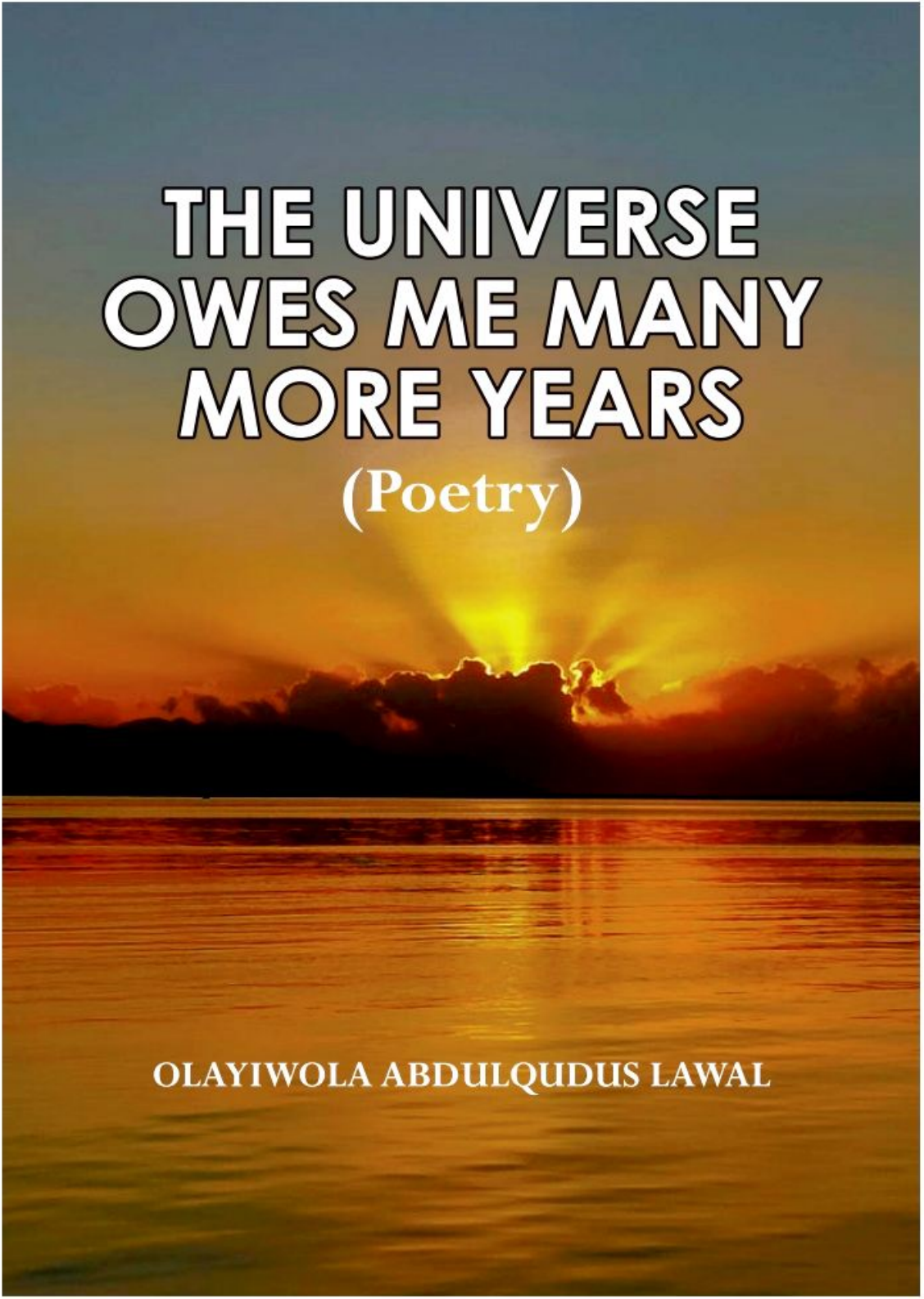


The background of the cover is a photograph of a sunset. The sun is partially obscured by dark, silhouetted clouds, creating a bright, glowing light that radiates outwards. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a pale blue at the top. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the warm colors of the sunset. The title text is centered in the upper half of the image.

THE UNIVERSE OWES ME MANY MORE YEARS

(Poetry)

OLAYIWOLA ABDULQUDUS LAWAL

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(Poetry)**

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LAZ EKWUEME:
TEASERS — Poems, Proverbs and Puns

**ACCLAIMS FOR OLAYIWOLA ABDULQUDUS
LAWAL'S THE UNIVERSE OWES ME MANY
MORE YEARS**

“Abdulqudus has again and again demonstrated that he is an all-round artist worth his craft. In this profound collection of poems that cuts across nearly all strata of human life and existence, this budding poet has made a bold statement and announced himself on the leeway of poetry. With striking metaphors, unforgettable anecdotes, rich thematic tapestry that cannot be ignored, here is a poet for today and tomorrow. The manner of his poetic craft stands him out; the poet has unmistakably addressed a myriad of multidimensional issues that affect man in his society. His poems are a screaming and vivid reflection of the social issues and challenges that stares humanity in the face. He has, through his craft, proven to be a socially conscious and responsive artist who is awake to the deep yearning aspirations as well as the lived and felt experiences of his society. Indeed, through this collection of scintillating poems, we agree without equivocation that indeed a poet is a teacher, a keen observer, a moral watchdog, a seer, a chronicler of society, among many other critical roles. His fresh insights are magisterial and very telling. This is a poet full of sparks, colours, candours and promises.”

Emmanuel Inedu, PhD.

Scholar | Poet; Cockcrow at Noon

Department of English and Literature,

Alvan Ikoku Federal University of Education, Owerri, Nigeria.

“Olayiwola is a rising poetic voice known for vivid imagery, emotional depth, and a strong sense of identity. Through themes of hope, self-worth, and social awareness, his poems inspire and empower, blending personal

insight with universal resonance. With authenticity and boldness, the poet ingeniously draws readers into a creative world that leaves an indelible imprint on the soul.”

Vincent Uche Nnamele, PhD.

*Theatre Scholar | Behavioural Therapist.
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.*

“This collection is beautifully dressed up with several major literary devices to explain daily life, and the process of obtaining results, crowning efforts, and responsibility. These figurative devices, as employed by the author, function to create a vivid image, evoke emotions, and make comparisons. More than that, they lead us on a journey of introspection, diagnosing humans' endeavours, including their plight, happiness, pains, struggles, and challenges. It is indeed an outstanding work of art that delves deep into the nature of man in the social environment, prompting us to reflect on our own lives and actions.”

Tola Onike

*Scholar | Doctoral Researcher.
Boston University, USA.*

“The Choice of words used by the writer is impressive; it proves why he refers to himself as the king of metaphor. Using earthy terms to express a sense of optimism and growth is top notch”.

Kellysam Emesowum.

*Chief Writer, Kwrite Africa. | Creator, The Fin FinSeries | Author,
Art of a Fulfilled Life.*

“I am impressed with the title and how the poet sustained it, as well as how he weaved the poetic narratives thoroughly. The poetry collection is didactic, figuratively knitted with poetic elements and follows poetic standards.”

Miracle C. Nduka.

Scholar | Historian.

University of Mississippi, USA.

“Olayiwola writes with mastery of metaphors and lyrical language as a poet asserting his voice and vision and one refusing to be bound by adversity. THE UNIVERSE OWES ME MANY MORE YEARS explores themes of identity, creativity, and resilience. It calls up the past and present of man’s realities on earth, especially of the African descent.”

Deborah Chinonyerem Uzoma.

*Scholar | Poet; **My Father’s House and Other Poems.***

Department of Humanities, Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri,

Nigeria.

Secretary, Association of Nigerian Authors, Imo State.

“A luminous voice of a generation, Olayiwola crafts verse with fire and finesse. Each page breathes truth; personal, political, and poetic in equal measure. His metaphors ripple with emotion, rich in cultural texture and soul. From tender odes to biting satire, his range is vast and his pen, fearless. These poems weep, sing, seduce, and scream, each one unforgettable. An anthem of survival and selfhood, drawn from Nigeria’s heart and history. Truly, The Universe owes him many more years, and readers, many more poems.”

Stephen Raphael Lucky.

*Literary Scholar | Wordsmith | Griot | Writer.
Department of English and Literary Studies,
University of Abuja, Nigeria.*

“The poems are a conglomerate of tapestry lip wetting lines that create a memorable essence of poetry.”

Tairu Abiodun Olukayode.

*Scholar | Writer
Department of English
Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria.*

DEDICATION

... To that very special being that crosses my heart whenever I hear, write, read or speak of the name *Abike*. It might sound funny how *perfectly* creative you've presumed me to be, but in all honesty, you've been the major source of my poetic inscriptions.

&

Ogbonna, Kelechi Stellamaris

My Academic mother who never lets my pen rest; a big
Propeller!

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Prof. Carl Levan, Prof. Ted Anyebe, Sir A.B.C Duruaku, Prof. M.B.O Ajileye, Achor Akowe, Ass. Prof. Samuel Ernest Gloria, Ass. Prof. Ruth Epochi Olise, Dr. Onaivi Lucy, Dr. Tosin Tume, Dr. Abraham Obakachi, Dr. Joseph Onojah, Emmanuel Ikpelemo, Dr. Chisimdi Ihentuge, Ass. Prof. Dr. Ola Ifatimehin, Dr. Emmanuel Inedu, Prof. Jonathan Mbachaga, Miracle C. Nduka, Dr. Bankole Wright, Dr. Tola Onike and the host of others. And my 'big brothers' in the academics who always propel me scholarly: Dr. Uchenna Vincent Nnamele, Dr. Adewunmi Stephen, Dr. Ayodeji Kunle Kayode, Babalola Olushola Hakeem, Joshua Gabriel Ojochegbe and Olanrewaju Rotimi Churchy, you all inspire me in different ways; may your values and wisdoms never depreciate. To everyone who deems it fit to lend their support in the course of making this work a reality, I appreciate you all humongously.

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Oluchi, Barr. Abdulrasheed Mubarak, Fawole Abdulrasheed, Engr. Abdulrahman Salvador, Engr. Ayandokun Jaleel, Pharm. Afolabi Idris, Oladimeji Damilola Omowunmi, Haruna Bilikisu Oyiza, Ihendi Deborah Ogechi, Opaluwa Chioma, Arinze Nancy, Iheukwumere Patricia Amarachi, Chinaza Wilson, Ibezim Chiziterem Joy, Babatunde Dorcas Adeola, Gabriel Ekun Ayomide and others whose names I can't all mention, you all know I acknowledge your diverse roles in my life sojourn; I do not take you all for granted.

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FOREWORD

The Universe Owes Me More Years is Olayiwola Lawal's first collection of poems, after his recent play, *Desperate Chase*. However, the collection is coming out with appreciable mastery of the craft of poetry, not common in first efforts. Olayiwola Lawal has registered a presence, and also created a distinct voice to articulate his perspectives on the universe, the idea of life and the notion of living. He does this through the creation of a riveting poetic-persona that holds the reader from poem to poem in a bid to harvest the beauty of the art of making sound and sense.

The collection presents over three dozen poems in seven parts. The poet sees poetry as a medium of interrogating life as it is lived around us, before us and after we might have left this shore of existence. It is a tribute to the concept of being and continuity. Poetry here gives humanity the platform to ruminate on the vicissitudes of life, and many opportunities to survive life's daily kicks. It is a medium for dreaming day and night and hallucinating without fetters even in a state of sparkling consciousness. *The Universe Owes Me More Years* is, therefore, a collection of lyrical verses that engage different subjects.

"The Plight of an African Son" reflects on the anxiety and struggles of many Africans to conquer acquired poverty and inherited lack. In spite of many resources below and on the surface of the earth, Africans still contend with daily deprivation in many quarters. The poet puts the blame for this fate at the doorstep of "Orchestrators of Peril"; African leaders who have not been able to turn into realities, the dreams of those who have gone before, many decades after the much celebrated independence. From Ivory Coast to

Kenya, from Nigeria to Liberia, from Libya to Cameroon, leadership shares a common denominator. To the poet, African politics and governance are a vast arena of elaborate deceit, double-speak and manipulation. It is a site where the youths are sidelined and the field left wide open to members of the “grey-haired generation”. Consequently, the doors of opportunities are closed to the youths in terms of employment, even though they are armed with the requisite skills and education. As stated in “Doors of Opportunities”:

We bruised our hard knuckles
Hiding our pains behind chuckles.

Nonetheless, beyond the hard knocks on the head of perceived enemies of the people, there are poems inspired by love and the act of loving. These are words in soft tones whispered under tranquil emotion in a state of stability. Love poems run across two parts in which the matter of the heart is celebrated. These include “Abike: a poetic recitation”, “Orekelewa”, “Soothe”, “Priceless Pearl of the Waters”, “Spasm of Delight”, “Love Ignites”, “Rhythm of my Heart” and “Woman of my Dreams”. Love expressed through poetry here shows the therapeutic effect of this genre of literature as Sigmund Freud eloquently testifies in his psychoanalytic theory.

Be that as it may, I find more fascinating, Olayiwola Lawal’s attempt to reflect on the art of poetry, using the mechanism of the genre. In “I am an Artist”, he states his vision and understanding of poetry thus:

I view meaning in every shadow

See poetry in peeling paints
And paint affection with every brushstroke.

The self-introduction in “My Name” speaks of the identity of the poet. In “My words are Chocolate to the Ears”, he writes:

With my poem, I make demands out of stones
I incur different perceptions and tones
I make blazing fires out of embers;
My name on people’s lips from January to December.

Generally, his images are striking while the metaphors are intriguing. He brings witticism to bear on his use of irony and parody, in a bid to secure a poetic locution that is thought-provoking and mind-relaxing. Sometimes he engages in a succinct approximation of life realities. The result is often a self-curated aphorism as demonstrated in “Day Dreamers”:

Better days do not come to daydreamers
Events do not bloom like sunflowers.

The poet also plays on metaphor in his search for the universal sense in the tradition of proverbs:

You cannot throw dust at the Sun
And fix your gaze widely at your deed
Without getting yourself blinded.
Whenever nuts clatter on a tray
Its message would echo back.

Surely, Olayiwola Lawal's *The Universe Owes Me More Years* will enrich aesthetic possibilities and thematic engagements in new Nigerian poetry, especially the ones produced so far in the twenty-first century.

Gbemisola Adeoti (PhD, Fta)

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-Fellow, Society of Nigerian Theatre Artistes.

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PREFACE

My interest in poetry was planted in 2011 after reading *Village Voices* by Niyi Osundare. The mental effect it had on me made me reminisce on the content for several years, and slowly, it piqued my interest in this field of literature. During this period, I was already used to writing prose only, and when I tried to venture into poetry, I found it a bit complex, so I literally gave up writing this genre of literature and found delight in savouring the great works of Wole Soyinka, Gbemisola Adeoti, Tanure Ojaide and Gabriel Okara, amongst others. Along the line, I studied the nitty-gritty of drama too and ventured into its writings and practice. Poetry still remained a feat I was yet to accomplish; probably because I was a science student then, or because I read less of it like I read other genres.

Fast forward to my Undergraduate days in the department of English at the University of Ibadan (Federal College of Education, Okene affiliated centre), the muse for writing poetry came, and I always pen down my thoughts. I ventured fully into poetry in my 200-level after my encounter with Dr. Caleb Momoh in late 2019, who dismantled the strong walls of poetry and made it easy for me through his teachings. Since 2020 till date, I have become a dedicated poetry writer. That same year, I crossed paths with a lady (name withheld) whom I fondly refer to as *Abike*, who today, is the major inspiration of my love poetries. In August 2022, when we finally had the chance of meeting in person, seeing how pulchritudinous she was, I was always using my poems to 'rizz' her and luckily for me, she values the poetry, which triggers me to want to write more love poems. Though it didn't accelerate

beyond that but it's quite safe to say that the genesis of my poetry writings stemmed from love and romance.

In my poetry writing journey, Abdulrasheed Mubarak, Saliu Bashirat and I, in August 2021, released our very first anthology, *Erudite Poem Collections*, under the umbrella of our Organisation, **Erudite Foundation** and dedicated it to Dr. Caleb Momoh. In August 2022, we did another anthology that captures the three genres of Literature, *Usurpation and other Literary Collections*. The literary contribution came from the Writers in the Organisation. During this period, Dr. Caleb Momoh and I pioneered a Creative Club, **Prolific Griots** in 2022 alongside Moses Joshua Olubukola, who served as my Vice president and later my successor, Stephen Raphael Lucky, Oladimeji (Aremu) Damilola Omowunmi, Isa Faruk Obadaki and the host of others. In May 2023, I co-edited and contributed to the club's maiden anthology; *Gongs of the Griots* with Caleb Momoh, PhD, et al, shortly after my graduation from the University. I've contributed to anthologies within and outside Nigeria in the following titles: *Whispers of Wisdom and the Soyinka's Spirit* (A poem of deep reflection in honour of Professor Wole Soyinka @ 90 in 2024, (later published in 2025), *Echoes from the Griots* (2025), amongst others.

The Universe Owes me many more years is my debut poetry collection after years of contributing to different poetry anthologies. Its title reflects the period I'd scheduled the book to come to life; the day I was birthed- serving as a birthday gift to me and my little accomplishments. Entailing sixty poems, its contents span across different subthemes ranging from personal reflections, to emotionally, lustfully-creative embedded poetic pieces amongst

others. But it may be important to note that despite being a Yoruba man, I'm no replica of the *Yoruba Demons* as portrayed in a subtheme. I love 'love' and don't break hearts.

Olayiwola Abdulqudus Lawal

Owerri, Nigeria

27th January, 2025.

&

Lagos, Nigeria.

22nd June, 2025.