



'BEAUTIFUL . . . HEARTFELT'
Benjamin Zephaniah

'BRAVE AND MOVING'
Observer

'STUNNING'
Bernardine Evaristo

'HEARTBREAKING'
Christie Watson

'A SINGULAR ACHIEVEMENT'
Guardian

DEREK OWUSU
THAT REMINDS ME

WINNER OF THE DESMOND ELLIOTT PRIZE 2020

THAT REMINDS ME

Derek Owusu is a writer, poet and podcaster from north London. He discovered his passion for literature at the age of twenty-three while studying exercise science at university. Unable to afford a change of degree, Derek began reading voraciously and sneaking into English Literature lectures at the University of Manchester. Derek edited and contributed to *Safe: On Black British Men Reclaiming Space. That Reminds Me*, his first solo work, won the Desmond Elliott Prize 2020.

Praise for *That Reminds Me*

‘The book is a dreamy, impressionistic offering of reassembled fragments of memories emerging through the misty beauty of a deliciously individualistic poetic sensibility with flashes of Twi and UK London ebonics to further remind us of what has been missing from British poetry . . . I can’t tell you how impressed I was and how much I enjoyed reading this stunning book.’
Bernardine Evaristo, author of *Girl, Woman, Other*

‘*That Reminds Me* is a profoundly moving book about black bodies and identity, and about God, sex, family, art, love and madness. It is somehow both tender and unflinching, and the prose has both the lyricism of verse and the direct simplicity of overheard speech. Derek Owusu has made a vital contribution to the culture, and it should be widely read.’
Sarah Perry, author of *The Essex Serpent*

‘This book is brave and moving . . . Owusu writes with an enlightening fluency.’
Observer, Poetry Book of the Month

'A fresh and powerful debut . . . within contemporary British literature it is still uncommon to find these ideas about the brittleness of identity considered from the perspective of young black male characters. It is equally rare to find these concerns handled so unflinchingly . . . When the writing operates in this highly focused mode, as Owusu engages with the concrete minutiae of lived reality, *That Reminds Me* is especially powerful . . . There is a palpable charge and welcome freshness to the voice here that is undeniable.'

Michael Donkor, *Guardian*

'When writing is this honest, it soars. I think that this is why the words in this collection fly around you and settle, as they have. What an incredible use of language and truth.'

Yrsa Daley-Ward, author of *The Terrible*

'Derek Owusu's writing is honest, moving, delicate, but tough. Once you lock on to his words, it is hard to break eye contact. A beautiful meditation on childhood, coming of age, the now, and the media. This work is heartfelt.'

Benjamin Zephaniah

'[Derek Owusu] is one of a kind. Truly a precious stone of a poet. His words evoke flawless empathy and leave me with either a strained face from smiling or a wet page from crying. I consider myself enlightened, lucky, intimidated and gripped when I read his words.'

Nels Abbey

'Heartbreaking, important and original. Derek Owusu's words are precious scars.'

Christie Watson, author of *The Language of Kindness*

'Honest, insightful, and woven together in a narrative that will undoubtedly change lives.'

DeRay Mckesson, author of *On the Other Side of Freedom*

‘There is nothing indulgent about this quietly observed account of a black man Owusu gives the name of K . . . There is a physicality to his writing, the impression of incoherent feelings being wrestled into shape, that lends his book heft.’

Metro

‘These are words that come from the heart, the lived life and owned observations. Powerful and moving. Social realism at its best.’

Alex Wheatle

‘*That Reminds Me* reads like an open wound.

The prose runs like a pulse, builds like the beat of some lowercase drum. Honest and beautiful.’

Guy Gunaratne, author of *In Our Mad and Furious City*

‘A virtuosic debut by a raw new talent. An honest and timely evaluation of a black man’s struggle to belong and later come to terms with failing mental health. Utterly convincing and deeply sad, Owusu’s storytelling will bring readers to tears.’

Irish News

‘Owusu’s work is a much-needed contribution to literature. His work is profoundly tender, often wry and always sharply observed. He grants us a rare, nuanced glimpse into the world of a vulnerable young black man, negotiating his identity in a complex and difficult world.’

Okechukwu Nzelu

‘*That Reminds Me* is extraordinary. It’s a complex, emotional story – intimately told. Every word is used to great effect, and the images Derek evokes are simply stunning. It is unique, original and so very beautiful.

I enjoyed this book very much.’

Dorothy Koomson, author of *All My Lies Are True*

'Derek Owusu's voice is originally poetical and profoundly authentic. *That Reminds Me* is an addictive and painful delight, full of familiar bruises I don't know how I got but couldn't stop pressing.'
Kobna Holdbrook-Smith

'This book was gripping and an emotional rollercoaster. One that we could not put down.'
Sunny and Shay, BBC Radio London

'It's a tough read that rewards a thousand times. I love the fragmentary form and the sense of beauty that builds together throughout. So raw, tender and transporting.'
Rhik Samadder, author of *I Never Said I Loved You*

'In weaving emotion into literary gold, truth has never been this painfully told, or this beautiful.'
Courtia Newland, author of *The Gospel According to Cane*

'A fast-paces, dense, poetic, original and bewitching story by an important new writer. *That Reminds Me* will long be remembered by readers.'
Alain Mabanckou, author of *Black Moses*

'A magnificent achievement.'
Paul Gilroy, author of *Against Race*

THAT REMINDS ME

Derek Owusu



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*For Berthy, whose friendship defies definition.
For Joel, for coming into my life
when I needed him most.
And Yomi, always for Yomi.*

'To scathe walls of white and black,
it is the crime of the tainted man'

KALEKE KOLAWOLE

AUTHOR'S NOTE

This is the story of K. If you believe your life to be as fictitious as K's, if you find yourself within the pages of this book, then you are holding the pen and not me.

