



The Chameleon Couch: Poems

Yusef Komunyakaa

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A *Boston Globe* Best Poetry Book of 2011

A new and intimate collection from one of America's most important poets

The latest collection from one of our preeminent poets, *The Chameleon Couch* is also one of Yusef Komunyakaa's most personal to date. As in his breakthrough work, *Copacetic*, Komunyakaa writes again of music as muse—from a blues club in the East Village to the shakuhachi of Basho. Beginning with "Canticle," this varied new collection often returns to the idea of poem as hymn, ethereal and haunting, as Komunyakaa reveals glimpses of memory, myth, and violence. With contemplations that spring up along walks or memories conjured by the rhythms of New York, Komunyakaa pays tribute more than ever before to those who came before him.

The book moves seamlessly across cultural and historical boundaries, evoking Komunyakaa's capacity for cultural excavation, through artifact and place. *The Chameleon Couch* begins in and never fully leaves the present—an urban modernity framed, brilliantly, in pastoral-minded verse. The poems seek the cracks beneath the landscape, whether New York or Ghana or Poland, finding in each elements of wisdom or unexpected beauty. The collection is sensually, beautifully relaxed in rhetoric; in poems like "Cape Coast Castle," Komunyakaa reminds us of his gift for combining the personal with the universal, one moment addressing a lover, the next moving the focus outward, until both poet and reader are implicated in the book's startling world.

The Chameleon Couch is a finalist for the 2011 National Book Award for Poetry.

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