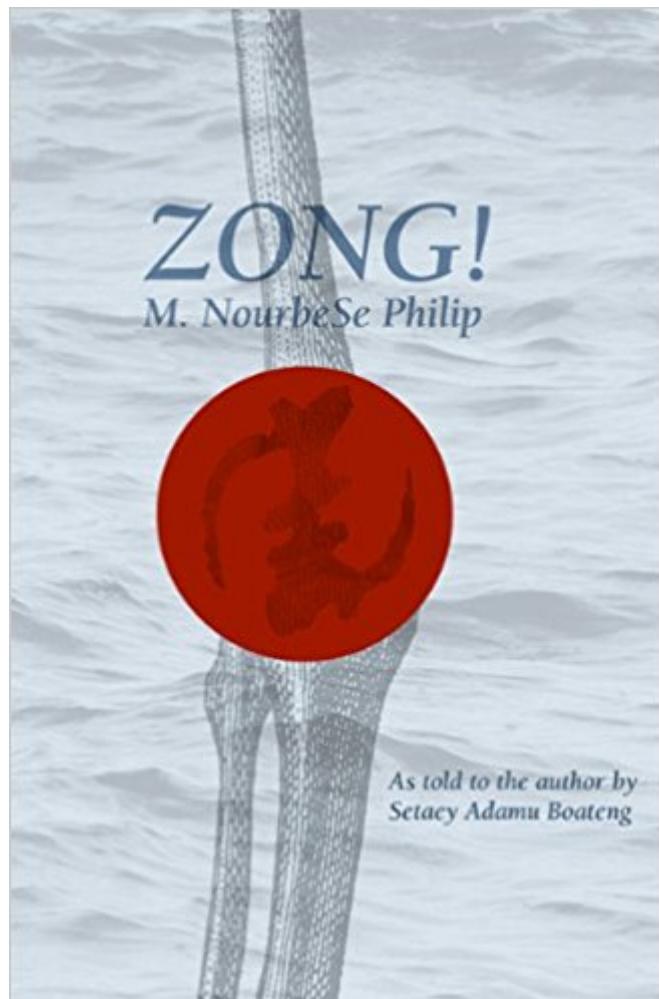


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# Zong! (Wesleyan Poetry Series)



## 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

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Language: English

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Average Customer Review: 3.6 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #23,417 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Textbooks > Humanities > Literature > World Literature > African & Middle Eastern #4 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > African #7 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Poetry > Regional & Cultural > Canadian

## Customer Reviews

At times I'm uncomfortable with both poetry and history, but then a book like Zong! comes along and reminds me how the lyric can shake up history's limited logics and history can shake up poetry's occasional evasive sheen. "Jill Magi, Poetry Project Newsletter" as Philip emphasizes, the story of the Zong is ultimately a story that can only be told by not telling. So even in the sea of words that fill up the final pages of Zong!, the registers of silence that mark the text are resounding. "Kate Eichorn, XCP: Cross Cultural Poetics" Nourbese-Philip cannot not "create" a story, even against her own intentions to "merely" document. She treats

each page as a field, a canvasâ "more accurately, the sea.â •â "Tyrone Williams, African American Reviewâ œSome poems roll off the tongue like a song and others like a cry for help.â •â "Victoria Iglesias, Mediumâ œM. NourbeSe Philip writes a poetry whose innovationâ "her spells of silence, her stuttering syntaxâ "is not an abstract experiment but a form of mourning for African words prohibited by â 'the ceremony of Whiteâ |Â in the elsewhere of time.â TMâ •â "Zinzi Clemons, Literary Hub

â œA brash, unsettling book, *Zong!* wants to chant or shout history down, shut history up. It not only laments and mimics historyâ TM's unreason but, verisimilar and retributive both, deranges history, as if to reorder its linguistic protocols might undo or redo history itself. Fretful, possessed, obsessed, upset, curse and homeopathy, both, it visits a breathtaking run of glossolalic scat upon historical trauma.â • (Nathaniel Mackay, author of *Bass Cathedral*)â œThose still confused about why poetry might fracture and splinter and stutter can find an answer in the work of M. NourbeSe Philip. In *Zong!* she delves into the trauma of the plantation economy and allows her language to be shaped by the conflicts between telling and not telling, between naming and not naming that define the horrifying story of the slave ship *Zong*. This book is exceptional and uniquely moving.â • (Juliana Spahr, author of *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs*)â œ*Zong!* pushes its readers to understand the *Zong* incident in the complex contexts of both African spirituality, languages, and regions and the British (Western) slave trade and law, with its assumed racism yet sincerely attempted pursuit of justice. The poems work powerfully at the individual level and even more powerfully as a sequence to call attention to the scantiness of our knowledge of the history of African enslavement from any perspective but that of slave holders or legal documents and to question the assumptions about â 'factâ TM and â 'valueâ TM assumed by that perspective. Like reconstructed archaeological shards, Philipâ TM's poems give us pieces combined in different orders and to different effects, building a story in such disjointed terms that it implies the tale cannot be simply known or told. As Philip herself says, she is finding ways â 'to â œnot-tellâ •â TM the story of the *Zong*â •just as Toni Morrison both relates Setheâ TM's story in *Beloved* and declares â "This is not a story to pass on.â TMâ • (Cristanne Miller, Edward H. Butler Professor of Literature, University at Buffalo SUNY)

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.

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.

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.

What a beautiful unreadable read

mind blowing.

Powerful Read.

Great

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.

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