

REVIEWS

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FILM &
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ARMCHAIR TRAVELLER

Recent literary releases to transport the heart and mind across family, relationships, love, loss and countries; no plane ticket required.

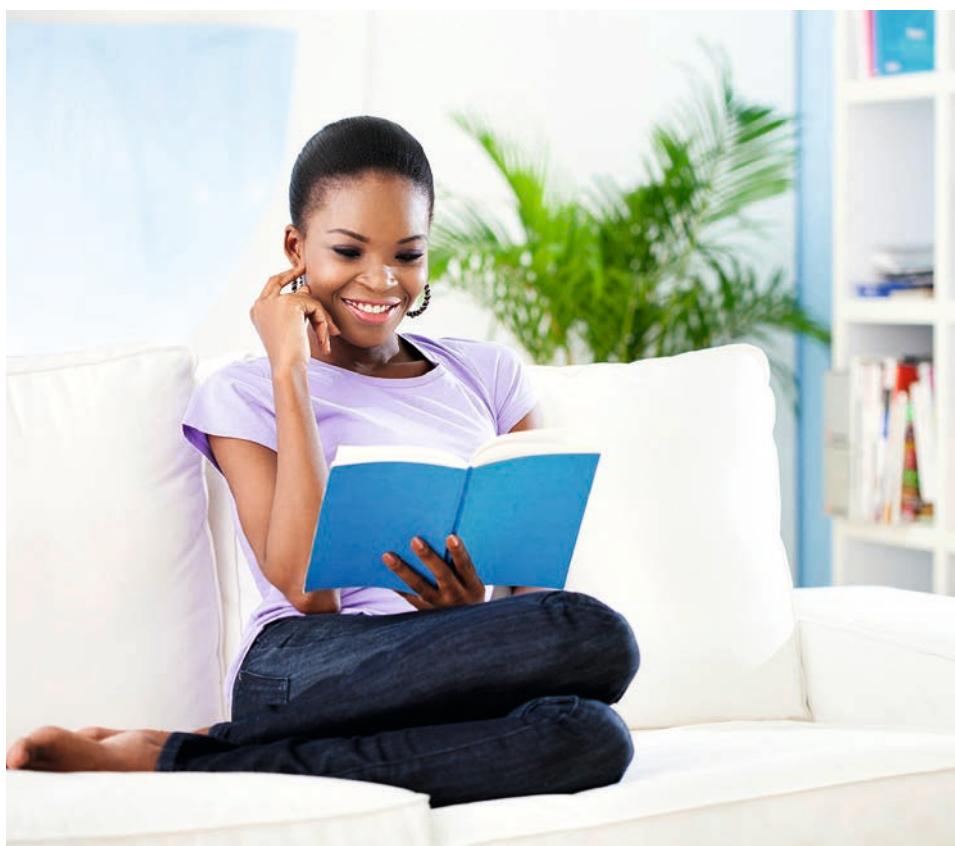
WORDS Belinda Otas

Who has the right to write about Africa and tell the continent's story for its multifaceted nature, from languages to cultures to religious beliefs? In his essay, 'Colonial Fictions: Memory and History in Yvonne Vera's Imagination.' Paul Zeleza writes, "Nowhere is the multidimensional, multifocal and multivocality of twentieth-century African literature more evident than in the postcolonial generation of writers born after 1960..." Nno Saro-Wiwa (travel

Carried Away With Books Candid, humorous and brilliant African writers take readers on journeys of a lifetime

writer and daughter of the late Nigerian human rights activist, Ken Saro-Wiwa), Nii Ayikwei Parkes (Ghanaian writer), Binyavanga Wainaina (Kenyan writer) and Helon Habila, also Nigerian, bring this point to life with their contributions to the ever-evolving narrative of the continent's literary landscape. Wainaina's essay, 'How to Write about Africa', published by Granta in 2005, famous for its satirical mockery of western representations and one-dimensional stories of and about

Africa, set the literary world alight and forced many to question why Africa was still being painted as the hopeless continent, devoid of potential and humanity but heavily indebted to the west for its provision of aid. Hence, it does not come as a surprise that all three writers, Saro-Wiwa (*Looking for Transwonderland: Travels in Nigeria*) Parkes (*The Makings of You*), Wainaina (*One Day I Will Write About This Place*) present us with stories that explore the varied narratives and nuances about their birth countries. While Habila, editor for *The Granta Book of the African Short Story*, brings together writers and stories that explore narratives of African and African Diaspora experiences from the post-colonial generation. As writers, they write knowing they have the right to do so, as aptly put by Saro-Wiwa, when I asked during her London book launch, which turned out to be an interesting session of discussion on Nigeria, if she felt she had the right to tell the story of Nigeria like she had. "I absolutely have the right and everyone has the right. I chose and I'm passionate about travel writing. I knew it was an original genre and you don't have that many Africans, writing about Africa. I'm in a really privileged position and not every Nigerian would disagree with my opinions but you know, I have a right to say what I want to say. Readers have to remember this is Nigeria through my eyes." Together, these writers bring you a sense of place and belonging through their individual and diverse experiences of home.



LOOKING FOR TRANSWONDERLAND: TRAVELS IN NIGERIA

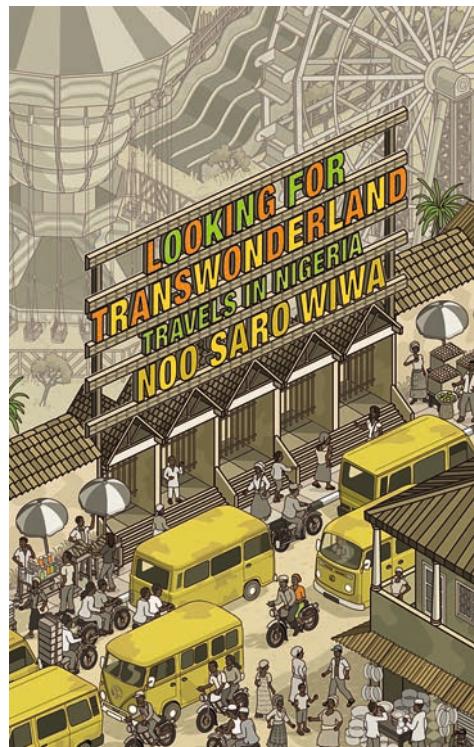
Noo Saro-Wiwa

GRANTA BOOKS



away. On her list of cities to explore were Lagos, Kano and Ibadan, among others. In Ibadan, she was gobsmacked to discover that there are Nigerians, who like dogs and hold a dog racing event, a huge contrast to the misconception that only westerners develop close relationships with their dogs. Saro-Wiwa captures the frenzy and frantic nature of Lagos, in addition to the colourful characters she meets along the way, from bus drivers and conductors to fellow passengers. She is also faced with the religiosity of Nigeria and its citizens as observed in Lagos and Kano, where the complexity of Sharia law, which serves as the rule of law but has an often curious implementation, especially when you can still pay people to look away. If Saro-Wiwa's aim was to paint a canvass of idiosyncrasies with rich layered textures of nuances about her country of birth, and its melting pot of cultures, then

"**If Lagos** were a person, she would wear a Gucci jacket and a cheap hair weave, with a mobile phone in one hand, a second set in her back pocket, and the mother of all scowls on her face..." When you think of a tourist destination, the odds are that Nigeria may well not feature at the top of your list but Noo Saro-Wiwa found herself surprised when she visited Nigeria in 2008, as a tourist, after a decade of being



she has definitely succeeded because if you are Nigerian and reading through her book, you most likely will find yourself nodding, smiling and saying to yourself, 'on point!'

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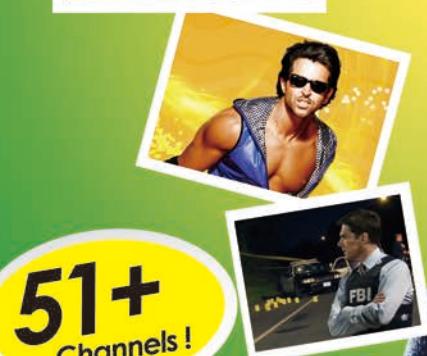
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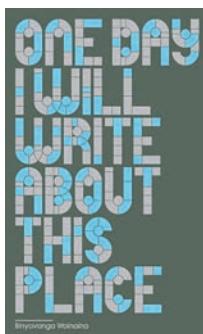
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ONE DAY I WILL WRITE ABOUT THIS PLACE

Binyavanga Wainaina

GRANTA BOOKS

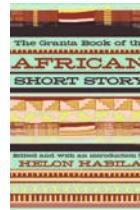
Binyavanga Wainaina takes you home to Kenya, as he relives his childhood which is as animated as it is revealing of the writer's mischievous nature. *One day I Will Write About This Place* gives Wainaina a vehicle to bring to the fore a Kenya he knows, as well as the African

countries he has been opportune to experience through his travels. Without the stereotypical clichés, Wainaina takes readers into a complex and fascinating world one would otherwise have no knowledge of, as someone who wasn't Kenyan. Through vivid descriptions, he invites us to take a birdseye view of the nation's beautiful landscape, educates about Kenya through history, enlightens the reader about the political positioning of the nation, and without flinching, unashamedly presents the high levels of tribalism that existed in his nation, from the corridors of power to family and the ordinary man on the street, revealing the undercurrent of trouble that would later blow up in the 2007 elections. A candid, honest, brilliant and humorous offering.

THE GRANTA BOOK OF THE AFRICAN SHORT STORY

Edited by Helon Habila

GRANTA BOOKS



Helon Habila successfully pulls an eclectic collection of work across generations of African writers. This accomplished collection explores the diverse narratives that African writers have to offer the world, through family, love, relationships, diaspora, poverty and inequality. From the award-winning Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (Nigeria) to Olufemi Terry (Sierra Leone) to Henrietta Rose-Innes (South Africa), the book's narratives are original, contemporaneous and reveal the incredible literary prowess of the post-colonial generation. This is a groundbreaking anthology that exemplifies the wealth of talented writers the continent has to offer the world.

THE MAKINGS OF YOU

by Nii Ayikwei Parkes

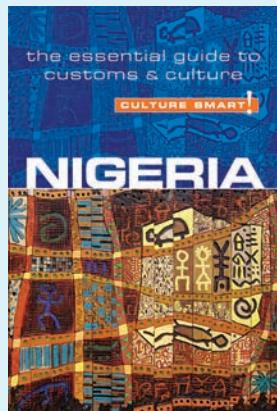
PEEPAL TREE PRESS



Nii Ayikwei Parkes is a writer, editor, performance poet and one of the most giving writers on the London African-diaspora circuit. His debut novel was lauded with critical acclaim and described as a story that accomplishes everything it set out to do. In his debut poetry collection, Parkes takes us on a journey that encompasses home and his family history which spread far to the Caribbean, London and then back to Ghana. His is a collection of stories told in lyrical prose that are imaginative and poignant. If there is one piece that captures Parkes to evoke the reader's senses, it is the poem, Pebbles 1980, which charts the course of nationhood, change and the celebration of a new life.

INSIDER INSIGHT

A newbie's guide to Nigeria



With an internal market of 150 million people and an economy growing at around 8 percent a year, it's no surprise that Africa's powerhouse is seeing a boom in foreign visitors, expatriates and returnees. It's also no surprise that the country presents somewhat of an enigma to the newcomer. Nigeria's landmass varies from sandy beaches and tropical jungles, to plains, mountains, and desert.

Its population is made up of 250 culturally distinct ethno-linguistic groups from the Hausa in the north, rooted in the Islamic city-states of the famed trans-Saharan trade routes; the Yoruba of the southwest, where ancient kingdoms nurtured some of Africa's best-known art forms; to the Igbo of the southeast, where decentralised, egalitarian communities have produced many of the country's most successful traders and businesspeople. Add to that major political and economic reforms and a few magazine articles just won't do when it comes to understanding the nation.

Written by journalist and Wings contributor Diane Lemieux, *Culture Smart! Nigeria* offers a unique, in-depth and yet concise introduction to life in the country today. "Foreign businesspeople cannot hope to be successful without understanding the ancient and complex systems of behaviour, values, and attitudes that underlie the country's vibrant social and business life," says publisher Kuperard who have produced *Culture Smart!* guides to over 10 countries in Africa, Asia and Europe. Order online at [Culturesmart.co.uk](http://culturesmart.co.uk) or download the e-book: tinyurl.com/75hug7a

THE JAM

Killer sites for good music

WORDS Tokunbo David



SOUNDCLOUD

The best direct-to-audience music site on the planet, SoundCloud allows both amateur and professional artists to constantly stream music (whether in demo or commercial format) in a fan-based environment. It's best enjoyed as an on-the-go app. Plus it's free. Soundcloud.com



TUNEIN

TUNEIN is a free service that lets you listen to music from all over the world, wherever you are. With access to a whopping 50,000 stations and growing, the opportunities to explore are endless. It also comes in app format for iPhone, iPad and Android devices. Tunein.com

TUMBLE UPON

Tumblr blogs ranging from the downright base to the brilliant

GURL GOES TO AFRICA

gurlgoestoafrika.tumblr.com

A hilarious send-up of typical 'White-person-in-Africa' voluntourism images, consisting of real photos of young European and American tourists with African villagers and accompanied by witty captions.

AWESOME PEOPLE HANGING OUT

awesomepeoplehangingouttogether.tumblr.com

A long-winded title for a blog, but the name says it all. In reality it

should read 'Awesome People You'd Never Believe Have The Slightest Acquaintance Hanging Out Together.' See stylish pictures of Jay Z with Frank Gehry or Amy Winehouse with the Olsen Twins, or David Lynch and Russell Brand (actually this one isn't weird at all)

PEREZ HAMILTON

perezhamilton.tumblr.com

Ever wondered what it would be like if Hollywood gossip blogger Perez Hilton lived and worked in the 18th century? Neither have we, but this blog imagines the hilarious trifecta of matching the man and his yellow journalism internet style with actual historical events.

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