

## THE POETRY OF SEDAR-SENGHOR

Léopold Sedar-Senghor: born 1906 in Joal-la-Portugaise, Senegal. Studied in Dakar and Paris. Was Professor of Greek and Latin at Tours. Since 1944, Professor at the École Nationale de la France d'Outre Mer. Since 1945, Deputy of Senegal to the French National Assembly. Has published four volumes of poetry and many articles.

### *Black Woman*

Nude woman, black woman  
Your colour is life, your form is beauty.  
I grew up in your shadow, the sweetness of your hands bandaged  
my eyes.  
And now, in the heart of summer and noon, I find you again,  
promised land from the height of a burnt hill  
And your beauty strikes my heart like the lightening of an eagle.

Nude woman, black woman  
Ripe fruit of solid flesh, dark ecstasy of dark wine, mouth making  
my mouth lyrical.  
Savannah of clear horizons, savannah trembling in the caresses  
of the Eastwind  
Sculptured tom-tom, tense tom-tom, rumbling under the fingers  
of the conquerors  
And your grave contralto is the song of the beloved.

Nude woman, dark woman  
Oil unrippled by the wind, calm oil upon the flanks of athletes,  
upon the flanks of the Mali princes,  
Gazelle with celestial ankles, the pearls are my stars on the night  
of your skin,  
Delighted games of the mind, red-gold reflections upon your  
flaming skin.  
In the shadow of your hair my anguish flees near the suns of  
your eyes.

Nude woman, black woman  
I sing your passing beauty, I fix your form in eternity  
Before a jealous destiny transforms you to ashes to nourish the  
roots of life.

*We delighted, my friend  
(for khalam\*)*

We delighted, my friend, in an African presence:  
Furniture from Guinea and the Congo, heavy and polished, dark  
and light.  
Primitive and pure masks on distant walls yet so near.  
Tabourets of honor for the hereditary hosts, the princes from  
the High-country.  
Wild and proud perfumes from the thick tresses of silence,  
Cushions of shadow and leisure like quiet wells running.  
Eternal words and the distant alternating chant as in the loin-  
clothes from the Sudan.  
But then the friendly light of your blue kindness will soften the  
obsession of this presence in  
Black, white and red, O red like the soil of Africa.

LÉOPOLD SEDAR-SENGHOR

\* a guitar with 3 strings

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