

## Narratives of Gold

*(after visiting a jeweler at Wuse Market, Abuja)*

The jewelers at Wuse Market welcome you warmly to their sheds filled with millions in assortments of gold—mostly yellow and occasionally white; silver stays away. They buy, exchange, and sell gold—their scales and calculators ready for whatever transaction sought. “Today the price of gold has gone up,” one explains, and I cherish a trader telling the truth that hurts his profit, a rare commodity in the market of fortune seekers. One of my colleagues sells a necklace for forty-two thousand naira, a gain of twenty thousand after wearing it for ten years. She was satisfied with the bargain she struck in several minutes. Another colleague wants to buy high-quality gold to treat herself after reimbursement of a long overdue payment. Of GL, the Hausa jeweler says: “It’s only coated with gold but not pure.” “What of Italian gold?” the prospective buyer asks. “That’s good but many others are better,” he says like a sage. He goes on to tell how Saudi is better than Italian, Dubai superior to Saudi, and Indian the highest priced. He talks of carats that mean much to the price placed on gold; for him 18 carats the standard in his gold-lavished shop. After toying with white gold, my celebrating colleague settles for a Dubai set of earrings and necklace to dazzle. She paid a ponderous sum, smiling to out-shine the gold. As soon as she pays, at about six, the jeweler shuts his shed, and I leave with a fresh sense of gold, not the glittering metal but a complex possession with so many long narratives.