



## AWE (A Woman's Experience)

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### Black Woman

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# Black Woman

Noémia de Sousa (1926–2002), Mozambique

Strangers with their eyes filled with other worlds  
have sought to sing your charms  
or them only of deep mysteries,  
of ecstasies and witchcraft . . .  
Your profound charms of Africa.

But they couldn't  
In their formal and ornamented songs,  
devoid of emotion and sincerity,  
you remained distant, unattainable,  
virgin to more penetrating contacts.  
And they masqueraded you as a sphinx of ebony, a sensual lover,  
Etruscan vase, tropical exoticism,  
delirium, attraction, cruelty,  
animalism, magic . . .  
and we don't know how many other florid and empty words.

In their formal, ornamented songs  
you were everything, black woman . . .  
except yourself.

And thank goodness.  
Thank goodness they left it to us,  
of the same blood, same nerves, flesh, soul,  
suffering,  
the unique and heartfelt glory to sing your praises  
with truthful and radical emotion,  
the thrilling glory to sing your praises, all kneaded,  
molded, poured out in these immense and luminous syllables: MOTHER.

*Originally published in Poets of Mozambique (2006); translated  
from Portuguese into English by Frederick G. Williams*

“Black Woman” by Noémia de Sousa in *Poets of Mozambique: A Bilingual Selection*, Provo, Maputo, and Lisbon: BYU Studies, Eduardo Mondlane University, and Camões Institute, 2006, 173.