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Solastalgia and Poetic Resilience in the Environmental Imagination of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner

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Abstract

Indigenous communities across the world and, more specifically, those of the Global South, are especially vulnerable to the effects of human-induced climate change. Standing at the crossroads of modernity and ancestral life, many communities face overwhelming losses of biocultural traditions along with their rightful homelands. Such loss has led to anxiety among communities firmly rooted in particular places. As a form of resistance to pervasive capitalist forces benefiting from the degradation of the environment, climate poetry offers an alternative response for voicing concerns in the form of protesting ecological abuses while allaying the anxiety of solastalgic disruption (McDougall et al., 2022, pp. 26–27). This article examines the poetic imagination of Marshall Islands writer and activist Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner by linking her work to the concepts of solastalgia and resilience. Representative of current Indigenous concerns over climate change and biocultural loss, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry presents a powerful voice from a postcolonial nation located in the Pacific Ocean between Hawaii and the Philippines. Her poetry exudes a sense of solastalgia in response to the ecologically destructive influence of powerful Western nations, in general, and the United States, in particular, on the Marshall Islands. Narrativizing the concept of solastalgia, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry critiques human-driven ecological ruination and voices concern about the impacts of climate change on island nations. Her work, furthermore, underscores that postcolonial states, such as the Marshall Islands, must negotiate conflicting relationships with the forces of modernity that underlie ecologically detrimental choices and behaviors. The article thus aims to extend the concept of solastalgia to Indigenous communities through an analysis of Jetñil-Kijiner's work.

Keywords: Anthropocene, climate change poetry, Indigeneity, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Marshall Islands, postcolonial modernity, solastalgia

Introduction

The intensification of global climate change within the Anthropocene context has triggered responses from scholars questioning the credibility of Western modernity and its foundational ideas. Environmental humanists, in particular, critique the techno-utopianist claim that "capitalist economies will generate solutions to environmental problems as they arise" (Garrard, 2012, p. 19) and, in turn, aim to formulate alternatives to the conceptualization of the world as a "controllable and manageable object" (Pugh & Chandler, 2021, p. 18). Environmental humanists contend that, as we encounter the planetary scale of the crisis, the biosphere emerges "as a site of existential concern" (Chakrabarty, 2019, p. 4). In this expanded sense of self and place, the planetary scale foregrounded by the concept of the Anthropocene indelibly transforms encounters with the Earth. Although ungraspable through an everyday perceptual framework, the planetary now invariably molds human decisions, behaviors, and actions. As a result of this, "the institutions humans have used so far to secure human life have reached a point of expansion and development whereby that very fundamental premise of human politics—securing human life—is undermined" (Chakrabarty, 2019, p. 30). The global precarity, underscored by Chakrabarty and other green postcolonial scholars, impacts both human and non-human entities. Anthropogenic and environmental climate change has adversely affected the physical and mental health of vulnerable communities across the world. This precarity instills anxiety and fear among vulnerable communities, giving rise to the sense of solastalgia. Climate Change Anxiety (Clayton, 2020), Major Depressive Disorder, and Generalized Anxiety Disorder (Goldmann & Galea, 2014; Hrabok, 2020) are some of the medical terminologies used to describe the effect of climate change on human mental health. Although affected by such ecoprecarity, Indigenous communities have shown tremendous resilience in coping with the crisis. For such communities, poetry becomes the site for responding to strife, where solastalgia and resilience manifest the capacity to build cross-cultural bridges for solidarity. Within this framework, and in relation to Anthropocene alterations, this article focuses on the urgencies faced by island nations and their indigenous inhabitants, with particular attention to the Marshall Islands, a republic located in the central Pacific Ocean between Hawai'i and the Philippines. This article examines the poetic imagination of Marshall Islands writer and activist Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner by linking her work to the concepts of solastalgia and resilience. Most research works on solastalgia are based on case studies associated with the visible psychological impact of environmental distress on a group (see Albrecht, Sartore et al., 2007; Warsini et al., 2014; Askland et al., 2018), thereby providing a medical-psychological model of research. This article transgresses a medical-psychological model of study by incorporating poetic intervention as a resilient strategy. Thus, the argument focuses on the impact of the anthropogenic disaster on the psychology and health of the Marshallese experiencing states of solastalgia. We further argue that solastalgia is engineered by potential geo-political forces that can be understood through a discourse of dominance and subordination as narrated in poetry.

Representative of current Indigenous concerns over climate change and biocultural loss, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry is a powerful voice from a postcolonial nation. Her poetry exudes a sense of solastalgia in response to the ecologically destructive influence of powerful Western nations, in general, and the United States, in particular, on the Marshall Islands. Narrativizing the feeling of solastalgia, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry critiques human-driven ecological ruination, and voices concern about the impacts of climate change on island nations. Her work, furthermore, underscores that postcolonial states, such as the Marshall

Islands, must negotiate conflicting relationships with the forces of modernity that underlie ecologically detrimental choices and behaviors. The indigenous communities of island nations have historically been viewed by dominant social classes as peripheral. They have been typically described as inhuman, brutes, less than human and so forth in colonial, literary, and political discourses, thereby validating the subjugation of Indigenous communities by Eurocentric powers. Hence their rights to health, well-being, and sovereignty have consistently been marginalized, particularly in relation to climate change impacts (Abate & Kronk, 2013). In many cases around the world, the colonial-era appropriation of island resources propounded a denigrative outlook on inhabitants as savages and brutes, thus legitimizing the colonizers' exploitation and extermination of human and non-human groups (Ghosh, 2021). Although overt imperial dominance of island economies has waned, neo-colonialist forms of exploiting the resources of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) have taken firm hold in the Caribbean, Pacific, Mediterranean, and other nations in the tropics and sub-tropics (Moncada et al., 2021). In an era of climate change escalation, island communities remain increasingly vulnerable to resource depletion, species decline, sea-level rise, extreme tides, and other precarities. As economist Stefano Moncada and colleagues (2021) observe, factors such as low income and poor infrastructure in Small Island Developing States "can deepen exposure to climate change impacts and act as obstacles to successful resilience building" (p. 2). However, while world leaders convene high-profile meetings such as United Nations Climate Change Conference to discuss global warming, relatively few concrete measures have been taken to address the anxieties of island communities, whose longstanding livelihoods and traditions are increasingly at risk. What's more, small island nations face the adverse consequences of techno-industrial interference, for instance, in the form of genetically modified crops and energy policy colonialism (de Onís, 2018). In response to these circumstances, literary works express the anxieties of island communities over the catastrophic biocultural effects of climate change. This pernicious sense of foreboding, termed *solastalgia* by philosopher Glenn Albrecht, expresses the psychological malaise associated with ecological degradation. Warsini, Mills, and Usher describe solastalgia as "emotional distress due to living in a severely damaged environment" (2014, p. 87).

In an early articulation of the concept, Albrecht (2005) defined solastalgia as "the pain or sickness caused by the loss or lack of solace and the sense of isolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory" (p. 48). Whereas the well-known idea of nostalgia signifies one's sense of loss after the experience of displacement, solastalgia for Albrecht refers to the feeling of mourning resulting from first-hand encounters with the deterioration of a home place or ecoregion. In other words, solastalgia is the "'lived experience' of the loss of the present as manifest in a feeling of dislocation" arising from the decline of a place's capacity to engender a sense of being at home or feeling secure (Albrecht, 2005, p. 48). Albrecht and colleagues (2007) further characterized solastalgia as "place-based distress in the face of the lived experience of profound environmental change" (p. S96). Emerging originally from ethnographic research on ecological concerns in the Upper Hunter Region of New South Wales, Australia, solastalgia is the "homesickness one gets when one is still at 'home'" (Albrecht, 2005, p. 48). This negative state of ecological awareness results from the prolonged sensory, emotional, and corporeal exposure to the deterioration of a place over time:

> The people of concern are still 'at home', but experience a 'homesickness' similar to that caused by nostalgia. What these people lack is solace or comfort derived from their present relationship to 'home' […] solastalgia exists when there is the lived experience of the physical desolation of home. (Albrecht et al., 2007, p. S96)

The factors instigating solastalgia are both environmental and anthropogenic, comprising "drought, fire and flood" in addition to "land clearing, mining, rapid institutional change"(Albrecht, 2005, p. 48), the latter especially salient in Jetn̄il-Kijiner's poetry. In *Earth Emotions* (2019), his most recent elaboration of the idea, Albrecht evokes solastalgia as "the pain or distress caused by the ongoing loss of solace and the sense of desolation connected to the present state of one's home and territory. It is the existential and lived experience of negative environmental change" (pp. 38–39). Put differently, solastalgia can be individual, collective, and transgenerational (Albrecht, 2019, p. 52).

Researchers call for further studies of Indigenous peoples' experiences of solastalgia (Galway et al., 2019; Kingsley et al., 2013) in the present scenario of climate change. In their review of fifteen years of scholarly literature on solastalgia, environmental health researcher Lindsay Galway and colleagues (2019) highlight the need for a deeper understanding of solastalgia in relation to Indigenous peoples' experiences of climatic and environmental transformation. The authors, in particular, advocate an approach to solastalgia that recognizes Indigenous historical trauma as the "cumulative and intergenerational experiences of multiple chronic traumas" including land dispossession (Galway et al., 2019, p. 13). Notable existing studies of Indigenous peoples and solastalgia, nevertheless, focus principally on Inuit and Aboriginal Australian communities (Cunsolo, 2017; McNamara & Westoby, 2011; Middleton et al., 2020). In interviews with the Inuit people of the Nunatsiavut region of Labrador, Canada, Ashlee Cunsolo (2017) identified "shared deep feelings of loss, sadness, and despair; they expressed anxiety and fear for the future" (p. xvii). Other researchers point to a "climate-mental wellness relationship" among the Inuit, emphasizing the need for "more culturally-specific and place-based investigations" of solastalgia (Middleton et al., 2020, p. 1). On Erub Island in the Torres Strait of Queensland, Australia, moreover, the distress triggered by environmental degradation reflects the disruption of deep ancestral ties to the land and cosmologies intimately linked to the environment (McNamara & Westoby, 2011). The stories of the older women, or aunties, of Erub Island voiced malaise, anxiety, and distress, as well as a weakened sense of belonging (McNamara & Westoby, 2011, p. 233).

Many vulnerable communities living in island nations and postcolonial countries bracketed under the Global South have been suffering from solastalgia as well. To counter these threats posed by overambitious capitalist nations and organizations, a common ground for world solidarity becomes crucial. But these small communities lack the adequate agency to form a contrapuntal resisting force in terms of economic and international policies. This is where, creative literature, and especially poetry, may act as an alternate emergent power (in the Marxist sense) and function as a resilient strategy. Poetry has the power to ignite and empower communities through logos of solidarity, thereby affecting popular opinion across the world. To use William Rueckert's words: "Properly Understood, poems can be studied as models for energy flow, community building, and ecosystems. The first law of ecology is that everything is connected to everything else - applies to poems as well as to nature" (1978, p. 110). According to Rueckert, "energy flows from the poet's language centres and creative imagination into the poem and thence, from the poem into the reader" (1978, pp. 109–110).

Similarly, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry forms a bridge across continents to connect with climate change activists. She shares her concern for other islands with a similar fate and, through her poetic endeavor, addresses the common plight of vulnerable communities (see Jetñil-Kijiner & Niviâna). Within this trajectory of solastalgia in poetic works, the next section discusses the challenges faced by indigenous communities with specific reference to the Marshall Islands.

Solastalgia and Resilience in Jetñil-Kijiner's Poetry

Jetñil-Kijiner is a Marshall Islander poet, performer, activist, and educator who first attracted international attention through her reading of the poem "Dear Matafele Peinam" at the opening ceremony of the 2014 United Nations Climate Summit in New York (United Nations, 2014). In addition to her writing and performance, she co-founded the youth-focused environmental non-profit organization, Jo-Jikum, dedicated to empowering Marshallese youth to devise solutions to climate change and other ecological urgencies (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2022). Her debut poetry collection, *Iep Jāltok: Poems from a Marshallese Daughter (2017*), comprises twenty-eight poems divided into four sections, "Iep Jāltok," "History Project," "Lessons from Hawai'i" and "Tell Them." The collection's opening pages define *iep jāltok* as "a basket whose opening is facing the speaker" (p. 11). A female child is also evoked figuratively as "a basket whose contents are made available to her relatives," signifying the matrilineal emphasis of traditional Marshallese society, which is symbolic of generosity (Chang, 2020). The poem signifies the hospitality and generosity of the Marshallese islanders, and at the same time, it sets the tone of bereavement through the following lines: "You/offer/offer/offer/earth/of your/mother…littered/ with scrapes/tossed by/others" (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2017, p. 14). The oval shape of the verses duplicates the shape of a basket without a cover, thereby signifying the possibility of getting robbed or exploited. The metaphor of the basket is used to describe the Pacific Islands as a place that can be filled or emptied. The basket also symbolizes Earth, which provides nourishment to both human and non-human life. The basket resembles the womb of an expecting mother. Most of the time, humankind has only extracted resources from the Earth without leaving space for recovery. In the contemporary context, the Marshall Islands and the sustainable ecosystems that have contributed to the food chain have been gradually emptied of vitality. Just as the land is considered an important factor in agricultural production, the mother's womb is also a tangible place of regeneration. However, neither the intrinsic value of land nor the intrinsic value of women is ever honored. In return, it is filled with toxic elements and radiation, symbolized by the Big Dome. The poet asks a rhetorical question: "What happens when islands/ that nourished us with the wisdom of their bodies/ become barren/ amputated" ("Dome Poem Part II: Of Islands And Elders"). The words "barren" and "amputated" evoke the image of T.S Eliot's *The Waste Land* where life is handicapped by the incursion of baneful modernity in a war-ridden world. In the same way, the wombs of the mothers also become barren or filled with jellybabies. Explaining this situation Jetñil-Kijiner writes "The hardships which the "nuclear nomads" of the four atolls—Bikini, Rongelap, Enewetak, and Utrik—have had to face are all the more horrific when you take into account how strongly our culture is tied to our islands, how peaceful we have been as a people, and how vulnerable we were to the US" (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2013). This knowledge of being vulnerable is accompanied by feelings of anxiety, fear, and helplessness. Consequently, because of the contamination, the Marshallese people have become economically dependent on the US for food supplies and other aids--an explication of the power politics between the dominant and the subordinate. Expressing both anxiety and resilience, Jetñil-Kijiner believes in the

regenerative power of nature and wishes to live on the island instead of leaving it: "There exists/ still/ some/ green/ Even after/ a nuclear blast/ life/ continues to unfurl/ its leaves" ("Dome Poem Part II: Of Islands and Elders").

The collection *Iep Jāltok* concludes with another poem of a similar title, "Basket." However, the shape of the lyrics has become disjointed, as if the basket has been lacerated. In consonance with the now distorted shape of the basket (signifying the island, or rather the shape of the earth, or a mother's womb), the speaker finally confirms the damage done to the island in return for the gifts she has offered: "a seabed/to scrap/a receptacle/to dump/with scraps / your/body/is a country/we conquer/and devour" (89). The speaker's insatiable greed is obvious as it demands more of the island. This Basket contains the poetic world that invites the readers to a journey of solastalgia triggered by numerous incidents of exploitation and deprivation. Simultaneously a strong poetic voice of resilience also emerges as the poet asks, "Who gave them the power to burn?" (Jetñil-Kijiner 2018).

The poet narrates the glaring effects of nuclear testing on the islands of Enewetak and the Bikini Atolls, which have left the places uninhabitable and have led to the displacement of indigenous communities. Even after several decades, the effects are seen in the next generation, thereby transforming the crisis into an intergenerational trauma. Although the US allows people from these islands to live and work in the US, eventually they become people from nowhere. Fully aware of this situation, Jetñil-Kijiner predicates the consequences of forced migration and relocation, "It also meant that our people were no longer able to maintain certain cultural traditions, skills, and knowledge that depended on close ties to our land. Despite all of these trials, however, our people have survived. And we continue to resist" (2017).

The on-the-ground reality is far worse than one can anticipate. Since the economic, political, and cultural lives of Marshallese Islanders are entangled with climate change and the history of American nuclear testing, the people have been relegated to a subaltern void of invisibility. With the growing influence of China (see H. J. Res. 73) and Russia's ongoing war with Ukraine, control over the Pacific Region becomes geopolitically crucial for the United States. This is why countries like the Marshall Islands are co-opted, much to the disadvantage of the latter. Although the situation enables the Marshallese leaders to renegotiate with the US, eventually, due to the heavy militarization of the area and the effects of radioactive waste, they continue to live precarious and vulnerable lives with an uncertain future. The impact of radiation can be gauged by the simple fact that the bomb that exploded in the Marshall Islands was a thousand times more powerful than the one that exploded in Hiroshima. Rust and Greene, reporting from ground zero, write:

> Here in the Marshall Islands, Runit Dome holds more than 3.1 million cubic feet — or 35 Olympic-sized swimming pools — of U.S.-produced radioactive soil and debris, including lethal amounts of plutonium. Nowhere else has the United States saddled another country with so much of its nuclear waste, a product of its Cold War atomic testing program. Between 1946 and 1958, the United States detonated 67 nuclear bombs on, in and above the Marshall Islands — vaporizing whole islands, carving craters into its shallow lagoons and exiling hundreds of people from their homes. (2019)

The geopolitical relationship between the Marshall Islands and the US is one of domination and subordination and therefore ambivalent for two specific reasons. First, due to its strategic importance, the site and its ecosystem have come under serious threat. Secondly, even when the islanders have been resettled elsewhere, they lose connection to their past, their culture, and their sovereign rights to take decisions without the interference of the US. As the Compact of Free Associations (COFA) between the Marshall Islands and the US is about to expire in 2023, Laura Brewington reports about uncertainties looming large: "Against this backdrop of inaction, climate change, inequality, and COVID-19 also pose existential threats to lives and livelihoods" (2022). Furthermore, the economic package that has been promised to the victims of the Marshall Islands as compensation has not been fully released (Lewis, 2015; Rust & Greene, 2019). The bill "H. J. Res.73 - Formally apologizing for the nuclear legacy of the United States in the Republic of the Marshall Islands and affirming the importance of the free association between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Marshall Islands," which was introduced by Congress, further exposes the horrendous crime committed not only against Marshallese Islanders but against vulnerable indigenous communities.

Whereas a military or political deterrence against powerful nations like the US, Germany, or Japan was not feasible for an indigenous community like the Marshallese, Jetñil-Kijiner sought poetic resistance. In this regard, her climate poetry offers a compelling example of work that addresses eco-disaster, anthropocentric legacies, and the debilitating effects of climate change, foregrounding the urgencies of an island nation threatened by radioactive contamination, loss of culture and identity, and rising sea levels. She provides a compelling image of the speaker's fever-stricken toddler as an effective strategy for narrating the implications of a warming climate on the low-lying topography of the Marshall Islands in her poem "Two Degrees". The speaker poignantly evokes the importance of poetry and narrative more broadly in a world confronted by conflicting messages about climate: "So that people / remember / that beyond / the discussions / numbers / and statistics / there are faces." The poet draws attention to the cold shoulder given to the vulnerable islanders in her poem entitled "History Project". Although people write and talk about Indigenous communities, there is hardly any action taken to alleviate their conditions. Death becomes statistics, and their analysis becomes project work filed away on papers. Blending pathos and irony, Jetñil-Kijiner mocks the contemporary history of the Marshall Islands as shaped by the US and exposes the biopolitics of a powerful nation:

> At fifteen I decide
>
> To do my history project
>
> On nuclear testing in the Marshall islands
>
> Time to learn my own history
>
> …
>
> Quotes from American leaders like
>
> *90,000 people are out there. Who*
>
> *Gives a damn*?
>
> …
>
> I read firsthand accounts

Of what we call

Jelly babies… (2017, p. 29-30).

The radiation from the site has not only contaminated the ecosystem, but it has also equally blighted the ecosystem of birthing; as a result, stillborns and jelly-babies are replacing the healthy ones. The Islanders have been made to believe that nuclear testing would end world wars once and for all; and that is why it is "for the good of mankind" (2017, p. 30). "Good for mankind" becomes a trope, that is iterated again and again to make the Islanders believe that "God will thank" them as if their sacrifice has been divinely ordained. Such discourse is necessary for the creation of dominance, by which victims are made not only to participate in their own destruction but also to create the illusion of a greater good.

Their sacrifice has yielded nothing but death and disease. Jetñil-Kijiner recalls her niece, who was afflicted with cancer because of the radiation: "There had been a war/ raging inside Bianca's six years old bones" (2017, p. 25). The loss of family members and the sight of death all around have made the poet remorseful and apprehensive about the future of her community. She refuses to be imprisoned by the feeling of solastalgia; on the contrary, the Marshallese folklore of resilience provides her impetus to rebound. The resilience of her community is manifested in the myths that connect them to the Earth's life systems-Liwatuonmour and Lidepdepju (pp. 8–9). She invokes "an old Chamorro legend" in which the women "saved their island/ from a giant coral eating fish" (p. 30). This allusion to the legend serves two purposes: it is a connection to the past from which they derive inspiration, and it also serves as a rhetoric of resilience. The lines from the poem refract like particles spread across the pages, indicating the collective unconsciousness, which needs to be rebounded to boost their resistance against the world powers gnawing at their islands. It is to be noted that Jetñil-Kijiner's poetic critique is not just directed against the US, but also toward all the nations that are responsible for climate change.

As vulnerable communities, islands continue to be impacted by climate change and contamination from industrial activities carried out in the Global North. Climate change is responsible for rising sea levels that threaten to inundate low-lying islands. Studies suggest that the rise in sea levels, further exacerbated under a fossil fuel-dominated global economy, will result in a 4–6-degree Celsius increase in temperature by the end of the twenty-first century (Mimura, 2013). This increase in temperature will result in the thermal expansion and melting of the ice sheet in the Polar Regions, triggering a massive transformation of the landscape (Lindsey, 2020; Nicholls & Cazenave, 2010). "Flooding due to storm surges, and wetland losses due to accelerated sea-level rise" (Nicholls, Hoozemans, & Marchand) will therefore affect the food chain that supports the web of life in coastal areas and islands. Moreover, cyclones and other natural calamities will become more recurrent in the coming days, which will affect coastal areas and the Small Island nations alike (Ghosh, 2017). Nemat Sadat's findings show that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) "are already threatened by escalating tides, cyclones, flooding, damaged crops, increased disease, the inundation of coastal areas and the loss of freshwater supplies. SIDS are indeed on the 'front lines' of climate change." Sadat further adds that the increase in consumption of fossil fuels in the post-industrial age has increased the presence of "carbon dioxide (CO2) to dangerous levels, damaging the environment and infrastructure of many SIDS and other low-lying regions." Under these circumstances, the indigenous communities will find that their homelands will

become uninhabitable gradually if climate action is not given urgent attention. Indigenous peoples constitute around 5% of the world's population, and their livelihood is based on natural resources. Their dependence on natural resources has developed into a symbiotic relationship because "it is they who protect forests vulnerable to the encroachment of modernity" (Etchart, 2017).

Jetñil-Kijiner's response to Climate Migration

This is a concern that Jetñil-Kijiner has addressed in her talks as well as in her poetry. A short-circuited remedy offered to address this problem is the promotion of immigration. However, immigration can also mean the loss of home and identity. Her poem "Lessons from Hawai'i" deliberates on the 'discourse of difference' that the immigrant communities experience in the host countries. A discourse of difference can be understood as a recourse to identity politics, wherein social, communal, racial, and linguistic traits are differentiated to validate the policy of exclusion. In this, it goes beyond the process of otherization, where the "otherized" community is appropriated and transformed. But in the discourse of difference, the process of otherization is coupled with the politics of exclusion. When certain communities are seen as a burden on resources, the dominant community invokes this discourse to legitimize their claim on the land and resources, thereby delegitimizing the presence of the other community, leading to their expulsion. Such discourses may proliferate through popular media, political debate, historiography, and national policies:

> this isn't their country.
> This is America…
> Eh, eh- why did
> The Micronesian man marry
> A monkey?
> …
> It's actually
> NOT Micronesian
> It's Marshallese
> Chuukese
> Pohnpeian
> …
> That's how I learned
> To hate
> Me. (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2017, pp. 46-49)

They are not only subjected to incendiary racial slurs and abuses; they are also looked down upon as swarms of locusts and social liabilities. Because of their abject state and harrowing existential experience related to human-induced environmental hazards, they are exposed to structural vulnerability. Consequently, it may have a long-term psychosocial bearing on their mental health (Gonzales & Chavez, 2012; Kelman et al., 2021). Studies reveal that

immigrants in the US are at greater risk of diminished health outcomes because of the anti-immigrant rhetoric prevalent in those societies. They undergo mental trauma because of "socioeconomic disadvantage, harsh living conditions…stigmatization and discrimination" (Garcini et al., 2021). It has been found that the impact of weather on the displaced population causes severe stress, depression, anxiety and PTDS (Loughry, 2012; Kutcher, 2005; Shultz, 2016). Kelmen states that "irrespective of unknowns and uncertainties, and of whether or not they migrate, SIDS peoples can expect large-scale alterations to their settlements, cultures, knowledge, and identities under climate change, with subsequent impacts on mental health and wellbeing." Immigration also entails numerous other challenges linked to citizenship, conflict, vocation, and individual rights, thereby triangulating psychological health, environmental hazards, and immigration to solastalgia. Since the possibility of social cohesion in the Marshall Islands is slim, as evident from the poem "Lessons from Hawai'i", their chances of suffering from solastalgia are also very high. Although one-third of the Marshallese population has migrated abroad due to environmental hazards and to seek better livelihood opportunities, Jetñil-Kijiner believes that migration is not an option because it would existentially deprive them of who they are. In the past, religious conversions have already alienated them from their cultural roots, as lamented by the poet in her poems "Liwatuonmour" and "Ettolok Ilikin Lometo", but they still look forward to their old faith to regain their resilience. Addressing this concern about immigration, Jetñil-Kijiner states "As a Marshallese, I disagree with the narrative that says, the Marshall Islands are sinking and the Marshallese all want to move abroad. It is perfectly fine to migrate if that is what you want to do, but many of us don't, and we want to have a choice. Climate change should not force us to leave our home (Press Releases)." She further expresses her feelings in the poem "Rise":

> Sister of ice and snow,
> I offer you this shell
> and the story of the two sisters
> as testament
> as declaration
> that despite everything
> we will not leave. (Jetñil-Kijiner & Niviâna)

Although she is resolute about not leaving her home, she feels the grief that her cousin felt when she had to travel to Hawai'I in one of her poems, "Flying to Makiki Street"

> My nine year old mind is desperate.
> It wonders if sticks of juicy fruit gum
> could chew away
> the raw ache in your heart.
> …
> we could find some way
> to peel apart the loss
> of your old home. (Jetñil-Kijiner, 2017, p. 34)

Through the use of compact metaphor, she further adds that the world should be empathic towards Small Islands like Greenland or the Marshall Islands and try to "see beyond SUV's, ac's, their pre-packaged convenience, their oil-slicked dreams" (Jetñil-Kijiner & Niviâna). Kathy's poetry familiarizes the readers with the causes of the rising water level that threatens to put her community's identity, culture, and home in peril. It is not just Jetñil-Kijiner's home that is threatened by rising water levels, as many other SIDS are sharing a similar fate. In this sense, Jetñil-Kijiner becomes the spokesperson for all the communities that are facing a precarious existence.

Jetñil-Kijiner connects to her counterpart Aka Niviâna in Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) through poetry in solidarity to fight against global warming. These Indigenous poets use poetry as their tool to inform the world about the precarity of global warming and its consequences on the tiny islands. The Marshall Islands face multiple threats because of colonial occupation, nuclear tests, and rising water levels. Quite discreet in her approach, Kathy paints the saga of the Anthropocene that has engulfed her homeland:

> first through wars inflicted on us
>
> then through nuclear waste
>
> dumped
>
> in our waters
>
> on our ice
>
> and now this (Jetñil-Kijiner & Niviâna).

It is not just the war or the nuclear radiation that is making the island inhabitable; it is also the rising global temperature that is posing a serious threat to the community. On the one hand, Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry introduces us to her solastalgic feelings, yet on the other hand, she also braves climate change and thinks of adapting to the new way of life as expressed through her poetry. Climate change activism through poetry could build a strong, resilient mechanism. Activism through poetry can help build solidarity with other communities to achieve similar objectives. This may have both positive and negative effects on mental health. In the case of adversity, it may prepare the person psychologically to face the worse, and secondly, it can also empower the individual or a community because of collective effort and social support (Gorski, 2019). Although it "may be a way to regain power and build agency, which, in turn, may be associated with better mental health" (Schwartz, 2022), a failure to achieve the desired goals and subsequent loss may also aggravate the feelings of solastalgia (Albright, 2021). Nevertheless, research findings point out that solidarity and collectivism show better results as coping strategies, thereby ensuring happiness and alleviating pain (Schwartz, 2022).

However, adaptation and mitigation are two different strategies and follow two different trajectories. With the nuclear radiation affecting the Marshall Islands, the indigenous communities have to adapt to the precarious environment; on the other hand, the call for mitigation from the indigenous communities will counter the effects of global warming at the current rate. Mitigation strategies offered by various Indigenous communities around the world are based on the vitality of the Earth (Ghosh, 2021) and the capacity to connect to it through shamans and 'elderpeople' (Ghosh, 2022). Such strategies are not only helpful in tackling the climate change crisis but also helpful in rejuvenating the world of

nature by minimizing the destructive growth of modernity and technology. This is precisely what enables Indigenous communities to be resilient.

Conclusion

The impact of climate change on indigenous communities can be described as both tangible and intangible. Material losses like land dispossession, contamination of the ecosystem that supports the web of life, depletion of aquatic and natural resources, and physical ailments can be bracketed under tangible effects; whereas mental anxiety, psychological effects, trauma and fear, and the loss of culture and identity can be considered intangible effects. Both of these effects contribute to the feeling of solastalgia. Research also shows that marginalized and economically poor communities are affected more by climate change than wealthy people because the former are in a disadvantaged position. In postcolonial ecologies where Indigenous community life is affected by solastalgia, climate change can invariably be linked to colonial, neocolonial, and postcolonial exploitation of the land and resources by capitalist organizations. This exploitation has been guided by a robust modus operandi wherein the dictum "Terra nullius" has been applied to dispossess the lands of their rightful dwellers. The colonization of Africa, America, Australia, the Indian subcontinent, and Island Nations resulted in the large-scale displacement of indigenous communities from their native places. Many of these nations are now passing through a phase of ethnic resurgence, giving space to the Indigenous knowledge systems that could help mitigate the climate change crisis. The tremendous effort displayed by these indigenous communities in dealing with adverse situations can be exemplified as potential wellsprings of resilience (Hernandez 2022). These Indigenous communities invoke stories, myths, folktales, and traditional knowledge systems to cope with the challenges they face, and their resilient strategies could be taken as signposts of sustenance in the face of adversity. Unfortunately, due to their feeble presence on policy-making boards and global climate change forums, their invisibility makes them vulnerable to the climate change action controlled by corporate heads. For instance, indigenous communities in the Amazon or the Andaman are not even considered stakeholders, which is why their existence itself is rendered invisible. In postcolonial nations, these issues have not been fully addressed and resolved (for instance, with the Adivasis and tea-garden workers in India, the Native people of America and the Australian Aboriginal people), and the Indigenous communities remain further alienated from their land.

Under such circumstances, literature plays a constructive role in delivering climate justice. As their strategic invisibility makes the indigenous communities vulnerable and defenseless, poetry can be instrumental in promoting world solidarity. Cohen and Mullender point out that poetry can play a vital role in securing social justice. Although poetry cannot topple governments, it can nevertheless help build solidarity by appealing to the emotions of the empathizers. To cite Illingworth and Jack, "Poetry has the potential to give people a voice, and to allow for meaningful dialogue to be developed between relatively disparate groups of people". This gives us the basis to conclude that Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry creates the space for a phenomenological framework that can accommodate the experiences of other Indigenous communities across the globe. For instance, in India, the poetic works of Adivasi (etymologically, Adivasi means the original inhabitants) writers such as Jacinta Kerketta, Usha Kiran Atram, Alice Ekka, and Waharu Sonwane transmute feelings of solastalgia linked to the loss of land and forest, like the work of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner. The rendering of ontological experience and existential threat arising from external forces is transmuted through the symbolic logos as an effective means of resistance in their poetry. Poetry as an

effective means of solidarity exudes the urgency expressed by them in relation to their Oikos, which has come under threat because of climatic changes and the anthropogenic activities of the capitalist forces. Although these poets are separated by a vast linguistic and geographical chasm, they all share a common poetic sensibility connected through a sense of loss, deprivation, and anxiety. Empowered with poetic strength, their creations work like embers that can fire the imaginations of readers across the world.

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