

in the “Notanda” that appears in the book, I believed it a story that could not be told, but which had to be told, and that it could only be told by not-telling. The arrangement of the text is governed by the organizing principle and concept that no word, fragment or word cluster can come directly under another in the abutting line. The words and the accompanying Silence/s that surround them breathe into the space above and become a series of recuperative and reparative acts on behalf of those enslaved Africans who could not breathe and were drowned; in so doing they simultaneously create an inner architecture within the poem that is irrevocably wedded to the massacre. The words and their accompanying Silence/s also look forward to the present condition of Africans in a world that continues to devalue their lives and their being, so that the phrase “I can’t breathe” has become a modern-day refrain forged in extremis. The technique I used was an unusual one and is fully described in *Zong!* in the “Notanda” but, as mentioned above, my concern with language and its forced imposition as well as with Silence had already surfaced in *She Tries Her Tongue* and *Looking for Livingstone* respectively. In *Zong!* these issues reappear and transform the desiccated, legal archive, Gregson vs. Gilbert, the foundational document of the poem, into a text that allows the reader to breathe for and with the unmourned dead, the Ancestors, as well as for themselves. The text, as broken as the peoples and the cultures of Africa were broken, becomes on the page a visual and textual representation of what I describe as the extraordinary fragmentary of relationality.

For the longest while I understood *Zong!* as a textual performance of the poetics of the fragment, which is rooted in the historical experience and social legacies of the Caribbean and parallels the physical fragmentation of the islands themselves, as well as the destruction and fragmentation of cultures that have formed the cultures. In *The Repeating Island: The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective* (1992) the late Caribbean scholar Antonio Benítez-Rojo describes the Caribbean as a meta-archipelago with a repeating island regardless of the earlier European owner. He suggests that the idea of repetition unsettles the understanding of a fixed identity, such as nationality for instance, since difference accompanies every repetition. At the centre of this continual repetition is an island that cannot be found, in the same way the mythic El Dorado continued to elude the explorer,