

WOMEN IN WAR, AND CONFLICT: A DISCOURSE ON FEMI OSOFISAN'S *WOMEN OF OWU*

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Abstract

Conflict and war are not unique to Nigeria or Africa. It is now a truism that in conflict situations, women are one of the worst hits. The reason is not farfetched: women in conflict areas are likely to be raped, kidnapped, killed, and/or end up as widows/concubines. Although women are seldom directly involved in conflict situations, they serve as the first line of aid, providing what can best be described as succor to the casualties of conflicts as well as maintaining the home front in the incessant absence of the male and

youths. Predicated on critical feminist theory and the relational theory of conflict, the study from a thematic view, discussed the plight of women in conflict situations both within the text and the context; that is Nigeria. Using Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* (2006), the study argued that the manner in which Osofisan dramatizes the story of the African woman trapped in conflict and war is both sympathetic and resilient, yet a gruesome reminder of the position women find themselves in conflict situation.

Introduction

A major contradiction exists in every oppressive society. Freire (1970) draws our attention to it when he asserts that oppression is almost always manifested in leaders who shy away from dialogue, and more so where such leaders insist on imposing their decisions. This manipulative approach does not organise the people or liberate them. This sets the tone for this discourse and throws some light on the implications of a dialogically barren leadership, since the lack of constructive dialogue itself can lead to conflict and even war. This assertion also calls attention to the contradictions of dictatorial leadership that employs the weapon of manipulation. The implications are that humans are dehumanised for the selfish motives of the ruling political elite. And in a patriarchal society such as Nigeria, the women are worst hit. Both implications are in effect tantamount to oppression which is a precursor to conflict and war.

In an axiomatic sense, existence here on earth is necessarily conflictual. In fact, in many conflict situations, women are always at the receiving end. Although the reason could be adduced to the irreducible fact that life itself is replete with imbalances and imperfections, the question is – why are the women so poorly disadvantaged to defend themselves? Disagreements almost always degenerate into conflict and if it is not carefully managed and resolved, it can result in war. This scenario has amply been reflected and mediated in several dramatic texts. The manner in which

Osofisan retells the narrative of the African woman (*Women of Owu*) is both fascinating and symptomatic of the disadvantageous position women find themselves in conflict situations. This study draws attention to the fatal hope of women in the promised revenge of the gods, and argues that Osofisan's subjugation of the role of the gods shows how much less faith we should have in this kind of gods.

Conflicts in the Dramatic Text

While it is a fact that playwrights draw from events within the society, ranging from the social to the religious, cultural, political and the historical, the flipside is that what drives the inner actions of a play is conflict and most, if not all, playwrights seek to resolve this conflict. For instance, OIa Rotimi in his play *Kurunmi* (1976), demonstrates the fact that the conflict over tradition coupled with the refusal of the ruling elite to embrace dialogue led to the war in the play between those who support that the tradition be upheld and those who desired a change it. Similarly, Rotimi in *The Gods are not to Blame* (1971), through metaphoric postulations, makes the point that it was the conflict over allegiance to tribe rather than love for country that led Nigeria into her first civil war.

Similarly in Irene Isoken Salami-Agunloye's *Idia, the Warrior Queen* (2008), we see a situation where a conflict between one of the King's Chiefs over the latter's wife eventually blossomed into war when the Chief switched allegiance to the rival Igala Kingdom. Furthermore, in *Emotan* (2001), Emotan's quest for justice motivates her to mobilize popular support for the exiled heir prince, leading to the overthrow of the King and restoration of order to the Bini Kingdom. In all these instances of conflicts, women are usually caught in the cross fire. Even

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where they are not actually in the forefront of the war, women are likely to be killed and or end up as widows. Although women are seldom directly involved in conflict situations, they serve as the first line of aid, providing what can best be described as succor to the casualties of conflicts as well as maintain the home front in the incessant absence of the male and youths. Predicated on critical feminist theory and the relational theory of conflict, this paper from a thematic view discusses the plight of women in conflict situations as exemplified in Femi Osofisan's *Women of Owu* (2006), which is an adaptation of Euripedes' *Trojan Women*.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework: Women and Conflict

Dennis Ityavyar and Stella Obiajunwa (1992:2) have made the point that "the Nigerian woman is not just the product of her biological origin or her social structure. She is equally the product of the various state policies that are designed within the context of the dominant male ideology." This is a conceptual truism. It implies that the Nigerian woman has been unequally yoked with the male counterpart and trapped by biology and social stratification within a patriarchal matrix. Ityayvar and Obiajunwa's assertion is corroborated by Omonubi-McDonnell's position that "the Nigerian women confront two distinct yet related systems of power: the economic mode of capitalism and the ideological mode of patriarchy" (1992:2). The two positions become clearer when collocated against the ripples occasioned by colonialism on Nigerian people. This is arguably because:

The African woman was never aware of gender problem in society until the advent of colonialism. Not that gender problems never existed the structural integration of Nigerians into the mainstream capitalism via colonialism has had adverse effects on the roles of women. Colonialism and capitalism brought a new social order. The new socio-economic order was predicated on Victorian Conceptions of womanhood. The African educational, legal and social system was altered in disfavour of the African woman. (Ityavyar and Obiajunwa, 1992:3)

In the contemporary African society, it appears that any appreciable discussion on women draws us back to gender. By gender, we refer to "the words, gestures, appearances, ideas and behaviours that dominant cultures understand as indices of feminine or masculine

identities" (Emenyonu, 2000:29). However, our theoretical starting point is the definition by the World Health Organisation (2018). According to WHO, gender is,

The socially constructed roles, traits, attitudes, behaviours, values, responsibilities, relative power, status and influence ascribed to male and female humans on a differential basis. Gender identity (masculinity/femininity) is not biological, but learned. It is changeable over time, and varies widely within and across cultures. Gender refers not simply to women and/or men, but to the relationships between and among them. Gender identities condition the way human beings are perceived, and how they are expected to think and act.

This broad definition sets the tone for a holistic conceptualisation of gender. However, the concept of gender is a thorny issue in itself, given the manner it has been misapplied in discourses. This explains why Carpenter (2002) asserts that "gender theory thus should distinguish between sex and gender, use both distinctly as independent variables; and seek to analyze the scope, context and logic behind what overlaps exist between the two" (2). Nevertheless, the misapplication of the concept of 'gender' appears to be as a result of the influence of sex-role theory as Kathleen Trigiani (n.d) puts it:

Sex-role theory implicitly assumes that our culture values the characteristics of each sex equally and that they complement each other in a balanced way. Women are just as esteemed for their passivity as men for their aggressiveness. Sex-role advocates will admit these traits have their limitations.

However, they always assure us that in the final analysis, conforming to our roles will bring glad harmony between the 'sexes'. This is a specious argument that leaves much to be desired in the worst-case scenario. It is partly in this sense that Carpenter (2002) posits that,

gender is a more complicated concept than sex.: ... Where sex is about maleness or femaleness (measured in biological difference), gender is about masculinity and femininity, measured in socially constructed and contextually contingent ideas about what attitude, attributes and behaviours correspond to ideal-type maleness or femaleness.

The point Carpenter makes is that the concept of gender explains variations across same-sex distribution, culture and time periods. The concept of sex explains uniformity within same sex distribution and variation between the sexes. As Carpenter (2002) further puts it,

Identifying gender as a social construction, fluid and malleable to suit the interest of the powerful, opens a broad explanatory power over a variety of phenomena. When the unnaturalness and the contingency of gendered identities and expectations is exposed, we can then ask: why is it that these particular configurations of gender appear in this particular context? Whose interests do they serve? How do they implicate outcomes?

This work is hinged on the critical feminist theory which is concerned with the “reformation of concepts and an attack on epistemological assumptions that affect the conception of the position of women in society” (Ityavyar & Obiajunwa, 1992:20). It is a theory of change that holds that “the long-established myths and evert jokes that misrepresent or downgrade women should be abolished to allow room for a new and a better socialization process in society which will not deny women their rightful positions in society’ (Ityavyar & Obiajunwa, 1992:20).

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement or clash between ideas, principles or people in any situation, condition and or circumstances. Interestingly, there is nothing inherently negative or positive about conflict. It is our perception and/or views that characterise our interpretation of any conflict. Thus, it is an irreducible truth that conflict is as old as man. This is partly because human relationship is necessarily conflictual. The historicity of conflict is such that every historical epoch is replete with conflict at a phenomenal level; an integral part of human existence (Isard, 1992, 1). This is corroborated by the assertion that conflict is an inevitability arising from choices and decisions in human interdependence (Zartman, 1991:370).

The conceptual definition of conflict here is hinged on the Relational theory of conflict, which holds that violence between groups can be explained when the sociological, political, economic and historical relationships between such groups are taken into account. In a conceptual sense, the paper proposes that all literary texts are a mediation of the dominant history and gender practices prevalent in the society that engendered their emergence. The result of this relationship is an ideology more often than not nuanced

in elitist politics which attempts to reify the masses into the worldview of the elite. Unfortunately, fewer women are found among Nigerian elites and it is the male gender that usually tells their story.

Synoptic Presentation of *Women of Owu*

The play which is an adaptation of Euripides' play *The Trojan Women* (415 BCE) dramatizes the story of the plight of women in war situations. An invasion by the combined forces of the armies of Ijebu and Ife, two Yoruba kingdoms in the south of what is now known as Nigeria, along with mercenaries recruited from Oyo refugees fleeing downwards from the Nigerian savannah land, sacks the city of Owu after a seven-year siege. The allied forces invade the city under the pretext of liberating the flourishing market of Apomu from Owu's control. Owu closes its gates. In the third year, worsening drought ensued, bringing hunger and starvation. In the seventh year, Owu inhabitants sensing that the allied forces had departed, decide to open the gates. The allied forces lurking in the bushes gain entry into the city killing all the males (adult and children) and carrying the females into slavery.

Ideology and the Story of African Women in Conflict Situation

From a historical point of view, Eagleton (2012:74) has attempted to roughly periodize the chronicle of modern literary theory in three stages, progressing from,

a preoccupation with the author... an exclusive concern with the text ... and a marked shift of attention to the reader over recent years. The reader has always been the most underprivileged of this trio-strangely, since without him or her there would be no literary text at-all.

The interesting aspect of storytelling is the simple fact that every story is told by somebody and for somebody. The strategic position of the reader is often neglected in favour of the story teller and the story itself. However, just as Heraclitus, the Greek philosopher once stated, no one can step into the same river twice, we can say that no two stories even of the same event are ever the same. What this presents is an ever-changing sameness/scenario.

This dialectic of ever-changing sameness is partly a function of ideology and/or aesthetics. In fact, every story (retell) is an aesthetic event not only because of what is selected or deselected, but because of how the retell is presented. The result of course is a mediated equation. This is partly so because, “the way in which the ideology of a class or other group is expressed in

literature ... will be affected or mediated by two sets of condition at the aesthetic level: (i)... the conditions of production of works of art and (ii) the existing aesthetic convention" (Wolff, 1993:61). While the second condition might not interest us much here, the first does a great deal. The fact that literary productions today in Africa (and stretching back to about seven decades ago) have been caught in the web of capitalist commodity production is indicative of the political system on which the economy is predicted. Money therefore is the basis for every transaction. The result is that one might have a good story to tell but without money, that story might never see the light of day in terms of publishing. Just as Wolff observes, "what gets produced and performed and received by audiences is often determined by straightforward economic facts" (1993:46).

Every storytelling is therefore a retell, often coloured (at other times marred) and mediated by ideological, sociological, historical, demographic and even economic factors. The fact is, the one who narrates the story almost always tells it with a tint of subjectivity. She can decide to edit one aspect out rather than the other for whimsical reasons. She can decide to tell the story with emphasis on this rather than that aspect. Well, that is as far as telling the story goes. The other issue is getting it published and the wherewithal to do this. And above all, how does the storyteller tell the story? How does she depict in the story the inner (ill) logic of society? For Aristotle then, it matters a great deal how the poet/dramatist depict the workings of society. And this, according to Aristotle, can be in one of three ways, "... we must represent men either as better than in real life, or as worse, or as they are" (Kess, 1997:3). This implies that the artist "... must imitate either things as they are, things as they are thought to be, or things as they ought to be" (Koss, 1997:3).

Incidentally, in Africa, both male and female authors have attempted to retell the story of the African woman. Nevertheless, the pendulum swings more in the direction of the male than the female. For example, the pioneer generation of Nigerian dramatists – Wole Soyinka, Ola Rotimi, John pepper Clark-Bekederemo and Zulu Sofola – have presented women in not too good light. Soyinka in *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1960) portrays Amope, Chume's wife, as a troublesome and nagging woman. Clark-Bekederemo in *Ozidi* (1966) presents Oreame as a witch and diabolical. Rotimi in *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again* (1977) depicts Sikira and Mama Rashida as traditional and docile women who were ready to tag along the men; Mama Rashida herself is an inherited wife. Flora Nwapa (2010) corroborates this when she asserts that:

Nigerian male writers, such as Chinua Achebe, Cyprian Ekwensi, Wole Soyinka, I. P. Clark and Elechi Amadi, have all in their earlier works played down the powerful role of women. Unlike Peter Abrahams, Ousmane Sembene, Nigerian male writers have in many instances portrayed women negatively or in their subordination to men. Ekwensi's Jagua Nana is a prostitute. Wole Soyinka's Amope is a ceaselessly nagging woman who makes life intolerable for her husband ... J. P. Clark's Eaeie entices her husband's younger brother into a sexual relationship. The focus has always been on the physical, prurient, negative nature of woman. (361-362)

The second generation of Nigeria's dramatists comprises the likes of Femi Osofisan, Bode Sowande, Segun Oyekunle, Kunle Omotoso, Tunde Fatunde, Tess Onwueme, etc. Here Osofisan and Onwueme stand tall. However, Osofisan remains the most prolific. Most of his plays have been staged widely across the length and breadth of Nigeria and Africa. Interestingly, Osofisan has also been outstanding in the manner in which he continues to retell the story of the African woman by subjecting historical materials to contemporary realities. These dramatists were affected by landmark events such as the Nigerian civil war which has led critics to label them as the Post War Generation. But more importantly, these writers have a philosophical outlook that was shaped by Marxism. No wonder their portrayal of women in their works differ somewhat from that of the first-generation writers. As Nwapa (2010) asserts:

Recent changes in Nigeria – the 1967-70 civil war, economic changes and an emphasis on the education of women – have affected men's views about women. Women have started to redefine themselves; they have started to project themselves as they feel they should be presented. (359)

Osofisan's Marxist ideological leaning often leads him to reconstruct and reinterpret history in favour of the oppressed class which often includes women. For instance, in *Morountodun* (1982), Osofisan,

... reinterprets the Moremi myth and legend of the past ... through the character of Titubi who plays the role of Moremi. Titubi's heroic impulse is spurred by the courage of Moremi who,

according to the legend, had earlier ensured victory for Ile-Ife people through her espionage activity. Titubi, unlike her legendary role model Moremi, fights for the government forces with aim of suppressing the peasant farmers' revolt against injustice and oppressive system of taxation. (Awodiya, 1995:40)

However, through careful characterisation, Osofisan makes Titubi experience the pains and sufferings of the peasant farmers which leads her to commit class suicide – “unlike the mythical Morerni who fought for the government forces to ensure victory for her ruling class” (Awodiya, 1995:40). Titubi switches camp from her rich and luxurious upper class to the proletariat class of the suffering and oppressed peasant farmers.

It is significant to note Awodiya's argument that “there are three groups of women in the plays of Osofisan” (1995:89). To this end, it is important to consider these 'groups' even if it is to see the application to the text under review. According to Awodiya,

The first group of women comprises young and progressive, positive and revolutionary women. Examples of these radical women are Funlola and Yajin in *The Chattering and the Song ...* the second group are the socially conscious liberal women who are eager for social reform. They do not lead the revolution themselves but are being led by more radical fighters for social justice Examples of the liberal women are the market women in *Once Upon Four Robbers*, the peasant women in *Morountodun*, ... The third group include conservative, reactionary and usually old women who lack consciousness and are adamant to social change. Such women who have tendencies to oppose or resist social transformation are Alhaja Kabirat in *Morountodun*, Tolu in *Who is Afraid of Solarin?* ... (1995, p. 89).

It can be argued that over all, what Osofisan has been able to achieve with these groups of women is portraying them as they are, as he thought them to be, and as they ought to be. This is a fair attempt to mediate the variegated narratives of women into our national consciousness. In addition, Osofisan has also shown that women are capable of initiating, engaging and sustaining the quest for social justice and transformation. Thus, women in Nigerian societies are strategic stakeholders to be reckoned with since they can be heard and seen as well.

Awe (2001) has succinctly chronicled Nigerian women, and this is worthy of mention. Although Awe's book is not a poem, however, in a sense, it equals Homer's *Odyssey* (700 BC) and *The Iliad* (750 BC), especially in the wealth of the history of Nigerian women it attempted to document for posterity. This book is also worthy of note because it can serve as a source material for dramatists to continually draw upon and present a more accurate picture of the positions of these women in the history of Nigeria, and their contributions to national development as a whole. The various themes then in Osofisan's *Women of Owu* reflect and mediate the mutating contexts of the African woman's challenges in conflict situations before colonialism, during colonialism and in today's neo-colonial Africa.

Thematic Analysis: *Women of Owu*

There are numerous themes in *Women of Owu*. A rundown will include the following:

- The after-effects of war (desolateness, rape, displacement, slavery, degradation, death)
- Greed/lust for power
- Sympathy for women
- Conceit of the gods /demystifying the powers of the gods
- Patriotism

From the various themes, focus shall be on three: conceit of the gods/demystifying the powers that be, the after effects of war, and sympathy for women. These three themes elicit the strength and thrust of the play, not to mention the aesthetic dimension Osofisan brings to the table of his adaptation.

The most glaring theme is the after-effects of war. It is within this matrix that we witness rape, displacement, slavery, degradation, and death of the citizens of Owu. Using a late point of attack approach, the play opens and ushers us straight into the thematic context. Owu has been sacked by the Allied Forces. The stage directions hint us thus:

The night before, the King, Oba Akinjobi had fled from the town, with some of his high chiefs and soldiers, leaving his family behind. The Allied Forces slaughtered all the men left in the town including the male children; and only the female children and women have been spared and made captives Visible in the background is the city itself, in ruins, and smoldering (Osofisan, 2006:1)

It is instructive to note that although in the nihilist rampaging of Owu women and female children are spared, we must not lose sight of the fact that earlier, the King, his Chiefs and some soldiers had fled, leaving the women and children behind. In addition, the fact that the women and children are taken into captivity is not a pleasant experience altogether. However, the two women from Owu who are accosted by Orisa Anlugbua and the dialogue that ensues is revealing. Anlugbua – "a former war leader, son of Oba Asunkungbade, ancestral founder of Owu Ipole, now also deified as *Orisa*" (Osofisan, 2006: ix). The conversation between them at the end only serves to highlight once again Osofisan's disdain and rejection of the superiority of the gods over human beings. At first the women are not aware of the man they are conversing with; to them he is just a mere stranger:

Anlugbua:

Tell me, dear women-

You seem to come from there
What's the name of the city I see
Smoldering over there?

Woman:

Stranger, you don't know? Look at my tears!

That was once the proud city of Owu, reduced to ruin yesterday ...

Anlugbua:

Yesterday

Woman:

Yesterday, old man!

For seven years we had held them off.
These invaders from Ijebu and Ife, together

With mercenaries from Oyo fleeing south from the Fulani forces. They said our Oba

Was a despot, that they came to free us
from his cruel yoke ...

Until yesterday, when a terrible fire engulfed the city
And forced us to open our gates. That was how
they finally gained entry and swooped on us ...
And before our very eyes here,..
(Stops, choked by emotion)

Woman:

They slaughtered them! All! ..

And shame, oh shame! Our women were seized
And shared out to the blood-spattered troops

To spend the night. Only some of us-
Were spared – those of us from the noble houses
And others whose beauty struck their eye:
We are being reserved, they say, for the Generals.
(*Women of Owu*, pp. 1.-2)

The glaring revelation here is the inability of the gods to come to the rescue of the people (in their time of need), who have worshiped them for ages. It is unimaginable that for seven years the gods did nothing to lift or deliver the people of Owu from the siege. Indeed, it's a shame that even after the slaughter and pillage, many women are raped and children (especially male), slaughtered. Then the women are filled with awe when they realise who Anlugbua really is:

Anlugbua:

My words were clear enough, I thought!
When any grave danger threatens the town,
How was it that no one remembered?

Woman:

You ... You ... Who are you?

Anlugbua:

Three times, I said! Call my name ... and I shall be back,
Sword in hand to defend you!

Woman:

Sword! That would have served little purpose
This time, I tell you! Because- eh! Yeh! Yeh!
What did you say? You ... you ... mo gbe! .
Is it you ... ? Have I stumbled upon
Impossible! My eyes have not seen.
No! Impossible!

Anlugbua:

Calm yourself, my dear women. You have nothing to fear!

Woman:

It's not you, is it? Let me not
Go blind today! It's not you, Orisa Anlugbua?
Not our ancestors they so talked so much about?

Anlugbua:

I said

Woman:

But – (Screams) So it's true, eh? Help Help! The god is here! ...

Anlugbua;

(Hard)

Sh! Quiet, I said! Calm yourself!

I don't want to be announced! Not yet! ...

Woman:

(Cowed) Yes ... yes ...

Anlugbua:

So go on, tell me all that happened here.

Woman:

(Whimpering with fright)

Ah ... ah ... (*Women of Owu*, pp. 3-4).

All the awe however soon turns to scorn when it dawns on them that the god that is so much talked about has failed them:

Woman:

Maye besieged our city for seven full years,
Because of woman, and would not go away!
For seven full years, the people of Owu
Suffered and refused to open the city gates.

Woman:

Seven years without rain they were, seven years,
Of failed harvest. All of those terrible years
Where were you, Anlugbua?

Anlugbua:

You did not send for me! You know
The oath I made forbade me to return
Here, unless you sent for me!

Woman:

After three years, the city
Began to starve of food and fruit,
And the streets stank of disease and death
But we never seized
To worship you, or pour libation at your shrine!
Where were you, Anlugbua?

Anlugbua:

Well, it's all over now
The Allies have got-what they wanted
I've come too late (*Women of Owu*, pp. 7-8).

Eventually, Anlugbua's subterfuges could not hold water; even the gods had to concede defeat no matter who is to be blamed. But that is not the worst yet. What follows is a denigration of the revered position of the gods; one of Osofisan's hallmarks:

Anlugbua:

It's very sad, my dear women!
But Still with all your tears, I, Anlugbua,
I am the real loser here,
Gods do not cry. But that only makes the pain deeper still.

Women:

So what do you want? What have you
Come back for? So that we may pity you,
We ourselves who ache for consolation?

Anlugbua:

I ask you – without a shrine, without worshipers,
What is a god? Who now will venerate us?
Who sing our praises among those ruins?

Woman:

Go back to your heavens, Anlugbua
And learn also how to cope with pain.
If only you gods would show a little more concern
For your worshippers!

Anlugba:

I confess, I am broken. Farewell my lost city.
Farewell my dear women, whose arguments
Shame me ... (*Women of Owu*, pp. 8-9)

Here, Osofisan once again demonstrates his dexterity in interrogating Yoruba myths/legends and traditions in an attempt to re-assert the strategic position of human beings in defining their reality and or destiny.

The second theme in focus is the after-effects of war. It is bad enough that the war took place, however, what follows after is even more devastating. The play is replete with the after-effects of war mainly in terms of desolateness, rape, displacement, slavery, degradation, and even death. In all these, it is the women who are left to cope with the effects.

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 the killings and carnage
To show that you are stronger than us? Did you
Have to plunge all these women here into mourning
Just to seize control over our famous Apoma market
Known all over for its uncommon merchandise?
(*Women of Owu*, p. 12)

These atrocities demonstrate the contradictions of war and only go to show that behind any war lie deep-seated personal ulterior motives.

The third and last theme we shall consider is that of sympathy for women. The courage of the remaining women of Owu is commendable. No matter how they

want to disagree with the gods, in the end their only recourse is to the gods who once again refuse to help them in the final ritual of sending the spirit of the dead to the here-after. However, the recourse to the gods is a bold step even if it is to fulfill all righteousness. This courageous posture paints the women in good light – a humanistic view that counters the hegemonic stance of other dramatists. The war may have been over and all the damages done, yet the rituals of life and death must continue and our spirits must move on. The implication of the courage displayed by the women of Owu is that this kind of never-die spirit should resonate in today's African woman.

Conclusion

We have considered Femi Osofisan's play text *Women of Owu* adapted from Euripides' Greek version *The Trojan Women* (315 BCE). The arguments that have been presented only go to show that in any story, the storyteller has the advantage to tell the story in one of three ways based on Aristotle's proposal. Interestingly, the manner in which Osofisan has chosen to re-tell this story is a commendation to the African woman in terms of the amount of sympathy they attract and the humanist perspective which Osofisan brings to bear on the work. In the end, the message cannot be mistaken: the remnant of the women of Owu (even as they go into slavery) will start a new Owu wherever they dwell and a new Owu will take root in several places. So, all hope is not lost.

The paper concludes that in reality, the irony of liberation is that the triumph of any side, unless based on genuine and fairgrounds, would only have set the stage for yet another conflict sooner than later, and the likelihood that women would be worse hit is still very high. This irony, within the literary text under review, is accentuated by the fact that more often than not, literary texts (owing to the nature of their literariness and coupled with the low level of literacy) in Nigeria and Africa at large are not available to a larger majority of the populace who are supposed to be the vanguard of the liberation; and here, women constitute a larger percentage.

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