LIAS Working Papers, vol. 12, no. 1 (2025).
https://doi.org/10.29311/lwps.2025125037.

On Loss, Language and Poetry: Reading Ecological Grief in Kamau Brathwaite's 'scarscape'

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Deeper Origins

> These islands: eye/lands: are the tips of mountains: tops of a sunken range of cordillera: a range that perhaps should not have been there at all. Because, you see, the Americas, dinosaural scarscape: have this antediluvian spine/ache stretching from Alaskan north through Sierra Madre Mexico, the Andes, on to where they end in thunder on the shores of the Antarctica: the 9000 mile long chain of the Americas (Brathwaite, 1983, p. 13).

In the opening section of 'Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms', Kamau Brathwaite describes what he calls the "geopsychic fragmentation" of the Caribbean by narrating the geological emergence of the Greater and Lesser Antilles – their formation as arcs of underwater volcanos that pierced the surface of the sea to become land, and their subsequent archipelagic division caused by a significant rise in sea levels some 15,000 years ago (Cambers, 2005, p. 222). "Where once there had been tree and spur and lake", there was now "Caribbean Sea", "grief and sibilance", Brathwaite (1983, p. 14) explains. Invoking an ancient grief in the Caribbean Sea, he alludes to more recent iterations of loss in the region: the trauma of the Middle Passage, the limited mobility of present-day Caribbean peoples[1], the terror of climate change and rising sea levels. And with his subsequent invocation of sibilance, he recognises that all of this grief must be borne by voice, by the soft hiss of poetry that echoes the sound of the sea.

'Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms' is well-known in post-colonial scholarship and Anglophone Caribbean literary theory, particularly in regard to its exposition of creolisation (Viala, 2014, p. 42), and yet relatively little has been said about this opening passage, the implications of which are multiple and wide-ranging. Through demonstrating that life in the contemporary Caribbean is directly informed by its archipelagic nature, by the geological processes that formed it many millennia ago, Brathwaite holds that the Earth is marked by that which it endures and witnesses. He uses poetic prose to explore the affective significance of environmental change, with an attentiveness to its deeper origins in colonial and capitalist projects of extraction.

[1] Brathwaite (1983) notes that Taíno communities could travel "island-island by canoe" (p. 16).

As Malcom Ferdinand (2019) demonstrates, these are projects which scholarly accounts of environmental change frequently elide due to a 'double fracture' between ecological/environmental movements and postcolonial/antiracist movements, which often "express themselves in the street and in the universities without speaking to each other" (p. 3).[2] Responding to Ferdinand's notion of 'double fracture', I suggest in this essay that there are at least two ways in which 'Caribbean Culture' speaks to what Cunsolo and Ellis (2018) call "ecological grief": "the grief felt in relation to experienced or anticipated ecological losses, including the loss of species, ecosystems and meaningful landscapes due to acute or chronic environmental change" (p. 275).

Firstly, the neologism of 'scarscape' highlights the ways in which space, like the body, bears the marks of its subjugation: a geography of scars that are continually reopened and obscured by further lacerations. These scars might manifest as so called 'environmental' catastrophes, like soil exhaustion, deforestation, or extreme weather events, or they might speak more directly to human losses – the remnants of a settlement or an unmarked mass grave. Through reading 'scarscape' across some of Brathwaite's poetry, I suggest that this formulation illuminates the precedence of ecological loss and grief throughout ongoing colonial histories, and that it does so with an attentiveness to nuances of race, gender and class. Additionally, because Cunsolo and Ellis do not explicitly define the 'ecological losses' that lead to ecological grief, I venture that such losses are constituted by ruptures in what Potawatomi botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer (2014) calls the "reciprocity" of "the biophysical world" (p. 23). Thus, 'scarscape' is formed by proliferations of such ruptures, by the ruptured relationality of ecological grief.

Secondly, just as significant as 'scarscape' itself, is the poetics of its exposition, the particular kind of interpretative reading or listening[3] that it demands. Through attending to Brathwaite's use of imagery and sound, I demonstrate that he pushes us to take seriously the reading, writing, speaking and hearing of literature in part as a way into grieving for and with relational rupture. He thus shows that ecological grief is both an affective/emotional experience *and* a practice, a state of being that contains within it both a problem and a solution.[4]

As Elaine Savory (2022) observes, 'we are familiar with Brathwaite as a writer-activist in his work, engaged with race, colonialism, and class', but his 'deep concern' for the environment has attracted little scholarly attention (p. 103). Brathwaite argued in 1985 that the 'destruction of the biosphere is a crime against us all' (p. 55), and yet his work is largely ignored in ecocritical scholarship, with the exception of a few illuminating studies that add to Savory's research on the ecological implications of his pluriverse

[2] Although I find Ferdinand's configuration of the 'double fracture' to be urgent and convincing, I would like to acknowledge the grassroots groups that have resisted this fracture, including, but not limited to, Black communities organising around 'environmental justice' in the USA, Indigenous communities organising around 'environmentalism of the poor' across Latin America (Martinez-Alier et al., 2016, p. 732), and Kamau Brathwaite's work to protect Cow Pastor in Barbados (Philip, 2020).

[3] As Jacob Edmund (2020) suggests, "teaching and studying Brathwaite should begin with the audible word, not the written text".

[4] Following Jo Labanyi (2011, p. 225), emotion is conscious and involves judgment; "affect is the body's response to stimuli at a precognitive and prelinguistic level". Thus, ecological grief can be experienced as an affect and an emotion.

thinking.[5] ‘Scarscape’ provides a starting point to address this omission, though Brathwaite makes reference to the formulation just once in ‘Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms’. It is true that this is a fast-paced piece of writing, and it would be easy to move on, to keep reading and forget. But to do so would be to neglect the extent to which the concept of ‘scarscape’ can elucidate complex geographies of the past, present and future. ‘Scarscape’ insists that though, in the words of Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros De Castro (2016), the world has ended many times because there are “many worlds in the world” (p. 104), there is one Earth, which can testify to all the suffering, all the loss, all the injustice that it has experienced.

Cartographic technologies are not useless as a means of gleaning this suffering, which is evident in the inflated northern landmasses of the Mercator projection and the uncanny, straight lines that contain colonial and postcolonial states.[6] And yet, ‘scarscape’ surely represents a new kind of mapping logic, one which can make legible the entwinement and perpetuity of human and more-than-human traumas, the implicit violence of ‘landscape’, a term that emerged in English at the turn of the 17th century alongside the expansion of the British empire. Denoting “a distant vista” or “picture representing natural inland scenery” (Oxford University Press), landscape “implies separation and observation” (Williams, 1975, p. 120). It often seeks to distil an ecosystem of interdependent beings into objective (white, male) human observers and othered ‘natural’ subjects, producing a ‘relationship of alienation’ (Mitchell, 2001, p. 272). ‘Scarscape’ is a product of landscape but it also presents a mode of resistance, of attending to the scars of alienation and seeking healing for relational rupture through insisting on the fact of earthly coexistence. Moreover, though ‘scarscape’ is not a phrase that Brathwaite mentions explicitly elsewhere in ‘Caribbean Culture: Two Paradigms’, it is always there in his work. Intransigent yet fluid, a foil for soundscape and the tidalectic, ‘scarscape’ constitutes the birthplace of nation languages.

Simultaneous Violation

To understand how ‘scarscape’ manifests, I look to *Islands* (1969), the final instalment of Brathwaite’s poetic trilogy, *The Arrivants*, which traces, to quote Paul Gilroy (1993), the movements of Black people across the Black Atlantic, “not only as commodities” but in ways that engage “various struggles towards emancipation, autonomy and citizenship” (p. 16). Following *Rights of Passage* and *Masks*, which take the Black

[5] Chris Campbell (2020) provides a world-literary analysis of Brathwaite’s interest in the limestone geologies of Barbados, arguing that he ‘has always been a poet of the stone’ (p. 73). In their explorations of contemporary Caribbean art, Elizabeth Deloughrey and Tatiana Flores (2020) have brought his theory of tidalectics to bear on critical ocean studies. And going back a little further, Anthony Carrigan (2009) has posited that Brathwaite “insists on a mode of evaluating natural environments which reclaims some of the island’s [Barbados’s] buried histories” in the activism and creative work inspired by his painful fight to protect the graveyard of enslaved peoples beneath his home from an airport expansion project (p. 158). In this essay, I build upon all three approaches, seeking in ‘scarscape’ an understanding of ecological grief that can transcend the terrestrial, oceanic and subterranean spaces that the each of these pieces respectively animate, so as to establish the wide-ranging significance of Brathwaite’s “profoundly environmental consciousness” (Savory, 2022, p. 104).

[6] The Mercator projection is a popular map projection that increasingly inflates the size of landmasses the further away they are from the equator, making the continent of Europe appear disproportionately large, while many of the regions colonised by European powers appear disproportionately small.

diaspora and the African continent as their respective geographical frames, *Islands* stages a return to the Caribbean, to the region's unique cultures, histories, languages, sounds, rhythms, landscapes and 'scarscapes'. Within just a few lines of 'Legba', for instance, Brathwaite tells of a "shak-shak tree", a "gaulin" (heron), a "pear / tree", "brambles", a "jack / bird", "shell-less worms" and "sugar cane" that "screams / swinging under the steel / cutlass" (1973, pp. 175–176), screaming in rage and pain at the plantation system that entraps both the cane and the people that harvest it.

The results of this system are laid out across the rest of the poem: "children eat dirt", learning 'lies' at school before labouring in a world of "banks, books, insurance businesses" only if they are "brown / enough", while "drought / tickles the root / of the clammy- / cherry tree" (pp. 174-176). Just 75 years after Barbados – the island of Brathwaite's birth, where he spent much of his life – was claimed as a British colony, 100% of the original forest cover had been removed (Beinart and Hughes, 2007, pp. 37–39). When trees are removed from an ecosystem, the process of transpiration is disrupted, making air less moist and rain less frequent, so that the area becomes vulnerable to droughts.[7] Enslavers in Barbados became aware of this link in the 18th century, leading their counterparts in Dominica to attempt to clear land in ways that did not disrupt rainfall, thus preserving the productivity of their plantations (Hauser, 2021, p. 105). However, as the reference to drought in 'Legba' indicates, the lack of tree coverage in Barbados remains a problem in perpetuity, hence the importance of the state-wide 'We Plantin' project, which was introduced in 2020 by the Barbadian Labour government to plant over a million trees on the island (National Conservation Commission).

It is this history of the simultaneous violation of human and nonhuman beings, revealing the inextricability of ecological grief and colonialism in the western hemisphere, that Brathwaite names 'scarscape'. The legacy of slavery in Barbados is not only about poverty, inadequate education, and colourism, though these three experiences underpin 'Legba' and are constitutive of 'scarscape'. It is also about having to make a life within an ecosystem that has been challenged by ecological violence and being reminded, by aspects of the damaged ecosystem itself, like the 'screaming cane', of the violence endured by people. To quote Kimmerer (2014), "balance in ecological systems arises from negative feedback loops, from cycles of giving and taking: living and dying, production and consumption, biogeochemical cycles, water to cloud and back to water again" (p. 23). Brathwaite demonstrates in 'Legba' that this relational balance of giving and taking has been superseded in Barbados by the relentless, rapacious taking of European colonists, resulting in a state of relational rupture wherein grief is held by human and nonhuman beings alike, including the 'screaming cane'. This relational rupture is the 'ecological loss' that Cunsolo and Ellis mention as the cause of ecological grief; when prevented from healing properly, it forms 'scarscape'.

And yet, relationality endures – perhaps counterintuitively, the pain of relational rupture itself attests that connection remains, as does the possibility of reconnection, in much the same way that grief belies the continued presence of love. Legba, after whom Brathwaite's poem is named, is the god of transitions, misunderstandings and

[7] For further details on the relationship between forest cover and drought vulnerability, see Y. C. Sud et al. and Jazlyn Hall et al.

negotiations. He is the 'master of crossroads', the one who "begins the journey, opening the gates onto a submerged past" (Dayan, 1994, p. 728). A figure of relationality, he makes possible, in the act of opening the gates, connection across realms, temporalities and species. Within the poem his presence gives way to an insistent chorus of nonhuman beings: "black black black / the black birds clack'; 'the jack / bird sings'; the 'bamboo' is 'snapping', the 'blue' cracking". Brathwaite's use of rhyme and percussive monosyllables here suggest that the ecosystem is singing together of Blackness, that the birds, the bamboo and the sky share in the grief of Barbadian people. In this way, 'Legba' the poem, like much of Brathwaite's work, takes on a task that is analogous to that of Legba the *lwa*: marking the crossroads, opening the gates into 'scarscape' and articulating the grief that shapes its topographies.[8]

But Brathwaite does not always linger at the crossroads. In 'Francina', he steps through the gate opened in 'Legba' to consider how 'scarscape' manifests in the life of an individual working-class Black woman (the eponymous Francina), asking what ecological grief might mean to her and what it might allow her to do when she is confronted with an environmental loss that is of enormous significance despite being local in scale. The first half of the poem outlines this loss and its causes:

> In the park that was once green,
> had a lake, two red stone lions,
> a macaw, monkeys, humped hundred-
>
> year old turtle with pale pink
> shell-fish eyes, the Mayor and Council,
> thin brown impressive men
>
> with black crack-liqour voices,
> have built a dance hall and a barbecue
> so the city-slick electorate
>
> can brawl and stew their buttocks
> in thick saucy tunes and latest juke-
> box choices. The green is gone now, (p. 214)

The mayor and council have constructed entertainment facilities for the local upper classes on land that was once a public park, and they now seek to "build / the island" with hotels and casinos for tourists (p. 214). In a sense, Brathwaite's speaker understands the impetus for this project: sugarcane is no longer profitable, so due to a scarcity of other commodifiable resources, "our people are too poor to be selfish with their sun" (p. 214). And yet, these construction projects dismay the speaker because they replicate the extractive and materialist principles instated by colonial powers. More "trees" have been "cut down", and "what about that humpbacked turtle with the shell-fish eyes?" (pp. 214–15). That the turtle has "shell-fish" eyes is testament to the specific solidarities of shelled animals, and therefore the kindred condition of all organic life. Emphasised by its echoing of "too poor to be selfish", this detail about the

[8] For some insight into the significance of the *lwa*, see *Vodou in Hatian Life and Culture: Invisible Powers* (2006), edited by Claudine Michel and Patrick Bellegarde-Smith – particularly pp. 16-19 of Karen McCarthy Brown's chapter, 'Afro-Caribbean Spirituality: A Haitian Case Study'.

turtle's eyes destabilises the poignant pragmatism of the speaker's acceptance of tourism. Brathwaite insists here on the importance of the unique ways of seeing that different beings bring, and in doing so he emphasises the significance of the turtle's continued survival – to lose the turtle would be to lose its unique way of seeing and understanding the world.

So, what did happen to the turtle? The second half of the poem answers this question about the turtle's whereabouts in the voice of a curious if judgemental onlooker, who speaks in long stanzas of "nation language" (1993, p. 260) that contrast with the preceding tercets of international English. "Francina bought it" (p. 215), this new speaker explains, though they cannot understand why she would do such a thing. The turtle is "a wrinkle-face monster you can't / even eat", "too old to be your father", and "besides, she can't / even afford it", so should surely spend that money on something more useful like "a man" (p. 215). The speaker sees two explanations for Francina's actions: she has bought the turtle either because "she used to scale / fish in the market so I suppose / she got a nose for slimy things" or because she lacks "sense in it brain- / pan" – "she is get the shakes / these days in she fingers; she nose / always runnin' an' I hear she is wee- / wee de bed" (p. 215). Here, the speaker is gaining too much satisfaction from discussing Francina's advancing age, disinterest in men, poverty, appearance (her "face tek on so") and "lard-oil" smell to recognise her heroism.

In response to the destruction of the park to create leisure facilities for tourism, which Angelique Nixon (2015) names "one of the largest sites of neocolonialism" (p. 3), and the destruction of the hundred-year-old turtle's habitat, Francina goes to the market and buys the turtle to take care of it with what little resources she has available. That the rescue of the turtle has been taken on by Francina, a person whose gender and social status is continually stressed throughout the poem, is not incidental. In the words of Velma Pollard (2001), "Brathwaite, railing against the destruction of a park, something precious reserved for the use of the people, chooses a woman to be the rescuer" (p. 43), and not just any woman but an old woman, a poor woman, a woman with whom "not one o' de fishermens toilin' / down here would be seen even dead / in the dark o' she company" (p. 215). Brathwaite is exploring here the ways in which 'scarscape' is experienced differently by different people, particularly in regard to gender, as it intersects with race and class.

As Janet Momsen (2002) demonstrates, "Caribbean gender relations are a double paradox: of patriarchy within a system of matrifocal and matrilocal families; and of domestic and state patriarchy coexisting with the economic independence of women" (p. 45). Francina has the requisite independence to decide to buy and take care of the turtle despite the scorn of her neighbours, but she also has little choice but to do so because the work of care falls to women such as herself in her society. The fact that her labour is filling a gap left by the state and the private sector in the development of the leisure facilities goes unacknowledged by the onlooking speaker, as does the fact that it is people like her whom the destruction of the park affects most: those who do not own large amounts of land, who rely upon public space to be able to connect with other living beings.[9] Since she is a single woman who spent much of her working life scaling fish in the market, it seems likely that Francina rescued the turtle because she

[9] This second speaker does at least notice that Francina saved the turtle, though, something which the first speaker, who uses international English, could not do; in this way, Brathwaite links the use of nation language to knowledge of Francina.

spent a lot of time in the park and perhaps formed a relationship with it there. Like many economically marginalised, older Black women, she is more affected by the presence of 'scarscape' than the political class of men who have turned the turtle's home into a dancehall, and more engaged in doing the work to make 'scarscape' liveable, both for herself and for others.

Francina's example speaks richly to the question of what it means to practise ecological grief. She responds to 'scarscape' by *finding community* with the turtle and *grieving with* it, seeking out some of the interspecies relationality that has been taken from them both, not only by the closure of the park, but also by those older losses that this more recent one reinscribes, such as the imposition of plantation or lack of reparations. To quote Édouard Glissant (1990/1997), she participates in a 'Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other' (p. 11); she tries to know and be known by a being of a different species and thus finds a kind of wholeness that defies the comprehension of the poem's speaker. It becomes clear here that ecological grief and 'scarscape' are not born out of the loss of the Other, exactly – the species, the ecosystem, the landscape, or even the park – but rather the loss of the relationships that the Other could have sustained. And, more importantly perhaps, it becomes clear that ecological grief is not just an affective or emotional response to ruptured relationality. It is also a practice, a practice that seeks to heal relational ruptures. For a woman in Francina's position, who is Black, working-class and socially marginalised, it is a practice that supports life in 'scarscape'.

Collaborative Meaning-Making

'Francina' is not just a record of the eponymous rescuer's process of grieving ecologically, though; the poem, too, is itself invested in the practice of ecological grief, because Brathwaite does not allow those who encounter this text to read passively. As Mandy Bloomfield (2016) suggests, he is a writer who 'contests the political valency of a poetics of clarity or accessibility' (p. 152) – this contestation holds true across much of his writing, including in his exposition of 'scarscape'. He is not especially interested in fastening comprehensive definitions onto 'scarscape', in ridding its invocation of uncertainty or doubt. He seems much more interested in what happens when signifier and signified are held carefully apart at this vital moment, in the possibilities for collaboration and community that might swell to fill the resultant gap. Indeed, 'scarscape' itself might be a space created by the riving of the organic sign, the alienated being's reduced ability to comprehend the meaning of their environment.

Brathwaite asks his listeners and readers to coproduce meaning alongside him, to interpolate his words into new and generative contexts that allow them to be seen differently. The second half of 'Francina', for instance, lists only the reasons why her purchasing of the turtle is a foolish endeavour. It is through the interpretive participation of the listener/reader that her heroism, as well as the heroism of other elder Black women, is celebrated, and in that act of participation, the listener/reader is confronted with the grief that Francina and the turtle share. Listening/reading is for Brathwaite another means of countering the ruptured relationalities of ecological grief, and is therefore itself means of surviving in 'scarscape'.

In his more narratively diffuse poems, this process of collaborative meaning-making becomes yet more pronounced. Take, for example, 'Coral'[10], a piece in which Brathwaite discusses Caribbean history in relation to the coral reefs that can be found throughout the region. The first stanza is as follows:

> A yellow mote of sand dreams in the polyp's eye;
> the coral needs this pain.
> Look closely:
> the pearl has limestone ridges, hills,
> out of it grows the sun
> and the fat valleys of Haiti,
> deep mourning waters under the mornes (p. 232).

As he so often does throughout *Islands*, Brathwaite evokes an entwinement of human and nonhuman suffering here. He likens the history of the Caribbean to the layers of calcium carbonate that a mollusc secretes around a painful, potentially destructive grain of sediment trapped against its body, producing a beautiful pearl. The subsequent stanzas imitate this process, adding layer upon layer of imagery.

Some of this imagery is relatively oblique – Brathwaite tells of how "the land rises slowly / fed by the ringed sun and the distant Amazon" (p. 232), in reference to the unique geological emergence of Barbados as an elevated staircase of coral reef (another form of calcium carbonate) raised by sediments delivered from the north coast of South America. Some is more direct: "even when I was a slave here / I could hear the polyp's thunder" (p. 232). In each case, Brathwaite considers how the history of the Caribbean is intimately tied to pearl, to coral, to limestone, to the living and dying beings who produce calcium carbonate. His use of the word 'mornes', for instance, meaning 'hills' in the Francophone Caribbean, holds within it the English word 'mourns', suggesting that the very land that comprises the Caribbean is constituted by mourning. And, by extension, he thinks too about the ways in which the Caribbean is constantly being shaped by the experiences of its organic inhabitants, making the past omnipresent in contemporary 'scarscape'.

"Coral builds / quarries, explosions, / limestone walls, / bougainvillea churches, plantation halls" (p. 233), Brathwaite writes, delineating the process by which limestone is extracted and commodified in service of colonial capitalism. But the limestone of the island also seems to nurture those who have suffered there:

> the narrow dead of the islands
> chalk chalk
> bone burning to limestone,
> hills, porous tears, showers
> rain unhooks flowers,
> green stars of the soil stare up from the stalks (p. 233).

A 'porous' rock that is well suited to growing plants, limestone holds onto the 'tears' that flow onto it and allows the nutrients held within the bodies of the dead to flow

[10] I refer here to his poem in *Islands*, not the piece of the same name published in 2019 in *The Paris Review*.

into flowers. This sense of cyclicality continues into the poem's final line, "my yellow pain swims into the poly's eye" (p. 234), a reference to the opening one, "a yellow mote of sand dreams in the polyp's eye" (p. 232). In coral and in the pearl-bearing mollusc, Brathwaite finds both the possibility of return and the possibility of protecting against pain through creating something beautiful.

To attempt to affix a single interpretation onto these images would be to flatten the poem's myriad multivalences, because Brathwaite is, as Nathaniel Mackey (1994) demonstrates, interested in fragmentation, in representing the physical and significatory "fragmentariness of insular topography" with "writing which amounts to a fractured wordscape, poems typified by idiosyncratic line breaks and syllabication" (p. 733). The project of collective meaning-making that this structural fragmentariness demands resonates not only with the physical fragmentation of Caribbean peoples, who can be separated by water, language and political borders, but also by the fragmentation of Caribbean ecosystems, including the construction project that displaces Francina's turtle. In each case, a collective effort is required to read wholeness across the scattered fragments. The 'fractured wordscape' is, therefore, the natural literary vehicle for one who seeks to write 'scarscape', particularly because it allows for experimentation as well with the *sound* of poetry, which is itself fundamental to the poetics that Brathwaite uses to evoke ecological grief.

In the passage of *Coral* quoted above for instance, Brathwaite uses rhyme to connect the "porous tears, showers" that ends one stanza with the "rain" that "unlocks flowers, / green stars" (p. 233) in the first line of the stanza that follows. The two sets of images, fragmented by the stanza break, are brought together with a sonorous resonance, which speaks to the ways in which the tears of grief can be, like rain, a source of creativity and nurture, allowing new life to bloom. This sense that poetry attunes those that encounter it to kinds of sound that are able to resonate across fragmentation can be traced throughout Brathwaite's oeuvre. It is evident in 'Legba', not only in the previously discussed passage in which the "clack clack clack" of the blackbirds forms a chorus with the "jack bird" and the "cracking" sky, but also when Brathwaite writes that, "sugar cane screams / swinging under the steel / cutlass; / bless us bless us / cries the shorn rain" (p. 175), Here, the sharpness of the "cutlass" echoes through the repetition of "bless us", while "cane" and "rain" rhyme, emphasising that they are both "shorn", that they scream and cry together. A soft yet percussive 's' sound permeates each of the lines, holding them together despite their short, uneven lengths, their fragmentation.

The combined effect of the sounds of these lines is those who speak or hear them are brought back into the vibrational physicality of the body, where sound is produced and registered, where grief is expressed and recognised through screaming and crying, like that of the cane and the rain, and through song. In this way, the poem itself becomes a site of grief, a space wherein Brathwaite makes possible an embodied exploration of loss and reconnection, as well as a potential locus of community, at which listener/reader and performer/writer collaborate to coproduce meaning. In the words of Mark Harris (2021), for Brathwaite, "a people's ability to resist colonial and postcolonial impositions depends on the ingenuity of the noises generated, on the health of its soundscape" (p. 21). The soundscapes that poetry provides therefore offer one way of grieving ecologically, healing relational rupture and surviving in 'scarscape'.

A Different Kind of Formulation

In this essay, I have argued that 'scarscape' articulates the deeper origins of ecological grief in ongoing colonial histories, in spaces where ruptures in ecosystemic relationality (the 'ecological losses' to which Cunsolo and Ellis refer) have accumulated over time due to sustained violence. 'Scarscape' speaks to the ways in which people grieve ecological losses – losses of relationality within an ecosystem – differently, dependent on their relationship to the topographical scars that surround them, and the social and economic resources that they are able to use to conceal those scars from view. Francina and her turtle highlight that the burden of ecological grief falls most heavily on those who are economically and racially marginalised, who are charged with gendered expectations of caring responsibility. For such individuals, grieving ecologically is often a means of surviving in 'scarscape'. It is both an affective/emotional experience and a practice of collaborative meaning-making, in which new connections are made, and the bereft is returned back into the physicality of the grieving body.

To grieve ecologically is to know 'scarscape', to know that the continued existence of all beings is, to an ever-shifting extent, contingent upon and at odds with the violence of the past. In much the same way that grieving ecologically allows people to affirm their dependence upon other beings, human and nonhuman, and begin to heal those relationships that have been damaged by ecological violence, it also provides a means of affirming a dependence upon and deference to those beings who have come before them. As a conceptual framework, and as a model of poetic collaboration, 'scarscape' provides a means of exploring these intricacies, of reflecting on the states of troubled relationality that characterise being in moments of climate crisis.

'Scarscape' is, however, not the only recent neologism that speaks to the grief inherent to ecosystemic breakdown. Indeed, the Australian philosopher Glen Albrecht (2020) argues that a whole host of coinages are needed to describe what he calls the "psychoterratic", the "health relationship between the psyche and the biophysical environment".[11] Albrecht (2020) makes his justification for his extensive list of new terms clear:

> Humans have no recent evolutionary experience of rapid global-scale environmental change. All cultures in all parts of the world are now experiencing something new. [...] We now live in a new era, an era of pervasive change, where the old languages, like the wisdom of the elders, have diminishing relevance and traction with respect to how we should live for the future (p. 10).

[11] Among these coinages, the most popular is perhaps 'solastaglia', which draws upon a range of Latin roots (s*olari, solacium, solus, desolare, algia*) to denote "the pain experienced when there is recognition that the place where one resides and that one loves is under immediate assault" (Albrecht, 2005, p. 48). Though solastaglia's emphasis on pain causes it to lack the capaciousness of ecological grief, which can enfold sadness, anger, numbness and hope, the two terms are not dissimilar in meaning.

His approach here is indicative of the 'double fracture' that Ferdinand (2019, p. 3) observes in colonial and environmental thinking, the double fracture that severs the contemporary climate crisis from its origins in colonial violence and denigrates 'the wisdom of the elders' as a source of ecological knowledge.

Brathwaite's 'scarscape' is a different kind of formulation. In addition to insisting that environmental degradation is, first and foremost, a scar that attests to the continued significance of previous violence, particularly colonial violence, scarscape invites questions about the workings of language. How is it made? Who decides what it means? Albrecht constructs his coinages out of fossilised chunks of Latin, a language which is in the modern Anglophone world a symbol of moneyed learning attached to a colonising upper class, often used to categorise and thereby control nonhuman beings. He then delineates the meaning of each coinage, anxious for it to be properly understood by his readership so that they might grasp the tools to verbalise their experiences.

Brathwaite takes an opposite approach, recognising language as a renewable resource open to all, constantly developed and enriched by everyday collaborations between people, not prescriptive interventions by a learned few. 'Scarscape' is hewn from two words, scar and landscape, that remain in popular use. It needs no explanation because its meaning is at once intuitive and poetically opaque, but it invites collaborative meaning-making from those that encounter it, with that repeated 'sc' sound that scrapes against itself like a glacier carving out a valley. 'Scarscape' is a word that honours the knowledge of Francina and the turtle without further marginalising her. It uses language not as a means of classification but of exploration, communication and collaboration, gesturing towards the generative possibilities of poetry in moments of ecological degradation.

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