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edited by onuora ossie enekwe

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Manuscripts should be in duplicate, typewritten, double-spaced with ample margins. A brief autobiographical note should accompany each submission. Unused manuscripts shall not be returned, unless accompanied by self-addressed, stamped envelopes.

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(Editor's note: The drawings in **Okike** No. 32 were by Chika Okeke)

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From the Editor

As announced in the February issue, the October 1996 edition will mark the Silver Jubilee of *Okike*. The theme for this issue is "**Nigerian Literature in the Last Decade (1986-1996)**". (See inside back cover for details).

Contributors are once again reminded to send biographical notes. This is very important.

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We have taken significant steps to ensure that *Okike* is available worldwide. If you have advice or suggestions as to how to facilitate this objective, please, write.

Thanks for your continuing interest in *Okike*.

ONUORA OSASI ENEKWE
Editor

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*AYO MAMUDU***Harmattan**

Bears on her billowy back
the season of harvests
mates past and future.

She stretches the tingling skin tight
to transmit impulses raining on mind,
the voice of cold-sharp vision.

Egrets return delivering parcels
to waiting souls
and children mark their white blessings on finger-nails

Cows flaunt the elegant burden
of the birds -
companions and dutiful valets

The eye puts new colours
on objects sifted through the bluish haze
which hangs down from skyrafters.

The call of the spirit
perched on the flowering branches of the soul
rebukes the year's slide

Even as on rising ashes
longings etherised rush beyond
swirls of dust storms.

Childhood Eggs

The colourful bird my childhood
re-acquaints mirthfully my afternoon
with catapults

The familiar long-forgotten tune flows
from its swollen throat into my afternoon
days parched beyond the touch of iced water;
on birdsong the years ebb;
flood-freight silting plant roots.

In the silted seabed flap-flops a fish,
disembowels herself and sets
her pouch of eggs my dreams on a rock slab

Between bird and fish, the dialogue
soon becomes warm
on questions of height and vista,
maturation and time.

I hear out
the weave and wash of their exchange,
my eyes blazing, hair smoking.

*SOLA OSOFISAN***Eternity**

He's been around for long
Forever,
He's been around forever,
Numerous footsteps invisible on windwaterwashed shores.
The creaks of his age,
The streaks of his days,
He wears no Rolex,
And because he alone dares to be timeless,
They call him Eternity

He was around when they manufactured history
And good children gathered the rumpled folds of curiosity
To spread at the knowing feet
Of yesterday's griots.
He outlives the insane songs that entomb,
The empty echo of bloodstained jackboots,
Knock-about babies,
The zombies of fear.
He seeps painstakingly through the millennia
To detonate mindless moments,
Assuring urchins hanging at the unacknowledged edges
Of courtyard celebrations
That homeless crumbs would always need a friend.
His is not the fickle affection of the bee for the pollen,
The vastness of every place is the forever of his love.
He is around in our longing for one to hold us today
As if tomorrow is just a mirage,
Around fleetingly in the alternate loins
Of couples hidden in the sweaty hasty grip
Of 'short time',
He was.

They called him Eternity.

He is .

They call him Eternity.

He was Eternity when moments had no name

And creatures had no place.

He was Eternity when Eve had no shame

And serpents hadn't lost face.

His voice is a querulous whistle

Asking 'whooooooooooooo?',

Screaming around sudden corners in high places

Whittling leaves in woody passageways.

Sometimes he makes a restless home in the armpit

Of the wind,

And because he's been around for so many forgotten

Yesterdays,

They call him Eternity.

He's awake in the sleeping night,

Smoothing wrinkles with fingers of light,

Cradling the battered faces of battered babies,

Whispering 'everything will be alright'.

He is in the drumble as angry clouds grind their teeth,

The fatal whiplash of his signature tattoos the sky.

The faraway stars are fireflies in the tangled

Macroverse of his endless hair,

The cohesive sparkle in his daylight eyes.

He watches even as darkness haltingly deserts the sky,

A broken whore dragging her bruises to bed,

And because his mind never fails

And his limbs never ail,

They call him Eternity.

