Abstract

Beginning with Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite’s idea and practice of the word that must be broken in order to be remade (to quote the well-known lines from the poems ‘Negus’: ‘I must be given words to refashion futures like a healer’s hands’ and ‘Ananse’: ‘dry stony world maker, word breaker creator’) this talk will explore the relationship between Kamau Brathwaite’s pioneering and generative word-breaking world-making poetic craft and the long poem, *Zong!*, published in 2008 by Canadian-Caribbean poet Marlene NourbeSe Philip. *Zong!* tells the story of the slave ship, *Zong*, whose captain ordered 150 African slaves to be thrown overboard and drowned so their insurance value could be claimed by the owners. The story told in the poem is based on an extant legal document (of 1783). “Equal parts song, moan, shout, oath, ululation, curse, and chant... Memory, history, and law collide and metamorphose into the poetics of the fragment”: The cover blurb of *Zong!* could have been describing a work by Kamau Brathwaite. Using these two poets as exemplar, this talk will discuss the exploration of relationship between history and memory, written and spoken word, silence and sound in Caribbean english-language poetry. This presentation will include a short performance by Creative Arts students of *Zong*.

Bio - Anne Collett is an Associate Professor and Head of English Literatures in the Faculty of Law, Humanities and The Arts. She has edited *Kunapipi*: journal of postcolonial writing & culture for 15 years and has herself published widely on postcolonial literatures, with particular focus on poetry and women's writing.