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Bending the Bow: An Anthology of African Love Poetry

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From the ancient Egyptian inventors of the love lyric to contemporary poets, *Bending the Bow: An Anthology of African Love Poetry* gathers together both written and sung love poetry from Africa.

This anthology is a work of literary archaeology that lays bare a genre of African poetry that has been overshadowed by political poetry. Frank Chipasula has assembled a historically and geographically comprehensive wealth of African love poetry that spans more than three thousand years. By collecting a continent's celebrations and explorations of the nature of love, he expands African literature into the sublime territory of the heart.

Bending the Bow traces the development of African love poetry from antiquity to modernity while establishing a cross-millennial dialogue. The anonymously written love poems from Pharaonic Egypt that open the anthology both predate Biblical love poetry and reveal the longevity of written love poetry in Africa. The middle section is devoted to sung love poetry from all regions of the continent. These great works serve as the foundation for modern poetry and testify to love poetry's omnipresence in Africa. The final section, showcasing forty-eight modern African poets, celebrates the genre's continuing vitality. Among those represented are Muyaka bin Hajji and Shaaban Robert, two major Swahili poets; Gabriel Okara, the innovative though underrated Nigerian poet; Léopold Sédar Senghor, the first president of Senegal and a founder of the Negritude Movement in francophone African literature; Rashidah Ismaili from Benin; Flavien Ranaivo from Madagascar; and Gabeba Baderoon from South Africa.

Ranging from the subtly suggestive to the openly erotic, this collection highlights love's endurance in a world too often riven by contention. *Bending the Bow* bears testimony to poetry's role as conciliator while opening up a new area of study for scholars and students.

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