

**Wole Soyinka : Art, Dialogue and Outrage, Essays on Literature and Culture.**  
Ibadan: New Horn Press (Exclusively distributed by Hans Zell Associates, PO Box 56,  
Oxford OX1 3EL, England) 344 pp. £29.95 cased.

'A dirty little ideologue with no scruples, a raddled intellectual whore to whom decency is a "romantic" word'. This description used by Wole Soyinka in 'The Autistic Hunt: Or, How to Maximise Mediocrity', which is published for the first time in this collection of essays, shows Soyinka at his most fiercely outraged.

The Nigerian poet and playwright is already familiar to those interested in a wide variety of artistic, ideological and political issues as a lecturer, essayist and polemicist. The publication by New Horn of a collection of nineteen pieces brings together vintage and familiar Soyinka with work which, like the intemperate 'Autistic Hunt', was taken smouldering from a bottom drawer and work which had appeared only in such obscure and inadequately distributed publications as to be virtually unobtainable.

Though it is to be followed by a second volume containing 'Soyinka's essays and documents on politics and society', *Art, Dialogue and Outrage* should not be regarded a part one of the 'complete and annotated' collected essays of Wole Soyinka. This book is marked by the energy and individuality of a creative writer rather than by the desire for order and explanation which tend to characterise editors. Though an 'Ed.' occasionally squeezed in a foot-note, though the 'Editor and Publishers' express their thanks to CUP and Dapo Adelugba, and though Biodun Jeyifo, Soyinka's respected critic, fellow actor and erstwhile colleague, provides a discursive 'Introduction', there is no fully acknowledged editor.

A 'Publishers Note' to the 'Introduction' indicates that Soyinka retained an interest in the selection of essays for the volume: he decided 'at the last minute' to remove 'And After the Narcissist?' Since Jeyifo's essay refers to that essay on several occasions this suggests, perhaps, a piece of authorial rug pulling. Fuller co-operation between Soyinka and Jeyifo, together with more extensive comment on, for example the circumstances which prompted various papers and an index would undoubtedly have increased the value of the volume.

There is compensation, however, in the vitality of the work, the sense that the poet-playwright himself was involved at all stages of the publishing process. The Soyinka who emerges, as can be appreciated from the quotation with which I started, is concerned, passionate, sometimes cantankerous. Above all else he is alive and kicking out at those who want him to follow their particular line, or to lie down and be entombed in a solemnly annotated volume. He has resolutely refused to be nailed down with cross-references, weighed down with an index, or bound, because of an introductory essay, to include a particular piece of writing.

**The volume, appropriately issued under a Nigerian imprint and distributed exclusively by Hans Zell, should be ordered by every Africana librarian who hopes to keep in touch with cultural, literary and critical debates through the writing of the vigilant and still very vigorous Wole Soyinka.**

**James Gibbs**