

# IBADAN

## Journal of English Studies

Vol. 12, 2016



**IBADAN:**  
**JOURNAL**  
**OF**  
**ENGLISH**  
**STUDIES**

Volume 12, 2016

ISSN 0189-6253



IBADAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

A publication of the Department of English, University of Ibadan,  
Ibadan, Nigeria

© 2016 Department of English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria

All rights reserved

No part of this journal may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system  
or transmitted in any form or by any means without the prior written  
consent of the copyright owner.

ISSN 0189-6253



Printed by Sapphire Prints  
08034892535 . 07016864877

Ibadan Journal of English Studies (IBJES) provides a forum for interdisciplinary approaches to theoretical issues and practices in culture, language, literature and performance studies.

**Editor-in-chief:** Emmanuel Babatunde Omobowale

**Editors:** Remy Oriaku  
Akin Odebunmi

**Associate Editors:** Adesina Sunday  
Ayo Osisanwo  
Kazeem Adebisi

**Consulting Editors:** Ayo Banjo, *University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria*  
Peter Auer, *University of Freiburg, Germany*  
Dan Izevbaye, *Bowen University, Iwo, Nigeria*  
Abiola Irele, *Kwara State University, Nigeria*  
Isidore Okpewho, *SUNY, USA*  
Kwesi Yankah, *University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana*  
Helga Kotthoff, *University of Freiburg, Germany*  
Nicholas Akwanya, *University of Nigeria*  
Harry Garuba, *University of Cape Town, South Africa*  
Dele Layiwola, *University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria*  
Carolyn Cooper, *University of the West Indies*  
Tejumola Olaniyan, *University of Wisconsin, USA*  
Pius Adesanmi, *Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada*

### **For Contributors**

IBJES is published once a year. Submissions should comply with the MLA Reference Style (for literature) and APA Reference Style (for language-oriented works). Our review process is anonymous. Contributors are therefore advised to avoid self-referencing and disclosures of their identities in the papers. The use of first person pronouns and sexist/racist expressions are not welcome. Names, designations and contact addresses of contributors are to be indicated on a detachable cover page with the title of the paper reflected on the first page of the paper. Two hard copies of manuscripts for submission and a disk copy (MS Word) should be sent to: The Editor, *IBADAN Journal of English Studies (IJES)*, Department of English, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria.

E-mail: [English@mail.ui.edu.ng](mailto:English@mail.ui.edu.ng), copy <[ibjes.editor@gmail.com](mailto:ibjes.editor@gmail.com)>

# Contents

Electronic Aids to the Study of Nigerian English <i>David Jowitt, University of Jos, Nigeria</i>	1
Pansemiotism: A Cognitive Semiotic Reflection on Correlates of Plant, Animal and Human Lives <i>Olaosun Ibrahim Esan, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria</i>	12
Discursive Construction of the Goodluck Jonathan Administration in the War against <i>Boko Haram</i> Terrorism in Selected Nigerian Newspapers <i>Ayo Osisanwo, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria &amp; Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa</i>	27
Text Message Lingoes in a Dynamic Society <i>Okata Gift Ngozi, Babcock University, Ilisan Remo, Ogun State</i>	59
Strength and Interpretability of Agreement and Tense features in English and Izõn Languages: A Comparative Study <i>Odingowei Kwokwo, Niger Delta University, Bayelsa State, Nigeria</i>	72
Interaction Patterns and Negotiation Strategies in Beggary Discourse <i>Boriwaye Adeyehun, University of Ibadan, Nigeria</i>	84
A Pragmatic Analysis of Facework and Christian Counselling Strategies among Feuding Couples <i>Abayomi O. Ayansola, National Universities Commission, Maitama, Abuja, Nigeria</i>	110
Assessment and Treatment of Error Patterns of Children with Speech Sound Disorders in Selected Primary Schools in Port Harcourt <i>Nneka Umera-Okeke &amp; Chidinma Iroegbu, University of Port Harcourt</i>	132
The Shift in Gender Imaging in Contemporary Nigerian Drama <i>Omolara Kikelomo Owoeye, Ekiti State University, Ado-Ekiti</i>	161

## Contents

- Ulli Beier, Obotunde Ijimere and Theopaneia in the Imprisonment of Obatala 176  
*Doyin Aguru, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria*
- Of Wars and Rumours of War: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Uzodinma Iweala's *Beasts of No Nation* 190  
*Emmanuel Babatunde Omobowale & Adebayo Sakiru Damilare, University of Ibadan*
- The Environment as Character: A Critical Reading of Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* 206  
*Sola Owonibi & Gabriel Faniyan*
- Vision, Themes and Techniques in Ahmed Yerima's *Hard Ground* and Arnold Udoka's *a Long Walk to Dream: A Comparative Approach* 224  
*Mary B. Aiyetoro, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State*
- Literary Creativity in Hilda Ogbe's *the Crumbs off the Wife's Table* 240  
*Folasade Hunsu, Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Nigeria*
- Nigerian Publishers Speak: Engaging Interviews with Founders and Directors of Selected Publishing Houses in Nigeria 253  
*Mary B. Aiyetoro, Bowen University, Iwo, Osun State*
- Beyond the Tales of Jenifa: Realities, Contradictions and Stereotypes of Nigeria's University Girls 270  
*A. Irene Pogoson*

# Ulli Beier, Obotunde Ijimere and Theopaneia in the Imprisonment of Obatala

Doyin Aguru, University of Ibadan, Nigeria

## Abstract

Ulli Beier's attachment to the arts and the peoples of Nigeria is in itself unique. His choices, in association, research and artistic efforts portray this in an unequivocal manner. Obotunde Ijimere, another of Beier's creations, is the author of *The Imprisonment of Obatala*. This study examines the posture and the context in which Beier perceives the Yoruba, his involvement with the people's theopanic visions and the significance of the experiences to his work in Nigeria.

**Key words:** Ulli Beier, Theopany, *Orisas*, Archetypes

## Introduction

This article is an explication of the context of the creative arts of Ulli Beier. Beier's perceptions of the Nigerian arts and theopany is reflected in several ways in *The Imprisonment of Obatala*. Beier's (1993) interview with Wole Soyinka is titled 'Orisa Liberates the Mind', it is a reflection of Beier's exposure to *orisa*<sup>i</sup>, *olorisas*<sup>ii</sup> and the society is seen in his association with these peoples and their cult.

His depth of understanding and respect for the Yoruba religion is evident in several of his statements. Beier describes philosophical tenets of the Yoruba religion such as significance of religion, religious tolerance, varieties of cults, and marriages amongst the Yoruba to mention a few. These thoughts of his amongst others, express explicit comprehension of and respect for the people. To further reinforce his comprehension of Yoruba religion, he wrote and I quote:

...in each town you have a variety of cults, all co-existing peacefully: there may be Shango, Ogun, Obatala, Oshun and many more ... even within the same family because you were not supposed to marry unto the same *Orisha*. But there is never any rivalry between different cult groups; They all know they are interdependent. Because they are like specialists. Everybody understands specific aspects of the supernatural world. Nobody

can know everything. The *Egunguns* know how to deal with the dead the Ogun worshippers know how to handle the forces that symbolized by iron. But for the Ogun worshippers to function, it is also necessary that Shango worshippers and all the other *Olorisha* perform their part. Only the concentrated effort of all of them will bring peace and harmony to the town (1993:6).

Wole Ogundele's seminal work on Beier and the Yoruba society, *Omoluabi*, is an encyclopedic collection on his activities particularly among the Yoruba in Nigeria. It, for the first time in my few years, unveiled the real person behind the "impossibly ridiculous Yoruba 'penname' Obotunde Ijimere" (Ogundele, 2000:14) the author of *The Imprisonment of Obatala* and other plays which I had grown up seeing in my dad's library and ended up 'inheriting' during my postgraduate years. The Soyinka interview with Beier, had to an extent, shed some light on the Beier personality but reading through *The Imprisonment of Obatala* without knowing who the playwright was roused a lot of questions within me about Obotunde Ijimere whose dark pensive face appears along with the blurb of the little green book claimed to be adapted by Ulli Beier and published under the African Writers Series by Heinemann in 1966.

According to the 1996 publication:

Obotunde Ijimere was born in Otan Aiyegbaju, Western Nigeria in 1938. After leaving secondary school he joined Duro Ladipo's theatre company. But soon discovered he had no talent for acting he attended Ulli Beier's extramural writers workshop in Oshogbo, and followed his advice to write in English rather than in Yoruba. Apart from the plays in this volume, he has written some short stories (he is still not very satisfied with the result) and several other plays including one in pidgin. *The Fall of Man* specially written for Theatre Express, the Lagos based theatre group.

Fundamentally, one would imagine that the playwright that has been so described to be a man of several interests, having been a student in an extramural writer's workshop, a member of Ladipo's theatre group who was quick to identify his limitations and concentrate his efforts and abilities in creative writing where he felt he had greater potentials. The striking thing, however, is the unusual allusions to myths and to Yoruba philosophy found in *orisha* worship. According to Ijimere, Ladipo's non conformist approach to theatre in Yoruba language influenced him



considerably and invariably was a part of the maturation for his creative and dramatic effusions.

Before reveling in the textual explications, it is vital to draw our attention to Beier's interest in kings, priests, street dancers and people who make up the cultural folio of the Yoruba people. Ulli Beier moved from Ibadan to Ede in 1951 and we are told that he struck a warm lifelong friendship with Timi Laoye of Ede who he saw daily for four years. For him, the relationship was intellectually rewarding and spiritually stimulating (Ogundele, 2000:61).

His exposure and close associations from this point when he moved from Ibadan to Ede defined and characterized all his subsequent activities and relationships. In 1954, he moved to Ilobu and developed a special relationship with the *olorisa* there, one described as... psychic...permanent and very intense (Ogundele, 2000:60) His movement to Ilobu enhanced his closeness to the priestesses and priests of various Orisa. Beier moved to Osogbo in 1958 and became quite chummy with *Ataoja* Adenle, who was nothing compared to the crooked and cynical *Olobu* of Ilobu.

Osogbo was a hub of activities; it had a train station which had turned it into a commercial nerve centre of the Yoruba nation. It was a cultural capital of sorts because it is the home of the Osun deity, a war zone during the incessant 19<sup>th</sup> century civil wars that the neighboring towns and villages were engaged in. Oshogbo plays host to various and interesting traditional festivals, Beier residing there was exposed to Sango festivals in Oshogbo and Ede. He was also able to witness Sango, Egungun elewe festivals in Illa Orangun, Obatala and Otun festival in Otan-Ayegbaju, Obatala festival in Ede, the Edi ritual and Olojo festival in Ile-Ife and several other festivals in smaller towns within the vicinity (62).

According to Ogundele, Ulli Beier always had somewhere to go, a festival to see for the first or the umpteenth time (62). Other friends Beier made while in Ilobu were the priests of Soponna and their drummer as well as the Magba Sango. Beier as a result learnt exceedingly much by pure observation and not by research or reading. In his words 'Everything just happened in front of my verandah' (Ogundele, 2000:65) and the other experiences he absorbed by spending several hours every day sitting down '... with priests and priestesses in their different shines' (66).

To attempt a description of Beier's activities particularly with royal characters, will require another article, suffice to state that he was deeply interested in the Oba institution and their deities because of his friendships, first with *Timi* Laoye of Ede and subsequently with *Ooni* Adesoji Aderemi of Ile-Ife, *Ataoja* of Oshogbo, *Ogoga* of Ikere, and the *Olokuku* of Okuku. The *Timi* by some spiritual predictions worshipped Sango and Ogun, though Sango was the personal deity of *Timi's*.

Timi Laoye's aunt, *Iya Sango*, an embodiment of power and knowledge of spiritual matters, customs and traditions, was a principal character in mentoring Beier in Yoruba religion. At some point, though Ulli was hesitant, Timi Laoye advised that he had to be initiated into the *Ogboni* cult to have access to the multi-levels of knowledge of the Yoruba society. Upon his initiation Beier discovered that it was a cult that symbolized a supreme court of some sort, comprising representatives of segments of the society, senior *Olorishas*, title holders in *orisa* cults and Beier could actually see a political institution.

In his view:

The *Oba's* power in the Yoruba cosmic order, was next to the *Orisa's*-he was the *Orisa's* companion, deputy and representative ... He was held in check by elaborate chieftaincy institution and by the *Ogboni* society. Hunter's guilds, *egungun* and *oro* cults also had their own separate clearly defined spheres of political influence which a wise *Oba* would hesitate to encroach upon (70).

Here, we are discussing an European who had become Yoruba in his understanding of the cosmic worldview. With this background, one easily appreciates Obotunde Ijimere's perceptions and reflections of the Oba institution as well as the cosmic world of the gods. In *The Imprisonment of Obatala*, Ijimere's members of cast consist of four gods and two goddesses: *Obatala*, *Sango*, *Esu*, *Ogun*, *Oya* and *Yemoja*. The plot structure is woven around the new yam as a symbol of fertility. *Yemoja* comes on stage presenting the new yam to her husband who receives her in his palace seated on the throne. She extols the virtues of the new yam, personifying it as being whiter than the cattle egret, whiter than teeth and the gown of *Obatala*. She describes yam as being costumed in a gown of bitter leaf, trousers of fish and a cap of meat. *Obatala* is also full of accolades for the new yam they continue its praise singing until *Yemoja* reminds *Obatala* of the sacrifice that put an end to the famine in the land in her words:

Blessed be the bald patch on the head of the vulture. Had he not carried the sacrifice to heaven. How could we celebrate the new yam? We thank the owner of the sky for this year's rain: we thank the earth for bowing to the sky (Ijimere, 1966:3).

Shortly Obatala is reminded of the sacrifice he and his friend Sango made ten years earlier to entreat the earth employing vulture, the carrier, who accepted to bear the sacrifice to heaven and got bald headed in the process. In response to the sacrifice, rain poured after the years of famine and there was all round fruitfulness and the people have continued to celebrate. Obatala becomes nostalgic, wishing Sango his friend was there to celebrate with him and longing to behold Sango, his:

...fiery friend, the owner of the palace, who spits fire from his mouth, who darts fire from his eyes (5).

Yemoja briskly reminds him that despite the fact that Obatala has the wherewithal to handle his friend, his people, her self inclusive are scared of Sango. Obatala meditates on friendship and its sacrifice and makes up his mind to visit Sango in his domain the next day. Yemoja sounds further warnings appealing to him not to provoke the god of fate and to be mindful of the harshness of the kingdom of Oyo where Sango dwells, as well as the ruffians that surround Sango.

Obatala appreciates but defies Yemoja's counsel, but to show reverence to her wisdom, he decides to call upon the *Babalawo* and consult him though his mind is made up. He preplans to disobey the *Babalawo's* counsel and offer sacrifices to placate and wave off the consequences of his stubborn posture instead. Obatala's utterances suggest that Yemoja:

...has the wisdom of the elders and the knowledge of the oracle yet my desire is stronger than your wisdom.

And my impatience is greater than your knowledge... (1966:6)

Of the *babalawo* he says:

...I will call the father of secrets to hear what awaits me on this trip. His advice I will follow,

All necessary sacrifices and concoctions I will make.

Yet even if his prophecy is death my longing will be stronger than his wisdom and my desire than his knowledge (Ijimere, 1966: 7).

Obatala proceeds on the journey having consulted the *babalawo* whose interpretation of the predictions of his nuts reveal that death

awaits him and the only sacrifice to make to avoid the pranks that Eshu will instigate is to have patience. He is told of the prophetic word revealed to the king of the Awe who conquered his foes through patience and that Obatala will thrive in suffering (11) in the course of the journey. Eshu plays pranks that puts Obatala on the receiving end, he spills palm oil on his white apparel, sees to it that an unsuspecting farmer gives him a resounding slap. Obatala bears both assaults patiently, cautious of the prophesy.

The conflict, however, arises when he sees Sango's horse wandering loosely, a combination of excitement of coming to the end of the journey, seeing his friend and a sense of duty to restore the horse back to its owner lands him in trouble with Sango's ruffians who claim that he had stolen the horse and instantly judged him, sent him into prison without interrogating him. At each point, Obatala acknowledges the cunning of Eshu who he says is a '... confuser of men...' (19).

Obatala is excited to see his friend, despite the accusations levied against him. This excitement is short lived when despite the fact that Sango recognizes him, he insists that he should be imprisoned for having the audacity to steal his horse and without any interrogation he accuses him of being a common thief and instructs that he be taken away!

Oya, Sango's wife appeals to Sango to beware of rashness, and taking decisions that could lead to self destruction. Alas! Sango is the impatient husband whose wife had been raped who would also find it easier to forgive his enemy than his friend. Obatala, the bringer of peace is sent to prison to languish. Oya knows the consequences of such an irrational decision and forewarns Sango that his decision will unleash Ogun, the violent one, who bathes in blood and whose reign spells death, violence and terror for the young and old.

Sango defies Oya insisting that the entire Oyo community is in need of the rattling that Ogun's campaigns will bring. Sango ignores the real significance of the appellation with which he first salutes Obatala when he recognizes him in his disguise:

Oh horror!

Is it you, Obatala, who turns blood into children.

Is it you Obatala the father of laughter (22).

He despises the inherent powers he himself acknowledges Obatala possesses and imprisons him. Ogun the war monger is on the loose, and there is violence, looting, blood shed and death. Peace is seized and more horrifying is the gynecological complications leading to death, suffered by the women of Oyo, particularly in Sango's house hold and Oya laments:

This city has been filled with slaves and this palace with women...  
 They all succumbed to the owner of the palace  
 Their bodies grow heavy with the king's fruit but alas a curse has  
 fallen on this city:  
 Some women die in childbirth, they bleed until their body is  
 drained and dry.  
 Or else the fruit rots in their womb  
 Before it sees the light of day.  
 For sometime now, the swelling belly and the pendulous heavy  
 breasts, a woman's pride,  
 Seem like a death sentence (30&31)

She concludes that the community suffers because of the injustice meted on Obatala and cannot expect less when the father of creation, one...who turns blood into children is lingering in jail (31).

Ogun certainly has a different opinion about the developments, Oyo has had peace for too long and the men had become lazy and fearful, he was also discontented with the occasional trickle of blood that was shed to him sacrificially when blood could flow freely in battle. Oya is able to persuade Sango, he consults the *babalawo* who confirms their woes are as a result of imprisoning Obatala. He clearly states:

Can you see the whiteness of the gown of the old man who suffers  
 in silence?  
 Do you expect your children to thrive.  
 And your crops ripen  
 When the father of laughter is imprisoned,  
 Do you expect your women to deliver  
 When he who turns blood into children  
 When he who makes eyes and makes nose  
 is living on water and cold maize pap? (1966:34)

Sango admits his folly, Obatala is released, he forgives his rash friend and Ogun reverently bows to the entrance and reign of Obatala whose tenure symbolizes, peace and fertility. A slight twist in the plot

structure is that Eshu in the epilogue tells the audience that 'Obatala rests in the sky like a swarm of bees' (42) watching the world in silence and Ogun retires to the dark forest of Ekiti and does not mention the location of Sango. One cannot but think that the plot is divided into the primordial existence of these gods on one hand and their experiences as mortals on the other.

### Theopanic and Archetypal Characters

Having explicated the plot upon which the theopanic characters are woven one can carefully analyze the characters that Beier's Ijimere created. One is quick to identify these characters:

- The priest
- The royalties: kings and queens
- The warrior
- And the dual characterization of royalties as Gods and goddesses
- And the warrior as a God.

Priesthood is a universally accepted role that men are appointed to or born to play. In *The Imprisonment of Obatala* we see the *babalawo* playing the role of go between the characters and the supreme being seeking direction, solution or pacifying the supreme one for prosperity and fruitfulness.

Twice we see King Obatala and King Sango seek the counsel of these priests who through divination of nuts on flour upon a carved tray can tell the future or unravel mysteries. The nuts when thrown upon the tray takes certain positions which refers to specific verses in the Yoruba scripture and which are chanted by the priests to buttress their counsel or revelations. It is during this procedure that their client receives answers to their enquiries. At the instance of Obatala's enquiry, the *babalawo* throws the nuts and proclaims.

This is the oracle of the hunter

Who followed the antelope to the forest of Onikorogbo

He was told to sacrifice all the eggs in his house.

The hunter refused to sacrifice.....

He met death...

Then death killed the hunter and his children (8&9)

King Obatala quickly understands the verse and states: 'Father of secrets, your nuts portends evil, your prophesy is death' (9) The *babalawo* however through another verse suggests how he may avert death and by doing so King Obatala survives his imprisonment which should have led to his death.

In the case of King Sango, the *babalawo* divines and chants  
Anybody who looks down will surely see his nose.

But the man who strikes before he asks

Who kills before he is answered is like a blind man...

Orunmila tells the story of a dog

Who is interlocked with his mate when they made love.

Then he decided to leave her for another bitch and he cut off his penis to break loose.

Why can't I have any children?

But no sacrifice could cure him no one can cut off a friend without hurting himself.

Do you expect your women to deliver when he who turns blood to children...is living on water and cold maize pap? (33 & 34)

Sango from the verse is quick to see his folly. He wails.

... I have been like the performing priest who thrusts knives into his body.

Insensitive to the pain in the dance.

Now I have woken after the dance bleeding...

I captured women...

But my seed was like poison injected between their thighs, They swelled up horribly and died.

I have cursed myself and my town

Because I imprisoned the creator.

Go and release the father of laughter,

Let us ask forgiveness of him (34).

Beier's Ijmere in *The Imprisonment of Obatala* captures the essence, the significance and the relevance of the *babalawo* to conflict resolution from a spiritual perspective that is respected by the most heady and irrational citizen whether king or subject. One is not in doubt that Beier being an eye witness and participant in divination sessions with priests gives him mastery and understanding of this Yoruba religious precepts.

This association with Kings and the Oba institution is portrayed in the lives of his royal characters; Oba Obatala of Ile-Ife and Oba Sango of Oyo. Aside Beier's being conversant with the Ooni of Ife and the Alaafin of Oyo, he was also vast in Yoruba history and must have read of the deification of some of the royalties particularly Sango and Oya who had transmogrified on their way to exile. King Obatala and King Sango have wives in *The imprisonment of Obatala*, Obatala is married to queen Yemoja who exits the play in scene one after Obatala takes up his archetypal journey, Oya remains all through the play playing an imploring role and pacifying all concerned for the peace and success of Oyo Kingdom. The significance of the portrayal of the dual nature of these characters particularly the kings can not be fully appreciated without knowing about the gods within the Yoruba context. Elebuibon (1998) describes Obatala as:

The king that wore the white robe the artist of God, who moulds the heads of new babies (216).

Obatala is recognized as a creator god in most Yoruba tribes and the sociolect of each community affects his nomenclature. He is generally also known as Oosala (Elebuibon, 1999: 216, Johnson, 2001:27).

From Johnson's account, he is ascribed creative powers. Obatala is assumed to be a co-worker with Olorun (27). Man is said to have been created as a lump by God and given a definite shape by Obatala (27). Asides being known as Oosala he is to the people of Oko, Orisako, the people of Ikire, Orisakire, to the people of Ejigbo, Orisagiyan, and to the people of Oba, Obatala. The creative powers of Obatala particularly in reproduction is the metaphor Beier's *Ijimere* plays upon.

King Obatala of *Ijimere's* play is given the same creative abilities. According to Elebuibon, Obatala at some point in the history of creation took palm wine and this resulted in him creating handicapped persons; the blind, the albino, and the hunched back.

*Ijimere* weaves, this episode into his work and in fact, creates an impression that Obatala suffers an archetypal punishment for this singular error. The *Babalawo* reveals:

Obatala,  
Who turns blood into Children  
Obatala, who can turn a single man into two hundred!



Divine crafts man, second only to the owner of heaven  
 You have an account to settle with the God of fate...  
 Olodumare, the owner of the sun, the sky and the earth,  
 Appointed you his craftsman..  
 To mould the features of man.  
 You who make nose and eyes  
 You who make penis and vagina  
 You betrayed the first of Olodumare  
 You drank the milky wine of the palm...  
 Fermenting in the calabash...  
 You must pay for your sins (10).

These esoteric powers ascribed to him are also portrayed as his nature particularly when he is imprisoned Obatala therefore is:

The god of essence - ideal of creation, serene and external, the symbol of suffering perseverance, tolerance and self containment (Ibitokun, 1995:55).

Eshu is a centrifugal figure in Yoruba mythology and religion, he is a personality that arouses much polemics but the consensus is that he is a trickster god. Elebuibon (1998) describes him as Elegbara, owner of power and law enforcement agent (211). Johnson (2001) describes him as Satan, the evil one, the author of all evil, often specially propitiated (28).

Ijimere portrays Eshu as enforcing the punishment declared by the *babalawo* for Obatala's drunkenness. He tricks Obatala thrice and provokes him in so doing. Obatala is the only character that understands the pranks of Eshu throughout the play

He repeatedly says:  
 Eshu confuser of men!  
 When he is angry he hits a stone until it bleeds  
 Having thrown a stone today-he kills a bird yesterday (19).

In the epilogue he, Eshu, dances and sings in mischief.

When I am angry I hit a stone until it bleeds  
 When angry I sit on the skin of ant. The stone I throw today has  
 killed the bird of yesterday (44).

Obatala however overcomes him by patience. Ogun is described by Elebuibon as the God of iron, patron of all metal and technology (217).

Ogun, as being portrayed in the play is true to this description as a war monger who desires free flow of blood to assuage his violent tempers. He is therefore the archetypal warrior.

According to him:

Shango is a king after my own heart for ten years now, he has not let the iron rest (30).

When he is pacified by Oya to see the negative effects of war he springs up in anger.

We have had ...peace too long.

The iron rusted in the smithy

I had grown tired of the blood of dogs offered as substitute...

Now let me quench my thirst! (31)

Ogun is arched with creative and destructive power. From Ibitokun's perspective, Ogun is a rebel, a creative, turbulent and inquisitive god with boundless energies that best defines his personality as existent (Ibitokun, 1995:55).

Ijimere portrays this boundless energies in his delightful account of his exploits in the ten year period that he is unleashed even though the people suffer the grave consequences that arise from his campaign with the other consequences that arise from the unjust incarceration of Obatala who describes himself as '...a man of peace' (Ijimere, 1966:16).

In the Epilogue, Eshu teasingly mocks Ogun who he says 'idly' observes the on-goings in the dark forest of Ekiti where he retires to. The people live in peace and no longer remember 'rule of Ogun' characterized by the stench of smoldering houses and rotting bodies... (43) Beier's Ijimere thus contrasts the personalities of the gods. The people serve Obatala, the father of laughter and peace though Ogun's iron is put in use for incisions on the cheeks, circumcision exercises are performed with Ogun's iron, and animals that are scarified with Ogun's iron. Eshu brags that Ogun's iron merely 'sleeps contented with the trickle of blood but at the instant of him (Eshu) creating confusion and chaos in the heads of men Ogun will emerge with the rule of iron. In his words,

... if Obatala is the right arm of the owner of Heaven, Ogun is his left arm.

If Obatala ... is the right eye of the owner of the sun, Ogun's iron is the left eye (Ijimere, 1966: 43&44).

Ijimere paints a dual portrait of Ogun, a tripartite portrait of Sango, Ogun as a warrior and a god, and Sango as a king, warrior and a god.

Oya and Yemoja are river goddesses. In several accounts tales of the transmogrification of both into rivers have been told. According to Johnson (2001), Oya is Sango's beloved and faithful wife whose courage fails at Ira on the way to Tapa. She is deified like Sango and the River Niger also known *odo Oya* is sacred to her. Thunderstorms, tornadoes and floods are attributed to her (36).

Yemoja is portrayed as influential on her husband's desire though meek and submissive to his will and desire to be a quester on an archetypal journey to the unknown. Oya's influence is more symbolic. Her original plea is despised by Sango but she is able to precondition Ogun's mind and persuade Sango to take the right action by her counsel and lamentations.

## Conclusion

Beier's appreciation of the depths of knowledge and psychic relevance of the Yoruba pantheon of gods is instructive. His incessant concern about Yoruba scholars and their unwillingness to come to terms with Yoruba religion, the body of prejudices, ignorance and unwillingness to examine the depths that do exist in Yoruba religion and in the pantheon of gods reflect in his works. In 1951, Beier met Ooni Aderemi, who told him of the shrines in Ile-Ife, and who told him of the Moremi myth that was as sacrificial as the myth of Mary mother of Jesus. The universality that was acknowledged by the Ooni was impressive in Beier's consideration and it validates the consistency of basic metaphors that remain constant across a variety of cultures.

The comparative sense lacked in the years Beier had the boldness to work at collecting writing and preserving the Yoruba culture, art and religion has paid off with the proliferation of contemporary writing on theopany. In 1993, Beier in an interview with Soyinka observed that Soyinka was the only writer who seemed to have come to terms with Yoruba religion in his writings and absolutely so too. In contemporary times, Femi Osofisan and Ahmed Yerima have come up with several theopanic works depicting the universality of traditional and ethnic religion with its significance in resolving issues of identify and national

crises. The body of materials collected, worked upon by Beier and his Obotunde Ijimere remain major sources of inspiration in Yoruba and Nigerian literary corpus!

### Works Cited

- Beier Ulli (ed) (1979) *Introduction to African Literature: An Anthology of Critical Writing*. Longman, London.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 1993 'Orisha Liberates the Mind' Wole Soyinka in Conversation with Ulli Beier on Yoruba Religion.
- Elebuibon Ifayemi (1998) *The Adventures of Obatala* Part 2. Ara Ifa Publishing Lynwood.
- Ibitokun Benedict, M. (1995) *African Drama and the Yoruba World-view*, Ibadan University Press.
- Ijimere Obotunde (1966) *The Imprisonment of Obatala and Other Plays*. Heinemann London.
- Johnson Samuel (2001) *The History of the Yoruba*. CSS Limited Lagos.
- Ogundele Wole (2000) *Omoluabi, Ulli Beier, Yoruba Society and Culture*. Bayreuth African Studies 66. Bayreuth.

<sup>1</sup> The New yam amongst Yoruba peoples and most peoples of Nigeria symbolizes the beginning of a new year. A season of harvest and bounty where all the hard work of the farmers is rewarded with abundance of food. Even in contemporary times when the new yam is harvested prices of food fall and there are celebrations in regard of the god of fertility.

ii Olorisas are the priests, people that propitiate, as well as worship the orisas.

iii Babalawo is an oracle priest, depended upon to consult the Odu Ifa i.e Yoruba scriptures. The scriptures embody wisdom and depth of revelation that can unravel secrets, guide or offer counsel to mysterious concurrencies and situations.

✓ Ulli Beier in several instances claims to have read Samuel Johnson's *The History of the Yoruba's* and had even given Duro Ladipo a copy as a gift.