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THEMATIC BLOCK: UTOPIA AND DEMOCRACY

After-Utopia: Political Imaginaries and Rhythmic Praxis in *Gardens in the Dunes*

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ABSTRACT
Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) reconceptualizes utopia not as a perfected future design but as an ongoing rhythm of care, relation, and endurance. Relying on Miguel Abensour's political philosophy, particularly his concepts "the new utopian spirit," "persistent utopia," and the "dialectic of emancipation," this essay argues that the novel's characters enact democratic life not through institutions but through ethical gestures rooted in indigenous knowledge and praxis. Beginning with the rupture of the Ghost Dance and extending through the Sand Lizard women's cultivation practices, the narrative displaces blueprint utopias in favor of what Abensour calls insurgent democracy: a political imaginary grounded in vulnerability, improvisation, and shared life. Through close readings of gardens and gestures of care across geographic and cultural boundaries, the essay shows how Silko reclaims utopia from the logic of domination and redefines emancipation as relational resilience in the wake of catastrophe. (GV)

KEYWORDS: after-utopia, dialectic of emancipation, insurgent democracy, political things, rhythmic praxis, Recovery Narrative, botanical imperialism, Ghost Dance

Introduction

What remains of utopia when its grand visions collapse, its blueprints stand discredited, and its universalizing claims are exposed as instruments of oppression? Is it not futile to cling to hopes of emancipation that have been repeatedly shattered by catastrophic events? The violent processes of modernity displaced or wiped out millions, caused unimaginable suffering, and altered the natural environment beyond repair. Leslie Marmon Silko's *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999) is a novel concerned with survival, symbolic and

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real acts of care, and alternative forms of community after colonial devastation. It traces the displacements of an Indigenous girl across the late nineteenth-century imperial world, juxtaposing the violence of imperial modernity with visions of ecological and spiritual renewal. Through this child's journeys from her people's desert garden to the cultivated landscapes of the Euro-American and European elite, Silko explores the survival of relational and ecological forms of life within the circuits of empire. The plot is set in the wake of the Indian Wars (1866–1890), the systematic massacres of native civilians, the forced relocation of Indigenous nations to reservations, and the cultural violence inflicted by the off-reservation boarding schools. Silko, who belongs to the Laguna Pueblo nation, displays a variety of Indigenous acts of resistance: efforts to sustain life, to preserve identity, and to create communities that do not suppress otherness and singularity. Rather than offering fixed blueprints for a better world, the novel foreshadows possible futures that adapt dynamically to historical and social conditions in flux.

Silko's narrative is centered on the trope of the journey, the foundational element of Thomas More's island voyage, and the structural metaphor of most utopian worlds. The central character, Indigo, a nine-year-old girl, member of the Sand Lizard tribe, embarks on a transatlantic journey with her temporary wards, Edward and Hattie Palmer. The gardens she visits, and those alluded to in the narrative, are microcosms of imagined ideal worlds, insular utopias embedded within the larger landscape of industrialized Western societies. Yet, rather than moving toward a finished version of the good society, the journeys in *Gardens in the Dunes* expose the violence that is integral to such utopian enclosures. Silko redefines the journey not as a route toward an ideal social space, but as a motion through multiplicity, diversity, and continuous transformation. This revisionary, subversive use of the utopian form leads us to a deeper understanding of the political and philosophical implications of "gardens" in the novel. Some gardens turn out to be spaces of cultivation and control, as in modern imperial utopias. Others appear as sites of interrelations between human and nonhuman actors who join forces, as equals, to protect life and carry it forward.

Before addressing the theoretical questions of utopia and democracy, it is important to recall, however briefly, the cultural ground from which Silko's imagination unfolds. While *Gardens in the Dunes* waves together several Indigenous histories and cosmologies,[1] my focus here remains on the novel's philosophical and aesthetic dimensions rather than

on its ethnographic texture.[2] Still, we should remember that the Laguna Pueblo, the community to which Silko belongs, has long been defined by an ethos of agriculture, balance, and reciprocity, values that sustain the novel's vision of relation and survival. The fictional Sand Lizard and historical Mattinnecock presences extend this agricultural imaginary across regions and histories, suggesting a continuity of care rather than a homogeneity of worldview. This orientation grounds Silko's political imaginary in cultivation and communal renewal, and lends to her utopian vision its urgency about resilience, growth, and return. Yet this ethos of cultivation and reciprocity stands in contrast to the modern utopian imagination, which has often translated the garden into a project of mastery and reform. It is at this edge between cultivation and control, between renewal and blueprint, that Silko's utopian vision unfolds.

This essay proposes an interpretation of Silko's novel as an "after-utopian" narrative that engages in, and revises, the modern legacy of utopia. The term *after* follows Étienne Balibar's notion, explained in his essay "After Utopia, Imagination?" where he argues for utopia's survival beyond the collapse of its realizable forms. Instead of "technocratic programs and messianic preaching," utopia needs to transform into a mode of political imagination, adapted to the needs of our time, that endures where projects of perfection fail (Balibar 163). Balibar's insistence on re-imagining our present prepares the ground for Miguel Abensour's critical work on utopia, democracy, and emancipation. Relying on this triad, I argue that *Gardens in the Dunes* grapples with the "dialectic of emancipation," a dynamic in which the desire for liberation can, paradoxically, lead to the rise of domination. Abensour's critique distinguishes between totalizing utopias, those that seek to realize perfection through control, and open utopias, those which resist closure and imagine emancipation as a dynamic, open-ended political practice ("New Utopian" 190, 212). Open utopias refuse to stabilize into blueprints and insist instead on the sudden and unexpected irruption of political things (Abensour, "What Kind" 37) within the repressive structures of modernity. In this sense*, the novel* exposes the imperial logic of blueprint utopias, reclaims the utopian spirit, and gestures toward a persistent utopia. This latter is no longer a blueprint for perfection, but a living rhythm of democratic practice, relational care, and ecological reciprocity, a mode of persistence that, as the novel shows, endures even after catastrophe.

Blueprint utopias and the failure of ethical relations

Silko's novel treats gardens as both adaptive spaces of material survival and powerful symbolic sites. They represent different political and cultural imaginaries that reflect visions of what life should be. Yet these visions emerge within a complex and, to individual subjects, opaque social totality that resists comprehension. As Frederick Jameson argues, "without a conception of a social totality (and a possibility of transforming a whole social system), no properly socialist politics is possible" (355). To address this representational difficulty, Jameson introduces the concept of "cognitive mapping" (353). This aesthetic strategy allows subjects to locate their individual experiences within the structural conditions of late capitalism. Such "mapping," as Robert T. Tally explains, can be defined as "a narrative technique akin to realism or modernism," one which allows us to mediate the gap between our lived experience and the structures of the postmodern condition. Moreover, it allows us to "imagine alternatives" (Tally 6). In this sense, the sites in *Gardens in the Dunes* may be seen as cognitive maps, attempts to represent particular utopian configurations. Some of these spaces, especially the ones that are associated with privilege, science, and progress, reveal how the desire for emancipation becomes complicit with the structures of domination it seeks to overcome. My analysis begins with such gardens, suggesting that their utopian aspirations often reproduce the systemic hierarchies they wish to escape.

Indigo's transcontinental and later, transatlantic journey starts with a painful separation and an unlikely bond. In early 1899, she is forcibly taken from a Ghost Dance ceremony in Needles, Arizona, by the Indian Police working in concert with US authorities. Separated from Sister Salt, her older sibling, Indigo is placed in the Carlyle Indian boarding school in Riverside, California. Running away from what she experiences as captivity, she finds temporary refuge with Edward Palmer, a botanist, and his wife, Hattie, a kind-hearted scholar who becomes a surrogate mother figure. The couple, preparing for a journey to England and the Mediterranean, decide to take "the little Indian" along (Silko, *Gardens* 105). From the Old Gardens, a subsistence garden in the Arizona desert carefully cultivated by her Sand Lizard tribe, Indigo enters the world of hothouses, orchard groves, and landscape gardens owned by upper-class Anglo-Americans. This transition unfolds in less than a year after the imperial moment of 1898. Victorious in the "splendid little war" with Spain, the United States acquired the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Guam, becoming an empire with overseas colonies, accelerating her bid for global power and influence. It is difficult

to dismiss the connection between this formative moment of US imperial modernity with its militarized state, industrial power, and vision of expansion, and the prospect of what would become known as the American Century. At the same time, the novel captures the disorientation and loss experienced by the older landowning elite, whose agrarian ideals and political imaginary belonged to an earlier phase of US history. This vision was increasingly out of place.

In the spacious American gardens featured in the novel, the landowning elite's dream of utopia takes diverse forms. Indigo explores private landscapes of personal fulfillment and philanthropic agricultural schemes in Riverside, and later, in Long Island. These projects emerge as attempts to counter the alienation and upheaval of industrial modernity. Looming in the background, Kew Gardens of London represents the artificial Eden of the British territorial empire. These utopian designs seek to restore harmony or generate happiness, but in doing so, they reproduce the very systems of control, hierarchy, and extractive practices they aim to escape. This dynamic reflects what Miguel Abensour calls the "dialectic of emancipation": the process by which modern projects of liberation inevitably become entangled in new forms of domination. Relying on Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer's argument developed in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Abensour defines the fundamental dialectic operating within modernity as "a paradoxical movement through which modern emancipation turns into its opposite, giving rise to new forms of domination and oppression . . . even though the original intention was indeed emancipatory" ("New Utopian" 193). He warns that movements of democratic liberation are continually exposed to the risk of solidifying into utopian blueprints that exclude the political and refuse to acknowledge alterity ("Utopian Conversion" 215). Such frameworks foreclose critical thought and adaptation to a changing world.

The orange orchard in Riverside, where Indigo finds refuge after she flees the Carlyle school, and the landscape garden she later visits in Oyster Bay, Long Island, are tended by middle-aged siblings, Edward Palmer and Susan Palmer James. These elite gardens are emblems of failed modern utopias, attempts to escape crisis by constructing closed worlds which, like blueprint utopias, ultimately replicate the very crises they want to overcome. To understand the emotional motivations behind these utopian enclosures, we must consider the siblings' history of instability and longing. Edward and Susan, children of an emotionally distant mother and a father addicted to gambling, never experienced the security of a stable home or the

comfort of unconditional affection. For most of the year, their parents lived separate lives on opposite coasts. Edward, the elder, stayed with his father in California. The mother, unwilling to endure the dry California summers, lived in New York City and visited only in the winter months "with Susan in tow" (*Gardens* 90). The children's loneliness and anxiety were channeled into activities in which they could lose themselves. As a boy, Edward took refuge in fantasizing about his mother in the greenhouse, "surrounded by [her] orchids," and in developing horticultural expertise by tending the citrus trees and grafting dwarf tangerine tree varieties (93). As an adult, he became a distinguished botanist immersed in the rigors and pleasures of the profession. Susan, who married a stockbroker, found satisfaction in the eccentricities of the moneyed elite: parties, elegant dresses, and performative gestures, "triumphant entrances" executed in grand style (80).

Edward and Susan's private gardens can be seen as affective responses to early experiences of abandonment and instability. In seeking to craft spaces of order, beauty, and permanence, they attempt to restore a sense of coherence and emotional security that eluded them in childhood. Yet these gardens are more than therapeutic or aesthetic undertakings. They are personal Edens that echo a larger cultural fantasy, the dream of recovering a blissful state through return to an idealized past. This fantasy, as Carolyn Merchant points out, lies at the heart of the Recovery Narrative, the "mainstream narrative of Western culture" since antiquity (2). The Old Testament story of the lost Eden comes to closure with the New Testament's promise of salvation, humanity's reunion with God in the "higher heavenly paradise" (17). Between the Fall and Salvation, two ethical alternatives emerge for managing humanity's relationship to nature: dominion, grounded in mastery over nature, and stewardship, grounded in moral care for the land (19).

The modern version of the Recovery Narrative, Merchant adds, was strengthened by the enlightenment's focus on reason and progress and the scientific revolution's revelations of the secrets of nature. History is imagined as the gradual restoration of paradise through science, order, and cultivation (10). In the American version of this narrative, conceptual metaphors like "City upon a Hill," "Manifest Destiny," "the closing of the Frontier," and "the American Dream" are essential for the utopian modeling of the New World. While each of these concepts expresses emancipatory desires, they define an extractive relationship to the land and refuse to acknowledge the full humanity of Indigenous nations and people of color. Their logic rests on dominance over nature and over human

beings defined as Others. Even as pathways to freedom are opened, new regimes of oppression and control are installed. From this perspective, Edward and Susan's gardens may be regarded as failing attempts to recover a lost personal Eden.

The novel does not allow the reader any insight into Susan's childhood. We can only infer that her socialite mother instilled in her a dependence on luxury and social spectacle in concordance with the shiny surfaces of the Gilded Age. Her share in the family trust and her husband, Colin James's seasoned expertise in the financial market provides her with the material means to satisfy her conscious and most superficial desires. The hollowness of her emotional world drives Susan towards an engagement with recreating the Eden she has always yearned for but never actually known. Thus, her pursuit of satisfaction and happiness remains unfulfilled. Charity work and parties offer an audience for her accomplishments, but she is always seeking new and more impressive versions of the spectacle. At the time of Edward, Hattie, and Indigo's visit, she is immersed in renovating—in fact, destroying—her Italian Renaissance-style garden, which she now finds "artificial and boring." Her new project, an English landscape garden, "a natural garden filled with color" (*Gardens* 188), is designed by a Scottish landscape architect who is also her lover. Susan's desire for happiness takes the form of endless aesthetic conquests. She can only imagine fulfillment as the transformation of the world around her through renovation, show, and possession. The garden becomes a terrain to be mastered and beautified according to her will. In this sense, her utopian project is one of dominion, in Merchant's terms: a vision of paradise achieved through control, erasure, and calculated pleasure. Susan's private garden-utopia remains haunted by the very emptiness it seeks to overcome.

Unlike Susan, whose wealth is symbolic and used for social display, Edward's relationship to the land is based on labor, science, and cultivation. His fondest childhood memories are sensual recollections of "the workshop of the orangery, with its odors of paraffin, sulfur, and damp earth" (*Gardens* 93). As an adult, and a man of post-enlightenment rationality, he imagines happiness in making his orange grove bloom, a Lockean ideal where, as Merchant points out, property is the ethical foundation of "civil, political society" (Merchant 78). Edward's attitude to the land is more ethical than Susan's. Rather than seeking to dominate nature, he treats it with a sense of stewardship. Yet his sincere vision of the estate—the orchard grove and greenhouses as a recovered Eden—remains personal. His closed garden is a utopian space of sentimental attachment rather than political openness. The

land is not inhabited or jointly created with others but managed, measured, and improved. Edward distances himself from Susan's superficial world, wondering "if his sister realized how fickle garden fashion was" (Silko, *Gardens* 192). Even so, he himself remains within the framework of a blueprint utopia which is private, possessive, exclusionary, and ultimately fragile.

Because the ownership of the estate is divided between Edward and Susan, Edward walks the thin line between solvency and bankruptcy. To sustain his Edenic ideal, he engages in economic and scientific practices that trap him into the structures his utopia seeks to resist. He collects rare orchids and sells them to wealthy clients, transforming wilderness into currency to fund his private garden. While he remains attached to the idea of contributing to science, this impulse becomes entangled with "botanical imperialism" (Kang 105). On his ill-fated Pará River expedition he agrees to assist Mr. Wicks in smuggling rubber trees to Kew Gardens, Britain's imperial hub of global botanical resources, and unwittingly enables Mr. Elliott's ecological devastation on behalf of his commissioners at Lowe and Co. To avoid a drop in the market value of *Laelia cinnabarina*, these wealthy collectors have the original habitat of these rare orchids destroyed. In attempting to recover paradise, Edward becomes complicit in its destruction and suffers serious harm himself. Although his scientific and economic activities are meant to support utopia, he is drawn into imperial circuits of extraction. The citrus grove of his dreams is sustained by extraction elsewhere: in the lush forests of Brazil, a "colonized Eden" (Merchant 137). Edward's utopia becomes a node in the global network of managed, commodified nature.

Edward's utopianism is not rooted in malice or greed, but in a sincere desire to cultivate, understand, and contribute: "His ambition was to discover a new plant species that would bear his name" (*Gardens* 80). Yet his failure illustrates the dialectic of emancipation, the tendency of utopian projects to collapse into domination for lack of "a position critical of the existing order" (Abensour, "Persistent" 412). Edward's utopia fails not because it is selfish, but because it is rigid. His desire for a happy and fulfilled life depends on the revival of his father's legacy—the orange grove—and on proving himself as an accomplished scientist. In his efforts to realize this blueprint, he relies on morally ambiguous and illegal schemes that involve deception and smuggling. In seeking to escape the alienation of the capitalist-imperialist framework, he reproduces its extractive logic. Citing Adorno's *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* (1944), Abensour suggests that

breaking this cycle requires recognizing where such reversals begin and investing in those "blindspots of imagination" with critique. This work will open, as Adorno puts it, "lines of flight" ("Persistent" 415) from domination. Edward, by contrast, remains unaware of these turning points. His utopia collapses under the weight of its own design, incapable of becoming the open, dynamic impulse that Abensour associates with the utopian spirit.

The same pattern of compromised utopia repeats itself in the case of Mr. Abbott, Edward's father-in-law, who is immersed in a philanthropic garden project. Hattie's father "relished the ample space on the old farmland, which allowed him to conduct many more of his odd agricultural experiments that aimed to teach the poor to grow food to supplement their diets" (*Gardens* 157). This vision of the garden as a restored Eden represents an altruistic version of Edward's land management model of stewardship, one that Carolyn Merchant calls a more "ethical alternative to the domination of nature" (23). Yet the blindspot in Mr. Abbott's utopian imagination prevents him from recognizing that "the poor" he aims to help are the very people whom Anglo-American landowners like himself and Susan Palmer James have displaced from their ancestral lands in Oyster Bay. His "old farmland" had once belonged to Matinnecock Indians, who were resettled near Manhasset Bay when "the land where their gardens used to grow was taken" (*Gardens* 169, 171).

Mr. Abbott's philanthropic project centers on a carefully managed breeding program to breed dwarf goats and pigs, assuming that smaller animals will be easier for impoverished "poor families" to raise, and goat carts could even serve as transportation (*Gardens* 181, 183). Silko subtly signals the irony of this endeavor by echoing earlier images of Edward's grafted dwarf tangerine trees and Susan's dwarf palms, symbols of domesticated, ornamental nature (93, 158). Like Edward's trees, Mr. Abbott's animals reduce natural vitality to controlled, aestheticized forms. He repeatedly refers to "poor people" in the abstract, without any concrete image of who they are or how they live. At the same time, he remains blind to the historical violence in which he is complicit: the dispossession of the Matinnecock Indians of their fertile land, now transformed into the estates on which he and Susan live and garden. Mr. Abbott's benevolence is rooted in abstraction and condescension. He fails to see that the Matinnecocks have already adapted to the changing conditions by developing a resilient coastal livelihood. Their "last, great, bountiful farm," where they harvest oysters for food and craft buttons from the shells, provides the basis for a

dynamic, ecologically sound practice embedded in a living relationship with the sea (171). But to Mr. Abbott, these living practices remain invisible. His philanthropic utopia, like Edward's scientific one, is a blueprint imposed from above, incapable of perceiving or engaging with political and epistemological otherness.

Susan's aesthetic Eden, Edward's part nostalgic, part scientific garden, and Mr. Abbott's philanthropic experiment are all examples of failed emancipation. In each case, the desire to overcome alienation and create a better world is genuine. Yet each utopian project—Susan's stage-managed landscape of sentiment, Edward's cultivated grove of scientific intention, Abbott's miniature livestock experiment—remains fatally enclosed. They do not open themselves to the other but impose a rigid form upon the world. As Abensour insists, utopia must resist closure: "what matters is the orientation toward what is different, the wish for the radical alterity here and now" ("Persistent" 407). The ethical imperative of utopian thought is not to design perfected worlds but to remain in conversation with difference, risking disorientation and allowing oneself to be transformed.

But these private gardens also fail on another, deeper level because they cannot recognize themselves as political. The utopias envisioned by Edward, Susan, and Mr. Abbott are crafted in the context of a constitutional democracy and an increasingly global imperial capitalism, yet they do not engage with the structures of power and inequality that shape their world. As Abensour suggests in his essay on E. P. Thompson, the violence of the Industrial Revolution, experienced as "cataclysmic" by many, was veiled by the narrative of progress. The suffering caused by this catastrophe was "attributed to an incomplete 'modernization' whose basic orientation [was] good" ("E. P. Thompson" 177–78). The result was not a politicized demand for justice, but a sense of private existential unease. Rather than interpreting their dissatisfaction in political terms, the protagonists of *Gardens in the Dunes* retreat into artificial landscapes of order, sentiment, and benevolence. In doing so, they fall prey to what Abensour identifies as a dangerous illusion: the belief that the question of emancipation has already been settled. In truth, their utopias participate in a reversal where emancipatory desire turns into domination, both over nature through extractive or aestheticizing practices, and over the self through the refusal to acknowledge the truth of their existential condition. They dream of Eden, while living in alienation. Their failure is not merely ethical or

aesthetic. It is political, even though these characters lack the awareness or conceptual framework to recognize it as such.

In *Gardens in the Dunes*, vitality and transformation do not arise from such managed Edens, but from those who, like the Matinnecocks or the Sand Lizard people, live in relation with the land, the sea, and the more-than-human world. These communities are not designers of perfected worlds, but participants in dynamic, ethical, and collective ways of being. The term "after-utopia," which frames the argument that follows, defines this shift from design to relation. Whereas Ernst Bloch's aspirational notion of utopia as "Not-Yet" expresses a horizon of possibility embedded in the emotional fabric of human beings,[3] Étienne Balibar's notion of "after-utopia" begins in the wake of catastrophe. Balibar situates utopian thought after the collapse of modern emancipatory projects, "the New World Order and its bloody humanitarian prostheses" (163), when imagination must reconstitute itself amid ruins rather than project ideal futures. My use of "after-utopia," therefore, marks a temporal and affective shift from anticipation to survival, from the projection of the new to the re-composition of community in conditions of loss. This perspective does not reject utopian desire but tests its endurance after historical disillusionment.

After-utopian imaginaries and political things

In contrast to the failed blueprint utopias of the elite, the Indigenous characters in *Gardens in the Dunes* respond to dispossession and imperial violence through practices of resilience rooted in lived trauma, ecological mindfulness, and care. The last survivors of the Sand Lizard people of Arizona—Grandma Fleet, Sister Salt and Indigo—tend the "old gardens," ensuring that the land, their home and refuge, may endure even in their absence. Displaced from their fertile lands on Long Island, the Mattinnecocks adapt to their new condition by living off the ocean's bounty. Their gardening, kinship labor, and memory-work through storytelling do not propose idealized alternatives to the present situation. Instead, they enact what may be called an after-utopian politics defined by fragility, interdependence, and resistance to institutional design. Silko's Indigenous characters redefine the political from below, not by following a blueprint, but by cultivating forms of resistance to cultural and existential erasure. In Silko's narrative, acts of survival and preservation like the collecting of seeds, the sheltering of children, and keeping the tribal stories alive function as insurgent acts. They suspend the colonial economy of destruction by re-activating relational obligations among humans, plants,

and spirits. Such scenes signal an ongoing re-appearance of the political within ordinary practices. By tracing these gestures as narrative forms of resistance, Silko situates the political not in abstract ideals but in persistent acts of care.

Constructing a narrated history for the fictional Sand Lizard people of the Arizona desert, Silko epitomizes the collective experience of Indigenous communities across North America. From the waves of English conquest through the legalized dispossession of ancestral lands, genocidal wars, and epidemic devastation, Indigenous nations faced what Walter Benjamin, in "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1942), called "the storm blowing from Paradise . . . [the] storm we call progress" (257–58). From Grandma Fleet's stories, Sister Salt and Indigo learn about the "rumors about the aliens" who would eventually appear, the "bloodshed and cruelty" marking their advance, and the way they "demanded and took everything" (*Gardens* 17). Fleeing into the old gardens, the Sand Lizard people avoided death from "disease and fever" for a long time (17). But the relentless expansion driven by Manifest Destiny, the Gold Rush, and the 1851 Indian Appropriations Act forced Indigenous peoples into reservations, leaving only a few fugitives living in secluded pockets. Within living memory, Grandma Fleet recalls, tribal land was ravaged by gold prospectors and many people were killed or taken prisoner (18).

In historical context, the pan-Indian Ghost Dance emerged in the late 1880s as a spiritual-political response to dispossession and violence. The movement had reached its tragic climax at Wounded Knee on December 29, 1890. The reverberations of that violence and the hope invested in the Ghost Dance persisted for years, reaching even the scattered communities in the Southwest. In *Gardens in the Dunes*, set in the wake of the twentieth century, this residual desire for emancipation surfaces not as a grand vision of a world well designed, but as the quiet spiritual revelation experienced by the Ghost Dancers in Needles: of the prophet Wovoka, of Christ the Messiah, his Holy Mother, and his wife with their eleven children (*Gardens* 33). In this vision of the Ghost Dance, Silko stages a utopian moment, a cry for a true salvation from the cycles of ruin and hope for the restoration of the world's wholeness in the present, when "Jesus promised [the prophet] Wovoka that if the Paiutes and all the other Indians danced this dance, then the used-up land would be whole again and the elk and the herds of buffalo killed off would return" (25). This desire for a renewed ethical relation among people, land, and all living beings, together with a lucid reckoning with present devastation, resonates with what Abensour

calls "difficult utopia": a political "irruption" that dares to imagine an end to repetition, while fully conscious of catastrophe's grip ("New Utopian" 199).

More than a spiritual yearning, the Ghost Dance marks the return of what Abensour calls "political things." Without providing a direct definition of this concept, he describes them as unexpected events that "are irrupting into the present, . . . awaiting response" ("What Kind" 38). In Martin Breaugh and Paul Mazzocchi's clarification, these events or actions emerge within history to "challenge the established order and draw into question that order on the basis of needs emerging in the here and now" ("Introduction" 6). This category of "political things" acquires narrative concreteness in Silko's text through scenes where shared gestures or material practices suspend colonial order. When the Ghost Dance re-enters the lives of Native American tribes as collective choreography and cosmological renewal, it marks precisely the "return of political things": the reappearance of political possibility in spaces where power seemed extinguished (Abensour, "What Kind" 38). Silko's narrative translates Abensour's insurgent democracy into aesthetic form where defiant material practices like gardening, ritual, and storytelling emerge as counter-politics grounded in continuity, gesture, and shared rhythm.

One such moment in *Gardens in the Dunes* occurs when Grandma Fleet relocates her family from the overcrowded old gardens to a hidden camp near Needles (20). She makes this move not as an act of retreat, but as strategic refusal to be absorbed into the settler state's view of Indigenous life. This modest choice is an act of agency that interrupts state-imposed patterns of displacement and surveillance regulating life on the reservations. A similar defiant response is the local Ghost Dance in Needles which gathers not only Native Americans from multiple tribes but fundamentalist Mormons as well. The latter refused the 1890 compromise and did not give up polygamy in exchange for Utah's statehood, so "the US soldiers chased Mormons when they were not chasing Indians" (40). Thus, the Ghost Dance becomes the stage of "the political" as Abensour describes it, not a set of institutions and procedures of "the State-form," but the unpredictable moment when the dominated, through "an experience of universality, the negation of domination, the establishment of an isonomic public space," open the space of freedom through democratic action (*Democracy against the State* 92). This sudden appearance of collective agency is fragile, and irreducible to existing frameworks that makes the Ghost Dance not only a spiritual act, but also a political and democratic one. As such, it must also be understood as a political event grounded in the Native American peoples'

vision of freedom and desire for wholeness. Instead of resisting domination, they powerfully articulate, in their own terms, a politics of restoration and renewal beyond the frameworks imposed by the settler state.

Although utopian in its character, the Ghost Dance does not inaugurate a new era, or lead to institutional transformation. Its power lies in the rupture it creates, and in small individual acts of defiance and resistance that linger after that rupture. While not all acts of resistance portrayed in the novel occur after the local Ghost Dance ceremony in Needles is broken up by authorities, they all take place in the historical aftermath of the movement's suppression, the Wounded Knee massacre of 1890. As such, they belong to the broader temporal and emotional aftermath of the Ghost Dance era. In this temporal space, Indigo and Sister Salt navigate the world not through institutional politics but through daily acts of adaptation: finding food, evading capture, remembering teachings. All these acts of endurance through resistance sustain a form of political community. They occupy a space of "aftermath" when hope is placed into quieter practices of survival, care, and continuity. In this sense, Silko offers a vision of after-utopia, transforming the pursuit of a perfected future into the ongoing work of living in its wake. Her vision resonates with Balibar's call for an "imagination of the present rather than an imagination of the future" (163). Such an imaginative turn towards the present, Balibar continues, is a form of political fiction oriented not towards distant futures. Rather, it is a fiction rooted in the collective "production of the real on the basis of experience itself" (163). Through characters like Indigo and Sister Salt, the novel traces how the utopian impulse of the Ghost Dance is converted into the rhythms of daily resistance that materialize in gardening, memory, and the refusal to disappear.

Beyond resistance, Silko offers an intimate vision of insurgent life in forms of care, kinship, and persistence. If the Ghost Dance represents a collective irruption of the political, a refusal to accept the world as it is and a gesture toward its radical transformation, *Gardens in the Dunes* also presents what remains after such irruptions. Silko portrays what endures when both revolution and defeat have run their course. In the wake of the Ghost Dance, the novel traces a series of smaller acts that continue its insurgent spirit in quiet, often gendered forms. The Sand Lizard women's moments of refusal, protection, or instruction are also political. Their insurgent gestures are embedded in the bodily and relational fabric of the narrative. The small, closely knit family care deeply for each other and for the plant and animal life surrounding them. They welcome kinfolk in need and

develop friendships with like-minded strangers. Young women's pregnancies—Mama's and Sister Salt's in the course of the narrative—are welcome, and the new babies, loved. These women fiercely guard their way of life, freedom, and self-sufficient independence.

Indigenous characters' gestures of survival and resistance, unrecognized as political by dominant, Euro-American frameworks, take on new significance when read through the lens of what Abensour calls "insurgent democracy." In two paratexts to new editions of *Democracy against the State*, Abensour specifies that insurgent democracy is not a political regime but "a mode of action" and "a modality of political agency," which always resurfaces through time whenever the democratic process confronts an obstacle (xxiii). It is, he adds, an "agonistic" act targeting the "unifying, integrating, organizing State-form" (xxiii). Unlike the democracy of state institutions which tends toward regulation and closure, insurgent democracy emerges spontaneously from the lived experience of the dominated and works "against the dominant/dominated relation and towards the advent of a state of non-domination" (xxxiii–xxxiv, xxxi). The Ghost Dance, as a visionary rupture, exemplifies this logic. Silko insists that the spirit of non-compliance with repressive structures persists in the aftermath of historical catastrophes, ensuring the survival of Native Americans. Their defiance is embedded in minor acts of dissent and care. The Sand Lizard people respond to violent displacement and the threat of epidemics by retreating in the old gardens (*Gardens* 17). When the resources of the gardens are dilapidated by the refugees, Grandma Fleet takes her daughter and granddaughters to the periphery of Needles, where the family persists unseen and uncontrolled by the authorities. Such acts form a string of emergent political events, refusals and reassertions of self-determination that are too small to attract attention or bring about change, yet strong enough to keep the utopian impulse alive.

There are moments in the novel when Indigenous characters' spirit of defiance surges spectacularly. When a white woman picks up the toddler Indigo on an impulse to hold a little "papoose," Grandma Fleet snatches her back, screaming "No! No!" until the woman, taken aback, lets the child go (*Gardens* 20–21). At other times, Grandma Fleet finds dissimulation to be the more adequate strategy. When white administrative personnel and Indian policemen search the makeshift lean-tos for school-aged children, she hides Indigo and Sister Salt under a large quilt and sits atop of them, pretending to be crippled (23). These acts, though brief and seemingly insignificant, break the passive flow of dispossession and reclaim kinship as

a site of political resistance. Later, when the Indian police get hold of the siblings and separate them, Sister Salt instructs Indigo: "First chance you get, run!" (64, 69). This action is subdued, unrecorded, and maternal, but it transmits a vital code of resistance. Despite being situated in the realm of familial relations, these acts are spontaneous expressions of radical democratic politics. Where there is domination, Bryan Nelson explains, forms of "opposition, contestation, dissensus and dispute" empowers "those in society who lack political agency (the demos, the poor, the excluded, the exploited)" (9). In *Gardens in the Dunes*, the utopian energy of the Ghost Dance migrates into the fabric of daily life. It takes root in women's gestures, children's memories, and Indigenous people's stubborn will to endure against all odds.

The rupture enacted by the Ghost Dance is not only political but cosmological, breaking both the domination of the settler state and the epistemic order that sustains it. Merchant's concept of "modernity's Recovery Narrative" (46) represents the foundational mythos through which Western thought sought to redeem a fallen world by mastering nature. Within this narrative, the transformation of wilderness into garden becomes both the symbol and the instrument of progress. It is a gesture that reimagines Eden through control, possession, and technological renewal. This narrative, shaped by the entwined legacies of Christianity and the Scientific Revolution, tells the story of a fallen world to be restored through knowledge, mastery, and technological control. "The recovery of Eden through its reinvention of Earth," Merchant writes, "is premised on the transformation of wilderness into garden" (59). Transplanted into settler-colonial ideology, the Recovery Narrative modulates into a civilizing mission that justifies conquest, enclosure, and large-scale ecological intervention. In this sense, Merchant's model is not simply environmental but political, illustrating what Tom Moylan calls a utopia "offering an ideal blueprint or system" (39), a pre-designed concept of the good life imposed upon the many by the few.

Silko, by contrast, reframes the idea of recovery through a radically different cosmology. The vision of the Ghost Dance emerges from spiritual renewal and political refusal, standing in contrast to technological or redemptive projects of mastery. Silko's after-utopian vision extends this defiance that is sustained by resilience after loss rather than the illusion of recovery. As portrayed in the novel, the dance does not reproduce the logic of the Recovery Narrative, aiming to reclaim a lost order through domination, like Edward Palmer and Susan James's managed gardens, or

through benevolent stewardship, like Mr. Abbott's agricultural schemes. Instead, the dancers—Indigenous tribal people and Old Mormons—make an attempt to break the cycles of loss themselves. In Abensour's terms, this is a political act: a collective "irruption" from below, an "interruption of domination" ("Letter from a 'Revoltist'" 256) that opens the space for something yet to come. If the settler-colonial imagination seeks to redeem the world by reordering it, the Ghost Dance and the small, rhythmic acts that follow seek to heal the world by inhabiting it differently. They withhold closure, opening instead onto the fragile beginnings of a political imaginary without a blueprint. It is here that Merchant's critique and Abensour's philosophy meet: both expose the dangers of utopian closure and leave open the question of how to live otherwise. This is a question Silko's novel answers through form, character, and rhythm.

The rupture is followed by a set of provisional, relational practices responsive to the needs of the land. In the aftermath of the Ghost Dance, Silko turns our attention to gestures, routines, and rhythms through which Indigenous characters continue to live within the ruins. The gardens cultivated by the surviving young Sand Lizard women, Indigo and Sister Salt, are not projects of recovery in the Western sense or attempts to restore Eden, but efforts to remain in relation with it. During her journey, Indigo visits gardens shaped by traditions that resonate with her own. In her mind, she never leaves the Old Gardens but carries their principles and their seeds—both literal and symbolic—with her. Meanwhile, Sister Salt finds herself in a barren construction site where all vegetation has been destroyed, and there she begins to create a garden out of stones. These are after-utopian spaces, defined not by perfection or restoration but by continuity, attention and care. As the narrative moves outward from the Arizona desert, Sister Salt and Indigo observe, evaluate, and learn. After the catastrophe of the Ghost Dance, the radical political vision of the novel persists in every seed kept, every gesture of care, and every garden that flourishes against all odds.

Rhythmic praxis and the ethics of care

After the political rupture marked by the Ghost Dance, a different order of meaning begins to emerge for the Sand Lizard women. "From the looks of things," Indigo and Sister Salt understand that "the Messiah and his family might have to stay in hiding for a long time," and so, perhaps, will their mother (*Gardens* 47). Finding refuge in the Old Gardens, the girls realize that from then on, they will have to take care of themselves. They

rely on the instructions of Grandma Fleet, who "began to show them the things they would need to know" (47). This new, after-utopian order consists in coming to terms with loss and continuing a shared life through gesture, rhythm, and care. *Gardens in the Dunes* shifts from the prophetic force of the dance to the quiet, continuous labor of relation. Sister Salt and Indigo tend the soil, share knowledge about growing plants, learn tricks for finding fresh meat. These are not acts of restoration as we have seen in the mainstream version of the western Recovery Narrative, with its promise of redemption through labor and the reclamation of the original Eden (Merchant 41). The Sand Lizard women's practices are modes of persistence after devastation. As the novel's landscape expands beyond the Arizona desert, their deliberate work continues. It unfolds not only through Indigo and Sister Salt's enduring connection to Sand Lizard traditions, but also through the fragile and evolving practices of others. Grandma Fleet dies and is buried in the old gardens, but her teachings awaken to new life in the minds and acts of her granddaughters. Indigo discovers new sites of learning in Aunt Bronwyn's and the *professoressa* Laura's cultivated garden-enclaves and attends to Hattie's slow alignment with the rhythms of Indigenous life. Sister Salt, in turn, forges a lasting friendship with twin Chemehuewi girls and finds ways to resist the prison-like environment and forced labor imposed at the Parker reservation. She becomes increasingly self-reliant under the hostile conditions of the Colorado River construction site.

In *Gardens in the Dunes*, acts of resistance and care mark a shift from utopia as blueprint to what Abensour calls a utopia that is "unfinished in its becoming" ("Persistent" 409). Indigo, Sister Salt, and other like-minded women create a livable world among the ruins. Instead of ideology or identity, these women are bound together by a shared commitment to tending life in the aftermath of loss. In Indigo and Sister Salt's world, to care for the soil, for plants, and for one another is more than a mode of survival, it is an ethical position. The Sand Lizard way of life affirms the ethic of responsibility in which attunement to others persists across time and distance and shapes each act of care.[4]

The Sand Lizard girls' understanding of how to live with the land begins under the guidance of their grandmother, whose daily labor in the old gardens enacts a form of subsistence knowledge that is at once material, ethical, and ancestral. Through stories and seasonal tasks, Grandma Fleet passes on the principles of Sand Lizard gardening: when to plant, where to gather wild food, how to attend to soil moisture, and how to recognize

signals from the land and sky (*Gardens* 49–50). In her stories, agricultural knowledge is carried by mythic figures like Grandfather Snake and his niece, Sand Lizard, who transmit not only cultivation techniques, but a cosmology of reciprocity. Sand Lizard instructs her children to share the harvest not just with kin, but with the sandy soil "beneath the mother plants to shrivel dry and return to the earth," with animals "who cared for the plants," and the "spirits of beloved ancestors" (17). The garden, then, is not a site of human mastery and domination over nature, but a network of mutual relations among plants, animals, ancestors, and weather patterns.[5] Moisture, for instance, is associated with ancestral benevolence. Animals such as coyotes and eagles help the people during lean times, showing them where to find meat, or where to find stored seeds and beans from the pack rats' nests (48–49). However, abundance depends on restraint: one must leave part of the harvest behind so that the land may continue to be fertile. This is a multispecies ethic, where each form of life is a participant rather than a resource. Instead of imposing order and control, Sand Lizard gardening adjusts human behavior to environmental rhythms and embodies an agroecological system that, as Merchant argues, "is based on the planting of interdependent polycultures in forest gardens" (138). Grandma Fleet transmits to Indigo and Sister Salt a rhythmic, relational way of living with others, human and other-than-human alike. In the absence of Grandma Fleet's guidance, amid the eroded landscapes of settler modernity, the girls begin to embody a form of knowledge rooted in ancestral practice, yet responsive to the present.

Yet these rhythms are not confined to the Sand Lizard world. As the temporary ward of Edward and Hattie Palmer, Indigo journeys eastward and, eventually, across the Atlantic. In Bath and Lucca, she encounters gardens shaped by other cultural imaginaries. Among them, the estate of Hattie's Aunt Bronwyn stands out as a site that harmonizes with Indigo's inherited knowledge. Living in a medieval cloister by the River Avon, Aunt Bronwyn tends an expansive orchard and a kitchen garden organized like a living botanical archive. Plants are grouped in four quadrants, according to their geographical origin (*Gardens* 245). This mode of cultivation mirrors the Sand Lizard ethos grounded in both ancestral practices and adaptation. Indigo immediately recognizes plants from the Americas—tomatoes, potatoes, pumpkins, squash, sweet corn—and is delighted to see baby pumpkins (242). Although enclosed by stone walls and bordered by the river, Aunt Bronwyn's estate is not closed. Cattle wander freely down to the willows and into the streets of Bath (240), and ancient Celtic stones are said

to shift at night and bathe in the river under the moon (239, 254). These porous boundaries, animated by movement and memory, echo the Sand Lizard principle of relation over control.

In Lucca, Indigo encounters the garden of Aunt Bronwyn's friend Laura, a place where time, land, and spirit form a complete whole. The *professoressa*, a scholar of archaeology and an independent woman of means, has cultivated her garden as an homage to ancestral presence. Among the herbs and flowering plants, ancient, pre-Roman stone and terra-cotta figures create a sense of continuity. The garden's documented ownership can be traced back to the Napoleonic Wars, but the artifacts that surface from beneath the shrubbery and from hidden grottoes point to "Old European" inhabitants (*Gardens* 283). Like Aunt Bronwyn, Laura treats ancient stones as animated beings with agency and needs, insisting that they "must have fresh air and sunshine, not burial in the museum" (296). Her careful practice of reciprocity, like leaving fallen trees "to nurture the earth for seedlings" (291), echoes the Sand Lizard ethos of care and collaboration across time, space, and species. Indigo explores the garden slowly, sensing its rhythms, attentive to plant life and stone figures. Unlike the managed estates of Edward and Susan or the experimental schemes of Mr. Abbott, the *professoressa*'s garden anticipates the future without design. Here, Indigo realizes that care and responsibility can emerge wherever life is approached with humility and attention.

While Indigo encounters gardens that resonate with the rhythms of her inherited world, Sister Salt witnesses only violence and desolation. Arrested at the Ghost Dance site by the Indian police and enrolled in a "school"—or rather, a "prison" of forced labor—she ekes out a living by washing the dirty laundry of soldiers, government employees, and construction workers (*Gardens* 206). Nearby, a dam and a canal are being built to divert the Colorado River's flow towards Los Angeles. However, the aqueduct that brings life to an arid region leaves another desiccated. To her distress, Sister Salt finds "silver-green carp belly-up" in the empty old riverbed, and watches cottonwood trees and willows "ripped out and plowed into mounds of debris, where their roots reached out plaintively like giant skeleton hands" (214, 218). At the construction site, stripped of vegetation and flooded with concrete, the idea of a garden seems absurd. And yet it is here, in this scorched terrain, that one of the novel's most striking acts of care emerges. With no fertile ground and no plants to tend, Sister Salt begins to arrange "colored rocks and pebbles" (215), fragments of a broken world, into a quiet, deliberate pattern. Her stone garden yields

no harvest; it only holds space. In the place where extractive infrastructure has destroyed the conditions of life, she creates a rhythm of relation between memory and presence, gesture and ground. This act is a form of praxis, a refusal to be reduced to ruin, and a reassertion of relation where none is expected. Sister Salt's stone garden continues the Sand Lizard ethic in an altered form, shifting the work of care from the hope of restoration to the practice of endurance. As Abensour insists, the utopian impulse does not depend on perfection or completion ("New Utopian" 203). In *Gardens in the Dunes*, this impulse arises after catastrophe and continues in practices of care. Sister Salt's gesture, made under the constraints of scarcity, represents this after-utopian mode of being. In conditions of domination, she does not dream of transformation but practices it.

The subsistence cultivation of the Sand Lizard women and the gardening practices of Aunt Bronwyn and Laura share respect for the essential conditions of life. These characters do not create utopian spaces in the classical sense.[6] Instead, they sustain a "persistent utopia," defined by Abensour as "a stubborn impulse toward freedom and justice," a mode of one that is "reborn in history, reappears, makes itself felt in the blackest catastrophe, resists as if catastrophe itself called forth new summations" ("Persistent" 407). In this sense, *Gardens in the Dunes* offers a vision of democracy after catastrophe. Unlike the state-form, with its apparatus of regulation, this is a democracy of gestures that are inherently political: quiet refusals, cultivated spaces, deeply felt solidarities. The political, here, is not projected outward in proposals of perfect systems, but practiced in rhythm and in relation with the land, with others, with memory. Each garden becomes a modest assertion of emancipation from violent erasure, displacement, and the fantasy of control.

What remains is to consider how Silko's aesthetic strategies—her manipulation of rhythm, temporality, and voice—translate these ethical and political gestures into the texture of the narrative itself. The novel's form performs a politics of rhythm. Its non-linear temporality, its alternation of dream, vision, and travel sequences, and its circulation of narrative voices together produce a pulse that resists the forward drive of progress. This rhythmic composition mirrors the cyclical temporality of ritual and the ecological attunement of the gardens where repetition and variation become strategies of endurance. Rhythmic praxis therefore names both an ethical stance and a narrative technique, transforming survival into pattern, vulnerability into temporal openness. In this rhythm, *Gardens in the Dunes*

portrays political imagination as something felt in time, a pulse of endurance that persists after utopian hope has faded.

Conclusion

In her previous novel, *Almanac of the Dead* (1991), an ambitious, politically engaged decolonial epic, Silko indicted capitalism, militarism, and environmental destruction. Years later, in an interview with Ellen Arnold, she recalled the "moaners and groaners" who criticized the novel's overt political engagement, which led her to consider stepping away from such themes. But turning her attention to writing about "gardens and flowers," Silko realized that "how you grow your food, whether you eat, the fact that the plant collectors followed the Conquistadors" (Arnold 3, 4) was also profoundly political. My reading of *Gardens in the Dunes* from the perspective of political theory was not meant to impose a theoretical framework from outside the text. Rather, it traced how the novel itself thinks politically through narrative and embodied practice.

Gardens in the Dunes does not offer blueprints of a better world, nor does it surrender to despair. What remains, after the utopian certainties of the Ghost Dance and the devastation that follows, is a persistent rhythm, a quiet continuity grounded in care, kinship, and relation. Utopia in this novel is neither abolished nor fulfilled, but interrupted, fractured, and carried forward in altered forms. Silko reclaims the utopian impulse from imperial totalizing designs and restores it as a mode of ethical and political practice. Resonating with Abensour's critique of the dialectic of emancipation, her novel suggests that true freedom must be enacted in the refusal to dominate others, in the endurance of memory, and in the willingness to live differently. Abensour's conceptual triad—utopia, democracy, emancipation—finds its final articulation in rhythm, the same living pulse of democratic practice that the essay traced from the novel's opening pages and that sustains life without fixing it in place. In the wake of catastrophe, Silko's characters plant seeds, arrange stones, share food, tell stories. For them, survival is not a return to order but a refusal of erasure. In their rhythmic gestures of persistence, a political imaginary of wholeness and integrity starts to take shape. Instead of resolving the contradictions of modernity, Silko's novel inhabits them. In doing so, *Gardens in the Dunes* invites us to imagine a future that does not await redemption elsewhere but grows through reflection, attention, and care.

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Notes

1. Silko's evocation of Laguna Pueblo life reveals agriculture as a form of moral and cosmological balance rather than mere subsistence. In "Landscape, History, and the Pueblo Imagination," she describes how "the Earth [is] the Mother Creator of all things in this world," joined by "the Corn Mother," since "all succulent green life rises out of the depths of the earth" (83). In *Gardens in the Dunes,* this agrarian ethos re-emerges as an ethics of care and endurance. Tending plants, exchanging seeds, and narrating attachment to the land become gestures of survival and renewal.

2. This brief contextualization acknowledges the novel's grounding in Laguna Pueblo and related Indigenous traditions without aspiring to an ethnographic reading, which would require a different methodological framework and scope. My emphasis throughout remains on the philosophical and narrative articulation of these traditions within Silko's utopian imagination.

3. In Volume 1 of *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch describes utopian affect as grounded in "expectant emotions" that open toward a real, not merely imagined, future: "the Not-Yet, of what has objectively not yet been there" (74–75).

4. Terre Ryan notes that Grandma Fleet's "simple" subsistence gardening embodies "a highly sophisticated understanding of desert agriculture and the continuation of agricultural traditions that had been in practice for thousands of years," reaffirming "Native authority" against the "extravagant practices of the novel's Euroamerican gardeners" (*"The Nineteenth-Century Garden"* 118–19).

5. Rebecca Tillett highlights how Silko's Sand Lizard gardens offer "a very different and much more comprehensive 'record' of sustainable Indigenous gardening practices . . . that both create and maintain a delicate ecological balance and demonstrate a profound cosmological and cosmopolitical understanding of the workings of the natural world and humanity's place within it" (192).

6. Tillett reads *Gardens in the Dunes* as articulating "a necessary 'lived resistance' to the growing risks of ecological disaster" (197), a practice of endurance that aligns with the after-utopian ethics of relation and care traced in this essay.

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