



OKIKE

AN AFRICAN JOURNAL OF NEW WRITING



44

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Printed By

Snaap Press Nig. Ltd., 1 Snaap Drive, Independence Layout
Box 11204, Enugu, Tel: 459902.

Manuscripts (not more than 15 quarto pages long) 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.

ISSN 0331-0566

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O K I K E

An African Journal of New Writing

Number 44

FEBRUARY, 2000

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OKIKE

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We keep open the channels of creativity.

We bring you new voices of Africa
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in poetry, fiction, drama, some criticism,
and more.

Okike has been the springboard
for new writers for more than

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One of the most difficult aspects of publishing long established journals literary or otherwise, is improving on or maintaining the standard set by its founder. While some have fallen by the wayside, others have simply retired to the attic, and yet a few have blossomed as a result of the managerial skill and intellectual savvy invested in such ventures. To this last group belongs *Okike: An African Journal of New Writing*. Established in 1974, among other things, "it discover new writers, publish them, and to set a new school of thought for the critical standards of African literature." — *The Post-Express*

GBENGA ADESANYA

African Democracy

African Democracy
Is an ABIKU.

The mother drank eyes' water
Before she stayed
The father had a sweaty bath
To tame her soul

But this familiar stranger
Is too slippery
In the hands of
Political spiritualists

The Day Shall Come...

Seemingly circumferent
Is the life of oppression
One minute a friend of misery
The other an enemy
Swinging forth and back
As a pendulum

The architects
Lineage of royal oppressors

Displaying acidic magnanimity
Gullyng the mind of ordinary gods

We dance possessively
The sermonising tunes of commandos
Whimpering with
Plastic faces of joy and satisfaction

"But hear ye this
Legions of command;
Let no man rejoice
Or be perpetually unhappy
For seasons come and go

The day shall come
For chaffs to be sifted.

'Lone Voice of the Wild'

Want to enjoy I said
Cold, green booze they piped me
Want to feel high I said
Webbed between my fingers was cannabis
Said I needed scholarly wisdom
Incantative knowledge I was fed
Letters craved I to carve
Mortals they asked me to knife

No limitation, no restriction, no constraint
They sugar-tongued me
Enslaved freeman that I am
Revelling in fettered bravado

How can I overcome
Survive
Escape
Cope...
This drunken stupour
This drugged smoke
This daylight bogy
This mortal butchery

Checkmate can I
This unintended WOLFISM
This courageous MONSTER
Fearful of unseen HUNTERS!

Mekunnu's Prayer

our officers
who live in stations
roads and barracks
hollowed be thy name
thy handcuffs strong
thy will be done in public
that the cells may be empty
give us this day
our security right
and collect no more *egunje*
that transporters
may forgive commuters too
lead us not into chaos
and deliver us
from stray bullets
for thine is the *kondo*

the gun
and the cell

for ever
and ever, AMEN!

Irony of Poverty

We can do nought
But watch
The merciless flood
Then see if redeemable
Those liberated sailing packs...

Husband
It's our child
And a pack load of naira!

I see.
Logic versus humanity
Scale of preference
Versus sacrifice...
Which one are you for
Child or money?

What value holds the money
If the child is wanting
My lord!

Stop lording me
The money first
Another child comes later
From joyful sleep.

OSITA EZELIARA**EAGLE ON IROKO: for C. A. at 70**
(To the background throbbings of the drum and flute)

I wrap this song in the silhouettes of your tales;
I sing in this twilight of songs the cadence
Of your common tones;
I sing of the sublime Eagle perched on the giant tree;
The tenor of the rendering plucked from the rhythms of *Idemili*.
I stand on the rock of our forebears
To dispense kolanut radicles to known deities;
My mug of palm-wine filled to the brim,
I pour libations to unseen spirits
Even as the living sludge to unknown destinations.

I have traversed the terrains of Nri regal slopes: Amichi To Ogidi;
Aguleri through Umuleri: feasted with Chike
At the bank of the river; and listened to monotonous cackles of
demented voices.
Has the giant tree fallen: do we live on hopes or impediments?
Why have birds of the air flown to unknown abodes?
On every tree and every clime:
See the children of iroko fingering ice
And spiders make palace of our wisdom's citadels.
Ugo beelu n'orji tell me: how do we trudge through
The fragmented terrains of the rising sun?

We had risen for a toast of your songs
But even at dawn, the songs were awry; sour to
The tongues and deadening to the nerves.

