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**Issues of Freedom and Sustainable Development in Select Works  
of Femi Osofisan**

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**Abstract**

Literature of freedom – a genre to which Femi Osofisan shows total commitment – is replete with issues of varied levels of deprivation arising from either a conscious or an unconscious subservience to some inimical phenomena or order. Naturally, man is born free, and is supposed to enjoy his freedom without any tint of constraints. However, this view of the human condition is utopian. Therefore, realistically, man's rights or freedom is, unavoidably, within the confines of humane laws as dictated by nature, the political order of the day and other tolerable social conditions. However, in spite of these reasonable restrictions to "total" freedom, most African nations provide a milieu where political, religious, economic, and socio-cultural freedoms are thrown to the winds, thereby posing a threat to national development. Thus, man's daily struggles in an environment such as this, instead of being directed towards national development, are geared towards self-emancipation from the *status quo*.

A key message in most of Femi Osofisan's works is that despicable human conditions can be changed to pave way for sustainable development. The human psyche, therefore, is the target of all his creative works of literature. It is in line with this fact that this paper attempts to discuss the issues of freedom vis-a-vis sustainable development by highlighting such issues as freewill, determinism, libertarianism and popular justice. In the textual analysis, we shall zoom in on two of these, Free Will and Popular Justice, using his *Another Raft* and *Red is the Freedom Road* respectively.

**Introduction**

In "And After the Wasted Breed?: Responses to History and to Wole Soyinka's Dramaturgy", Osofisan (2001:22) states: "My hope is that ... I can succeed in re-empowering our people, in shocking them out of lethargy or despair, out of hopelessness". This forms the pivot around

which Femi Osofisan's dramaturgy revolves in terms of its utilitarian essence. The phrase "shocking them out of" suggests a re-awakening of consciousness through some sort of psychological appeal via drama. First, the status quo is despicable and needs a total change. This change, which is the *sine-qua-non* for sustainable development, needs to begin with self-consciousness, and/or a keen and an earnest quest for self-actualization. This paper, therefore, submits that sustainable development in our society can only be obtained in an atmosphere where the basic tenets of freedom are upheld.

The discussion on the theme of freedom is not concerned with the ignoble slave trade and other similar dehumanizing experiences of the colonial era. Rather, I shall amply focus on a new trend of slavery in the hands of today's indigenous African oppressors whom Fanon (1963:48) calls "the spoilt children of yesterday's colonialism". In addition, I shall examine the issue of freedom from self-enslavement to some inimical norms, traditions or values which had since lost their purported efficacy to time. In addition, I shall examine the themes of freedom as addressed by Osofisan in his dramaturgy from two perspectives: (a) Intra-personal perspective, which has to do solely with the workings of the inner mind, either culminating in passivity or re-awakening of consciousness and subsequent determination to effect a change; (b) Massive action, which is concerned with the mobilization of the progressive forces for the struggle for freedom either with words or blows, or with both.

In Nigeria, as is the situation in every other African country that obtained what Kwame Nkrumah called "fake independence" (in Oyebola, 1976: 85), three categories of people are found in relation to liberation struggles. The first group is made up of men and women agitators who are ready to lay down their lives in order to uphold the tenets of human freedom. The second group is a bunch of people who are forced by the situation to remain pitifully placid, or to adopt the "if you can't beat them, join them" stand-point. The third group is those who degenerate to the level of subjecting themselves to the fraudulences of religious con-men in their bid to free themselves from the status quo. The last two groups base the reason for their state of inactivity on the notion of fate (i.e., the notion that "what will be, will be"). These seem to agree with Ackrill's determinist argument that whatever "is" or "was" is always the same "what will be" (cited in O'Connor's *Freewill* (1971:14). And so, if it were possible at all for humans to effect a change in their destinies, then their desired results, which subsequently "is", still remain "what was to be". On the other hand, the libertarians, whom Osofisan

seems to be echoing in his plays, are of the view that every human success or otherwise is proportionate to the level of commitment towards its attainment. In the quest for freedom, therefore, it is the attitude of the oppressed or the deprived that determines its attainment or not. Thus, Frederick Douglass (cited in Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1983:3) maintains that "... power concedes nothing without demand". According to him, "... the limits of tyrants are prescribed by the extent of the endurance of those whom they oppress".

It is this awareness, coupled with a very high level of determination, which forms the bedrock of massive action, which ranges from mild resistance to revolution, without which the world would stagnate (also see Iji, 1991: 1). These approaches, as demonstrated in Osofisan's plays, are very crucial if the expected freedom is to be realized. Of course, to Osofisan, it is possible for the oppressed to experience freedom again; hence, he optimistically declares, "... our continent will one day surmount its present woes, however long or traumatic the process of transition" (Osofisan, 2001: 13). It is this process of transition presented in his dramas that this paper probes from the point of view of the concepts of free will and popular justice as exemplified in *Another Raft* and *Red is the Freedom Road*.

### **Issue of Free will in *Another Raft***

Any act that is self-determined, whereby the self is the only determinant and sole causal agent ready to accept whatever responsibility there is for the action, could claim to be based on free will. Campbell, in his article, "In Defense of Free Will", maintains that the issue of moral responsibility in man's self-determined act presents man as a legitimate object of either praiseworthiness or blameworthiness (Tillman, *et al.* 1967:165). Hence, external causal agents that, as a matter of necessity, would have caused the action to occur other than it is are totally out of the question. Free will, according to O'Connor, is the freedom of decision or choice between alternatives; the freedom of the will to choose a course of action without external coercion. It is also seen as the power of self-determination regarded as a special faculty. It is equally defined as the ability to choose one's actions, or to determine what reasons are acceptable to motivation for actions. Free will is the doctrine that human beings ... are able to choose their actions without being caused to do so by external forces.

From the aforesaid, one important point to note is that the exercise of free will is not born out of some pre-conceived and strategically planned ideals. If it were, then a certain degree of logic and reasoning would either averately or otherwise influence the behaviour or action. What this implies is that the exercise of free will is more or less impulsive rather than compulsive. This explains why, in Osofisan's *Another Raft* (1988), the characters' exercise of free will can be described as being extempore.

*Another Raft* (1988) is a direct response to the political, as well as philosophical issues raised in J. P. Clark's *The Raft* (1964). In *Another Raft*, Osofisan deviates from the trend of thought that was predominant in Wole Soyinka's and Clark's works, which present human conditions as being doomed to stasis. Soyinka's works always demonstrate the recurring cycle of fate, which tends to limit man's ability to exercise his will towards self-emancipation. Similarly, Clark's tragic heroes – Zifa in *Song of a Goat* (1961), Ozidi in *Ozidi* (1979), Titi in *The Masquerade* (1964) and the four lumbermen in *The Raft* (1964) – struggle fruitlessly in an attempt to free themselves. In most cases, as is the case with the lumbermen in *The Raft*, Clark does not lead them to self- realization and the need to will against the inimical forces of control but, following the Aristotelian concept of tragedy, merely throws them into the hands of fate.

However, for Osofisan, men are in control of their destinies. In *Another Raft*, the professional sailors – Waje and Oge, quite unlike Clark's lumbermen - use their initiatives, necessitated by their desire for safety, in an attempt at salvaging their situation. For instance, when the raft stops moving, they use their clothes and those belonging to other passengers to construct a mast. Temporarily, this serves to enhance the movement of the raft once again. Excited exclamations from the group indicate their happiness:

REORE:     It's moving! Agunrin Look!  
              We're moving!  
OROUSI:    We are moving! Moving!  
OGE (excited): Broda! Broda, we don do am!  
EKUROOLA: At last! At last, thank God!  
OROUSI:     Yemosa be praised! (p. 66)

Waje draws the attention of Gbebe, who, with his strong belief in destiny, has been pessimistic all the while: "See Gbebe? We're in control again! We're in control of our destiny." (p. 66)

What Osofisan seems to suggest here is that if, at will, the nation's intelligentsia set a common goal to achieve, and pool their resources together towards the attainment of this goal, then the economic, political and socio-cultural situations of the nation, rather than stagnate, can be revamped. Waje, before his death, had prophesied:

One day, I know, we'll be back in Aiyedade. However long it takes. All of us ...(p. 46)

However, it is rather unfortunate that he could not live to see this dream come true. In an attempt to rescue Ekuroola and Lanusen who are floating on a piece of the broken raft, Waje loses his life. Some people may hastily conclude that if Waje had succeeded in rescuing Ekuroola and Lanusen, then Osofisan's position on the essence of free will would have been upheld. Nevertheless, it should be observed that his main thrust in this play is that man's freedom depends on man's physical ability and free will. In this scene, on the one hand, the issues of determinism and fatalism are indisputable since, judging from Waje's role in the play and his death in the course of trying to effect a reversal of destiny, human beings may only try, but cannot change what will be. On the other hand, one can also assume that what Osofisan is trying to demonstrate with the manner of Waje's death is that the fear of risk (even the risk to life) should not dampen our free will to achieve salvation.

Gbebe's suicide is yet another episode in the play that is concerned with the issue of free will and fatalism. Gbebe is a fatalist, a determinist and a strong pessimist. For instance, after his spontaneous murder of his father, Omitoogun, the priest of Yemosa, he presents this fatalistic view that his father,

... was dead before I was born ... He died the day he swore his life to a powerless cult ... (p. 32)

Gbebe obviously sees humans as being helpless in the hands of some forces beyond their control. His reaction to this unfortunate situation on the ill-fated raft is that of nonchalance. As far as he is concerned, there is nothing anyone can do to change their destiny. Hence, he maintains that,

.... it's our destiny. We of this continent we're like a raft lost in the stream of history, bound for an island of pain. We can scream all we want, sing our complaints to the air, but we cannot leave the raft. We're doomed forever to be the slaves of conquerors. Yes, that's why our

ancestors chose Yemosa as the totem of the land, because they know she is goddess of shipwrecks. (p. 45)

Gbebe is of the opinion that each of the people on board the raft is a nation of Africa - "the son of a shark to be eaten by other sharks" (p. 45). Convinced that the future is bleak, he plunges into the water and drowns. He dies of his own volition, thereby exercising his free will. Fromm (1960:120) describes this as "negative freedom" which, according to him, is an attempt to escape the unbearable feelings of aloneness and powerlessness that arise within an individual under vicious circumstances. Gbebe dies because of his belief in the meaninglessness and worthlessness of life. His freedom to die is therefore determined by his belief and strong desire to avert these problematic modes of existence.

At Waje's death, Oge, his assistant, takes up the idea of physical strength, determination and free will towards a positive end. He improvises paddles for the three survivors on the raft and, as they drift past a coastal town, Reore and Orousi want to jump into the river to swim ashore but are dissuaded from doing so by Oge:

If you jump into de water, you go die for  
certain ... The town still dey far way, and  
de current is too strong! But together, we  
fit row! (p. 80)

Through determination and will power, the three men row the raft to safety. In this scene, Oge's level of determination and conscientiousness is detected in the tone with which he encourages Reore and Orousi to row on:

Make we no surrender! De sea, we fit beat Am!  
We fit fight de sea and win am! Come on! (p. 82)

Hence, unlike Gbebe, they reason that the fact that they are adrift does not mean that they are hopelessly lost. Hence, they use everything at their disposal to salvage the situation. This is central to Osofisan's belief in man as the "centre of the universe, the source and end of ideas, action and meaning" (Webster, 1990: 70). And so, it is man that can either make or mar his destiny through the power of his will.

To stress this point, Osofisan subjects the purported efficacy of the goddess to disparagement. The people of Aiyedade believe strongly that the various disasters in the society are caused by Yemosa, the goddess of

the sea, who has long been neglected, starved, and her priest, Omitoogun, disregarded. To avert these, there is the need for human sacrifice so that

... we can have peace at last ... so that our  
people can resume our history, without  
the terror of flood or fire ... (p.13).

However, Osofisan rejects this mentality specifically through the demystification of the gods in the play. He makes the much revered Yemosa of the Aiyedade people denounce their existence.

YEMOSA ONE: We're like this, as you can see because we don't exist.

YEMOSA TWO: We're merely the figures of fantasy.

YEMOSA THREE: Actors made up, dream images

YEMOSA ONE: Made real only in the minds of these men on the raft

YEMOSA TWO: And in all the minds where such things as goddesses  
still exist.

YEMOSA THREE: Minds such as yours - perhaps? (p.35)

According to the libertarians' concept of freedom, to be free "...you must be self-determined, which is to say that you must be able to control your own destiny in your own interests" (*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall, 2008). For instance, the messy situation in Aiyedade and the misfortunes that befall the people are caused by those in authority. They embezzle funds that should have been used in building good drainage systems; they exploit, mislead and oppress the people, depriving them of the basic material necessities of life. However, when the adverse effects of these misconducts confront them, they accuse the goddess for their misfortunes. This adverse effect is symbolized by the drifting raft. Instead of using their initiatives to salvage the situation, they pin their hopes on the goddess who, according to them, must be appeased for normalcy to return. But the speeches of the goddesses show how misconstrued the powers of the gods and goddesses are when juxtaposed with human free will. In the play, Osofisan presents the fact that in man's imagination, gods and goddesses are so invested with extraordinary powers that man has the tendency to abandon his will power and look helplessly on them for help. This tendency, as may be deduced

from the speeches of the goddesses in the denouement of the play, is inimical to societal/national development.

Hence, instead of succumbing to the whims and caprices of the supernatural forces, Osofisan in this play presents man as "...capable of altering his unjust world by his own resources instead of waiting meekly for divine intervention" (Iji, 1991: v).

A free will that metamorphoses into organized action should subsequently lead to freedom as illustrated by Yemosa's strong speeches towards the end of the play:

YEMOSA THREE: But all such powers as we have are  
Made only by your will...

YEMOSA ONE: But if you abandon yourselves  
Recklessly to our caprice as most of you insist on doing,  
we have no power anymore except to drift with the  
currents of your cowardly surrendering and choke up  
the fresh springs, and the waterways of your lives (p.  
83).

Furthermore, Osofisan condemns the coercive rule of the military. Agunrin, with all his authoritative approach to issues on the raft, cannot, in any way, help the people out. What Osofisan seems to be highlighting here is that the military in this drifting nation cannot steer the course of the nation aright. The characteristics of military administration – for example, force, subjugation, oppression and autocracy – can only aggravate misery in the community. But it is through will power, unity of purpose, and an unwavering resolve that we can jointly steer the course of the nation out of turbulent waters. A conscientious adherence to the ideals of democracy, with the readiness of those in power to be committed to selfless service, is what can guarantee a change in the *status quo*. In *Another Raft*, there is a call for African, and Nigerian leaders in particular, to exhibit the qualities of selflessness, sacrifice, self-denial and foresight if sustainable development is to be attained.

### **Popular Justice as an Alternative in Osofisan's *Red is the Freedom Road***

*Red is the Freedom Road* (1982) presents a conflict between slaves and an exploitative and draconian feudal government. The slaves who were once respectable and fearless are now reduced to nothingness by a tyrannous king. The level of oppression and the nature of



dehumanization meted on these slaves are pitifully severe. Akanji's wife, Ibidun, describes the situation to her husband, another slave, in the following words:

Our masters have become crueler with us. Each day their whips cut deeper into our skins. They harness our women to their chariots, feed our children to their gods. The men have waited long enough for you. Now the suffering multiplies. They're beginning to lose hope. (p.117)

Akanji, a very strong warrior on whom the people rely for their emancipation, is extremely slow in working out his strategies. He is slow to the point of being mistaken by the slaves as nonchalant towards their plight. Akanji, after having caused the death of his mother, is declared by the pervasive government as the Basorun (i.e the slave leader).

Nevertheless, he, at the right moment, proves himself the "son of thunder" (p.118) and "the notorious confuser" (p.121) that he is. He painstakingly organizes a secret revolution against the exploitative government when he mobilizes the slaves, and psyches them up with words that evoke nostalgia of their past life. Through speeches loaded with biting sarcasm, rhetoric and satirical allusions he pushes them into action. For instance, in the following speech, he upbraids them:

... Fools! Slaves! How soon you forget! How soon you forgive! You used to command warriors to fight your wars! You it was, who gave out commendations in the stadium, and men received from your hands. Have you forgotten? Tall, tall men you were. Men with gait of panthers, all handsome in their splendour. Ah, how you've shrunk ...(p. 129).

These words of exhortation are enough to revive the hope of freedom in the slaves who unanimously agree to fight.

AKANJI: I shall lead you into war. War!  
But it shall be the war of freedom!

SOLDIERS: Freedom!

AKANJI: Only if you follow me! If  
You come now at my calling,  
I shall set you free!

A SOLDIER: Listen gallantly we fought in war.

Like men, on our two feet. But the gods were against us. Now we pay the price.

AKANJI: No. The gods you speak of Are in your muscles!  
Surrender is in your willing,  
Not in magic. I offer you Freedom, but only to men.  
Only to those who can stand  
And beat their chest.

SOLDIERS: Go on. We are with you!

AKANJI: Warriors, the road is hard  
But straight. We shall fight  
Our way to freedom. Will  
You fight with me?

SOLDIERS: Lead on. Freedom or death!

AKANJI: Will you follow me?

SOLDIERS: You delay! Lead us,  
Basorun!

SOLDIERS: Death to all oppressors!

SOLDIERS: Death to all oppressors!

AKANJI: Take your arms. Shake the  
Cobwebs from your muscles!  
O all men, follow me! (pp. 131-132).

With such solidarity and determination, the soldiers set out to fight. They win and capture the despot. However, because of the injury he sustained in the battle, Akanji dies and Ibidun, his wife commits suicide.

In *Red is the Freedom Road*, Akanji and other slaves decide to free themselves at all cost. They may probably have waited for a long time for divine intervention, whereby the king would be kind enough to declare them free; but this is like hoping against hope. Osofisan makes the slaves succeed in this rebellion because he does not believe in fatalism; and he also does not like seeing humans as hopeless victims of any form of oppression. Freedom, as far as Akanji is concerned, is a birthright which must be won, not only for himself but for the rest of the slaves too. Of

course, it is important to realize that the prerequisite and priority of any revolutionary undertaking must be the collective interest of the people.

As Sartre observes in his preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* (1962:14), "... if suppressed fury fails to find an outlet, it turns in a vacuum and devastates the oppressed creatures themselves". Akanji and other slaves could no longer withstand the high-handedness of their oppressors and they resort to violence, which is an inescapable aspect of popular justice. For the slaves to succeed in taking the laws into their hands to change the course of their destinies positively, the process begins with the realization of their deplorable condition which needs change. This is followed by a necessary psychological impetus which Akanji provides to spur the slaves into action. Then, there are systematic manoeuvres intended to make the revolution a surprise to the oppressors. This is followed by the ultimate action – violence – that necessary ingredient of popular justice. It is this violence that Fanon (1963:117) reiterates as what "... makes it possible for the masses to understand social truths ...". Noteworthy is the fact that popular justice does not succeed without the concerted effort of those involved.

Popular justice, achievable through a collective effort, fosters communal co-existence among the people. Fatoba (1988: 333) observes that freedom is offered in the play not just to have fashion followers, but to have such followers as believe in themselves as well as in their goal of freedom. He sees Akanji not as the type of hero who frees his people in order to re-subjugate them. The ultimate goal of freedom obtained through popular justice is egalitarianism. Hence, Akanji, in his motivating speech, paints a bright future for the slaves. He makes them realize that it is their inalienable right to bask freely in the radiant rays of this bright future. Therefore, for popular justice to succeed as it does in *Red is the Freedom Road*, there must be a unified front with sameness of purpose, love and collectivism, foresight, togetherness and absolute will power. All these, which are the sedatives that make tyranny crumble in the play, must be backed up by a well orchestrated programme of action. In a conversation with Obafemi in 1978, Osofisan maintained that "... revolution itself is a mass of people always doing things together. But of course, somebody has to inspire it, and be its leading spirit ..." (Awodiya, 1993: 29). This is true of *Red is the Freedom Road*.

One negative attribute of popular justice is the fact that it, in the words of Norrie, "runs the risk of an unregulated social development which can get out of hand" (in Adelman and Paliwala, 1993: 78). For instance, as is the case in the play, death may occur, there may be massive

destruction of property, looting and the like, but that is the risk one has to take if emancipation is to be achieved. In Norrie's view, one either "rides the tiger" of popular justice, or gets bogged down in the mud of legal formalism and the inequitable system it protects (78). Akanji himself acknowledges the risk involved in popular justice as he forewarns the soldiers while stressing the need for togetherness:

Warriors, the road is hard but straight. We  
shall fight our way to freedom. Why,  
together, we are three hundred men ...(p. 131)

In addition, the two pessimistic soldiers that Osofisan employs as chorus in the battle scene comment on the rough nature of a rebellious approach to emancipation. The nature of popular justice arouses in many pessimists the fear of being devoured in the process of this physical struggle for freedom. This makes them, as is the case with the two soldiers, to condemn this violent approach; and they would see the truth but rather remain docile. They do not see anything good in revolution. According to them, neither peace nor freedom can come from revolution for "... red runs the freedom road" as "... soldiers will shed blood" and "plant corpses" (p. 135).

Perhaps the two soldiers in the play and others like them need to be spurred on by the witty analogies of Frederick Douglas:

Those who profess to favour freedom, and yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without ploughing up the ground. They want rain without thunder and lightening. They want ocean without the awful roar of its many waters.  
(quoted in Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1983:3).

Docility and inactivity on the part of the oppressed encourages the viciousness of the oppressor. Hence, Akanji acknowledges the fact that "power concedes nothing without demand"; and that "the limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress" (wa Thiong'o, 1983:4). Moreover, Akanji's ability to successfully "ride the tiger" of popular justice is in line with Wright's view that "oppression helps to forge in the oppressed the very qualities that eventually bring about the downfall of the oppressors" (1957:47). Thus, the force of popular justice is always applied by the oppressed in most situations where the bearable becomes unbearable.

Care, however, must be taken not to see Akanji's death in the play as pessimistic. His death, his mother's and the death of many others who stand for freedom in the play, should, in Charles Uji's view, not be judged as being in vain (Awodiya, 1996:108) but rather from the standpoint of the success registered by this revolution. These deaths form part of the risk involved in "riding the tiger" of popular justice. Ultimately, the state of the autocratic machinery of the despotic ruler stands foredoomed the moment Akanji makes up his mind to orchestrate a new dawn for the slaves. His death, therefore, may be seen as a vicarious service to his people. This is the kind of sacrifice that Wright (1957:61) sees as "a means of political struggle". Wright further posits that,

One of the cardinal traits of the national revolutionary is to anticipate in advance the cost of the liberation of his land in terms of human life and physical suffering. (61)

Perhaps, during his seven-day period of solitude, Akanji must have called upon such "cardinal traits" to enable him embark on the rigorous strategies towards the liberation of his people. With the ignominious defeat of the forces of animosity and dehumanization by the forces of collectivism led by him, Akanji feels elated, despite a mortal injury he sustains in the battle; even at the point of death, his optimism never wavers. In a soliloquy rendered while dying, Akanji feels contented with the outcome of the battle:

... Mother, I have come as you ordered. I have set our men free. Look! They dance there, happy in their dancing. They are the rulers now. I will bring the message home: our men are no longer slaves, I have placed their bottoms on a throne. Your death was not in vain. Mother, say I have tried. Tell the men of Sapon to clap for me. To form me a colonnade of praises ...(p, 137)

In this play, as in many others, Osofisan presents man as the subject of the inner person. Man's will, action, history and experiences are all subject to his control. Human actions, in Osofisan's drama, are not pre-ordained by gods or spirits. Man's destiny is shown to lie concretely within the collective might of man himself (in collaboration with other men) and not in the hands of some capricious gods, deities, ancestors or other phantasmagoric creatures (Awodiya, 1996: 12). Hence, Akanji

makes it clear to the slaves that “[t]he gods you speak of are in your muscles” (p. 131); thus supporting Sartre’s position that “men are powerless only when they admit they are” (1970: xii).

The play seems to suggest that popular justice is the best way to tackle what the bottle-neck bureaucratic order cannot. The fact is that the courts of law in developing nations, as Ignatius Chukwudi (1996) argues, have been transformed into battle grounds for financial power tussle, the institutions for propagating sadism by the autocratic regime, the smothering grounds for the poor and the voiceless, the protective agencies of the oppressors, and the coffins with which justice is buried. Under this kind of political set-up, the rule of law is totally stifled to the detriment of the oppressed and deprived masses. In lieu of this, Norrie seems to commend the popular justice approach as it offers “the possibility of a direct route to emancipation” (1973:98). The road to freedom through popular justice, in the words of Akanji, is “hard but straight” (p. 13). It therefore goes without saying that considering the condition of the slaves in the play, there is no legitimate approach through which the slaves would have won back their freedom; thus, popular justice is the only alternative.

On the philosophical plane, popular justice may be seen as an offshoot of libertarianism. But here external compulsions are totally played down by Osofisan. Despite Ibidun’s pressures, Akanji is not, at any point, seen to be influenced by her emotional instigations. Rather, what his mind judges as being right he sets to carry out in spite of the consequence(s). Man, therefore, uses his freewill and volition, coupled with determination to shape his future instead of waiting for external motivations. Popular justice, therefore, disavows the power of fate and or destiny. For instance, it is clear that the slaves’ collective efforts to obliterate tyranny succeed as a result of their level of pertinacity and commitment. In other words, if they were nonchalant, leaving everything to hinge on determinism, they would still have remained in bondage. This fact is in line with Soyinka’s assertion that “[t]he man dies in all who keep silent in the face of tyranny” (1972:13).

## Conclusion

From the foregoing discussion, we observe that Osofisan’s primary emphasis in *Another Raft* and *Red is the Freedom Road* is how man determines his fate through actions taken to satisfy his will. The ultimate aim of such actions is to usher in freedom from intolerable conditions.

However, the major problem that besets literature of freedom is its tendency to remain purely literary. The plays of Femi Osofisan have gained popularity in the various university campuses and, perhaps, a few theatres in the cities in Nigeria and parts of Africa. But what happens to those in the countryside and the remotest villages in Africa, most of whom cannot even read? If the psyches of these ones are equally to be touched, this literature/theatre has to find a way to reach and speak to the masses whose lives and oppressions the works explore. Some of the ways of achieving this are: First, vibrant Theatre for Development (TfD) and Community Theatre troupes should be established by theatre practitioners to create a forum where such plays can be made and seen. Secondly, screen adaptations of these plays should be encouraged. Third, these plays should be translated into various key Nigerian languages, or indeed, African languages so they can reach the real target audience. Finally, because these plays are addressing the human psyche, I strongly suggest that the curriculum planners in the nation's educational system should work them into the reading lists of our secondary school children; this is because, in view of their didactic nature, they can impact positively on the children.

Let me end this paper by agreeing with Osofisan when he states that: "All freedom is the result of constant struggle and of constant vigilance" (2001: 167). But our new tyrants in the corridors of power should not wait till such struggle degenerates to the goings-on in the Niger Delta region today, where able-bodied youths, instead of toiling to effect sustainable national development, are struggling, albeit unwittingly, to effect national debasement.

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