

School for International Training

Ghana: African Arts and Culture

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China Plates: A Dance Expression of Spiritual Healing

From the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade

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ABSTRACT

My project is a dance that provides a physical metaphor of the separation of body from soul and spirit that must occur when we perform actions hurtful to others. Of major importance to me was that the main character in the dance would be either one person functioning as many characters or many actors presenting one body. This one to many, rather than one-on-one relationship between actors and character is integral to the drama. The audience is challenged to see the magnitude and weight of human relationships if people are not individuals whom we can dismiss but rather an embodiment of many or vital parts of a whole.

This paper describes characters I found in my research of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade and was inspired by my questions regarding the trade. I have learned, through my own observations of others, through what children know and don't know, and through stories told by elders, that the questions exist because slave trade was a taboo not to be mentioned. Thus the dance drama visually states what we cannot verbally discuss. Since visiting Cape Coast Castle, the museum display of china plates that the Europeans traded for enslaved Africans haunts me. This memory titles the piece.

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TABLE OF CAPE COAST AND ELMINA VISITOR STATISTICS

Cape Coast Castle Visitors on Saturday, November 15, 1997 12 Noon-5:00pm

1 Church group, 48 16

1 youth Scout group wearing green berets @ 9 teens

1 school group, JSS age, wearing white uniforms; @ 90 students

several families

Ghanaian couples

One single Arab man, thirtyish

Single British young men, 3 of them

2 Spanish ladies, fortyish

2 Jamaican/Caribbean families

1 African-American middle-aged couple

1 interracial couple; male of African decent, European woman

Elmina Castle Visitors on Sunday, November 16, 1997 8:30 am-1. 45 pm

4 Frenchmen, 1 woman, 1 interpreter

1 European couple speaking what I think was Dutch

1 Jamaican couple who did indeed refuse to pay

Group of Ghanaians just on an outing for the day

French and Spanish families, 2 with a few children

European (Italian looking) fortyish man with video recorder

2 Black men, country unknown

1 British couple

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem: There is something that Tiffany Ulanda Trent fundamentally does not understand, and I will describe it in a scenario: If I cut myself, I hurt and bleed. I do not cut myself because I know this. Therefore, in recognizing another human, I do not cut them for the same reason. Being similarly human, I know exactly the pain that it will create. Literally, I can feel it. Suppose that I cut someone at a point in time, and for years do not know that I am responsible. When I learn of their bleeding to death I cannot discuss my role in the death. In fact, to escape the pain of it, I may so successfully convince myself that I do not recognize such an act as cutting of flesh that I cannot now recognize when a third party is cutting me. This metaphor is analogous to African diasporic discussion of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade.

Justification for Study: The number of government coups show the corruption in West African countries. At the same time the interactions of Ghanaian leaders with the World Bank and other international and European organizations show that money is being spent to purposely "under-develop" African countries. That this political and economic abuse exists shows that government and policy do not ease the violence that people suffer. Thus we need to use a more relevant and effective way of creating awareness, healing, and change. My own advisor has the best justification for dance study that I have read.

"....to us [Africans] life, with its rhythms and cycles is Dance. The Dance is life expressed in dramatic terms. The most important events in the community have special dances to enhance their meaning and significance. To us the Dance is a language, a mode of expression, which expressed itself to the mind, through the heart, using related, relevant, and significant movements which have their basic counterparts in our everyday activities, to express special and real life experiences in rhythmic sequences to musical and poetic stimuli. For a deeper insight into our way of life-our labours, material culture, aspirations, history, social and economic conditions, religious beliefs and disbeliefs, moments of festivity and sadness-in short, our life and soul, and the realities perceived,

conceived or felt, that make us the people that we have been and are at present, are revealed to the serious seeker in our dance.

The dancer is an okyeame-a spokesman-with the gift of turning the most prosaic of utterances into poetic eloquence. The dancer is a spiritual medium, sensitive and receptive to the impressions, thoughts, and feelings around him, and capable of re-expressing them on an elevated plane to the people surrounding him." (Opoku, 1965)

Previous Research offers us mostly the American and European sides of the story.

Though *Roots* and *Chesapeake* were both invaluable in my study and have inspired my work, I am still troubled that foreigners tell the African's stories. Most of it does what the first panel in the museum display at Cape Coast Castle says: "This exhibition places the forts and castles within broad, economic, political, and historical contexts and includes the legacy of the slave trade, clearly one of the more tragic chapters in the history of Africa and the Americas." My approach is to do exactly the opposite of the above quote: to find the specific spiritual context and look for healing rather than tragedy.

Aims of the study

A major aim of my study is to express in movement what we cannot say in words. We have physical and life circumstances as evidence of past events, but we do not have recorded rationale for their occurrence. The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade is referred to as "That thing which we don't mention its name: am mo din" is the Akan translation. My goal is to use art to spiritually challenge the political and to spiritually analyze that which the political cannot explain.

METHODOLOGY:

My methodology included a series of research techniques such as informal interviews, participant observation, non-participant observation, some library research, and other techniques. I traveled to three major locations for my research. To record the data I used my own note-taking and a handheld mini-cassette recorder to speak my notes. I recorded some information in tables and notes; some in journal entries, some in poetry, and some in song. Still other data was organized into pictures, since I am a director and I see and think often in images. Some of those images are recorded into blocking sheets in the Appendix at the end of this paper. To collect data I spent one week in the village of Onwe outside of Ejisu near Kumasi. There I taught English at God's Power International School in the mornings, and spent the afternoons and evenings visiting elders and community leaders. From Onwe I went to the towns of Elmina and Cape Coast to visit the old trading castles. I spent six hours at Cape Coast Castle on the first day and five hours at Elmina Castle on the next. This time was spent interviewing other visitors, reading the comment books signed by guests, informally interviewing tour guides and security guards, and recording my own statistics of types of visitors and how they spent their time during their castle visit. I spent one hour next door to Cape Coast Castle listening to the observations of a particularly vocal security guard from Cape Coast. At both castles I took out my recording device to record my own ideas and feelings as they occurred, and to hear what signs of life on the outside that an ancestor within the dungeons might have heard from below. I gathered information brochures from the castles; took pictures of signs that amused or pained me, and took note of the contents of their museums and gift shops.

After my time in Cape Coast and Elmina, I returned to Accra. I thought that the ten days had allowed me to "meet" characters, which I could use to create a dance theater piece about the spiritual damage done by denial or ignorance of the slave trade, and how that damage pains Africa today. I intended to spend the time in Accra studying dance and writing my piece. A difficulty in my data collection was when to collect information for content of the piece and when to collect dance skill.

I did have some systematic tasks that aided in data collection. I watched tapes of interviews of African Americans and Ghanaians visiting Cape Coast Castle at a television studio at the Trade Fair Center. There were books given to me by my advisor, books I selected myself, and performance events to attend so that I could see the great potential of speaking through the collaborative efforts of drums, dance, song, and actor-dancers. It was at an Agorofie performance in Elmina that I watched and learned from the artistry of the choreography that four bodies can say much more than one. I enjoyed the transfer of energy from person to person, and at that moment considered restructuring my vision to include more than one dancer. I found articles, which catalogued the vocabulary of sign language in the adowa dance of the Akan (see Appendix A) and the relationship of that vocabulary to other dances. I included information from lectures by Ms. Patience Kwakwa and Mr. Manwere Opoku; dance class demonstrations by Oh! Nii Sowah and Mr. Martin Owusu, attended sessions of Ms. Kwakwa's regularly scheduled intro to African dance classes, and took private dance lessons first with Ms. Kwakwa and six other students, and then continued with a series of lessons on my own with Sister Faustina of the Ghana Dance Ensemble.

Another creative method I tried was the use of metaphors and proverbs to illustrate my ideas. I expected this technique to support Ghanaian oral tradition, because we have so often been told that Ghanaians find their ways to say what they mean indirectly. A series of Akan and Biblical morals, metaphors, and proverbs are in the Appendix. Additionally, there are images and pictures in the Appendix that would support the metaphoric scenarios in staged performance. To make the message accessible, I sought common statements and stories that would efficiently clarify my goals.

I eventually realized that my message goals in this performance piece are not achieved by the amount of dance that Tiffany can learn in one month nor by the volume of research that I can complete in one month, but rather by the number of communities and depth of them that I can presume to represent in one month's time. Beyond the reading and understanding of the history and the learning of the dance, I also need to learn what my target audience needs to hear and can digest. It is the balancing of these three arenas that I would have liked to manage more efficiently. What I was unwilling to admit is that I cannot learn about a community's needs in so short a time, and I was unwilling to limit my target audience to Americans, African-Americans, or Africans alone. Further, because of my main focus, which is that spiritual healing is required for amending human injustice, establishing the basis for a message that for me is divinely inspired is also troublesome. How do I spend research time documenting a message that specifically comes from what I believe to be God in myself, and as an artist confine that message to structure and form?

After several script drafts I found that I was designing fairly violent and angry pieces for the stage. I knew that I wanted myself and my audience to feel purged, cleansed, reborn, newly alive after the theatrical experience of my work. My method in trying to think for a wider community of humans was to use the beatitudes from Matthew 5:3-10 in order to examine basic ideals of human behavior that represent universals good for all. I want to give my audience a hunger for beauty; a thirst for righteousness. In the end, I removed the specific characters that I had collected and focused on a few of the specific stage movements I knew that I wanted. I had a first rehearsal on Saturday, December 5, with three of the five dancers I invited, and without drummers. I told the actor-dancers the groupings and use of the stage that I wanted, and gave them the "am mo din" phrase that I wanted to use in song. In five minutes the dancers composed a beautiful call and response. The dance script will develop until we perform it, but I will include a script in the Appendix and will analyze the choreography in the body of the paper.

Next time I attempt such a project I might consider several factors. The first would be my own skills. I am a directing student familiar with the new play development workshop process. I am not a playwright, dancer, or choreographer. I am not a scholar well versed in the body of academic study regarding the slave trade, nor am I a Ghanaian challenged by the accusations of bitter African-Americans. Maybe I should have targeted my performers earlier on and worked through my own ideas about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade by using them in an improvisational theater development workshop. In that manner I would still have gathered information from everyday people, which was one of my goals; learned the dances from my actor-dancers themselves; and been developing the

script with more heads and consultation, in accordance with the old Akan proverb. When I considered this type of process at the beginning of the project I thought it was a very Western avant-garde method of performance, and that I can do this kind of thing at home. What I needed to be told was that the Ghanaians and their perspectives are exactly the thing that I cannot get at home. I must admit that some of my desire to return to the village was exactly that I liked it and felt at home there. Part of my challenge with the performance piece I wanted to write is the pain that African-Americans describe when they do not feel at home in Africa. I had thought that my time in Onwe would help me to put into dance, if not words, what a blessing that homecoming experience would be, and was in this way a relevant and productive use of time. I also wanted to add everyday movement into the performance, and in the village there are no dance schools or lessons but simply learning through experience. Productive learning it was, but not necessarily efficient for the rehearsal of a project. In short, I feel that I spent more time on research than on the creative process, which is what I love most and would result in a clearer performance.

BODY OF PAPER

Collecting Information

My first week of the independent study period was spent in the Village of Onwe near Ejisu outside of Kumasi. We had spent one week there as a group in early October. I returned to the village for two main reasons. The first was that a small girl, Harriet Abena, recited a poem on our first night in the village. The poem was called "Slave Trade." The line I remember most from her six-year-old voice is "All my noble men have been taken away." As I listened to the child tears filled my eyes. I wondered if she knew anything about the magnitude of what she was saying. This was my first inspiration towards narrowing whatever theater or dance project I knew I wanted to construct. The second inspiration for me also happened in the village, and for that I also returned. This was the blessing of Okese's mother-in-law. During my village stay, a young girl of about thirteen years came to visit me with a bag of bananas. They were the small ones that I fell in love with in India this past summer that I've never had in America. Her name was Rose, and she was the Town Committee Chairman's daughter. She said that her grandmother had sent them for me. The next day, Okese her father came to see me. He brought Rose; another bag of bananas, a large pottery jug as a present for my mother, and a hand carved Oware game with the seed marbles as a present

for my father. For me, in addition to the bananas, he brought a fertility doll. He said that he and his mother wanted to send the message to my family in America that they recognized their daughter coming home, and that we are one people. On my final evening in the village, the old lady graced me with more bananas. Rose came to take me home with her to meet Nana, and she was sorry that I hadn't been available earlier in the day to observe her making the palm oil.

The small girl and the old lady were the first beings in Ghana to address my similarity to them. From them arose a question: how do Ghanaians think of the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade? In America we are constantly reminded of the enslavement of Africans, and still suffer greatly from beliefs of human inequality. I read everything I could about the belief that I couldn't do well in school as soon as I knew that people thought that way. But that was all on the other side of the ocean. I wanted to know how people on the Eastern side of the Atlantic had been affected. I knew from lectures and three weeks in Kumasi that being American seemed to mean that I had nothing to do with Africa. But in Onwe--in the village where modern government and education are trying to create progress, people were quick to recognize my origins. So I returned to Onwe to collect stories and images for a dance theater piece. I was additionally pleased that the my inspirations came from a six year old girl and an elderly woman. We three share femininity in common; we are divergent in age. I was sure that apiece about an activity that spanned nearly five hundred years needed perspectives from old to young. Harriet and Nana offered voices to characters I knew existed but had never heard speak.

What I found in the village when I returned was that there was no way to formally approach my task. Harriet, who spoke beautiful English, could hardly understand my

speech at all. The old lady spoke no English, so we could communicate little. I thought the best way to learn about what children know was to go to school with them. I offered to teach something or to aid another teacher at God's Power International School. Of the several schools in the area of Onwe-Abenase-Kwaso, I chose this school because it already had a focus on theater and self presentation. All of the children knew some hundred and thirteen poems from a book that Headmaster John Quansah had put together. He was clearly using performance to teach the children spiritual and health and academic matters, as well as cultural differences around the world by collecting poems from different countries. Still, the typed poetry book included "I want to be a Queen Mother" and "Ghana: Such a Rich Country." The children and the school seemed to have a pride that I wanted to explore.

My data collection idea was to interview the students in small groups by asking them to explain some of the poems, which they could recite. I tried this after three days of teaching each level but the KG one and two for 40 minutes. I felt the students knew and were comfortable with me. Their English seemed quite good when they spoke, but understanding my speech was difficult. The headmaster tried to help me the first day, but I quickly saw that he wanted much more formality and input than I wanted to have in my discussion with the children. He first had me sit opposite and above them in a way that was too intimidating, so I requested that I sit with them on the floor in a circle. Mr. Quansah insisted that mats be brought. Then, while he was helpful in rephrasing some of my questions into Twi, he also inserted his own opinions with which the children would agree before they got time to think for themselves.

For example, in discussing Abigail's "Ghana: Such a Rich Country" poem, we named all the riches that Ghana had. Abigail herself said that Ghana was a rich country because it is beautiful. Mr. Quansah quickly corrected the six year old and said, "Oh, but America is more beautiful than Ghana," as if it were an obvious fact that the child should have known. This was exactly the kind of input I did not want the children to have. Further, as he tried to help me explain how some Americans are Black and are really from Africa, he told the children how Ghana lost out in the slave trade business. Quoting Harriet's poem, Mr. Quansah said that the best and most noble amongst us were taken away and were over there advancing society for the white people, instead of doing anything for Ghana. He told the children that Black Americans were big and strong and smart, not like Ghanaians. He said over there we excel at so many things, sports being a major one. At this the KG 2 teacher said, "Especially basketball. Black Americans are really good at that. " When we finally did get back to the poems, I found that the children usually hadn't thought about the words that they recited. They certainly weren't giving their interpretations of the pieces. I speculate that kind of reticence is normal in children of any culture. Answering my questions didn't grab their attention, and their teachers and headmaster knew more than they did anyway.

So I decided that the next day I would try a whole different format. I decided to let the children interview me. In this way I would learn what they cared and thought about, and they would be eager to have their own questions answered. I had three sessions on this fourth day in the village with groups of nine, ten and twelve students each. Here was the bulk of my learning in the village. The children asked questions too many to catalog here, but I learned some valuable information from them regarding

impressions of each other as Africans in the diaspora. In each group no more than two children knew about the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. A few children in each group did not even know that there were Black Americans at all. While they were mostly interested in what children do in America, they wanted to know about money and expenses, equipment in American schools, and all had reasons for wanting to visit America. The biggest thing that I learned which was relevant to my topic relates also to my argument that people's stories are what they are for a reason. If adults in Ghana have not been telling their own children that they have brothers and sisters of African descent across the water, and are not telling their own children how those brothers and sisters got over there, then the old ones are certainly not going to tell me about it.

Reading Isichei's *History of West Africa* presents a volume of disagreements about the slave trade. Historians can so debate the benefits or negative effects of slavery on population, on industrial growth, on international interaction, on technological advances to such degrees that people's lives necessarily become more weighty than facts so easily manipulated. The lives become the only truths upon which we can rely, if only the elders share them.

The elders in the village of Onwe who spoke with me were the Queen Mother Nana Ampobeng, whose given name is Abenaa Deewaa, and her sister Ataa Serwaa. The two women had little to say about the trade specifically, because it did not touch them or their community. No one was taken when they were small. Even that was valuable to know. Kofi, the education director at Cape Coast Castle, told us in a workshop in which we wanted more information in the Castle museums that not all visitors would read panels for two hours or even one hour. "Not everyone is this interested" he told us in

Cape Coast on 15 October 1997. We all strongly disagreed. But I must retract my dissent. My personal statistics taken at the Cape Coast-Elmina Castles on 15 and 16 November show that castle visitors spend literally twelve to sixteen minutes reading museum displays. Knowing the level of interest in the slave trade and whether Ghanaians thought it a major factor in the condition of the country today was specifically relevant to images and character needs in the piece that I wanted to create. So hearing that we don't discuss or are not interested in the plight is fuel for the fire I build.

Learning to Dance

I began dance classes in Ghana with University of Ghana Dance Professor Patience Kwakwa and her assistant Marion. Seven of the SIT students attended six one hour classes with her over two weeks. She taught us three traditional dances: kpanlogo, kpatcha, and gahu. I do believe that I can distinguish the bells for each of these dances when I hear them played. Ms. Kwakwa invited me to attend her Monday and Thursday Intro to African Dance class as support during the independent study period, and I wouldn't have to pay for that class. I did attend for two weeks, but found that the class was doing two of the same dances. There was a third, but because I watched roughly 80 students perform it four at a time on an assessment day, I learned that one quickly as well. I didn't attend the class for the second two weeks. This is an example of when I chose to use time to collect inspiration and progress in my specific piece rather than to collect dance proficiency when I hadn't determined what my dance was supposed to mean. Further, in a class of eighty students many of whom were Americans even less

familiar with dance than I was, I wasn't getting specific attention to correcting my form because comparatively I was doing pretty well to remember the steps in order.

Professor Opoku, my advisor and the technical director for the Ghana Dance Ensemble has a class with the Ensemble that I was able to attend. This was a blessing because the national dance company is of course professional, and committed to the traditional dance forms. The first time that I attended, he requested that the company perform a few dances that might show me the characters and styles available within the Ghanaian dance. "Lamentations" was a particularly inspiring piece, and was one of the first to show me slower body movement that was supported even by the speed of the drums. Professor Opoku also introduced me to Faustina, who became my individual dance tutor for the three weeks I had left to continue the project. We danced for two hours a day about five days a week, skipping Sunday and whatever day during the week I felt too obsessed with writing a storyline to be able to focus on dance.

Selective Storytelling: Finding the Beautiful Thing

Selecting the story for the dance was the most challenging aspect of the process. I knew little about choreography before attempting this project. I viewed dance expression as an art in which there doesn't need to be a complete story from beginning to end, but that could just be feelings. In fact, I chose dance as a form specifically because I felt there were no clear or linear stories to tell regarding the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. I gathered the research in the village and in Cape Coast-Elmina so that human lives could tell us that which history cannot. People's stories are their stories for a reason even if they made them up. In visiting Onwe and the castle dungeons, my story is that there is no

one **real** story. There are only the thoughts and experiences of millions of individuals who in many different ways and for many different reasons lost themselves, their families, and their countries. With that knowledge, I wanted to explore through dance how we as an African diaspora and indeed as a world could regain some of those losses.

From the first lectures in Kumasi through group discussions in Onwe and Tamale I have argued that as a world we have not developed a language to discuss Africa and Africans as entities that know what they want and will devise methods to achieve desires. Because of my distaste for the passive, victimized, helpless role accorded to Africa in most discussion, I wanted to create a piece with only Africans as actors. No European characters belonged in the piece. I have been troubled with a desire to know where African power of action lay. I lay in my bed in the village one night, after having been presented with special gifts by the town council and after having eaten two breakfasts and two dinners, and from the welcoming and generous treatment of strangers, I realized that I did know how the slave trade began.

Professor Opoku insisted that I follow through my project with a beginning, middle, and end. In that structure I would be forced to end the piece with solutions or recommendations for healing. A low point in the process of creating was when I realized that if for centuries we have healed neither the African continent nor the Euro American nations, I certainly wasn't going to fix the damage in a one month dance piece in a language and art form I didn't fully understand. About this time I realized the pain and anger that showed in the dance theater pieces I had written (see Appendix D). In the end, I created a dance piece without words and without naming of any characters. I hope in the future to develop either a play with dialogue between the characters I met, or a series

of poetic monologues that will support the dance and movement without literally putting @ words into the actors mouths. Appendix C includes character sketches of seven people who have become important to me in Ghana and who have taught me about the human soul.

Designing Performance: Translation of Information into Movement

As a director I think mostly in pictures. I use images on stage to create meaning. I introduce the content vs. form debate not as something I have researched for the purposes of this project. But I do know that the content-form or "the medium is the message" debates exist, and I discussed them briefly with Professor Opoku near the end of the study period because I was having trouble hearing what I know of traditional Ghanaian music during the pictorials in my head. My vision of movement appeared too slow or conflicted with the style of image that I usually associated with the drums. Nana assured me that anything one wanted to express should be attainable in any art form.

While I believe that he can at eighty-four years see this potential of all art, I have not experienced enough to see clear translations. In recommendations for further study, or what I would do differently next time, I would try to listen to a lot more music than I did earlier on in the process.

My main job as director-writer-choreographer was to translate what I learned onto the stage. I struggled with the literal, the dance, and the abstract in terms of stage technique. As a director I look for literal stage pictures that, frozen in time or in a photograph, tell a story. In the abstract I look for movements that have a quality and

energy that create a mood or feeling. In the dance I mostly look for beauty and I was challenged to find other values and emotions with this piece.

As I thought of different characters, I knew that I could offer each one a different style of music. I have a lot of holy trinity images that I think belong in the piece, because Christianity played a great role in the vulnerability of Africans to the trade and currently plays a role in the denial and ignorance of that vulnerability. I am interested in keeping men and women separate from the beginning of the piece and coming together only at the end as a further representation of different spirits joining as a way of healing. As I consider the spirits in the pieces that I have written, those spirits belong partly to their bodies, but also to other spirits. Part of this metaphor means that the spirits of Africans in the diaspora also belong to each other.

I am in love with what the china plates offer on many levels. China is delicate and fragile, like the threads binding our spirits to ourselves. China also represents slavery today, considering the injustice to the women and children who make it. Indian mythology tells how a woman was challenged by gods to find her husband among them after they all took on his likeness because they were displeased with him and did not wish his happy marriage. She was able to select her husband because none of the gods' feet touched the ground, and her lover's feet did. This story is remembered in dance forms by, the gods dancing on a plate. In addition to the visual interest that it provides, the plate could be used as a travel device or vessel within the context of the play.

CONCLUSION

I conclude that the line between denial and ignorance is quite blurred. For further study I recommend that I clarify in the early stages what is Western and what is African, and what is simply theatrical process unlimited by oceans. I constrained my process by categorizing some ways of working as one or the other and thus acceptable or not so without regard to 1) whether I was right about that categorization and 2) whether it mattered in the face of efficiency.

There is a Bible verse that was on the wall of the church at Elmina Castle, Psalm 132:14 that I looked up in my own bible. The verse reads, "This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell, for I have desired it." It is a Psalm of David giving thanks for the place he has. When I listened to the tape recording of my own reactions to Elmina I heard my voice say, "I could stay here forever and not be finished. In fact, I think I am here forever and I'm thinking about David (the security guard at Cape Coast) telling me that I seemed homeless. That I don't know where my home is/ and that I can't argue with that." The weight of this alone—of the forever that it will take to know the cosmic, karmic, Creator's purpose at least assures me that the play I am trying to write about the healing we must do for ourselves can never come too early or too late. In this work in progress, then, much as I wish I had a beautiful finished piece to present, I simultaneously believe that I am on time learning the stories that people are spiritually strong enough to see, hear, and speak.

APPENDICES

In the one-month that I attempted to become a historian, playwright, choreographer, and dancer, many ideas for performance flooded my vision. I include in the appendices possibilities for performance that may not be reflected in the performance presented for SIT ISP purposes but will be a part of future development of China Plates. The project has had much more impact on me than I as an artist am experienced enough to present. The images on the following pages are intended to share the magnitude of exposure and inspiration granted me during the month, in spite of my inability to constructively channel so many pieces.

Appendix A: Symbols in Adowa Dance

Listed below are a selection from a longer list of symbols in adowa dance. They are taken from Ampofo-Duodu's "Symbolic Movements in Ghanaian Dances."

Hooked forefingers in front of the body say "I am in love with you" or "We are one."

The right forefinger pointed at the lower eyelid means "See what has happened to me?" or "Do you see what I see?" and/or "Do you feel what I feel?"

The lower arms rolled over each other followed by stretching the elbow joints to side middle means "I have broken the chord" or I have freed myself."

An accent stamping means "I will trample my enemies."

The back of the palms placed against the back of the waist means "I am breaking my back."

Both palms pressed against the stomach mean, "I am suffering from stomach pain;" physical or psychological.

The two palms against the back of the neck means "I am breaking my neck." "My load is heavy."

The right hand pushed up and down against the buttocks means "I regard you as a toilet roll."

Finger against lip means "I shall not talk."

To bare the shoulders (if you are wearing a piece of cloth) in the presence of a senior or a deity is a sign of profound reverence and respect.

To remove sandals off the feet and standing on them before an elder is also a sign of respect.

Appendix B: Choreographic and Staging Notes

Recommended Props and Costumes for a full drama

- Staff: a piece of wood to use as walking stick, rifle, cross, water buckets, ox harness
- Bucket, calabash bowl, or pot to balance on head. Can be used to carry things, used as a pot god or shrine, or for rhythm and drumming onstage.
- Strips of cloth to use for pulling people, pulling out their souls, and water
- Plates for trading and weighing, and dancing on like gods and goddesses whose feet cannot touch the ground
- Priest collars for spirits

Set Design Notes

A level of at least 1.5 feet should occupy the back third of the stage if performed in proscenium. In a round or three quarter space, the level should take a diagonal. The dance may be set in a graveyard

Sound

There should be different music for each character poem: for example, the Jamaican is a famous reggae musician and Philip Quaku gets an Ave Maria.

Appendix C: Character Sketches

GOVERNOR MACLEAN'S WIFE is rumored to have committed suicide because her husband had relations with so many female slaves. She and the Governor are buried side by side at Cape Coast Castle. Guards and guides at the castle, such as David Kodjo Fogah, enjoy pointing out the window from which she apparently jumped. In the text she will be constantly referred to as "MacLean's Wife" rather than by a name of her own, because it was this role that took her life. I am inclined to have her speak as a ghost on stage, because her death is the significant thing.

FEMALE SLAVE was introduced to me by two tour guides at Elmina Castle, the security guard at Cape Coast, and pieces of literature including "Save Elmina 1,2, and 3" booklets. She was selected by the Governor or an officer for pleasure. If she became pregnant from her relations, she was placed in a home with other mistresses near the castle. Sometimes the officer would marry her. I am interested in this woman whose illness from filth and stench in the dungeons might motivate her to attempt her own escape. Her monologue would include the only thing I could hear as I walked through the Female Dungeons: if I were with child the blood would not flow and then I would not have to sit here in the red pool.

MIXED [UP] CHILD, III is the product of FEMALE SLAVE and a Dutch officer. This child was brought back to the castle at the age of three for schooling. Meeting this

character in Elmina was my first awareness that there even were schools in the castles. Children were educated in the halls above the dungeons. The child character's journey makes him/her aware of the activity in the castle that produced such children as himself.

JAMAICAN: MUTA BALUKA was introduced to me first by David Fogah after a full day of research and observations at Cape Coast Castle. Had I doubted any of David's tales of Castle visitors, which I didn't, I certainly was convinced he spoke the truth the next day at Elmina Castle after literally meeting three specific types of visitors that he shared with me. JAMAICAN was by far the strongest character that toured with me at Elmina. He is comic relief in the play, mostly because he's NOT funny. His gravity and truth are so shocking and crude that we laugh, but he is right. He refuses to pay to enter the castle because his ancestors already paid, believes it is his right to smoke weed in the courtyard there, and cannot look a Ghanaian in the eye. On castle tours he makes all the Europeans uncomfortable. With permission, he may be called or at least based on Muta Baluka, a famous reggae musician who came to Cape Coast for Panafest 1994. Baluka visited the castle with his son and refused to pay the admission fee. This character could add a stylistic music influence in a developed piece.

EQUIANO'S MOTHER first spoke to me through Kwadwo Opoku-Agyomang's poem "Supplication." In his intro to the Cape Coast Castle collection of poems, he says that "Equiano's mother came home from the farm one evening to find her only daughter and youngest son stolen, never to be heard from again. We do not know her story. Nobody knows the story of her grief." (Opoku-Agyemang 6) In my play I would like this

character, along with Binta Kinte, (Haley) to debate with those who argue that the loss of Olaudah, his sister, and Kunta was a blessing because it relieved the overpopulation and poverty of West Africa.

PHILIP QUAKU AND HIS FATHER (played by the same actor) live in the fourth corridor of Cape Coast Castle. Dad is a chief who deals in slaves and gold. Son Philip was born and raised in the castle and was so loved by the British that they sent him to school in Europe. He became the first Ghanaian Anglican priest. When Philip returned to the Castle, he insisted that a church be built on the premises. He spent his years ministering to the enslaved peoples, attempting to save their souls before the journey that might take their lives and without him condemn their souls to hell. In a developed script, I would love to have the Female Slave and Philip Quaku in a confession scene.

Confronted by Muta Baluka about his role in "helping" the slave trade, Quaku's father might respond to the musician as I heard a castle guard reply to a young Black American: "If I have sold you why do you come here to me?" This chieftain's voice is the one that could speak as did Cudjo's village elders in Michener's Chesapeake. The elders, following African custom, do not make individual decisions. They believed some communal good would come from their actions.

Appendix D: Scenario Scripts

29 October ISP Story. This one is a one woman show. My interview with David Fogah at Cape Coast Castle offers one argument for a single actor piece (though supported by musicians and voices). David said that African Americans need to visit the castles on their own, meaning individually. Usually we come in groups and are rushed through the castle by tour guides (Fogah, 15 Nov 97). He thinks that a castle visit is a solo journey, which is still my own gut instinct about the piece.

One woman, me. I am bathing and dressing myself. I am at peace. I use the lake in front of me as a mirror. It shows that I am crooked (from the crooked basket story). I test a calabash of stuff that I was balancing upon my head. It is not crooked. I look in the water and see that I am crooked. To the rhythm of the drum, I test my reflection. I lean into the water until I fall or jump into the story and space. Dance of drowning.

I climb out of the water. I don't want the water to be there. I use a cloth to cover it up. Through dance I show that the cloth attacks me. I fight it and it strips me of my own spirit—a cloth pulled from the bundle on my back. I have tried to tie myself down but still must run; it pulls out as I run. Drums try to stop me from pulling and running but I continue. I pick up the cloth that is my spirit and try to put it back inside myself. It will not fit. I offer it to the gods: water, pot, sky. I finally sweep my spirit under the "rug;" the cloth that is the water. I pull off an end and give some pieces of my spirit away to the audience.

19 Nov 1997 ISP Attempt: The Scales of Justice

<u>Characters</u>	<u>Elements</u>
Maclean's Wife	
Female Slave	Scale
Jamaican	Scale
Mixed (Up) Child, III	Body
Equiano's Mother	Judge
Philip Quaku's Father	Self
Grandmother	

This play is a dance war between the body and the self. The characters have monologues/poems/short scenes. Between speech there is dance.

DANCE STORY

BODY and SELF are one. They function, dance, play in harmony and support each other. Three actor-dancers serve as "The Scales of Justice" and BODY and SELF-dance to show how they balance each other. At a specified point, an audience member will place a china plate on stage. BODY/SELF marvels at it; places it on one end of the scale.] From the audience, BODY/SELF gathers more and more European trading items till they balance BODY/SELF. Maybe SELF will clap hands to request "GOLD!" or "KETTLE!" BODY/SELF splits up when SELF must jump off scale to balance it. Scale becomes auction block plank with BODY left alone to walk off it and swim-dance across the water. Now SELF is alone with stuff on the scale. SELF cannot balance the items by

herself. She tries to 1) find BODY 2) enjoy items 3) Return items 4) Dance on plate 5) use audience to help balance scale. All efforts fail.

The final action is something like digging, or climbing a ladder, or BODY/SELF plunging together into the water, to say that through mutual action we might progress. The audience can help to clear the stage and scales of the useless traded items. Maybe we break the china plate.

27 Nov 1997 ISP scene. The Tower of Knowledge

Adam and Eve sleep in the paradise of Ghana's Elmina Castle. They play there. What they think is God tells them not to go into the tower of knowledge. If they open that door, they will surely die.

A snake, which moves onstage like a snake but dresses like a priest, is God's guard for the door. This is Philip Quaku.

A small child, biracial product of a Dutch officer and a Female Slave, at age 3 returns to the Castle for education. He cannot to into the tower either, however. This goes with the idea of being "just educated enough to control."

One day a Jamaican comes and fights with the guard. During the distraction the child leads Adam and Eve to the tower of knowledge. There they stumble upon two black figures who mirror them, except those two figures have on chains. The four mirror dance for a spell. The dance becomes a fight, violent. The tower figures slip out of their chains and Adam and Eve, still fighting, end up locking the chains upon themselves. Adam and Eve tire and pass out upon the floor.

The now free tower pair swims about freely. Tries to enjoy itself; spies the chained sleeping pair and wants to wake them. After a few attempts, Adam and Eve wake. The free ones try to remove their chains. Adam and Eve won't let them. They want to keep the chains on. The free ones get on their knees in front of Adam and Eve begging to be allowed to free them. Adam and Eve turn away hugging their chains. The free ones move into their sight. The free ones bring audience members to help beg. They even bring the biracial child.

Upon seeing the child Adam and Eve, from within their chains, blindfold themselves. They do not wish to see the child.

The child, with drums, dances an evil and cruel solo around Adam and Eve. The snake guard hears the noise and comes running. He drives away the child, pulls down the blindfolds. Adam and Eve see the guard and quickly powder themselves with white powder to cover their blackness. At this the snake-guard-priest laughs in their faces, so they blindfold themselves again and crouch in shame as he resumes the evil solo. The priest tires eventually and rests downstage.

The free pair return. They begin a song that is call and response, and await Adam and Eve to echo. The first two times, there is silence. The free pair must come and sit with Adam and Eve, taking their exact positions, raising them to their feet and supporting them in dance like the servant does a chief. When Adam and Eve respond in song, they remove first their chains, then their blindfolds.

The child has appeared upstage dragging two snake priests. He is wrapped in kente while they each hold scarves tied to the two ends of a wide stick that the child holds horizontally and pulls them, like an ox or a horse. The child climbs up to a higher level

and hoists the stick up across his back with his arms wrapped around it-like the water-girl in the fields and like Jesus on the cross; also like the scales of justice, with the scarves and priests hanging from each end.

As the child climbs each couple approaches one side tugging the cloths and prying off the priests. Finally the snake priests are thrown out of the tower into the rough ocean. The couples take the cloth ends and tug, the child leaning each way until they balance each other. They have climbed to the top of the tower; sit together and eat. Then the celebration: purify the powdered ones, then a harmonious dance. Maybe the child should wash them all off as a baptism. I like that.

04 December, 1997

A body lies onstage. Two actor-dancers stand over it, hitting or kicking the body. Two more actor-dancers stand behind them. Whatever action the first two do to the body is immediately done to them. From this we learn that we cannot do harm to anyone else because it actually harms ourselves.

We cannot pretend or afford to be ignorant of this effect or it will happen again and we won't see it coming. The two who were the chain reaction now dance around and past, even over the body. They pass with varied energies; must occur three times and there must be humor in the passing.

We have to marry ourselves and others: exchange vows of love and support and offer our selves completely to the ideal.

Tears of joy of peace of freedom bathe the dancers. We laugh until we cry that we are physically incapable of hurting anybody. If we try, we can't.

04 December 1997 China Plates

Characters: 2 BODIES, 2 SOULS, 2 DEVILS (1 male, 1 female of each)

Prologue: Tiffany dances what she learned from Faustina with everyone on stage. Leave still dancing.

T enters to start machine in center. F joins. O joins. S joins. E joins. A enters; circles as if he is part of machine; pulls T out and we exit.

Machine sputters and crumbles. 2 women, 2 men partner together at diagonals of the stage. They (Body & Soul) dance in harmony.

2 Devils enter to screw up the rhythm: use a jerky dance I learned in Ms. Kwakwa's class where we pull in a motion like tug of war. 3 cycles of pulling and then the bodies and souls injure themselves. 2 Devils take off.

The Bodies and Souls caress each other's pains; Bodies kneel to bathe; Souls stand behind and bathe also.

2 Devils see the harmony and hate it. They do Adowa accent stamping "I will trample my enemies." They go to get plates and put them in front of the Bodies.

The Bodies, on knees, stare into the plates. Smile. Pass hand over it. Turn it over. Run finger around the edge.

Devils put one hand over Bodies' eyes. The Group sings "Am mo din yenko" with spirits doing the See no -Hear no -Speak no evil.

When song ends, the souls hit the floor. The Bodies stand. The devils lie on their stomachs and watch. They may roll around as obstacles for the Bodies, rounding the

stage looking for their souls. They may use the 3 Adowa pain symbols: back, neck, stomach.

Bodies trip over souls, which wakes them. Souls keep them from falling, and rise. Souls shadow them in dance like guard supports chief. Make an Adinkra pattern for unity on the floor and then men and women meet center stage. Now they can dance together:

Bawa.

Bodies and Souls pull Devils into the group, which has begun the harmonious machine again.

Appendix E: Index of Relevant Proverbs We are one.

A stranger breaks no law.

The child can break the shell of the snail but not the shell of the tortoise.

And a little child shall lead them.

No one shows the child God.

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

If you eat your brother's chicken leg then your own chicken is walking on one foot.

(What I have done to you I have done to myself. This one is my favorite).

Crooked basket story.

The Beatitudes, Matthew 5:3-10

3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

6 Blessed are they, which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

10 Blessed are they, which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

APPENDIX F: POETRY AND SONGS

25 Nov 1997

*I litter on the roof of the castle and smoke weed in the courtyard because I can
(inspired by the Jamaican and the please do not litter signs)*

the rite of passage is from denial
into knowledge
do I have to be a snake
did God say you couldn't know
the evil or that
because you recognize the evil you
realize the power of choice
that what happens is only with
your permission
And if you gave your permission
you know you did
If you didn't give it
you were violated
If you were violated you were
vulnerable
Like it or not
You were vulnerable
You must admit it
If you don't how can you
Arm yourself?
My dream is to admit vulnerability
To know the violation and arm those
seeking
with knowledge so that we no longer
give our permission to be raped.

I want to ask Europe "which part
of No don't you understand?" ;
But then I think maybe Europe never got a no because

Europe never ASKED.

How should Ghana Africa say no when?

There is no question?

Song in Twi by Ephraim Amu; translated by A.M Opoku (Opoku, 1965)

This message needs telling

Who shall tell it?

I, yes, I,

Yes, no one but I.

This work needs doing

Who shall do it?

I, yes, I,

Yes, no one but I.

This life needs living

Who shall live it?

I, yes, I,

Yes, no one but I.

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