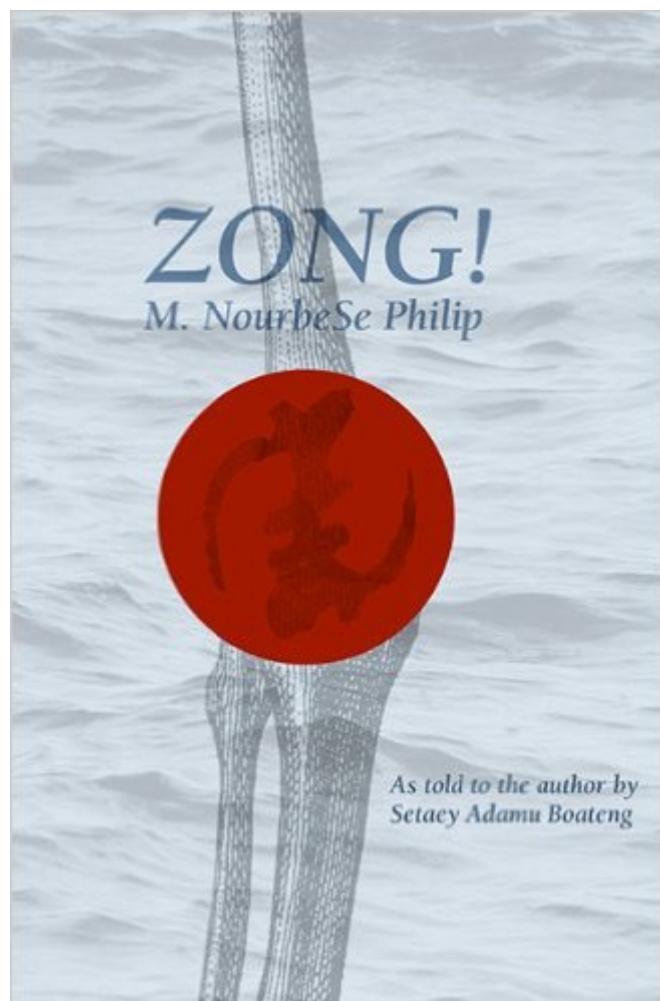


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# Zong! (Wesleyan Poetry Series)



## Synopsis

In November, 1781, the captain of the slave ship Zong ordered that some 150 Africans be murdered by drowning so that the ship's owners could collect insurance monies. Relying entirely on the words of the legal decision *Gregson v. Gilbert* "the only extant public document related to the massacre of these African slaves" Zong! tells the story that cannot be told yet must be told. Equal parts song, moan, shout, oath, ululation, curse, and chant, Zong! excavates the legal text. Memory, history, and law collide and metamorphose into the poetics of the fragment. Through the innovative use of fugal and counterpointed repetition, Zong! becomes an anti-narrative lament that stretches the boundaries of the poetic form, haunting the spaces of forgetting and mourning the forgotten.

Check for the online reader's companion at <http://zong.site.wesleyan.edu>.

## Book Information

Series: Wesleyan Poetry Series

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: Wesleyan (August 15, 2011)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0819571695

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Product Dimensions: 7.1 x 0.7 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 15.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars (See all reviews) (16 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #65,831 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > African #39 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Genres & Styles > Poetry #352 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Criticism & Theory

## Customer Reviews

"But this is a story that can only be told by not telling...." With this enormously important book M. NourbSe Philip charts a fearless, moving, and gorgeous trajectory across the unspeakable. The book length poem honors a true event (the 18th century murder of over 150 slaves, thrown overboard for the insurance) while resisting and refreshing the language of the original report of the event (a legal document). Engaging a tragedy, in which the meaningful fact of humanity was not recognized, the poet refuses to supply sense, asking her reader to work with her to understand the structure of understanding itself. Fragments and associative leaps make the reading of this text a

powerful experience of otherness, while her extraordinary music resonates in the heart, so that the poem finally comes from both within and without. One of the absolutely essential books.

This book will haunt you. Daunting at first in its experimental layout, Ms. Philip's masterpiece cries out to be heard. I urge anyone who picks up this book to look up her readings of the poems, especially on video and especially the one of "Zong #1" which has the air of a stifled scream. They are extremely emotive and really bring the texts to life.

Please disregard the negative comments. This book is an accomplishment plain and simple. I would recommend reading the essays in the back before reading her poetry--they will provide much needed context.

Anyone who actually spends the time to read this work will know how genius Philip's work and invention towards speaking about "what cannot be give voice to". Unless you have a completely singular and static identity/POV you will be moved by this book.

What happened on the Zong was, like most of slavery, horrible. The "tag line" to the book is compelling, "There is no telling this story; it must be told:" Philip demonstrates the brokenness and anguish visually, that is, there are no sentences, no punctuation, no structure, and the words are spread throughout the page. This is powerful, in that it reflects a gasping and laboring series of images from a long and anguished story. But this is where the tragedy begins. The broken, labored structure goes on for almost 200 pages. Many will argue that this is "poetry" and is therefore justifiable. That argument will be proven by the taste of the pudding; people will be reciting great poetry as long as mankind lives. The problem is that the anguish is clear, but the story is not told. Reading this book is laborious and unpleasant. Some might say that this is the point, and maybe that the fact that it is "poetry" justifies anything. My opinion; it is not poetry, it is certainly not good poetry, and therefore, despite the value of the story, it is not worth reading. It is tragic that the story that couldn't be told had to be told, but, in the end, wasn't told.

Intense - -Creative and exploratory - ZONG is a book which highlights new styles of poetry that manage to revive the voices of those victims lost in the ZONG tragedy.

Need to put in effort to get everything out of it that it has to offer! Very beautiful and powerful! Tells a

story that history has tried to forget.

What a beautiful unreadable read

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