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UNIVERSITY OF GHANA

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

PERCEIVING ROMANTICISM IN GHANAIAN POETRY: A CASE STUDY OF KOFI AWOONOR'S *REDISCOVERY AND OTHER POEMS (1964)*

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that except for references to works of other researchers and writers which have been duly cited, this work is the result of my original research. This research was carried out under the supervision of Prof. Kofi Anyidoho.

……	……
Yvonne Mawunyo Larbi	Prof. Kofi Anyidoho
……	…….
Date	Date

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

"I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed." (Psalm 37:25&26)

To Him who brought me on this journey; be all glory, honor and praise. I am eternally grateful to you, God.

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the interplay between Romanticism and African Poetry within the framework of William Wordsworth's 'Preface' to the *Lyrical Ballads*. For the past few decades, there has been an evolution of contemporary African literature (especially poetry). One such evolution is the shift from the oral tradition to the modernist in literature due to the emergence of formal education. This has engendered a phenomenon whereby contemporary African poets who wish to project their customs, and at the same time gain a wider readership, have picked up elements of writing from the Western culture. It will be worthwhile to gauge the degree of success with which they execute this task.

This research explores Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964)* as a case study to prove that there is fruitful integration of Romanticism and African oral tradition. This research also posits that Kofi Awoonor is a contemporary African Romantic Poet. Textual analysis is the basic methodology used in addressing the phenomenon of romanticism in African poetry. This study adds to existing knowledge on the experimental fusion of Africa and oral literature and Western literary elements. It is recommended that further research be conducted to establish other paradigms existing in the creative integration of African oral elements and western literary techniques.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The dynamic interplay between Romanticism and African Poetry, as seen in Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964)*, is both intriguing and unique. Tenets of Romanticism which seep into African literature cause a unique blend of the two. From pre-colonial times till early post-colonial times, African poetry has had a vast portion of its literary culture in oral form. That is, the literary culture was not documented on paper but was passed down from one generation to the next by word of mouth. Oral literatures have flourished in Africa for many centuries, and exist in variety of forms. Myths, epics, funeral dirges, praise poems and proverbs are just a few forms of the oral literature present in Africa. People well versed in the culture of the land passed down the heritage and culture of the people using poems, story-telling and drama.

A prominent chief would appoint a professional performer to compile his praise poems and perform them on special occasions. The following is quoted from a praise poem to Shaka, the Zulu warrior and king:

> Shaka went and erected temporary huts
> Between the Nsuze and the Thukela,
> In the country of Nyanya son of Manzawane;
> He ate up mantondo son of Tazi,
> He felt him tasteless and spat him out,
> He devoured sihayo.
> He who came dancing on the hillside of the phuthiles,
> And he overcame Msikazi among the Ndimoshes (qtd. in Owomoyela 15).

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Contemporary African literature, for that matter African poetry, has seen a significant shift from the oral form to the written form. Owing to the emergence of formal education, much of Africa's rich culture and heritage expressed through literature can be found in the books and poetry of prominent African writers and poets. Chinua Achebe, from Nigeria who wrote books such as *Arrow of God*, *Anthills of the Savannah* and the famous *Things Fall Apart* is one such writer. Through these books and his rich formal education in literature, the outside world gets insights into the Igbo language and culture.

Kofi Awoonor, a Ghanaian Poet, is one of the contemporary Africans who has endeavoured to take up the task of documenting Africa's, and for that matter Ghana's, rich literary culture in books for the appreciation of a worldwide readership. Born in 1935 at Wheta near Keta in the Volta Region of Ghana, Awoonor presents a series of spell-binding works which arrest the reader's imagination. Awoonor published the following books: *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964), Night of My Blood (1971), This Earth, My Brother: An Allegorical Tale of Africa (1971), Come Back, Ghana (1972), Ride Me, Memory (1973), The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of the History, Culture, and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara (1975), The House by the Sea (1978), Until the Morning after: Collected Poems (1987), Latin American and Caribbean Notebook (1992), Comes the Voyager at last (1992),* and most recently *The Promise of Hope: New and Selected Poems (2014).* Awoonor also published several historical and political commentaries such as *The Ghana Revolution: A Background Account from a Personal Perspective (1984), Ghana: A Political History from Pre-European to Modern Times (1990)* and *Africa: The Marginalized Continent (1995)* and *The African Predicament: Collected Essays (2006).*

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Reading Kofi Awoonor's works brings out certain poetic mannerisms that feed into the Romantic school of thought. Awoonor's expressive nature and emotional display of memories of his heritage and culture reminds the reader of Romantic Poets such as William Wordsworth and William Blake who expressed Romanticism in their poetry. Kofi Awoonor states in a conversation between himself and Hein Willemse that took place at Don Suite Hotel, Rosebank, Johannesburg on the 25th of February, 2004, that:

> It was a very conscious exercise to craft in the sense that I thought that my writing should emanate from that deeper well of consciousness which was developing for me and looking at what it was that was confronting me in the society that I was living in. I am very interested in the mystical dimension of the artistic impulse … (189-190).

William Wordsworth defined romantic poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings-emotions recollected in tranquillity". With this quote, Wordsworth opines that poetry is a matter of mood and inspiration. Poetry evolves from the feelings of the poet. A poet cannot write under pressure. In this regard, poetry flows out of his heart in a natural and fluent manner. Deep emotion is the basic condition of poetry; powerful feelings and emotions are fundamental. Without them, great poetry cannot be written. His rejection of poetry of form and reason and the acceptance of imagination and emotion brought about a revolution in the late 17th century. Legouis and Cazamian (from the post-Wordsworth era) defined Romanticism as:

> an accentuated predominance of emotional life, provoked or directed by the exercise of imaginative vision, and its turn in stimulating or directing such exercise (45)

According to William J. Long:

> the Romantic Movement was marked, and is always marked, by a strong reaction and protest against the bondage of rule and custom which in science and theology as well as literature, generally tend to fetter the free human spirit (220)

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The fusion of western literature and oral traditions present in contemporary African literature is an aspect of our ever-changing literary world that must be deeply researched into. The relationship between Romanticism and contemporary African poetry feeds into this great fusion. One immediately thinks of poets who actually bring this fusion of 'literatures' to life. "Kofi Awoonor is a name that appears with some frequency in discussions and anthologies of Contemporary African literature" (Early 1). His works are both highly African in nature and can stand to compete with the works of Western poetry on the same platform. His craftsmanship in writing is admirable. Awoonor is a formidable poet who, at each and every turn, develops his themes through the employment of appropriate aesthetic devices. Kofi Anyidoho, in his introduction to the book *The Promise of Hope: New and selected Poems, 1964-2013,* praises Kofi Awoonor's works when he states that:

> Awoonor's early poetry, presented in *Night of My blood* and *Rediscovery*, attracted a great deal of critical attention and quickly secured for him a place of honor among Africa's leading poets of the twentieth century (xxx).

Awoonor has been, and continues to be, an important influence in the development of poetry in Africa. His works have illuminated the path for many poets who have continued to hold high the torch lit by Awoonor and the poets of his generation. The power and depth of Awoonor's poetry has led to his recognition as one of the greatest African poets of all time. In this regard, Awoonor and his works present a formidable backdrop for investigating the interrelation between African poetry and Western concepts; in this case Romanticism.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The paradoxical link between Romanticism and African poetry as seen in Kofi Awoonor's poems is the issue this thesis seeks to address. This study will seek to bridge the knowledge gap by taking into consideration Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems* and applying

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Romantic features to them to establish a link between the two. The successful establishment of this link will aid the researcher in determining whether or not Kofi Awoonor can be considered a Romantic Poet.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

In view of the problem identified in the preceding section, the main thesis of the current research logically ensues. It is the purpose of this research to study the link between Romanticism and African Poetry as seen in the poetry of Kofi Awoonor. Selected poems in *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964)* will be analysed in assessing whether they exhibit romantic features.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are:

- To investigate the interplay between Romanticism and African Poetry by focusing on Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964)*.
- To identify the presence of romantic features in Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964).*

1.5 Research Questions

1. Is there an interplay between Romanticism and Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems*?
2. Which Romantic features are present in Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems*?

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1.6 Significance of the Study

The study would be beneficial, in that, it would help create awareness on the link between Romanticism and African Poetry. The awareness of this dynamic interplay will encourage the interest of further studies in this area and other related areas.

The study will add to existing knowledge on the fusion of Romanticism with African Poetry. This study projects the poetry of Kofi Awoonor and throws more light on it.

The study allows for an appraisal of African poetry using the concept of Romanticism and also serves as a guide to other researchers interested in this study's area of focus.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

Over the years, Romanticism has become an area of interest to several academicians which has led to the development of theoretical models to aid in better understanding the concept. This study has embraced William Wordsworth's Theory of poetry as seen in the Preface to his *Lyrical Ballads* as a worthy foundation on which the study thrives.

The *Lyrical Ballads* is a collection of Poems written by William Wordsworth and his friend Samuel Taylor Coleridge. The book was first published in 1798. This book is seen as the instrument that speared on the Romantic Movement in English Literature. A second edition was published in 1800. In this edition, Wordsworth included some poems and the Preface which is of relevance to this study.

The Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* is a systematic defence of the theory upon which poems were written in the Romantic era by William Wordsworth. This preface is seen as a suitable backdrop for this study as it grounds and solidifies the Romantic assertions this study hopes to address in Kofi Awoonor's poetry.

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William Wordsworth was on a quest to provide an explanation of his poetry. This explanation has been adhered to by many Romantic poets that came after him. And has thus been seen as Romanticism's 'Bible'. In the Preface, he states that:

> The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. (1-2)

Wordsworth went on to touch on the language the people who lived rustic and rural lives used in communicating, which was simple and easily understandable as compared to that of poets of that time who fancied flamboyant language in their poetry. To this he says:

> Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings coexist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated; because the manners of rural life germinate from those elementary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation. (2)

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Wordsworth asserted that poetry must have a purpose, and must spring from the creative and imaginative tendencies of the poet, whose emotions and feelings aid him in writing to convey his worldview to the rest of the world:

> From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formerly conceived; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connexion with each other, that the understanding of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.(2)

Wordsworth goes on to assert that the Poet is one who is a man who addresses men and has amble knowledge of the human nature.

> He is a man speaking to men: a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. to these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than anything

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> which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves: (3)

William Wordsworth states that the poetry is an explosion of expressive feelings inherent in the poet. He states:

> I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity: the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of reaction, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. (7)

1.8 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is two-fold. The first scope borders on the concept or theory of Romanticism. Quite a number of theories exist which can be used in undertaking a review of any literary work. This study will however only focus on employing romanticism in its review. Again, numerous authors and works exist which are worthy of attention in literature. This study however chooses to focus on Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and other poems (1964*). This collection was chosen because it presents Romantic tendencies which are of interest to the researcher. The study would however focus on only selected poems in the collection and not the entire collection. Specific poems treated in this study are presented in chapter four of this study. The decision to focus on some selected poems was due to time constraints which impacted the study.

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1.9 Methodology

The study is conducted using the qualitative approach to research. Qualitative research is a systematic investigation to gain an in-depth understanding of phenomena. It enables deeper evaluations of phenomena and therefore allows for more detailed findings and insights about the subject under investigation. To this extent, the employment of the qualitative approach is well-suited for this study on the linkage between Romanticism and Kofi Awoonor's poems. A careful reading of the poetry of Kofi Awoonor produced a selection of individual poems worthy of analysis within the scope of this paper. An analysis carried out by a critical reading of the selected texts and examining the various occurrences of Romantic features and its related motives is encouraged.

The qualitative nature of this study deals with an examination of the presence of Romantic features in Kofi Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964).* This examination is undertaken by assessing the poems in the collection in light of certain specific features of Romanticism like love for nature, the dwelling on imagination, seeing the poet as the creator of his own poetry, interest in the supernatural, language, emotion, subjectivity, individuality and the journey motif. The presence of these features in the poems reveals the Romantic leanings of Kofi Awoonor.

1.10 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into four chapters as outlined below:

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Chapter one

This chapter covers the background of the study, the statement of problem and objectives of the study. It further states the research questions, the significance of the study, the theoretical framework, scope and limitations of this study and the methodology. This chapter also presents the organization of the study.

Chapter two

This chapter reviews related literature on the study area. The chapter reviews relevant literature on Romanticism and its features and related articles on Kofi Awoonor's life and work. It has an introduction and the body of the chapter follows respectively.

Chapter three

This chapter presents the analysis and findings of the study and a discussion of those findings. It presents the analysis under the Romantic features of the love for nature, imagination, the journey motif, an interest in the supernatural, language, emotion, and subjectivity, individuality and the focus on the artist as creator.

Chapter four

The chapter deals with the summary, conclusion and recommendation of the study. The chapter summarizes the study, its methodology and findings, in addition to making recommendations for future research.

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CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews works on Romanticism, African Poetry and Kofi Awoonor. It highlights salient points and themes in reviewed works which are relevant to the subject of this study, and draws parallels and similarities where necessary. This aids the reader look into the world of Romanticism and its connection to the personage and work of Kofi Awoonor.

Romanticism has had diverse definitions from the pre-Wordsworth era to date. The early Romantic poets like James Thomson (1700-48), Oliver Goldsmith (1728-74), Thomas Chatterton (1752-70), Thomas Gray (1716-71), William Collins (1721-59), William Cowper (1731- 1800), George Crabbe (1754-1832), Robert Burns (1759-95) and William Blake (1757-1827) moved away from the Neo-classical insistence on rules and form in poetry (Roe 1)

Romanticism was a reaction against the classical, and more specifically a challenge against the neo-classical way of thinking. Brown described the rejection of the neo-classical thinking as "a great tide on the turn", and this saw philosophical enquiry shift from the objective to the subjective (34). It was a model that described potential and instincts rather than the conscious mind. It focused on integrity rather than obedience; and wonder of suffering, sorrow, fear and joy rather than logical thinking. Romantics also negated the popular feeling that science could explain everything concerning human beings. Instead, Romantics were inspired by the natural world, and individual emotional experience to explore and better understand the nature of man.

In the Arts, however, Romantics challenged the purity of form and subject matter which were outlined by their classical counterparts. Romantics did not follow this rule; rather, they opted to

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include actions that took place in different or multiple locations, sometimes simultaneously, that spread through multiple sub-plots and times.

Romanticism saw a shift from faith in reason to faith in the senses, feelings, and imagination; a shift from interest in urban society to an interest in the rural and natural; a shift from public, impersonal poetry to subjective poetry; and from concern with the scientific and mundane to interest in the mysterious and infinite. Mainly, Romantics cared about inspiration, intuition, and imagination. Wordsworth outlined three basic tenets of Romanticism. The first tenet is that, Imagination and emotion are more important than reason and formal rules. Imagination is therefore a gateway to transcendent experience and truth (Wordsworth 9). Secondly, intuition and reliance on "natural" feelings as a guide to conduct are valued over controlled rationality (12). Finally, Romantic literature tends to emphasize a love of nature, a respect for primitivism, and a valuing of the common, "natural" man; Romantics idealize country life and believe that many of the ills of society are as a result of urbanization (Wordsworth 2-3). The list of features discussed below is not a definitive list that characterizes the romantic way of thinking, but captures the features that will be used in the analysis of the poems in this study.

One important feature of Romanticism is Imagination. It is said to be the underpinning feature of the Romantic Movement. Works by John Keats, Samuel Coleridge and P. B. Shelley display traits of imagination. Unlike neo-classical poets, romantic poets focused heavily on imagination. They disassociated poetry from the tenets of reason and intellect (Roe 10). Samuel Coleridge, for instance, distinguished between two types of imagination-primary and secondary imagination. He described primary imagination as the living power and prime agent of human perception. He, however, considered the secondary as an aspect of the primary, coexisting with the conscious

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will yet identical with the primary. To the Romantics, imagination is the ultimate "shaping" or creative power of nature or even a deity (Roe 17). Imagination is considered a feature with diverse functions and an active power of the human mind. Imagination according to Coleridge helps to "read" nature as a system of symbols.

The Romantic feature of Imagination is present in several of Awoonor's poems. In poems like "The Cathedral", "Desires", "In My Sick Bed", "The Consummation", and "We Have found a New Land", Awoonor freely employs the Romantic feature of Imagination in conveying messages to the reader. In "The Cathedral", for instance, Kofi Awoonor employs the imagination create a picture in the reader's mind. In the lines:

> Shedding incense on the infant corn:
> Its boughs stretches across a heaven
> Brightened by the last fire of a tribe (3-5)

imagery is employed in conveying pictures of farmlands, sweet-smelling fragrances, skies and human bonding depicted in the form of a tribe; thus propelling the reader to have mental pictures of contexts in which Awoonor conveys his message. The use of imagery similarly plays out in "Desires", where Awoonor creates a totally new world by making days literally stand in awe of the years rolling past. In "Salvation", the reader is pulled by the imaginative power Awoonor brings to bear in the poem and is spurred on even after reading, to continue living in this created imaginary world the rest of his/her life. These poems go to show the power of imagination wielded, and freely employed by Awoonor, in conveying sceneries and unique worlds to readers, and in also transporting readers to those worlds to live the poems they are read.

Love for nature is also an aspect of Romantic poetry. Nature to the Romantics constituted inspiration, satisfaction and happiness. Though nature is an important attribute of romantic poetry, various poets differed in their views about nature. William Wordsworth was regarded as

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the poet who was instrumental in the development of nature as a key feature of Romanticism. He described nature as a living organism, teacher, God and everything. Shelly also observes nature not as pleasure but a living thing unifying both nature and man alike (19). John Keats was also acknowledged as a great lover of nature. He saw nature not as spiritual inspiration but as a feature of aesthetics. On the other hand, Coleridge expressed an entirely different view from other Romantics. He believed that nature is not the source of joy and pleasure; it all depends upon our mood or disposition (Boluwatife 2).

Awoonor's works are known for drawing freely on nature. The opening part of Awoonor's poem, "Desires", gives a descriptive imagery of nature. The description of nature sets the tone for the poem: a serene and peaceful tone; one that must be admired and looked onto for inspiration. The use of simile to compare the 'stars above' to 'merry bells' in "Desires" throws more light on the nature of the stars above. Similarly, in "Exiles", the moon represents hope in its ability to light the path that leads to the 'homeland'. The persona's trust and belief in nature's 'saving grace' can be likened to William Wordsworth's humble plea to all humanity to look to nature for solutions to all their problems. Also in "The Cathedral", the reference to the tree signifies shelter and a place of rest for the whole community. The image of rejuvenation and refreshment brought on by the allusion to the shade and shelter afforded by the tree conveys a powerful image of peace to the reader's mind.

Subjectivity is another feature of Romanticism. It reflects the miseries, despairs and personal stories of the poets. It is referred to as poetry of sentiments, emotions and imaginations of the poets. Unlike Neo-classicism, Romanticism acknowledges the presence of emotions and feelings and plays down objectivity. Most parts of the poems of Romantic poets are considered a reflection of their personal life. Romantics are predominantly subjective in their poetry. To this

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extent, their views, perspectives and perceptions play out heavily in their output. Awoonor can be thought of as a highly subjective poet who conveys his worldview and perspectives through his poetry. In "My God of Songs was Ill", Awoonor presents a subjective introspection of the speaker and his sense of isolation (alienation) amid the complexity and discovery of modern society and recent history. "March, King Comrade, Abreast Him" similarly exhibits traits of subjectivity in the lines:

> Tell him we want him with us
> We want him to bring his drum along
> And sing at our funeral (12-14)

In agreement with the Romantics, Awoonor expresses his ability to draw a light of hope out of the otherwise gloomy and sad feeling that the death of a close family and friend brings in "Rediscovery". These poems show the subjective poetic tendencies of Awoonor and his ability to weave personal perspectives into his poetry in giving the reader a peak into Awoonor's worldview.

Romantics also focus on the artist as creator. The Romantic period saw the position of the poet gain supremacy. In the earlier times, the poet was seen as the person who imitated the external world through his works. However, the Romantic era brought about a shift where the poet was seen as the creator of something which reflected his individual perceptions and emotions. Thus, the poet's feelings governed him and became his law. It was also the first time poems written in the first person were accepted, as the poetic persona became one with the voice of the poet. The artist became the mouthpiece of his own experiences, emotions and feelings and that of his community. He could now write poetry that expressed his deeply felt emotions on issues in his life and the community at large. Romantic Poets used their poetry to cause a revolution in the society and era they lived in. In this vein, Kofi Awoonor believes that:

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> …The artist is the one who goes in front of the people and therefore his experiences, sharpened, focused and multiple as they are, do locate him at the frontier of the totality of human experience. He is the one who sees more if he has the gift; if he's a real artist, he sees more than anyone else. (an extract of a conversation between Awoonor and Hein Willemse that took place at Don Suite Hotel, Rosebank, Johannesburg on the 25th of February, 2004)

Like he conveys in the interview above, Awoonor expresses creative tendencies in his poetry. In the case of "In My Sick Bed", Awoonor skilfully presents his thoughts on death by asking a question on the existence of a resting place 'elsewhere'. He draws on thoughts, feelings and questions that come from within himself in portraying his creative abilities; that is his ability to create a world where the reader can appreciate Awoonor's views about life, the journey to living that life, and the prospects of a possible afterlife. Again, the use of the personal pronoun 'I' throughout "My God of Songs was Ill" presents a focus on the poet. Throughout the poem, a splash of the personal pronoun 'I' and 'my' is seen. In "Desires", Awoonor draws inspiration from within himself to express his emotions, thus the use of 'I' in the poem. These poems depict Awoonor as the creator of his own destiny, showing him as one who takes charge of his circumstances to ensure the occurrence of desired outcomes.

The Journey motif is another important feature in explaining Romanticism. Romantic poetry is sometimes patterned along the lines of a journey or quest. This journey is either an internal journey the mind embarks on in order to arrive at a particular decision, or an external physical journey, where the persona actually journeys from one place to another. This journey also presents itself in the outlook on life. That is, journey from childhood to adulthood. Early states that the journey, which is a quest for meaning and identity, is a pattern implicit in Western poetry since Homer (53).

Early states that Kofi Awoonor makes use of the journey motif in his poem *Exiles*. He further states that the historical migration of the Ewe people chronicled or recorded and mythologized in

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Night of My Blood symbolizes "the recent journey of African people out of a technologically primitive culture of their own into the welter of modernization and Westernization" (53). He goes on to state that "a converse view of the journey motif is displayed in Awoonor's *Rediscovery and Other Poems* as it presents Africans who seek to regain the wisdom of their ancestors" (53). Throughout most of his poems, one gets the notion of Awoonor as a traveller who journeys from his present state to a place of absolution, where weariness of body and soul give way to rapturous delight in arriving at the place of rest.

> But their journey homeward done on the sea-scape's roar
> Their final strokes will land them on forgotten shores (*Exiles*, L. 10 -12)

This journey is not one undertaken by Awoonor alone, but also involves the reader, as Awoonor seeks to bring his readers to that place of enlightenment and revelation in the world he calls his own.

Romantics also display an interest in the supernatural. The interest in the mysterious and the surreal led to the appearance of several supernatural themes in works of Romantic poets. Allusions are made to God, the gods, mystical beings and spirits to depict the belief Romantic poets have in the existence of other-worldly entities. Supernatural elements are seen in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan", "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and John Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci". Like these Romantic poets, Awoonor also conveys notions of the supernatural in his poetry. "The Purification" expresses supernatural tendencies in that the 'sea god' is made reference to. The 'sea god' is seen as a sign of productivity and fruitfulness. Its presence in the lives of the fisherman guarantees a good 'fish day'. "My God of Songs was Ill" also makes reference to two gods: one who is the personal 'god' responsible for the poet's songs, and the other who is a 'cure god' whose job it is to cure gods and mankind as well, of whatever ailments

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they may suffer. Awoonor consequently conveys several notions of the supernatural in his works.

Language is a key tenet of Romanticism. Romanticism employed a language that was simple and ordinary, which was a reflection of the rural and rustic lifestyle of the common man. The language was mostly conversational and inquisitive in nature. The ability to communicate with the ordinary man was central to Romanticism and the message of Romantics. "The Cathedral" is one of Awoonor's most popular poems because of its brevity and simple use of words and language. In "Desires", Awoonor makes use of very simple and understandable English language. As seen in Romantic poetry, Awoonor wants his poetry to be easily read and understood. Thus, he uniquely weaves and crafts words, phrases and sentences which are very simple but highly thought-provoking. "Rediscovery" also displays the use of simple language. The language used distinctively expresses Awoonor's feelings and intent. In lines 22-25 of "Salvation", Awoonor states that:

> And in the season of search
> And the others who took the big boats return
> We shall find our salvation here on the shore, asleep.

We therefore clearly see in several of Awoonor's poems, an affinity for using simple language in conveying his thoughts. To Awoonor, the ability of his readers to comprehend and appreciate the depth of his poetry is key. As such, he goes to great lengths in clothing his craftsmanship in simple language, in order to gain a wider readership and a broad-based comprehension of his poetry and worldview.

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Emotion, another Romantic feature, is clearly evident in Romantic works. A deep sense of emotional expression was shown by Romantic poets through the eyes of the characters or imaginative scenes found in their poetry. The employment of complex imagination and symbolism aided in adequately conveying their deep-seated emotions and feelings. Romanticism is connected greatly with one's intuition. It values feeling and instinct over logic and reason. Indulgence in the senses was understood to be the key to understanding human existence and nature. The Romantics celebrated physical sensations and an abundant expression of emotion. Awoonor is highly expressive of his feelings and emotions in most of his poems. In "We have found a New Land", the poem evokes sympathetic emotions as readers sympathize with the persona:

> And tears well up in my eyes for them
> Those who want to be seen in the best company
> Have abjured the magic of themselves (12-14)

The persona is sad that people are running toward modernity, leaving their rich culture and heritage behind. In "The New Warmth", Awoonor expresses feelings of anguish, despair and intrigue towards the western religion of Christianity. He asks:

> Did they say that God shall wipe away all tears from every eye?
> I bring my offerings of new corn before your altar
> Unclasp our hands so I can place them on the firewood (4-6)

The persona seems to be intrigued about the behaviour of his captors. His inability to present his offering to God because of his unclasped hands intrigues him since Christianity preaches freedom in worship and service to God. "Rediscovery" sees an intense expression of sadness and hope. Awoonor expresses feelings of both after the mourning of a sad event or occurrence. This oxymoronic feeling connects with the reader's emotions as well. An encouragement in the form of a new chorus spurs the persona on.

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Individuality is a critical component of Romanticism. It was thought that institutions stifled the natural state of man and his connection with the world. Romantics thought of themselves as unique individuals who had the strength of character to go against the flow. They described anyone who stayed in the mainstream as a 'conformist'. Whereas the Neo-classics saw men as creatures endowed with reason, the Romantics saw diversity and uniqueness: that is, those traits which set one man apart from another, and traits which set one nation apart from another. Romantics encouraged man to discover and express himself. Therefore, instead of the motto "*Sapere aude*," "*Dare to know!*" the Romantics took up the battle cry, "*Dare to be!*" The idea of man's natural goodness and the stress on emotion also contributed to the development of Romantic individualism; that is, the belief that what is special in a man is to be valued over what is representative (the latter oftentimes connected with the conventions imposed on man by "civilized society").

If a man may properly express his unique emotional self because its essence is good, he is also likely to assume also that its conflicts and corruptions are a matter of great import and a source of fascination to himself and others. So the Romantic delights in self-analysis. William Wordsworth (in *The Prelude*) and Lord Byron (in *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*), poets very different from each other, felt the need to write lengthy poems of self-dramatization. The self that Byron dramatized, a projection not necessarily identical with his own personality, was especially dear to the Romantic mind: the outcast wanderer, heroic but accursed, often on some desperate quest, in the tradition of Cain or the Flying Dutchman. S. T. Coleridge's *Mariner* and Herman Melville's *Ahab* are similar Romantic pilgrims.

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Just as the Romantics love to do, Awoonor in "Rediscovery" does a self-analysis of his thoughts and feelings concerning death, and then conceptualizes his view on the matter for consumption by readers. He believes that, in as much as his forgotten comrades are transformed and sing new songs, he himself by the death gets a chance to rediscover his inner self. "My God of Songs was Ill" sees a presentation of the poet's own feeling and emotions, where he expresses his sadness at his god of songs being ill. Awoonor similarly shows a strong individualistic tendency and a portrayal of his identity, which he mostly conveys in his poetry. His unique beliefs and perspectives, which are sometimes at odds with mainstream society, makes him stand out as a poet ready to defend his position and hold his ground regarding what he believes in. Awoonor's strong individuality establishes him as a man who lives his life according to time-tested principles.

Some works have portrayed Romanticism in various lights. Percy Bysshe Shelley's study on *Defense of Poetry (1821) - A Manifesto of the Writer's Function in Society,* hailed poets as "the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Poets take their authority from nature, the fountainhead of inspiration. The heart in each individual (which naturally knows goodness and beauty) must be stirred to love what is good, and to this end, art is the great instrument. Shelley intuited an eternal reality beyond, separate from the mortal world in which we live where all we know is fleeting, unsubstantial, and illusory. From this, he argued that Romanticism is always present to some extent in any poetry. He also argued that poems cannot be separated from the heart, soul and emotion of the poet.

The sentiments expressed by Shelley are indicative of the life and work of Awoonor. As already elucidated in the preceding paragraphs, the works of Awoonor convey diverse romantic elements and themes which can be described as stemming from his emotions and feelings towards his

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work. All his works succinctly capture and convey the themes and concepts that matter to him as a writer and person. His views on life, spirituality, society, and the journey towards the realization of human progress and dignity, are themes which greatly matter to Awoonor and are conveyed in his works. His ability to capture emotions and qualities such as grief, joy, hope, and fortitude is indicative of the passion he attaches to his works and to the progress of his people. In works such as "The Cathedral", "Desires", "In My Sick Bed", "The Consummation", "You Have found a New Land" and "My God of Songs was Ill", Romantic tendencies which are indicative of his beliefs and worldview are portrayed. It becomes evident then that Awoonor's passion for life and his fellow man forms the fulcrum around which his poetry is hinged. Awoonor therefore represents the Romantic African poetic voice who seeks to make his fellow man see the beauty and uniqueness inherent in life, which should be appreciated without inhibition.

In his thesis, "Tradition and Continuity in Contemporary African Poetry in English: The Case of Kofi Awoonor and the Anlo-Ewe Tradition", Mawuli Adjei focuses on the extent to which Kofi Awoonor appropriates Anlo-Ewe oral tradition in his poetry; both in content and form. In his discussion, he highlights Awoonor's focus on traditional Ewe dirge form, the Poetry of abuse and the war verse. The thesis was an attempt to locate Kofi Awoonor within the totality of Anlo-Ewe oral and song tradition. Adjei, particularly sought to explore Awoonor's reliance on Anlo-Ewe oral tradition in the light of 'vernacular poetry' which is rarely understood by readers outside Awoonor's native circles. The study stated the fact that Awoonor, through numerous setbacks, has been able to establish himself as a 'very important voice in African poetry in a rather revolutionary manner.'

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Adjei furthers his discussion of Kofi Awoonor's poetry as he takes a look at Kofi Awoonor's view on death and his treatment of the subject matter in his poetry. In the article, Looking Death in the Eye: The Human Condition, Morbidity and Mortality in Kofi Awoonor's Poetry, Adjei treats Awoonor's attitude to death and his "acceptance of the inevitability, anticipation and, sometimes, defiance of death" (Adjei 137). He states that Awoonor looks at death from different perspectives. He makes reference to Awoonor's speech hours before his tragic death in West Gate Mall terrorists attack in Nairobi in September 2013:

> I have written about death also. Particularly at this old age now, where at 79, you must know, unless you are an idiot, that very soon you should be moving on. I have seen friends of mine petrified of death. I say; what are you afraid of? You have done everything already; you have fathered your children, your grandchildren are thriving. So begin to pack your things because the man will come (138)

Adjei asserts that Awoonor's poetry from his first publication; *Rediscovery* to *The Promise of Hope,* which is his later publication, sees a fantastic twist and turn of the issue of death which is grounded in Awoonor's culture and poetic traditions. Adzei states in conclusion that Awoonor's poetry

> seems to be sending a clear message to his readers that death may be a natural phenomenon of the life cycle, but wherever there is human suffering, wherever there is tyranny or oppression, mankind is perpetually predisposed to death. (150)

In the discussion of 'home'; as one of Kofi Awoonor's themes in his poetry, G. Edzordzi Agbozo writes on the topic: The 'Wheta Poetic Circle: The continuing Dialogue about "Home" in the Works of Awoonor, Anyidoho and Adzei. He explores the metaphoric use of "home" and other themes and motifs in the works of these three "Whetaphile" poets. He describes the metaphoric use of the word 'home' in the Ewe worldview to mean "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 … the temporary resting place of ancestral beings before they reincarnate into

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another being in the physical world, if Sobgo Lisa, the Supreme Being wanted them to." (Agbozo 3). His findings reveal that the three poets draw largely from their ethnic culture and their poetic artistry in their poetry.

Anyidoho asserts that the Romanticism found in the works of Senghor reflects 'a yearning for the past and a vision of the future' (761). Anyidoho sets out to analyse Senghor's works from two angles. First, 'a retrospective view often realized as a quest for the "kingdom of childhood"' and second "an essentially prospective view, is seen as a particular vision of the future that is also a projection of the Romantic quest for that kingdom of childhood." (761). This work bears some semblance to the current study in that it examines the relationship between an African poet, Senghor, and the Romantic Quest; whereas the present study focuses on Awoonor and his expression of romantic tendencies in his poems. There is however a divergence between this study and Anyidoho's work, in that Anyidoho focuses primarily on an examination of the retrospective and prospective romantic nature of Senghor's work, while this study dwells on the various romantic features present in Awoonor's collection of poems: *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964)*. In essence, both works seek to highlight a connection between African poets and the concept of Romanticism, and how the works of these poets can be understood in light of Romanticism.

In contemporary Ghanaian poetry, a mixture of oral and written poetry produces a great mix of rich culture and intellectual pizzazz. This fine mixture is neatly brewed in Kofi Awoonor's collection of poetry. While he shows a deep interest in the oral tradition of African poetry, Awoonor has also enriched his work through his understanding of Western literature (Early 52). As he mixes the oral culture and traditions of the Ewe people with an exquisite display of

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penmanship and poetic flair, a creation of a unique kind of poetry emerges; one that only Awoonor can lay claim to.

Kofi Nyidevu Awoonor (also known as George Awoonor Williams) was born on March 13, 1935 at Wheta, a rural town in the Volta Region of Ghana. Wheta is also the birthplace of his "twin brother," Kofi Anyidoho, another prominent Ghanaian scholar and poet. It was because of his extended stay abroad that Kofi Anyidoho in his collection *Earthchild* dedicated a poem titled "The Song of a Twin Brother" to him in which he insistently reminds Awoonor "not to forget the back without which there is no front" (Asante 54). In Kofi Awoonor's critical work, *The Breast of the Earth: A Survey of the History, Culture and Literature of Africa South of the Sahara*, he has a variation on Shelley's position. Awoonor writes:

> in Africa where despair deepens in the practice of politics and in the lives of the ordinary people, the writers must represent the vanguard of the armies that will liberate the masses from cultural strangulation and restore for them their earlier attachment to life.

It can be argued that Kofi Awoonor also created and lived his myth. The tragic irony of his death through a terrorist attack at the Westgate Shopping Mall in Nairobi, Kenya, on September 21, 2013 sharply reminds us of this. In *A Selection of African Poetry*, K. E. Senanu and T. Vincent write that Awoonor is:

> very conscious of his roots in traditional Ewe poetry and folk songs among Ghanaian writing poetry, he is perhaps the most successful in attempting to recover the rhetorical vehemence and the metaphorical intensity of vernacular poetry.

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Kofi Awoonor's immortality is through his poetry. It is through his poetry that the world knew him and it is through his poetry that the world will remember him. Among his many collections are *Rediscovery and Other Poems* (Asante 103).

The collection of poems *Rediscovery and Other Poems* by Kofi Awoonor was published in 1964 by Mbari Press in Ibadan, Nigeria. It consists of poems such as: *My God of Songs was ill, Exiles, Desire, The Cathedral, In my sick Bed, What song shall we sing, The Consummation, We have found a new land, The anvil and the Hammer, March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him, That flesh is heir to, To her Afar, To Her Near, Delight of Tears, The New warmth, Come, Let us Join, Rediscovery, The Weaver bird, Salvation, The purification,* and *The Gone Locusts.* Kofi Anyidoho in his introduction to the book *The Promise of Hope, (2014)* states that:

> Awoonor's early poetry, presented in *Night of My Blood* and *Rediscovery*, attracted a great deal of critical attention and quickly secured for him a place of honor among Africa's leading poets of the twentieth century.

He goes on to state in the opening paragraphs of his introduction to *The Promise of Hope: New and Selected Poems, 1964-2013* that:

> The collection opens with poems that point us in two directions, to a reconciled past and to a future of new challenges and new possibilities. First, to a past where we meet poet and country, young as the new moon and filled with hope and the promise of hope. (xvii)

Early describes Kofi Awoonor's poetry as exciting because it transcends particular cultures (52). He states that the universality of Kofi Awoonor's poems in general is especially expressed in the recurring archetype at the core of *Night of My Blood*. Early took into consideration the early works of Kofi Awoonor: *Rediscovery (1964)*, *Night of My Blood (1971*); a novel, *This Earth, My*

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Brother (1971) and two plays in *Short African Plays* edited by Cosmos Pieterse in 1972. He attempts to make an assessment of traditional genres, structures, and rhythms in Kofi Awoonor's works. Early adds in the ensuing parts of his article that:

> Awoonor's poetry often achieves the illusion of this kind of spontaneity and a logical movement; in fact, it is usually intellectually coherent, having a sophisticated unity of symbol and theme (55).

Thus, we see a portrayal of Awoonor as that grounded poet skilfully meandering his way between antiquity and modernity to weave poems which capture the glories of the past, the wonders of the present and the promise of the future. His poetry is one of life; a life that seeks to return to its roots in order to better understand its place in the circle of life. For without a grounding in the past, one cannot face the future. This deep desire by Awoonor to turn to his roots for inspiration in facing the future, can be characterized somewhat as an ironic allusion to Anyidoho's prophetic plea to Awoonor "not to forget the back without which there is no front" (Asante 54).

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CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter undertakes an analysis of the poems in *Rediscovery and Other Poems* by Kofi Awoonor. The analysis is done by examining the presence of Romantic features in selected poems. Specifically, the following poems are addressed in this study: "The Purification", "The Gone Locusts", "Salvation", "Rediscovery", "The New Warmth", "That Flesh is Heir To", "The Anvil and the Hammer", "We Have Found a New Land", "The Consummation", "What Song Shall we Sing", "In My Sick Bed", "Desire", "March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him", "My God of Songs Was Ill", "The Cathedral", "Exiles" and "The Weaver Bird". The features present are then highlighted and discussed in respect of their role in the poems.

The Love for Nature

The love for nature is a romantic theme which clearly stands out in several poems in the collection. In "Exiles", the reference to the moon signifies a directive light that shines bright enough to light up the way home. Awoonor places so much hope in the presence of the moon and its ability to light the path that leads to the homeland. He acknowledges the fact that journeying back home will not be easy but trusts nature (the moon) to light the way.

> Moon, moon shine on our way
> Shine bright for us to go home (1-2)

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The persona's trust and belief in nature's 'saving grace' can be likened to William Wordsworth's humble plea to humanity to look to nature for solutions to all their problems.

> But their journey homeward done on the sea-scape's roar
> Their final strokes will land them on forgotten shores (10 -11)
> The moon the moon is our father's spirit (18)

The mention of a 'tree', 'heaven', 'dirty patch', and 'fires' speaks to the romantic feature of the love for nature in "The Cathedral'. Awoonor makes use of the dirty patch to show where 'a tree once stood'. This tree has several benefits, some of which include shedding 'incense' on 'infant corn'. In religious settings, the incense is used to symbolise or represent the holy liquid that was used in the purification and perfuming. The use of the infant corn further symbolises the sign of new life and abundance. The promise of growth and productivity was clearly inevitable which deepens Awoonor's love for nature. His admiration for the structure of the tree symbolizes the benefits the community derives from the tree. The reference to a dirty patch represents a degradation of nature and also a cutting-short of a life source in the community.

The opening parts of "Desire" gives a descriptive imagery of nature. The use of simile to compare the 'stars above' to 'merry bells' throws more light on the nature of the stars. The description of nature sets the tone of the poem: a serene and peaceful tone; one that must be admired and looked unto for inspiration. Awoonor from his expression of nature seems to believe that nature is a serene hospital that soothes weary souls.

> The stars are above, stilted like merry bells;
> The scented dew falls on the rotten leaves of yesterday's Storm: (1-3)

The allusion to the 'scented dew' falling on 'rotten leaves' depicts nature's assimilation of moisture from the earth and giving same back to the earth: a form of interdependence and interconnectedness of things which speaks to the very essence of nature. Yet again, the love for

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nature is evident in "What Song shall we Sing". The use of the word 'stars' signifies the persona's view of the star as a saving grace; an anchor which can be clinged to:

> Shall we jump and clutch at the stars (1)

This poem portrays the rejuvenating abilities of nature depicted through the stars, and its power to provide solace and salvation when needed. Clutching at nature therefore has the ability to provide respite in times of distress.

The admiration of nature in "That Flesh is Heir To" is commendable. It is perceived that the persona draws inspiration from nature. In the opening lines, we see:

> Flashes of dawn light
> beam
> star (1 – 4)

And in the lines below as well, Awoonor makes a fine reference to nature. The feeling of admiration is got from how he expresses his 'love for nature':

> Beyond the twilight
> The myriad colour and the dazzle of the rainbow
> Confirm our immortality (12 – 14)

Nature then seems to be a vehicle in which Awoonor conveys his awe of the stream of life. Nature sets the tone for talking about rites and ceremonies, agony and denial, mortality and immortality, and resurrection. Awoonor therefore employs nature in painting a picture about the various cycles of life and the events occurring therein. Yet again, Awoonor's reference to nature seeps through in "Rediscovery". In lines 1 and 3 of the poem:

> When our tears are dry on the shore
> And the seagulls return to bird island

We see Awoonor make reference to the shore which is always wet, and links it with tears that dry on the shore. Also, seagulls are referred to as returning to their homes, which is depicted as

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an island. These two lines depict Awoonor's prowess as a poet, and his ability to employ nature in conveying his point. Painting a picture of tears drying on a shore highlights an irony; the irony of an ever-wet shore being the place where tears dry. Again, Awoonor depicts nature as a home, shown by the refuge 'bird island' provides to the 'seagulls'.

In "Salvation", the love for nature appears throughout the poem. In the poem, the focus is on talking to the sea and also hearing from the sea:

> You said you heard what the sea said
> Though I asked it did not talk to us (6 – 7)

The persona wants to be sure if the sea actually spoke. In their quest for knowledge and answers in this poem, the persona says again:

> The sea you said talked to us.
> The moon-flakes on storm's horns shiver
> With the tenderness of birth cords. (17 – 20)

Here again we see his expression of his love for nature come to the fore. His search for his salvation and that of his friends leads him to look to the sea in search of answers. However, he says:

> Where lies our salvation? You asked
> We do not need any salvation (10 – 11)

He admonishes his friends not to give up the search for their salvation just at 'the beginning shore'. And not also to go back and join the mourners who are keeping wake for the dead. A strive-on will lead them to their salvation. The persona states in the ending parts of the poem that:

> And in the season of search
> And the others who took the big boats return
> We shall find our salvation here on the shore, asleep. (22 – 25)

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In this poem Awoonor uses nature as a symbol or representation of what he wants to put across. References are made to types of nature such as the elements:

Then the storm came (4)
On the bow of the storm experienced canoe (11)
And the rains will come and beat me (16)
Like the madman at moonrise (21);

Shore:

We stood on the shore and watched you sail (7);

Sea:

To the roar of the sea and the priests' bell (8)
Then you were lost where earth and sea met (19)
The sea roared and run around (21);

Animals:

cow (10)
Anipaye the fish, I shall stay at the net's end (12)
And Anipaye you will go down (18)
The cow and Anipaye had gone down (24);

Vegetation:

Weed (3)
I shall be under the tree (15)
And the tree will die and leave its branches (17)

It becomes evident that "The Purification" is packed with several themes of nature, as highlighted above. These natural icons are used in painting a picture and grounding the setting for Awoonor to convey the message he intends conveying to the reader.

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Finally, the title of the poem "The Gone Locusts" speaks to nature, and the focus of nature runs through the poem. The use of nature by Awoonor is seen again in this poem. The persona sees 'tree tops from the desert land', and wishes to 'pluck the green leaves'. The irony arises when the desert land is assumed to be a bearer of green leaves. Other archetypes of nature like 'locusts', 'clouds', 'rain', 'trees' and 'season' are presented throughout the poem to show the persona's encounters with nature.

Imagination

In "Exiles" Awoonor plays on the imaginative faculties by drawing the reader to perceive the moon as a directive light which leads the persona and the reader home. The hypothetical journey the reader is led on is one which requires imagination and conjecturing to embark on. Images of 'exiled souls', 'arguments', 'fences', 'dunghills', 'the moon', 'stars', 'altars' and 'inhuman sweat' are all concepts that are created in the reader's mind as he proceeds on this journey with Awoonor. The employment of imagery therefore paints the picture of the journey and the journey men, who are the exiled souls, proceeding on this journey. In the same vein, great use of imagination is seen in "The Cathedral". The poet employs the imagery tools to create a picture in the reader's mind by using lines like:

> On this dirty patch
> a tree once stood
> shedding incense on the infant corn:
> its boughs stretched across a heaven
> brightened by the last fire of a tribe (1 – 5)

The reader's imagination is also drawn upon in painting a picture of surveyors and builders:

> who cut that tree
> planting in its place

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A huge senseless cathedral of doom (7-9)

In "My God of Songs was Ill", the reader is required to paint a mental picture of the persona entering the hut with his 'backside' in order to follow the sequence of events in the poem. The systematic show of the persona's action plays out the reality Awoonor wants to present in the reader's mind. In this poem, there is a step-by-step leading of the reader by Awoonor into the heart of the poem. There, the reader experiences a bursting into song of the persona's god, whom the persona joins to sing.

"March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him" sees the employment of imagery and symbolic tools in the depiction of imagination. Phrases such as 'smash the cradle', 'dug the grave', etc. aids the reader in forming an imaginative picture of the actions of the persona. In "Desires", Awoonor creates a totally new world by making days literally stand in awe of the years rolling past. By creating such imagery in the minds of the reader, Awoonor is able to further ground his argument of the poetry.

With regard to "In My Sick Bed" Awoonor employs imagery by using words such as 'flesh melting', 'flesh peeling off', and that same flesh being used to muffle the funeral drums. The reader is left to create vivid pictures with these imagery tools of how 'this flesh' is treated. This leads the persona to question the existence of 'a resting place elsewhere'. "What Song shall we Sing" also portrays the presence of imagery through the use of repetition. Phrases like:

The drums are beating
and beating
Man of huge testicles draw away
draw away, draw away.

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Peal on, peal on
Peal on and let the people with dirty clothes (8-13)

The use of repetition places emphasis on the picture the reader creates in his mind. The reader is forced to pay attention to the imagery being presented by the repetitions. This leads the reader to be engrossed in the poem, and to better understand it. In "The Consummation", Awoonor asks questions that puzzle him and seeks answers through the creative imaginative ability of the reader. He asks:

When we make our grand finale
Will there be souls this side of eternity
Who will wish us fulfilment
And watch the holy prostration
And bend and anoint the sinning heads? (1 – 5)

Awoonor asks rhetorical questions which are to be answered in the minds of the reader. These questions speak to a world outside of this present one; and thus, the reader needs the imaginative vehicle to drive him to that destination.

In "We have found a New Land", Awoonor cleverly chooses his words with the imaginative ability which comes from within his repository of expressions. He makes a relation between the modernity that has found its way into the African society and calls for a rediscovery of the issues that really matter – a true self-identity that is unadulterated:

The smart professionals in three piece
Sweating away their humanity in driblets
And wiping the blood from their brow (1 -3)

In essence, Awoonor cries out at the blind adoption of western culture and the subsequent discarding of traditional culture which characterises these present times. The juxtaposition of a heavy iron block with a smooth face, which is the anvil, and a solid head set crosswise on a hand

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which is a hammer, is used metaphorically as symbols of the persona's imagination in "The Anvil and the Hammer":

> Caught between the anvil and the hammer
> In the forging house of a new life,
> Transforming the pangs that delivered me
> Into the joy of the new songs
> The trappings of the past, tender and tenuous (1 – 5)

The avid use of the imagery tool in this poem is quite remarkable in that Awoonor succeeds in using the symbols of an anvil and a hammer to metaphorically deliver his message to the reader.

In perceiving the world around him, Awoonor, through the poem "Salvation", succeeds in creating a world of his own in which the there is an ongoing journey on the quest for salvation. The reader is pulled into the imaginative power of Awoonor and is spurred on even after reading to continue living in this created imaginative world.

Here also, we see a use of simple language. The language used distinctively expresses Awoonor's feelings and intent. The use of this type of language has greatly helped Awoonor in the creation of his imagery world.

The Journey Motif

Compared to other romantic features, for example, love for nature, imagination and the supernatural, the journey motif is less pronounced and consequently appears fewer times in *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964).* Some instances of the journey motif do exist in some poems though. In "Rediscovery", the journey motif is clearly depicted. A journey into the spiritual world by 'our forgotten comrades' is seen in this poem. Even though the persona is sad that his comrades must journey into this new world, he has hope that these comrades are renewed

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and transformed and are singing new songs; just as the persona and his comrades on earth find themselves anew – Rediscovery.

The poem 'Exiles' exudes the journey home. The employment of nature tools such as the moon and the star illuminate the path of those on the journey. The title itself "Exiles" suggests movement from one place to another. The persona is seen to be on a journey towards home:

> The return is tedious
> And the exiled souls gather on the beach
> Arguing and deciding their future
> Should they return home
> And face the fences the termites had eaten (3-7)

A contemplation of whether the journey home might yield good returns is the worry of the persona.

"Salvation" also depicts some form of a journey motif. Here the persona is seen on a journey to join the mourners and partake in the funeral drink. He seems to have lost hope in their salvation but looks to the sea for direction. He seems to realize that their salvation is found on the shore 'asleep'.

In "My God of Songs was Ill" the persona is instructing someone to 'go and tell' that he has started his journey. Awoonor gives a description of the lonely nature of his journey when he says:

> While the canoes were still empty
> And the boats had gone away.
> My god of songs was ill
> And I was taking him to be cured.
> When I went the fetish priest was away
> So I waited outside the hut. (2-7)

However, the persona musters courage due to the groaning and crying of his god of songs and enters the fetish hut. He follows the directives and his journey's mission is accomplished. It

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becomes clear that several allusions to journeying are made in this poem. From the persona's journey from his own home, to the journey to the fetish hut and back, the persona is on a mission to ensure that his singular goal of seeking relief for his god of songs is achieved.

"Desire" sees the persona being fixed in a 'single quest' as a result of the passage of time characterised by an allusion to days and years. This contrasts with another indication of a journey; this time not undertaken by the persona but by a generic individual referred to as "you" in the latter part of the poem. This individual journeys to a 'place of skulls', finding himself 'reclining in an arm-chair'. At this individual's destination, 'the lost' and 'the bewildered' are depicted as being in ceremony, which the journey man must supervise. The participants in these ceremonies are described as 'wanderers' who have 'lost their way homeward', and have as a result chosen the 'scented putrefaction of death'. Unlike other allusions to journeys made in other poems which are often times journeys for relief, victory and absolution, the journey depicted in "Desire" is one of morbidity, which relates predominantly to death and the afterlife. Awoonor views death in light of "a journey, or passage, by boat or ferry" (Adjei 142).

An interest in the Supernatural

The mention of 'the eternal gateman' in "Rediscovery" relates to the mention of 'Kutsiami' in his poem "The Journey Beyond". Awoonor talks of 'Kutsiami', a boatman who will ferry him across to the other side. A belief and praise of the supernatural is seen in this poem. A talk of men who keep the eternal gates presupposes an existence of a world beyond this physical we see.

> There shall still be the eternal gateman
> Who will close the cemetery doors
> and send the late mourners away (6 – 8)

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"The Purification" records the sacrifice to the sea-god in a time of poor fishing. A belief in a sea-god who controls good fishing days and bad fishing is one of the traditions of Africa Awoonor seeks to project. Sacrifices are made to this god from time to time to ensure that fishermen get a good 'fish day'. However, in this poem the sea-god seems to have deserted the shore, with its people producing only weeds as their catch for the day.

> The sea-god has deserted the shore
> And the day-long net lands with catches of weed
> Then the storm came (1 – 3)

The 'sea-god' as a supernatural figure represents fruitfulness or productivity. This goes to show the dependence of man on supernatural beings for divine provision in meeting man's needs. However, the absence of the sea-god has caused the fisherman's net to be full of weed the whole day.

Supernatural elements are presented in "Desire" through the use of words like 'ghosts'. Awoonor in this poem gives a clear view of the traditional elements of his homeland where he states:

> And I looked into the herb pot to read the message from
> beyond
> There is no voice, no ghosts whisper.
> Only the voices of the fishermen dragging the mackerel net
> Beating time on the calabash drums. (6-8)

In this and other portions of the poem, Awoonor delves into African tradition by making mention of 'Calabash drums', 'herb pot', 'coloured cowrie' which signifies a dive into the spiritual world. The belief is that there is a world beyond this physical world that rules in the affairs of men. It is also believed that this supernatural world must be consulted from time to time in divining the future and destiny of people in this world. People of the Ewe culture further believe that the gods know better than any man and can decide the destinies of men. Thus, they consult the Gods from time to time for direction and insight into issues that affect them. In this poem, the persona is

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seen trying to make a desperate attempt to consult his God. By looking into the 'herb pot', he hoped to receive a message from 'beyond' that will soothe his 'desire'. However, to his despair, no 'voice' or 'ghosts whisper' was heard. The persona rather found himself hearing the physical voices of fishermen, thus his questions:

> Where, where could it be?
> Where gone? (10-11)

These questions signify his quest and desire to 'read the message from beyond'. The whole poem is an actual quest into the supernatural. The persona hopes to find some sort of solace in the response 'from beyond'. He speaks of this quest in these lines saying:

> The merry village clown calls me by name,
> And gives me a colored cowrie
> 'In the coloured cowrie you hear the sea
> And the throbbing vibrations of your soul'
> But where, where could it be?
> The day stands still as the years roll past
> And fix me in the single quest,
> For what
> Is it you are looking for
> In these scattered ashes from forgotten hearths? (12- 21)

"In My Sick Bed" sees Awoonor painting an imaginative picture of the combination of Christian and Traditional views on a life after death. He touches on the hypocritical nature of Colonial people and tries to establish the fact that life after death is an illusion. Early posits that "the imagery of a distinctly African scene is combined with echoes of the kind of medieval Christian meditation on sickness and death (58). Thus, the poem states:

> Who says there is a resting place elsewhere?
> It is here with us,
> Here with us in the sound of the fall of
> Dust on coffin. (8 – 10)

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'While the speaker acknowledges his mortal frailty and evokes the sense of despondency and squalor that attends sickness, he rejects the idea of an afterlife where all manner of things shall be' (Early 58).

The focus on the life beyond is a key theme in "The Consummation". Love for the surreal and supernatural drives the Romantics in their quest to wander into the life beyond. Awoonor makes several allusions to the afterlife in his works, bringing home the point that there exists the possibility of life beyond this world. In "The Consummation", he asks questions that puzzle him and seeks answers through the creative imaginative ability of the reader. He asks:

> When we make our grand finale
> Will there be souls this side of eternity
> Who will wish us fulfilment
> And watch the holy prostration
> And bend and anoint the sinning heads? (1 – 5)

In the last line of the above extract of the poem, Awoonor mocks the present Christian doctrine that seeks salvation of a man's soul before an entry into heaven is assured.

> Cannot we join the ceremony of our death
> And partake of the ritual? (6 -7)

This questions posed by the persona speak to his expression of his African heritage and descent. The use of the words 'ceremony' and 'ritual' touches on the way the issue of death is handled in the African setting. Rituals are performed upon the death of a person.

> Cannot we carry the remainder of our
> circumcision
> Away with us beyond? (8 – 10)

"That Flesh is Heir To" sees Awoonor drawing once more on the supernatural in his poetry. In the lines below, Awoonor makes fine reference to the supernatural:

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Beyond the twilight
The myriad color and the dazzle of the rainbow
Confirm our immortality (12 – 14)

An allusion to the Christian religion is seen in this poem as the persona says:

Confirm our immortality.
The mortal coils of flesh peel off
And resurrection awaits us
Large at the foot of the cross on Calvary
While we pray for us at the hour of our birth (14 - 18)

It is evident that the supernatural construct plays an important role in Awoonor's worldview, as espoused by his constant focus on death and the life beyond.

A question or revolt against the Western religion of Christianity comes up in "The New Warmth". The persona asks:

Did they say that God shall wipe away all tears from every eye?
I bring my offerings of new corn before your altar.
Unclasp our hands so I can place them on the firewood (4 – 6)

Awoonor seems to argue that if the adherents of Christianity, who themselves are the colonizers, preach for sacrifices to be offered to their God, then they should set him free by unclasping his hands so he can offer his sacrifice of new corn.

In "Exiles", supernatural reference is made of the 'father's spirit' being the 'moon'. Throughout the poem, the moon shines on their way home. Other references are made to 'souls', 'sacred altar', 'sacrificial cock', 'inhuman sweat', and 'gateman' who all possess other-worldly connotations. The reference to these supernatural elements makes "Exiles" read not only as a journey from one physical area to the other, but also a journey into the spiritual realm.

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In “My God of Songs Was Ill”, supernatural elements such as ‘my god of songs’, ‘fetish priest’, ‘cure god’, and ‘fetish hut’ present an imagery of the metaphysical world in that the persona’s god of songs is tied to his own livelihood. The actions the persona needs to take to cure his god of songs; for example, entering a hut with his backside, also have metaphysical connotations attached to them, as they are a departure from the normal and mundane way of doing things. In the end, the persona’s joy is heightened when his god is healed, and bursts into new strong songs that the persona and the god sing together.

The use of the words ‘heaven’ and ‘cathedral’ in “The Cathedral” alludes to the Christian doctrine of spirituality. The tree’s attributes are extended in that its boughs stretch across a heaven. In this poem, the tree is symbolic of the native traditional religion of the land, and the heritage of the people. The cutting down of the tree and its replacement by a cathedral conveys the notion of an uprooting of one religion and its replacement by another. For Awoonor seeks to convey to the reader, that the surveyors and builders are agents of the new religion, which typifies Christianity, who seek to destroy the traditional religion and ways of the native land, and replace it with a Christian God and his temple, signified by the cathedral.

Awoonor’s interest in the subject of death and the afterlife plays out in “Salvation”. In lines 9 and 10 the announcement of a funeral is made by funeral drums, while reference is made to salvation in lines 12 and 13. Similarly, reference is made to ‘mourners’ and ‘funeral drink’ in lines 15 and 16 respectively. The poem highlights the African conception of death and the rites performed in getting the dead ready for the afterlife. This focus on death highlights Awoonor’s preoccupation with the life beyond and the need to prepare for such life.

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"The Weaver Bird" sees Awoonor opposing a new religion making inroads in his native land. This new religion, represented by the weaver bird, is at first given a hospitable reception by the local people, who allow it to build a nest in their house and also lay eggs in their tree. The weaver bird, and by extension the new religion, however turns to start preaching to the people, with the hope of indoctrinating them with a religion alien to those of their fathers. There is however a vehement and stubborn holding-on-to by Awoonor and his comrades to the old religion and the old ways, characterized by their confession of not being able to:

> ... join the prayers and answers of
> the communicants (13-14)

Instead, there is the desire to look for new homes each day and to re-build 'new altars', as the 'old shrines' are defiled by the 'weaver's excrement'. The weaver's excrement therefore desecrates the sanctity of the traditional religion. Finally, in "March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him", we see reference made to the supernatural where the hands which 'smashed the cradle' are those which again dig 'the grave'. References are also made to a 'funeral' as well, with subtle hints dropped in the poem about the cycle of life which starts from birth and ends at death. There is therefore the conveyance of some supernatural and other-worldly idea to the reader regarding man's journey in this present life.

Additionally, Awoonor's treatment of the issue of death in his poems feed into the romantic interest in the supernatural and surreal. His view of death and a life beyond is based on his cultural view of the subject matter. Adjei states that Awoonor's view on death sterns from his:

> people's belief in the idea of death as a result of the interplay of cause and effect relationships, both physical and metaphysical ;(137)

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Thus, in "In My Sick Bed', Awoonor speaks of a physical melting away of flesh 'in the melting pot'. He asserts that the clay and flesh shall peel off. His talk of a transformation of a physical body through death. In the latter parts of the poem, he sarcastically alludes to no life after death. He sets out to refute the Christian belief of a life after death. The allusion is made to "Christ's death on Calvary and the idea of resurrection" (Adjei 141). He debunks this Christian notion by saying:

> Who says there is a resting place elsewhere?
> It is here with us
> Here with us in the second sound of the fall of dust on coffin
> And the priestly prayers of the communicants
> Not beyond, not beyond o Lord (8 – 11)

It may seem that the poet seeks to project the idea of no life after death by reason of his questions asked. Not to refute an entire existence of life after death but to refute the Christian view of resurrection and their view of a life after death.

In his treatment of the same issue in his poem "That Flesh is Heir To", Awoonor alludes to a resurrection that awaits them. Here also, Awoonor seeks to "engage in a parody of the idea of resurrection as preached in Christendom" (Adjei 142). We see the persona say:

> The mortal coils of flesh peel off
> And resurrection awaits us
> Large at the foot of the cross on Calvary
> While we pray for us at the hour of our birth. (15 – 18)

Awoonor, according to Adjei uses these lines on death and Christian view of an afterlife which is better than life on earth to debunk and call to question "doctrines that encourage Africans to suffer on earth and await joy and bliss in a hypothetical heaven." (Adjei 141)

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In his avid pursuit of justification and liberation of the African mentality from the Christian – Colonial brain wash on death and the life after, Awoonor, in "March, Kind Comrade, Abrest Him" states"

> What all this talk of our people and salvation is about?
> Isn't it the hands that smashed the cradle that dug the grave? (2 – 3)

These questions state Awoonor's aversion to the concept and ideology of death as is presented by Christendom. He seeks to provoke the African to think hard on these questions and arrive at a an answer that benefits his situation as an African.

Language

In "Rediscovery", Awoonor uses very simple language. This leaves much of the interpretation of the poem to the reader to easily undertake. This technique is a feature of Romanticism; it is a tool used in a revolt against the use of sophisticated diction that is understood by only a select few. Awoonor does same with his poetry. In his bid to project his indigenous Ewe oral tradition he uses understandable English so that his message is the focus and not the flamboyance of his language. In "Salvation", we see a use of simple language. The language expresses Awoonor's feelings and intent. The use of this type of language has greatly helped Awoonor in his creation of his imagery world.

Similarly, "The Purification" employs simple understandable English language in conveying its message. The reader does not have to take time to understand the words in this poem. The simple nature of the language makes it easy for the reader to appreciate other features of Romanticism present in the poem such as imagination, love for nature, and the supernatural.

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In "The Weaver Bird", Awoonor makes use of simple and understandable English. He uses simple diction to show the relationship and distinction between the things he wants to express in this poem. The poem flows on the tongue of the reader with ease, and so does the message of the weaver bird as the poem registers in the mind of the reader:

> We look for new homes every day,
> For new altars we strive to re-build
> The old shrines defiled by the weaver's excrement (15 – 17)

The same trend of simplicity in language plays out in the rest of the selected poems. To illustrate this fact, Awoonor makes use of words like 'hut' and 'songs' in "My God of Song was Ill", 'scented' and 'voices' in "Desire", and 'moon' and 'home' in "Exiles". This very important tool of writing highly feeds into the Romantic school of thought.

Most of Awoonor's poetry makes use of simple language which can be understood by the common man. His use of this technique which is prevalent in most romantic poetry, also finds presence in William Wordsworth's Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*. In the preface, Wordsworth states:

> Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature: chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement.

Awoonor, in his use of simple language, also employs language that is fused with words that are inherent in his traditional language – Ewe. The splash of 'vernacular' in his poetry feeds into his quest to domesticate the English language in the propagation of his message as an African Poet.

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Awoonor deliberately incorporates the dirge-song tradition of the Ewe people. By doing this Awoonor, permanently places himself in the domain of his African heritage and culture. At the same time he is able to communicate with the ordinary man in his land and the ordinary man in other lands in the world. The ability of Awoonor's poetry to communicate to both worlds perfectly and effectively proves Awoonor's ingenuity and creativity when it comes to his poetry.

Emotion

The intense expression of emotion in "Rediscovery" appeals to the emotions of the reader. By Awoonor's expression of the emotions of sadness and hope, the reader is pulled into these emotions just by reading the poem. In "Exiles", Awoonor's expression of his feelings towards the natural bodies reveals his highly expressive nature as a poet. The reader's emotions are stirred, as Awoonor leads the reader on the journey being undertaken by the 'exiled souls'. Emotions like uncertainty, pain, agony and loss are evoked as the reader goes along with the 'exiled souls' on their journey.

Awoonor's utmost expression of emotion in "The Cathedral" is quite interesting. He bluntly expresses his view on the tree that used to be a source of joy to the townspeople being cut down by 'surveyors' and 'builders'. His outrage is seen more in the replacement and not necessarily the cutting. It is safe to say that if the tree was replaced with some other entity which was able to cater to the needs of the townspeople, the rage and anger will be minimal.

In "March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him", Awoonor presents the feeling of togetherness. By the use of the pronoun 'we', Awoonor conveys the feelings of a communal world. The feeling of agony is expressed in "That Flesh is Heir To". Awoonor plays with the feeling of agony in this

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poem. While in line 7 the agony of death is expressed, Awoonor's attribute of agony to joy may be purported to mean that the feelings of joy are highly subdued due to the happenings in the poem. A reference to tears becoming the brewing water of bitter herbs suggests an overflow of sadness and despair.

"The New Warmth" presents a mixture of feelings on the subject of God. In the first line, the persona expresses an unending feeling of love and unity between him and his fellow man. However, an instant mixture of emotions like anguish and joy arise when the persona considers the idea of God wiping away tears from every eye. The reader perceives a feeling of confusion in the expressions of the persona. In that, the persona seeks to feel the joy that comes from God wiping away all tears from every eye, but at the same time feels the agony of his unclutched hands. The persona and the reader partake in the feeling of oneness where a common destiny is unearthed. The poem ends with encouragement and hope as:

> We seek a life in the house of the fire-god
> So the benumbed fingers of our souls can
> Unclasp
> And the new fire warm us all (17-19)

"In My Sick Bed" sees the persona present intense feeling of dislike towards the idea of a 'resting place elsewhere'. He expresses his view that the resting place is here with us:

> Here with us in the sound of the fall of dust on coffin
> And in the priestly prayers of the communicants.
> Not beyond, not beyond O Lord. (10-13)

The persona expresses certainty in his conviction of no resting place elsewhere but here. He makes definitive statements to express his feelings on the issue, which may come across as a quest to renew a mindset on the issue. In "The Gone Locusts", the persona is seen expressing his

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emotions on events happening around him. He wishes to pluck the green leaves to make himself a hut, but sits and watches the locusts eat up the green leaves. The persona conveys a feeling of indifference with regards to unfolding events, and to events expected to happen in the future as well. In mentioning the coming of the rains, the persona indicates that he would still be sitting when the rains come, thereby heightening the possibility of being beaten by the rain. The feeling of powerlessness at the outcome of events is one which is conveyed in this poem.

The "Anvil and the Hammer" sees a dichotomous presentation of two contradictory emotions. Here, the persona talks about 'transforming the pangs that delivered' him into the 'joy of new songs'. It is hinted that the potential exists for turning pain into joy, and bitterness into laughter. In "We have found a New Land", the persona expresses joy in finding a new land where blackness does not matter. His feeling of hope is revived in the finding of this new land. He however expresses sadness that in the new land the water is drying from the towel and their songs are dead. He expresses a desire to relearn wisdom from his fathers which might help in the present predicament.

Subjectivity, Individuality and the Focus on the Artist as Creator

In "Rediscovery", the issue of subjectivity and individuality plays out perfectly. In agreement with the Romantics, Awoonor expresses his individual emotion and feelings on the issue of death.

He employs the creative ability of his mind and philosophies to highlight the issue of death even more. He is able to draw a light of hope out of the otherwise gloomy and sad feeling that the death of close friends and family brings. Just as the Romantics love to do, Awoonor does a self-

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analysis of his thoughts and feelings concerning death and then conceptualizes his view of the issue. He believes that in as much as his forgotten comrades are transformed and sing new song, he himself by their death gets a chance to rediscover his inner self. In this poem, Awoonor does not imitate the external world but rather searches within himself, and expresses his individual perceptions and emotions on death.

In "The Gone Locusts", the use of the personal pronoun 'I' is prevalent. The person is speaking of events happening to him and no other person. He talks of seeing 'tree tops from the desert land' which he saw as good enough provision for his hut until locusts come all of a sudden and 'then the green tops of the trees were no more'. The poem ends with a recall of the wish for the return of the locusts in light of the rains that came and beat him. Similarly, the romantic elements of individuality and subjectivity are present in "My God of Songs was Ill". The introversion of the speaker, his sense of isolation (or alienation) amid the complexity and discovery of modern society and recent history are characteristic of individuality and subjectivity. Thus, Awoonor looks inward just as Wordsworth, Blake, and Coleridge look within to bring out the core essence of their being in word form. Awoonor, however, in his bid to express his heartfelt sentiments, takes into consideration his community. Thus, in "My God of Songs was Ill", he says:

> Go and tell them that I crossed the river
> While the canoes were still empty
> And the boatman had gone away.
> My God of song was ill
> And I was taking him to be cured (1 – 5)

The use of the personal pronoun 'I' throughout this poem presents a focus on the poet. The subject of his poem is himself, his feelings and emotions. Throughout the poem we see a splash

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of this personal pronoun coupled with the use of 'my', which is evidently seen in the title of the poem – "My God of Songs was Ill".

"March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him" similarly expresses subjectivity through the pronoun 'we' used in expressing communal desire and aspirations, forging the communal unity, and spurring the people on in achieving the greater good.

> Tell him we want him with us
> We want him to bring his drum along
> And sing at our funeral.
>
> We can be one then, we can be one,
> We shall shake his fingerless hands
> And give him our pay-packet
> And drink his hearty toast
> To a better world, a socialist world. (12 – 19)

Early states that whereas Western writers speak for themselves, the African writer, like his ancestors, often speaks for his community (57). In this poem Awoonor clearly stands with his people; thus the use of 'we' and 'us'. Awoonor presents himself as a part of a community fighting for togetherness and unity. Awoonor seeks to identify with his origins, his unique African heritage, and culture.

The poems examined above are indicative of the subjectivity, individuality and the focus on Awoonor as a creator. In most of his poems, Awoonor comes across as a highly subjective and creative poet. This shows through his usage of personal pronouns like 'I', 'my' and 'we', and to other pronouns such as 'you'. His affinity for his heritage comes to the fore through his treatment of communal and societal issues. In the end, Awoonor's poetry portrays him as a uniquely original writer whose goal is to mirror his society in his poems, and to reach out to his society in order to lead it back to its ancestral roots and heritage.

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In an analysis of the Form of Awoonor's poems, it is seen that he succeeds in incorporating African vernacular traditions, especially the dirge-song tradition of the Ewe people, into modern poetic form. Modern poetic form here meaning the romantic poetic form. Because the focus on very simple and understandable English, the Romantic poets mostly invest in short lined poems. Although they make use of sonnets, most of them used free verse as a conscious revolt against the neo classical way of the poetic form that was obsessed with tightly structured poetry that carries strict rhymes and metres. Awoonor, in the analysis of poems used in this study, has relatively short lined poems. "In My Sick Bed" has just eleven lines but hold in it concisely and effectively used language that opens the doors of imagination.

"Exiles", "Desire", "The Cathedral", "In My Sick Bed", "We have Found a New Land" for example, have a representation of long and short lines. Particularly, some of these lines hold single words. 'roar', 'gateman', 'birthplace' are single words that constitute a line in the poem "Exiles". This technique is believed to be employed by the poet to create emphasis and also create a vivid imagery picture of the message being put across.

Most of the poems are seen in one stanza presentations with the exception of "What Songs Shall we Sing" and "March, Kind Comrade, Abrest Him" where two and three stanzas are present respectively. Awoonor does not adhere to strict and stringent poetic expressions in Neo classical Poetry.

Adjei asserts that Awoonor's earlier poetic career follows:

> the oral – formulaic poetic vein; the poet- persona acting as a surrogate voice, or an adaptor of the traditional dirge, whose core themes are built around death (142)

The oral –formulaic poetry is the type of poetry that allows the poet to improvise poetry

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CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

1.1 Summary

This chapter deals with the summary of key points of the findings and the conclusion. The study makes recommendations for further research in the ending sections of the chapter.

In almost all the examined poems in this study, several romantic features clearly stand out. In the "Weaver Bird", for example, love for nature seems to be the central romantic theme which is being projected. This is expressed in the use of the weaver bird, its eggs and the 'only tree' as important figures in conveying the central idea of the poem. Also in "Exiles", nature is strongly portrayed through the use of the moon, beach, shores and sea scapes. These symbols go to show how the poet manipulates romantic to effectively convey his message. "The Cathedral" also dwells and draws from nature, as it centres on a tree that once stood on a dirty patch. The poet employs the romantic feature of nature in conveying his message of the rude intrusion of colonialists into the otherwise simple and serene life of a 'tribe'. In so doing, the coming of modernity displaces the natural balance of things, which has existed since time immemorial.

"My God of Songs was ill" speaks to the subjective nature of romantic poems. The use of the personal pronouns 'I', 'my' and 'me', projects the poet's own feelings, expressions and emotions on the illness of his god of songs. A singular quest is seen in this poem where the poet tries to heal or cure his god of songs of its illness. The search for a cure presents the poet's quest for regeneration in his life and that of his people; which quest itself is a feature of Romanticism. The poem is also set within a traditional religious backdrop, which highlights an important theme and feature of Romanticism. In "March, Kind Comrade, Abreast Him", Awoonor again projects the

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roman tic theme of subjectivity. Here however, the personal pronoun 'we' is used in expressing communal desire and aspirations, forging the communal unity and spurring the people on to achieve the greater good.

"Desires" sees Awoonor giving a descriptive imagery of nature. Awoonor seems to believe that nature is a serene enclave which soothes weary souls, a theme explored by Romantics as well. Awoonor creates a totally new world by making days literally stand in awe of the years rolling past, which speaks to the romantic feature of Imagination. He also, as much as practicable, employs very simple English in putting this poem across to the reader. Awoonor touches on the concept of the afterlife in "In My Sick Bed" which is a focus of the Romantics. However, in his treatment of the afterlife, he conveys the notion that the idea of an afterlife is an illusion. He uses simple language, for example 'pot', 'drums', 'sound', 'fall', and 'dust' to enable the reader identify with the message more and appreciate the beauty of the poem. "What Song Shall We Sing" presents a profound connection to nature, as the poet persona speaks about clutching at the stars in times of distress. The use of songs, which is a product of the creative imagination, seems to convey the poet's need for reform and revitalization, showing a desire for respite and relief from life's problems through the call for the man of huge testicles to 'draw away'. The adherence of the poet to the usage of these elements neatly places him amongst romantic poets.

The "Consummation" focuses on the life beyond, an important romantic attribute. Here, the poet draws the reader's attention to the existence of an 'eternity' which all souls go to, after their sojourn on this side of existence. Awoonor seems to convey a silent hint to all, on the need to be circumspect in our everyday life, as there exists an 'other world' which all will one day step into. The focus on the afterlife shifts to a focus on wisdom in "We Have Found a New Land". The poet seems to reach out to a generation of Africans who have wholesale-adopted the culture of

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foreigners, imploring them to return to the wisdom of their forefathers in order to make meaning of their world. Awoonor calls for a rediscovery and a return to what was of old, touting its relevance to the modern-day world. "The Anvil and the Hammer" seems to locate the persona in an ever-changing world; a world of constant change and flux. The foundation that the old culture, typified by the anvil represents, and the promise of change alluded to by the new culture, depicted by the hammer, together work to forge in the persona an ability to draw on the past in order to face the future. The blend of the two cultures in one person seems to be the overarching theme of this poem.

"That Flesh is Heir To" is packed with powerful depictions of nature and immortality that seem to give inspiration to the poet. From references to 'dawn light', 'twilight', 'colour', 'rainbow' and 'resurrection', we see a strong conviction in the poet on the power of nature and the certainty of a life waiting beyond the one we currently live in. Spirituality on the other hand seems to be the main focus in "The New Warmth". The poet speaks of a God who can wipe away tears, bringing his offering to seek the goodwill of that God. Inherent in the poem however is a theme of bondage, highlighted by a plea to a 'silent other' to come unclasp the poet's hand so his offering can be placed on the firewood.

"Rediscovery" speaks to pain and rejuvenation, by talking about mourning and some aspects of hope. Awoonor encourages the reader in saying that even after the mourning of a sad event or occurrence is over, there is still hope for the future. In "Salvation" the poet speaks on sorrow, despair and death. The poet admonishes his friends not to give up the search for their salvation just at 'the beginning shore'. And not also to go back and join the mourners who are keeping wake for the dead. Striving on will lead them to their salvation. "The Purification" depicts a sacrifice to the sea-god. Here, the poet projects a reverence for nature and divinity, conveying the

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notion that obeisance to the sea-god leads to prosperity and fruitfulness. "The Gone Locusts" depicts the subjectivity inherent in Awoonor's writing. It focuses on self-introspection and the events of life, and how they impact mankind. In this poem, Kofi Awoonor talks on nature by using the words 'tree', 'green leaves', 'clouds', 'desert' and 'locusts'. Awoonor uses the natural element of the locust as a symbol to represent invasion of the colonizers. He employs the element of remembrance while delivering the message of the poem.

1.2 Recommendation

It is recommended that more research needs to be undertaken on the works of other African writers to determine how well they have also integrated Western literary concepts and Traditional African paradigms in their creative works.

1.3 Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Awoonor lays claim to the rich oral tradition of his African heritage throughout his poetry. His aim as a poet is to present his traditional Ewe heritage in the English language by giving expression to the orality, rhythmic and song-like nature of Ewe using the medium of the English language. Thus, in most of the poems in *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964),* Awoonor incorporates the rich culture of his people – the Ewes. Awoonor introduces the whole world to his pride and joy – the Ewe culture. In doing this, especially in *Rediscovery and Other Poems (1964),* Awoonor comes out strongly as a romantic poet. His employment of important romantic features like subjectivity, love for nature, creative imagination, language, individuality, subjectivity, religion, the journey motif and the quest for knowledge establishes him as a contemporary African romantic poet.

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APPENDIX

SELECTED POEMS USED IN THIS STUDY FROM *REDISCOVERY AND OTHER POEMS (1964)* BY KOFI AWONOOR

- **EXILES**

Moon, moon shine on our way
Shine bright for us to go home.
The return is tedious
And the exiled souls gather on the beach
Arguing and deciding their future
Should they return home
And face the fences the termites had eaten
And see the dunghill that has mounted on their birthplace
But their journey homeward done on the sea-scape's roar
Their final strokes will land them on forgotten shores
They committed the impiety of self-deceit
Slashed, cut and wounded their souls
And left the mangled remainder in manacles
Before the sacred altar, alongside the sacrificial cock
Whose crow woke the night sleepers at dawn.
The moon, the moon is our father's spirit
At the Star's entrance the night revelers gather
To sell their chatter and inhuman sweat to the gateman
And shuffle their feet in agonies of birth
Lost souls, lost souls, lost souls that are still at the gate.

- **DESIRE**

The stars are above, stilted like merry bells;
The scented dew falls on the rotten leaves of yesterday's
Storm:
And I look into the herb pot to read the message from
Beyond.
There is no voice, no ghosts whisper.
Only the voices of the fishermen dragging the mackerel net
Beating time on the calabash drums.
In songs that ring of the sea before them

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where, where could it be?
Where gone?
The merry village clown calls me by name,
And gives me a colored cowrie
'In the colored cowrie you hear the sea
And the throbbing vibrations of your own soul.'
But where, where could it be?
The day stands still as the years roll past
And fix me in the single quest,
For what
Is it you are looking for
In these scattered ashes from forgotten hearths?
And in the fireplace where mother's cooking pot hangs
Revealing past travails and future glories'
Glories? Who says they are glories?
Behind me I smell their talcumed bodies
Washed in palm olives
The cloths smell with camphor removed
Yesterday from the old lady's box.
They say at the journey's end there is a resting place
Covered with dead cows and hungry vultures
Who do not give you a chance
Yes a chance to measure your own limitations
Besides your future glories
The pall bearers reek with drink and vomit
And the dead man wakes up looks at them
And dies again
The glow worm shows your way to the place of skulls
And there you find yourself reclining in an arm-chair
Supervising the ceremony of the lost
Yes the ceremony of the bewildered
The wanderers that lost their way homewards
And chose the scented putrefaction of death.

- **THE CATHEDRAL**

On this dirty patch
A tree once stood
Shedding incense on the infant corn:
Its boughs stretched across a heaven
Brightened by the last fires of a tribe.
They sent surveyors and builders

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Who cut that tree
Planting in its place
A huge senseless cathedral of doom

- **IN MY SICK BED**

This flesh shall melt in the melting pot
Of receding clay and the flesh shall peel off
And be used to muffle the funeral drums.
The lights are grey and the voices faint
The buzzing flies ask soul searchers' questions
Expecting answers:
Liars and hypocrites
Who says there is a resting place elsewhere?
It is here with us in the sound of the fall of dust on coffin
And in the priestly prayers of the communicants.
Not beyond, not beyond O Lord.

- **WHAT SONGS SHALL WE SING**

Shall we jump and clutch at the stars
Singing hosannas
Shall we sing the flesh peeling songs
Of goose-pimples,

Or shall we sing the new songs
That are on the lips of the street boys?
What song shall we sing?
The drums are beating
and beating
Man of huge testicles draw away
draw away, draw away
Peal on, peal on
Peal on and let the people with dirty clothes dance on.
Here come the travelers with new songs
Let us learn the new songs from afar.

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- **THE CONSUMMATION**

When we make our grand finale
Will there be souls this side of eternity
Who will wish us fulfilment
And watch the holy prostration
And bend and anoint the sinning heads?
Cannot we join the ceremony of our death
And partake of the rituals?
Cannot we carry the remainder of our
circumcision
Away with us beyond?
The wind blows on the graves
Sweeping the sparky debris away:
Cannot we find where they buried our birth cord?

- **WE HAVE FOUND A NEW LAND**

The smart professionals in three piece
Sweating away their humanity in driblets
And wiping the blood from their brow
We have found a new land
This side of eternity
Where our blackness does not matter
And our songs are dying on our lips.
Standing at hell-gate you watch those who seek admission
Still the familiar faces that watched and gave you up
As the one who had let the side down,
'Come on, old boy, you cannot dress like that'
And tears well in my eyes for them
Those who want to be seen in the best company
Have abjured the magic of being themselves
And in the new land we have found
The water is drying from the towel
Our songs are dead and we sell them dead to the other side
Reaching for the Stars we stop at the house of the Moon
And pause to relearn the wisdom of our fathers.

- **THE ANVIL AND THE HAMMER**

Caught between the anvil and the hammer
In the forging house of a new life,

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Transforming the pangs that delivered me
Into the joy of new songs
The trappings of the past, tender and tenuous
Woven with the fiber of sisal and
Washed in the blood of the goat in the fetish hut
Are laced with the flimsy glories of paved streets.
The jargon of a new dialectic comes with the
Charisma of the perpetual search on the outlaw's hill.
Sew the old days for us, our fathers,
That we can wear them under our new garment,
After we have washed ourselves in
The whirlpool of the many rivers' estuary.
We hear their songs and rumours every day
Determined to ignore these we use snatches from their tunes,
Make ourselves new flags and anthems
While we lift high the banner of the land
And listen to the reverberation of our songs
In the splash and moan of the sea.

- **MARCH, KIND COMRADE, ABREST HIM**

Gentle, gentle, tell me what it is all about
What all this talk of our people and salvation is about?
Isn't it the hands that smashed the cradle that dug the grave?
Let us go and get drunk at the funeral.
For us the choice is one of fulfilment
And the jovial reliance on memory.

He came and talked about the revolutions of the world
And diagnosed the diseased socialists
That walk the bank pavements with gold in their teeth,
And we sighed for denying him.
Tell him we want him with us
We want him to bring his drum along
And sing at our funeral.

We can be one then, we can be one,
We will shake his fingerless hands
And give him our pay-packet
And drink his hearty toast
To a better world, a socialist world.

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- **THAT FLESH IS HEIR TO**

Flashes of dawn light
Beam
Star
In agonies of joy, fulfilled, denied.
Whatever is, is the rite and ceremony
The functions unperformed.
Flesh weakens before the agony of death
And tears become the brewing water of bitter herbs.
These are with us
Yet our thoughts soar searching for lands that are never there.
Beyond the twilight
The myriad color and the dazzle of the rainbow
Confirm our immortality.
The mortal coils of flesh peel off
And resurrection awaits us
Large at the foot of the cross on Calvary
While we pray for us at the hour of our birth.

- **THE NEW WARMTH**

The frosted season of our love does not end
And the benumbed fingers of our clasped souls congeal.
We burst into tears of anguish and joy
Did they say that God shall wipe all tears from every eye?
I bring my offerings of new corn before your altar.
Unclasp our hands so I can place them on the firewood.
In the sameness of the feast we discover the focal point.
In the bamboo grove of yesterday's desires
And the other day's ambitions
We seek a life in the house of the fire-god
So the benumbed fingers of our souls can unclasp
And the new fire warm us all.

- **REDISCOVERY**

When our tears are dry on the shore
and the fishermen carry their nets home
and the seagulls return to bird island
and the laughter of the children recedes at night,

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there shall still linger here the communion we forged,
the feast of oneness which we partook of.
there shall still be the eternal gateman
who will close the cemetery doors
and send the late mourners away.
It cannot be the music we heard that night
that still lingers in the chambers of memory.
It is the new chorus of our forgotten comrades
and the halleluyahs of our second selves

- **THE WEAVER BIRD**

The weaver bird built in our house
And laid its Eggs on our only tree.
We did not want to send it away.
We watched the building of the nest
And supervised the egg-laying.
And the weaver returned in the guise of the owner.
Preaching salvation to us that owned the house.
They say it came from the west
Where the storms at sea had felled the gulls
And the fishers dried their nets by lantern light.
Its sermon is the divination of ourselves
And our new horizon limit at its nest.
But we cannot join the prayers and answers of the communicants.
We look for new homes every day,
For new altars we strive to re-build
The old shrines defiled by the weaver's excrement.

- **SALVATION**

The earth's filaments stood out flanked by the fingered
Hands of our search that night.
By the lantern light we searched
From the house to the narrow strip
That is now the shore of childhood.
You said you heard what the sea said
Though I said it did not talk to us.
Doom, Doom, Doom, you said the funeral drums said.
The funeral drums beat from the eastern houses.

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Where lies our salvation? You asked.
We do not need any salvation.
Does our end lie on this beginning shore?
We cannot stop the search and join the mourners,
And partake the funeral drink of dry gin,
And eat of the ginger cakes and the tea at the wake.
Do not ask whether there will be a weed-off.*
The sea you said talked to us.
The moon-flakes on storm's horns shiver
With the tenderness of birth cords.
And in the season of search
When discoverers land on far-off shores
And the others who took the big boats return
We shall find our salvation here on the shore, asleep.

- **THE PURIFICATION**

The sea-god has deserted the shore
And the day-long net lands with catches of weed
Then the storm came
Chastening the birth bowels and cords of sacraments.
We stood on the shore and watched you sail
To the roar of the sea and priest' bell.
They didn't forget to place the sacrificial cow
On the bow of the storm-experienced canoe
Anipaye the fish,* I shall stay at the net's end
While you go down.
While you go down.
I shall be under the tree
And the tree will die and leave its branches
And Anipaye you will go down.
Then you were lost where earth and sea met
And we didn't know what happened.
The sea roared and ran around
Like the madman at moonrise.
But it stopped, it suddenly stopped.
The cow and Anipaye had gone down.

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- **THE GONE LOCUSTS**

  I saw tree tops from the desert land
  And wished I could pluck the green leaves and make myself a hut
  I sat there and watched the locusts
  From the east come in clouds;
  And then the green tops of the tree were no more.
  Then I and the trees and the gone locusts became the desert dwellers.
  Yet I shall be under the trees
  And the rains will come and beat me.
  I shall wish for the return
  Of the sowing season
  In which the farmer
  will remember his harvest.