

# NO SERENITY HERE

An Anthology of African Poetry  
in Amharic, English, French, Arabic and Portuguese

## 这里不平静

非洲诗选




Edited by Phillippa Yaa de Villiers  
Isabel Ferrin-Aguirre  
Xiao Kaiyu

主编

[南非] 菲丽帕·维利叶斯

[德国] 伊莎贝尔·阿闰热

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Zheli Bu Pingjing—Feizhou Shixuan

主 编

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## Preface

Welcome to our world, a world created by 26 poets from 12 countries on the continent of Africa! A world that is under construction, filled with noise: the rumble of diggers and building machinery, in urban spaces Chinese-manufactured boom-boxes blare out jazz and indigenous pop music. If you have the ears to hear, the landscape exhales the song of birds, the calls of animals and the ancient drumbeat of African cultural traditions.

Initially, African poetry was ritualistic and anonymous, that is to say, within those early communities poets and storytellers who had a gift with the language and a richness of idiom were celebrated within those communities, Authorship was not a priority until words were captured in books. Z. Pallo Jordan, South Africa's former Minister of Arts and Culture, in his foreword to his father AC Jordan's seminal *Tales from Southern Africa* writes: "The ethos of traditional society was enshrined in an oral legal, religious, and literary tradition through which the community transmitted from generation to generation its customs, values and norms. The poet and the storyteller stood at the centre of this tradition, as the community's chroniclers, entertainers, and collective conscience." [*Tales from Southern Africa*, translated and retold by A.C. Jordan, University of California Press 1973] Because orality was dynamic and improvised and relied on the audience's participation, the storyteller's creativity includes facilitating the communal voice, what Jordan refers to as "the collective genius". For this reason writers like Keorapetse Kgositse say: "Poetry will survive without me. It was here long before me and it will continue long after me."

We wanted to include traditional oral poetry, so that readers could get a sense of the history captured in the idiom of working songs and women's songs, and more recently, struggle or resistance songs, because this, for us, *is also classical literature*. Many traditional poems have been translated and recorded in anthologies published by western houses like Penguin, Jonathan Cape and Faber and Faber. We were unable to get the rights to republish these poems because of the bureaucracy of these institutions – but we hope the essence of these early texts has informed our choice and you can still 'feel' the African tradition through the voices of contemporary poets.

Kgositsile's *In the Naming* explores the emotional results of the colonial practice of renaming African settlements. Rhini is the African name for a place where people have lived since time began, and Grahamstown is the name of a relatively recent military base and colonial town. It is the same physical place, but experienced entirely differently by two different sets of citizens, English speaking and Xhosa or Afrikaans speaking, white and black. This is a portrait of a town, a microcosm of South Africa and its historical contradictions, and captures the essence of some of those contradictions for the whole continent.

Kofi Anyidoho gives voice to loss of identity, language and culture and tradition as he charts the journey of a twin brother who is seduced into the easy promises of the West. Song of Twin Brother was composed in honour of master poet Kofi Awonoor:

*...And here I am today,  
Holding on to Grandfather's sinking boat  
While Atsu my Twin Brother*

*Floats on air in Jumbo Jets*  
*And stares into the skies*  
*And dreams of foreign ports...*

Many of the poems that you will read here carry the imprint of the poet's mother tongue: there are close to 2000 indigenous languages spoken on the continent. The colonial experience and slavery depleted Africa of resources like gold, copper, platinum and oil but also the languages and cultures that ensure social cohesion and historical continuity. At the same time, the strange benefit of having languages like French, English, Portuguese and Arabic imposed was that it allowed fellow language users across the continent and further into the world to engage with African thought.

And African thought is vibrant and varied: from Tolu Ogunlesi (Nigeria) and Stanley Kenani (Malawi), to Obodimmo Oha (Nigeria), Dorian Haarhoff (South Africa,) Tania Tome (Moçambique), Beaven Tapureta (Zimbabwe) and Keamogetsii Molapong (Namibia) and Alemu Tebeje Ayele (Ethiopia), we explore the human condition via their hearts and minds. We recreate the fireside of oral poetry with the inclusion of three internationally renowned performance poets, TJ Dema, Lebo Mashile and Shailja Patel.

You might say that this anthology is hopelessly inadequate, when there are more than 50 countries in the continent, each with its highly respected canon of indigenous literature we have only 26 poets! This is not a definitive work, it is a handful of seeds from which we invite you to feed your curiosity. This anthology was created in a desire to offer an experience of Africa through poetry

to the Chinese people: in a celebratory spirit Xiao Kaiyu was asked to throw a party for African poets, Isabel Ferrin-Aguirre was given the task of sending out the invitations, and I was asked for names.

South Africa, as most recently liberated country in Africa, is also the most industrialized and the economic powerhouse of the sub-continent. With its history of racism and resistance, South Africa is a microcosm of the world, becoming a home to Europeans and Asians, who daily commit themselves to the task of creating a society based on values of equality and non-racialism. Africa, already diverse, now is home to people from the whole planet, and this is reflected in the choice of poets. For these reasons, and also because South Africans were more accessible, there are more of them featured in the anthology.

Together with Isabel and Kaiyu, we decided on the order of the poems and the journey through the pages. We invite you to listen to our elders, the Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka (Nigeria), South Africa's National Poet Laureate Keorapetse Kgositsile, Ghana's Kofi Anyodoho, Chirikure Chirikure from Zimbabwe, Shabbir Banoobhai and James Matthews from South Africa, and younger voices like Nii Ayikwei Parkes (Ghana), and Hama Tuma (Ethiopia). We introduce you to the unsung co-creators of literature: the giants Ama Ata Aidoo (Ghana), Fatima Naoout (Morocco), Veronique Tadjo (Côte d'Ivoire), Makhosazana Xaba (South Africa), Joyce Chigiyi and Amanda Hammar both from Zimbabwe.

Music is one of Africa's major exports, and the proximity of poetry to song is heard over and over again in the cadences of the poems that are gathered here. The poems are arranged around broad themes of:

- I Landscapes and Change
- II Identity, History and Language
- III Oppression and Resistance
- IV Love
- V Hope and the future.

The internet has played a major role in collecting and compiling this work, which speaks to the technological fluency of African writers. As barriers dissolve, the entire planet becomes the setting for the ritual, the storyteller's fire, the dance of words in which all are invited to see themselves reflected. You will not find serenity between these pages, you will find voices struggling, laughing, weeping, voices that are alive, roaring and whispering as they enrich the world's song by adding their voices.

Phillippa Yaa de Villiers  
Johannesburg, 10 May 2010



## 序一

欢迎来到我们这个世界，一个由非洲大陆12个国家26个诗人所组成的世界！一个正在施工的喧嚣的世界：挖掘机和建筑机械的隆隆声，市镇里中国造的便携式收录机放出的刺耳的爵士乐和本地流行音乐，如果你听得见，风景中还传出鸟的歌唱，动物的叫唤，以及非洲文化传统幽邃的鼓点。

最初的非洲诗歌是仪式性和不署名的，也就是说，在早期的社群里，诗人和故事讲述者语言出众、语汇丰富，受到他们社群的尊崇，但在这些语言进入书本之前，作者的概念并不被优先考虑。Z.帕劳·乔丹，前南非艺术文化部长，为他父亲AC乔丹具有开创性的《来自南非的故事》撰写的前言中写道：“传统社会的精神被口头的律法、宗教和文学传统所尊崇，通过这个传统，人们一代接着一代传承它的习俗、价值观和规范。诗人和故事讲述者作为这个社群的纪年者，表演者和集体的良心，就站在这个传统的中心。”（《来自南非的故事》，A.C.乔丹译述，加利福尼亚大学出版社，1973）由于口头表达是动态的、即兴的，有赖于听众的参与，故事讲述者的创造力就包括发出集体的声音，即乔丹提到的“集体性天赋”。正因为如此，凯奥拉佩策·考斯尔等作家才说：“诗歌的生存不需要我。它在我之前很早就存在了，也将在我之后长久存在下去。”

我们本来也想收入传统的口头诗歌，这样读者就能从劳动歌谣、妇女歌曲，以及晚近的挣扎反抗的歌曲里捕获一种历史感，因为这对我们来说，也是古典文学。很多传统诗歌已被翻译和收入一些选集，由企鹅、乔纳森·开普、费伯和费伯等西方的出版社出版，但因为这些机构的官僚

作风，我们无法得到再版这些诗的许可。然而，我们希望这些早期文本的精髓已经贯穿了我们的选择，你能从当代诗人的声音中仍然“感觉到”非洲的传统。

考斯尔的《在命名中》探索了对非洲殖民地重新命名的殖民做法的情感后果。利尼是一个非洲地名，人们自古就在那里生活，格雷厄姆斯敦则是一个新兴的军事基地和殖民城市。这两个名字所指的是同一个地方，两组不同的人群却经验迥异：讲英语的和讲科萨语或南非荷兰语的，白种人或黑种人。这是一幅城市的画像，是南非及其历史矛盾的一个缩影，它抓住了属于整个大陆的某些矛盾的本质。

科菲·阿尼多赫谈到了身份、语言、文化和传统的丧失。他记述了被西方的廉价承诺所诱惑的一对孪生兄弟的旅程。《双胞胎兄弟之歌》一诗是为纪念诗歌大师科菲·阿沃诺而作的：

……今天我在这里，  
抓住我祖父下沉的小船  
而我的双胞胎兄弟阿特苏  
飘浮在天上在喷气客机中  
凝视着天空  
梦想着外国的港口……

这里的很多诗歌都打上了诗人的母语的烙印：这片大陆上有接近2000种本土语言在使用。殖民经历和奴隶制耗尽了非洲的资源，像金、铜、铂和石油，更耗尽了确保社会凝聚力和历史连续性的语言文化。另一方面，从外部强加来的语言，如法语、英语、葡萄牙语、阿拉伯语，却很诡异地带来了好处，它能让非洲大陆进而全世界使用这些

语言的人介入非洲的思想。

而非洲的思想是充满活力和多种多样的：从陶鲁·欧冈勒斯（尼日利亚）、斯坦利·克那尼（马拉维），到奥波多迪玛·奥哈（尼日利亚）、多利安·哈尔霍夫（南非）、塔尼娅·托麦（莫桑比克）、比温·塔普莱塔（津巴布韦）、齐莫格茨·莫拉庞（纳米比亚）、阿莱姆·特伯热·艾尔（埃塞俄比亚），我们通过他们的心灵与头脑来考查人类的境况。通过收入三位国际知名的表演诗人，TJ迪玛、勒布·马希爾和莎尔遮·佩特尔，我们重新点燃了口头诗歌的篝火。

你可能会说这个选本严重不足：非洲大陆有50多个国家，每个国家都有其令人尊敬的本土文学经典，而我们仅收入26位诗人！这部诗选并非终极选本，而是一把培养你的好奇心的种子。这个选本的目的是通过诗歌给中国人民提供一点非洲经验：大家提议萧开愚为非洲诗人举办一个派对，伊莎贝尔·阿闰热发请柬，而我来提供人选。

作为最晚解放的非洲国家，南非是非洲次大陆最工业化的经济强国。带着它种族主义和抵抗运动的历史，南非是世界的一个缩影，它正在成为欧洲人和亚洲人的家园，他们每天都承担着重任，以创造一个基于平等和非种族主义价值观的社会。非洲本已多姿多彩，现在更是来自整个星球的人们的栖所，这也反映在诗人的挑选上。出于这些原因，也因为南非诗人更容易接触到，所以这本诗选中他们也展示得更多一些。

与伊莎贝尔和开愚一道，我们确定了诗人的顺序和书的编排方式。我们邀请你聆听我们的长者，诺贝尔奖获得者沃莱·索因卡（尼日利亚）、南非的国家桂冠诗人凯奥拉佩策·考斯尔、加纳的科菲·阿尼多赫、津巴布韦的齐里克热·齐里克热、南非的沙比尔·巴努海和詹姆斯·马修

斯，以及像奈伊·阿伊克维·帕克斯（加纳）和阿玛·图玛（埃塞俄比亚）等更年轻的声音，我们也要向你介绍尚未得到足够赞誉的文学世界的共同创造者：巨匠阿玛·阿塔·艾杜（加纳）、法提玛·纳乌特（摩洛哥）、伏罗尼克·塔乔（科特迪瓦）、马克霍萨萨纳·萨巴（南非）和同样来自津巴布韦的乔伊斯·齐基娅与阿曼达·哈玛。

音乐是非洲的一项主要出口产品，诗与歌的亲缘性可以从收集于此的诗里一再听到。这些诗是根据以下宽泛的主题来安排的：

1. 风景和变化
2. 身份、历史和语言
3. 压迫和反抗
4. 爱
5. 希望与前途

在本书的收集和编辑过程中，互联网起到了重要作用，这也说明了非洲作家的技术熟练程度。随着交流的障碍被打破，整个星球都为仪式，故事讲述者的篝火，以及词语的舞蹈而设，在这里，所有人都被邀请，去观看从中映出的他们自身。在这些书页里你将感受不到平静，你将听到挣扎的、大笑的、哭泣的声音，这些声音生机勃勃，或怒吼，或低语，所有声音的叠加丰富了这首世界之歌。

菲丽帕·维利叶斯

约翰内斯堡，2010年5月10日

## Introduction

Renowned artist Hu Xiangcheng is profoundly drawn to the literary, as well as the visual, arts. At an early age, he spent some time in Africa and to this day has a deep longing for it. Thus, he entrusted me with overseeing the editing and translation of an anthology of African poetry. With the help of Phillippa Yaa de Villiers, a poet from South Africa, and the German literary figure Isabel Ferrin Aguirre, we have come up with this work.

Phillippa has already addressed the process of selection in her own preface. What I wish to clarify here is that although the three of us collectively established the principles and parameters of selection, the final say in matters of editorial strategy was primarily in the hands of the two of them, especially Phillippa. I was proud to have been included in their deliberations. The accumulation of source material and selection of the poets and poems was also carried about by the two of them together. Whenever I would read the poems they would send, with their different languages and orientations, as well as the superb analyses they included with the poems, so many works and analyses, I would have a sense of fear: the vast subject matter confronted in African poetry, the profound meaning, the direct expression and the special admonition, would make me physically quiver as the poems shattered my expectations. In my previous involvement in various literary events in Europe I had come across some African poets who gave me the impression their works were adorned for momentary shock value. But this time, I was enveloped by an unsettling system of thought. It truly sank in to me that Africa is a part of the contemporary

world with its imperiled environment, enigmatic relations, and its frayed psychology. No matter how innocent or unaffected, Africa is no exception to this. From the point of view of poetry per se, these works from an utterly different literary tradition are deeply inspiring. Not only does the subject matter strike a chord and the sentiments expressed in them are clearly apprehended; beyond the basic forms that poets from around the world share, they present all sorts of unique stylistic flourishes. One example is the construction of performative and ballad techniques as a powerful and direct way of opening the door.

I was able to secure poets with strong foreign language and poetic skills who happened to be available to do the translations. As the first reader, I believe they've done quite a handsome job, especially when it comes to the quality of their use of the Chinese language in conveying the meaning of the original and their ability to maintain a poetic character. Every poet has his or her own method of assessing poetry as it makes its debut in another language. With the results here in full view, the reader can get a taste of how different ways of achieving beauty vie with each other. Certain poems have different translations, and they are published here together.

The energetic support of the Jiang Nan Art and Design Foundation, which has been engaged in exploring how the interaction between the Neo-Confucianism, traditional arts and village society can be conceived for the contemporary world, and the Moonchu Foundation, have been a prerequisite for the success of this complex project. And for that I would like to express sincere gratitude. Finally, we would like to thank the insight and collegiality of World Affairs Press.

Xiao Kaiyu, Berlin, 26 June 2010

## 序二

艺术家胡项城先生对语言艺术作品也抱有深衷，他早年在非洲呆过一段，至今心驰神往，遂嘱托我来组织编译一本非洲诗选。我找到做国际文学活动的德国人伊莎贝尔(Isabel Ferrin Aguirre)，伊莎贝尔建议由南非诗人菲丽帕(Phillippa Yaa de Villiers)和我一道做编辑工作。

关于编选过程，菲丽帕已在她的序言里介绍过了。我要说明的是，编选的原则和范围虽由我们三人共同商定，最终成为编辑策略的建议则主要是她们二位尤其是菲丽帕贡献的。我为参与了讨论而感到骄傲。搜集资料、选择诗人和诗作的工作，也由菲丽帕和伊莎贝尔两位联合完成。每当读到她们传来的大量的不同语种和取向的诗歌作品以及她们所做的精湛评议，都让我震撼不已：非洲诗歌的广阔面对、幽深触及、直接表达和特别忠告，带着生理性的震颤，颠覆了我的期待。原先在欧洲种种文学活动中我结识过一些非洲诗人，他们像山间的点缀引起片刻诧异，而这次，我被一种不安的哲学覆盖了。我真实地体会到，非洲是我们这个环境告急、关系叵测和心理撕扯的当代世界的一部分，哪怕更多保有了天真但不是什么例外。从诗歌自身的角度讲，这些出自迥异的文化传统的作品令人振奋，它们不但内容结实，情感具有明晰的辨识度，而且在世界所有地区的诗人所共享的一些基本形式的基础上，奉献了多种特殊的形式因素，比如，塑造表演和说唱风格的强劲直贯的排闼法。

我邀请到诗艺和外文俱佳碰巧也抽得出空的几位诗人来做翻译，作为第一读者，我感觉他们翻得相当精彩，特别是在达意的时候保持住了汉语的质感和诗歌的性格。每

位诗人对诗歌在另一门语言中登场的方式有自己的设计，这里把结果展示出来，读者可以看到不同的出彩法如何地斗艳。所以，个别诗作有了不同的翻译，这里一并发表。

致力于探索理学、传统工艺与乡镇社会形态如何在当代性的生活构想中交互发生作用的江南工艺社 (Jiang Nan Art and Design foundation) 和梦周文教基金会 (Moonchu foundation) 的鼎力支持，是完成这项复杂的工程的前提，在此诚挚地致谢。最后，感谢世界知识出版社的慧眼相识。

萧开愚

2010年6月26日于柏林



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We would like to thank Monica Rorvik of Poetry Africa for her assistance in contacting poets, as well as Irene Staunton of Zimbabwe Poetry International. Internet sites such as <http://www.african-writing.com/nine/> and Poetry International [www.poetry-international.org](http://www.poetry-international.org), as well as [www.lyrikline.org](http://www.lyrikline.org) and <http://famous-poetsandpoems.com/> also gave us access to some of our poets. We also read several anthologies in order to deepen our understanding of African Poetry, and if you are interested in learning more, we recommend the following titles:

- ❖ You Better Believe It (Penguin, 1973) ed. Paul Breman
- ❖ The Penguin Book of Modern African Poetry (Penguin 1998) edited by Gerald Moore and Ulli Beier
- ❖ Daughters of Africa (Jonathan Cape 1981) edited by Margaret Busby
- ❖ The Rattle Bag (Faber and Faber 1982) edited by Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney
- ❖ The Heinemann Book of African Poetry in English (Heinemann, 1990) edited by Adewale Maja-Pearce
- ❖ Women writing Africa: this massive 4-volume set of writing is a project of the Feminist Press at City University of New York (2007)
- ❖ A Rain of Words. A bilingual Anthology of Women's Poetry in Francophone Africa (Virginia Press, 2009) edited by Irène Assiba d'Almeida
- ❖ Antilopenmond. Liebesgedichte aus Afrika (Peter