

America, a place part III, The Garden

Scene I a field

fade up...the first light of dawn: dim, shadowy, opaque. we see the Poet, dressed as the Judge from *the Trial* at the end of part 11, yoked to the leather traces of an old fashioned plow, walking in circles around and around and around the performing space, pulling the steel teeth of the plow, exposing the rich, fecund earth in his wake.

(a long guttural expostulation) “make a muscle...make a muscle...make a muscle...muscle sense...muscle...memories...memories...contained...the memories contained...within each hard...working...muscle...strrrretch...strrreeetch...furrther...furrther back...strrrretch further back...(pause in work) thew (wipes brow) make a muscle...make a muscle...make a muscle...muscle sense...muscle sense...prepares the land...for those to come...”

he continues to plow as the lights slowly, very slowly fades, leaving only his scintillating, silvery figure in the **Blackout**...

Scene II the garden

light...still dawn, only moments later. Ami and Ruth lay naked in a furrow of the Judge’s plowed field.

Ami “Ruth...can we make love?”

Ruth “Ami...come to me.”

wild lovers, they make wild love, rolling across an expansive field. as they do, the field slowly transforms into a topographical map of the United States of America. their lovemaking takes them from coast to coast, border to border, culminating in a ritual orgasm. as his seed is planted, birds fly upon the land.

-Blackout-

-up music sotto voce...lights. still quite early in the morning. Ami and Ruth sit face to face within a furrow, their legs around each other’s waists, lovers that they are. their lines are vocalized-

Ruth (while eating an apple) “i am the garden.”

Ami “i wish i could say...that.”

Ruth “i am the soil betwixt my fingers...”

Ami “while you worked the land, i went unto the mountain...”

Ruth “the mud upon my knees.”

Ami “...to winnow one thought from another...”

Ruth “i am the lacerations, the scrapes, the cuts, all the bruises inflicted upon me.”

Ami “...to perceive their differences.”

Ruth “i am the earth that sends forth shoots which wave and shout to the wind...”

Ami “i learned...”

Ruth “...worms crawl about the black soil.”

Ami “...to separate, comes from a root which indicates Time...”

Ruth “that the wretched little organisms swarm.”

Ami “...the Time to pre-prepare a piece of fruit—”
Ruth “i am the garden...”
Ami “...an apple, a fig, a pomegranate?”
Ruth “...that i have painstakingly nurtured. i am the earth.”
Ami “and i eat thereof.”
Ruth “i am the soil i have amended.”
Ami “my mind...”
Ruth “i am the design i have dreamed...”
Ami “...has not allowed me.
Ruth “..and and and
Ami “my body remains separate from the garden, like wheat from its chaff.”
Ruth and...(music fades) the earth is me.”

-**Blackout.** one. two. three-

-lights up. same level. Ruth and Ami are back to back within the same furrow. as Ruth speaks she rubs earth over her naked body. her looseness and intimacy is in contrast to Ami’s austerity. he clutches the dusty, old library book from part two. up music...slight lighting change through dialogue as the morning lengthens-

Ruth (sing) “in the beginning...there is a garden...and it is filled...with all things...(spoken) including that which allows us to see ourselves, (sung) to see ourselves, see ourselves (spoken) in a very different light, in a separate way, from the way we have always (sung) seen ourselves, seen ourselves, see ourselves, to see ourselves (spoken) it’s the way we have been trained, what people have agreed to over the years (sustain)...”

Ami (overlap) “while i was in the mountains i learned one cannot begin to understand their relationship to the world until they understand the concept of what is appropriate.”

Ruth (speak-sings) “i know this much.”

Ami “what is appropriate...”

Ruth (speak-sings) “in the garden.”

Ami “what is appropriate morally within a relationship?”

Ruth (speak-sings) “the garden...eternally holds our place within nature.” (she enacts a religious ritual)
 -a moment of **silence**-

Ami “the indigenous ethic revolves around reciprocal appropriation.”

Ruth “our failing in the garden has to do with our need to control, our desire to dominate, and witness our unilateral power, a power unhinged that loosens the ties we have to nature, and exert ourselves against her, a wild power which knows no bounds.”

Ami “man invests himself in the landscape and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own fundamental experiences.”

Ruth “our failing in the garden has to do with our fruitless assumption everything around us is bound up in a choice of good or evil.”

Ami “indigenous man makes the earth his own, and willingly gives himself back to the dust from which he has come.”

Ruth “our failing in the garden has to do with our inability to accept responsibility for our actions.”

Ami “this appropriation becomes part of his moral imagination and ethos.”

Ruth “we cling to good and evil. our failing in the garden has to do with our misguided belief Man rules Nature.”

Ami “they are what they imagine themselves to be. his act is a moral act.”

Ruth “what allows me to grow as a person is much more profound, and the answer may not be the same tomorrow.”

Ami “i have looked, but i have not found a thing appropriate...Ruth, i have failed ”

Ruth “one must decide what they must do, then accept responsibility for their decision.”

Ami “i have failed. i have failed to choose. i have learned about all that i speak...(up music. the sound of the surf breaking on the shore, played by a lute or lyre. speak-sing teh remainder) i have learned, and learned and learned...somehow with my mind i know...but not with my body.”

Ruth (speak-sings) “the land contains many secrets if we open ourselves.” (sustain *ourselves* ‘neath Ami’s line)

Ami “Ruth...i have no sense of who i am.”

Ruth “my friend, begin (sustain) with your body.”

Ami “my first task was to name the things of this world. then i learned to order these things. i named the towns and villages, then i learned to name the rivers and hills. lastly, i learned the names of the plants and animals, the fish and things that crawl.”

Ruth “yes, you’ve learned to name, but you have not learned to touch. you’ve failed to feel what you have fingered. you have failed to become intimate in the garden. it has not become your own. a veil of separation remains between you and all you’ve learned.”

Ami “seems so natural for you...for me, it is a struggle. it has always been a struggle.”

Ruth (scratching soil) “today is friday. there is no snow. a patina of frost covers the still hard ground. the milky sky thru the branches of the locust tree shines. sun...spring.” (end music)

-silence-

Ami “Ruth...i’ve worked hard, and i’ve not come beyond equal days and equal nites. (deep sigh) everything is temporary. insight is followed by dirty laundry. everything is good until the next bad thing. something’s missing! (another sigh) at this moment i don’t know what. i only know it has something to do...with...i don’t know. i wanna know my place, that’s all. i wanna become part of something...larger than me. i can’t hear my voice, Ruth!...when i’m with you i feel close, fulfilled. i feel strong. i feel necessary. when my seed is released, i feel barren, somnolent, lost...i feel empty.”

Ruth “truly, your seed has filled me and i will produce the fruit of our labor. we are blessed Ami, fruitful, and we shall replenish the garden. there is much we have...”

Ami (interrupts) “Ruth...i can’t stay. i’ve gotta go. i gotta...find...something. (a deep breath)”

Ruth (finishes her line under Ami’s breath) “there is much we have...to share and learn.”

-Blackout-