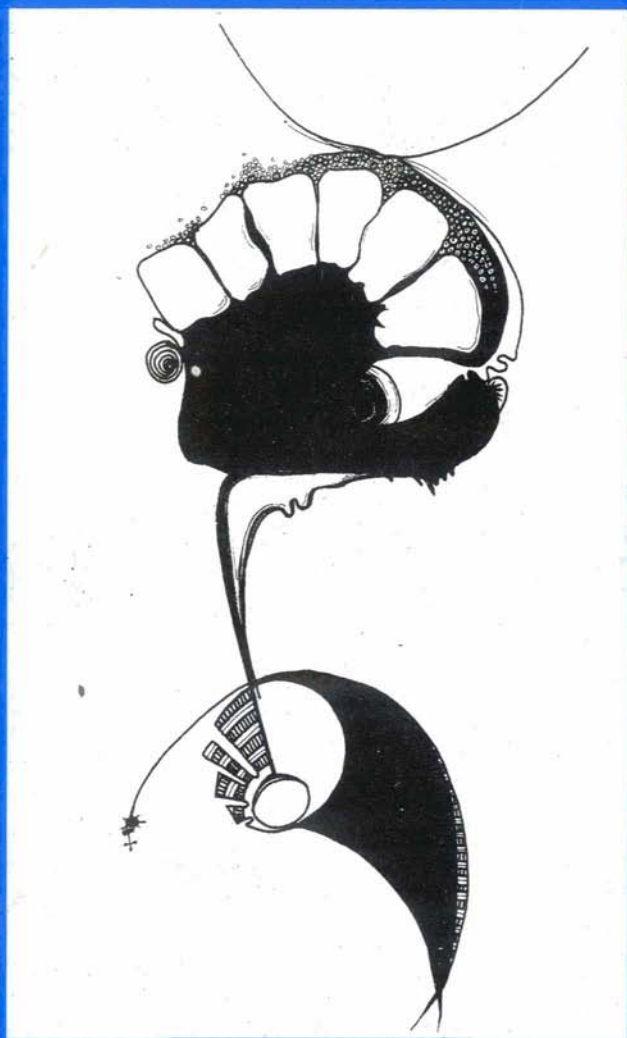




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37

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From the Editor

The contents of this issue strongly underline the literary character of *Okike*. For instance, we are featuring five short stories by up-and-coming writers, a far cry from the situation last year when we remarked the dearth of short stories, plays and reviews.

In addition, there is an increasing presence of writers from different parts of the world. We look forward to more contribution from lovers of *Okike*.

Our contributors are once again reminded to attach short biographical notes to their manuscripts.

Best wishes!

ONUORA OSSIE ENEKWE

The Lion Does Not Die

(For Samora Machel)

In her land
clouds blend
part at will.
Gentle breezes ruffle
her silvery-grey hair
upon the hills
calm as lions
limbs stretching
gazing at the world
through glass-hued dawn.

Insatiate eyes seek the virgin.
Hawks' talons scratch her land.
Hungry winds ravage her.

Gently the lion wakes
eyes, a flash of arrows
over the plains,
plants his legs
upon a path
ferries his bulk
over shrub and grass
roams the mountains
awash with light
dares intruders



step on his shadow.

The lion does not hesitate.
 He hauls himself against
 evil eyes and talons.
 He dies, a seed
 at the moment of germination

The lion does not die.



OZIOMA IZUORA

No Water! No Fuel! No Hope!

Ring! Ring!! 'That's the phone! Hello!'

'Is your mother home?'

'No Auntie, she's not.'

'And your father?' 'He's not home either!'

'Anybody I can leave a message with?'

'Only me, Auntie'.

'How old are you?'

'I'm six.'

'How can they leave you at home all by yourself?'

Where have Mummy and Daddy gone to?'

'Mummy went to look for kerosene. She says she can't afford gas anymore, even if she finds it. Daddy has gone to the 'Black Market' to look for fuel. My brother and sister went with our House-help to look for water. Nobody wants me to go with them because I'd slow them down.'

'My dear, you are bright for your age! I'm sure you can take a message. Tell Mummy Auntie phoned to ask if she has found a station that has kerosene. I have looked everywhere and I can't find. And if Daddy comes back with fuel, I am interested in the location of his 'Black-Market'. As for water, tell Mummy I've found a clean gutter. That apart from the refuse that house-helps occasionally throw into it, it doesn't seem there is anything toxic in its water; that if I'm able to keep the brats off long enough, the water settles. I'll tell her how to treat the water when I see her. She should ring me

