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SOYINKA'S DRAMA OF ESSENCE

James Gibbs⁺

In his article entitled 'The Early Writings of Wole Soyinka', Bernth Lindfors succeeded in his task: he filled in a few of 'the large lacunae in Soyinka's literary career by examining some of his unknown writings'.¹ Lindfors carefully and sensitively pieced together Soyinka's articles and notes from national and college publications in Nigeria and Britain to convey an impression of the young artist's activities and development. But he made no mention of a conference paper which Soyinka delivered at Ibadan in 1960 entitled 'The African Approach to Drama' and which has far reaching implications for Soyinka's principal area of activity - playwrighting.²

The account Lindfors offered of Soyinka's activities during 1960, activities which included writing, acting, broadcasting and directing, and to which can be added his responsibilities as an editor of Black Orpheus, seems to leave little time for more conventional academic pursuits. Yet Soyinka was a Research Fellow and presumably both the Rockefeller Foundation which was supporting him and the University which recognized him as a member - the first Nigerian member³ of staff in the English Department - expected something 'conventionally academic'.⁴

Soyinka gave his paper at an International Symposium on 'African Culture, History, Values and Perspectives', which was held at Ibadan from December 19th to 24th. The participants 'expected' included distinguished artists, historians and Africanists - Ben Enwonwu, Ezekiel Mphahlele, Ephraim Amu, K.O. Dike, J.B. Danquah, Kofi Busia, Janheinz Jahn and M.J. Herskovitz. Mphahlele, in fact, devoted one of his papers on 'African Writing in English' to Soyinka's work and remarked that 'The Immigrant' showed his 'incisive sophistication' which was 'born no doubt of his long stay in Britain as a teacher'. Although the facts and the reasoning are wrong - Soyinka did not spend long teaching in Britain and that experience was not crucial to his development - Soyinka's paper does display a broad awareness and analytical insight which is highly sophisticated. It shows the synthesis of Yoruba and European traditions which is characteristic of Soyinka's work.

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The paper posed the question 'Is there African theatre?' And answered yes'. Using Aristotle's analysis of the development of Greek tragedy and an evolutionary reading of the growth of the Medieval religious drama as a background, Soyinka surveyed some of the literature. He probed the largely descriptive accounts of festivals which had appeared in magazines for dramatic features, and judged them by the definitions of drama implied by the Absurdist as much as those used by the Aristotelians. He distinguished two kinds of drama: that concerned with human myths and that concerned with heroes and their heroic deeds. The potential for growth was, Soyinka argued, greater where there was scope for comic interaction. He drew attention to the masks of the favourite comic types and to the characters of the favourite comic figures. He speculated about the history and the future of the drama of human myths. When he turned to the drama concerned with religion he reported that it was the awareness of the deities and the spirits, the belief 'in the spirit, in the essence of Nature' which was distinctively African. In drama this awareness of spirit might mean that the narrative content was obscured or assumed and the play reduced to 'essentials'. For example, a rhythmic evocation of the gods might represent the pertinent features of a deity's intervention and be all that was desirable. Soyinka argued that traditional religious drama achieved purity and resonance by avoiding distracting action. A 'central' action might be performed out of the audience's field of vision - but the wealth of associations of the act and implications of it meant that the air was heavy with 'atmosphere'. 'Atmosphere' which, Soyinka observed, 'we have allowed ourselves to forget in our literary and academic approach to drama', but which the Theatre of the Absurd has made central to its concept of drama. Soyinka's final example, one to which he returned in his difficult essay on a related subject, 'The Fourth Stage', was the drama of Obatala, in which, he suggested, the bare bones, or the animist essence, of the myth were presented without elaboration or explanation. The paper concluded with a quotation from Ulli Beier, the observer on whom Soyinka had drawn most frequently, that summarised the impact of 'the drama of essence':

"It is not what happens that really matters, nor is it important what is done. What is felt does matter". (Soyinka's emphasis). 5

Having given a broad outline of Soyinka's argument I now want to follow it through in greater detail, to suggest some of its written sources and indicate

some of Soyinka's variant interpretations. Then, remembering that Soyinka said that he wanted to combine stylized African drama with English dialogue drama,⁶ I will compare the approach followed in the paper with that adopted in some of Soyinka's plays. From this it will emerge that the paper was the result of reading rather than field-work and that Soyinka's contribution was in originality of insight and approach rather than extensive, mundane research. It will also be clear that the insights were similar to those implied by work which he had written in Britain before returning to Nigeria as a Rockefeller research fellow, and that they represent a fusion of European and Nigerian traditions such as informed much of his later writing.

Soyinka's search for African drama as described in the paper began with the published work of others. In the opening paragraph he wrote:

"When the questor after drama has had a surfeit of undisciplined masquerades, colourful festivals and uninhibited dances, he is left with one question: Is there African drama?"

The quest, as well as the surfeit, had been partly in the pages of Nigeria Magazine a publication which Soyinka based much of his analysis on, contributed to and drew inspiration from.⁷ In 1939 K.C. Murray enquired through the magazine for information about the plays and dramatic dances of Nigeria.⁸ Both before and after Murray's questionnaire the magazine carried articles on festivals and masquerades. These articles were on the whole descriptive and the authors were not usually interested in whether or not they had witnessed 'drama'.

Deliberately leading the reader/listener away from his conclusion Soyinka then searched for parallels between African and Greek, and African and Medieval English drama. Taking the Aristotelian evolutionary theory as if it was undisputed, Soyinka stated the 'universal fact that the primitive roots of drama must be sought in religion'. He pointed out, using 'Africa' and 'African' where it would have been more appropriate to prefer 'Yorubaland' and 'Yoruba', that 'Africa is as rich in gods as the Greeks', that the 'African' pantheon is 'an enviably elastic community' and 'the anthropomorphic origins of most of the deities deny us the excuse of fearful remoteness'. He then anticipated his final position by suggesting that the type of African drama is to be found in elaborate rituals rather than in literal dramatizations. With his own affirmative answer clearly ready, he asked:

"Could (the absence of literal dramatizations) be perhaps a refutation of the long-standing myth of the African 'naivete'? Perhaps we will end up by discovering that dramaturgically the African is an instinctively metaphorical artist, eschewing the plain historical restatement for the symbolic ritual".

He quickly qualified this suggestion by saying that it was true only of religious drama. 'Where human myths are the subject, the African has not been niggardly in lively theatrical colouration'. His first example, from the drama of expiation, falls between his two categories, the religious and the human. He wrote expiation 'is after all religious necessity' and 'an immediate human need'. With a flourish which took him beyond the limits of his research he stated:

The ritual of the expiatory dance for a slaughtered enemy, kin or beast is undoubtedly the archetypal African drama.

He speculatively traced the evolution of the dance from the mime of the hunt or 'the leap of joy and clumsy capers round the fallen animal' to the performance stage, with re-enactment and professional praise singer.

Soyinka did not cite any examples of the elaborated drama of the hunt, but turned instead to the celebration of a dead hero. He wrote:

"The funeral rites of the Vakpelis (Bakweri tribe) offer us, like the second funeral ceremonies of Ibo tribes, examples of this now highly developed drama of expiation. Only, of course, it is not performed for that purpose".

Presumably 'not, of course' because motives are so often disguised, particularly when handled by 'instinctively metaphorical artists'. In the case of the Molio dance, he said, a dead hero's battles were re-enacted with goats standing in for the enemy and the dead man's son possessed by his father's spirits.

Developing his contention that there was 'lively colouration' of human myths he described the play of Mingi Oporopo. His account was based closely on an article by Onoura Nzekwu, which had appeared in Nigeria Magazine the year before.⁹ This dramatization of an adventure myth is, even by the narrowest European definition, a 'play'. Soyinka concluded his account of the performance:

"It is obvious that in this play, the Opobo arrived at the straight performer-to-audience relationship. Conscious acting is demanded. And no one goes into a trance that

the spirit of Kaligbo (the fisherman) - or probably more excitingly that of the monster Mingi Oporopo (which he overcomes) may possess him".

He then cited a further example of the development of 'lay drama': the masquerade, the spirit of the dead man. The enlargement of the masquerade's role was, Soyinka argued, the result of the desire to 'out-Herod Herod'. He wrote:

"It is merely the creative answer to the human compulsion towards historionics, evolving in the same way as the Medieval comedies of Europe".

He referred first to the Yoruba Egungun - 'It's serious mystery has not prevented the sprouting of comic off-shoots'.¹⁰ And then to the Ekpe from the Eastern Region, particularly in the festival of Ikot Ekpene, the Okwankwo play in Ohafia and the Arugu play in Okrika.¹¹

The brief reference to the Egungun does not in any way prepare us for the extensive use of the cult which, it has been argued can be found in A Dance of the Forests and The Road.¹² In 'The African Approach to Drama' Soyinka merely referred to the strong sanctions which surround the masquerade, the fact that the body is completely covered, the disguised voice, the witty insights and the capacity for histrionics. The writing here, and the failure to comment on the origin of the disguised voice which was a debated point, suggests that Soyinka was writing directly out of his experience.

He observed a subtle and essential difference between the Egungun and the Ekpe masquerade where, because the dancer's body was partly exposed, the masks have acquired to a greater extent than in other societies, 'a direct dramatic purpose of their own'. Drawing on K.C. Murray's account of the masks at Ekot Ekpene in 1945, he listed the stock comic masks: the buffoons, the witch doctor, the quarrelling husband and wife.¹³ He added to the list the favourite characters from the Okwankwo play in Ohafia and the Arugu play in Okrika. And he has used some of them and added others in his own plays.

With a cast of comic characters already gathered, Soyinka was in a position to score some points off the Greeks:

"It is pleasantly idle to trace the introduction of these characters and their dramatic development, and compare it - shall we say - with the parsimonious invention of two extra actors from the Thespian lyric tragedy of Greece to Sophocles".

For his 'idle' speculation Soyinka selected the 'policeman' who goarded the Nnewi Masquerades and dancers. Since the policeman used humour, 'mock dignified antics', to control the crowd rather than relying on terror, Soyinka regarded the situation as ready for development. He also regarded the fact that the Nnewi masqueraders appeared in a family group as likely to stimulate their comic invention. He concluded the 'idle' speculation:

"... Comedy required detachment. This the Nnewi was fitted to possess, and he became the first comic actor of the maskers".

Soyinka's own plays often developed through comic exaggeration and a family is usually an important party of the theatrical conception.

Having established the existence of the drama of human myth in conventional, Aristotelian terms, he returned to the drama of the gods. He wrote: 'In a loudly theatrical sense, one could say that the drama of the gods has been at a standstill'. He pointed out that, unlike the story of Mingi Oporobo, the myths had not been dramatised. All that had come to light were the 'token rituals'. In preparing to relate his view of the theatre of essence to the revelations of the Absurdist, he pointed out:

"... Only a few anthropologists, and hardly any of the early missionaries, succeeded in avoiding being fooled by the luxuriance of African images - or 'idols' to use the missionary term. As Ulli Beier has forcefully pointed out, the African does not worship the clay images in the shrine. He does not offer food to the 'ibeji' carving on his doorstep. His prayers and his offering go to the deities and spirits which they represent. The African believes, in fact, in the spirit, in the essence of Nature. This revelation is to be found in religious drama".

African religious drama is, Soyinka argued, mature, free from 'the accident' of myth, sophisticated, the 'drama of essence'.

The first example and one with far reaching implications for his plays was the festival of Oshun in Oshogbo. He drew his facts about the festival from a description by Ulli Beier published three years earlier, but he manipulated the information so that it contributed to his search for African religious drama.¹⁴ Behind the festival lies the myth accounting for the founding of the town, the story involves the intervention of various gods and stipulated that each year the Ataojo should renew a covenant with the river goddess, Oshun. The myth had theatrical possibilities, but the festival did not involve impersonation or acting. The intervention of the

various gods was evoked only by rhythms associated with them being played on a drum. The actual renewal of the covenant - the dramatic core, or the scene a faire - was not actually witnessed by the 'audience'. The Ataoja made the covenant alone and out of sight of his followers. With a hint of actual experience of the festival, Soyinka described the feelings of the 'audience' while the covenant was being renewed:

"A visit to the Oshun grove soon resolves our sense of dramatic frustration. It reminds us 'at once of one element of the theatre which we have allowed ourselves to forget in our literary and academic approach to drama - atmosphere. Sweating stagehands and electrical dimmers. Atmosphere'".

It is impossible to decide whether this is the result simply of an empathetic reading of Beier or whether the excitement of a landrover trek to the grove was still tingling in his veins. But the point was made, and remade by the construction of The Road and Kongi's Harvest which sometimes seem deliberately obscure because important events are not shown on stage by the 'instinctively metaphorical artist'. Atmosphere is all important.

With a sweeping comparison he brought together the Absurdist theatre, which he said demanded 'intellectual submission', with the drama of the Oshun grove which demanded 'spiritual submission'. He argued:

"We acknowledge today the play of mood. Since Samuel Beckett and Ionesco burst on to the European stage, we have come to acknowledge the possibility of a new dimension of the stage. The play of indefinable emotions. James Joycean nightmares and Kafkaesque experiences evoked on the stage by seemingly unplotted and disjointed dialogue. To the discomfiture of the European critic and audiences, these plays demanded an intellectual submission. Creatures of the brain were thrown back on the pores of the skin. Nothing else could save them".

From this it would seem that 'intellectual submission' means that the intellect is of little or no use in unravelling what actually happens in, say Waiting for Godot, and in deciding, who and where the tramps are. Or, the intellect is lost in the world the play expresses. He continued:

"The Festival of Oshun employing a totally opposing medium is no less dramatically valid because it requires a spiritual submission. If we concede that the ceremony at Oshun was never intended for those who are not actually at the grove, or who being present, are yet outside of it all, if we admit that drama can mean the

evocation of unifying emotions where the audience not merely beholds, but partakes, then we may begin to experience the 'seesence' of the Oshun that is yearly dramatised by her followers".

'Unifying emotions' and participation can, surely, be evoked by poetry, music or rhetoric and they are not adequate indicators of drama. The direction of Soyinka's argument was clarified by the examples he gave.

He then compared the initiation rite in which a Fulani Youth was thrashed to test his courage and endurance with the 'metaphorical' rite of the Yoruba. In the following quotation, which incidentally reveals part of the background and part of the root of the syncretistic flavour of The Strong Breed, he described symbolic substitution in a cleansing ritual.

"A far, more convenient and less painful method of self-flagellation was to drag a masquerade through the streets at the end of the old season, curse it, trample it, endow it with all the evil of the old year and of the citizens. The custom has survived today and little children can be seen at Easter time dragging Judas Iscariot in the dust, and after adequate strokes, burning his effigy".

The symbolism of this action is followed by accounts of ritual wrestling (the Oloku festival), the 'house arrest' of the Oba (at Onde), the insulting of the chiefs (in the Orange festival) and the ritual wrestling and burial of the Eze Nri.¹⁵

But it was Soyinka's concluding illustration, the drama of Obatala, that went furthest towards illustrating the principles of African theatre which he proposed.

Again he relied heavily on Beier's account.

".. The myth of Obatala is full of incidents, of encounters - always to Obatala's discomfiture - with the god of mischief. In the drama, however, the tales are significant only as they illustrate the attributes of the gods".

The festival is not closely analysed, but its phases, as described by Beier, are effectively juxtaposed and hint at the coherent myth which lies behind the festival. Indeed the festival, with the addition of a myth preserved by the Yoruba of the diaspora, formed the basis of Beier 'Ijimere's play The Imprisonment of Obatala.¹⁶ Soyinka, drew attention to the symbolic elements, the costumes, the ritualistic fight, the triumphal procession, the working out of the drama in song and dance. He concluded with a quotation from Beier which I have already reproduced about the importance

of what is felt. He might equally well have concluded with slightly more elaborate account of the effect, also from Beier:

"Described in words such a festival may seem to be little more than the routine repetition of traditional ritual, but a sensitive observer able to appreciate atmosphere will be conscious of far more than that. He will come under the spell of widespread intensity of feeling that cannot fail to make him conscious of the spirit of the orisa himself". 17

The significance of Soyinka's paper does not lie in his sources. Writers and researchers have had access to the same material and have put it to different uses. Soyinka is not, like J.P. Clark and Ola Rotimi among the play wrights who have surveyed the theatrical situation, interested mainly in classification.¹⁸ He is interested in extracting an aesthetic and principles of play construction. Even here he is not particularly original, since he follows Beier closely on a number of important occasions. The significance of the essay lies in the fact that it provides a straightforward account of an analysis which has informed subsequent articles and, more important, plays, it also clarifies a little his relationship with Yoruba and European traditions.

'The Fourth Stage', one of Soyinka's subsequent accounts of traditional drama, takes the reader through the mysteries of Ogun to the origin of Yoruba tragedy.¹⁹ But the mysteries sometimes seem to be a muddle, or a maze, and it is tempting to clutch at threads which may lead to an exit or an entrance. The process of elaboration and penetration is shown in relation to the drama of Obatala. In 'The Fourth Stage', Soyinka wrote:

"... And the ritual of Obatala is a play of form, a moving celebration whose nearest equivalent in the European idiom is the Passion play. The drama is all essence - captivity, suffering and redemption; Obatala is symbolically captured, confined and ransomed. At every stage he is the embodiment of the suffering spirit of man, uncomplaining, agonized, full of the redemptive qualities of the spirit of endurance and martyrdom. The music that accompanies the rites of Obatala is all clear tone and winnowed lyric, or order and harmony, stately and saintly. Significantly the motif is white for transparency of heart and mind; there is rejection of mystery, tones of vesture and music combine to banish mystery and terror; the poetry of the song is litanic, the dramatic idiom is the procession or the ceremonial. It is a drama in which the values of conflict or of the revolutionary spirit are excluded, attesting in their place the adequacy and inevitable aftermath of harmonious resolution which belongs in time and human faith. It is antithetical to the tragic dare of Ogun".²⁰

Nine years, a novel, a book of poems, several plays, a state of emergency, a period in prison, etc. etc., lie between the 'The African Approach to Drama' and 'The Fourth Stage'; which were, in any case, presented in different contexts. But the latter account is still illuminated by the former, and the process whereby Soyinka's personal interpretation, sense of contrasts and values, are related to a traditional ritual drama is, in part, revealed. The festival has not changed, Soyinka's analysis of it has.

Throughout 'The African Approach to Drama' Soyinka regards the possibility of comic elaboration as essential for the development of drama. His earliest published stories and many of his early verses were comic or satiric, and Soyinka's sense of humour is glimpsed in all his works. 'Fantastical' elaboration is found even in The Man Died and a grim humour illuminates Madmen and Specialists. Indeed sometimes the wit is strained and apparently inappropriate. The telescopic wand in his version of The Bacchae and the jokes with the Egungun masks in Death and the King's Horseman are examples. Comedy is an essential part of Soyinka's conception of drama, more bitter in Madmen and Specialists than in The Lion and the Jewel, but still present. The comic elaboration which he looked for in the developing theatrical tradition is a starting point for his own writing.

The most significant points about African stagecraft in the essay concern the use of rhythm, the importance of atmosphere rather than explicit plot and the attitude to 'essence'. The gods who were active in the Oshun festival were evoked simply by drum rhythms. In Kongi's Harvest we find an opening mood created by drum and song, this is then contrasted with the music and poetry of Segi's Night Club and both are contrasted with the barren prose of Kongi's retreat. In the New Yam Festival itself there is a variety of cross rhythms, provided by the carpenters' Brigade and the Women's League. The play is resolved by the intermingling of rhythms and the final descent of an iron grating. It has, in fact, been built on rhythmic contrasts. Madmen and Specialists is equally clearly constructed through contrasts, in this case the fractured, abandoned word play and bitter jingles of the Medicants are set against the balanced prose and lyrical duets of the Old Women. In both plays who is actually doing what, and what is actually happening are not immediately apparent. A close reading of the text is required to discover the 'details' of the assassination plot against Kongi. And those who struggle to understand exactly what is meant by 'As', or

precisely what The Old Man has served to whom, will find themselves distracted from the 'barely definable emotions' of the play. In all Soyinka's plays since the mid-60's, with the exception of The Metamorphosis of Brother Jero, the overall organization, the balance of the parts, has been of greater significance than the plot and this is in line with his analysis of traditional religious drama. The Metamorphosis is an exception because it is related to the drama of human myths, and follows the more Aristotelian structural principles of traditional comedies like Mingi Oporobo, rather than the pattern of religious drama epitomised by the rite of Obatala.

Soyinka's is a drama of essence. The clearest example of this is to be found in the spirits sequence in A Dance of the Forests, written in England and presented in 1959 before Soyinka took up his Rockefeller scholarship or thought about a paper on 'The African Approach to Drama'.²¹ It is in his approach to character that the concern with essence can be most clearly observed. It may have resulted from his awareness of African forms, or from his literary studies, or both. The present century has seen a complete change in the attitude to stage character among English literary critics. A.C. Bradley's studies of Shakespeare in terms of individuals has been replaced, in the wake of work by T.S. Eliot, G. Wilson Knight, Dover Wilson, F.R. Leavis, L.C. Knights and others, with a tradition of criticism - with which Soyinka was familiar - which regards character as only one element in a play, an element which cannot be considered out of context.²² It is wrong to regard Soyinka's characters as individuals, and important to observe their spiritual and representative dimensions. In The Road the boundaries between the human and the spiritual are constantly being crossed. Samson becomes possessed by the spirit of Sergeant Burma, Murano is a reminder of the transitional phases between man and god and between the living and the dead. In Kongi's Harvest Segi is a representative of women rather than a specific woman, and it is no more appropriate to ask: 'How many lovers had Segi?' than to ask: 'How many children had Lady Macbeth?' Daodu, the prince, the farmer, the revolutionary becomes The Spirit of Harvest, hailed and dressed as essence rather than as an individual. Soyinka's drama is given breadth and depth by these links with the spirits, essences, types, in the same way as Falstaff and Othello root Shakespeare's plays in a theatrical and social tradition by being variations on the Vice and the Moore.

In his paper Soyinka referred to Beckett and Ionesco, to 'James Joycean nightmares and Kafkaesque experienced'. In the previous paragraph I referred to Eliot, Wilson Knight, Dover Wilson, Leavis and Knights. I think that the theatrical, literary and critical traditions suggested by these names are an essential part of Soyinka's awareness. Indeed he has not attempted to deny his European heritage, as his choice of English and innumerable references indicate. But his artistic sensibility is only partly expatriate. The Road is not Waiting for Murano and The Interpreters is not The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Nigerian. In the inspiration which lies behind both works the Absurdists and Joyce have a part, but only a part. 'The African Approach to Drama' is particularly valuable for the way it reveals Soyinka using his background in European drama, Greek, Medieval, Absurdist to come to terms with African drama - of human myths and religion.

I have been unable to find evidence of much fieldwork behind 'The African Approach to Drama', though Soyinka occasionally draws on personal experience. The reading seems to have been narrow since a large number of the references can be traced to Nigeria Magazine. The awareness of European drama is no more than would be expected of an English graduate. The authorities followed are few, in fact Beier stands alone as an influential older worker in the same field. A Dance of the Forests seems to anticipate several of the conclusions of the paper, so some of the conclusions must have been reached before Soyinka returned to Nigeria. For Soyinka the composition of the paper was probably a useful but not an essential undertaking. For the student of his writing, particularly of his drama, who wants to relate it to the practice and principles of its background it is very valuable; a fascinating statement of the traditional elements in his approach to play writing. The more valuable for using a conventionally academic approach for highly unconventional ends.

FOOTNOTES:

- 1 Bernth Lindfors, 'The Early Writing of Wole Soyinka'. A paper presented to the Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language, Liege, April 3rd-5th, 1974, published in The Journal of African Studies.
- 2 On file in the Library at the Institute of African studies, Legon.

- 3 J. F. Ade Ajaye, The University of Ibadan, 1948-1973; a history of the first twenty-five years. Ibadan: Ibadan University Press, 1973, p. 154.
- 4 W. H. Stevenson, 'The Horn: What it was and what it did'. Research in African Literatures (Austin, Texas), Vol. 6, No. 1. (Spring 1975), pp. 5-31. Refers to Soyinka's comments on the future of African theatre prepared for the Rockefeller Fund on file in the University of Ibadan Library.
- 5 From Ulli Beier, 'Obatala'. Nigeria Magazine (Lagos), No. 52 (1956), pp. 10-28.
- 6 Lewis Nkosi, 'Towards a New African Theatre'. Home and Exile, London: Longmans, 1965, p. 108.
- 7 As examples, see Ulli Beier, *op. cit.*, 'The Dancer' in the Special Issue, (1960), and Robin Horton's article which described the festival used in The Strong Breed, 'New Year in the Niger Delta: A Traditional Festival', No. 67 (1960), pp. 258-274.
- 8 K. C. Murray. Nigeria Magazine, No. 19 (1939) pp. 214-218.
- 9 Onoura Nzekwu, 'Carnival at Opobo'. Nigeria Magazine, No. 63 (1959), pp. 302-319.
- 10 No. 51 (1956), pp. 380-392) and suggested that the voice was distorted because the masquerader was in a trance. He refers to alternative explanations and it is surprising in some ways that Soyinka does not give his own explanation.
- 11 Onoura Nzekwu, 'Masquerade'. Nigeria Magazine, Special Issue (1960), pp. 134-144. (He refers to the fear the Ekpe inspire, but not to their distinctive 'underess'). A. J. Udom-Ema, 'The Ekpe Society'. Nigeria Magazine, No. 16 (1938), pp. 314-316. (On Ekpe in Efik country mostly concerned with ranks).
- 12 Joel Adedeji, The Alarinjo Theatre: The Study of a Yoruba Theatrical Art Form from its Earliest Beginning to the Present Time. Ph.D. Thesis. University of Ibadan, 1969. Eldred Durosimi Jones, The Writings of Wole Soyinka. London: Heinemann, 1973.
- 13 I have been unable to trace this article. It might have appeared in The Nigerian Field, volume 12 (1947) to which Murray contributed an article entitled 'Ayslugba'.
- 14 Ulli Beier, 'Oshun Festival'. Nigeria Magazine, No. 53 (1957), pp. 170-187, and there is a brief reference in 'Oshogbo', Nigeria Magazine, Special Issue (1960), pp. 94-102.
- 15 K. C. Murray. 'Oluku'. Nigeria Magazine, No. 35 (1950), pp. 364-366 (Refers to the ritual wrestling). Ulli Beier. 'Oloku Festival'. Nigeria Magazine, No. 49 (1956), pp. 168-183, and 'Oba's Festival at Oranfe' No. 50 (1956), pp. 229-238.

- 16 'Ijimere' is Beier's pen-name, see Who's Who in African Literature, by Janheinz Jahn et. al, Tübingen: Horst Erdmann Verlag, 1972. Beier's influence and significance as a researcher, editor and publisher remain to be assessed. His plays, are increasingly widely studied, acted and enjoyed. 'The African Approach to Drama' certainly owes a lot to him, but it is illuminating to compare what he made out of the Obatala festival (i.e. The Imprisonment of Obatala) with what Soyinka made out of it (i.e. a prototype for the drama of essence).
- 17 Beier, 'Obatala'. op. cit. p. 28.
- 18 J.P. Clark, 'Aspects of Nigeria Drama', The Example of Shakespeare, London, Longmans, 1970, pp. 75-96 Ola Rotimi, 'Traditional Nigerian Drama', Introduction to Nigerian Literature, ed. Bruce King, Lagos, London University of Lagos, Evans. 1971, pp. 36-49.
- 19 "The Fourth Stage" in The Morality of Art, (ed), D.W. Jefferson, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969, pp. 119-134.
- 20 Ibid., p. 128.
- 21 The scene formed part of an evening Soyinka presented at the Royal Court, 1959.
- 22 G. Wilson Knight was Soyinka's professor at Leeds. In The Golden Labyrinth he acknowledges the help he received from one of Soyinka's examination answers. The answer was about the royalty of King Lear on the Heath.