

ISSUE 1

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# CÓN-SCIÒ

POETRY | PROSE | ART | PHOTOGRAPHY

AT THE  
FOREFRONT OF MY  
INTENTIONS AS A  
WRITER IS A NEED  
TO ENTERTAIN.

— OTHUKE

## LIFE IN MY CITY

KATE MEYER-CURREY / JAMIU AHMED / S. SU'EDDIE VERSHIMA AGEMA / TAIWO HASSAN  
ODEMAKIN / OLAJUWON JOSEPH OLUMIDE / NKET GODWIN / CHISOM CHARLES NNANNA /  
BRIGITTE POIRSON / KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON / HAJANI HIBARD / ENIOLA OGUNLEYE /  
JAACHI ANYATONWU / NWABUISI KENNETH N. / EUGENE YAKUBU / ADEDAYO A. AGARAU



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# INTRODUCTION

The rats in Puchong are fat, fatter than the ones I saw in Lagos during my first visit. My fears about Malaysia being an Islamic country dissolved in less than a week. I cannot remember seeing the minaret of a Mosque or hear the call to prayer once in my two years stay. But I can't forget the little red shrines and the "sacrifice" bowl filled with fruits—where Lagos gods dey chop better egg and oil for crossroads! My short time in Oraifite in Anambra was a huge contrast to that of Ede, Osun state—in Ede, my Landlord's Mosque's loudspeaker screams into my room window. I still have poems in me about both villages and the serenity, the closeness to nature.

Travel is a form of education that brings man to appreciate the nuances of cultural and geographical differences. Literature is one vehicle that takes us to places we have not physically been. The places we've been are memory markers—they trigger nostalgic feelings.

In this issue, the contributors took us by the hand into streets and alleys and events that set their cities apart. From Brighton to Soka, Florence to Lagos, Paris to Abeokuta...this beautiful issue promises you great sounds, sights and scents.

**Jide Badmus**  
*Poetry Editor*

# EDITORIAL TEAM



- JIDE BADMUS (*Poetry Editor*) is Jide Badmus is an engineer, a poet inspired by beauty and destruction; he believes that things in ruins were once beautiful. Jide is the author of *There is a Storm in my Head*; *Scripture*; *Paper Planes in the Rain* (co-author)) and *Paradox of Little Fires*. Badmus has curated and edited several anthologies. He is the founder of INKspiredNG, a literary platform, poetry editor for Con-scio Magazine, and sits on the board of advisors for Libretto Magazine. He writes from Lagos, Nigeria.



- DAVID ISHAYA OSU (*Photography & Art Editor*) is the author of *'When I'm Eighteen'*, a poet memoirist and street photographer. His work has appeared in *Magma Poetry*, *Poetry Wales*, *The Griffith Review*, *The Oxford Review of Books*, among numerous others.



- EHI-KOWOCHIO OGWIII (*Features Editor*) is a writer who examines womenfolk issues, mental health, and environmental realities. Her works have appeared on several literary platforms and she has won accolades for her writing.



- EUGENE YAKUBU (*Fiction Editor*) is a seasoned book critic, reviewer and storyteller. He loves art and nature and spends his time reading beautiful novels and writing stories.



- KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON (*Editor-in-Chief*) is an award-winning writer, communications professional, publisher and entrepreneur. Kukogho has authored four books including *'Devil's Pawn'*, winner of the Dusty Manuscript Prize 2018.





IN THE  
SPOTLIGHT:

OTHUKE  
OMINIABOHS



I WRITE, FIRST, TO ENTERTAIN, AND  
IN THE SAME VEIN, TO QUESTION OR  
ADDRESS WHATEVER PRESSING  
CONCERNS THERE MAY BE...

*Interview by Ehi-kowochio Ogwiji*

Othuke Ominiabohs is a Nigerian novelist, poet and dramatist. A graduate of Computer Science from the University of Benin, Nigeria, his writings are influenced by experiences from the land of his birth. His published books include *Chapters*, a collection of poetry; *Odufa*, a play that was shortlisted for the 2014 Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature; *Odufa: A Lover's Tale*, his first novel, which was shortlisted for both the 2016 Association of Nigerian Author's Prize for Prose Fiction and the 2016 Grand Prix of Literary Associations in Cameroun; the acclaimed novel, *A Conspiracy of Ravens*; and his third and latest novel, *Aviara: Who Will Remember You*. He is also the Executive Director of the Nigerian publishing firm, Masobe Books.





## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: OTHUKE OMINIABOHS

**OGWILL:** You come across as an eclectic writer in terms of preferred themes and genres. Though you do not yet have a full-length poetry collection, you authored a highly successful play, *Odufa*, and three successful prose works. Thematically, you have explored diverse themes of family, love, friendship, patriotism, militancy, corruption, betrayal, science, spirituality/metaphysical, fate, etc. All of these point to a rich mind. How did you evolve into this writer who writes across genres and themes? Which came to you first?

**OTHUKE:** I actually have a published collection of poetry titled *CHAPTERS*. For me, writing started with poetry. There was a time in my life where everything around me seemed to be unfolding or happening in stanzas. Poetry consumed me completely and I churned out poem after poem. I currently have 3 poetry anthologies that contain a total of about 400 poems. Maybe someday, I'd get to publish them and share this side of me with the world. Prose came next and Drama happened as a result of my desire to explore other forms of literary expression. Currently, I enjoy prose the most because it gives me a lot of room to express my ideas better, even though you can still find my poetry in every sentence I write.

**OGWILL:** What led you to the crime fiction/thriller genre? It is common knowledge that this is not a genre many Nigerian writers currently write but you showed mastery of this genre in *A Conspiracy of Ravens*, and *Aviara* to some extent. What were your influences – any Nigerian writer/books among them?

**OTHUKE:** Writing for me has always been about three things: entertainment, the burning desire to express a profound thought, and a need to seek answers to one or more of the many questions that I have struggled to comprehend, like questions about life, death, fate and ancestry. And these ideas screaming to be let out, do not come in labelled boxes. They come simply as they are – stories ready to be told.



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: OTHUKE OMINIABOHS

So when I wrote *A CONSPIRACY OF RAVENS*, I simply told a story I had always wanted to share, and didn't care much if it was crime fiction, thriller or Literary fiction. The story decides its form, as can also be seen in the trajectory of *AVIARA*, my latest novel. And my greatest influence, outside the James Hadley Chase, Robert Ludlum and Sydney Sheldon books I binged on as a teenager, is my environment. If you live in Lagos for instance, writing 'thrillers' will almost come second nature to you, because an average Lagosian's day in itself is a thriller.

**OGWILL:** Your highly acclaimed novel *A Conspiracy of Ravens* mainly explores Nigeria's tricky socio-political landscape and the resource control agitations in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Being a Niger Deltan yourself, how personal are these themes to you? Did the novel achieve what hoped to achieve, especially given the fact that the situation in the region remains largely the same?

**OTHUKE:** I grew up in the heart of the Niger Delta. I have lived through terrible roads, lack of infrastructure, insecurity and all the ills that could possibly bedevil a people. In fact, my community, a beautiful town called Aviara in Isoko South LGA, hasn't had electricity in almost 15 years. So yes, the themes captured in my book are quite close to home. As a writer, I owe it to the past and the future to document this time period in the history of our people. I also owe it to the present to shine the light on our circumstances. My tools however, are pen and paper. Is it not said of the former to be mightier than the sword?

**OGWILL:** In its review of your most recent novel 'Aviara: Who Will Remember You?' the Daily Trust newspaper described your novel as a "metaphor for a nation in need of a saviour". Was the book's original purpose: to protest the ills in our nation? Or is this a label you would wash your hands away from like Pilate at Jesus's trial?



**OTHUKE:** Aren't all our books metaphors for a nation in need of a saviour? Our stories are simply a reflection of the times.

**OGWILL:** This brings us to the question of art for art's sake or art for social good? Looking at the themes of both *A Conspiracy of Ravens* and *Aviara*, One may be tempted to assume you write with social good at the forefront of your intentions. Where do you stand on this?

**OTHUKE:** At the forefront of my intentions is a need to entertain. Of course to whom much is given, much is expected in return. This means I do not write in a vacuum, or rather I do not 'entertain' in a vacuum. There is so much to be said, so many questions to be asked, ills to be addressed . . . so much that even a thousand books will still not be enough to cover it all. So I write, first to entertain, and in the same vein, to question/address whatever pressing concerns there may be. You know how, when we were younger, our mothers would wrap a tablet of Panadol in a mound of eba so we could swallow without tasting the bitterness of the drug? That's what a good writer does with their stories.

**OGWILL:** There is a never-dying 'self-publishing vs traditional publishing' debate: some argue that self-published books are inferior to traditionally published books. This perspective is reinforced by the fact that several prizes only accept traditionally published books. On the other hand, there are many highly successful self-published books. As a publisher and author, where do you stand in this debate? Should writers consider self-publishing or keep chasing that traditional publishing deal?



## IN THE SPOTLIGHT: OTHUKE OMINIABOHS

**OTHUKE:** I think it's a good thing to get traditionally published. It will save the author money, time and other resources that the traditional publisher will incur in the writer's stead. But this does not in any way negate self-publishing as a viable option to get one's book out there. Especially in this time and age of the internet and ebooks, any writer can access millions of readers within the blink of an eye. I started out as a self-published author myself, and would totally recommend going that route in the event that you do not find a traditional publisher to take your manuscript off your hands.

**OGWILL:** Your publishing firm Masobe Books is fairly a new entrant but it is already a notable name in the industry, publishing several amazing Nigerian literature from big-name authors with high print quality. What is your motivation and, without naming figures of course, can you say you have matched the obvious literary success with financial success... or is this a long term project with future gains?

**OTHUKE:** I have a strong desire to give Nigerian readers a wide range of book options to choose from. One of the things I noticed as a writer and a reader was that the Nigerian literary space was dominated by literary fiction. I found this odd and disappointing as I hungered for other Nigerian stories: action stories, adventure stories, romance novels, Sci-fi, horror, middle-grade books... the list of possible sources of literary excitement is endless. I also realised that a lot of people didn't fancy reading because they couldn't find what they enjoyed and what was available wasn't their cup of tea. So I decided to do something about it. We've started a journey at Masobe Books, and at barely two years old, we still have a lot to learn, investments to make, so as to live up to the promise of excellence we made to our readers.

A LOT OF PEOPLE DIDN'T FANCY READING  
BECAUSE THEY COULDN'T FIND WHAT THEY  
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**OGWILL:** Distribution is one of the biggest problems of the Nigerian publishing industry. This is followed by the high cost of publishing materials and a market that is increasingly turning to digital products. How is Masobe Books tackling these problems? Do you think the print book will survive the continuous onslaught of digital (literary) products for much longer?

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**OTHUKE:** I honestly don't think the printed book is going anywhere anytime soon. Currently, statistics show that the printed book is still millions of dollars ahead of ebooks in sales. But to reach all audiences, we've collaborated with notable platforms...



**THE INTERVIEW CONTINUES ON OUR  
WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.**





# POETRY

# WHAT BRIGHTON SAYS ON A SUMMER EVE

---

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema

Brighton's summer day is a pain polluted by a million visitors, pilgrims led by the sun,  
guided by the sea spreading her soul to lovers and the lovelorn.

In the shadows, the homeless thrive, begging a penny.

I crouch in a corner, smiling at a poster proclaiming our town a rainbow.  
The rainbow – promise: a flood will never destroy the world again.

Darts of Brighton's insensitivity hits bull's eye— my chest.

In the flood of passers-by, someone stops.  
Drops me a McDonald. I open the wrap. Cheap soggy burger.

I hear harsh wails and a flap of winds. Seagulls descend from heaven. Attack me and peck  
at my meal, which I fling.

I see Brighton's pilgrims stare, smiling, as they take pictures.

I walk away, hoping to be a light. I am only a witness to the dark.  
I am dark. Dead on another night.

S. SU'EDDIE VERSHIMA AGEMA is a husband and father, an editor, scholar, publisher, cultural enthusiast and development worker. Su'eddie is the author of *Home Equals Holes: Tale of an Exile* (Winner, Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Poetry, 2014); *The Bottom of another Tale* (Shortlist, Abubakar Gimba Prize for Short Stories, 2015); *Once Upon a Village Tale* (Shortlist, Association of Nigerian Authors' Children's Literature Prize); and *Bring our casket home: Tales one shouldn't tell* (Nominee, Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Poetry 2013).



# CEMETERY

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Chisom Charles Nnanna

Here, the smell of sweat rivals oxygen  
for dominance in the air. It's

a fierce battle, and one could tell—even  
before touching the entrance—that the  
former is reaching ascendancy.

One foot through this gate and you could  
already perceive a saturation of perspiration  
in the ambiance, like the sweet scent of incense  
burning on a Catholic altar flying all over the space--  
finding its way into all the nostrils present at worship. Or

perhaps it's no sweet scent, supposing  
you're an alien to the odour of the man who,  
for a living, baths in metal-melting  
sun rays whilst shouldering and transporting  
loads the weight of a house.

Here, boys are men, and girls  
are no ladies—no—they're no less the man  
who shoulders a house for a living—frankly. And  
it's no child abuse, it's the hustle.

Here, the rain doesn't shatter the anthills—  
no—the bustling is just as steady as when  
the sun is at its peak.

**[THE POEM CONTINUES ON OUR WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)**

*CHISOM CHARLES NNANNA (runnyink) is a Southeastern Nigerian poet with works in Eboquills, Kalahari, Afro Lit Mag, Feral, and elsewhere. He is an undergrad student of Mass Communication at the University of Ilorin, Kwara state. His writings border around politics, philosophy, humanity, and resolutions amongst others. He finds fun playing football, cooking, dancing, writing and reading poetry.*

# ÈKÒ

---

Jamiu Ahmed

a city whose name is a river — journeying down  
the cheeks of a mother with sundry children.

this city is an old mermaid, yet a virgin in her prime,  
with lecherous eyes — gleaming like the blue sunbathe sea.

her pulchritude spellbound my eyes into a dazzled vision, i woke up  
in the boulevard of her portuguese lover to behold her shrouded mysteries.

in this city of crowded histories, where hurrying feet run after  
the skyline like a masquerade chasing a lunatic over a pilfered naira note.

here at the beach, prayers are freed butterflies — flying to heaven's  
verge, the fishermen are *aladuras* immolating to the imaginary fishes,  
while they watch the wave clasps restlessly.

amidst the tireless buzzing of busy bees haggling in the market,  
i saw the ghost of my dead neighbour hawking her dreams, i became  
a statue where I stood, wondering, who's the alchemist of this el-dorado?

*JAMIU AHMED is a Lagos based Nigerian writer and blogger. He has several works featured on digital literary platforms. His writings have also performed well in competitions organised by Poets in Nigeria (PIN) and Word Rhymes & Rhythm*

# THE MAGIC AROUND HERE

---

Chisom Charles Nnanna

The world around here is an  
indescribable sparkle  
of light. / It's daybreak, & I look through my window  
hanging a few heights in the sky & the little boy coming out of his  
mother's hut has a smile that halts my uncertainty—

& for a broad while I'm happy I  
awoke from a sleepless bed. / The whole day in this street  
is enveloped in  
a miracle that can't be undone. / The

seemingly unsightly road is everything at the same time:  
a football pitch,  
a dance arena,  
a carpark,  
a bathroom... yes, here juveniles without  
any automobiles drive me back  
to the innocence of yesteryears. The kind that saw a  
skirt or what's under it

& just go about the untiring business of  
nagging & clamouring for mama to undo the poverties of my belly.  
It's angelic.

At night time the street is a mixture of afro-beat  
coming from a shop that sells compact discs, the heavy  
sound of different pestles brutally beating into the mortar  
trying to turn cassava into something worthy of dinner, &  
the back-up cries of children hanging around the firewood  
kitchen impatiently waiting for the cassava transformation--  
& that of the little babe strapped on mama's back  
awaiting the same magic. / Dinner's almost ready,



# THE MAGIC AROUND HERE

---

but the cries won't stop. Fathers return  
from their workplaces &  
mothers waste no time in untying the burden

gathered around her kitchen to daddy sitting  
in the front yard—probably thinking the same  
thing I'm writing. / The children at this point are specially  
drawn to his pocket, & soon to kill their tears at  
the promise of sweets & biscuits. Mama at last is at  
peace to continue with dinner preparation.

Ten pm leaves only the disco alive.

The other sounds are now fast asleep. Now young  
adults are gathered about the biggest bulb in the area,  
talking & dancing to the rhythm of the beat from the  
film shop. / Without a clock

one could tell when the street goes to sleep.  
It sleeps after the disco finally sleeps -- when the 'film man'  
is closed for the day.

**[THE POEM CONTINUES ON OUR  
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*CHISOM CHARLES NNANNA (runnyink) is a Southeastern Nigerian poet with works in Eboquills, Kalahari, Afro Lit Mag, Feral, and elsewhere. He is an undergrad of mass communication at the University of Ilorin, Kwara state. His writings borders around politics, philosophy, humanity, and resolutions amongst others. He finds fun playing football, cooking, dancing, writing and reading poetry.*

# A PORTRAIT OF PORT HARCOURT

Nket Godwin

port Harcourt  
when i first stood on your forehead  
you became the guise of voices  
in neighbouring hut at night  
not the assonance of laughter  
that placated my nerve  
the sight of your plastered mug  
brings back my grandmother's  
blistered time-crumpled outward  
you waver along in ragamuffin  
under cosmic bridge  
limping after every shoe  
cloth dress and bags  
for a handshake of alms  
what happened to your health?  
why does your perfume nauseate me  
and your breath pierces my nose  
like a voyage in a forest of carcass?  
you are a rotten trunk  
tasselled with a glowing bark!  
your night is a moment in hell  
and your morning once upon egypt  
air-route for flying jet of delinquency  
your water produces leech  
blood usurpers on fish scale  
not fortress against baits  
where is the rainbow i often found  
in the sky of returning lips  
oh port harcourt whose pots are courts  
where meat arbitrates fingers

*NKET GODWIN is a poet, critic and essayist. His works appeared or are forthcoming in both print and online magazines and anthologies. He writes from Rivers State.*



## Adedayo Agarau

at the forest of horror we found the dried bones of people's  
children a web of forgotten  
clothes; the rustiness  
of them, brown shorts  
& baby diapers beside  
a dying woman, school uniforms & bags & plastic bottles

& sandals  
& a man whose wife does not recognize  
the frame of his body

& a girl, 14, thin with guilt  
breastfeeding a child

in another room,  
we found femurs  
the latitude of  
suffering

tendons of dreams  
roasted in calabashes,

blood in plastic containers

**[THE POEM CONTINUES ON OUR WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)**

Adedayo Adeyemi Agarau is a human nutritionist, documentary photographer, and author of two chapbooks, *For Boys Who Went* & *The Arrival of Rain*. Adedayo was shortlisted for the Babishai Niwe Poetry Prize in 2018, Runner up of the Sehvenge Poetry Prize, 2019. Adedayo is an Assistant Editor at Animal Heart Press, a Contributing Editor for Poetry at Barren Magazine and a Poetry reader at Feral. His works have appeared or are forthcoming on Mineral Lit, Glass, Jalada Africa, Linden Avenue, and elsewhere. Adedayo was said to have curated and edited the biggest poetry anthology by Nigerian poets, *Memento: An Anthology of Contemporary Nigerian Poetry*. His chapbook, *Origin of Names*, was selected by Chris Abani and Kwame Dawes for *New Generation African Poet* (African Poetry Book Fund), 2020.

# MONSIEUR PARISCOPE

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Kate Meyer

In my twenties, long before satnavs invaded the City of Light, I roamed Paris under the watchful guidance of my bachelor-companion, Monsieur Pariscope. He was a compact listings magazine, costing a few francs at the newsstand, but worth his weight in gold. He was a dapper, glossy-coated flaneur, who chaperoned me with Haussmann expertise, to the distant ends of every Metro line. We stepped out from my borrowed flat in the Marais, under the Renaissance arches of the Place des Vosges and the formalities of the Hotel de Sully, into the squalid modernities of far-flung banlieu where a cathedral lurks amongst market debris. He was cultured and eclectic in his tastes. He showed me the cluttered dreams of Redon's artistic workshop, but was not impressed by the dangling guts of the Centre Pompidou. He was tired after the long march, we took around Versailles. He coveted the tapestries and Visigothic crowns with their rough cut gems in the Musee de Cluny. He attended organ recitals in the Madeleine and took cheap seats at the Bastille opera, and even went to the cinema every day for a whole week. He made my solitary days of scholarship in the Bibliotheque Nationale bearable, helping me



# MONSIEUR PARISCOPE

---

plan our outings. He gave me a sense of confidence as I explored his city. He only spoke to me in French, so my accent improved under his tutelage so that even Parisians sometimes asked me for directions and thought I was allemande, not anglaise. He shielded me from beggars on the Metro. He glared at mecs who tried to chat me up in bistros, cafes or banged on phone-boxes as I called home in tears. He taught me how to be streetwise and give the finger to impatient drivers on the free-for-all of zebra crossings. We gazed at the Ile de la Cite from the prow-like park of the Jardin du Vert-Galant, as we ate cakes with greedy concentration. He stays with me, though our Paris is long-gone, his suit dove grey like the late-spring sky, his gold-topped cane glinting with past recall, like the roof of the Grand Palais.

KATE MEYER-CURREY was born in 1969 and moved to Devon in 1973. A varied career in frontline settings has fuelled her interest in gritty urbanism, contrasted with a rural upbringing. Her ADHD also instils a sense of 'other' in her life and writing. She currently has over forty poems in print and e-journals including *Not Very Quiet*, *Mono*, *Granfalloon* and *Poetica Review*. 'Gloves' recently made top 100 in the UK's 'PoetryforGood' competition for healthcare workers. Her first chapbook 'County Lines' (Dancing Girl Press) comes out later this year.

# IF LAGOS KNEW

## (FOR ABULATAN WURAOLA)

---

S. Su'eddie Vershima Agema

If Lagos knew, its streets sing a saner song  
In the hearts of those whose tunes an orchestra never loses beat to  
The roads wouldn't rage with the anger of hustlers in BRTs, kekes and danfos  
Swearing, sweating in hope for a slice of the Island's promise.  
It wouldn't grind all to its slow pace or halt time for folks whose foreheads  
fold into waves of worries as adrenaline increases several thoughts  
raised from internal pain as they try to escape the sun's whip  
lucky folks shielded in moving tents filled with gases that purr noiselessly  
bringing the harmattan to closed chambers on another hot noon...

If Lagos knew, even if the chaos were gathering from Ajegunle to Ikotun  
or overt poshness descending from the Island to Maryland  
there would be that pause for the wind to dance across the skies  
leaving imprints of colours and shapes in cones and candles  
for the waves to dance across the waters in claps and hurrahs  
for the beautiful tapestry seen from Third Mainland to be rearranged  
and that beauty captured by several lenses to be seen in a new light,  
the sun kissing her belly in million sparkles,  
those boats in proper formation.

If Lagos knew, it would change, if only for one moment  
to breath in deep in awe of this nativity  
Bethlehem slept but Lagos hustles on another sunny day.  
And as another placenta gets buried  
Eko's beauty is crafted in the sound of another infant cry.

*S. SU'EDDIE VERSHIMA AGEMA is a husband and father, an editor, scholar, publisher, cultural enthusiast and development worker. Su'eddie is the author of Home Equals Holes: Tale of an Exile (Winner, Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Poetry, 2014); The Bottom of another Tale (Shortlist, Abubakar Gimba Prize for Short Stories, 2015); Once Upon a Village Tale (Shortlist, Association of Nigerian Authors' Children's Literature Prize); and Bring our casket home: Tales one shouldn't tell (Nominee, Association of Nigerian Authors' Prize for Poetry 2013).*



# A BOY'S CITY

Odemakin Taiwo Hassan

Abẹ̀òkúta Ìlú Ègbá  
Ìlú Lísàbí Agbòhgbò-Àkàlà

I  
green taxis rocky views sparse roads  
a boy is a desert, yearning for rain, for home.  
my heart melts into the wheels of this bus, then my legs  
& body, teach me how to tame this pace.

Ìlú Lámọ̀dí, ojúlówó Balógun  
Ìlú orí òkè òun pètélẹ̀

II  
nothing wears cracks here except old houses and  
unbroken hearts. i taste the dust on these roads &  
a weird mix of pain and nostalgia latch on to my  
tongue. this city moulded me too, in ways too many to mention.

Ìlú Ajíbáyèdé tó fọmọ rẹ túnlẹ̀ ẹ  
Ìlú Sódẹkẹ, ọmọ Èfúwò, akọni àtàtà

III  
look at this skin, can you see the different places I house?  
Mother once told me home is where some memories  
come to roost and others find wings. journey into me,  
this body holds more than untarred roads.

Ìlú A-rò-bí-ológbò-ẹgàn, ojúlówó ọdẹ  
Ìlú àwọn àgbà-ọjẹ nínú isẹ̀ ìdájọ̀

IV  
i want to drown myself in Ebenezer Obey's songs,  
in the damp smell of rich earth after a rainfall, in

# A BOY'S CITY

the sour taste of tamarind and almonds. bring back  
those moments, times worries didn't nest on my palms.

Ìlú tẸgbàá Aké tí n sán nà ìlọsíwájú  
Ìlú tẸgbàá Òwu tí n sáré ìgbéga

V  
my mother's hands still smell like cocoa butter,  
like unbroken prayers, noisy markets, quenched qualms,  
her eyes settle on mine and once again, i'm reminded  
of this city. how in it, many of my firsts float.

Ìbí tẸgbàá Àgùrá tí n fọn rere ìdàgbàsókè  
Bẹ̀ẹ̀ ÌẸgbàá Òkè-Ònà ò yéé polongo ìtẹ̀síwájú

VI  
tell me not to see myself in this river.  
i cross the bridge at Láfenwá and my legs still wobble  
at its sight, as if to say it's a mirror and this body, a mass  
of elements, endless, thick, flowing, brown.

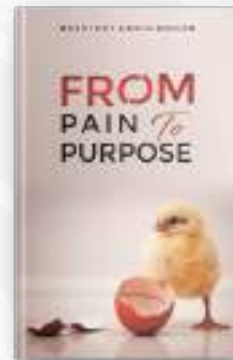
Ẹgbá Ìbarà ò sì dẹkùn aáyán ìtúnlùúṣe  
Ìlú tí gbogbo Ẹgbá tí n fífẹ̀lò  
Ìlú abẹ̀ òkúta, abẹ̀ Olúmọ̀ à-bẹ̀-ìlẹ̀rò

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# FRESCOES: FLORENCE, DECEMBER 1989

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Kate Meyer

I mount the hill of time to  
see that week's panorama  
frescoed on my memory's  
crumbling wall. Some forms  
and outlines still hold true  
to its plaster foundation,  
like far-glimpsed cities.  
Others have flaked into  
powder, but still hold the  
hues of their ground  
pigments; lapis, siena and  
umber. Altarpieces blur  
into one gilded frame,  
as weary Madonnas fold  
struggling infants into their  
stiff robes. Christ children  
frown like stern abbots,  
clutch doves that yearn  
to fly free to cavort in  
porticoed squares, as I  
longed to. I conquered  
churches, galleries and  
rusticated palaces like a  
mercenary, glutted with  
visual spoils until I was  
routed and limped back  
to my pensione, a toppling  
merchant-tower, and to  
my high-ceilinged room,  
adorned with ghostly  
paintings of lost merchant  
splendour. I looked out  
from its deep-set windows  
over a tapestry of unchanged

# FRESCOES: FLORENCE, DECEMBER 1989

Kate Meyer

streets, bridges and stalls  
that clung to the Arno like  
a braided sleeve. So those  
chaste profile-portrait  
maidens gazed over other  
vistas, with their marble brows  
and Botox faces, brocaded  
gowns spread like ruffled  
spring meadows over the chilly  
peaks of their chemised breasts,  
as if seeking glimpses of their  
condottiere lovers lost to  
war or plague, gone to join  
the dance of death grinning  
down at them from church  
walls, left frozen, unconsolated  
by trappings of perpetual  
virtue; prayer books unread;  
rosary-beads slipping through  
stiff white finger-bones. But  
on the rising ground of San  
Miniato, my pilgrimage was  
rewarded. I saw the celestial

[THE POEM CONTINUES ON OUR  
WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)

KATE MEYER-CURREY was born in 1969 and moved to Devon in 1973. A varied career in frontline settings has fuelled her interest in gritty urbanism, contrasted with a rural upbringing. Her ADHD also instils a sense of 'other' in her life and writing. She currently has over forty poems in print and e-journals including *Not Very Quiet*, *Mono*, *Granfalloon* and *Poetica Review*. 'Gloves' recently made top 100 in the UK's 'PoetryforGood' competition for healthcare workers. Her first chapbook 'County Lines' (Dancing Girl Press) comes out later this year.



# THIS CITY SHAN'T BE MY CAULDRON!

- FOR IYESI OTA. CIRCA 2017.

Olajuwon Joseph Olumide

In this cauldron of a teeming city,  
We have seen infantile masquerades  
Who ought to prance home in scholastic shoes  
Walk, barefooted, the muddy path bereft of coated tar  
(lest I forget, schools here are rest rooms for goons)  
And we've heard of men hiding in the nocturnal cloak  
Of ominous howling sounds to prey on innocent flesh  
In this cauldron, the future of young souls  
Running into manhood are mortgaged  
For futility in a bet 9ja shop  
How to be a record breaker is becoming lord of the bar  
Or a smoke master, hell boy, right from age 12  
In this cauldron, poverty litters the land  
With many a cluster of churches  
And gossips are the lyrics of the choir  
It's alien to chant a Melody of revolution  
In this cauldron, Ramadan is a period  
When motels and bars turn a grave yard  
Electricity has long been on exile here  
The dark supremacy of witches is ever  
Fighting the sick transformer!  
For the weapons of warfare  
Are not by spanners, hand gloves  
And what have you, Mr. elect-elect?  
You don't want to be next on their list  
Like a relegated craftsman on a disabled bed  
Whose house mother once pointed me

**[THE POEM CONTINUES ON OUR  
WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)**

*OLAJUWON, JOSEPH OLUMIDE, a teacher of English language, Literature & History, is an award-winning author of three books. His latest classical mystery fiction, INDISPENSABLE ALLIES is up for purchase on Amazon stores. When he is not writing, he sings soul music. He is Olajuwon Joseph Olumide on Facebook and @souljoecreatives on Instagram.*



# ART & PHOTO

# THE LADY THAT LIGHTS THE PAST AND THE PATH



DOLE | BRIGITTE POIRSON | 2021

*Please meet my native town, Dole, the former capital city of the Free County of Burgundy. A place very dear to the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick Barbarossa, who established his residence there in the XIIth century, and to his successors, in particular Charles-Quint. Along the centuries, the city was regularly destroyed by the Bourbon kings and was annexed by France. The city centre rates among the richest and most impressive in France. The Notre-Dame basilica, a young, 500-year-old lady, towers over the city. Her lofty, yet stout, white silhouette delineates the antagonistic, complex lines of force of the place, a mixture of proud endorsement of the past and resolute faith in the future. Louis Pasteur was born in her shadow and incidentally, so was I. I very much resemble my home town.*

Brigitte Poirson, a former teacher and university lecturer in languages in Franche-Comté (Fr) and England (High Wycombe, Plymouth and Exeter universities), is also a multiple award-winning writer. She has published eight books, mostly in poetry. She published two anthologies to promote budding poets, *Via Grapevine I* and *II*, in Bloemfontein, South Africa. For the past six years, with Nigerian Publisher, Words Rhymes & Rhythm, she has organized poetry contests (BPPC) leading to monthly awards and culminating with the publication of a paper anthology in December.



# GREENWAY

*The beauty of my land, Nigeria, lies at the surface of north from south to the west and east to which, mostly, its green outgrowth can never be sabotaged, neither besieged nor cast away by mere stones. If I ever lie in this line, my country's greenway would ever show you the path to the obviousness.*



**GREENWAY | AJANI HIBARD | 2021**

*HAJANI HIBARD is a youngster born in Nigeria and nurtured by Africa. He is a student of Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria. A visual artist, poet and documentarist, Hajani's works have been published in The Quills, The Fitrah Review, Feral Journal and elsewhere.*

# ABUJA NIGHT SMACKS

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ABUJA NIGHT SMACKS | KUKOGHO IRUESIRI SAMSON | 2016

*Nigerians love to snack at night and the suya sellers, who are regular and permanent fixtures in almost all communities in Nigeria, meet that need with their well-seasoned meat offerings that include beef, mutton, chicken and various innards served straight from the hot grill.*

Kukogho Iruesiri Samson is an award-winning writer, communications professional, publisher and entrepreneur. He is the Editor-in-Chief of Cộn-sciò Magazine and CEO of Authorpedia Publishers. Kukogho has authored five books including 'Devil's Pawn', winner of the Dusty Manuscript Prize 2018.



# MIDNIGHT GROOVE IN IBADAN CITY

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MIDNIGHT GROOVE IN IBADAN CITY | ENIOLA E. OGUNLEYE | 2021

*Midnight Groove in Ibadan City is a capture of the cool and upcoming night life springing up in the ancient city of brown roofs.*

ENIOLA E. OGUNLEYE is a mobile photographer, videographer and content creator from Nigeria. Eniola is currently studying philosophy at the University of Ibadan.



The background features a light blue silhouette of a city skyline at the top, with various building shapes and a tower. Below this, there are several large, stylized leaves in shades of light green and grey. The leaves have prominent veins and are arranged in a way that frames the central text.

# SHORT FICTION

# ABA IS A STORY

---

Jaachi Anyatonwu

Aba is a street in Ogbor Hill at that time of the year when heaven weeps copiously on my rooftops – at every two-pole sits a puddle, tadpoles dance offbeat to the melody of nature for the digestive delights of wandering chickens.

Aba is an aerial view of Owerri-Aba – a cluster of brown roofs spread across her plain expanse. Happy kids behind television screens staring at their faint reflections; no power.

Aba is Ohanku road, by all loved – lying stale like the carcass of an old lady begging for flowers dipped in tar, and a hand to mend the broken edges of her tombstone lest vibrant souls navigate carefree into the potholes that decorate her lane.

Aba is Ariaria – a hood lined with merchants coming and going, acclimatized to the beautiful mess of their neighbourhood, & inhaling the aroma of money exchanged for wares fashioned with crude tools by hands that were dipped in empty piggybanks before cockcrow.

Aba is a story in motion pictures,  
no commercial break,  
story-blend of neo and retro that has no end.

So, on and on it reels, the wheel of time, churning out plot twists of a beautiful mosaic of everything good, bad, ugly – Aba!

*JAACHI ANYATONWU is a poet, editor, and publisher living in the suburbs of Aba. He is passionate about discovering new voices and mentoring emerging poets. He is also a fierce advocate for the boy child and sexually molested. He is @jaachianytonwu on Facebook and Twitter and @jaachi\_anyatonwu on Instagram.*

# EDGE OF TOMORROW

---

Nwabuisi Kenneth N.

It is a sunny and bright morning, and dew drops perch on leaves. Ajao wakes up from a long slumber. Three days ago was Friday; today is Monday. Since Friday, he kept reciting word by word his admission letter into the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. So he kept thinking about tomorrow.

There are many tomorrows to come into his life. This tomorrow will wash away today's petulance. He won't want to term it what it is – petulance – No, Ajao wouldn't, till thy kingdom come. He still believes he is an adult, despite his age. Nwanyimma, his mother, still believes he is.

This idea emerged from Ajao's childhood days. The way she would clap in dusting powder to his face and body, the way she would wrap him in her arms after the double throw and catch over the air, and singing him lullabies to sleep while the moon shone. To her, he is still that tiny baby she had cuddled to sleep, the same boy she nuzzled and told bedtime stories all through his teenage years.

Ajao grew up to be a brilliant boy, the best Nwanyimma and Ondo have ever had. So since he'll be moving to the city of Nsukka, he no longer thought of many things: his mother, the bad roads in Ondo, the murky corners to traverse before he got to Ore. At Ore, the smelly armpits of women who hawked gbole, groundnut and plantain chips whooshed into his nostrils. With the smell of fossils around the vicinity; the cramped stall of women who scrambled for space around the filling station's arena, Ajao no longer thought he grew up here.

Today, Monday, he packs up his belongings and places them on top of a bench in the middle of their compound. Nwanyimma hands him a polythene bag that contains a bottle of red oil, unripe avocados, and other perishable goods.

"Foods are cheap in Nsukka, if you reach; you buy food items with this money." She tucks in a wad of naira notes into Ajao's palms. Ajao stares at the money in his hand, then he smiles and hugs Nwanyimma. Nwanyimma holds him closer to her bosom, longer. She's going to miss Ajao so much, especially in helping her harvest some cassava and plantains and taking them to the market for sale. Nwanyimma has been a struggling widow ever since the



# EDGE OF TOMORROW

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demise of her husband, Iduma. Iduma was predominantly a farmer and hunter before he went on expenditure at Iyagba Forest where he met his death.

"Call aunty Nnebu once you reach Nsukka, she will help you get the items you need," Nwanyimma instructs. Nnebu is Nwanyimma's sister who resides in Nsukka with her husband and two kids.

Ajao boards bus number 411 from Ore. He's the fifth passenger. He sits on the third seat to the window. Heads of hawkers keep poking inside the open window. The boy sitting next to him has a bad breath. Ajao thinks he hasn't brushed for over a week, his stomach rumbles, the least he can do is place his white handkerchief over his nose.

Later on, after the bus revs to life and an exhaust pipe coils transitory smoke backward, Ajao wonders if he's a transient to this place or an indigene. He ensconces himself as a transcending air swoops across his face.

Two hours later, the bus pulls up at a park in Nsukka. It's June and so it's raining. Through the windscreen, Ajao tries to make sense of figures that whirl past the screen. The door to the bus jerks open. A woman close to the opened door was shouting: Okpa di oku! People rally around her. Many wore thick sweaters and couples cling to themselves.

The rain comes in heavy torrents with splinters of thunder sounds. Ajao sits for like an hour at the park; he keeps seeing people walk past him, few throw a cursory glance his way and ask, "Idikwa oyi?" He doesn't know what Idikwa oyi means here, he keeps nodding, just as he nodded at the Okpa seller while she divided the okpa for him into sizable pieces.

**[CONTINUE THE STORY ON OUR WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.](#)**

*NWABUISI KENNETH N. is a Nigerian writer.*



# ESSAYS & REVIEWS

# IT HOLDS YOU BY THE HANDS AND LEADS YOU THROUGH THE NIGERIAN MAZE

*A Review of Michael & Faith's 'Adulthood in Nigeria'*

Eugene Yakubu

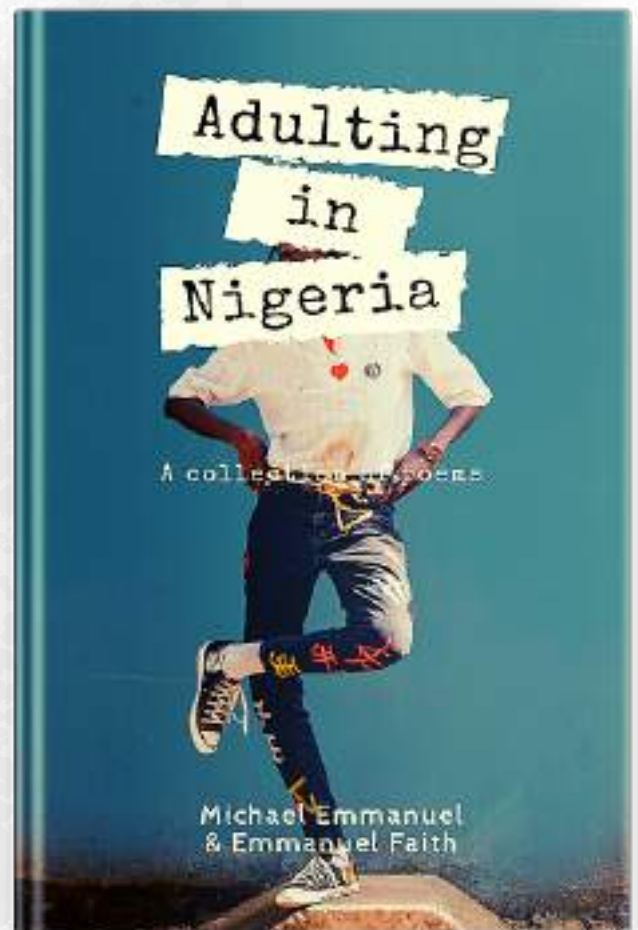
Language is one of our most powerful tools for change as humans. We have always explored and experimented with language in our philosophies, idiosyncratic leanings, and societal postures. However, beyond being a tool, language is itself an experience. In *Adulthood in Nigeria*, Emmanuel and Michael do not just use language as a transformational tool, they also give us that desirable experience of language in all its majesty—its joys, its sorrows, its wilderness, its rainforest, its obscurities, its glories, its bends, and its blends.

In this collection, two brothers stand masterfully on the podium in the colosseum of language to teach, galvanize, and jolt us to the individual and collective Nigerian reality. Emmanuel and Michael have done a truly remarkable thing. Captains of language, the cadence of the voices in this collection is both authoritative and accessible.

In *Opening Cadence*, that majestic cadence is reinforced in the line:

“We open our story with bottles of caffeine”

Here, Emmanuel x-rays a common habit among the generation-Z community in Nigeria. It is the way his lines reverberate with incisive intentionality that marks Emmanuel’s brilliance.



**FINISH THE REVIEW ON OUR WEBSITE. PLEASE CLICK HERE.**





# BOOKSHELF

# AVIARA: WHO WILL REMEMBER YOU

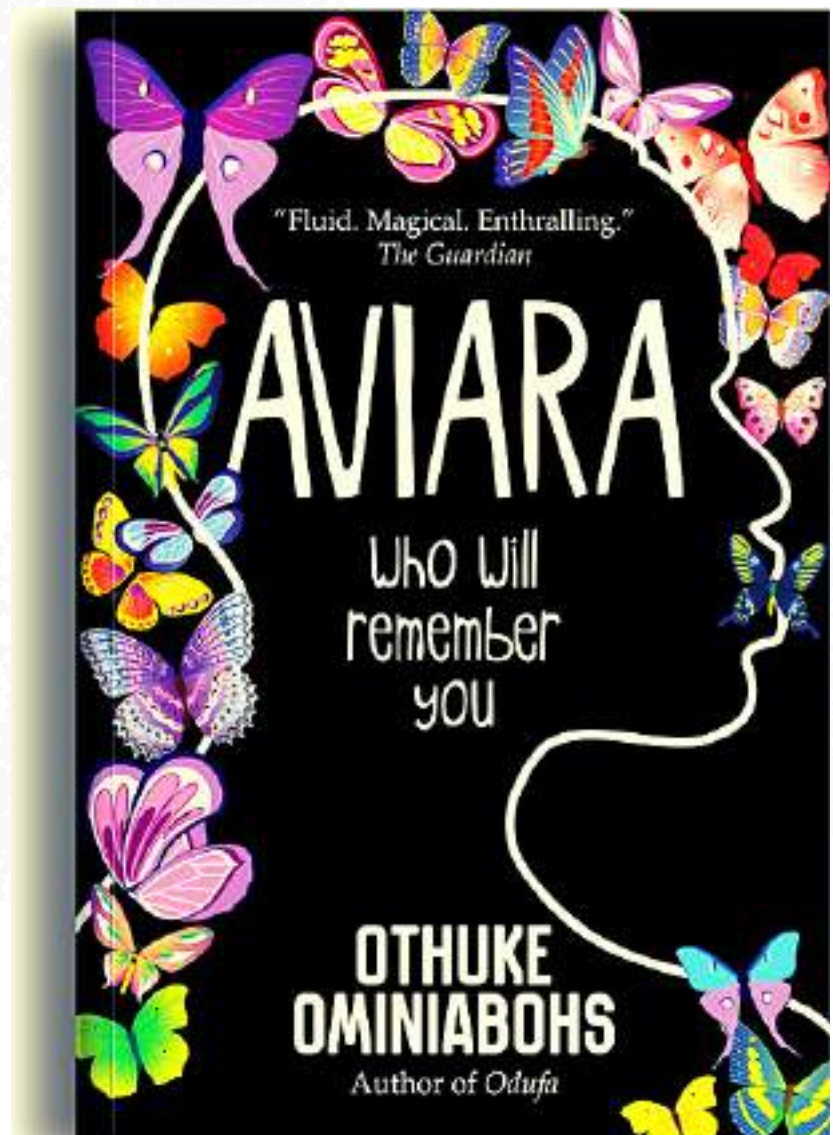
*Othuke's multi-layered tale is worth the read!*

When twenty-five-year-old Anthony Mukoro returns from the city, to his hometown Aviara, it is with news that shatters the hopes of his retired parents – he is dying. This startling revelation sends his family into a frantic search for answers. But the answers they seek will come at a cost.

To save his life, he must confront forgotten memories from a traumatic experience in his past and a darkness that swells and grows unnoticed within the town. Unknown to Anthony, this begins a journey that will lead him into a dark world of murder and a town's history steep in blood and shadows.

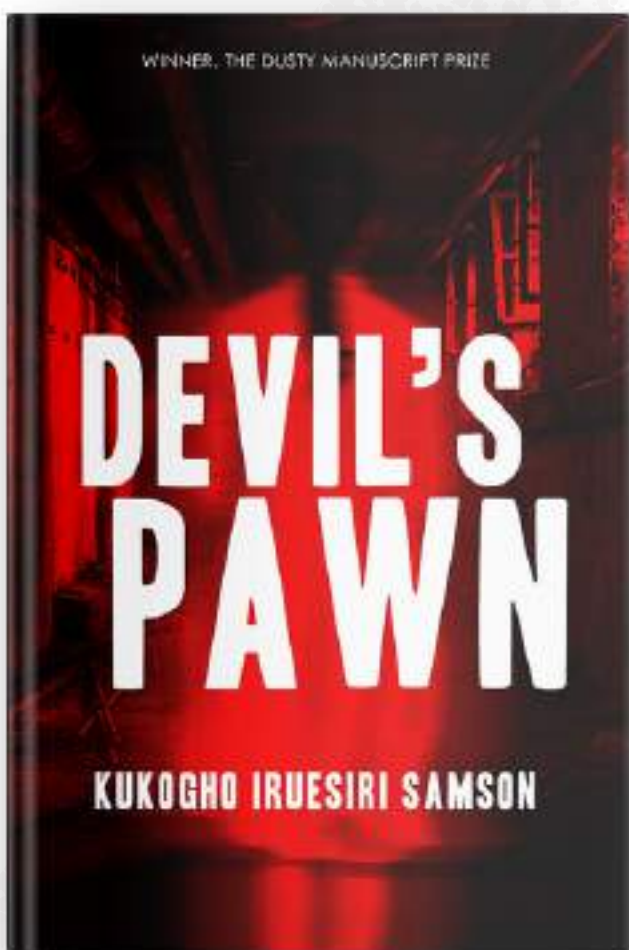
Aviara explores the complex balance between science and spirituality, fate and ancestry, within the labyrinth of one man's unravelling reality.

- **GENRE:** Fiction
- **THEMES:** Mystery, Spirituality
- **PAGES:** 324
- **PRICE:** N4,000



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# DEVIL'S PAWN, A THRILLING PAGE-TURNER



When the Black Cats join their capone to “punish” a fellow student, they have no idea the terror they are about to unleash.

When Simon, a student at Buscan University, awakens from a dream covered in blood, he has no idea he has become a puppet in the hands of a vengeful spirit.

When the police are called to investigate heinous murders on a university campus, they have no idea they are up against something more sinister than their eyes can see.

Different worlds collide in this chilling novel that blurs the lines between justice and revenge.

Devil's Pawn, the winner of the Dusty Manuscript Prize 2020 and 1st runner-up of the 2017 ANA Prize for Fiction, has been described as a "page-turner" and an "exciting thriller filled with terse suspense and unfolding curiosity".

- **GENRE:** Urban Fiction
- **THEMES:** Justice, Politics, Metaphysical, Death
- **PAGES:** 357
- **PRICE:** N3,000







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