

Playing Romanticism and Patriotism through History and Myth in Femi Osofisan's *Tegonni*: An African Antigone

Adebola ADEMESO Ph.D.

Department of Theatre Arts and Music, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos
bolames6@yahoo.com

Adebola ADEMESO Ph.D. is a Lecturer in the Department of Theatre Arts and Music, Lagos State University, Ojo, Lagos. His research interests include Sociology of Drama and Theatre, Media Arts, Dramatic Literature Theory and Criticism.

Abstract

The most engaging issue in Africa's postcolonial discourse is the search for a well defined identity that is reflective of continent's sociocultural heritage and experiences in the hands of her imperialists, through fascinating parables that best illustrate the power struggle, self-governance and democracy, the rule of law, and social justice, a war-free environment, unity in diversity, freedom of expression and association, with a conscious and passionate cry for patriotism, on the part of the leadership and the followership. The basic idea behind this is to create an enabling environment for the fusion of the pre-colonial and colonial experiences in order to mollify the harsh and unbearable neocolonial atmosphere occasioned by ethnic rivalry, selfishness, religious intolerance, youth restiveness, favouritism, poverty, feelings of insecurity, leadership misrule and dictatorial tendencies, large scale corruption, debts, hunger and diseases. The need to redress the *status quo* within the traditional *status quo ante*, through a reflective memory, triggers passion for the dynamism and diversity explorable in the literary and performance output of the postcolonial discourse, especially in Nigeria where the seed-bed of both literary and performance engagement is in the struggle for the survival of the nation, and a deliberate enthronement of civil order through democracy and self-governance that is rooted in the alliance between the traditional and the colonial signposts which are capable of creating a home-grown identity for Africa in all the areas of human endeavour.

In this study, however, Osofisan's *Tegonni: An Africa Antigone* is analysed within the ambit of his romantic and patriotic zeal, and his use history and myth toward finding needed solutions to the sociopolitical problems in Africa.

Keywords: Drama, History, Myth, Culture, Self-Determination.

Introduction

The totality of Werbner's anthropological excursions in *Memory and the Post-Colony* (1998), Ngugi wa Thiong'o's *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Teju Olaniyan's survey in *Scars of Conquest/ Masks of Resistance* (1995), Appiah's philosophical standpoints in *In My Father's House* (1992) and the illustrative postcolonial picture of African literature in styles and techniques in Chinweizu *et al.*'s *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature* (1980), seek to redefine the African identity within the precepts of postcolonial scholarship for the purpose of creating a new Africa in the world view. To them, the new Africa *must* be forged out of the bits and pieces of her historical past and the scars of colonial imperialism with a strong bias for patriotism and nationalism (Osofisan, 1972:1-20). While this search is unabated among scholars, dramatists like Wole Soyinka, Athol Fugard, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ola Rotimi, Bode Sowande, Ama Ata Aidoo, Efua Sutherland, Kole Omotoso, Mukotani Ruyendo, Sarif Easmon, Ebrahim Hussein, Lewis Nkosi, have come to terms with the dialectical relevance of history and myth, extracted from the African past; before the invention of the *new* Africa, the tragedies and disillusionments subtly, and in most cases, violently created through the Holy Books (*Bible* and *Quran*), jack boots and guns of the imperialists, in order to interpret the myriad of sociopolitical and economic problems befalling contemporary Africa.

The postcolonial African drama and theatre exploit the history and myth of the pre-colonial and colonial experiences for cultural, political, economic and social rejuvenation and continuity beyond the Afrocentric paradigms of *negritude*. It is geared towards articulating the passionate and cultural needs of Africans with a considerable sense of patriotism and nationalism. This, in turn, expresses itself through the import of scientific and technological development in Africa in general and in Nigeria in particular.

Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963) paints a graphic picture of the colonial idiosyncrasies, and how these have affected the growth and development of Africa and other third world nations, especially on the need to have a vision for *national consciousness and national culture*, which form the bedrock for the dramaturgic expressions of the contemporary dramatist. Osofisan, for instance, sees himself as an ally of Fanon, especially in the transformation through human consciousness and freedom. This is clearly portrayed in *Tegonni: An African Antigone* (1999), where history and myth become powerful mechanics for the articulation of

sociocultural dichotomy. It is also in a bid to show the parable of power and struggle for liberation in a *postcolonial state*. Though the story-events adopt multiple origins- the events in the colonial era and the exploration of the Greek mythology of *Antigone* as used by Sophocles in the 5th century B.C., the paradox of Greek mythology of *Antigone* and the contrived historical events in the Yoruba-speaking area in Nigeria during the colonial era are deliberately used to signpost the essential values of patriotism amid cultural identity and nationalism.

The major factor to be considered in this play is the universal essence of rebellion; an outright rejection of an unpleasant social order, and a radical demand for social justice and equity. This cuts across races and ethnic nationalities. A fight for liberty and freedom (democracy) is not an exclusive preserve of a particular people; it has roots in both history and myth. Osofisan's search for social justice and freedom, in a postcolonial state, sees a link between the Western mythology and African (Nigerian) history through which human dignity, self-determination, self-awareness and self-identity can be redefined.

However, the most passionate dialectical impulse in this play is premised on the heterogeneity of struggle against all forms of oppressive mechanism, historical or contemporary. It is not just to harp on the ideological provision as attributable to the works of committed African artists and writers (Jeyifo, 1985) or an exploration of the class struggle which tends to be the thrust of the drama and theatre of the radicals of the left wing. Though this play may be viewed from the prism of multiple projections of the death of oppression and a dawn of optimism for the sociopolitical and economic growth of Africa.

Tegonni, the African symbol of hope and optimism, sees her rights as God-given, and the consciousness and awareness of these rights are instigated by her natural and traditional combative upbringing coupled with the tutelage from her fiancé, Captain Allan Jones, who happens to be a representative (District Officer) of Her Royal Majesty, the Queen of England, in Oke-Osun. A reflection on this standpoint suggests that the battle for survival can only be fought for and won through a multiplicity of approaches, which may involve a combination of traditional and Western intellectual dialectics. Genuine freedom and liberty requires all efforts, foreign or local, even if it means using the captor's wisdom. This can be propelled by self-assertion, self-consciousness and self-realisation as alternative ideological realities upon which the strength of romanticism and patriotism can be built. Patriotic sensibility calls humanity to action for the progress and renewal of a society in the throes of despondency and despair.

Furthermore, these alternative ideological realities may be useful if an individual can free himself from the traditional and historical bondages that may constitute hindrance in the way of struggle, as done by Tegonni, who ventures into bronze casting; a profession only known to men, but through tenacity of purpose and self-determination for the best, the deviant spirit in Tegonni becomes a useful path to liberty for the people of Oke-Osun. The traditional and cultural signposts that tend to stand in the way of the progressive transformation of a society must also be defied. This espouses the radical disposition of Marxism, especially within the ambit of material needs and existentialist realism. Tradition and culture should therefore, in the view of Osofisan, not be a barrier against the struggle for progress. The history is meant to serve as gauge through which contemporary and the future events can be measured in order to determine the dynamics of humanity in sociopolitical and religious context.

Tegonni... employs multiple dramatic techniques that are characterized by Osofisan's search for appropriate media through which his ideological strength and dramaturgy could be viewed; a conscious use of the interplay of the aesthetics of history, myth, legends and oral African traditions, as observed in scene five; a deliberate subversion of Greek mythology of *Antigone* to fit into the historical and oral traditions of Africa with a view to exploring the tragic paradox (Oko, 1992) recognisable in the contemporary world, provides a strong force for the dramatic technique and dynamism, just as the narrative technique is in consonance with the African folkloric sensibility. For instance, *The Story of the Tiger and the Frog (Recent Outings...*, 1999:94-101) reminds us of the African moonlight night entertainment but it has sociopolitical and moral implications or messages. The politics behind this kind of folklore is to show the interplay between oppressive force and wisdom in order to reflect the human fooleries within the scope of ideology.

The literary paradigms in *Tegonni...* project, strongly, the creative force as used by Osofisan; the language is multicultural and highly political. There is a clear distinction between the romantic and patriotic cries of the British imperialists as represented by Lt. General Carter Ross and Captain Allan Jones, the British Governor and District Officer respectively, on one hand, and the rebellious but visionary disposition of Tegonni and her friends on the other. The pulse of language of *Antigone* and *Tegonni* elucidates a link between myth, history and the postcolonial world especially in the articulation of a strong passion for dialectical aesthetics which could serve as a catalyst for the rebirth of a society with vision and mission for the growth of humanity in a world of despotism. Osofisan's use of accessible language in *Tegonni...* suggests a clear indication of his commitment to the masses whose plight he considers needs urgent attention and apprehension through every mechanism available.

The import of Osofisan's language in this play can be best diagnosed and understood within the

traditional and cultural aesthetics of the Ijebu Yoruba subgroup of Western Nigeria, and the historical mythological landscape of Nigeria and Greece. Beyond this, a distribution of language is observable among the characters, reflecting their social status in the play. This is not an attempt at highlighting the class distinction in the society but as a way of reflecting the *status quo ante* and *status quo* in a postcolonial state.

Collective Struggle for Survival

Beyond the dictates of the colonial and neocolonial conspiracies against the growth and development of humanity, it is imperative for self-conscious and visionary individuals to come together and in one voice, to save, *forcefully* and rationally, the society from the gaping jaws of despondency, created by the internal and extraneous leadership misrule. Osofisan's position in *Tegonni...*, shows that a collective struggle by the society can achieve a wide range of success. This struggle may be triggered by an individual's consciousness and patriotism, however, once it is aimed at the betterment of the society, it should enjoy positive consideration. Tegonni's triumphant disposition is a collective one. She enjoys the support of her friends, who share her views and are also ready to die with her, if the need arises. It is the voice of unity in a society that delivers it from the oppressive claws of terror. Genuine freedom can only be won through collective struggle. This is Osofisan's advocacy.

However, collective struggle is usually propelled by patriotism, and it is absolutely beyond the romantic signpost. Tegonni finds ally in her mind, her fiancé Captain Allan Jones, and her conscience, with a vision for tomorrow. The tendency to appropriate the tenets of the collective voice of the people in the struggle for democracy and self-determination in the society may have instigated the efforts of Osofisan in metaphorically building his characters in *Tegonni*. It is also not by accident that Tegonni, though a woman, sees herself as conduit, together with her friends, toward liberating Oke-Osun. Both the physical and emotional ambiances of the protagonist could also be viewed as fulfilling the dictates of Marxism and feminism. Though the collective struggle for good governance and democracy is not the exclusive preserve of Marxist and feminist schools of thought, it is also a rational and humanist attempt at making a society free from all forms of oppressive and dictatorial conceptions and realities.

Self-determination and Resource Control

The significant cry in the modern economy and politics is the need for every individual nationality and race to determine its fate and also have a full control of its means of production and exchange. Osofisan uses *Tegonni...*, to project this age-long cry for resource control which is fast gaining support from every individual that is conscious of his rights in Nigeria.

Tegonni could be seen as a metaphor for the third world nations, like Nigeria, while Lt General Carter Rose, the British Governor, is the symbol of the West. One can conclude that Osofisan wants the Western nations to leave African countries alone to determine their fate, especially in the areas of politics, economy and social order. The crisis in Sudan, Rwanda, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo have been traced to the strong influence of Europeans and Americans who export weapons of war to these countries for the purpose of taking control of their national resources, like diamond, gold and oil, just as the European and American governments, from history, take pleasure in creating crises in order to take advantage of the nations in distress. Prince Adoloro and Prince Oyekunle could also be seen in the light of Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi, and Osofisan's metaphor in this regard stresses that myth, history and the contemporary issues have one or two lessons to learn from one another. Adoloro who had the support of the British Empire died just as Oyekunle who had the support of Dahomi force was killed and left to be devoured by vultures leaving the leadership (throne) position vacant. This created an opportunity for the British government to perpetuate itself in power. It may also be a lesson for African nations to solve their internal crises by themselves, away from the intervention of the foreign powers. To Osofisan, it is shameful, if the internal crises cannot be solved, and this disappointment and despair as expressed by Kunbi confirms the acts of treachery and betrayal among ethnic nationalities in Africa.

You see now, my friends! This is the drama of our defeat as a people! Adoloro will be buried well. The one who licked the Governor's boots shall be allowed to go to the grave with honour. But the one who opposed him, also stood for his rights, will be fed to the dogs...

(*Recent Outings...*, 1999:93)

In Nigeria, the issues of self determination and resource control are common songs among the various ethnic nationalities, especially in the Niger Delta region where ninety percent of the nation's revenue comes from. Oil, to the Niger Delta people, is supposed to be a natural blessing, but it has been turned into a curse through the unwholesome activities of the foreign oil companies that exploit oil in the region without any developmental efforts for the people. The health hazard people are exposed to, through oil exploration and spillages, and the level of poverty in the Niger Delta triggered the struggle for self-determination and survival.

Since their means of survival and economy have been destroyed by oil spillages, they have no other

option than to agitate for their own share of the money that the Nigerian government is making from their resources. Osofisan's *Tegonni...* reflects the radical aesthetics of the various Niger Delta human rights struggles, as represented by the more violent and confrontational groups like the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), Ijaw Youth Council (IYC), Ogoni Movement (OG) who are at the vanguard of agitation for better living conditions for the people of the Niger Delta. It may not be a misplaced argument that *Tegonni*, as a character, may have been crafted to symbolise Ken Saro Wiwa who was killed together with his kinsmen in 1995, by General Sanni Abacha regime, for leading a protest against the oil companies in the Niger Delta. Osofisan's radical reaction to the Niger Delta questions in *Tegonni...*, can be seen as a direct one just as expressed in Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*, J. P. Clark's *Oil Boom* and Tunde Fatunde's *No More Oil Boom* that explore the dynamic nature of crisis, and *causes or curses* of oil in a helplessly crippled society. While these other plays may have adopted historical and diplomatic approaches to the solution to the Niger Delta crisis, Osofisan's standpoint is more radical and revolutionary and it is also in tune with the genuine agitation of the Niger Delta people of Nigeria.

However, it must be pointed out that Osofisan's solution does not include violence and armed struggle, kidnapping, hostage and ransom taking, bunkering, rape, stealing, bombing of oil facilities, killing of soldiers and foreigners among other tactics associated with some militant groups in the Niger Delta. Rather, he prefers a conscious effort at fighting for one's right through rational appeal to the conscience of the conquerors. *Tegonni*'s confidence is informed by the tutorial she received from her husband-to-be, Allan, and it is this that helps her in her agitation for her rights, even in the face of death.

Gov... you wish to die, I see, but you seem to forget that there are still a hundred and one ways of making you suffer, even before death comes.

Tegonni: I don't doubt your competence in such matters, General. After all you've had practice on our people all these years. But remember, you were the one who came here to find me.
(*Recent Outing...*, 1999:82)

Her courage and resolve could be likened to that of Igwezu's in Soyinka's *The Swamp Dwellers*, who was determined to know the causes of the predicament of his people despite the huge sacrifices made to the goddess for good harvest. However, according to Osofisan (2008), Soyinka never thought that Igwezu in *The Swamp Dwellers*, written in 1956, would graduate to gun toting militant in the 2000s.

I need not say much about the play. I am sure you all can see already how much it predicted the present crisis in the Niger Delta region. The Igwezus have now acquired guns and bombs and turned into militants. Their dissident, self-seeking militia are kidnapping and taking ransom from hostages. Anomie is upon us. (Osofisan, 2008: 14)

Beyond the metaphor of the Niger Delta crisis, Osofisan explores the dynamics of leadership problems in Nigeria in *Tegonni...*, and concludes, through the relationship between Governor and the people of Oke-Osun, that what exists between the leaders and the led is fear and mistrust. The British Empire acquired the Oke-Osun through guns, and in stills fear in the hearts of the people. The people are not sure of what could happen in the next moment. In Nigeria, for instance, the annulled presidential election of June 12th 1993 brought about increase in the number of the civil society and pro-democracy groups. Whether they are genuine agitators or not, the fact still remains that the Nigeria leadership is not to be trusted just as *Tegonni* does not see anything good coming from Governor Carter Rose, nicknamed Mr. Slap-My-Face. The leadership is constituted by a small powerful group either as military or civilians, and foreign multinational business interest who feed fat at the expense of the poor. Ironically, the poor people in this regard are the wealth (resources) owners. Osofisan's view of freedom is canvassed through the courage, resoluteness and commitment of *Tegonni*. He also recognises that in the fight for liberty and self-determination, there would always be traitors and collaborators with the oppressors. Both the internal (military and civilians) and external (foreign and imperial powers) oppressors always use the people against themselves in order to achieve their goals:

Isokun: No... look, take reverend here! When I look at him, for instance - I ask, who were the people who came and captured him, and sold him to the ship that took him to slavery in America? Was it not our own people, of the same colour of skin as you and me?...

Built the baracoons, as agents! Devastated villages, set fire to once-flourishing towns, as agents! Marched hundreds of women and children through swamp and forest in rain and heat, as agents! Tell me, what cruelties have we not inflicted on ourselves, we black people, as agents in the service of others! (*Recent Outings...*, 1999: 107-108)

Reverend Bayo in this case reminds one of the pathetic but glorious stories of Bishop Ajayi Crowther,

who was sold into slavery and later became one of the most celebrated Bishops in black African history. He was born in 1909 in Osogun, Oyo State of Nigeria, and in 1821, he was captured by the slave-raiders. He had his education in Fourah Bay College and became Anglican Church Priest when he was freed by the British war ship. Today, the history of missionary and western education in Africa is not complete without the name of Bishop Ajayi Crowther. However, Osofisan sees the need, in *Tegonni...*, to speak consciously to Africans especially those who collude with the imperial powers to pillage their people's wealth, that the game is up, and that this is the time for them to retrace their steps. The evil being perpetrated against the innocent people must be stopped. Osofisan also wants the black people to speak truthfully to themselves. For instance, Isokun says to Tegonni:

Forget the Governor now. I know he
seems all powerful, but to spend our
time fighting him is to merely waste
our energy. He is not the enemy,
but we ourselves.

(*Recent Outings...*, 1999: 107)

In this regards, however, the oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, the Western imperial powers who have stolen the wealth of Africans and the slave raiders in Africa may not have succeeded if they did not have the full cooperation of the black people. In the appeal to Tegonni by Isokun, it is obvious that the real enemies of the black race are the black people themselves just as the problems of the Nigerian people and the Niger Delta region can only be solved when the people are ready to be sincere and truthful to themselves.

Yoruba Ethnography: The Egungun Cult Example

As part of Osofisan's radical and revolutionary response to the socio-political issues he attempts to demystify the social and traditional order. He sees crisis as a harbinger of creative efforts that save man from dangers. Though Egungun cult in Yoruba land is a sacred one, only the initiates are allowed to participate in its major activities. Women are also allowed to be involved in its events up to some extent. Women are not allowed to wear the masquerade masks, touch the masques, and to be too close to the masquerades. They may be singers or chorus. But Osofisan allows his women to do all these in order to scare the soldiers and Governor who mistook them for the real bull roarers. Beyond this bull roaring is an exclusive role of men in the society for ritual cleansing. It is done to ward off Spirits. Osofisan, in this respect, sees the arts and cultural phenomena as tools that could be used to provide for the need of the people in moments of crises. Culture and tradition should not be too rigid; they must change and adapt.

Women in masks! Our world is changing fast,...

(*Recent Outings...*, 1999:111)

The new age Osofisan advocates for in *Tegonni...*, should be without any restriction; where women and men would be treated equally, where culture, tradition and law would not be hindrances to their progress. For women to be allowed into the sacred grove of Egungun and Osugbo cult, just to be hidden away from the immediate danger, Osofisan makes the subversive standpoint as a way of charting a new age, a metaphor for a positive transformation.

Our world is changing,. Even faster than we feared. Yes, it's a new age! We are on the
brink of a great transformation

(*Recent Outings...*, 1999:112).

Playing Metaphor in *Tegonni...*

The desire of every play director is to meet and sustain the aesthetic and professional interest and the demand of his target audience within the available human and material resources, and with a strong consideration for a balanced assessment between the artistic fulfillment and profit making. But it must be pointed out that artistic creation in Africa is primarily for the positive growth of the society, while the *profit* derivable through such an engagement is ploughed back into the creative work, for the purpose of continuity. Therefore, producing or playing *Tegonni ...* requires a communal and collective effort of the artistes of the theatre interplaying with a wide sense of precision and history, with the use of metaphor. The communal effort in this regard helps to discern the metaphorical import of *Tegonni...* because each of the artistes in the theatre has a definite role that is geared towards a collective goal spearheaded by a director.

A director of *Tegonni...* must be very creative, through the use of actors and other material resources, in order to project his message. The play poses a great challenge to a director that enjoys experimenting with a large cast and highly technical scenery. Directing a play with a multi-faceted mode – history and myth-could be very interesting and demanding. It is a play one could describe as a director's play because of its artistic and creative demands; the metaphor in the play requires the skill of the director, and it is not a play that an amateur director could pick up and attempt to direct without a background knowledge of Osofisan's dramaturgy, artistic predilections and ideological aesthetics, because these are the dynamics of Osofisan's theatre. Songs, music,

dance, mime and story-telling and folklore within Yoruba or African atmosphere are variously used to sustain the strength of the play from the beginning to the end.

In November, 1998, *Tegonni...* was adopted as a Convocation and 50th anniversary play by the University of Ibadan. The play was directed by Femi Osofisan himself, and the cast and crew were drawn from the Diploma One right up to the Ph.D students of the University of Ibadan Department of Theatre Arts, and students from other Departments in the University. While members of staff of the Department of Theatre Arts provided technical support, some professionals were invited from outside the University to play some roles in the production of the play (*Recent Outings...*, 1999: 6-7).

The play was adopted for the University's 50th Anniversary because of the following reasons: the University of Ibadan is a legacy of the erstwhile British administration in Nigeria, and attaining the age of fifty was a thing of joy; the play was meant to make the Nigerian leaders to begin to forge a new nation through a collective strength and struggle where democracy, the rule of law, social justice, equality and fair play would reign, especially at the time Nigeria was transiting from the Military dictatorship to the civilian administration; and the 50th anniversary of the University of Ibadan actually called for a great celebration which must bring people from all walks of life together both as participants and audience, and *Tegonni...* provided such an opportunity that reflects both African and Western (British) cultural aesthetics and ideology. However, it must be pointed out that *Tegonni...* may as well pass for the Nigerian independence anniversary play because of its topicality on the Nigerian democracy, freedom and social justice. The play has a strong metaphor capture the oppressive tendencies of postcolonial African leaders.

Actors of *Tegonni...* must understand the various acting skills associated with Osofisan's drama. Beyond the aesthetic demands of the play, the actors need to know that the ideological tenet of the playwright is crucial to the performance of the play. Actors that involve themselves in *Tegonni...* must be ready to burn a lot of energy on dance, song rendition, and mime. For instance, Tegonni, as a character, combines the meekness of a dove with the aggression of a cat. Therefore, the actress for this role must be able to interplay between these two virtues, in equal proportion. Tegonni's meekness and love reflect in her relationship with Captain Allen Jones while her aggression pours out against all the debasing and dehumanising mentality of Lt. Gen. Carter-Ross.

Tegonni, as a character to be acted out, is a "complex and dynamic one especially in the use of emotion and verbal expressions laden with a great measure of cynicism, sarcasm and paradox which are essential for the strength of metaphor in the play. The following monologue of Tegonni proves that the character is also strong, fearless, determined, caring, understanding and loving.

My fathers and my mothers. My dear mates. And you, Gomina, who rule over our lives. My dear people, I wish first of all to apologise to you all for subjecting you to this humiliation. I should have known better, I'm old enough. A defeated people have no rights. They have no dignity. They have no freedom.

It was futile ambition, therefore, to try to decide our own leader for ourselves, to determine who would be best to sit on our throne. Only a free people have that luxury, and we are not free...

The army occupying us now is not interested in our happiness, only in power and its benefits. They will loot all our resources, and further enslave us... As you all know, I was never much interested in politics... All I was interested in was my dancing and my bronzes. And oh; how happy I was when I thought I did win the love of the finest man I've ever met, that wonderful white man who, unlike his countryman, was always so humane and gentle.

I am sorry. I can't help it, I loved him. Yes, I knew he was not one of us, that he was of the race of our masters, those who continue to trample over us... (*Recent Outings...*, 1999:134-136)

This monologue signifies the high point in the play, and it also exposes the emotional strength of Tegonni as a living character with a magnetic and repelling disposition; other characters in the play are either made to act in the same tempo, pace or space as she does, or they assume the opposing actions as those of Lt. Gen. Carter Ross. However, the 1998 production of the play, at the University of Ibadan, had Binta Ayo Mogaji, a seasoned actress in Nigeria, as Tegonni, and her double-casts were Bunmi Opajobi and Bola Olanrewaju (*Recent Outings...*, 1999:6) who had to play the role at each of the performance. The acting skill required by Tegonni as a character is far beyond the competence of an amateur in training. Binta Ayo Mogaji was not a student of the University of Ibadan, as at that time in 1999, but because Osofisan needed an experienced actress to project the vibrancy and dynamism exemplified in the character of Tegonni, he had to contact her. The double-casts (Bunmi Opajobi and Bola Olanrewaju), who were students of the University of Ibadan, then provided a strong back-up for the lead actress.

It must also be noted that Osofisan, as the director of the production (1998) needed to balance the acting experience of Binta Mogaji with that of Tunji Sotimirin (though, a Masters student, 1997 – 1998, in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ibadan), another seasoned actor, who played Lt. Gen. Carter-Ross.

The interplay between Tegonni and Lt. Gen. Carter-Ross explores the paradox in the Western Power (Politics) and the naivety of the traditional landscape, and the actor and actress for these roles must be ready to play round these virtues to portray the metaphorical concern of the playwright.

However, in this play, Osofisan has succeeded in bringing out a passionate quest for freedom and liberty for a society that is going through a delicate transitional period. And the significance of metaphor in this regard aligns history and myth with the reality with a view to making a postcolonial society see historical and mythopic events as the basis for shaping the society of today and of tomorrow.

Antigone, The Island and Tegonni...: The Meeting Points

The most enduring aspect of literary work is in its meaning and relevance to the period in which it is written. Such work could also be assessed through its use of metaphor as a semiological mode, especially in the areas of language, stage iconographies (sets, props, costumes, makeup, etc.), dance, music, songs and thematic representation through characters that could be identified in our society. However, every dramatic and theatrical piece is expected to instigate a course that has a value from which the society must benefit or at the least see itself for probable adjustment to the well-being of the people.

Sophocles' *Antigone* of Greek 5th century has a strong influence on the radical and feminist disposition of the contemporary world, and playwrights like Athol Fugard and Femi Osofisan have taken what appeals to them in this play for the purpose of creating their message. Sophocles, though, never envisioned radicalism or feminist revolution, but because every work of art is a metaphor that could be subjected to varying interpretations, Fugard and Osofisan found relevance in *Antigone* to their world hence their recreations. But the most significant storyline remains in Fugard's *The Island* and Osofisan's *Tegonni...* even though the story is recreated for different purposes and from different angles. In Sophocles' *Antigone*, the death and burial of King Oedipus created a vacuum in the leadership of Thebes, and by tradition one of his sons must ascend the throne, but because of the rift between them they both engaged in a war that eventually took their lives. Polynices and Eteocles died in the war and Antigone, their sister, buried Polynices who was considered as enemy of the state in defiance of the order of Creon, master of the City. The penalty for defying this order was death, and the entire city was silent about it. So, the major issue in this play is the burial of Polynices by Antigone against the order of Creon and the helplessness of the people whose voices have been taken by a terror.

However, the inspiring factor in this play, for Fugard, is the quest for justice and fairness. This is why his adaptation of *Antigone* into *The Island* is in form of enactment by the two prisoners in the Robben Island prison. Robben Island is one of the most dangerous prison cells in the South African during the apartheid regime. In this cell prisoners were dehumanised, tortured and broken for no just cause. Fugard is more interested in the message of *Antigone* that could be used to project the dialectics of power and inhumanity in a state. Fugard's attempt in *The Island* is also geared towards a search for social justice and the rule of law. John and Winston, the prisoners, see themselves as victims of a state terror, as represented by Creon in Sophocles' *Antigone*. Moreover, because Fugard wanted to avoid the state's "anger" he resolved to the use of metaphor that allows him to put words in the mouth of his characters, John and Winston. John and Winston in *The Island* are only used by Fugard to perform the Sophocles' *Antigone* for radical projection. The trails and travails of Antigone are explored by Fugard just to highlight his strong condemnation of the heinous crimes of apartheid system against humanity. Sophocles never aimed at this conclusion, but Fugard sees it is an attempt at bringing to the fore the parallel lines between the Greek of 5th century and the contemporary African situation. A rape on the human dignity and pride, and an abuse of power, man's inhumanity to man form the bane of Fugard's *The Island*. John and Winston are the symbolic representations of the South African people who have been subjected to all forms of oppression and repression by the government.

Beyond the South African apartheid system, Fugard aims at exploring the dynamic nature of power in the hands of the most ambitious rulers who see dissenting voices as oppositions that must be suppressed or in the least be kept off the society. John and Winston could also be seen as artists and revolutionaries whose position in the society cannot be overlooked. But a government that rules with terror cannot accept such revolutionaries.

Athol Fugard may have explored the trials of Antigone by Creon as the high point in Sophocles' *Antigone* for the purpose of reflecting the mythical and historical antecedent of man's abuse of power, and inordinate ambition. In a rather satirical manner, Fugard portrays Creon as an agent of terror whose ambition it is to feed fat on the state's resources, and also show the strength of his power to unarmed citizens. To heighten the satirical presentation of Sophocles' *Antigone* in *The Island*, Fugard uses pun, burlesques, paradox, as forms of metaphor just to draw a graphic picture of his message for the modern world.

But have you ever paused to ask yourself whose responsibility
it is to maintain that fatness and happiness? The answer is simple,
it is, if not? ...your servant the king! But have you then gone on to
ask yourself what does the king need to maintain his happy state
of affairs? What, other than his silly crown, are the tools with which

a king fashions the business of his people? The answer is equally simple, my good people. The law! Yes. The law. A three-lettered word, and how many times haven't you glibly used it, never bothering to ask yourselves, 'what then is the law?'" (Fugard, *et al*, 1974: 73-74)

The language of *Antigone* is updated with radical venom in *The Island* just to satirise the authority of the state. The imageries and metaphors in the stage iconographies in *The Island* are meant to give credence to the dehumanizing and agonizing situation in which the people of South Africa found themselves.

Taking a cue from Fugard's *The Island*, Osofisan's *Tegonni...* expanded the scope of discourse in Sophocles' *Antigone* for revolutionary and socialist realism, and also for artistic vision. Perhaps, the socialist and feminist dispositions in Sophocles' *Antigone* are fairly revealed in Osofisan's *Tegonni...* unlike Fugard's *The Island* where less emphasis is placed on the physical confrontation between Antigone and Creon. Osofisan uses the confrontation between Tegonni and Lt. General Rosse to strengthen his feminist ideological position in the struggle for freedom and justice. Though, *Antigone* may not be seen as a play that deals with feminist revolt against social injustice as such but it could be appraised as a play that explores man's attempt at disobeying an obnoxious state order. Osofisan, in *Tegonni...*, examines the political, social, religious and economic place of women in myth, history, folklore and legends with the aim of establishing the dialectics of power and ideological revolution. *Tegonni...* treats more issues than its precursors, *Antigone* and *The Island*. For instance, social justice and the place of women have been a common trend in the contemporary discourse but Osofisan is more radical in his treatment of it in *Tegonni...* and it is not by coincidence that he retains the gender of the lead character, Tegonni, as a woman in conformity with his feminist ideological leanings. In Osofisan's view, women should be allowed to be agents of social change. Every work of art, especially drama and theatre should be designed for the promotion of the positive impact of women in a socially and politically changing society. Therefore, *Tegonni...* is an advancement on the earlier position of Sophocles on social justice and the place of women in nation building.

However, while *Antigone* may be considered as an exploration of the place of law and religion in a search for social justice, Osofisan's *Tegonni...* displays religion, traditions and culture as tools for subjugation in a postcolonial state, and it is only people that are affected by this that could liberate themselves. Liberation can only, therefore, come from self-realisation and self determination.

Beyond the thematic and ideological paradigms, Osofisan widened the performative elements in his adaptation unlike the Aristotelian dramatic constructs in *Antigone* where the chorus plays a dominant theatrical role of dancer, singer and actor. Just as the story in *Antigone* is told with a fusion of Nigerian and Yoruba histories, myths and culture in *Tegonni...*, Osofisan displays a dexterous use of music, songs and dance performance traditions for the purpose of establishing the relevance of his message.

Beyond the cultural and political environments in *Antigone*, *The Island* and *Tegonni...* the common trend in them is a quest for social justice, freedom, and strong confrontation of the abuse of power and inordinate ambition. Osofisan's metaphor in *Tegonni...* is both dynamic and relevant to all ages and cultural and political environments that have found themselves in the midst of oppression and social injustice. However, Osofisan, in most of his adaptations of older works attempts to "plead an opposing point of view ...in a conscious aim to contest some of (the) stated positions" (Osofisan, 1974:201) and it is often done to enlarge the issues raised in the previous work apart from updating them to be relevant to the contemporary world.

Apart from Osofisan, according to Obafemi (2001: 165-172), other African writers like Soyinka, Rotimi, Ofeimun, "have benefited, consciously or unwittingly, from the post-structuralism phenomenon, which contends that interpretation depends on the interpretative envisioning of an individual reader of any given text" (165-166). This is premised on the need to broaden one's horizon as one progresses in a dynamic world of art and science. A reader's interpretation of an established work may, however give birth to a new work that is aimed at advancing the older one, especially within the scope of ideology and artistic vision.

Conclusion

Though Osofisan's aim in his adaptation of *Antigone* is for the advancement of his socialist philosophy just as he did to Soyinka's *Strong Breed* which he recreated as *No more the Wasted Breed*, and *Another Raft* that has come to be described as a response to Clark's *The Raft*. Osofisan's recreative exercises in the intertextual strategy is both reactionary and radical in nature because he sees mythology, ritual sacrifice, history and folklore as used by older playwrights as metaphors that could be deployed for the ideological use of the society. If Fugard's *The Island* could be considered as a humanist and subversive interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, Osofisan's *Tegonni...* is more revolutionary and socialist in its treatment of history, myth, folklore, tradition and culture. However, Sophocles' *Antigone* is not the only Greek play adapted by Osofisan for revolutionary aesthetics, his *Women of Owu* was contrived from Euripides' *The Trojan Women*. The aesthetics of dance, songs, poetry and other stage iconographies – movements, lights, sets, props, costumes and make up- are deliberately fashioned out

to project Osofisan's mastery of stage crafts for the purpose of radical polemics. However, of all the playwrights in Africa Osofisan may have benefited from older works more than any other playwright. For instance, his "Wesoo! Hamlet" has its origin in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Who's Afraid of Solarin?* is adapted from Nikolai Gogol's *The Government Inspector* and "The Adventure in the Forest of a Thousand Daemons" recreated from D.O. Fagunwa's Yoruba epic novel, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* apart from the earlier discussed works. Osofisan's exploits in the creation and interpretation of classical, renaissance and modern; British, American, French and Yoruba works could provide a new story for scholars but it is clear enough that he uses his exploits to bring his revolutionary and socialist points of view closer to his audience and readers.

References

- Appia, K. 1992. *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture*. New York : Oxford University Press.
- Chinweizu, et al. 1980. *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature*. Enugu : Fourth Dimension Publishers.
- Fanon, F. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. England : Penguin Books.
- Fugard, Athol et al. 1974. "The Island" in *Statements: Three Plays*. Oxford: University Press.
- Jeyifo, B. 1985. *The Truthful Lie: Essays in Sociology of African Drama*. London: Villiers Publications Ltd.
- Obafemi, O. 2001. *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision*. Lagos: CBAAC.
- Obafemi, O. 2001. *Contemporary Nigerian Theatre: Cultural Heritage and Social Vision*. Lagos: CBAAC.
- Oko, A. 1992. *Tragic Paradox: A Study of Wole Soyinka and His Work*. Ibadan: Kraft Books Ltd.
- Olaniyan, T. 1995. *The Scars of Conquest/Masks of Resistance: The Invention of Cultural Identities in African, African-American and Caribbean Drama*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Osofisan, F. 1972. *Theatre and Nationalism: Wole Soyinka and LeRoi Jones*. Ile-Ife: University Press Ltd.
- Osofisan, B. 1974. "The Origin of Drama in West Africa: A Study of the Development of Drama from the Traditional Forms to the Modern Theatre in English and French" Unpublished Ph.D Thesis Submitted to the Department of Modern Languages, University of Ibadan, Ibadan.
- Osofisan, F. 1999. "Tegonni: An African Antigone" and "Many Colours Make the Thunder-king" in *Recent Outings*. Ibadan: Opon Ifa Readers.
- Sophocles. 1947. "Antigone" in *The Theban Plays* (trans. E.F. Watling). Great Britain: Penguin Books.
- Wa'Thong' O, N. 1986. *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. London: James Currey/Heinemann.
- Wa'Thiong'O, N. 1986. "Language and Literature" in *Literature and Society: Selected Essays on African Literature*, Ernest N. Emenyonu (ed.), Calabar: Department of English and Literary Studies.
- Werbner, R. (ed.). 1998. *Memory and the Postcolony: African Anthropology, and the Critique of Power*. London: Zed books.

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:

<http://www.iiste.org>

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: <http://www.iiste.org/journals/> All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: <http://www.iiste.org/book/>

Academic conference: <http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/>

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digital Library, NewJour, Google Scholar

