Revisiting "Home" in Ghanaian Poetry: Awoonor, Anyidoho and Adzei

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Gabriel Edzordzi Agbozo,

"Revisiting 'Home' in Ghanaian Poetry: Awoonor, Anyidoho and Adzei"

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Abstract: The idea of "home" is a significant occurrence in postcolonial literature, as it connects to other ideas as identity, nationhood, and culture. This paper discusses "home" in Ghanaian poetry focusing on three well-regarded poets: Kofi Awoonor, Kofi Anyidoho, and Mawuli Adzei. These poets come from the Ewe ethnic group, and engage with the Pan-African project in both their scholarly and creative expressions. Drawing on John Berger, Sara Dessen, and Ewe thought on the afterlife, this paper suggests two major types of "home" in the works of these three poets: the physical, and the metaphysical. Physical "home" refer to the Wheta traditional area, Ghana, Africa and her Diaspora, while the metaphysical refers to tsiefe or aulime - the afterlife. The paper also discusses why "home" is significant to these poets and how their portrayal of 'home' is a starting point for the next generation of Ghanaian poets.

Gabriel Edzordzi AGBOZO,

Revisiting 'Home' in Ghanaian Poetry: Awoonor, Anyidoho and Adzei

Some of the most significant persons, throughout the course of human history, descend from very otherwise insignificant and virtually unknown geographical locations. For instance, Kwame Nkrumah, the first president of Ghana who was pivotal in the nation's independence struggle, hailed from Nkroful, a little village in the western region of Ghana. Barak Hussain Obama, the 44th President of the United States of America has his ancestry traced to Nyang'oma Kogelo, a village in the Siaya County of Kenya. In similar ways, the Wheta Traditional Area, in the Volta Region of Ghana, has produced such literary persons of significance whose works are intrinsically intertwined with the Ewe tradition. Wheta is not a village like Nkroful or Nyang'oma Kogelo but until the emergence of the literary works that it inspired, it might be virtually unknown to some people beyond the boundaries of the Volta Region of Ghana. This place has produced many Ghanaian and African literary stalwarts. The concept of "home" in the poetry of three of such writers is the focus of this paper. The three "Whetaphile" poets, whose works we discuss in this paper are Kofi Awoonor, and Kofi Anyidoho who were born in this place as well as Mawuli Adzei, from nearby Atiteti in the same traditional area. Some other known names in the tradition of songs/poetry from the vicinity include the legendary Henoga Vinoko Akpalu, Komi Ekpe, Amega Dunyo, Henoga Domegbe, Abia Adidi Anyidoho, Kwadzovi Nugbegble Matekpe Anyidoho, and Agbodzinshi Yortuvor.

Kofi Awoonor and Kofi Anyidoho have traced the influence of the cultural and artistic traditions of their people on their work. For instance, Kofi Awoonor affirms his rootedness in his Anlo-Ewe tradition, especially the dirge tradition, and was motivated by the concept of continuity as maintained in the Ewe idea, *eka xoxoawo nue wogbea yeyeawo do* (it is onto old ropes that the new are woven). He claimed that some of his "earliest poetry was an attempt to carry over from the dirge a series of segments or individual lines around which to create longer pieces that still express a close thematic and structural affinity with the original" ("Tradition" 237).

Some critics (e.g. Zagbede-Thomas & Thomas) saw this continuity as plagiarism of traditional poetry. Mawuli Adjei pointed out, however, that what Awoonor did, was not different from the ideas expressed in T.S. Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Kwabena Nketia's "The Artist in Contemporary Africa: The Challenge of Tradition" or Abiola Irele's "Tradition and the Yoruba Writer" where the artist borrows from the culture, and adapts to the culture but maintains a personal identity.

Anyidoho ("Back" 7) also recalls how his admiration of the oral Ewe poetry tradition arrested him and later influenced his artistry as a poet:

At that early age, good poetry in Ewe, usually as song, had a dramatic impact on me. I began to read transcriptions of Akpalu's songs in books, even as I heard my mother and others singing his songs at home. And when Akpalu himself came on the radio, or when his voice boomed into the megaphone of Uncle Kofitse Ashiakpor's gramophone—that miracle of His Master's Voice—everyone dropped whatever they were doing and gathered around the miracle machine as the greatest of all Ewe poet-cantors spoke and sang to us in our own language. (7)

Concerned primarily with the artistic spirit of the Anlo-Ewe song traditions and styles, the three "Whetaphile" poets extend their themes to narrate the traumas of Ghana and all other spaces they consider "home." Their works are draped with the concept of home and its related themes and motifs that occur in different contexts. While some literary commentators have correctly observed the recurrence of the idea of "home" in the works of Awoonor and Anyidoho, not much attention has been paid to it in the poetry of Adzei, maybe because he is the latest of the "Whetaphile" trio. Again, though the concept has been identified in the works of Awoonor and Anyidoho, a systematic discussion of the different meanings of 'home' is yet to be undertaken about Awoonor like the one I previously did on Anyidoho. This paper undertakes this systematic discussion. In what follows, an attempt is made to define home, classify the concept into two main categories, discuss these classifications in details with respect to the poetry of the poets in focus and the paper concludes with suggestion for the budding artists.

Home has varied definitions. Literally, home is an apartment, house, and any type of shelter where people live, especially with their family. On another level, home is the larger geographical location to which people could trace their identity. This may be a particular village, town, city, country, continent etc. In the context of this discussion, such examples include the Wheta area, Ghana and Africa. However, "home" stretches beyond the physical.

John Berger, however, suggests that "home" defies definition in the geographic context and can only be defined in the ontological. In his book *And Our Faces, My Heart, Brief as Photos* (1991), Berger draws on the work of a Romanian-born historian of religion Mircea Eliade, to offer a meaning of home. Following Eliade, he sees home as the center of the world, in the ontological sense. Eliade suggests that home was the place from which the world could be founded. It is established at the heart of the real without which the world is not only shelter-less but also lost in nonbeing, in unreality and without a home, everything is fragmentation. It is the place where a vertical line crosses with a horizontal one. The vertical line is a path leading upwards to the sky and downwards to the underworld. The horizontal line represents the journeys in the world, and all the possible roads leading across the earth to other places. When people are at home, they are nearest to the gods in the sky and to the dead of the underworld. This nearness promised access to both the gods and the underworld and at the same time, they are at the starting point and, hopefully, the returning point of all terrestrial journeys.

In contrast, Sarah Dessen proposes that: "Home wasn't a set house, or a single town on a map. It was wherever the people who loved you were, whenever you were together. Not a place, but a moment, and then another, building on each other like bricks to create a solid shelter that you take with you for your entire life, wherever you may go" (11).

On another level, home is that unknown metaphysical world where one believes to have come from, and where one believes to dwell after death. In the Ewe worldview and belief system, this place is *tsiefe* or *aulime*; the place across the river, a mirrored image of existence on earth, a village where life carries on in a shadowed form devoid of material substance. This metaphysical cosmos is also, in the Ewe cosmology, the temporary resting place of ancestral beings before they reincarnate into another being in the physical world, if Sogbo Lisa, the Supreme Being, wanted them to. This meaning of home entails the ontological view of Berger that holds that home is the place where we are nearest to the gods and the underworld.

Given these diverse meanings of "home," it may be prudent to propose that the different occurrences of the idea of "home" in the poetry of the "Whetaphile" trios suggest diverse meanings in various instances. We put these instances into two broad categories: the physical home and the metaphysical home. Data was collected by a selection of individual poems worthy of analysis within the scope of this paper. Data was analyzed by a critical reading of the selected texts and examining the various occurrences of "home" and its related themes and motifs based on such factors as culture, tradition, history, religion and politics.

The physical "home" is the various geographical locations on earth that these poets consider homes. These include the Wheta area, Ghana, Africa and the diaspora, especially the Caribbean. In speaking of these places as home, the poets concerned themselves with initiating and or continuing dialogue about the social traumas of these places and the hopes that they hold.

The exploration of some religious and cultural beliefs among the Anlo-Ewe suggest that certain occurrences of "home" and accompanying motifs may be interpreted as the Wheta Traditional Area. This home is constructed as a place with which the poets have strong emotional attachment and a place of fond childhood memories, among others.

Due to its proximity to the sea and the Keta Lagoon, the sea floods the area whenever it overflows its boundary. Many valuables are damaged and human lives lost in the process. In "The Sea Eats the Land at Home," Awoonor bemoans the sea's destruction of the land and the livelihood of Keta. The aftermath of this is desolation. Even buildings become testaments of melancholy as their gray, and brown walls tell the story of their neglect and disuse. Because of his emotional attachment to this "home" Awoonor found it a duty to comment on this devastation:

At home the sea is in the town,
Running in and out of the cooking places,
Collecting the firewood from the hearths
And sending it back at night;
The sea eats the land at home.

It came one day at the dead of night,
Destroying the cement walls,
And carried away the fowls,
The cooking-pots and the ladles,
The sea eats the land at home;

It is a sad thing to hear the wails,
And the mourning shouts of the women,

Calling on all the gods they worship,
To protect them from the angry sea. (*The Promise* 272)

Since the arrival of the Anlo-Ewe ancestors, circa the 15th century, after escaping from the kingdom of Notsie led by Togbui Wenya on the coast of present-day Keta, it is estimated that only about thirty percent of the land remains. Since that time, about seventy percent of the original Keta no longer exists. It lies beneath the Atlantic Ocean. Awoonor uses imagery to portray the sea, personified, as the evil entity that destroys his home. This helps picture the damage caused by the storm as it comes running, collecting, carrying and sending the people's valuables away as the women wail, shout and invoke their gods for protection. The tone used helps bring out the emotional toll the destruction may have had on him.

In spite of the devastation, Anyidoho, in "The Place We Call Home," constantly craves for that place, which suffered from the anger of the sea: "I will come again to these shores/ I will come again to these lands [...] of birthplace waters lap lap lapping against/ these feet grown weary with waywardness" (*The Place* 31) These "shores" and "lands" are parts or synecdoches of home. In spite of his wide travels, Anyidoho could not claim any part of the earth for himself. In "The Place We Call Home," he reflects on his sojourns "across horizons." He catalogues some of his destinations as Wellington, Medellin, Santiago de Cuba, Haiti, Santo Domingo and Baranquija in Columbia, among others. His constant return to a particular geography may be because of the many forms of devastation that he saw, heard, felt, smelt, and tasted.

This place also holds fond childhood memories for Anyidoho. In "The Place We Call Home" he recalls the early morning life: waking up usually at "the third CockCrow" to fetch water from the village stream or from the community pipe while the dew on the grass splashes on the legs: "the third CockCrow/ and the early walk to the village stream/daily nuisance of grass still wet with dew" (*The Place* 32). In his poem "Homing Pigeons," Mawuli Adzei also registers his affinity to this home: "Listen, 'tis not only the pigeon that has a habit/ Of crafting its way back to its pigeon-hole/ I, too, have ridden the chariot of gravity/ Along the new asphalt pathways/ To the familiar battlegrounds of yore/ These changing landscapes Kofi calls home/ And for which he sang a thousand praise-songs" (*Filaments* 52).

Like the pigeon, which has the character of constantly returning into its hole after the day's work, the persona goes back to this place that he sees as a changing landscape. The changes caused by the devastation of the sea, the absence of war with their neighbors over salt, and fish among others. He tells us of the bravery of his people by calling this home a "battleground of yore." Historically, the Anlo-Ewes, and all Ewes, were a warrior nation and revered for the art of warfare. Due to a clash of economic interests in salt mining and fishing in the Volta estuary and seldom slave raiding, the Anlo-Ewe had conflicts with the Ada, Agave and Ga people. This led to a number of battles in which the Ada, Agave and Ga usually fought with the Anlo-Ewe. These wars commenced around 1750 and continued into the nineteenth century. Some accounts recorded hostilities between the Anlo-Ewe and these people in 1750, 1769, 1776, and 1780. The atrocity that Anlo-Ewe inflicted on Ada on 26 October 1780 when it attacked Ada without warning, defeated it and burnt the town, instigated a subsequent mobilization of forces against the Anlo-Ewe by the Danes in 1784. They tried to control the trade on the coast and fought the Anlo-Ewe, with the collaboration of all the enemies of Anlo-Ewes. This was the Sagbadre (swallow) War. They had to flee and seek refuge at Wheta and Klikor as most Anlo towns were burnt. Under coercion, Anlo signed a peace treaty on 18 June 1784. There was also a civil war in 1792, which resulted in the founding of the state of Some with its capital at Agbozume by those who fled (Amenumey, *The Ewe*). The Keta war or the Agudza war from 1844 to 1847, the Agoe war from 1860 to 1863 and the Funu war followed the Some war in 1865. One of the most significant of these wars was the Battle of Datsutagba in 1866, in which Anlo-Ewe, and with the assistance of some other Ewe groupings such as the Mafi-Ewe fought the British and their allies at Akatsi and Mafi-Adidome. Other wars include the 1873–1874 Glover war; the 1881 Kpoglu or Dzodze war; the 1885 Taletto war; and the 1889 Shime or Trekume war (Green 35).

In this poem, however, Adzei talks about home with a sort of desperation and sadness: "I have neither praises nor homilies to shower/Instead, tears gather, gather in torrents/ I'll dam them in the reservoirs of the heart" (*Filaments* 53). The reason for the sadness is the neglect of the cultural and traditional way of life, a degradation of morals, the absence of discipline and patriotism. He bemoans the departure of some ancestors, together with the contemporary generation's neglect of ancient art of medicine, artisanship and creativity so that nobody cares about keeping their memory. He bemoans in particular the loss of identity, consciousness and self-esteem among his people, but takes consolation in the remnants of nature, symbolized by the baobab tree. This tree reminds him of a great nation that once was alive, fearsome and proud. These natural reminders, however, will soon die and erase the

memory of a people. He laments, "I look to the sedentary ancient baobabs for companionship/ They still sit in state, counting the days/ 'Tis they who remind me/ Of what was once our common heritage/ This vanishing topographical puzzle/ But they too will die slowly, slowly/ And yield their places to common shrubs". In spite of the sadness with which "home" is constructed in this poem, the poet-persona yearns for no other home, except the same. He writes: "They say the home-bound feet are not evil feet/ So on my honour I promise, I promise/ I'll ride the splash of waves back again and again/ Asking questions, looking for signs/ I'll come back to be counted among the living and the dead/ I'll come back to these same places of yore."

Worthy of note too is the communal entertainment, reflected in Anyidoho's "Fertility Game," (*EarthChild* 14) one of the attractions of this home. This poem is a communal performance. This form is peculiar to the oral tradition into which the poet is born. The poem portrays the tradition where young women sing and dance in the moonlight, often in honor of their men, in public celebration. The persona exclaims, "Come back home Agbenoxevi come back home/ a week today at carnival time/ youngmen of the land will gather/ for the wrestling duel of song and dance/ maidens will sharpen their tongues and/ carve praise images of dream lovers and/ I have a gourdful of praise names laid aside for you."

This beautiful communal life was, in recent history, marred by a chieftaincy conflict in the Anlo State. The Anlo State has thirty-six towns with their respective chiefs. The paramount chief, the Awoamefia (the equivalent of a King), is the overload and head of all the chiefs. A dispute erupted when some kingmakers tried to enstool Francis Nyonyo Agboada as the Awoamefia against traditional hereditary succession. Coming from Atiteti, one of the Anlo-Ewe towns in the Wheta Traditional Area, Adzei found it necessary to call for calm and decency. In "Thoughts of the Native Son: A Lament for Torgbui Sri," (*Testament* 56) he portrays an image of the ancestral Awoamefia casting his eyes on the Anlo land and seeing the devastation going on, shakes his head and goes back into sleep.

Of special interest in this poem is the tone and voice of the persona. The persona speaks to the issues with the first person singular "I" voice. He calls the poem's subject matter "heavy matters of the heart" which he wants to "unburden" at "crossroads" where "tin-gods lay ambush for our testicles." He takes the issue upon himself, sees himself as a victim of the cultural erosion and deems it dutiful to restore sanity. In trying to restore this sanity, he recalls the shame that the dispute caused; how their actions have tainted their ancestral glory, as "the sun threatens to set at dawn/over this land of drum and fire/ where the ancient warriors' banners/now hang red-frilled at half mast/among waistbeads and menstrual blood."

Like their contemporaries such as Ayi Kwei Armah, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Amu Djoletto, the "Whetaphile" trio have commented on the fate of Ghana on several occasions. In speaking about Ghana as home, they portrayed the country as a place of continuous political instability, a nation led by corrupt leaders who mismanage her affairs, and as a nation of hope.

At the time that Ghana gained her independence from Britain, there was the expectation that independence was going to better the lot of the country. The citizens expected tremendous improvement in their lives, as Awoonor shows us in "The Light Is On": "the time we as young as/ our country/ dreamed of obvious success, / of achievements measured/ in concise yardage/ of promises delivered, / of children protected from age" (*The Promise* 3).

Very soon, the joyful celebration of the birth of a new dream was interrupted "by rogues/ and other bad men" who sang "obscene songs" and "made bad gestures". This dream of a successful nation, which takes care of her people, became a fiasco. The failure manifested mainly in national leadership as leaders became selfish, power-drunk, and corrupt.

Post-colonial Ghana has witnessed five military coups. First was the National Liberation Movement, which overthrew Kwame Nkrumah in 1966. Secondly, the Supreme Military Council I led by Ignatius Kutu Acheampong overthrew Edward Akufo-Ado and Kofi Abrefa Busia in 1972. Then there was the Supreme Military Council II led by Frederick Akufo, which toppled the Ignatius Kutu Acheampong's government in 1976. The Armed Forces Revolutionary Council came next, under the leadership of Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings and toppled Frederick Akufo in 1979. The last military government was the Provincial National Defense Council again led by Flt. Lt. Jerry John Rawlings, which overthrew the Hilla Liman government in 1981. The social trauma of this period in history was so devastating that Anyidoho uses the dirge to mourn the situations in this country. In "Pan Am 188," the poet rejoices over the death of some of the coup makers and coup plotters who he regards as relatives. This poem is Anyidoho's commentary on the former leaders of Ghana who were executed by firing squad soon after Rawlings launched his house-cleaning exercise and "though Anyidoho writes dirges on the tribulations of his motherland, the passing away of Ghana's corrupt leaders inspires no sorrowful poem" (Agbozo 17).

Like the military governments before them, they replicated the social evils that they repudiated. An example of such is what Anyidoho uses the "wedding feast for butterfly ladies" in "The Panther's Final

Dance" (*EarthChild* 12) to symbolise. This poem echoes the situation, which came to be popularly known as "Fa woto bɛgyɛ golf" which literally means, "grab VW Golf with your genitals". It was the phenomenon whereby the military leaders gave Volkswagen Golf cars, which were imported with state resources, to their girlfriends and other sexual partners in exchange for their services (Agbozo 19).

"Mythmaker" (*EarthChild* 34) is another poem in which Anyidoho recalls a historical atrocity that bad men and rogues caused. This is a response to the shooting of three students by the national security forces during a demonstration against the establishment of a semi-civilian rule under Acheampong's Union Government. The country's constitution was to be amended as a strategy to entrench the revolutionary government in power. The universities closed down as students and teachers demonstrated against "our common kenkey grown so lean/ we needed a decree to insure her health". Eventually, the military used force to stop the demonstrations: "Early in 1975, a Sudanese student at the University of Ghana was killed by a bullet in the course of the brutal put-down of a... strike at the University. In the following years a few more students would be killed, and the country would be reduced to beggary due mostly to the mismanagement of its economy. The revolution had indeed "gone astray into the arm of dream merchants..." (Mensah 9). Adzei refers to this recurring danger of bad leadership in "Reincarnation," when he observes, "Nothing has changed/ Eternity is but a short time" (Adzei, *Testament* 48).

The civilian leaderships were worse than the military as they used trickery to camouflage their acts. In "Kleptoculture," (*Testament* 56) Adzei likens them to "sakpana," a dreaded disease of the small pox family and calls them "common charlatans parading themselves as soul-guides" who are "Taunting the dying nation with promises of bumper harvests" as the citizens froze like scarecrows. In the midst of these, however, the poets warned against total despair. In *Testament of the Seasons*, Adzei (41) dedicates a whole section to Ghana under the subtitle, "Land of our Birth." The prose poem that introduced the section is a pledge of patriotic citizens who are bent on not giving up on the country: "Land of our birth, where the fire never goes out in the family hearth. Land of our birth, where our mother's milk never goes sour. Land of our birth, where we planted our birth-cord, awaiting the harvest of age. Land of our birth, land of our death. We pledge to thee. We shall return." What shall "we" return to do? In "To Feed Our People" (*The Promise* 13), Awoonor reminds Ghanaians of the very essential things that are necessary for the restoration, to the people, of the dream conceived at independence. These include physical and spiritual responsibilities such as building roads, cultivating the land for agricultural purposes, cleaning/restoring ancient places of worship; and these must be attended to with a sense of urgency: "and oh, we must meet the/ morning dew wet, / work with the early sun till the vertex/ when it will come home with us."

The result of this hard work and positive outlook on life is a resurrection of the hope and the restoration of human dignity, comfort and satisfaction. Anyidoho invites the people, in "News from Home," to remain strong and positive about life. He proposes that it is only this that can make Ghana's doom mongers become surprised at the progress being made:

Those who sent their funeral clothes
To the washerman
awaiting the mortuary men to come
bearing our corpse in large display
Let them wait for the next and the next
season only to see how well earthchildren
grow fruit and even flower
from rottenness of early morning dreams (*EarthChild* 23)

In "To Feed Our People," Awoonor admonishes that it is only after any Ghanaian has contributed positively to the restoration of hope and worked for the recovery of the positive dreams conceived at independence, that they can congratulate themselves and proudly journey into peaceful ancestorhood:

When the final night falls on us
as it fell upon our parents,
we shall retire to our modest home
earth-sure, secure
that we have done our duty
by our people;
we met the challenge of history
and were not afraid. (*The Promise* 13)

Postcolonial African creative writing has been noted to express nostalgia for the continent as ancestral home. The "Whetaphile" poets have expressed the sense of belonging to the larger continent through their concern for her state of affairs. They see Africa as a continent with a history of pain, a land of valiant people, and a continent with prospects.

The established and internationally acclaimed duo, Awoonor and Anyidoho, have long been noted for their conversations about Africa's traumatic history of slavery, colonization, and postcolonial issues. Adzei, publishing his poetry collection for the first time in the 21st century, has focused more on current happenings. Of these, the Arab Spring is the most notable. His collection, *Testament of the Seasons* opens with a section titled "Winds of Change." The section is primarily a commentary on the recent seemingly stochastic "revolutions" that occurred largely in parts of North Africa and the Middle East. The main catalyst for the escalation of the "spring" was the self-immolation of Tunisian Mohammed Bouazizi who, having been unemployed, was selling fruits at a roadside. On 17 December 2010, a municipal inspector confiscated his fruits. An hour later, he drenched himself in gasoline and set himself ablaze. He died on 4 January 2011, and this event brought together various groups that were dissatisfied with the existing system to begin the Tunisian Revolution. The segment opens with "Springtime," which narrates the sudden and uncontrollable unrest, the effects of which are still visible:

Springtime came playing dominoes
Hurling through the storms in a spiral of fireballs
A conflagration feeding on itself
Consuming everything in its path
Tunis to Cairo
Tripoli to Casablanca
Saana to Bahrain
Jeddah to Damascus (*Testament* 5)

In "Dance of the Dinosaurs" (*Testament* 7) Adzei names and describes the long-serving leaders, whose seemingly eternal leadership ignited the "spring." He likens them to "dinosaurs." This metaphor echoes the ancient, huge, and fearful, who lost their importance and how their praise songs faded and yet they held onto their "browning memories." The leaders who fell victim to this uprising were Mubarak, Ben Ali, Saleh, and al-Gaddafi. Hosni Mubarak was the forth president of Egypt. He ruled from 14 October 1981 to 11 February 2011. Zine El Abidine Ben Ali ruled Algeria from 2 April 1989 to 14 January 2011. Ali Abdullah Saleh was president of Yemen from 1990 to 2012. He was previously the president of North Yemen from 1978 until unification with South Yemen in 1990. Muammar al-Gaddafi led Libya from 1 September 1969 to 23 August 2011.

Adzei initiated and or continued conversations about many other continental and diaspora concerns: the failure of Somalia, the Rwandan genocide, the Hatian earthquake and the Ivorian civil war. In all these, he tries as much as possible to remind us of the rich historical past of these places, the realities of the present, and made suggestions for the construction of a future. In addressing these concerns, Adzei portrays these places as homes and their success or otherwise affects him.

Anyidoho invites all Africans to learn from the historical past and forge a new way forward for "self-renewal." Anyidoho took on the African unification issue in "Children of the Land: A Sequence for African Liberation" (*Ancestrallogic* 34). It is a construction of the framework for the unity of the African people. "The poem projects a common dream of African liberation and creates a shared vision from the fight for self-determination among the people. There is a re-birth of a new African image out of the beauty of her physical and cultural space and the tenacity she exerts in withstanding diverse conflicts and unexpected invasion by colonizers, slave raiders, betrayers et cetera" (Agbozo 32). The end of the second part of this poem portrays hope. The poet-persona narrates, "Our hope rise deep from the bosom of our Earth/ And touch the very foreheads of the sky./ From the mountain glory of our Eastern Lands/ We come to you with the victories and the worries of our people/ WE are the Children of the Eastern Lands."

As noted earlier, the Ewe conception of home defies the physical and delves into the metaphysical or the spiritual. This metaphysical home is *tsiefe* or *avlime*, the village where the dead, mostly those who lived good lives, live as ancestors, and to probably be re-born as *amedzodzwo* "the reincarnated." As people age, the Ewes believe, they are getting closer to this metaphysical home. A manifestation of this closeness is the consistent dreams they have about their ancestors who, sometimes, invite them into their midst, in the dreams. "At that point in time, the images and correlates of death—graves/graveyards as well as specific trees that often adorn cemeteries—loom larger and seem to vibrate with the ominous songs of death" (Adjei 147). They journey between two worlds. They become familiar with the terrain of the new world before eventually crossing a river into *avlime*. In "Those Gone Ahead",

Awoonor undertakes this same journey between two worlds in which he saw his dead father and sister. His sister sat under a "Gbaflo tree"; a tree associated with the cemetery and death:

I dreamt again this recurrent dream
of my father
taller ever than he has ever been
in the dream
I travelled on the seventh night
to awlme, the land of spirits
to visit my people,
those I know and those who knew me

On a mat in a corner
under a shady Gbaflo tree
lay my sister Comfort

a bit leaner, her beautiful
smile, frozen by death
as radiant ever (*The Promise* 24-27)

Awoonor refers to this home many times in his works. In "To the Ancient Poets," he invokes such prominent Ewe poets as Vinoko Akpalu, Amega Dunyo and Komi Ekpe, who he calls his "ancient friends" (*The Promise* 16). This designation denotes that he considers them part of a world that is related to his; a world he himself might join. He calls that world "night of life" where people who stand by their gods (of song) or who have satisfactorily fulfilled their earthly duties go:

and all of you,
those gone ahead
into the long night of life

My ancient friends Dunyo,
mesea gbagba o,
Komi Ekpe
who said his deity
is stuck in a brass pan.
You stood by your gods
and went home a holy man. (16)

In this poem, he is in conversation with the ancestral poets as he recalls their meeting, especially his last meeting with Akpalu "by the lagoon shore on a breezy cloudy day/when the rusty roofs of Keta/had disappeared in the mist." It is this home that he (Awoonor) wishes to go when his duty to his country and people is done. He writes, "we shall retire to our modest home/ earth- sure, secure/ that we have done our duty/ by our people". Earlier in "The Journey Beyond," he referred to this same home, when he pleads with Kutsiami, death's boatman, that he (Awoonor) does not have the money to pay him (Kutsiami) when the latter paddles the former across the river.

Similar sensibilities reflect in Awoonor's "Counting the Years" (*The Promise* 18) when the poet-persona talks about death: "the dying time, the pity, /when we resurrect the travelers/the anchorman on our singular boat/that will take us home." Adjei observes that "our singular boat" is a euphemism for coffin, "home" is the grave, the underworld or eternity; it is "home" because not only is it the final destination of all mortal beings but also where "those gone ahead" reside, waiting to receive him" (Adjei 138). This metaphysical is not explicit in the work of Adzei. However, in Adzei's work a journey motif reflects the Ewe belief of reincarnation from a metaphysical world. In "The Wayfarer" (*Testament* 135), the persona says he (and all humans) is a wayfarer in a slow trek through this life into a life beyond. This idea also echoes John Berger's view of home as an ontological space of journeys to the gods, the underworlds and with possible return in a cyclic movement. The persona is not sure if he wants a return into life but wishes that the iron gates of life be left ajar for him because, as fate has it "I shall return" (136).

Positionality, geographic and otherwise, influenced writers' worlds. Three of Ghana's most influential poets use their grounding in their ethnic culture and their poetic artistry to comment on the idea of "home." The varied occurrences of "home" have diverse meanings. While some occurrences of "home" suggest the physical world such as Wheta, Ghana, Africa and the African Diaspora. "Home" also means the metaphysical, and in the context of these poets, the ancestral world beyond the river. Of special

attention concerning this meaning of 'home' is the work of Awoonor whose poetry is draped with the tone, style and themes of the dirge. After over seventy years, his preoccupation with death is handled in *The Promise of Hope: New and Selected Poems, 1964-2014* with "an air of solemnity and the calculated resignation of the sagacious old man who knows he would soon be plucked away by death" (Adjei 33). The burden that these poets leave at the door of the budding Ghanaian/African poet is enormous. These poets have chronicled Ghana/Africa/African Diaspora's litany of traumas encountered in the course of history but also underscore the value of hope. It is on this note of hope that the budding poet must continue the conversations about "home," and eventually lead his/her people to find antidotes to the destructions encountered in history.

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