ships make it back to port, others wash up on a nearby island, and another is lost. Tirant's ship loses its rudder in the storm, and it then drifts

²⁸ Mark Meyerson, *The Muslims of Valencia in the Age of Fernando and Isabel: Between Coexistence and Crusade* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1991), 221.

²⁹ Martorell, chap. 295.

toward the coast of North Africa. Tirant manages to make it to shore with one of his shipmates (Plaerdemavida also survives, though they are separated for a time), and he then begins a long period of captivity and service to the Muslim King of Tlemcen.

Tirant is predictably heroic in North Africa, and his captors consistently marvel at his martial skill. Lauseta's murder quickly fades from view as Tirant takes territory and converts thousands of Muslims to Christianity. There is no more talk of murder in the garden, guilt, or justice for Lauseta. The hero's journey continues onward, eventually back to Constantinople and Tirant's joyous marriage to Carmesina. Back in the emperor's garden, Tirant likely takes no notice of the small house near the orange and myrtle trees, the scene of his crime. There is a new gardener, and years of rain have washed away, at least in his mind, all five liters of Lauseta's blood. Cut down like a citrus tree (Fracastoro is always closer than one thinks), Lauseta can no longer remind Tirant of his crime.

Returning to the Book of Genesis, however, it becomes clear that Tirant is gravely mistaken about what remains. Like Abel, Lauseta is no tree, and his *demei* have indelibly stained the rocks, trees, and soil near where he was slain. He is now part of the garden itself, absorbed into the rhizomatic and humid proximity of its subsoil networks. Tirant has not cut down a tree so much as he has placed his thumb on a drop of water, sending smaller drops radiating outward. Death is dispersal. It is this point that lies at the center of Emmanuel Levinas's claim that the imminently relational "face" of the Other is "what one cannot kill."³⁰ To totalize—in effect, reducing the rhizomatic *demei* of the Other to arborescent *dam*—is a "banal fact";³¹ however, such totalization is never complete nor enduring. As with Abel, the bloods inevitably cry out to God "from the ground."³²

Back in the emperor's garden, which the Viuda Reposada worked so earnestly to reterritorialize as a perverse garden of love, Lauseta's *demei* remain, collateral damage in a story of erotic desire and conquest. One only wonders where God may be and whether he hears the cry. Perhaps it is God's justice that finally strikes Tirant down, taken as he is so suddenly by a sharp pain in his side that no doctor can cure. He confesses before he dies, but the narrator again makes no mention of Lauseta. Turning back to Genesis 4, it bears asking whether Tirant's North African captivity was his opportunity to "do right" and to find a place with God. In this sense, one can convincingly read the storm that shipwrecks him as a deluge of both water and blood, the latter pulled up to heaven from the emperor's garden. Like Cain, Tirant ignores this warning and reverts to his violent ways, covering up his murder with more killing. His death is thus an exile to the Land of Nod, somewhere east of Eden, where the twisted roots of coloniality continually wrap around themselves, choking off possibilities until none remain. A

³⁰ Emmanuel Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Richard Cohen (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), 87.

³¹ Levinas, 87.

³² Gen. 4:10.