

# KOFI ANYIDOHO: INTELLECTUEL ORGANIQUE ET CRITIQUE GÉOPOLITIQUE

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## RÉSUMÉ

L'article jette un regard critique sur certaines des œuvres sélectionnées de Kofi Anyidoho, en particulier ses poèmes qui le distinguent en tant qu'intellectuel organique, ainsi qu'en tant qu'érudit connaissant bien la géopolitique. À l'aide de son recueil de poèmes intitulé *Praise Song for The Land* (2002) et *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems* (2011), cet article révèle à quel point le poète est profondément enraciné dans sa culture éwé natale. Cet article tire son cadre théorique de la théorie littéraire postcoloniale proposée par Homi K. Bhabha et d'autres, ainsi que du concept d'organicité d'Antonio Gramsci tel qu'il est exprimé dans ses *Prison Notebooks* (1948) où l'intellectuel organique est celui qui est un produit de sa communauté, et aussi quelqu'un qui s'intéresse à d'autres cultures. L'étude montre qu'une organicité prend une dimension plus large en plongeant dans la diaspora noire et identifie clairement le poète comme un militant culturel et politique.

**Mots Clés:** communauté, culture, géopolitique, impérialiste, organicité.

TOPIC: Kofi Anyidoho: An Organic Intellectual and Geopolitical Critic

## ABSTRACT

The paper takes a critical look at some of the selected works of Kofi Anyidoho, especially his poems that make him stand out as an organic intellectual, as well as a scholar who is well-versed in Geopolitics. Using his collection of poems titled *Praise Song for The Land* (2002) and *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems* (2011), this paper reveals how deeply rooted the poet is in his native Ewe culture. This paper draws its theoretical framework from the Postcolonial Literary Theory propounded by Homi K. Bhabha and others, as well as Antonio Gramsci's concept of organicity as it is expressed in his *Prison Notebooks* (1948) where the organic intellectual is the one who is a product of his / her community, and also someone who is interested in exploring other cultures. The study shows that Anyidoho's organicity takes a wider dimension as it plunges into the Black Diaspora and clearly identifies the poet as a cultural and political activist.

**Key words:** community, cultures, geopolitics, imperialistic, organicity

## INTRODUCTION

Antonio Gramsci expresses the concept of organicity in his *Prison Notebooks* (1948) as an organic intellectual who is a product of his / her community, and also someone who is interested in exploring other cultures. Kofi Anyidoho, a literary and cultural scholar who does not need much introduction for a Ghanaian public, African readership and Literature fans around the globe is a true definition of an organic intellectual. His words and influence cuts cross boundaries and link cultures and human beings. He has been active in keeping a close eye and pointing out the injustices brought upon the world. The injustices brought by the global imperialistic apparatus that tirelessly aims at amassing wealth regardless of the effect it had on other people.

Anyidoho's poetry explore themes like praise for the ancestors, the realities of life in his native land before and after the intrusion of colonizers, the nostalgia that engulfs the African student who finds himself / herself in the West, the cacophony that the arrival of Christianity heaped on the African. His two writings, *Poems of Hope & Love & Care* (2002), and *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems* (2011) provide the main data for this research which looks at the poet as an organic intellectual who is highly concerned with the geopolitical events of his time. Postcolonial Literary theory and Antonio Gramsci's concept of organicity provide the guiding thread for the work.

### 1. KOFI ANYIDOHO'S BACKGROUND

Kofi Anyidoho is a Ghanaian poet and scholar who comes from a family tradition of Ewe poets and oral artists. He was born on 25th July 1947 in Wheta, in Ghana's Volta Region. He had his education in Ghana and the USA where he specialized in English, Linguistics, Folklore and Comparative Literature. He has received numerous awards for his poetry, including the Valco Fund Literary Award, the Langston Hughes Prize, the BBC Arts and Africa Poetry Award, the Fania Kruger Fellowship for Poetry of Social Vision, Poet of the Year (Ghana), and the Ghana Book Award. Kofi Anyidoho's most renowned poems are the following: *Elegy for the Revolution* (1978), *A Harvest of Our Dreams* (1985), *Earthchild* (1985), *Ancestral Logic and Caribbean Blues* (1992), *Praise Song for the Land: Poems of Hope & Love & Care* (2002), and *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems* (2011).

### 2. TRADITION AND ROOTS IN THE POEMS UNDER STUDY

It might be useful at this level to shed some light on the theoretical concepts that sustain this paper. The first one is the postcolonial literary theory which has several proponents like Homi Bhabha and Edward Said. Postcolonialism as it is viewed by these scholars is the encounter between the East and the West, and the aftermath of such an encounter. The term "East" or "Periphery" means colonized lands in Africa, Asia and the Americas. The "West" or "Centre" is synonymous with Europe or imperial powers, whose duty is called the "white man's burden." This white man's burden is an apologia used to justify the imperialistic mission of Europeans in the colonies they conquered and had their resources pillaged. Antonio Gramsci's concept of organicity and specifically the organic intellectual can be explained as a person who succeeds in blending her/his native culture, with that of the colonizer, without falling into identity or cultural crisis. As the founder of the Communist Party of Italy (PCI), Gramsci's idea of the organic and non-organic intellectuals was at first couched in political terms. For him, the organic intellectual's duty was to be at the service of the Party and ensure the well-being of everyone in society, especially those perceived as the "downtrodden". Again, the "organic intellectual" was the one in charge of looking for the best arguments to defend the strategies and actions established by the Party, a position similar to the behavior of politicians or a lawyer defending a client. On the other hand, the traditional or non-organic intellectual lacks this kind of commitment (*Prison Notebooks*). The "Organic Intellectual" epitomizes the important role that successful working class intellectuals play in the process of social change. They do not remain in a static and single unipolar and eternal view of social events.

### 3. ANYIDOHO AND ORGANICITY IN *THE PACE WE CALL HOME AND OTHER POEMS*

In this collection, emphasis is laid upon the following elements: the past, the present and the future. However, the salient feature which makes the poems outstanding is the order in which these three elements are arranged. Time and space are closely related where the present is portrayed as that delicate membrane in which all the important events of society are accumulated, from the past to the present. The persona is preoccupied with landmarks in world History like the abolition of slavery and the contemporary ones like the September 11, 2001 attack of the World Trade Center. The persona also sings the fortunes and misfortunes of another type, in his community. As the French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre saw the responsibility of the committed or 'engaged' writer in his reflections in *Existentialism*, Anyidoho poses in *The Place We Call Home* that the role of the poet is to project all the events that constitute the daily reality of his community. The collection has thirty-four (34) poems which can be classified in three categories. Then, the poems in the different categories are joined together by a single theme which is written from various dimensions. "Homage" is the title of Category One. The poems in this section include the titular poem, "The Place We Call Home".

Remembrance and change are the core concern in the poem. The old man's remembrance is of a special kind. They are divided into, the twilight of his life – just before his transition into the other side; the memories of the old man's youthful days, thoughts of his lost friends, and finally, the rendition of the loneliness that engulfs him. However, the remembrance in question here is not a mere reminiscence over lost decades that make one's youthfulness or a change that is unilateral and cannot be undone; emphasis is laid upon the remembrance of things that are no more. Category One is concluded with the following expressions "... these Shores", "... these Lands", terms that obviously point to a definite place, which could be one's place of origin. This context is also about coming home to a native place, a place of freshness, of fulfillment, for replenishment. There is a feeling of uncontrollable romanticism about this piece, and not a void romanticism which emanates from the persona's life experience. This preoccupation highlights the poet's organic inclination. He does not succumb to art for art's sake. He rather voices the features and concerns of his time and place that is of importance to him and his people.

The organicity of memory in this case extends to "those who have crossed over", who are in the eyes of the persona, path-makers, those with eyes, heroes who did extra-ordinary things. In "The Place We Call Home", homage is paid to Africa's ancestors. In this poem, Anyidoho is explicitly the unqualified humble linguist who solicits help from the ancestors, who have "what is needed" by the community of the present. "Ancestral Roll-Call" is a clear illustration of such a communication between the living and the ancestors. He communicates to the former what the latter have whispered into his ears. The ancestors also include less known historical figures whose deeds have impacted society significantly like Pedro Alonzo Nino, Estavanico and others. Pedro Alonzo Nino is a Spanish explorer of African descent. He was the pilot of the Santa Maria, during Columbus's first voyage to the Americas. The persona seems to question him on a certain number of points that have shaped the course of world History. Estavanico is often called "the Black". In History, he was an African slave from Morocco, one of the first native Africans to have reached today's continental United States. In "Ancestral Roll-Call", these Blacks who were the first to have reached the Americas as captives, seem to be questioned by today's Africans about the truth of what happened in History. This shows that Anyidoho is an organic poet, if we consider both the political and cultural role of the organic intellectual. Whispering into the ears of the ancestors what today's citizens are telling is both a political and cultural act. The persona is being an active agent of change, who intends to set the records straight by questioning History, through some of its "controversial" characters like black explorers or black Arab slaves.

The two CDs that are attached to this anthology are the author's recorded reading of his poems. This is where the anthology comes alive. For in listening to the author read his poems, one is given the opportunity to appreciate the cadence and the rhythm of Anyidoho's works. Through technology, the poet has resurrected

the age-old tradition of oral literature, carried in songs and incantations in Africa. For instance, some of the poems begin with a song sang in the author's language, which the reader – even if written down for him (which isn't the case) – might not be able to read or even deliver it expertly as the author. However, the reader will appreciate the songs even if he has no clue what their meanings are. There could not be any better evidence of the poet's attachment to his mother tongue and his native Ewe specifically Anlon culture.

#### 4. THE ORGANIC POET AT WORK IN *PRAISE SONG FOR THE LAND*

In this collection, the poet seems to be bent on the following mission: to sing a praise song for his Land and his People. Anyidoho draws on Ewe verbal art as a critical source of the culture and philosophical expression of an African community to produce this collection of poetry. The collection opens with a foreword by Kofi Awoonor (1935-2013), who is Kofi Anyidoho's senior in age and even "brother" as it can be said in the African context, since they hail from the same area. The fact that the collection considered in this section is preceded by the words of a 'senior', can be interpreted as synonymous with Anyidoho's view of societal values. Specially, in the African context where the voice of the elder is more loaded and is treasured. As a result, the elder opens the path for the younger by speaking for them or introducing them to the community. That introduction of the younger one to the public translates the role that age represents in Anyidoho's native society, and that is a sign of organicity. The cyclical world view of African tradition (Gehman, 2005) or Ewe culture requires that the elder nourishes the younger with intellectual and spiritual food. The youth in turn when they become elders, must edify the youth of their generation. The main role of the elder and the younger one is explicit in *The Place We Call Home*. The forward is written by Femi Osofisan (contemporary poet), and the afterword is written by Veronique Tadjó (younger person). This is also an expression of the role that generations play in Anyidoho's society. Anyidoho's words are placed between those two sections. That reaffirms the organic position of the poet. The younger ones have a say, they are groomed by the elder. So Tadjó speaks, but her words come after those of Osofisan and Anyidoho. Awoonor dwells also on the local flavor and origin of Anyidoho's work and the reason behind the poet's motivation, in the following lines, in the foreword to *Praise Song*:

Anyidoho's career as a poet manifests a full expression of the totality of verbal art as a significant and intrinsically ample feature of the culture of his original society. It is to the exploration, explication and aesthetic exposition of this exciting sample of African life that he has devoted himself as a poet over these two-and-half decades. (*Praise Song*, p.9)

Anyidoho's close and almost sacred relationship with his native community in the same foreword, where Awoonor highlights the exceptional skills the poet exhibits, as an academic who marvelously creates "a symbiosis between creativity and research [...] like all true poets whose gifts come from the people" (*Praise Song*: 10).

It is important to point out that as much as Anyidoho's poetry is grounded in his land, soil and culture, it does not limit itself to those areas and cultures that one is tempted to see as "directly related to the poet". Anyidoho's view of his culture goes beyond Eweland, and extends to the whole of Ghana, to Africa and to the Black diaspora. This gives a broader dimension to the organicity of his poems. His organicity has a solid correlation with pan-Africanism and many of his poems attest to that. In "Memory & Vision (for Children of Musu)" the persona associates a powerfully complex and artistically symmetrical dimension to those whom he refers to as 'We', a term he uses to mean he and his people, or Blacks. Anyidoho writes in that poem:

We are Dancers and The Dance  
Time beyond Memory  
Memory beyond Time  
We are Tears  
From laughter's Eyes  
We even sow some Joy  
In Sorrow's deepest Soul  
We are Dancers and The dance (p.22)

These lines echo the dual nature or Janus- faced characteristic of the Africans and Blacks in general. It translates the endurance of the poet's race, their ability in possessing an overall and astonishing power and these lines also reveal the incarnation of one thing and its opposite. That last point can be found in the line "We are Dancer and the Dance", which can be interpreted as "We are the actors of the event and at the same time, we are the event". That might imply that the admirable things and achievements of today's society evolve around only one group of people, the "We" who are the poet's people: the Ewes, Ghanaians, Africans, and Black Diasporans.

Anyidoho's concern with the Black Diaspora has been examined at length by Mensah in *Legon Journal of the Humanities*. Mensah (2011) opines that *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems* especially under the first category titled "Homage" takes up again the pan-African theme that was identified and skillfully articulated in the poem *Earthchild*. The African wherever he may be found is an inheritor of a common heritage of slavery, colonization, displacement and the loss of a significant part of his identity. He further affirms that the poet has already powerfully explored these themes in *Ancestral Logic & Caribbean Blues* (1993) by educating his reader on the situation of the African in the diaspora, and to move the Africans towards a more positive view of themselves and help heal the psychic wounds inflicted by their History. In those lines, Mensah rearticulates Anyidoho's role as an organic poet.

Contemporary preoccupations of his people are his main concern. The intrusion of Western religion and the turmoil that ensued is captured in lines where the poet writes about some people "They" that preach salvation to him and his people. The core of the subjectivity of Blacks lies in the following terms which have craftily been created by the poet whose diction is exactly the following: our Salvation, our Selves our History. The sad remark related to the important words in the preceding sentence is made by the poet in these terms:

Some tell us our Salvation  
lies in a repudiation of our Selves  
a repudiation of our History  
of pain our History  
of shame our History  
and of endless fragmentation (*Praise Song* :24)

The deliberate capitalization of certain words reveals how important they are, in the current situation of the colonial and postcolonial African, or the Black. They enable the poet to couch in impeccable and unequivocal terms the woes of the African who is currently caught up in an identity crisis, a tragedy that manifest through religious bigotry and intolerance or self-hatred. Novelists like Ayi Kwei Armah capture this malaise in *Fragments* where Africans turn their names into British sounding ones. Achebe touched upon the root of that phenomenon in *Things Fall Apart* and Kobina Sekyi renders it in glaring terms in *The Blinkards* through Mrs Brofosem. Tackling such themes shows that the poet is organic per excellence, not in a narrow sense of the term. The realities of the daily lives of all human beings who share any kind of affinity with him are of immense and serious concern to him. He sings and cries those realities. The poet can but revisit the cruelty that was meted out to "his" people and he does that by recalling the physical and spiritual decimation which Africans have been victims of. He does that in the following lines which he italicizes on purpose, in order to show that it really happened:

So they wiped them out?  
Drowned their screams  
*Burned their nerves and bones*  
*And scattered their ashes*  
*Across the intimidating splendor*  
*Of this young history of lies?* (*Praise Song* p.27)

These lines totally capture machinations of the Westerners in Africa, and their creation of a version of history, a false one. The lines that follow these ones emotionally recall, remember and pay homage to people from all corners of Africa:

The Asante the Azande and the Mande  
the Madingo and the bakongo  
the basuto the Dagaaba and the Dogon ( p.27)

The great deeds of those people, who are the poet's people and those whose voice he carries are portrayed in words that poignantly capture what the encounter with the West has done to them:

a people who once built Civilizations  
of rare Glory  
are now Doubtful Memories  
on Faded Pages  
of World History  
And  
For Five Hundred Years-and more-  
We have journeyed from Africa  
Through the Virgin Islands into Santo Domingo  
From Havana in Cuba to Savanna in Georgia  
From Voudou Shores of Haiti to Montego  
Bay in Jamaica from Ghana (pp.27-18)

This conveys the fate of Africans, the inhabitants of the cradle of world civilization as Cheickh Anta Diop demonstrates in *Origins of World Civilization* and Martin Bernal in *Black Athena* who overnight are being trashed, possessed, and dragged across the Atlantic. Dwelling on these historical moments and facts that shape the configuration of the World in general and the black world in particular is the best way in which the poet could project the essence and contemporary facets and dynamics of his people: Blacks, Africans, Ghanaians, Ewes and the Anlons. Only an organic poet with vast experience and amazing open-mindedness can achieve such a task. At the launch of *Praise Song for The Land*, Awoonor, asserted his view on Anyidoho's role as both a spokesperson for his community and a vibrant actor. Anyidoho is described as a committed activist. His expectation of the writer is to be someone who cannot merely act as the observation post which gives account of what is happening, nor can he or she be the ventriloquist's dummy or the African parrot who is a past-master at mimicry. To Anyidoho, the writer is a product of history which is replete with so many heroes, and villains. The writer has to be a product of a specific landscape even though he has passed through so many different terrains, deserts, vast forests, cactus fields, marshlands, lagoons, violent seascapes, terrible rivers, and even the mighty oceans. These are not merely metaphors that dwell in the writer's consciousness, in the definitive memories of place. They are also the psychic fixtures of time, what in a more mundane parlance is generally called "history".

## **5. GEOPOLITICS AND GLOBALIZATION IN *THE PLACE WE CALL HOME AND OTHER POEMS AND PRAISE***

### ***Song for the Land.***

This section is anchored in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's analysis of globalization and the metamorphosis that globalization has allowed imperialism to go through. In *Empire* and *Multitude*, the authors show that the nation state has lost its sovereignty to the multinational and international financial institutions like the IMF and the World Bank. In other words, they demonstrate that a phenomenon of deterritorialization and reterritorialization is taking place, where the geographical borders of the nations, especially the "less developed ones" represent nothing but reservoirs of natural, mineral and human resources that international oil companies like Exxon Mobile, Shell and others can occupy and siphon resources from. The configuration of the world has therefore drastically changed. This leads to more sophisticated form of imperialism where neo colonies turn into an Empire that is the property of financial multinational institutions and the citizens of those nations are simply a multitude, a term which ironically reminds the reader of the way human gatherings are referred to in the Bible. Anyidoho exemplifies globalization, brutal aggressions

and injustices that come with it through imperialistic military interventions. For instance, the war between the US and Iraq, dubbed 'Operation Desert Shield' that took place between August 1990 and February 1991. Also, 'Operation Desert Storm' that followed 25 years later and was the occupation of Iraq by the US after September 11, 2001. The September 2001 attack itself commonly referred to as 9/11 and the previous imperialistic invasions by the US are carefully dissected in *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems*.

Pan-Africanism and Diaspora have been associated with several Ghanaian writings and Anyidoho's works are no exception. Critics dwell on the importance Anyidoho associates to these two concepts in his work. Okunoye (2009) asserts that Ghanaian literary culture is unique in the sense that it exhibits a considerable sense of historical awareness. Ghanaian writing exhibits a great deal of pan-Africanist consciousness, a reality that has much to do with the nation's history and the conscious manner in which a pan-Africanist outlook has been sustained within the Ghanaian intellectual tradition and public life. Ghanaian writers generally privilege realities that are central to defining the experiences of black people from the pre-colonial era to the present. Four writers that Cristel Tempels studies in *Literary Pan-Africanism* are Ghanaian.

According to Okunoye (2009), two major factors explain this orientation in Ghanaian writing: The first one is that Ghana has many of the reminders of the traumatic experience of slavery, the single most important assault on the continent, which constantly inspires creative reflection on the experience. These are mainly forts and trade posts that European slave traders used: Ghana boasts the distinction of having sixty castles, forts, and lodges built along its three-hundred-mile coastline. These historical sites attract diasporic Africans who are eager to trace their African roots and emotionally recapture the origins of the African diaspora.

The second factor is that Ghanaians have particularly sustained the pan-Africanist vision and this has come to be associated with the way the Ghanaian nation itself is imagined. Okunoye further asserts that Kwakwu Larbi Korang's *Writing Ghana, Imagining Africa* situates African modernity within a transnational framework and demonstrates the sense in which the intellectual history of Ghana must proceed from acknowledging the foundation that a form of Pan-Africanism from the nineteenth century laid the foundation for the Ghanaian outlook on the African identity. The fact that Ghana was also the first African country to gain independence from the British naturally placed the responsibility of leading the rest of the continent on Pan-Africanism and Globalized Black Identity. Kwame Nkrumah, who led Ghana to independence (with other equally hardened nationalists) and became her first president, sought to translate his vision of an integrated Africa into reality by encouraging Ghanaians to long for an African nation in which people of the African diaspora will also have a sense of belonging. He consequently promoted an official policy that encouraged people in the African continent to strive towards unification as a practical expression of the grand dream of uniting Africa and recovering from her fragmentation by colonialism. That initiative also reinforced the link between this new nation and the African diaspora to the extent that many diasporic Africans had extended sojourns in Ghana. But because no literary tradition simply reproduces history, the black creative imagination is almost obsessed with recreating, reinterpreting and recovering remarkable experiences. For people of African descent who have been forcibly taken away from their lands and peoples, that recovering process focuses on slavery and the consequent loss of identity, the agony of the Middle Passage and the eventual quest for freedom and integration in the new environment.

Okunoye (2009) further quotes Anyidoho who opines that Pan-Africanism and the issue of slavery dominate Ghanaian literature because there is no major Ghanaian writer who has not engaged either or both of these themes in his or her work. He states further that Kwado Oseyi-Nyame demonstrates in his study of the novels of Kwabena Sekyi and J.E. Casely Hayford, two Ghanaian nationalists, that a great deal of pan-Africanist consciousness animated their imagination and adds that Ayi Kwei Armah has given the most eloquent contemporary expression to the transnational consciousness that centralizes black experience, and his work explores various aspects and phases of the same history in a way that makes him register his vision of the black experience in a consistently passionate fashion.

The point being made about transnational engagements of the pan-Africanist variety in *The Place We Call Home* is noted by Femi Osofisan, who in his preface to the compilation points to how “Kofi Anyidoho displays an impressive intimacy with the geography and genealogy of black dispersal throughout the world, from the entire North and South America to the Caribbean and then to the Eastern Hemisphere” (Anyidoho 2011: xxiii – xxiv). Adika claims that that statement is particularly true of the “first movement” of the collection which constitutes nothing but movements into Diaspora and back to African space in a series of kinship rituals meant to challenge the history of dismemberment. *Ancestral Roll-Call* which is a libation-invocation of personas of diverse nationalities from across the Black world, appropriately sums up his transnational cum pan-Africanist twist in the collection: a fact which in turn reasserts the continuing relevance of transnational visions and hopes in the poetry of Anyidoho and increasingly, of other Ghanaian writers.

Regarding Western modern and postmodern imperialism, there cannot be any better examples in Anyidoho’s writings than the poem “Countdown to Ground Zero” which reflects destructive and sophisticated experiences of people outside Black Africa such as the United States of America and Baghdad. The poet certainly points out to and accuses American interference in the affairs of a sovereign country like Iraq. “Countdown to Ground Zero” is simply the accumulation of what the US brought upon itself by forcefully and falsely associating the 9/11 attack to Saddam Hussein’s regime in Iraq. Iraq had been assisted by the US with weapons likewise Iran which was also supported by the Soviet Union in the war between Iran and Iraq (1980-1988). The period corresponded with the peak of the Cold War. The US ultimately had to find a way to retrieve from Iraq the weapons they had donated them, and the only reason such a “plot” could be carried out was by indicating to the whole world that Iraq was the hideout of the mastermind of the 9/11 attack, Osama Ben Laden, although authentic records point to the fact that Iraq was not involved in any way in the terrorist attack, and that the US government in power at that time, led by George Bush Jr. was in connivance with Usama and was investing heavily in armament industry (*Fahrenheit 9/11*). The physical destruction imagery is prominent in “Countdown to Ground Zero”. The poet exposes the psychosis of war and some people’s enthusiasm to opt for it in spite of its adverse consequences.

In *Desert Storm*, the poet describes how the war was telecast on television screens and how presumably blood-thirsty inconsiderate generals, in shiny medals, zealously discuss war strategies in which younger souls were to perish. The planners (Old Generals) relax comfortably in well-secured and danger-free environment (White House) as common soldiers lose their lives on battle fields in their effort to protect the interest of their country. The persona captures the inconsiderate behavior of the US authorities in these lines:

It is the age of Old Generals  
all dressed in shiny medals  
issuing hourly briefs  
from cozy conference rooms.  
And out there in the Gulf  
A widowed mother’s only son  
Bleeds to Death in  
... To call for war and watch The War  
from the safe Distance  
of a Whitehouse Fortified  
against the raging tide of Blood  
against the lurking danger of the ArmBush  
 (“Desert Storm”: 39-40)

The poet declines to be specific about the number of victims involved but is concerned about the pain and other costs that the loss of the casualties brought to their families. For example he projects a few instances:

A widowed mother’s only son bleeds to death. (“Desert Storm”: 39)  
He was an orphan born to a father killed in the  
Desert Storm – a week before his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday.  
 (“Killed by Friendly Fire”:52)



Today they bring his body home wrapped in his country's  
 colors. His 3-year old boy all dressed in military gear  
 takes the salute as they sing *God Bless Amerika*...  
 and lower the casket into a hollow grave in Arlington Park.  
 ("Killed by Friendly Fire": 52)

The persona has resentment against the "stupidity of the war heroes" and sarcastically calls them "Infant Men", men whose obsession with war is akin to a teen's obsession with a new toy. He questions the irony and possible insult embedded in the word "Heroes" those veterans are tagged with. As those veterans walk about with "cracked souls", chased by the horrors of war. This incongruity of hero-worship is addressed in *Hero* (2011:43):

But his voice was cracked  
 and jagged like granite caught  
 in Fire Storm.  
 They dressed him up in new Medals  
 Dragged him off to Parade Grounds  
 Rewrote his Name in Brass  
 Nailed a Star to his Crown  
 Hanged Ribbons around his Neck.  
 Before they could name Hero  
 he stopped the Anthem  
 with a Fart so Loud  
 The Heavens went Silent.  
 ("Hero" :43)

Also, in *The Capitol Gang*, he questions why many young folks must die because of one person's hatred for another person. Previously, America "Armbushed" Iraq and bombed many places. Countless ordinary citizens were killed resulting in widowed women and orphaned children. The persona describes the horrors of war such that it paints a clear picture for the reader:

War is not . . .  
 but a meal of Death  
 cooked in Blood and served RedHot  
 at Flashpoint of Gun and Smoke  
 and the Choked Breath ("Desert Storm" :40)

The most disastrous poem, *nine eleven* discussed below was compiled after the devastating event involving the World Trade Center in 2001. The poem comes to us in the simplest language and the arrangement of the words on the page defies the normal stanzafication to suggest the broken and crushed towers as well as the rupture brought about by death. It also depicts the ruined state of the human race because the tragic event did not affect America alone but the global world.

There will be time again	for dreaming
There will be time again	for laughter
For now	only the doubt
	Remains.
As the towers burst	
	into flames
The future crumbles	
	into ruins
And O	how our soul's being
	Is heavy laden
With rage and ruin and Smoke. ( <i>nine eleven</i> :42)	

Further demonstration of the total destruction of human beings through this incidence is the illustration of images suggestive of the victims' bodies disassembled into their fundamental constituent parts as:

one thousand body bags  
ten thousand body parts  
ten billion DNAs  
("nine eleven":41)

One notices that the destructive imagery is heightened through the increasing statistical figures of the body constituents from "one thousand to ten thousand to ten billion". This deepens the reader's sympathy for and association with the victims of the fatal incidence that rocked the whole world on September 11, 2001.

One other portrayal of destructive imagery appears in "Termites". Termites, scientifically, are greedy destructive insects that live in organized colonies. They do a lot of damage by eating the wood of trees and buildings. In the poem "Termites" the persona describes some of their targets and the extent to which they carry out their destructive activities on these targets.

Termites: They eat their greed  
Through your precious clothes  
Through your sculptured Dreams  
Across priceless memories  
Through your manicured fence  
Into your neighbour's fears.

Still  
Filled with ... ("Termites": 74)

The poem consists of two stanzas. The exhibit above is the first stanza and the second stanza is the repetition of the same idea in the same lines. The change in the use of the possessive pronouns "your" in the first stanza to "our" in the second paints a picture of the persona's detachment from the subject and rather directly addressing an absent subject, meanwhile in the second stanza he is inclusive, part of the group. Looking at both stanzas, between "termites" and the next word on the same line there is a wide identifiable gap and "termites" in both cases are written in bold. This graphology foregrounds "termites" and gives the reader ample time to reflect on the destructive activities of termites. The repetition of "greed" in both stanzas brings to the forecourt of the reader's mind the greedy nature of "termites". This imagery is intensified in the repetition of the phrase "Still Filled with ..." to conclude each stanza. Termites are never satisfied in spite of their vast area of operation; they always hunger for more. Denotatively, the destructive and greedy nature of "termites" may apply to the destructive behavior of some individuals in society. Such people are greedy, very unsupportive and occupy themselves with unconstructive criticisms. Their aim is to tarnish people's hard earned reputation and destroy them completely. They make sure they stagnate others' aims and plans in life. The persona has succeeded in bringing this destructive character of people through the symbol of "termites" and maybe cautioning readers to be on the lookout for such people and know how to relate with them.

Fortunately, in spite of the numerous evidences of destruction, death, and other challenges in life that rear their ugly faces in the poems in the collection, especially in "CountDown to GroundZero", there are also imagery of proofs that the poet has substantial hope for the future. To begin with, the persona in "nine-eleven" begins on a hopeful note that regardless of the disaster and death that had entangled a people, all is not lost; there is still something to hope for. This idea is repeated intermittently as the poem develops.

There will be time again for Loving  
There will be time again for Laughter  
.....  
There will be time again for hoping  
There will be time again for dreams  
( "nine-eleven" :41)

Even if at the moment “Only the Hurt/ remains/ Only the Pain/ survives”. The persona further spreads out the message of hope in the category. He includes the victim, or one of the most prominent victims of America’s rage, Baghdad, in a poem bearing the same title. He traces the fall and rise of Baghdad through history. How different marauding forces, Hulagu, Shah Ismail and his Safavid Persian Gang, Suleiman, has assaulted the city. The hopeful imagery breaks bounds and embraces some poems in the preceding category, *Homage*. In *Harvest Dance* the persona persistently ends the discourse in a spirit of hope. The repetition of the same idea foregrounds the imagery of hope.

There is Darkness still in our Mind  
But Dawn cannot be too far Behind.

There is Darkness still in our Mind  
But Dawn cannot be too far Behind.

There is Darkness still in our Mind  
But Dawn cannot be too far Behind.  
 (“Gathering the Harvest Dance: Harvest Dance”:24)

Previously in the same poem, the persona drops hints of hope. The lines read:

We come today to Stare our History in the Face  
We come today to Shake Hands with our Deepest Fear  
We come today to exchange our Shame for Hope  
Our DeepSilence for Ancestral Harvest Songs  
.....  
Offering us a New Vision of Life a New Meaning of Hope  
 (“Gathering the Harvest Dance: Harvest Dance”: 22)

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined Kofi Anyidoho’s two collections of poems, *Praise Song for the Land* and *The Place We Call Home and Other Poems*, focusing on revealing the following specific features of those poems: an organicity which takes a wider dimension by plunging into the Black Diaspora and the paper clearly identifies the poet as a cultural and political activist. The second task that the work assigned itself is to scrutinize the global and geopolitical dimension of the poems. It highlighted some traits that the poet uses to describe and castigate the injustice of the capitalist nations of this earth. Those who erect themselves to the rank of the police officer of the world, use fallacies to cruelly deconstruct the socio-political, economic and cultural fabric of certain nations, under the pretense of working for the establishment of peace in the world. The peace maker is in reality a selfish glutton warrior who works for the forces of injustice and exploitation.

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