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不太平：

核化人類世與凱西·傑尼－媞吉娜的作品

Unpacified:

The Nuclearized Anthropocene and
the Works of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner

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摘要



本論文主張馬紹爾群島詩人凱西·傑尼－媞吉娜（Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner）作品以「不太平」的再現，面對在阿奈斯·毛雷爾（Anaïs Maurer）稱之為核化人類世的時代中，核彈帝國主義與碳排放帝國主義的雙重挑戰。本論文動用泰瑞西亞·提艾瓦（Teresia Teaiwa）提出的概念——「不太平」——以分析傑尼－媞吉娜的作品如何連結在太平洋及其他地區原住民身體及其水域和地域中的生存挑戰、回憶信諾、以及反抗決心。透過這樣的描繪，她的作品意圖挑戰新舊權力統制如何持續製造氣候不正義。第一章梳理跨太平洋研究以及人類世論述以探討此詩人在其原住民經驗書寫中，如何呈現美國核彈帝國主義和全球氣候變遷之間連結。此章也提出需要分析此詩人的作品如何創造能面對氣候變遷挑戰的共同體——一個留意誰被排除在外和納入其中的共同體。第二章提供美軍在馬歇爾群島試爆核彈的歷史回顧，並闡述相較於這樣毀滅性歷史更悠遠且建立跨太平洋連結的馬歇爾反抗運動歷史。此章節分析從詩人作品集 *Iep Jāltok* 中采選出的詩作如何連結早期的反抗運動歷史，為在美軍核能部屬中被剝奪歸屬感的各種身體創造出不太平的返家。第三章檢視更多采選作品中，詩人如何強調需要在處理當前氣候危機的同時留意新舊權力關係如何持續將環境汙染向外排送至原住民居住地。透過文字影像及聲音，傑尼－媞吉娜在自身的作品集中以及和格陵蘭因紐特詩人阿卡·尼維亞那（Aka Niviâna）共同表演的影片詩 *Rise* 中，創造出不太平的航行，以期動員一個共享卻又適時分裂的共同體來挑戰持續至今的帝國環境遺毒。第四章回顧傑尼－媞吉娜作品中的不太平敘事並分析另一首她的影片詩 *Anointed*。此章節末也反思如何在進行太平洋原住民文學研究時避開墾殖者視角，特別是當原住民仍持續地為被他者化的身體及水域及地域進行抗爭。

關鍵字：凱西·傑尼－媞吉娜、阿卡·尼維亞那、核彈帝國主義、人類世、跨太

平洋研究、太平洋原住民、馬歇爾群島、格陵蘭



Abstract



This thesis argues that Marshallese poet Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's works provide unpacified representations of struggles against nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism in what Anaïs Maurer calls the nuclearized Anthropocene. Mobilizing a key term presented by Teresia Teaiwa—unpacified—this thesis analyzes how Jetñil-Kijiner's works depict connections between the survival, remembrance, and resistance of Indigenous bodies, lands, and waters in the Pacific and beyond. Through such depictions, her works seek to challenge how forms of domination continue to produce climate injustice. Chapter One reviews selected works in transpacific studies and discourses of the Anthropocene to address tensions in and to consider ways of reading the links between U.S. nuclear imperialism and climate change as they are depicted in the works of Jetñil-Kijiner. This chapter also addresses the need to examine how her works call for a fractured collective to face climate collapse—a collective that must attend to processes of inclusions and exclusions in its formation. Chapter Two traces histories of devastation that U.S. nuclear detonations produced in the Marshall Islands, as well as longer histories of Marshallese resistance that sought to build solidarities across the Pacific. This chapter analyzes how selected poems from Jetñil-Kijiner's *Iep Jāltok* connect with these earlier resistance efforts to create unpacified homecomings for bodies not at home in bombed and contaminated lands and waters. Chapter Three examines how additional selected works by Jetñil-Kijiner highlight a need to address current climate collapse while simultaneously redressing earlier structures of domination that continue to facilitate the outsourcing of climate crises. Through the mediums of word and image and sound Jetñil-Kijiner in *Iep Jāltok* and with Inuk poet Aka Niviâna in the collaborative video poem *Rise* create(s) unpacified navigations that mobilize a collective if also fragmented

resistance against unjust ruinations of empire that persist in the present. Chapter Four concludes this thesis to reflect on unpacified storytelling throughout Jetñil-Kijiner's oeuvre including in a second video poem *Anointed*. This chapter also addresses the need to avoid replicating a settler-centric gaze in conducting research on Indigenous Pacific texts as Indigenous peoples continue to rise and fight for othered bodies and lands and waters.

Keywords: Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Aka Niviâna, nuclear imperialism, the Anthropocene, transpacific studies, Indigenous Pacific, Marshall Islands, Greenland

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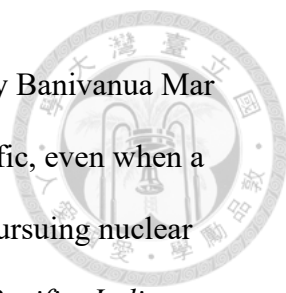
Chapter One

Introduction

On October 7th, 2022, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted a resolution designed to assist the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI) in obtaining justice for the sixty-seven nuclear weapons tests the U.S. had conducted in their country's territory from 1946 to 1958 ("Marshall Islands to Receive"). In September 2024, the UN Human Rights Chief's report will be due, a report that is expected to assess how this nuclear legacy has impeded the Marshallese people's human rights. Though the UNHRC's promise to assist the RMI is long overdue, the effectiveness of this promised assistance remains to be seen.

In the meantime, activists do not plan on waiting for this report to make the next move in decolonizing the nuclear Pacific. Roughly two months after the UNHRC adopted this resolution, more than one hundred activist groups (including the Marshallese Education Initiative) signed a letter urging U.S. President Joe Biden to formally apologize to the RMI for the U.S.'s twelve years of nuclear tests there. In the letter, activists state that without an apology, a renewed Compact of Free Association between the U.S. and the RMI will continually stave off claims for nuclear justice instead of adequately addressing them: "We do not believe that any new Compact of Free Association can be considered fair or equitable without fully addressing these issues in a way that is acceptable to the Marshallese people" (qtd. in "Activists Call").¹

¹ The U.S. established three Compacts of Free Association (COFA) with the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), the Republic of the Marshall Islands (RMI), and Palau. The COFA between the U.S., the RMI, and FSM came into effect in 1986, and for Palau its COFA entered into force in 1994. According to an assessment of the COFA between the U.S. and the RMI, "the common COFA narrative describes the agreement in terms of U.S. military access in exchange for economic assistance and for citizens of the FAS [Freely Associated States] to live and work in the U.S." (ICAAD 5). In 2023, all three of U.S. COFAs in the Pacific expired and, after lengthy negotiations, were all renewed ("U.S. Agrees";



It is not surprising that activists continue to develop what Tracey Banivanua Mar calls “centrifugal” decolonizing tactics for nuclear justice in the Pacific, even when a supra-governmental organization such as the UN has committed to pursuing nuclear justice for the Marshallese people (185). In *Decolonisation and the Pacific: Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire* (2016), Banivanua Mar writes an alternative history foregrounding Indigenous forms of decolonization in the Pacific to contest the “accepted orthodoxy” that claims there has been “no energy for decolonisation in the [Pacific] islands” (2).² She calls Indigenous forms of decolonization “centrifugal,” since their connective counter-imperial webs move “away from the neat borders of nation states” (169-70). Both informed by and countering the failures of top-down forms of “procedural decolonisation” (216), focused on state actors, Indigenous forms of decolonization have in Banivanua Mar’s account developed “as a *postcolonial* phenomenon, characterised by a transnational identity politics of diaspora and displacement where the nation, as the primary formation of decolonised independence, has proven inadequate” (14). The limits of procedural decolonization in the nuclear Pacific can be discussed in how the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) cannot regulate any of the top-five nuclear-weapon-holding countries, none of which signed the Treaty.³ In this MA thesis, I engage with some limits of procedural decolonization in the Pacific to understand how ongoing forms of nuclear imperialism and other environmental crises impact Indigenous bodies and lands and waters.

As Banivanua Mar argues, oceanic movements of “upwelling and downwelling” that keeps the Pacific Ocean alive serve as a metaphor for “Indigenous networks of

“U.S. Signs”).

² This thesis follows Banivanua Mar in employing the term Indigenous to refer both to “Indigenous and colonised peoples on their own country, and Indigenous peoples residing off country, but whose indigeneity, and the management of it, was the reason for their displacement” (1).

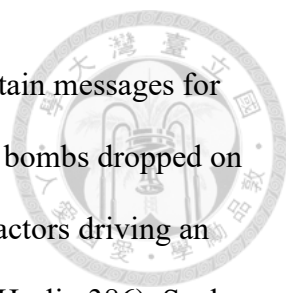
³ According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN, the recipient of the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize), as of 2017, the top five nuclear-weapon-holding countries in the world were Russia, followed by the United States, China, France, and the United Kingdom (ICAN).

decolonisation as they [surface and coalesce] in expressive actions of protest, artistic and literary media, or written and spoken petitions, speeches and articles” (15). Building on Banivanua Mar’s interventionary study, I will investigate selected artist-activist works to better understand how they address and are ignited by failed forms of procedural decolonization. I will analyze Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner’s poetry collection *Iep Jāltok: Poems From a Marshallese Daughter* (2017) as well as her collaborative video poems including *Anointed* (2018) and *Rise* (2018) and the ways these texts help address nuclear imperialism and other environmental crises in the Pacific and beyond.

Jetñil-Kijiner wrote *Iep Jāltok* as part of her creative portfolio for obtaining a master’s degree at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in 2014. Published as an independent poetry collection later in 2017, *Iep Jāltok* moves from reframing Marshallese legends; to colonial, imperial, and military conquests of their lands and waters that have triggered an ongoing diaspora; to global climate change that comes for the Marshallese in the form of what Potawatomi scholar Kyle P. Whyte calls “colonial déjà vu” (“Is” 19).⁴ In this poetry collection, she collects an archive of bodies in pain, reframing bodies experiencing left-over frictions of the Cold War nuclear arms race from an Indigenous perspective of what Anishinaabe scholar Gerald Vizenor calls “survivance.”⁵ Honoring the importance of baskets in Marshallese tradition, she offers

⁴ See also Chapter Three for more discussions on what Whyte calls *colonial déjà vu*.

⁵ As Vizenor writes, “Native survivance is an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion; survivance is the continuance of stories, not a mere reaction however pertinent. Survivance is greater than the right of a survivable name” (1). Survivance evokes in one word senses of survival as well as resistance. Vizenor argues that narratives of Indigenous survivance create what he calls “the storied presence of a fourth person” (2). In a section called “Fourth Person,” Vizenor recounts the testimony of an Anishinaabeg man Charles Aubid in a U.S. court case in the 1970s. In his testimony, Aubid referenced his memories of his then-deceased friend John Squirrel as proof of the Minnesota state government’s unlawful regulation of the rice harvest on the Rice Lake National Wildlife Refuge. District court judge Miles Lord overruled Aubid’s testimony based on the fact that “the court could not hear as evidence what a dead man said” and could only take “the actual experiences of the witness” as evidence (2). Incensed by what judge Lord said about his friend, “Aubid pointed at the legal books on the bench, and then in English, his second language, he shouted that those books contained the stories of dead white men. ‘Why should I believe what a white man says, when you don’t believe John Squirrel?’” (2-3). As Vizenor makes clear, the importance of telling stories of Indigenous survivance, such as Aubid’s story, is to create “a storied presence of a fourth person” that may challenge, dismantle, and resist dominant narratives that

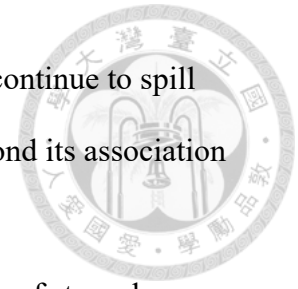


her poems as baskets to the Marshallese. Her poetry baskets also contain messages for those who might not have heard of the sixty-seven American nuclear bombs dropped on Marshallese atolls or of the rising sea level that has been one of the factors driving an estimated one third of the country's population to reside in the U.S. (Heslin 386). Such messages to global audiences insist on a Marshallese presence: "there are faces / all the way out here" (*Iep Jāltok* 79). The insistence on Indigenous presence in the age of long climate emergencies, borrowing Timothy Morton's words, ends the world as we know it (99): those *out there* in the obscured background of the world who bear the costs of linear progress come sharply into focus in *Iep Jāltok*.

Jetñil-Kijiner not only works in book form, but also in hybridized image-word form of collaborative video poems. Directed by Dan Lin, *Rise: From One Island to Another* (2018) is a video poem featuring the collaborative spoken word poetry of Jetñil-Kijiner and Kalaallit Nunaat (what is now called Greenland) poet Aka Niviâna. The video poem, shot as part of 350.org's Fossil Free World movement, brought together two Indigenous artist-activists to address global audiences about climate change from archipelagic perspectives. *Rise* stresses precarious connections between the lived experiences of islanders across two geographically distant sites, each of which has its different and uneven experiences of imperialism and colonialism. However, *Rise* does not take for granted grounds of archipelagic connections as tensions in its music as well as in its images suggest the need to move forward in an age of climate change on the basis of a fragmented *we*. Also directed by Dan Lin, Jetñil-Kijiner's video poem *Anointed* (2018) protests the injustice of the nuclear weapons detonated on the Marshall Islands and the power structures that enable the U.S. to *anoint* itself as either destroyer or savior of the RMI depending on its own geopolitical interests. As *Anointed* shows,

erase Indigenous presence in legal, national, military, scientific narratives and more (2).

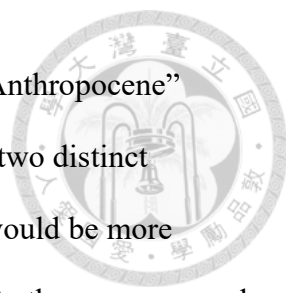
even though effects of nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism continue to spill over sanctioned boundaries, stories about Runit Island continue beyond its association with an American dump site of nuclear waste.⁶



In this thesis, I argue that Jetñil-Kijiner provides representations of struggles against nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism which can be understood through Teresia Teaiwa's idea of being *unpacified*. Presented in her article "Lo(o)sing the Edge," Teaiwa probes at the limits of studies about the Pacific, including Native Pacific Cultural Studies, Pacific Studies, and Cultural Studies, amongst others, to potentially loosen boundaries of these field imaginaries. Addressing tensions and potential growth where these fields come into contact with one another, Teaiwa cites one of her earlier poems to illustrate commitments these studies might share towards the Pacific: "*Unpacified // This ocean // Still // Has much to teach me*" (Sweat 65). Using the term unpacified to depict the Pacific Ocean and herself, Teaiwa suggests how, from the edges of an ocean defiant in the face of forces which seek to contain it, the writer learns to become disobedient. In the context of my thesis, the term unpacified shows an insurgent underflow sustaining struggles against the compounding violence of nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism, struggles that have taken different names and shapes including the Nuclear Free and Independent Pacific movement and Pacific Climate Warriors. Unpacified helps connect struggles to survive, commitments to remember, as well as determination to resist older and newer structures of domination.

Borrowing this key term from Teaiwa, I understand articulations and amplifications of the links between U.S. nuclear imperialism and climate change in the works of Jetñil-Kijiner as contributing to a larger body of Indigenous works depicting the voices of

⁶ Runit Dome is a concrete structure on Runit Island in the Marshall Islands. It is a site where the U.S. dumped the waste produced during its nuclear weapons detonations. Sitting at sea level inside this concrete structure built on fractured rocks, radioactive matter has been leaking into the surrounding lagoon. The dumping of nuclear waste in this site will be discussed in more details in Chapter Four.



those who are living with what Anaïs Maurer calls “the nuclearized Anthropocene” (11).⁷ “Instead of conceiving of nuclear war and climate collapse as two distinct scenarios that could threaten most life on earth,” Maurer writes, “it would be more generative to think of them as inextricably linked in the nuclearized Anthropocene—and to challenge them both simultaneously” (13). Overwhelming overlap between low-lying atolls and nuclear testing sites in the Pacific, shown in a map in Maurer’s monograph (16), points to the urgency to face how persistent structures of oppression undergird the nuclearized Anthropocene. Jetñil-Kijiner in her works teaches us the importance of simultaneously challenging both nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism by representing how Indigenous peoples try to adapt to the current climate cataclysm as they continue to grapple with legacies of nuclear assaults on their bodies and lands and waters. In her works, while nuclear pollution and rising sea levels impact the Pacific and beyond, long histories of resilient survivorship and sticky resistance also inflect these environmental crises. To read how Jetñil-Kijiner’s works engage with ongoing legacies of the nuclearized Anthropocene, I will in the following sections review selected key works in transpacific studies and discourses of the Anthropocene. Together, they help me to address more precisely some of the tensions between reading Jetñil-Kijiner’s works as Pacific and planetary, Marshallese and Oceanian, local and global.

Transpacific Studies

To understand how Jetñil-Kijiner’s works build links amongst various sites in and beyond the Pacific Ocean, I propose to read her works from a transpacific studies

⁷ This thesis follows Maurer in using the term nuclear imperialism to describe U.S. nuclear weapon detonations in the Marshall Islands. As Maurer argues, nuclear imperialism “is different from pre-1945 forms of colonial oppression. When imperial powers began coveting strategic territories in which to deploy their nuclear strike capacity, large-scale colonialism was replaced by different structures of imperial oppression, taking the form of imperial webs of smaller nuclear colonies the world over” (12). Given its formation, nuclear imperialism refers to “the state-sponsored, systemic mode of oppression of current or former sites of empire through any use of the nuclear complex” (12).

perspective. I first review in this section works in transpacific studies to connect sites within and beyond their shared experiences of being bombed and contaminated by U.S. nuclear weapons. I then review selected critical works on Indigeneity in Oceania and selected parts of Marshallese history to see how a transpacific analytic might help resist discursive and material erasures of the Pacific.

In her entry on “Transpacific” in *The Routledge Companion to Asian American and Pacific Islander Literature* (2014), Erin Suzuki describes the term as one that is “as fluid and dynamic as the oceanic terrain it navigates” (352). Focusing on how Asian, Pacific Island, and American cultures and communities mutually shape one another, a “transpacific frame for cultural and literary analysis necessarily calls attention to the very different and often unequal circumstances that shape the conditions of these moments of contact, conflict, and exchange” (352). For Suzuki, these different and unequal moments of contact, conflict, and exchange may include the following: how the term transpacific “may alternately invoke or erase the indigenous histories of the region” (356), how the occlusion of the Pacific experiences “not only parallels but also materially *enable[s]* the transpacific crossings of Asian communities” (357), and how gender critique tends to get lost in the transnational turn in transpacific studies (358-59). However, moments of connection and coalition also emerge from “a shared concern about Pacific environments and ecologies” that addresses issues such as climate change, nuclear testing, and mass waste disposal (360). On the issue of nuclear testing in the Pacific, citing Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Suzuki stresses the importance for a transpacific analytic to dismantle the colonial discursive production of “the Pacific as a tabula rasa or blank slate” (360). Such discursive construction misses amongst many other things the material consequences of nuclear fallout which give lie to the myth of “the island as an isolated or closed laboratory and the Pacific itself as a timeless or extra-historical

space” (361).⁸ I understand this critical intervention as an attempt to discursively construct a time and space where the Pacific is not relegated to the periphery of dominant historical narratives and geographic maps. While recognizing how the many nation states in this region shape transpacific flows, a transpacific analytic might produce alternative histories and geographies to trouble these flows.

Published around the same time as Suzuki’s entry, Viet Thanh Nguyen’s and Janet Hoskins’s introduction to *Transpacific Studies: Framing an Emerging Field* disrupts the designation of the transpacific as a region with rigid boundaries. Nguyen and Hoskins do not see the term the transpacific as a “region” but as one of those “spaces of interaction” that “define flows of culture and capital across the [Pacific] ocean” (7). The usefulness of the transpacific as a concept lies neither in its ability to set up geographical territory nor academic institutions, and that is why Nguyen and Hoskins deliberately refuse to capitalize the term (24). Rather, the critical energy of a transpacific analytic lies in how it can “historicize, contextualize, and illuminate the transpacific circulations of peoples, cultures, commodities, and ideas” (23). While a transpacific analytic shows otherwise illegible flows, it does not fetishize the fluidity of flows: following Anna Tsing, Nguyen and Hoskins recognize that friction is the stuff of global connections including transpacific traffics of various kinds (25). A transpacific analytic does not celebrate “cosmopolitan globe-trotters”; it instead questions the symbolic and material production of such travels (26). This critical move also stresses looking at those who are forced to move, cannot move, refuse to move, that is, those

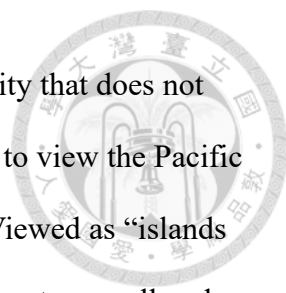
⁸ Suzuki points out that Jonathan Weisgall—an attorney for the displaced peoples of Bikini Atoll of the RMI—popularized the term *the nuclear Pacific*. As Suzuki shows, the nuclear Pacific calls attention to “the material consequences attending the nuclear era ushered in by the bombing of Hiroshima” (360). Indeed, as Barbara Rose Johnston suggests, “[f]rom the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, to years of the Pacific being utilized as an experiment site for America, British, and French nuclear testing, to renewed concerns about environmental and global public health issuing from the breach of a reactor in Fukushima, Japan as a consequence of a devastating 2011 tsunami, the Pacific has been a figurative and literal ground zero for nuclear diplomacy, popular resistance, and continuing debates about human rights, international law, economic and political power, and the environment” (“The” 614).

who are caught up in the friction produced upon impacts with transpacific flows.

Nguyen and Hoskins propose a partnership “between academics on both sides of the Pacific and in the Pacific” (4). Through such alliance, they hope to reclaim some critical energy for the term transpacific partnership, salvaging it from fantasies of economic expansion in the now-abandoned Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) of twelve countries that border or are in the Pacific (3). Diverging from a linear temporality structuring the TPP’s imagination of capitalist progress, the transpacific partnership in Nguyen’s and Hoskins’s reconfiguration signifies a speculative vision for the future: it may anticipate how future generations speak about a twenty-first-century transpacific world where networks of various kinds grow and wane (7). Following Nguyen and Hoskins, I understand a transpacific analytic as gesturing towards an alternative temporality where the presentist Trans-Pacific will have run out of time. In other words, through historicizing flows and frictions in and across the Pacific, a transpacific analytic emphasizes how the present consists of plural temporalities.

The transpacific analytic Nguyen and Hoskins articulate builds on important earlier scholarship—part of which is what Teresia Teaiwa, amongst others, calls “Native Pacific Cultural Studies” (*Sweat* 53). I now turn to this earlier scholarship to trace an important legacy it provides that continues to inspire newer works: the need to recognize the coevalness of the Pacific Ocean when producing knowledge about Oceania. A transpacific analytic draws on earlier scholarship to insist that the Pacific Ocean is not merely a space to be crossed to travel between Asia and America.

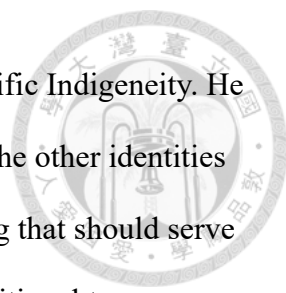
Resisting erasures of the Pacific in his works, Epeli Hau‘ofa famously proposed the Pacific Ocean as a common yet fluid ground for an Oceanian identity. In his essay “Our Sea of Islands” (1993/2008), Hau‘ofa articulates what he describes as “a new and optimistic” view of Oceania (*We* 27), a view that seeks to draw individual Pacific Island nations out of their respective national borders in search of an Oceanic common that



they cannot each generate on their own. In search of a common identity that does not homogenize the heterogeneous cultures in Oceania, Hau'ofa proposes to view the Pacific Islands as “our sea of islands” instead of “islands in a far sea” (31). Viewed as “islands in a far sea,” Polynesia, Micronesia, and Melanesia are framed as being too small and isolated to ever be able to “rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations” (29). In contrast, “our sea of islands” provides a “more holistic perspective,” denoting “a sea of islands with their inhabitants” that does not limit traffic across the ocean to dominant national paradigms (31-32). Hau'ofa's search for such an alternative view of Pacific Islands started when he discovered how crestfallen his students in Fiji were in learning there seemed to be no solution to their countries' plights: “the faces of my students continued to haunt me mercilessly” (29). I take this as stressing that “our sea of islands” is in part Hau'ofa's effort to decolonize his and the next generation's minds, a refusal to reproduce the discourse of islands-in-a-far-sea. Constructed through colonial arrivants' erasures of Oceanic maritime histories, islands-in-a-far-sea has been a persistent discourse.⁹ It is not only reproduced through modern disciplines' construction of knowledge that misses “the hole in the [Pacific] doughnut,” but also through Oceanians' construction of self through such knowledge (37). For Hau'ofa, Oceanians must unlearn indoctrinated notions of insular smallness and recognize that “smallness is a state of mind” (31).

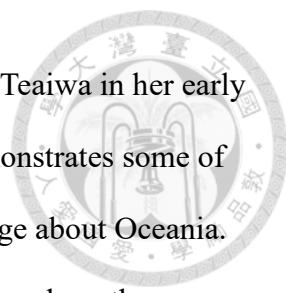
As Hau'ofa suggests in a later essay “The Ocean in Us” (1997/2008), to overcome the notion of islands-in-a-far-sea, the boundary of the Pacific Ocean must be continually contested, negotiated, and troubled. In this essay, Hau'ofa's earlier attempt at

⁹ Braithwaite coins the word “arrivant” in his 1973 long poem *The Arrivants: A New World Trilogy*. As DeLoughrey argues, the “myth of the remote isle derives from an amplification of the nautical technologies of the arrivant and an erasure of islanders' maritime histories” (*Routes* 8). Arrivant describes a settler colonist explorer whose gaze discursively and materially constructs Indigenous lands as *terra nullius*. As Hau'ofa's writings show, more contemporary arrivants can include perhaps well-meaning researchers who propagate an islands-in-a-far-sea ideology in research that stresses smallness as but an empirical measurement (*We* 31).



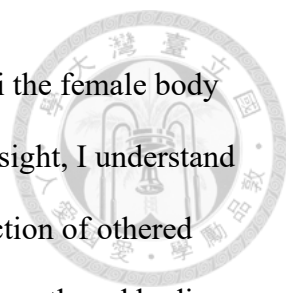
formulating an Oceanic common extends into a search for a transpacific Indigeneity. He describes the regional identity he attempts to build as “additional to the other identities we [Oceanians] already have, or will develop in the future, something that should serve to enrich our other selves” (*We* 42). These “other selves” that are additional to Oceanians’ autochthonous names are not bound within national boundaries: they take root in the traffic of peoples, commodities, cultures, and ideas in an “expanding Oceania” (42) that might progressively cover more areas and peoples “than is possible under the term Pacific Islands Region” (51). Hau‘ofa’s proposal that “the ocean is in us” takes Oceanians’ collective yet uneven histories and responsibilities towards the Pacific Ocean as grounds for a common regional identity (58). While recognizing the Pacific Ocean as Oceanians’ “most powerful metaphor,” Hau‘ofa does not wish to homogenize it: he insists that Oceanians must recognize that “the ocean is uncontainable and pays no respect to territoriality” and foreground the question of who or what is a Pacific Islander (55). At its inception, “the ocean is in us” was partly inspired by the title of a newspaper students of the University of the South Pacific issued—*Wansolwara*—“a pidgin word that [the students] translated as ‘one ocean, one people’” (52). Hau‘ofa transplants the sense of inventive hybridity in *wansolwara* into the phrase “the ocean is in us” (58). The pidgin word *wansolwara* builds a contingent Oceanic alliance on the troubled ground of how colonialism has violently brought people and languages into contact on Pacific Islands. Building on this history, “the ocean in us” practices possibilities of taking the arrivants’ languages to trouble (neo)colonial narratives and mappings of the Pacific.¹⁰

¹⁰ Hau‘ofa does not propose to take the Pacific Ocean as an unproblematic ground for a collective identity. A counter example of Hau‘ofa’s vision was the Pacific Way—used by the then-statesman and now former-president of Fiji Ratu Sir Kamisese Mara to refer to his efforts to (arguably only nominally) integrate Indo-Fijians into the country. As Hau‘ofa explains, the Pacific Way proved to be “a shallow ideology that was swept away by the rising tide of regional disunity in the 1980s” (*We* 42-43). Another counter example of the concept of *the ocean in us* is arguably movies in the Avatar franchise, which for example Whyte argues “allows allies to claim themselves as the protagonists for Indigenous peoples” (“Indigenous” 238). Through claiming the ocean as a fluid ground of identity, the Avatar movies arguably *bluewashes* the complex politics of Indigenous Pacific waterscapes which Hau‘ofa discusses.



Also blurring the discursive edges of the Pacific Ocean, Teresia Teaiwa in her early essay “bikinis and other s/pacific n/oceans” (1994) explores and demonstrates some of the possibilities of building what she later called *unpacified* knowledge about Oceania. In this essay, Teaiwa develops the idea of “s/pacific n/oceans” to expose how the hypervisibility of the two-piece bathing suit that is christened a bikini erases violence against the Bikinians. As Teaiwa elucidates, the bikini that most people know violently appropriates the name of a Marshallese atoll called Bikini, the site where the U.S. conducted twenty-three nuclear weapons detonations. Through layers of removals, Bikini Islanders are discursively and materially alienated from a geography once familiar to them (88-91). On 10 February 1946 the U.S. staged and filmed negotiations with the Bikinians to borrow their atoll for military purposes, after the Marshall Islands came under U.S. Trusteeship following Japan’s defeat in WWII. These staged and framed negotiations obscure how the affairs of Bikinians were in fact decided from a place far removed from the Marshall Islands. Starting in 1946, Bikinians were physically removed from Bikini Atoll to Rongerik Atoll, Kwajalein Atoll, and Kili Island. In 1968, after the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) pronounced Bikini Atoll safe, islanders returned there until 1978, when the U.S. government admitted that the atoll remained too contaminated. To this day, Bikinians have not returned to their home island.

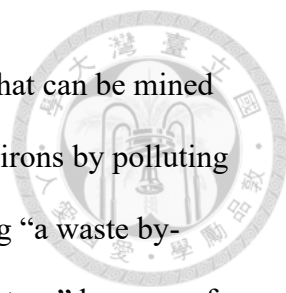
As Teaiwa observes, Bikinians are not only materially but also discursively dispossessed. From Bikini to bikinis, the “mass-produced-and-marketed bikini simultaneously transcribes and erases the dispossession of the Bikini Islanders onto millions of female bodies” (95). Such a simultaneous act of transcription and erasure captures how bikini-clad bodies relegate radioactively contaminated bodies into the background of spectacle-driven frames of visibility. Teaiwa explains that Bikini is diffused into bikinis through a dual structure of erasure: “[t]he bikini politically negates



the female body by exposing it, but by its mass exposure in the bikini the female body also negates the history of s/pacific bodies” (92-93). Based on this insight, I understand Teaiwa’s slash in “s/pacific” as capturing the tensions in the reproduction of othered bodies, describing how already othered bodies might marginalize other othered bodies. If Teaiwa’s “s/pacific bodies” can denote erasures of oppressions specific to Pacific Islander bodies, her “s/pacific n/oceans” insist on the possibilities of taking such erasures as the troubling ground on which a “more politicized version of what some call the Pacific Way” might be built (102).¹¹ Through the pun “n/oceans,” Teaiwa cares for knowledge (notions) grounded in the Pacific Ocean, experimenting with using such knowledge to decolonize the Pacific. With this in mind, I interpret Teaiwa’s “s/pacific n/oceans” as imagining how Hau‘ofa’s “the ocean in us” might be practiced: that is, how Oceanians might develop “other selves” to enrich their identities (42). These additional and collective identities are other to Oceanians’ autochthonous names, yet as Teaiwa insists, these identities nonetheless care for “s/pacific n/oceans” that describe Oceanians’ discursive and material places on the planet (103).

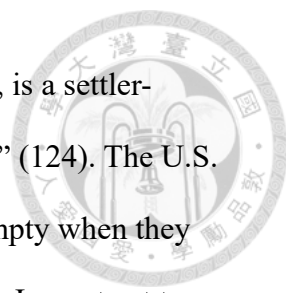
Most everywhere it goes, the travelling split atom debilitates the landscapes and peoples that are forced to live with it. In *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (2015), Traci Brynne Voyles theorizes the term “wastelanding” to name a form of environmental racism and settler-colonial technology that renders “resources extractable and lands and bodies pollutable” (24). Writing an environmental history of uranium mining on Diné Bikéyah lands in the Navajo Nation in the continental U.S., Voyles argues that settler colonialism *wastelands* Diné people, lands and epistemologies through discursively remapping their lands as “uninhabited or unimportantly inhabited” (10). Such emptying of Indigenous worlds proceeds in two primary forms: “the

¹¹ See note 10 for discussions on the Pacific Way.



assumption that nonwhite-lands are valueless, or valuable only for what can be mined from beneath them, and the subsequent devastation of those very environs by polluting industries” (10). Starting from the 1930s, as uranium went from being “a waste by-product of vanadium to the most sought-after ore of the twentieth century” because of the Manhattan Project, radioactive tailings and debris from uranium mines have continued to contaminated Diné lands and inhabitants (2). As uranium poisoning can create mutagenic and genotoxic effects in the human body that will take shape in unknown ways on a future population, Voyles argues that the targeting of the Diné population for such a form of pollution demonstrates how “racialized bodies are in many ways themselves wastelanded” (15). The ways wastelanded cuts across class, race, gender, and environmental lines, as Voyles insists, necessitates a rethinking of “questions of justice and injustice outside of the frame of rights discourse” (26). In this context, environmental justice may transform the ways we approach the question of redressing uranium mining in the Navajo Nation “because of the transformative ways in which it theorizes *environment* as wherever humans ‘live, work, play, and pray’ and *environmentalism* as a political practice deeply invested in class, race, and gender justice” (26).

From uranium mining to the detonation of nuclear weapons, the split atom creates what Christine Hong calls “a violent peace.” Hong examines what she describes as “the atom’s destructive itinerary” in transpacific coordinates, exposing how multiple sites in and around the Pacific Ocean are made into “the apocalyptic underside to the American good life” (126-27). Hong identifies three pretexts often used to prop up the Cold-War “U.S. nuclear umbrella”: proving grounds, virgin territory, and virgin target (123). The concept of proving grounds legitimizes designating sites as sacrificial zones. As Hong writes, “[u]nder the cover of the proving grounds concept, the United States zoned the



Marshall Islands for death” (123).¹² *Virgin territory*, or *terra nullius*, is a settler-colonial justification of imagining inhabited lands “as void of people” (124). The U.S. government likewise imagined Diné, Pueblo, and Apache lands as empty when they seized their lands for uranium mining and nuclear tests during WWII. In contrast to *virgin territory*, as Hong explains, the concept of *virgin targets* justifies a “violent conflation of land and people”: through such conflation “inhabited terrain and sited life” only have strategic value in “their capacity to be reduced to irradiated ashes or to survive with radiation sickness and in either case thereafter be subjected to scientific scrutiny” (128). When designated as the virgin targets and proving grounds of U.S. nuclear weapons, Japan and the Marshall Islands were not envisioned as “atomic ruins” that could one day serve as “the basis of capitalist futurity” (124). Instead, as Hong contends, these islands were imagined “solely through the crosshairs of [the U.S.’s] war machine” (124). Subsumed under the U.S.’s necropolitical war machine that “destroyed to destroy,” radiologically contaminated *hibakusha* in Japan and the Marshall Islands were subjected to human radiological research programs conducted respectively by the U.S.-directed Atomic Bomb Casualty Commission and the U.S.’s AEC (123).¹³ These blatantly instrumental human-subject research programs measured and mapped the science of nuclear warfare on debilitated bodies, all the while refusing to provide genuine medical care to them.

As Hong shows, the pretexts of the proving grounds, the virgin territory and the virgin target travel from node to node in the nuclear Pacific. In doing so, they link “[I]ndigenous peoples and lands in the United States to the atomic ruination of

¹² Commodore Ben Wyatt of the U.S. military, during a staged and filmed negotiation, told the Marshallese that the U.S. wanted to enlist Marshallese lands to better understand the atomic bomb “for the good of mankind and to end all world wars” (qtd. in Barker 20). Discussed by many scholars, this flagrant lie is also criticized by Jetñil-Kijiner in “History Project” in *Iep Jāltok*: “*God will thank you they told us // yea / as if God Himself / ordained / those powered flakes / to drift / onto our skin hair eyes / to seep into our bones // We mistook radioactive fallout / for snow // God will thank you they told us*” (21).

¹³ *Hibakusha* refers to “explosion-affected people” in Japanese (Hong 108).



Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the protracted nuclear horror perpetrated in the Marshall Islands” (126). However, Hong argues, these necropolitical links may be reframed as the basis of what she calls “radiogenic solidarity,” the contingent grounds of collective life for radioactively contaminated communities under the U.S. nuclear umbrella (132). To see how radiogenic solidarity might proceed, Hong reads a part of what she calls “the cultural archive of the nuclear Pacific” (134), notably Marshallese magistrate Nelson Anjain’s 1975 public letter to Robert Conrad, the head of the AEC’s biology and medicine division at the time. In the letter, Anjain indignantly accuses Conrad as seeing the Marshallese “only as a group of guinea pigs for [U.S.’s] bomb research effort” and invites “doctors from hospitals in Hiroshima to examine [the Marshallese] in a caring way” (qtd. in Hong 131). Hong interprets this text as showing how “the inhabitants of wartime target and the peacetime proving ground—two nodes of the nuclear Pacific—sought to move together toward the possibility of life” (132).

To end my review of key works in transpacific studies, I want to stay with the troubles a transpacific analytic may create. Though the transpacific can be an umbrella term that includes a growing list of geographical locations that are entangled with the Pacific Ocean, possibilities for the term need not be limited to such a list. As my review of selected critical works has demonstrated, a transpacific analytic may productively evoke alternative histories and geographies that resist the erasures of the Pacific.¹⁴

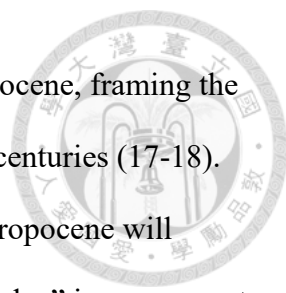
¹⁴ As many writers concerned with the elision of the Pacific point out, the arguably most dominant world map made with the Mercator Projecting method halves the Pacific Ocean. Efforts to disrupt hegemonic ways of seeing perpetuated by cartographic practices have been shared across the Pacific. Tao writer Syaman Rapongan discusses the experience of being erased by the Mercator-Projector world map. Off the southeastern coast of Taiwan, Orchid Island is home to the Indigenous Tao people, and the site of dumping of nuclear waste materials from nuclear power plants operated by Taipower, Taiwan’s government-owned power company. In an interview, he describes an experience of finding a map that centers the Pacific Ocean on a visit to the Cook Islands: “I was beyond myself. I’ve finally found it. This map now hangs in my study. I’ve told many of my Han [the dominant settler colonist group in Taiwan] friends this story. Many people are apathetic to the fact that the Pacific Ocean is cut in half. However, as Oceanians, we feel so much for the ocean” (my translation; qtd. in Chang.)

Discourses of the Anthropocene



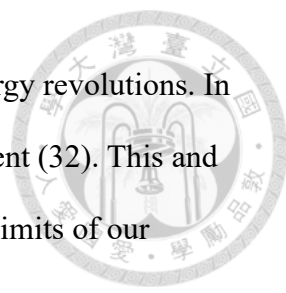
In this thesis, I understand Jetñil-Kijiner as addressing the nuclear Pacific and the planet in an age many have started to call *the Anthropocene*. To triangulate where her works are situated in this age, I now review selected works that propose, discuss, or critically examine the concept of the Anthropocene. With the help of this review, I aim to find ways of analyzing how Jetñil-Kijiner's works provide representations of Pacific landscapes and seascapes that vitally inform the futures of those who live within and beyond them.

In 2000, Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen and Paleoecologist Eugene Stoermer advanced the hypothesis that geologically speaking we have left the Holocene and entered what they called “the Anthropocene.” They stated that considering “major and still growing impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere,” they thought it “more than appropriate to emphasize the central role of mankind in geology and ecology by proposing to use the term ‘anthropocene’” (17). Crutzen and Stoermer referenced evidence of increasing human exploitation of resources on Earth to advance this hypothesis. As their review of research shows, the tenfold increase of the human population in the past three centuries and the tenfold increase of urbanization in the past century have left significant traces in Earth system history. Such evidence includes but is not limited to massive exhaustion of fossil fuels, great application of artificial nitrogen (in fertilizers for agricultural purposes), a rise of the photochemical ozone typically called “smog,” increasing release of green-house gases, the Antarctic “ozone hole,” humans’ increasing access to fresh water and transformation of land surfaces, and more. Though they acknowledged assigning a start date to this assemblage of geological evidence “somewhat arbitrary,” they nevertheless proposed “the latter part of the 18th century” as the onset of this new geological period (17). Through this start date, Crutzen and Stoermer marked James Watt’s invention of



the steam engine in 1784 as a significant origin point for the Anthropocene, framing the Anthropocene as a narrative about human activities in the past three centuries (17-18). Crutzen and Stoermer believed that addressing the issues of the Anthropocene will require “intensive research efforts and wise application of the knowledge” in our current “information society” (17-18). In 2019, the Anthropocene Working Group (AWG) voted on whether “the primary guide for the base of the Anthropocene [should] be one of the stratigraphic signals around the mid-twentieth century,” with the result showing eighty-eight percent of approval. In other words, the AWG reached a majority consensus, at least among this group, about marking mid-twentieth century as the start of the Anthropocene.

Dipesh Chakrabarty helped catalyze debates about climate change in the humanities and beyond in “The Climate of History: Four Theses” (2009/2021). In this essay, Chakrabarty stages an environmental intervention of humanist thoughts, arguing that climate change introduces four fundamental shifts to historiography. Firstly, it collapses the distinction between natural and human history (26); secondly, it qualifies humanist histories of modernity/globalization (31); thirdly, it requires us to put global histories of capital in conversation with the species history of humans (35); and lastly, it generates histories that probe at our limits of understanding (43). As Chakrabarty observes, the effects of climate change demonstrate that humans are no longer merely biological agents but geological agents (30). Reading the human from a geological viewpoint exposes how what Chakrabarty describes as “parametric conditions” have forged the survival of humans and how humans have inadvertently yet nevertheless profoundly disturbed these boundaries (40). The idea that environmental parameters enclose human survival reveals how certain environmental limits have in fact fenced in institutions and values central to humanity. For example, human freedom, forming “one of the key underlying questions of human histories written of the period from 1750 to



the years of present-day globalization,” has developed alongside energy revolutions. In other words, human freedom has been energy-intensive and -dependent (32). This and other examples of environmental parametric conditions probe at the limits of our understanding of humans as a species, prompting us to ask what the pronoun *we* means as climate change unfolds. As Chakrabarty observes, *we* in the writings about climate change often references humans as a species, while in humanist histories of modernity/globalization and global histories of capital, “such biological-sounding talk of species” would worry historians (37). Chakrabarty does not suggest collapsing the distance between these different ways of signifying humans. Rather, he suggests that “[t]he crisis of climate change calls for thinking simultaneously on both registers” (42), requiring *us* to devise ways of staying with differences between the *us* in histories of modernity, capital, globalization, and in histories of the Earth. As Chakrabarty argues, it is important to acknowledge that “[w]e humans never experience ourselves as a species” (43) and move toward “a global approach to politics without the myth of a global identity” (45).

In the 2021 version of this article, Chakrabarty includes an addendum responding to criticism against his claim that humans do not phenomenologically experience ourselves as a species (46-48).¹⁵ As Ursula Heise criticizes, “Chakrabarty’s skepticism toward species thinking leaves his argument [. . .] with no positive content. What he imagines at the end is a ‘negative’ universalism’ that [. . .] would be bound to postulate some characteristics of a particular community as the paradigm by which other communities should be measured” (qtd. in Chakrabarty 46). In response, Chakrabarty stresses how he proposes the four theses as ways to think about what Theodore Adorno

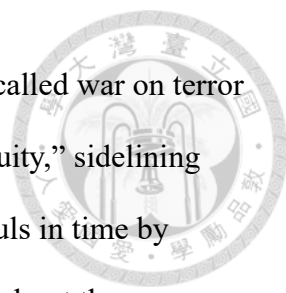
¹⁵ DeLoughrey responds to Chakrabarty’s skepticism towards human’s phenomenological experience as a species. Adding to Heise’s response, discussed above, DeLoughrey cites radioisotopes left by nuclear weapons as evidence of humans nonontological experience as a species. She writes, “[w]e are cautioned that the Anthropocene cannot be experienced ontologically, yet the militarized radioactive isotopes carried by our bodies may suggest otherwise” (*Allegories* 76).

calls a “negative universal history” that “allows the particular to express its resistance to its imbrication in the totality without denying being so imbricated” (47). The four theses provide ways to think about how plural histories of climate change resist cooption into a concretized universal history of the human, yet also give space for such a universal history to take shape. The four theses are as Chakrabarty puts it “necessarily empty” because closing the negative discursive spaces they provide would also mean closing spaces to consider how perspectives of othered bodies and lands and waters may vitally disrupt and inform the formation of a universal *we* (48).¹⁶

In “The Anthropocene: The Promise and Pitfalls of an Epochal Idea” (2012/2018), Rob Nixon analyzes the emergence of critical works responding to the dangers of the Anthropocene becoming a “potentially regressive Age of Man” (6). As Nixon asks: “in terms of the history of ideas, why now? Why has the idea of *Homo sapiens* as a fused biological-geological force gained traction in the second decade of the twenty-first century” (1)? To answer this question, Nixon proposes that the Anthropocene’s breakthrough into more popular discourses concerns two factors. Firstly, a political environment hostile to the urgency of long climate emergencies delayed the emergency of an Anthropocene discourse during the millennium’s first decade (6). As Nixon observes, the Anthropocene debates lurked in “narrow intellectual corridors” for a decade before gaining a more public life in (predominantly Euro-American) magazines’ and newspapers’ special issues, curatorial spaces, and digital platforms (7).¹⁷ In the

¹⁶ My framework here is indebted to Professor Hannes Bergthaller’s comment that “the four theses designate ways in which climate change undercuts established historiography; the ‘negative universal’ is a way of closing the rift that is thus opened” (“Thesis Proposal.” Personal communication, 26 June 2023.)

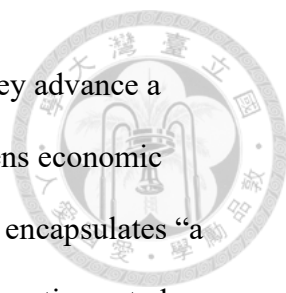
¹⁷ In *The Anthropocene: Key Issues for the Humanities* (2020), Hannes Bergthaller raises the question of how western the concept of the Anthropocene is. He writes, “[t]his book is the result of extensive dialogues with many colleagues from Europe and North America, Asia and Australia, with literary scholars and historians, geographers and geologists. But the bulk of it was written in Asia: in Bangkok, on Bali and Taiwan. Looking at the wildly proliferating discourse on the Anthropocene from this vantage point, we are struck above all by one thing: despite its claims to universality, Anthropocene talk remains largely a Western phenomenon. In Thailand, Indonesia or Taiwan, no magazine covers were devoted to the Anthropocene, no exhibitions, TV specials, or bestselling books. Much the same appears to be true for most other countries in Asia. If the term even comes up, it is almost exclusively in a scholarly context”



Anthropocene “paradigm’s lost decade,” as Nixon puts it (6), the so-called war on terror and economic recessions “shook Westerners’ faith in history’s continuity,” sidelining Crutzen and Stoermer’s efforts to “expand time” in a concept that hauls in time by centuries, millennia, and eons (6). Here I think Nixon’s observations about the discourses of Anthropocene’s delayed entry into certain popular discussions build on concerns with what he calls “slow violence” in his earlier landmark monograph *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011). Nixon uses the term “slow violence” to describe violence overflowing humans’ usual perception of time, space, body and indeed violence itself. This seemingly oxymoronic term signals how long ecological calamities escape the “sensation-driven technologies of our image-world” (3). Slow violence falls outside of our “flickering attention spans” that corporate media nurture and sustain (6). The Anthropocene narrative struggled for a decade to gain a more public life because as a narrative about slow violence it had been obscured in a political climate of short-termism.

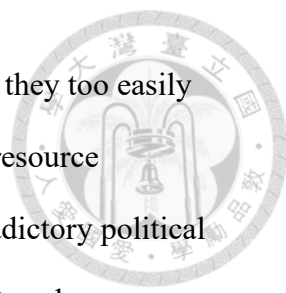
Secondly, as Nixon analyzes, the flourishing of the Anthropocene debates coincided with a heightened attention to deepening economic inequality in the millennium’s second decade (“The Anthropocene” 7). Attention to growing economic schisms helped move along the eventual emergence of discourses of the Anthropocene.

(170). Indeed, in May 2024, a quick Google search of the term Anthropocene in Chinese traditional characters [人類世] in Taiwan has yielded a few local magazine essays, some popular scientific articles, a 2020 Taipei Biennial exhibit titled *You and I Don’t Live on the Same Planet*, a 2023 special exhibition of Kaohsiung Museum of Fine Arts titled *Anthropocene*, and a few books written in Chinese with 人類世 in their titles. In the context of Taiwan, it seems that the concept of 人類世 has not entered public discourses the way the concept of the Anthropocene has done in Nixon’s observations. It seems important to qualify the kind of popularity the Anthropocene as a concept enjoys in public discourses, which Nixon observes, with Bergthaller’s observation that it has in fact been a predominantly Euro-American phenomenon so far. Interestingly, the Anthropocene in Chinese simplified characters [人类世] seems to have garnered some popularity on a popular search engine in China. A quick Baidu search of 人类世 conducted in May 2024 has yielded a commencement address, a self-published novel titled 人类世, newspaper articles explaining the concept, and more. The different lives of the concept of the Anthropocene in its different names across different digital platforms is a productive research topic but is one that is outside the scope of this thesis.



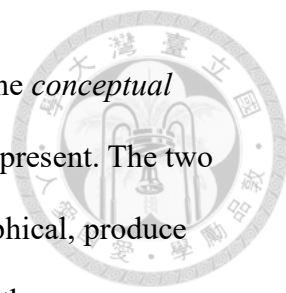
Discourses of the Anthropocene gained a more public life because they advance a universal *we* that more and more people identify as a factor that widens economic disparities. In this sense, the concept of the Anthropocene effectively encapsulates “a resurrected selective enlightenment in disguise” which has been and continues to be criticized from “the perspectives of anticolonialism, feminism, multispecies ethnography, queer ecologies, and environmental justice, among others” (6). Simply put, Nixon is arguing that the concept of the Anthropocene partly *fails upwards* into public discourses: the arguably problematic advancement of universalism in Anthropocene discourses gives space for heated criticism against the environmental fallout of widening economic schisms. I think Nixon’s argument here again extends his concerns in his 2011 monograph, this time concerning the environmentalism of the poor. Heightened concerns about the fact that “it is those people without resources who are the principal casualties of slow violence” (*Slow Violence* 4) helps highlight that “we may all be in the Anthropocene but we’re not all in it in the same way” (“The Anthropocene” 8). In other words, discourses of the Anthropocene’s evocation of a grandiose timescale subsuming all humans may inadvertently homogenize the ways structures of race, class, and gender unevenly inform different timescales. As such, the temporal perspective often evoked in discourses of the Anthropocene may be problematically cited to support the temporal perspectives of those whom Nixon describes as “the short-termers who arrive (with their official landscape maps) to extract, despoil, and depart” (*Slow Violence* 17).¹⁸ While these discourses emerged in this millennium’s first decade as a much-needed environmental intervention to

¹⁸ Nixon cites John Brinckerhoff Jackson’s distinction between official and vernacular landscapes to explicate the temporal clash between short-termers and long-termers “who must live inside the ecological aftermath and must therefore weigh wealth differently in time’s scales” (*Slow Violence* 17). As Nixon observes, environmentalism of the poor is often catalyzed when those whom he describes as “developer-dispossessors [. . .] descend from other time zones to impose on habitable environments unsustainable calculations about what constitutes the duration of human gain” (17).



challenge political short-termism, their emergence also signaled how they too easily lend themselves to supporting the temporal perspective structuring “resource imperialism” (*Slow Violence* 22). How then to reckon with the contradictory political ramifications of discourses of the Anthropocene? Nixon suggests that such contradictory political alignments reflect how the “immense, omnivorous idea” of the Anthropocene has been exploded into many different Anthropocenes (“The Anthropocene” 2). More than two decades after Crutzen and Stoermer proposed the term, the Anthropocene has become “a spectrum of paradigms that range from the hubristic to the humble, from the reactionary to the positively iconoclastic” (15). As Nixon stresses, and much like Chakrabarty’s insight, understanding the Anthropocene as a range of paradigms instead of pigeonholing it into one monolithic concept might help resist “the imposition from above of a quick-and-easy ‘we’ that becomes complicit in disenfranchising the many” (16).

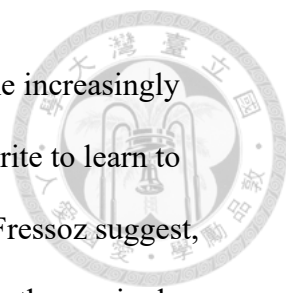
Writing plural histories of the Anthropocene, Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz argue in *The Shock of the Anthropocene* (2016) that those who continue to disturb the Earth system feign shock at the emergence of the Anthropocene to conceal their complicity in producing this era. Tracing multiple possible narratives of the Anthropocene (or rather, Anthropocenes), Bonneuil and Fressoz reject a monopolizing narrative of the Anthropocene that frames this epoch as an unprecedented story of ecological awakening. In this dominant narrative, the Anthropocene marks a threshold where “‘we’, the human species, unconsciously destroyed nature to the point of hijacking the Earth system into a new geological epoch. In the late twentieth century, a handful of Earth system scientists finally opened our eyes. So now we know; now we are aware of the global consequences of human action.” This narrative, as Bonneuil and Fressoz argue, “is a fable.” The fabricated and false “opposition between a blind past and a clear-sighted present” erases and depoliticizes histories of environmental



reflexivity that continue to inform what the two authors describe as the *conceptual grammars* within which we think of environmental reflexivity in the present. The two main variants of this narrative, one managerial and the other philosophical, produce distinct problems of their own. In the “managerial variant” of this Anthropocene narrative, engineers of the Earth system hold “a view of the Earth—and of our earthly issues—from above.” This detached view helps to justify “a humanity abolishing the Earth as natural alterity in order to occupy it entirely and transform it into a techno-nature.” The latter “philosophical and incantatory variant” of this dominant Anthropocene narrative encourages “a revolution of morality and thought” that promises a simplistic and eventual reconciliation with Gaia where the Anthropocene will be but a transitory crisis.¹⁹ As Bonneuil and Fressoz argue, to describe the Anthropocene as a crisis or awaiting an eventual balancing of the Earth system is to willfully ignore the fact that the Anthropocene “is a point of no return.” Even if humans “invent a more [ecologically] sober civilization,” as the two writers indicate, “our urban, industrial, consumerist, chemical and nuclear age will remain for thousands or even millions of years in the geological archives of the planet.” In other words, the dominant narrative of the Anthropocene arguably tells a falsely immaculate story of an ecological *tabula rasa* that helps some to feign shock at how destructive disturbances of the Earth system culminated in a geological bifurcation, while precluding others from taking political actions with the potential to undermine the foundation of such a narrative.

Indeed, the problem the Anthropocene poses to the human, as Bonneuil and Fressoz argue, is no longer whether we are in the Anthropocene or not, but rather on

¹⁹ First formulated by Lovelock and later co-developed by Lynn Margulis, the Gaia hypothesis proposes that, as Bonneuil and Fressoz put it, “life, by acting on the various biogeochemical cycles, stabilizes the state of the Earth system, ensuring the continuous habitability of the planet.” In recent Earth system sciences, the Gaia hypothesis is linked to the existence of climate feedback loops and tipping points that describe how the living world and the physico-chemical parameters of the Earth system inform one another.



what terms are we in what Anthropocene(s). These terms may become increasingly clear as we try to answer the question of “[w]hat histories must we write to learn to inhabit the Anthropocene.” To write such histories, as Bonneuil and Fressoz suggest, entails “producing multiple, debatable and polemical narratives rather than a single hegemonic narrative that is supposedly apolitical.” That is why they propose in their book multiple histories of the Anthropocene, instead of “a universal history of the ‘human species’ distorting the ‘Earth system,’” to help understand how the Anthropocene has continued to undercut our present world. One of the Anthropocene histories they trace is what they call the Thanatocene in which the Great Acceleration, where geological impacts of human activities started surging in the mid twentieth century, takes shape amidst “[t]he basic transformation of the Western way of making war, its deep integration in the industrial system, [and] the way in which the military are embedded in research and development.” Primarily surfacing histories of death-making and consumption-driving technologies developed for twentieth-century warfare, they make a case for how hegemonic powers have produced ecocides through war-making.²⁰ As their research shows, inventions created to decimate life forms to win wars not only left behind enormous ecological destruction, but also often continued to dirty the Earth once adapted under the guise of civilian uses in peacetime. Hegemonic powers on the rise during wars invented or improved high-energy technologies to accommodate their growing needs, while those which were dominated during wars created highly pollutive ways to produce resources they were cut off from. Once wars ended, infrastructures created to support wartime needs were adapted to both produce and satisfy the desire for civil consumption. Ecological impacts of modern warfare show that “military apparatuses, war and the logic of power, with the unsustainable technological choices

²⁰ The then-Swedish prime minister Olof Palme popularized the term ecocide in 1972: it refers to a mass destruction of the environment by humans.

subsequently imposed on the civilian world, bear a heavy responsibility in the disturbance of local environments and the whole Earth system.” Though much of the histories of the Anthropocene Bonneuil and Fressoz trace are histories of devastation, they also emphasize the importance of understanding what they call Polemocene, a history of what Ramachandra Guha calls the “‘environmentalism of the poor’ fighting for social injustice and environmental decency.” By reading histories of devastation and survival together, as Bonneuil and Fressoz suggest, we may “[rethink] the past to open up the future” of living in the Anthropocene.

In *Allegories of the Anthropocene* (2019), Elizabeth DeLoughrey argues that using a “multiscalar method of telescoping between space (planet) and place (island)” we need to ground “the universalizing figure of the Anthropocene” in specific places like postcolonial islands (2). Such multiscalar telescoping learns from postcolonial critiques of globalization studies, refusing to reanimate a “globalization discourse that misses the globe” in Anthropocene scholarship (2).²¹ For DeLoughrey, postcolonial islands offer inspiration for Anthropocene scholarship to unlearn universalizing assumptions because their “long association with ecological imperialism, extinction, plantation slavery, and sea-level rise” makes them “a foundational figure for the micro- and macrocosmos” (18). In other words, postcolonial islands provide alternative ways to think about the Anthropocene from specific places. DeLoughrey is reluctant to propose the term the “Nuclearocene” for she believe that “enough awkward neologisms” emerged in Anthropogenesis debates (17). More important than naming the nuclear constellation of the Anthropocene, as she suggests, is the need to historicize Anthropocene scholarship and acknowledge its intellectual predecessors in works linking the rise of ecology

²¹ Chakrabarty had theorized this point in his earlier essay, recognizing that “the concept of *globe* in the word globalization was not the same as the concept of *globe* in the expression *global warming*. Same word but their referents were different” (18). Based on this realization, Chakrabarty argues that the globe is “a humanocentric construction” while “the planet, or the Earth system, decenters the human” (4).

studies and nuclearism. DeLoughrey argues that Anthropocene scholarship should pay attention to how “the history of worldwide military irradiation has been an important material and symbolic precursor to our current articulations of global warming” (73).

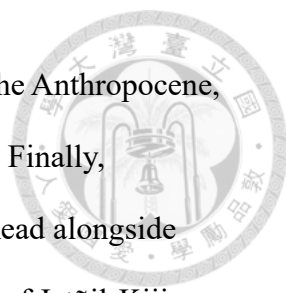
Besides the violence of the military-science complex, discourses of the Anthropocene should also highlight militarized environmental racism against Indigenous Pacific Islanders who have been repeatedly used as nuclear guinea pigs as well as the precarization of uninformed pregnant women, disabled children, the terminally ill, and the incarcerated in the U.S.’s AEC’s “human radiation experiments” (71).²²

DeLoughrey identifies a central technology used to obscure these histories as “nukespeak”: revising Orwellian newspeak, nukespeak refers to “a euphoric language of nuclearization” drawing its power from the historical association between radium and the sun (74). The AEC has consistently normalized the alterity of atomic and hydrogen weapons through nukespeak, marketing them as a form of familiar solar energy (73). A related concept, as she suggests in an earlier article, is heliotropes: “the persistent use of solar metaphors for understanding nuclear weaponry” (“Heliotropes” 237).²³ She urges Anthropocene scholars to show how nukespeak and heliotropes pushed Cold War nuclearism and its fallout to the periphery of our understandings of climate change.

As my short review in this section shows, Chakrabarty urges us to articulate a global identity in the Anthropocene without erasing how people experience this age differently. Nixon criticizes potential resurrections of enlightenment ideas in discourses

²² The need to historicize the AEC’s human radiation experiments alongside American nuclear imperialism in the Pacific shows how the nuclear Pacific extends beyond the boundaries of the Pacific, constituting a range of transpacific experiences. As DeLoughrey writes, “the AEC also funded studies, in concert with universities across the United States, that injected or fed radioactive tracers into the bodies of thousands of uninformed people [. . .]. In the vast majority of cases, the victims carried the cost of their illnesses (or their children’s illnesses) on their own, and were not informed or compensated for their radioactive exposure” (*Allegories* 71).

²³ Developing a critical vocabulary—heliotrope—proposed by Jacques Derrida, DeLoughrey shows that Hollywood photographers and film makers who were hired by the U.S. military folded the Marshallese “already carrying mementos of light in the form of radioactive cesium, iodine, and strontium” into cinematic reels and documentary footages of American nuclear weapons detonations (“Heliotropes” 240).

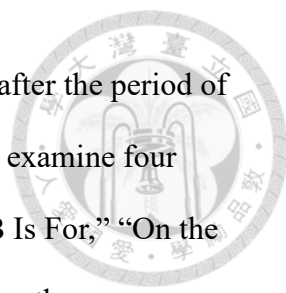


of the Anthropocene. Bonneuil and Fressoz write plural histories of the Anthropocene, cautioning us against the shock value of a single Anthropocene story. Finally, DeLoughrey insists on the need to provincialize the Anthropocene. Read alongside these conversations with the concept of the Anthropocene, the works of Jetñil-Kijiner look outside narratives of islands framed as frontline sites of climate change, and potentially open up possible worlds to house a fractured collective seeking to address climate change. To end my review of discourses of the Anthropocene, I wish to return to Morton's provocative statement which I cited at the beginning of this chapter. If Jetñil-Kijiner's works end the world as it has been known, it is because her works fragment the world as it has been known into multiple possibilities for inhabiting the nuclearized Anthropocene.

Chapter Breakdown

I began this chapter by examining how tensions between what Banivanua Mar calls procedural and centrifugal decolonization in the Pacific require us to seek alternative imaginings of Pacific histories, possibilities that Jetñil-Kijiner unfolds in her works. To understand how these works depict transpacific links amongst various sites in and beyond the Pacific Ocean, I have examined how a transpacific analytic might help contest material and discursive erasures. To triangulate her works in the Anthropocene, I then reviewed discourses of the Anthropocene and some key critical responses towards them. Through engaging with these analytics and debates, I have suggested that Jetñil-Kijiner's works represent unpacified voices of those who are living in what Anaïs Maurer calls the nuclearized Anthropocene. Reading the works of Jetñil-Kijiner this way may open spaces for us to consider ways of inhabiting the nuclearized Anthropocene in the Pacific and beyond.

Chapter Two analyzes Jetñil-Kijiner's poetry collection *Iep Jāltok* (2017). I will

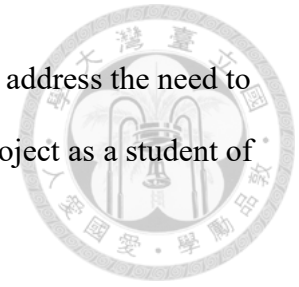


first trace histories of devastation as well as survivorship during and after the period of U.S. nuclear weapons detonations in the Marshall Islands. I will then examine four poems selected from the collection—“Liwātuonmour,” “The Letter B Is For,” “On the Couch with Būbū Neien,” and “Campaigning in Aur”—to analyze how these poems negotiate meanings of homecomings and homelands for those living through the consequences of these detonations. As these poems vividly depict, Pacific landscapes and seascapes bear memories of nuclear assaults. Understanding these landscapes and seascapes may help build resistance against ongoing violence, and may inspire actions inflecting, frustrating, deflating, or choking the progression of nuclear imperialism.

Chapter Three will discuss additional selected works by Jetñil-Kijiner to show how, through the mediums of word and image and sound, these texts strive to depict unevenly experienced climate collapse. I will begin with Jetñil-Kijiner’s invited address at the UN Climate Summit and four poems from *Iep Jāltok*—“Lōktañūr,” “Dear Matafele Peinam,” “Tell Them,” and “Two Degrees”—to examine how these texts address the planet. I will then analyze her collaborative video poem *Rise* (2018) co-performed with Inuk poet Aka Niviâna to examine how she finds decolonizing allies in what is now called Greenland and how together the poets emphasize the urgency of moving towards a fossil-fuel free future. With a focus on what Mary Louise Pratt calls “planetarized Indigeneity,” this chapter will analyze how the poets navigate across ruinations of empire into an uncertain future.

Chapter Four will conclude this thesis, I will ask: what sorts of unpacified knowledge might be gained from reading and viewing Jetñil-Kijiner’s works? How might we understand the roles of Indigenous writers who are speaking from within and beyond runaway ruinations of empire on a warming planet? I will turn to her collaborative video poem *Anointed* (2018) to see how this text seeks to surface, through its interventionary video poetics, stories that may help us devise alternative ways of

inhabiting the nuclearized Anthropocene. Closing this chapter, I will address the need to avoid replicating a settler-centric gaze in conducting this research project as a student of Han-settler-colonist descent in Taiwan.



Chapter Two

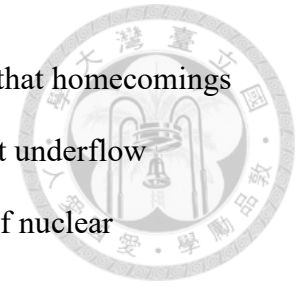
Unpacified Homecomings: Addressing the Nuclear Pacific



“When the United States tells us that they are there to protect us, we turn around and ask them, protect us from whom?” asked the Marshallese nuclear fallout survivor, health advocate, and antinuclear activist Darlene Keju in her 1983 address that revealed to the world the extent of devastations U.S. nuclear imperialism has brought to the Marshall Islands (“Darlene” 09:44—09:53). In her address, Keju refused to be interpellated by an apocalyptic rhetoric—an appeal to an apocalyptic world to mask incorporation into the U.S. empire as entry into sanctuary—and instead insisted that Marshallese futurity exists outside of such an imaginary. Her refusal of apocalypticism reflects the legacy of Marshallese resistance that has continued in the work of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner. In her poetry collection *Iep Jāltok*, Jetñil-Kijiner powerfully exposes how the apocalypse relegated to the future from a continental U.S. perspective has already arrived for the Marshallese, making “patients sleeping in a clinic with / a nuclear history threaded / into their bloodlines w[a]ke to a wild water world” (78). Such an image of nuclear history threaded into human flesh in a rising sea demonstrates how Jetñil-Kijiner’s works critically engages with legacies of U.S. nuclear imperialism in the Pacific and the nuclearized Anthropocene more broadly as they unfold on bodies that are made to search for new senses of belongings in bombed and contaminated lands and waters.

In this chapter, I will first situate Jetñil-Kijiner’s *Iep Jāltok* in the histories of how U.S. nuclear weapon detonations in the Marshall Islands continue to dispossess, displace, and debilitate people, producing experiences that I propose to describe as bodies not at home. I will then examine how Jetñil-Kijiner creates homecomings in her work for those impacted by these detonations. Building on Teresia Teaiwa’s concept of

being unpacified, discussed as a key term in Chapter One, I suggest that homecomings represented across selected poems from *Iep Jāltok* show an insurgent underflow inflecting, frustrating, deflating, or indeed choking the progression of nuclear imperialism.

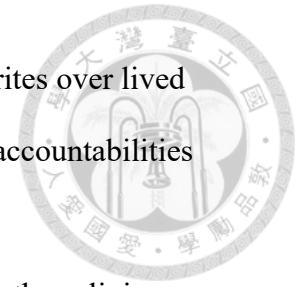


Not at Home in the Pacific

In *Iep Jāltok*, Jetñil-Kijiner collects an archive of bodies in pain in the Pacific. As I observed in Chapter One, she embeds stories of bodies in pain in ongoing histories of survivorship. In this chapter, I propose using an analytic—bodies not at home—to surface granular aspects of the nuclear Pacific and nuclear-free activism. I follow how James Clifford describes attachments to a place—“the grounding that helps one feel at home in a world of complex interdependences” (470)—to suggest that not being at home evokes experiences of dispossession where the grounding that allows interdependences to take shape is assaulted and undermined. I draw on the varied meanings of not at home to help understand the ways U.S. nuclear imperialism in the Marshall Islands has generated ongoing displacements, diasporas, and debilities across the Pacific, and how those living through the consequences of nuclearism refuse to be at home with narratives of peace written for the interests of decision makers in the continental U.S.

Not at home evokes how the U.S. military has uprooted the Marshallese from their homes to make room for nuclear weapons detonations, transporting them between atolls framed as empty from a settler-centered continental view. It also highlights how people can be uprooted from their homes without moving—what Rob Nixon memorably calls “displacement in place” (*Slow* 19). Aside from focusing attention on displacements of varied kinds, not at home stresses senses of alienation that emerge when radioactive contamination makes once familiar bodies and environments unrecognizable. Evoking

these varied senses, this analytic shows how the U.S. government writes over lived experiences of bodies not at home and thereby seeks to write off its accountabilities towards nuclear detonation survivors.



Alongside histories of devastation, I analyze in this section how those living through the consequences of nuclearism challenge the prescription that they should feel at home with narratives of peace. Activists in the Pacific continue to address the world on how narratives of peaceful ownership, necessary sacrifice, special trust, or free association constructed on the level and for the interests of global politics speak over lived experiences of violence. In this sense, I use not at home to also signal what drives the activism and agency of people in the Pacific who work to reclaim their homes.²⁴

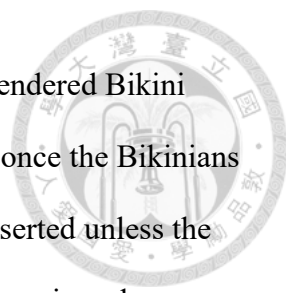
From 1946 to 1958, the U.S. detonated atmospheric and underwater nuclear weapons in the Marshall Islands that set into motion the exile, displacement, and diaspora of Marshallese people that continue today: many were evacuated from test sites as members of a United Nations Strategic Trust Territory under the care of the U.S.,²⁵ and later many moved to Hawai‘i and various sites in the continental U.S. under the Compact of Free Association (COFA). The neoliberal rhetoric of establishing *trusteeship* and being *freely associated* belie how the Marshallese since WWII have remained under the governance and control of an imperial power. Particularly in the case of the Strategic Trusteeship, as Aimee Bahng argues, “securitization becomes the mechanism for continuing colonial subjugation under the auspices of UN-approved

²⁴ By using not at home to signal not only histories of devastation in the nuclear Pacific but also survivorship, I am inspired by how Teresia Teaiwa in writing about histories of Bikini Atoll engages with “both destructive and life-sustaining histories” (“bikinis” 102). Nic Maclellan affirms Teaiwa’s point when he writes, in discussing histories of the nuclear era in the Pacific, “[i]t is a history not of victimhood, but of resistance and survival” (2).

²⁵ After Spanish and German colonial rule, the Marshall Islands was captured by Japan during WWI. Following two years of conflicts between the Allies and Japanese forces during WWII, in 1944 the U.S. defeated Japan and seized control of the Marshall Islands, and proceeded in 1946 to conduct Operation Crossroads which consisted of the detonations of two atomic bombs. A year later, the Marshall Islands officially became a Trust Territory of the U.S. with the terms of its trusteeship established by the UN.

international law” (50). It was under the banner of securitization during the Trusteeship period from 1947 to 1986 that the Marshallese experienced and witnessed intensive U.S. nuclear testing in their homelands, including the Bravo detonation on 1 March 1954, a hydrogen bomb with the yield equivalent to that of roughly one thousand atomic bombs dropped on wartime Hiroshima.

During the Trusteeship period, the Bikinians were shipped from island to island in military vessels as the U.S. tested a total of twenty-three nuclear weapons on their home atoll. In 1946, the Bikinians were first shipped to Rongerik Atoll where insufficient food sources brought starvation. After the Bikinians were evacuated from Rongerik in 1948, they lived for a short while on Kwajalein Atoll before eventually being moved to Kili Island later that year. Before Bikinians were removed from a tent encampment on Kwajalein Atoll, a Navy official was reported saying, “[t]he Navy is running out of deserted islands on which to settle these unwitting, and perhaps unwilling, nomads of the atomic age” (qtd. in Pincus). This statement reveals how the naval government sought to manage Marshallese people in an imperial language of wishful expedience, in which those who were removed from their homes are to be swiftly transported to supposedly empty lands suitable for new settlement. The discursive framing of islands without permanent human settlement as deserted exemplifies a form of what Traci Brynne Voyles calls wastelanding, a settler-centered form of environmental racism that discursively marks and maps Indigenous lands as “either always already belonging to the settler—his manifest destiny—or as undesirable, unproductive, or unappealing: in short, as wasteland” (7). Both cases render “resources extractable and lands and bodies pollutable” (24). As Voyles writes, wastelanding Diné lands in Navajo Nation with uranium mining “means to wasteland, to render pollutable, the lungs, the cells, and the respiratory tracts of everyone involved in the nuclear cycle. It also means to wasteland Navajo worldviews, epistemology, history, and cultural and religious practices” (11).



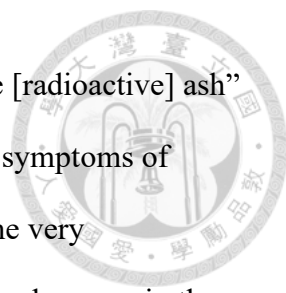
Moving wastelands practices across the Pacific, the U.S. military rendered Bikini Atoll as deserted and thus available for nuclear weapons detonations once the Bikinians were removed. Similarly, they viewed Rongerik and Kili Atolls as deserted unless the Bikinians settled there. Through a logic of wastelands, the U.S. army viewed landscapes and seascapes that are textured with Marshallese memory and knowledge as wasted spaces that could be productively sacrificed “for the good of mankind” (qtd. in Barker 20).²⁶ Today the violent legacies of U.S. wastelands Bikini are still glaringly legible: with the Bravo detonation evaporating three of its islands, Bikini today remains too contaminated for its former residents to return.²⁷

Besides evoking displacements that involve the movements of people away from their place(s) of belonging, I also use not at home to evoke what Nixon calls displacement in place. As Nixon argues, displacement in place signifies “the loss of the land and resources beneath [people], a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable” (*Slow* 19). Such “stationary displacement,” as Nixon puts it, immobilizes people by moving them out of their “living knowledge as one’s place loses its life-sustaining features” (19). The Marshallese were severed from their living knowledge of how to survive in familiar environments when radioactive materials mixed with crushed coral and water fell onto Ailinginae, Ailuk, Likiep, Rongelap, Utirik Atolls in the form of nuclear fallout from the Bravo detonation.²⁸ As Barker points out, the Marshallese breathed air and ingested water and

²⁶ These words are excerpted from Commodore Ben Wyatt’s address to the Bikinians in 1946. See also note 12.

²⁷ As Michelle Keown suggests, Commodore Ben Wyatt “appealed to the New England Protestant values that were by then well established within Marshallese society [due to earlier colonial rules] in order to persuade the 166 residents of Bikini atoll” to lend their home atoll to the U.S. military (“Children” 935). As Keown further shows, Wyatt also appealed to such Protestant values to simplify the Bikinians’ complex decision to leave their home atoll into an act of following God’s will (936). As for Bikini today, Keown shows in her research that “Bikini has more recently become the focus of Western fantasies of the uninhabited paradise island. In the late 1990s, scuba-diving facilities were established on Bikini Atoll for wealthy visitors wishing to explore the wrecks of warships deliberately sunk in Bikini lagoon during the nuclear testing era” (“War” 36-37).

²⁸ After the Bravo shot, U.S. military personnel including a detonation crew stationed on Enyu Island (in



food that were contaminated while some “played with or even ate the [radioactive] ash” for they mistook it as snow (23). As they started experiencing severe symptoms of radiation poisoning, they discovered that they had been stranded in the very environment that had once sustained them. As Barbara Rose Johnston observes, in the immediate aftermath of the Bravo detonation, the “people of Rongelap had not seen their islands atomized, and they had not physically lost their lands. Rather they were removed from the ability to safely live on their lands because of the contamination produced by fallout” (“Atomic” 5). In other words, they could no longer be at home with—or to feel at peace in—their now-poisoned environments even when they were in fact still in their homelands.

Living through the aftermaths of nuclear weapons detonations, fallout survivors could no longer feel at home in once familiar environments. The mobility of nuclear fallout exposes the failure and punctures the fantasy of a U.S. epistemological control mechanism that Bahng identifies as enclosure. As she argues, the U.S. devised Marshallese spaces into units of enclosure to transform the Marshall Islands into a “strategic trust territory,” “a living laboratory,” and subsequently “an (irradiated) ecosystem” (48). Enclosure, as Bahng explains, turns interconnected environments into “mythological objects of control” that are “concretely defined, and measured in ways that defy the movements of peoples, flora, fauna, and for that matter, radiation” (48). Indeed, the U.S. Army did not evacuate residents on Ailuk and Likiep Atolls after the Bravo detonation because they imagined nuclear fallout to travel according to bounded

Bikini Atoll) and a weather monitoring team stationed on Rongerik Atoll were soon evacuated. They were part of what Francis Lincoln Grahls calls “Atomic Veterans” (4). In the 1940s, as a U.S. Navy officer, Grahls received orders to participate in U.S. nuclear detonations in the Marshall Islands. In his PhD dissertation completed in 1995, Grahls writes that “Atomic Veterans were pawns in somebody else’s game. They were for the most part ordinary military men serving their country, following whatever orders they were given. At one particular time, those orders sent them to the nuclear test arena. The people organizing and executing the tests, however, were a coalition of powerful military, scientific and industrial personnel with their own unique culture” (4).

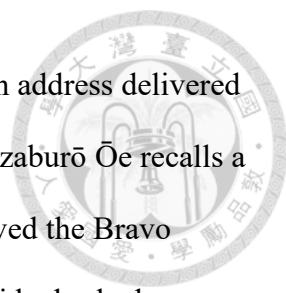
routes designated on maps that speak the bureaucratic language of minimizing and externalizing responsibilities.²⁹ In an interview Barker conducted with survivor Tempo Alfred from Ailuk, Alfred criticized and exposed the U.S. imperialist fantasy of containing radioactive matter in cartographic enclosures:

The U.S.S. *Wheeling* brought some scientists to show us maps and charts of the route of the nuclear fallout as it was carried downwind. The movements of the fallout were so funny to us because the lines actually zigzagged between Likiep, Ailuk, and the other atolls. I actually saw the charts and we were wondering how the radioactive poison could navigate itself between these islands without touching them! (qtd. in Barker 57)

Alfred's incredulous anger towards the combined scientific, military, and bureaucratic mechanisms of control legible in a map shows a story perhaps familiar to nuclear fallout survivors: the U.S. military vessels that arrived with experts, this time bringing official maps and charts to write over lived experiences; the meandering nuclear fallout coming to take the lands and seas from beneath their feet; and the radioactive poisons moving beyond U.S. rhetorical boundaries of enclosure as they continue to decay in near eternal half-lives. In Alfred's story, cartographic enclosures allow the U.S. to whitewash the violence of nuclear detonations. His story reveals how the U.S. writes narratives of safe containment over lived experiences of contact with militantly itinerant fallout.

The U.S. rhetoric of safe enclosure was further deflated by the exposure of twenty-three Japanese fishermen to radiation contamination on board a ship—the Lucky

²⁹ The Marshallese who lived on Ailingnae, Rongelap, and Utirik considered by the U.S. military to be within the nuclear fallout area of the Bravo shot were not evacuated for several days after the test. By the time they were evacuated to Enewetak Atoll, many were experiencing symptoms of severe radiation poisoning. It would take decades before the Marshallese fallout survivors found out that they had become medical subjects in a covert Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) study on human response to nuclear fallout called Project 4.1. As Barker's research reveals, Project 4.1 quickly changed to describing its study subjects as being "accidentally" exposed to nuclear fallout within two months after the Bravo shot. This change became a point of much contention, as many maintained that "the colonial powers purposefully exposed Marshallese citizens to radiation" (41-42).



Dragon No. 5—unwittingly within the fallout area of the Bravo. In an address delivered in the aftermath of the 2011 Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster, Kenzaburō Ōe recalls a question raised by Matashichi Ōishi, one of the fishermen who survived the Bravo fallout: “who will take responsibility? –I [Ōe] gathered that Mr. Ōishi had asked me whether anyone had taken responsibility in light of his own experience, meaning from his exposure to the bomb at Bikini to this very day” (31-32). As excess exposures to radiation continue to produce bodies not at home across the Pacific, the question that Ōe and Ōishi ask exposes how lived violence is rhetorically discounted at the state level in order to minimize accountability. Part of such efforts, in the context of the Marshall Islands, was to undermine radiation-illness narratives, a process that Rebecca Hogue calls nuclear normalizing. As Hogue argues, nuclear normalizing obfuscates causal relationships between nuclear weapons detonations and their consequences, creating “a humanity certainly not at peace, and one whose governments are at war with their citizens by convincing them that they are at peace” (212). With normalizing in the present continuous tense, nuclear normalizing evokes the “active, ongoing process” through which the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) normalizes “experiences with excess radiation and radiation poisoning over generations” (212). Hogue analyzes bilingual pamphlets the DOE published in 1979 and 1980 to “educate” the people of Enewetak and Bikini about the level of radiation in their islands, revealing how the U.S. has sought to displace accountability for their actions (210). In these pamphlets, the DOE used a passive voice to describe nuclear weapons detonations to avoid naming the U.S. as the actor; sprinkled hazard symbols over Marshallese lands and waters depicted in colorful illustrations to suggest the natural ubiquity of radiation; and repeatedly adopted the impersonal imperative mood to coax the Marshallese into believing that other health risks such as smoking were causing their radiological illnesses (212-14). The seemingly neutral usage of calling nuclear weapons detonations *tests* or *trials* also

reflected broader and ongoing U.S. efforts to normalize its nuclearism, undermining the fact that U.S. nuclear detonations were “deliberate actions with real consequences” (226).³⁰

Qualifying lived damage within discursive boundaries, the U.S. has maintained a façade of peace that allows it to dismiss Marshallese calls for full reparations.³¹ Codifying narrow parameters for the damages of nuclear weapon detonations, the U.S. government has managed to write off substantial components of its responsibilities towards Marshallese fallout survivors during COFA negotiations. When COFA went into effect, its Section 177 created a liminal legal space where the U.S. can legitimately deny Marshallese requests for comprehensive restitutions.³² Such a strategy is part of an imperial ideology that Sang Eun Eunice Lee calls atomization, “or the ideology of reducing, separating, isolating, and destroying lands and bodies to serve an expansionist agenda” (101). Lee argues that atomization governs the compensation scheme of the Nuclear Claims Tribunal, where the Marshallese people are reduced to “the imperial archive of irradiated body parts” (108). As Lee writes, “[t]he body, in this divisive

³⁰ Here Hogue is following Rebecca Solnit’s critique that “[t]est’ is something of a misnomer when it comes to nuclear bombs” for all nuclear weapons detonated by the U.S. military in the Marshall Islands have been full-scale explosions” (qtd. in Hogue 226).

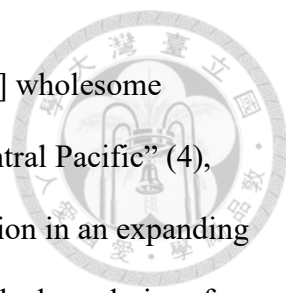
³¹ The “U.S. government has continued to argue that accounts of the health problems suffered by the Marshall Islanders are exaggerated,” as Keown writes, in spite of “herculean efforts on the part of Marshallese activists” such as Darlene Keju-Johnson and Lijon Eknilang to expose the extent of devastations nuclear weapons tests have brought (“War” 35).

³² Section 177 of the COFA effectively enabled the U.S. to monetarily write off due reparations for damages caused by its nuclear testing programs. In this Section, the limited responsibilities the U.S. government took for the effects of its nuclear detonations were scientifically supported by a radiation level survey conducted by the DOE in the Marshall Islands in 1978. This survey narrowly confined nuclear weapons contamination to four atolls—Bikini, Enewetak, Rongelap, and Utirik. As Barker observes, this 1978 survey “enabled the DOE representative working on the Compact [COFA] negotiations to effectively erase U.S. government responsibility for acute exposures during earlier decades and to ignore the needs of any communities beyond those the survey identified as areas of concern” (36). Furthermore, the Nuclear Claims Tribunal (NCT)—established under Section 177—had awarded roughly US\$2,400,000,000 over the years for nuclear-testing related injuries and damages, far exceeding the US\$150,000,000 provided by the U.S. In lieu of this discrepancy, the Marshall Islands government filed a Changed Circumstances Petition in 2000 to request for adequate compensation, but the petition was denied on the grounds that circumstances had not changed enough to warrant additional funds. Section 177 had also been repeatedly cited to deny Marshallese pursuits of nuclear justice within domestic U.S. courts (ICAAD 22-26).

vision, is not legible to the United States as a whole” (109). Such an atomizing vision allows the U.S. to contain effects of radiation-related illnesses within parameters of individual and isolated body parts, discounting lived experiences of bodies not at home. Minimizing effects of nuclear weapons tests in this way has helped to justify violent incorporation into the American pursuit of military dominance as service to peace.

Exposing Pax Americana as instead what Christine Hong calls a violent peace, activists in the Pacific continue to challenge false narratives of peace that ignore ongoing damages of nuclearism. As many Marshallese activists continue to stress, U.S. nuclear imperialism has not ended with the termination of nuclear detonations in 1958. U.S. imperial practices in the Marshall Islands continue today as, amongst other forms, intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) tests operating in what Lauren Hirshberg describes as “a mythical landscape of small-town Americana” mapped onto Kwajalein Atoll (4).³³ Transitioning from a military support base for nuclear to ICBM testing during the 1960s, as Hirshberg points out, the U.S. Army Garrison on Kwajalein Atoll (codenamed USAG-KA) was transformed “into a home for U.S. workers” as a recruitment and retention strategy for its mostly elite and civilian work force of engineers, scientists, and their families (4). Supported by a Marshallese service sector labor force who would commute daily from Ebeye Island (3-4) as well as a mostly bachelor and blue-collar workforce consisting of the largest percentage of U.S. workers of color on Kwajalein (27-28), USAG-KA operated at racially segregated and class-distinctive lines crisscrossing with military-surveilled gender and sexual norms. While three miles of reef separating Kwajalein from Ebeye allowed the perfection of “segregation never fully achieved in [U.S.] continental suburbia” (28), housing segregation and monitoring of recreational spaces that position single men as potential

³³ ICBM is primarily designed for the delivery of nuclear warheads.



predators on Kwajalein itself ensured “the security and purity of [. . .] wholesome nuclear families” (27). Restaged as “a tropical-style Mayberry in Central Pacific” (4), USAG-KA continues to shroud “in a veil of innocence” its participation in an expanding U.S. base imperium that flexes its nuclear muscles through policing the boundaries of an elite class of nuclear families built over Indigenous dispossessions (25).

Mapping over Kwajalein with signature markers of American suburbia not only helped to convince “[those] migrating from the United States that they were ‘at home’” in Kwajalein (13), as Hirshberg argues, but also framed Ebeye as “an urban and impoverished site housing foreign labor,” foreign in this sense “to the domesticity of Kwajalein’s U.S. suburbia” (29).³⁴ As Hirshberg shows, though the Marshallese continue to pay the costs of the U.S. quest for security, many also work to unsettle this suburban landscape of innocent ownership erected atop their lands. Dissatisfied towards how American claims over Kwajalein lands were signed into the COFA in 1982 in May, Kwajalein landowners mobilized a land-justice occupation called Operation Homecoming later that year in June—when one thousand people participated in a peaceful sail-in to disrupt ICBM testing and reinhabit their segregated lands. As Hirshberg suggests, in this Operation activists “upended the mythical frame of Kwajalein as a site of American belonging [. . . and] reminded the most powerful military in the world, and a local and global audience watching, that this was *their* home” (emphasis original 191). Deliberately naming their movement as an operation, activists spoke back against numerous U.S. military operations conducted on

³⁴ Antagonistic exchanges between Hirshberg and some Kwajalein residents revealed the extent to which the narrative boundaries of Kwajalein as an *American* home “were taken up by civilian residents and vehemently guarded” (14). After some Kwajalein residents learned that Hirshberg had elsewhere used the word “imperialism” to define U.S. history in the region, many reneged on previously expressed consent for interviews (13-14). As Hirshberg argues, such disavowal is a local iteration of a global structure of UN-sanctioned U.S. expansionism labelled a “special relationship” through the Trusteeship Agreement (14). Both structures and narratives, Hirshberg writes, “armed U.S. civilian workers and family members—individuals like those antagonistic to [her] visit—with other ways to frame their residency and employment on the island” (14-15).



Marshallese bodies, lands, and waters. Acting at a time before the Marshall Islands became independent in 1986, participants in this Operation arguably sought to resist an emerging Marshallese government based in Majuro that traded in Kwajalein land rights to strive towards national sovereignty.³⁵ In postwar Kwajalein resistance movements, as Greg Dvorak suggests, such stories of “fighting bravely for land rights and compensation and attempting to return home” might be called “the ‘homecoming’ narrative” (199). Homecoming in such a context “is rooted in a strong sense of Marshallese land and identity that stretches far into the distant past,” demonstrating “an affirmation of land, identity, and continuity” in the face of Japanese imperial expansion and putative American liberation (199).

Infused with Marshallese agency and autonomy, the deliberate co-opting of a U.S. military moniker was employed three years later in Operation Exodus, where such a move signaled the self-exile of three hundred Rongelapese who boarded the Greenpeace ship *Rainbow Warrior* to leave their contaminated home island. The Rongelapese feared for their own safety after having lived for nearly three decades on Rongelap Atoll since 1957 when the U.S. sent them back, claiming the atoll already safe for habitation despite heavy contamination from the Bravo fallout only three years prior. “Our lives are worth more than their money, our lives are worth more than their legal system,” Rongelap descendent Jelton Anjain stated in his address to the World Conference Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs in Japan in 2012 one year after the Fukushima Daiichi disaster.³⁶ In the aftermath of a nuclear disaster showing that, as Johnston puts it, “nuclear colonialism is not a history that exists only in a defined period” (“The” 633),

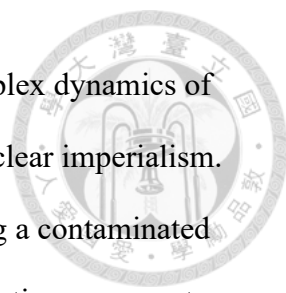
³⁵ Hirshberg suggests that “[a]s an emerging Marshallese government worked to negotiate Marshallese decolonization as a seamless transition toward free association with the United States, it did so by leveraging its biggest bargaining chip, Kwajalein, while cutting KAC [Kwajalein Atoll Corporation of landowners] input out of the process” (211).

³⁶ This conference was organized by the Japan Council Against Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs (*Gensuikyo*). It took place from 2-9 Aug. 2012 in Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Anjain voiced reasons why former residents of Rongelap and their descendants risked being cut off from compensation funds when most of them ignored the U.S. Congress's ultimatum to resettle Rongelap Atoll by 2011. In his address, he strongly criticized the instrumental rationality with which the U.S. urged them to resettle Rongelap out of "legal and economic necessity."³⁷

With resettlement deferred indefinitely, contemporary Rongelap "look[s] like a ghost town" in the eyes of two vacationing sailors (qtd. in Pincus). One asphalt road arrowing towards an airport with no traffic. New houses with shiny tin roofs, scarcely inhabited. A fruitless mango tree. Generators chugging on, uninterrupted. The desolate town of Rongelap thus described runs on money that "cannot take the poison from the coconut crabs," as John Anjain had already made clear to the U.S. government in 1977 (qtd. in Pincus). The Rongelap magistrate at the time of the Bravo shot, Anjain stated in his testimony: "I know that money cannot bring back my son. It cannot give me back twenty-three years of my life" (qtd. in Pincus). His insistence on upholding the value of life resonated more than three decades later with the words of Jelton Anjain. In closing his address in 2012, he linked Rongelap experiences of navigating questionable information that the U.S. government provided and disseminated with experiences of Japanese *hibakusha* and their descendants. Seeking to build what Hong calls "radiogenic solidarity" where radioactively contaminated communities "sought to move together toward the possibility of life" (132), Anjain emphasized the need to combat nuclear injustices across the Pacific.

³⁷ The DOE conducted studies claiming Rongelap was safe for habitation if residents follow certain (quite alarming) regulations. As Anjain pointed out in his 2012 address, "if the scientists are saying that these islands are safe to go back to, why are they urging our people to 'consume 30% local diet from the land and 70% imported food.' This statement alone clearly indicates that the islands are still contaminated." Furthermore, as Pincus reports, DOE's Rongelap garden projects, where the replanting of Rongelap would help scientists gather data on potential environmental and health impacts of radiation exposure, disturbingly revealed how "exposed [Rongelap] lands continued to be used for experiments that [. . .] allowed the U.S. to gather information on the long-term effect of low-level radiation on the environment."



Operation Homecoming and Operation Exodus articulated complex dynamics of and relationships to homes in Marshallese resistance against U.S. nuclear imperialism. Whether it was temporarily reinhabiting an occupied home or leaving a contaminated home in search of a new one, acts of homecomings in these two operations were not simply defined by the geographical directions towards which people travel. Marshallese activists laterally connected with communities that shared, however unevenly, *unhomely* experiences of dispossessions to imagine a nuclear-free and independent Pacific. Such shared aspirations for the future powerfully emerged in a 1998 collection called *Pacific Women Speak Out for Independence and Denuclearisation*, where women across the Pacific tied independence in intimate ways to speculative visions of a nuclear-free Pacific.³⁸ In the collection, they amplify each other's voices when they speak out about Marshallese and Maohi nuclear justice commitments, Kanaka Maoli and Maori land justice efforts, resistance against Indonesian colonization in Timor Lorosa'e and West Papua, struggles for self-determination in Bougainville,³⁹ and resistance of Belauan women against the signing of the COFA with the U.S. Amidst their collective voices is a map of "Nuclear Colonialism in the Pacific," unmarked in the table of contents. The key of the map indicates symbols identifying sites of nuclear explosion(s), airbases and naval bases with nuclear capability, electronic facilities vital to nuclear warfare, missile testing, nuclear waste dumping, and uranium mining in the Pacific (*Pacific Women* 35-36). The map calls for readers to recognize and remember nodes occupied, claimed, devastated, and polluted by nuclear weapon designing, testing, and detonating in the Pacific. Situated amongst voices of Pacific women, the position of this map speaks to

³⁸ This collection was a joint publication by Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Aotearoa), the Disarmament and Security Centre (Aotearoa), and Pacific Connections (Australia).

³⁹ Bougainville is currently an autonomous region in Papua New Guinea (PNG). Bougainvilleans voted overwhelmingly in support for independence from PNG in a referendum in 2019, which has so far not been ratified by the parliament of PNG. In 2024, Bougainville president and PNG Prime Minister agreed to enlist a moderator to progress talks on the 2019 referendum ("Bougainville").

how women activists continue to situate histories of devastation within longer histories of survivorship.

Evoking these broader histories in the final piece of the collection, Belauan activist Cita Morei calls for collaborations ensuring that the dream of “liv[ing] in a nuclear free world will not have died when [Belauans] approved of the Compact of Free Association with the United States” (*Pacific Women* 77). Her words are worth reflecting upon in the current context of the Marshall Islands for in the renewed COFA ratified in 2023, according to journalist and *Marshall Islands Journal* editor Giff Johnson, the ongoing nuclear legacy is “clearly not resolved” (qtd. in “Marshall Islands Signs”). While the Pacific continues to be entangled in complex ways with nuclear imperialism, Morei envisions a future where peace, in a rare reversal, takes the force of and coopts the language common to war. “[W]hen peace breaks out there will be no stopping it,” Morei states, projecting forth fervent commitments for a shared future (*Pacific Women* 77). Her vision joins and continues in other activist works, including the works of Jetñil-Kijiner, whose poetry I will now analyze.

Not Just Stone: *Iep Jāltok*

Jetñil-Kijiner describes the mix of Marshallese storytelling forms and spoken word poetry in *Iep Jāltok* as “meant to be spoken out loud, not just silently read” (*Iep Jāltok: A History* 117). She connects how spoken word and slam poetry are—as Javon Johnson argues—“doing material things with words” (7) with how Marshallese storytelling forms interact with the world they are in and help to shape. Reflecting on her interviews with elders, Jetñil-Kijiner notes how Marshallese oral traditions serve as “a way to process the world” and how they are “breathing entities that are yearning to be

experienced over and over again” (*Iep Jāltok: A History* 86).⁴⁰ Depicting how repeated apocalypses are inscribed in bodies, Jetñil-Kijiner traces in her poetry collection disposessions that traffic in religious doctrines, military strategies, human medical experiments, and global environmental politics; within these histories of devastations however, she employs Marshallese storytelling forms and spoken word to surface histories of survivorship.

In this section, I suggest that Jetñil-Kijiner creates in *Iep Jāltok* unpacified homecomings for those who cannot be at home in the nuclear Pacific. Homecomings take different shapes in the four selected poems I will discuss—as lived histories in “Liwātuonmour,” a linguistic common in “The Letter B Is For,” a literal return to home in “On the Couch with Būbū Neien,” and commitments to a place in “Campaigning in Aur.” Despite the different forms that homecomings take, the poet situates them in Pacific landscapes and seascapes that remember concretized offenses and help to constitute the sticky materiality of resistance. Showing an insurgent underflow sustaining varied acts of homecomings in her poems, these texts represent how the Marshallese stand with bombed and contaminated lands and waters to inflect, frustrate, deflate, or indeed, choke the progression of nuclear imperialism.⁴¹

⁴⁰ The focus on oral traditions in Pacific studies involves commitments towards subverting the dominance of the visual in erasing, among other things, representations of grassroots antinuclear movements. As Talei Lusia Mangioni writes, “[t]here is cumulative violence in the constant repetition of the military photographic and filmic representations of the mushroom cloud” (52). Challenging such a visual obsession, Mangioni chooses to privilege the aural in doing what she calls “creative Pacific histories” (56). Doing creative Pacific histories, as Mangioni practices and shows, involves taking stock of and making accessible “vernacular, performative, poetic, embodied, and sensory archives” of Pacific histories (51). As a pedagogical practitioner of creative Pacific histories, Mangioni argues for the need to make Pacific histories “accessible through listening” (54).

⁴¹ Amitav Ghosh provides a reconceptualization of choke points in his nonfiction monograph *The Nutmeg’s Curse* (2021). In thinking about possibilities of environments *choking* the progression of nuclear imperialism, I am informed by his argument that geographical features may power or obstruct, with an agency of their own, the movements of humans and resources. As he writes, “[f]rom a vitalist point of view, it could be said that the wars of the twentieth century were won as much by the fossilized energy of botanical matter as by particular groups of humans” (105). As Ghosh suggests, vitalism describes the ways that so-called natural resources (some) humans think of as inert have in fact demarcated the boundaries within which human lives and civilizations become possible. Ghosh argues that a vitalist politics has long energized environmental movements, and should continue to intervene in our current climate crisis. He discusses the 2016 movement of #NoDAPL, protests blocking the



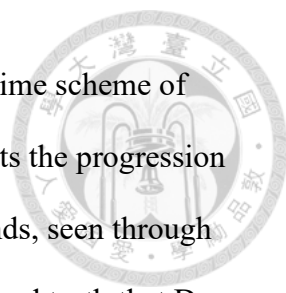
In “Liwātuonmour,” part of the first section of her poetry collection, Jetñil-Kijiner embeds historical moments of violence in the deep-time histories of Marshallese atolls, speaking back against the ways religion is invoked to justify laying waste to Marshallese epistemologies. She narrates the Marshallese story of two sisters who were pillars of basalt stone that birthed the clans and *Irooj* line yet were denigrated by a missionary in an effort to, as Jetñil-Kijiner puts elsewhere, “stamp out ‘pagan’ practices” (“Why”).⁴² A missionary named Dr. Rife proclaimed the stone sisters as “nothing more. Than rocks. Nothing more. Than stone,” even though the Marshallese respected them (8). With periods creating uniform separation in what should be whole phrases, the language Dr. Rife speaks reflects a homogenizing message and divisive vision. Jetñil-Kijiner contrasts such language against the words the two sisters speak: “7. They found the words inside their blood inside their pulse inside the stars and the waves” (8). Growing from archipelagic entanglements of human and the other-than-human, the language the sisters speak also speaks through them. It is a relational language enmeshed multi-directionally in the atolls, shaping “the sounds of midday and dusk” just as such language shapes them into “mothers of the chiefly lineage” and “goddesses” (8). Their language is not one to be spoken *to* others, like the one-directional declaration of truth Dr. Rife forces onto those on the shore after he returns from having thrown the stone body of Liwātuonmour into the ocean: “16. Nothing more. Than a rock” (8). Such a segregating message hides its intent to, as Jetñil-Kijiner puts it, “eliminate the competition” from Marshallese religious practices (“Why”). This message possesses power because its speaker is regarded as an expert (indicated through the title Dr.). The ways an expansionist agenda augments its authority through its

construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline for underground oil transportation, as a prominent example of effective environmental advocacy that draws its political powers from the Earth and recognizes the ways that the Earth make political actions possible (235-44).

⁴² *Irooj* is Marshallese for chief.

affiliation with religion recalls how, as discussed earlier in this chapter, Christian doctrine has been invoked to justify U.S. nuclear weapons tests. Similarly, an evangelical religious discourse is invoked in the poem to justify seeing basalt landscapes of atolls textured with Marshallese epistemologies as wasted spaces that can be improved with efficient destruction conveniently making room for a hegemonic enterprise on its quest for expansion.

Jetñil-Kijiner enumerates the progression of the legend in this poem with numbers, creating intermittent interruptions in a poem that forms a paragraph on the page. Such enumeration brings attention to the layered formation of a story unfolding in the deep-time histories of the Marshall Islands, from when the two sisters were born to the present moment in which the violence Dr. Rife has initiated towards Liwātuonmour enrages Lidepdepju. The form of a constantly interrupted paragraph that the poem takes reminds readers that they are reading a self-reflexive narrative of Marshallese histories often disrupting its own speech. As such, the enumeration creates a bumpy reading experience, asking readers to constantly stop and reflect on the porous layers of the past that make up the present. The bold-faced numbers, in turn, act as footholds giving traction to a plural sense of histories. On this point, I suggest that Jetñil-Kijiner's poem evokes a sense of histories that Greg Dvorak calls "atollscapes" in his auto-ethnography of Kwajalein atoll histories (28). Citing Epeli Hau'ofa, Dvorak writes that "[a]n atollc Marshallese sense of time is aware of the many sedimented layers of concrete and coral in the past that make up the present. The power of place remains as an enduring frame around which these competing meanings, identities, and histories are arbitrated. I call these multiply emplaced histories 'atollscapes'" (27-28). As Dvorak explicates, atollscapes describe the ways that local histories persist and resist coercive co-option into national or global politics, much like how coral reefs, blasted away to make room for concrete structures that facilitate the U.S. nuclear program and other military

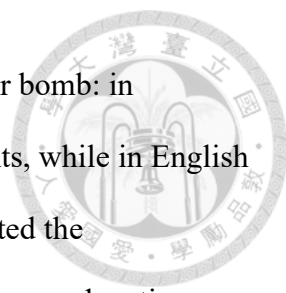


activities, grow to break through the surface of concrete in the deep-time scheme of things (26-28). In the poem, through enumeration Jetñil-Kijiner counts the progression of a ground-level or even seabed-level narrative of the Marshall Islands, seen through the eyes of the two sisters, breaking through the surface of a concretized truth that Dr. Rife proclaimed and propagated. Enumeration allows the story of the two sisters to trouble the narrative that Dr. Rife constructs, poking holes in the seemingly smooth narrative monolith of nothing-more-than-rock. The bold-faced numbers occupy spaces that would not be possible in a conventional paragraph and, by occupying impossible spaces, they show how lived histories from the ground up may crack authoritative history inscribed from above.

“Liwātuonmour” is part of the first section of *Iep Jāltok* providing witness to Marshallese histories from below the level of national or global politics. This section engages with the *longue durée* of the Marshall Islands, emphasizing the need to remember and resist wars continually waged against the Pacific. The second section “History Project” remains committed to narrating lived histories that challenge official narratives written for the interests of advancing U.S. nuclear imperialism.

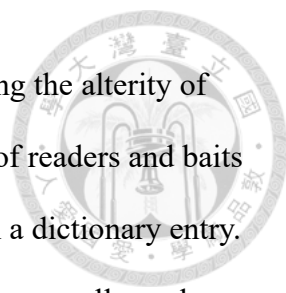
In the second section of *Iep Jāltok*, “The Letter B Is For” stages a linguistic rebellion against how the U.S. government seeks to discursively contain the violence of the nuclear weapons it has unleashed onto the Marshall Islands (19). Jetñil-Kijiner presents the poem as a bilingual dictionary entry on the Marshallese word *baam*, complete with a pronunciation guide, an example sentence, the grammatical properties of the word, and a title reminiscent of contents from English as a Second Language textbooks. However, this seemingly professional dictionary entry mistranslates *baam*, the Marshallese word for bombed, into English as bomb.⁴³ Through this unsuccessful

⁴³ *Baam* is Marshallese for bombed.



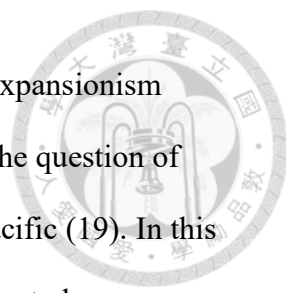
translation, Jetñil-Kijiner contrasts two linguistic pictures of a nuclear bomb: in Marshallese a bomb is associated with a verb that suggests movements, while in English a bomb is a noun that names an object. In a language that has facilitated the development and detonation of nuclear weapons, the word bomb is a noun denoting a stationary object safe under the military and scientific controls of an imperial power. In a language spoken by those whose homes have been exploded by nuclear weapons, the word *baam* presents the violence of a nuclear bomb in action. Through such contrast, Jetñil-Kijiner evokes in this poem how the U.S. military and its allies sought to discursively contain the consequences of their nuclear weapons program in what Bahng identifies as enclosures (48). As discussed earlier, the U.S. government has sought to harness the spectacle of nuclear weapons detonations to maintain its image as a world power through framing these detonations as controllable events—events that can be safely pressed into photographs, stored in cinematic reels, printed as words, and drawn onto maps. However, for those still living through the aftermath of nuclear weapons detonations, the transpacific travels of the split atom are experienced not as events that time stamps and lines on maps can contain or enclose. Depicting how nuclear bombs are experienced in her poem, Jetñil-Kijiner engages with this epistemic gap: the mistranslation of the word *baam* into English highlights how contacts with the violent mobilities of nuclear weapons are discursively enclosed to buttress the interests of decision makers in the continental U.S.

Given the slippage of meaning in its translation, the validity of this poem serving as a dictionary entry becomes suspect. In the poem, between an abbreviation for the word English and the word bomb is a string of ambiguous shorthand, casual italicizations, random numbers, and cavalier placement of punctuation marks: “Engl. 2(inf, tr / -e) 3,4,6(-i). Bomb.” (19). Here I interpret Jetñil-Kijiner as using a recognizable form of a dictionary entry in luring readers to skim over this string of



enigmatic ciphers and in putting readers at risk of seeing yet not seeing the alterity of these codes. Using enjambment, the poet arguably tests the patience of readers and baits them to see the lethal otherness of the bomb as normal denotations in a dictionary entry. I suggest that such a process of naturalizing the bomb recalls what Hogue calls nuclear normalizing—particularly the U.S. government-speak of using the passive voice that in fact indoctrinates when it professes to educate. The way that the passive voice reinforces the self-professed educational function and genre of the dictionary recalls how the government-speak of passive voice allows the DOE pamphlets to pass off as being *educational*. In other words, the voice of the poem abets its form in creating an educational veneer that normalizes the alterity of the nuclear bomb.

Though mistranslated, shrouded in the passive voice, and regulated by a seemingly standard form, the Marshallese language still speaks in this poem. Instead of heliocentric flashes of illumination, nuclear weapons detonations are reframed in this poem as radioactive fallout that never ends. As the example sentence shows, the word *baam* bears collective memories of the question: “*Kobaam ke? // Are you contaminated // with radioactive fallout?*” (19). The typographic layout of this example sentence, with each part falling farther away from where the dictionary entry begins, mimics how radioactive matter falls from the sky and hints at how it continues to reverberate politically, socially, and environmentally. Faced with such fallout, the Marshallese language serves as a witness to the lived experiences of bodies not at home, bodies that are otherwise muted or erased in official U.S. narratives. This language thus creates and stores the narrativized presences of nuclear fallout survivors. In this sense, this poem describes how the Marshallese language provides a linguistic common where bodies not at home are invited to join a collective body of resistance against erasure and amnesia of histories written from below the level of geopolitics. In such a linguistic common, Jetñil-Kijiner reframes the pedagogical implications carried in the title of the poem “the

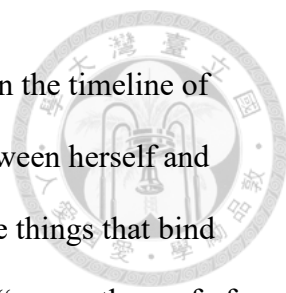


letter B is for”: not so much (arguably) an arm of English linguistic expansionism anymore, this sentence passes down a range of memories evoked in the question of “[k]obaam ke” as future knowledge needed to survive the nuclear Pacific (19). In this sense, the Marshallese language in this poem produces what I consider to be an unpacified space where survival, remembrance, and resistance potentially connect. The poet constructs a linguistic common to house those living through the aftermath of nuclearism, providing spaces outside of a continental U.S. imaginary where they are inscribed as an afterthought.

“The Letter B Is For” is part of the second section of *Iep Jāltok* engaging with the continuity of Marshallese histories, evoking what Dvorak in writing about Kwajalein histories describes as histories “in the middle of now-here” that do not gravitate towards narratives of Pacific Islands as being “in the middle of nowhere” (1). In this sense the section of “History Project” in *Iep Jāltok*, as Lee puts it, “is hardly limited to history” (104). The third section “Lessons From Hawai‘i” explores how these continuing histories of devastation as well as survivorship shape the transpacific travels of contemporary Marshallese subjects.

In “On the Couch with Būbū Neien,” Jetñil-Kijiner creates dynamic acts of homecomings in everyday settings that reach into moving pasts to look towards new futures (42-44).⁴⁴ In the poem, returning to Majuro as a diasporic Marshallese living in Hawai‘i, the poet’s struggles to speak fluent Marshallese meet her grandmother’s physical struggles to speak due to tongue cancer. U.S. nuclear weapons programs may well triggered their inarticulations, with the poet’s grandmother developing cancer in a radioactively contaminated country and the poet herself caught in the diaspora in the aftermath of those detonations. Yet, when their inarticulations encounter one another in

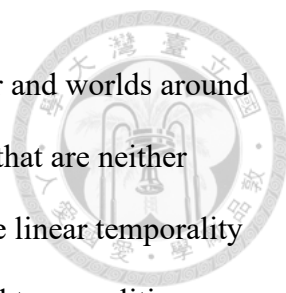
⁴⁴ Būbū is Marshallese for grandmother.



the poem, it takes place in genealogies outside, longer, and larger than the timeline of exploding bombs. As the poet writes, in the “silence [that] roars” between herself and her grandmother, she wishes she could ask her grandmother about the things that bind them together—the color pink that the poet liked as a child, the pink “across the roof of the sun’s mouth / yawning over” the childhood home of her grandmother, the ache of her grandmother’s fingers from days of scrubbing on iron washboards, and “the warriors healers canoe carvers buried / before [her grandmother]” (43). Here, Jetñil-Kijiner does not piece these moments together based on presumed consanguinity. Rather, she asks whether she can encounter her grandmother outside of blood relations, exploring how things like the color pink, bodily aches, voices of those who came before may constitute the ancestral lineages in which she finds herself (43). In other words, she troubles the terms of what are recognized as her ancestral lineages, arguably negotiating them outside of a reproductive imaginary. In so doing, her return to Majuro involves more than a trip back to her homeland. Her return is an opening up of revisable possibilities that shape what are called homelands and acts of homecoming.

Beyond framing homecoming as moving from one place to another in which one is home and the other foreign, Jetñil-Kijiner creates homecoming in her poem by engaging with what Rob Wilson calls *worlding*. “Worlding [. . .] opens up different ways of being with others and being in the world,” Wilson writes, “in terms and stories of connecting to other worlds and opening everyday life to other lived local temporalities and ways of dwelling (as ‘being with’) above or below the nation-state or the policed and bordered world system” (“Afterword” 15-16).⁴⁵ Indeed, Jetñil-Kijiner writes of her homecoming

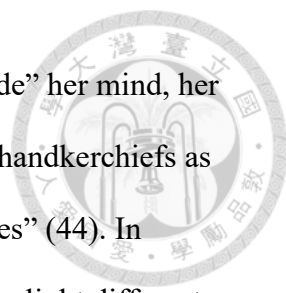
⁴⁵ In the introduction and afterword to *The Worlding Project*, Christopher Connery and Rob Wilson respectively lay out how broader intellectual currents shaped the World Literature and Cultural Studies group at the University of California, Santa Cruz, and how the vibrant scholarly communities that grew and organized themselves around this project sought questions about the world that are always incomplete and resist mastery. Connery shows how this study group is, amongst other things, a pedagogical project committed to “worlding”—“an interruption and critique of a range of field imaginaries” (1). Continually transforming its pedagogue as well as its pupils, the worlding project questions “the ways in which a



in the poem as creating different ways of being with her grandmother and worlds around her. Coming home in the poem opens up revisable ways of dwelling that are neither funneled through the narrow vision of blood relations nor through the linear temporality of the bomb. Homecoming in the poem surfaces submerged and lived temporalities where reverberations from exploding bombs create spidering cracks, long after the end of nuclear weapons detonations were pronounced in official state documents and long after the end of the UN-sanctioned Trusteeship period. These cracks emerge in how two people dispossessed of their (native) tongue try to articulate how it is that they come to sit beside each other on a couch in contemporary Majuro. Homecoming provides possibilities for a survivor of U.S. nuclear weapons testing and a descendent of a survivor to try to articulate their crisscrossing worlds.

Homecoming as articulated in the work of Jetñil-Kijiner unfolds piecemeal, contingent, and partial comings together of worlds in a gerundive sense that, taking inspiration from Wilson, involves “a world-forming verb more than pregiven noun” (“Introduction” 14). In this sense, Jetñil-Kijiner is not coming home *to* her homeland, with the preposition *to* suggesting homeland as a passive noun receiving actions. Rather, a homeland emerges deferred, half-formed, and unsettled as the poet comes home pondering questions about her lineages that she cannot fully articulate and her grandmother cannot fully answer. Multiple things at once and on the move, homeland is held in a blurry vision in the poem, in flux amidst nagging questions of the poet, incomplete answers of her grandmother, and temporary junctions between the two.

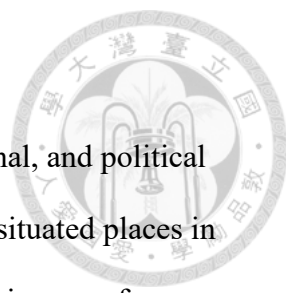
given discipline or scholarly field sets its own boundaries” (1). As such, the worlding project as Connery argues traces “new spatialities and temporalities” that “might help to continue to produce students who, while not at home in the world, are productively strangers in it” (11). These productive strangers, as Wilson shows, may move towards “creating different modes of *thinking and writing, studying, and teaching the world* against and inside this apparatus” (211). Wrestling “‘worlding’ away from strictly Heideggerian uses” (219), Wilson argues that worlding as an “active-force gerund” can shift “the taken-for-granted and normal life-forms of the market and war into the to-be-generated and remade” (212). As such, worlding can potentially “install a vision that operates otherwise from older modes of imperialism and outright colonization” (212).



When the poet finds her unanswered questions threatening to “implode” her mind, her grandmother reaches out her hand to give her a pat and embroidered handkerchiefs as gifts. “And suddenly sunlight,” as the poet writes, “floods [her] insides” (44). In fleetingly reaching each other, the poet and her grandmother create sunlight different from the illumination of Earth that nuclear weapons explosions promised to bring. They speak back against representations of sunlight crafted to naturalize atomic bombs—part of what DeLoughrey problematizes as heliotropes, as discussed in Chapter One. The poet and her grandmother, as depicted in the poem, reject heliocentric fantasies of enlightenment that atomic bombs promise to fulfill, exposing such fantasies as selected apocalypses targeting othered bodies. Through reaching out her hand, the poet’s grandmother speaks what I consider to be an unpacified tongue—a tongue as yet untamed by radioactively induced cancer and unruly in passing down fragmented knowledge for living in the nuclear Pacific. Such a sunlight made otherwise lights an everyday scene where the poet and her grandmother feel at home in the quotidian gestures of each other and provides solace for the poet when her grandmother passes away three months after her visit. The forces that have made both unable to speak perfect Marshallese are forces that have also repeatedly claimed the non-futurity of the Marshall Islands, of which U.S. nuclear imperialism has been but one force.

The survival of the Marshallese language and worldmaking brought up in “On the Couch with Būbū Neien” continues to be explored in the next and last section of *Iep Jāltok*, “Tell Them.” In this section, the poet describes her lessons in learning Marshallese, participation in Marshallese election campaigns, serving as the Climate Envoy of the Marshall Islands, and becoming a mother. Traversing various sites in this section including addressing representatives from around the world at the United Nations Climate Summit in 2014—a key moment to which I will return in Chapter Three—Jetñil-Kijiner triangulates her place amidst some of the moving pasts and

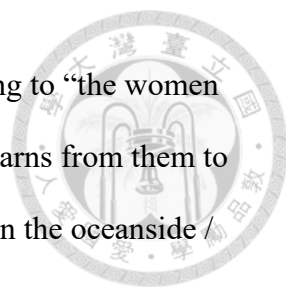
futures of the Marshall Islands.



In “Campaigning in Aur,” Jetñil-Kijiner creates aesthetic, personal, and political representations of women advocate who care for Oceania from their situated places in Aur Atoll. In the poem, the poet documents how her mother Hilda Heine runs for senator in the Marshall Islands, and the committed endeavors of “a campaign army of women,” including the poet herself, in garnering political capital for Heine (60).⁴⁶ While documenting the construction of a collective during a campaign for a national election, the poet shifts her gaze inside and outside of this campaign’s boundaries. In one stanza, the poet explains difficulties her mother faces in navigating a Marshallese political landscape where women are underrepresented. In the next, she relays the meanings this political campaign holds for some of its advocates: “For a few of them / this is their first time back home / after so many years. / For me and my cousin / this is our first time ever” (60). Here, shifting the campaign away from the limelight of national politics, the poet shows how advocates connect to the physical and discursive landscapes of their home. Such a transition reflects how these women campaigners navigate the politics of homecoming both within and beyond the edges of a national election. In this sense, the election campaign serves as a partial medium through which they build their commitments to their homeland, and their march on the atoll serves as an embodied route for taking up their responsibilities towards Aur.

The mobility of these women in the atoll comes sharply into focus in the third and shortest section of the poem. Here Jetñil-Kijiner introduces the advocates one by one and describes their actions with gerunds. The brevity of this section heightens the force and mobility of actions—promising, stirring, promoting, discussing, stringing,

⁴⁶ Hilda Heine has served as the president of the Marshall Islands since 2024, having previously served her first presidential term from 2016 to 2020. She founded the non-profit organization Women United Together Marshall Islands (WUTMI), and served as the Minister of Education prior to assuming the office of President.



strumming, and telling—in which these women engage (62). Listening to “the women the women the women / talkingwhisperinglaughing” (63), the poet learns from them to see the goddess Lidepdepju as “the mother of all mothers / standing in the oceanside / watching” (62). The use of repetition and fused gerunds describing the women campaigners recalls the uninterrupted language of the pair of stone goddesses, discussed earlier in my reading of “Liwātuonmour.” The sense of plurality, collectivity, and solidarity that the languages of these women and goddesses share stresses how learning to see life in stone necessitates unlearning hegemonic history of the Pacific like the narrative of nothing-more-than-stone Dr. Rife proclaimed and propagated (8). As the poet discovers, seeing sacred life in “a rock / on the reef” (59) entails enlivening pasts that were declared (stone) dead yet are continuing right in front of her eyes in the basalt landscapes and coral seascapes of her homeland. Here Jetñil-Kijiner evokes a notion that Hau‘ofa describes as ecological time where the past lies in front of one’s eyes on the landscapes and seascapes. As Hau‘ofa insists,

We cannot read our histories without knowing how to read our landscapes (and seascapes). When we realize this, we should be able to understand why our languages locate the past as ahead or in front of us. It is right there on our landscapes in front of our very eyes. (“Epilogue” 466)

It is in such profound acknowledgement of the ways landscapes and seascapes have always already been entangled with human histories that Lidepdepju comes to life. What might be understood as an act of *animating* stone in the poem in fact signals recognition of ecological time and its discursive as well as literal ramifications.⁴⁷ If once petrified by Dr. Rife, Lidepdepju is now watching over women advocates

⁴⁷ Hau‘ofa points out that the “intimate association between history and the natural landscape and between us and our Earth” may be twisted into “the basis for the oft asserted and maligned notion that we [Indigenous Pacific Islanders] are spiritually and mystically related to the lands to which we belong” (“Epilogue” 467).

campaigning for their homeland. Using active gerunds to link Lidepdepju with the campaigners, the poet illustrates how respecting sacred life in the landscapes and seascapes of the atoll empower these women to act in Aur in ways that honor and share the strength and burden of a goddess rooted in the ocean.

Jetñil-Kijiner situates the women and Lidepdepju in Aur atoll's water. Here, the goddess remains and the campaign women spill out of speedboats "whooping, hollering, laughing" (60). Running away from the campaign in the last section of the poem, the poet and her cousin splash into the sea (63). Later, they emerge to "fall asleep on a sun worn jaki," dreaming of "the women [they] hope to one day be" (63).⁴⁸ Their imagination of the future is situated in the water of Aur where what was once declared dead remains alive in front of their eyes. In such imagination, to believe that the stone goddesses are *not just* stone is not only to acknowledge that the violence in their petrified death is *not just*, but also to see possibilities of coming home to a place vibrantly gesturing towards the future behind.

"Blossoming Stitches"

"'Oceania' denotes a sea of islands with their inhabitants," as Hau'ofa writes; "People raised in this environment were at home with the sea" (*We* 32). How might people become at home in and with Oceania again? This is one of the questions that, as I suggest in this chapter, Jetñil-Kijiner asks and explores in *Iep Jāltok*. Homecomings emerge in this collection shaped rather like the handkerchiefs with "blossoming stitches" that the poet's grandmother puts in her hands (44). While stitches evoke an

⁴⁸ According to a Marshallese student group from Enid, Oklahoma, invited to partner with the Field Museum in Chicago to create an exhibition titled *Home is Where the Jaki Is* in 2021, jaki is Marshallese for "a hand-woven floor mat that can be found in nearly every Marshallese household. It is a place of rest, a symbol of identity, and a tool that connects us." The importance of jaki to the Marshallese, as they further explicate, lies in the fact that "[a]s climate change devours our islands, many of us in the United States are losing a sense of our home and culture. Despite this, our families try hard to help us remember who we are. The jaki helps us do just that" (qtd. in Mote et al.).



image of treated wounds, blossoming references a thriving life force. Together they point to the porous and incomplete homecomings in *Iep Jāltok* where Pacific landscapes and seascapes vitally inform possible futures. For those who are “homeless for the good of mankind,” as chairmen of the Marshall Islands Nuclear Commission Alson Kelen notoriously put it (“Concern” 01:20-01:25), Jetñil-Kijiner creates unpacified homecomings. Returning to an image discussed at the beginning of this chapter, “patients sleeping in a clinic with / a nuclear history threaded / into their bloodlines” can find poetry caring for rage against repeated disposessions, a linguistic common resisting historical amnesia, tongues both physically and figuratively trying to survive inarticulations, and dreaming about futures and pasts that are not past. They may come home to where survival, remembrance, and resistance align in *Iep Jāltok* even as they “w[a]ke to a wild water world” (78)—an evocative image of climate change and rising sea-levels to which I will turn in the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Unpacified Navigations: Addressing the Planet



“We have already sailed into high tides and have reached the point of no return,” stated Antari Elbon at the 35th Nuclear Victims Remembrance Day in the Marshall Islands in 2023 (*Nuclear Victims Remembrance Day* 25:00-25:10).⁴⁹ Elbon explained why a Marshallese saying—*kūrtiplōk* meaning the point of no return—was chosen as the theme for the Remembrance Day: “We have sailed no matter how thick the waves are or how strong the waves are. We will continue to strike forward because we don’t have time to return” (25:10-25:24). *Kūrtiplōk*, as it is mobilized here, connects with how Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz describe the Anthropocene. As I reviewed in Chapter One, Bonneuil and Fressoz argue that the shock at the Anthropocene as a crisis is often manufactured to delay climate action. As they contend, “[t]he term ‘crisis’ denotes a transitory state, while the Anthropocene is a point of no return.” Reading Elbon’s, Bouuenil’s, and Fressoz’s words together, *kūrtiplōk* can be understood to describe moving points of convergence between the Anthropocene, nuclear devastation, and Indigenous survivance. Not only evoking histories of devastation, *kūrtiplōk* stresses also the survival and resistance of the Marshallese people as well as a remembrance of pasts that have not ended. What kinds of remembrance and resistance could help us inhabit the nuclearized Anthropocene, if we have metaphorically sailed past a point of no return? To answer this question, I analyze in this chapter how Jetñil-Kijiner in *Iep Jāltok* and in her collaborative video poetics speaks to an urgent necessity of addressing current climate collapse while simultaneously

⁴⁹ Elbon served as the Assistant Secretary for the Ministry of Cultural and Internal Affairs in the Marshall Islands at the time.

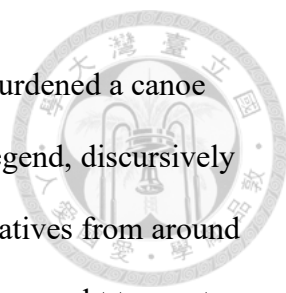
redressing earlier structures of domination that continue to facilitate the outsourcing of climate crises.

I will first examine how Jetñil-Kijiner depicts compounding climate violence repeatedly speeding up on variously othered bodies and lands and waters. I will analyze the invocation of a Marshallese legend Jetñil-Kijiner made as part of her address at the UN Climate Summit in New York in 2014 before interpreting another articulation of the same legend in “Lōktañūr,” a poem in the first section of her collection, as well as selected poems from the last section, including “Dear Matafele Peinam,” “Tell Them,” and “Two Degrees.” I will supplement these texts with partial histories or debates to see how the poet adeptly makes use of Pacific and planetary modes of address in exhorting everyone on the planet to join what I call unpacified navigations into an uncertain future. I will in the second section analyze her collaborative video poem *Rise*—performed with Aka Niviâna—to see how the poets create unpacified navigations moving across borders to mobilize a collective if also fractured resistance against ruinations of empire on a rapidly warming planet.

“We Won’t Slow You Down”: *Iep Jāltok*

In 2014, as a chosen representative of the voice of civil society at the UN, Jetñil-Kijiner invoked a Marshallese legend of a canoe race to put forward a planetary call for action:

One of our most beloved legends features a canoe race between ten brothers. Their mother holding a heavy bundle, begged each of her son for a ride on their canoe. But only the youngest listened, and took her along for the ride, not knowing that his mother was carrying the first sail. With the sail he won the race and became chief. [. . .] I ask world leaders to take us all along on your ride. We won’t slow you down. We’ll help you win the most important race of all—the race to save humanity. (“Statement” 00:43-02:30)



In this Marshallese legend, the first sail created friction which both burdened a canoe and gave it speed. Such friction, articulated in a retold Marshallese legend, discursively gave grip to connections Jetñil-Kijiner sought to build with representatives from around the world. The way that Jetñil-Kijiner told the story of the sail thereby sought to create what Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing calls friction, “the grip of worldly encounter” (*Friction* 1).⁵⁰ As Tsing writes, “[f]riction makes global connection powerful and effective. Meanwhile, without even trying, friction gets in the way of the smooth operation of global power” (6). Friction between what is given and what enters from outside gives lie to a wishful imagination of motion running unencumbered on a globe levelled by globalization, and in this way produces surprising and unplanned outcomes. Indeed, at the Climate Summit, Jetñil-Kijiner demonstrated through a Marshallese story some of the surprising ways friction can intervene in the operations of power, such as when a sail that gave traction to a moving canoe intervened in the struggles for leadership between ten brothers, and when this story was allegorized to intervene in some of the global politics around addressing climate change. Through retelling a Marshallese legend, she sought to spur a supranational community of representatives into action, and thereby joins Indigenous thinkers who Mary Louise Pratt observes “are addressing all humankind about how to inhabit the planet” (115).⁵¹ As Pratt writes, “[f]ar from speaking for and about themselves, Indigenous thinkers today address all humanity, exhorting non-Indigenous and Indigenous people to remake their place on the planet and in the cosmos and aiming to show them how” (9). Pratt calls the force that Indigenous thinkers continue to engage with to create extroverted and futurological work *planetaryized Indigeneity*. On planetary scales, Indigenous thinkers are making and

⁵⁰ Tsing develops the concept of friction from her field work in the 1980s and 1990s with the Meratus people in the rainforests of Indonesia.

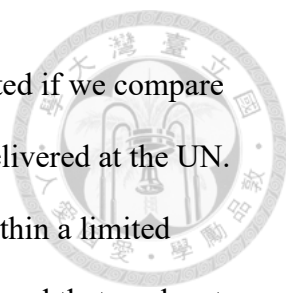
⁵¹ Pratt cites Tsing in developing the concept of planetaryized Indigeneity. As Pratt writes, “[o]n an increasingly planetary scale, indigeneity creates and is created by the friction that Tsing (2004) identifies as the stuff of global connection” (113).

remaking Indigeneity, a force which Pratt argues “generates agency wherever it comes into play. [. . . And] has the power to make things happen” (18). At the Climate Summit, Jetñil-Kijiner evoked the Marshallese legend of the first sail to create ideas that, to borrow Pratt’s words, are “meant to travel, to reach all humankind” (115).

Jetñil-Kijiner articulates the Marshallese legend of the canoe race not only at the Climate Summit but also in *Iep Jāltok*, which I will now analyze.⁵² In the opening stanza of “Lōktañūr,” the poet frames the powers of a sail in pithy lines: “The sail / that powers / the Marshallese canoe // feeds our family / fights our wars / claims our land / visits clans // comes from // a Mother” (6). Uninterrupted by punctuation marks, this opening stanza conveys the flowing tempo with which a sail energizes the everyday lives of the Marshallese. Brief verbs frame the actions of a sail with a sense of strength, while the present tense suggests the presence of navigational technologies as an uninterrupted constant. With short yet compendious lines, this stanza visually expresses how in its compressed body a sail carries great potential for momentum.

Proceeding into the second stanza, however, enumeration that creates constant interruptions supplants the steady rhythm of the first stanza. This form is continued in the next poem “Liwātuonmour,” which was previously discussed in Chapter Two. Here in “Lōktañūr,” bold-faced numbers mark and make visible the jagged seams where narrative parts are selected and connected to form a Marshallese legend. These numeric bumps, visually forming scattered protrusions from the page every now and then, arguably make visible to readers the junctures through which the legend takes shape. In other words, disruptive enumeration urges readers to reflect on how an Indigenous legend emerges as a sutured ensemble of adaptable parts that may be taken apart and put

⁵² Through Jetñil-Kijiner’s work, the Marshallese legend of the first sail continues to live many lives. It was included in the poetry section of her Master’s creative portfolio submitted in 2014, the same year that the Climate Summit took place. As the video of her statement and poem as a representative of civil society at the Climate Summit started circulating online, this Marshallese legend would later be printed as part of her poetry collection in 2017.



back together in different contexts. This point may be further illustrated if we compare this stanza with a different version of the same story Jetñil-Kijiner delivered at the UN. At the Climate Summit, she delivered this legend in smooth prose within a limited timeframe to address a room full of powerful people in suits, and beyond that, a planet mired in climate crises. In *Iep Jāltok*, the poet tells the same story in a form that creates spaces to disrupt its own storytelling, and through such disruptions, prompts readers to reflect on the made-ness of a Marshallese legend. If in “Liwātuonmour” enumeration creates a bumpy reading experience that asks readers to consider palimpsest histories, in “Lōktañūr” a bumpy reading experience in its second stanza resists quick and easy readerly consumption.

The way that the poet navigates a sea of narrative possibilities to retell a Marshallese legend recalls what James Clifford identifies as Indigenous articulations. Building on Stuart Hall’s articulation theory, Clifford argues that Indigenous articulations make visible the ability of Indigeneity “to conjoin disparate elements” and thus take “no eternal or natural shape to [its] configuration” (478). When Indigeneity is thereby understood as articulations, as he indicates, “the whole question of authenticity is secondary” and the “relevant question is whether, and how, [Indigenous communities] convince and coerce insiders and outsiders, often in power-charged, unequal situations, to accept the autonomy of a ‘we’” (479). Indeed, Jetñil-Kijiner crafts different articulations of a Marshallese legend to seek to convince and coerce those in a UN hall charged with unequal powers as well as those listening, viewing, reading in poetic spaces of performance and in print to recognize an autonomous Indigenous *we* who address the planet. Such Indigenous articulations show how she joins Indigenous thinkers who, as Pratt observes, are today making and remaking Indigeneity, a force that “can operate on any range of scale, in any register, using any materials” (18). In *Iep Jāltok*, through the poet’s articulation, when Lōktañūr reveals the first sail to her

youngest son, she is addressing the planet about possibilities of a larger-than-life “Sail” making and remaking navigations on a watery planet (7). Similarly in the first stanza, when the poet evokes Lōktañūr as “a Mother” (6), she shows how the goddess empowers the Marshallese to practice planetary possibilities of navigations in their everyday lives. Whatever scales of things Lōktañūr enters—planetary, everyday, or otherwise—she can make things happen.

The images of navigations that the poet creates in “Lōktañūr” arguably reflect the importance of canoes in the activism of Pacific Climate Warriors, to which she pays tribute in another poem “Dear Matafele Peinam.”⁵³ I will examine the latter poem after discussing how the Pacific Climate Warriors seek to empower Indigenous Pacific peoples to stand with their assaulted homelands and show the rest of the world how to stand with them. A grassroots activist group that has affiliations with the international climate advocacy organization 350.org, Pacific Climate Warriors engage in peaceful civil disobedience and climate resilience advocacy to protest and help build capacity to face the disproportionate impacts of climate change Pacific Island nations continue to bear. Their central message—“We’re not drowning. We’re fighting!”—seeks to reject a discursive construction of Pacific Islands as sites of what Carol Farbotko sharply criticizes as *wishful sinking*.⁵⁴ Framing themselves as climate warriors, they propose an

⁵³ As Jetñil-Kijiner explained, when preparing for her performance at the UN she learned that her cousin Milañ Loeak was about to participate in the Newcastle blockade organized by the Pacific Climate Warriors. Thus, she found herself with a platform to represent their upcoming mobilization (“Fighting” 51:04-51:21).

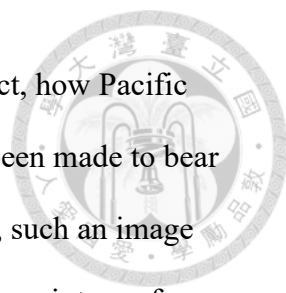
⁵⁴ As Farbotko argues, low-lying islands in Oceania have been incorporated as sites of *wishful sinking* into global climate change discourses. Analyzing discursive constructions of Tuvalu in journalistic, scientific, and environmentalist writings, Farbotko shows how Tuvalu has been evoked as “an island laboratory” where “climate change impacts are constructed as readily observable and scalable upwards to aid [an] understanding of the urgency of climate change at a global scale” (53). A “cosmopolitan gaze,” as Farbotko further suggests, characterizes such an island laboratory imaginary and creates a “strong, albeit paradoxical connection [. . .] between ‘saving the climate refugee’ and ‘watching the islands drown’” (58). The resulting wishful sinking discourse about these low-lying islands fictionalizes islanders “into victim populations fleeing inundation, desperate for dry land, even drowned,” and thereby denies island peoples “their own agency in the climate change crisis” (58). The slogan of the Pacific Climate Warriors discussed here is from their website: *350 Pacific*. 350pacific.org/. Accessed 28 May 2024.

expansive imagination of what and who constitute a warrior and seek to enact their proposed aspirations in direct action. In a blockade of the Port of Newcastle in Australia in 2014, they enacted perhaps their most memorable image as warriors who continue to, amongst other things, be “resilient” and serve “those who cannot fight for themselves.”⁵⁵ The Pacific Climate Warriors here paddled out in a flotilla of canoes and kayaks to block the entry and departure of coal ships for the day and demanded the fossil fuel industry at large to take responsibility for their greenhouse gas emissions.⁵⁶

As Karen E. McNamara and Farbotko suggest, the Pacific Climate Warriors were “involved not in a literal battle, nor [was] there an enemy embodied in a particular individual or group. Rather, the warriors and 350.org [were] engaged in symbolic, discursive battles” (24). In this discursive battle, the warrior figure, as they indicate, continues to “demonstrate a new vision of Pacific Islanders in climate change narratives” and challenge “narratives about the future demise of their homelands” (24). The canoes and kayaks at the blockade, read this way, served as a vessel for the aspirations and actions of a collective Indigenous Pacific *we* on the move exhorting everyone on the planet to join their navigations towards a post-carbon future. As Farbotko and Taukiei Kitara argue, these vessels formed a vital part of the visual aesthetic that the group demonstrated that day. Together with ceremonial attires, hand-made artifacts, face and body paints and tattoos, as well as a ceremony and prayer, the canoes formed what the two scholars describe as “a powerful warrior aesthetic of ocean-going mobile climate change fighters, ready to battle huge ships” (403). The contrast in

⁵⁵ This blockade was part of their activist tour of Australia in October 2014. The participating activists that day were from Fiji, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, the Marshall Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. Located in the city of Newcastle, New South Wales, Australia, the Port of Newcastle claims to be the largest coal port in the world. The self-proposed qualities of a warrior discussed here are from their website: *350 Pacific Climate Warriors*. 350.org/pacific/. Accessed 28 May 2024.

⁵⁶ As McNamara and Farbotko write, the vessels were built in the home nations of the participants according to their respective traditional canoe-building techniques, before being shipped to Australia for the blockade (22).

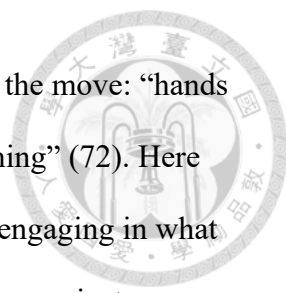


size between a canoe and a coal ship reflected, and continues to reflect, how Pacific Island nations with small per capita greenhouse gas emissions have been made to bear heavy consequences of emissions from other areas. At the same time, such an image also demonstrated how the Pacific Climate Warriors utilized a creative mixture of Indigenous art, canoe-building techniques, navigational technologies, and coalitional powers to seek to make their desired future happen. The Australian-based grassroots group Rising Tide mobilized a People's Blockade to temporarily halt the operations of the Newcastle port in 2023, showing how the Pacific Climate Warriors continue to inspire translocal activism.⁵⁷ Despite the Port of Newcastle again and again resuming its operations and the CO₂ concentration level continuing to leave the 350 parts per million threshold farther and farther behind, the Pacific Climate Warrior have still, in the words of one of its Marshallese warriors Milañ Loeak, “chosen to fight and not to drown” (Loeak).

Jetñil-Kijiner depicts the Pacific Climate Warriors in “Dear Matafele Peinam” as “canoes blocking coal ships” (72), situating the direct action of Indigenous Pacific peoples amongst planet-wide climate movements. Perhaps her best-known work, this poem was performed following her statement for audiences at the UN and viewers around the world who would later access her performance through online platforms.⁵⁸ Asked to address world leaders about climate movements when she was preparing her performance, she chose to do so in the form of an open letter to her newborn daughter (“Fighting” 43:15-43:24). In this letter, together with the image of the canoes mentioned

⁵⁷ Source: “Port of Newcastle Blockade Climate Protesters Face Court Over November 2023 Rising Tide Action.” *ABC News*, 11 Jan. 2024, www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-11/climate-protesters-port-newcastle-rising-tide-escape-conviction/103308308. Accessed 28 May 2024.

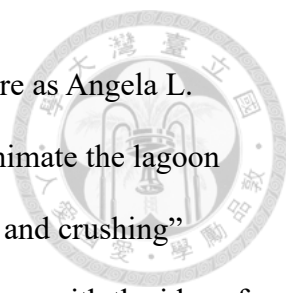
⁵⁸ When Jetñil-Kijiner performed this poem at the UN, her performance was accompanied by video images shown to the audiences. Though the video images were not all included in the UN video recording of her performance (“Statement”), they were available in the video recording of her performance of “Dear Matafele Peinam” as part of her keynote address at Portland State University in Oregon, U.S. in 2016 (“Fighting”).



above, the poet captures glimpses of environmental mobilizations on the move: “hands reaching out / fists raising up / banners unfurling / megaphones booming” (72). Here with active gerunds, the poet shows how climate demonstrations are engaging in what Rob Wilson calls *reworlding*, “transformative life forces” doing battles against *deworlding* consequences from “enduring impacts of empire, colonialism, and turbo-capitalism upon other lifeworlds and threatened ways of being” (“Introduction” 13).⁵⁹ In other words, activists in Jetñil-Kijiner’s text are reworlding places brutalized by “all the hurricanes, earthquakes, and tidalwaves” that those “hidden behind platinum titles” pretend do not exist (72, 71). Representing activists this way, the poet articulates how climate movements are, to borrow Wilson’s words, “projecting forward out into and across” (13) aspirations for and practices of dwelling otherwise. Seeking to move towards alternative possibilities of living on the planet, in her narration of climate movements to her daughter the discursive position of the poet changes: she is the we “spreading the word” (72), the they “marching for [her daughter,]” and again the we promising her daughter to “not let [her] drown” (73). These adaptable speaking positions reflect how she uses Pacific and planetary modes of address to represent translocal movements, mother-daughter relationships, and resistance against what Farbotko identifies as the *wishful sinking* of Pacific Island states, seeking to surface possible ways of inhabiting the planet.

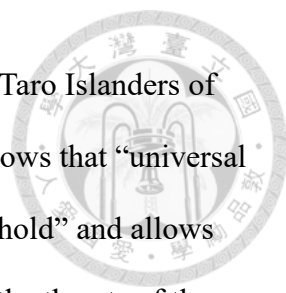
The collective *we* in climate movements, as the poet explains to her daughter, seek to in part resist predictions about the future that narrativize island lagoons into gluttonous monsters: “Men say that one day / that lagoon will devour you // They say it will gnaw at the shoreline / chew at the roots of your breadfruit trees / gulp down rows

⁵⁹ Here I am indebted to Professor Wilson who pointed out the importance of analyzing the use of gerunds—and the possible *reworlding* work they do—in Jetñil-Kijiner’s “Dear Matafele Peinam.” (Personal communication, 30 Jan. 2024.)



of your seawalls / and crunch your island's shattered bones" (70). Here as Angela L. Robinson suggests, "[i]t is the men with their apocalyptic tale who animate the lagoon in monstrous ways with teeth capable of gnawing, chewing, gulping, and crushing" (330). We might understand the future of monstrously animated lagoons with the idea of withdrawing care that Elizabeth Povinelli discusses. As Povinelli suggests, "[i]n turning away from each other, entities withdraw care for each other. Thus the earth is not dying. But the earth may be turning away from certain forms of existence" (28). Indeed, lagoons are not dying in this poem; rather, in being violently animated they may be turning away and withdrawing care from forms of entities that are "so excited" for "morning walks past the lagoon" such as the poet's daughter (70). Read this way, when the poet indicts those "hidden behind platinum titles" (71), she seeks to resist a series of some humans withdrawing care from othered humans that, when cascaded through climate feedback loops and inflected by tipping elements, may violently push lagoons to turn away from already othered humans.

Writing against varied forms of withdrawing care, the poet insists that "there are those / who see us" (72). Standing with them, the poet promises her daughter that "no one / will come and devour you // no greedy whale of a company sharking through political seas / no backwater bullying of businesses with broken morals / no blindfolded bureaucracies gonna push / this mother ocean over / the edge" (71). Through repeated interjections starting with a resounding *no*, the poet seeks to diminish the force with which these opportunist, speculative, and managerial forces are laying claims to the mother ocean. Decreasing lengths of the lines here visually reflect the efforts of the poet: with each refusal, she pushes back those who wantonly assault landscapes and seascapes a few more steps until what is left on the page is "the edge" that she seeks to defend (71). Upholding this edge against encroaching regimes of withdrawing care, the poet apologizes to those already made to relocate due to climate change, including

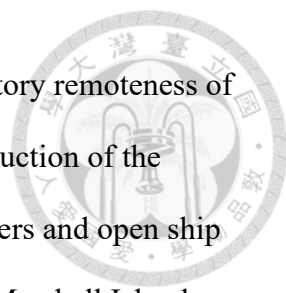


amongst others, the Carteret Islanders of Papua New Guinea and the Taro Islanders of the Solomon Islands (71). As Sarah Dimick suggests, this apology shows that “universal representations of the climate crisis—‘no one’s drowning’—fails to hold” and allows Jetñil-Kijiner “to go on record in the UN chambers as testifying that the threats of the warming world are universal but not simultaneous nor equally distributed” (581). Furthermore, these uneven experiences of climate collapse, as Rebecca Oh argues, show us that “apocalypse [is] a genre of selective historical expendability, a consequence of the ways in which the future is denied to subaltern subjects of various kinds” (968). Connecting Dimick’s and Oh’s analyses, we might understand Jetñil-Kijiner in her apology in the poem as speaking from “the edge” back at how centers of power orchestrate selective foreclosures of futures and script a universal representation of climate apocalypse oblivious to (already) lived realities of othered bodies, lands, and water.

I suggest that Jetñil-Kijiner’s critique of capitalist territorialism in this poem—“blindfolded bureaucracies” supporting companies “sharking through political seas” and “businesses with broken morals” to exploit “mother ocean” (71)—arguably serves as a decolonizing tactic.⁶⁰ To support this idea, I trace in the following paragraphs some debates on the Marshall Islands’ participation in an expanding aquatic territorialism of the international shipping industry that supports, amongst other things, the U.S. military and the oil industry.⁶¹ As Craig Santos Perez argues, though it is true that “islands have small carbon footprints compared to industrialized nations. [. . .] we should pay more

⁶⁰ Here I follow how Jeffrey Santa Ana et al. argue that “[f]or women of the Marshall Islands and other Pacific Island nations, demanding action against climate change is no different from fighting colonialism and injustice—the ‘backwater bullying of businesses with broken morals,’ as Jetñil-Kijiner puts it—because the U.S. military [. . .] consumes fossil fuels in order to maintain and preserve an imperialist North America political power whose global dominance depends on the petroleum industry” (12).

⁶¹ As DeLoughrey suggests, given that “[s]ecuring the flow of oil has been a vital US naval strategy—not to say ‘mission’—since the 1970s,” “American militarization of the oceans is foundational to maintaining the global energy supply that undergirds what some call the Capitalocene” (“Towards” 23).

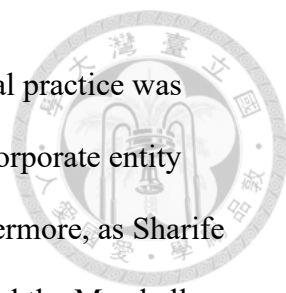


attention to how the geopolitical separateness and (perceived) regulatory remoteness of sovereign island nations have asymmetrically contributed to the production of the Anthropocene, especially as strategic sites for offshore financial centers and open ship registries” (430). Perez further points out that, writing in 2021, “the Marshall Islands Ship Registry is now the second largest in the world, and the largest for oil tankers”—the impacts of such a practice already visible in the fact that “[w]hen the infamous Deepwater Horizon [oil drilling rig which Transocean owned and that which British Petroleum operated] exploded in 2010, it was registered with the Marshall Islands” (431). Indeed in 2024, the Marshall Islands currently hosts the third largest ship registry in the world with a 200 million shipping tonnage capacity following behind Liberia and Panama.⁶² Yet, as Bonneuil and Fressoz argue, we need to recognize wartime construction of shipping infrastructures and supply chains to move energy resources across distances as part of the Thanatocene—a death-making Anthropocene. As they suggest, wars “[impose] an increased mobility on men and things. It requires new infrastructures whose economic and environmental effects persist long after the return of peace.”⁶³

In the context of the Marshall Islands, with its economy closely connected to the U.S. through the COFA, its open ship registry arguably provides the U.S. with a method to allow multi-national corporations that already produce heavy carbon emissions to burn more fossil fuels in long-distance shipping. Indeed as Khadija Sharife analyzed in 2010 and 2011, in so much as the Marshall Islands was considered a flag-of-

⁶² “The Marshall Islands Ship Registry Passes 200 Million GT.” *Seatrade Maritime News*, 30 Jan 2024, www.seatrade-maritime.com/regulation/marshall-islands-ship-registry-passes-200-million-gt. Accessed 6 June 2024.

⁶³ As Bonneuil and Fressoz propose, major developments in long-distance shipping, including amongst others, tripling of the transatlantic shipping capacities to support British imperial needs for timber during the Napoleon Wars in the nineteenth-century, the construction of the German motorways during WWII, and the American National Interstate and Defense Highways Act signed partly to mitigate nuclear threats in the Cold War, demonstrate the need to investigate how global warfare has contributed to the production of the Great Acceleration.

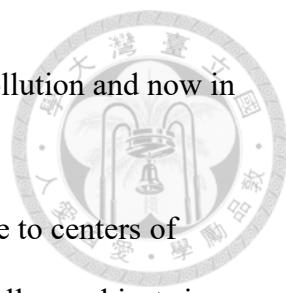


convenience state, it was important to recognize that this transnational practice was coordinated “within the boundaries of the United States” through a corporate entity headquartered in the outskirts of Washington D.C. (111-12).⁶⁴ Furthermore, as Sharife suggested, surfacing in links between the Deepwater Horizon spill and the Marshall Islands were American colonial legacies in Liberia, which was where, together with Panama, the rest of the Transocean fleet of oil rigs were registered at the time (112).⁶⁵ Considering the transnational legacies of U.S. colonial and imperial projects emerging through the Marshall Islands Ship Registry, the neoliberal rhetoric of being *freely associated* with the U.S. extends an earlier rhetoric of *trusteeship* to belie how the Marshall Islands since WWII has been entangled with an imperial power—first through nuclear detonations blasting organic bodies, and now through long-distance shipping sheltered by corporate bodies. Here, I am following critical frameworks Kylie Crane provides: in analyzing the Marshall Islands Ship Registry, she argues we should attend to the ways that “legal frameworks shelter corporate bodies at the cost of organic ones” and think together “the aqua-territorialisation of nation (through the ships, located across the globe at any time), and the externalisation of risks and minimalization of cost / responsibility (by the oil companies.)” To return to Jetñil-Kijiner’s poetry, we might understand her critique of those who are pushing “mother ocean over / the edge” (71) as an intervention seeking to disentangle how her country has been caught up in American

⁶⁴ Since the 1990s the open-registry practice of the Marshall Islands has been operated by a corporate entity named International Registries Inc. (IRI) with its headquarter in Reston, Virginia. Source: “Serving the Maritime & Corporate Industries.” *International Registries Inc.*, www.register-iri.com/about-iri/. Accessed 6 June 2024.

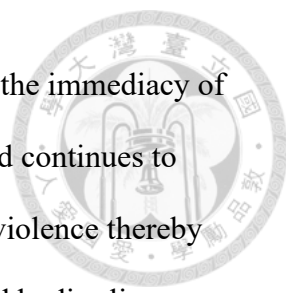
⁶⁵ The American Colonization Society established a settlement in what is now known as Liberia from 1821 to 1838. Carrying the highest tonnage capacity in 2024, the Liberian Ship Registry was formerly Settinius Associates—a corporation that the then U.S. Secretary of State Edward Reilly Settinius Jr. established in 1948. Investigations into possible connections between the Liberian Ship Registry and the IRI have been scarce. However, Andre Standing suggests that the IRI, through complex acquisitions and mergers, were formerly a part of Settinius Associates. Sources: “History.” *The Liberian Registry*, www.lisr.com/about-us/history. Accessed 6 June 2024. Standing, Andre. “State-Corporate Interests and the Abuse of Open Registries in Fisheries.” *Coalition for Fair Fisheries Arrangements*, 1 Dec. 2017, www.cffacape.org/publications-blog/2017/12/01/2017-12-1-state-corporate-interests-and-the-abuse-of-open-registries-in-fisheries. Accessed 6 June 2024.

imperial and (neo)colonial projects that earlier outsourced nuclear pollution and now in sites across oceans outsource carbon emissions.



Continuing to imagine otherwise how the Marshall Islands relate to centers of power, in “Tell Them” Jetñil-Kijiner attends to how diasporic Marshallese subjects in the U.S. navigate the question of where they are from as their home country bears disproportionate burdens of climate change. The poem begins with the poet preparing a package for her friends in the continental U.S., in which she places Marshallese handicrafts alongside a message saying, “when others ask you / where you got this / you tell them / *They’re from the Marshall Islands*” (64). The baskets and earrings in the package, made from materials gathered in her country, show how islands move: earrings that are “half-moons black pearls” and baskets that are “brown cowry shells shiny” travel as pieces of the Marshall Islands to parties, classes, meetings, stores, and buses in the U.S. (64). The message accompanying these gifts carry pieces of the Marshall Islands with it as well. “[C]urling letters” like the one the poet writes communicate and travel across sites that experience uneven burdens of global warming (64): the moisture curling letters in packages that reach the U.S. come from the Marshall Islands where rising seas “__level__ with the land” (66). Using underscores to visually represent a rising sea compounding extreme weathers to produce severe inundation, this poem stresses how a static noun in the phrase rising sea levels has in fact become a verb wielding tremendous power in the everyday lives of people in the Marshall Islands. The contrast between the word level as a verb and a noun, reinforcing the contrast between land-leveling seas and letter-curling moisture, shows how the magnitude and immediacy of violence in the Marshall Islands which global anthropogenic climate stress causes is subdued and delayed as it travels to the continental U.S.

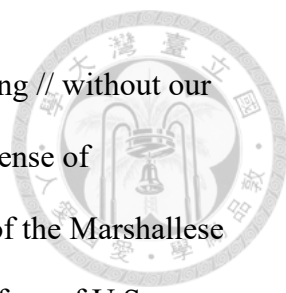
In this sense, the package the poet prepares for her friends in the U.S. shows what Maurer argues should be called—revising the work of Rob Nixon—“slowed violence”



(24). As Maurer argues, while othered bodies continue to experience the immediacy of climate violence, the representation of such violence has travelled and continues to travel across varied borders slowly; such a slowed representation of violence thereby fails to convey to those living in centers of power the realities othered bodies live with.⁶⁶ We may further consider how *slowed violence* is informed by what Laurie Parsons calls carbon colonialism, a system in which centers of power utilize accumulated wealth to produce gated or securitized zones where environmental fluctuations or even disasters can be stalled.⁶⁷ Through a refrain in “Tell Them,” Jetñil-Kijiner vividly conveys this revisionist idea of othered bodies experiencing the kind of violence which is discursively and materially slowed in (reaching) centers of power. With a repeated imperative of *tell them*, the poet engages with the creative challenge of representing those living in ecological buffer zones made to absorb increasingly sped-up and dramatic climate fluctuations (land-leveling seas) and how these buffer zones enable others to live in ecological safety bubbles within which climate fluctuations are both subdued and delayed (letter-curling moisture). In this sense, in writing a letter to her friends in the U.S., the poet is writing against slowed violence by narrativizing struggles to survive relays of domination which produce continued climate injustice. Addressing her friends in the continental U.S., the poet instructs: “tell them / we don’t

⁶⁶ “[C]ontemporary Pacific climate activists often narrate the violence of climate collapse as a sequel to nuclear imperialism and mass epidemics,” as Maurer suggests, “thereby emphasizing not only the immediacy of its devastation but also its historical continuities with older forms of environmental racism” (24). As Maurer further argues, “the term *slow violence* fails to encapsulate this reality. This violence is neither slow nor dispersed across space. It is slowed down as it travels through space. It is slowed down as it moves from Roñlap to the academic centers of nuclearized nations. It is slowed down as it is transformed from oral testimony to written scholarship. It should therefore be referred to as slowed violence” (24). Throughout *The Ocean on Fire*, Maurer calls “Pacific countries by the names chosen by local decolonial activists,” including using the name Roñlap rather than Rongelap (n.p.).

⁶⁷ Complicating a narrative that the “rich world has, it seems, *progressed* past the stage of dirty industry” (3), Parsons argues that carbon colonialism “is the latest incarnation of an age-old system in which natural resources continue to be extracted, exported, and profited from far from the people they used to belong to” (6). Carbon colonialism, as Parsons theorizes, engages a pernicious economic logic that firstly, pushes the environmental costs of economic progress out of sight for centers of power (15-18), and secondly, produces wealth inequalities and debt cycles which decide how increasingly violent climate fluctuations may or may not be mitigated (5-7).

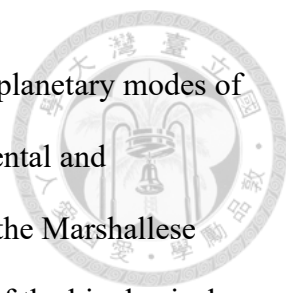


want to leave / we've never wanted to leave / and that we // are nothing // without our islands" (67).⁶⁸ Here the use of the present perfect tense suggests a sense of uninterrupted progression, helping to establish the continual refusal of the Marshallese to leave their island—a refusal that has been earlier expressed in the face of U.S. nuclear imperialism and now in the context of climate change.⁶⁹ Yet, as the poet also stresses, writing against slowed violence involves more than narrativizing such prolonged struggles to survive. It involves remembering the Indigenous *longue durée* extending before and aiming to reach beyond oppressive continuities: "Tell them we are descendants / of the finest navigators / in the world [. . .] Tell them we are the hollow hulls / of canoes / as fast as the wind / slicing through the pacific sea" (64-65). It also involves narrativizing a determination to defend their homelands through, for example, rhetorically appealing to lived knowledge: "Tell them we don't know / of the politics / or the science / but tell them we see / what is in our own backyard" (66). In other words, writing against unevenly slowed environmental disasters and their representations is unpacified insofar that it requires connecting struggles to survive, commitments to remember, and a determination to challenge older and newer structures of domination.

Bikinians' forced displacements show an urgency to challenge slowed violence of varied forms—an urgency that Jetñil-Kijiner conveys in "Two Degrees." To help me

⁶⁸ The "old fishermen who believe that God / made us a promise" that Jetñil-Kijiner brings up before this stanza refers to Bible-based climate denialism in the Marshall Islands. As Tony Crook and Peter Rudiak-Gould observe, "[s]ometimes a discourse seems so threatening that the response is to disavow it entirely; in the Pacific this often takes the form of dismissing the idea of climate change on the grounds that God promised Noah never to flood the earth again, an argument that people in Kiribati, Tuvalu, and the Marshall Islands make, and probably elsewhere as well" (14). However, Crook and Rudiak-Gould point out that not everyone believes this discourse. As Jetñil-Kijiner stresses in "Tell Them," "some of us are a little bit more skeptical" (66).

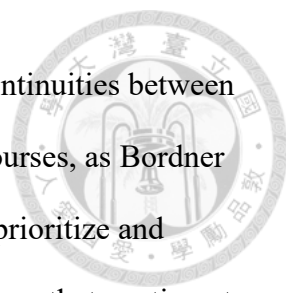
⁶⁹ Such a refusal now informs the support for in-place adaptation towards climate change in the Marshall Islands. Launched at the UN Climate Change Conference in 2023 (COP28) where Jetñil-Kijiner attended in her capacity as a Climate Envoy of her country, the Marshall Islands' *National Adaptation Plan (Pāpjelmae): Responding to the Impact of Climate Change* (NAP) suggests that the "people of the RMI strongly aspire to continue living in their homelands, which is sustained by their access to place-based natural resources" (*National* 96). "Lessons from the nuclear legacy" serves as one of the NAP guiding principles—a list of principles that begins with the "[r]ight to remain" to emphasize in-place adaptation as a priority (31). See Republic of the Marshall Islands *National*.



analyze how the poet represents Bikinian diasporas with Pacific and planetary modes of address, I now trace some histories on the consequences—environmental and otherwise—of U.S. nuclear detonations. As Bordner et al. argue, for the Marshallese “climate vulnerability is not purely—or even primarily—a function of the biophysical characteristics of a place. The legacy of U.S. colonialism in [the] RMI has increased vulnerability to climate change, both exacerbating susceptibility to harm and constraining possibilities to adapt” (3-4).⁷⁰ In the case of the Bikinians, as I discussed in previous chapters, they were displaced to Rongerik Atoll, Kwajalein Atoll, and eventually to Kili Island to make way for U.S. nuclear detonations. The same characteristics that made the Marshallese long view Kili Island as uninhabitable now make the island vulnerable to impacts of a warming planet: as Bordner et al. indicate, Kili has long been deemed an unsuitable place to live because it lacks freshwater, reef or lagoon systems, and coastal protection, characteristics that make the island susceptible to impacts from “sea-level rise, increased storm surges and flooding” (4).⁷¹ The trajectory through which the climate vulnerability of Kili Island has been manufactured recalls how Whyte suggests that climate change impacts on Indigenous peoples take a form that he calls “colonial déjà vu” (“Is” 19). Colonial déjà vu gives lie to what Whyte problematizes as the “bad luck view” of climate vulnerabilities that Indigenous peoples experience (12). The “bad luck view” stresses how climate vulnerability merely occur on top of Indigenous lifeways as a matter of happenstance and how such lifeways happen to not absorb climate change impacts well, diverting attention away from the continuities between colonialism and climate change (12-13). In the context of the Marshall Islands, certain global discourses that assume the country

⁷⁰ Published in 2020, Bordner et al. based their research on semi-structured interviews in the Marshall Islands and Springdale, Arkansas, U.S. (5).

⁷¹ Bordner et al. cites Francis Hezel’s 1995 monograph *Strangers in Their Own Land* for earlier views of the Marshallese on the uninhabitability of Kili Island.



will eventually be submerged underwater obscure the déjà-vu-like continuities between earlier and older forms of colonization and domination.⁷² Such discourses, as Bordner et al. show, serve to undermine the ability of the Marshall Islands to prioritize and obtain funding for in-place adaptation (7-8); they also speak over voices that continue to place the threats of rising sea levels in the long histories of adaptation in the Marshall Islands (6-7).⁷³ The experiences of the Bikinians highlight acutely felt continuities between colonial rule, imperial testing grounds, forced migration, and climate vulnerability.⁷⁴ Yet, their experiences of continuing to live through these oppressive continuities also demonstrate that, following Perez, beyond Pacific Islanders figured as “a kind of cultural ‘fatal impact’ and death” in discourses of climate migration and refugeeism lies “the long history of Pacific migration, as well as the strength and resiliency of [Pacific] diasporas” (431).

In “Two Degrees,” Jetñil-Kijiner portrays experiences of the Bikinian to critically engage with the ways that nuclear violence persists as the 2°C global warming threshold blunts and brackets efforts to address climate injustice. Representing her daughter’s fever as a foil for how the 2°C threshold has failed to adequately decrease the speed of global warming, the poet writes: “[w]e wrestled with a thermometer / that read 99.8

⁷² Jetñil-Kijiner emphasizes that in global discourses on climate change the Marshall Islands were included without being heard: “we’re talked about, we’re talked around, we’re talked at” without being “given a voice, given a space” (“Fighting” 36:40-36:51). Commenting on how others in the past have compared the Marshall Islands to the fictional island nation of Atlantis, which was famously submerged in the ocean in the work of Plato, Jetñil-Kijiner jokingly but also sharply asserts: “Don’t compare us to Atlantis!” (36:57-37:10). Her observation about this global discourse is affirmed in the empirical research of Bordner et al.

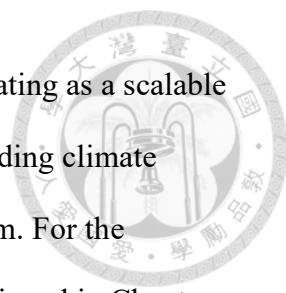
⁷³ Bordner et al. shared voices of those living or formerly living in the four recognized atolls that were affected by U.S. nuclear weapons detonations, including the Bikinians, the Rongelapese, the Enewetakese, and the Utrikese. For example, Kelen Alson stated, “[d]ifferent era, different name, but the same animal. In the [19]40s and [19]50s it was called The Atomic Bomb and now into the future it’s called Climate Change. [. . .] we’ve been warriors. If we can survive the atomic bomb, I’m sure we will survive the climate change. We’ll adapt” (qtd. in Bordner et al. 6).

⁷⁴ As Peter Rudiak-Gould argues, climate change, global warming, and rising sea levels are not “environmental” problems per se for atoll nations. He suggests that “[t]here is no good reason to call climate change impacts in atoll nations merely ‘environmental’: the final impact that Marshall Islanders may face—nationwide destruction and mass exodus—is so far beyond the merely ‘environmental’ that to call it such would be not only misleading, but offensive” (52-53).

degrees / the doctor says / technically / 100.4 is a fever [. . .] // And I think / what a difference / a few degrees can make” (76). Writing the numbers 9 and 0 in a bold-face font, the poet stresses how a threshold seeks to create exclusions on a continuum, authorize a norm to manage damages, and contain injuries with measurements.⁷⁵

Thinking about such normative work a threshold performs in climate change negotiations, the poet describes how a threshold creates a regime of seeing that maintains unequal structures of power. For those looking out from places where most people pollute what rarely concern them, “2 degrees / is just a benchmark for negotiations” (77). Within their vision are only negotiation tables where it looks “like 0.5 degrees / are just crumbs [. . . they] / dust off the table, wipe / [their] hands clean of” (77). Assuming that a global warming threshold can move across spaces without changing its framing as a negotiation tactic, such a view exemplifies what Tsing calls scalability—“the ability of a project to change scales smoothly without any change in project frames” (*The Mushroom* 38). As Tsing argues, a hallmark of colonial plantations, contemporary factories, and modern knowledge production, scalability requires “a lot of work” to maintain it, and inevitably creates messes in such work (38). In the poem, living with the messes of varied scalable projects, othered peoples, bodies, and waters acutely experience the need to prevent a global warming threshold from *scaling up* unproblematically. As the poet explains, “our leaders push for 1.5” because “2 degrees / is a gamble” that if breached some “will already be under water” (77). Instead of a negotiation table, within their vision are the crossings at “the edge of a reef” of a toddler—her daughter—amongst “faces / all the way out here” (79).

⁷⁵ Here I am partly following, in the context of environmental damages fossil fuels produce, David Bond’s argument that “toxic thresholds and impact assessments push effective action into the realm of standardized methods, certified results, acceptable levels, and codified assessment models. [. . .] Instantiating the official definition of defensible life, such scientific and legal norms also introduce a technical limit to democratic practice around fossil fuels” (9).



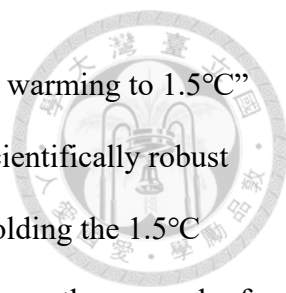
Seeking to write against the 2°C global warming threshold operating as a scalable project, the poet amplifies the voices of those experiencing compounding climate cataclysms through speaking in varied alliterations for and about them. For the displaced Bikinians living on Kili Island—an image previously mentioned in Chapter Two—waking to a “wild water world” “wandering wondering / if the world will” wipe their hands clean of them, the poet is “writing the tide towards / an equilibrium / willing the world / to find its balance” (78). For those with “a nuclear history threaded / into their bloodlines” waking to “a rushing rapid of salt,” the poet urges people to “remember [. . . them] beyond the discussions / numbers / and statistics” (78). For those facing “a sewage of syringes and gauze” (78), the poet suggests that there is a toddler “stomping squeaky” who continues to survive (79). Alliterations of words starting with the letters W, R, and S in this poem reflect not only connections between nuclear imperialism and climate change, but also the ways Marshallese navigate across what Keown evocatively calls *waves of destruction* (“Waves” 585-86). As the poet watches her daughter, having recovered somewhat from her fever, playing a game of *fort-da* with pebbles, leaves, and a plastic bucket, the poet “think[s] about futility / [. . .] about the world / making the same mistakes / since the industrial revolution” (77). With her daughter’s game as a foil, the poet allegorizes how her country has been caught up in a global environmental game of *fort-da*, where in negotiation rooms Pacific nations like hers have repeatedly been wiped off the table—*fort* (gone)—while the 2°C global warming threshold which a Yale economist William Nordhaus proposed in 1977 continues to stay there (*da*). Yet, from within unequal power relations of climate conferences, the poet seeks to disrupt an inane play of business-as-usual. Asserting an alternative mode of thinking she has learned from her father the poet strives to crack futility from within: “My father told me that idik / —when the tide is nearest an equilibrium / is the best time for fishing” (78). *Idik* evokes a method of thinking that

recognizes what an economics of scarcity ordering the politics of climate change fails to see—abundance in power symmetry, even distributions of resources, and fair negotiations. Writing and willing the tides towards abundance in these varied equilibriums, the poet navigates a futile game of global warming threshold to move towards a future “not yet / under water” (79).

“We will not go silently to our watery graves,” stated John Silk in the country statement of the Marshall Islands to the COP 28 in 2023 (*Marshall Islands*).⁷⁶ Silk was speaking about the imperative of keeping the global temperature rise under 1.5°C—the politics of which Jetñil-Kijiner continues to navigate through activism and poetry. Earth system science, amongst other disciplines, has confirmed with increasing precision the irreversibility of widespread climate change if the 1.5°C global mean surface temperature (GMST) threshold is breached. One of the Earth system theories widely cited to suggest the Anthropocene as a multi-focal crisis—the planetary boundary framework that Johan Rockström et al. first developed in 2009—has continued to show that at a 1.5°C GMST increase our biosphere will not be able to sufficiently and safely mitigate large-scale anthropogenic climate stress (“A Safe” 473).⁷⁷ According to McKay et al., an updated assessment of the planetary boundaries’ tipping points published in 2022, at 1.5°C GMST four of the sixteen core and regional planetary boundaries—including the Greenland Ice Sheet, the West Antarctic Ice Sheet, low-latitude coral reefs, and the Boreal Permafrost—will be triggered to produce self-perpetuating changes that are likely to continue triggering larger changes (1177-78). As they state, “[o]ur updated assessment of climate tipping points provides strong scientific

⁷⁶ At the time Mr. Silk delivered this statement to COP28, he was serving as the Minister of Natural Resources and Commerce of the Marshall Islands. See Republic of the Marshall Islands *Marshall Islands*.

⁷⁷ The nine planetary boundaries framework includes climate change, change in biosphere integrity, stratospheric ozone depletion, ocean acidification, biogeochemical flows (phosphorous and nitrogen cycles), land system change, freshwater change, atmospheric aerosol loading, and the introduction of novel entities (Stockholm Resilience Centre).



support for the Paris Agreement and associated efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C” (1178). In other words, Earth system scientists continue to provide scientifically robust and politically urgent evidence to demonstrate the imperative of upholding the 1.5°C warming threshold. Even at the current level of 1.2°C global warming, as the research of Johan Rockström et al. on what they call the safe and just Earth system boundaries demonstrates, we have already passed the 1°C warming threshold for a just climate that may better protect humans from exposure to significant harm (“Safe” 104-06). Already living in an unjust climate, and moving closer and closer towards breaching 1.5°C GMST, the *we* that occupies a position of a collective subject in such a description presents a creative challenge. What will happen to the *we* in Silk’s statement if McKay et al.’s updated assessment of the planetary boundaries framework becomes a reality? Who would such a collective involve, and what is at stake in thinking about this collective? To address these questions, in the next section I turn to the collaborative video poem *Rise: From One Island to Another* where Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna seek to build a fragmented *we* navigating towards a post-carbon future.

“We Demand that the World See Beyond”: *Rise*

A repeated refrain in the collaborative video poem *Rise*—“From one island to another / I ask for solutions / From one island to another / I ask for your problems”—shows how Jetñil-Kijiner and Inuk poet Aka Niviâna depict ways that Indigenous islanders address planetary climate collapse (02:14-02:20). Directed by Dan Lin, this collaborative video poem shows how the poets seek to connect their home islands beyond discourses of deterministic climate causation.⁷⁸ Part of the 350.org social media campaign platform which sought to mobilize a translocal action named Rise for Climate in 2018, *Rise*

⁷⁸ Along with Jetñil-Kijiner, Niviâna, and Lin, *Rise* was produced collaboratively with producer Oz Go, editor Nick Stone, story editor Lyz Soto, and glaciologist Jason Box, amongst others.

demonstrates how artists can intervene with poetry, image, and sound. To some extent, this video poem demonstrates a purpose of mobilizing the global audience of 350.org with an image featuring, as the founder of the organization and initiator for this project Bill McKibben describes, “someone standing on top of the water [ice] that will drown their homes when it’s melted” (350.org 01:15-01:23).⁷⁹ However, the collaborative video poetics developed in *Rise* seeks to go beyond this image to build a sense of planetarity outside of a zero-sum relationship between receding ice in what is now called Greenland and land submergence in the Marshall Islands. On the basis of an Indigenous-to-Indigenous collective sustained across the home islands of the two poets, *Rise* creates a fragmented *we* inviting and exhorting all of humanity to join an unpacified navigation towards a fossil-fuel free future.

In the video poem, Jetñil-Kijiner and Niviâna dialogue with each other to create an Indigenous-to-Indigenous conversation. Jetñil-Kijiner begins by addressing her “sister



Figure 1 – Video still from *Rise* (2018), showing Jetñil-Kijiner standing at a Marshallese seaside

⁷⁹ Partly, *Rise* was produced within the work that 350.org has continued to do since its inception, which was, as McKibben puts it elsewhere, to build “a big enough movement” to face climate change (234).

of ice and snow”: “I’m coming to you / from the land of my ancestors / from atolls, sunken volcanoes—undersea descent / of sleeping giants” (00:00-00:18; see figure 1). Showing the poet standing and walking barefooted, *Rise* visually frames how she takes the sands, dirt, waves of the Marshall Islands as the grounding for her travel to meet her sister. In the next stanza, Niviâna addresses Jetñil-Kijiner: “sister of ocean and sand / I welcome you / to the land of my ancestors /—to the land where they sacrificed their lives / to make mine possible / —to the land / of survivors” (00:19-00:33). As Niviâna narrativizes her home island, a series of images situate her in the long memories of ice in Greenland. The images begin with a close-up of a wrinkly ice surface filling the screen, leading into a long shot showing a block of ice, floating as if weightless in a dark depth sparsely sprinkled with white dots suggestive of stars (see figure 2). The next



Figure 2 – Video still from *Rise* (2018), showing a floating block of ice shots show the poet digging into a crunchy surface of ice with her shoes as she climbs up a hill, visually and sonically depicting how Niviâna roots herself in the ice of Greenland as she travels to meet her sister. Together, these shots represent ice across the scales it straddles in different forms: as the chemical element of H₂O in a solid state, an

interstellar element in outer space, and the grounding for the Inuit in Greenland. Taking the material that thrives in the galaxy as her grounding, Niviâna welcomes Jetñil-Kijiner, who treks across the sands, dirt, and waves of her homeland into her planetary travel. *Rise* thereby depicts the poets creating an Indigenous-to-Indigenous collective routing planetary travels and cosmic aspirations through deep roots.

Though their collective voice speaks of an expansive vision, Jetñil-Kijiner and Niviâna route such a vision through connections between their home islands precariously sustained across uneven histories of imperialism and colonialism. The two poets take turns to narrate how they mourn the subjection of their home islands to brutalizing forces: “Sister of ice and snow,” as Jetñil-Kijiner addresses Niviâna in a stanza, “I come to you now in grief / mourning landscapes / that are always forced to change” (03:04-03:11). “First through wars inflicted on us”—Niviâna begins in the next stanza before Jetñil-Kijiner in turn speaks—“then through nuclear waste / dumped / in our waters” (03:11-03:18). “On our ice,” as Niviâna then stresses before the two poets state together “and now this” (03:19-03:27). Their back-and-forth performance in this stanza reminds audiences how contamination radiates outwards from the nuclear Pacific, travelling across national borders, oceanic edges, and latitude differences to reach Greenland. Their indictment of the continuing contamination of nuclear waste around the planet appears together with a close-up of the face of an islander (03:16-03:17), an aerial view of a Marshallese shoreline (03:17-03:19), and a shot of the two poets standing together on an open ice field (03:19-03:20). Viewed alone, the first two images form a ground-up and top-down view of an island uncontaminated and thus outside of modern civilizations—a myth that DeLoughrey problematizes as the island isolate (*Routes* 8-9).⁸⁰ However, the words of the poets together with the third image

⁸⁰ As DeLoughrey suggests, the myth of the island isolate imagines islands as contained laboratories ideal for experimentation. Such a myth has been punctured by realities of postcolonial islands, including

(03:19-03:20) crack such a myth from within to show how imperial nuclear ruins persist in Pacific waters, Greenlandic ice, and beyond.

The back-and-forth performance of the poets in this stanza also links Greenland and the Marshall Islands as sites which colonialism violently marks. When Niviâna points out that wars were inflicted “on us,” her extradiegetic voice accompanies a shot of a statue memorializing a 10th century Viking settler and explorer Leif Erikson in Brattahlíð, Greenland (03:14-03:15; see figure 3).⁸¹ Through the angle of the camera

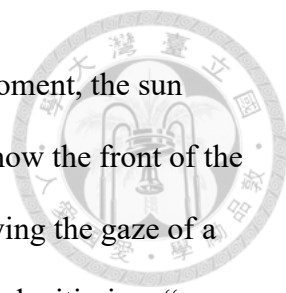


Figure 3 – Video still from *Rise* (2018), showing the back of a statue memorializing Leif Erikson in Brattahlíð, Greenland

eye—looking out from behind the legs of the statue—Erikson appears to cast his gaze down upon a valley cradling a lake in front of him. Capturing only the back of the statue, the camera pans laterally to reveal the sun which the statue blocked a moment

how the Marshall Islands contrary to the assumption of the U.S. military “was not remote enough to prevent nuclear contamination of the Pacific and its spread to Africa, Antarctica, and Europe” (*Routes* 18).

⁸¹ Through transatlantic routes, Leif Erikson has been memorialized through statues not only in sites in Greenland, but also in the continental U.S., Iceland, and Norway. He is often cited as a settler explorer Viking to reach today’s North America around the 10th century before Christopher Columbus reached the Americas in 1492. Though the disappearance of the Norse settlement in Greenland which lasted from the 10th to the 15th century remains a debated issue, a study in 2018 provided more evidence to support one of the speculated reasons for its disappearance—that the Norse settlers could not adapt adequately to the Little Ice Age beginning around the 13th century. For more discussions, see Jackson et al.’s study.



earlier. Shining glaringly into the eyes of the viewers, if only for a moment, the sun dims the focus on the ten-foot-tall likeness of Erikson. Refusing to show the front of the statue, this shot affirms Niviâna's words in turning away from glorifying the gaze of a settler explorer, and in seeking to speak back against how such a gaze legitimizes "wars inflicted on us" (03:11-03:15). Considering that the disappearance of this earlier Norse settlement in Greenland has been popularly cited as a reason that encouraged Hans Egede to sail across the Atlantic and facilitate the expansion of the Danish Empire in establishing Greenland as its colony starting in 1721,⁸² what the settler explorer gaze of Erikson legitimized—today embodied in his likeness—was arguably the Danish colonial rule of Greenland.⁸³

How to think about an image seeking to decolonize legacies of colonialism in Greenland within the framework of addressing climate change that *Rise* seeks to set up? To answer this question, I wish to evoke how Stratford et al. suggest that, in discussing possibilities of decolonizing the Anthropocene through decolonizing statues in Greenland, "sculpture in general, and the production of statues in particular, are part of an aesthetics of reckoning that has been linked conceptually to the Anthropocene" (1260).⁸⁴ Building on Stratford et al.'s intervention, I suggest that *Rise* in connecting a

⁸² The Danish colonial rule of Greenland officially began in 1721 and ended in 1953, with this period beginning with the Danish-Norwegian priest Hans Egede establishing a mission and trading activities in the present-day capital of Greenland—Nuuk. This period ended in 1953 when Greenland became an autonomous part of the Danish Realm. The pre-colonial history of Greenland, as Søren Rud suggests, has often been evoked as a source of information legitimizing Danish colonial rule. As he writes, "the ethnographic exploration of traditional Greenlandic culture might well be compared to time traveling. Observers who traveled to the yet uncolonized spaces in Greenland [. . .] gained the opportunity to [. . .] study and construct the Greenlanders' otherness" (9).

⁸³ Though Danish colonial rule of Greenland officially ended in 1953, today Greenland has yet to gain independence from its former colonizer. The Greenland Home Rule Act in 1979 and the Self-Government Act in 2009 gave the nation conditional sovereignty, yet as Rud argues, "the ambiguous legacy of colonialism remains somewhat unresolved in both [Greenland and Denmark]" (2). Today, Denmark still retains control over the foreign affairs, justice system, military defense, and border control issues of its former colony. However, Greenlandic efforts to decolonize legacies of Danish colonial rule continue, as evidenced by recent events including in 2023 an Inuk member in Danish parliament Aki-Matilda Høegh-Dam refusing to repeat in Danish in a speech she delivered in the Inuit language ("Greenlandic MP") and in 2024 a group of Greenlandic women suing the Danish state for forced contraceptive procedures performed during their teenage years without their consent and knowledge ("Greenlandic Women").

⁸⁴ In their research, Stratford et al. discuss an attempt in 21 June 2020 to decolonize a statue of Hans

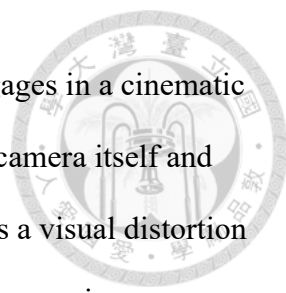
statue of a Norse settler explorer in Nuuk with images representing dumped nuclear waste from the U.S. in the Marshall Islands (03:16-03:19) demonstrates some ways of tussling with the relays of power that continue to shape the nuclearized Anthropocene. Through images and sound, *Rise* develops a video poetics seeking to cut across a regime of truth-making embodied in a statue in Greenland, and an apparatus of obscuring pollution constructed in portrayals of isolated islands; through such a cutting across, *Rise* connects both sites to make visible ruinations of empire that persist in the nuclearized Anthropocene.

After connecting Greenland and the Marshall Islands as sites witnessing and living some of the trajectories through which planetary climate collapse has been shaped, Jetñil-Kijiner and Niviâna state together “and now this” as the camera shows a melting glacier (03:21-03:28; see figure 4).



Figure 4 – Video still from *Rise* (2018), showing a receding glacier in Greenland

Egede in Nuuk (1259-61). One of whom they call their “participant co-authors” Juno Berthelsen, a Kalaaleq Inuk, describes how the word “DECOLONIZE” and Inuit tattoos sprayed in red by an anonymous artist (or artists) on the statue spoke back against “a symbol of the colonial violence that Denmark inflicted on the Inuit in Greenland” (qtd. in Stratford et al. 1260). Niviâna spoke out for the activists who were later caught up with legal charges, and pointed out that decolonization efforts that day involved also hanging flags in front of churches with the words “land back” (“Greenland Land” 2:35-2:50).



Here, the extradiegetic string music pauses briefly, as the camera engages in a cinematic technique called the pull focus—a simultaneous pulling away of the camera itself and zooming in through adjusting the lens inside the camera—that creates a visual distortion where the glacier in the deeper background of the frame remains the same size even as the camera pulls away. As the glacier stays seemingly frozen in the same place, more and more moraines exposed by melted ice in the foreground roll into the camera frame. Such a pull focus shot, through freezing a glacier in the same size, appears to express a desire to stop the melting of the Greenland Ice Sheet. Yet, introducing growing moraines inside the frame, this shot also urges viewers to recognize glacier melt not as a single event but as a series of interconnected changes including, amongst other things, receding ice and expanding stone. The pull focus, as Morton suggests, is instructive to our thinking about a double denial of human supremacy in the Anthropocene because this cinematic technique reorients how we experience our place in the present through making us “appear to be in the same place, yet the place seems to distort beyond our control” (19). Following Morton in thinking about how a pull focus, as he describes it, “reestablish[es] the way we experience ‘here’” in the Anthropocene (19), I understand the use of this technique in *Rise* as an attempt to reorient—and potentially disrupt—how audiences may interpret images of a glacier melt as standing in for a present reality of climate crises. Indeed, such an understanding of receding glaciers, as Amanda Boetzkes criticizes, rests on figuring melting ice as “the contamination of nature, a rhetorical structure that codes the landscape as a fetishized commodity” (128). *Rise* arguably seeks to turn away from such a discursive commodification of landscapes, asking viewers to also listen to polyphonic temporalities erupting in a shot that seeks to freeze a glacier and follow moraines. Erupting in the brief pause of music (03:27-03:28) are the rapidly growing stones, hopefully stalled thaw of ice, and the poets’ silent ask of the viewers to

remember the historical trajectories and the immediacy of climate crises—expressed through a summary line *and now this*.

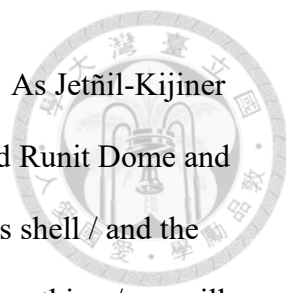
To inhabit a planet mired in climate crises, the two poets expand their Indigenous-to-Indigenous conversation, precariously sustained throughout the video poem, to potentially house a fragmented *we* seeking to include and address everyone on the planet. As they state towards the end of *Rise*, “each and every one of us has to / decide / if we / will rise” (05:20-05:28). Moving beyond the overt message of rise for action that 350.org wishes to broadcast, the two poets build, as Jaimey Hamilton Faris suggests, “a potential invitational ‘we,’ open to all viewers” (91). It is worth noting that when the two poets deliver an invitation potentially extended to audiences—“each and every one / of us” (05:20-05:24)—they are standing atop moraines (see figure 5). Visually their



Figure 5 – Video still from *Rise* (2018), showing Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and

Aka Niviâna standing atop the moraines in Greenland

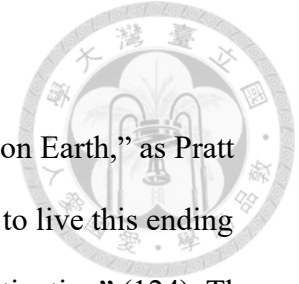
invitation to a planetary viewership is situated in rocks, stones, soil, water, and ice. In fact, not only do both poets see in moraines possibilities of forming a fragmented planetary collective; they also take inspiration from the resilience other calcified



remains of the planet exhibit as they seek to build enduring homes.⁸⁵ As Jetñil-Kijiner declares, in bringing to Greenland shells picked from Bikini Atoll and Runit Dome and a legend from Ujae Atoll about a pair of stone sisters, “I offer you this shell / and the story of the two sisters / as testament / as declaration / that despite everything / we will not leave. / Instead / we will choose stone” (03:49-04:00). In turn, Niviâna offers stones picked from Nuuk and an Inuit legend of “Sassuma Arnaa Mother of the Sea” (01:31-02:02) to state: “may the same unshakable foundation / connect us / make us stronger / than the colonizing monsters / that still to this day devour our lives” (03:28-03:42). Through offering each other ossified pieces of their home islands, the two poets build a shared ground where they demand the world to enter a post-carbon future. As they state together, “we demand that the world see beyond / SUV’s, ac’s, their pre-packaged / convenience / their oil-slicked dreams, beyond the belief / that tomorrow will never happen” (04:08-04:19). With the hardened matter of Earth that travel with them from their home islands as a foundation, the poets demand viewers to see beyond deterministic links between Greenland ice melt and Marshall Islands land submergence—links allowing those with “oil-slicked dreams” to feel good about feeling bad as they continue business-as-usual (04:16-04:17). With the shells and rocks they offer each other evoked in repeated refrains, the poets route their unpacified navigations towards a net-zero world through obdurate roots in their home islands. Outside an extractivist imaginary of Earth animating the global oil economy, Jetñil-Kijiner and Niviâna present the travelling, moving, expanding shells, stones, rocks, and moraines in *Rise* as a possible foundation where a fragmented *we* may rise.

⁸⁵ Here my discussion is informed by how Boetzkes and Diamanti propose the moraine as an analytic. They suggest that “[a]s an analytic, moraine solicits a processual form of thinking. [. . .] it is a site where forms and relations melt, where abstractions collapse under the forces of climate change, where new materials emerge and new epistemic standpoints are forged.”

Moving Islands



“Even if you accept that it’s too late for carbon-based life to survive on Earth,” as Pratt argues, “there is still a rich creative challenge in thinking about how to live this ending [. . .] the possibility of a *buen vivir* (living well) unfolding toward extinction” (124). The nuclearized Anthropocene arguably highlights the creative challenge of thinking about living well within and beyond the ruinations of empires on a planet teetering on the edge of becoming an inhospitable dwelling place for organic life. In *Iep Jāltok* and *Rise*, Indigenous poets engage with such a creative challenge, depicting unpacified navigations routing their planetary address through their roots in their home islands. Unpacified navigations analyzed in this chapter seek to resist assaults brought by varied kinds of ships—whether it was the coal ships at Newcastle Port in Australia, the multinational ships registering with the Marshall Islands Ship Registry coordinated in the continental U.S., the military vessels that arrived and left to displace the Bikinians onto an island long deemed to be inhospitable, or the ships which brought Leif Erikson to establish a settlement in and Hans Egede to later colonize what is now known as Greenland. Against these mobile forms of assaults, Jetñil-Kijiner seeks to make visible some of the ways her home island engages with mobilities of its own—whether it is through possibilities of navigations in “Lōktañūr,” climate mobilizations on the move in “Dear Matafele Peinam,” a travelling message in “Tell Them,” or navigations towards equilibrium in “Two Degrees.” With Niviâna in *Rise*, the poets seek to navigate towards a planetary future outside an extractivist imaginary. Through unpacified navigations, these texts address the planet about a need to reframe, and thus possibly see from the perspectives of Indigenous islanders, what sea level rise means: *sea* is where islands move instead of where they sink or melt, *level* shows how violence slowed elsewhere speeds up on othered bodies, and *rise* names aspirational mobilizations for a planetary if also fractured collective.

Chapter Four

Conclusion



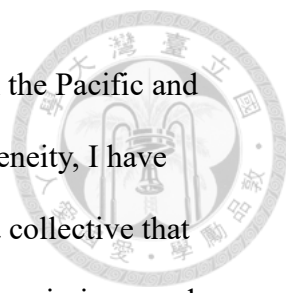
In this thesis, I have examined the works of Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner—including her poetry collection *Iep Jāltok* and the video poem *Rise* co-performed with Aka Niviâna—as unpacified representations of struggles against nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism in what Anaïs Maurer calls the nuclearized Anthropocene. Mobilizing a key term presented by Teresia Teaiwa—unpacified—I have suggested that Jetñil-Kijiner’s works depict connections between the survival, remembrance, and resistance of Indigenous bodies, lands, and waters in the Pacific and beyond. Through such depictions, her works seek to challenge how newer and older structures of domination continue to produce climate injustice. In Chapter One, to understand how Jetñil-Kijiner’s works articulate and amplify some of the resilience and resistance of Indigenous peoples, I have examined selected works in transpacific studies and how a transpacific analytic can enable us to discern alternative histories and geographies. I have reviewed discourses of the Anthropocene and how tensions amongst these discourses suggest a need to address the unevenness of global anthropogenic climate change on the basis of a fragmented *we*. I have emphasized a need to examine how Jetñil-Kijiner’s works call for a fractured collective able to stand together in facing the current planetary climate collapse—a collective that must attend to processes of inclusion and exclusion that other certain bodies, lands, and waters.

In Chapter Two, I have traced how U.S. nuclear imperialism created bodies not at home in the Marshall Islands and beyond. I have sought to understand how the Marshallese were displaced by the U.S. military which transposed to the Marshall Islands a form of settler environmental racism on Native American lands that Traci Brynne Voyles identifies as wastelanding; and how the Marshallese were caught in what



Rob Nixon calls displacement in place when radioactive fallout contaminated their bodies and homes. These U.S. nuclear activities in the Marshall Islands, as I have discussed, were met with resistance operations from the Marshallese. Operation Homecoming in 1982 and Operation Exodus in 1985 demonstrated some of the ways the Marshallese have navigated the complex dynamics of seeking new homes as displaced subjects caught up in some of the ruinations of the nuclear Pacific. Turning to Jetñil-Kijiner's *Iep Jāltok*, I have analyzed what I considered to be unpacified homecomings created in her poetry for those who cannot be at home due to varied forms of the aforementioned violence. As I have argued, the poet represents diverse acts of homecomings that, in standing with landscapes and seascapes in the Pacific, are inflecting, frustrating, deflating, or choking the progression of nuclear imperialism. I have examined how selected poems represent nuclear detonations leaving behind near eternal fallouts with which the Marshallese continue to grapple, informed by an even longer history of resilience entangled with Pacific landscapes and seascapes. Engaging with some of the insurgent legacies of earlier resistance operations, the poet narrativizes in "Liwātuonmour" lived histories seeking to crack concretized truth an evangelical expansionist agenda proclaims; houses in a linguistic common in "The Letter B Is For" those living through the aftermath of nuclear detonations; depicts coming home to a place beyond inarticulations in "On the Couch with Būbū Neien"; and imagines futural possibilities in committing to a place in "Campaigning in Aur." In closing this chapter, I have suggested that homecomings emerge from her poems without closures—like the blossoming stitches on the handkerchiefs the poet receives from her grandmother—thriving through sutured wounds.

In Chapter Three, I have analyzed Jetñil-Kijiner's invited address and performance at the UN and additional selected poems in *Iep Jāltok* as well as a collaborative video poem. I examined what I have called unpacified navigations Jetñil-Kijiner mobilizes



against continued assaults on Indigenous bodies, lands, and waters in the Pacific and beyond. Drawing on what Mary Louise Pratt calls planetarized Indigeneity, I have examined how the poet seeks to navigate tensions between forming a collective that may be able to address uneven effects of outsourcing greenhouse gas emissions, and redressing earlier structures that continue to facilitate U.S. nuclear imperialism in outsourcing radioactive pollution. The poet navigates unequal power relations, asymmetrical distributions of resources, and unfair negotiations in her UN statement with a construction of a discursive sail giving traction to connections she sought to make with representatives from around the world; in “Lōktañūr” with a Marshallese legend in which a canoe powers promises of planetary navigations; in “Dear Matafele Peinam” with depictions of planet-wide climate movements seeking to perform what Rob Wilson calls reworlding; in “Tell Them” with writing against what Maurer argues should be called, revising Nixon’s work, slowed violence; in “Two Degrees” with a method of thinking that seeks to move beyond what Anna Tsing calls scalable projects. I have also turned to the collaborative video poem *Rise* by Jetñil-Kijiner and Aka Niviâna as well as a team of artists. I have examined how the two poets sustain connections across uneven and ongoing histories of U.S. nuclear imperialism in the Marshall Islands and Danish colonialism in Kalaallit Nunaat / Greenland. On the basis of Indigenous-to-Indigenous relations, the two poets seek to address the planet outside an extractivist imaginary to see possibilities of taking calcified remains of their home islands as a foundation for a fragmented *we* that may navigate towards a fossil-fuel free future.

Another key video poem Jetñil-Kijiner co-produced with the director Dan Lin, *Anointed* (2018), also strives towards ways of inhabiting the nuclearized Anthropocene. Through its interventionist video poetics, this text seeks to distance viewers from an

understanding of Runit as a discursive as well as literal concretization of finality.⁸⁶

From its start, *Anointed* orients its viewers' attention towards the long aftermath of U.S. nuclear detonations—its radioactive waste dumped in a structure called Runit Dome—by introducing this ongoing history in its opening credits that appear with extradiegetic sounds of waves (00:00-00:14).⁸⁷ As the opening credits end, an eye-level shot from behind a sail on a double-hulled canoe looks towards a horizon where a sea meets the sky (00:15-00:16). This eye-level shot turns into an oblique angle shot as a wave comes in, rocking the canoe and tilting the perspective of the camera eye. Against a slanted horizon that subverts comfortable scopic norms, the title of the video poem fades in and out (00:16-00:19; see figure 6) before the wave passes and the canoe falls back in line with the horizon. Here the visual form of the title, entering to join a disruption of a levelled photographic composition, arguably affirms the message the title seeks to convey—which is that *Anointed* endeavors to disrupt, in part by looking askew at naturalized ways of seeing Runit. Indeed, the poet stresses as she goes on to apostrophize Runit Island: “You were a whole island, once” before “[y]ou became solidified history, immovable, unforgettable” (02:05-02:18). Forgotten in the unforgettable image of Runit being a so-called nuclear coffin is how Runit used to

⁸⁶ Runit Island is an island in the eastern side of Enewetak Atoll. More than forty of the sixty-seven U.S. nuclear weapons detonated in the Marshall Islands were detonated in Enewetak. James E. Maragos provides aerial photos of bombed craters in the atoll (386-87). Not all of these detonations left craters though: the detonation of a hydrogen bomb codenamed Ivy Mike in 1952 evaporated the island of Elugelab (384).

⁸⁷ Sitting on the northern tip of Runit Island, Runit Dome is a concrete structure where the U.S. in the 1970s dumped more than 100,000 cubic yards of radioactive waste produced by its nuclear detonations. As Michael B. Gerrard suggests, the Dome serves “as a testament to the failure of [the] US and international law [. . .] first by the Cold War and now by the industrially-induced warming of the planet” (95). “[L]ack[ing] any liner at the bottom,” Runit Dome “is placed above fractured rock and next to the water and below sea level”; yet, according to a U.S. DOE report published in 2013 and summarized by Gerrard in his research, this leaking structure of nuclear waste did not pose further threats because “the radiation inside the dome is ‘dwarfed’ by the radiation in the sediments in the lagoon outside” (93). As Susanne Rust reported in 2019, when the Marshall Islands government lobbied the U.S. for help, “American officials have declined, saying the dome is on Marshallese land and therefore the responsibility of the Marshallese government.” To which the then-president of the Marshall Islands Hilda Heine commented, “how can [the dome] be ours? [. . .] We didn’t build it. The garbage inside is not ours. It’s theirs” (qtd. in Rust). For the people of Enewetak, directed to resettle in their home atoll in 1980, they have been living twelve nautical miles away from Runit Island.



Figure 6 – Video still from *Anointed* (2018), with the title faded in house people with the abundance of an island. Dressed in blue, the poet narrativizes this earlier life of the island:

You were breadfruit trees heavy with green globes of fruit whispering promises of massive canoes. Crabs dusted with white sand scuttled through pandanus roots. Beneath looming coconut trees beds of watermelon slept still, swollen with juice. And you were protected by powerful irooj, chiefs birthed from women who could swim pregnant for miles beneath a full moon. (01:04-01:42)

In this stanza, between images of Enewetak and its people the video poem inserts images of the poet braiding her hair on the canoe (01:27-01:31). Her performance self-referentially reflects how she weaves together stories of forgotten bodies, lands, and waters to show the deep-time histories of Runit Island. In other words, intervening into an image of Runit as a solidified end, *Anointed* self-reflexively surfaces submerged memories of an Indigenous *longue durée* at home in a thriving spatial nexus.

This interventionist video poem continues by seeking to subvert how a scopic regime of the atomic bomb, affording visibility only to the moment of explosion, obscures prolonged effects of nuclear assaults on varied bodies and lands and waters. Of the different personas the poet performs in the video poem, arguably distinguishable by

their different attires and the different settings they are in or traverse, one the poet performs is a silenced body with an obscured face and closed lips looking at a burning fire in the dark (01:43-01:45, 02:55-03:02, 03:38-03:39, 03:53-03:55). With shots of this muted body spliced into archival footages of nuclear explosions folded into the video poem, *Anointed* cuts across an archive of film and photographic records of U.S. nuclear operations to show how nuclear weapons continue to burn long after the moment of explosion. As the poet narrates in one stanza, continuing to apostrophize Runit Island after surfacing memories of the life it led before: “Then you became testing ground. Nine nuclear weapons consumed you, one by one by one, engulfed in an inferno of blazing heat” (01:43-01:53). With her voice beginning extradiegetic, the poet references a military moniker called Pacific proving grounds—which I discussed in Chapter One—that was used for various Pacific sites where the U.S. tested nuclear weapons during the Cold War, while a close-up shows her in profile performing the recurring persona of a silenced body (01:43-01:45; see figure 7).

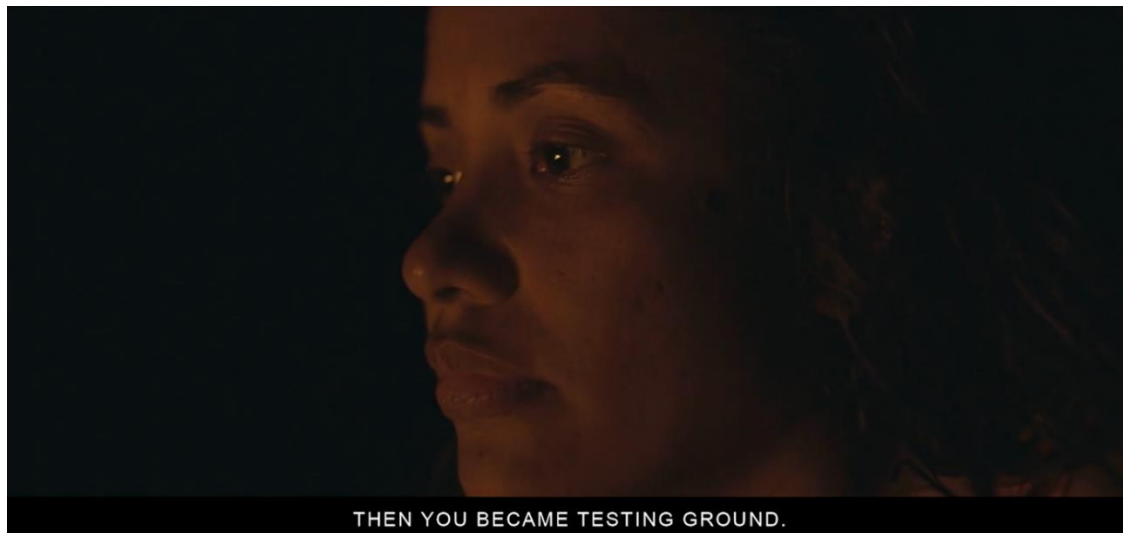


Figure 7 – Video still from *Anointed* (2018), showing Jetñil-Kijiner performing a silenced body

Closed lips in this image symbolize how an American military moniker silences, through literally speaking over, a body proclaimed to be illuminated by the light of the

exploding bomb. Followed by a match cut in which an image of a sunrise at sea—standing in for Runit Island—is swiftly wiped off screen by archival footages of nuclear explosions (01:45-01:50), this performance shows how the poet strives to crack a scopic regime of the atomic bomb that does not see the long and toxic burn these weapons continue to produce on blasted bodies. In injurious aftermaths of the atomic bomb, as the poet further suggests, is “a story of a people on fire—we pretend it is not burning all of us” (03:51-03:58). Following archival footages of coconut trees incinerated by nuclear fire and ballooning mushroom clouds (03:39-03:43, 03:48-03:51),⁸⁸ the poet again performs the silenced body, except this time she stands motionless in the background as the fire blazes in the foreground (03:53-03:55; see figure 8).



Figure 8 – Video still from *Anointed* (2018), showing Jetñil-Kijiner performing a silenced body obscured by a fire

In this image, even though the fire taking up the foreground wantonly obscures—and almost erases—the silenced body in the back, this body lingers. What nuclear detonations treated as disposable fodder and what solidified ways of seeing these

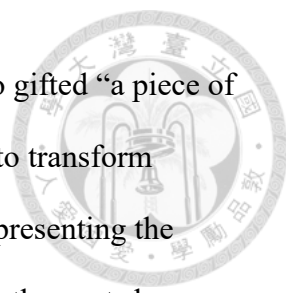
⁸⁸ Between these archival footages of nuclear fires is an image where the poet dressed in blue last appears on screen, walking down a road with her back to the camera (*Anointed* 03:43-03:48). With this persona established earlier in the video poem as linked to the life Runit Island led before nuclear assaults, her erasure at this point in the text arguably reflects how, given the near eternal half-lives of radioactive matter, the uncontaminated island that once was cannot be restored any time soon.

weapons do not see form a sticky presence that refuses to leave the camera frame. Meanwhile, through her extradiegetic voice the poet indicts an *us* who pretends that radioactive toxins have not travelled through interconnected environments to burn everyone, however unevenly, and thereby joins the spectral figure on screen to disrupt a display of military power neatly contained within the boundaries of cinematic reels.

Through this video poem, Runit emerges as a site of fractured and multiplying stories. Performing another persona while dressed in black and adorned with Marshallese handicrafts, the poet searches for stories of Runit in the present moment beyond its earlier life as an abundant home and its later life as assaulted lands and waters. Arriving at a lagoon at Enewetak (02:11-02:13), the poet expresses discontent as she walks deeper into the island: “I am looking for more stories. I look and I look. // There must be more to this than incinerated trees, a cracked dome, a rising sea, a leaking nuclear waste with no fence. There must be more than a concrete shell that houses death” (03:02-03:24). Folding in a billboard featuring Runit Dome that welcomes visitors to Enewetak (03:21-03:24; see figure 9), this text shows what the



Figure 9 – Video still from *Anointed* (2018), showing an Enewetak billboard poet seeks to move beyond through her search for more stories—a depiction of Runit as a toxically exotic yet safely contained site. The poet’s search indeed produces more



stories, starting with a Marshallese legend about a turtle goddess who gifted “a piece of her shell, anointed with power” to her son Letao, who used the shell to transform himself into a fire which almost “burned us alive” (02:36-03:01). Representing the concrete shell of Runit Dome as an anointed shell of a turtle goddess, the poet shows how, to follow Lee, “Runit writes back” (113).⁸⁹ *Runit writes back* here expresses a demand for a chance to speak in stories told about itself, and a demand for the U.S. to take ownership for the runaway contamination it had produced and dumped. Next, the poet expresses another version of this legend in which Letao gave this anointed shell to “a small boy” who “almost burned his entire village to the ground” (03:25-03:51). Evoking memories of the atomic bomb codenamed Little Boy that the U.S. detonated over Hiroshima in 1945, the poet connects Japan and the Marshall Islands through uneven yet shared experiences of being bombed by American nuclear weapons. These precarious connections productively muddy the boundaries of the silenced body that the poet has performed and show how as Hong argues “the U.S. atomic bombings of Japan and its Marshallese nuclear tests [. . .] demand theorization along a continuum” (110).⁹⁰ The two versions of this Marshallese legend then invite even more stories, through which the poet attempts to sustain fractured connections with a repeated refrain of *here is a story*. As Hogue argues, these stories expose the legacies of the Cold War as “injustices intentionally obscured” (224)—injustices that include as I reviewed in Chapter Two—what she calls the *nuclear normalizing* that the U.S. DOE pamphlets expressed. Intervening into a concretized narrative of Runit as being only associated with a “concrete shell that houses death” (03:20-03:24), the waves of stories that the

⁸⁹ With the phrase *Runit writes back*, Lee evokes an influential monograph *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (1989 / 2002) by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. In naming their book *The Empire Writes Back*, the authors evoke a quote from Salman Rushdie on how “the Empire writes back to the Centre” (qtd. in Ashcroft et al.).

⁹⁰ Linking experiences of being bombed by American nuclear weapons between the Japanese and the Marshallese to create possibilities of life, *Anointed* arguably creates what Hong calls radiogenic solidarity—which I discussed in Chapter One and Two.

poet invites viewers to navigate help to reframe Runit as a place of varied crossings—crossings between and amongst blasted pasts, a burning present, writing back, and potentially bonding across.⁹¹

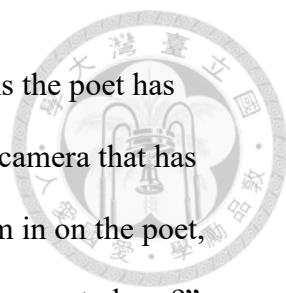
In this place of crossings, what to make of Runit Dome? The poet returns to this question while standing atop the actual structure: “My belly is a crater empty of stories and answers only questions, hard as concrete” (04:17-04:29; see figure 10).



Figure 10 – Video still from *Anointed* (2018), showing Jetñil-Kijiner performing atop Runit Dome

Shown in this close-up with her hair dancing loose, her unraveled hair presents an act of unraveling concretized narratives about the Dome. In other words, the poet endeavors to self-reflexively perform how, instead of being a structure full of concrete matter embodying the end of U.S. nuclear operations, Runit Dome is empty of closures like her own allegorized belly. In this sense to claim that the contaminated material in the Dome provides a concretized end to historical violence, as the poet shows in her

⁹¹ Here I am indebted to Professor Keown who pointed out that, according to the poet, in the video poem her travel to Runit was not to mourn for Runit Dome, which does not belong to the Marshallese for they were not the ones who detonated the nuclear weapons and dumped the resulting waste (Personal communication, 9 June 2023). Indeed, what Jetñil-Kijiner elsewhere calls a ritual of “grieving and cleansing” (“Bulldozed”)—in which she performs the scattering of white stones from Marshallese baskets in the video poem—is not for the Dome. As the poet narrates in *Anointed*: “To get to this tomb take a canoe. [. . .] Gulp down radioactive lagoon. Do not bring flowers, or speeches. There will be no white stones to scatter around this grave” (00:34-00:55).



interventionary performance, is to ignore “hard as concrete” questions the poet has raised about the long burn of nuclear weapons (04:27-04:28). As the camera that has pulled away into an extreme long shot of Runit Dome returns to zoom in on the poet, she asks: “Who gave them this power? Who anointed them with the power to burn?” (04:34-04:45). On top of a radioactive shell, the poet speaks back against officially sanctioned radioactive waste through interrogating a *them* who burned to rise to power and continue to burn to retain their power—interrogations which may also be read as a searing critique of a fossil-fuel burning humanity. Against fires that centers of power (repeatedly) set on othered bodies, the poet affirms her commitments to unpacified storytelling that seeks to connect how survival disrupts containment, remembrance multiplies stories, and resistance unravels truth claims.

In *Anointed*, Jetñil-Kijiner presents continuities between nuclear imperialism and carbon imperialism by seeking to tell stories of “[p]lutionium ground into concrete slurry” leaking into a rising sea on a warming planet (01:57-01:59). Her search in this video poem for more stories is also a search for ways to tell stories about the nuclearized Anthropocene. Indeed, as Maggie Wander suggests, “[r]ather than perpetuate a narrative of glamour, scientific achievement and military power, *Anointed* demands a different framework that considers a history of military violence in the context of present rising seas and toxified landscapes” (160). *Anointed* thereby joins *Iep Jāltok* and *Rise* to help connect determined resistance, committed remembrance, and struggles to survive in sites in and beyond the Pacific. From the works of Jetñil-Kijiner discussed in this thesis, the Marshall Islands emerges as a site of cultural production engaging other sites including those in Japan, Kalaallit Nunaat / Greenland, and the U.S. In doing so, these works can be read collectively as stories about the nuclearized Anthropocene pointing at the edges of the Pacific: not as a frontier site of the U.S. empire building its nuclear capabilities, or as a soon-submerged site on a planet

teetering towards a point of no return, but a site of crossings.

“I turn back to poetry again and again—not for escape, or for luxury,” Jetñil-Kijiner writes, “But to remind me that [. . .] there is something beneath us all, that extends beyond each of us, that has survived, and will continue to survive”

(“Afterword” 388). An image of texts linking across from below, as suggested by the poet, provides a helpful way to visualize an unpacified underflow sustaining shared yet at-times fractured struggles represented in the works I have examined in this thesis. As I researched and wrote this thesis project as a student of Han-settler-colonist descent in Taiwan, I am wary of replicating a settler-centric gaze that sees Indigenous literatures as self-contained products of isolated places.⁹² Unpacified as a term reminds me to keep in sight the varied ways Indigenous literatures and other cultural texts connect struggles to survive, remember, and resist across othered bodies, lands, and waters. Unpacified as a term also teaches me to understand how Indigenous writers including Jetñil-Kijiner seek to create, through connecting across from below, a sense of fractured planetarity that may help to address our current and unevenly experienced climate collapse. I present this thesis in the hope that it may contribute in some way to alternative storytelling representing how Indigenous peoples rise on the planet, as Jetñil-Kijiner puts it, to “fight for land, ocean, air” (“Afterword” 387).

⁹² As an Indigenous student in a Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures in Taiwan, Limuy Asien discusses how she was confronted with the need to justify her MA thesis topic on the films of Atayal film director Laha Mebow (who later won the Golden Horse Award for Best Director in 2022). She contends, “assumptions and imaginations of Indigeneity as presumably a localized and compartmentalized object of study cannot adequately take into account what it means to be Indigenous in the contemporary world” (90).

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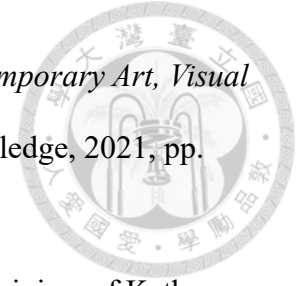
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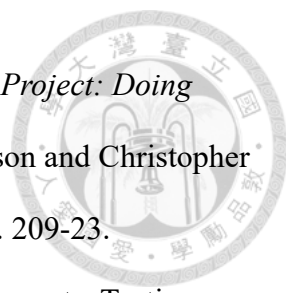
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