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Poetry as a Travelogue: *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* as a Journey back to the African People's Fragmented History

La poésie comme carnet de voyage : *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* comme un voyage retour sur le passé douloureux du peuple africain

Sansan Sib

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Abstract

AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues (1993) is the fourth collection issued by the Ghanaian poet Kofi Anyidoho. The book represents an important literary endeavour through which the poet reflects from a pan African perspective on the mutilation of the black race throughout history. This article analyses the collection of poems from a postcolonial theoretical lens, arguing that it serves as a poetic travelogue through which Anyidoho revisits the fragmented, traumatic history of African peoples and highlights their enduring resilience. This is done through the concept of Sankofa that allows the reader to capture the particular interest that the poet devotes throughout the entire collection to the conditions of the descendants of Africans in the Caribbean. The survey has thus allowed to shed light on the people's enduring challenge against Western hegemonic tutelage allowing them to progressively rise up from the endemic subaltern conditions that is their lot.

Résumé :

AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues (1993) est le quatrième recueil publié par le poète ghanéen Kofi Anyidoho. Ce livre représente une entreprise littéraire importante à travers laquelle le poète réfléchit, dans une perspective panafricaine, à la mutilation de la race noire à travers l'histoire. Cet article analyse le recueil de poèmes à travers une approche théorique postcoloniale, en soutenant qu'il fonctionne comme un carnet de voyage poétique par lequel Anyidoho revisite l'histoire fragmentée et traumatique des peuples africains, tout en mettant en lumière leur résilience persistante. Cela se fait à travers le concept de Sankofa, qui permet au lecteur de saisir l'intérêt particulier que le poète accorde, tout au long du recueil, aux conditions des descendants d'Africains dans les Caraïbes. Cette étude a ainsi permis de mettre en lumière le combat constant de ces populations contre la tutelle hégémonique occidentale, leur permettant de se relever progressivement des conditions subalternes endémiques qui sont les leurs.

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Corresponding author:

Sansan Sib,

Institut National Polytechnique Houphouët Boigny (INP-HB)

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8044-3947>

Email: sibsansan01@gmail.com

Introduction

Kofi Anyidoho is a name that echoes vivid on the contemporary African poetic scene. The poet has indeed made a name as one of Ghana's renowned poets of all times. His entire poetic career is known for its commitment to the African predicament both in the homeland and in the diaspora. Since his emergence on the modern African poetic scene, he has made himself the champion of the masses using his poetry as a platform to speak on behalf of the less privileged in order to alleviate their sufferings.

His poetry questions various thematic concerns including “the brutality of regimes, social disintegration, the betrayal of revolution, the destruction of optimism, the conflict between tradition and Christianity, the clash of contrasting life styles, social deprivation, persecution of innocence and injustice in general” (Palmer 79). This unexhausted list of thematic preoccupations underlying Anyidoho's poetic experience proves undeniably the commitment of his literary imagination to the African people's welfare. He has thus definitely taken side to fight on behalf of the less privileged in post-colonial Africa and the oppressed in general for the sake of improving their lot.

Though a great deal of his early poems has been devoted to the precarious conditions of post-independent Ghanaians and post-colonial Africans in general, his poetry has grown to capture the predicament of the entire black race both in the homeland and in the diaspora. The collection *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* (1993) offers in this regard clues that substantiate the bridge the Ghanaian poet builds to connect homeland and diasporic Africans. The collection “artistically spins the web of the black man's history and experience from the past to the present” (Bamgbose 34). It has therefore served Anyidoho as a ThinkPad to contend “the linking up of various segments of the black world as a necessary act of collective definition of Africans peoples in their various locations” (Okunoye 77).

This study considers therefore the collection as a poetic travelogue informed by the Sankofa philosophy, enabling a literary and historical re-examination of trauma and resilience among people of African descent in the Americas. It essentially offers to read the collection as a journey the poet does in the African people's painful past. Through this historical journey, the reader is allowed to reflect on the painful legacies of slavery and displacement that

have shaped the experiences of the African people in the Caribbean and beyond.

The idea of reading the collection as a travelogue implies to perceive the poetic narratives about the African people's fragmented history not just as stories or poems, but more importantly as pathways and routes that guide the reader through the emotional and historical landscapes of the people's painful past. It aims essentially at unveiling the Ghanaian poet's call to a journey back through time and memory to the people's history of pain and of endless fragmentation to experience the collective pain, trauma and resilience.

1. Migration from a Sankofa Perspective: The Homeland Visiting the Diaspora

1.1 Anyidoho's Migration Experience

Anyidoho defines his poetic experience in the collection *PraiseSong for TheLand* (2002) as a journey from continental Africa to "the various spaces of the Earth" (23). This poetic journey to which the Ghanaian poet has committed his poetry led him to witness various dimensions of the mutilation of the black race that the dirge style participates to express. In the collection *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* (1993) the reader is taken to the experiences of the Middle Passage and in the heart of slavery to witness the lingering effects of Western imperialism in the life of the descents of the enslaved black people in the Americas.

The poet himself has successfully passed, through his life experience, the three types of migration tests discussed by Anita L. Harris within the framework of the *sankofa* mythology. In his migration process into the black people's future and past, the poet succeeded indeed in passing subsequently the "physical migration," the "migration of identity" and the "literary migration" (Harris 57). Anyidoho's entire life is indeed marked by a constant intermittence between his native Ghana, the United States and other various locations in the world.

Having earned a BA honour in English and linguistic from the University of Ghana-Legon, he pursues his studies in the United States where he got a Master degree in folklore from Indiana University in Bloomington, and a PhD in comparative literature from the University of Texas at Austin. After his graduation, Anyidoho has even regularly visited the country as a guest

professor. Likewise, his career as a full-grown poet has revolved between Africa and the various locations of the black people in the five continents. Having tasted the American dream, the poet has all the same returned to his native land to gather the “unfinished [independence] harvest” (Anyidoho, *Earthchild* 7) of post-independent Ghanaians. In the poem “Bad Debt,” the reader is reminded the bad debt the poet paid for this return:

So now I’ve paid
my last bad debt
to the consumptive glory of academe
And I’ll sit the nights
sustaining my years with yearning
for the final homegoing
waiting for Legon’s dreadful processes
to catch up with this impatience of mine. (35)

Throughout the poem a brief summary of the poet’s academic years is provided, especially during his academic stay in Bloomington and later at Austin. The poem is a logic continuation of the poem “Mythmaker”. After the BA he got at the University of Ghana, the poet benefited from a scholarship to pursue his studies in the United States. These studies sent him far away from the fight against the malfunctioning of the Ghanaian nation to which he was involved in as a student when studying at the University of Legon. The poem expresses the poet’s hurry during these years of absence to resume his combat for the welfare of his homeland.

The persona sums up thus these years far from the motherland as a bad debt he paid “to the consumptive glory of academe” and during which he was expressing an impatience “for the final homegoing.” Likewise, the announcement that the poet does in the poem “The Homing Call of Earth”, that he has “come back home to Earth” (43) is an implicit way for Anyidoho to evoke his migration of identity. During his US stay indeed, the poet was cut from his roots for a while. Coming back home has permitted him therefore to find his cultural roots and take part to the unfinished cultural harvest of post-independent Ghanaians.

Though the poet sometimes associate homeland with agony and sufferings of all kinds, the feeling of happiness providing home pervades in Anyidoho’s entire poetry. In fact, despite his long stay out of his native land, the poet is still ingrained culturally to his African roots. Most of the poems in

the collection *A Harvest of Our Dreams* (1985a) for example, were written during his stay as a student in the United States. Besides, many of the poems in the collection *PraiseSong for TheLand* (2002) as Anyidoho himself maintains “date back to July and August 1991, when [he] was in residence as fellow of Ragdale House in Lake Forest, Illinois” (*PraiseSong* 19).

This identity migration is also emphasized by the poet’s contention in the preface of the collection *The Place We Call Home* (2011) that the cluster of poems in the second section “was born out of 9/11 and its tragic aftermath” (*The Place* xvii) from the terrorist attack of the Twin Towers in 2001. This implies that Anyidoho has made an identity migration in different places of the world and has experienced different cultures.

In the literary domain, Anyidoho’s migration could be determined by his successful combination of the Ewe poetic heritage and English. He has invited with a rare literary craft, African poetic tradition (the dirge style and the tradition of song of abuse song) in a perfect dialogue with European linguistic heritage (English). The hybrid muse defining Anyidoho’s poetic imagination derives thus its strength from this unique capacity he has to borrow concepts from different cultural backgrounds and invite them in a coherent dialogue.

This perfect symbiosis between Western and African cultural ethos in Anyidoho’s poetry has to do with the fact that the “new elements [the poet] weaves onto the ‘old’ include allusion to figures and movements of various geographical and cultural origin” (Wilkinson 546). Thus, beside the perfect collaboration between different African cultures (Ewe and Akan) pervading in his poetry, the Ghanaian poet has successfully invited other African and Western aesthetics as his use of language testify in a perfect poetic dialogue.

This impressing fusion of various binaries (western and African, written and oral, modernity and tradition, past and present) is the result of the poet’s capacity to navigate as an individual between various geographical spaces. This is made possible by the poet’s perfect understanding of the Sankofa concept and its successful appropriation in his poetic experience.

1.2 Sankofa as Poetic Device

The Akan mythology of *sankofa* represents a key standpoint from which to appraise the perfect dialogue between cultures in Anyidoho’s poetry. The mythology of *sankofa*, in the Akan traditional belief, involves the vision of life as a cyclical interface in which past, present and future interact endlessly.

According to Anyidoho, the philosophy is embedded in the belief that there is a “constant interplay between antiquity and modernity, between past and present-future” (Anyidoho, *The Back* 6) in a people’s life.

In the core of the Sankofa paradigm lies the idea that to face present or future challenges effectively, knowledge and resources must constantly be drawn from past experiences. Anyidoho admits his appropriation of this Akan traditional wisdom when he states that the constant interaction of past and present-future in his poetry partly rests upon the concept of *sankofa*. He contends in accordance that

[the hybrid muse of his poetry is] appropriately captured in the now ubiquitous mythological figure of ‘sankofa’: ancient Akan proverbial bird, constantly reaching back into the past even as it flies sky-bound into a future of great expectations, mindful always that an incautious leap into the future could easily lead to a sudden collapse of dreams. (Anyidoho and Gibbs 21-22)

The influence of this traditional philosophy serves the poet to blur the line between different historical, social and cultural experiences. He has succeeded to bring in the same poetic space the experiences of slavery, colonization, neo-colonization and their aftermaths in the life of the black people. His awareness that “History is but the Future/We should have known in the Past” (*Ancestral Logic* 50), is the reason why the poet deals with Africa’s history as a long journey into past to come up with resources to improve the present and the future of the African people.

Having earned for this reason “a Master in Communication and Journeyism” (*Earthchild* 16), Anyidoho’s persona skims over the African people’s future such a *sankofa* by regularly flying back to their painful history. For the poet, to avoid reviving these painful experiences is a way to make them a living wound for the people. However, recalling them constantly to bear witness to the present, is one way to provide a psychological relief to the people.

This interplay between past and present experiences is the current that flows throughout Anyidoho’s entire poetry. Osundare remarks for instance that in the collection *The Place We Call Home*, “place crosses path with time;

present is a delicate diaphragm between the past and the future.”¹ This dualism is translated in Anyidoho’s poetry as an interplay of binaries such as hope and despair, modernity and tradition, as well as African and Western ontologies. Despite the apparent opposition underlying these binary semantic markers, they work as organic parts of a complex totality. The unity of past, present and future is conveyed by the extent to which the poet connects the present predicament in the life of the African people to their history of slavery, colonization and neo-colonization. The poet goes even further to demand the appropriation of the people’s glorious precolonial past to face their present challenges. Thus, with the Ghanaian poet, the past is not vanished, for it is still relevant to bear witness to present and future experiences.

This interaction between past, present and future embodying the mythology of *sankofa* is also carried out through the dichotomy opposing on the one hand the portrayal of the rape of the African people in the course of history, and the pervasive note of hope that evokes the poet’s desire to overcome the present difficulties by drawing resources from the people’s glorious past on the other hand. This dichotomy is quite obvious in the poem “HarareBlues” as the persona pretends to have “Composed/An anthem tattooed with hopes & lingering doubts” (*AncestralLogic* 52).

As expressed in the mythology of *sankofa*, Anyidoho’s persona flies into the African people’s future of great expectations by constantly reaching back into the people’s past of five years of painful experiences as well as their glorious precolonial past. These multiple binaries concur to endow Anyidoho’s poetry with what Terry Eagleton calls an “anarchic polysemantic potential” (71). The freedom benefitting the poet allows him to deal with various thematic concerns going from the protest against oppressive forces, cultural alienation, dictatorship, racial subjugation, among others. The poet’s perfect understanding of the concept of Sankofa has permitted him to navigate in the Americas in order to experience the Caribbean blues.

2. The Sankofa Experiencing the Caribbean Blues

Anyidoho defines his poetry as a travelogue that allows the reader to cross the major historical events in the black people’s history of subjugation the past

¹This quote by Niyi Osundare is from the back cover of the collection *The Place We Call Home* (2011).

five hundred years. This journey back in time leads the poet subsequently to the period of slavery, the colonial and the present neo-colonial atmosphere to appraise the effects of Western imperial institutions upon the black people. Thus, through this endeavour, Anyidoho expects to challenge effectively the great deal of the Eurocentric scholarship upon the history of the African people that is plenty of alien conceptions. In the poem “Memory & Vision”, Anyidoho protests against the distortion of the African people’s history. He suggests rather a change of paradigm by making a backward journey to their past. He asserts:

And if today we seem lost among shadows
we must probe the Night of our Blood
and seek out our Birth-Cord
from the garbage of history’s crowded lies (*PraiseSong* 26).

Thus, the persona connects here the present difficulties facing his people to the misrepresentation of their history. In fact, the fact that Anyidoho’s persona intends to seek a new birth cord from the garbage of the crowded lies of his people’s recent history is an interrogation on the relevance of Eurocentric narratives on the history of the African people. An effort is especially done for example by the poet to highlight the lies about the issue of Taino conveyed by Western oriented narratives.

2.1 Rewriting the History of the Taino

Through the medium of his poetry, Anyidoho explores the inexhaustible mine providing Africa’s history from its glorious past to the recent past of scars with Western imperial inroad. This is possible because as a creative art, poetry is vested with the power to capture the social and historical experiences of a people living in a continuum. Thus, through the flexibility offering the concept of Sankofa to journey back in the past, the poet is able to question the effectiveness of the history of the Taino as reported by Eurocentric scholars.

The cluster of poems entitled “CaribbeanBlues” in *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* (1993) is particularly meaningful. This group of poems exposes the precarious conditions of people of African descent and Native Americans in the West Indies due to the erasure of their lives, identity and African ancestry. Modelled under the blues and the Ewe dirge, these poems particularly focus upon the huge contribution of slavery in the Americas to the social

decay, economic apathy, political instability and the cultural alienation of Native Caribbean and the people of African descent.

Written as an answer to the five hundredth anniversary of the discovery of the Arawaks² by Christopher Columbus in 1992, the poems express the painful experiences of Native Caribbean and the people of African descent in the Americas. The poem “The Taino in 1992” is particularly pregnant in that it recalls the inhumane and violent history of the Western inroad in the Caribbean. Through this poem, Anyidoho especially denounces the infringement of Native Americans by Western imperial invaders.

The poem stands in this regard as a counter-discourse to the celebration in 1992 of the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus. It counters the bias Western hegemonic report of the history of the Taino. Contrary to what has hitherto been perceived as a natural disaster, the poem gives an account of the erasure of Native Americans by Spanish imperial lords. Thus, according to the persona, it is nothing but the Western explorer’s greed for fame that caused the violent erasure of the Taino people. The following words attest the violence of the Western imperial lords:

Ao! Amigo Los Amigos

Adios Domingo
Adios Santa Domingo

Hispaniola Hispaniola Hispaniola
Lost Land of the Taino

Christoph Colomb Christoph Colomb
Duarte Sanchez Mella
Imperial Statues in a Sea of Blood.

The turbulent memory of the Taino
And a hurricane of Arawak sounds. (*AncestralLogic* 3)

The poem embodies various metaphors that portray the oppression that resulted from the encounter between Native Caribbean and Western imperial

²The Arawaks is a Spanish term standing for the American Indians of the Caribbean and South America.

lords. The introductory lines of the poem portray a farewell address in Spanish to the mutilated people. Through this farewell in Spanish, the persona recalls the hidden inhumane side that the pretended discovery of the Taino³ hides. The imperial greed of Christopher Columbus and Duarte Sanchez Mella is here pointed up as the main cause that wiped out the people.

Contrary to the celebrative arrogance animating the Western world through the statutes in the Hispaniola⁴ Island immortalising these explorers is hidden an unprecedented bloodshed. The statutes of the imperial lords in the island are thus said to stand in a sea of blood. Though Western scholars tend to portray the demise of the Taino as the consequence of a natural disaster⁵, Anyidoho reveals that it has rather been caused exclusively by Spanish oppression.

This allows him to portray the entire history of the Taino as a turbulent memory of the Taino and a hurricane of Arawak sounds. The violence that preceded the erasure of the people is described as follows:

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
StormTime in these CribSeas.

Soon the Hurricanes the Hurricanes
Shall Spring loose
From places of ancient ambush.

They will gather once more
The ancestral anger
Of this land of hostile winds.

³The Taino are an Arawak subgroup that were the first Native American peoples encountered by Christopher Columbus.

⁴Hispaniola is the name of the place in which Christopher Columbus has met Native Americans.

⁵It was long held that the island of Arawak was virtually wiped out by Old World diseases to which they had no immunity, but more recent scholarship has emphasized the role played by Spanish violence, brutality, and oppression in their demise.

In the dying howl
Of Hurricane Columbus
We yet may hear once more
The rising gowl
Of the Taino Chieftain
Who opted out of Christ's Kingdom
Where they insist the butcher dog
May come to sum up with ArchAngel and God. (3-4)

The great violence that resulted from the encounter between Westerners and Native Americans is expressed in the poem through various symbols. The meeting of the two peoples is depicted through the images of storm and hurricane. Hurricane and storm which symbolize here violence in the broader sense are attributed to Christopher Columbus and by extension to the Western imperial powers. This is especially true since the persona depicts the imperial lord as "Hurricane Columbus."

Anyidoho refers here to irony to denounce Western oppression and the annihilation of the Arawak that it has caused. In fact, it is known that as Westerners noticed the impossibility to exploit Native Americans as slaves in the New World, a great deal of them were simply erased. The term "butcher dog" to which the persona refers to depict Westerners is meant to denounce this massive destruction. Portraying the effects of slavery as endemic, the persona portrays the Native Americans as going "Through the infinity of centuries/Forever lost to trauma and to amnesia" (5).

Like the Native Americans, the same tragedy is imposed to the people of African descent. The poet's drop in the Caribbean reveals the same the tragic fate that is the lot of the descent of former black slaves in Haiti navigating between social decay and loss of identity.

2.2 Haitian Fragmentation and Ancestral Loss

The gap between the precarious conditions of Native Caribbean and the people of African descent in the America's is blurred. Anyidoho depicts both Native Americans and the people of African descent in the continent to be suffering from slavery and its lingering effects. Due to the peoples' disintegration during slavery, their present in the continent is not any better.

This is particularly true with Haitians. It is argued that, despite the heroic and glorious past that the country is accounted for, “the present in Haiti for the African people is not any better as poverty and the dislocation of basic social institutions stare the discerning in the face” (Okunoye 73). What remains of Haiti is indeed nothing but a dislocated society in the throes of poverty, political instability and social disintegration.

The poem “San Pedro de Macoris” represents in this regard a transition between the situation of Native Americans and the post-slavery conditions of the people of African descent in the Americas. The poet makes indeed the caustic remark exposing the present conditions of Haitians in the continent. He reports this:

In these CanFields
Nourished by silent
Groans of Haitians Immigrants
The Memory caves
in upon, the memory History’s sad logic:
Disinherited by Haiti
Repudiated by Republica Dominicana
They shuffle through Life
In the uncertain Dance of the Zombi.
These are the children
of Macandal and Toussaint
of Dessaline and Olivoro Mateo.
But ancestral trophies
Are not valid collateral
For the new industrial enterprise. (6)

Haiti is known in fact to be the world’s first Black-led republic and the first independent Caribbean state as well as the first black republic worldwide. The country threw off French colonial control and slavery and succeeded in establishing an independent republic in 1804 with the ex-slave Toussaint Louverture and Jean Jacques Dessalines as the most important heroes of the revolution.

The persona’s address to the country’s revolutionary leaders is therefore quite significant. It is a way for the poet to contrast Haiti’s glorious past with its turbulent present. The country is presently deprived of its glorious past for today, as the persona can admit, “ancestral trophies/are no valid

collateral/For the new industrial enterprise” (6). The issue of the Batey⁶ to which the poem alludes is quite meaningful.

The depiction of The Haitian *Batey* in the poem as “a LivingWound/In the throat of the SugarMill” (7), is a way for the poet to show the persistent effects of slavery upon the people. The country’s painful experience of slavery did not allow the establishment of solid social, political and economic systems after independence. Threatened by political instability, economic apathy and social disintegration, many Haitians migrate abroad in quest of survival means. Many of these Haitian emigrants settled in the Dominican Republic where they are exploited to work in the plantations of sugarcane.

The poem therefore portrays the social decay that this situation has caused. In fact, the dislocation of family members during slavery has generated a perpetual fragmented social order that is still persistent in the Haitians’ present. The history of Abel William depicted in the poem is quite illustrative of this fragmented society that slavery and Western oppression have contributed to establish in the life of the people of African descent in America. The persona presents his life in the following terms:

Head of the household at 18.
Has never known a girl.
May never know a woman.
And he is Head of a family of 8.
Proud inheritor of a father
Who poured out his life
Upon the SugarFields. (*Anyidoho, AncestralLogic* 7)

The persona portrays Haitians as orphans in the plantations of sugarcane in the Dominican Republic who are abandoned by both their home and host countries. He exposes their present impotency which contrasts with the heroism of their ancestors as the consequence of the people’s enslavement. During slavery, children and parents in the plantations are constantly separated. This has resulted to the decay of the family relationship which is at the core of a solid social organization. The present conditions of many Haitians

⁶ *Batey* is a term used to refer to rural community of sugarcane workers in the Dominican Republic. In fact, as the Dominican economy is heavily dependent on sugar production and export since 1500’s, the 20th century batey system was established by dictator Rafael Trujillo in the early 1930s as a way to import cheap and disposable Haitian migrant workers during the seasonal cane-cutting harvest. However, many workers began bringing their families in the coming years and staying there permanently throughout the years.

looking for means of subsistence in the Dominican Republic seems to perpetuate the dispossession of life in the plantations during slavery.

2.3 Plantation Symbolism and Modern Dispossession

The conditions of Haitians during slavery are not better than the rest of the people of African descent both in present day Haiti and in the Dominican Republic. Like the plantation life prevailing during slavery, the present of the people is marked by dispossession and oppression. The notion of loss is expressed in the poem “San Pedro de Macoris” in relation with the dispossession that continues to impede Haitians at every regard. Through this poem, Anyidoho exposes one more time the Haitian predicament in the Caribbean. The poet points up the prevailing violent environment and informs the reader by this very fact of the implication of slavery in the decay of African identity and cultural heritage in the Caribbean.

Appraising this poem Gabriel Bamgbose remarks that it captures the inhumane conditions of Haitian migrants who are still under the yoke of slavery in the Americas. He writes on that account that

the gory picture of the experience of the ‘Haitian immigrants’ in the ‘Canefields’/‘the sugarfields’ is captured in grim images, which match the dehumanizing experience of slavery. The poet presents the sad history of the Haitians as they ‘shuttle through life’ in ‘infinite sadness’ on plantations ‘In the uncertain Dance of Zombi,’ where they ‘poured out’ their lives ‘Upon the sugarfields.’ (Bamgbose 38)

After presenting the negative effects of the experience of slavery in the present of Haitians, Anyidoho presents in the poem “Republica Dominicana” the poorest present conditions of the descents of former black slaves in the Americas with the feeling of loss that is still persistent. The poem sheds light on a dispossessed world in quest of ancestral landmarks. The first section “Dispossession” is particularly worth of consideration. The poet depicts a black people deprived of their ancestral heritage as well as their African identity. He especially recalls the traumatic experiences of loss of lives in an environment where death is a common threat. He asserts that

Here in the Republica Dominincana
Santo Domingo pursues your primal dreams
across fevers into nightmares
where death lays ambush for your Soul. (*AncestralLogic* 8)

In addition to the destruction of human lives that the experience of slavery involves, the notion of loss expressed in the poem also includes the idea of cultural erasure and the denial of the people's humanity. In fact, the process of dispossession of the people during slavery is still being perpetrated through the Western oppressor's attempt to suppress definitely their African cultural heritage. The persona argues for example that as the people are being numbered, the census office took care to undress their skin, peel their veins and dilute their African blood. Thus, at the end of this process of dehumanization the people lose definitely their identity. The persona presents the effects as follows:

Dispossessed of your ancestry
your BlackNess
Dissolves into vague regions
of the Indios Myth. (8)

This is a protest against Westerners' attempt to alienate Africans in order to perpetuate the tradition of oppression. The poem ends by the persona's denunciation of the lingering effects of the dispossession of the black people in the Caribbean by slavery through the image of a tarantula. He portrays it as:

Full of dis-
crepances and dis-
jointed limbs
Pitiless and venomous
image of
history's dis-
tortions
of our furious race. (11)

The fact that the poet connects this turbulent experience to the "furious race" means that the experience of slavery is a collective plight threatening the entire black race including diaspora and homeland Africans. This implies also that the experience of slavery has become endemic for it continues to threaten the present of the people from various perspectives. The endemic effects of the trans-Atlantic trade are indeed a common experience for homeland and diaspora Africans. Like Native Americans, Africans and people of African descent in America are also undergoing the endemic effects of slavery. The link between these oppressed peoples is well established in the poem "Nostalgia". It is a moment of self-reflection and an increased awareness upon

the present conditions of the black people in the world. The persona presents the poem as a moment through which meditates upon his conditions. He contends that

the nostalgic self moans its way
through MidNight Storms
into DawnNightmares”
reaching into distances silences... (31)

This self-reflection process is a moment through which earthchildren revisit their painful history and draw from its resources to counter the lingering effects of slavery. This moment enables the poet to situate the subjugated African people's own responsibility in the establishment of this oppressive environment.

3. The Sankofa connecting the experiences of diasporic and homeland Africans

3.1 Slavery

The depiction of the effects of slavery in the present day of the black race implies that it is a living wound that continues to haunt the daily life of the people. Thus far from representing a vanished past, Anyidoho portrays slavery in his poetry as a transcontinental plight threatening Africans and their descents generation after generation. The rediscovery of this history of endless fragmentation that slavery represents for the black race is for Anyidoho, an opportunity to revive the silence but living wound in order to provide a total recovery. Recalling the memory of slavery represents therefore a means for the poet to provide the people with a collective therapy.

The consequences of slavery represent in this regard a common experience between continental and diaspora Africans for it has prevented the two peoples from their major economic assets. In fact, as expressed in the collection *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* (1993), the dislocation of the African populations to the Americas and the Caribbean has prevented their social-economic expansion in the New World too. Once in these new territories, the dislocation process has been institutionalized preventing consequently any possibility for their social reconstruction. This long dislocation process prevented therefore the people to plan any development perspective. This is the reason why, the people of African descent in the Americas are dominated

by poverty and precarious living conditions compared to their white counterparts.

3.2 Feeling of Betrayal and Loss

In the poem “Lolita Jones,” the persona vindicates the deep sense of betrayal dominating the descents of the enslaved black people in the Americas. The poem recalls the feeling of betrayal that is still enlivening the people of African descent in America and the Caribbean. Through the poem indeed, Lolita Jones regrets the sad logic of the institution of slavery for it prevented the African people’s self-determination.

The present of Africans both at home and in the diaspora is marked by a profound sense of alienation at every regards. The alienation of the people in the Americas as Anyidoho’s persona explains is due to the lingering dislocation process occasioned by slavery. Lolita Jones protests especially against the loss of her identity and African ancestry that is the result of the enslavement of the African people in the Americas. She advances the following comment:

But that aint my real name.
I never has known ma name our Name
I cud’a been Naita Norwetu
Or May be Maimouna Mkabayi
Asantewaa may be Aminata Malaika.
Ma Name cud’a been sculptured
Into colors of the Rainbow
Across the bosom of our Earth.
But you see:
Long ago your People sold ma People.
Ma People sold to Atlantic’s Storms.
The Storms first took away our Voice
Then it took away our Name
And it stripped us of our Soul. (27)

The above lines portray a deep sense of loss dominating the persona. As it comes out from the poem, one can notice that the persona’s loss has something to do with the decay of her identity and African ancestry that results from the enslavement of her people. In fact, her desire to look for her real name is a way for her to appropriate her real identity. Though Lolita Jones

accuses homeland Africans of betrayal, she perceives reclaiming her African ancestry as key to healing identity trauma.

Conclusion

Anyidoho has built his reputation through his commitment to the quest for his people's cultural, political and economic freedom. Though considerable efforts have been made by preceding generations, the Ghanaian poet has brought modern African poetry to a dimension that deserves a scholarly attention. He has succeeded to use his poetry as a space portraying a successful fusion between poetry and the painful history of both continental and diasporic Africans.

Anchored within the postcolonial theoretical standpoint, the study has proven that the collection *AncestralLogic & CaribbeanBlues* (1993) by Kofi Anyidoho can valuably be considered as a travelogue that involves the reader to a journey of rediscovery and self-moan. Reading the collection as a travelogue through the lens of Sankofa enables the reader to re-engage with the traumatic history of African peoples and to witness their enduring resilience and hope.

Thus, as the reader is transported upon the wings of the Sankofa throughout the fragmented and traumatic history of the black race, he is offered the unique opportunity to reflect on themes such as loss of identity and the quest for racial justice that remain lingering preoccupations in the life of both homeland and diasporic Africans. Through this self-reflection opportunity offering the collection, the reader is able to notice the strong spirit of the people in their attempt to overcome white hegemony and supremacy.

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About the Author:

Sansan Sib est enseignant-chercheur en anglais à l'Institut National Polytechnique Félix Houphouët-Boigny (INP-HB) en Côte d'Ivoire. Titulaire d'un doctorat en Littérature et Civilisation Africaines des Pays Anglophones, ses travaux s'inscrivent dans une approche interdisciplinaire mobilisant la poésie africaine anglophone, la sémiotique et les études postcoloniales. Spécialiste des dynamiques esthétiques et discursives dans les littératures africaines postcoloniales, Sansan Sib s'intéresse particulièrement aux modalités d'expression identitaire et aux stratégies de résistance culturelle dans les textes poétiques. Sa recherche explore également les systèmes de signes dans les productions littéraires, mettant en lumière les interactions entre langage, pouvoir et mémoire dans les sociétés africaines anglophones contemporaines.

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