

The brain is in the belly.

When the brain experiences some form of anxiety or intense emotion, the belly reacts accordingly – perhaps thumping or tightening. When the belly drops or shakes, the brain knows to feel unease or terror.

When on a boat, the brain/belly is alerted, almost stumbling over itself to bend backwards and sideways. A sickness sometimes follows, though sickness implies an impermanence, and this function finds itself lodged in every body. The eyes see the water, the sea, and the brain/belly knows all that the waves envelope, obscure; of what becomes sediment in its deep. Like the body, the sea holds, cannot forget.

A punch to the belly like the slap of a dorsal fin hitting the water.

The ship Zong was originally named Zorg by its owners, meaning *care* in Dutch.

To care, meaning to protect, to attend to, to look after, to nanny.

I will not comment on the irony of this, or on how behaviour overrules semantics. Nor will I attempt to conduct a metaphor, likening this all to something floaty; about how, if those on the ship behaved in the essence of the vessel's name, things may have been different. Such bloodshed cannot be inked over with literary tools. There is no time for poetry now.

Zong was bought by merchants from Liverpool in 1781 and set to sail from what we would now call Ghana to Jamaica. It could hold up to one hundred and twenty abducted Africans, though when leaving the port at Accra, it was filled with four hundred and twenty-two. Along the journey, due to a supposed lack of drinkable water, the ship's captain and crew decided to throw one hundred and thirty-three abducted Africans overboard. When they reached the port in Jamaica, the ship's owners filed an insurance claim for the loss of cargo during this massacre.

*negroe man*

*negroe woman*

*ditto man*

*ditto woman*

*negroe boy*

*negroe girl (meagre)*

A name can be a word unremembered.

A word can be a name lost at sea.

And again. And again.

I am grasping in shallow pools to find things and ways to describe the (word). I place a dulled piece of sea glass underneath my tongue in the hopes it will cut like the (word) disrupts a slab of white, but its edges are soft, and now my mouth is nothing but salty. Parentheses work to enclose, but the (word) cannot be contained; it bursts, feebly, weak-boned, between the two curved palms crushing, pushing at something more alive than it can hold. The mouths in mid-conversation, shouting over the fading (word), hands over ears and knees curled to elbows, deafened by existing. An adjective, a postpositive, a marker, slung almost like an afterthought, a glance; though, it is the only thought I can see on the page. The (word) to depict a girl whose face I cannot know but who looks part like me. The (word) that follows me into dreams and down darkened alleys at midnight. The (word) I cannot shake.

I will not raise the question one asks now, brains slippery with hindsight – how could a  
person willingly give another to the deepness of the ocean? Or,  
how could the brain process body as cargo, or,  
how could one really, truly, justify these murders to oneself, or,  
how long did the screaming last or  
did the belly or the brain react first or  
how could the enslaved children ( ) thrown overboard the ship Zong understand that  
greed was of greater value than their lives?

Questions so simple cannot tell us what it's like to feel salt water in a wound forever. To see  
ourselves imprinted on the seabed.