



OKIKE

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complete them. However, I have a rough view of what I am going to call this one. It's likely to be called *Tidal Rage*.

J.O.J.N: What's it about?

Okpewho: It's a story set in Rivers State of Nigeria. I am moving away from the areas I am familiar with. But I have done some research on the setting. It's about the problem which people living in that area are encountering - the oil pollution, the curtailment of whatever gets down to that side, especially the dams that have been built in the upper reaches of the Niger and so on and so forth. People are suffering. I am trying to explore this suffering, again from a writer's angle. I am simply exploring the problems the people are living with. That's the broad concern of the work.

J.O.J.N: Were you attracted by the environment, like the streams and the rivers? I know that some writers purposely set their works in such environments.

Okpewho: No, I don't have a romantic view of settings. As a matter of fact, such things are not described at all. To some extent it's like *The Last Duty*. I don't speak at all. It is the characters who speak. It's an epistolary work - two characters are communicating with each other all the way through. So the entire story is told in letters. I don't speak at all, so I do not have any chance at all to describe scenery. I am not attracted by scenery, I am attracted by the problem, the kind of psychological and other stresses which operate here.

J.O.J.N: So, I begin to sense Alice Walker already, *The Colour Purple*, which is essentially epistolary.

Okpewho: I came to Ibadan in 1976 to teach. I have taught Creative Writing among other courses. About 1977, I started letting my students experiment with the epistolary novel. That was long before Alice Walker published *The Colour Purple*. Alice Walker is not an influence at all. I simply think that the epistolary novel is a very effective form of exploring the minds of people. It is in that sense that it is somewhat like *The Last Duty* because the characters are allowed to speak and they give us the benefit of their minds, their thinking, their views, their own descriptions of what goes on.

J.O.J.N: What of Mariama Bâ?

Okpewho: Bâ's is one long letter. Characters in her work don't exchange letters. The one letter is so long that it becomes the story itself.

J.O.J.N: Thank you.

Okpewho: You are welcome.

FRANCIS I. EDE**Lizzy**

Lizzy

In beauty and kindness lies the lure

Like a sprouted tendril after the sun

Lizzy

Sweet, enduring and captivating

Like the nectral fragrance that spellbinds
the butterfly

Lizzy

The sight of you lights

The candle of my heart

And your nearness inflames it

Lizzy

In the sanctimonious shrine of your love

I supplicate, enthralled in its reflective glow

of purity and free flow like INEWE unmindful of its course.

