TROJAN WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES: DUAL READINGS OF TWO RECENT ADAPTATIONS

Izuu Nwankwo E.
Department of English
Gombe State University, Gombe, Nigeria

Abstract

Adaptation of Classical Greek plays has been with the theatre throughout its development in the west; and has also gained traction in the post-colonies. These adaptations are undertaken by their authors not merely (and/or necessarily) for a form of emergent neo-classicist purpose, but to use them as background texts for making certain salient contributions to the ruling socio-political issues within their own societies. This is exactly what Charles L. Mee and Femi Osofian have done in their The Trojan Women 2.0 and Women of Owu respectively, which are re-writings of Euripides' Trojan Women. The thrust of this paper is to use these adaptations to highlight the various permutations of postmodernism and post-colonialism with a view to eliciting a critical interrogation of their points of convergence and divergence. The intention is to draw attention to the variations in the appropriation of various elements of drama within these plays in conformity to the critical "movements" to which we necessarily have to attribute them respectively.

Preamble

A preoccupation with the multifarious "posts" of contemporary critical discourse seems to be a Hobson's choice that today's academic is saddled with. For the African whose critical impetus and framework is continuously being defined by western

critical schemas, it is not a personal choice to be marooned within the maze of the interminable "posts" disputations. More disheartening is the fact that in spite of the ingenuity and originality of exteriorising the realities of their society in arts, the African is merely viewed as reacting against coloniality. In this way, the artistic works of formerly colonised peoples and the "strategies" they employ are merely described as "strategies to deconstruct the presence of colonization" whereas these works are in deed "attempts to confront ... the various problems of underdevelopment which our countries are facing" (Osofisan "Theatre…" 3).

Hence, the observation that post-colonialism is a term that "rings truer for those who have 'posted' colonialism in posh conference halls and arcane seminar rooms conveniently far from the real battleground of colonial encounter," which in turn "lures us into a false sense of security, a seeming pastness of a past that is still painfully present" (Osundare 208) becomes not only poignant but also graphically resplendent of the estrangement that post-coloniality foists on the texts that it ostensibly qualifies. However, disputations as to whether the term "post-colonial" is apt for encapsulating the myriad cultural narratives that have had colonial experience is one that has a long history. In spite of the various critical proclivities, one tends to agree with Paul Brians' opinion that

> The more it is examined, the more the postcolonial sphere crumbles. Though Jamaican, Nigerian, and Indian writers have much to say to each other; it is not clear that they should be lumped together. We continue to use the term "postcolonial" as a pis aller,

> and to argue about it until something better comes along. (5; my emphasis)

It is to this that one subscribes and thus hinges the discourse of post-colonialism in this paper-not that it is appropriate but that it is the convenient nomenclature for now.

In mediating Jean-François Lyotard's remark that the major characteristic of postmodernism is a "loss of credibility in the grand récits of modernity;" Gayatri Spivak avers that what has been achieved is not necessarily a victory over these hitherto universal truths, but "… a radical acceptance of vulnerability" because when any "narrative is constructed, something is left out." It also follows that "when an end is defined, other ends are rejected, and one might not know what those ends are." Consequently, she justifies the polygonal dimension of the postmodernist framework by positing that one needs to "know the limits of the narratives, rather than establish the narratives as solutions for the future, for the arrival of social justice …" (Harasym 18-19). Nevertheless, the numerous contradictions identified within postmodernism itself point to the fact that this framework is not without intrinsic foibles that question its claims. One of such is the observation that the interventions and interpretations that postmodernism gives to texts are "introspective and anti-objectivist" giving rise to "a form of individualized understanding" that is hinged on individual vision rather than data observation" (Rosenau 119). This does not however, mitigate the fact that its interrogation of modernist grand narratives and their claims of universality have more or less given a leeway for newer thoughts and expressions to gain spatial traction in contemporary literary discourse.

In this paper therefore, one will proceed under the supposition

that the two plays under study fall within the compartments of postmodernism and post-colonialism respectively. Postmodernism itself, defies boundaries because it continues to resist stable definition by mutating in myriad forms of intertextuality as can be seen in Charles L. Mee's The Trojan Women 2.0. In this postmodernist adaptation of Euripides' Trojan Women, the aim is not historical accuracy rather there exists a deliberate effort exerted at anachronistic juxtaposition of texts from history, politics, current affairs, religion and other disciplines. Subsequently, this adaptation conforms to the definition of postmodernism as:

> … a fundamentally contradictory enterprise: its art forms (and its theory) use and abuse, install and then subvert convention in parodic ways, self-consciously pointing both to their own inherent paradoxes and provisionality and, of course, to their critical or ironic re-reading of the art of the past. In implicitly contesting in this way such concepts as aesthetic originality and textual closure, postmodernist art offers a new model for mapping the borderline between art and the world, a model that works from a position within both and yet within neither, a model that is profoundly implicated in, yet still capable of criticizing, that which it seeks to describe. (Hutcheon 180)

Hence, apart from questioning the grand narratives, postmodernism also interrogates its own procedures of enquiry. Put differently, Ryan Bishop posits that postmodernists "are suspicious of authoritative definitions and singular narratives of any trajectory of events" (993). Thus, categorisation itself becomes

a misnomer because both what is being categorised and the yardstick for such categorisations are altogether and separately interrogated within the "non-existent" bounds of postmodernist criticism. What then emanates is a continuous process that is persistently in a self-examining flux; perpetually destabilising the centre and in turn destabilising the peripheries that turn up with each dislocation of the centre.

However, in spite of this benevolence that postmodernism seems to exude it surreptitiously occludes post-colonialism from its inchoate commodious space even in its endorsement of difference. This is obvious from the fact that critics often refer to these two critical "movements" differently in a manner that shows that they are mutually exclusive. In support of this assertion, Gilbert and Tompkins argue that despite the temporal and literary intersections of postcolonialism and postmodernism "the two cannot be equated" (3). The inability to equate these two traditions however, means that one is placed at an advantage over the other. It is for this reason that a play such as Osofisan's Women of Owu, in spite of its contemporaneity would obviously be excluded from the postmodernist canon not because of formalistic non-conformity but for geo-political differentiations. Subsequently, even in its accommodationist stance, postmodernism by its subsisting definitions, persistently clog up any avenue for interstitial relations with post-coloniality.

In this vein, post-coloniality defines a whole range of disproportionate expressions across the globe-a homogenisation of all cultures that have had colonialism foisted on them. As such, it finds itself marooned in a lesser spatial ambience. For this reason Tejumola Olaniyan argues that western history has placed a burden on post-colonialism and all it signifies, and that burden is

"a forceful socialization into a dominating culture which the postcolonial can never even begin to approach except through extreme, even if ultimately productive, ambivalence." Therefore post-colonials are thus expected to be occupied with nothing but the "consuming project" of extricating themselves from the significations of colonial imposition by "getting along with it, exorcizing it, taming it, denying or affirming it ..." (489). Postmodernists on their part as has been observed are merely bothered with the "project of transcending certain aspects of a self-conscious, self-privileged project of modernism that is largely absent in Africa's construction of itself" (Zeleza 15). The overbearing question nevertheless is whether there is such delineation as postmodernist and/or post-colonialist critics or loci and the answer is not far-fetched because they are two sides of the same coin.

The Trojan Women Story

It is quite instructive that of all the classical tragedians, it is Euripides that opted to narrate the story of the Trojan War from a humanistic and sympathetic perspective rather than a conquering and hegemonic one. He chose to ignore the grandeur of the Greek conquest which is replicated from all angles-Agamemnon, Odysseus, Achilles and even the valour of Trojans like Hector fighting in his brother's stead and Paris eventually killing Achilles to avenge his brother's death. Furthermore, Euripides was also not carried away by the glorious re-telling of the beauty of Helen, Menelaus' wife and how it stirred the war in the first instance; causing men and women to give up their lives and their freedom.

Both Femi Osofisan and Charles L. Mee share an affinity with the sympathetic perspective of Euripides' theatre. Their theatres are riddled with overabundant sympathy for the plight

of humanity in contemporary living. Osofisan says of himself: "I am, I must confess, an incorrigible plagiarist! I am like the old storytellers, constantly stealing from other narrators" (Jeyifo, 230-231). Essentially, Olu Obafemi captures the dominant perception of Osofisan's dramaturgy in the following observations:

> ... Femi Osofisan is ... most articulate and ... most ambitious in his use of subversive potential of the theatre to shape the audience's perceptive awareness of the social revolution which [his generation finds] inevitable in the country. Osofisan largely [...] reject(s) the 'philosophy of defeat' and 'disarming fatality' which [... arise] from the lucid 'predatory symbolism' of contemporary literature in Nigeria .... He opts for a radical alternative, such that will bring about an attitude of questioning and a challenging of history on the part of the audiences, the masses. (174)

It is in furtherance of the questioning of history that Osofisan has proceeded from querying Yoruba myths in Morountodun to the interrogation of the tenets of Greek myth as he has done in his re-workings of Sophocles' Antigone and Euripides' Trojan Women. Just like Euripides did in his own version, Osofisan is at odds with the predicament that women, children and other civilians face in war.

On the part of Charles L. Mee, his theatre is defined by a personal perspective that since "we are creatures of our history and culture and gender and politics-that our beings and actions arise" from complex influences and forces which make contemporary living richer and less susceptible to "be reduced to

a single source of human motivation" (Mee par. 1). Owing to this conviction he tries in his works to transcend traditional narratives to the point of bringing "material from history, philosophy, insanity, inattention, distractedness, judicial theory, sudden violent passion, lyricism, the National Enquirer, nostalgia, longing, aspiration, literary criticism, anguish, confusion, inability" (Mee par. 2). In return, the emergent script is one that appears to be a jumble of unrelated texts, the type that he prefers-one that is "not too neat, too finished, too presentable. [This type is often] broken, jagged, filled with sharp edges, filled with things that take sudden turns, careen into each other, smash up, [and] veer off in sickening turns" (Mee par. 3). Apart from making him feel good, Mee also perceives this kind of play as a reflection of life, more specifically contemporary western living to which he belongs.

From the preceding statements it becomes obvious that Mee is not interested in creating plays that are "well made" in the traditional realistic mode. Felix Budelmann describes Mee's The Trojan Women as a play that "uses collage of stories, humour, music, an unusual performance space and other means to create what Sarah Bryant-Bertail calls 'postmodern tragedy'" (98). Elinor Fuchs postulate that in Mee's texts "plot and character are rhetorical surfaces in precisely the same way that ethic and personhood function as emptied-out simulacra … [because they] are quoted, but are not objects of exploration" (105). She further opines that the "vertiginous moral prospects" of his plays are depicted to be contemplated by the audience in a miscellany of "stand-up production numbers-monologues, occasional dialogues, and song and dance routines …" (105). Mee's interest is not necessarily in coherent adherence to the tenets of traditional drama but in replicating situations and circumstances of his characters and their

situations in concurrently running strata of significations. It is this mode of theatrical presentation that Ken Urban refers to as the "collage technique, where a variety of texts would be sliced and diced to form a new one" (137). Urban further observes that Mee sometimes "borrows the structure of an existing play (…) to anchor these collages, often remaining close to the story of the original, even while retaining little or none of its dialogue" (137).

Aspects Of The Adaptations

According to Scott T. Cummings, rather than "conceiving a character and then imagining what that character would say [Mee] gathers and combines various texts of interest and then imagines them being spoken by one figure onstage" (qtd. Urban 137). Furthermore, there is "no demarcation that clearly sets off citation from 'original' speech" because the characters do not indicate when texts are taken verbatim from any source. But in spite of "its varied sources, it all becomes the language of the character" and the beauty of this arrangement is that by "imagining characters as the sum of disparate quotations, Mee creates figures who are contradictory and polyvocal, oddly enough managing to be both highly theatrical creations and yet very real" (Urban 137).

This is however very much unlike the characters that Osofisan presents in his version of the play. His version is Yorubanised, taking its bearing from the sack of the ancient city of Owu by the Allied Forces of Ijebu and Ife kingdoms as well as Oyo mercenaries (Women of Owu vii). In the same vein, a major innovativeness of this adaptation could be Budelmann's observation that despite the nineteenth century setting of the play, Osofisan gives the war "present day resonances" through the emboldening of the slavery theme to the point of opening out

"perspectives well beyond Yorubaland, onto the black Diaspora across the centuries" and secondly, by the term 'Allied Forces' (referring to the Ijebu and Ife armies that besieged Owu), Osofisan alludes to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq (91-92).

Nevertheless, suffice it to say that in constructing their adaptations of this ancient Greek tale, Osofisan and Mee have given birth to plays that explicate contemporary issues based on their individual perspectives. There are different levels of divergence between these two adaptations; and each of them has direct relevance to the manner in which the playwright articulates certain aspects of the Classical Greek version. The first level of divergence is that these two adaptations belong to very different historical era from that of the original. At the second level, the two adaptations differ in terms of geo-cultural origin. To further extrapolate on the dimensions of treatment that these two dramatists adopted in re-writing this text of Euripides', the treatments would be examined from the following sub-headings: plot, character, diction, music and then theme.

Plot

The plot arrangements of these two adaptations differ in more ways than one. Mee privileges a postmodernist diversified approach. First, the play is divided into two: The Prologue and The Play. The Prologue is Mee's adaptation of Euripides' text, while The Play is entirely his creation. In the previous, the action takes place in front of the smouldering city of Troy after the sack of that city by the Greeks. Just like Euripides' text; Hecuba, her daughters and other surviving widows of the defeated city in spite of their grief are being distributed by Talthybius like war spoils to different military personnel of the victorious Greek army. Mee's major point

of deviation is in introducing Polyxena, a thirteen year-old daughter of Hecuba whom he dresses in contemporary American fashion and talking about numerology, horoscope and dating (Mee Trojan Women 33). It is her gruesome murder that prompts Hecuba's recourse to action. She summons Aeneas, one of the surviving Trojan men the women were hiding away from the Greeks. As Aeneas enters and is emotionally overpowered on seeing the lifeless body of Polyxena, Hecuba says to him:

> Now your time has come
> to be as brave as she has been
>
> Your time has come to avenge her death. […]
>
> **AENEAS**
> This is not what I have heard you say before.
> I have heard you....
>
> HECUBA [cutting him off]
> […]
> Your time has come
> to find all those who have survived,
> take them to a new country
> build a home.
> Make it strong.
> Put your trust in power alone.
>
> Make a nation that can endure. (Mee Trojan Women 49-50)

With these words, Hecuba sets Aeneas on a mission that is supposed to avenge the massacre of their once prosperous city of Troy which would be documented in The Play. But Aeneas and

his colleagues, other veterans of the Trojan War-Eddie, Joe and Jim, arrive at a modern day spa in Carthage filled with women. On encountering them-Andrea, Carol, Alice, Letty and the black skinned Dido, Aeneas and his colleagues forget their primary assignment in Carthage and allow themselves to be taken into all manner of sexual indulgence with these women to the extent that by the end of The Play, there is a battle of sexes between the Trojan War veterans and their Carthaginian hostesses. There is no indication that Aeneas would ever return to Hecuba's charge in p. 50. Summarily, in Trojan Women 2.0, one sees a play that refuses to adhere to any known plot formation. It could be at best be described as a pastiche of varying themes that have become very relevant in contemporary socio-political discourse.

Osofisan's Women of Owu has a tighter plot sequence due to its linear plot progression. The play is divided into five scenes, with action starting after the sack of the city of Owu by the Allied Forces of Ijebu and Ife with their Oyo mercenaries. Just like in Euripides' version, where Poseidon meets with Athena, the patron god of the city of Owu, Anlugbua meets with a woman from that city. From there action moves to the widows of Owu including their queen, Erelu Afin. Her faith in the impending salvation of their god is dislodged by the Woman who just returned from a meeting with Anlugbua. She then channels her energy into convincing the Chorus of Owu women of their hopeless situation. The next scene takes the audience back to Anlugbua who now meets with the goddess, Lawumi. Just like Euripides' Athena, Lawumi is the one that stirs up the Allied Forces aggression against Owu. She enters into a partnership with Anlugbua to punish the conquering soldiers on their way back home for desecrating her grove.

The next scene confirms the helplessness of Erelu Afin because

it is here that the emissary, Gesinde arrives to execute the decisions of the conquering soldiers. Thus, all surviving daughters of Erelu are summarily sent to their death. This continues into the next scene where Maye Okunade comes to take his renegade wife, Iyunloye. In spite of the women's protests and Erelu's warnings, Iyunloye succeeds in regaining her place in her husband's heart. This puts an end to the last hope for vengeance on the woman that instituted their misery through her lechery which the widowed women of Owu had. The play ends with a ritual dance aimed at releasing the souls of Owu sons and daughters who died in the war. In this dance, Erelu falls into trance and then speaking in Anlugbua's voice promises that Owu shall rise again not in its present state but in little communities amidst other groups.

Character

Mee maintains all the characters in Euripides' work except the deities-Poseidon and Athena, perhaps to highlight the prevailing lull in religiosity in contemporary western societies. He also adds new characters like the two Special Forces soldiers-Bill and Ray Bob who accompany Talthybius in executing the decisions of the conquering Greek army. He names some prominent members of the Chorus-Sei, Aimable, Chea, Eisa and Valerie. Then Aeneas and other characters encountered in the second part of the play are additions made by Mee.

In Women of Owu, Osofisan finds local equivalents for all the characters Euripides mentioned in his text. Hecuba is Erelu Afin, Cassandra is Orisaye, Andromache is Adumaadan, Astyanax is Aderogun whereas the trio of Talthybius, Menelaus and Helen are Gesinde, Maye Okunade and Iyunloye respectively. It has already been mentioned that the deities in Euripides' text are here

represented by Anlugbua and Lawumi. However, Osofisan does not merely transfer Euripides' characters to another period and location but creates newer ones that possess depth and motivation. One of such is Maye Okunade, Menelaus's alter ego, whom Osofisan presents as an artist-turned-soldier. He and Iyunloye were making their living through the production and sale of adire cloths until Iyunloye is abducted at Apomu market by the Owu warriors (51-52). Even in "captivity" Iyunloye continues with the business and creates a design which she names after her husband, known from "Kano to Porto Novo to Kumasi as Faari" (49). On his part, Okunade does not continue in that trade due to the ire he has against his wife's desertion, so he takes up arms in order to fight for her retrieval from Owu. To the god Anlugbua, one of the women says:

> He abandoned his tools and took to arms. And so fierce
> Was his passion for killing, that he rose rapidly
> Through the ranks, and soon became the Maye!
> An artist? He's a butcher now! (6)

It is from becoming a general of the army that he is able to muster the support to advance on Owu to reclaim his beloved spouse.

Furthermore, Osofisan does not take up the Greek part where Paris woos Helen out of Sparta but takes it up from the point where Owu forces attack Apomu market and takes Iyunloye captive, and then her beauty catches the eyes of the Prince Adejumo who makes her his wife. In justifying her role on this matter Iyunloye says to her husband:

> I know I hurt you, but it was not me, believe me.
> Just my misfortune as a pawn in the hands of men! Beauty

> Makes all women vulnerable to the greed of men, as
> You know, and when the men are powerful, our will
> Is nothing! Such men just ride over us as they wish. That was
> My problem, believe me! […] (57)

The contest over Apomu market is more plausible as a reason for war between the kingdoms rather than over a woman. Also, the siege in this instance lasted for seven years and the Allied Forces gained entrance not through hiding inside an artificial horse gift but through firing fiery arrows into Owu.

Diction

Both dramatists adopt free verse for most of the dialogue. However, where Osofisan could be said to have used a text that is more like a Yorubanisation of Euripides' diction, Mee pillages texts from various sources and imposes them on his characters without adherence to any sense of order. Going by Mee's note to the play,

> *Trojan Women 2.0* was developed--with Greg Gunter as dramaturg--the way Max Ernst made his Fatagaga pieces at the end of World War I: incorporating shards of our contemporary world, to lie, as in a bed of ruins, within the frame of the classical world. It incorporates, also, texts by the survivors of Hiroshima and of the Holocaust, by Slavenka Drakulic, Zlatko Dizdarevic, Georges Bataille, Sei Shonagon, Elaine Scarry, Hannah Arendt, the Kama Sutra, Amy Vanderbilt, and the Geraldo show. (Mee *Trojan Women 86*)

In spite of this polyvocality in Mee's text, there is a consistency in thematic preoccupation-the severity of war and social strife on

hapless individuals. In Mee's adaptation, the variedness of his dialogue-Hiroshima, the Holocaust (perhaps seen from the perspective of Hannah Arendt), the Yugoslav war and dissolution-emboldens rather than mitigates the severity of the suffering the women have been reduced to owing to the destruction of their city, their livelihood. The hopelessness of their situation even while being carried away to death and slavery is further aggravated by the fact that in the second part of the play, rather than remain focused and dedicated to Hecuba's charge, Aeneas gives himself over to lasciviousness. One supposes that the sexual explicitness of The Play could have been influenced by the Kama Sutra. Furthermore, Mee's dialogue is also derived from Seo Shonagon (966-1013), a Japanese, author of The Pillow Book. Summarily, Mee's diction is a concatenation of texts from various cultures and epochs put together in this instance, to highlight and deepen the theme of the play.

Osofisan's text is subsumed in traditional poetry written in free verse. The entire diction could be described as Yoruba equivalents of Euripides'. However, the ingenuity of his diction is that the characters speak what one can term Yoruba in English; sometimes riddled with satire and sarcasm. A good example is Erelu's enquiry to Gesinde about her own fate:

> I am not the widow of a hero. Only an old woman
> With fallen breasts. Without this stick to lean on,
> I could not stand alone by myself. Age, you see,
> My son, has turned my limbs to banana stalks
> And rendered them useless for any task:
> What will happen to me? (Osofisan Women 25-26).

The overruling innuendo here is that she is of no sexual beneficence

to the Greek generals like her daughters whom Gesinde has allocated to them individually.

Furthermore, Osofisan and Mee make extensive use of songs. In the former's case, the songs are in Yoruba and are employed to heighten the mood of situations in which they are used. In Mee's version, songs are taken from different sources and are mostly used in situations that hardly match them. From The Prologue, the play begins with a "Lights out." Then, the disorderliness of the situation is enhanced by a merger of Berlioz's Les Troyens and the sounds of warfare. The accompanying authorial note to the play acknowledges the abundant use of songs in the play but at the same time advises future directors of the play to choose their own songs if necessary.

Content

In Mee's version, as the lights come up "slowly", a hundred "third world" women are seen at work, making "computer components." The fact that this happens at "early dawn" is an indication that these women are undergoing slave labour and have been working throughout the night. The preceding sounds of warfare could also be described as being the very situation that produced these "slave labourers" who are now compelled to make computer components obviously not for their motherland but for their conquerors. In designating these slave labourers as "third world" women, Mee throws up the issue of colonialism and neo-colonialism which has/ continue to enable developed nations to bleed developing countries of their work force. The imagery of their being in thorn dresses and their having been raped indicate the dehumanisation that has accompanied the dislocation of these women from their homeland, one that lies in ruins and still smouldering behind them.

Moreover, in the introduction of the play one other disturbing juxtaposition of unrelated events is that there is a continuous rain of ashes throughout the presentation. This highlights the fact that in spite of the sophistication of the products they are compelled to produce, they still live in degenerate circumstances. In other words, their interminable labour is not remunerated and thus does not improve their lives.

Furthermore, Berlioz's composition which is superimposed on the introductory action has a dual purpose of alluding to the Trojan story; a reminder of the source of Mee's work while at the same time enhancing the contemporaneousness of the adaptation itself. In the latter instance, one is reminded to see the play not as a re-enactment of a classical Greek play but as an enactment of a present disorder that threatens to keep recurring if not rectified. From this point therefore, one can read the feminist anecdotes that the play is replete with. Most importantly, in this re-creation of Euripides' play, Mee depicts the remnants of the smouldering city of Troy as third world women conscripted into slave labour. In this part of the play, just like in Euripides' and Osofisan's versions, the only visible men are the conquerors, representatives of those who have put the women in their predicament. Mee however, takes this to another level by designating these men as representatives of the US government. His Talthybius is "wearing the standard State Department pin-stripe suit" and is accompanied by two soldiers "from Special Forces, Bill and Ray Bob." The allusion is indubitably unmistaken: Mee is making a polysemous allusion to instances of conquests that America may have instituted in some hapless climes before and after the play was written.

Osofisan's adaptation alludes to the numerous wars that have decimated humanity in recent times. To him whatever justification

that is adduced cannot in any way mitigate the gravity of its gruesome effect on helpless peoples. He used satire to present his views on this:

WOMAN: Liars! You came, you said,
To help free our people from a wicked king. Now,
After your liberation, here we are
With our spirits broken and our faces swollen
Waiting to be turned into whores and housemaids
In your towns. I too, I curse you!

ERELU: Savages! You claim to be more civilized than us
But did you have to carry out all this killing and carnage
To show you are stronger than us?
Did you
Have to plunge all these women here into mourning
Just to seize control over our famous Apomu market
Known all over for its uncommon merchandise?
[…]

WOMAN: All they care for, my dear women
All they care for, all of them, is our freedom!

WOMAN: Ah Anlugbua bless their kind hearts!

WOMAN: Bless the kindness which has rescued us
From tyranny in order to plunge us into slavery!

WOMAN: Sing, my friend! Let us celebrate
Our new-won freedom of chains!
(Women of Owu 12-13)

From the foregoing one finds a similarity between Osofisan's and Mee's texts in terms of content in that where the latter designates the conquered women as slaves from the "third world" the former highlights the conqueror/conquered disparity as one that has economic moorings. This is because when the slave labourers are poached from their homeland they are used to improve the economy of the conqueror and this is reflected in slavery, colonialism, neo-colonialism, contemporary human trafficking and the wars.

Summary

The theme of feminism runs through the two adaptations but the approaches differ. Mee for instance, takes his adaptation from a polyvalent dimension which looks at issues of gender disparity from several perspectives two of which can be seen in the themes of The Prologue and The Play. In the former, the effects of war is seen from the underside, the side of the vanquished women while in the latter, the action of Aeneas and his cohorts supposes a lackadaisical attitude which emphasises interminability of the sufferings of the "third world" and alludes to leaders who would continue in their profligacy in spite of the sufferings of their own people. In this manner, there seems to be a justification for the

sack of Troy due to the fact that their leaders were cowardly, lecherous and corrupt.

Osofisan however takes his adaptation from the perspective of the evils of war, with the emphasis that no amount of rhetoric would justify its anti-human dimensions. In line with contemporary critical categorisations, his text is post-colonial in its approach. The issues of war, slavery, colonialism and their attendant adverse effects on the conquered have more experiential relevance to the "post-colonial". Hence, for Mee, his adaptation could still be situated in a very re-modified Troy but for Osofisan, the ancient city of Owu is more convenient. This is because for Mee, Greek history is analogous to his in that there is a continuum between ancient Greece and today's West. But this is not the case for the post-colonies. For one, even apart from the colonial interregnum which has overtime lumped their differences into an anachronistic homogeneity, there is also a discontinuous historical relationship between its pre-colonial form/s and classical Greek historical specificities. Consequently, at the level of setting, the post modern in spite of their privileging of the meta-text in a bid to be accommodating still leaves out a good number of the Other, the post-colonial. But essentially, postmodernism and post-colonialism are two sides of the same coin.

Works Cited

Bishop, Ryan. "Postmodernism." Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology. Eds. David Levinson and Melvin Ember. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1996.

Brians, Paul. "'Postcolonial Literature': Problems with the Term." January 5, 2006. <http://www.wsu.edu:8080/~brians/anglophone/postcolonial.html> Accessed on 19/03/2009.

Budelmann, Felix. "Trojan Women in Yorubaland: Femi Osofisan's Women of Owu." In Portraits for an Eagle: Essays in Honour of Femi Osofisan. Ed. Sola Adeyemi. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies Series, 2006: 89-110.

Fuchs, Elinor. The Death of Character: Perspective on Theater after Modernism. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996.

Gilbert, Helen and Joanne Tompkins. Post-Colonial Drama: Theory, Practice, Politics. London: Routledge, 1996.

Harasym, Sarah (ed.). The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues. New York: Routledge, 1990.

Hutcheon, Linda. "The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History." Cultural Critique 5 (Winter, 1986-1987): 179-207.

Jeyifo, Biodun. "Interview with Femi Osofisan." In Insidious Treasons: Drama in a Postcolonial State. Femi Osofisan. Ibadan: Opon Ifa Readers, 2001.

Mee, Charles L. "What I Like." The (Re)making Project. <http://www.panix.com/userdirs/meejr/html/charlesMee.html> Accessed on 29/07/2009.

----------. The Trojan Women 2.0. <http://www.charlesmee.org/html/trojan.html> Accessed on 02/08/2009.

Obafemi, Olu. Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision. Bayreuth: Bayreuth African Studies Series, 1996.

Olaniyan, Tejumola. "Dramatizing Postcoloniality: Wole Soyinka and Derek Walcott." Theatre Journal 44.4 (Dec., 1992): 485-499.

Osofisan, Femi. "Theatre and the Rites of 'Post-Negritude' Remembering." Research in African Literatures 30.1 (Spring 1999): 1-11.

----------. Women of Owu. Ibadan: University Press PLC, 2006.

Osundare, Niyi. "How Post-colonial is African Literature?" Caribbean Writers: Between Orality and Writing. Eds. Marlies Glaser & Marion Pausch. Matatu 12 (1994): 203-16.

Urban, Ken. "A Happy Union - Remaking American Theater: Charles Mee, Anne Bogart, and the SITI Company by Scott T. Cummings." Book Review. Theater 38.1 (2007): 136-140.

Zeleza, Paul T. "Historicizing the Posts: The View from African Studies." Postmodernism, Postcoloniality, and African Studies. Ed. Zine Magubane. New Jersey: Africa World Press, 2005.