

DECLARATION

I declare that this Research Report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Masters of Arts (Dramatic Arts) in the University of the Witwatersrand Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before in any other university for degree purposes.

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INTRODUCTION

Dad: (*Looking at me in silence across the dining table as I had supper*) Mmm! Elikem, I have noticed some changes in you since you got back from South Africa.

Elikem: What kind of changes, Da?

Dad: Everything about you; the way you think, talk, and dress.

Elikem: A lot has been added to what I knew since I left Da.

Dad: Oh! I see. What kind of additions son?

To my Dad, it was very awkward to have a necklace made of cowries around my neck and not ascribe to the symbolic meaning behind them. Growing up in a Christian family, I was brought up with certain principles which clearly drew the line between what was and was not acceptable. Some of these principles clearly ascribed cowries to the world of occultism and witchcraft. Even though I did not give such a meaning to them, they were not to be encouraged and accepted in my father's house. The end result of this conversation was me succumbing to my Dad's plea to take them off. In building my defense on his request, I made him aware that my actions were due to artistic, personal statements emanating from the additions and experiences I have had since I left home in pursuit of further study abroad.

To explain these additions and changes my Dad was talking about, I created *Unshelved* which forms part of my research towards my Masters Degree in Dramatic Arts (MADA). This research report is divided into two components. The first component, which is equally weighted to the

second, entailed the creative part which led to the creation of my autobiographical performance *Unshelved*. *Unshelved* is a movement/dance/physical theatre performance which places the body at the center of investigation where identity, history and memory are stored, created and recreated over time in its interactions with society and the environment. With this point, I made the claim that an individual's body is an embodiment and a representation of mannerisms, stories, history, intellect and psyche. It is the site where identity is generated, created and recreated.

The second part of this research, which is geared towards the fulfillment of traditional scholastic obligation, is the report that documents the processes, challenges, hypotheses and findings from the performance. The equal relationship of practice to theory reflects the recognition of the significance of the artistic, creative process (Conquergood 2003). This research falls under the Practice as Research paradigm which recognizes creative art as research (Nelson 2006), where practice speaks to theory and theory speaks to practice.

Unshelved was created over a period of five months with four months spent in conceptualization and the last month spent working on the floor. It was performed in two Seasons: one without a director and the other having an outside eye. These choices were intentional as the research, based on the premise of 'physical intelligence' (Fatseas 2009), was aimed at making a piece of theatre about my diverse identities, seeking to prove that the body is inscribed by cultural and social processes beyond an individual's conscious control.

From the beginning, the creative process of *Unshelved* was based on improvisation which thrives on spontaneity and impulse. Improvisation is a form of immediacy, discipline of spontaneity and

awareness (Steinman 1986:77), which transforms and changes one's state at a given time or with the introduction of other influences.

To aid my improvisatory approach, I used a process I title 'body percussion'. Body percussion was my Practice as Research investigation (Kunutsor 2008) into Isadora Duncan's search to find a way that the body could express the life that exists internally without letting external forces dictate what the body does (Rosemont 1981:31). Duncan attempted to reject cultural and social dictates upon the body. I took this investigation further by exploring some of these dictates created by my society. These dictates as I identified them took the form of societal structures; structures that acknowledge that human social behaviors are not random (Burr 1995). Human social behaviors follow certain patterns that can be discovered and understood (Babbie 1994:12). In my body percussion research I discovered that the dancer can work from internal impulses, unique from social dictates, but also discovered that the dancer cannot ignore or simply reject cultural and social inscriptions upon the body. The body's percussion is a complex combination of internal and external impulses.

The main investigation in *Unshelved* is the patterning of these societal structures and how they informed my perception both in accepting them as well as challenging them. I engaged with certain societal structures from birth like religion, culture and tradition which were put in place by and for my society to aid continuity amongst generations. This investigation unpacks how the body from birth is inscribed and constructed as it interacts with and experiences these societal structures through everyday improvisation. These interactions create memories that get stored in the body. And memories according to Daniel Schacter a cognitive psychologist are records of

how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves (Schacter 1996:6). Schacter's explanation of the experiential aspects of memory is one that I ascribed to in my investigation where my understanding of my societal structures was derived from the experiences I remembered and encountered. To do this, there was the need to revisit the past which I believe has been stored in the body just waiting to be excavated when evoked.

To understand how the past had inscribed itself upon my identity, I relied on the memories stored in the body. The 'body as archive', a store house for memory plays an important role in constructing the past, present and future which is constantly under construction (Burr 1995). This reveals the archive in flux because as Fraleigh puts it, the body is experiencing a dynamic intersection of three ecstasies, the past and future unfolding in the present. For this reason, Fraleigh claims that 'our corporeality is never finished' (Fraleigh in Fatseas 2009:50). For any moving being, the body becomes a walking or living archive which is an unfinished, meticulously constructed artifact (Thomas 2003:165).

The body is not in isolation- the body is in relationship to other bodies, space and time- the body is located within environments. The body engages with the environment which informs it as well as it informing the environment it finds itself in (Schechner 1994). As the environment and society changes, the body through its experiences also undergoes these changes. Derrida, in writing on a multi-dimensional subject (body), defines the subject as one without centre or hierarchical integration. Derrida continues by saying the subject would give us a process and a paradox, but never a beginning or an end (Shotter & Gergen 1989:15). The subject, in other words the body, is not a fixed subject or object, but rather an idea or a process that is constantly

undergoing change through internal and external influences. These processes happen in various stages in the multi-dimensional subject.

This research began with the intention of exploring the multi-dimensional subject and how this multi-dimensional subject is created and expressed. The body as the multi-dimensional subject in question became the subject through which my multiple identities manifested themselves. In investigating these identities, I realized the need to visit what created the various identities, why they were created, how they were created and who created them. What happens when they are all experienced in one body? I sought to investigate what would happen if all these identities were integrated, rather than kept separate, in one body.

To unearth these questions, I firstly realized the Episodic nature of these various constructs at every stage in my life. Upon reflecting on my present construct as a 28 year old Ghanaian male, permanently residing in South Africa, I discovered little pockets of stories leading to these constructs. These little stories formed the Episodes that make up the various sections of my investigation in this research.

I have selected to engage with the written research through creative lateral forms. The report is written in Episodes. Each Episode is a contained entity. All Episodes form a single, unified voice together. In Episodes One and Two as I have titled them, I look into autobiographical stories that place me as the subject in the research. Episode One investigates my principal constructs by locating me in the Ewe society. This involves reflection about their belief system, the way they do things as well as why they do those things. It investigates how the child is born into an

already codified society and how that society inscribes the way of life into the psyche which is expressed in and through the individual's body. Episode Two continues with my story but in a different environment and setting, namely, South Africa. This Episode outlines a story that works more against my original codified society and way of life. This Episode deals with my experiences with a South African contemporary education and life. It deals with how Physical Theatre as a contemporary form of art worked against the codification of traditional Ewe dance rules. These rules according to John Berryman are very resistant to change (Berryman 1987: 8). This raises a conflict between Episodes One and Two.

It is within this conflict that Episode Three locates the individual's body through his or her society where clothing as a metaphor is used as society's inscriptive tool on the individual. Within these tools, I located the earlier mentioned societal structures which were challenged by my introduction of the personal voice given by physical theatre. This Episode unravels what ensued after the personal voice challenged the traditional structured codification.

Episode Four unpacks the methodology used in excavating materials from the body which is a store house of memory. This Episode puts the body at the heart of the investigation as a primary tool within which intelligence is gathered.

The final Episode explores the malleability of my body as a result of the demands placed on it to learn and relearn from the society and environment in which it found itself, and how during these learning and relearning experiences my body became a merger and a vessel which contained multiple layers of identities; the body becoming conscious and aware of its environment; the

body as an intelligent subject/object. The body according to my investigation in *Unshelved* has physical intelligence which transforms as it encounters and experiences its environment, people and situations.

Through these experiences, the body, due to its malleability and multiplicity moves towards hybridity as it experiences different environments and societies. The body only moves towards hybridity through a particular conscious process.

EPISODE ONE

THE BEGINNING OF MY STORY

It was a lovely warm evening after supper sitting with my grandmother, sister and mother outside on our porch. The family always escapes the heat that has gathered in the rooms during the day by enjoying a cool breeze outside before bed. My grandmother during one of her usual visits happened to enjoy this moment with us. She decided to sing “medeme ne yesu” (I have climbed on the Lords back) and like wild fire, my mother joined in with my sister egging them on. I watched as my grandmother added her upper body to the song she was singing. My mother stood on her feet and did similar movements but including her lower body.

I am a young Ghanaian male born into the Ewe ethnic group from the Volta region of Ghana. Being born into this group already locates me within a particular society and a particular way of life ascribed to that society. As a growing individual, I was already faced with multiple identities due to the environment I was raised in. My multiplicity ranged from my duties as a son, brother, student, and friend to the number of languages I could speak. I grew up in a diverse environment which taught me two different languages and two dialects due to association. I learned languages like Ga and Twi; Fante and Fedome dialects in addition to my native Ewe language not by choice but rather through interactions. One of my learning curves as a boy was derived from my interactions with *my* society and its people: the emphasis on *my* reiterates my acceptance into this society by association from birth and counting myself as part of it.

To further describe what I term ‘my society and its people’, I’ll need to unpack what ‘society’ entails in this context, as well as what defines my society. Sociologist, Earl Babbie identifies a dimension of reality that is invisible and unrecognized by most people, and yet controls our lives in many ways (Babbie 1994:1). Babbie further points out that these controlling dimensions are organizations made up of a collection of human beings (Babbie 1994:4) who aim at controlling the way things need to be and carried out. In that case, I would define my Ghanaian society as a collection of people who have identified ways of living and have aimed at controlling the way each societal member lives within that society.

As mentioned earlier, I grew up in a multi-layered society with different tribes living in the same environment with very similar ideologies. Their ideology is to keep the lineage and way of life cyclical within evolving generations. Societies outlast any of the individual women and men who create and pass through them (Babbie 1994:5). I believe that even though generations are faced with constant changes due to globalization, the aim of these societies is to keep the pre-conceived existence of a way of life rooted in their young. The best way to do that is to create certain belief systems that would distinctively set them apart from others. Anything done outside these belief systems is termed taboo, hence not recognized as part of the status quo and faces great rejection by that particular society. A society established on certain belief systems holds certain activities like clothing, food, marriage ceremonies, language and dance, which have existed through generations, in high esteem. It is upon these belief systems that the society has been built and continues to live.

Survival of these societies depends on how the people living in them abide by the status quo set up over generations. An example of one of the statuses I ascribed to as a maturing individual was calling any one older than me by their title before mentioning their name. For example, my older brother, whose name is Selasie, has to be called ‘Brother Selasie’, and my sister by the name Elorm would have to be called, ‘Sister Elorm’. A teacher or lecturer has to be called by his/her surname with a Mr. or Mrs/ Miss attached to it. The name Victor Anku would be mentioned as Mr. Anku. If these are not adhered to, there is a break in the status quo which is deemed disrespectful and a taboo. These cultural codes are instilled in one from home by one’s parents and reinforced in schools and in other gatherings of older people. Taking this into consideration, I can then make the assertion that society was created on certain belief systems and injected into those who form part of it, willingly or unwillingly.

As an adolescent, there was great struggle in trying to adhere to these belief systems as I wanted to experiment with things in ways that best suited me. I remember my father telling me to put on native sandals (Ohinima) with my traditional garment (Kente) for my Junior Secondary School graduation because, ‘that is how it is done’. I wanted to go in an ordinary closed sandal. As much as I wanted to find my own voice and make decisions for myself, my voice was still framed within the status quo because the status quo must be strictly adhered to, and reinforced by structures set by society. The precision and specificity was evident in almost all facets of the society’s undertakings, from mannerisms to dance.

The introduction to my traditional dance ‘Agbadza’ (Ewe traditional dance) as a boy in the 1980’s was initiated by my family members and community. I have memories of my

grandmother and mother singing and dancing to the lyrics of a favorite Ewe song in expression of their joy. Their half, circular open arm actions to the song were purpose driven and expressive in locating their presence in the moment. Their actions to this song expressed what they felt which caused me, the observer, to engage with and join in their celebration. Similarly, Tierou in his account on traditional African dance outlines his personal encounter with his mother who chose to dance on hearing good news rather than speak (Tierou 1992:11). His investigation further defines the act of dance in an African context as an expressive act; an expression of the most profound experiences of people. Dance, according to him:

is a complete and self-sufficient language. It is the expression of life and of its permanent emotions-joy, love, sadness, hope-and without emotions there is no African dance (ibid).

Bakare (2000) also defines dance as a rhythmic movement of the human body in time and space to make statements. Bakare's definition of dance makes it a purpose driven activity which is geared towards conveying a message by the dancer.

Some practitioners like Stanislavski (1989) have argued that motion can evoke emotion. Most contemporary dance forms work within this construct. As a boy, I learnt from the beginning what makes my traditional dance true and authentic in meaning. For the traditional dance to happen there needs to be an emotion attached to it, without the emotion the dance has no meaning, without the emotion the dance cannot be sustained by the dancer and no message would be conveyed to those watching it. The body of an African dancer overflows with joy and vitality, it trembles, vibrates, radiates, it is charged with emotions (Tierou 1992:13).

The catalyst for the body to express any movement in African dance is rooted in the emotions of the one expressing it. My mother and grandmother's movements to the song, *Medeme ne Yesu*, were deeply rooted in their emotional state of being, within that particular moment of excitement.

The dancer's emotions and movements change accordingly to elaborate their state of being when confronted with grief. In expressing her grief over the loss of her older sister in 2005, my mother started singing a slow, softly toned song with her hands in between her legs. The rest of her movements to the song were either with her hands in the air or eyes looking up into the sky, with her back hunched inwards. Emotions then become the *transformative* tool through which movements in African traditional dance change.

Gestures within African traditional dance are extensions of these emotions and carry the meaning of the dance. Every movement in Ghanaian traditional dance is embedded with meaning and aimed at accomplishing a goal. "Gome", an occupational dance belonging to the Ga-Dangbe people of the Greater Accra Region of Ghana, is an example of how meaning is embedded in movement. This dance is for Artisans - carpenters, masons, tailors and cobblers. The movements of the dance depict the activities and social life of the artisans and their families. It is characterized by serious facial expressions and a somewhat stiff body posture meant to playfully cajole the artisan. The female "Gome" dancer's duty is to entice the male dancer into wanting her. To evoke such emotions in the male dancer, the female dancer pads her buttocks to make it difficult for the male to ignore. The male dancer in response to the enticing gestural approaches of the female constantly pulls his pants up above his belly button. The constant gesture of pulling

the pants up puts the man in the state of constant readiness to champion his course of luring the woman into his corner.

Act of learning

Traditional dance in an African society is a socially learnt and shared activity. The history of the dance is passed on through generations and children learn them from their elders. As a boy, by watching the elderly in society engage in traditional dance recreationally, in functions and ceremonies, the desire to express myself and associate with the dances grew. This raises the notion of learning through observation which ends up forming part of the observer's experiences. I saw myself imitating my grandmother's gestures and actions when she engaged in dance. The grace with which she moved her back and hands to "Agbadza" became one of the bedrocks on which my study of traditional dance was based. Her backwards movement automatically connected the head and shoulder blades which gracefully allowed her hands to speak a language of appreciation.

I remember my grandmother and mother correcting my hand movements in my attempt to dance "Agbadza" in a gathering of other family members. They taught me the right and acceptable way of executing that particular dance which was later inscribed in my body as memory, identity and a way of being. As I explored the dance, I also started aiming for the same dexterity and precision, as I realized that the only way of deriving meaning was through connecting the emotions to the dance. Emotions came with the ability to act out the feeling or state of being which translated itself into motion and expressions.

As mentioned earlier, the only way meaning is derived from traditional dance is through accuracy in its execution. These accuracies demand particular trainings which come with the teaching of the dance. My initiation to the dance came with the first training my grandmother and mother introduced me to; thus, the reason to dance. The first thing I learnt about my traditional Ghanaian dances as I engaged with them in primary school was the historical value. With that in mind, a partaker of that particular dance lives and evokes the meaning and spirit behind the dance. After my introduction, I had to now start learning how to do it the right way, which demanded my body to be trained and built in a particular way. The training and building of the body was in the dance. Every dance developed the body in its own way, not through any other extra exercises - as in contemporary dance technique where the body is classically trained to build strength and flexibility in certain areas. The training in traditional African dance as I experienced it is through the meaning and engagement with the dance. The constant repetition of my arm movements, inwards and outwards in relation to the timing of my legs in “Agbadza” built flexibility in my upper body and rooted the legs to carry the weight of the body. Whereas in contemporary dance, my upper and lower body strengths were built through the understanding of my center or core muscles, as well as finding the weight distribution through the feet.

EPISODE TWO

MY CONTEMPORARY STORY

“We both know this is a metal pole according to what is visible in front of us, but if you are able to substantiate your claim by convincing me that you see a tree I would believe you”.

These were the words I encountered from a lecturer in one of my *Film, Visual and Performing Arts* lectures in 2004 during my first year of studying drama at Wits University. As someone coming from an environment and educational background where everything had to make logical sense, and accorded the description of what it has been originally defined as, the above statement was very difficult for me to grasp.

After this particular lecture, I went home with a lot of questions about my choice of career, as well as the state of mind of the lecturer. My logic at this point was under contention and challenged, which made me feel uncomfortable. This discomfort was from a history of an already codified state of mind which informed my perception, understanding and life. An example of these codified states is how different student cultures respond to lecturers. For example, a university student in Ghana is not allowed to leave a lecture room until the lecturer has finished reading. This, according to my culture, is a sign of respect which has to be adhered to by all students. This then attested to my confusion when I saw South African students picking up their bags and leaving a lecture while the lecturer was still talking.

The physical departure from Ghana to South Africa was one met with mixed feelings and uncertainty because I knew I was leaving family and comfort behind for unknown experiences. But with these uncertainties came the desire to explore and experience something different, which I did when I enrolled to study Dramatic Arts at Wits. This different experience is what I title ‘my contemporary experience’; the experience of the unknown, the experience of the other which challenged what I knew and experienced in Ghana.

My introduction to the contemporary started with my introduction to the contemporary style of movement (physical theatre) which started in 2004 when I enrolled at Wits University. Physical theatre comes from a tradition of experimentation and ground breaking moments. It evolved as a movement breaking away from established practices (Chamberlain 2007:120) evident from classical structures. These classical structures create codified languages like posture and pointing of toes that the body responds to, which can cause the body to be bound. Contemporary dance practitioners like Isadora Duncan aimed at challenging these codes by outlining that dance is not only the art that gives expression to the human soul through movement, but also the foundation of a complete conception of life, more free, more harmonious, more natural (Rosemont 1981:31).

Borrowing from the example I gave of “Agbadza” in Episode One, where the dance needs to be done in a particular way in order for meaning to be derived from it by the observer, physical theatre did the direct opposite. For instance, the male dancer in “Abgadza” has to break the back more vigorously and rapidly with the leg movements in order for meaning to be accorded to his dance. Physical theatre on the other hand suggests another interpretation by opening an avenue to say that the male dancer can vigorously break one part of the back whilst the other is executing a

much more steadied movement to derive another meaning. These experiences challenged my codified body even more as the body had been trained in a set way and pattern.

In physical theatre the boundaries on my physical body created by society collapsed. With the collapse came changes in spaces. I started questioning what the private and public space was. By this I mean, the self engaged with others through touch and body to body contact which speaks back to a contemporary societal existence that is urban, multiple in identity, confined in space, with ever changing boundaries. My body became sensitive to sensation and impulse with my interactions with other bodies in space. The traditional dances I engaged with on the other hand do not deal with touch because the private space was respected as it stood for morality, respect and discipline.

Physical theatre works against these codes by putting the codified body to task. The codified body has a language that is aimed at achieving particular goals within a particular society or environment. And physical theatre aims at finding the free, harmonious, more natural body Duncan talks about, hence putting my codified body under scrutiny where the techniques that codified my body are physically challenged. The way of life of a particular society runs on these codes which informs their identity. Mistrusting the codified languages of the body, as Anna Sanchez-Colberg (2007) puts it creates a platform for one to interrogate the set norms. My experience with physical theatre at Wits University put my traditional codified body to task in terms of style and technique.

To further elaborate on the above mentioned point, there is the need to have a look at the physical formation of the body from previous experience. My physical body was closed to the contemporary experience due to the formation of my body structure as a result of my Ghanaian environment. Mannerisms of being in a foreign country, namely South Africa, thus also resulted in a physically closed body which spoke to my formative bodily environmental influences. There is a bodily intelligence which reacts to environmental and mood change. There are investigations by psychologists working with the body and human actions that acknowledge that our bodies are sophisticated in conveying subtle changes in emotions without the need for language (Berryman, et al. 1987:11).

From my training and way of life in my traditional dance and culture, there was less fluidity in my upper body strength as most of our dances demanded agility in the upper body in order to create precision and clarity. The male version of “Abgadza”, for example, is very much in the curved openness of the arms and the rigidity of the whole arm and fingers. The emphasis on the movement is more in the forward and backwards movement of the shoulder blades and the stamping of the legs. The female dance of “Agbadza” is a bit more graceful and fluid. This training made my upper body more rigid and precise to every movement which became a challenge in my physical theatre training.

This challenge created the platform for exploration into other body dynamics. As mentioned earlier in this Episode, the training needed for all the dances I engaged in differed, yet similar in terms of structure. The demands of physical theatre shifted body composure and movement into a different realm where demand was made on the body to respond to impulses and spontaneity as tools (further details of which are outlined in Episode Four). My explanation into the changes

that occurred in terms of technique is from the hypothesis drawn from my scholarly investigation into my practical experience through the process.

The question I asked myself in this investigation was: what happened to the traditional technique whilst learning the contemporary? The answer to that question is evident in my return to traditional dance after four years of not engaging with it. I realized I was dancing the traditional form in a way that was informed by the indelible inscriptions of some contemporary techniques clearly entrenched in my body after years of exclusive practice in this form. My experience with “Agbadza” had a different twist to it where the upper body movements took on a different dynamic. Even though the precision and clarity remained evident, there was fluidity and flare added to it. Instead of the circular hand movements of both arms, I realized a deeper extension in the back which opened the avenue for the lower back to be engaged. I picked up on the little details that opened up other possibilities in body movements within “Agbadza”. I realized in my investigation that the traditional in conflict with the contemporary created a platform for a merger in techniques. The traditional technique reformed itself into “another” [unknown] to aid the learning of the contemporary. The conflict between the contemporary and the traditional created the reasons that inspired the birth of *Unshelved*. It created the awareness of an investigation that paves the way for questions around the influences of the contemporary upon traditional forms of dance and movement styles. It opened the avenue for the old which is rooted in tradition to merge with the new which was contemporary.

EPISODE THREE

UNSHELVED: A MEETING OF GHANA AND SOUTH AFRICA

Dad: (Explaining how to wear the Kente, a special traditional African garment) Elikem, in order for the Kente to look and feel right on you, you must first and foremost allow a lot of room on the right. Place the smaller portion of the cloth over the left shoulder and throw the bigger portion on the right from under your right armpit to join the smaller portion on the left shoulder. Now gather the whole lot with the left arm and fold it over the left shoulder. Make sure it does not drag on the floor or you would be sending a different message.

(Elikem upon following dad's instructions tried it out and got it right after a few attempts)

Dad: Now take the first few steps and tell me how you feel.

My investigations in this Episode would be based mainly on metaphors I conceptually used in my creative process for *Unshelved*, which is an original theatrical performance I created. In this Episode, I will be dealing with certain identified societal structures that would be used in weaving the personal story with historical events. My engagement with each structure would be a vehicle to give insight into my past through the present. Through my interaction with the present in *Unshelved*, I relieve the past in the present through spontaneous reactions that are carried through the body. *Unshelved* became a vehicle for me to fully comprehend the depth and extent of different cultural inscriptions, traditional and modern, deeply embedded in my physical being. My secondary intention was to find artistic ways in which to convey this to an audience through my body in space as it experiences the various societal structures.

The body as a subject matter is very difficult to grasp due to its complex nature, making it difficult to come up with a clear definition (Coakley 1997:2). My position about the meaning of body as subject is based on a fusion of theory, personal experience and practice.

In materialist philosophy, the body may be everything else except the brain; in feminist analyses of pornography and cultural manipulation the body represents the female that the male seeks to control; in both Freudian and Foucaultian accounts of sexuality it becomes the site of either forbidden or condoned pleasure, rather than the more-or-less unconscious medium of human existence; and in popular magazine discussions of slimming and fitness it still stands for the rebellious fleshliness that has to be controlled and subdued from some other place of surveillance (Coakley 1997:4). In Christianity and other religions, it becomes a vessel which could be possessed by divinity or a spiritual being. The bible gives an account of this claim in 1 Corinthians 6:19. In religious terms, the body as a vessel to be possessed can be contaminated as well as edified to best suite that which possesses it.

From the above accounts given about how the body is constructed, there is one evident factor, which is the fact that the body is visible and present. From my own experience with the subject matter, there is evidence that the body experiences changes as far as it associates itself with external forces which in this investigation is society and its norms. Once an individual associates him or herself with a group, they stop being individuals but part of a group (Babbie 1994:11) and what the group does is in one way or the other influential on the participant.

On this basis, I make the claim that once an individual has contact with a group; there is a change that occurs. I parallel this claim to a painter with a pallet of colours and an empty canvas on which he paint. Every stroke he puts on that canvas changes the form, shape and meaning of what was there before. When the painting is finally done, you are left with an accumulation of different strokes of the brush. I would take this analogy a step further in subsequent paragraphs but the important thing to note here is how the body had been objectified. Some theorists like Butchart, Sey and Blanche see the body as something given, an object around which actions, attitudes, impressions and evaluations may fluctuate with changing fashion, ideologies and interest (Blanche 1999:3).

Anthropologists like Robert Brain in his investigation into the *Decorated Body* also outline the various stages through which the objectified body is decorated in both primitive and civilized societies to represent certain ideologies and states of being (Brian 1979:10). From these encounters, there is the realization of the body undergoing certain changes due to changes in environment and status quo. From the above metaphor, the canvas represents the body on which imprints would be made with colour in order to realize a picture. The imprints to be made are a representation of society which determines how the picture should look like. The colours to be used also represent the structures that are used by society in making these imprints.

The pictures painted through the moving body and sounds in *Unshelved* were painted by my interactions with an already coded and structured society. The difficulty in the making process of *Unshelved* was the decoding of my already coded body to interrogate the idea behind the influences of the societal structures. The way I dealt with this is discussed in Episode Four. To

aid my process in *Unshelved*, I identified societal structures as five pieces of draped fabric. The costumes used in *Unshelved* were ripped apart from these drapes representing society. The idea behind this creative choice reaffirms the social constructionist view point of us being fabrics of society. As each piece of fabric gets worn on the body, a piece of a societal structure gets added to my construct. As a piece gets removed from the drape, it leaves an indication of the influence I had in creating the whole. I danced and moved between these drapes which transformed my body with every encounter with them. This has a correlation to how the various structures society engages with provide and evoke different responses and action from human beings (Burr 1995:5). Each piece of cloth influenced my movement as they differed in sizes, colour and texture. The main investigation was how each preceding structure I engaged with added and changed the one before it. To represent this during my performance, I wore a piece of each structure on a particular part of my body.

As mentioned above, I identified five different stages of my journey with the societal structures that informed and influenced it. I colour coded all these societal structures with each colour representing the mood and weight of that particular structure. The colour represented what a particular structure stood for in my life as well as what it demanded of me. My journey began with the stage I titled **birth** where I was introduced to the world, ready to explore. This world already had people like parents and other elderly people within it who seemed to have answers to most of the questions I asked myself. Questions like, what am I doing here? What should or should I not be doing? My quest to find answers to these questions brought about my engagement with my environment and society because I believed the answers were within the structures they created.

The colour I chose to represent **birth** was white which was used in covering my private part, representing the awareness of my naked state which is not permitted within my society as it is associated with weakness. I remember my Dad saying:

“You are a boy and as a boy you always need to be strong and work hard, there is no room to be soft; you need to respect yourself!”

From a young age, I got to realize the roles ascribed to a boy in my particular society. These roles according to the statement above existed to aid the boy child grow into a responsible adult. I personally took on those responsibilities at a young age due to my particular family setting where my dad handed over great responsibilities to me. I at the age of 14 had to run a 10.5 acres poultry farm with the help of my mother. Through this experience, my representation of birth as a point of covering depicts the taking on the role of a boy/man who cannot afford to expose himself and his weakness.

In order for the society to survive, it created certain structures within which order is found and becomes a powerful force in determining the lives of those who created it (Babbie 1994:19). These societal structures were created long before I was born by those who lived before my generation, they shape your behavior, condition your beliefs, values, and opinions (Babbie 1994: 35). My engagement with them formed the bedrock on which my experiences were generated and lived. My entry point to these ordered structures was my birth into a **culture**. Taking the definition from an anthropological view point; **culture** is defined as a way of life, values and beliefs (King 1991: 2) unique and peculiar to a group of people. A question to note here, relevant to my creative research, is:

If these values and beliefs get challenged, what happens?

I would use my exploration in *Unshelved* to answer this question in the preceding paragraphs and Episodes.

Cultures are designs for living, formed through historical processes (Billington et al 1991:4) and carried through generations. I was born into a culture that had been lived and practiced over years with inputs from generations before me. The thriving force of **culture** is its shared nature where structures are created to give the individual the means to adjust to social life and learn creative expressions (ibid). In order for me to adjust to the Ashanti social life, I had to learn how to eat *fufu*, an Ashanti staple food with the hand. I remember the embarrassment I brought upon myself when I tried eating like I was eating my Ewe staple food *banku*. Due to its starchy nature, *fufu* has the tendency of being elastic when drawn, unlike *banku*. The skill in eating it is to avoid the elasticity as you take it from the bowl. Failure to do so results in your actions being classified as nasty.

My inability to eat *fufu* the way Ashanti's ate it in that particular gathering created a clear distinction between me and the skilled eaters of *fufu*. One needs to be able to have sameness to be able to associate with a particular **culture**. There needs to be a shared and normative aspect of **culture** which functions as an integrating agent for the individual into the group (Kluckhohn in Billington et al 1991:4). The way of life of my people started becoming my way of life because I started believing in order to have a sense of belonging. I became part of the experience of that way of life and wore it as a piece of clothing to identify me and cover my ignorance of myself. I started naming certain things for myself as I understood and interacted with them. I adopted a

way of life that basically fell under the status quo of my people. People behave as they are expected to in a given situation because they have internalized the norms and values of the **culture** of society (Billington et al 1991:5). I started feeling part of the collective and used words like, my people and our way of life as I addressed certain things like clothing, language, dance and food, things that had to do with the collective.

The colour clothing I used to represent **culture** in *Unshelved* was black which represented my identification as a black African male. The way I was culturally treated from birth was always in attestation of the fact that I was African, black and masculine. Our education system taught this from a very young age through history books, national anthems and games. This then built into my psyche and was lived in my everyday life without challenge. My point of accepting this norm was when my Mum clothed me with male traditional clothes and my Dad proudly introducing me to others as his last born male child.

With this built exposure and pride from my parents came certain **cultural** expectations like respect for the elderly. In my culture, it was classified as disrespectful looking into an elderly person's eyes when being spoken to. In conforming to this notion, I started my movement by listening and obeying what was being said without eye contact to my uncle's speech about holding on to my heritage. There were movements like kneeling with head bowed and hands stretched out to show reverence and respect.

As I engaged with this structure through *Unshelved*, I introduced the taboo; the taboo of challenging a belief and value. I introduced the "what if" question. "What if I decided to look up

at the elderly when being spoken to”? The introduction of this contradictory question into a **culture** that is not familiar with it started creating an area of contention. My challenge to the accepted norm physically started with a raised head which later was transferred into the clapping of a closed hand. The clap started off as an appraisal to authority which slowly changed into loud, vigorous and tensed claps. These claps later grew into the rest of the body which started rebelling against what the palms were doing. This fight between the palms and the rest of the body started creating a conflict that resulted in the body being subjected to the frustrations of the palms.

The result of the ‘what if’ question asked earlier lead to a subdued body to the order set up by an already established society. Even though the palm started unfolding events of rebellion, the body subdued it by inflicting pain on itself with the palm being the catalyst. The introduction of “me” or my voice into the established status quo created for itself a destructive mechanism which punished the self. Through my investigation, I realized my voice could not challenge a societal structure like culture which has been established to keep the way of life of a particular society. Any individual or child who tries going against it faces the scrutiny and punishment of the order or law. In order for that individual to have a place amongst the collective in the society, that individual needs to abide by the status quo.

The collective started introducing another structure created by society which is passed on from one generation to the other which defines the way things are done; thus **tradition**. **Tradition** is one of the oldest structures which one is born into and inherited from people who existed before. **Tradition** like **culture** is also a structure upon which the livelihood of my society strives on. I

lived, experienced and expressed tradition through clothing, dance, food and songs. I did not have a choice in choosing my tradition as it was inscribed on me from birth. As my parents believed in our **tradition**, I was bound, raised and taught those traditions. My **tradition** defined who I was as it gave me clear rules on how things were to be done. Without these rules, things do not exist as they are supposed to. Anything outside these rules breaks the social order. Taking the rules of “Agbadza” as mentioned earlier as an example; women have certain patterns they follow, different from the men. Traditionally, meaning is only derived from the dance if it is done according to the patterns allocated to both gender. For meaning to be derived, one needs to replicate what has been taught generationally, according it all the reverence it needs. The dance loses its meaning when done otherwise, hence it being considered a taboo according to the traditional setting.

Through *Unshelved* I explored the foundation of my physical inscriptions through my Ewe traditional dance which I colour coded brown. **Tradition** in *Unshelved* represented authority and the act of learning. I re-traced my history by looking up to the authoritative and traditional figure that instilled the right way of living in my home. The traditional figure I chose to look up to was my father who represented my teacher or mentor. In the creating process of this encounter, I chose the idea he represented in my life. He represented a guardian who made it his responsibility to teach me the role of a man in the traditional Ewe setting. The way this unfolded through practice would be detailed out in Episode Four when I deal with methodologies. With his teachings of the role of a man came the parameters within which yard sticks were set. Being precise and accurate became my yard stick which needed constant acknowledgement and approval in order to progress. By reliving the influence of the father figure in my life, my

movements in *Unshelved* took on the notion of establishing the father figure and the training that was needed to get his approval. I constantly looked back to see if approval was being given in order for me to progress.

The “what if” question I asked in this interaction as an adult was; what if I decided to add a few more steps to the already existing traditional dance? Once I had established the way it had to be done and gotten approval from my teacher, I started exploring the dance with the introduction of additional footsteps and hand movements as an expression of my joy. The introduction of these personal narratives evoked the chastising power of my teacher which was met with a bit of resistance on my path. As the two different opinions engaged in dialogue, I started conforming to my teachers teachings and started realizing great enjoyment in them. I later conformed whole heartedly and found a sense of escape within the confines. I located myself within the rules and allowed them to express my understanding of the environment within which I lived. I found great pride and exoneration in being an Ewe and danced my expression of being part of the tradition.

Through dancing my Ewe **tradition** in *Unshelved*, I slowly wore the piece of clothing I took from the drape over my head covering my chest area which represented the taking upon myself the responsibility of manhood. This responsibility came with the choice of the colour brown which represented the earthly nature of my inheritance and continuity. It also represented the rooted nature of **tradition** as it is a structure that keeps reforming itself no matter the odds.

Tradition became a lived experience that informed and forged the way for me to start engaging with the norms that made up this particular social structure. The learning in tradition was in the

experience of it. It was not an individual act but more of a collective act, as the experience and learning happens as a collective. The quest to master and have dexterity of the codes and ethics of the traditional structure in *Unshelved* brought me close to the point of understanding who I was and the duties I needed to carry out. Due to the interactions with these codes and ethics, I started finding a voice which was based on the foundation laid down by my **tradition** and **culture**. I started living both **tradition** and **culture** either in a conscious or an unconscious way. There are inscriptions of both **tradition** and **culture** in me.

Inscriptions of **tradition** and **culture** did not become the only social structures I was born into and experienced. There was **religion** which categorized as well as channeled me towards routes that dealt with personal belief systems. **Religion** which was colour coded green played a major role in my experience and engagement with society right from birth. There are many schools of thought as far as the subject of **religion** is concerned, with these schools of thought comes tensions and complications. The complications of these schools of thought would not be dealt with in my investigation of religion but I will just outline some of them.

Everyone is born into an environment constructed by belief systems. I agree with Fiona Bowie when she outlines the fact that, as biological and social beings we are all dependent upon our physical and social environment in order to live. We do not however experience the world passively. The way we act affects both society and the web of life around us. Our actions are determined by the way we think, by our values and belief systems. These she says are actualized and reinforced by our education, through various aspects of our **culture**, and by means of ritual activities (Bowie 2000:107). Most of these belief systems are the society's way of understanding

their existence and how to live in order to make sure their existence remains blameless and pure; giving it a purpose and reason.

I can therefore say that I was introduced to these belief systems as a way of channeling my life styles to be approved and accepted by the codes of belief. The quest of showing myself worthy in the religious structure furthered my journey into self discovery and better understanding and engagement with the word “individual”. Out of this word came the self and personality in relation to others and the society at large. I will not delve more into that but would like to bring across the fact that there is great awareness and personal discovery of details in relation to what one wants within a societal setting. The individual now really starts questioning certain things that are evoked with every interaction. The answers to these questions become part of the experiences one grows up with to inform the present and the future.

To narrow down my investigation, the **religion** I make mention of in this session is Christianity. Being born in a Christian family, I ascribed to the beliefs of Christianity and carried it through my adolescence because that was what I knew. This reflects my earlier point with regards to ascribing to what society and family already has in existence. My meaning and understanding of **religion** (Christianity) was paved and directed by my family. I had very little or no voice at all in the choice and had to make meaning within an already inscribed and imposed choice. There already was an existing standard structure of way of life within the Christian fraternity which if not adhered to was termed disobedient. An example of how strict my family was in obedience to the Christian faith was the refusal of lunch by my mother if I did not go to church on Sunday.

Religion according to my investigation in *Unshelved* highlights the taboos that exist if you do not ascribe to a certain belief system. My journey in *Unshelved* dealt with the struggle of the ‘other’, where great discontent was given to things that were not within the Christian belief system, like the conversation I had with my Dad in Episode One. The major discontent which formed a stimulus for this particular structure in my performance was what my body could dance to and where those dances could be expressed. These phenomena led to a very composed body movement when in church, which also affected the mannerism. The most noticeable one was the diplomatic clapping of hands with some upper torso movement which caused the legs to travel a few steps in the space. These actions were always something I had to work hard in getting right. Due to the fact that I did not want to disappoint my parents, I needed to behave and compose myself in the manner best fitted for church.

This brought about unsettlement in my body as it mentally and physically battled through what was right and accepted. In my investigation in *Unshelved* I depicted the struggle through the breath as it represented my life source. The breath caused the physical body to react according to the amount of air I took in. As I struggled with the breath in the beginning, representing my discontent with conforming to the imposition by the religious setting, the body reacted by tensing. The struggle later changed during the performance when I at a later stage in life realized what my mother was trying to instill in me. The breath changed gradually to a more relaxed rhythm after I later on in life had a conviction to follow the Christian belief system with personal understanding and actions. I started making meaning of the Christian faith and saw the reasons why my family held it in high esteem. Meaning brought about my decision to investigate and explore what it was all about, and the result of my exploration determined my view point of the

faith today. A view point that makes me see beyond the taboos that were set; a view point that gives me a better understanding of the principles of the faith.

My investigation of **religion** was not an oppositional one but rather geared towards conformity. Even though I had certain conflicts during my interactions and engagement with this structure, I accepted it and allowed it to inform my life. *Unshelved* expressed these conflicts and release found within the conflict. The clothing for this was a piece of green fabric wrapped around my head as it represented a belief system. In *Unshelved*, I realized that my belief system paves my actions and the way I live. I saw it as the crown of Christ the king. Since I have accepted His influence in my life I accepted His authority over my life. The colour green represents the hopeful nature that the Christian faith gives me.

The **contemporary** as I have labeled it is the final social structure which deals with a combination of all the above structures informing my present. The golden colour coded **contemporary** for me deals more with the now and how my understanding of the now is lived by what I see, engage with and experience. The **contemporary** deals more with the teaching and learning of different experiences as a result of the foundations that have been laid with my encounters with the past which are still evident. The only reason why new things can be learnt is due to the fact that the old exists. I believe through my investigation in *Unshelved* that the past transforms itself into what we call contemporary today. To illustrate; Afro Fusion as a dance form is a combination of old traditional dances using present day learnt techniques and discipline.

My **contemporary** is a combination of my past which took a back seat in order for the present (physical theatre) to be learnt. My experience of physical theatre brought to the fore a different engagement with the body in movement. It introduced a technique that is rooted in the body-mind investigation. Callery simply puts physical theatre as theatre where the primary means of creation occurs through the body rather than through the mind. In other words, the somatic impulse is privileged over the cerebral in the making process...The intellectual is grasped through the physical engagement of the body because, as Lecoq puts it; ‘the body knows things about which the mind is ignorant’ (Callery 2001:4). I will be engaging more with the intelligence of the body in Episode Four. But what I would like to engage with from the above statement is the fact that physical theatre acknowledges the working of both the mental (mind) and physical (Body) with the physical being the primary tool. Through the working of the physical, the mental is projected and lived. My experience with physical theatre gave me the tools to explore this physical intelligence in my process in *Unshelved*.

In dealing with **contemporary** as a structure, I celebrated the new rather than ask the “what if” question. I conformed to what was learnt as it geared me towards a better understanding of the self and what needed to be explored. My choice of colour for clothing myself in contemporary was gold. This piece of clothing represented the richness of the various discoveries I have made for myself over the past few years. This clothing stood for the learnt traits I had picked up and made part of me which started posing certain questions to further bring light to the quest of self discovery. Almost everyone gets to the point where they pose certain questions to themselves in relation to who they are and how they understand certain things due to the existence of others. Horkheimer (1972) calls it the enlightenment movement.

Briefly taking from Bowie's explanation of enlightenment movement, as a movement in the seventeenth and eighteenth century European philosophy concerned with the role of reason and the progress of human civilization (Bowie 2000:3). Physical theatre I believe came out of this kind of movement where attention was given more to the individual and what the individual had to say rather than what society wanted the individual to say. I see my **contemporary** experience to be one that gave me such a personal voice and ways of expression. *Unshelved* in its investigation managed to deconstruct the **contemporary** by unifying the past which is evident in the **contemporary**.

It was during my **contemporary** state that certain challenges were posed mentally, emotionally and physically. It is at this point that the platform and permission was given for me to fuse dance with multi media. It was a point where I started realizing and comparing the present in relation to the past. It is at this stage where researches like *Unshelved* get their grounds to be explored. These explorations are always golden as they are the cherished moments of discovery. My clothing for this structure was worn over all the other social structures I had encountered merging all of them together. The golden moment became the one where I was crowned with valuable discoveries that propelled me into greater investigations of the self with awareness and realizations, discoveries and analysis.

EPISODE FOUR

BODY AS ARCHIVE

Is it the left leg which turns first before the right or is it the right before the left? If it is the right before the left, what does the left do in the process and how does the hand movement go?

Frustrated with myself for not recollecting the steps to Kpanlogo, a traditional dance for the Gas' in Ghana, I dejectedly started moving my body with the little memory I had of the dance. After a few repetitions of the steps I remembered, my right leg started moving in relation to the left and the hands in response to the leg movements started turning in and out. From these movements, the body started recollecting what the mind thought it had forgotten.

The movement of my fingers as I type these words are stored in my body as memory which would be relied on the next time my fingers hit these key pads. This example is foregrounding the body as an access point of any physical action. What happens to these physical actions once they happen? Where do they happen? In this Episode, I am going to dialogue with how my physical experiences with the various societal structures I encountered manifest themselves through my body; where they manifested from; as well as the methods I used in realizing these experiences.

According to Steinman, 'memory, whether of a mythical past, last night's dream, or this morning's conversation at the breakfast table, begins in the body' (Steinman 1986:11). From this statement, I am making a claim that there can be no human interaction or action without the body

being involved. The beginning of these actions unravels a chain of experiences that demands an individual's participation. With these participations whether mentally, emotionally or physically comes an encounter that remains within the individual, whether good or bad. We human beings experience our encounters or action with our interaction with society. These interactions have permanent residences in our bodies.

The social constructionist identifies the fact that individuals become the products of the kind of society they are born into, and that their choices and decisions are explicable in terms of societal norms and values (Burr 1995:96). I in *Unshelved* realized that I was a construct of my societal norms and values. These norms and values were evident in the way I used my body in movement to express my transformation, state of mind and emotions. Foucault sees the body as something molded by a great many distinct regimes; broken down by rhythms of work, rest and holidays; poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances... Nothing in man-not even his body-is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis of self-recognition or for understanding other men (Foucault 1977:153).

The body is under constant reformation through experiences that turn into memories stored within the muscles. I would deal more ineptly into the reformation of the body in Episode Five when I delve into the move of the body towards hybridity. The process of recapturing these memories can only happen when one allows the muscles to relieve itself of every tension and familiarity. Taking from Grotowski's analysis that art as it is does not like rules (Grotowski 1975:56), every rule governing the social body needs to be deconstructed and dissolved in order for the muscles to reconstruct its memory through the body in movement.

The core of this investigation needs to be built on the trust of the wisdom of the body, a respect and curiosity about the natural world, an embracing of the value and communicability of unitary experience (Steinman 1986:3). The body as it stands has a great amount of intelligence stored through the years of experiences. Our body thinks, and it thinks as it moves. In other words, our moving, living body is intelligent, and our thinking arises through material physical sources as surely as it may seem to move beyond them. When we trust our innate intelligence, it speaks, or brings us images and feelings in unpredictable ways (Fraleigh 2000:57). *Unshelved* in its investigation played on the unpredictable ways the body makes meaning, where the body was given the platform to manifest itself through the experiences stored in it.

The body is a store house of memory; a physical archive where intelligence is stored. Every interaction we have gets stored and manifested in and through the body. From Berryman points earlier on the sophistication of the body in conveying every subtle change in emotion (Berryman 1987:11) makes the body an unfixed thing. This places the body in a malleable state where changes do occur with different experiences at different times in one's growth. An individual's memory boils down to his personal experience of that particular event. Schacter claims that '...memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves' (Schacter 1996:6). Our personal memories create our personal view points of the world and the future we engage ourselves with. Relating to Schacter's claim, I remembered my traditional dance the way it was because I had a personal experience with it and that formed the memories I had of it. In replicating that through my investigation, I recollected what I stored in my body as my memory of it. All my encounters with my various societal structures were a result of the memories I created for myself.

Unshelved investigated the body-mind continuum with the aim of finding the liberated body by placing the mind in a “non thinking” state; a state where the intelligence in the body meanders through without any restrictions placed on it through thoughts. The body, according to Lecoq, ‘knows about things which the mind is ignorant’ (Callery 2001:4). The intelligence of the body has always been in detention by the mind in its process of making sense and meaning of events and situation. The body has been diminished to the status of object, or machine, under the command of the mind (Zarilli 2006:48) which constrains its movement to explore itself.

Instead of looking at the body and mind as two separate entities, I would like to draw attention to Zarilli’s body-mind integration where he sees a dialectical engagement of ‘body-in-mind’ and ‘mind-in-body’ (Zarilli 2006:55). Marshall also outlines the fact that the integration of the body-mind is integral to our state of being. She states:

The common use of the two words ‘mind’ and ‘body’...reflects a false perception; in reality the organism is already a single physical/electrical/chemical unit (Marshall 2007:163).

Unfortunately, the single physical/electrical/chemical unity has been broken by a changing society and environment. The complication of a changing world alters our movements and expressions as these changes weave themselves into our daily lives and routine. This starts driving us more towards a mental view point of the world where the mind takes dominance. I realized during my exploration with *Unshelved* that my mind was always in search of a set structure of movement due to my experiences of performance. I had to work hard to break that thought in order to interact with my area of investigation. Surely, the question is: can we trust that our physical intelligence would define the structure we require in any given moment?

One needs to understand that in the midst of a mentally dominated world view, the body is the vehicle on and through which the mind manifests itself. Without the body, one would not be able to express adequately what needs to be expressed. This puts the body at the center of any human expression. My investigation so far has been concentrated on the moving body and the intelligence it possesses in conveying the true self (Miller 1997). The moving body is imbedded with history, memories, identities and wisdom. Having done something once, apparently, we do not forget. The body has its secrets, and touch and movement is often the potent key (Steinman 1986:21). Most of the time, there is very little trust in the wisdom of the body which is contrary to what Steinman urges one to do. He highlights the need to trust the wisdom of the body, a respect and curiosity about the natural world, an embracing of the value and communality of unitary experiences (Steinman 1986:3).

To trust the wisdom of the body leads one towards a process of relinquishing certain ways of being in the world. Babara Dilley asked her students to “acknowledge the voice” of their bodies. Instead of following the master-apprentice model, where one attempts to take on someone else’s highly individual movement style; she encouraged them to work from the inside to recover their own body’s native language (Steinman 1986: 14). The voice being spoken about in this case is the individual’s unique physical language determined by experiences, training and society.

There is a key word underpinning my investigation which Steinman defines in a paragraph:

We can choose to observe the stream of thoughts filling our minds, or we can try to ignore them, to focus on something else, on nothing. But if we are quiet enough to listen we might hear/learn something essential, essential to ourselves, and to the well-being of our urban industrial-age tribe (Steinman 1989:21).

The key word in Steinman's statement is the ability to **"listen"**. In order for the body to express history and the self, one needs to listen to the stimulus that causes it to move. My investigation in "Body Percussion" (Kunutsor 2008) was based on the ability to listen to the body during movement based on the first impulse, not external forces. During my investigation, I came to be influenced by Rosemont who wrote about Isadora Duncan talking about allowing ones body to express the life that exists in it without letting external forces dictate what the body feels like doing at a particular moment because of containment and dictates (Rosemont 1981:31). Duncan talks against the dictates that classical ballet gives to the body restricting it from expressing emotions that lie within. Duncan speaks about finding what is within and **trusting** the ability that your body has the greatest potential to express itself in anyway and how it wants to, freeing it from all unnatural influences.

For Duncan, the dance is not only the art that gives expression to the human soul through movement, but also the foundation of a complete conception of life, more free, more harmonious, more natural (Rosemont 1981:31). The human soul needs to be set free to express itself whichever way it wants to because the soul in containment does not do justice to one's expression. It is in the freedom of expression that we hear the true self in speech through dance and movement of the body. The natural body has ways of harmonizing with itself and the environment, and in order for that true state to be achieved; performers need to be true to the voice of the body in paying close attention to its natural voice.

Murray like Duncan also goes beyond external stimuli and searches for the true essence of movement from within. He argues that, a dancer must listen to his body and pay honour to it. Behind the movement lies this terrible, driving passion, this necessity. Dance must involve a

searching analysis and representation of human experience, and that movement must spring from within (Murray 1979:68). The main thing you need for dance to take place is a true feeling that causes you to move in expression of your feeling and experience. If the dance comes from within, there is a connection between what is being expressed and who is expressing it. In the case of *Unshelved*, the desire to move and express comes from the influence of experiences within the said societal structures. Taking the structure **culture** as represented in *Unshelved* as an example, my movement was derived from the impulses I received as I communicated with the elderly figure. The main catalyst to spring board these stimuli without any influence is spontaneity. To be spontaneous implies the ability to trust the body as an intelligent archive. Spontaneity comes with the ability to act according to the energy being felt from one's interaction with the subject matter. I relied on spontaneity as one of my major tools in my exploration.

Spontaneity is best expressed in life through improvisation which Steinman defines as:

a process by which the evolving nature of the world around and within the artist is revealed by their actions. In dance and in theatre and in the area overlap between the two called performance, improvisation is a form of immediacy, a discipline of spontaneity and awareness. One invests each movement, each moment with the utter attention of the mind. The content of the work is in the content of the present (Steinman 1986:77-78).

Improvisation in Physical Theatre thus emerged as a tool which can 'provide new paradigms' (Carter 2000:182) or 'languages of the body' which somehow capture or convey an 'experience of self-in-the-world'. These expressions rely on the body's experience of the world, they rely on the archival body to show states of being in current situations. We constantly leave improvised lives in our daily work as situations demand spontaneous reactions to best suit the situation.

Improvisation is a way of experiencing yourself in a non codified and restricted way. It is at the point of improvisation that one listens to the body in order to act from the unconscious; where one is available to the flow of the moment through instantaneous responses. *Unshelved* was created through spontaneous, improvised explorations of traditional and contemporary performance modes in dialogue.

Spontaneity unlocks the door of restriction on the body as the body is put in a heightened state of awareness, with attention being given to the ears of the body. Listening to the muscles as they move from one state of being to the other instantaneously falls back on the memories stored in them. Improvisation according to Steinman can have a complicated structure or no structures at all (Steinman 1986:81). All I needed to propel my memory in *Unshelved* were some associations I had with each societal structure I dealt with. Memory is triggered in movement once one starts moving and listening to the body.

EPISODE FIVE

BODY MOVING TOWARDS HYBRIDITY (through multiplicity)

*During my rehearsal period with the Wits second year performance students for the Ghanaian play **Anowa** in 2008, I noticed a personal change in the way I moved. I realized my body had gained some level of freedom to express itself. In revisiting some of my traditional dances I choreographed for the show, I incorporated and fused different traditional dances from four different tribes. This is unheard of in my Ghanaian traditional setting as it is seen as unethical and untraditional. I noticed the ease at which I was able to do that due to the incorporation of the contemporary which changed the meaning and the way the traditional dances were performed. I realized a form of freedom and liberty in expressing myself with all the forms of dance interweaving into each other. I remember fusing Kpanlogo with Agadza, Damgbai and borbobor from the Ga, Ewe, and Hauza tribes from Ghana respectively. In the midst of these, some contemporary movements emerged which helped find more freedom in expression.*

I would like to open this concluding Episode with my definition of a recurring word that would underpin my investigation. Before I delve into the body moving towards hybridity and the results of my investigation, I would like to define the word **transformation**.

What is Transformation?

According to the Oxford dictionary:

‘It’s a marked change in nature, form, or appearance’:(Soanes, C. 1987: 970).

[My definition]:

“It is from an existing old state into a newly acquired one with evidence of the old still present. The old becomes a propelling agent through whom the new is realized and manifested”.

The word change is used in the first definition and suggested in the second, which illustrates a cyclical trend of events. By this, I mean a transition from one state into another. My definition of the word transformation evolves from my practical experience with the word during my investigation with *Unshelved* hence my usage of it reflecting or having direct reference to my work.

The word transformation in the case of *Unshelved* comes about with the existence of the word hybridity which I have realized through my investigation works in close proximity. Simply putting it in my own words, hybridity is a catalyst upon which transformation is realized and lived. Hybridity in itself is a unified word comprising of various components or elements of different makes. To clarify this point, Gary Jay Williams in contextualizing hybridity and syncretism locates them as a manifestation of intercultural and intracultural performances made manifest as a result of globalization (Williams 2006:491).

Intercultural theatre is a term used to describe performances that borrow the text, acting styles, music, dance etc from one culture and adopts them into another (Williams 2006:486).

Intercultural theatre in this sense works across cultural and national boundaries, unlike Intracultural theatre which deals more with keeping the combinations of performance modes from different traditions and communities within nation-state boundaries, rather than across them

(Williams 2006:491). Intracultural theatre I believe is geared more towards the preservation of national cultures. But one needs to note that within intracultural theatre, the original culture faces modification as a result of globalization (ibid).

My investigation in *Unshelved* started from an already biased point of view where globalization had already taken its toll on my experiences. I was already born into a merged society, a society that strives on syncretism. Syncretism, according to Williams, refers to the merging of different systems of beliefs, societal practices, or aesthetics, from sources inside and /or outside of culture (Williams 2006:492). As stated in the earlier episodes, I was born into a diverse society, rich in different languages, beliefs and practices. This inscription already located me as a multi layered individual who now needed to undergo the journey of experiencing the various constructs of his society. It is through these societal constructs that I as an individual started labeling and making meaning of my environment. I as an Afropolitan started engaging with another nation, another culture in order to study.

Through my investigation, I came to the realization that, all the mentioned societal structures I engaged with were based on ideas and practices. This places these structures in a state of contention when challenged with other ideas and beliefs either from an internal or an external source. Just as much as these structures construct the individual, it at the same time creates the opportunity for other constructs to emanate hence making them malleable. This point would be further explained with examples later in this final Episode.

The engagement one has with different structures stands to prove the point that the individual is a construct of many ideologies and beliefs. Hence I would like to make the claim that the

individual is born into multiplicity and engages with society on that level. In other words, I was born into a society that demanded me to engage from birth and life, culturally, traditionally, religiously and contemporarily at various stages in my growth. At the heart of all these engagements, as mentioned earlier in Episode Two, is the body as a manifesting agent.

It is through the individual's body that all these societal demands are carried. As the body engages with all the various social structures, it gains malleability. Just as I have identified that societal structures are malleable, the body through its engagement with the society also becomes malleable through its experiences. Foucault adapts the hypothesis that the body is entirely malleable over the course of history (Hoy in Weiss & Haber 1999:3). The only way the body can learn and engage with each structure at a particular point in time is when it is malleable as the demands and experiences for each structure differs.

In dealing with the malleability of the body in *Unshelved*, I used the clothing as a transformation tool through which the different influences of society is realized upon the body. At every encounter with each society, there is the evidence of the previous society present. For example, my engagement with tradition had the evidence of both birth and culture present. My engagement with **religion** had evidence of **birth**, **culture** and **tradition** present and lastly, my interaction with **contemporary** had the evidence of **birth**, **culture**, **tradition** and **religion** present. This places the body in a layered state where there are constant additions to structures, formations and norms. The important factor to note in this exploration is the use of the word addition. The old state is not alienated but rather used as a propelling tool in the experience of

the new. The old state is malleable enough to be subjected to change in acquisition of a new one. But once acquired, it remains with you and manifested differently when exposed to another.

This brings me to my encounter with what I title **contemporary**, thus the new learnt form.

Williams explains **contemporary** as a transaction between past and present (Williams 2007:458), and he sight Robert Weimann's idea of this transaction being bound to generate new meaning (ibid). The past in *Unshelved* is a representation of all my encounters with society from **birth** through **culture**, **tradition** and **religion** with the present being my present experiences in South African education. My experience with the **contemporary** highlighted a combination of the past with the present with each past being a building block on which the present is realized. The malleability of each encounter on the body starts gearing the body towards hybridity where every experience transforms the state of the body. My merging of the past with the present is a hybrid of a structured Ghanaian societal past with a South African present which aims at breaking boundaries.

The investigation started off as a binary exploration of **traditional** and **contemporary** dance in one body. But after my explorations and engagement with the body, I realized the identity under question goes beyond two spheres of movement forms/styles. There was an enlightenment into the multiple identities that exists in one's body as well as the constant reconstruction of these identities through engagement with society and its structures. There was the realization into how one phase of an individual construct aids in the construction of another when the need arises. There is always a constant regeneration and reformation of one's identity in the midst of more than one identity. For one identity to be realized, the already existing one regenerates itself into an aiding force to inform and aid the realization of the one to be explored.

This brings me back to my definition of the word transformation as:

“From an existing old state into a newly acquired one with evidence of the old still present. The old becomes a propelling agent through whom the new is realized and manifested”.

As I walked the transformed body into the audience in Unshelved, I discovered a new state of being which was rooted in stillness and articulacy. I realized articulacy as I rubbed my thumb against the index finger. As I rubbed the fingers together, I felt grains of sand between them. As I rubbed the grains together, I noticed the different textures, shapes and colours. As I explored these different qualities over a period of time, I started noticing sameness in them. They seamlessly started merging together as part of a whole in my engagement with its qualities. They transformed from being independently different in qualities into a whole. This did not rule out the existence of the different qualities possessed but rather celebrated the differences as it unified the whole.

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Fig 1. Poster



Fig 2 and 3. The genesis of birth.



Fig 4. The exploratory face



Fig 5.The clothing of the naked self

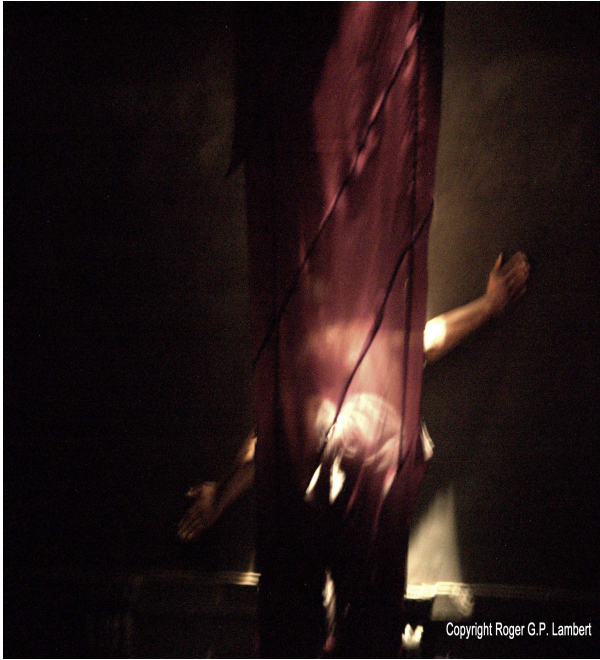


Fig 6. Introduction to culture

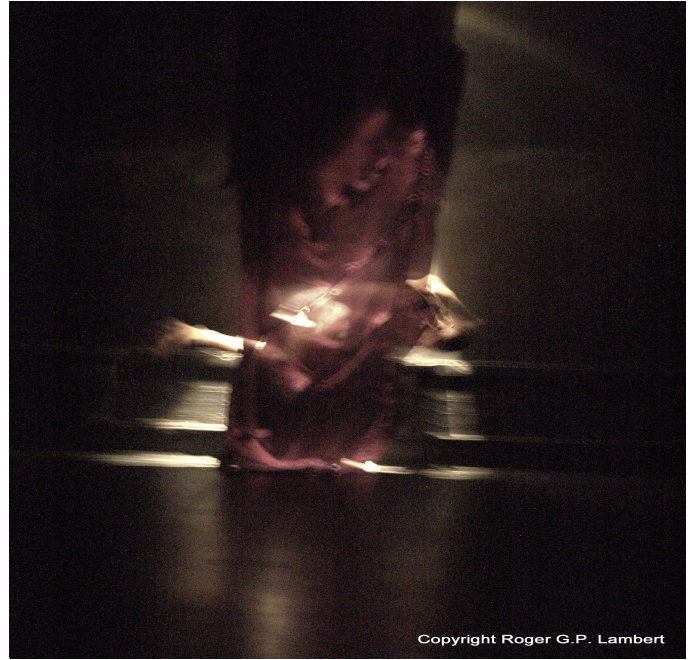


Fig 7. Culture chastening the rebellious body



Fig 8. The subdued body to Culture



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Fig 9. My father, my teacher, my authority.



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Fig 10. The son, the learner.



Fig 11. The wearing of tradition and finding enjoyment in its practice



Fig 12. Dancing tradition.

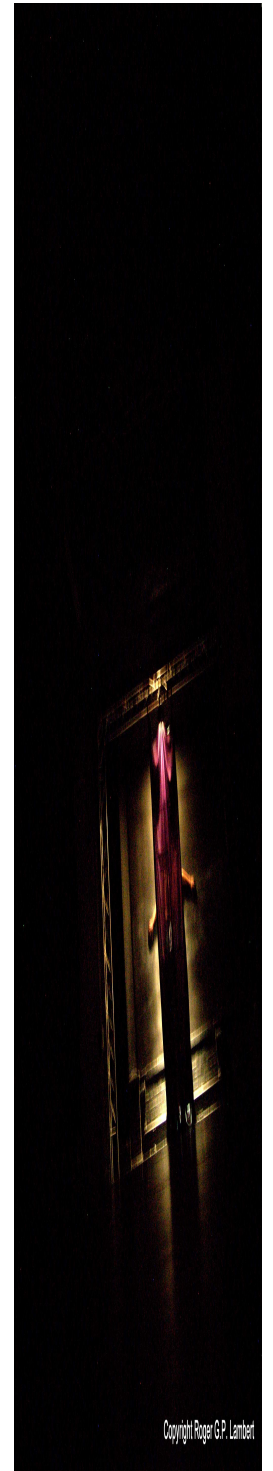
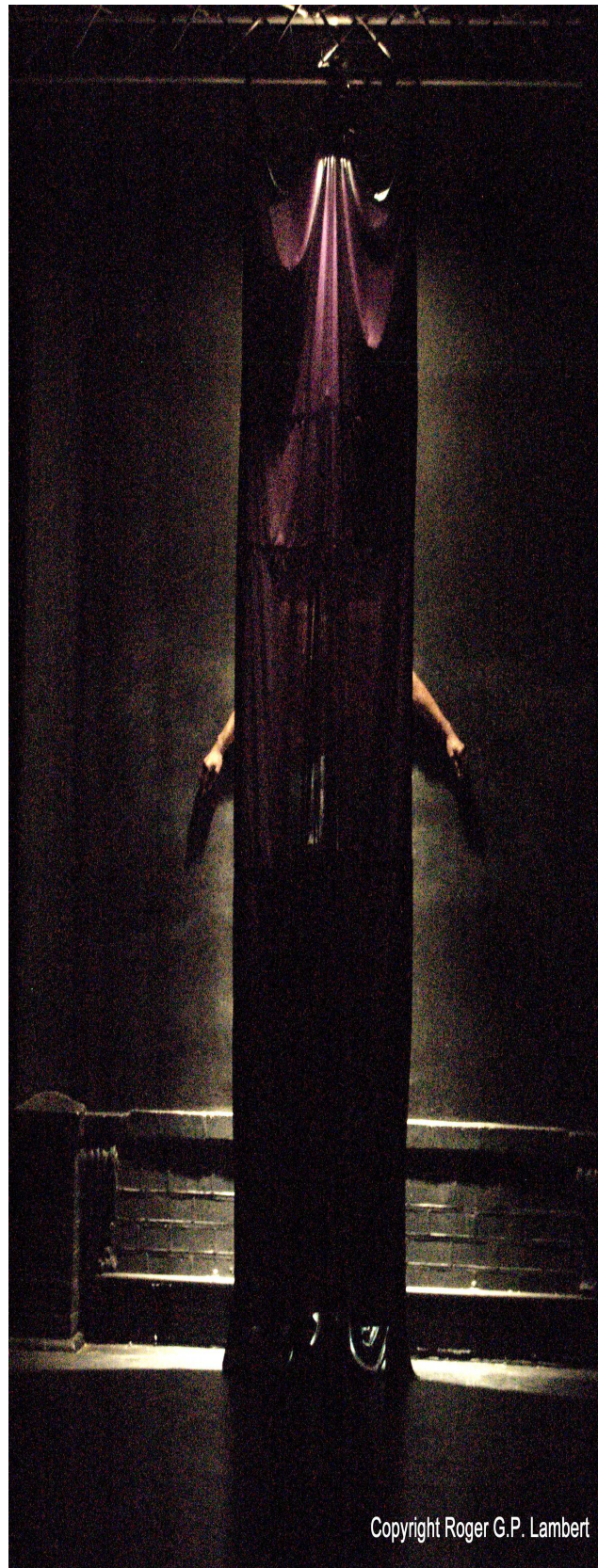
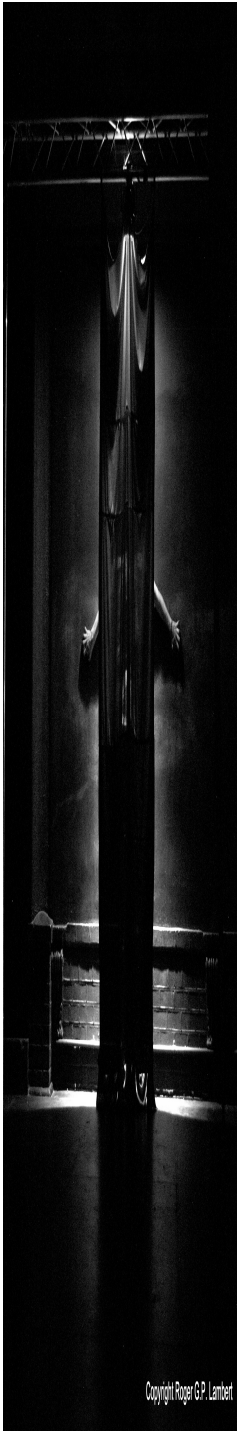


Fig 13. Religion as a social structure



Fig 14. Exposing the contemporary body



Fig 15. Wearing the contemporary



Fig 16. The exploration of all the structures in one body