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## DECONSTRUCTING THE MYTH OF FOREIGN AID IN KOFI ANYIDOHU'S A *HARVEST OF OUR DREAMS* (1993) AND *EARTHCHILD* (1985)

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**Abstract:** This paper explores the contribution of modern African poetry to the quest for a genuine economic freedom in post-independence Africa. Despite political independence, many African countries remain economically dependent on foreign aid. This situation raises questions about its effectiveness in fostering sustainable development. The study aims therefore to examine Kofi Anyidoho's poetic engagement with the issue of underdevelopment and his critique of foreign aid as a development strategy. Drawing on a deconstructionist literary framework, the study analyses selected poems by Anyidoho to investigate his representation of Africa's economic challenges. The findings reveal that the poet challenges the conventional belief that foreign financial and technological assistance can effectively drive Africa's development. Instead, he exposes the limitations of foreign aid and its contribution to economic dependence. The study concludes that Anyidoho advocates self-reliance and the mobilisation of local resources as viable alternatives to external dependence. It therefore recommends the adoption of endogenous development strategies to achieve sustainable economic growth and genuine economic freedom in Africa.

Keywords: African countries, deconstruction, economic development, foreign aid, poetry.

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**Résumé :** Cet article examine la contribution de la poésie africaine moderne à la quête d'une véritable liberté économique dans l'Afrique postindépendance. Malgré l'accession à l'indépendance politique, de nombreux pays africains demeurent économiquement dépendants de l'aide étrangère, ce qui soulève des interrogations quant à son efficacité dans la promotion d'un développement durable. L'étude vise à analyser l'engagement poétique de Kofi Anyidoho à l'égard de la problématique du sous-développement ainsi que sa critique de l'aide étrangère comme stratégie de développement. S'appuyant sur une approche littéraire déconstructionniste, elle examine un corpus de poèmes sélectionnés d'Anyidoho afin d'étudier sa représentation des défis économiques de l'Afrique. Les résultats montrent que le poète remet en question la croyance selon laquelle l'assistance financière et technologique étrangère peut favoriser efficacement le développement du continent. Au contraire, il met en lumière les limites de l'aide extérieure et sa contribution à la dépendance économique. L'étude conclut qu'Anyidoho préconise l'autonomie ainsi que la mobilisation des ressources locales comme alternatives viables à la dépendance extérieure. Elle recommande donc l'adoption de stratégies de développement endogènes afin de garantir une croissance économique durable et une véritable liberté économique en Afrique.

**Mots clés:** Aide extérieure, Déconstruction, Développement économique, Pays africains, Poésie

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## Introduction

Throughout its different stages, poetry provided a wider space to modern African poets to value not only the African cultural achievements but also to raise against Africa's major post-independent quandaries. Kofi Anyidoho whose poetry emerged during the contemporary phase of the evolution of modern African poetry provides an inexhaustible mine to exploit in this regard. Anyidoho has made a name as one of Africa's admired poets due to his ability to make poetry meaningful in societies hitherto characterized by a considerable neglect as this genre is concerned. He advocates a change of paradigm in the modern African poetic scene with his alternative poetry<sup>1</sup>. He has thus successfully proven that literature can meaningfully contribute to liberate the continent from alien forces and empower its socio-economic development as well. Though considerable efforts have been made by preceding generations, this poet has brought modern African poetry to a dimension that deserves a scholarly attention.

In the present study, there is an effort to examine the commitment of modern African poetry to the economic welfare of African countries. It especially seeks to shed light on Anyidoho's view about the plight threatening African economies and his desire to propel the economic growth of African countries. This is premised on the awareness that there is always a close relationship between African literature and its historical context. The poet uses for this reason poetry as a site for the quest of the economic prosperity of African countries and challenge the negative impact of foreign aid in Africa.

The study essentially investigates from a deconstructionist perspective some selected poems from the collections *A Harvest of Our Dreams* (1993) and *Earthchild* (1985) in order to show how the Ghanaian poet deconstructs<sup>2</sup> the traditional myth underlying foreign aid in post-independent Africa. It essentially explores the concept of *differance* to examine the poet's depiction of foreign aid as an infringement to the economic growth of post-independent African states and the need to reinvent it.

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<sup>1</sup> The alternative trend is a poetic movement that emerged in the contemporary phase of the evolution of modern African poetry. The Ghanaian Kofi Anyidoho and the Nigerian Niyi Osundare stand as the most outstanding voices of this poetic school. It involves a redefinition of modern African poetry by avoiding Western alien poetic tradition to appropriate native African aesthetic to convey African issues.

<sup>2</sup> The term here refers to deconstruction, a theory developed by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Deconstruction challenges Western dialectical approach of Western theories such as structuralism and Marxism. It advances rather "the irreducibility of metaphors" (C. Norris, 2004, p.65) and it questions the assumption "that structures of meaning correspond to some deep-laid mental 'set' or pattern of response which determines the limits of intelligibility" (C. Norris, 2004, p.3). Peter Zima argues that in the core of deconstruction lies the "attempt to liberate critical thinking from institutionalized philosophy and to question in a radical way dominance of the concepts as well as systematic terminology" (P. Zima, 1994, p.1).

The study is conducted through a threefold sequencing. It is primarily devoted to the depiction by the Ghanaian poet of Western financial assistance as an impediment for the continent. Then, it pays a close attention to the extent to which the poet views these aids as an open door, authorising the violation of the code of non-interference in Africa's internal affairs. And finally, it presents Anyidoho's call to redefine the nature of these so-called assistance due to its ineffectiveness.

### **1. Foreign Aid as an Infringement to Africa's Economic Growth**

The selected poems under study portray the extent to which this contemporary Ghanaian poet views poetry as a powerful weapon to stimulate the economic growth of African countries hitherto chained to an indescribable economic apathy. Anyidoho makes the economic diagnosis of post-colonial African countries and is able to point out the major causes preventing these countries to accede to a genuine economic freedom. Though various reasons may justify the precarious economic situation of African countries, the poet points namely foreign aid. This assistance is considered to be the major cause of the economic apathy dominating African countries. Foreign aid policies and the conditions under which they are implemented in many African countries are ineffective for their economic growth.

Poetry offers the Ghanaian poet a space to deconstruct the traditional myth underlying Western financial and technological assistance in order to provide a genuine economic freedom to the entire continent. The poet refers to the concept of *differance*<sup>3</sup> to protest against the misconceptions nurturing foreign aid and the threat it represents for Africa's economic development. He portrays these financial supports from Western countries as a real curse for the economic growth of African countries. The poem "Slums of Our Earth" is quite meaningful in this regard. Throughout the poem, the persona's depiction of Western aid agencies and financial institutions is not shining at all. The title of the poem raises a contrast that is quite significant. The presence of Western international aid agencies such as the IMF, the USAID and the AIC in the continent is said to favour the proliferation of slums in the poet's earth. In the first movement, the persona depicts a very awful picture of these non-invited guests in his

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of *differance* is a notion coined by the philosopher Jacques Derrida in his approach to deconstruction. John Caputo defines the concept in the following terms "Strictly speaking: it is the condition of possibility of these things, which are so many effects of its play, traces traced on its surface, from which it itself withdraws (*re-trait*). More strictly still: *differance* is a quasi-condition of possibility, because it does not describe fixed boundaries that delimit what can happen and what not, but points a mute, Buddhist finger at the moon of uncontainable effects" (J. Caputo, 2000, p.102)

earth. What he says of the representative of Western financial institutions in Ghana is quite meaningful. He says what follows:

So he flew over all slums of Eden  
spent his grant money in Accra  
spent his grant and guts and brains  
funding crime in Nima our rotten dream  
(K. Anyidoho, 1985, pp.28-29)

As it is possible to notice through the above lines, the emergence in Africa of Western financial aids is far to represent a blessing in the poet's view. The poem portrays a contrast that is evocative of the controversy brought about by foreign aid in African economies. He especially expresses the difference that opposes African countries before and after the introduction of these aids. The oxymoron "the slums of Eden" used in the first line highlight the ineffectiveness of Western financial and technological assistance to Africa's development. The notion of *différance* explored here is meant to challenge the ineffectiveness of Western financial aid. In the deconstructionist sense of the term, the concept implies to make allusion to difference and deferring to understand meaning.

The poet defines Africa before the introduction of these aids as an "Eden". Through this metaphor the poet presents the entire African continent as blessed with riches of every kind. This includes raw materials, but also a young population able to contribute to its economic blossoming. However, contrary to this bright perspective, the term "slums" is rather associated to the economic disorder that Western financial and technological supports have brought about in African countries. The persona denounces throughout the poem the pretended development that Western foreign aids are supposed to bring in Third-World countries. In fact, far from helping these countries, the aids have rather contributed meaningfully to widen the gap between developed and developing countries.

Despite the spectacular success that foreign aid has benefited in some countries of the globe<sup>4</sup>, the implementation of foreign aid programs in Africa and other Third-World countries has been a total failure. Rather than contributing to the economic growth of these countries, they stand as a real curse. Indeed, foreign aid programs have contributed significantly to infringe the

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<sup>4</sup>Foreign aid as it appears today dates back to 1945 at the eve of World War II. Its forefather is nothing but the Marshall Plan. This is a plan adopted by the United States to help Europe recover from the chaos prevailing after the war. Foreign aid has proven thus to be efficient and effective in healing the economic problems of some countries for it has been a real blessing for Western countries and Japan to recover from the chaos that resulted from World War II and has even helped countries like South Korea and Brazil and Argentina to overcome underdevelopment.

recipient countries' economic development in every regard. Therefore, it appears worthy to question why the aid is not working for developing countries while it has proven to be a real blessing for some Western countries. The fact that Anyidoho's persona notices the negative impact of foreign aid in the development of African countries is quite meaningful. In fact, even economic experts are quite aware of the ineffectiveness of the aid for many Third-World countries. A report of the US Department for International Development (DFID) states for example that "some parts of the international system have become either too complicated or inefficient or simply do not work at all" (W. Easterly, 2008, p.2). Such a comment from the most important donor proves undeniably the failure of foreign aid.

In Africa for example, the ineffectiveness of foreign aid lies to the fact that it represents a major cause of the underdevelopment of African economies. A great deal of the loans is embezzled once they reach the target countries to serve private interests. Besides, the opaque management that stands as the rule in many African countries, makes their use more difficult. As Moss et al. rightly argue, the failure of foreign aid policies in Africa is due to the fact that "in the poorly integrated and fragmented states of the region, political leaders have relied on systematic clientelism and the private appropriation of state resources for political ends. As a result, government resources have not been utilized primarily to promote economic development, as political elites have acted in a predatory fashion to maintain themselves in power" (Easterly, 2008, pp.257-258). As a matter of fact, most of African countries find themselves heavily indebted at the end of process leaving the masses under unprecedented conditions of poverty. In fact, the people suffer the compression of their government in their revenues and economic activities in their country's attempt to pay for the debt services.

This economic oppression undergoing the people is a condition deepening and widening poverty and lowering consequently their living standards. Anyidoho depicts African masses for this reason in the poem "Pan Am 188" as a people made orphans due to the ineffectiveness of foreign aid in their countries. Many African governments are compelled to devote an ungodly amount of their yearly budget to cover the services of the debt. This situation leaves their people in low standard living conditions without water supply, hospitals, and schools. Thus, far from helping Africans to improve their lot, the poet views foreign aid rather to put them in an unprecedented bitterness. This painful experience leads thus the persona run from Western support and look for rescue from the traditional gods. He asserts:

I shall stand before the gods  
and plead guilty to a certain callousness:

such terrifying joy burying kinsmen  
with no sudden feel of loss, no tears nor emptiness.  
So often in our time we've lived as  
orphans in our home, picking crumbs from garbage heaps  
cracking kernels with our teeth while late uncles  
stood by asking stupid questions about bad harvest and  
negligence of Old Nyame and rainmakers. They even  
talked some jazz of technical aid and capital investment codes.  
(K. Anyidoho, 1993, p.55)

The poet appropriates through the above lines the Ewe dirge to lament about the ineffectiveness of foreign aid that has contributed significantly to the underdevelopment of African countries. Though he cries about the conditions of his countrymen, his cry echoes in the entire African continent and the developing world as a general rule. The subtitle introducing the poem is quite evocative. It portrays an air route connecting three capitals, namely New York, Dakar and Accra. While New York refers to the donor country, Accra and Dakar alludes both to Anglophone and Francophone African countries that are the final recipients of foreign aid. The issue connecting these three geographical spaces is therefore nothing but the one of foreign aid. Thus, as the persona expresses his distress, he also denounces the ineffectiveness of Western financial supports. He views these aids to be of no contribution to the economic growth of African countries.

The issue of foreign aid is therefore a condition that leaves African masses in an extreme vulnerability. Through it, African governments remain in a state of childhood that let them to always rely on Western countries for all their basic needs. Thus, the lack of a sophisticated economic background concurs to divert the missions of the aid policies. The final line of the stanza is quite illustrative in that the persona protests against the "callousness" of his "kinsmen" as they are always still waiting "technical aid and capital investment codes" from foreigners. The poet raises here against African governments' blind faith to foreign aid to develop their countries while there is plenty of evidences that show the contrary. Hiding thus their lack of competence, they blame Mother Nature for lack of rain to justify food shortage. Some of them will even point foreign countries for raising excessively food prices.

The huge dependence to foreign aid is a situation that put African nations in a situation of extreme vulnerability and concurs to nurture their underdevelopment. Therefore, rather than contributing to the development of African countries, foreign financial and technical assistance stand as a serious impediment to their economic growth. The results of the implementation of more than 40 years of foreign aid policies in Africa reveal a growing tendency to corruption,

heavy indebtedness and underdevelopment. The aid seems to produce the contrary of what it is expected to do. It has opened the way to an unprecedented violation of the sovereignty of African countries in every regard.

## **2. Foreign aid and the violation of the code of non-interference in internal affairs**

An important mission that Kofi Anyidoho has assigned to his poetry is that of liberating independent African nations from Western hegemonic tutelage. This is the reason why the Ghanaian poet has committed his poetic imagination to challenge the ineffectiveness foreign aid in African countries. These aids, as the poet maintains, keep Africans in an endemic state of Western dependence and contributes by the same token to deepen the gap between developed and developing countries. Foreign aid represents indeed a pretext that allows the donor countries to openly violate the non-interfering principle governing the international relations between countries. Thus, these aids have opened the way to Western countries and the developed world in general to interfere in the internal affairs of African countries. The saying according to which the hands that give are those that command echoes vividly in the context underlying the implementation of foreign aids in Africa. The principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of nations has never been trampled as it has been within more than 40 years of implementation of foreign aid policies in the continent. The article two of the United Nations Charter states clearly that “nothing contained in the present Charter shall authorize the United Nations to intervene in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any state or shall require the Members to submit such matters to settlement under the present Charter; but this principle shall not prejudice the application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII”<sup>5</sup>. Despite this non-interference principle inherent to the international law that regulates international relations between countries, foreign aid has opened the way to Westerners and other donors to openly and with impunity act as policy-makers in African countries.

In fact, as the former colonial masters (France and Britain) noticed the impediment that the independences of their former colonial territories represent for them in their quest to continue supplying their factories with cheap raw materials, they have appropriated foreign aid as a new opportunity to still controlling the new independent countries. In addition to these traditional imperial lords, new neo-colonial masters such as the United States and recently China are

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<sup>5</sup> <https://treaties.un.org>

playing a leading role in controlling the economies of post-colonial African nations by providing them with substantial financial support.

This may partly justify why though working successfully in other countries, the implementation of foreign aid in post-independent Africa has resulted in a total failure. The implementation of aid programs in post-colonial Africa seems to be nothing but a mere reinvention of the West's hegemonic aspiration and exploitative tendencies. This is quite true in that more than forty years of foreign aid policies has not favored any economic growth in the continent. The situation seems rather to have grown worse than it was before the aid. Many African countries are nowadays immersed under the weight of an unprecedented increased of their exterior debt that prevent any development perspectives for them. For example, countries like Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania whose economic growth far preceded South Korea in the 1960s are now suffering an unprecedented underdevelopment.<sup>6</sup>

Though this economic backwardness may be said to proceed from the lack of effective economic policies from the African decision-makers, it is also partly accountable to the negative impact of foreign aid. Foreign aid has indeed always fulfill foreign policies. Behind the aid lies in fact the desire of Western countries to convey their worldviews. In his book *Foreign Aid as Foreign Policy* (2007), Jeffrey Taffet rightly remarks that "foreign aid is not, and cannot be, divorced from foreign policy goals. Foreign aid is a tool that policymakers use, and have used, to achieve their larger aims of dominating, pacifying, protecting, strengthening, or changing certain countries (2007, p.2). Therefore, it appears obvious as Taffet's words testify, that foreign aid cannot be detached from Western countries' desire to control African countries.

The aids have been diversely used to achieve different goals. The reason why the various aid programs are not working in Africa is that they serve the interests of the donor countries rather than contributing effectively to the development of African economies. The aid represents for the donor countries a powerful weapon to control both the economic and political systems of the countries benefiting from them. The failure of the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAP) in many sub-Saharan African nations represents a good example of the ineffectiveness of foreign aid in African countries. In 1994 indeed, the SAPs have been imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to African countries as the result of the inability of these countries to service their grants and loans. However, neither the aids

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<sup>6</sup> Korea is considered today as developed country while Côte d'Ivoire and Tanzania are still fighting against poverty.

themselves nor the SAPs imposed to solution the non-payment of these debts did not produce the expected results.

Rather than contributing to the improvement of African countries' economic conditions, this is rather a situation that puts these countries under an unprecedented foreign control. Through the implementation of the SAPs, African countries have been imposed indeed some foreign experts to decide which economic policies they should or should not undertake. The negative effects of these policies on the economic systems of African countries are blatant. Since their implementation in 1994, none of the African countries benefiting from them seem to get rid from the yoke of poverty and underdevelopment. In fact, these programs are unfair as the development of African countries is concerned. Indeed, not only the SAPs authorize that the countries' economic policies be dictated from the exterior but they also authorize the privatization of the most important companies providing the nations' income. Though the institutions of Breton Woods have sometimes sent the countries own citizens to implement their policies, these experts were just like puppet or simply too brain washed to be able to contribute for the effective development of African countries. The so-called hero that is the object of the persona's sarcasm in the poem "Slums in the Earth" is quite reminiscent of the African experts that are sent to implement the SAPs. The persona reveals thus his contrasting identity:

Today I watched him  
shit his new model  
for 3<sup>rd</sup> World Development  
They say he is a consultant  
to USAID and IMF, and AIC  
Today, here in these distant  
academics of the learned  
I watched him  
sing a praise song  
for his big breakthrough  
in anthropological urban studies into  
the political economy of urban slums  
He spoke of form and structure  
spoke of variants and invariables  
of projected revenues and capital outlays  
and all the bubbles on which the learned crash their brain  
(K. Anyidoho, 1985, pp.28-29).

Through the above lines, the poet alludes directly to Western financial institutions and aid agencies such as the USAID (United States Agency for International Development) and the IMF (International Monetary Fund). He did not indeed hide his words with complex rhetoric to express his disgust about these international financial institutions. He seems to protest against the huge contribution of these financial institutions to the underdevelopment of African and other developing countries. The poet establishes for this sake a contrast that is quite obvious.

Thus, despite the fact that he seems to deal with a present situation as the use of the adverb “today” testifies, he uses a past tense to depict the expert sent by these international financial institutions. As it is possible to notice, the expert’s pretended qualifications contrast tremendously with his achievements.

Indeed, though the hero was praised “for his big breakthrough / in anthropological urban studies into / the political economy of urban slums” and even “spoke of form and structure” or “...of variants and invariables / of projected revenues and capital outlays”, all his actions and policies resulted into a failure. The failure is so important that he is himself obliged to “shit his new model / for 3<sup>rd</sup> World development”. By shitting the development model, he has himself advocated and implemented for the developing world, the hero proves undeniably that he is under the control of alien forces.

The alienation of the new experts that are sent to empower African economies is certainly the reason why they have accepted to implement new economic models that are quite disrespectful of the local economic potentials. Though they are sometimes aware of the ineffectiveness of the policies they are advocating, the experts seem powerless. Robert Calderisi who happens to have devoted many years to these international financial institutions admits the huge pressure and influence to which aids professionals are submitted by western donors. He maintains indeed that most aid professionals of his generation “are still working as staff or consultants, and are not at liberty to express their views” (R. Calderisi, 2006, p.7). This confession is quite pertinent to understand the alienation of the international financial experts and why all the policies they have implemented on behalf of the international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have resulted all into a total failure.

Therefore, Anyidoho’s depiction brings into the fore the kind of economic interference that foreign aid has authorized in the developing world, and especially in African countries. Most of the experts sent by Western financial institutions to implement the aid programs that were supposed to propel the development of African economies were under their control. Thus, though generally originating from the continent, most of the so-called redemption experts were serving the interests of Western imperial lords. What is therefore striking with foreign aid is nothing but its inefficiency, and more importantly its inability to contribute effectively to the economic growth of African countries.

Instead of fighting corruption, the experts have encouraged rather the privatization of the most important national firms underlying the African countries’ economic systems. The problem

with such policies is that they do not encourage the emergence of national champions. They have rather favoured the selling of all the local companies cut prices to Western multinationals. Thus, instead of being beneficial to the local development, the privatization of national companies serves rather the interests of Western countries. The income generated by the privatized firms is most of the time repatriated in Western countries to empower their economies.

By authorizing the violation of the non-interference principle, foreign aid therefore opens the way to the subjugation of the economic systems of African countries. This opens indeed the way to underdevelopment as these countries' economies are controlled from abroad. Through foreign aid policies, the economic systems of African countries are bound to a global Western economic system. This annexing of African economy is quite irrational in that it maintains African countries in a kind of subsistence while all their resources are exploited to serve the interests of Western and developed countries. This may justify the reason why African countries represent in the global economic system nothing but mere providers of raw materials.

The fact that none of the foreign aid policies for the development of Africa is not targeting the field of industrialization is quite meaningful. It is due to the fact that in the world economic system the continent represents simply a cash cow. The implementation of foreign aid policies has therefore erased the economic dynamics characterizing many African countries at the eve of their independences by allowing Western countries to freely immix in their economic affairs. This interference places the economic systems of African countries into Western control as it used to be during the colonial period. This is certainly a situation that conditions of their underdevelopment for the continent's economic policies are dictated from abroad.

In addition to the ineffectiveness of foreign aid to propel the economic growth of African countries, it is also far to represent a blessing in the African political scene. This is due to the fact that the gap between economic and political issues is blurred. In the international relations for example, it is not possible to dissociate political and economic issues. In fact, as a country's economic interests grow in another country so will its interests to the political affairs of that country also grow and vice versa. Jeffrey Taffet explains for instance that the massive aid provided between the 1990s and the 2000s by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to countries such as Iraq, Afghanistan, Colombia, Israel and Egypt are infective.

It expresses rather the country's desire "to ensure that they remained devoted to peaceful relations with each other and to creating stability in the Middle East" (J. Taffet, 2007, p.1). The implementation of foreign aid has offered the possibility to influence negatively the political scene of a country. The results of the aid in these countries are quite controversial. Though, this economic support has importantly contributed to stabilize Israel and Colombia, the political turmoil dominating Afghanistan, Egypt and Iraq seems to prove the contrary.

Like in Afghanistan, Egypt and Iraq, the implementation of foreign aid policies in sub-Saharan Africa has been a disaster. The impact of foreign aid in the establishment of the nation-state in many African countries is quite determinant. Anyidoho's poetry offers a space to apprehend the negative role of Western financial aid and technological assistance in the African political scene. Western foreign aid agencies and financial institutions are significantly accountable for the political turmoil prevailing in many African countries.

Though it may be unfair to point Western imperial forces as the main plotters of the political instabilities characterizing African nations, they are not free of duty. In fact, number of the political problems occurring in the continent are plotted from abroad. These hands are offered to work by the interfering space allowing the implementation of foreign aid policies. The impact of foreign aid in the decay of the political scene must be understood through the extent to which it offers Western plotters the opportunity to control and influence the political system. The desire to exploit the African countries economic potentials is what justifies the intrusion of Western countries in the African political scene.

Despite the fact that many reports from international agencies admit the weak contribution of Africa to the world's economy, many voices in developing countries publicly acknowledges the economic potentials ingrained in the continent. It is not surprising that many multinational companies dash in the continent in quest of raw materials. The desire to secure their investment leads these powerful firms to influence considerably the African political scene in various ways. This is made possible by the ways opening foreign aid to donor countries to violate the principle of non-interference in internal affairs regulating the relations between countries.

The grants represent thus a pretext for developed countries to control the political issues in the developing world. Representing the major provider of funds<sup>7</sup>, Western donors have therefore a

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<sup>7</sup> In many African countries, foreign financial support far exceeds the national income. Moss et al. argue that ODA (Overseas Development Assistance) "to sub-Saharan Africa was the equivalent of 11.7 percent of the continent's gross national income (GNI) in 2003 (excluding Nigeria and South Africa) (Easterly, 2007, pp.255-256). In Côte d'Ivoire for example the national debt

significant impact on the policy-makers of the countries receiving their grants. The donors become thus the rule-makers causing the decay of many political systems. They plot coups and conspiracies whenever the African leaders do not act in their favor.

The poem “Kingmaker” in the collection *A Harvest of Our Dreams* is quite evocative of the negative impact that Western imperial forces have on the African political scene. The poem sheds light on the extent to which foreign forces impact negatively the African political scene. The term “kingmakers” is a metaphor that Anyidoho uses to protest against Western imperial forces’ violation of the non-interference principle in the African political scene. Thus, denying the right to Africans to freely choose their leaders, the former colonial masters and the new imperial lords have become those who are in charge of deciding which leader should or should not rule.

This is particularly true in that the subsequent coups that took place in francophone Africa between 2018 and 2022 have been differently appreciated by France. While some military regimes have been fiercely condemned by the former colonial master, the Chadian leader Idriss Deby seems to benefit from her approval. This foreign interference in the African political scene has made of the violation of democratic principles in Africa something that is logic. The interference of these neo-colonial forces on the African political scene is such that they have somehow become in the poet’s words the “kingmakers”. The persona tells thus the sad story to which he has been an eyewitness in his country. He depicts the precarious condition that has allowed the imperial forces to make “destoolment logic”. He notes thus his helplessness before the situation as he cannot but only sit:

and watch the Kingmakers  
making destoolment logic  
against the stool they made  
only a while ago. (K. Anyidoho, 1993, p.53)

The scene portraying the persona here illustrates explicitly the kind of impact exterior forces have in the African political affairs. As expressed through these lines, the entire poem provides evidences that prove that Western hegemonic forces are the decision-makers in the African political scene. What strikes the Ghanaian poet here is the ease and the rapidity of the occurrence of coups allowing invisible hands in his country. Though the poet decides not to name the plotters of these coups, he gives nonetheless some indices that point out Western imperial forces and especially the English former colonial master. In fact, the situation in Ghana

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represents something like twenty-one thousand billion francs while the country’s budget for the same year is nine thousand billion of francs.

was so that Nkrumah's open rejection of Britain's neo-colonial policies resulted to a coup that sent him into exile. Thus, from Nkrumah's destoolment in 1966, the country noticed an unprecedented outburst of violence that resulted from subsequent coups and counter coups. In fact, as soon as a leader was proven untrustworthy and unable to preserve the interests of the former colonial master, he was automatically dethroned to the detriment of a more receptive one. The process is renewed till the most trustworthy leader is obtained. Western imperial forces do this most of the time by demonizing the untrustworthy leaders. The reintroduction of the poem "Kingmaker" in the collection *Earthchild* (1985) offers Anyidoho an opportunity to give further reflection to this thematic concern. Throughout the poem, the Ghanaian poet orders his people that they must:

Go crawl naked all through the Castle walls  
into splendour halls of QueenMother's naked dreams  
Not to rape we swear. Not to rape  
but to tickle and cuddle our infant prince  
sowing compassion's seeds within his Soul  
before before somebody offers him  
the tiger's skill the eagle's pride  
Give him honeycombs and spiced cornmeal  
before before somebody trains his taste  
into a lust for candies steamed in blood (K. Anyidoho, 1985, pp. 13-14).

The poet uses here irony to protest against the manipulation of African leaders by foreigners. Anyidoho is especially concerned with the unfamiliarity characterizing the African leader imposed by the kingmaker. He tells him thus "not to rape" the African people's freedom. Though the poet seems to be concerned here with the situation in his native Ghana, the scope the issue raising his concern can be extended to the whole African continent and the developing world as well. The persona's words portray a prince that is not yet accustomed to his people's environment and who seems not to know what his people are expecting from him. By asking to sow "compassion's seeds within his soul", the poet presents implicitly the brutality characterizing the prince and as well as his lack of care for his people. This is meant thus to prevent him from the influence of outsiders. Anyidoho seems to admit here that the intrusion of Western invisible hands in the African political scene has impacted negatively African leaders. What results from this immixing is that African political leaders are compelled to seek to please Western kingmakers' interests rather than being preoccupied by their people's rightful concerns.

Foreign aid becomes thus just a pretext to intervene into the African political affairs. It is used as a powerful weapon to convey foreign policies. Providing economic support and technological assistance to African countries authorizes indeed Western donors to influence

both their local and international political issues. Jaffet points the United States as a good example illustrating this phenomenon. He argues indeed that the country “assumed that foreign leaders who received aid would be willing to support the United States in the international arena. (J. Taffet, 2006, p.3). Far from a grant given for free, foreign aid is nothing but a strategy to control political issues. By providing their support to vulnerable countries such as African countries, Western imperial forces are assured to impact their politics both locally and internationally.

Anyidoho gives clues in his poetry that prove the failure of foreign aid in African countries. The aid openly violates the non-interference principle underlying the international relations between countries. The poet argues that the aids are unable to contribute efficiently and effectively to the economic growth of African countries for they are unfair in every regards. In fact, foreign aid authorizes the donor country to immix in the economic and political issues of the country benefiting from it. This is particularly true for African nations for the implementation of foreign aid policies since the 1990s has set both their economies and politics under foreign control. This is obviously a situation that prevent these countries from any economic growth. The blatant failure noticed by more than forty years of foreign aid policies demands undoubtedly a redefinition.

### **3. Redefining Foreign Aid**

The failure of foreign aid programs in Africa seems undeniable. Aiming to contribute to the economic growth of many African countries and other developing countries, foreign aid failed to bear the expected fruits. The economic conditions of the developing countries benefiting from aid programs have even worsened. There is therefore a growing demand among scholars in the continent and even abroad to question the effectiveness of these financial supports. Anyidoho uses therefore his poetry as a space not only to protest against the ineffectiveness of the aid but also make relevant proposals to stimulate the economic growth of African countries. Going through his poetry allows to apprehend how the poet refers to the concept of *différance* to convey his thoughts about foreign aid. Exploiting the Ghanaian poet’s poetic imagination through this conceptual lens allows to understand how the poet’s demand for the redefinition of foreign aid echoes significantly in the African political scene. In fact, the reader’s awareness that the meaning of any word is understood through a continuous process of differing and that to understand the definition of one word we rely on the meanings of other words that define it, allows him to apprehend the message hidden in Anyidoho’s poetic message.

What the poet seems to advocate through this protest is a redefinition of foreign aid to make it meaningful for the development of African countries. Anyidoho's proposes indeed a reinvention of foreign aid by reforming the aid policies. By denouncing the causes of the failure, the poet suggests implicitly a reform. This reform consists to avoid the practices infringing the aid to work and to adopt new strategies. Anyidoho views in fact developed countries pretended economic aid to developing countries and especially towards African countries to be totally unfair.

In the poem "Long Distance Runner" for example, this modern Ewe poet denounces the lack of fairness characterizing the cooperation between developed and developing countries. The presence of developed countries in African countries is far to be motivated by a philanthropic interest. It is rather motivated by a desire to exploit these countries' economic assets. The persona expresses his awareness on the lack of fairness defining the economic cooperation between Western and African countries. Speaking thus from the communal voice of the entire African people, he warns the African leaders waiting for Westerners to help their country. He asserts:

We know there is an agony in waiting for the long distance  
runner  
who breaks the finisher's line for the judges to declare he  
jumped the starter's gun stepped upon some other  
runner's toes threw him off balance and off the race  
And what is race, Cousin, without the rules  
without other runners? (K. Anyidoho, p.43)

The metaphor that the poet uses here to denounce the lack of equity underlying the relations between Western and African countries is quite determinant. The poet situates Western and African countries in the context of a race for development. Therefore, the poet views this competition to be quite unfair for one group. In fact, while they are supposed to compete, the other group seems to cheat for it has already broken "the finisher's line". The ineffectiveness of foreign aid according to the poet rests upon the fact that it is unfair as the development of African countries is concerned. It is therefore a waste of time for these countries to rely on foreign aid for their development. He warns African leaders indeed that it is agonizing to wait for "the long distance runner". This is due to the fact that the type of support they are receiving from foreigner countries contributes to significantly infringe any development perspective. The last line is particularly meaningful in that the poet questions the rules underlying this pretended economic support.

In fact, the service of the debt is a situation that conditions the underdevelopment of African countries for the disproportionate rate of interest characterizing them. Anyidoho suggests therefore to divorce from these alien practices. He views foreign aid in its present state as a phenomenon causing Africa's underdevelopment. In the poem "Hero and Thief", Anyidoho gives clues of the negative impact of foreign aid on Africa's development and the need to reform these policies. He explains for example that African leaders' deep confidence upon foreign aid to solve every economic problem is a real infringement to their countries' economic blossoming. The news brought by Fui and Enyo, the two protagonists in the poem, are quite inglorious. They reveal that:

a nervous government sits on our bankrupt stool  
wearing a gown of fantasy and hope  
telling tales of foreign aid and godmothers  
at Christmas time ... (K. Anyidoho, 1985, p.14)

The poem depicts a situation that is quite familiar to many African countries. The persona tells a story of a government that is expecting a foreign aid dotation to be able to respect his engagement before the people. The poet's portrayal of the begging government is evocative of the fragile economic situations of African countries that force them to borrow from Western financial institutions. In fact, the bankrupt stool upon which the government is sitting is what causes it to be nervous. The unstable political situations prevailing in many African countries do not allow them to set up good sophisticated economic systems. Leaders are constantly obliged to take loans in order to satisfy their people's needs.

This situation is a condition that allows the exploitation of Africa's economic assets. In fact, the huge dependence of African countries upon Western financial institutions, as the persona agrees, is a situation allowing "the thieving hand" to reap "much more / than farm owner" (K. Anyidoho, p.15). The rhetoric question ending the poem is therefore a warning the poet addresses to African leaders about the misappropriation of his people economic resources by Western imperial forces. He asks:

Is it enough is it enough to dream the Moon and Stars  
When this Earth we own we can't possess? (K. Anyidoho, 1985, p15)

The poet connects here the inability of his people to possess their own "Earth" to the fact that they have dreamed "the Moon and Stars" for long. This metaphor explicitly expresses Anyidoho's desire to provide a genuine economic freedom to his people. To reach such a goal, Anyidoho recommends to African leaders to adopt an economic model rooted in their local assets. He wants thus African countries to stop depending exclusively on foreign aid for their

development. In fact, this huge dependence upon foreign aid agencies and financial institutions opens the way to the misappropriation of the continent's economic potentials. Anyidoho proves therefore that in its present state foreign cannot remove African countries from the yoke of poverty. This requires to make a serious reform so that to enable African countries to overcome underdevelopment.

The heavily indebted poor countries<sup>8</sup> program initiated by Western financial institutions in favour of developing countries proves undeniably the failure of foreign aid. A reform of the economic systems of African countries is therefore necessary for their development. Calderisi rightly remarks that all over the world "successful countries are those that have chosen the right policies for their own reasons and seen foreign aid as a complement to their own efforts rather than as a bribe for undertaking difficult reforms (2006, p.7). In Anyidoho's view, the development of African countries must first rest upon their economic assets rather than borrowed money from abroad. A profound reform is therefore necessary to challenge effectively the endemic development problems facing Africans. Though Anyidoho advocates sometimes a total rupture with foreign aid policies, he also sometimes prioritizes technical assistance and the financing of developing project.

### **Conclusion**

The analysis of the selected poems from the collections *A Harvest of Our Dreams* and *Earthchild*, confirm the crucial role of Western imperial forces on the precarious economic conditions prevailing in Africa. Anyidoho has especially pointed out throughout the poems the negative role of the pretended foreign aid meant to stimulate the continent's economic relief. He does it by deconstructing the traditional myth according to which foreign aids stand as the salvation door for independent African countries. Thus, he has proven that the implementation of foreign aid policies is retarding the African countries rather than helping them to overcome underdevelopment.

The failure of these financial supports, as the poet views, is accountable to the fact they are unfair as the development of African countries is concerned. The many years of implementation of foreign aid policies have resulted into a heavy indebtedness. Therefore, as he protests against the ineffectiveness of foreign aid for the economic growth of African countries, Anyidoho also raises the necessity to reinvent it.

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<sup>8</sup> This is a program launched in 1996. It concerns a group of 39 countries with high level of poverty and debt eligible for special assistance from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The major recommendations of the present study include the need for African governments to prioritise endogenous development strategies. It will consist in other words to invest in key sectors such as local industries and entrepreneurship to establish an economy that produces added value. Another fundamental recommendation that emerges from the analysis concerns the urgency to mobilise and manage domestic resources instead of privileging external assistance. This can be achieved through a well-trained human resource, a wise exploitation of natural resources and technological innovation. Finally, if they should refer to foreign aid, decision makers must assure that their use and implementation align with the national development priorities to avoid any misuse.

The poet's criticism of the negative impact of foreign aids seems to echo favourably among decision-makers in the continent. In fact, recently, Ghana's current president Nana Akufo-Addo has openly expressed his desire to build his country "beyond the aid"<sup>9</sup>. This proves undeniably the positive role that literature can have in a country's economic growth.

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<sup>9</sup> The president reasserted in his address at the 76th session of the United Nations' General Assembly, on Wednesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021 the desire to sop with foreign aid policies. Nana Akufo Addo admits that these aids cannot participate to the development of African countries "because long and bitter experiences have taught us that, no matter how generous the charity, we would remain poor". <https://ghanahighcommissionuk.com>.

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